



Northern Dollars for Huntsville Spindles

by Patricia H. Ryan



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Introduction

“The more things change, the more they are the same.” Alphonse Karr

In early August 1982 a delegation composed of seventy members of city government and the Huntsville Chamber of Commerce traveled to California to meet with representatives of forty-four companies. Their purpose was to attract “high tech” industries to the Huntsville area by promoting its well-trained labor force, educational assets, and moderately priced land and housing. While this trip by civic leaders may seem to exemplify our space age society, it, in fact, culminated a century of such activities, for Huntsvillians had been recruiting industries and businesses since the 1880’s using essentially the same techniques. This report examines the town’s first industrialization when the city became an important cotton mill center, beginning in the 1890’s and continuing through the 1920’s. In the early twentieth century Huntsville’s key industries were these textile mills, and much of the city’s growth occurred because of them. Secondary businesses in turn arose to meet the need for supplemental goods and services.

The prime consideration in understanding Huntsville’s textile industrialization was its dependence on northern capital to finance cotton mill construction and operations. While some southern cities may have restructured their economic base using local capital, Huntsville was not prosperous enough to do so. Many northern men contributed time and money to attract industries here, but no one matched the achievements of Tracy W. Pratt, a transplanted South Dakotan who moved to Huntsville in the 1890’s. So entwined were Pratt and Huntsville that it is impossible to consider one without the other. Therefore, the first chapter concerns this synergism in developing the city.

Because Pratt’s activities embody the quintessence of Yankee ingenuity, a study of his business ventures, both locally and nationally, is presented in the second chapter. This serves a dual purpose. Even though his contributions to this city were exemplary, strikingly little has been written to chronicle his distinctions. Secondly, Pratt typifies the *savoir faire* that rebuilt Huntsville and the South in the 1880’s and 1890’s, employing the same methodology—travel and advertising—that continues to the present time.

Chapter 1

“Huntsville is not only the center of the great Tennessee agricultural and timber region but it sits in all of its beauty and attractiveness not only in the lap of the great agricultural wealth but upon the very brink, so to speak, of the grandest coal and iron region which lies immediately south of us, known to man...

“With this condition existing we claim for reasons obvious to the intelligence of the world that this section offers greater inducement in the character of growing and ripening wealth for the home seeker and investor than any section now known in the United States.” **Huntsville Weekly Mercury**, May 4, 1892, p. 7.

“Huntsville is also in a good position to develop industrially. The city has a good supply of land available for industrial use, good marketing and distribution advantages because of its location in the southeastern part of the United States, and a good supply of labor. These features should continue to make Huntsville attractive to prospective industrialists of all types.” **Growth Patterns in Huntsville**, Huntsville Planning Department, September 1982.

The story of the poverty of the South during Reconstruction has often been told. By 1880 the region was ripe for development and many historians affix this year as the beginning of the industrial revolution in the South. In an economic sense, the end of a depression in 1879 enabled northern and British capitalists to seek new investments. Political elections also affected the South. In upholding its long Solid South Democratic tradition, Southerners endured Republican Reconstruction only to have an apparent 1876 presidential victory by their Democratic candidate snatched away by a Republican in a hotly disputed and questionable election. In the election of 1880 southern anticipation of a Democrat in the White House came to naught.

Another development, and the prime one in Huntsville's industrialization, was that Southerners actively began pursuing outside investors and industry. They rallied around the cry, "bring the cotton mills to the cotton fields," as they came to the realization that the agrarian tradition only cemented their antebellum colonial status upon their region; if the North had industrialized successfully, so could and should the South. The most obvious way involved manufacturing their local cotton crop into threads and yarn. The intended result was to emulate the success of the Yankee entrepreneur and thus carry the South into the national realm of industry. No longer was northern money rejected as tainted, especially by citizens who did not possess the requisite capital for initial investments. An open embrace of Northerners nevertheless had limits, as the editor of the **Huntsville Independent** announced:

Huntsville wants more people from the North—manufacturers, business men, farmers, investors, tourists. We want more banking capital; we want a street railroad; we invite correspondence, and welcome the world to view the Queen City of the South.¹

Furthermore, the South had much to offer. Water power was inexpensive and readily available, building costs were low, and most important—labor was cheap and plentiful. Tenant farmers and mountaineers, barely able to subsist on their worn-out land, would work long hours for low wages. Economically, this group, which had been written out of southern society by the planter/slavery system, now provided an attractive inducement—to uplift a local economy by giving employment to the otherwise unemployable of the area, along with their wives and children, and by providing a sure market for local cotton. Moreover, the mill would act as a civilizing agency to those from the backwoods. Mill owners merely redirected paternalism from slaves to poor whites and thus rescued them through an act of charity, i.e. employment.

The **Huntsville Herald** underscored both the poverty of southern laborers and the burgeoning of the labor force in a study of all southern manufactured goods. In a 1902 article the paper reported that 10,019 persons were employed in 1880 in Alabama, 31,137 in 1890, and 52,902 in 1900. Furthermore, wages averaged about \$250 for 1880, \$350 for 1890, and a dismal \$285 per year at the turn of the century.² Locally for 1892-93 the Dallas Mills paid an average wage of \$.68 for an average 10.65 hour day.³ And while sixty-six hours was the shortest work week in the South and seventy-five-hour weeks were commonplace, Alabama had no restrictions to limit hours as late as 1930.⁴ These low wages and long hours were only somewhat tempered by the goods and services offered by the paternalistic mill system which provided housing for their workers. That over 40,000 men, women, and children would accept unquestionably boring jobs illustrates the penury these persons faced. Nevertheless the belief is widely held that the living standard of mill workers was an improvement over their agrarian past.

Whether the cotton mills began

locating in the South for the exploitation of an underpaid work force or for the redemption of the region, as some have maintained, the growth was substantial. Melvin Thomas Copeland produced the following figures to illustrate this growth:



Spindles (in millions)⁵

	1880	1885	1890	1895	1900	1905	1910	Increase 30 Years
North	10.1	12.2	12.6	13.7	14.5	15.3	17.4	7.3
South	<u>.5</u>	<u>1.1</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>4.5</u>	<u>8.8</u>	<u>11.2</u>	<u>10.7</u>
Total	10.6	13.3	14.3	16.1	19.0	24.1	28.6	18.0

The new southern industry grew but in a disproportionate manner throughout the region. North Carolina and South Carolina led Alabama in all facets of comparison for both 1880 and 1910. Alabama had about 10 percent (16) of all southern mills in 1880, but this number decreased to 8 percent (61) by 1910. While the state secured forty-five new textile industries during this period, its growth was surpassed by other states. A more striking illustration occurs with the number of spindles; although the state acquired almost 900,000 new ones between 1880 and 1910, these figures represent only about 8 percent of total southern spindles for both 1880 and 1910. Alabama also saw the addition of approximately 15,000 looms.⁶

There is disagreement among historians concerning the role of northern capital in southern cotton mill development. Early writers such as Broadus Mitchell argued that the capital for the mills was raised by Southerners from among themselves in small installments:

Nothing stands out more prominently than that the Southern mills were conceived and brought into existence by Southerners. The impulse was furnished almost exclusively from within the South against much discouragement from selfish interests at the

North, and capital was supplied by the South to the limit of its ability.⁷

Perhaps the key to understanding this opinion lies with the statement "to the limit of its ability," for, at least with Huntsville, the "ability" was sorely lacking. John Van Osdel, Jr., agreed with Mitchell: "It is widely but mistakenly held, even in the South, that the southern mills were built with capital furnished by northern investors, and were, in most cases, branches of New England mills."⁸ He continued, "Direct northern investment seems to have come early, however, in some areas of the deeper South, though often, as at Huntsville, Alabama, in conjunction with both local capital and money from older southern cities."⁹ While these authors may have correctly depicted the South as a whole, they also included Huntsville, which owed both its textile industry and many others to northern capital and men, some of whom moved here and others who did not. Without the influx of northern money, combined with Yankee ingenuity and necessary financial connections, it is entirely possible that the city's history would read much differently than it does.

An examination of Huntsville newspapers of 1880 at the beginning of the southern industrial revolution reveals a town of 4,977, still struggling to recover



A dapper Michael O'Shaughnessy pictured at his home "Kildare."

from Reconstruction and reliant on a cotton-based economy but desperately seeking to expand. "Huntsville must not stand still. Progress is the word" wrote Austin Britten in the **Huntsville Advocate**.¹⁰ Early in the year it was announced that the citizens of Huntsville proposed to print a twenty-five to thirty page booklet describing the lands, minerals, water power, manufacturing facilities, markets,

climate, and social advantages of the area in order to induce immigration and capital. Transportation facilities were inadequate, and the townspeople formed various groups to raise funds to construct or improve both land and water routes to surrounding cities. The Tennessee River Improvement Committee met in Huntsville in January to petition Congress for larger appropriations for the Muscle Shoals

Canal, but the bill was defeated in the House of Representatives. Talk of a new railroad line surfaced several times but none was established, leaving the citizens with only an east-west line, the Memphis & Charleston; connections for north-south travel had to be made in Decatur. The newspapers underscored Huntsville's need for capital with numerous reports of alterations and additions to both public buildings and private residences but precious little new construction. In fact in April, notice was served on the First Presbyterian Church that unless the balance of their mortgage was paid, the church would be sold; the trustees voted to assess each member with his or her share of the debt and thus averted foreclosure. These conditions were soon to improve.

The first cotton mill in the city was established the following year, in 1881, by some of the town's leading citizens with physician George M. Harris as president. The Huntsville Cotton Mills was a cotton

spinning mill and stood near the Memphis & Charleston depot. It began with 1,248 spindles, added 3,600 more in 1882, and by 1887 had 10,000 according to newspaper reports.¹¹ In 1918 this mill was reincorporated as the Margaret Mills, and in 1932 Margaret Mills became Fletcher Mills.

More important in the long run was the founding in 1881 of the Huntsville Cotton Oil Mills by M. J. O'Shaughnessy—more important not because it was another industry but because it signaled the start of investment in Huntsville by wealthy outsiders. Michael O'Shaughnessy and his brother James had opened a commission house and cottonseed oil factory in Nashville during the mid 1860's. Perhaps due to the success of the latter enterprise, Michael sought to expand his business to Huntsville in 1881, but it was James who clearly recognized the untapped potential of this city.

The O'Shaughnessy brothers be-



The James O'Shaughnessy Home on the eastern side of Monte Sano was photographed in the late 1880's.

came enthusiastic supporters of Huntsville, and they possessed the requisite capital, experience and connections to effect a major transformation in both the town's economy and its aspirations. In 1886 they organized the North Alabama Improvement Company composed of eighteen prominent local citizens, two Memphis investors, and themselves. According to the incorporation papers, the general purpose of the company:

is the improvement and development of the material resources of North Alabama. The nature of the business it proposes is as follows, namely, to encourage, promote, procure, and secure immigration to North Alabama of the best and most skilled class of persons from all industrial pursuits, to own, buy, sell, lease or hire as the case may be and mortgage all kinds and descriptions of real and personal property, to mine coal, iron and other minerals, to act as commissioner agent in negotiating loans or mortgages as pledges of property on personal security, to own, buy, build, operate, and lease hotels and other improved real estate, to quarry rock, granite, marble and any other materials, to sink oil wells, and to construct, buy, own, operate and lease in connection with any of said branches of business one or more railroads, tramways, turnpikes or canals.

