

**From:** Baldwin, DeeDee <DBaldwin@library.msstate.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 25, 2025 9:35 AM  
**To:** Greg Higginbotham <greg.higginbotham@madison-co.com>  
**Subject:** Permission for historical marker

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Dear Mr. Higginbotham & Supervisors of Madison County,

Our group is interested in securing your permission to install a new state historical marker on the grounds of the county courthouse at Canton in the latter part of 2026. As part of "Making Their Mark," a statewide, grant-funded initiative to recognize the first African Americans to hold legislative office in Mississippi after the Civil War, this marker would honor the 9 Black men elected from Madison County during this period. All costs for the manufacture and installation of the marker would be covered by our group. The unveiling of the marker would be accompanied by a community event at which we would be happy to include remarks from Board representatives if interested. The marker would be a standard state historical marker like the ones you've seen all around the county (<https://www.mississippimarkers.com/madison-county.html>).

Here is a draft of what the marker text would be, subject to final editing and approval by MDAH:

(Side 1)

The First Black Legislators

After the Civil War, formerly enslaved African Americans represented a majority of the state's population. The Fourteenth Amendment and a new state constitution

enabled the people to elect 162 Black men to state or national office - more than any other state. The overthrow of Reconstruction and passage of the 1890 state constitution ended multiracial democracy in Mississippi for over 70 years.

(Side 2)

The following Black men from Madison County served in the Mississippi state legislature between 1870-1887:

George Edwards	Matthew Levy
Alfred N. Handy	Samuel W. Lewis
John F. Henry	Adam D. Simpson
David Jenkins	James J. Spelman
John Johnson	

More information about these men can be found at <https://much-ado.net/legislators/legislators-by-county/> (just scroll to Madison).

So far, we have secured approval from Adams, Holmes, Marshall/DeSoto, Wilkinson/Amite, Oktibbeha/Clay, Noxubee, and Lauderdale/Clarke at their November 17 meetings, and we're on the agenda for Hinds, Warren, Lowndes, and others on December 1.

Please let us know any additional information we can provide you or any questions we can answer to have this request added to the agenda of the supervisors' next meeting. If permission is given, all we need is a copy of the minutes to include with our application for the marker. We would be happy to arrange for someone from our group to speak before the board if necessary. A conference call would be easier because I live in Starkville, but if in-person is needed, we'll make that happen.

Our goal is to submit the marker applications, which must include permission for placement, to MDAH in mid-December.

With great appreciation for your time and with best wishes,

"Making Their Mark" project co-directors,

DeeDee Baldwin (Mississippi State University) - 601-479-1424

Chuck Yarborough (Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science)

Team members: Brother Rogers (MDAH), Roscoe Barnes (Visit Natchez), Robby Lockett (Jackson State), Heather Denne (Jackson State), Vickie Roberts Ratliff (Land, Literacy, Legacy LLC)