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Andrew Jackson



LeRoy Pope
(Courtesy Huntsville Public Library)

JACKSON'S VICTORIOUS RETURN TO HUNTSVILLE: ONE FINE DAY

By
Nancy Rohr

On October 7th 1813 panic filled the county, and folks fled to Tennessee for safety leaving food on the tables and animals not fed. It appeared that a large body of Indians was within a day's march of Huntsville, coming toward town. The citizens of Huntsville, and the whole of Madison County, were instantly panic-struck, and immediately fled towards Nashville. Some left their calves fastened up in pens; some their horses in the plow; most of them taking their flight on foot. Others mounted their horses without saddles or bridles. Four young ladies rode on one horse, riding like gentlemen without saddle or bridle and making good speed by applying their heels to the horses sides!!! One man took another man's child, and left his own. Women on foot, running with their nightcaps on, and no bonnet...husbands riding, and wives walking...The whole was a false alarm. About a thousand people were on the road to Nashville.¹

But the horror had been real. The accounts, just two months before, of the bloodiest massacre in America's frontier history at Ft. Mims, screamed to the people of Madison County of immediate danger. Two hundred fifty settlers had been killed within the confines of the Fort just north of Mobile. Huntsville did not even have that possible shelter. Word spread that the Indians, always a threat, were on the way to this very village. Mrs. Royall's account, written just a few years later, probably does not exaggerate how frantically the citizens responded as the rumors grew. And now on this very fine day in May of 1814, General Andrew Jackson and the Militia were returning through Huntsville from the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, where in late March, they defeated the Creek Indians and put an end to the uprisings. There had been so much at stake.

The route back to Huntsville had not been easy. The original Militia, composed of 2000 men, was a volunteer army. When their enlistment time, the pay, and the supplies ran out, many men felt it was time to return home. Jackson actually quelled two mutinies when his men threatened to desert. After order was restored

¹ Anne Newport Royall, *Letters from Alabama 1817-1822*, ed. Lucille Griffith (1830; rpt. ed., University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1969), 243-244. Anne Royall may have been convicted in the District of Columbia as a "common scold," but she was an uncommon reporter. During her travels about the country she was a fearless correspondent with a good ear, keen eyes, a sharp tongue, and a grand sense of the ridiculous. Her two observant trips to northern Alabama make one wish she had stayed longer and written even more.

among his troops, the decisive battle near present-day Alexander City wiped out the entire Creek Indian force. Except for a few men left to guard the outposts, the army now made its way toward Tennessee and home.

Citizens along the way eagerly cheered Jackson and the army as they progressed northward. At Huntsville, with last October's panic still in mind, the townspeople planned a heartfelt and exciting daylong welcome for the heroes. Town leaders, and most particularly LeRoy Pope, hosted the festivities. There had been so much at stake in the community, and Pope was the man with perhaps the most to lose. His vision and energy planned and built where only a spring and a few squatter cabins had been earlier. Leroy Pope was clearly the most powerful leader in the town and county in those early years.

For a man who was so influential, little is really known about his personal life, but he certainly was in all the right places at the right times to take advantage of hard work and good fortune. LeRoy Pope (1764-1844) was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia, son of John Pope and Elizabeth Mitchel Pope. At the age of 15 he served in the Revolutionary army, and according to one account he was a courier for General Washington during the siege and battle of Yorktown. In 1790, with a group of friends, he moved to Petersburg, Georgia, in the area of the Broad River. Pope's influence became so impressive that in the community his extended family was often referred to as the "Royal Family."²

Enormously successful with his ventures in Georgia, LeRoy Pope continued to look westward and seek still better investments. In 1805 Pope took a tour by horseback to view acreage soon to become available for sale. He must have liked what he saw because in August 1809 when the Madison County lands were finally made available by the federal government, he and his friends were ready. "Alabama Fever" struck these wealthy planters from Petersburg, all college educated and cultured, and they joined Pope in this exodus in 1810. Together they settled in the "Great Bend" of the Tennessee River in the northeast corner of what was still the Mississippi Territory but would become the state of Alabama in 1819.³

LeRoy Pope quickly acquired the Big Spring tract that the first white settler, John Hunt, could not afford to buy at the land sales. Laying out the town to his design, Pope generously donated the land for the Public Square and the ground on

² Elise Hopkins Stephens, *Historic Huntsville: A City of New Beginnings* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, 1984), 22; Pope Family Files, Misc. Papers, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library; Hugh C. Bailey, *John Williams Walker* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1964), 31; Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, 4 vols. (S.J. Clarke, Chicago, 1921, Reprint Company: Spartanburg, South Carolina 1978), 4:1375.

³ Bailey, *Walker*, 68-69.

which the earliest jail was built. He continued to play a variety of roles as a leading citizen. Pope, as his activities suggest, was both a risk-taker and a public-spirited citizen. Besides his widespread holdings in town and in the county as the years advanced, he established the Planters and Merchants Bank. He promoted the Indian Creek Navigation Company, was one of the founders of the Episcopal Church, and was the chief justice of the first County Court. Pope showed enough control in his new domain to name the village Twickenham in honor of the country estate of his literary ancestor Alexander Pope. However, with persuasion from the Tennessee settlers and other pioneers, the Territorial Legislature restored the name Huntsville to the community in 1811. Nonetheless, his total realm of influence was immense; LeRoy Pope was the “father of Huntsville.”

There is sometimes a residue of resentment surrounding those who are wealthy and powerful. Many of the townsfolk felt Pope’s purchase of the land had been illegal, or at least immoral. If he was admired by some, Pope was not always liked. As a public figure he was also an easy target for those who might have expected more from him on every occasion. Anne Royall reported attending her first missionary preaching while in Huntsville. The evangelist had collected several hundred dollars to convert the heathen. “The next day, after the event, the women spoke of Col. Pope because he put only 25 cents in the hat. ‘Such a man – of his wealth – to give a quarter – Did you ever see the like! They would have given all they had!’ It was beyond doubt, the worst laid out quarter he ever spent” suggested Mrs. Royall.⁴

Pope’s immediate family included his wife, Judith Sale Pope (1770-1827), and at least five children, born in Georgia. Judith Pope died at the age of 58 and was buried at Maple Hill Cemetery. Born in Virginia, she had moved to Georgia with her family and then again to Alabama. Mrs. Royall described Judith Pope as “one of your plain, undisguised, house-keeping looking females; no ways elated by their vast possession... Report says, she is benevolent and charitable, and her looks confirm it.” The *Southern Advocate* at the time of Mrs. Pope’s death reported, “She was the first and oldest female inhabitant of the town.” Their children included Matilda, Maria, John, William (Willis) and LeRoy, Jr.⁵

⁴ Royall, *Letters*, 286.

⁵ Anne Royall, *Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the United States* (New Haven, Priv. Prnt. 1826; repr. New York: Johnson 1970), 14; Pauline Jones Gandrud, *Marriage, Death and Legal Notices from Early Alabama Newspapers, 1810-1893* (Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, 1981), 458. (Perhaps this implies Mrs. Pope was the most worthy female in town. Or, simply she really was the first female settler to take up residence.) LeRoy Pope died June 17, 1845, and was buried beside his wife at Maple Hill Cemetery. Diane Robey, Dorothy Scott Johnson, John Rison Jones, Jr., Frances C. Roberts *Maple Hill Cemetery, Phase One* (Huntsville: Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, 1995), 116 -117.



LeRoy Pope Home
(HABS 1934)

LeRoy Pope progressed, as did his friends, from being “just” log cabin aristocrats. Pope soon enjoyed the comforts of what is often considered Alabama’s most photogenic mansion. He built his new brick home on the highest hill, overlooking the entire town – his town. Flatboats carried the bricks, made in Tennessee, down the river, and then they were carted to town by wagonloads. Anne Royall noted the house during her visit in 1818. “If I admired the exterior, I was amazed at the taste and elegance displayed in every part of the interior; massy plate [heavy sterling silver], cut glass, china ware, vases, sofas and mahogany furniture of the newest fashion decorated the inside.” The house was newly completed in 1814, just in time for the victorious army’s return through Huntsville. Pope called his fine new home, “Poplar Grove.”⁶

* * *

Economics and marriage related many of Pope’s fellow transplanted Georgians as they settled the new territory. Together these families owned between them perhaps one-half of the entire Madison County acreage purchased in the early land sales.⁷ United by their common ties and politically powerful, they became known as the “Royalist Party.” Certainly all of these friends would have attended the festivities on the lawn at Pope’s new mansion to honor the returning heroes.

