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Special Combined Issue

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from the Editor . . .

Due to the great amount of material acquired on early inns and hotels of Huntsville, this larger combined issue of the Quarterly has been published in an attempt to present an extensive view of Huntsville hostelries through the years. It is hoped that publication in the future will be on a more timely schedule.

Inns and hotels of varying sizes and types of accommodations have come and gone in Huntsville over the years. Discussed in this issue are some of the better known hostelries of our town, though certainly, other hotels have existed here from our earliest days through the height of popularity of our last fine old hotel, the Russel Erskine. There are many more tales to be told than there is room for in these pages, so we have tried to cover some of the more obscure stories as well as a few of the better known ones, and regret that they could not all be included.

Cover :

The McGee Hotel shortly after 1869. It was located at the northwest corner of Jefferson Street and Clinton Avenue on the site of the present Terry-Hutchens Building. At the left is the old Opera House.

Photographs and Illustrations:

Courtesy of Huntsville Public Library Heritage Room:
Cover, pp. 25, 27-30, 32-41, 42-46, 48.

Courtesy of Mary Medaris Burgess Lee: pp. 24, 31.

Micky Maroney: pp. 7, 26.

Celebrations and Toasts

by Micky Maroney

"The party dispersed in good order, at an early hour, and the day passed off with much hilarity, and without any disturbance or accident."

An article about an Independence Day celebration at the Huntsville Inn was concluded with the above statement in **The Alabama Republican** of July 8, 1819. Twenty toasts were drunk at the party celebrating the 44th anniversary of American Independence. "His Excellency Governor Bibb" and many distinguished members of the Alabama Constitutional Convention were among the guests.

Huntsville Inn, besides providing accommodations for travelers and visitors, was a favored location for social events and festivities in Huntsville's early years. In those days, it was the custom for gentlemen to hold many of their political and patriotic celebrations at local inns. These festivities included "plentiful dinners" which started in the late afternoon and lasted for several hours. After the meal, the "cloth

was removed," and a president and vice-president of the gathering were elected or appointed to preside over the toasting and speech-making. From six to twelve Set Toasts, or Sentiments, were drunk, followed by the Volunteer Toasts.

The Set Toasts usually began with a toast to the occasion being celebrated, followed by up to eleven more Sentiments being offered to subjects generally including: "Our Country, the President of the United States, the Constitution of the United States, the Congress of the United States, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, the Heroes of the Revolution," etc.

Numbering up to twenty or more, the Volunteer Toasts were offered by the various guests, who toasted topics of national and local concern. An interesting Volunteer Sentiment, offered at the 1819 July 4th Celebration by the Honorable J. W. Walker, was to: "Florida, west of the Apalachicola -- May it speedily be incorporated with

the state of Alabama." Even now, from time to time, the state still grasps at that unattained goal! All the Toasts were accompanied by cheers, speeches, appropriate songs, and even the discharge of cannon at a dinner held in honor of President James Monroe.

On June 1, 1819, when President Monroe made his unannounced visit to Huntsville, he was en route from Augusta, Georgia to Nashville, Tennessee. The presidential group, traveling by horseback on a tour of the South, stopped in the Alabama Territory town of Huntsville "to examine the various fortifications in the area and to lay plans for strengthening them against foreign aggression."

The Alabama Republican on June 5, 1819 reported, "On Tuesday last the President of the United States with Mr. Gouveneur, his private Secretary, and Lieut. Monroe of the Army very unexpectedly arrived in Huntsville and put up at the Inn." The paper stated that the citizens appointed a committee "to wait upon his Excellency" and to invite him to a public dinner to be given in his honor the next day.

The Republican continued, "On Wednesday at 4 o'clock, the President and suite, together with more than one hundred of the most respected citizens of Madison County, sat down to a sumptuous entertainment prepared by Capt. Irby Jones.... After the cloth was removed, the following sentiments were drunk accompanied by the discharge of cannon, and appropriate songs." The sentiments, numbering twenty-four in all, were patriotic in

theme, although by Toasts Number 20 and 21, the gentlemen were drinking to "The friends of freedom in South America" and to "Our Fair Countrywomen." President Monroe offered a toast to the Territory of Alabama and her speedy admission into the Union.

The company rose from the table about sunset, everyone highly delighted with the entertainment and the pleasure of dining with the President. The article concluded by saying, "The President left on the ensuing day, 3rd inst., for Nashville, and was escorted by a number of respectable citizens several miles on his way, the whole company being on horseback."

More than tens years later, on Christmas Eve of 1829, another memorable dinner was given. The newspaper account, entitled "Jackson Supper," even though Jackson himself was not present, does not say where the festivities were held. But the purpose was to celebrate "the reception and perusal of the President's Message" which had been addressed to both Houses of Congress. The speech had been printed in the December 18, 1829 **Democrat**, including an editorial note that the Message had arrived with record speed in the last Tuscaloosa mail from Washington City in "3 days and 19 hours."

The President was Andrew Jackson, well-known and admired in Huntsville for many years. But nationally, President Jackson had many critics and detractors, whose vehement criticisms of the rough and unpolished frontiersman incensed his loyal friends in Huntsville. (John

Quincy Adams is on record as having once referred to Jackson as "a barbarian who could not write a sentence of grammar and could hardly spell his own name.") At the Christmas Eve supper, the Huntsvillians showed their disdain for people who ridiculed Jackson, as is illustrated in several of the many toasts traditionally offered after the meal.

In the January 1, 1830 issue of *The Democrat*, an article describing the supper states, "On the evening of the 24th ult. Major John K. Dunn, to evince the pleasure derived from the reception and perusal of the President's Message, prepared a Supper and invited the citizens generally to partake of the viands. The supper was well served up and very numerously attended. After the cloth was removed -- On motion, Thomas J. Sumner, Esq. was appointed President, and Col. Byrd Brandon, Vice President -- and the following set toasts were drank (sic) with much cheer and friendship: ..."

Printed verbatim by the newspaper were all thirty-one sentiments that were eventually drunk, all patriotic in content. Many of them demonstrated the intense local support for Jackson. Among the Set Toasts that were offered, the following sentiments showed the great support for the President:

"Andrew Jackson, President of the United States: Let him be judged by his acts -- and detraction will not destroy a faithful servant of the people. 3 chrs."

"The Present Administration:

***"

"Our Country: Free and prosperous, though under the guidance of a MILITARY CHIEFTAIN. 3 chrs."

"The President's Message: The velocity with which it has been disseminated can be equaled only by its intrinsic merit."

Of the Volunteer Toasts proposed by the guests, some showed an occasional bit of local wit:

By Maj. N. B. Rose -- "The oil of Hickory, famous for taking the rust from the locks of old bureaus: May the oil be well tried before it is condemned, to be not good."

By Capt. John Phelan -- "Here's to the cat, that routed the rat, that eat (sic) the mault, that lay in the vault of the house that Uncle Sam built."

By Mr. Hamblin -- "The Hickory: May it flourish in the Republic and be the scourge of tyrants."

By Mr. S. Spencer -- "General Jackson: His enemies like our pigs -- well roasted."

By Col. B. Brandon -- "The President's Message: If he can neither READ, WRITE, nor SPELL -- he has a very happy talent for chosing (sic) an amanuensis."

The festivities were concluded by a lengthy speech on "Liberty and Patriotism" delivered by James Robinson, Esq.

FOOTNOTE: Amusingly, the

next article in the paper after the "Jackson Supper" with the thirty-one toasts, is an article on temperance, entitled "Drunkards," start-

ing with this line of verse: "Oh, that man would put an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains... ."



A NEW TAVERN,

At the Sign of the Planters Hotel

THE Subscriber respectfully informs the public, that he has taken the large White House on Franklin-street, which is about 80 yards from the south-east corner of the public square, the main leading street from town to Ditto's Landing, which house was lately occupied by Mrs. J.S. Rawling as a tavern.

The proprietor has been at a very considerable expense in fitting out the house; it is now commodious, and ready to receive and accommodate travellers, and those that may favour him with a call, in a style and on such terms as, he flatters himself, will render complaints unnecessary.

His Stables are large and commodious, and well provided with all the requisites.

RATES:

Breakfast,	-	-	-	37	1-2
Dinner,	-	-	-	50	
Supper,	-	-	-	37	1-2
Lodging per night,	-	-	-	12	1-2
Horse per night,	-	-	-	50	
Boarding, without lodging, per w.				\$3.50	
Boarding, including lodging, "				4.50	
Horse per week	-	-	-	3.00	

Travellers for two days will pay by the meal - should they remain longer than that time, for man and horse per day, 1.50

Without a horse per day - 1.25

No gentleman considered a monthly boarder except from the time he enters his name as such - the same rule to be observed as to keeping horses.

N. B. ROSE

Huntsville, 17th Nov.

A facsimile ad from **The Alabama Republican**, November 24, 1820. The first five rates listed are cents.

Huntsville Inns of the Early 1800's

by Micky Maroney



This Williams Avenue House undergoing restoration is believed to have been the Planters Hotel, formerly located on the corner of Franklin and Gates Streets.



Government regulations prevailed even in 1820. According to **The Alabama Republican**, November 17, 1820, the county courts set the rates for Inns and Taverns, and the law required of all tavern keepers "that they take out a license and to furnish good, clean, wholesome diet, and lodging for travellers, and stabling, pasturage and provender for horses, for and during the time of his license."

The inns of the early 1800's were quite different from today's modern roadside and city accommodations. In the small inns and stagecoach-stops, there often was only one public room for socializing and dining - usually at one large table. Here, too, thirst could be quenched with potables ranging from spring or well water to the best rum and whiskey available.

