

The Huntsville Historical Review

Spring- Summer 2025

Volume 50

Number 1

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Buggs Chapel: A Little History; Eighty Years with Galilee Baptist Church

*Composite of interviews with Myra Pritchett (at age 86) Author
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This year of our Lord, Nineteen Hundred Eighty Three marks the continuance of 80 years since Galilee Baptist Church was organized as a fellowship of people of God, a union, with Him the head or whole body and Christian people as the members.

Last year at our Homecoming Sister Myra Pritchett, who is one of our oldest members, shared with us some of her memories of Galilee Church, she being present when the church body was formed, and we are indebted to her for these memories since the first church records available to us are dated 1917.



The church was organized in 1903 under the leadership of Bro. John Henry Vann, a Baptist preacher, extended an arm of faith and fellowship from Cedar Grove Baptist Church in the Oak Grove area.

The first place of worship was the old school house, also used as the "Farmers Union" meeting place and stood about where our Pastorium now is built.

Since the Church had no elected Pastor, several local ministers would fill the pulpit which was a homemade teachers table during school hours. Two of those who preached, (Bro. Lyons and Bro. Martin) were Primitive Baptist, and one (Bro. Henry Tabor) was a Methodist, which proves that even back then we were not (as we are sometimes accused of being) "Selfish Baptist".

For several years services were held on Saturday evening and Sundays, and only once a month. Mrs. Myra tells us a Bro. Jones was the first elected pastor. A new school was built in the community called "Yellow Bank" and the church secured the former school property, enlarged the building, and in 1916 the first permanent church was built.

The minutes of a church conference dated September 14, 1918 show that Bro. H.F. Merrill, of Elora, Tenn. was elected as pastor, Bro. A.A. Vann as church Clerk, Bro. G.W. Harless, Frank Maples, and Lone Maples as Deacons. Bro. Merrell lived in Elora, Tenn. and came by train to Hobbs Island and some members of the church would meet him with horse and buggy on Saturday and take him back on Monday to take the train home. The train fare was 30 cents one way and sometimes the 60 cents was hard to come by.

There are no records to tell us when our church went into the local Association but the minutes of August 1919 show that the Baptist Association met with Galilee Baptist Church that year and lists G.W. Harless, Mrs. Lee Harless, Alex Vann, and Miss Lizzie Maples as voting delegates.

Bro. Merrell served as pastor 3 years and Bro. Price was called as pastor. In 1920 the minutes of June 26 reads that Rev. Roy Stone was ordained to full Gospel Ministry August 24, 1919. Galilee Church, in 1920, extended support to two new Baptist bodies formed, the minutes of August 28 reads that an arm of faith and fellowship was extended to Clouds Cove and also Concord Church in Marshall County. Minutes written

April 15, 1922 by Curt Maples, Church Clerk at this time, states a Baptist Convention meeting would be held in Florida and donations were solicited to help cover the delegates expenses. \$2.00 was received. In March 1923 it is stated that an offering was taken to support the delegates expenses to a State Convention and \$4.10 was given.

In Sept. 1922 Bro. Henry Branus was elected pastor by the first secret ballot the church had ever used, and has continued to use since that time until now. Bro. Herman Maples was ordained as Deacon in December of that year and has remained an active Deacon of this church for these 61 years and a member for 67 years. Only God knows and remembers all the good things he has done down through the years for this church. I ask this congregation at this time to give him a standing ovation of thanks for the many years of service he has given to God and this church.

From time to time, up until the year 1926, foot washing and communion was recorded in the minutes as being observed, but no mention of foot washing is mentioned after that year.

The pastors' salary for year 1919 was recorded as \$100.00 and church membership as \$48. 1920 salary listed as \$50.65 and 69 members. 1921 salary \$81.90, membership 104 and the year 1926 must have been a good year for the "Cotton" since pastors' salary was \$185.74 with 143 members.

Bro. Branum resigned as pastor October 1929 being pastor for 7 years and Bro. Roy Stone was elected pastor in August 1930.

Our first pastorium was built in 1932 on property the McMillian Family gave for use as church pastors home. It was a church and community affair. It being the depression era no money was available so different people gave trees for timber which was cut and hauled to the saw mill and all the work was done by men of the church, and friends of other church's who gave of

their time. Mr. Alex Cobb (Roy & Elmer's father) and his brother Mr. Murphey Cobb made the boards to cover the roof, by hand, white oak timber from trees donated by Mr. Archie Russell. The ladies of the church saved eggs, sold milk and butter, and what they could, to buy windows, doors, and nails. How proud we were of that 4 room house that was truly a work of love. Bro. Stone lived there until his own home was built.

For a few years things went fine in our church life. Membership grew as people were saved and added to the church. And then in 1938 calamity struck! A very bad wind storm struck our church building blowing it from its pillars, demolishing the belfry, and blowing the sides in. It was decided repairing was impossible and a new building was necessary. Again the church rallied and our present church Sanctuary was erected.

In 1944 Bro. Stone resigned as pastor and went to Lincoln Baptist in Huntsville for one year and then to Concord Baptist at Fayetteville Tenn. for a year. He was called back as our pastor in 1946.

During the two years Bro. Stone was away our church was pastored by Bro. Robert Warden who lived in the New Market area and our Pastorium was rented out monthly.

