
Six Dollars

Spring - Summer

1992

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY
Of Local Architecture & Preservation



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Founded 1974

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COVER:

Watercolor by Louise Marsh, 1959. Contributed by
Mrs. Margaret Belle Mahoney Crow.

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE

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of Local Architecture and Preservation

Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1&2

Spring-Summer — 1992

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From the Editor...

This issue of the *Quarterly* follows Roberts Rules of Order. First, it addresses old business — World War II. Then, it takes up new business with the introduction of a series of articles about Huntsville's Artists' Renderings. It concludes with a brief visit to Village Antiques followed by a mystery photo.

More about the front cover. The watercolor by Louise Marsh was given to Margaret Belle Mahoney Crow by a friend. It called up the memories of her childhood, as she lived on Bank Street, up the hill behind the maple tree, next door to Miss Molly Hutchens (house on the right). The Big Spring and the lagoon were her playground. She especially loved running up the steps leading to Cotton Row and getting in boxes to slide down the grassy hill. A favorite game was playing Jesse James Gang at the Big Spring. The kids caught crawdads in the canal and tested their nerve by trying to walk across the mossy, slippery dam without getting caught by the authorities in the pumphouse.

Louise Marsh's delightful watercolor incorporated Margaret Belle's world. The resounding bells of the Church of the Nativity beckoned her on Sundays, while the clock in the old Courthouse tower called her home in the evenings. From the ducks to the good things she could buy at the Curb Market, her life was filled with the joys of a Huntsville childhood.

I am reminded of a book review in the July/August issue of Historic Preservation which concluded with this optimistic assessment: "Chances are we will successfully continue to recover and transform our history in order to make us what we want to be — especially on the local level, where memory is at its most tenacious." Margaret Belle Crow has done us all a favor. Perhaps she will agree to write her vivid recollections down for future *Quarterlies*.

Please note that History Day is scheduled for September 12th, in conjunction with Trade Day on the Square. This *Quarterly*, as well as future ones, contains contributions such as letters, photographs, old newspapers, etc. Please make a History Day visit to the Courthouse and add to the area's great store of knowledge and recollections. See you there!

From the HHF Board Chairman,

Dear Fellow Foundation Members:

Well, your Board of Directors has seen fit to return me as your Chairman for a second term. I do appreciate this honor and shall strive to be worthy of its trust.

Historic Huntsville Foundation's 1991 - 1992 year was a successful one. Many dedicated volunteers gave hours of effort to achieve that success. Of course, not all goals during the year were reached, but those unfinished tasks are still on track and should reach fruition in the 1992 - 1993 year.

A brief look back through the just-completed Foundation year reveals a most successful Trade Day, the advent of History Day with the accompanying selection of the late Cecil V. Fain as the recipient of our first "Honored Citizen Award," a couple of special events co-sponsored with Constitution Hall Village ("Autumn Feast" and "World War II Remembered"), the publication of Photographic Memories: A Scrapbook of Huntsville and Madison County, Alabama, and membership meetings with great food and fellowship along with entertaining programs. Our memorabilia display cabinet and duplicate signature quilt can now be seen at the Huntsville Public Library. Harrison Brothers Hardware continues to be a success story of growing proportions. Foundation membership stands at approximately 800 memberships, with over 1,100 members.

To all those persons who contributed time, talent, and funds to the Foundation during the last year, you have my sincere gratitude. You are helping to advance a vital, worthwhile organization. As I said in my letter to you last year: With you continued support, all signs point to another great year for Historic Huntsville Foundation!

Gerald W. Patterson



The
NORMALITE
1945



Dedicated

TO CAPTAIN ALVA TEMPLE, WHO HAS HELPED TO REVEAL THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE
NEGRO IN AVIATION DO WE DEDICATE THIS VOLUME

Captain Temple is a native of Pickens County, a former student of the State A. & M. Institute, and a graduate of the Tuskegee Army Air Base. During Captain Temple's eighteen months of service with the 99th Pursuit Squadron in Italy, he completed 120 missions over enemy territory. Captain Temple has gone a long way towards establishing a precedent for all Normalites. His achievements and loyalty to his country are worthy of commendation and imitation.



To Our Service Men . . .

We here do acknowledge our most profound devotion and admiration to you valiant men and women, who only a short time ago walked and studied amidst the rocks of Normal, but who have now taken your places in the service of our Country.

The task that is now being performed by you, fellow students, in the several theaters of war proves that you are believers in the Sovereignty of Service. We are sure that of all the services you can render to mankind, none is greater than the service to your Country during a time when its security is endangered.

We are very grateful to you servicemen and women, for the manner in which you have represented us as a racial group. You have unquestionably proved that the Negro, when given an opportunity to perform military functions can do so with as much accuracy and loyalty as any other human being. Thus you are helping to make the equality of men more evident.

The Y.M.C.A. feels closely connected with the cause for which all of our service men and women fight. Through its affiliation with the World Student Federation, the Y.M.C.A. seeks to reemphasize the idea of the brotherhood of man to young people of all races. This world movement of Christian students will play a large role in keeping the peace that you men and women strive so courageously to establish.



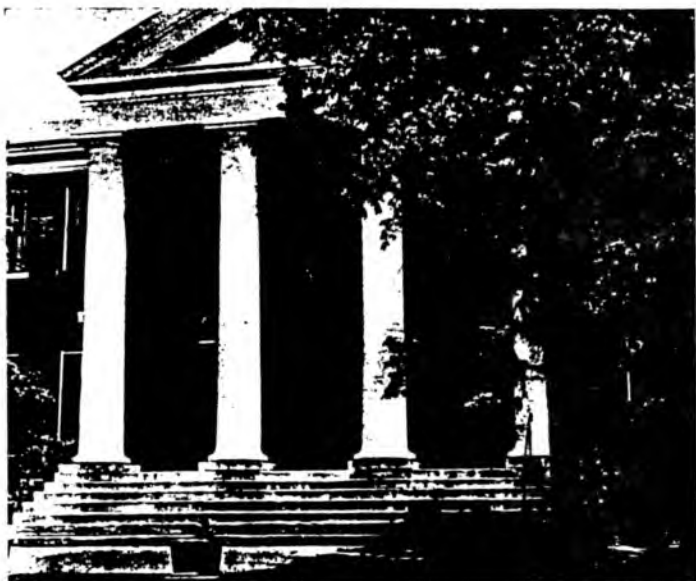
William Hooper Councilll

Dr. Councilll was a pioneer in Negro Education and Founder of State A. & M. Institute. Born a slave, Dr. Councilll lived to establish the school on the site where, tradition says, he was once sold. A. & M. remains dedicated to the ideal which Dr. Councilll expressed in the motto of the College, "Service is Sovereignty."



President J. F. Drake

A dynamic factor in our school's progress through the late Twenties, the Thirties and the early Forties of a century of unparalleled events—a veteran of World War I, an educator, a builder and a dreamer who dared to dream and make his dreams come true.



Carnegie Library



J. F. Drake Hall

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GREEN BOTTOM INN

THE COLLEGE SANDWICH SHOP

Located on the site where once stood

OLD GREEN BOTTOM INN

an Inn that was frequented by Andrew Jackson and other outstanding
men of the Nineteenth Century

Managed by Students

"We Enjoy Serving Our Fellow Students"

THOMAS V. MORRIS, Manager

Remembering World War II

Mamie G. Browne

Remembering World War II is to recall wartime conditions during the years 1941 - 1945.

I still like to hear the tunes that came out of those years:

“Let’s Remember Pearl Harbor”

“This is the Army, Mr. Jones”

“Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition”

“Comin’ In On A Wing and A Prayer”

“Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree With Anyone
Else But Me”

“White Cliffs of Dover”

“When The Lights Come On Again All Over The
World”

If you asked me the question ... What Was It Like? I’d say, in short, everyday life during those years revolved around a shortage of many consumer goods. Tokens, ration certificates and coupons flourished and became a way of life. Most families conserved in every way possible believing that what was being done was eventually a help to winning the war. The sooner the war was won, the sooner we could get our boys home and return again to normal life.

You probably know that story — that the U.S. was brought into a state of war when Japan destroyed the Pearl Harbor Naval Base on December 7, 1941. In a relatively short time afterwards America geared itself for a tough war. Defense measures began on a national scale that were felt shortly thereafter in everyone’s hometown (Huntsville included).

Draft boards appeared. Registration was required for all males. Draftees were classified and this led to a familiar letter from the U.S. Army headquarters which began with — GREETINGS.

Army camps you never knew existed in the regular army prior to 1941, were now conversational words. Our men were being recruited, trainees were being transported and shipments of men and materiel were en route to all points all over the U.S. and abroad.

Much too soon you received that letter from the son, husband, classmate or whomever which announced that ("This is probably the last letter from this address."). Only those who experienced this situation would know the agony of the long wait until you finally received word that you may now address mail c/o APO New York, NY ... destination unknown.

From what I have said up to this point, you have become aware, that for sure, I must have been in Huntsville when the war began.

Essentially my wartime memories parallel the conditions that existed in Huntsville and every place at that time.

It was more the rule than the exception to wait in line for gas or food (especially meat, sugar, or butter) and receive a smaller amount than the specified allotment or maybe none at all if the amount gave out.

At Alabama A&M University, where I was employed as cashier/accountant, I saw first hand a drop in male enrollment and a continuous decrease in deferments. It was mentioned recently that it was due to World War II that the traditional game between Alabama A&M and Alabama State was canceled. The team members had been drafted.

Often I traveled by bus to Birmingham, Alabama, to visit my parents. With opened windows, we drove on dirt roads on Highway 231. The first thing you did upon arrival in Birmingham was to brush off the first layer of dust. Many times en route the bus developed motor trouble which made it necessary to remain in the bus station if not on the side of the road, waiting for a replacement.

My family was terribly bewildered when we were made aware that my brother was being drafted into the army. He had a limp in his right foot because of an ankle injury resulting from a "sand lot" football game. The family developed a bitterness towards the draft board because we felt that it had been biased in its decision, and that my brother should have been exempted. We did not feel that he could live up to the rigors of a foot soldier.