Larger inns and taverns, located in cities and bustling towns such as Huntsville, offered much more to the transient and to the townspeople, as well. The public rooms were likely to contain enough dining tables for private groupings, and there might have been a room set aside for ladies only, where they could dine or visit in privacy, away from the sometimes indelicate remarks of the imbibing men. (However, a **sober gentleman** would not have dreamt of making an indelicate remark in the presence of a lady.) Also, in the larger establishments, a separate barroom was sometimes available; even an elegant ballroom would be provided by an inn catering to the carriage trade.

Four to a Bed?!

Sleeping arrangements in those early days were rather different from today, too, to put it mildly. The smaller hostleries, such as the Mooresville statecoach-stop, featured a common dormitory room for their patrons, who were predominantly male. Two or more double beds, and maybe a single bed if space allowed, provided the sleeping accommodations. If there were more than a few travel-

ers, as many as three - or even four - men would be piled into one double bed! Perhaps after a hard day's ride on horseback in the rain or hot sun, or a journey in a bouncing, rocking stagecoach over rutted uneven roads, any bed looked inviting, even one with three strangers already in it!

Ladies traveled in those days, too, and even the smallest inns usually provided a least one small private room for the gentlewoman and her accompanying family and/or servant. Undoubtedly, the private room would have been made available to any gentleman willing to pay, perhaps, a higher tariff for privacy.

Necessary Appurtenances

The larger in-town inns and taverns provided a greater number of private rooms and more amenities in general. In addition to the standard wash bowl and chamber pot usually found in each room, a "necessary house" was a necessary outbuilding on the premises, as well as a stable and provender for horses. The kitchen, due to excessive heat and cooking odors, would be located in a separate outbuilding or in a basement or a wing of the main tavern house. Depending on the inn's location, a well might have been nearby.

Huntsville, M.T.

Without a doubt; the inns in early Huntsville must have offered similar accommodations. Detailed information about local inns is woefully lacking prior to 1817, and precious little information is available for

many of the years thereafter. However, old deed records and newspaper notices provide many nuggets of information about the old hostelrys. One certainty is evident from those early documents and papers - most of the local inns and taverns changed owners frequently. Not only did ownership change periodically, but some of the owners were merely investors who rented their property to various proprietors who actually ran the taverns, and these renters changed often, also. Occasionally, the tavern name changed, too.

Reference is made to three Huntsville inns and taverns in a local newspaper, **The Alabama Republican**, dated Huntsville, M.T., August 5, 1817. (In 1817, Huntsville and Madison County were still a part of the huge Mississippi Territory.) John B. Grantland advertised a "New Dancing School at Talbot's Inn," Daniel Price promised a "\$5.00 Reward for a large Silver Watch taken from Cheatham's Tavern" (perchance from a shared lodging room?) and Benjamin L. Saunders had a notice for a "House and Lot for sale adjoining C. Cheatham's Tavern." Mr. D. Rather's Tavern was mentioned in an ad by Clifton C. Steele. It is evident from these notices that the three inns were well established by 1817. Of the three, two would obtain prominence in the burgeoning social and political activities of the town.

Two Inns

By the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1819, Talbot's Inn had changed owners three times

and was renamed Huntsville Inn. Cheatham's Tavern also underwent changes in ownership and name, becoming Bell Tavern. And in 1819, Irby Jones became the owner of both inns.

From deed descriptions, it is known that the Huntsville Inn was located near the middle of the block on the east side of the Public Square; Bell Tavern was situated on the west side of Jefferson Street near the northwest corner of the Square, and it had several additions and improvements made during its long existence. Virtually all of the many Deeds and Deeds of Trust for the Huntsville Inn describe it as "the three story brick house at present occupied as a Tavern" However, an 1819 Deed of Trust for the adjoining property of J. M. Taylor and P. A. Foote mentions the Huntsville Inn as "the three Brick houses now occupied as a Tavern by Irby Jones."

For many years, the histories of Huntsville Inn and Bell Tavern were intertwined through their dual-ownership by Irby Jones. And from Mr. Jones' well-documented financial adventures, comes invaluable information about the furnishings of Huntsville Inn. It would seem probable that Bell Tavern's furnishings would have been similar.

Goods and Chattels

The fates of finance were not kind to Irby Jones. He never quite seemed to be able to pay off the debts incurred from the purchase of the two inns, and signed several Deeds of Trust to various creditors, apparently hoping to be able eventually

to make payments in full. These Deeds of Trust allowed Jones to retain possession of the property unless or until the creditors called for full payment at the dates set in the deeds.

A November 1821 Deed of Trust signed by Jones to the Planters and Merchants Bank listed the following inventory of "goods and chattels being the furniture of Huntsville Inn ... five oblong cherry Tables, two half round cherry Tables, nineteen single feather beds, nine double feather beds & the blankets & bedding to said twenty eight beds belonging, thirteen single Poplar bedsteads, six double Poplar bedsteads, Two cherry bedsteads, forty two windsor chairs, a set of glass ware consisting of four Decanters, two Pitchers, six dishes, two salt stands, four tumblers & twelve wine glasses - six Dozen common plates, seven Decanters, four Dozen glass Tumblers, five sets of Plated castors, five Dozen knives & forks, five Dozen Cups and saucers, two twelve Gallon Kettles, four ten gallon pots, four Dutch ovens, & three Dozen Dishes."

Even by the standards of the nineteenth century, this inventory would not seem to be a complete list of furnishings, but it obviously met the requirements of the Deed of Trust and provides us today with a glimpse of the past.

From the Beginning

It is not known exactly when either Huntsville Inn or Bell Tavern was built, but the Government Land Sales records and the earliest Deed records provide dates that

indicate both buildings were constructed between 1809 and 1817. From these records, it is logical to assume that Le Roy Pope must have constructed the three-story brick house known as Talbot's Inn, later known as Huntsville Inn.

Pope had invested heavily in the 1809 Government Land Sales, buying many, many acres, including most of the area that would become the little town of Huntsville. Records show that Pope and two partners (whom he later bought out) paid \$23.50 per acre for the quarter-section of land surrounding the Big Spring (totaling \$3,763.29 for the 160.14 acre tract). Some of this land he sold, but he retained the entire block bounded by Randolph, Green, and Eustis Streets and the east side of the Public Square, where the Inn was located. Being a founding father of the new town of Twickenham, as it was then called, and seeing a need for an inn in the sparsely settled but fast-growing territory, it is quite likely that Pope might have built the Inn as an investment and then rented it to Clayton Talbot, the proprietor for many years.

The First Sale

DEED: POPE TO BRAHAN & ROSE. The first sale of the Huntsville Inn property occurred in 1817. A deed dated April 28th of that year conveys most of the block on the east side of the Public Square to John Brahan and Neal B. Rose from Le Roy Pope and Judith, his wife, for "\$4,500 to them in hand paid." The property -- four one-half-acre lots -- is de-

scribed as being Lots 33, 34, 37, and 38, "excepting and reserving out of said lot number thirty seven the Brick Tenement now occupied as the store house of Pope and Hickman with its appurtenances and the space of ground between the said Tenement ... and the wall of the three story brick house now occupied as a Tavern by Clayton Talbot"

The deed is not explicit in describing the existing buildings on the four lots purchased by Brahan and Rose, stating only, "... the above described lots or parcels of land with the tenements and appurtenances thereunto belonging."

Clayton Talbot continued to rent the Inn from Brahan and Rose during their tenure as owners of the property, and these years of proprietorship by Talbot seemed to be the most stable period of the Inn's financial history. Apparently Mr. Talbot knew well the business of innkeeping and did not have the financial worries of owning the property.

A Tidy Profit

DEED: BRAHAN & ROSE TO MCKINLEY. Less than two years had passed when John Brahan and Neal B. Rose sold most of their East Side Square property to John McKinley of Lexington, Kentucky. Real estate values were booming -- Brahan and Rose received "\$18,000 to them in hand paid." McKinley's purchase included "the three story brick house at present occupied as a Tavern by Clayton Talbot, fronting the Public Square."

The deed, dated December 12, 1818, lists the parcels

of land as being lots numbered 34 and 38, and parts of lots 33 and 37. Excluded this time from the original four-lot parcel were the (business) houses of Neal B. Rose, John M. Taylor, and some property of Rose Fletcher. Thus, Brahan and Rose had made a tidy profit from their \$4,500 purchase of 1817.

Absentee Landlord

According to information on a later deed, John McKinley must have remained in Kentucky after he bought the East Side Square property in late 1818. Perhaps Clayton Talbot did not like having an absentee landlord, or maybe other ventures beckoned, but by January 30, 1819, an advertisement was appearing in **The Alabama Republican** notifying the public that E. Baker had rented "the Huntsville Inn, lately occupied by Mr. Clayton Talbot, from John McKinley." Mr. Baker added, "The house has been fitted up and furnished at great expense, and is now ready for the reception of such gentlemen as may please to call." This is the first reference to the Huntsville Inn by that name.

Did many "gentlemen please to call" on Mr. E. Baker at the Huntsville Inn? The answer is not known at this point in researching the Inn, but by June 2, 1819, in a Deed of Trust for the adjoining business of Taylor and Foote, reference is made to "the three (?) Brick houses now occupied as a Tavern by Irby Jones, known as the Huntsville Inn."

So, Mr. Baker did not last long as the Inn's proprietor. By June 26th, he

was advertising in the **Republican** that he wished to settle his accounts for the Huntsville Inn. On July 15th, he warned patrons to pay up their accounts with him for Huntsville Inn, or else!

Irby Jones Buys Bell Tavern

DEED: CHEATHAM TO JONES. Prior to Mr. Baker's departure from the Huntsville Inn, Irby Jones announced in **The Alabama Republican** that, as of February 27, 1819, he had opened a house of **ACCOMMODATION** in the house formerly owned and operated by Mr. Cheatham and recently by R. Turner. Christopher Cheatham deeded his Tavern to Jones on February 29th, with Jones still owing him \$7,527.90.

