

*Two Dollars*

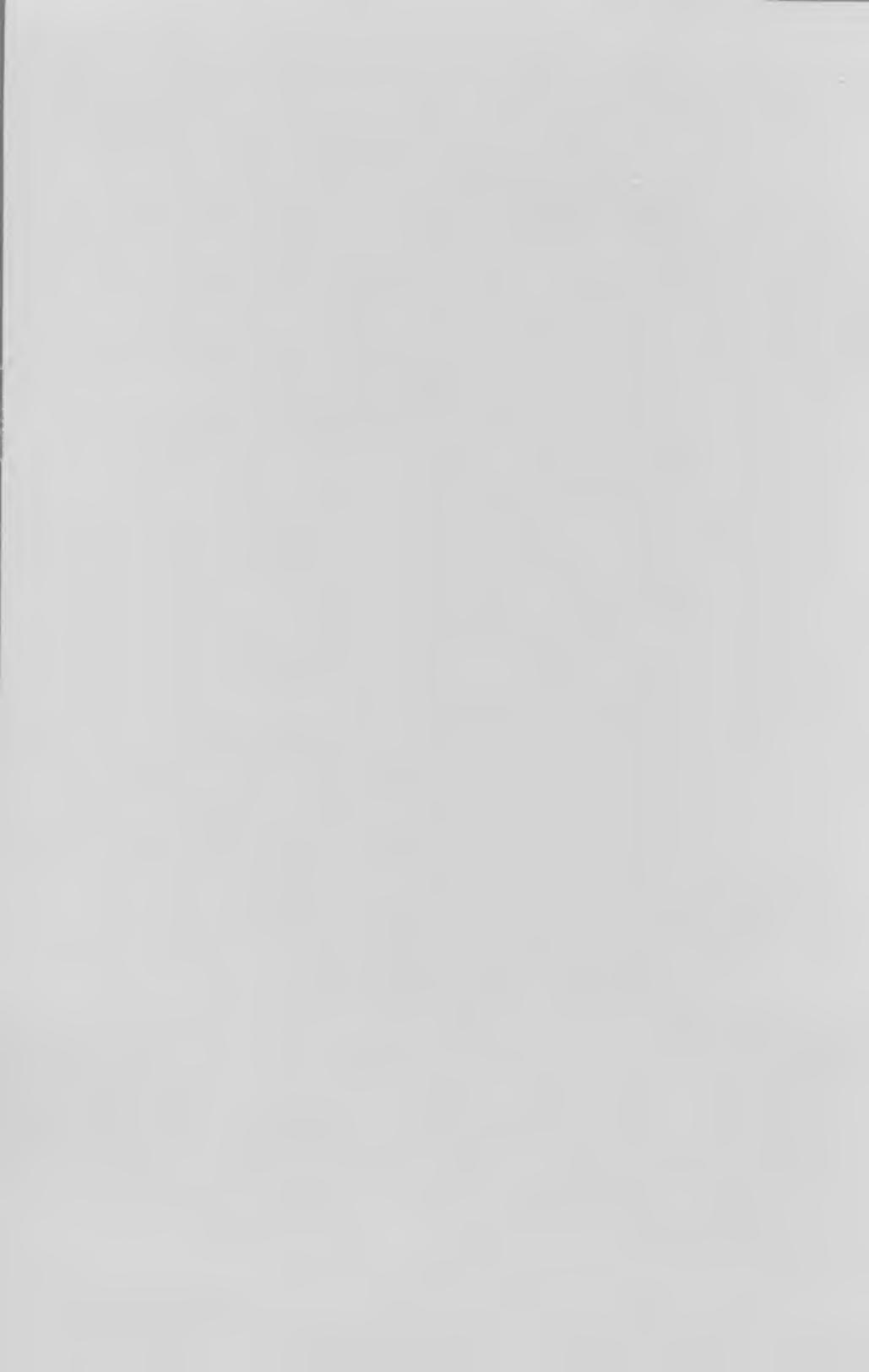


*Fall/Winter*

*1988-89*

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE  
QUARTERLY

of Local Architecture and Preservation



# THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY

of Local Architecture and Preservation

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#### **COVER:**

Architect George Steele designed the first mausoleum erected in Maple Hill Cemetery - that of Mary Chambers Bibb (1816-1835). She was a young bride who died three months after her marriage to William D. Bibb, son of Governor Thomas Bibb. The Greek Revival mausoleum is sealed on all four sides, and the legend persists that she was entombed sitting in a rocking chair.

#### **PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS:**

Micky Maroney: Cover; pp. 4, 6-14, 18, 19.

From the brochure of Maple Hill Cemetery, published by the Twickenham Woman's Club; artwork and research by Louise Marsh and Minnie Marie Hedden, with map drafting assistance from Linda Bayer: pp. 2, 16, 17.

From the **Montesanon 1925**, (yearbook of Huntsville College/Wills-Taylor School): p. 22.

# Maple Hill Cemetery

by Joberta Wasson

On September 3, 1818, the City of Huntsville paid LeRoy Pope \$75.00 for a two acre plot of land to be used as a community burial ground. So began Maple Hill Cemetery on what is now its northwest corner. It has grown to encompass over one hundred acres.

An eerie and enthralling historical tour awaits those who browse among its towering trees and along its carriage lanes. Here lie five governors of Alabama, business and professional leaders, military men, and many other individuals who, though obscure, led fascinating lives. Maple Hill was registered by the Alabama Historical Association in 1962.

A civic group, the Twickenham Woman's Club, has made it easy to locate many points of interest in Maple Hill. Talented members have drawn a map which pinpoints them and gives short descriptive material. (The map, in brochure form, is available at the cemetery office.)

The best place to start a historic tour is at an unmarked grave on the north side of the main gate. Here lies a gypsy queen. She fell ill and died while the

gypsy tribe was encamped in Huntsville many years ago. Curious onlookers say that the funeral rites lasted far into the night. Mourners danced and sang around her grave, alternately pouring wine on it and imbibing, themselves.

