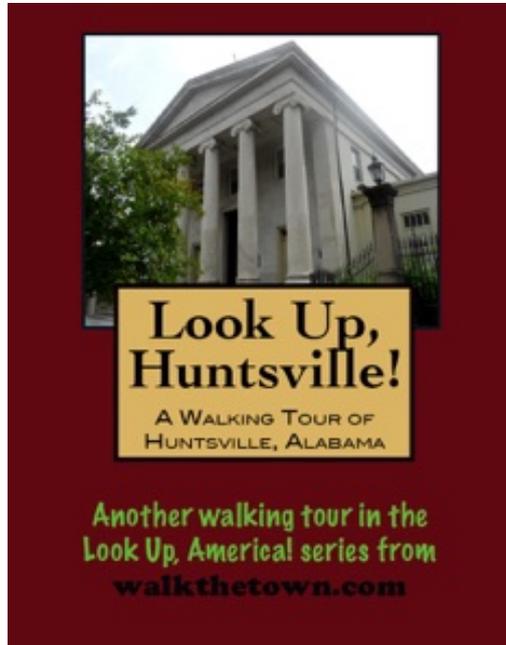


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Each walking tour describes historical and architectural landmarks and provides pictures to help out when those pesky street addresses are missing. Every tour also includes a quick primer on identifying architectural styles seen on American streets.

This area was long known to travelers for its "big spring" which was a reliable source of fresh water. There were some half-hearted attempts at settlement but an abundance of mosquitoes and black bears sent homesteaders elsewhere. John Hunt, a Revolutionary War veteran, however persevered in 1805. Hunt did not have the money to register his claim properly and "Hunt's Spring" and much surrounding land were gobbled up by a Georgian planter and lawyer named LeRoy Pope for \$23 an acre. The energetic Pope laid out streets, built a house on the village's highest hill and got his town named the County seat for Madison County that had been formed in 1808 and named for the newly sworn in fourth President of the United States, James Madison. Pope named the town Twickeham after the estate of his distant relative, the celebrated English satiric poet, Alexander Pope. The name never caught on with the newcomers who arrived to live in the town and the territorial legislature named the town after the squatter, John Hunt.

Huntsville grew rapidly on the back of King Cotton as the surrounding fields could yield a thousand pounds of the crop per acre. The town was peppered with the offices of those involved in the cotton trade - factors and lawyers and bankers. During harvest season Huntsville would be overrun with carts and wagons of cotton farmers bringing their crops in to be graded and auctioned off. The entire west side of Court Square at the center of town was reserved for business on "Cotton Row."

As a frontier metropolis Huntsville hosted the Alabama constitutional convention to hammer out the details pursuant to statehood in 1819. When Alabama was accepted into the Union as the 22nd state Huntsville was designated the temporary capital. Here, Alabama's first governor was inaugurated and its first legislature convened.

The Civil War, during which Huntsville was used as a Union base of operations after the town fell in 1863, put a crimp on progress but after the war the area became a center for cotton textile mills and a building boom took place that lasted from the 1890s until the Great Depression of the 1930s.

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Still, by 1940 Huntsville was still a small town of some 13,000 people. With the coming of World War II the government built three chemical munitions plants southwest of the city, employing 20,000 personnel. When the war ended the plants were mothballed and designated for redevelopment. In 1950 the United States Army brought its Ordnance Guided Missile Center to the abandoned plants under the leadership of Wernher von Braun, acknowledged as the "greatest rocket scientist of the 20th century." The work in Huntsville laid the foundation for America's space program and earned the city the nickname "The Rocket City."

Today, Huntsville's population tops 180,000 but we'll begin our walking tour at the site more than 200 years ago when the population was just one - where John Hunt shook off the mosquitoes and shooed the bears and built a cabin...

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