I'm happy to say that the family forgot their bitterness. My brother weathered the basic training, the overseas duty in Heavy Artillery, anti-aircraft in the South Pacific, and this year celebrated his 79th birthday in Birmingham, Alabama.

During the war and in 1943, I accepted a call for Federal Service in the District of Columbia. It was a War Service Appointment in the Navy Department's Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. My residence in D. C. was memorable.

Also in 1943, I became a war bride. There was no time to plan a wedding, so on that special weekend pass and after waiting until late at night for my pastor to return from an out-of-town trip, I became Mrs. Calvin Browne.

My life, from this point, was lived in a suitcase, on weekend passes and furloughs, on posts or in towns, in the homes of people who would share their homes and provide space for soldiers and their wives.

It was ironic that many times soldiers were overcharged. Some places thrived on servicemen's pay.

My travels to and from the army posts took me to places wherever my husband was stationed — Charleston, South Carolina (Port of Embarkation); Los Angeles, California (Port of Embarkation); and many times to Fort Benning, Georgia.

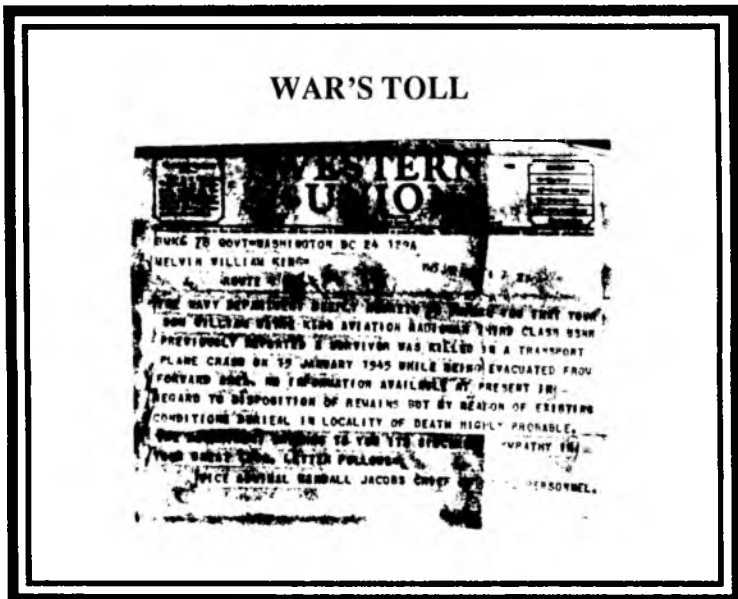
I was in Los Angeles in 1945 visiting my husband when the war ended. It was midday when the news came on the air.

Traffic stopped in the streets and people got out of their cars and danced in the streets shouting, "The war is over!!!"

It is true that time is as you perceive it. As I stand here, it is hard to realize that a measly little fifty years have transpired since World War II.

I am yet trying to figure out how I lived through those long four years, 1941 - 1945.

Mrs. Calvin Brown recently retired from Alabama A&M University after serving the university in varied capacities from Secretary to the President, to bookkeeper, to librarian and archivist. The essay reprinted here was presented at U.A.H. in February, 1992.



William Wayne "Bill" King (1926 - 1945)

In memory of the Huntsville sons and daughters who died in the service of their country during WWII, the following letters and photos capture the essence of one young man's sacrifice and a family's sorrow. William Wayne King was the first son of Melvin William and Leslie Pursley King. His brother, Dick, also saw action in WWII as an Army Air Corpsman. His younger brother, Gene, was a toddler and for him memories of his older brother have been kept alive over the years by a packet of old letters and memorabilia. Gene King knows that other families, too, pass down such treasured reminders. By sharing these fragments from a lost life, that life and our own take on renewed meaning, as history serves its purpose.

William Wayne King was born March 7, 1924, in Albertville, Alabama. His folks later moved to Huntsville, but a favorite aunt, Pearl, continued to live in Albertville. She became a vital link in the young serviceman's correspondence. His girlfriend, Mary Evelyn Ward, who lived at 1105 McCollough Avenue, helped make his mail calls happy occasions. He was always looking forward and faced each day bravely. His life was full, patriotic, purposeful — and short. Shot down in the China Sea, November 25th (Thanksgiving Day), he was declared "missing" in December, 1944. Finally rescued in January, 1945, William Wayne King was snatched from the jaws of death only to be brought down a few weeks later by a crash of the plane bringing him home to recuperate in the U.S.A.

Youth and war have always been at cross purposes. World War II was no exception. Forgoing the pomp and pleasures of graduating with his Huntsville High School class, Bill King enlisted in the Navy January 18, 1944. Assigned to the *USS Ticonderoga*, he wanted to fly and did — not as a pilot, but as a tailgunner and radio man. He strove to be a "Good Navy Man." His daily log book was filled with action. These letters are as fresh as daily bread. Through them we share in this young life given up for his country.

DOCUMENTS

- A. Western Union Telegram
- B. How To Be A Good Navy Man
- C. Aviator's Flight Log Book (Bill's 1st crash was June 30, 1944. See July entry)
- D. Evelyn's letters
- E. From Aunt Pearl to Bill and Snoffy (Typed excerpts)
- F. From his Commanding Officer, John R. Doyle
- G. Tribute to William King, First Baptist Church, Huntsville, Alabama
- H. Citation - AIR MEDAL
- I. Huntsville High School Memorial Award

PHOTOGRAPHS

- A. Melvin W. King, Gene King and Bill King in backyard, 1944.
- B. Bill King with Harry Ward, Evelyn Ward's brother who was with Bill on the *USS Ticonderoga*, little Gene King in background.
- C. Evelyn Ward and Aunt Pearl Pursley, the two women in his life, beside his mother.
- D. November 5, 1944 in Ready-Room preparing for "Another Strike." This photo appeared in *Coronet*, May, 1945, and is now in the Smithsonian. Bill King is front and center.
- E. Navy Airmen Rescued at Sea — L to R, top row: Ensign M. L. Naylor, Buffalo, New York; Ensign N. J. Roccafort, Houston, Texas; Ensign J. R. Doyle, Lincoln, Nebraska; bottom row: C. P. Schelitzche, ARM2c, Hopkins, Minnesota; and William W. King, ARM3c, Huntsville, Alabama.
- F. Last Rest — The casket arrives at the Southern Railway Station and burial follows at Maple Hill in the Veterans Section.
- G. Family Portrait: 1st row - Gene King, grandmother Ella Pursley, Cousins Jack and Ed Pursley from Texas, 2nd row - Uncle Cleve Pursley, Aunt Teck Pursley, Leslie Pursley King, and Melvin W. King. Pictures on wall: left, Bill King; right, Dick King.

“How To Be A Good Navy Man”

1. Observe everything within your notice.
2. Learn what your duties are and do them cheerfully and efficiently.
3. Be alert and on time.
- * 4. Obey orders, but be sure that you understand them; if not, ask questions.
- * 5. Put all your energy and drive behind everything you do.
6. Keep yourself and your equipment neat and clean.
7. Indulge in clean recreation off duty.
8. Put duty before recreation.
9. Choose your associates off duty carefully.
10. Do not indulge in things which might injure you.
11. Mind your own business and do not spread rumors.
- *12. When things go wrong, take it on the chin like a man.
13. Do not try to “bull” to get by; it will catch up with you. Remember, no one has a good enough memory to be [a] successful liar.
14. Don’t be a “BOOTLICKER.”
15. Cultivate the respect of your fellow-shipmates and you will get the respect of your superior Officers.
16. Attend Religious Services.
17. Write home often.
- *18. Don’t borrow or lend money.
19. Save some of your pay; buy war stamps and bonds at your camp post office.
20. Resolve to give the service the best you have and to leave it a bigger and better man morally and physically — a credit to your family and country.

- * Reminded him of his “Pop’s” advice.

I

1105 McCallough Ave
Nanteville, Alabama
September 18, 1944

Dear Bill,

As I am thinking of you to-
night will try and write a line or
two. Hope you are feeling good to-
night. I am over across the street
at my girl friend's house. Vertace
Morgan. I ask her to write to you
She is writing as I write this.
I hope you don't mind her writ-
ting to you.

Vertace and I went over to
see your mother last Saturday
afternoon about 5:30. She showed
us the pictures of you in the
hammock "drinking your beer."
They were very good of you.

June

We went down to the slating ring tonight and slated about 30 minutes.

We are going down to the airport next Sunday and go for an airplane ride if we don't back out before then.

I had to make a 3 minute speech in History today. And boy was I scared. I didn't complete mine so I'll have to make another one tomorrow. I don't think I'll go to school tomorrow. I don't like the idea of making too many speeches. I am taking 4 subjects English, History, Biology and Home Ec. I'm learning to sew and cook in Home Ec.

you.

we baked bread today in Home Ec. and let it beem. good bakers aren't we?

Sunday Afternoon we went out in the country to our farm got some fruit. we went home back riding and made some pictures. when we went out there we had on our play seats. we went down to the barn and the negro's were feeding the stock. They asked us if we wanted to go home back riding and of course we said, yes. we took some pictures on the horses with our slats on and base slatted. we didn't ride base slatted we kicked our sandals off when they started to take the pictures.

October 4, 1944
Huntsville Ala.

Dearest Bill,

What you doin' tonight. I'm not doing any thing at the present but I have been playing "Rook" with Oliver, Woodie, Harry, Vintaru and "Dick". Harry is here on a fifteen (15) day furlough. We have been having some pretty good times while he is here.

Gladys, Vintaru and I went to the Grand stage show last night but it wasn't any good. The name of it was, "Flying High."

Boy the teachers are really getting tough now. They were pretty good at the beginning of school. But they are really strict now. The seventh period study hall has had to stay in once this week and Miss Neil said if they had to stay in any more it would be an hour. So we'll probably be staying until 4 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Love

Earlyn.

Letters from Aunt Pearl

(excerpts)

Thursday, Sept. 28

Dear Bill & Snoffy,

Of all the crazy boobs you two take the cake. ... I think you were "plumb" sweet to write me a joint letter. Watch your step though Snoffy, or that ornery nephew of mine will be wishing all his letter writing off on you. ... Now where the heck are you two guys? Your letter came in six days ... Pearl Harbor, ... California, ... South Pacific ... Oh, well, I give up. Snoffy I'm glad that nephew of mine, once removed, is a laugh maker & blues chaser. I've tried to ding it into his leather hide to be a good sport. ...