Therefore, it must have been only a few months after buying Bell Tavern that Irby Jones was also doing business at Huntsville Inn, obviously renting the Inn from McKinley.

The President's Visit

On June 5, 1819, **The Alabama Republican** published an article describing in much detail the visit of President James Monroe to Huntsville. Unfortunately, Huntsville Inn is barely mentioned in the account; it states that President Monroe "put up at the Inn" and that Irby Jones prepared the dinner given by local dignitaries in honor of the President. But the article does not state exactly WHERE the public dinner was held. Since the affair was attended by "more than 100 of the most respected citizens of Madison County," it seems highly unlikely that the Huntsville Inn would have had

a room large enough to seat that many people for a meal, but maybe it did. One theory is that the dinner was held at Walker Allen's Cabinet Shop which served as a hall for the Constitutional Convention then in session.

According to the 1821 Deed of Trust Inventory for Huntsville Inn, even then, the Inn would not have had enough tables, chairs, and tableware to accommodate so many people at once. But, of course, Irby Jones was running two nearby inns in 1819, so it is probable that he used the accouterments of both Huntsville Inn and Bell Tavern to equip the large party, wherever it was held.

Over the years, many similar festivities took place at Huntsville Inn, though with fewer guests than were present for the President's dinner.

An Enigma

DEED: MCKINLEY TO JONES. A short time after signing the promissory note for over \$7,000 for the purchase of Bell Tavern, Irby Jones signed notes for \$27,000 to buy the Huntsville Inn property from John McKinley. The Deed from John McKinley was signed and conveyed to Jones on July 6, 1819. That, in itself, may not be very strange, but it does seem rather odd that on the day before McKinley actually filed the Deed to be recorded at the County Courthouse, an ad appeared in **The Alabama Republican**, on August 19th, announcing a Lottery which offered the Huntsville Inn as top prize!

The Lottery was to have weekly drawings for certain properties as soon as 3,000 tickets were sold. For the

SCHEME

FOR the disposal of certain parcels of property, estimated at the following value, viz :

Huntsville Inn,	\$30,000
70 acres Land,	2,000
1 negro woman & child,	800
1 do. Nancy,	700
1 do. Zeze,	600
1 do. Fanny,	500
20 Cash prizes, \$ 50 each,	1,000
100 do. 10	1000

\$ 36,000

To be awarded by **LOTTERY** in the following manner.

Floating Prizes.

20 Cash Prizes \$ 50 each	\$ 1000
100 do. 10	1000

Stationary Prizes.

First drawn Ticket on the	
2d day entitled to girl Fanny,	500
3d to Zeze,	600
4th to Nancy,	700
5th to Rhoda & child	800
6th 70 acres Land,	2,000
Last drawn Ticket the	
Huntsville Inn,	50,000

\$ 36,700

3670 Tickets at \$10 each, 36,700

To commence drawing so soon as 3,000 Tickets are sold.

We, the undersigned commissioners, do hereby Certify that we have examined the above mentioned property and do estimate its value at the above rates.

<p>LE ROY POPE, JOHN READ, JOHN BRAHAN,</p>	}	<p>Commissioners.</p>
--	---	-----------------------

August 17, 1819. 1819

purposes of the Scheme, Huntsville Inn was valued at \$30,000. Neither Jones nor McKinley was mentioned in the ad, only the names of the commissioners certifying the property values -- Le Roy Pope, John Read, and John Brahan.

Strange, indeed, that Irby Jones indebted himself to such a great extent on a property to be used as a lottery prize, unless he made the purchase with the Lottery in mind. Perhaps he, and maybe others, had high expectations for making a large and quick profit. Is it possible that there was some "wheeling and dealing" in progress?

The weekly drawings were held at the Huntsville Inn beginning November 1st, but no notice of winners was ever published. If the grand prize -- Huntsville Inn itself -- was actually won, apparently the winner did not want it! Poor Irby was stuck with it for years. And with debt.

Financial Maneuvers

In order to buy Huntsville Inn, Jones had signed three promissory notes to John McKinley, totaling \$27,000, on June 1, 1819. They were payable and negotiable at the Planters and Merchants Bank and were due in three annual payments. His endorsers, for the sum of \$9,000 each, were listed as Walter Otey, William Lewis, and Edwin Jones (Irby's brother). The Deed to the Inn, as noted previously, had been signed and conveyed on July 6th; McKinley filed it at the courthouse on August 20th, but the Clerk of Court did not record the Deed until

Lottery ad for Huntsville Inn and other prizes. *The Alabama Republican*, August 19, 1819.

\$40,000:
 BY AUTHORITY OF CONGRESS.
 NATIONAL
LOTTERY,
 SECOND CLASS.

SCHEME.

100 Prizes of \$1,000 is \$100,000

1 do.	40,000	-	40,000
2 do.	10,000	-	20,000
4 do.	5,000	-	20,000
20 do.	500	-	10,000
50 do.	10	-	6,000
2 600 do.	40	-	104,000

10,000 Tickets. \$300,000

PRIZES ALL FLOATING.

First 1000 Blanks entitled \$10 each.

2 Prizes of \$5,000 floating from first day's drawing.

1 do.	5,000	floating from 5th do.
1 do.	5,000	do 7th do.
1 do.	10,000	do 10th do.
1 do.	10,000	do 15th do.
1 do.	40,000	do 17th do.

Prizes subject to a deduction of 15 per cent.

The drawing of 500 Tickets is called a Day's Drawing, and will re-

gulate that of the above Prizes.

The drawing will commence at the City of Washington, in the month of October next, positively, unless the sale of Tickets will allow it to be done sooner.

Cash will be promptly advanced for Prizes, at either of D. GILLESPIE'S United States' Lottery Offices, No. 114 Broadway, opposite the City Hotel, N. York; No. 11 South-Third, between Chesnut and Market Streets, Philadelphia; and Pennsylvania Avenue, City of Washington.

This splendid Lottery being under the authority of the U. States, and the Prizes all Floating as specified, offers the greatest inducements to venders and adventurers. As the Tickets can be sold in any part of the U. S. orders (post-paid), forwarded to the subscriber at either of the above Offices, from venders, associates, or individuals, for Tickets or Chances, will receive thankful and punctual attention, from
D. GILLESPIE.

N. B. Present Retail Price of Tickets \$35.

June 23, 1819.

52—1m.

Ad for a National Lottery. The Alabama Republican, August 19, 1819.

December 31st. This time, the property included only one full lot -- Lot 34 -- and parts of Lots 33, 37, and 38.

DEED of TRUST: JONES et Ux to POPE & HARRIS. The delay in filing the Deed, no doubt, was due to the fact that the endorsers of the three \$9,000 notes wanted guarantees to cover their own losses in case Irby could not pay. A Deed of Trust was signed by Irby and his wife, Mary S. Jones, on August 16, 1819 "for the purpose of securing the said securities

(Otey, Lewis and E. Jones) from being in any way injured or sustaining any loss thereby"

This Deed of Trust did not directly involve the Huntsville Inn, but listed as securities other real estate owned by Jones -- three quarter-sections of land (483.42 acres) in Madison County, and Huntsville Lots 25 and 26, plus two other unnumbered parcels of land in town. The Deed of Trust was delivered to the Trustees, Benjamin S. Pope and William

B. Harris, "on the day of its date," and also to the Court Clerk to be recorded, which was done on August 21st.

On January 1, 1820, Irby Jones placed a series of notices in **The Alabama Republican** requesting patrons to pay up their accounts at both Huntsville Inn and Bell Tavern, advising that the account books were kept upstairs at Huntsville Inn. Also, as of that date, ads appeared in the same papers notifying the public that Collin Bishop had rented Bell Tavern for the two succeeding years, and that "by the addition of ten or fifteen lodging rooms" it was "now rendered more commodious than any other in this place."

A Deed of Trust

Mortgages did not appear to be common in early Huntsville, although occasional reference was made to them in early deeds. In more common usage was the Deed of Trust.

As defined in **Black's Law Dictionary**, a deed of trust is "an instrument in use in some states, taking the place and serving the uses of a mortgage, by which legal title to real property is placed in one or more trustees, to secure the payment of a sum of money or the performance of other conditions. Though differing in form from a mortgage, it is essentially a security."

Ballantine's Law Dictionary further defines the difference between a deed of trust and a mortgage as "essentially one of form, the former being executed in favor of a disinterested third person as trustee, while the latter is executed directly to the creditor to be se-

cured."

Financial Struggles Continue

DEED of TRUST: IRBY JONES TO JOHN MCKINLEY. From the terms of a new Deed of Trust on Huntsville Inn itself, it appears that by February, 1820 Irby was able to pay John McKinley \$12,318 on the \$27,000 debt. Nevertheless, on February 9, 1820, Irby and Mary Jones signed another Deed of Trust, with Le Roy Pope and John Read as Trustees holding the D/T until the debt was paid to McKinley. The terms of this Indenture included two promissory notes: the first one for the sum of \$9,788 to be paid by May 10, 1821; the second note for \$4,894 due by May 10, 1822.

DEED of TRUST: IRBY JONES et Ux TO C. CHEATHAM. On the same date -- February 9th -- Irby and Mary signed yet another Deed of Trust, with Benjamin S. Pope and William B. Harris as Trustees for Christopher Cheatham. This D/T was for the Bell Tavern debt of \$7,527.90, originally stated in the Deed of Conveyance dated February 29, 1819. The endorsers for that original Bell Tavern promissory note were Walter Otey, Frederick Jones, Edwin Jones, and William Lewis -- three of whom had also endorsed the original notes for Huntsville Inn. Apparently, no money had been paid on the Bell Tavern note when this D/T was made.