Then, if we walk north along the west wall to a tombstone in the shape of a cross, we will see - literally - another gypsy. Her portrait is on her marker; handsome, dark-eyed Lena Mitchell's (1906-1959) face fits her profession - that of a fortune teller.

A few feet northeast a small stone between two tall shafts designates the grave of Jeremiah Clemens (1814-1865), Mark Twain's cousin. A Huntsville native, he was something of a writer himself, being the author of four romantic novels. But primarily, Jeremiah was a man of action. A hero of the Mexican War, he was elected Brigadier General of the Alabama militia when Alabama seceded from the Union. This honor displeased him, however, because he was opposed to secession. He resigned and bravely endured the shame of being called an "arch traitor." He died of pneumo-



The inscription on an ornate monument of twin fluted columns topped by urns hints at an intriguing story: "The Sisters" - "Mary E. Wright, wife of J.M. Wright; born in Nelson County, Va., Dec. 6, 1822; died at her sister's in Huntsville, June 7, 1855;" and "Margaret C. Moore, wife of Wm. H. Moore; born in Nelson County, Va., April 27, 1825; died at Oakwood, Huntsville, April 12, 1859."

The two obelisks in the background offer another brief history: "To the memory of Mary E., wife of Egbert J. Jones, who was born in Huntsville, Jan. 15, 1832, was married June 8, 1854, and died April 7, 1855;" and "Egbert J. Jones; an honored member of the Ala. Bar. Col. of the 4th Ala. Regiment; died at Orange Court House, Va. Sept. 1, 1861 of wounds received July 21, 1861 in First Battle of Manassas."

nia, a comparatively young man. (His home still stands at the corner of Clinton Avenue and Gallatin Street, now owned by Huntsville Utilities and used as offices.)

Nearby is the grave of Anne Bradshaw Clopton (1878-1956). As a little girl, she read about a German artist who painted on cobwebs. If he could do that, so can I, she told herself. She did indeed master the art and became famous. One of her works hangs in the Smithsonian Institution. The Burritt Museum here in Huntsville has many more.

To find Governor Robert Patton's (1809-1885) gravesite, we must go to the first carriage lane leading north. An enlightened statesman, he served during some difficult years, just before and immediately following the Civil War. He was ousted by the Reconstruction Act.

The Patton family plot has a singular beauty. In the spring tulips and daffodils nod brightly among the confederate violets and forget-me-nots which grow wild all over the cemetery. Blooming almost year-round are shrubs which were planted fairly recently. It seems that a few years ago an attractive young lady, a newcomer to Huntsville, visited this plot. She saw there the grave of one of the Governor's sons who had been a soldier of the Confederacy. As his marker attests, he had been killed at the battle of Shiloh. The young lady, reading the inscription, was overcome with a powerful feeling that she had known

this boy long ago. She was convinced that she had once been a nurse at Shiloh in a previous incarnation and had tended the fatally wounded boy. Now she felt he wanted her to beautify the neglected family plot. For more than a year she came, almost every sunny day, to plant, tend, and water. She has gone now but has left a legacy of beauty.

Across the lane from the Patton plot rests infamous Governor David Peter Lewis (1820-1884), in office during the carpetbag regime. He is said to have been greedy and devious. The story is told of how he sent out pleas for help for victims of a flood. Many kind souls sent food, clothing and money, but - there was no flood.

Continuing our stroll, we see the tall red granite cross which marks the grave of Governor Reuben Chapman (1799-1882). He was a state legislator and United States congressman as well as governor (1847-1849). In the Chapman family plot one headstone bears only the name "Mammy." The family had refused to obey an ordinance forbidding the interment of Negroes in Maple Hill.<sup>3</sup> "She was our beloved nurse and one of our family and she stays with us." (Governor Chapman's home is located at 2404 Gaboury Lane.)

Just northeast of the Chapman plot, a Celtic cross marks the grave of LeRoy Pope Walker (1817-1884). Walker, as Confederate Secretary of War under Jefferson Davis, triggered the start of the Civil War by ordering Fort



The tombstone of LeRoy Pope Walker (1817-1884). He was a lawyer, state legislator, and first Secretary of War of the Confederate States of America. His grandfather was LeRoy Pope.

Sumpter in South Carolina to be fired upon. (Walker's home is located at 413 McClung Avenue.)

An imposing monument designates the grave of Thomas Bibb (1782-1839), Alabama's second governor. He was president of the first state senate, among other accomplishments. Governor Bibb has become the subject of one of the ghost stories in which all cemeteries seem to abound. He had passed away at the family home, Belle Mina in Limestone County, and was laid to rest there. Some twenty years later the body was exhumed and reinterred in Maple Hill. It is said that the governor tries unceasingly to find his way back home. At dusk,

especially on rainy evenings, a black hearse pulled by six black horses can be seen along the carriage lane, Governor Bibb seated within.

(Governor Bibb built a splendid Greek Revival home in Huntsville for his daughter Adeline Bibb Bradley. This home is at 300 Williams Avenue.)

A handsome monument topped by an urn memorializes Dr. David Moore (1787-1845). He was a true Renaissance man - planter, state legislator, friend, and personal physician to Andrew Jackson. He served on Jackson's medical staff during the Creek Indian Wars. And "he found the golden fleece hanging from the cotton stalk," ac-



The marker of Dr. David Moore (1787-1845), who was a physician, planter, state legislator, friend and personal physician to Andrew Jackson. In 1815 Dr. Moore was one of the town trustees to whom LeRoy Pope deeded thirty acres for the town of Huntsville.

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According to a local newspaper, the **Weekly Democrat**. He died a rich man, but a generous man, as well.

Near the north wall, encompassed in an iron fence, is the family plot of another versatile and brilliant man, Dr. Thomas Fearn (1789-1863). He, too, served in the Creek Indian Wars. Business man and public servant, state legislator and trustee of the University of Alabama, he, too, holds an important place in the history of Huntsville.

His greatest contribution, however, was as a physician. He pioneered the use of quinine in the treatment of malaria. The recipient of many honors, he was well-known internationally but was always homeward-bound - the father of seven motherless daughters. (Dr. Fearn and his family lived at 517 Franklin Street.)