Bill Willyam, if you two were here, I'm afraid I couldn't set you up to mint juleps, but let me whisper in your ear, there's a pitcher of scuppernong wine brewing on the kitchen table. ...

Your mom gave me a snapshot of you in the barrel stave hammock. I selected it.

I enjoyed my week in Huntsville, but I missed the two King boys. Your mom sort of took off and we both had a little vacation ... We went to town a good bit. On Saturday Leslie, Gene & I took a lunch up to Monte Sano and had a little picnic. Gene fussed because we had to come down right after lunch. he said that was no picnic. Isn't he the fuss box, though? Your daddy took us to two shows, "Wintertime" & "Going My Way." Les & Gene brought me home. We put a lunch in the car and ate it on the point by the lake at Whittaker's. Right by the picnic table was a big tree of ripe wild persimmons. Do you have wild persimmons in Ohio, Snoffy? I like 'em, so do the possums.

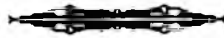
Did you know the song, "Pistol Packin' Mama" is written to the tune of an old southern folksong, "Possum up a 'simmon tree, shake dem 'simmons down."?

I've canned 17 qts. of tomato juice since I came home from Huntsville. ... Yes, Snoffy, you could have a meal without crippling the ration books. Fried chicken & hot biscuits don't require stamps, thank goodness! ...

Lots of love & good wishes,

Pearl

Snoffy, my nephew is only running true to his raisin'. All rebels stand up when Dixie is played.



Wednesday, Dec. 6

Honey Chile,

... I've just ... read your letter ... I ate it up! You and Dick are in my thoughts more than you'd ever guess. ... my mail contained a card from the War Dept. giving Cpl. Dick King's New York A.P.O. address. It put a big lump in my throat. It means he's either gone across, or going soon. Say, didn't you have anything for Thanksgiving dinner but turkey & olives? That's all you mentioned. ... I think as much of you and have known you a lot longer than that little gal you call Mary Evelyn, even if you do write her the most. ...

Bill Willyam, I'm glad you wrote me one letter using fairly passable English. I was about to wonder if you deserved that High School Diploma after all.

... It's been down to 16° above. That's pretty cold for

north Alabama. Today is cold, dark, rainy. I'd surely love to know where you & Russell [Snoffy] are and if you're in any of those raids I read about in the South Pacific. ...

Cigarettes are almost extinct in the good old U.S.A. Once in a while one can get a package of "stoopers" — the kind the clerk stoops behind the counter to get. ... I see by the paper that the shortage is reaching the armed forces. Why didn't you stay off them as you did when you first joined the Navy? I've nothing against smoking but was kind o' proud of you for being one sailor that didn't have to do it. Guess I'm kind o' proud of you, anyway, Bill Bo.

[P.S.] Rearing to hear those sea stories someday. Are you baked brown as a ginger cake?



Thursday, Jan. 25, 1945

Dear Snoffy,

Here I come again. Bill's parents received another telegram from the Navy Department yesterday saying he had been killed in an airplane crash while being evacuated. It was hard to take.

Just the day before they received this letter from Bill himself.

[The following is a copy of the original letter Bill sent to his parents, dated January 11, 1945.]

Jan. 11, 1945

Dear Mom and Dad,

Man I've nearly forgotten how to write, but please try to decipher this, huh?

I hope you've already gotten a telegram to the effect that your no-good son is back in use again. Y'ep, we started living again on January 10 at about 11:00 A.M., and I am none the worse for wear and tare. We are all getting complete check ups and it seems we are in A-I shape.

I was lucky enough to get with a bunch of swell guys, all of whom were suffering the same malfunction, so we didn't lack very much for good old American companionship.

Boy, what a feed they gave us! We'd sit around and talk about what and how much we were going to eat, and it just kept building up to a climax, and what a climax.

Say mom, you folks kinda hold up on the letters a little while 'till I get a good substantial address. Write a short letter, though, and just see if and when I get it because I'm very anxious to hear from you.

Love,
Bill

WM KING, ARM 3/c
V-6 DIV.

That is all we know of his rescue. We are wondering if they were on the life raft til Jan. 10 and a thousand other things.

I thought it a sporting letter. Never a word to make anyone unhappy about him.

Snoffy, if several of the boys in the squadron wanted to write a little letter to Bill's parents I'm sure it would be a great comfort to them. We are hard hit about the boy.

If you have a chance to do so, please tell Bill's Commanding Officer how much Bill's folks appreciated his grand letter. If Bill's dad hasn't already written him, I am sure he will. It helps to know that Bill did what was expected of him on his job and that the boys liked him. The C.O.'s letter was the most earnest and sincere letter I ever read. It made us feel good for him to go to the bother to write all the details in such a sympathetic understanding manner.

Don't stop writing, Snoffy. I'll miss Bill's crazy, flip-pant little letters. He didn't write often but all his letters gave me some laughs.

With love and best wishes to you and all Bill's squadron.

“Aunt Pearl”

14 May 1945

Dear Mrs. King,

You must forgive my long silence. It has been unforgivable. This malaria has been awful.

As you know we were knocked down in the China Sea about 15 miles off shore in the vicinity of Santa Cruz. Our plane was hit twice and although on fire we continued to dive scoring a direct hit on a heavy cruiser of the Mogami Class. The Cruiser, we found later, sunk.

The water landing which we effected was extremely successful and neither of us were scratched. Bill had the rubber raft out of the plane so fast that all I had to do was climb out on the wing and step in.

We spent two days out there in the water. During which time we joked and came to know each other like brothers. We were expecting a submarine at any time. However on the second afternoon we were spotted by two Jap sea planes and had to turn the rafts over and dunk. I can still hear Bill cursing the little yellow so and so's as we had both almost completely dried out our books.]

We had two rafts so there was no want for room. By alternately rowing a half hour or so at a time we reached shore about two o'clock in the morning. Here we were able to contact friendly natives. Our diet from this point forward became rice three times a day!

The Philipinos took excellent care of us to the point of eating 6 meals a day. Both of us soon acquired a taste for rice if there is such a thing. Bill could put it away in enormous quantities.]

We stayed in this vicinity approximately a week. The 3rd of December we were driven out by the Japs and so proceeded Southward; we marched about 75 miles in $2\frac{1}{2}$ days over rough mountain trails. If we weren't going up hill we were going down. During the journey we talked about malted milks and hamburgers and what we would do when we got back in the states.

I told Bill that when we hit San Francisco the two of us would go to the St. Francis Hotel, walk into the grand dining room and we would gorge ourselves, on no. He objected my footing the bill, but I told him he would have to let me or I would put him on the report. He laughed and said, "O.K. but I'll eat you out of a month's salary including flight pay."

It was like that all during our stay on Luzon. Our sense of humor never lagged and though the going at times was extremely rough we had many a hearty laugh.

Then we finally arrived at our destination we met a Lt. Col. G. Merrill U.S.A. who had escaped from Bataan and had been holding out for three years with the guerillas.

He told us about Roccaforte, Naylon and Schlitzche who were down on the beach, about 14 miles from where we were, in a little bay called Nazasa Bay.

We joined them on the 14th of December and made our first contact. Four Hellcats came down and buzzed us. Our slogan immediately became "Out by Christmas." On the 15th and 16th we were again buzzed and cigarettes, candy, food, matches, first aid kits, signal gear etc. was dropped to us. Bill and I just about went wild waving etc. We did somersaults on the beach. However the sub never came. On the 27th we were driven out by the Japs. We returned again on the 31st to see the New Year in. Christmas day we had two chickens for dinner and thought about you all back home and hoped that would have a Merry Christmas; we were there in spirit if not in body.

Our greatest worry all during this time was just how you would take it back home. We talked about that a lot. The parents were our big concern.

On the second of Jan. we again made contact with the aid of our mirror. This time it was the Army P-40's. Nothing happened however and the Japs again drove us out on the 4th. We kept coming back to this beach for it was our only chance of rescue. We could never be picked up in the jungle.

The 6th of Jan. we were recognized again and were dropped some Philippine money. The 8th and 9th planes came back and dropped us more supplies. They were Army A-20's. One of them crashed into the mountain side after dropping us a first aid kit, so you see the fortunes of war are variable and incalculable.

As you know we were picked up by a PBY on the 10th of Jan. and taken down to Leyte where we went aboard the aircraft tender "Tangier." By this time I was quite sick with malaria and was confined to my bunk.

You know the rest. Bill, Naylon, and Roccaforte were pronounced fit to go home. The transport they were on gained about 200 feet upon take off where an Army pilot in a piper cub crashed into the tail of the transport. I can guarantee that there was no suffering for it was instantaneous. I hate to write and recall all this to you for I know how you have suffered and grieved at the great loss that has befallen you. I can never forget Bill in memory or in prayer.

Mrs. King, Bill was a good boy. He was an excellent marksman and radio man, true, loyal, courageous, and of the highest moral standards. I say this for I came to know him very well. He is a son to be extremely proud of and I mean this with all my heart when I say that I am proud to have been his pilot.

Some day, when this is all over, I hope that we may all meet.

Yours very sincerely,
John R. Doyle

A Tribute to William King.

The cause is worth more than all of us together can pay. We now pay our next installment. Whatever either one of cares for in life, as our chief joy, let it be remembered that that joy was purchased, in part, by this sacrifice; This GIFT: This Noble SON. Your home, your liberty, your life and your all remains yours at just such a cost as we pay here to-day.

To date we have paid with the lives of: Pvt. James Gumm; Seaman First Class James Watson Mount; Ist. Lt. Arthur Davies; Pvt. First Class James F. Ivy. And now we come to offer the mane of William Wayne King ARM 3C who died in active duty in the service of our country. William was a Christian and a noble son. His father and mother and others of his family and kins people are here to-day. A GOLD STAR goes by his name on our Honor Roll.