The capital stock was to be \$50,000.¹²

The Huntsville businessmen involved in this venture were drawn from various professions, some perhaps deemed unlikely candidates as developers by today's standards. J. J. Dement and G. M. Harris were physicians, while C. H. and W. L. Halsey were grocers. A. B. Jones served as president of the Huntsville Female College; Archibald Campbell headed the dry goods firm of A. Campbell & Son. Henry McGee was owner and proprietor of McGee's Hotel,

and John L. Rison was a druggist. J. R. Stevens and William Rison were bankers; Milton Humes was the group's sole attorney. Robert E. Coxe and W. P. Newman ran insurance agencies, and Newman also sold and developed real estate. Ernest Dentler advertised as a confectioneer who also sold musical instruments and fireworks. W. F. Struve operated a saloon while J. B. Laughlin was an undertaker and furniture salesman. A. W. McCullough served as a court clerk; A. F. Murray's bookstore also offered stationery and jewelry. It is not known how much each invested, but the point to be drawn is that the North Alabama Improvement Company culled its membership not from politicians and developers but from the community as a whole, cutting across socio-economic lines for the purported benefit of every citizen.

The O'Shaughnessy brothers, on the other hand, were true businessmen. As previously mentioned, Michael owned two cottonseed oil factories. James was involved in the development of Pensacola, Florida, and Brunswick, Georgia, as port cities and in the building of southern railroads. He was a founder of a carpet and rug company and an organizer of a group to invent a new cotton picker. His most ambitious venture involved Nicaragua. From the Nicaraguan government he purchased the franchise, for \$100,000, to construct a canal through that country. O'Shaughnessy organized the company with a capital stock of \$60,000,000 to dig the canal, but the plan was aborted when the United States government decided to build the Panama Canal.¹³

Unfortunately, neither brother could be considered a permanent Huntsvillian although both owned residential properties in the city. Michael built "Kildare" (also known as the McCormick House at 2005 Kildare Street) and resided there until the turn of the century. James purchased several hundred acres on Monte Sano in 1885 for his home, which



The North Alabama Improvement Company built the Monte Sano Hotel to attract wealthy capitalists to the city. Today only a portion of its chimney stands.

unhappily was destroyed by fire in 1890 and never rebuilt. James made New York City his permanent home but visited Huntsville frequently throughout the 1890's.

One of the first projects of the North Alabama Improvement Company was the construction of the Monte Sano Hotel, an undertaking designed to attract to the city wealthy men who would then invest in local businesses or move their families here. Work began in 1886 and the new hotel was opened June 2, 1887. The improvement company also purchased the Huntsville Hotel (on the site of the First National Bank on Jefferson St.) and overhauled and modernized it. Other properties acquired by the company were

often purchased by James O'Shaughnessy who then deeded them to the organization in exchange for its stocks or bonds. The group also voted to subscribe \$20,000 for a Huntsville and Guntersville Road and an equal sum to the Tennessee and Coosa Railroad from Gadsden to Huntsville. Another \$25,000 was pledged to build a dummy line up Monte Sano to serve the hotel once it proved successful.¹⁴

The company's main technique to promote immigration and investment was through advertising, and periodically pamphlets were mailed throughout the country. Typical of the genre is "Queen City of the South", a thirty-five page booklet published in 1888 with photographs of

local churches and public buildings. Its text was encapsulated on the title page:

The Queen City of the South: Huntsville. Madison County, Alabama. Its History, Location, Health, Climate, Railroad Facilities, Manufacturing Advantages; Resources in Coal, Iron, Timber, Limestone; Agricultural Products Adjacent and Surrounding It; The Route To Come; Schools, Churches, Magnificent Summer Resort and Elegant Winter Hotel In The City; With Full Information on All Matters Of Interest To the Home-Seeker, The Farmer, The Mechanic, Manufacturer And Capitalist; also Properties of the North Alabama Improvement Company.

The industries sought were wide and varied:

Unexcelled openings and inducements are offered for blast furnaces, rolling mills, steam forges, foundries, machine shops, boiler works, rail, fish-plate and spike mills, nail works, bridge and bolt works, furniture factories, planing mills, wagon, buggy and carriage works, car shops, boot and shoe factories, paper mills, starch works, and diversified industries of all desirable kinds, seeking healthy climate and good homes, cheap fuel, abundant water and raw material, with ample transportation for supplies and manufactured products, etc., etc.¹⁵

The success of these pamphlets is, of course, only speculative and immeasurable,



Construction began on the four-story section of the Huntsville Hotel in 1857. The North Alabama Improvement Company enlarged the hotel with the three-story addition in 1887. The original structure burned in 1910; the following year the remainder of the block was also destroyed by fire.

but at least one company triumph is known.

The minutes of the North Alabama Improvement Company describe the company's successful role in securing the Dallas Mills for Huntsville. The company agreed to donate fifty acres of land for the mill site and later took \$25,000 in stock of the new cotton mill.¹⁶ When it was announced in early 1890 that Trevor B. Dallas of Nashville would locate his mill here, the newspaper editors, in their first foray into what would become standard operating procedure, regaled their readers with ecstatic effusions. The **Huntsville Weekly Mercury** proudly predicted that:

This mill will be the largest and most modern in all of its appointments in the entire South and will make a line of fabrics heretofore not manufactured in the South...This mill will employ about 2000 hands, and we can readily see if the usual ratio is maintained, will increase the population of Huntsville thirty-five to forty-five hundred people.¹⁷

Dallas Manufacturing Company was chartered as a weaving mill with cotton sheeting its principal product.

Initial financing for the Dallas Mills operation established the precedent that would be repeated by the other mills that located in Huntsville during the following two decades, that is, the raising of capital outside the state of Alabama. The capital stock was set at \$500,000 with T. B. Dallas and G. M. Fogg of Nashville and S. M. Milliken of New York each subscribing \$20,000. Early in 1891 Milliken sent the improvement company a current list of forty-four subscribers pledging \$276,500; of these, thirty-two can be positively identified as residing outside the state while not one Huntsvillian can be recognized. Furthermore, Milliken confidently predicted he could raise another \$73,500.¹⁸ Nine northern businesses pledged \$110,000 to be paid in mill

machinery and supplies. In mid-1890, one local newspaper printed a list of forty-three Huntsville citizens and businesses pledging a total of \$90,600, but of this, half was subscribed by the North Alabama Improvement Company (\$25,000) and the transplanted O'Shaughnessy brothers (\$10,000 apiece).¹⁹ It is unknown how many of the subscribers actually made good on their pledges. As an inducement to subscribers, the amount of the pledge was not due in one lump sum, which conceivably would create a hardship; instead 10 percent was payable for the first two months and 5 percent per month until the total was received.²⁰ A complete list of all original stockholders and their pledges is not available for this and many other mills since Alabama law required only 20 percent of stock be subscribed prior to incorporation.

An examination of the stockholders for 1894 demonstrates more conclusively the importance of outside investors. In that year 52 percent of the stockholders resided in Huntsville, yet they held only 16.7 percent of the shares of the common stock and 1.8 percent of the preferred.²¹ For the year 1898-99, 34 percent of the shareholders were local and held 7.9 percent of the stock; in contrast, the 22 percent from New York controlled 43 percent of the total stock.²² While the local citizens supported the new industry to the extent of their constrained resources, clearly the main investors were outsiders.



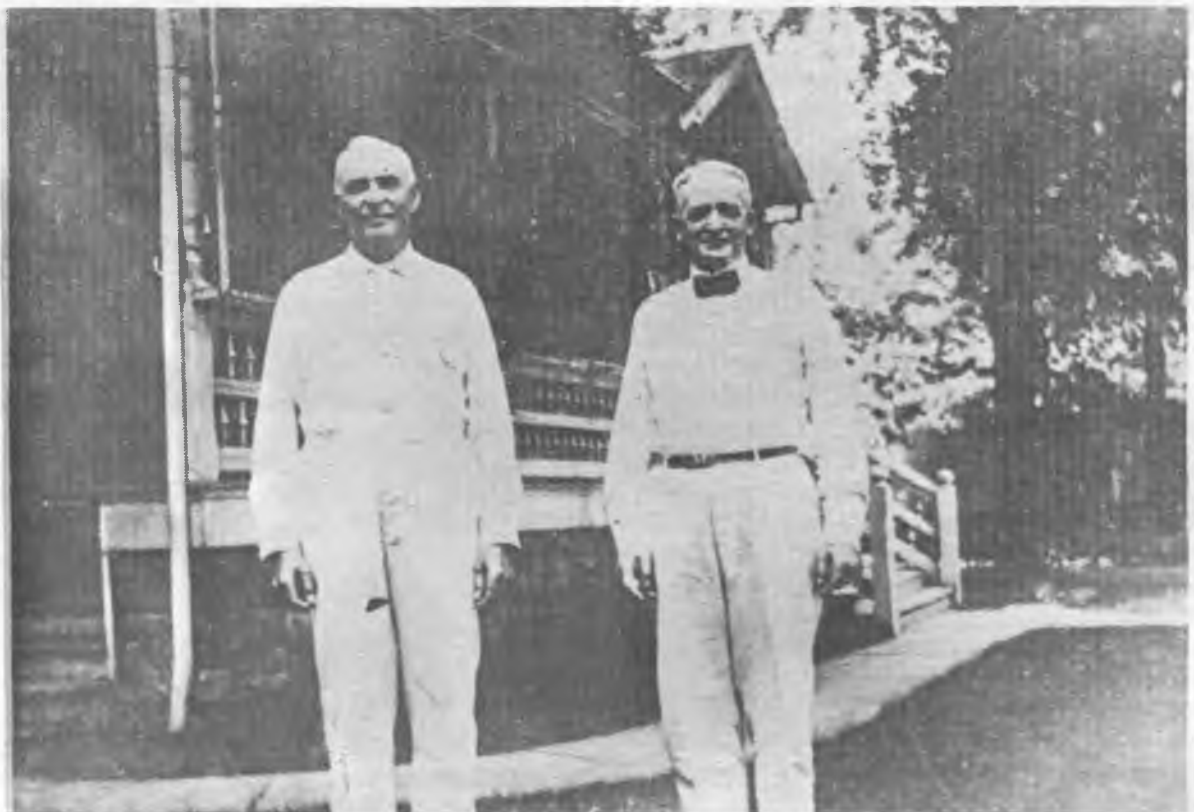
Dallas Mills

Dallas Mills had not yet commenced operations when in early 1892, for unknown reasons, the North Alabama Im-

provement Company in essence dissolved and sold their properties to the Northwestern Land Association, a South Dakota corporation. Northwestern's charter reads much like that of the old improvement company, but the new company was capitalized at \$6,000,000. What convinced this group of businessmen from South Dakota to invest in Huntsville remains a mystery; it is known that some of the North Alabama Improvement Company's advertising and pamphlets had been directed to the Dakotas and perhaps they were effective. However, a more plausible explanation credits the influence of James O'Shaughnessy who was prominent in both groups. James had made New York City his permanent home, but he frequently came to Huntsville on business; two of his visits in 1891 coincided with those of William S. Wells, a town builder from Pierre, South Dakota, who had disposed of his

northern real estate and was investigating investment opportunities in the South.²³ O'Shaughnessy and Wells were both successful businessmen with a keen eye for the financial potential of small towns, and O'Shaughnessy's faith in Huntsville's future must have proven persuasive.