Irby must have continued to struggle with finances, because on August 25, 1820, he placed a short and simple ad in **The Alabama Republican**:

Look at this!

The subscriber

wishes to sell either the HUNTSVILLE INN or the BELL TAVERN. --- Terms of sale will be made accommodating.

IRBY JONES

The ad was to run weekly for fifty weeks. Even if prospective buyers were interested, neither property was sold in the ensuing year. Both establishments continued doing business as usual. A September 15th ad for Mr. Chandler's Dancing Academy referred to "the elegant Ball-room of the Huntsville Inn."

Meanwhile, a former owner of Huntsville Inn, Neal B. Rose, became the proprietor of the Planters Hotel on Franklin Street, not far from the Inn.

As Irby tried to make ends meet, the situation must have seemed hopeless to his father, Nathan Jones. In fact, Father Jones stated in his will that as of January 1, 1821, his son Irby owed \$7,385 to his son Edwin; therefore, Irby's share of the inheritance would be deeded to Edwin.

Complications

Fate caught up with Irby when he was not able to make the payment due on Bell Tavern. The endorsers (W. Otey, F. Jones, E. Jones, and W. Lewis) requested Trustee Benjamin S. Pope to execute the terms of the Deed of Trust of February 9, 1820. So, on February 1, 1821, Pope proceeded to sell Bell Tavern to the highest bidder for ready money, the public auction having been advertised beforehand.

Walter Otey, being the highest bidder, became the

purchaser of the Tavern for the sum of \$1,012. But Walter Otey "departed this life without having obtained from said Trustee a deed of conveyance." This, indeed, presented complications for the Trustee and for the administrators of the Otey estate.

It took several years for the Bell Tavern matter to be settled. On December 29, 1823, the Alabama General Assembly passed an act authorizing the administrators of the Otey estate to sell the Bell Tavern property "for the payment of the debts due from said estate." It was March 3, 1825 when the administrators sold the property to Rodah Horton for \$4,425. And in May, Horton was advertising locally that Bell Tavern had been newly opened by Rodah Horton and John Otey.

One slight complication remained, however. The Deed to Bell Tavern never had been conveyed because of Walter Otey's untimely death. Benjamin Pope still held the Deed, after having executed the terms of the Deed of Trust.

In order to carry out the intention of the Act of the Assembly and the sale by the administrators, Pope agreed to convey the Deed of Bell Tavern to Rodah Horton. But it was not until November 7, 1826 that Pope conveyed the Deed to Horton "for and in consideration of the premises and the further consideration of one dollar to him (Pope) in hand paid."

Further Complications

Although the public auction of Bell Tavern in 1821 released Irby Jones from his debt to Christopher Cheatham,

Jones still would have had an obligation to his endorsers, who would have had to pay the difference between the amount of the promissory note and the lesser amount produced by the sale. And Huntsville Inn remained a problem, too.

DEED of TRUST: JONES TO P. & M. BANK. November 30, 1821 was the date of yet another Deed of Trust which allowed Irby Jones to retain possession of Huntsville Inn. This D/T to the Planters and Merchants Bank was more complicated than the previous one. Eldred Rawlins, Cashier of the P. & M. Bank (or his successor), was Trustee for the President, Directors and company of the Bank.

The terms of this Trust cancelled two prior promissory notes of Jones', totaling \$5,135 payable to the bank, and allowed him to sign two new promissory notes with later due-dates. The two new notes were for \$2,557 each, the first one payable to Edwin Jones and the second one payable to the P. & M. Bank. Both notes were due on January 30, 1822.

The complicated terms of this indenture covered not only the Huntsville Inn with its goods and chattels, but included two promissory notes that were payable to Jones. He assigned to Rawlins the authority to collect the monies due on the two notes: (1) "a note drawn by Henry C. Bradford and sold to Jones by Eldridge Robertson of Tennessee & originally payable to Egbert Harris on which judgement has been recovered against said Bradford in the Circuit Court of Madison County," and (2) "a note drawn by Egbert Harris payable to Henry Bradford and endorsed by him & by Purdom &

Pritchard, for \$4,690 or thereabouts & interest thereon at 5% per month." (Emphasis is Editor's!)

Jones also gave Rawlins full power to prosecute on his behalf any suit against any of the parties of the two notes, and to sue Eldridge Robertson for the recovery of the money to which Jones had become entitled.

The terms further noted that the real estate (Huntsville Inn, etc.) was subject to a lien described in a Deed of Trust from Jones and wife to McKinley, Pope, and Read, dated February 10, 1820. Therefore, the promissory notes payable to Jones, and the monies to be paid on them, were also subject to the lien.

Of course, if Irby failed to pay the bank by the promised date, a public sale could again be held by the Trustee. In that event, the proceeds were to go, first, to pay the expenses of executing the Trust; second, to satisfy Jones' debt to the bank; third, any balance, on request, could be paid to Jones or his lawful representative.

DEED of TRUST: IRBY JONES TO EDWIN JONES. By April 5, 1822, Irby was still trying valiantly to pay his debts. On that date, Irby and Mary signed still another Deed of Trust on the Huntsville Inn, this one to his ever-faithful brother Edwin. The Trustees were attorneys Alexander Erskine and Robert Fearn; a promissory note for \$7,753.56 was due June 1, 1822. This indenture was made to secure payment of money for the Huntsville Inn property. (It appears that Edwin must have paid a portion of Irby's debt that was

due to the P. & M. Bank in January, 1822.)

During the succeeding two and a half years, business at the Inn seemed to continue much as it always had, according to newspaper references to activities there. No further Deeds of Trust were recorded as being signed by Irby Jones; probably, he was able to make partial payments to show his good intentions.

Another Public Auction

Whether or not Irby managed to make small payments to the P. & M. Bank, the Bank decided to execute the terms of its Trust on Huntsville Inn. On November 27, 1824, the Court of Chancery appointed William H. Campbell as Trustee for the President, Directors, and company of the P. & M. Bank, as Complainants against Irby Jones, the Defendant. The Chancery Court further ordered Campbell to sell the Huntsville Inn Real Property at public auction, according to the stipulations in the Deed of Trust of November 30, 1821.

The boundary description was much the same as before: "It being the house and lots whereon the said Irby Jones now resides," including Lot 34 and parts of Lots 33, 37, and 38, with "all the houses, out houses, stables, and every part and parcel thereof

DEED: WM. H. CAMPBELL TO WM. SMITH. Ten days before Christmas, on December 15, 1824, the public auction was held at the Courthouse in Huntsville. William Smith of York District in South Carolina was the highest bidder, purchasing the Huntsville Inn property for \$3,200 "in hand

paid" to William Campbell, Trustee. However, the Deed of Conveyance was not drawn until March 12, 1825, the same day that it was signed, sealed, and delivered to Smith.

This is the same William Smith who in 1833 began construction of a grand mansion at the northeast corner of Eustis and Green Streets. After his death in 1840, the mansion would become known as the Calhoun House when it was the residence of his granddaughter, Mary Smith Calhoun, and her husband, Meredith Calhoun. (See HHQ, Spring/Summer 1983, "The Calhoun House" by Linda Bayer.)

Irrepressible Irby

With their second business and home sold out from under them, it is not clear exactly what became of Irby and Mary Jones. Newspaper ads indicate that they possibly stayed on at Huntsville Inn for a while, until William Smith could engage the proprietor of his choice to run the Inn for him.

There is no doubt that Huntsville Inn remained open for business during the transition of ownership. A notice in a September, 1825 **Southern Advocate** informs the public of a Tea Party to be held at Huntsville Inn that month. Toward the end of September, Irby started advertising "A FOUR HORSE HACK" for hire -- "apply at the Huntsville Inn to Irby Jones."

Irby seemed irrepressible in spite of his woes. He probably would have made an excellent advertising copywriter had he lived in the present era. At least, his newspaper ads were eye-

catching, as is obvious in this **Southern Advocate** ad dated December 23, 1825:

O YES! O YES!

ALL persons indebted to the Huntsville Inn must make payment by the first day of January next, or their accounts indiscriminately will be placed in the hands of an officer for collection.

IRBY JONES

Irby probably did not collect all of the money owed him, but perhaps he collected some of it. At this point, Irby's history (from newspapers and Deed Records) tapers off. A Deed Index indicates that he sold some real estate to Samuel Peete sometime between September, 1825 and March, 1827. Unfortunately, the ultimate fate of Irby and Mary Jones remains a mystery.

As Irby was trying to collect his debts that December of 1825, Huntsville Inn was under new management. An ad, signed anonymously "THE MANAGERS," advised that the Anniversary of the Victory of New Orleans would be celebrated at a MILITARY BALL at the Huntsville Inn on the 9th day of January next, with Subscription paper at the bar of the Inn.

Other Accommodations

Of course, other inns and taverns were in business in Huntsville at the same time as Huntsville Inn and Bell Tavern. In January, 1826, it was announced by A. T. Madera that the Madison Inn on Jefferson Street, "partly fronting the Bell Tavern," had enlarged its

accommodations. In a few years, the Madison Inn, like Bell Tavern, would undergo a name change. Being advertised in the **Southern Advocate** at the same time as Madison Inn was the Alabama Hotel, operated by Allen Cooper. It was located at the southwest corner of the Public square.

One of the earliest spas in the area must surely have been Chalybeate Springs. An ad in **The Democrat** of July, 1828 advised the public that P. G. Oliver had erected

To the Public.

THE public are hereby respectfully notified that a very excellent gap in the mountain, about three miles below the gap now made use of in crossing the Tennessee river at Ditto's Landing, having been lately cut out, the Subscriber feels himself warranted in informing the public, without fear of contradiction, that they can pass up and down the New Gap with the greatest ease imaginable. Good stock pens on each side of the river are prepared for the convenience of getting over stock— An excellent Ferry Boat fixed up for the same purpose, and cabins on each side of the river for the convenience of mavers. The subscriber pledges himself that the utmost attention to the interest of travellers will be paid them.