Among the Broad River bunch were many other enterprising newcomers. Dr. James Manning, Anne Royall reported, was the second greatest planter in the state. She admired Manning because he showed not only great wealth but also modesty. Manning’s only daughter married Bartley M. Lowe, later General of the Militia of the state. The wedding announcement in the newspaper tastefully noted Lowe was a merchant, but this marriage really combined immense acreage and commercial wealth in Madison County.⁸

The Bibb brothers also settled in the area. William Wyatt Bibb, another of the former Petersburg citizens, was a physician and Senator from Georgia before he moved to Madison County. He became the first governor of Alabama, appointed so by President Monroe. When he died in a riding accident, his brother, Thomas Bibb, a man of “great intellectual force and indomitable energy, and of marked distinction of bearing,” became governor.⁹

The Petersburg Watkins family “were prominent in business life, but they were also successful in marriages.” Attention to business, well-considered marriages, and prosperity seemed to go hand in hand for these Georgia families. Captain

⁶ Royall, *Sketches*, 14; Royall, *Letters*, 246.

⁷ Bailey, *Walker*, 69.

⁸ Royall, *Letters*, 245, 286. (There is an unexplored link between these early Alabamians and today’s Tennesseans. The name Peyton Manning appeared repeatedly in early land deeds and court actions in Madison County.)

⁹ Stephens, *Historic Huntsville*, 21.

Robert Thompson came along with the pioneers. He was a very successful merchant and was nicknamed "Old Blue" in the community because he carried considerable sums of money with him in a blue denim bag. Reflecting the violence that always was nearby on the frontier, Thompson's portrait shows him elegantly seated but holding a cane with a concealed sword. One of his daughters married Dr. James Manning, and another married Thomas Bibb.¹⁰

Peyton Cox also arrived with the Georgia aristocrats and became the cashier of the newly formed Planters and Merchants Bank. Anne Royall wrote, not kindly, that he was "a crusty old man and a bachelor." Perhaps someone in the community had tried matchmaking. Anne, always one to speak her mind clearly said, "the dogs may take him for me."¹¹

Probably closest to LeRoy Pope, of those from the Petersburg community, was his son-in-law, John Williams Walker. This young man, with old family ties, graduated from Princeton, and had recently married Pope's older daughter, Matilda. The newlyweds made the move from Georgia with the family just five months later to begin their married life together on the frontier. Walker was highly regarded as a lawyer, and at the time of statehood he served as President of the Constitutional Convention. Andrew Jackson would recommend him to become the first governor of the new state, but Walker served instead as the first legislator in the Senate of the United States. It was here at his new home place, Oakland, that President Monroe made a call on his way north after a surprise visit to Huntsville that year.

Joining the already powerful band from Georgia were two wealthy and influential men from Mississippi. Thomas Percy, a college chum of Walker's, left his own plantation and settled on 1400 acres in Madison County next to Walker's property. At Oakland, Percy met and then courted successfully Maria Pope, daughter of LeRoy Pope.¹² The second newcomer, Dr. Samuel Brown, had married Percy's sister, Catherine, in Mississippi. Catherine Percy Brown died in childbirth in 1813, and Brown moved from the Natchez area with his three small children to join this close-knit group.¹³ However, he accepted a teaching position at Transylvania University in Lexington, while Tom Percy sheltered his nephew and nieces during their motherless years in Alabama. Percy also tended Walker's plantation and his young children while Walker served in the U. S. Senate. In

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Royall, *Letters*, 122.

¹² Walker's own brother, Samuel Sanders Walker, a childhood friend courted Maria for many years but waited too long to act. Rejected by Maria, Samuel settled in Tuscaloosa. After Tom Percy's death at their plantation, Belfield, his widow relocated with the children in Greenville, Mississippi. These Percys became a power southern dynasty, noted as politicians and writers in the south.

¹³ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The House of Percy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 74.

turn, Dr. Brown watched over the schoolboys, Pope and Walker, when they attended boarding school in Lexington.¹⁴

* * *

Although they formed a strong opposing political party, a powerful band of settlers from Tennessee were likely included as guests at the Pope mansion that day in May of 1814. Certainly it would be considered rude and politically incorrect to ignore these local leaders. After all it was the Tennessee army that had just saved the countryside from slaughter.

Hugh McVay was a frontier Democrat from Tennessee who served in the Mississippi Territorial Legislature in 1811 and 1818. His education was limited but never his patriotism. He proudly named his second daughter Atlantic Pacific. Life was filled with tribulation in the rough-and-tumble frontier for this widower. In 1828 his second wife left him for another man taking with her two slaves and two horses, leaving him saddled with her many debts. Later McVay was elected president of the Alabama Senate, and still later he became the state's ninth Governor.¹⁵

Gabriel Moore represented Madison County in the first session of the Alabama Territorial Legislature. At home he served as county tax assessor, a position of enormous power. Apparently Moore was an especially regarded candidate by some. He "early became the squatter's favorite lawyer and representative. His opponents claimed that he 'frequented every grog shop in the county and visited every old woman.'" ¹⁶ Moore resourcefully supported the popular General Jackson quite early and was elected Governor in 1829.

* * *

There were other leading citizens who were likely to be at Poplar Grove for the celebrations who did not take sides with either the Georgia or the Tennessee factions.

¹⁴ This was an ambitious family. Samuel Brown received the best possible medical education in Edinburgh and in Philadelphia with Dr. Benjamin Rush. His brothers expressed their energy as politicians in the South. James Brown was a senator in Louisiana, and John Brown served in the United State Senate from Kentucky. Wyatt-Brown, *Percy*, 74.

Percy, Walker, and Brown pledged their undying friendship by naming their children after one another. Thus, one might tangle with names of the next generations: James Percy Brown, LeRoy Pope Walker, Percy Walker, John Walker Percy, Charles Brown Percy, and LeRoy Pope Percy.

¹⁵ Quoted in Stephens, *Historic Huntsville*, 33, 34.

¹⁶ Quoted in Stephens, *Historic Huntsville*, 34.

Respected in the community, T. B. Bradford published the *Madison Gazette*, already in business for two years, and he wrote a first-hand account of the events with excitement in almost every word. He obviously was in attendance.

Dr. Thomas Fearn of Virginia studied medicine in Philadelphia with the leading practitioner of the country, Dr. Benjamin Rush. Fearn settled in Huntsville in 1810 or 1811 to begin his practice. But he suspended business as Jackson and the army came through town on their way to Horseshoe Bend. Fearn served as a battalion surgeon, then as a surgeon of the Tennessee regiment. He tended Andrew Jackson and was in charge of the military hospital at Huntsville.¹⁷

Dr. Henry H. Chambers, also a Virginian, was a surgeon on the staff of General Jackson during the Creek War. Later he became active and popular in politics; he died on the way to Washington, D. C. to take his seat in the Senate.

Certainly other worthy citizens were at the gala events at the Pope mansion. General Brahan, Anne Royall said, "was a prince in whatever light he may be viewed. He is polite and affable of great size, handsome person, of middle age, and a man of great wealth." Brahan was the receiver of public money at Huntsville and helped keep the wealthy Tennessee clique at bay during the recent land bidding mania. He at least earned the respect of the less prosperous future landowners in the county. Anne hinted at what had become public knowledge and thus public embarrassment. Brahan, in effect, had speculated and come up \$80,000 short in his accounting with the federal government. Some of the town leaders, notably Walker, Percy, and Pope, who already had their lands, kept the secret, helped bail him out, and saved him from jail.¹⁸

Major John Read was a merchant, a stout gentlemanly man said to be wealthy. He served as the clerk in the Nashville Land Office and knew every chain and link of land in Madison County when he arrived in 1810. As a result he invested in town property. He was both prosperous and popular according to Judge Taylor.¹⁹ Eli Hammond, of Tennessee, was a friend of long standing of Andrew Jackson's. At one time he masqueraded with a small group of men as Indians, attacked and

¹⁷ Owen, *Dictionary*, 2:591. Fearn later studied abroad in Paris and London. He became noted in medical circles for his pioneering work in the use of quinine for malaria and typhoid. Among his many interests, he and his brother George purchased the Huntsville Water Works. He was also involved with forming Greene Academy and the Indian Creek Canal.

