



January 15, 2025

Dear Board of Supervisors,

The Canton Convention and Visitors Bureau and its Black Heritage Division is pleased to announce that Canton, once again, has been selected as a site for a State Freedom Trail Marker. These markers are great honors to a community when selected and we are proud to say that we are working to achieve Individuals, spaces, and places that deserve this very special recognition.

These markers are chosen very strategically and again honor those that have paved the way for past and future generations. The Mississippi Humanities Council as well as Visit Mississippi oversees this program and these impressive tributes. Our office also has been very instrumental in the application, research, and implementation of submittals for these very important distinctions.

The Freedom Trail Marker that we are unveiling on February 25<sup>th</sup> will be that of Mrs. Annie Devine who was raised in Canton, Mississippi. Mrs. Devine made so many contributions, but a couple to name was that she was the first black woman to speak before the United States House of Representatives, she worked for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and she helped found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Again, these are just a few of her many lifetime achievements.

The Canton Convention and Visitors Bureau and her daughter, Barbara Devine Russell, who still resides as a Canton resident, is respectfully requesting that Annie Devine's marker be placed on the Madison County Courthouse grounds. The requested location is on the West side of the square against the courthouse proper in the landscape area just as Flonzie Brown Wright's marker is on the South side. Mrs. Russell specifically asks us to please request this spot from the Board of Supervisors.

The Annie Devine celebration will take place on February 25<sup>th</sup> at Canton High School auditorium with a reception to follow there as well. We would then like to have the unveiling of the marker ceremony on the Courthouse grounds. There will be no need for any additional set up to the grounds.

Thank you for your time and attention to this very important event and to honor the life of Mrs. Annie Devine and her legacy for past and future generations.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jo Ann Gordon, Executive Director

Billy Joe Wells, Annie Devine Project Coordinator

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