

Early 1800s painting of Huntsville's Monte Sano Mountain rediscovered

April 5 2011



"Mountain Home of Thomas Martin" is a painting done by Henry Strode, the great uncle of the late Hudson Strode, a professor of creative writing at UA. The painting was recently rediscovered and refurbished, and it will be on display at the Huntsville Museum of Art.

(PhysOrg.com) -- A 19th-century painting depicting a scene of early

settlers on Huntsville's Monte Sano Mountain was recently rediscovered and restored to its original brilliance and depth by representatives of The University of Alabama College of Arts and Sciences.

Created by Henry Strode, the great uncle of the late Hudson Strode, a professor of creative writing in the College's English department, the painting was found in storage at Hudson Strode's Tuscaloosa home, which Strode willed to UA at his death in 1976.

Titled "Mountain Home of Thomas Martin," the oil painting shows in detail roads, gardens and a home. College alumni in the Huntsville area were treated to an unveiling of Strode's work at a recent reception in Huntsville.

According to Thomas Hutchens, a library assistant in the Heritage Room of the Huntsville Public Library, records show that Thomas Martin was one of the members of the first families to settle on Monte Sano Mountain in Huntsville. According to research by Hutchens, Strode was born in the 1830s and the work reflects the painter's recollections of the early Martin homestead.

"This was a scene painted of that time, and it is a good depiction of early Huntsville in the 19th century," he said.

Hutchens determined that Strode was connected to the Martin family because his brother Eugene, the first Baptist minister in Huntsville, was married to Sallie Martin, one of three Martin daughters. Although Strode worked professionally as a lawyer, it is clear he spent time on the mountain's hillside of his sister-in law's homestead to paint the piece.

Jane Barr, the president of the Monte Sano Historical Association, has been researching the mountain since her organization was formed in 1992. In addition to being one of the first homes on the mountain, the

Martin homestead was one of the first in the area to have crude plumbing. Large, hollowed out cedar logs were used to transport water downhill from Cold Springs into the home. There was even a bathtub, carved from the mountain's limestone, where the water would collect for bathing.

Although there is little left of the Martin home but foundation rocks, it is still considered a significant part of the area's history, Barr said. Strode's painting gives current generations clues to life at the time. The [painting](#) is now on loan to the Huntsville Museum of Art which plans to display it in the museum's Huntsville's Legacy Exhibition.

Hudson Strode taught at The University of Alabama from 1916 until his retirement in 1963. He was known internationally and traveled and wrote widely. His creative writing classes gained international fame for the literary successes achieved by his students, who published more than 55 novels and 101 short stories.

Provided by University of Alabama

Citation: Early 1800s painting of Huntsville's Monte Sano Mountain rediscovered (2011, April 5) retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2011-04-early-1800s-huntsville-monte-sano.html>

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