¹⁸ Royall, *Letters*, 122; Wyatt-Brown, *Percy*, 78; Stephens, *Historic Huntsville*, 19-29,

¹⁹ Royall, *Letters*, 122; Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, *History of Madison County and Incidentally of North Alabama, 1732-1840*, eds. W. Stanley Hoole and Addie S. Hoole (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1976), 77. Read's touching memorial is, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches and loving favour rather than silver and gold." Robey, *Maple Hill*, 39.

killed a war party of Indians, and had come away untouched. Hammond was one of the close company of friends who fought with Jackson during the murderous attack by the Benton brothers on the streets of Nashville. Hammond served in the War and formed his own company of Mounted Rangers from Huntsville.²⁰ Jackson was still recovering from those serious wounds of that encounter in Nashville.

S. D. Hutchings, as he was known locally, did not have to call attention to himself. Everyone in the neighborhood knew his relations. Stockly Donelson Hutchings was a Tennessean fortunate enough to be related by lineage and marriage to General Jackson. Hutchings settled in Madison County where he served as postmaster, then a political appointment.²¹

Anne Royall observed William Patton had set out poor, was now one of the richest men in the territory, and all this was acquired by his own industry. Much respected, he was the proprietor of large plantations, stock, etc. Patton was born in Londonderry, Ireland, and immigrated first to western Virginia. He arrived in Huntsville in 1812 to begin "merchandising." By 1815 Patton felt secure enough to return to Virginia to gather up his wife and children, driving the entire distance in wagon from his store. He was a merchant and founder of Bell Factory, perhaps the first cotton mill in the state. Adding to the family connections, Patton's eldest daughter, Jane, married Willis Pope.²²

Judge Clement C. Clay, Mrs. Royall said, is "a very young man of pleasing manners, a handsome person said to be a man of the first talents in the state. There are few who might rank with Judge Clay in elegance of manners." He came to Alabama in 1811 with one Negro manservant, two horses, his law books in his saddlebags, and only enough money to last a few days. He built an extensive law practice and served on the Constitutional Convention, in both houses of the Legislature, as Governor, and Judge of the State Supreme Court.²³

Marmaduke Williams was also an attorney, a brother of Robert Williams who became governor of the Mississippi Territory. Marmaduke Williams had served

²⁰ J.G.M. Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee to the End of the 18th Century* (Charleston 1853, rpt, East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville, 1967), 605. For a look at some of the leading citizens and some of the leading felons of Huntsville in the early days see Nancy M. Rohr, "The News from Huntsville, 1820," *Huntsville Historical Review*, Vol. 26, #1, (Winter-Spring, 1999) 3-23.

²¹ Rohr, "News," 15.

²² Royal, *Letters*, 122, 271; S. D. Cabaniss Papers, Box 434, William Stanley Hoole Special Collections Library, University of Alabama; Gandrud, *Notices*, 475.

²³ Royal, *Letters*, 212; Ruth K. Nuermberger, *The Clays of Alabama: A Planter-Lawyer-Politician Family* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1958), 1.

as a member of the congress in North Carolina before coming to Madison County. He was a clever and amiable gentleman, it was said.²⁴

Dr. David Moore, of an old Virginia family, arrived in 1809 and through judicious investments accumulated property both in the county and in town. Among other enterprises he established the first cotton-ginning house. He was a family physician and a personal friend to Andy Jackson. Moore shared his energy in public service where he showed "financial ability, sagacity and prudence." At the time of his death in 1844, he was the largest landowner in northern Alabama. Judge Taylor suggested that Dr. Moore was the most prominent man of the 1820's.²⁵

Describing some of the respectable citizens of the community, Mrs. Royall wrote that Major Rose, another of the heroes of the War, was a Scotch gentleman and a Tennessee soldier. "You have not to look very deep for the qualities of his mind. It is plainly depicted in his fine open countenance, and soft blue eye. He is a middle-aged man of portly size, and acted in the quartermaster's Department. He was in high favor with Jackson; and his labors in procuring supplies for the army were unequalled by any thing in history." Rose tried his hand at various undertakings, a merchant and owner of the Planters' Hotel. Perhaps he was best remembered as the operator of the hotel where as a genial host he delighted ready listeners – travelers and townspeople alike. He spoke with a Scottish burr and had the ability to hold an audience spellbound with his story telling and sense of humor.²⁶

Edwin, Frederick and Irby Jones together owned the Huntsville Inn and the Bell Tavern. In the less formal occasions of the festivities, merchants and townspeople would mingle with Jackson and soldiers – if not at the ball, at least on the Town Square or at the meal served by Mrs. Bunch at the Bell Tavern that night.

The Brandon brothers, William and Thomas, and their families were greatly admired by the townspeople. They arrived in town with no other possessions than their masonry tools. As highly successful bricklayers, most likely they had seen the bricks of the Pope mansion up close. The Brandons created many of the fine brick buildings early visitors admired. Theirs was an extended family that worked hard and was highly respected. Later Andrew Jackson, as President, appointed Byrd Brandon Attorney General of the United States.

John Connally was probably in town by then. In 1815 he formally opened the Green Bottom Inn. Horseracing was already an established practice in that very site. Connally's property included a noted turf for racers that always drew a crowd. Horse fanciers, and Jackson particularly was fond of racing, could

²⁴ Taylor, *History*, 51.

²⁵ Taylor, *History*, 39.

²⁶ Royal, *Letters*, 121; Robey, *Maple Hill*, 4.

socialize freely. Here also the common laborer and the aristocratic planter could mingle socially on level ground, as it were. Of course gambling always accompanied racing. It was only natural to see whose nag was the best and to put a little money down. With the great wealth available in Huntsville and Madison County, many of the gentlemen were known to have expensive racers. In the days when the price for returning a slave was a mere two to five dollars, Willis Pope offered twenty-five dollars for the return of his racer "Cyclops."²⁷

* * *

All these settlers – whether from Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, or Ireland, living in a modest log home or in a fine brick mansion – hoped for statehood soon. Judge Taylor described with realism his pioneer family's struggle to clear the dense forest, grub the rough soil, and plant the first patch of corn – all with hand tools. Cotton planting would come later because the day was spent in obtaining the "absolute necessities of life." Many early houses did not have iron in the construction, and the floors were dirt or made of puncheons. Writing his memoirs later, Judge Taylor had few regrets, and he did not appear to think he had suffered in his childhood from the hard work.²⁸ On the other hand, the wealthy planter may have only supervised the building of his home or the planting of his crops, but financially and emotionally he was just as involved. And the village was taking shape. In this short time the town's attractions were evident to early visitors who recognized the lovely vista and the excellent prospects for the future.

Anne Royall wrote, also in 1818, the cotton fields were

astonishingly large, from four to five hundred acres in a field.... The land around Huntsville and the whole of Madison County is rich and beautiful as you can imagine; and the appearance of wealth would baffle belief. Town has 260 houses, principally built of brick, bank, court house and market house, large square in the center with 12 stores around it. The workmanship is the best I have seen in all the states; and several of the houses are 3 stories high and very large. The citizens are gay, polite and hospitable and live in great splendor. They are the most generous of the human race...Madison County alone contains more wealth than half of western Virginia.²⁹

Little did the frantic citizens know on that fearful October day in 1813 that deliverance was on the way to save all them. When General Jackson heard the Indians might be heading for Huntsville, he rushed from Fayetteville, Tennessee,

²⁷ Rohr, "News," 19.

²⁸ Thomas Jones Taylor, *The History of Madison County, Alabama* (W.P.A. employees, 1940, Huntsville), 66-70 passim.

²⁹ Royall, *Letters*, 114, 119.

with the volunteers, marching 32 miles in nine hours to save the town. The next day, the army continued on down to Ditto's Landing and Fort Deposit on their way to decisively defeat the Creek Indians at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.