A DAR marker honors Albert Russel (1755-1818) who served seven years as a Revolutionary War soldier.



This obelisk is in memory of William Robinson (1808-1852) and his family. Robinson was a planter and sheriff (1840-1843) of Madison County. His widow built Quietdale, the mansion he had designed and gathered materials for prior to his untimely death.

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Near the Civil War Veterans Monument lies William Robinson (1808-1852), high sheriff of Madison County. He designed a plan and gathered the materials for a mansion to be called "Quietdale" but did not live to enjoy it. His widow built the home exactly as he had specified, even to the witches glass at the front door. (Quietdale is located at 401 Quietdale Drive.)

A strange legend is connected with Mary Chambers

Bibb, a young bride who died in 1835 at the age of nineteen. She is interred in a mausoleum which is completely sealed on all sides. [See cover photo.] The legend has it that she is inside, sitting upright in a rocking chair. Her wedding, to Governor Bibb's son, was to have been a very gala affair. Her wedding dress had come all the way from Paris. At that time the fashion was for young ladies to have very pale complexions. Because her face was not as white as she



A simple, unadorned marker indicates the resting place of George Gilliam Steele (1798-1855), one of Huntsville's most noted architects and builders.

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wished, she dosed herself on what was a very common, but very dangerous, remedy - arsenic. Unfortunately, she used too much. Just three months after her marriage, she died. It is told that for some time she had feared she was dying and begged not to be buried underground.

No one now living knows if the legend is true, but one lady, a native Huntsvillian, says, "My mother, who is ninety years old, declares that when she was a little girl, she was told by her great-aunt, who was born in 1850, that it was so." The mausoleum of Mary Chambers Bibb was designed by the noted Huntsville architect George Steele.

He himself, George Gilliam Steele (1798-1855), is buried close by with only a modest headstone. He designed (the present) First Alabama Bank building, other public buildings, and many homes, including his own mansion, Oak Place. (A Baptist church now owns Oak Place, located at 808 Maysville Road.)

Farther east under a grove of magnolia trees some two hundred unknown Confederate soldiers are silent reminders of the lost cause.

Nearby a pretty rosette decorates the gravestone of Mollie Teal (1852-1899), the town's most famous "Lady of the Evening." She was the glamorous madam of a house of



The headstone of Mollie Teal (1852-1899). She was a madam who ran a popular house of "ill repute." She willed her large house to the city of Huntsville, and the first city hospital was located there from 1904 until 1926.

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prostitution, perhaps the finest "sportin'" house the town ever saw. When she died she left her "house" to the city for either a school or a hospital. So, it became Huntsville's first hospital.

Turning north, we may visit the grave of Governor Clement Comer Clay (1789-1866). He rode into Huntsville on horseback in 1811 with law books stuffed into his saddle bags. He set up a law practice and rose to the top of his profession. He became chairman of the committee which drafted the Alabama Constitution in 1819, was first chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, United States congressman and

senator, and governor of Alabama.

Resting in the same plot is his famous granddaughter Virginia Clay (1862-1911). When her father Withers Clay, editor of the **Weekly Democrat**, fell ill, she took over his position. Assisted by her sister Suzanna, she successfully edited the **Democrat** for more than twenty years. The first woman news editor in the south and possibly in the United States, she was nationally recognized and respected. She was even invited to address the National Editorial Association at its meeting in 1905. Her political editorials were often reprinted in newspapers as



Monument marking the Huntsville Meridian. "Richard W. Anderson caused this monument to be erected in memory of deceased relations and to perpetuate the Huntsville Meridian."

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far away as Michigan and New York. (The J. Withers Clay family, including Virginia, lived for many years at 513 Eustis Street.)

Turning south, we reach a beautiful snow-white marble monument soaring above all others in Maple Hill. Near its pinnacle on its east and west sides is carved the word "Meridian." This shaft, indeed, marks the primary Huntsville meridian. Legal descriptions of land over a wide area are measured from it. The monument was commissioned by Richard Anderson

(1790-1859), a wealthy land broker, in honor of his brothers and sisters. Although he was a bachelor, he loved children. A bevy of them followed him wherever he went, except on his longest jaunts. Reportedly, it was not unusual for him to walk from Huntsville to Whitesburg and back before breakfast.

Across a carriage lane from the Meridian is another Thomas Bibb (1792-1871), a cousin of the Governor and a hero of the War of 1812. At



Mausoleum of Albert Russel Erskine (1871-1933). Russel Erskine was an industrialist and president of the Studebaker Corporation (1915-1933). The Hotel Russel Erskine in Huntsville was named for him. He donated the Erskine Addition to Maple Hill in 1918 and the stone entranceway in 1916 in memory of his mother, Sue Ragland Erskine.

the Battle of New Orleans he single-handedly captured a British major. After the war he settled in Athens, Alabama and into a successful contracting business.

There is a strange tale in Bibb family records of an honor guard being placed at his gravesite by General Sherman during the Civil War because he had been a war hero. This obviously could not have been true because Bibb did not die until 1871. General Sherman did visit Huntsville in April 1871, near the time of Thomas Bibb's death. We might surmise that he placed an honor guard at the grave during

this visit, although no record of it has been found in existing newspapers.

Now we go up the broad central avenue to a handsome mausoleum which is Maple Hill's veritable focal point. In this crypt is interred Albert Russel Erskine (1871-1933).<sup>4</sup> He was an industrial magnate, the perfect example of a hometown boy who made good. He began his career as a \$15.00 a week railroad company office boy when he was a fifteen-year-old school drop-out. He soon became head bookkeeper. Then by a series of successes, he became the multimillionaire president of the Studebaker Automobile



This mausoleum is the resting place of John Lee Robinson (1891-1947) and his sheepdog Mickey (1929-1947). Robinson was a successful cotton broker. The emblem carved over his name at the top of the tomb represents two bales of cotton.

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Corporation in South Bend, Indiana. He was also a civic leader and president of Notre Dame University's lay Board, as well.