The year 1947, after Bro. Stone returned, marked a milestone in our church. We became a twice monthly preaching time church for the first time. Our first Sunday school rooms were built and in 1951 the church voted to call Bro. Stone for an indefinite time instead of yearly as had always been done.

Gas heaters were installed in 1956 and new pews were purchased in 1957.

The year 1961 was another great year for us as we decided to go "full time" preaching each Sunday. Bro. Stone retired from the active ministry in 1965 after 33 years as pastor of Galilee Baptist Church, making him the longest in service of any of our pastors. He

remained a faithful member of our church after his retirement and was always available for weddings, funerals, advice, book studies, etc., and taught the Bible Class for many years until his health failed. Bro. Stone passed away in February of this year and is sadly missed by us all. His family still attend this church and are members in service.

Bro. Harry Brooks became pastor of our church after Bro. Stone retired and was with us 1966 and 1967. Under his leadership our present Pastorium was build.

Bro. John Jenne served as our next pastor coming to us in 1968 and resigned in 1971. His 4 years with us were very fruitful. Our membership reached its highest peak in 1971 (328) and he led us to build our Educational Building in 1969.

Bro. Roland Lee came to serve us as pastor in 1972 and resigned in 1977. Our Sancuary was carpeted in 1974 in memory of Sister Hattie Stone. Our Baptistry was installed under his leadership and our present padded pews were added.

Bro. Lamar McGriff followed Bro. Lee as pastor and served 2 years.

Bro. Jim Edmunds was called as pastor in 1980 and due to health reasons resigned after 18 months, and our present pastor Bro. Billy Taylor accepted our call in October of last year and is truly leading us to become a growing church in love, fellowship, and service to God and each other.

Thus we see that God has wonderfully blessed Galilee Baptist Church for these 80 years. Many great pastors and members have passed in and out these doors. We thank God for each of them and for these that remain on this our 80th Birthday. May God's riches blessings be on this church, its members, former members, and friends who have come to remember, with us, the good years, the good people, the joys and blessings of Galilee Baptist Church.

Will you pray with us, and for us, that from this church will go out a real ministry of service, not in pride, but in humility, obedience and “self-offering”, like unto the example of Him who was among us, as one who served.

May we, with pride look back on its accomplishment and with a prayer in our hearts, look forward in faith to the future, determined to make it a better church, holy, and acceptable unto God.

Reference: *The material above was recovered in the boxes retained by Mary Alice McDonald, a life time member of the Galilee Baptist Church and it is held in the New Hope Library.*

- *Photo by the editor*

Editor comment: *Confederate soldier, John Andrew Jackson Vann was born 19 February 1826 and died 26 March 1906. He lived about two miles west of New Hope on old highway 431 near a fork in the road where Hobbs Island Road begins on the left and Old highway 431 curves north toward Owens Cross Roads. Andrew was appreciated as a supportive neighbor and friend of the community, his nick name was Buggs. The area where he lived was referred to, colloquially, as Buggs Chapel. Alabama Archives.*

The Life and Times of 2nd Lieutenant Paschal Conley Buffalo Soldier

By Arley McCormick

The civil war was a couple of years away nearing the end of the 1850's and many believed the saber rattling would dissipate as it had in previous years. It did not, but the world did change for the soon-to-be emancipated Paschal and Mary Stieger Conley. On a plantation near Huntsville in 1858 their son, Paschal Conley, was born. His parents learned in a short time that Paschal was special. As the war commenced around them, he grew up to be clever, athletic, and creative.

Long after the war ended the Huntsville community experienced drought, high unemployment, lawlessness, and remained under Martial Law. Freedmen were employed by the Union Army while others worked as laborers, migrated north, or became share croppers. Life was hard for everyone.

Uncertainty began every day at sun rise. The Union Army was terminating soldiers' enlistment agreements and sending them home, changing local leadership, reassigning units, and defining an adequate force structure to support its specified missions. Two important missions required attention: staffing to enforce Reconstruction policies in the former Confederate states and protecting the flood of pioneers heading west from nearly everywhere east of the Mississippi River from the plains Indians.

In this period of uncertainty the US Congress, in 1866, established two cavalry and two infantry regiments whose enlisted men were exclusively black soldiers. They were commanded by white officers.

Their mission was to defend pioneers against desperados and the Native Americans west of the Mississippi River. They would soon be known as

buffalo soldiers and Paschal began to dream of an adventure.

On March 6, 1869, at the age of nine, Paschal made a deposit in the Freedman's Bank and Trust Company. The company was organized in 1865 to support Freedmen by giving them a location to save a portion of what they earned to support their family and their future.

Paschal continued his education and on March 25, 1879, at the age of 20, he boarded a train at the Huntsville Depot and in the last passenger car he proudly handed the conductor a ticket indicating a destination of Memphis, Tennessee. Upon arrival he enlisted in the United States Army's 24th Infantry Regiment, Company H. After training, he was ordered to Fort Supply, an outpost in Indian Territory, now the state of Oklahoma. His future had begun.

Private Paschal Conley was quickly assimilated into his new post and the leadership recognized his mental acuity and leadership skills immediately. Assigned to the Quartermaster officer's staff, he supported the 10th Cavalry as well as the other black regiments keeping peace on the plains.

