

Driving Forces: ‘No man loved Athens more’ than Hobbs Street namesake

By Rebekah Davis

Limestone County Archivist

Note: This article is the first in a series of articles sharing the stories behind the names of some local streets.

“City Council Honors Late Maclin Hobbs” announced the headline in the April 8, 1926, edition of the *Limestone Democrat* in Athens.

“The name of North Street, which extends from W. R. Hightower’s residence on Beatty Street to the Houston property on Houston Street, Friday night was changed to Hobbs Street in honor the late Thomas Maclin Hobbs,” the article said. “The Hobbs home faces on this street and the honor is one that is worthily bestowed, for no man loved Athens more than he and none were more willing to contribute to the advancement of the welfare of the town.”

Today, Hobbs Street, at one time the northern boundary of Athens, extends from U.S. Highway 31 (where it crosses to become Enda Hobbs) west to Houston Street, then picks up again at Hine Street to extend west to Lucas Ferry Road and then change names to Quinn Road.

Hobbs, the son of Confederate soldier Thomas Hubbard Hobbs and Anne Benagh Hobbs, had died on Sept. 6, 1921, at age 62, at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Maryland. A native of Limestone County, Hobbs was a toddler when his father marched off to war, and he never saw him again. The elder Hobbs was an early casualty of the Civil War. Then when Thomas, or Maclin as he was known, was a young adult, his only brother Benagh died of a fever, leaving Hobbs the sole inheritor of his family’s estate in the Tanner area.

Hobbs and his wife, Annie Richardson Hobbs, had three daughters. One of them, Anna, married James E. Horton Jr., who later became well-known as the judge in the famous Scottsboro Boys case. Hobbs farmed and served on the county commission in the Tanner area, which was known as Harris at the time, before moving with his family to the Maclin home where Athens City Hall now stands. He was a faithful member and teacher at the church next door, Athens First Methodist Church, and his obituary noted that he had “one of the largest men’s classes in the state, which he was particularly proud of, and each member of which was loyal to him.”

Hobbs generously supported many causes in the city, but one he is best known for was getting the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy out of a pickle with the Confederate monument. After years of raising funds to erect a monument on the Square, the UDC discovered that the Confederate veterans thought the one they chose looked “whipped.” So Hobbs personally paid for the monument now standing on the Limestone County Courthouse lawn, and only asked that he be allowed to choose the inscription on it. The lines he chose: “The knightliest of the knightly race, who since the days of old, have kept the lamp of chivalry alive in hearts of gold.”

The *Alabama Courier* published a lengthy obituary of Hobbs, in which they summed up his life this way: “He went about quietly doing acts of kindness and very seldom did one hear about the lifting of the hand of want or the driving away of the veil of gloom occasioned by misfortune for he never allowed that to be done, but hundreds have had cause to lift their voice in thanksgiving for his beneficence.”

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