While the army caught its breath overnight before starting south, Jackson consulted with LeRoy Pope about the status of the troops and the safety of the town. It is clear from correspondence that Jackson was on friendly terms with members of the Pope family. In a letter of October 1813, Jackson added a postscript to give his compliments to Mrs. Pope. To Miss Maria he hoped soon to be able to send a princesses [sic] necklace.³⁰

Obviously LeRoy Pope was the real financial and political power in the village. Jackson sent 74 Indian prisoners in October and November to be confined at Pope's.³¹ It may be simply that Pope had enough goods and cash to feed them. (One might be surprised to know that Jackson had Choctaw captives that were not to be considered prisoners sent to Pope on one occasion. His instructions requested they were to be held until he could locate the family of the Indian woman and her three children to reunite them with their families.) Jackson did not need extra mouths to feed because stores for the troops had been delayed, and this became one of the causes of desertion among his men. Jackson wrote that he would be able to put an end to the Creeks if he just had enough supplies. If he could, Pope could furnish them and draw on Governor Blount of Tennessee for funds.³²

Jackson's entourage included the second most admired Creek War hero, John Coffee. Anne Royall, who met everybody sooner or later, was clearly impressed with him. She wrote

General Coffee is upwards of six feet in height and proportionally made. Nor did I ever see so fine a figure. He is 35 or 36 years of age. His face is round and full and features handsome. His complexion is ruddy, though sunburnt. His hair and eyes black, and a soft serenity diffuses his countenance.... His countenance has much animation, while speaking, and his eyes sparkle, but the moment he ceases to speak, it resumes its

³⁰ Andrew Jackson to LeRoy Pope, October 31, 1813 and November 4, 1813 in *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, eds. Harold D. Moser and Sharon Macpherson, 2 vols. (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press 1984) 2: 339, 341.

³¹ Andrew Jackson to Rachel Jackson, November 4, 1813, Moser, *Papers* 2:44.

³² Jackson to LeRoy Pope, October 31, 1813, Moser, *Papers*, 443; Jackson to Pope, November 4, 1813, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, ed. John Spencer Bassett, 7 vol.s (Washington, D. C., Carnegie Institution 1926, rpt. Kraus Reprint Co., New York 1969), 1:341.

wanted placidness, which is characteristic of the Tennesseans.³³

Coffee had moved to Tennessee in 1789 and worked as a surveyor. On hearing of the massacre at Fort Mims, he went to Alabama with some Tennessee volunteers and served under Jackson at Horseshoe Bend and later New Orleans. When peace was restored he was appointed surveyor for the Creek boundary and the northern Mississippi Territory lines. After tramping much of the area during the Indian and British Wars and as the official surveyor, Coffee was certainly qualified to take notice of any good buys for his special Nashville friends that included Jackson. The two men became plantation neighbors in north Alabama.³⁴

Among the returning local Militia leaders were Captains Gray and Mosely, who raised two companies in the spring of 1813. Eldridge and Hamilton raised two more local companies soon after that.³⁵ Local officers, if they were free from duties, would have attended the ceremonies. Col. Thomas E. Eldridge, who rallied settlers to volunteer from Huntsville and Meridianville, continued to be a fighting man after the battles. Later he was brought before the Territorial Court for fighting "to the terror of peaceable citizens." Apparently in the violent setting of the frontier, he did not consider that would lessen his chances for political office when he ran for the House of Representatives in 1819.³⁶

Certainly not any less important were the militiamen from the county who served in the ranks during the hostilities, whether or not they were invited to attend the festivities at the mansion. In later years the newspaper death notices of these soldiers always included proudly their service with the army. Charles Hall enlisted with Jackson and lived to be 81. Col. Henry King, it was said, was a warm friend of Jackson's who later avoided politics because he felt the "filthy pool of politics had for him no charms." Aged veteran Joseph Rice died in 1883 at 86. He and his brothers, Levi and George Rice, had been in the New Market area since 1805. At 16 Joseph Rice served with Jackson as a volunteer in the Creek War and was one of those who marched from Fayetteville in double quick time to defend Huntsville, the distance being noted in 1883 as 30 miles and the time raced down to five hours.³⁷

Also among the death notices were William Kirby of nearby Triana, who died in 1847 at the age of 52. Kirby entered the army with Jackson at New Orleans and fought bravely. Marcus LaFayette High, who died in 1847, aged 65, had served

³³ Royall, *Letters*, 120, 121

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 270.

³⁵ Taylor, *History*, 30, 41, 43.

³⁶ Taylor, *History*, 41; K. Loughran, comp. Minutes Book, Superior Court of Law and Equity Madison County, Mississippi Territory, 1811-1819. State Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, n.d..

³⁷ Gandrud, *Notices*, 261, 357, 380.

12 months under Jackson in the Indian Wars. Undoubtedly there were more veterans from the county who served. Some of course, like Captain John J. Winston, were wounded during the battles. Jackson wrote that five men from Capt. Hammond's men had been wounded, but all behaved bravely. Among the wounded were John Taylor, Bryson Hinds, George Sharp and "old" John Wright as he carried Taylor out of the range of the action. Those not there, dead in the battles, from Madison County were John Bean and William McCartney, surely not forgotten.³⁸

Decent citizens, merchants, and their wives – although probably not invited to the festivities at the house – would have crowded around the Square for the ceremony. Andrew Jackson, the peoples' hero, who visited town often, could have known some of them by sight or name. Among the spectators most likely were men like the well digger, John Baxter; David Beckett the weaver; and Thomas Johnson, the shoemaker.³⁹ John Ditto, whose ferry Jackson's army used to cross the River, certainly came to town to join the celebration. Everybody must have known the army was on its way home; and everyone must have come to share in the jubilation. Servants and slaves all recognized the returning heroes. Passing Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians, who aligned themselves with the winning side, certainly joined in. In the warm spring air with the dust underfoot, children running and cheering, a dog or two barking alongside, a grateful village welcomed the victors who had saved them from death or worse.

* * *

The *Madison Gazette* reported its account just two days after the festivities.

The army of General Jackson, except for the troops left to garrison the Forts William and Strother, passed through our little village on the return march home. It was a scene of much interest, animation and feeling. An army of victorious warriors... headed by their hero General, was returning triumphantly and crowned with laurel from the savage country they had subdued, thro' the village they had passed – destined by the Red Sticks after the fall of Fort Mims to be the next victim of their hellish fury.⁴⁰

Of course a committee had been appointed by the citizens to make suitable arrangements. "On the approach of the army the General was met by Capt. Winston at the head of his company and almost the whole of the gentlemen of the

³⁸ Gandrud, *Notices*, 488, 355; Jackson to Rachel Jackson, November 4, 1813 Moser, *Papers*, 2: 444; Taylor, *History*, 43.

³⁹ Misc. papers, Huntsville-Madison County, Alabama, Business Establishments, 1804-1939, Archives, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

⁴⁰ *Madison Gazette*, May 10, 1814.

village on horseback and escorted to the public Square, while the main body of the army continued their march through town.” Major Walker then delivered an address at the request of the committee. Walker, Pope’s son-in-law, was tellingly sincere as he spoke of the alarm and fears about the countryside the previous autumn, danger seemingly on all sides. He spoke of the difficulties of the army – the winter, hunger, sedition and desertion. However “feeble and inadequate,” the citizens of Huntsville offered their attention, respect, and affection for the termination of the Creek campaign.⁴¹

After the salute the artillery company, headed by the General, his aides and staff, and accompanied by General Coffee, was formed in front of Col. Pope’s dwelling house, where they witnessed the presentation of a stand of colors by Miss Maria Pope and the return of an Indian child. She spoke, she said with the liveliest joy to the deliverer of Madison. She handed the flag to the conqueror of the Creeks with best wishes for his health and happiness and length of days. Maria Pope returned the little Indian boy [Lincoya], “the sole remnant of a warlike family,” she said. “I have discharged the trust reposed in me” and “I deliver him to you with no happier fortune than the patronage and protection of a brave and generous chieftain who in the midst of victory forgot not the duties of humanity and claimed as his own the friendless, helpless, isolated orphan, tho’ of enemy blood and savage race!”⁴²

Major Reed, the General’s aide, replied for him thanking Miss Pope because their arms could never “know disgrace nor be soiled with dishonor” when presented under the banners of the fair. After the receipt of the colors, a handsome salute was fired by artillery.⁴³