The incorporators of the Northwestern Land Association comprised an impressive group. Three, Milton Humes, J. R. Stevens, and C. H. Halsey, were from Huntsville, Humes being an attorney, Stevens, president of the First National Bank, and Halsey a grocer. President of the organization was the aforementioned town-developer Wells. Vice-president Tracy W. Pratt and secretary W. I. Wellman were bankers and real estate and insurance agents. The treasurer, James A. Ward, was an attorney and railroad speculator. Other per-



Wellman (left) with Pratt

sonel included Frank R. Pettigrew, a U. S. Senator for South Dakota, and the state's governor, A. C. Melette. James O'Shaughnessy was a charter member as was P. C. Frick, a grocer of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.²⁴ Not only did these men seek economic opportunities in Huntsville, but Wells, Wellman, and Pratt made this their permanent place of residence. And it was this troika, notably Pratt, who primarily set Huntsville's course for the next fifty years.

Wells, a native of Elmira, New York, was born in 1839 but died in 1900, thereby limiting his contributions to Huntsville to an eight year period. Nevertheless, he served as president of the Northwestern Land Association and founded and managed the Union Investment Company to develop city property. He was active in the chamber of commerce, a director of the Farmers and Merchants Bank and head of W. J. Bennett & Company, a livery firm. Wells, his wife Emma, and son Glenn constructed numerous and much-needed rental houses in the East Huntsville Addition. Aside from assessing Well's death as "a public calamity," his obituary maintained that "by trade he was a druggist—by adoption he was a banker, real estate agent, promoter, contractor, builder, stock raiser, and liveryman."²⁵

Williard I. Wellman (1852-1922) was associated with the Farmers and Merchants Bank, having served as its first president in 1892. He also functioned as chairman of the state Republican Party in the early twentieth century. He held virtually all of the stock in the Spring City Furniture Company in West Huntsville, and about half of the International Slack Copperage Sales Agency, a \$100,000 corporation that bought and sold real estate throughout the country.²⁶ The local real estate firm of Boyd & Wellman actively subdivided lots and constructed housing for rent or sale to the middle class. His parents, L. R. and Mary A. Wellman, were equally involved with Huntsville and the Northwestern Land As-

sociation. In late 1892 the senior Wellman purchased over \$63,000 worth of lots in the East Huntsville Addition from the group. Wellman attended the University of Minnesota in 1876-77 and then apparently moved to Pierre, where he linked up with Tracy Pratt.

Pratt was born in 1861 in Minnesota; his father was a bank clerk. Little is known of Pratt's business activities before his move to Huntsville. The cover of the 1890-91 Pierre City Directory cites Pratt & Wellman as proprietors of the Dakota Central Bank and sole owners of four additions to the City of Pierre. Another listing tells of the Pratt & Wellman Real Estate and Insurance Agency. Also on the cover is an advertisement for the North Western Land Association, owners of the Wells Addition with a capital stock of \$100,000.



West Huntsville Cotton Mills

A few months after Pratt's arrival in Huntsville, he announced the formation of Huntsville's third cotton mill. It was known as the West Huntsville Cotton Mills but was often called the Coons and Pratt Mills. The capital stock was \$100,000. To raise the first half of his capital, Pratt sought familiar sources. Joshua C. Pierce, president of the bank with which his father was associated, pledged \$12,500. A like amount was subscribed by both Albert Voorhies, not recognizable as a local figure, and Tracy Pratt. Joshua Coons, formerly associated with the Huntsville Cotton Mill, also put up \$12,500.²⁷ The mill was constructed at the corner of 9th Avenue and 8th Street, one block west of Triana Boulevard; the building is still extant and today houses the Huntsville Warehouse Company. In the 1890's this area lay outside the city limits and

was purchased from the Huntsville Land Building and Manufacturing Company, a group of investors from Baltimore, Cincinnati, Huntsville and New York, who had laid off the 144-block subdivision of West Huntsville in 1892.

In addition to their individual business interests, Wells, Wellman, and Pratt also worked with the Northwestern Land Association. To induce new growth for the city, in 1892 this group replatted a 285-acre tract purchased from the North Alabama Im-

provement Company and known as East Huntsville Addition. Except for Randolph and Clinton streets, which were continuations of existing roads, the new streets were named for the company's directors and other prominent Huntsvillians. The tract was subdivided into lots that were sold at reasonable prices to encourage new residential construction. For those who could not afford to build, developers bought lots and erected rental houses. Wells and Wellman each built a number of these as did Pratt, who at one time or another, owned over 200 lots



East Huntsville Addition as it was platted for the Northwestern Land Association in 1892.

in East Huntsville alone. To attract a market for the lots, the association advertised heavily.

The Northwestern Land Association also circulated pamphlets throughout the country with a fervor as had the North Alabama Improvement Company before them. In March of 1892 the **Huntsville Weekly Mercury** noted that the group had already mailed 240,000 brochures, extolling the virtues of Huntsville and Madison County, and which required \$1500 postage, and by September they were sending out an average of 6000 more per day.²⁸ The initial procedure began by requesting from bank cashiers nationwide the names of two or three investors in their area; these investors were then mailed a pamphlet, a ploy which seemingly proved successful.²⁹ The **Mercury** reported a total of 846 new jobs created in 1892: Dallas Mills, 600; West Huntsville Cotton Mills, 150; handle factory, 30; Rightmire Knitting Mills, 30; Lownes Factory addition, 15; new Acme Steam Laundry, 6; new marble yard, 5; and new harness manufacturing establishment, 10.³⁰

The Northwestern Land Association was equally active in 1893 in attracting a variety of small businesses. In January they reportedly sent out the last of 300,000 documents on Huntsville; the following year the chamber of commerce was begun, and together they conducted the pamphlet campaign for the remainder of the decade. The leaders of the two organizations often travelled throughout the country inviting investors to visit the city. In 1895, for example, Ward visited Cincinnati to attract a warehouse company and Coons met with three cotton men of Massachusetts.³¹ Their combined efforts were soon rewarded.

Early in 1899 it was announced that the Merrimack Manufacturing Company of Lowell, Massachusetts (today Huntsville Manufacturing Company), planned to erect a mill in Huntsville with 200,000 spindles. The newspapers overconfidently predicted the population

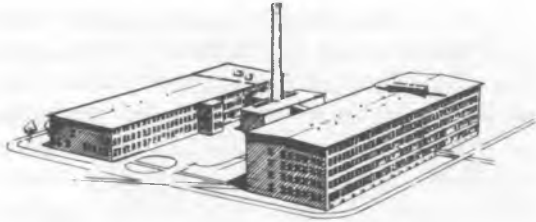
of the city would double with other industries soon to follow.³² Because the incorporation papers were never filed with the secretary of state of Alabama or Massachusetts, it is difficult to analyze the mill financing, but apparently Merrimack furnished the construction capital, and the local citizens raised the money to acquire a tract for the mill building. A questionable account by the **Mercury** chided the citizenry for not supporting the new venture, stating that half the amount had been raised by only eight men.³³ That a concern this enormous chose Huntsville was a joyous occasion indeed, and credit for its location was given to Tracy Pratt, who, aided by Wells, had worked with Merrimack officials for eighteen months, contending with competition from other cities and an untimely flood of the proposed site.

Of course a number of progressive citizens have assisted in bringing the Merrimack Cotton Mills to Huntsville, but the credit due Tracy W. Pratt is inestimable. The idea originated in his active brain and no amount of physical or mental labor has deterred him from following the advantages his straight-forward presentation of facts secured at the very inception of the undertaking.

Working for Huntsville has been a labor of love to Tracy Pratt since he first cast his lot among us. The results of these intelligent efforts are visible in every direction now, but when Huntsville becomes the 'Fall River of the South,' as it surely will, the name of Tracy W. Pratt will be the first written in her commercial and industrial history.³⁴

The Manufacturer's Record concurred:

The citizens were led by Mr. T. W. Pratt to whom is attributed the origin of the plan and the persistent work, both before the State Legislature and among his fellow townsmen.³⁵



Merrimack Mills

Once the Merrimack Company decided to build in West Huntsville on the Triana Pike, a need arose for a streetcar system to link the Dallas and West Huntsville villages with Huntsville proper. Thus in July of 1899 the Huntsville Railway, Light & Power Company was organized. The capital stock was set at \$100,000; of this amount Pratt invested \$99,700. The effect of the system was quite far-reaching as it effectively opened up huge tracts of land for residential development. Huntsville had expanded around its downtown commercial core area, and the most desirable residential properties were those in the nearest proximity to the shopping district. The streetcar system made it practical for employees and shoppers to live beyond walking distance of the commercial section and, in fact, created the suburb as

we know it today. Accordingly property in East Huntsville became highly desirable, which explains the building boom at the turn of the twentieth century in that neighborhood. Aside from this, the streetcar allowed mill workers to shop and transact business in Huntsville, although since they were commonly referred to as "lintheads" throughout the South, their welcome in the downtown area was somewhat questionable.

The three minor stockholders in the streetcar venture, N. F. Thompson, John F. Waters, and T. Coleman du Pont, were from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and were involved with Pratt in several other Huntsville corporations. Coleman du Pont, who as president built the Du Pont corporation into a major manufacturer of explosives, and John Waters were the major investors in the West Huntsville Land & Improvement Company with subscriptions of \$49,000 each, while Thompson and Pratt each took \$1000. This new land company was formed "to encourage, promote, induce, and secure immigration to Huntsville."³⁶ In 1899 the Huntsville Electric Light Company was organized to expand the services of



A streetcar travels down Clinton Street approaching Jefferson Street. In the background is the Twickenham Hotel.



By connecting the Dallas and Merrimack villages with Huntsville proper, the streetcar, in essence, created the suburb.



Pratt about 1900 as president of the chamber of commerce.

the Huntsville Electric Light & Power Company; Waters and du Pont contributed \$24,000 each and N. F. and Frank J. Thompson, \$1,000 apiece to comprise the \$50,000 stock issue.³⁷ The capital supplied by these Northerners was an obvious boon to Huntsville and came as a result of Pratt's connections.

The newspapers of 1899 could not

laud Pratt enough:

A half dozen New England corporations could be induced to come here if there were a dozen of T. W. Pratts here to take the steps needed to turn them this way instead of letting them listen without competition to the stories told them by Georgians or Carolinians.³⁷

When it comes to downright hustling, Tracy W. Pratt has few equals...A dozen such men as Tracy Pratt would make Huntsville as big as Chicago in a dozen years.³⁹

On numerous occasions these news reports cited Pratt as predicting another mill would locate here and the predictions were soon confirmed.



Lowe Mills

In 1900 Pratt was successful in securing Huntsville's fifth cotton mill, Lowe (later to become the Genesco plant and now part of Martin Industries) which located at 9th Avenue and Seminole Drive. For three years Pratt had negotiated with Arthur H. Lowe of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, to reach a final settlement in which the West Huntsville Land & Improvement Company agreed to donate nine blocks in West Huntsville in exchange for Lowe's promise to build a 10,000 spindle mill within one year.⁴⁰ The subscribers to the \$100,000 stock issue were Lowe (\$10,000); George P. Grant, Jr., also of Fitchburg (\$10,000); J. Harper Poor of New York City (\$20,000); Wellman and Pratt (\$5,000 each); Charles Lane Poor of Shelter Island, New York (\$15,000); Rodney Wallace (\$10,000); David M. Dillon (\$5,000); J. R. Boyd of Huntsville (\$5,000); and A. W. Hunking, manager of Merrimack Mills (\$5,000).⁴¹ The remaining \$10,000 was probably raised by local investors in small increments. Pratt and Wellman were the only Huntsvillians to serve on the board of directors, and Wellman also served as vice-president.