In humble imitation of our Heavenly Father who gave his all to save a broken race of people, to save a lost world; we give our gift trusting that through our sacrifice, through the crucifixion of this another son of our church, a salvation from any and all future wars will be procured. God give us an everlasting Peace.

Unte Thee, O Lord, we dedicate this noble son forever.

Huntsville, Alabama
First Baptist church
February 18 1945
11:00 A.M.

John J. Milferd.

United States Pacific Fleet

COMMANDER SECOND CARRIER TASK FORCE,

PACIFIC FLEET



In the name of the President of the United States, the Commander Second Carrier Task Force, United States Pacific Fleet, presents the AIR MEDAL to

WILLIAM WAYNE KING AVIATION RADIOMAN THIRD CLASS
UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION

"For distinguishing himself by meritorious acts while participating in an aerial flight against enemy forces in the Philippine Islands on 25 November 1944. As gunner in a carrier based aircraft he participated in an attack on an enemy heavy cruiser which capsized and sank. His aircraft was hit and set on fire by enemy anti-aircraft fire, but the attack was pressed home with great courage. His bravery was inspiring and in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."



J. S. McCain
Vice Admiral, U. S. Navy

In Memoriam

The Huntsville High School

His fellow students, teachers, and the citizens
of this community hold in reverent memory

Bill King

who gave his life for his country. May the
great sacrifice he has made help to promote
perpetual peace and further the welfare of our
nation and the freedom and security of mankind.
He shall be remembered as long as time shall
endure.



December 7, 1945
Date

J. R. [Signature]
Official















When Uncle Sam Called: The Creation of Redstone Arsenal

Elise H. Stephens

Few other cities can make the claim about their military installation that is heard here: Redstone Arsenal is incontestably the best thing that ever happened to Huntsville, Alabama. From humble beginnings in corn field and cow pasture, its future will soon be crowned by a major new role as MACOM and a magnificent new building — The Sparkman Center — will bear the name of the man many say “almost single-handedly” brought the Arsenal to Huntsville.

My topic for today is “When Uncle Sam Called: The Creation of Redstone Arsenal.” As with other acts of creation, certain “creation myths” have gained currency over the years. Bob Ward in last year’s wonderful *Times* tribute commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Arsenal, quoted the plaudits as saying “In the beginning ... there was John Sparkman.”

Redstone Arsenal is the generic name for three separate entities which originally shared the nearly 40,000 acres purchased from 320 landowners in the fall of 1941. Displaced from this land were 550 families, 76% of whom were blacks. First came the chemical War Plant which became the Huntsville Arsenal. 7,700 acres were set aside for the Gulf Chemical Warfare Depot. A 4,000-acre tract, the Redstone Ordnance Plant, was later elevated to arsenal status in February 26, 1943. The two arsenals and depot coordinated to deliver Uncle Sam’s powerful punch in WWII. Not until well after the war when then Colonel H. N. Toftoy had secured Redstone Arsenal for the United States Ordnance Guided Missile Center did the army in the summer of 1949, consolidate most of the deactivated Huntsville Arsenal with Redstone and make them one, preparatory of the arrival of 130 German scientists from Fort Bliss.

For the purposes of history and for today, the Redstone Arsenal traces its origins back to that thrilling and memorable July 3rd day when fire engines clanked and honked their way through the city's streets tossing out *Huntsville Times Extras* which headlined the good news. HUNTSVILLE GETS CHEMICAL WAR PLANT, COST OVER \$40,000,000. A front page picture of John Sparkman accompanies the lead article. Its caption reads: "DISTRICT GETS PLUM — Rep. John Sparkman, above, played a major role in the selection of Huntsville as the site for the new chemical warfare plant. Rep(resentative). Sparkman and Senator Lister Hill have been working untiringly since early June to land the plant."

Lister Hill's biographer, Virginia VanderVeer Hamilton, says Hill "induced the Army Chemical Warfare Service to locate a plant at Huntsville to take advantage of cheap electricity to produce gas." (p. 97)

If Hill "induced" the birth of the Arsenal, exactly what was the role of John Sparkman, the Chamber of Commerce, and other individuals? John Sparkman's papers are housed in the W. S. Hoole Special Collections Library at The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. It is to them as well as to the newspapers and interviews that I have gone to piece together for my own satisfaction (and I hope your interest) the course of events and actions that culminated in the creation of the Arsenal.

A native of Hartselle, Alabama, Sparkman rose from humble beginnings to become Adelai Stevenson's running mate in 1952. He attended the University of Alabama, taking three degrees, BA, MA, and law. Politics came easy to this young man who edited (*The Crimson and White*) and served as Student Government President. Coming to Huntsville in 1925, Sparkman taught school in the mornings and practiced law in the afternoons until established in his profession. It wasn't long before Huntsville became Sparkman's oyster. Active in most things civic, he gained a reputation for effective leadership.

In 1936, in the midst of the Depression when Roosevelt's New Deal was sputtering, and the TVA was under attack, John Sparkman won election to the Congressional seat from the Eight District. In Congress he came to the attention of Representative Lister Hill.

The Montgomery Democrat had sponsored enabling legislation for TVA, joining with Senator Norris in 1933 to create the Tennessee Valley Authority. This agency was overseen by the House Military Affairs Committee on which Hill served for fourteen years, many as the ranking Democrat and from 1937 to 1938 as Chairman. When he went to the Senate in 1938, Hill and House Speaker John Bankhead worked to get Sparkman appointed to Hill's old seat on the Military Affairs Committee.

In the days before the Arsenal was announced, John Sparkman must have thought of his seat on that all important committee as a hot seat, as his constituents kept trying to light a fire under him.

On February 22, 1939, John Sparkman put a bill into the legislative hopper. It became HR4408. "A bill to authorize a survey for the establishment of a chemical warfare unit in the Tennessee Valley in north Alabama." Like all such bills, HR4408 was referred to Sparkman's Committee on Military Affairs.

Important connections were made. Sparkman met Walter C. Baker, then Major General and Chief of the Chemical Warfare Service, who escorted him and his colleagues through Maryland's aging Edgewood Arsenal in May of 1939. Baker later wrote Sparkman hoping he had given the Representative "an intimate grasp of the affairs of this service" and assuring him "I am available at anytime."

Sparkman later admitted that Major General Baker, in 1939, came to Huntsville under cover simply as "Mr. Baker" and surveyed the city and environs, unbeknownst to anybody except Sparkman, Lister Hill and the TVA.

Thus was set into motion a proposal that would culminate in the creation of the Redstone Arsenal. From bill to building, the route was circuitous, filled with detours, deadends and much hometown grumbling.

The Chamber of Commerce watched as war clouds gathered and Uncle Sam began to spend millions of dollars on defense industries. All around them it seemed, towns were landing defense plants, aviation schools, chemical or munitions industries. When an ordnance plant was announced for Gadsden, Chamber of Commerce Secretary Jack M. Nelson, wrote Sparkman, July 5, 1939, in urgent tones: "This story has certainly started everyone in this town after you and me. They seem to think we have gone to sleep on the job."

Further, Nelson wrote: I am advised, pretty reliably from Washington that the War Department is planning for both munitions plants, depots, and aviation posts in the South. We feel that Huntsville should be given consideration on these and that something should be done. ... and that you, as a member of the Military Affairs Committee, could investigate and allow us an opportunity to present Huntsville's claims in this connection. I am having this thrown at me on all sides and so is President George Mahoney. ..."

In January, 1941, he expressed the same conviction to Claude Pipes, the new Chamber Secretary:

"The way I see it, there is no need for us to butt our heads uselessly against a stonewall. Huntsville is simply not properly located for such a plant, for instance, as went to Gadsden, or to Childersburg, or to Talladega. We are properly located for aviation, both manufacturing and training."

Sparkman zapped a letter back dated July 7, 1939, expressing a view he was to hold firmly until 1941:

"General Wesson has told me that it would be foolish to build a munitions plant outside of an iron and steel

area — and that ... any such plant would almost have to be located in the Birmingham - Anniston - Gadsden area.”

With heavy defense plants out of the question, Sparkman encouraged his constituents to look to the air for Huntsville's future.

The need for a respectable airport was given dramatic punch when, on the evening of March 15, 1938, eighteen army planes radioed that they needed to land in Huntsville enroute to their destination. Citizens were frantically called upon to hasten to the airfield in their automobiles so that their headlights could serve as beacon lights to guide the pilots as they landed.

From 1939 until May 26, 1941, he championed an airport, an air school, the encouragement of airplane manufacture and the idea of Huntsville as a “hub”, probably before the concept had originated.



Tremendous local energy went into the creation of the airport off Whitesburg Pike on a 720 acre stretch of the old Garth farm called the Sibley farm. Carl T. Jones of G. W. Jones & Sons was the engineer who laid out three landing strips. A fourth was to be added later. To finance construction, city and county leaders looked to Washington and John Sparkman.

A barrage of telegrams apprised Sparkman. Major McAllister wired:

It's up to you now to secure approval of War Department WPA Application for National Defense Airport Project for Huntsville ... nothing short of its approval will be tolerated.

County Commission Chairman, Joe Van Valkenburgh wired:

... Huntsville has asked little of you, but this time everyone is expecting results.

Sparkman gave them results. On August 12, 1940 he wired the good news to Robert K. (Buster) Bell, then President of the Chamber of Commerce. But the good news soon soured. Hopes that the airport could be a nucleus of a major flight school were smashed.

In a four-page letter dated 26 May, 1941, Commanding Brigadier General W. R. Weaver wrote to Sparkman that the Huntsville airport site was too cramped, "approached at a slope of 30 to 1," instead of the Air Corps requirement of 40 to 1. Student flyers had to be able to take off and land into the wind, which could not be done with the present topography of the three runways. There had to be four runways and only three had been built. They weren't all long enough. And, furthermore, these could only be used for non-military use; yet the mayor and county commission had stipulated that they wished to reserve the right for its use "in the event we can secure the routing of a commercial airline."

The fallout from this rejection of everyone's fondest hopes could have led to some bitter acrimony and finger pointing had not the arsenal been waiting to be born. I am reminded of a sign behind my desk at school: "When My Ship Came In, I Was At The Airport." When Huntsville's ship finally came in, John Sparkman and most Huntsvillians were still at the airport!