* * *

Besides getting the recognition the army deserved, Jackson did have another reason for stopping at Huntsville. He wrote Rachel on November 4th of 1813 that he would be sending a little Indian baby to Huntsville for safety. No one was available to leave the fighting and on the 19th of December Jackson wrote again to tell Rachel that he was indeed sending Lincoya as a playmate or companion for Andrew Jackson, Jr. (Jackson and Rachel had adopted one of the twins born to Severn Donelson and his wife. The mother was unable to care for the two infants and his sister-in-law, Rachel, took one of the twins to the Hermitage, naming him Andrew Jackson, Junior.) Jackson wrote, “The Indian infant is the only branch of the family left, and other [Indian women] when offered to them to take care of would have nothing to do with him, but wanted him killed. Qualls [probably James Quarles] my interpreter took him up and carried him on his back and brought him to me. Charity and christianity [sic] says he ought to be taken care of

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

and I send him to my little Andrew and I hope will adopt him as one of our family.”⁴⁴ Still later Jackson wrote again thinking the infant had already reached her, “Keep Lincoya in the house. He is a Savage but one that fortune has thrown in my hands when his own female matrons wanted to kill him. I therefore want him well taken care of, he may have been given to me for some Valuable purpose – in fact when I reflect that he as to his relations is so much like myself I feel an unusual sympathy for him.”⁴⁵

At the time the army was destitute of provisions and the only food that could be found for the infant was made by mixing “a bit of brown sugar and crumbs of biscuits scraped from the chinks of a barrel. These, mixed in water, composed a diet which he seemed to relish, and with it the General and his faithful servant, Charles, kept him alive until he was sent to Huntsville.”⁴⁶

The three-month-old baby, Lincoya, was sent north out of harm’s way to be sheltered by Miss Maria Pope and her family in Huntsville. Jackson wrote Rachel on May 8th about his reception in Huntsville the day before. He said that he and his officers had received every mark of attention by a gratefull [sic] people. We were met by the respectable citizens, escorted into Town, where a salute was given us, a sumptuous dinner, provided and an elegant ball in the evening.” He wrote he would join her in Nashville on the 13th. Would she bring little Andrew, and he would present him with Lincoya. “Miss Maria Pope, when presenting me with an elegant stand of Coulours [sic], presented little Lincoya with them dressed more like a poppet, than anything else.”⁴⁷

* * *

At 3 o’clock the General was conducted to the dinner table, which was laid on the fine green immediately back of Col. Pope’s new brick house – no room in town could have contained the company – upwards of one hundred persons partook of the festivities of the day. The General’s family and staff, Generals Coffee and Johnston, and many gentlemen of the army” were among the guests. “Col. Pope presided, aided by Col. Perkins and Capt. Brahan.... The dinner was abundant, for the season excellent and well arranged. The utmost harmony, hilarity and joy pervaded the whole assemblage. The full number of toasts were

⁴⁴ Andrew Jackson to Rachel, November 4, 1813, December 19, 1813, Moser, *Papers*, 2: 400, 401, 495.

⁴⁵ Andrew Jackson to Rachel, November 4, 1813, Moser, *Papers*, 2:444; Jackson to Rachel, Dec. 19, 1813, Moser, *Papers*, 2:494; Jackson to Rachel December 29, 1813, Moser, *Papers*, 2:516.

⁴⁶ *United States’ Telegraph*, July 3, 1828.

⁴⁷ Andrew Jackson to Rachel, May 8, 1814 Moser, *Papers*, 3: 70. Poppet is still a term of endearment used for the very young in Britain.

drank – many of them were cheered and encored with burst of feeling – while the artillery, under the orders of Capt. Parish lent forth its deep toned echo.⁴⁸

The “regular” toasts, 19 in number were heartfelt. The first of course, was to “Our country – may she never want defenders, nor ever forget to honor and reward them.” The second was to “The Union of the States – the sheet anchor of our national safety.” Continuing, toasts were to the American Congress, the President, Major General Andrew Jackson, Brig. General John Coffee, the Militia of Tennessee and the Madison Volunteers all gallant heroes, the British Partizins [sic], and continued through to “The Fair – May they greet with the animating light of their smile, and bless with rich reward of their love the gallant defenders of their countrys [sic] rights.”⁴⁹

After the General retired, the committee cheerily continued raising their arms to toast Jackson, “whose sword had reduced the savage yell of war to humble petition for peace,” another to Gen. Coffee and a third toast against Benjamin Hawkins, the object of their “implacable hate.”⁵⁰ About 6 o’clock the company separated in good order, pleased with each other, and full of enthusiastic admiration of their illustrious guest.

About 7 o’clock the General was escorted to the Ballroom at the Bell Tavern, where was collected a numerous and brilliant assemblage of beauty. Pleasure beamed in every eye; every countenance was lighted up with joy; the accent of gratified satisfaction hung on every tongue; all hearts were filled with the same delighted and delightful emotions. A handsome supper was prepared by Mrs. Bunch, and set out with considerable style. [The] well-pleased party separated at an orderly hour, without the slightest circumstance having transpired to mar the pleasure or interrupt the harmony of the evening.⁵¹

Everyone slept securely that night, even those respectable citizens who perhaps were unable to recall every event or every toast of the celebration. And, after all, the next day, Sunday was a day of rest.

* * *

⁴⁸ *Madison Gazette*, May 10, 1814.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ The unfortunate Hawkins was always considered honest and able; there was no doubt. Originally his appointment by President Washington was made when the government maintained an image as the Great White Father to the native Indians. As the agent for the United States government, Hawkins spoke out in defense of treaty rights for the Indians and was, as a result, poorly thought of among the settlers. Fortunately history considers him more kindly today.

⁵¹ *Madison Gazette*, May 10, 1814.

The hero of the day retired early; he was not well. Anne Royall described Jackson as, "tall and slender. [Jackson was 6'1]" but sometimes weighted as little as 120 lbs.] Features not handsome, but strikingly bold and determined. He is very easy and affable in his manners and loves a jest, but there is a dignity about him. His language is pure and fluent, and he has the appearance of having kept the best company." Those who raced at the Green Bottom Inn racetrack would be pleased to hear they were among the "best company." Modestly, Jackson told one of her party that he was only "one of the blue hen's chickens." Although he was not from Delaware, the phrase implied that he thought of himself, as did everyone else, as a formidable fighter.⁵²

General Jackson was the hero of the south and soon to be of the entire nation for many reasons. Besides being an awesome fighter and leader, he was considered to be "good and kind to his soldiers." One of his soldiers informed Anne Royall, the man, Andrew Jackson would "walk through the mud for miles and let his sick men ride his horse. He would distribute his biscuit, tea, and whatever his private stores consisted of, among the sick."⁵³ At the same time this is the general who did not hesitate to order a soldier shot for desertion, and he aimed his own pistol at soldiers who attempted to desert.

Jackson was not in good physical condition himself. Still recovering from the attack by the Benton brothers when he heard the news of the Mims massacre, Jackson left his sickbed in Nashville and took charge of the army. Bits of bone were still being expelled from his arm, and he was unable to put his left arm in the sleeve of his jacket. During the campaign he suffered from fever, dysentery, pulmonary hemorrhaging, and malaria. To relieve these symptoms he was given the best current medical prescriptions – massive doses of calomel and sugar of lead, effectively poisoning his entire body.

* * *

By next morning the shouting and the toasts were done. The troops continued on to Tennessee where most of them were eager to return to their families. Even though it was Sunday, servants and townspeople probably cleaned up after the grand celebrations at Poplar Grove, the Bell Tavern, and the Town Square. Surely the festive atmosphere spilled over into other local taverns and outlying homes as well.