WM. LEEMON,

3 or 4 miles below Ditto's
Landing, Madison Co.

4th Dec. 1819.

12

This ad depicts another type of accomodation - mere shelter for the working man needing no amenities. **The Alabama Republican**, December 4, 1819.

buildings to receive guests visiting his springs on Flat Top Mountain, four and one-half miles east of Huntsville, with access by "a tolerable good carriage road from Huntsville to the Springs."

End of an Era

In the meantime, Huntsville Inn was being advertised as having new proprietors again, as of February, 1827: "The subscribers respectfully inform their friends and the public generally, that they have taken possession of the above establishment for the purpose of conducting a Public House.

...Several improvements have been made and are now making, calculated to render the house more comfortable. - BENOIT & ORRELL, Agents for JOHN PHILLIPS." It is unclear as to when and why John Phillips came into the picture, because William Smith still owned the Inn.

By May of 1828, Huntsville Inn was once more in the ads, this time as being "re-opened" by Innkeeper E. Benoit, Agent for William Smith. Not long after that, Smith decided to demolish the Inn so he could build another structure in its place.

It is not known exactly when Smith had the building torn down, but according to some research material for Linda Bayer's article, "The Calhoun House," an August, 1829 building contract Smith signed called for \$400 credit "for all the old bricks and stone that have been taken down or are yet to take down on the lot of said Smith on which said buildings will stand." Although the lot was not identified in the con-

tract, the wording strongly indicated that it might have been the Huntsville Inn lot on East Side Square.

It is a documented fact that a new building was constructed on the site of the old Inn. On September 4, 1830, John Martin, James Bradley, and James J. Pleasants deeded a parcel of land to William Smith. He paid them \$100 for part of a lot lying on East Side Square between the Storehouse of Martin, Bradley, and Pleasants and "the house lately built by the said William Smith - on the site of the late Huntsville Inn."

Thus came the end of the era of the popular Inn on the Public Square. It had been a favorite gathering place for more than twenty years and had provided shelter, food, and good cheer to all who had entered.

But, an establishment called Huntsville Inn continued in business at a different location. It was mentioned in a December, 1830 advertisement extolling a program of "Indian Dances, Back of the Huntsville Inn." No location other than that was given in **The Democrat**. Everyone knew where this new Huntsville Inn was, of course.

Presumably, the Inn was now under new ownership, or maybe another entrepreneur simply adopted the name. It would be several years before a newspaper ad gave a location for the new Huntsville Inn.

Hard Times

By early 1839, The Bolivar Hotel, "nearly opposite the Bell Tavern," was being advertised as having been

taken over by John P. Hawkins. That site, it will be remembered, was the location of the Madison Inn in 1826. And that same site, by 1842, had become the location of the Huntsville Inn.

In January of 1842, ads again appeared in **The Democrat** for Huntsville Inn: "William W. Edwards, having purchased of William Gaston his entire interest in the above named house, has formed a partnership with Britain Franks ... they will continue to keep Public Entertainment in the above mentioned house on Jefferson street, nearly opposite the Bell Tavern. ... Rates have been reduced."

An ad for Bell Tavern in the same issue of **The Democrat** also announced reduced rates "owing to continuance of hard times." For the ensuing year, George W. Hunt promised to "only charge One Hundred and Fifty Dollars for Board, payable in all cases Quarterly." Those reduced rates compare rather unfavorably with the rates posted in 1820 by the Planters Hotel.

Certainly, times had changed in those twenty-two years. The Huntsville Inn advertisements, which continued to be published for a while before tapering off, seemed to indicate that the Inn had lost its charm and popularity of former years.

Bell Tavern Endures

Bell Tavern, meanwhile, appeared to retain its original character. It had continued in business as usual during the years of so many changes at Huntsville Inn. However, Bell Tavern, too, had its share of changes in owners and proprietors.

In July, 1829, a Bell

Tavern ad stated that W. T. Caruthers and John Kinkle had entered a partnership in "keeping the Tavern House." By 1839, P. Yeatman advertised that he had purchased and taken possession of "this Establishment," and advised the public that: "All the Stages running to and from Huntsville, stop at the Bell Tavern, where the stage office is kept." And of course, the "hard times" of 1842 saw George W. Hunt reducing the Tavern's rates. In November of 1853, Z. P. Davis had leased the Bell Tavern.

Also, by 1853, the former Planters Hotel was known as the Franklin Hotel. It was still located at "the corner of Franklin and Gates streets, a few doors below the Public Square." Thomas Cain, the current proprietor, announced that he offered "as good accommodations as any house in this place, and on reasonable terms."

Burnt Out

Alexander Johnson was in possession of Bell Tavern when disaster struck in 1855. He had leased the stables of the Tavern to a Mr. Thomasson, while retaining ownership of the equipment -- the buggies, saddles, harnesses, etc. -- as well as retaining ownership of the tavern house, including the numerous lodging rooms and "The Owl" dining and bar facilities there. Shortly after Mr. Thomasson took over the stables, several buggies were "cut to pieces."

Soon thereafter, Bell Tavern was destroyed by fire. And Alexander Johnson was convinced that the fire, rather than being accidental,

was the work of an arsonist. He was also convinced that the stables would be next on the list to be torched, advising patrons to "come quick" while the stables still stood.

Although Johnson soon found other quarters nearby to house the Owl Refreshment

Rooms, plus a few lodging rooms for transients, it seems that the Bell Tavern of old was never to flourish again. In a short while, the new, modern Huntsville Hotel would dominate the block over which Bell Tavern had prevailed for so long.



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Volume E, pp. 168-169, 420-421, 424-426.

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Volume H, pp. 108-110, 208-210.

Volume I-J, pp. 356-357.

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BURNT OUT BUT STILL on HAND:

The undersigned has reopened the

OWL REFRESHMENT ROOMS

in the first Brick House on the same side below Schlack's Confectionary, and nearly opposite the Market House, where the best EATING, DRINKING and SMOKING that can be procured in this country may be had AT ALL HOURS. Also, Lodgings for a limited number of transient persons.

I avail myself of the present opportunity of returning my thanks to all who so kindly assisted me at the late fire, and sincerely hope that a similar opportunity of returning the appreciated favor may never present itself.

ALEX'R. JOHNSON.

May 23d, 1855

TAKE NOTICE

THAT the Agency for the BELL TAVERN LIVERY STABLE is kept at the "Owl Refreshment Rooms," where any quantity of Stable Room, Horses, Vehicles and Drivers may be procured.

As there were several Buggies cut to pieces immediately after Mr. Thomasson took possession of the Stable, and as the Bell Tavern was evidently burnt by an incendiary, it is a fair presumption that the next move will be to set fire to the Stable; so all hands that feel disposed to patronize us will please come quick, while we are prepared to receive company. When a Horse is sent to the Bell Tavern Stable to be fed he will be fed as a Horse should be.

ALEX'R. JOHNSON, Agent

May 23d, 1855

I DEEM it entirely unnecessary after my late misfortune to say to all hands indebted either at the Bar or Stable, to come forward immediately and settle up, as they are all aware that everything used at both places has to be bought and bought for cash. For further particulars call down and consult the "Owl."

A. J.

Huntsville, Ala., May 23d, 1855.



Hotel Twickenham, corner of Washington Street and Clinton Avenue. The Parking Garage is now on this site, but the block to the north has changed very little.

Huntsville's Old Hotels

by Joberta Wasson

Huntsville's old hotels were always exceptionally fine, on a par with many of the best in much larger cities. This was no happenstance. Even in its earlier years, Huntsville had two distinct advantages: it was on a major trade route between other cities, and it was a very pleasant place for a sojourn. According to old accounts, traveling salesmen planned their routes so that their longest stop-overs would be in Huntsville where they knew they would find

comfortable rooms, good food, and nice surroundings.

For people fortunate enough to live in Huntsville, there was another advantage. The hotels made marvelous centers for parties, club meetings, and dances; and Huntsvillians have always taken great pleasure in social gatherings. It is interesting to speculate that the hotels may help explain why. Perhaps because there was always a delightful place to gather, people just naturally socialized more often.

VERY EARLY INNS. We do not know exactly when the first tavern in the area was built. We do know there was one opened well before 1819 by George Russell on the Deposit Road south of New Hope, near the Tennessee River. This road had been opened by Andrew Jackson in 1813 during the Creek Indian Wars. It ran from Winchester, Tennessee through Madison County near the Three Forks of Flint River, and continued south across the Tennessee River to Fort Deposit, which Jackson established that same year in what is now Marshall County.

An inn which frequently attracted the famous Andrew Jackson as a visitor was the Green Bottom Inn, built in 1815. It was located several miles north of Huntsville on

what is now Highway 231, near Alabama A & M University. This unique establishment boasted an attraction not often found at hotels. It had a race track. John Connelly, the proprietor, loved horses and possessed the champion of the South, Gray Gander. General Jackson often brought his favorite horse to race against Gray Gander, but Gray Gander was never beaten by the General's, or anyone else's horse. James K. Polk was a visitor at the inn, also.

The Green Bottom Inn, after it ceased to be a tavern, became part of the A & M campus in 1891 and served for years as its president's home until it burned down in 1931.

The tavern and stage stop at neighboring Moores-



Green Bottom Inn where Andrew Jackson often stayed. It was located where Alabama A and M University is now. Built in 1815, burned in 1931.

ville in Limestone County is another local early inn. Deed records imply that the surviving structure was built between 1825 and 1828 by Griffin Lampkin. Besides being a popular stage stop, the Mooresville Tavern housed a post office. In 1819 an Act of Congress established a post road from Mooresville to Huntsville, authorized the Mooresville post office and delivery of mail between the two towns.