Paschal assisted the supply officer for 5 years and when his enlistment agreement ended he, along with friends that accompanied him to enlist, went north to Montana. But his stay in Montana was short lived. He was drawn back to the Army and upon Paschal's reenlistment he was assigned to Fort Smith Arkansas and once again settled into the Quartermaster's staff.

He left his family in Montana and after a few months of his absence his wife wrote to the President of the United States begging that he be released from Army service because she feared for the safety of her family as Indians and outlaws were causing mischief. He did not terminate his service but did return on leave and made suitable arrangements for the safety and well being of his wife and family.

He was in the 10th when his marksmanship was discovered and he became a member of the 10th Cavalry, Department of Missouri, rifle team.

Paschal was well known in officer circles and when the Spanish American War was announced in April 1898 he was deployed with the 10th Cavalry and other buffalo soldier units arriving at Lakeland, Florida on June 5, 1898. While in the Quartermaster position of the 10th Cavalry, John Lewis of H Company, 10th Cavalry stated in a letter that *"he was an excellent noncommissioned officer who should be commissioned."*

Lakeland, Florida was a staging area for Army units being deployed to Cuba. The units trained, were equipped, and deployed to Cuba without their horses. For cavalry troops, being on foot was a condition they were not accustomed to, and their pride was hurt. They weren't common infantry.

Paschal's performance was regarded as exceptional and he received accolades from his chain of command and the men he supported. For the Quartermaster, the work is never done. The Quartermaster is constantly ordering, securing, and identifying shortages of equipment including both the soldiers' uniforms and unit equipment, i.e., tents, weapons, and food.

The war was won rather quickly and the soldiers were returning to Florida in bad spirits because many were suffering wounds from diseases acquired in Cuba and badly in need of healthy rest.

Fighting Joe Wheeler was in command of the buffalo soldiers and witnessed Paschal's performance in the field. And being from Alabama, a former member of the United States Congress, initially a General in the Confederate Army and more recently a tested leader and General in the U.S. Army, he became aware of a survey of the United States that concluded Huntsville, Alabama was one of three most healthy places in the country.

General Wheeler influenced the War Department to send many warriors of the Spanish American War to Huntsville to rest, recover, and prepare for their mission whom buffalo soldiers assumed would be west of the Mississippi River.

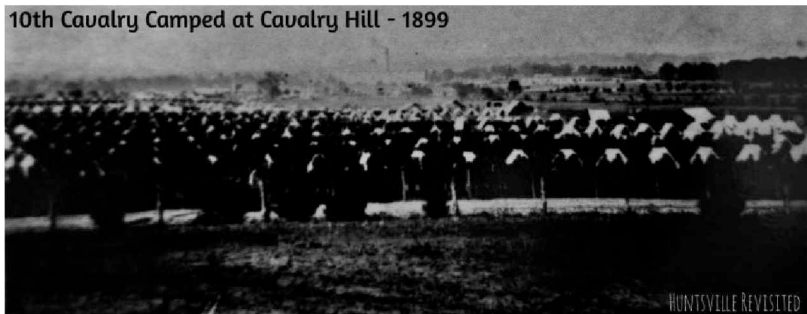
Before the main units arrived an advanced party came to the city to coordinate camp locations, make arrangement for food, water, medical support and find locations large enough to train for their next mission as soldiers recovered. As a member of the Advanced Party Sergeant Paschal Conley, a known member of the Huntsville Community, would have participated in the planning and coordinate the movement of troops to their appointed encampments.

Finally on Trinity Sunday 1898 the buffalo soldiers arrived in Huntsville (the first Sunday after Pentecost in June). The *Huntsville Weekly Democrat*, on September 21, 1898 reported that Oaklawn, on Meridian Pike, was used as a hospital and the buffalo soldiers were scattered all around the city. Initially a Regiment established their base camp on Monte Sano Mountain. But that didn't last long.

Regiments were distributed around the city as listed below:

- Fifth Ohio: Brahan Springs
- Fifth Cavalry: Brahan Springs
- Sixty Ninth: New York, near Brahan Springs
- Tenth Cavalry: Initially Monte Sano Mountain,

10th Cavalry Camped at Cavalry Hill - 1899



then along with the Second Cavalry in West

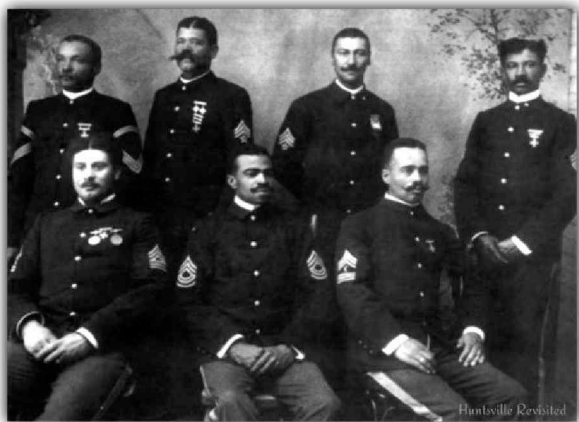
Huntsville which would become known locally as Cavalry hill.