The baby, Lincoya, joined Jackson, the faithful Charles and the returning army as they traveled northward. Jackson met Rachel and Andrew Jackson, Jr. just outside of Nashville in a triumphal return. The orphan was raised in a totally

⁵² Royall, *Letters*, 152, 196.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 152. Mrs. Royall wrote a good deal more about the common soldiers' affection and admiration for Jackson.

white man's environment with Jackson, Jr., the Jackson's ward A. J. Hutchings, and the miscellaneous nephews and nieces at the Hermitage.⁵⁴

Lincoya was sickly in his early years, but at the age of eight he was strong enough to be sent to the same day school in the neighborhood as the other boys. The General hoped to send him to West Point as his education progressed, but the political climate had changed by then, and the appointment was not received. Jackson suggested Lincoya use his mechanical tendencies and learn a trade. The lad chose to become a saddler and was apprenticed in Nashville in 1827.⁵⁵

Unfortunately during that winter Lincoya caught a cold which settled in his lungs, and he returned home to the Hermitage. His family treated him with the "greatest kindness and care." While he was able, he often rode horseback with Mrs. Jackson on short excursions or traveled in the family carriage. However, he died of consumption "under the roof of the hero who had conquered his nation, but who followed his remains to a decent grave and shed a tear as the earth closed over him forever."⁵⁶

* * *

In January of 1815 Jackson and the army went on to soundly defeat the British at New Orleans, and he became truly a national hero. His military days may have been over, but his battles continued as he entered politics. A grateful state elected him to the U. S. Senate from Tennessee in 1823, and in 1828 a grateful nation elected him the seventh President of the United States. Unfortunately his beloved Rachel died less than a month before he left for the inauguration in Washington, D. C. In 1832 the first national political conventions were held. The group nominated Jackson for President as they formed what would become the Democratic Party. The people again elected Jackson to serve as President. After his somewhat stormy second term in Washington, he returned to Tennessee. He died there, near Nashville, in 1845. Jackson was buried beside Rachel in the gardens of the Hermitage.

* * *

Among those present that day in 1814 for the ceremonies on Pope's hill in Huntsville, Andrew Jackson became the most distinguished as a legendary war hero and President of his country. There were others who were no less important within the state. Six counties in Alabama were named for men who probably were in attendance—Bibb, Chambers, Walker, Clay, Coffee, and Jackson. Five

⁵⁴ *United States' Telegraph*, July 3, 1828.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Although this story would suggest the grave is on the grounds of the Hermitage, Lincoya's actual gravesite is unknown.

men went on to become Governors of the state of Alabama – William Wyatt Bibb, Thomas Bibb, Gabriel Moore, Clement Clay, and Hugh McVay.

In safety now, Huntsville continued to grow; statehood was just around the corner in five years. Citizens returned to the rhythms of everyday life on the frontier. Farmers planted their crops, hunted for game, gathered for muster day, and met afterwards to argue politics. The womenfolk worked in the fields too, prepared the homespun thread, cooked, tended the sick, and gathered at the quilting bees to share gossip. Of course the children worked in the fields, and some attended school if they were lucky. Merchants sold, tinkers mended, servants and slaves performed their work. On Sunday most folks tried to attend some kind of church meeting. After services the well to do sat down to a meal eaten with their silverware, the middlin' folk with pewter, and the less fortunate were glad to have spoons of muscle shells. All took up the task again of making a home and a town for their families and loved ones. Probably that day of joy was celebrated in stories long after the events. Recollections are meant to be shared, and who can say if some accounts were exaggerated as time passed. After all, it was one fine day in May when the Militia and General Jackson returned to Huntsville

Patriotic and historical organizations abound, many of them linked to ancestors who served in the American Revolution. Herein is provided a brief history of four such organizations which flourish in Madison County. (Source: *The Heritage of Madison County*)

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION Twickenham Town Chapter

At the time this chapter was organized, in May of 1908, there were 17 chapters in the state of Alabama. There were 23 charter members, and for a number of years meetings were held in members' homes. From this original group, two other chapters of the DAR were formed, one in 1970 and another in 1974.

As evidence of the group's interest in history, several markers have been placed in the city: one is in evidence at what is now known as Constitution Village, another marks the Weeden House, and one was erected in historic Mooresville. Through the years flags have been donated to fly at public sites, graves of Revolutionary War soldiers have been marked, and donations have been made to the Tutt Fann Veterans Home.

Always interested in supporting education, the chapter has donated books, flags, money, and medals to schools in the area and scholarships to deserving students. They have been supporters of the Kate Duncan Smith School at Grant, Alabama, since its founding in 1924.

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION Huntsville Chapter

This chapter was organized in 1970 with fourteen new members who joined eight members transferring from the Twickenham Chapter. Members are admitted by invitation only and meetings are held once each month September through May. The current membership numbers more than 100.

The aims of the organization are to foster patriotism, education, and history in public and private schools and to encourage respect for the flag of the United States of America. Certificates and medals are awarded for good citizenship to seniors in high school and to members of ROTC programs. Scholarships are awarded to deserving students for higher education, and service and gifts are provided to disabled veterans.

The chapter supports the Kate Duncan Smith DAR School at Grant, Alabama, and the Tamassee DAR School in South Carolina. These schools were built and are maintained by the DAR.

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION Hunt's Spring Chapter

Founded in 1974, this organization began with 36 charter members some of whom had been members of the original Twickenham Town Chapter. It was the third chapter in the city of Huntsville, and now numbers some 100 members.

The group has been active in presenting awards for good citizenship to area high schools as well as ROTC medals to military cadets at Alabama A & M University and to cadets at the junior ROTC at Butler High School.

Another project carried on by this chapter has been the marking of Revolutionary soldiers' graves and researching unmarked soldiers' graves in the north Alabama area.

SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION Tennessee Valley Chapter

Membership in this patriotic and social organization which meets once a month is based upon descendency from a Revolutionary War patriot. The chapter was founded in 1927, originally in Mooresville, but moved to Huntsville in 1958. There are 13 chapters in the state, this being the largest and most active with more than 70 members.

Honors are awarded each year to outstanding members of police and fire departments, as well as high school and college ROTC members. An essay contest for eagle scouts results in a scholarship award to the winner. Other honors include awards for heroic or significant contributions to the welfare of the United States, Alabama, and local governments and industry.

THE "BIG SPRING" IN HUNTSVILLE'S HISTORY

By
Harvilee Phillips Harbarger

The colorful history of Huntsville is centered around the phenomenal Big Spring from which source, until 1953, has come the total water supply of Huntsville. This city is truly a scenic replica of the genuine old South with all of its life, past and present, having as its nucleus the Big Spring. The spring has been in constant use by the white man since it had its first settler in 1805. At that early date, the basis for Huntsville's water system was realized, with water that was said to be of such quality and goodness, that better drinking water can hardly be found anywhere.

Concerning the early settlement at the Big Spring, as it was called by the Indians, Thomas J. Taylor, a pioneer local historian, has this to say in his history of Madison County: Old man Isaac Criner, who died some four or five years ago at the age of ninety-three or four, says that he and his brother had put up a cabin when John Hunt stayed all night with him on his way to Huntsville Spring, and his brother's wife baked bread for him and David Bean to bring with them—that was the fall of 1804. And that Bean helped Hunt put up a cabin and then Bean came back and settled on Bean's Creek near Salem, Tennessee. Hunt went to east Tennessee and returned with his family in the spring of 1805. If there were any other settlers in the county in the spring of 1805, except those mentioned, Mr. Criner had not heard of them. This is the substance of the statement Mr. Criner made to me, and has often made to others, and as he was a man of remarkable memory and undoubted veracity, I am disposed to give his statement credit. I do not think there is any doubt of John Hunt's being the pioneer in the settlement of Huntsville; yet I think it quite probable that there were several settlers in the county who came here about the same time. The settlements in Tennessee in 1805 had reached down to the Elk River in the neighborhood of Winchester, and several of the pioneers claimed to have come across the line into this county in the year 1805. But taking Mr. Criner and Mr. Hunt as the original pioneers, there was this difference in their careers. Mr. Criner came here before he attained his majority, settled in a remote corner of the county, stayed at home and worked hard, and when he died, left to his children a large body of the land where he settled. John Hunt came here in the full meridian of life with very little of this world's goods, and when the lands at public sale brought prices beyond his reach, the land became the property of richer men. All that he received of the vast domain on which he was the first to settle was a half-acre town lot in the city that bears his name, a name that will be remembered as long as the city of Huntsville marks the place where he built his cabin and commenced to battle with the wilderness.¹

After the Irishman Hunt returned to the Big Spring with his family, he and his sons, William and George, busied themselves with getting settled. Great numbers