Russel Erskine's success came to him so easily that he never learned to cope with failure. For the first time in his life, he encountered it when the Studebaker Company went into receivership during the great depression. He died from a self-inflicted bullet wound.

An apparition of an angel appears at night on the portal of his mausoleum. Whatever combination of chemicals - or ghostly ectoplasm - causes this phenomenon, it is there. (The Russel Erskine

Hotel at 123 East Clinton Avenue was named in his honor. The building has since been converted to apartments.)

In another mausoleum south of Erskine's lies John Lee Robinson (1891-1947) and his sheepdog Mickey. Naturally, the dog preceded him in death. "My dog stuck by me all his life and now I'll stick by him." John L. Robinson was a successful cotton broker.

Behind the Erskine mausoleum a tiny flat stone, etched with the outline of a dog, marks the resting place of Pepe, the beloved chihuahua of the Edward Rolfe family.



A Gothic style mausoleum serves as a memorial to Dr. William Henry Burritt (1869-1955). Dr. Burritt willed his home on Round Top Mountain to the city of Huntsville for a museum and nature preserve. Mysteriously, the mausoleum contains seven unidentified caskets, in addition to the caskets of Burritt family members.



A small flat stone marks the grave of Pepe (c. 1959-1975), a Mexican Chihuahua. The little dog was the beloved companion of the Edward Rolfe family.

Walking back down the broad avenue, we pass an intriguing stone with the message: "Jessup Whitehead 1833-1889; Chef de Cuisine; Monte Sano Hotel; And Author of Many Cook Books."

Across from this marker, a slender shaft bears the inscription: "Adelaide Eugene Bankhead; July 14, 1880-February 23, 1902; Beloved wife of William Bankhead."

She was the mother of famous actress Tallulah Bankhead and of Eugenia Bankhead, longtime keeper of the state archives. Her husband was William Bankhead, for many years Speaker of the House of Representatives. She died in childbirth with Tallulah. (At the time of Tallulah's birth, the Bankhead family lived in an apartment on an upper floor of the Schiffman Building at the corner of East Side Square and Eustis Street.)

Farther down the avenue a beautiful Gothic style mausoleum serves as a memorial to Dr. William Henry Burritt (1869-1955). He willed his house and grounds on Round Top Mountain to the City of Huntsville for a museum and nature preserve. It opened its doors in 1957 and now regularly attracts thousands of visitors.

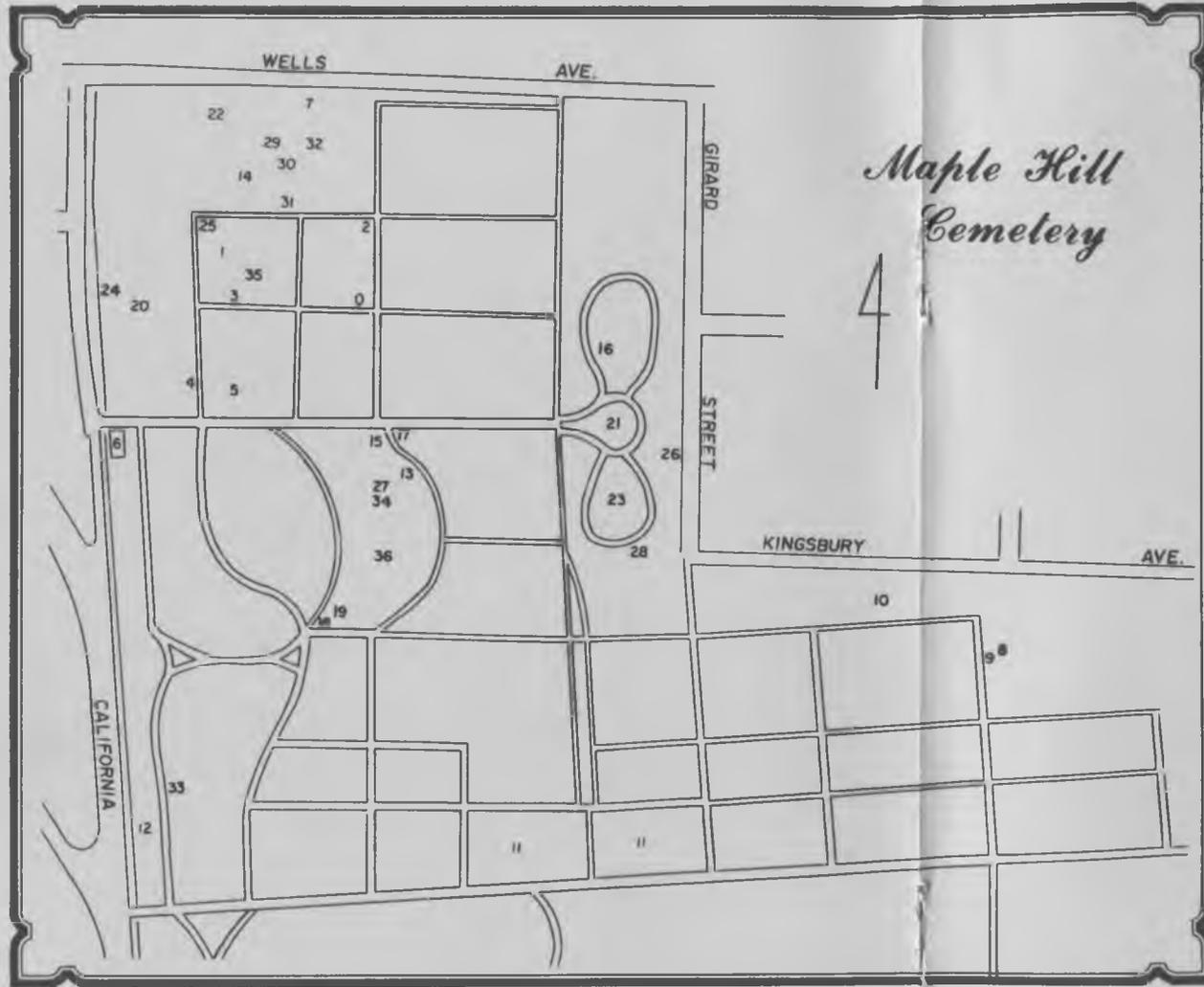
In 1899 when Dr. Burritt was a young, handsome local physician, he received a proposal of marriage from a lady. She was a widowed tobacco heiress, Mrs. Josephine Drummond, twenty years his senior. He accepted. They lived happily in her home in

St. Louis for many years, but after her death and after inheriting the bulk of her estate, he returned to Huntsville in 1933. The mausoleum, erected to his specifications soon after his return, contains the bodies of his mother and father and of his first wife Pearl. His ashes remain in an urn to the left of the entrance. Mysteriously, the mausoleum contains seven other caskets, all sealed, indicating bodies within. No one knows whose bodies because there is no identification.