By the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1819, there were at least four inns within the town of Huntsville. One of these, a two-story frame building in the Federal style, is still standing and is now undergoing restoration. Originally, it was located at the corner of Franklin and Gates Streets, but was moved many years ago to the north side of Williams Avenue, between Franklin and Green Streets. This must, without a doubt, have been the Planters Hotel. (Editor's note: see "A New Tavern" advertisement on page 6.) Even now, after more than 160 years, this building

is sturdy and foursquare.

The most prestigious inn, however, must have been the Huntsville Inn on the east side of the Public Square. Notables usually stopped there. President James Monroe's arrival at the Huntsville Inn was probably the most disconcerting call a celebrity ever made at a Huntsville hotel. He registered there, utterly without warning, one day in early June, 1819. The efficient proprietor, Mr. Irby Jones, prepared a grand feast the next day, and after the proper dignitaries had been quickly invited, a memorable banquet ensued.

It seems a miracle that none of the taverns burned before 1850. In that year the Caldwell House, along with many other buildings, was destroyed by fire. In 1855, the Bell Tavern burned, too. After this second calamity, plans were made to construct a new hotel on the same site, a local corporation being formed for the purpose. Among its subscribers were Governor Reuben Chapman and Dr. Thomas Fearn.



Detail of box cornice of the Williams Avenue house undergoing restoration; believed to be the former Planters Hotel.



Artist's view of the Huntsville Hotel in the 1860's before an annex was added at right. Built 1858, burned 1910 and 1911.

HUNTSVILLE HOTEL. The forthcoming Huntsville Hotel became the town's first real luxury hostelry. Four stories high, with ornate iron-work trimming the facade, it was of neo-classic design. It occupied the northwest corner of Jefferson Street at the Public Square. The interior was furnished in what the media of the day described as a "tasty and elegant" style, part Moorish, part Louis XVII, part merely contemporary Victorian. For its time, this hotel must have been the epitome of elegance and comfort. It brought much pleasure to the townspeople as well as to travelers. Even during the Civil War and the dour reconstruction period, there were evenings of gaity, such as a

grand fancy dress Ball in June, 1866. Any financial woes it may have suffered were dissipated by - of all things - a health scare.

A veritable epidemic of yellow fever broke out in the South in the latter part of the nineteenth century. But, for inexplicable, if fortunate reasons, Huntsville never was affected. Scores of refugees from other towns, particularly Memphis, spent the dangerous summer months in Huntsville, many occupying the Huntsville Hotel.

For many years, the Huntsville Hotel remained a popular and elegant landmark. But it, too, eventually met the fate of its predecessor - destruction by two fires, one in 1910 and one in 1911.

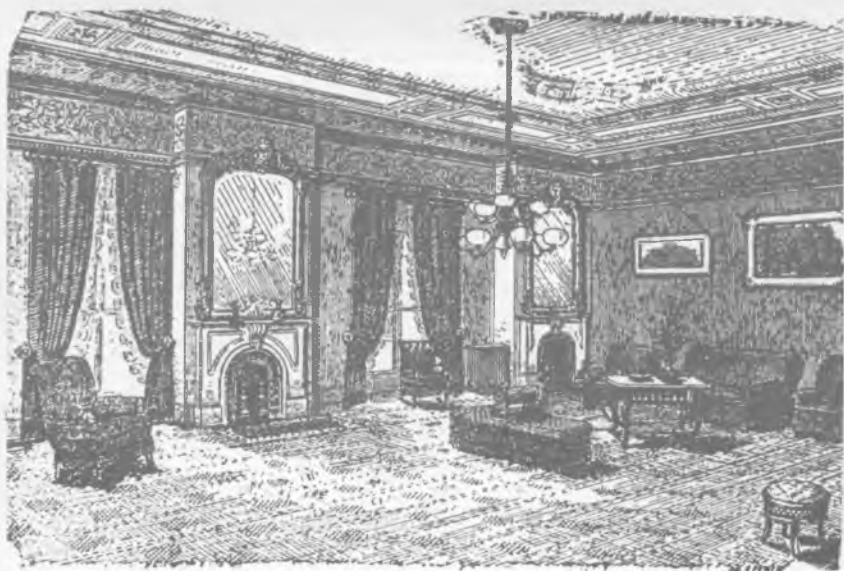


The Huntsville Hotel pictured between 1901 and 1908. Built on the site of the Bell Tavern at the northwest corner of the Square where the Henderson Bank Building is now located.



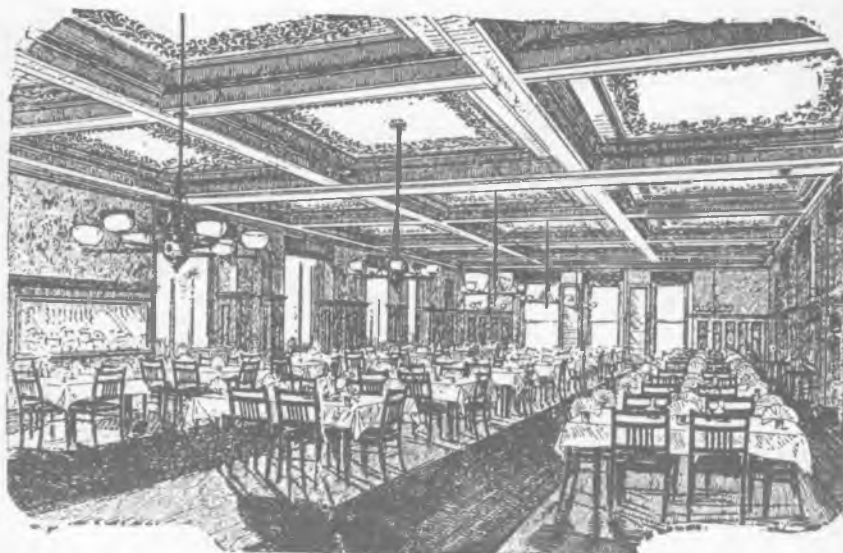
The Huntsville Hotel fire, November 11, 1911.





MAIN PARLOR HUNTSVILLE HOTEL.

Copied from **The Independent** newspaper, March 28, 1890.



DINING ROOM, HUNTSVILLE HOTEL.



The Huntsville Hotel Bar. Copied from **The Huntsville Post**, December 27, 1900.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

THE MONTE SANO HOTEL.

The yellow fever scare that helped increase business at the Huntsville Hotel was not without impact upon a corporation named the Huntsville and Monte Sano Improvement Company and upon its president, Mr. James O'Shaughnessy. This group was making plans for a resort hotel and health spa.

On June 1, 1887, Huntsville's most fabulous hotel of all time, the Monte Sano Hotel, opened its doors. Located on a bluff high atop Monte Sano Mountain, it afforded a panoramic view of the valley below. Healthful mineral springs bubbled nearby. The building itself, a rambling, five-story brown wooden structure with an encircling porch, was architecturally fashionable rather than beautiful. But inside,

luxurious furnishings, impeccable service, and gourmet dining made The Monte Sano the acme of perfection.

All manner of delightful diversions - music and dancing every night, parties, excursions, and games during the day - enlivened the scene. The ever-bubbling mineral springs provided the guests with healthful potions for "taking the waters", which was all the rage during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Almost immediately, The Monte Sano became one of the leading spas of the nation. By August, it had registered more than a thousand guests. In its heyday, names such as William H. Vanderbilt, William Waldorf Astor, and Jay Gould appeared upon its register.

Business continued brisk

through the next decade, except for a few seasons when it did not open at all. Then, suddenly, after a successful season in 1900, it ceased operations. Why?

One problem seems to have been transportation. The road up the mountain had fallen into disrepair. The little railroad spur, running between the train station and the hotel, closed down after a wreck frightened off passengers, even though there had been no injuries. But surely the carriage road could have been repaired! Something else had to have gone wrong, but exactly what remains a mystery. By the summer of 1901, cattle and hogs were running at large on the unkempt hotel grounds.

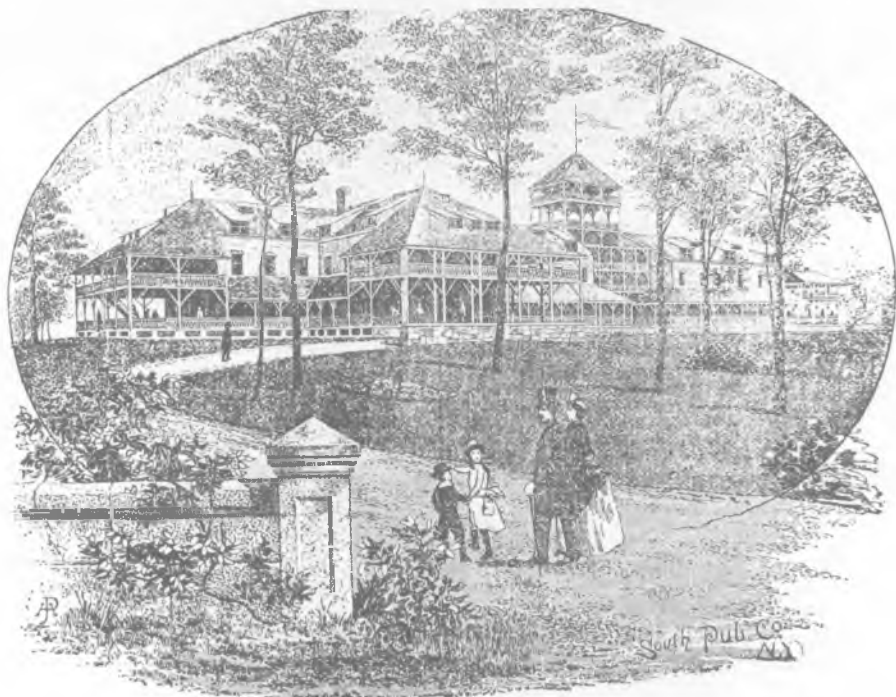
During the next few years, several futile attempts were made to improve transportation up the mountain. A suggestion to

turn the hotel into a tuberculosis sanitarium was disregarded. In 1909, the hotel was sold to Lena Garth and her father, Horace Garth, for a summer home. They paid \$20,000 for grounds, buildings, and contents. But this was not the end of the Monte Sano story. Not quite.