On two other occasions in 1900

the *Weekly Tribune* credited Pratt with securing another industry for the city—the Rowe Knitting Company which he clinched late in the year.⁴² The plant manufactured cotton and woolen yarns, fabrics and underwear, and was located in West Huntsville on 9th Avenue and 10th Street. Three blocks for the mill's village were provided by the West Huntsville Land & Improvement Company in return for erecting a two-story mill with 15,000 square feet on each floor.⁴³ Again much of the requisite \$300,000 capital was supplied by Northerners. W. H. Rowe, Jr., subscribing \$185,000, lived in Troy, New York; Frances J. Wood Rowe, representing \$25,000, was from Hartford, New York; and Harry H. Day, investing \$5,000, lived in Lansingburg, New York. Pratt and Wellman each provided \$1,250.⁴⁴ In 1908 the Rowe Mills became the Huntsville Knitting Company and in 1928, Helen Mills.

A separate account clearly illustrates the enormously important role that outside capitalists played in Huntsville's turn of the century development. In response to burgeoning northern investments, the local citizens attempted to establish a "People's Cotton Mill" here in 1899. This endeavor was to be owned by a large number of small investors as opposed to the small number of large investors that controlled the city's other textile mills. The maximum subscription allowed was \$2,000, and on the first evening \$15,000 was taken toward an undisclosed goal. However, the consequence of outside capital is enhanced rather than lessened by this figure: Boyd & Wellman contributed \$2,000; Wells, \$1,000 plus a guarantee of \$2,000 in additional pledges, presumably from outsiders; and Pratt subscribed \$1,000 with an additional \$2,000 in guarantees. This \$8,000 accounts for over one-half of the amount raised without including the \$2,000 pledged by a Providence, Rhode Island, resident.⁴⁵ More revealing was the observation by N. F. Thompson, an Alabama native then residing in the North, that the "moral effect of building a \$100,000 mill ourselves is better than



West Huntsville

securing a million dollar mill from New England.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, despite various scattered pleas for support and contributions, the newspapers made no mention of the fate that befell the proposed mill. One can only surmise that although the proposition was sound, the citizenry either could not or would not support the venture in the financial sense. No incorporation papers were filed, and this foray into southern capitalism met a hasty demise.



Rowe Mills

The Madison Spinning Company offers still another example of the significance of outside domination of the local economy. This corporation was formed in 1900 with a capital stock of \$100,000 composed of 1000 shares of \$100 each. Huntsville attorney Milton Humes reserved 500 shares payable in property (donation of land) and services. J. R. Stevens and William R. Rison, both of Huntsville, contracted for five apiece as did T. B. Dallas of Nashville.⁴⁷ In 1903 the capital stock was raised to \$300,000 to construct an addition and purchase new equipment, but Humes seemingly did not receive sufficient sound financial backing, and in 1906 the mill was reincorporated as Abingdon Mills (sometimes referred to as Abington). The new subscribers included William L. Barrell of Lawrence, Massachusetts; F. S. Bennett of Englewood, New Jersey; Judson L. Hand of Pelham, Georgia; and Jack J. Spalding of Atlanta, each of whom provided \$25,000, while Milton Humes reserved \$50,000, again probably in property and services.⁴⁸ In 1918 Abingdon became the Lincoln Mills with Barrell retaining 7998 of the 8000 shares and Theophilus King of Quincy, Massachusetts, and Wellman the

remaining two shares.⁴⁹ The mill building, known recently as the Huntsville Industrial Center (HIC Building), was destroyed by fire in 1980.

The final large mill to locate in Huntsville was the Eastern Manufacturing Company in 1901. The principal subscribers to the stock were already familiar with the area for they were connected with the aforementioned Lowe Manufacturing Company. Arthur H. Lowe and George P. Grant, Jr., were from Massachusetts and represented 100 and 50 shares respectively of the 500-share issue. Charles Lane Poor of New York reserved 100 shares while Huntsvillians Wellman took ten and J. R. Boyd one.⁵⁰ In 1903 Eastern was absorbed by the Lowe Mills and today is a portion of the southern arm of the one-time Genesco plant.

By 1908 the impact of the cotton industry on the local economy was significant as is demonstrated by one of the pamphlets promoting Huntsville:

We have nine cotton mills, with an aggregate capital of over four and one-half million dollars, employing four thousand operatives, which calls for a pay roll of about eighty thousand dollars monthly and consume sixty thousand bales of cotton per year. They spend in the course of twelve months a little short of a million dollars for labor and nearly \$3,000,000 for cotton.⁵¹

Attracting additional cotton mills remained highly desirable, but the local citizenry realized the need to diversify their economic base and once again sought outside investors. The northern capital previously invested in Huntsville by the mills was an obvious advantage in attracting smaller businessmen because it allayed their apprehensions about the South and its untrained labor source. More importantly, the mills created a local demand for additional goods and services as the influx of operatives pro-

duced an increased demand for food and material goods. Thus every sort of business was encouraged to relocate in the city. The methodology for achieving economic diversification often varied, but again pamphlets were the bedrock of the process. The local newspapers were also a vocal means of attracting industries as they effusively proclaimed the attributes of Huntsville as an arcadian city of health and prosperity. The city fathers tempted prospective industrial coffers with an abundant supply of water, which was often furnished free (as to the Dallas Mills) or at a nominal cost (one dollar per year to the West Huntsville Cotton Mills). As previously noted, the citizens often purchased property and donated it to the developer.



Madison Mills

The stakes involved in securing new industries and new jobs at the turn of the century, as in 1983, begat unemployment among various cities and also increased demands by the prospective new businessmen. Three examples serve to illustrate this point. In October 1894 the Lownes Wrench Factory and Foundry proposed to locate here if the city would donate land and erect a forty-foot by sixty-foot iron-clad building with a cupola. In addition, the city was to pay freight from Milwaukee to Huntsville for three carloads of machinery which was estimated to cost \$1,500 and was to be raised by subscriptions. (Wells, Wellman, and Pratt, with an ever-ready eye for enterprise, pledged \$50 each).⁵² To obtain a hickory fibre establishment, the citizens were to furnish three acres of ground rent-free for ten years and provide a railroad switch thereon. Also a frame building was to be constructed: "the main building to be 50' x 50' with an L-extension of 30' x 100', with a boiler room 13' x 30', said building to be

not less than 14' at the eaves". (Wells subscribed \$100, Wellman and Pratt, \$50 apiece).⁵³ It is not known if any of the aforementioned requisites were later negotiated, but both concerns relocated in Huntsville. In 1898 Pratt received a letter stating a cellulose plant would be established here if enough preferred stock was taken to build the plant and buy corn stalks for the first year. Although Pratt urged farmers to accept stock for their stalks, the fate of this concern is unknown.⁵⁴

These three industries are by no means isolated examples of those that proposed to locate in the town if their demands were accepted. In late 1892 for example, D. L. Raymond of Huron, South Dakota, began successful negotiations for a flour mill⁵⁵ while the Church Cart Factory of Grand Rivers, Kentucky, received two acres and \$1500 as an inducement.⁵⁶ A cider and vinegar manufacturing and bottling works also was begun in 1893 by a gentleman from Madison, Wisconsin. Relocations and new businesses continued to open throughout the decade as the Northwestern Land Association and the chamber of commerce attracted assorted investors to the city. An examination of the factories in the town in 1904 reveals that through the inducements limited diversity was indeed attained although the textile industry remained preminent:

- 11 cotton mills
 - Dallas (2 mills)
 - Merrimack (2 mills)
 - Lowe (3 mills)
 - Huntsville
 - West Huntsville
 - Madison
 - Rowe
- 2 spoke and handle factories
- 1 hoop and stave factory
- 1 fiber and veneer factory
- 1 roller factory to supply cotton mills
- 1 mattress factory
- 1 ice factory
- 1 flouring mill
- 1 broom factory
- 2 machine shops
- 3 brick yards

- 3 saw and planing mills
- 2 carriage and buggy factories
- 4 latest improved steam cotton gins
- 3 cotton oil mills
- 2 fertilizer factories
- 2 sheet tin and metal working establishments
- 2 bottling works
- 1 soap factory
- 1 electric light plant and electric railway
- 2 steam laundries
- 3 daily newspapers
- 6 weekly newspapers
- 2 lime kilns, latest improved
- 1 cabinet factory
- 8 commercial printing offices
- 1 business college
- 3 bakeries
- 1 foundry
- 1 gas company
- 3 cold storage plants
- 2 monument works
- 1 cotton compress
- 2 candy factories
- 6 nurseries
- 5 sash, door and blind factories
- 1 stove factory.⁵⁷

The above list serves as an apt conclusion and summation of the first industrialization of Huntsville. Some of the industries were established by local citizens while others were lured to the area by groups such as the North Alabama Improvement Company and the Northwestern Land Association. Northern capital gave life to the textile mills and their prosperity, in turn, created a demand for many of these ancillary businesses. However the town's economic base continued to revolve around the cotton industry until the 1930's and 1940's when strikes and unprofitability prompted some mills to close. Today only Merrimack (Huntsville Manufacturing Company) continues textile operations.

Another way of gauging the impact of outside capital on Huntsville's development is to examine the town's growth in terms of population figures, although this is somewhat problematical. The mill villages were constructed beyond the city limits, and while incorporation of these neighborhoods began in the 1920's, the bulk of the mill housing was not annexed until 1955. This point is extremely important when analyzing the town's growth through census data for the mill environs were not enumerated with the city proper. Thus the 0.9 percent growth rate for Huntsville during the 1890's is extremely misleading, for while the city gained a mere seventy-three persons during the entire decade, the mill village growth was astounding. Furthermore, from 1900 to 1910 the city lost 457 residents.⁵⁸ Exact population figures for the mill villages are not available for these two decades but from a newspaper article of 1904 an approximate count of operatives can be ascertained. Dallas and Merrimack each employed 1,200 persons; the population of each village numbered about 3,000. Rowe, Huntsville, and Madison each engaged 300 workers; West Huntsville had 250. Although figures for Lowe and Eastern were not given, the article reported that total mill employment was 4,100, allotting 550 persons for these two mills.⁵⁹ Thus the influx of operatives for all mills and only two of the seven villages numbered 7,700 persons. If these people were added to the population of Huntsville in the 1900 census, the town would have experienced at least a 97 percent surge in the 1890's instead of the less than 1 percent increase actually recorded. Quite obviously such rapid immigration had far-reaching effects. It cemented the textile industry on Huntsville and gave impetus to the belief that it was Tracy Pratt who "made" Huntsville.

Chapter 2

In 1915 the City of Huntsville observed the 4th of July with a parade and celebration. To the surprise of the organizer of these events, local businessmen presented him with a loving cup inscribed: "As a loving testimonial of our exalted esteem, this cup is presented by the Citizens of Huntsville to Tracy W. Pratt, whose energy, thrift, and progress have made him a loyal benefactor to be remembered in the days to come as the man who made Huntsville."

As the first chapter makes clear, a small group of outside investors had an inordinate influence on the successful industrialization of Huntsville at the turn of the century, and the most visible and active member of this group was Tracy Pratt, a man whose role in shaping the future of the town has not received the recognition it deserves. Consequently this chapter will focus on the range and extent of Pratt's business ventures in an attempt to clarify his individual contributions to Huntsville within the context of his national activities. This account also serves to illustrate, by example, the mode of operation common to that group of businessmen, the self-styled "town builders," who were vital elements in spurring the development of new towns in the West and the redevelopment of old towns in the South.

Tracy Wilder Pratt was born September 1, 1861, the eldest son of Albert (1837-1910) and Agnes Russell Pratt (?-1897). It is not known specifically where Tracy Pratt was born, but the elder Pratt located in Red Wing, Minnesota, in 1863 and remained in that city until his death. In 1868 Joshua C. Pierce, T. K. Simmons and Albert Pratt organized the bank of Pierce Simmons & Company with Pratt serving as its cashier. When Pierce died, Pratt succeeded him as president and remained so until his retirement. The elder Pratt also operated a book store.¹ Sadly, nothing is known about Tracy Pratt's early life; however, records from the University of Minnesota reveal he pursued a scientific course of study from 1878 to 1880 but apparently did not graduate.