To the south of the Burritt mausoleum rests LeRoy Pope (1764-1845), the man honored as the Father of Huntsville. Lawyer, planter, and early resident, his contributions to the physical, economic, and political development of the town were considerable. (His home is known as Echols Hill and is located at 403 Echols Avenue.)

Sharing a tombstone with Pope is his son-in-law, John Williams Walker (1783-1823). He was president of the state's 1819 constitutional convention and the first United States senator from Alabama.

Still farther south a simple gray stone, with the inscription "Blessed Are the Pure in Heart," memorializes poet-artist Maria Howard Weeden (1847-1905). Her gentle evocation of life in late 19th century Huntsville shows black servants and white masters all as one loving family, all poor together. Her portraits of blacks display a



Map of the historic part of Maple Hill Cemetery. The map is from the Maple Hill Cemetery brochure which is available at the cemetery office.

#### MAP LEGEND:

- 0 \*\* Meridian.
- 1 \*\* Gov. Thomas Bibb, 1782-1839.
- 2 \* Gov. Clement Clay, 1789-1866.
- 3 \* Gov. Reuben Chapman, 1799-1882.
- 4 \* Gov. Robert Miller Patton, 1809-1885.
- 5 \* Gov. David Peter Lewis, 1820-1884.
- 6 Cemetery Office.
- 7 Civil War Veterans Monument and burial ground.
- 8 World War I, World War II, and Korean War Monument.
- 9 Disabled American Veterans Monument.
- 10 Garden Area.
- 11 Potter's Field.
- 12 Hebrew Burial Ground.
- 13 \* Adalaide Eugene Rankhead, 1880-1902.
- 14 \*\* Mausoleum, Mary Chambers Bibb, 1816-1835.
- 15 \*\* Mausoleum, Dr. William H. Burrirt, 1869-1955.
- 16 Henry B. Chase, 1870-1961.
- 17 \* Chef Jessup Whitehead, 1833-1889.
- 18 \* Clement Claiborne Clay, 1816-1882.
- 19 \* Virginia Clay-Clopton, 1823-1915.
- 20 \* Anne Bradshaw Clopton, 1878-1956.
- 21 \*\* Mausoleum, Albert Russel Erskine, 1871-1933.
- 22 \* Dr. Thomas Fearn, 1789-1863.
- 23 Dr. Carl August Grote, 1887-1964.
- 24 \* Lena Mitchell, 1906-1959.
- 25 \*\* Dr. David Moore, 1787-1845.
- 26 \*\* Pepe, circa 1959-1975.
- 27 \*\* LeRoy Pope, 1764-1845.
- 28 \*\* Mausoleum, John Lee Robinson, 1891-1947.
- 29 \*\* William Robinson, 1808-1852.
- 30 \* Albert Russel, 1755-1818.
- 31 \*\* George Gilliam Steele, 1798-1855.
- 32 \*\* Mollie Teal, 1852-1899.
- 33 Rev. Jerimiah F. Treacy, 1826-1872.
- 34 \*\* John Williams Walker, 1783-1823.
- 35 \*\* LeRoy Pope Walker, 1817-1884.
- 36 \* Maria Howard Weeden, 1847-1905.

- \* Mentioned in text.
- \*\* Mentioned in text and pictured.



**ABOVE:** The family plot of LeRoy Pope (1764-1845) and John Williams Walker (1783-1823). The two men share a tombstone. Pope is honored as the "Father of Huntsville" for his contributions to the physical, economic, and political development of the town. He was a lawyer, planter, and the chief justice of the first Madison County court. Walker, who was Pope's son-in-law, was a lawyer, president of the 1819 constitutional convention, and first U. S. Senator from Alabama. Also, he was the father of LeRoy Pope Walker. (See page 6).

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Standing like sentinals, nearly identical tombstones mark the graves of five babies of S. H. and M. A. Allison. The parents are not buried anywhere near the graves of their four sons and one daughter. The dates carved on the markers are: "Oct. 19, 1853, 18 days; Dec. 13, 1853, 2 years; Dec. 28, 1856; March 3, 1858; Sept. 4, 1860."

rare beauty. (The Weeden family home, now a house museum, is at 300 Gates Avenue.)

Soon we arrive at a five-point intersection. Here are the last two graves we will visit, those of Clement Claiborne Clay (1816-1882) and his wife Virginia. The oldest son of Governor Clay, he became a lawyer, a state legislator, and then United States senator.

On January 21, 1861, southern senators by prearrangement announced the withdrawal of their states from the Union and walked out of the Senate before crowded galleries, Senator Clay among them. Later he became politically active in the Confederate cause. He was imprisoned with Jefferson Davis in Fortress Monroe in 1865, falsely accused of conspiring to assassinate President

Abraham Lincoln. President Andrew Johnson signed their release in 1866.

Senator Clay's wife Virginia (1823-1915), dynamic and lovely, became the belle of Washington in the pre-war decade. She later wrote **A Belle of the Fifties**, an account of her happy years there. Five years after her husband's death she married Judge David Clopton but kept the name Clay, as well.

Our tour has taken us mainly through the oldest parts of the cemetery. Outside of its historic sections we visited only the Erskine and Robinson mausoleums and the grave of the little dog Pepe. Maple Hill has many more stories to tell, some of them merely hinted at by inscriptions on forgotten tombstones.