- Second Georgia on William Moore Place
- Fifth Maryland, Company D, Engineers and First Florida were on the Steele Place.
- Eighth Cavalry, Third Pennsylvania, Seventh Cavalry, and Sixteenth Infantry were on the Chapman Places.

The city was prepared to host the heroes of the Spanish American war. The Regimental bands played a variety of music in the evenings, streets were crowded with visitors, and of course there were incidents between disgruntled soldiers, aggressive civilians of the community, and curious visitors (alcohol most likely involved).

For Paschal, he was his family's hero and the black community was proud of his accomplishments and position in the Cavalry.

On December 6, 1898 the 10th, 6th, and 7th Cavalry passed in review. The community lined the streets down town to watch the last big event of the encampment. Later the official report indicated there were 132 deaths from all causes while soldiers recovered in Huntsville.



Paschal Conley Seated front row center

On January 26, 1899, 1st Lt. John J. Pershing of the 10th Cavalry wrote a letter to the War Department recommending that Paschal be promoted to the grade of 2nd Lieutenant. His letter stated: *Sergeant Conley is an applicant for appointment to the grade of 2nd Lieutenant in one of the colored immune regiments, and I hope that his application may receive favorable consideration. I have known him over three years, and regard him as one of the most capable non-commissioned officers in his regiment. In all that is said of him and his ability by other officers I cheerfully concur. His promotion would be a fitting recognition of long and honorable service.*

He was not promoted.

In 1899 Paschal re-enlisted as Squadron Sergeants Major, at Fort Robinson, Nebraska and continued as the Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant through 1905. Paschal retired honorably in 1906 after thirty years of exceptional service and received a pension of \$30.00 a month.

Retired Sergeants Major Paschal Conley's story does not end with his retirement. During the 1990's and early 2000's, students of the Academy for Science and Foreign Language and youth from Conley Chapel CME Church, petitioned for a posthumous promotion to no avail. In 2010, the Conley family -the late Dr. Binford Harrison Conley and his wife, Ollye Ballard Conley - requested the Department of Defense review Paschal Conley's records and support recommendations for promotion.

The Conley family was notified by the Alabama Department of Veteran Affairs that the request for the promotion of Sergeant Paschal Conley to Second Lieutenant was being revisited and on December 6, 2022, the Conley Family was informed that Paschal Conley's promotion had been approved and was awaiting one final signature.

On February 22, 2023, a promotion ceremony was conducted at the Von Braun Civic Center's Galaxy Lounge. The family was honored with a set of shoulder boards for 2nd Lieutenant Paschal Conley and a certificate of promotion from the United States Army.

2nd Lieutenant Paschal Conley served his country honorably and received recommendations from many officers he served with including the future Commander of the American Expeditionary Force deployed to Europe for WWI, General John (Black Jack) Pershing.

Congratulations, 2nd Lieutenant Paschal Conley!
Rest in Peace!!

References:

- *The family ancestry archives in possession of Ollye Ballard Conley, Huntsville Alabama*
- *Photos complement of Huntsville Revisited curator William Hampton*
- *The Huntsville Weekly Democrat, September 21, 1898*

The Crash of the Martin Marauder

Jacquelyn Procter Reeves

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. Few of our WWII veterans are still with us, but many of us remember the impact the war had on our parents and grandparents. My father, a Marine Corps veteran who fought in the South Pacific, would not volunteer information about his time in service, because like many, he had seen the horrors of war and preferred not to remember. This story focuses on a little-known event that took place in Huntsville during the war.

On December 8, 1941, the day after Japanese planes bombed Pearl Harbor, Prime Minister Hedeki Tojo announced to the Japanese people that Japan was at war with the United States, the British Empire, and the Netherlands. The announcement ended with a song whose words were translated:

“Across the sea, corpses soaking in the water,
Across the mountains, corpses heaped up in the grass
We shall die by the side of our lord,
We shall never look back.”

On that same day, the United States Congress declared war on the Empire of Japan. Japan's allies, Germany and Italy, then declared war on the United States. During the following four years, Americans came together for a common cause. Factories sprang up and women put away their aprons to join the work force in local factories. Huntsville, Alabama was no exception.

The Martin Marauder was a twin engine bomber built in Baltimore, Maryland and Omaha, Nebraska by the Glenn L. Martin Company. Other bombers produced during the war included the B-24 Liberator, the B-29 Boeing Super fortress, the Douglas Dauntless, the Grumman Avenger, and others. The Martin Marauder was first used in the war in the Pacific in early 1942. It was called the "Widowmaker" because of the high number of fatal crashes during takeoff and landing. In particular, landings were extremely hazardous because the plane required a much higher speed on the runway approach than was standard with other planes. If the plane's speed on the landing approach was less than required, the engines would stall, potentially causing a crash. Despite this obviously dangerous problem, 5,288 planes were produced between February 1941 and March 1945. The Marauders were flown by the Royal Air Force, the South African Air Force, and the U.S. Army Air Force. Each Marauder was built at a cost of \$250,000 (over 4.5 million in today's money) and in addition, it was expensive to operate. The per-hour cost while in the air was \$570. Adding \$100 per hour for 100-octane fuel and \$30 per hour to pay the crew, the total came to a whopping \$700 (\$13,000 in today's money) per hour flying cost. It was estimated that every hour the Marauder was in the air, 10 hours of maintenance were required for the ground crew to keep it in condition to fly.