On April 9, 1941, President Roosevelt met with the governors of six southern states, among them Alabama's Frank M. Dixon, Chairman of the Southern Governor's Conference. They were advised that 18 new plants would be located in the South and West, among them would be ordnance and chemical units. The governors urged "decentralization of defense industries" and Roosevelt listened. Within a week, Sparkman wrote Claude Pipes alerting him to "a new procedure" for plant site selection. A Plant Site Committee located in Washington would give "full and sympathetic consideration ... to any proposal setting out the availability of particular sites." The controlling factors would be "availability of labor, necessary supplies, housing, strategic geographical locations, and such other factors as may relate to the particular class of defense project."

Sparkman suggested that the Chamber send the Committee Chairman any map or plat showing available sites, setting forth their advantages.

On April 24, 1941, Sparkman wrote Pipes, "I have obtained from the War Department a memorandum setting out requirements for new munitions plants ... I am enclosing a copy."

Huntsville was getting closer and closer to pay dirt. Within a fortnight of the airport rejection letter, while still smarting from that blow, Sparkman received a curious letter from Lawrence Goldsmith, Sr., who had all along been busily at work with George Mahoney and others pushing for Huntsville. It was dated June 9, 1941.

Right: Lawrence
Goldsmith, Sr.



Below:
George Mahoney



Footnotes to History

AIR MAIL

June 9, 1941

Hon. John Sparkman,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

My dear John:-

On yesterday, Mr. Senter, connected with the N.C. & St.L. Railroad phoned George Mahoney that he had two men flying down from Baltimore Sunday afternoon, who would be in Huntsville Sunday night, and these gentlemen were interested in looking over Madison County in the area south of the airport, and as far south as the Tennessee River, an area of approximately 7 square miles.

This morning George and myself took these gentlemen and covered the entire area from Huntsville south to the Tennessee River; Whitesburg Pike on the east, and Triana and Madison on the west. They had maps and knew exactly what they wanted to see.

Their names were Lt. Col. Charles Ernest Loucks, located in the War Department, Annex #1, Washington, and the other was Mr. R. F. Graef, connected with the engineering firm of Whitman, Requardt, & Smith, 1304 St. Paul Street, Baltimore. They did not tell us very much except that they wanted about 1500 acres for a building site, and that the entire project would require 30,000 acres in all. They had looked at several sites, one in West Tennessee, others I do not know where.

They were not inclined to talk very much, but knew exactly what they wanted, and where they wanted to go. They were very much impressed and liked the area that we showed them

very much. What firm they were representing, or who they were representing, I could not get the information from them.

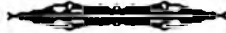
I am writing you this for what it is worth. Perhaps you can enlighten me on the subject. They were especially interested in keeping the matter as quiet as possible. Get what information you can and write me. Thanks.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Lawrence

Lawrence Goldsmith



COPY OF WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Washington, D. C.
June 11, 1941

Mr. Lawrence Goldsmith
Huntsville, Alabama

Have discussed matter fully with Colonel Loucks, also with Senator Hill. Five sites, all told, are under consideration. Engineers report will be made soon based on which final selection will be made. Am keeping in close touch with situation urging strongly favorable action on Huntsville site. Senator Hill promises full co-operation.

John Sparkman, M. C.



COPY OF WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Washington, D. C.
June 12, 1941

Mr. Lawrence Goldsmith
Huntsville, Alabama

Forced to cancel telephone call due to another engagement.
When convenient tomorrow call me. Suggest you have stenographer available to take notes.

John Sparkman, M. C.



AIR MAIL

June 12, 1941

Hon. John Sparkman,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D. C.

My dear John:-

Thanks for your telegram. I certainly hope that we can get favorable action on the Huntsville site.

I also phoned Senator Hill on yesterday, and he promised to do everything possible in the matter.

Huntsville is counting on you. This is our only chance.

Many thanks.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Lawrence

Lawrence Goldsmith



COPY OF WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Washington, D. C.
June 14, 1941

Mr. Lawrence Goldsmith
Huntsville, Alabama

Confirming telephone conversation yesterday Major General Porter and Colonel English leaving Washington this afternoon will reach Huntsville eleven tomorrow morning. Will be on Memphis Pullman. Meet them at station and have reservations at Russell Erskine Hotel. Have informed them you would and that you would be completely at their disposal. Have assured them of every cooperation by people and officials of Huntsville and Madison County.

John Sparkman, M. C.



(excerpts only)

June 14, 1941

Mr. Reese T. Amis
Huntsville, Alabama

Dear Reese:

... As soon as Lawrence Goldsmith told me what had happened, I got in touch with the War Department; and finding that it was the Chemical Warfare Service involved, I immediately went to the heads of that Service and discussed the whole matter with them. I found that the Huntsville site was recommended by the Engineers as No. 2 out of 5 on which engineering studies had been made. Nevertheless, before I left the office, General Porter, the Chief of Chemical Warfare Service, and his executive, Colonel English, made their plans to leave this afternoon for Huntsville in order to see the site personally. I feel very good over our prospects and, of course, intend to stay behind the matter until a definite decision is reached.

After my talk with General Porter, Colonel English, and Colonel Loucks, I called Lawrence Goldsmith and discussed the matter with him, arranging for him to meet General Porter and Colonel English Sunday morning and to take them over the site.

Sincerely,

John



CONFIDENTIAL

(excerpts only)

June 16, 1941

Dear Reese:

You will be pleased to know that Saturday afternoon before the gentlemen left Washington they called me and told me that the letter of recommendation — 20 pages long — had already been prepared, would be signed before they left and would go over to the War Department ... today. Their trip was simply for the purpose of fortifying them to answer any questions ...

I believe it will go through all right. Lister thinks so, too. He promised me right off that he would go all the way for this particular site regardless of what other sites might be on the list in Alabama. This he has done.

You know, I believe, that I have been working on the Chemical Warfare proposition for three yeas or more. I knew well the last Chief, General Baker. At my request he made a trip more than two years ago to Huntsville and Decatur and Muscle Shoals, traveling simply as Mr. Baker. His visit was known only to me, Lister and the TVA. Col. English was his executive officer, as he is for the new Chief, General Porter. He has been of invaluable assistance in the present matter, making suggestions and often "grabbing the ball and running with it" himself.

Regards,

John



WESTERN UNION

1941 JUN 16 PM

Congressman John Sparkman=

:Army officials delighted may make favorable recommendation
today please watch and notify me immediately when any develop-
ments pop for publication=

Reese.



(excerpts only — referencing a letter from Reese Amis to John Sparkman)

June 18, 1941

Major General William N. Porter
Chief of the Chemical Warfare Service
War Department
Washington, D. C.

Dear General Porter:

... "It is my intention to prepare for an extra edition, to be issued if Huntsville gets this plant.

... I will have a story prepared and set in type ready for release whenever you wire me that the decision has been officially made.

... The whole matter has been kept pretty quiet here, and no more than a dozen or so local people have been let in on it."

Sincerely,

Huntsville Housing: A World War II Problem

Clifford Vanderpool

A rapid population increase was the first effect of the arsenals on Huntsville. The majority of workers coming to the city between July 1941 and April 1942 came without their families and wanted only temporary employment. This group was distinct from the second wave of more permanent employees who started arriving as the arsenals were being completed. Undoubtedly, some of the first wave stayed to work at the arsenals, but contemporary observers noted that this group quickly left after the construction was complete to seek work in other parts of the country.^[1]

Huntsville's population figures for 1940 and 1943 demonstrate the huge movement of workers into the city. In 1940, 13,050 people lived in Huntsville.^[2] By 1943, almost 20,000 resided within the city limits, but by 1950, the number decreased to 16,437.^[3] These figures mirror the temporal nature of Huntsville's growth during the war years. As newcomers arrived, the city searched for ways to accommodate its new citizens in the desperate hope that the benefits gained from the arsenals' presence would be permanent and the Chemical Warfare Service (CWS) would stay in Huntsville after the war.^[4]

Throughout the war the most pressing problem faced by the city and its new inhabitants was housing. Huntsville possessed 3,574 dwelling units in 1940, and only ninety-two of these were vacant. All the dwelling units were not in good condition though, for 23.4 percent needed major repairs and 53.7 percent did not have a private bath.^[5] As construction workers poured into the city through the summer and early fall of 1941, adequate housing was rapidly occupied. Congressman Sparkman anticipated a housing crunch but assured the city that the Defense Housing Agency would "pro-

vide a housing program by the time it is needed.”^[6] Despite statements from Sparkman that federal housing would be provided, residents of the city dashed to secure residential and commercial leases one day after the announcement of the project, July 4, 1941.



An “influx of destitute men” and some poor families started arriving in Huntsville during the fall months of 1941.^[7] The newcomers begged, slept in cars, and created health problems while waiting for work.^[8] The city considered this initial group of workers a security problem since many were “floaters” with criminal records.^[9] Judge Schuyler Richardson charged the Circuit Court Grand Jury “to be vigilant in ridding our city of harpies, camp followers, and hangers on” during the present boom period.^[10] Reece Amis, *Huntsville*

Times editor, praised Richardson's remarks, stating that the [chemical warfare] plant is:

certain to draw a considerable number of undesirables, both men and women, who will seek to prey on the thousands who will be employed. They will be light fingered generally [and] have no regard for law or decency. ...Decent citizens do not want Huntsville turned into a wide open town, or made the haven of criminal scum.^[11]

Amis and Richardson expressed views held by their community. One was the community's spokesman and the other its guardian. Their comments reflect the city's first concern, maintaining order.