In November of 1916, banner headlines in the local newspapers declared that the Monte Sano resort was being prepared for a reopening on a grander scale than ever before. It was to be transformed into a country club. What's more, it was to be one of the largest and most select clubs in the nation, with all manner of activities available. A golf course was to be constructed; there would be tennis and fishing; a celebrated pack of fox hounds would be maintained for fox hunting; there would be a stable of horses; and,



Hotel Monte Sano, front entrance at right. Built 1887, demolished 1944.



Hotel Monte Sano, front view. Copied from **The Independent**, April 25, 1890.

for indoor pursuits, bowling, billiards, and dancing. The club was to remain open all year round, and there would be rooms available for overnight guests.

A key man in this project was Mr. Alan Jemison of the Jemison Real Estate Company of Birmingham. (The firm is still in existence.) He presented the concept to the city council with a request for free water. (**The Democrat**, November 8, 1916). A date for the opening was set most positively as January 1.

Stockholders in the enterprise were sought, and two campaign directors were hired

to solicit money for needed improvements. (**Mercury**, May 30, 1917). The Garths had apparently leased the property, as there is no record of a sale.

There was no January 1 opening, but work on new plumbing and electrical wiring got underway early in 1917. A May 1917 issue of **The Democrat** states that jolly parties from nearby cities bent on spending the heated term in this natural refrigerator would soon be welcome.

Statements concerning the accessibility of the mountain to downtown Huntsville were extremely san-



Hotel Monte Sano, back view, April 1927.

guine, though. The grounds could be reached within fifteen minutes, said the ads, because the hotel was just three miles from the center of town.

The Democrat for April 11, 1917, says that the materials for the road repairs had come, and everything would be shipshape soon.

"All that needs to be done is to raise twenty-five thousand dollars."

The club did actually open on an informal basis, Sunday, June 24, 1917. The manager, Mr. Harvey Hughes, said there would be music and dancing every afternoon and evening. Light lunches would be served. There would be a

Parlor, Hotel Monte Sano, June 1897.





Hotel Monte Sano Lobby, 1890.

Hotel Monte Sano Dining Room, 1890.



formal opening later, after the improvements were completed, he declared.

An article by Tracy Pratt, written that same year, (*The Democrat*, April 18, 1917), speaks of the new country club as one of Huntsville's prime assets (as it certainly would have been if it had become firmly established). Unfortunately, this was a war year. People were buying war bonds instead of investing in country clubs. The twenty-five thousand dollars needed for improvements did not materialize. Few visitors cared enough about the music and dancing and light lunches to brave the rough, rutted, unrepaired roads. Only a bird could have covered the distance in fifteen minutes. There never was a formal opening. The

property reverted to the Garths, who owned it until the building was sold for salvage in 1944 and was torn down.

In the meantime, in downtown Huntsville, calamity had struck again. The main building of the Huntsville Hotel burned in November, 1910, except for a few rooms. (One traveling salesman slept peacefully through the fire, arose at seven, dressed, and stepped into the hall to find himself in a charred ruin. He exited by way of a skylight). In 1911, the annex burned, too.

MCGEE HOTEL. The only leading hotel left in town was the McGee, a small, though charming, family-style establishment. It had been built in 1869 and was located on the present site of the



The McGee Hotel. Copied from the *Mercury*, June 15, 1892. Built 1869, burned Christmas day 1924.



Hotel
Twickenham,
Clinton Avenue
view.
Built 1914,
demolished
1975.

Terry-Hutchens Building on Jefferson Street. Its facade was lovely, with a wrought iron balcony overlooking the street, and ornamental gables over all the windows.

Transients may have had trouble finding enough rooms during this time, but the townspeople enjoyed the usual dances and parties and

dinners there. The small ballroom was large enough to accommodate the tango and the two-step. The Study Circle, a ladies' club organized at the McGee in 1909, is still active and is, this very year, celebrating its 75th anniversary.

The McGee suffered the same fate as so many of its



The old City Hall and City Market occupied the southwest corner of Washington Street and Clinton Avenue before the Twickenham Hotel was built there.



Groundbreaking for the Hotel Twickenham, April 23, 1914.

predecessors. It burned to the ground on Christmas day in 1924. But, it did not serve as Huntsville's prime entertainment center as long as 1924, anyway. A new hotel, the Twickenham, had already superseded the McGee.

TWICKENHAM HOTEL. Plans for the Twickenham aroused the interest of the townspeople to a high pitch. Even the groundbreaking ceremony was charged with excitement. On the appointed day, April 1, 1914, all stores suspended business from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. The schools closed at noon. Brass bands played. Dignitaries made speeches. Then, at the climax of the festivities, at 1:45, one of Huntsville's loveliest belles, Elizabeth Cooper

(Mastin), surrounded by a bevy of pretty maids of honor, broke ground with a golden spade. Exactly at 2:00, all the factories in town blew prolonged blasts on their whistles, simultaneously. What a send-off!

The sturdy building which was subsequently constructed on the southwest corner of Washington and Holmes Streets was fireproof, a first for a Huntsville Hotel.

In March, 1915, invitations to a grand opening celebration banquet went out to almost everybody in town. The manager, Mr. Quincy Love, greeted guests at the door. Mr. John Scott, the florist, had decorated with masses of flowers, many of them well-

wishers' gifts, such as a horseshoe done in roses, ferns and carnations, signifying success. The dinner menu included, among the more exotic dishes, green sea turtle and braised sweetbreads.

The Twickenham, with a fine ballroom and party rooms, met the townspeople's highest expectations, but Mr. Love had no intention of letting it be a mere social center. Under his efficient management, it won recognition as the best American-plan hotel in Alabama. (*Times*, June 28, 1925). It became a favorite with honeymooners, as well as businessmen.

Mr. Love, himself, deserves more than passing attention. He was one of the most interesting personages ever associated with Huntsville hotel life. Abrupt and gruff in manner, intolerant of careless or foolish behavior, uncompromisingly honest; it is not surprising that he was highly respected, but somewhat surprising that he was very well liked, too.

A 1917 *Times* ran an announcement for him which is typical of the man. It concerns a Red Cross banquet for which he had received 125 reservations. He says, in effect, that he is expecting exactly 125 to attend, not 124 or 126. Also, he expects the 125 to all be on time.

Mr. Love's untimely death in 1925 dealt a blow to the Twickenham from which it never recovered. His wife managed it for awhile, and then his son, Quincy, Jr., but never with his success. However, even after the new Russel Erskine Hotel was built in 1929, it continued to be popular for small



Demolition of the old Twickenham Hotel to make room for a new city parking garage; June 2, 1975.

parties and dances. Many Huntsville ladies recall fondly the Saturday night USO dances which were held there to entertain the servicemen during World War II.

The Twickenham was closed to guests in 1971 and served as a Senior Center for several years before being torn down to make way for a parking garage.

YARBROUGH HOTEL. The Yarbrough, which opened in 1924, was a commercial hotel without a ballroom or party rooms. Four stories high, with eighty rooms, it catered to businessmen. The capable Mr. J. D. Smith managed it successfully for many years, but it finally closed when motels became established. It is still standing on the Southwest corner of Washington and Clinton Streets, presently undergoing renovation.



The Yarbrough Hotel at the corner of Washington Street and Holmes Avenue was built in 1924 as a strictly commercial hotel. It is presently undergoing renovation.



Built in 1930, the Hotel Russel Erskine on Clinton Avenue is now an apartment building for the elderly and the handicapped.

RUSSEL ERSKINE HOTEL.

The last of the fine hotels, the Russel Erskine, could not have been built at a worse time. It opened in January, 1930, just as the Great Depression began. A corporate group had started plans for its construction back in 1927. The name "Russel Erskine" was a deliberate ploy to entice a hometown boy who had made good to invest in the project. Mr. Russel Erskine, the highly successful president of the Studebaker Corporation, was a Huntsville native. He did invest, but meagerly.

Indeed, the hotel did not turn a profit until the beginning of World War II, and was kept solvent largely through the efforts of Mr. Lawrence Goldsmith, its principal stockholder. De-

spite its problems, the twelve-story structure was considered the finest hotel in North Alabama from its very first years. It dominated Huntsville's social life as "The Hotel" until the mid 1960's.

One businessman wrote an unsolicited letter of appreciation at the end of its first year, saying he traveled a great deal and always selected one outstanding hotel each year to compliment.

"This year," he wrote, "the palm goes to the Russel Erskine. This is not a provincial tribute. My assignments took me to fifteen states." (Daily Times, January 4, 1931).

In the late 1960's, when new motels were plentiful on

outlying roads and businesses were leaving the downtown area, the Russel Erskine lost patronage because of its inconvenient location and poor parking facilities. It closed in March, 1971, a few weeks after the Twickenham ceased operation.

Several attempts to revive it have failed. It has now been recycled into a highrise apartment complex for the elderly and disabled.

So all of the old hotels are gone, as such. We may think of them with nostalgia now and then, but the new motel-hotels which have replaced them serve our present needs better. The motels' chapter in history will be written some time in the future.



Russel Erskine Hotel Lobby. At left is doorway to Ballroom; electric wall-fans are between the windows.



Ballroom of the Russel Erskine Hotel - an Elks Club meeting.