## FOOTNOTES

1 Further research has shown that there are a few minor errors in the brochure.

2 The rank of "Queen" does not exist in the gypsy hierarchy. "Queen," as the gypsies use it, must mean "Matriarch."

3 This ordinance was repealed in 1969.

4 The mausoleum had been erected several years before by Russel Erskine as the designated final resting place for him and his family.



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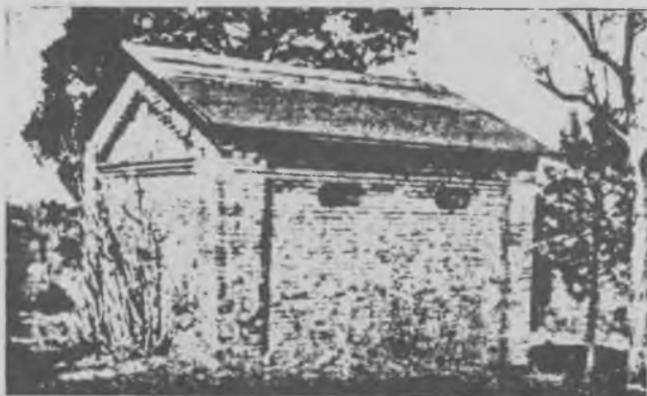
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# The Huntsville Powder House



[The following unsigned essay is from *The Montesanon* 1925, yearbook of Huntsville College/Wills-Taylor School, p. 90.]

Strange it is to hear the different stories and opinions of the Huntsville Powder House. As the Chinese proverb is -- When the water has receded, the stones will appear. Let us then dismiss from our minds the idea that this powder house was operated for the use of the soldiers. It was not. It was built and used by the merchants of Huntsville. It was sometimes referred to as the Merchant's Powder House.

Sometime about the year 1850, the merchants of Huntsville and the near surroundings got together and raised funds to erect a powder house to store their powder, dynamite, and shells, there not being enough room in the local stores. They too were considering the safety of the town, when they thus considered. In case of a fire, the damage would be threefold.

The powder house was built a little way down the Big Spring Branch, then called the canal. It was situated on the north side of the branch, about two-thirds the distance from Gallatin street [sic] to the point where the branch joined the dry creek. There was a walkway on the south side of the branch,

leading down to a wide flat "foot-log," which lead [sic] across the branch to the powder house, which was about thirty feet from the branch. It's [sic] front faced south. The structure was a small brick house about ten feet square. It had a steel door and a concrete floor. It was the container of the powder of Huntsville.

Some years later, it was abandoned, another was built on the little spur of the mountain above the cemetery. It was situated on a little rise, where the first ascent to the mountain is reached, on the Monte Sano Drive. A change to this location, the people thought, would be more safe, and would be a little more convenient. This house was a little larger than the other one, for Huntsville was growing; there were more stores that handled powder. This structure was built of brick; it had a concrete floor, steel door, and a well supported roof. The inside measurements of this house was [sic] about fifteen feet long, twelve feet wide, and fourteen feet high. There were no windows. Although very crude, it is one of Huntsville's relics.

W. H. P.



# Contract For The First Court House In Lincoln County Tennessee

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Not much is known about the appearance of the first Madison County, Alabama Court House, other than the fact that it was a two-story brick structure probably in the Federal style. Since it was built at about the same time (it is thought to have been completed no later than 1816) as the neighboring Lincoln County, Tennessee Court House, construction methods and materials were undoubtedly very similar. One can better imagine the appearance of both buildings from the following specifications, an exact copy of the original contract for the first Lincoln County Court House in Fayetteville, Tennessee.]

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM **THE VOLUNTEER**, SPRING 1977,  
p. 12, JOURNAL OF THE LINCOLN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

To be let Thursday the 22nd  
of November 1810.

The building of a Court House  
for the County of Lincoln in  
the Town of Fayetteville.

#### Dimensions:

40 feet square, the walls to  
be of brick and the founda-  
tion of stone. The foundation  
wall to be 2-1/2 feet thick,  
sunk 2 feet under ground and  
raised 3 feet above ground.  
The brick wall to contain 2  
stories in height, the lower  
story to be 15 feet high in  
the clear, the wall to be

2-1/2 brick thick, the second  
story to be 12 feet high, 2  
brick thick, the lower floor  
to be laid with brick edge  
up, the second floor to be  
supported by a girder 14  
inches square, the joist to  
be 14 inches by 4, all of  
good yellow poplar, the joist  
to be placed two feet apart  
center to center, the floor  
to be of good quartered yel-  
low poplar 1-1/2 inches  
thick, well tongued and  
grooved, the girder to be  
supported by 2 good strong  
well turned walnut posts, the  
posts to stand upon a well  
founded pillar of stone. The

stone not to be seen above the floor, the second floor to be well ceiled underneath with good quartered yellow poplar planks, the second tier of joists to be 10 inches by 4 placed 2 feet apart from center to center to be ceiled underneath with good quartered yellow poplar planks neatly planed and beaded. The roof to be of good poplar or chestnut joint shingles, and to be well sheated with yellow poplar planks, inch thick on good sufficient rafters with cornice medallion, and the roof to be well painted red immediately after covered in, a fireplace of customary size, to be made in each corner of the second story, the stairs to begin in the North west corner of the lower story and to land in the center of the North side of the house in a 8 foot passage, the east side of the passage to be cut through the center of a partition through it East and West, the passage and partition walls to be made of 1-1/2 inch plank of yellow poplar, stairs to be put up with banister and hand rail with doors of customary size to be in the center of the South, West and North sides with a row of lights 8 X 10 over each door, 16 24-light windows in the lower story, the glass to be 8 X 10 and 16 windows in the upper story. Sixteen lights in each and a door to open out of the pas-

sage into each room, the shutters to the upper doors to be single panel doors, the shutters to the lower doors to be panel doors well lined with a good and sufficient double lock to the South door that is a spring bolt and one to turn by key, and good bolts to the other two doors, with good stone steps to each door, and good bolts and spring locks to the upper doors, also window shutters and bolts to the lower story, the door and window shutters and facing painted white, the Judges Seat, the Clerk Seat and Bar and Jury Box to be fixed in the same manner as the Court House in Nashville, all to be done in a neat workmanlike manner, any person or persons who undertakes the Public Buildings, Bond and Security will be required by the Commissioners. The Building is to be completed by the First Day of November 1813.