The first invasion of workers into the city needed cheap temporary housing. Many of these workers were poor agricultural laborers or part of the twenty percent unemployed of



WESTLAWN

Madison County who did not have enough money to pay high rents. Thirty-seven percent of the construction workers came from Southern states or other parts of Alabama, and property owners in Huntsville pursued the opportunity to benefit from the workers' problem. According to the editor, rent prices leapt fifty to one hundred percent, an increase that would only harm the development of the city.^[12] Despite pleas from Amis, rents continued to rise. During August 1941, the *Huntsville Times* covered stories about the plight of poor renters, including the eviction of a widow unable to pay her increased rent.^[13] By late September the housing problem was acute, and the mayor was making public appeals to provide more space for the newcomers. He especially desired homeowners "to make all suitable old property in good repair" for living quarters.^[14] Homeowners made repairs totaling \$166,173 in 1941, and \$80,164 in 1942, but this was not enough.^[15] In January 1942, there were no available rooms or apartments in the city, thus forcing workers into overcrowded living space. John B. Finley testified before the House Defense Migration Committee hearing in Huntsville that he left his wife and four children in Anniston, Alabama, to find employment with the Huntsville Arsenal. Finley stated that his situation was common among the workers; he shared a room ten feet by ten feet with another man in a house containing twenty-four men and one bathroom.^[16]

Trailers housed construction workers and their families. Some workers towed their own trailers into the city and established temporary residence wherever they could. Others moved into private trailer parks or FSA camps.^[17] Camps sprang up in Huntsville and in Madison County and particularly benefited workers with families, because space for a family was very hard to find. The number of trailers in Huntsville and Madison County peaked in April 1943 when 769 were in the area.^[18]

To address immediate and long-term housing needs, the city council created the Housing Authority of the City of Huntsville.^[19] During the war the Housing Authority's chairman

Herbert Johnson and other civic leaders such as Mayor McAllister, Reese Amis, and Henry M. McKelvie (President of the Chamber of Commerce) continuously sought to solve the city's pressing housing problem. Part of the effort to increase housing availability relied on private enterprise in the community. The Chamber of Commerce served as a rental referral agency to new arrivals seeking a place to live. Local residents informed the organization when they had an available room or home to rent, and then the chamber would post the vacancy. Repairs to existing property were voluntary, but owners expected large dividends from their investments; hence individual volunteer efforts had an immediate cash incentive because of the high rental rates.^[20] Private enterprise could not solve the housing shortage, and civic leaders understood the necessity of federal help.^[21]



WESTLAWN - closeup



BROOKFIELD

Federal assistance began when the city received an Office of Production Management war priority rating. Under the OPM plan, the city received a priority rating that enabled builders to apply to the Federal Housing Administration to obtain essential materials for building houses costing \$6,000 or less. The government guaranteed ninety percent of the housing costs, and builders could rent or sell the homes at their discretion.^[22] The government designed FHA homes to be permanent, but facilities built by the Federal Public Housing Authority were only for temporary wartime demands. In Huntsville, the FPHA assisted the FSA in providing trailer homes and building certain dwellings (Binford Court) to be torn down after the war.^[23]

The demand for living quarters ran in cycles during the war. The first wave of construction workers created a huge shortage, but when they started leaving, a lag developed. In July

1942, Reese Amis boldly asserted that the scarcity of housing was over. Amis believed that the second wave of workers, those who would run the arsenals, would move into the newly built FHA homes. The editor's optimism ended in late September 1942, when another housing crunch hit.^[24] Cycles of availability and scarcity continued until the winter of 1944 and 1945, which brought the last great period of lodging deficiency.^[25]

Housing shortages plagued the city despite efforts by the Housing Authority, McKelvie, Amis, and Sparkman. Initially these community leaders and the federal government hoped that the large FHA developments and the small FPHA establishments could meet the demand, but commuting workers from surrounding areas continuously desired to move closer to the arsenals.^[26] Therefore, when affordable space became available in the city, commuters rushed to fill the void. In 1943, 1,000 government employees traveled up to sixty miles a day, a task complicated by tire and gas rationing.^[27] For example, Melvin Moody drove daily to Huntsville from Falkville, Alabama and found that gas and tire rationing made it imperative that he move or quit his job at the Huntsville Arsenal.^[28] FHA homes were too expensive for many workers, thus the proposed solution prevented some workers from obtaining decent living space. Melvin Moody wanted to move to an FHA house but could not afford to rent or buy one, which required a \$100 deposit. Moody earned \$1,445 a year as an arsenal worker, not enough for FHA prices that ranged from \$37 to \$55 a month. He was part of the thirty-five percent of government employees who made less than \$1,500 a year, and most of this group could not afford FHA homes.

Empty FHA structures in Huntsville added to the frustration of men and women like Moody. The FHA built 820 homes in the city, but 141 stood vacant in 1944 because they were not affordable.^[29] The FHA rental rates were higher than the rental property rates of private citizens, because the Office of Price Administration excluded FHA properties when it declared that rents must return to their pre-April 1, 1941

level. Private property owners, therefore, had to lower their rates to get them back to the pre-boom levels, a requirement that infuriated many citizens after they just made costly repairs.^[30] Lower rents in the private sector attracted workers, but the high demand made these lodgings difficult to obtain throughout the war. Table three demonstrates that while many workers desired homes in the city, they could not afford to locate in Huntsville, causing vacancies in some FHA homes. Eighteen percent of the FHA homes remained empty during the war despite the high demand from commuters for city housing. FHA costs, then, prevented men like Moody from moving closer to their work.

Table 3. FHA projects in Huntsville, April 1944

Project	No. of Units	No. Vacant	Cost/Month
Westlawn	295	35	\$45
Brookfield	83	7	\$41-50
Madison Heights	292	84	\$37-48
Haven Manor	38	6	\$50-55
Mayfair	112	14	\$50

Source: Beirne Spragins to Congressman John Sparkman, April 14, 1944. Sparkman Papers, William Stanley Hoole Special Collections, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Lawrence B. Magnusson summarized the Huntsville housing situation in a letter to John Sparkman. Magnusson came from another state to work as a chemist at the Huntsville Arsenal and observed that “the property owners of Huntsville are resentful that they are subject to regulation while the [FHA] housing projects are not.” He continued to state that he paid \$45 a month for a house in the Westlawn division that “is of very poor construction having such features as exposed plumbing which freezes, no insulation, and inadequate heating, and general poor carpentry.” Angered over

high costs for poor housing, the chemist wrote that “if this situation is not corrected we workers cannot help but retain in our memory an everlasting enmity towards Huntsville and Alabama.”^[31]

FPHA dwellings provided some employees affordable housing. The FPHA built two large projects in Huntsville. Redstone Court had 300 units and rented for \$22.35 to \$27.65 a month; in April 1944 none was vacant. Binford Court was for black workers. It contained 230 units, had seventy-one vacant, and rented from \$18.50 to \$23.50 a month. The Huntsville Housing Authority wanted to obtain more FPHA projects but could not on account of vacancies in the FHA units. Attempts to transfer the vacant FHA homes to the FPHA did not work, for the FHA would not assume such a financial loss since it was responsible for financing the homes.^[32]



MAYFAIR



MADISON HEIGHTS

Military and civic leaders in Huntsville believed the housing situation caused absenteeism at the arsenals. Military commanders at Huntsville and Redstone Arsenals stated that the ten percent absentee rate was the result of an insufficient supply of cheap housing.^[33] Reese Amis also linked absenteeism to the housing situation. His solution was for store owners to stay open longer to permit workers, especially those commuting, to shop. Store owners agreed to stay open longer on Tuesday and Saturday but stopped after a month when absenteeism failed to decline.^[34]

Other factors contributed to absenteeism. To Amis, housing was just one cause of many. The editor declared that workers abused the government and took off without authority, something they would not do in private industry. The solution Amis offered for this problem was to ship absent workers "into the hell of New Guinea or Guadalcanal and let the

soldiers come back and operate the plants.”^[35] A month later Amis added that legitimate reasons existed for absenteeism. Causes included female workers unable to work because of sick children, unattractive shift work, and gasoline and tire rationing. To Amis, some workers had understandable reasons, but it seemed “a big percentage of absenteeism is because workers get their checks and then feel that they have to get drunk.”^[36] Privately Amis stated that “I think perhaps the fault lies partly with them [the army] — and partly with the workers, who are just about the bottom of the barrel. Part of the absenteeism is excusable, a lot of it has no rhyme or reason, but is due to pure cussedness.”^[37] While Amis blamed the army and the workers and the army pointed to the housing difficulty created by the FHA, the FHA denounced the OPA as the culprit. An FHA recommendation for Huntsville declared that “if absenteeism among the currently employed workers is to be held to a minimum and serious curtailment in the existing labor supply is to be avoided, some action must be taken by the OPA to provide supplementary gas and tire rations.”^[38]

Amid this finger pointing, the army turned to Huntsville’s business and civic leaders to solve the problem. In April 1944, the commanders of Huntsville Arsenal, the Gulf Chemical Warfare Depot, and Redstone Arsenal addressed the directors of the Chamber of Commerce. The commanders wanted the chamber to help with personnel problems that included absenteeism, high worker turnover, and insufficient labor supplies. The business group responded by creating a special committee to assist the army. The chairman of the committee was Beirne Spragins, the President of the First National Bank in Huntsville. Members included Reese Amis, Mayor McAllister, and Henry McKelvie of Merrimack Manufacturing Company. The committee met with army representatives, the management of the three textile mills, the manpower commission, and the United States Employment Office. It decided that only affordable, low-cost housing could solve the absenteeism problem.^[39] Local attempts to reduce FHA rates failed. Therefore, Spragins and the committee solicited the help of Sparkman and Senator Lister Hill “to hurtle [*sic*] the red tape” and get rents reduced “to combat absenteeism at the arsenals.”^[40] Realizing that

the political efforts would probably be futile, the committee established an educational campaign to inform workers about problems created by absenteeism. The campaign used schools, billboards, and churches but proved useless in ending the high rate that continued to V-J Day.^[41]

Clifford Vanderpool is currently working towards his Ph.D. in History at The University of Alabama. The above is an excerpt from a larger study.