In the spring of 1943, three officers and three enlisted men, members of the Army Air Force,* were brought to Huntsville Arsenal along with two planes: a B-26 and an L-20. The home base of these men, members of the 618thAAF unit, was Eglin Field in Florida.

On Tuesday, June 27, 1944, a B-26 Martin Marauder bomber took off from the Huntsville Arsenal airstrip on a mission to flight test incendiary bombs.

The expected high that day was in the low 90s and no rain was in the forecast. Their mission was to drop bombs on an area of the western side of the arsenal known as "Little Tokyo," a test target village with about 50 wooden structures constructed on three streets. One street was constructed with large stones, another with gravel, and a third was dirt. Although some of the shacks had already been destroyed testing M47 bombs, a 200-foot wooden structure was built to test the 500-pound M76 incendiary bombs. An airstrip was specially built on the arsenal for the tests.

The pilot that day was 26-year-old Lt. Emmett Hale, who was originally from Statham, Georgia. Lt. Hale arrived in Huntsville in 1943 to set up the air detachment. He went back to Eglin Airfield, but had been sent back to Huntsville at the request of the commander of the detachment.

With Lt. Hale that day was 20-year-old 2nd Lt. Jerome Loeffler, the bombardier, from Miami, Florida. Sgt. Antone "Tony" Valim, 31-years-old, was the engineer. The newly married young man was a first generation American born in Oakland, California. His parents were from Portugal. His father's middle name was Valim, which he took as his last name, dropping the name Vasconcellos after he came to America.

Soon after the three men took off at just before 11:30 a.m., one of the Marauder's two engines began to skip. Not long after, the engine began to shut down while the plane was at an altitude between 3,000 and 4,000 feet. The engine sputtered and fell silent. Due to the excess weight of the bombs, and with only one engine working, Lt. Emmett Hale struggled to control the plane.

Lt. Hale turned the plane back toward the arsenal, hoping he could land it safely. He contacted the control station by radio and was instructed to make the best landing he could, wherever possible. Their only hope was to drop some of the bombs to lighten

the load. At first, Lt. Hale was reluctant because of farmhouses in the area.

Finally, he had no choice. A 500-pound bomb was dropped onto a vacant field near present-day Hudson Alpha Institute to lighten the load with the hope they might regain altitude. With one engine out, the plane was still in trouble. Lt. Hale tried to land on Highway 72, but with embankments on both sides of the road, and their inability to maneuver the crippled plane, landing on the highway was impossible.

An eyewitness saw the plane as it crossed over Highway 72, heading north. It was on fire. Because it was loaded with bombs, the crew had to know they were doomed. According to the eyewitness, none of the crew members bailed out. The plane crashed violently in a cotton field near present-day Memorial Gardens Cemetery and about 100 yards north of Highway 72. The Marauder exploded and was immediately enveloped in flames. In the following day's newspaper report of the crash, the writer hoped the crew members died as a result of the crash, and did not burn to death. Arsenal guards surrounded the crash site; ambulances carried the bodies from the site. The flag at Redstone Arsenal was lowered to half-staff in honor of the dead.

Laughlin Funeral Service in Huntsville prepared the badly burned bodies of the three crew members before they were sent to their families for burial. The June 28, 1944 newspaper reported that the remains of Lt. Emmett Hale were shipped at 1:10 a.m. on Thursday, June 29 to Winder, Georgia. His body would then be taken to Statham, Georgia where his mother lived. His body was escorted by Lt. Krieheder.

Lt. Lane accompanied the body of Lt. Jerome Loeffler, who was to be buried in New York City. He died three days before his 21st birthday. Sgt. Tony Valim's body was taken to nearby Athens to be put onto the Louisville & Nashville train for Oakland,

California for burial. His body was escorted by Sgt. Gwartney. Valim had been married only three months. One of his brothers had recently been awarded the Purple Heart for wounds in the Italian campaign, as well as a Bronze Star for Gallantry in Action.

The following month, the newspaper reported that 2Lt. Robert Burns, an AAF bombardier, was assigned to the Huntsville Arsenal to fill the vacancy left by Lt. Loeffler's death.

On August 10, 1944, the east-west road that connected Rideout Road to the Arsenal airport was named Hale Road in memory, and in honor, of Lt. Emmett Hale. The picnic park on Redstone Arsenal was named Loeffler Park for Lt. Jerome Loeffler on November 18, 1944. The Huntsville Arsenal reservoir on Madkin Mountain was named Valim Reservoir for Sgt. Antone "Tony" Valim on April 20, 1945, ensuring the names of these brave men would never be forgotten.

Ironically, 1250 miles from Huntsville, a top secret project was already underway that would put an end to the type of testing that took their lives. The world was unaware that the Manhattan Project was coming to fruition in a secret town known as Los Alamos, New Mexico before the tragedy in Huntsville. J. Robert Oppenheimer and his scientists were developing an atomic bomb to end the war. It was first tested at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico on July 16, 1945.

On August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The surrender of the Empire of Japan was announced by President Harry Truman on August 14, 1945. The following day, the same was announced by Emperor Hirohito at noon via radio broadcast. The statement had been secretly prerecorded on August 14. The official surrender was signed on September 2, 1945 in Tokyo Bay.