¹ Thomas J. Taylor, *History of Madison County*. (Manuscript in possession of Mrs. Douglas Taylor, Huntsville, Alabama)

of rattlesnakes, not Indians, were the main worry of these new settlers. These reptiles were in the rocks and crevices all around the bluff and the general area of the spring. Long hollow canes were filled with gunpowder and shoved back among the crevices of the rocks and a charge ignited. Repetition of this same practice was done for weeks until the snakes retreated into the caves.²

Word traveled to former friends and neighbors of the unusual fertility of the soil, the beauty of the country, and of the wonderful Big Spring. Beginning in 1806, large numbers of homeseekers began to come into the county from middle and east Tennessee and from Georgia. At the time the county was being surveyed, John Hunt served as a guide since he was familiar with the area and to some extent was friendly with the Indians who used the area as a hunting ground.³ It was during this time that Leroy Pope of Petersburg, Georgia, is believed to have made his first journey into the county to examine the lands around the Big Spring.⁴

Within four years after the arrival of the first pioneer, the land which is now Madison County had an almost incredible population of more than 3,000 settlers. By a proclamation of the Honorable Robert Williams, Governor of the Mississippi Territory, Madison County was created and established the 13th day of December, 1808.⁵

John Hunt had anticipated the sale of lands when he first came to the county. Before the government land sales started in 1809, and before the town was laid out, Hunt made application to purchase two hundred acres in the immediate site of Huntsville including the Big Spring, but was unable to perfect his title to this land because he could not raise enough money to complete the purchase. So the quarter section of land, upon which was located the spring, was in turn sold to Leroy Pope for twenty-three dollars an acre, and this was indeed an exorbitant price in 1809. The bidding for this piece of land was sharp because it brought four times as much as any of the adjoining lands. Pope bought this land with a view of locating the county seat upon it.⁶ On December 23, 1809, when the commissioners were given the authority by the Mississippi Territorial Legislature to select a county seat, Pope's site was chosen. Pope requested that the town be named "Twickenham" in honor of the estate of Alexander Pope, the famous English poet, and the name was accepted.⁷

² Pat Jones Scrapbook, Huntsville Public Library.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Frances C. Roberts Interview, February, 1955.

⁵ Edward Betts, *Early History of Huntsville, Alabama, 1804-1870*. (Montgomery, Alabama, 1916), p.11.

⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

⁷ Ibid.

The streets of the town were laid out with reference to the spring bluff. This work was probably done by J. W. Leake, a local surveyor, who according to record, did all such work until 1816, when an Englishman named Hunter Peel came into the area to live.⁸ Twickenham, as the town was first named, was bounded on the north by what is now Holmes Avenue, on the east by Lincoln Street, on the south by Williams Avenue, and on the west by Gallatin Street and Oak Avenue.⁹

The town was in the process of being platted when the commissioners bought thirty acres, the south half of which was purchased from Leroy Pope for twenty-five dollars an acre. The thirty acres obtained by the commissioners was that immediately adjacent to the spring bluff—comprising a portion of the courthouse square. This thirty acres was divided into half-acre lots, which when sold, brought from \$200 to \$500 each.¹⁰ The total revenue derived from the sales was \$10,000, and was used in the construction of public buildings which were begun immediately.¹¹

Just like other towns, Twickenham had local dissension and internal strife, and as might be guessed, the name of the town was one bone of contention. According to Edward Chambers Betts in his *Early History of Huntsville*, legend claims that the settlement was divided into two parts, and there existed two powerful factions. These were the “Royal Party” and the “Castor Oil Party,” being so named because of the leadership of each. The former was led by Leroy Pope and contended for the name of Twickenham, while the latter was led by John Hunt who operated a castor oil shop and spoke for the name of Huntsville.¹² This traditional tale may or may not have given the real names of the factions, but historical records do reveal that though the town was legally named Twickenham, the spring, and to some extent, the settlement around it was known as “Hunt’s Spring. This fact, taken in connection with the knowledge that there were those who believed respect should be shown to Hunt as a pioneer settler, and an even more potent circumstance that Twickenham was an English name—all added to the angry discussion. The English name, no doubt, made it very unpopular, for at that time relations between Great Britain and the United States were unfriendly and strained to the breaking point by the unfavorable British naval policy toward American commerce on the high seas. This subsequently led to the War of 1812 and perhaps explains the desire for a change in name.¹³

Replying to the demand of the people, the Territorial Legislature, by act of November 25, 1811, changed the name of the town by providing that: ‘From and

⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 24.

¹² Ibid., p. 25.

¹³ Ibid.

after the passage of this act, the county town of Madison County—now called Twickenham—shall be called and known by the name of Huntsville.” The same legislature passed an act on December 9, incorporating Huntsville and gave it its first municipal charter and government.¹⁴

The significance of the Big Spring as the center of early Huntsville is expressed in a letter written by John W. Walker, later United States Senator, to his friend, W. H. Crawford, then Secretary of the United States Treasury in Washington, DC. In 1815 he wrote: “Huntsville is situated around the finest spring in the world; the spring forms a semicircle one hundred feet wide, and at a trivial expense the stream can be made navigable to the Tennessee River; which is only ten miles distant. The market house is of brick; the jail of wood. In its immediate vicinity are five cotton gins. The average land in the county will produce 1000 pounds of cotton to the acre and 800 bales will be this year’s crop. The land is also admirably adapted to tobacco raising. Besides the gins in Huntsville, there are twenty in the county.”

Also quoting from Ann Royall, woman journalist of 1818: “The land around Huntsville and the whole of Madison County is rich and beautiful as you can image and the appearance of wealth would baffle belief. The citizens are gay, polite, and hospitable and live in great splendor. Nothing else like it in our own country.”¹⁵

Channeling the waters of the Big Spring for town use came in 1823 when the trustees of Huntsville gave Hunter Peel permission by contract to erect a water-works system. The contract held in its content that in one year Peel should put up a hydraulic wheel that would carry the water to a reservoir with a high enough elevation to supply the city sufficiently with water. The reservoir was to have a capacity of 1,000 cubic feet and the pipes were to be buried low enough beneath the surface of the ground to keep them from freezing and also to prevent any obstruction in building and opening the streets. Peel was to have control of the water rates and was to be entitled to proceeds from the water tax.¹⁶ Permission was given him by Leroy Pope to erect a dam across the spring and to build a house at the dam to cover the machinery, not over twenty feet by thirty feet. Peel formed a partnership with James Barclay, a practical machinist, and together they constructed the reservoir and organized the water works.¹⁷

In 1823 the reservoir was a small “goose pin” of a building attached to one end of the courthouse. No doubt this was a small affair as there were frequent complaints about the scarcity of water in it and complaints also that some people who had no hydrants used their neighbors’ and avoided paying water taxes.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁵ Scrapbook, Huntsville Public Library.

¹⁶ Deed Book, Madison County Courthouse, Huntsville, Alabama.

¹⁷ Taylor Manuscript.

Cisterns with charcoal purification were used by others as a source of water supply.

The first reservoir was supplied with water by means of a self-propelling turbine wheel at the spring and red cedar water pipes were used to carry water up the hill to the reservoir. However, this first reservoir and system proved unsatisfactory and the city fathers became dissatisfied with Peel's operation. According to the editor of the *Southern Advocate* in its issue of May 18, 1827, the people of Huntsville were dreadfully cheated by the first contract. The price paid for the deal was too high and completion of the contract to supply the town was not accomplished.¹⁸

Consequently, Peel was released by the city as proprietor of the water works and a contract with Thomas A. Ronalds of New York was drawn up in March, 1828. Nine hundred dollars was appropriated by the city for erection of a new reservoir on the public square and for procuring a regular supply of water.¹⁹ The new reservoir was a two-story brick building with the reservoir occupying the first floor and the meeting chamber for the city council filling the second.²⁰

In the new system wooden pipes were made of red cedar logs cut about eight feet long. These pipes, bored through the center, were tapered at one end and hollowed at the other. Joints or connections were held in place by iron bands.²¹ The primitive method used to bore these logs was comprised of a horse attached to a long pole going around in a circle, thus operating the large auger. The logs were held securely in place by the use of clamps. A shop for this purpose was located on Green Street and owned by a Mr. Neely. The cedar pumps being made there were generally in use by people who had wells instead of hydrants.²² Relics of these early cedar water pipes have been unearthed on many occasions, and have been found to be in a good state of repair. There are a few of the early cedar log pipes on display in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

Water from the spring was forced through these pipes by means of a large turbine wheel situated in a frame house which was built directly over the water. The turbine was operated by water power and required very little attention.²³

Ronalds operated the water system from 1828 until 1836 when Thomas and George Fearn gained control of the water works and agreed to construct the new reservoir on Echols Hill, at the junction of the streets, "so as to admit as elevation

¹⁸ *Southern Advocate*, May 18, 1827, Huntsville, Alabama

¹⁹ Minute Book, 1828-1834, City Council Records, Huntsville, Alabama, City Hall, pp. 78-80.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²¹ Betts, *op. Cit.*, p. 74.