- [1] *The Times*, May 31, 1942; Mary M. Thomas, Riveting and Rationing in Dixie: Alabama Women and the Second World War (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1987), 17 and 10; The 38 percent of construction workers not from Huntsville or Madison County appear to be part of the mass labor migrations of the 1930s and 1940s. Men and their families seem to have moved quickly onto other projects — see Final Report of the National Defense Migration Committee.
- [2] United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census of the Population, 1950; vol. II: Characteristics of the Population, part II, Alabama (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1950), 2-14.
- [3] *Ibid.*
- [4] *The Times*, September 1941.
- [5] U.S. Department of Labor, appendix J.
- [6] Sparkman correspondence, Sparkman Papers (W. S. Hoole Special Collections, University of Alabama) July 2, 1941.
- [7] *The Times*, September 17, 1941.
- [8] *Ibid.*
- [9] Joiner, 22.
- [10] *The Times*, August 4, 1941.
- [11] *Ibid.*, August 6, 1941.
- [12] *The Times*, July 12, 1941.
- [13] *Ibid.*, August 17, 1941.
- [14] *Ibid.*, September 29, 1941.
- [15] U.S. Department of Labor, appendix K.
- [16] *The Times*, May 7, 1942; The Tolan Committee is another name for the Defense Migration Committee.

- [17] Ibid.
- [18] Ibid., May 3, 1942.
- [19] Ibid, August 15, 1941.
- [20] U.S. Department of Labor, appendix K.
- [21] *The Times*, July 11, 1941.
- [22] Sparkman to T. R. Harrison, December 7, 1941; Funigiello, *The Challenge to Urban Liberalism: Federal-City Relations During World War II* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1978), 101.
- [23] H. Johnson to John P. Broome. September 6, 1944, Sparkman Papers.
- [24] *The Huntsville Times*, September 18, 1942.
- [25] Ibid., January 16, 1945.
- [26] U.S. Department of Labor, 17; *The Times*, July 1, 1942.
- [27] U.S. Department of Labor, 17.
- [28] Sparkman to J. B. Blandford, November 4, 1942.
- [29] "Study on absenteeism," April 29, 1944 in Sparkman Papers; Sparkman to Blandford, November 4, 1942.
- [30] *The Times*, July 1, 1942; A. C. Montgomery to Sparkman.
- [31] L. B. Magnusson to Sparkman, January 4, 1943.
- [32] "Study on absenteeism;" Amis to Sparkman, 1944.
- [33] Amis to Sparkman, 1944 (Most of Amis's correspondence to Sparkman was not dated).
- [34] *The Times*, May 11 and June 25, 1943.
- [35] Ibid., December 22, 1942.
- [36] Ibid., January 26, 1943.
- [37] Amis to Sparkman, 1944.
- [38] FHA recommendation sheet in Sparkman's papers, May 10, 1943.
- [39] Beirne Spragins to Sparkman, April 29, 1944; Spragins' letter contained the "Study on absenteeism," which was a three-page report written by either Spragins or the committee.
- [40] Ibid.
- [41] *The Times*, April 4, 1944; Joiner, 42.

ARTISTS' RENDERINGS

An Interview with Louise Marsh

Suzanne Bolton

The day is soft and surprisingly warm for the middle of February. Red fuzzies on the redbud trees and a tinge of yellow on forsythia bushes hint a promise that spring will soon burst upon the city and this particular older and well-established neighborhood. Small, neatly kept houses line the street as the car winds around one curve and then another before stopping at the home of one of Huntsville's pioneer art educators, Louise Butler Marsh. The door stands open as the visitor ascends the one step. A pleasant face and warm voice bid a welcoming, "Hi, I'm Nancy." Nancy is an invaluable companion to Mrs. Marsh, a friend, a locator of lost pictures and files, and the provider of organization.

Entering the house, a newcomer is introduced to the tiny dynamo seated in a comfortable arm chair in the living room. It is evident immediately that Mrs. Marsh is still very much the teacher she has always been, and a visitor quickly assumes the role of student waiting to be taught. The owner's paintings look down from each wall and give warmth to the room filled with a lifetime collection of cherished pieces.

Louise Butler Marsh is a fifth generation north Alabamian, the oldest of seven children born in New Hope to W. E. and Lillian Mussetter Butler.

"Father was a merchant who ran Butler Bros. General Store, which was founded by my grandfather, and Mother was an excellent watercolorist, although not a professional artist." Mrs. Marsh explains, "Mother was the one who encouraged me to paint and draw, and she took me to art museums in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York."

The Butler family moved to the Governor Bibb house (now known as the Bibb-Hutchens house) at 300 Williams Street when Louise was ten.

“It was exciting, fantastic,” she said with relish. “I had new playmates and went to a schoolhouse for the first time when I was in sixth grade. I took music lessons and Miss Mable Metcalf gave me art lessons.”

There were no museums or art shows at that time, but down the street was Miss Howard Weeden’s home, with every inch of the walls covered with pictures large and small.

“We played with Mary Elizabeth Weeden and had a great time sliding down the winding banisters,” relates Louise as her eyes, still bright and intense, gaze out through the screen door seeing the memories that flood her mind. “I think Miss Howard really inspired me. ‘If she could do it, why can’t I?’ I thought.”

At sixteen, Louise graduated from the Wills Taylor School [located on Eustis Street] where she had been art editor of the school annual. She entered Ward Belmont College in Nashville and selected costume design as her art major. But she was disappointed in the curriculum there and decided instead to attend Sophie Newcomb College of Tulane University in New Orleans. The art department at Newcomb was a dream come true. Louise was able to study watercolor, design, life drawing, and pottery. One of her paintings was acquired by the old Delgado Museum.

“All this wonderful schooling and Mardi Gras too!” Louise exclaimed. “I met my husband at one of the Mardi Gras balls.” Their son, the eldest of five children, was born in New Orleans. Mrs. Marsh also did graduate studies in art education at George Peabody College. She has studied painting, printmaking, and sculpture at UAH and Alabama A&M University.

After returning to Huntsville, the family subsequently moved to New Hope where Louise taught in the high school. The principal there established an art department where Louise taught art classes for elementary as well as the high school students.

In 1952, the family again relocated to Huntsville. There Louise taught at Lincoln Junior High and started an art program at the elementary and junior high levels.

“Our class won five gold medals, six honorable achievements, and seven Hallmark awards in the scholastic competition in Birmingham,” she proudly reports.

Louise wanted to project her philosophy of art to students throughout the community. “Teaching the children to be aware of light and color and composition would make their lives so much more meaningful,” she recalls, but there was no curriculum in the city schools with which to teach them. So, in 1958, Louise, together with Louise Smith, went to Dr. Raymond Christian, then Superintendent of the City Schools. With his help and direction, the two women launched an art program for the city school system. Louise Marsh became supervisor of the entire Huntsville art program when Louise Smith retired. Pride fills her voice as she tells her visitor, “I planted seeds of art in the students.” Later Mrs. Marsh taught at HALMA for fifteen years and was a director of the Huntsville Art Museum Planning Committee.

Awards and achievements have marked Louise’s career. In 1982, she was named art teacher of the year for Alabama, an honor bestowed on her in a ceremony at the National Art Education Association in New York. She was a member of the Alabama Art Education Association for forty years and served the association as secretary, treasurer, vice president, and president. Following her retirement as art supervisor to the Huntsville City School System, she continued to guide children in their artistic endeavors and education. She served as a docent for the Huntsville Museum of Art and as

a volunteer teacher for the Mental Health Center. She also presented frequent slide lectures and demonstrations on art for various Huntsville organizations.

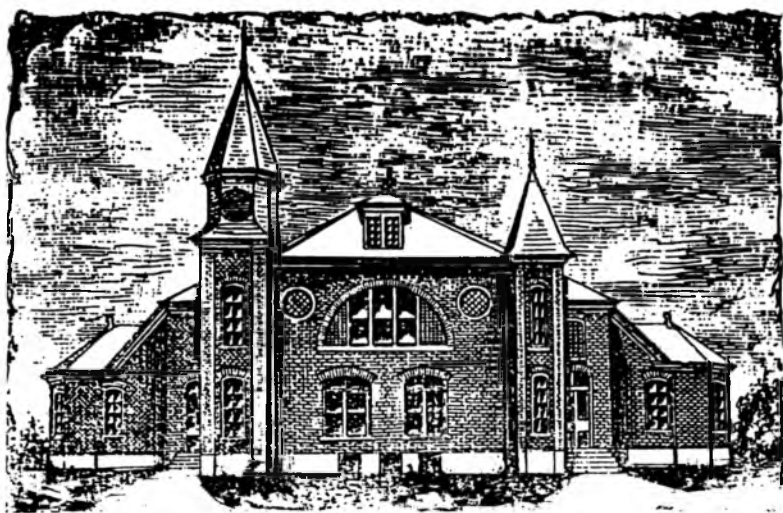
From Louise Marsh's lifelong devotion to art have come some sketches and paintings which captured early Huntsville and its environs for all time. These include a watercolor series on life in Scottsboro and Mooresville, several sketches of historic homes in Huntsville, schools throughout Huntsville and Madison County, and the old Huntsville Courthouse which was torn down in 1964.

The visit finished, Mrs. Marsh sips from the water glass held tightly in her small hands. These hands have captured eras and lifestyles of bygone days in and around Huntsville and have preserved them for us all. These hands have taught children by showing them how to hold a brush, how to mix colors, and how to paint skies, landscapes, and buildings. These hands have carved block prints and worked pottery as well as painted watercolors. These hands have brought pleasure to the viewer and instruction to the student. These hands have shaken fingers at those who disobeyed in class or stood in the way of spreading the love of art. These hands belong to Louise Marsh.

WORKS BY LOUISE MARSH

- A. East Clinton Elementary School
- B. Poplar Ridge School
- C. Madison County High School
- D. West Clinton School, originally a high school
- E. Confederate Monument at Old Courthouse
- F. Old Huntsville
- G. Changing Huntsville









BIOGRAPHY — Suzanne Bolton

Suzanne Bolton is a native Californian who grew up in Santa Barbara and earned her Bachelor's degree in history from U.C.L.A. She worked in the aerospace industry in California prior to moving to Huntsville, Alabama in 1963. For several years, she owned and operated a secretarial and organizational consulting business, which she recently closed to devote full time to freelance writing. Suzanne has spoken at various organizations throughout Madison and surrounding counties on the subject of organization in the home. She has served as a volunteer at Huntsville Hospital, on the Board of Directors of Christian Women's Club, and presently serves on the Board of Directors of the Historic Huntsville Foundation. She and her husband, Bill, enjoy researching genealogy and traveling as often as possible.