Over the next few months, many Japanese soldiers and civilians committed suicide as a result of the war's end.

On Sunday, September 2, 1945, the headline of the *Huntsville Times* read: "Japanese Formally Surrender to Allies on Board *Missouri*." Also on the front page was the announcement that contracts worth \$97,000,000 were cancelled at the Huntsville Arsenal, due to the conclusion of the war.

In the course of the war, over 5,000,000 M69 incendiary bombs in 500 pound clusters, along with 500,000 bombs filled with "goop", were produced in Huntsville. In addition, 9,000,000 canisters, 7,000,000 grenades, 2,300,000 smoke pots, and 3,000,000 artillery shells filled with white phosphorous were produced as well. The Chemical Warfare Service reported that 6% of bombs dropped in Europe were incendiaries while 19% of bombs dropped during action in the Pacific were incendiaries.

By the end of the war, Hedeki Tojo, who had announced the declaration of war against the United States, was General of the Imperial Japanese Army. The arrest of General Tojo, plus 39 others, was ordered by U.S. General Douglas MacArthur. Five American soldiers were sent to arrest him on September 11, but he shot himself in the chest. He survived and was sent to Sugamo Prison. An American dentist made a new set of dentures for him and secretly drilled the words "Remember Pearl Harbor" in Morse code. Tojo was tried and found guilty of war crimes. He was hanged on December 23, 1948.

As for the employees of Huntsville Arsenal, at one time, 40% of the work force at the arsenal were women, both black and white; black men made up about 1/5 of the workforce. In more than three years that the arsenal (known by locals as the bullet factory), produced war materials, nine civilians and

seven military men died as a result of accidents. There were several civilian casualties, including the first woman, killed in an incendiary explosion, who became the first female casualty in the war/war effort. Of the military casualties, they were Capt. Herman Finkelstein, Capt. John Marzolf, Lt. Earl Tremblay, Sgt. Richard Welty, and of course Lt. Emmet Hale, Lt. Jerome Loeffler, and Sgt. Antone Valim.

Capt. Herman Finkelstein died September 9, 1942 after a short illness. The 33-year-old doctor was buried in New York. Capt. John Marzolf was a native of Washington, D.C. and was stationed in Huntsville since November 1941. He had a degree in chemical engineering and even though he was only 24, he was the manufacturing plant supervisor. On September 4, 1944, a disconnected valve began to spew high concentrations of deadly gases into an arsenal building. John went in to shut the valve off, knowing it could be, and it was, a fatal move. Others that day were injured, but they survived. A recreation field at Redstone was named in his honor.

Earl Tremblay died August 15, 1945 when his Jeep crashed on the arsenal. He was 33. Sgt. Richard Welty died on August 31, 1945 when the B-25 Mitchell bomber he was in crashed on takeoff. He had a wife and son. He was buried in New York.

Deaths attributed to design flaws with the Martin B-26 Marauder, should never have happened. Hastily trained pilots also caused unnecessary deaths. At MacDill Field in Tampa Bay, there were 15 crashes in a 30-day period. Thirteen planes were ditched in the water during a 14-month period. Besides the nickname "Widowmaker," they were known as the "Martin Murderer," "Flying Coffin," "B-Dash-Crash," and "Baltimore Whore" because the Martin company was based there. Some pilots refused to fly the Marauder, so 17 female pilots were

trained to fly the Marauder to shame the male pilots. Of course, women did not fly in combat in those days. Some crashes were blamed on weight distribution problems on the plane, runaway propellers, and of course pilot error.

In 1942, Glenn L. Martin, whose company produced the Marauders, appeared before the Senate Special Committee to investigate the National Defense Program. Their role was to determine fraudulent cases involving defense contractors. Senator Harry Truman, who would become the U.S. President in 1945, asked why there were so many problems. Martin said that the wings were too short. When asked why the wings had not been changed since they knew about the problem, Martin replied that his company already had the contract to produce them as they were and they were already in production. Truman informed him the contract would be canceled. Soon an additional six feet was added to the wingspan and the plane was fitted with an up-rated engine, more armor, and bigger guns.

In 1943, the North American B-25 Mitchell gradually phased out the use of the Marauder during missions in the South Pacific. The last combat mission of the B-26 Marauder in the Pacific Theater occurred on January 9, 1944, six months *before* the tragedy at the Huntsville Arsenal. The deaths of these three men were unnecessary.

The War in Europe

The entire world was weary with war. Hitler was becoming more unhinged and there were rumors that his health was in decline. His left arm trembled and he went to great lengths to hide it from the public. His eardrums had been shattered by a bomb blast in an assassination attempt, increasing his paranoia. The German Army was beginning to consist of boys and old

men, as the fighting force began to dwindle due to combat fatalities.

The headline in the April 10, 1945 issue of the *Huntsville Times* read, “*Germans Crumpling Rapidly; Fresh Assault Toward Berlin.*” The newspaper reported that American Marines were fighting on Okinawa and our Allies were closing in on “*withering German forces.*” More horrors of German executions were being discovered. The same issue featured a picture of German POWs escorting the flag draped coffin of German General Hans von Schubert who was captured in France and died of brain ailment in Como, Mississippi where he was buried.