According to one obituary, which is highly questionable due to numerous errors, Pratt met Wellman at the University (records show Wellman attended from 1876 until 1877) and the two moved to Zumbrota, Minnesota, to engage in the banking profession. The same article relates that the two men later settled in Pierre, South Dakota, as bankers.²

Another newspaper expressed a different version of Pratt's young adulthood. In 1915 Pratt returned to Pierre on business, prompting an account in that city's **Daily Capital-Journal** which stated that he had moved to the South Dakota capital with his newspaper, the **Goodhue County (Red Wing, Minnesota) Free Press**, and founded the **Pierre Free Press**. He was elected to the Pierre City Council, but the vote was contested on grounds that Pratt was not of age. By the time the matter was settled, he was of age, ran again and won. He also served as a Democrat in the state House of Representatives.³

In either event, by 1890-91 Pratt and Wellman were successful businessmen as depicted by the cover of the Pierre City Directory for that year; they sold real estate and insurance, were proprietors of the Dakota Central Bank, and owned four subdivisions in Pierre. Wellman was also secretary and treasurer of the North Western Land Association, which owned the Wells Addition (Wells was president of the group). By the end of November 1891 the North Western Land Association had been reincorporated upping the capital stock from \$100,000 to \$6,000,000. The principal place of business under the new charter was Pierre with an office at Huntsville. By January of 1892 Wells, Wellman, and Pratt had decided to move to Huntsville. Two occurrences most likely prompted the translocation.

According to the Pratt family tradition, Pratt went to New York City to sell South Dakota school bonds and there met James O'Shaughnessy. O'Shaughnessy convinced Pratt of the economic opportunities Huntsville offered and described the improvement company's attempts to develop the town. An impressed Pratt returned to Pierre to then persuade his friends and associates. Perhaps this is the reason Wells visited the South in 1891.

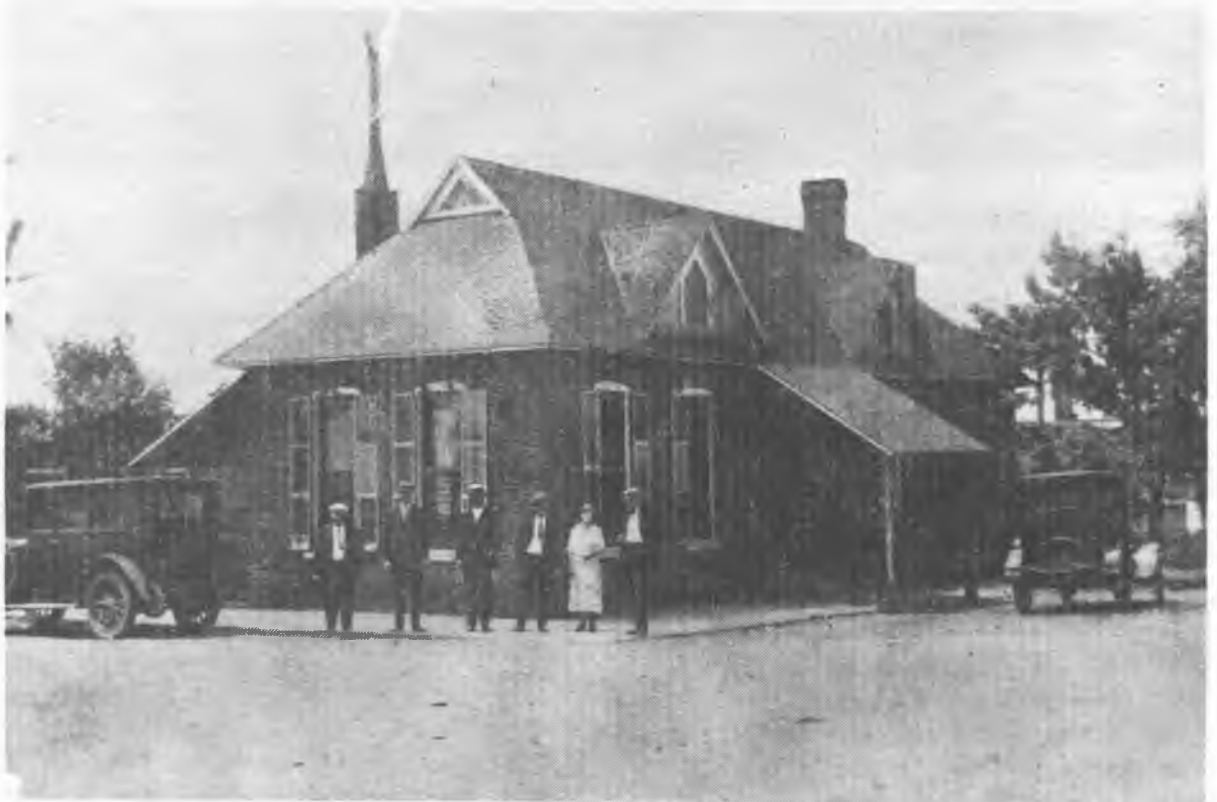
As previously mentioned, a Chattanooga newspaper article told of Wells' desire to invest in the region. Twice during 1891, in February and December,

Wells visited Huntsville and on both occasions James O'Shaughnessy of New York City was also present. Possibly the properties of the North Alabama Improvement Company were offered as inducements, giving the Northwestern Land Association raw land to develop (the East Huntsville Addition) plus proven successes (the Monte Sano and Huntsville hotels). Either or both of the above explanations may account for Pratt's decision to move southward with his young family.

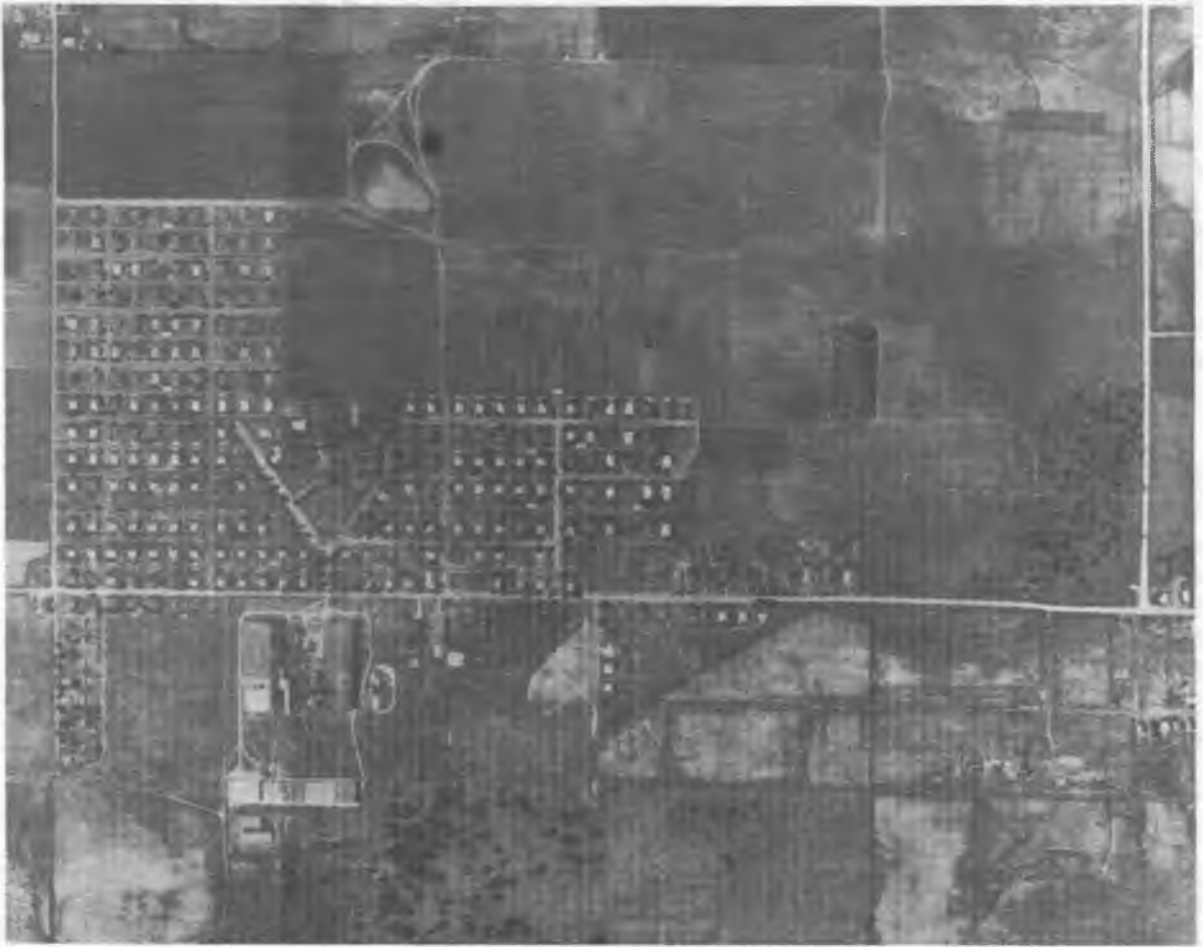
Sometime in the early 1880's Pratt had married Jessie Ludlow (1866-1894) and to them three children were born: Albert (1884 - c. 1940), Lucille (1887-1894), and Leola (1890 - c. 1945). The oldest daughter Lucille lived in Huntsville only two years before her death at the family home on the bluff of Monte Sano and only a fortnight later Mrs. Pratt also died.

It is not known where Pratt got the capital for his initial investments; however, his father's bank seems a likely source since its involvement is known on two occasions. In the first transaction Pratt and Wellman mortgaged some acreage they owned jointly. Then in late 1893 Pratt sold numerous lots, including his home, to the Bank of Pierce, Simmons & Company. This undoubtedly provided the necessary capital for other dealings; Pratt repurchased these lots in 1902.⁴

Pratt's first local business venture was the establishment of the West Huntsville Cotton Mills and its attendant mill village. Because he probably knew very little about the operation of a textile factory, Pratt enlisted Joshua Coons, the onetime superintendent of the Huntsville Cotton Mills to oversee the daily operation. It was predicted that 200 operatives would be required to run the 30,000 spindles and to convert the raw cotton into yarn



The office and staff of the West Huntsville Cotton Mill. The building, constructed in the 1890's, still stands at the corner of 9th Avenue and 8th Street.



As late as 1937 Merrimack was an isolated community. Drake Avenue is shown vertically at left while Triana runs horizontally.

and the yarn into woven cloth.⁵ Construction of the mill began in July of 1892 and was apparently completed later that year or in early 1893. Today Pratt's daughter operates the Huntsville Warehouse Company in the onetime mill.

Aside from the mill structure itself Pratt and Coons provided housing and several stores for their operatives. Mill towns were usually self-contained entities, reliant upon the paternalism of the mill owners, and this paternalism pervaded most facets of the workers' lives. One summation tells the story for the mill village in general:

It was theoretically possible that a man's mother might attend a

pre-natal clinic established by the mill, that he be born in a mill-owned hospital and delivered by a mill-paid doctor, that he be educated in a mill supported school, married in a mill-subsidized church to a girl he had met in the mill, live all his life in a house belonging to the mill, and when he died be buried in a coffin supplied, at cost, by the mill in a mill-owned cemetery.⁶

Selected Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps facilitate an examination of the West Huntsville Mills Village. An 1894 map documents four dwellings in the village and eighteen "tenements," probably with space for several families for the general rule in the South was to

provide one room for each operative.⁷ In 1898 there were thirty-six houses, and by 1908 within several blocks of the mill there were roughly sixty homes, a Baptist and Christian Church, a memorial chapel, and a public school, along with a photography studio, three grocery stores, three general stores, and one druggist. In fact, prosperity and self-sufficiency were such that in 1912 there was talk of incorporating the village, and had this been accomplished, it was thought that West Huntsville would be the county's second largest city.⁸ Growth continued throughout the 1920's with new construction emanating from the core area occupied by the mill building. Other mills laid out their villages in much the same way.