Sources:

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Weekly Argus

Weekly Democrat

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Reminders of
THE GOOD OLD DAYS

You are cordially invited
to attend the
Formal
Opening and Ball
of
Hotel Russel Erskine
on Friday Evening
January the Third
Nineteen Hundred and Thirty
9 o'clock
Huntsville, Alabama

.....MENU.....

Oyster Soup

Celery Lettuce Olives
Mixed Pickles Chow Chow

FISH

Baked Pickerel—Butter Sauce

ROASTS

Prime Beef, Demi Glace
Turkey—Sage Dressing, Cranberry Sauce

BROILED

Saddle of Venison, Current Jelly
Haunch of Bear, Brown Gravy

Cherry Junc

ENTREES

Pineapple Fritters—Brandy Sauce
Frog Legs—Tartar Sauce

Corn Bread Butter Milk
Chicken Salad Oyster Patties
Asparagus Tips on Toast

VEGETABLES

Mashed Potatoes Stewed Tomatoes
Egg Plants in Batter
Sugar Corn Candied Yams

DESSERT

Mince Pie Pumpkin Pie
Plum Pudding—Brandy Sauce
Peach Ice Cream Assorted Cake
Charlotte Russe Fruit
Mixed Nuts and Raisins
American Cheese Edam Cheese Flake Crackers
Tea Coffee Milk

FRUITS, ETC.

Grapefruit Juice	10c; 20c; 25c	Orange Juice	10c; 20c; 25c
Baked Apple with Milk	15c	Tomato Juice	10c; 20c; 25c
Baked Apple with Pure Cream	25c	Fruit Salad	25c
		Half Grapefruit	15c

TOAST AND CEREALS

Dry or Buttered Toast	10c	Oatmeal, Cream	20c
Milk Toast	25c	Oatmeal, Milk	15c
French Toast	30c	Grape Nuts	15c
Cakes and Coffee	25c	Corn Flakes	15c
Doughnuts	10c	Bran, Post's or Kelloggs', with Cream 20c; Milk	15c

SOUPS TO ORDER

Chicken	15c	Vegetable	15c
Tomato	15c	Chili Con Carne	20c

STEAKS, CHOPS, ETC.

Sirloin Steak	1.00	Lamb Chops	45c
Small T-Bone Steak	75c	Veal Chops	45c
Club Steak	50c	Fried Ham or Bacon	40c
T-Bone Steak	1.25	Fried Onions with the above orders	15c
Porterhouse Steak	1.25	Mushrooms	20c
Beef Tenderloin Steak	75c	Breaded, extra	20c
Pork Tenderloin	50c	Tomato or Spanish Sauce, extra	20c
Hamburger Steak	40c		
Pork Chops	50c		
Veal Cutlets	40c		

EGGS AND OMELETTES

Two Eggs Fried or Boiled	25c	Plain Omelette	25c
Three Eggs Fried or Boiled	30c	Onion Omelette	30c
Two Poached Eggs on Toast	30c	Tomato Omelette	30c
Three Poached Eggs on Toast	35c	Bacon or Ham Omelette	40c
Ham & Eggs	40c	Cheese Omelette	35c
Bacon and Eggs	40c	Spanish Omelette	45c
Minced Ham and Scrambled Eggs	45c	Mushroom Omelette	50c
		Jelly Omelette	35c

SALADS

Chicken Salad	35c	Sliced Tomatoes	20c
Lobster	50c	Sliced Cucumbers	20c
Salmon Salad	25c	Head Lettuce	20c
Combination Salad	25c	Celery	25c

Hotel Twickenham Cafe Menu - November 2, 1941.

Fare

SANDWICHES

Boiled Ham.....	20c	Cold Chicken Sandwich.....	20c
Fried Ham or Bacon.....	20c	Cold Tongue Sandwich.....	20c
Ham or Bacon and Egg.....	20c	Roast Beef Sandwich.....	15c
Denver Sandwich.....	20c	Imported Sardine Sandwich.....	25c
Egg Sandwich.....	10c	Swiss Cheese Sandwich.....	10c
American Cheese Sandwich.....	15c	Hamburger Sandwich.....	15c
Pork Chop Sandwich.....	20c	Hot Roast Beef Sandwich.....	20c
Club House Sandwich.....	40c	Steak Sandwich.....	25c
Roast Pork Sandwich.....	20c		

OYSTERS IN SEASON

Half Dozen Stewed.....	30c	Half Dozen Fried.....	40c
Dozen Stewed.....	50c	Half Dozen Raw.....	30c

DRINKS

Coffee, Cup 5c; Pot.....	10c	Buttermilk.....	05c
Hot Tea, Cup 5c; Pot.....	10c	Ice Tea, Small 5c; Large.....	10c
Sweet Milk, Small.....	10c	Postum, Cup.....	10c
Sweet Milk, Large.....	15c	Pure Cream, Glass.....	25c

COCKTAILS

Shrimp.....	20c	Pineapple Juice.....	15c
Oyster.....	20c	Sauer Kraut Juice.....	10c
Assorted Fruit.....	20c	Orange Juice.....	10c
Tomato Juice.....	10c	Lemonade.....	15c
Grapefruit.....	15c		

DESSERT

Stewed Prunes.....	10c	Home Made Pies Slice.....	10c
Ice Cream.....	15c	Cake.....	10c

DRINKS

Whiskey & Gin	Min.	1/2 Pt.	Whiskey & Gin	Min.	1/2 Pt.	Wine	
Old Grand-Dad	.35	1.40	Barclay Select	.20	.65	Budweiser Beer	.16
Canadian Club	.35	1.40	Glenmore	.20	.70	Schlitz	.16
Royal Banquet Sc.	.35		Mattingly-Moore	.25	.80	Cooks	.11
Paul Jones	.25	.80	Spot Bott's	.20	.70	Sterling	.11
Four Roses	.30	1.10	Treasurer Hill	.15	.60	Red Top	.11
Seagram 7-Crown	.30	1.00	Mint Spring	.15	.60	Burger Ale	.11
Seagram 5-Crown	.25	.80	Green River	.15	.60	Chevy Ale	.11
Calvert Special	.25	.80	Three Feathers	.20	.70	Goble	.10
Calvert Reserve	.30	1.00	Hiram Walker Gin	.20	.60		
Barclay G. Label	.25	.80	Mr. Boston Gin	.20	.60		
Mr. Boston	.25	.75					

DINNE D=LUXE

 MENU 

COCKTAILS

FRESH OYSTER-----FRESH SHRIMP

SOUPS

SPLIT PEA-----CREAM OF PEANUT BUTTER

ENTRIES

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. WESTERN T-BONE STEAK & POTATOES----- | \$1.00 |
| 2. CHOICE GRILLED SIRLOIN STEAK----- | .85 |
| 3. FILA MIBION STEAK--MUSHROOM S.UCE---- | .85 |
| 4. TWO CHOICE VEAL CHOPS----- | .75 |
| 5. GRILLED K.C. CLUB STEAK----- | .75 |

VEGETABLES

TURNIP GREENS-----BAKED SWEET POTATO
 COLE SLAW-----LIMA BEAN
 ASPARAGUS TIPS-----SNOW FLAKE POTATO
 .80¢ SPECIAL

ROAST BEEF WITH BROWN GRAVY
 ROAST LEG OF LAMB WITH MINT JELLY
 SOUTHERN STYLE ROAST BEEF HASH
 CALF'S LIVER WITH PARSNIP BACON
 GRILLED SPANISH MACKRELL-----MELTED BUTTER

SALADS

PINEAPPLE & APPLE-----LETTUCE AND TOMATO
 COMBINATION-----PEAR WITH COTTAGE CHEESE

DESSERTS

CHEERY COBBLER-----COCONUT PIE-----ICE CREAM
 SOUP TWO VEGETABLES SALAD DESSERT ON DINNER

"See America First"

Specials of the Day Menu clipped on the Hotel
 Twickenham Cafe Menu, November 2, 1941.

FOUL BIRDS DISAPPEAR

FROM "CUCKOOS' NESTS"

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article, giving a different view of Huntsville in the early twentieth century, was copied from THE WEEKLY TIMES of June 8, 1916.

In official circles this afternoon it is stated that the foul birds have flown from the Cuckoo's nest in Blounts' alley and along the spring branch.

At 12 o'clock last night the time limit was up as fired by the Sheriff and police departments, for the closing of the red light "districts".

Officers report that the "girls" began to leave on the outgoing trains yesterday and the last bunch pulled out on the Memphis Special this morning.

Several of the former inmates of the district said they were leaving for all time, while a few of them left word that they might be back within a few weeks and establish headquarters in the neighborhood of the brickyard community. A howl has already been heard from that section and they will not be permitted to stop there or any other part of the city. The officers of the law will see to this; for the great bar of publicity is behind them.

Most of the Madammes are still here but they promise strict observance of the law and some of them will disappear altogether as soon as

they can dispose of their furniture, etc.

The new Battle house with large barny bungalow effect is among the lonesome propositions on Blount's alley; and so it begins to look like good people and the new high school are to be saved from the stigma of disgrace.

The Pastors Union and the city, county and state officials are determined that this evil on society shall never be permitted to return with official winking and blinking to Huntsville, where public moral sentiment is so strong that it will not be tolerated at all. Here grand jury indictments, arrests, fines, jail, mine, road and penitentiary sentences await the women who would dare flaunt indecency in the face of our good people again.

Carrying out the fiat, officers this afternoon stated that they will now wage war against the common street walker and will see to it, too, that the men (get) what is coming to them. There is to be no two standards of morals. The men are to be brought to taugh, (sic) exposed and a general cleaning up of the town and county made to stand four square.



A 1905 group photo taken in a hotel lobby, possibly the McGee or Huntsville Hotel.

from

Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc.

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