Ernie Pyle, a well-known syndicated columnist, wrote about the war while living alongside G.I.s. “*Seeing the War with Ernie Pyle*” was published in over 200 newspapers across the United States. Pyle had a premonition of his own death, and unfortunately, it came true. While reporting from Ie Jima, a small island near Okinawa on April 17, 1945, he made his way to the frontline to get a feel of the action for an upcoming column. He and others dove into a ditch when they came under enemy fire, and when he looked up from the ditch, a bullet hit him in the left temple, just under his helmet. Ernie Pyle’s body was recovered under enemy fire, and he was buried on Ie Island with military honors two days later. His last column was printed next to his obituary.

Local newspapers weren’t completely dedicated to reporting news of the war. The April 26 issue of the *Huntsville Times* ran a story about Thomas Moore, who had turned 102-years-old. Mr. Moore was 20 when he was freed as a slave. He said, “*We’re living in the last days, get ready. Get ready for the last day.*” Mr. Moore lived on the Moore plantation, located 10 miles northwest of town. (This may today be a subdivision known as Moore Farm.)

On April 30, 1945, Adolph Hitler was dead. There were signs, but no conclusive proof, according to the Soviet Union's Marshall Georgy Zhukov. Although the Russians had found burned corpses, one with Hitler's identification, they were not certain it was Hitler's body. It was assumed that Hitler and his bride, Eva Braun, had fled Germany and were perhaps hiding in Spain. It was now up to the Americans and Brits, said Marshall Zhukov, to find him.

On September 2, 1945, the Instrument of Surrender was signed by Japanese officials. Approximately 407,316 Americans died in WWII. Those who survived were forever changed and came home to a country that had also been changed by war.

Meet the Author: Jacquelyn Procter Reeves is a native of New Mexico although her ancestors were among the earliest settlers in North Alabama and Tennessee. She is the past president of the following organizations: Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll, Alabama Brigade, and Descendants of Washington's Army at Valley Forge. She is past editor of the *Historical Review*, and *Tennessee Valley Leaves*. Jacque served as the curator of the historic Donnell House in Athens and has written numerous books and articles on history, true crime, and ghost stories. She is the co-founder of the Huntsville Ghost Walk and various historic tours in Huntsville.

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The Kildare/McCormick House

By Marjorie Ann Reeves

Although increasingly forgotten in recent years, the Kildare house is an important site of Huntsville history with a long legacy. Its storied history goes back to its founding by pioneering Irish immigrants, the O'Shaughnessy brothers, and later, a sign of the mark that Mary Virginia McCormick left on Huntsville.

Major Michael O'Shaughnessy and Colonel James O'Shaughnessy were brothers born in Kildare County, Ireland, but grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. They worked in Lincoln's government during the War Between the States. As Chief Accountant in the Treasury Department, Michael drew the original sketch from which the first greenback was printed, and he designed the form of bonds issued for the purchase of Alaska. Michael was a scholar, draftsman, musician, connoisseur of art, fond of horses and sports.

After the war, the brothers moved to Nashville, Tennessee, then to Huntsville. Because of the devastation



**Colonel James Frances
O'Shaughnessy**

*Photo: James Reeves
personal Collection*

in the South from the war, the two brothers were able to bring growth and employment to Huntsville, Alabama. They created the North Alabama Improvement Company that built the Huntsville Cotton Oil Mill and the Dallas Mill in 1891 employing up to 2000 jobs and lasting until 1949. The company bought large tracts of real estate, the entire Huntsville Street railroad system, the Pike leading from Huntsville to Monte Sano to provide a railroad to the Monte Sano Hotel, and they bought and restored the Huntsville Hotel. The energy of Huntsville was engaged through the businesses the O'Shaughnessy Brothers brought to the city and the growth they developed.

Colonel James Frances O'Shaughnessy built his home on Monte Sano and named it Castle Delight. He donated

money for an iron fence and porch rail to St. Mary's Catholic Church in Huntsville. His home burned in 1890 contributing to his moving on to other opportunities. Major Michael James O'Shaughnessy married Anna Pyles while in Nashville, combining old money with new. In Huntsville, they had a large, beautiful Queen Anne home built in 1886 in the Meridian section outside of Huntsville city limits. They named it Kildare after the county in Ireland where Michael's family was from. Like James, Michael donated to St. Mary's, and his funds were used for glass windows and new pews. He also donated \$1,500 to the city of Huntsville for a park off Big Spring Branch.

In 1900, Michael sold Kildare to Mrs. Cyrus McCormick to be her daughter Mary Virginia McCormick's winter home and the O'Shaughnessy moved back to Nashville. As Mary grew up, she developed a mental imbalance diagnosed as Dementia Praecox. Nevertheless, she displayed musical talent and became a skilled pianist. Due to her mental illness, her parents provided her with a trust fund that paid for a staff of 35 people to take care of her all her life. Her personal caretaker was Miss Grace Walker who became part of the Famous Philanthropists of Huntsville. Although it was Mary Virginia's money given, it was Grace Walker who chose the charities and wrote the checks as donations from Mary Virginia. Fondly remembered, *"Grace was a very bright refined, wonderful businesswoman who had a love of helping others."*

Mary Virginia always had music every afternoon by hiring her own musicians. She added the conservatory to Kildare for her musicians who also played at church on Sundays. Mary Virginia donated the communion silver to the Episcopal Church. Animals were kept on the estate such as deer and a dairy which



Mary Virginia McCormick (1861-1946)

Photo: Find a grave, website

provided free milk to underprivileged children in Huntsville. In 1904, Mary McCormick provided the first community center named Virginia Hall, a fifteen-room situated in West Huntsville.