ARTISTS' RENDERINGS

An Interview with Teresia Reid

Suzanne Bolton

Brushes, pens, graph paper, a drafting board, mat cutting tools, narrow drawers filled with paper supplies, bookshelves filled to capacity, a comfortable couch and easy chair are the components of Huntsville artist Teresia Reid's studio. This is the setting where Mrs. Reid captures with pen, pencil, and watercolor the buildings of bygone days and helps preserve the memories of the past for occupants of the present. Her warm, friendly smile and bright eyes make one feel welcome and at home in her workplace.

It is hard to imagine that Huntsville and its environs have changed so much that this attractive, youthful-looking artist could have a historian's perspective on the rapid growth of the area. Yet, Teresia Reid's stories of growing up in Madison emphasize the speed with which change has taken place around us during the past three decades.

In the late 1940s, Teresia Shelton and her family rode the train from Madison to Huntsville when they came to town to buy groceries. Highway 20 did not exist then, nor were there any high schools in Madison. Teresia came to Butler High School on a school bus driven by the students! She fondly remembers Sunday afternoons when the family came to Huntsville for an ice cream cone at Tom Dark's Drug Store and an afternoon of visiting with family who lived in "the city."

Hoyte and Septimia Shelton, along with their twin daughters, Teresia and Patricia, moved to Madison in 1947. Hoyte had grown up in Madison and returned to his roots following World War II. Madison's population then was about 1100, most of whom were farmers and many of whom sought the

services offered in the barber shop Mr. Shelton established on Main Street.

Though the lifestyles of 1992 Madison contrast sharply with those of yesteryear, some of the old lingers for younger generations to enjoy. Driving down Main Street today, one sees Shelton's Barber Shop still operating across the railroad tracks from graceful old homes, facing a street enchantingly named Buttermilk Alley. A few miles away, modern homes have been built along Shelton Road named for Teresia's grandfather.

When Teresia's future husband moved to the Huntsville area to work with the Army Ballistic Missile Agency in 1956, the space age boom was in its infancy and, like most boom towns, Huntsville was hardly ready for the influx of population it was experiencing. There were no places for rent in the city, so Harry Reid rented the only room available in Madison. Fortunately, that room was just across the street from the Sheltons' home, and romance soon blossomed. Teresia and Harry were married in 1960.

Teresia's formal art instruction began with a class in oil painting. "After that I felt I needed more instruction. I knew how to draw," she says, "but I had trouble with colors and needed a teacher."

One evening while attending a Bible study at a friend's home, Teresia saw many beautiful paintings and discovered the artist was also the teacher of the Bible study, Larry Casso. When Teresia asked him to teach her watercolor painting he declined, explaining he had no teaching experience. Teresia persisted with her request, and at last Mr. Casso agreed to teach her if she could find four others also interested in the class. She found the others and Mr. Casso taught them for a year and a half. Later he moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana where he opened his own art school.

Teresia has taken lessons from other private instructors in Huntsville and has broadened her artistic abilities through

classes at UAH and workshops given by nationally known artists.

“I’ve also learned a tremendous amount from working on my own and with fellow artist, Joy Beeson,” she smiles.

Teresia, along with several other local artists, formed the Association of Community Artists. At first, the Association held two art shows per year, but several members decided to show their works more often. They were offered the use of a house on Governors Drive and some sixteen members exhibited there. Some time later, these same members incorporated and began the Art House Gallery now located on Lily Flagg Road and then on Madison Street. Public exhibition of Teresia’s work was well received. The positive response of viewers encouraged her career. She values highly her years of involvement with the Art House Gallery. “Wonderful friendships resulted from that group!” she exclaims.

“I’ve always loved architecture,” Teresia explains when asked why and how she chooses what she will paint. “I carry my camera with me wherever I go,” she explains. “That way I can take pictures of old homes and other buildings when I see one which interests me.” Teresia paints from these photographs in rare spare moments between commissioned work.

Many clients bring Teresia old photographs of ancestral homes, commissioning a Reid watercolor of their photo often to be presented as an heirloom gift to a member of the family. Her watercolors are produced by a multi-step process. Teresia makes “meticulous drawings” of the photo on graph paper. These drawings, she states, are the most time-consuming phase of the production process. The drawing is then transferred to watercolor paper and the final product is painted. Each commissioned piece takes between forty and sixty hours to produce. She estimates that she completes two to three paintings each month. She has painted buildings found in Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee, and

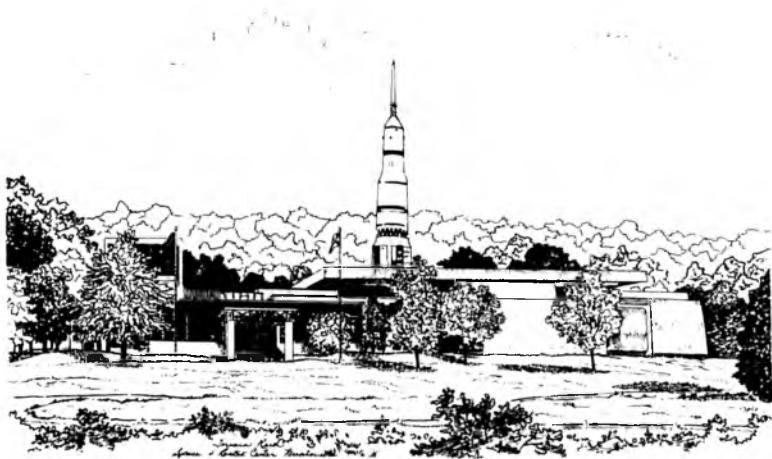
most of her work is done on a commission basis. Currently she has commissions through the end of 1992.

Among the many Huntsville buildings Teresia has painted are the pen and ink drawings reproduced here: Huntsville Depot, Madison County Courthouse — 1914 - 1964, Constitution Hall, the Burritt Museum, the Weeden House, and Cedarhurst. Others include the Steamboat Gothic House, the Church of the Nativity, the Schrimsher Home, First National Bank, the Annie Merts Center, the Fleming Home, the Hughes Home in Madison, and the Albert McDonald Farmhouse.

Before her visitor departs, Teresia proudly points out the original Albert Lane painting hanging in her living room and relates the story behind it. Several years ago Teresia heard that an Albert Lane painting was to be offered at a local benefit auction. With great excitement, she and Harry decided to bid on the painting and agreed on a ceiling price. When the bidding went beyond that amount, Teresia was deeply disappointed.

“I so wanted one of his paintings,” she told Harry.

Shortly after the auction, Mr. Lane, who had been sitting in front of Teresia during the bidding, introduced himself. He said he'd overheard her expressions of disappointment and promised to paint Teresia her own picture. She was thrilled by his generosity and was greatly moved when Mr. and Mrs. Lane delivered the painting personally. This episode tells us a great deal about the artistic community and the character of Albert Lane, another Huntsville artist who will be featured in the next issue of our *Quarterly*.



*Jessie Reid
Appt. Huntsville, Al.*







New Life For Old Walls

Richard Davis

To most people living in Huntsville, it is a small town with small town ways, still experiencing growing pains, struggling to get up there with the big boys. If you have moved here from a city the size of Atlanta, New York or Chicago, then Huntsville seems especially to have that character.

Being a native of Huntsville as was my father, grandfather and great-grandfather, and growing up on a farm, I remember that the only time you could afford a new pair of shoes or a pair of pants was when you brought in a good cotton crop. Such memories as these make one really appreciate the way our city has grown and prospered through the years. I feel we as a city have made a great statement and contribution to the 20th century.

It is nice to be able to look back to our youth and see in our mind's eye, not the present hustle and bustle of today's world, but a time when things were much less frantic. I can still remember my great-aunt, Buell Davis, saying that if having the good old days back meant milking cows twice a day, bringing in firewood every day for cooking, and feeding six or eight fieldhands, then you could have the good old days with her blessing. I am sure that to her country life was as hectic as life was to those living in town.

I would often accompany my father to town when he would come to sell produce to the grocery stores and cafes. Many of the places were in the Lincoln mill area. There was the grocery store in the building that now houses the Girl's Club. That building also housed a barbershop, movie theater, and public shower. For a dime on a Saturday you could get a haircut, shower, and see a matinee at the theater upstairs. Across the street was Davy's Cafe. where you could get the best burgers in town. A pool hall was next door. My

father would always say that when I got older he better never see me there. Just why, I don't know, but I imagine that if the building had been standing when I did get older, that would have been one of the first places I would have gone just to see what I had missed. Dad would always take me to Mr. Condra's ice cream shop next door to Davy's Cafe and the pool hall, to get a popsicle which Mr. Condra had made himself.



Years later I was to acquire the property and open a furniture refinishing shop in that same ice cream shop. Then I opened an antique shop two doors down in a building that had once been a mercantile store but which I remembered to be the home of the Dr. Pepper Bottling Company.

My earliest recollections of the building which is now Village Antiques date back to 1955. After leaving school at Lincoln Elementary I would often stop on my way home to look in the window of the Dr. Pepper Bottling Company and watch the bottles as they traveled down the conveyor belts to be filled and then placed in wooden crates for delivery to Huntsville stores.



Built in 1922 by John McKinney and his wife, the building originally was both business and residence to the couple. Downstairs was a thriving mercantile store, and upstairs John and his wife made a comfortable nine room apartment for themselves. After the McKinneys closed their store in the forty's the Dr. Pepper company leased the building for many years. When I purchased the building in 1989 it had fallen into great disrepair and decay. Although the renovation is still not complete, I have been able to open

what I hope is a unique antique shop. It offers not only a selection of both Southern and European furniture and accessories, but a fine line of classic grand pianos as well.



Meridian Street, and in particular the Lincoln Mill area, seems to have gone a complete circle. First the main hub of business going north from Huntsville, it later seemed to be the forgotten area of town. But now it is experiencing a resurgence of business and cultural activity. It is really exciting to see an area have a rebirth, but even more exciting and satisfying to think that I have had a part in this rebirth, however small it might have been.





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