Commissioners     John Whitaker  
                         James Stuart  
                         Eli Garrett  
                         Hardy Holman  
                         W. Edmiston

Contract let to Macajah and William Muckleroy for \$3,935.00.

Stocks received of James Miller by Vance Greer and John P. McConnell, Commissioners. Nov. 27, 1811.



# Huntsville Becomes A Town



## From Wilderness Log Cabins to Sturdy Brick Buildings

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HUNTSVILLE'S SESQUICENTENNIAL - SEPTEMBER 11-17, 1955

### Site Is Ordered For Twickenham

South Half Of Square And  
Areas To Williams Bought  
By Commission

The Town of Twickenham, later Huntsville, was created by an act of the Territorial Legislature Dec. 22, 1809.

This was the first government act having to do directly with the Hunt's Spring settlement, the other acts up to this time relating only to Madison County.

This was not an act of incorporation, but simply set up a commission of three men to select a site for public buildings. In the land sales held in August in Nashville, LeRoy Pope had bought the quarter section of land on which the big Spring was located at \$23 per acre, about four times as much as surrounding land. Pope had

bought the land with the intention of laying out a town site. The sixty acres were platted. The platted area was bounded on the north by what is now Holmes Street; on the east by Lincoln Street; on the south by Williams Street; and on the west by ... Gallatin Street.

The Twickenham Act had named William Dickson, Edward Ward, Louis Winston, Alexander Gilbreath, and Peter Perkins, all of whom resided in the county, as commissioners "for the purpose of fixing on the most convenient place for establishing the public buildings of the said county."

The act further provided that they were to buy or otherwise procure 30 to 100 acres of land, reserve three acres for public buildings, and to plat the town on the remainder into half-acre lots.

These lots were to be sold, and the money used to pay for the land. All the remainder was to be used for public buildings.

As soon as a public building was erected, the commissioners were to notify judges of the county courts, who would have to hold courts in the Courthouse thereafter.

Since Pope had already bought the land on which the town was platted, probably by J. W. Leake, a local surveyor, the commissioners bought 30 acres from him, including only half of the Public Square and land to the south of the Big Spring, for \$25 per acre. Pope donated the north half of the Square to the town, including a lot for the jail on the northeast corner of the Square.

This deed was made Sept. 1, 1815, and was made to the five commissioners, then elected annually each February. In that year, John Brahan, who had come here from Nashville as a government surveyor and receiver of public monies, Peter Perkins, David Moore and Louis Winston were the commissioners.

The area was generally bounded by Henry Street (now Gallatin), Williams Street, Lincoln Street, and the Square.

The "free and uninterrupted" use of the water for the citizens of the area was guaranteed in the deed, and it also prohibited dams or machinery that would produce stagnation at the spring.

## Stores And Inn First On Square

Town Of 1810 Mainly Scattered  
Log Cabins, Rock Pile  
On Square

When men first vied for purchase of lots in the town site of Twickenham, a big pile of bare rock, sloping on every side and holding a pond at one side, was the area to be the Public Square.

Around the rocky knoll were dense trees, and a ridge of cedar stretched eastward to Pope's Ridge, the present Echols Hill. Along this cedar ridge were scattered cabins. Other cabins were around the Big Spring, and southward to what is now [in 1955] the city limit at Donegan Lane.

Water stood in ponds west of what is now the Whitesburg area and west of the Big Spring. Between Clinton and Holmes streets were low, marshy lands.

After the city was incorporated, five trustees elected and work begun on streets, the picture changed rapidly. John Read, register of public lands, who came here in 1811, built three stores on the south side of the Square at the west end of Commercial Row, and a house in the next block at the southwest corner of the Square. Here later lived David T. Knox, a silversmith of high repute among early settlers.

The first brick stores were erected on the east half of the block north of the Square. Talbot Inn went up on the east side of the



Square, taking up the northern half of that block, and the first market house was nearby. At the southeast corner of the Square, Calvin and Luther Morgan built a home and at the back on Franklin Street, Clement Comer Clay set up his law office in 1811. He arrived here with only one Negro servant, two horses, his law books in a saddlebag, and a small sum of money.

The lot at the northeast corner of the Square was also used for a residence, that of James Brock.

During the first 10 years in the city, there was a small drygoods store, a grocery which was then called a "whiskey shop," a hatter's shop, and a bowling alley.

By the time lots sales in the downtown area were completed in 1816, Pope was erecting his beautiful residence, which still stands, on Pope's Ridge, and had subdivided an area to the south, including Adams Avenue and McClung Street, with some lots as big as three and four acres, and which were being bought for homes of the wealthiest residents.

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[ED. NOTE: The following information is excerpted from a long article about the general history of early Huntsville.]

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### **Huntsville's Influence Spread Rapidly After Incorporation As Town**

City Became  
A Dominant Power  
In The Territory

By John Craig Stewart

After the town of Huntsville was incorporated [on Dec. 9, 1811; the name was changed to Huntsville that year, also] and established as the county seat of the recently formed county of Madison, the people set about building a city which was to be the nonpareil of the Mississippi Territory.

It soon became a dominant influence in the territory, a power which, through its financial and cultural

growth and the influence of its citizens, was to play the leading role in the establishment of the Alabama Territory in 1817, and the State of Alabama two years later in 1819.

During this period, Madison County had a population equal to more than half the total population of all that area which was to be the State of Alabama. And that population was centered in the town of Huntsville.

Starting in 1810, and accelerating itself immediately following the incorporation of the town, a fever of building began. The old log huts of early settlers had to be replaced with buildings of stone and brick.

In 1810, two masons, the brothers Thomas and William Brandon, settled in Huntsville, and there was more than sufficient opportunity for their skills. The Court-

house was completed by 1816, and by this time the Square was the site of many handsome brick buildings housing the early commercial establishments.