In many cases the mill village determined the financial prosperity of the enterprise. D. A. Tompkins' **Cotton Mill, Commercial Features**, an 1899 textbook for

textile entrepreneurs, set forth guidelines for laying out a village in which the church and school figured prominently to improve the lives of mill operatives. It was widely believed that if the workers were redeemed they would work harder and thus produce more goods.⁹ In 1916, Pratt noted:

The mill villages of this industrial community have done as much if not more than any other similar communities in any part of the world in uplift work and we can point with merited pride to the modern schools of the mill villages where each boy and girl is compelled by law to go. The school buildings are also provided by the mills, who also furnish part of the teachers. The villages also support the kindergarten, domestic science schools, reading rooms, picture shows, baseball teams (4 teams composing a City League) of high class



This bird's-eye view illustrates the monotony of mill architecture. These rows of identical duplexes are from the Merrimack village.

players but best of all is the good uplift work done through the four Young Men's Christian Associations and the trained nurses provided by each mill who are subject to the call of anyone needing help in the villages.

The nurses look after the sanitary condition in and about each house in the villages, report the appearance of any contagious disease and see that quarantine is established when needed, thus insuring healthy conditions. All of the mill villages are splendidly lighted with electric lights and the water supply is plentiful and pure.¹⁰

The newspapers present a profitable appearance for the West Huntsville Mills. An unsolicited wage hike, a most rare occurrence, was granted in 1893 due to the amount of business, and later in the year it was disclosed that the mill ran fifteen hours a day and was two months behind on filling orders. The stock was reportedly rising in value.¹¹

The success of the mill operation freed Pratt to work with the Northwestern Land Association, and perhaps there was no traveler as inexhaustable as Pratt when working on behalf of Huntsville. The quest for personal business for his mill and opportunities for the city took him nationwide throughout the 1890's. He was selected by the chamber of commerce to address a Birmingham meeting on cotton mills, and his paper on the advantages of locating cotton factories in Huntsville appeared in newspapers across the country.¹² At the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895, Pratt was appointed to the board of managers to represent Alabama and was granted an hour to promote the city to the Cotton Manufacturers Association of New England.¹³ The chamber later sent him back to Atlanta to negotiate with a palace car company seeking a location.¹⁴ To secure an army camp here, the chamber was represented in Washington by Pratt and Humes; the outcome of their many visits was a large

encampment of soldiers in Huntsville proper and its two environs, East and West Huntsville, during the Spanish-American War. Throughout his life, Pratt sought to locate a permanent army camp in the city, but only temporary ones resulted. In 1902 he traveled to the capital in vain, but in 1907 a National Guard camp, named Camp Tracy W. Pratt, was established in West Huntsville. As late as the outbreak of World War I, he again beseeched the War Department for a campsite.¹⁵

Pratt's personal business also grew steadily. In 1895 he and Coons formed the Huntsville Warehouse Company for cotton storage; Pratt also subscribed to numerous other projects ranging from the Huntsville Furniture & Lumber Company to the Southern Handle Company. But his greatest contribution occurred in 1899 when he convinced Merrimack Mills to locate in Huntsville; his success was repeated the following year when both Lowe Mills and Rowe Knitting Company decided in favor of Huntsville. In 1899 Pratt also brought the streetcar system to town.

That same year machinery to convert a square bale of cotton into a round one was installed in the West Huntsville Cotton Mills. Although the *Mercury* reported that Pratt's was "the first experiment of the kind that has been tried in the United States," the statement is most likely inaccurate, since Pratt toyed with the idea in mid-1897 when the same newspaper wrote that the mill's round-bale machinery was then being shipped.¹⁶ The advantages of the round bale were impressive:

Lessen price of ginning to one-half and produce a sample that will bring the farmer from 1/3¢ to 1/4¢ a pound more for his cotton...the bale is so reduced in size (a bale of 500 pounds being but four feet high and two feet in diameter) and the fire hazard eliminated, there will be a great reduction in freight rates,

both on railroads and water. By this method of handling, false packing is impossible and the manufacturer knows [this]...It is estimated by several of the best authorities on cotton that the South loses \$30,000,000 a year by reason of the crude manner in which the cotton crop is handled.¹⁷

If the other local mills converted to the round-bale press, the newspapers did not report it, but Pratt, always eager for innovations, did so with apparent success.

Like the investors he attracted to Huntsville, Pratt pursued business opportunities outside his adopted home, probably as a form of reciprocity as much as for financial profit. To determine these interests one must rely heavily upon the newspapers since corporation records were usually filed with the county and state in which the business was conducted. If the newspapers reported accurately, Pratt's dealings outside Huntsville were quite impressive. His first was in 1900 with the formation of Buck & Pratt, a cotton commission business with offices in New York City.¹⁸ In the early twentieth century Pratt traveled to New York numerous times for his business and also to promote Huntsville, and he soon became involved in a new ambitious venture.

The Southern Textile Company was incorporated in New Jersey early in 1903 with a capital stock of \$14,000,000. The general character of the business was "buying, selling, manufacturing, and dealing generally with cotton, yarns, and textile materials."¹⁹ However, the company charter granted various related activities from buying stock in other corporations to manufacturing locomotives, wagons and boats to transport the company products. Apparently the bottom line was to acquire southern textile mills and sell their goods through one commission house, possibly the firm of Buck and Pratt. Although Pratt's name does

not appear as an incorporator, for 1904 he served as vice-president and treasurer. No other Huntsvillian seems to have served as a director.²⁰

The actual business of this enterprise is difficult to assess for the local newspapers hit their nadir for contradictions. Late in 1902 the **Mercury** stated that Pratt and four North Carolinians met to place the value on mills seeking to merge. There were 135 applications, but only seventy appeared likely to fuse into a \$30,000,000 company. In April of the following year, the same newspaper reported that Pratt was attempting to lure sixty mills in Georgia, Tennessee, and North and South Carolina into a \$20,000,000 venture.²¹ The **Herald** in August of 1903 noted that the merger of seventy mills had been completed, that the capital stock of \$14,000,000 had been raised in New York, and that the promoters of the takeover were the firm of Buck & Pratt of New York City.²² The following month the **Mercury** announced the new company was composed of sixty mills.²³

The role of Pratt's West Huntsville Cotton Mills lends further confusion. In July of 1903 the **Herald** and **Republican** both stated that this mill was included in the merger and had closed down to await the new cotton crop.²⁴ In January 1904 the **Herald** backtracked by declaring the mill was still owned by Pratt and would begin operations soon.²⁵ Early in 1905 the **Democrat** announced that the mill, which went into the trust, had been closed for two years and would resume running shortly.²⁶ At this point, early 1905, the Huntsville newspapers fortunately ceased their coverage of the Southern Textile Company; however, one account by the **New York Times** is illuminative.

In mid-1904 a petition of bankruptcy was filed against the Southern Textile Company by creditors seeking just over \$10,000. The **Times** account reported that the company was insolvent and, aside from the bonded debt, that the com-



The office of the West Huntsville Cotton Mill; the center figure is Pratt.

pany had liabilities of from \$40,000 to \$50,000. In addition, the *Times* claimed the group purchased cotton bales for about \$16.00 and sold them for around \$11.00.²⁷ In 1907 the corporation was voided in New Jersey for non-payment of taxes.

The Southern Textile Company was not Pratt's only venture for 1903. That same year he and Samuel Buck formed the Buck Coal and Coke Company with a capital stock of \$1,500,000 with offices in South McAlester, Oklahoma (then in Indian Territory). The capital stock was divided into shares of \$25.00 each, of which \$450,000 had been subscribed at the time of incorporation. Although the company was named after Buck, he and six others (including Pratt) only held four shares apiece; the bulk, or 17,972 shares representing an investment of \$449,300, was retained by J. A. Hill. The firm bought, mined and sold coal and

coke at the town of Buck, Oklahoma (also called Buck Junction); today only a few concrete foundations remain.²⁸

Probably due to his association with the Southern Textile Company Pratt moved to New York City in April of 1904. Late in the year he contracted to purchase the Marlborough Hotel at Broadway and 36th Street. Perhaps the failure of the textile trust induced him to return to Huntsville for by mid-1905 he was again living in the city and concentrating on two new enterprises.²⁹

In May of 1905 talk of a Huntsville-Nashville railroad arose and Pratt was named chairman of the subscription committee. For the next three years he worked tirelessly on this project. Its importance was derived from the fact that there was no direct line running between the two cities; connections were

made in Decatur, or one had to travel to Elora, Tennessee, then eastwardly on to Dechard, Tennessee, and finally on to Nashville. A direct line would open up the cities of the Northeast and Northwest for more convenient, more rapid, and cheaper transportation. There were ninety-five towns along the proposed line, which passed through or near Elkton, Lewisburg, Chapel Hill, Eagleville, Triune, and Nashville (roughly I-65 to a point north of Elkton, then following Alternate Highway 31 into Nashville). Considering the benefits to Huntsville-Madison County alone, the stakes were indeed high. Twenty-seven million pounds of cotton were shipped annually, mostly to northern cities, along with 12,000 tons of cotton seed products and 600 carloads of nursery products. Thus any improvement was deemed highly desirable.

The capital stock of the railroad company was set at \$3,000,000. Because a Huntsville-Nashville road had been begun several times previously but never completed due to a lack of funds, a new approach was conceived. The plan called for \$1,500,000 in cash to be deposited with the Knickerbocker Trust Company in New York before any work commenced. Stock and bond sales were the main sources of capital, although counties along the route of the road were required to raise \$250,000. This apportionment was as follows for the Tennessee counties: Giles and Lincoln counties—\$50,000; Marshall County—\$50,000; Rutherford, Williamson, and Davidson counties (including Nashville)—\$100,000.³⁰

The subscription for Madison County was set at \$50,000. Pratt pledged \$1,000 and received \$5,000 from the Huntsville City Council. Aside from numerous trips to New York City on behalf of the proposed road, Pratt and the local newspapers made countless appeals for subscriptions. Pratt perceived the road as necessary to develop the phosphate lands lying near the road which had remained untapped due to poor transportation. He predicted the road

would mean "100% advance in real estate values, thousands of new people, many new industries, and material prosperity in all trade and business."³¹

By the end of March 1908, \$35,000 of Madison County's \$50,000 subscription had been paid, and only \$5,000 more was required before work could commence. In July of the same year Pratt broke ground for the new railroad and christened the plow with a bottle of beer;³² this is the last mention of the road by the newspapers. Perhaps the final monies could not be raised, or possibly a portion of the original investors reneged on their pledges. At any rate, the road was not constructed which must have been a great disappointment to Pratt. However, his other major endeavor of the period was an unqualified success.

Around 1905 the drilling of oil wells had begun in the vicinity of Hazel Green, but instead of oil, the wells struck natural gas. Pratt became interested, although it is not known whether he was acting alone or in conjunction with the New York-Alabama Oil Company (sometimes called the New York-Alabama Gas Company), a Delaware corporation in which he was active. An expert from Indiana was brought in who advised the company to drill near the West Huntsville Cotton Mills, where gas was indeed discovered. By 1907 the corporation sought a franchise to furnish the City of Huntsville and its environs with natural gas.