Her assistant Grace Walker worked with the local YMCA clubs. Her charitable works influenced young women of Huntsville to become involved with volunteer work and many organizations formed a 'Grace Club' in honor of Grace Walker. In time, The Grace Club was associated with other clubs that help raise funds for charities. Grace worked with Mary Virginia to provide \$17,500 to the YMCA. Mary Virginia's donation allowed the Central YMCA to open on Greene Street in February 1912, and the West Huntsville YMCA to open on Eighth Avenue in 1915. Mary Virginia gave \$3,000 in 1916 to erect the West Huntsville School, an eight-room wooden school house on Ninth Street.

Mary Virginia McCormick funded the construction of a hospital in 1911 which later became Virginia McCormick Hall at Alabama A&M University. It was the only black hospital in Madison County when it was built. She also contributed \$19,000 in the same year to build the Council Domestic Sciences Building on the A&M campus. In



Kildare House

Photo: Huntsville Library Archives

February 1916, she donated \$5,000 to open a black hospital annex to Huntsville Hospital. It was an eight-room building that was furnished by her household servants and located across the street from downtown Huntsville Hospital.

The Grace Club Easter Egg Hunt was held annually at Kildare. On May 5th, Mary Virginia's

birthday, hundreds of children were invited to celebrate Mayday. It was opened for Halloween parties. She had a

large Christmas tree with presents for local children and a party given during the Christmas season. Even though she was exclusive, she allowed entertainment in her home.

McCormick ended her seasonal residency in Huntsville in 1931 and moved to California. After her mother died, Mary Virginia's manor in Huntsville was sold in 1932 and became The Kildare Hotel that year. Mary Virginia resided in California for the next ten years until her death in 1941. Her obituary in a California newspaper told of the charities that she gave to while in Huntsville.

The Kildare Hotel business did not make it financially and was sold for mortgage debt in 1934. The Kildare estate was sold again in 1935 and again 1936 to the Kildare Realty Corporation. It went to auction in 1937 selling the estate in lots. The house was used as a boarding house during the depression, later becoming a brothel during WWII. In the 1970s, it had a beauty shop, barber shop and massage parlor in it. After each foreclosure, owners would take parts of the house with them. The *Huntsville Times* of July 7th, 1975, stated the Kildare House was, "a gutted run-down old house, merely a skeletal remnant of its former self."

James Reeves bought the Kildare house in 1975 and spent 32 years continuously working on the house and finding pieces that had been taken out of the home, buying them back in an effort to restore Kildare. During his time at the house, it was open to the public and he loved giving tours and talking about its history. He allowed parties and weddings to be held in the beautiful home. Reeves was a gracious, gregarious, Southern Gentleman that loved art and beautiful things. He worked with other antique dealers and interior decorators to showcase the house. He sold antiques and paintings to help support his family and the house. With the help of a retired teacher, who loved woodworking, David Shippey and Author Smith worked with James Reeves to help preserve Huntsville's history as best as they could. Reeves had it placed on the National Register of Historic Places in July of 1982. The Reeves family were the longest owners of the Kildare House until financial woes caused the house to be placed on the market again.

Dwight Wright bought the Kildare Mansion in 2007. "Present owner Wright says the best option for recouping his investment is to harvest and sell Kildare's most coveted parts: century-old slate roof tiles; hand-made chimney bricks; ornate interior trim; mantle pieces; heart pine floor planks. A former antiques dealer, Wright knew those treasures from the 1880s would fetch a bundle of money. Lack of visual proof of the restoration, along with a January real estate listing for a Monte Sano home boasting pieces from Kildare, fueled rumors that Wright has already been stripping the mansion." He told AL.com he sold some pieces from the third floor several years ago.

Sadly the Kildare home is disappearing to the history and development of the new Huntsville by being ignored. The house is the only physical reminder of the success that the O'Shaughnessys' brought to Huntsville. It is a reminder of the mark that Mary Virginia McCormick left on Huntsville. The house is decaying and disappearing visibly with no plans to save it.

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A casual examination of every community in the world reveals the character of its citizens and, if you look closely, voices from the past express their expectations for the future. Today is based upon our collective experience and the socialization of our ancestor's existence.

Although this publication focuses on local history, we cannot forget that what happens here has roots often connected to state, regional, national, and international events. In an effort to build on past traditions and continue the quality of our *Review*, an editorial policy will be implemented to guide contributors who wish to submit manuscripts, book reviews, or notes of historical significance to our community. The Historical Society wants you to submit articles for publication. We will assist you toward that goal.

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Please submit an electronic copy of your article or book review to arleymccormick@comcast.net or send to:

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Review Content and Style

- There is no limit on word count. The manuscript can be divided into parts published in separate volumes of the Review.
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- Write in the third person.

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