One of the earliest mercantile houses was founded by Alexander Gilbreath in 1810 at the corner of Gates and Henry [Gallatin] streets....

On the north side of the Square, John Brown built the first two stores on Exchange Row. A little later, J. O. Crump built another store near these. John Reid built the first house on the old Schandies property which was located at the southwest corner of the Square. Mr. A. Jameson afterward bought this and ran a hotel there. This hotel was later owned and operated by Allen Cooper, Neal B. Rose, and John Hickman. LeRoy Pope built the first store on the east side of the Square.

There were no ABC boards or State liquor stores in those days, but taverns were not lacking in early Huntsville. A Mr. Cheatham owned and operated a tavern [Bell Tavern] on the west side of Jefferson Street near the Square, and just across the street in the center of the block, a large tavern was operated by Archibald Madera. This building, also a hotel, was to be the headquarters for the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1819.

But one of the most important indications of the progressive growth of early Huntsville was the rapid es-

tablishment of newspapers here.

The first paper began publication in 1812. It was named the Madison Gazette and was originally owned by T. G. Bradford and Company.... The Gazette was the second newspaper published in the Territory....

The Madison Gazette, however,... was replaced in September 1816, by the Huntsville Republican, an enterprise of Thomas B. Grantland....

Another Huntsville newspaper, the Huntsville Advocate, had been established in 1815....

All the building which took place in this period did not have to do with commercial and business establishments. The people built with an idea of permanency and beauty.

As to the location of some of the earliest homes, let us again quote from General Betts' "History:"

"Most of the wealthier citizens built houses along the south of the town, just out of the town limits, ranging from Pope's - now Echols - Hill on the east, to the spring bluff on the west, along what is now Williams Street, which was lined with towering oaks and stately poplars; while others erected their houses along Maiden Lane [Eustis], just south of a rugged and picturesque bluff, upon which was later situated the home of LeRoy Pope...."

Remarkable as it may seem, these and other fine homes were erected during a period when most of Alabama was a wilderness....

The growth of the town in the first few years of this period (up to 1816) was phenomenal, but to some extent was held in check by the uncertainty of the times, clouded by the Creek Indian War and the War of 1812. The most fabulous growth was to come, as we shall see, between 1816 and 1829, a period which included the land sales of 1818, and a rise in prices which approached actual inflation. However, by 1816, Huntsville had planted its foundations firmly in the bedrock about the "Big Spring," and was "on its way." The population of Madison County in 1816 had reached the incredible figure of 14,200.

To give some insight into the optimistic outlook of the town, let us quote from a letter written in 1815 by John W. Walker to the Secretary of the United States Treasury, W. H. Crawford. This is what he says of Huntsville and the county:

"Huntsville is situated about ten miles from the Tennessee River, immediately round one of the finest springs in the world, issuing from a fine perpendicular cliff 50 feet high, in a sheet of water 150 wide in a semi-circle forming instantly a fine bold creek, which it is now confidently believed can, at a trivial expense, be rendered navigable for batteaux to the Tennessee. Each square contains two acres,

divided into half acre lots, so that every lot is a corner lot. The Public Square contains about three and a half acres, lying immediately back of the spring cliff. On this are a courthouse, and market of brick, and a small wooden jail. The first lot was sold on the 4th of July, so that the whole town is the growth of six years. In the suburbs are five cotton gins."

And so it was, as the year 1815 ended, that Huntsville and all of Madison County stood upon the brink of its most prosperous days....

Soon after the Government Land Office was moved from Nashville to Huntsville in 1817, the fabulous land sales of 1818 took place here. If the land sales of 1809 at Nashville represented heavy buying, these sales of 1818 represented a rush of purchasers, which "created as great excitement, all things considered, as the California gold fever of 1848-49."

Nothing like it had been seen in the South before. It so happened that at this time new lands in the Territory were put up for sale. These included not only lands in Madison County, but lands throughout ... North Alabama, in what are now the counties of Morgan, Blount, St. Clair, Jackson, Limestone, Lauderdale, Lawrence and Franklin....

Perhaps lending to the speculative, optimistic spirit of the times was the fact that Alabama had been authorized as a territory in December 1817. The people of the

great Tennessee Valley were now free of the Mississippi Delta influence in their affairs.

William Wyatt Bibb was governor of the new territory. The population of Huntsville far exceeded that of any other town. Huntsville was without question the leading town, the heart and soul, of the new Alabama Territory.... These were the truly golden years of Huntsville's early development. ...

And so we come to the end of that early period, the turbulent first fifteen years, in the history of Huntsville.

For one last look at the old town of that time, let us read what an eye witness, a visitor, had to say. As quoted in Brantley's Three Capitals, Anne Royal in her "Letters from Alabama" wrote on January 1, 1818, that Huntsville had:

260 houses principally built of brick, has a bank, a courthouse and a market house. There is a large square in the centre of town, like the towns in Ohio. Facing this are the stores, twelve in number. The buildings form a solid wall, though divided into apartments.

The workmanship is the best I have seen in all the State; and several of the houses are three stories high and very large.

There is no church. The people assemble in the Courthouse to worship.

Huntsville is settled by people mostly from Georgia and the Carolinas - though there are a few from almost every part of the world; - and the town displays much activity.



The citizens are gay, polite, and hospitable, and live in great splendor. Nothing like it in our county.

It was this group of "gay, polite, and hospitable" citizens who in July, 1819, received the Constitutional Convention which made Alabama a state of the Union.

... Huntsville's sons played a commanding part in the framing of that Constitution and in the "lone but memorable" first session of the General Assembly when Huntsville was the "temporary Seat of Government" for the infant state.

### First Cemetery Across End Of Greene Street

The first cemetery for Huntsville was located on Meridian Road, at the point where Greene Street now meets the road.

Greene Street came to a dead end about two-thirds of its present length from Holmes Street, and the city used this as a burial ground until purchase of the present Maple Hill Cemetery in 1824.

Walker Street did not exist then, being opened after the Civil War.



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