The most attractive advantage of natural gas was its cost. Manufactured gas cost \$2.25 per thousand cubic feet while the New York-Alabama Company proposed to sell the natural article for 50¢ per thousand. The savings on heating, lighting, and cooking were indeed substantial. For example, a storekeeper in West Huntsville claimed he lit his store and house for a nickel per day.³³ Cheap power was thus accessible to the common man as well as vaunted to the industrialist as an inducement for this area. "Huntsville. 50,000, 1910." ran

a headline for several months beside the **Evening Banner's** masthead in 1907 reflecting the town's faith that cheap natural gas would spark a population boom. The same newspaper also reported that signs were to be erected by the Business Men's Club around the town and at the depot proclaiming "Huntsville. 50,000, 1910. Natural Gas."³⁴ The prediction, albeit apocryphal, provided a great morale boost for the city:

Huntsville appears to be about to enter into an era of prosperity such as has never been known before.

Local people are beginning to feel buoyant and the spirit of enterprise is catching, becoming epidemic.³⁵

Because the State of Delaware does not require the names of stockholders to be filed at the time of incorporation, an examination of the New York-Alabama Company is difficult. Newspapers of 1905 cite Pratt as vice-president and general manager; a 1907 blurb reports William B. Lightfoot of New York was treasurer, Col. S. J. Harmon of Baltimore a principal stockholder, and J. F. Gillespie of Birmingham the company's attorney.³⁶ Again it appears that Pratt sought outside investors to provide inexpensive power for the hinterlands of Alabama.

It also appears that the New York-Alabama Oil Company began searching about 1902 for oil and only later became interested in natural gas. In Madison County alone the company negotiated about 185 leases (some for tracts of several hundred acres) which were broadly worded to allow the company to secure oil, gas, coal, or mineral rights. This seemingly indicates financial stability, but in 1914 the company merged with the Huntsville Gas, Light & Fuel Company to form the Huntsville Consolidated Gas Company. The reason given to the New York-Alabama shareholders was lack of capital and insufficient stock sales to continue operations. One share of

stock in the new company was issued for four shares of New York-Alabama stock to partially appease shareholders.³⁷

The aforementioned Buck Coal and Coke Company was not Pratt's only foray into the coal mining business. In 1906 he was an incorporator of the Straight Mountain Coal and Mining Company, whose principal branch office was at Carlisle, Etowah County, Alabama. The main office was located at Huntsville since five of the six incorporators resided at that place. Pratt and James R. Boyd invested \$2500 apiece, while Henry J. Certain, Robert T. Baugh, and Charles M. Baugh of Gadsden pledged \$5,000 each.³⁸ During the three years prior to this incorporation, Henry J. Certain as trustee had purchased about 250 acres in Etowah County, presumably for the company to develop.

Although it will be remembered that in 1907 Pratt was actively involved with the proposed Huntsville-Nashville Railroad and the New York-Alabama Oil Company, those were not his only business dealings. In mid-1907 he was granted the franchise to erect and operate an electric railway and power plant for Bridgeport, Alabama. The railroad was to connect Bridgeport with Copenhagen, South Pittsburgh, Jasper, Huntsville, Scottsboro and Stevenson.³⁹ That same year he served as a delegate to the annual convention of the Tennessee River Improvement Association in Knoxville, a group organized to press Congress for harbor improvements to facilitate river transportation. In recognition of Pratt's multiple efforts on behalf of the town, the **Evening Banner** issued this tribute:

No town ever had a more enterprising citizen than Mr. Pratt and no town has ever received more at the hands of one citizen than Huntsville has his.

His time, brains, and energy have always been at the service of his town and practically all of the substantial growth of the town

since his residence here has been due to his efforts.⁴⁰

In the following years Pratt continued his affiliation with the New York-Alabama Oil Company and frequently traveled throughout the country to develop new opportunities for Huntsville. His association with the Business Men's Club and the chamber of commerce involved pursuing both outside industries and local improvements such as the Twickenham Hotel, a project promoted in 1913 as essential since Huntsville lacked adequate hotel space. It is entirely probable that he continued to invest outside the area, but it was 1914 before he engaged in another ambitious local project.

It was in this year that the Allentown Power Company was incorporated in Florence with Pratt serving as vice-president. The capital stock was set at \$200,000; and Pratt, N. F. Thompson and Alan Jemison of Birmingham, Thurston H. Allen of Florence, and Harry H. Read of Philadelphia each took \$20,000 of the issue. The principal function of the group was to construct hydroelectric dams on Cypress Creek near Florence and subdivide the adjacent property for summer homes. In addition the company's charter provided for the marketing of timber and minerals. The corporation existed only two months before consolidating with the Lauderdale Power Company which had been created to develop hydroelectric power along Shoals Creek. Since the two companies had been chartered for similar objectives, the merger seemed logical. The capital stock was raised to \$400,000, and the directors were Solon Jacobs of Birmingham and the aforementioned Jemison, Read, Allen and Pratt, who served as treasurer.⁴¹ It is unknown what the company actually developed, but similar proposals to construct dams faced either congressional or presidential vetoes.

In 1916, however, the federal government finally appropriated \$20,000,000 for construction of a nitrate plant and dam for the Shoals area. Both projects

had dual purposes: nitrates were used in munitions during wartime and in fertilizers during peacetime while Wilson Dam would facilitate navigation as well as produce electricity to run the nitrate plant. The boost these projects provided North Alabama is incalculable.

Pratt became the leading advocate of this government undertaking because he recognized that the new fertilizer contained forty percent more plant food than the older substance yet could be sold at a lower price. He further predicted:

"The commercial organizations of the South have never had—in our judgment—as great an opportunity to do something for their section of our southland as is presented in this Muscle Shoals matter."⁴²

Two nitrate plants were completed in 1917. Wilson Dam was begun in the summer of 1918 and work continued until 1921 when Congress suspended appropriations. Pratt represented Huntsville in Washington to lobby for the work to continue, but Congress stalled so that the dam was not completed until 1925.

The prospect of a major federal project for Florence had prompted a desire for improved transportation between that city and Huntsville. Accordingly, in conjunction with the Allentown Power Company, Jemison of Birmingham, Read of Philadelphia, and Allen of Florence joined with Jacobs of Birmingham to form the Florence and Huntsville Interurban Railway Company in late 1914. The capital stock was \$3,000. Although Pratt's name did not appear in the charter, the newspapers cited him as treasurer of the group.⁴³ Perhaps it was perceived that the railroad would not become cost effective until the nitrate plant and dam were operative for the issue was silenced for several years.

A new, somewhat redirected, proposal surfaced in early 1918, this time

to link Muscle Shoals and Huntsville with an electric railway. Pratt stated that he and his associates would build the road if the people in the counties through which it ran demanded the road, i.e. would purchase predetermined amounts of the stock. Huntsville's assessment totaled \$15,000. It appears that Pratt served as treasurer in this new Muscle Shoals Traction Company and was a vocal proponent for donations.⁴⁴ Although a contract was signed for the preliminary surveying of the road, it does not seem to have been completed. It seems likely that after the United States entered World War I, North Alabamians were pressed to their material limits by the Red Cross War Fund and the Liberty Loan programs.

Pratt generously donated his time and his money to both of these war programs and to other beneficent war-related projects as he had done for other benevolent societies throughout his life. In 1909 the Huntsville Christian Settlement Association was begun with Pratt and Wellman among the organizers. Its purpose was to provide "free kindergarten, night school and such other forms of moral and uplifting work...using the Virginia Hall" (precursor of the McCormick YMCA in West Huntsville).⁴⁵ Presumably, such charitable work also pervaded the Lowe, Eastern, and Rowe villages as well as West Huntsville.

A more far-reaching society was the Heralds of Liberty, organized in 1900 by Pratt; Wellman and James R. Boyd. Aside from encouraging a general improvement in the moral character of its members, the enterprise was chartered as a life insurance company. A few years after its inception the main headquarters moved from Huntsville to Philadelphia, probably due to rapid growth, for by 1913 the group had nearly 16,000 members.⁴⁶ In 1925 the Heralds of Liberty became Liberty Life Assurance Society of Birmingham and today is known as the Liberty National Life Insurance Company.

On the lighter side, Pratt was rumored to be Gregory Falls, the hero in *The Northerner*, a 1905 roman a clef by Huntsvillian Norah Davis. The novel was set in Adrianville, Holmes County, Alabama, but the author took few pains to disguise her hometown. Her most recognizable character was Mrs. Eldridge-Jones, known in halycon times as the wife of "the Senator;" her second husband, Col. Jones, was "annexed with a hyphen."⁴⁷ The depiction, although unflattering, was clearly Virginia Clay-Clopton, the wife of Senator Clement Clay, and after his death, of David Clopton.

Gregory Falls was from New York City, a Republican (Pratt was a confirmed Democrat), and very unpopular with the citizenry, especially the newspapers. Falls came to the town to purchase and operate the old Power and Passenger Company which ran the streetcar system. In the course of the story he saved a black man from a mob lynching and in the end "got the girl." While the story was an indictment of southern bigotry and static ideals, the Falls character epitomized progress, ambition, and decency and could very easily have been based on Pratt.⁴⁸

Throughout the 1920's Pratt attended to his various business pursuits while experiencing major changes in his personal life. His second wife, Bertha Hughes Pratt, whom he had married in 1903, died in 1923, and the following year Pratt wed Neida Humphrey of Huntsville. Before her marriage Miss Humphrey had received acclaim as an operatic singer, having debuted at Rome, Italy, and traveled throughout Europe and the United States. To this union a daughter Bess was born.

Tracy Wilder Pratt died on October 29, 1928. His obituaries clearly elucidate his local influence:

It is generally agreed that he was responsible for more of the major industries locating in Huntsville



In 1920 Pratt purchased this home on the south side of Eustis Street, where the annex of the First Presbyterian Church now stands.

than any other man who ever resided here, and he was often called 'Huntsville's First Citizen.'

He was a member of and identified with practically every civic, social, fraternal, patriotic and business organization in Huntsville.⁴⁹

Out of respect for Pratt, all businesses in Huntsville ceased operations for five minutes at the onset of his funeral.

It would be foolhardy to assume that Huntsville became a textile center solely due to Pratt's efforts. Certainly others, particularly the O'Shaughnessy brothers, Wells and Wellman,



Tracy W. Pratt

played important roles; in fact, the entire developmental process was begun by the North Alabama Improvement Company, comprised for the most part of local businessmen. Moreover, it could be argued that the cotton mill industry had its liabilities, especially as it attracted its workers from the lower economic strata. But this is not the point. Pratt's influence was by far the most pervasive, diffusing throughout every medium in his adopted city. By his own admission, Pratt observed that:

“the only time he ever failed to contribute to any enterprise in Huntsville was a few years ago when he was presented with a loving cup by admiring friends—and of course was not advised of what was going on.”⁵⁰

Would Huntsville have developed in the manner it did had Pratt remained in South Dakota? Perhaps, but his role and the history of Huntsville are too entwined to ever be isolated.

Footnotes—Chapter 1

¹**Huntsville Independent**, 25 April 1890, p.3.

²“Manufactures,” **Huntsville Herald**, 5 September 1902, p. 6.

³Dallas Manufacturing Co., “Record of Stockholders Meetings,” p. 56.

⁴Melvin Thomas Copeland, **The Cotton Manufacturing Industry of the United States** (n.p., 1917; reprint ed., New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1966), p. 42; John G. Van Osdell, Jr., “Cotton Mills, Labor, and the Southern Mind: 1880—1930” (Ph. D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1966), p. 51.

⁵Copeland, **Cotton Manufacturing**, p. 34.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁷Broadus Mitchell, **The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South** (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1921; reprint ed., New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), p. 102.

⁸Van Osdell, “Cotton Mills,” p. 11.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 12. In Van Osdell’s defense, it should be noted that he based his assumption on an article which presented a distorted picture of the town’s true development.

¹⁰**Huntsville Advocate**, 18 February 1880, p. 3. This section previously appeared in the author’s “Huntsville—1880,” **Historic Huntsville Quarterly** (Summer 1980): 21-23.

¹¹“Factory Items,” **Independent**, 26 January 1882, p. 3; “Manufacturing Notes,” **Independent**, 15 June 1882, p. 3; “Huntsville,” **Huntsville Weekly Mercury**, 2 March 1887, p. 2.

¹²Madison County, Ala., Corporation Record 1, p. 17.

¹³“Col. O’Shaughnessy Dies of Pneumonia,” **New York Times**, 5 March 1914, p.9.

¹⁴“Minutes of the North Alabama Improvement Company,” pp. 56, 58, 71.

¹⁵“Queen City of the South,” (Birmingham: North Alabama Improvement Co., 1888), p. 3.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁷“Huntsville’s Greatest Opportunity,” **Mercury**, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

¹⁸“Improvement Company Minutes,” pp. 101-102.

¹⁹“The Meeting Last Night,” **Mercury**, 4 June 1890, p. 8.

²⁰**Mercury**, 2 March 1892, p. 3.

²¹“Stockholders Meetings,” pp. 76-79.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 183-185.

²³“A Western Town-Builder,” *Mercury*, 4 March 1891, p. 5.

²⁴“Huntsville to the Front,” *Mercury*, 20 January 1892, p. 5. The North Western Land Association was incorporated sometime prior to 1890; in December 1891 the organization was rechartered as the Northwestern Land Association.

²⁵“Huntsville Loses a Loyal Citizen,” *Mercury*, 7 March 1900, p. 3.

²⁶Madison County Corporation Record 2, p. 208.

²⁷Madison County Corporation Record 1, p. 187.

²⁸“Advertising Huntsville,” *Mercury*, 30 March 1892, p. 8; *Mercury*, 14 September 1892, p. 8.

²⁹“A Magnificent Way of Advertising a City,” *Mercury*, 21 September 1892, p. 8.

³⁰“Our New Industries,” *Mercury*, 7 December 1892, p. 7.

³¹*Mercury*, 30 March 1895, p. 8; “Chamber of Commerce,” *Mercury*, 30 March 1895, p. 5.

³²“Victory For Huntsville Mills,” *Mercury*, 22 February 1899, p. 5.

³³“The Merrimack Mills,” *Mercury*, 10 May 1899, p. 3. The blurb appealed to the “other 14,992 citizens of this city” for aid; the 1900 census set the population at 8,068.

³⁴“Bravo—Tracy W. Pratt,” *Mercury*, 22 February 1899, p. 5.

³⁵“Huntsville’s Future As Seen In Baltimore,” *Mercury*, 7 June 1899, p. 2.

³⁶Madison County Corporation Record 1, p. 380.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸“The New Cotton Mill,” *Mercury*, 1 March 1899, p. 3.

³⁹“Around the Town,” *Mercury*, 10 May 1899, p. 2.

⁴⁰“Another Big Cotton Mill Will Be Established Here,” *Mercury*, 6 June 1900, p. 2.

⁴¹Madison County Corporation Record 1, p. 460.

⁴²“Another Big Mill,” *Weekly Tribune*, 27 November 1900, p. 3; “That \$300,000 Mill,” *Tribune*, 11 December 1900, p. 3.

⁴³Madison County Deed Record 89, p. 270.

⁴⁴Madison County Corporation Record 1, p. 474.

⁴⁵“The Subscription Started,” **Mercury**, 23 August 1899, p. 7.

⁴⁶“Chamber of Commerce Holds Busy Session,” **Mercury**, 23 August 1899, p. 7.

⁴⁷Madison County Corporation Record 1, p. 434.

⁴⁸Madison County Corporation Record 2, p. 186.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 401.

⁵⁰Madison County Corporation Record 1, p. 508.

⁵¹“Illustrative and Descriptive Huntsville and Madison County, Alabama,” (n.p.: Business Men’s League of Huntsville, Ala., 1908), p. 8.

⁵²“The Wrench Factory,” **Mercury**, 31 October 1894, p. 2.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴“Was Interesting,” **Mercury**, 16 March 1898, p. 5.

⁵⁵“The Proposed Flouring Mill,” **Mercury**, 7 December 1892, p. 7.

⁵⁶“A Good Bargain For Huntsville,” **Mercury**, 1 February 1893, p. 4.

⁵⁷“Huntsville’s Industries,” **Morning Mercury, Industrial Edition**, 15 December 1904, p. 7.

⁵⁸Juergen Paetz and Linda Bayer, **Annexation and Boundary Survey** (Huntsville: Huntsville Planning Department, 1981), p. 6.

⁵⁹**Morning Mercury, Industrial Edition**, 15 December 1904, p. 22.

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¹Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, ed., **History of Goodhue County, Minnesota** (Chicago: H. C. Cooper, Jr., & Co., 1909), p. 1023.

²“Tracy W. Pratt Died Suddenly of Heart Attack Last Night,” **Huntsville Daily Times**, 30 October 1928, p. 1.

³“Old Timer Visits Pierre,” **Weekly Mercury**, (Huntsville), 19 May 1915, p. 5.

⁴Madison County, Ala., Real Estate Mortgage Record 45, p. 109; Madison County Deed Record 75, p. 313; Deed Record 93, p. 329.

⁵“Our Onward March,” **Mercury**, 4 May 1892, p. 2.

⁶John G. Van Osdell, Jr., "Cotton Mills, Labor, and the Southern Mind: 1880—1930" (Ph. D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1966), p. 60.

⁷D. A. Tompkins, *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features* (Charlotte, N. C. : By the Author, 1899), p. 116.

⁸"West Huntsville May Be Incorporated Town," *Mercury*, 6 March 1912, p. 6.

⁹Tompkins, *Cotton Mill*, p. 112.

¹⁰"Industrial Huntsville," *Huntsville Mercury Centennial Edition*, 23 July 1916, sec. B, p. 5.

¹¹"Wages Increased," *Mercury*, 10 May 1893, p. 5; *Mercury*, 15 November 1893, p. 3; *Mercury*, 22 November 1893, p. 3.

¹²"Highly Interesting Meeting," *Mercury*, 14 March 1894, p. 3; "Chamber of Commerce," *Mercury*, 18 July 1894, p. 6.

¹³"Push Old Alabama Along," *Mercury*, 24 July 1895, p. 2; *Mercury*, 25 September 1895, p. 3.

¹⁴"Chamber of Commerce," *Mercury*, 11 December 1895, p. 5.

¹⁵"Mr. Pratt Returns," *Weekly Tribune* (Huntsville), 21 January 1902, p. 1; "Routine of Duty Has Begun at Camp Tracy W. Pratt," *Evening Banner* (Huntsville), 18 July 1904, p. 4; "Facts About Huntsville," *Mercury*, 2 May 1917, p. 2.

¹⁶"A New Industry," *Mercury*, 21 June 1899, p. 2; "The Round Bale," *Mercury*, 16 June 1897, p. 2.

¹⁷"Farmers Attention," *Mercury*, 21 July 1897, p. 7.

¹⁸"The Census Matter," *Tribune*, 27 November 1900, p. 2.

¹⁹Corporations Division, Department of State of New Jersey, "Annual Report of the Southern Textile Company."

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹"Seventy Mills in Merger," *Mercury*, 29 October 1902, p. 4; *Mercury*, 22 April 1903, p. 3.

²²"Mr. Pratt's Merger," *Huntsville Herald*, 21 August 1903, p. 1.

²³"Cotton Mill Merger," *Mercury*, 2 September 1903, p. 5.

²⁴"Closed Tuesday," *Herald*, 24 July 1903, p. 4; "Closed Temporarily," *Republican* (Huntsville), 25 July 1903, p. 3.

²⁵"Huntsville Cotton Mill," *Herald*, 1 January 1904, p. 3.

²⁶*Huntsville Weekly Democrat*, 8 February 1905, p. 3.

- ²⁷“Textile Firm’s Trouble,” **New York Times**, 21 July 1904.
- ²⁸Robert A. Layden, District Judge, McAlester, Oklahoma, letter and xeroxed copy, incorporation papers of Buck Coal and Coke Co.
- ²⁹“Buys A Large Hotel,” **Herald**, 21 October 1904, p. 4.
- ³⁰“The Nashville and Huntsville Railway,” **Mercury**, 19 September 1906, p. 6.
- ³¹“In the Balance,” **Mercury**, 5 September 1906, p. 1.
- ³²“Work on New Road Begins,” **Mercury**, 22 July 1908, p. 1.
- ³³“Huntsville’s Gas Producing Well,” **Mercury**, 9 January 1907, p. 7.
- ³⁴“Four Hundred Is the Membership of Business League,” **Banner**, 7 May 1907, p. 1.
- ³⁵“Boom Is Coming to Huntsville,” **Mercury**, 1 May 1907, p. 7.
- ³⁶“The Gas Question,” **Banner**, 10 July 1907, p. 1.
- ³⁷Madison County Deed Record 109, p. 130.
- ³⁸Etowah County, Ala., Corporation Record B, p. 234.
- ³⁹**Democrat**, 17 April 1907, p. 3.
- ⁴⁰“Tracy W. Pratt,” **Banner**, 20 July 1907, p. 2.
- ⁴¹Lauderdale County, Ala., incorporation papers of Allentown Power Company and consolidation act between Allentown Power Company and Lauderdale Power Company.
- ⁴²“Muscle Shoals Will Be Greater Than Niagara When Developed,” **Mercury**, 9 August 1916, p. 4.
- ⁴³“Terminal Is Secured” **Mercury**, 11 November 1914, p. 5.
- ⁴⁴“Business Men Hear Electric Railroad Plan,” **Mercury**, 15 February 1918, p. 1.
- ⁴⁵Madison County Corporation Record 2, p. 268.
- ⁴⁶“Heralds of Liberty Here for Fourth Grand Conclave,” **Mercury**, 23 July 1913, p. 6.
- ⁴⁷Norah Davis, **The Northerner** (New York: Century Co., 1905), p. 54.
- ⁴⁸In one lengthy passage Miss Davis discusses the role of northern capital, disguised as eastern money, on her fictional town:
- “Seen from car windows, and by eyes focused to Eastern vision, Alabama in the ear-

ly eighties had seemed a land of financial promise beyond the utmost dreams of dividends—a land whose fields lay fallow in inglorious ease, awaiting only the Midas touch of Eastern capital to stagger under a golden harvest. And Eastern capitalists had been quick to read the South's sad astrology in the silent market-places of her battered towns, her empty fields, her undeveloped mineral lands. The Tennessee Valley Improvement Company had bought with insatiable greed fields, and streams, and mountainsides, as unconscious of the incorporeal hereditaments appurtenant thereto as of the transient colors which flushed the long, green mountain ranges. Davis, *The Northerner*, pp. 100-101.

⁴⁹“Tracy W. Pratt Is Laid to Rest,” *Times*, 31 October 1928, p. 8.

⁵⁰“Enthusiasm for New Road At Hoover Banquet,” *Mercury*, 20 February 1918, p. 1.

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