²² D. C. Monroe Interview, April, 1949.

²³ William Dickson, "Early History of Huntsville," Scrapbook, p. 15.

of water therein forty feet above the surface of the public square and to be of dimensions not less than sixty feet by sixty feet and ten feet deep.” They also agreed to set up an iron pump at the spring and to begin laying down iron pipes from the spring to the four corners of the public square.²⁴

The town council required that a committee of two, called the water-works committee, be appointed to act as overseer for the city for the contract made with Thomas and George Fearn to supply the city with water. The committee served a term of six months and then another was elected.²⁵

The new reservoir was nine-six feet above the level of the spring, was seventy feet in diameter, ten feet deep, and held 287,523 gallons of water. It was protected by a red cedar picket fence about fifteen feet in height and was located on ground at the junction of Echols and McClung Streets.

The water supply remained under private ownership for eighteen years, and in 1854 the following entry in the town council’s record states: “Resolved that a committee consisting of three members be appointed to examine and inquire into the propriety of purchasing, for the benefit of said corporation, the water-works from Dr. Thomas Fearn, and to ascertain from him the terms upon which said water-works can be purchased.” Dr. Thomas Fearn deeded the water-works to the city in 1858 for the sum of \$10,000 to be paid in ten equal annual installments and the first payment was in the amount of \$300.00.²⁶

Water taxes were established in 1859 on July 1.²⁷ Also on the same day the water works was valued at \$17,020.53.²⁸ And during this year a new house to cover the machinery at the dam was proposed.²⁹ Thus the water-works became municipally owned and in 1887 the town obtained from the state legislature \$15,000 in bonds for water system improvements.³⁰

The excavated and obsolete reservoir was replaced by a standpipe, built between 1887 and 1890. Today in its stead, is a beautiful natural sunken garden. The standpipe is sixty feet high, ten feet in circumference, holds 600,000 gallons of water, and cost \$7,000. This pipe had the advantage of being more sanitary as no foreign matter could be thrown into it, as could the excavated reservoir. Records show that in 1894 the town was served by approximately ten miles of cast-iron water mains. These pipes varied in their diameters; some were two, three, four, six, eight, and twelve inches wide.

²⁴ Deed Book, Madison County Courthouse.

²⁵ Minute Book, Huntsville City Hall.

²⁶ Minute Book City Council Records, Huntsville, AL, p. 260.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Cast Iron Pipe News.*

A colonel of the Engineer Corps of the United States Artillery, W. Hiram Chittenden, stationed in Huntsville in 1898 during the Spanish American War became interested in the spring and its source. He knew there was a limestone bluff, a small opening, a natural fountain, and millions of gallons of water. It seemed incredible that this tremendous supply of water just flowed out of a bluff. So he obtained permission from the mayor to explore the mysteries of such a phenomenon. Along with an orderly and using a canoe, they entered the small opening in the bluff. The two men rowed for approximately two and one-half miles, and at that point the stream divided; one half going toward Huntsville and the other toward the southwest. That division may account for the formation of Byrd and Brahan Springs.³¹

Also in 1898 the Village Improvement Society of Huntsville was formed. Among the things proposed by them to beautify the town was a plan that the "Big Spring" lot should be laid off by a landscape gardener and opened as a park. The Village Improvement Society noted that the courthouse fence was used as a hitching post by all of the people of the county. As an unsanitary condition resulted, the Medical Society and thoughtful citizens petitioned the mayor and aldermen for its removal. The petition for removal was blocked by merchants who owned stores on the square, saying trade would be destroyed if the fence were removed.

Colonel Chittenden's investigation proved that hitching horses at the courthouse fence was a menace to the health of all the drinkers of "Big Spring" water. Just under the square he discovered a crevice through which seepage could get into the spring. The Village Improvement Society again urged the removal of the fence and again met with defeat. However, the city fathers were going to have to take some measure, as in October 1898 cases of typhoid fever were reported. Consequently, the square was paved in brick as a precaution.

At this time, in 1898, the city commissioned Colonel Chittenden to beautify the spring. Chittenden realized that accessibility of water from the spring would be aided by the removal of loose debris from the channel opening, construction of an intake basin, installation of pumping equipment, and necessary cleaning of the spring to keep it as free of pollution as possible. The natural dam was blasted, a wider basin made, and the banks of the branch were walled in and curbed with white stone. A small waterfall was left at the entrance to the street, and three stone bridges were built across it. A new pump house was constructed in 1899 at the extreme northwest corner of the park so as not to mar the beauty of the grounds, as the old pump house surely must have done. Mr. Azel A. Love then became the engineer for the city's water system at this new pump house.³²

³¹ Elizabeth H. Chapman, Scrapbook, "Huntsville's Life in the Gay 90's," Huntsville Public Library.

³² Interview Miss Dorothy Love Adair, March, 1955.

The Village Improvement Society then began work on landscaping the park, and picnics were encouraged. Oftentimes visitors of the old Huntsville Hotel (located on the northwest corner of the square) descended the steps between Murray and Smith's Jewelers and the White Building on the west side of the square to rest and enjoy the beauty of the spring. In 1899 the fountain which rose from a rock in the basin froze, and, as the legend goes, the spring was bedecked in all the wonders of winter. The trees were feathery and limestone bluff was a shining mass of ice. Nevertheless, the wonders of King Winter did not wash away the courthouse hitching post fence, and the century ended with the editor of *The Democrat* still writing articles against it.

Beginning the twentieth century, the water-works of Huntsville was an established operation and functioned as such with Mr. Frank Murphy as overseer. On October 1, 1912, Claude D. Phillips became superintendent of the water works and street departments. During his first year of service, from October 1, 1912 to September 29, 1913, total water tax receipts were \$15,992.66. In an interview with him, he stated that in order to beautify the spring park still further, concrete walks were to be laid. In 1912 there was a Hutchens Lumber Company directly across the street from the spring, on the hill, and an auditorium and skating rink adjacent to this. Also situated next to these buildings on the southwest corner of Gallatin and Canal Streets was the small office of the water-works and street department. The vault securing sewer maps and pipeline data were in this brick building. The ice house was across Canal Street from this office.

For generations there had been near epidemics of typhoid fever in Huntsville, and in 1917 while Claude Phillips held office as superintendent, a typhoid epidemic struck Huntsville. Along with Dr. Carl Grote, who came to Huntsville as county health officer in 1917, they explored the possibility that the drinking water coming from the spring was being contaminated in some spot—thus spreading the disease. It was discovered that open toilets, located over rock crevices in back of the old market house, where the Twickenham Hotel later stood, were a direct cause of the epidemic. It was also found that the first chlorine plant installed in 1914 was inadequate.

Mayor Earle Smith authorized Mr. Phillips to blast in the rock and put in an iron sewer. It is interesting to note that though the blasting was done in solid rock, at ten and twelve foot depths, not a window glass was broken around the blast scene. It was at this time that the drip-type chlorine plant was installed at the water works under the supervision of Dr. Grote. In 1917 there were 120 cases of typhoid fever, and the year following the installation of the adequate chlorine plant, there were only four reported cases.³³

Heretofore, the only opening into the spring that has been mentioned is the small aperture in the cliff above the basin. However, there is another opening on Greene

³³ Interview, Dr. Carl Grote, February, 1955.

Street in front of the site of the old Post Office Building which was made in 1917. This opening was made during the time Mr. Phillips was in the water department and was made so that investigators could see what contaminated water at the spring and caused the fever around 1917. Again, during the blasting of this hole, no windows were cracked or shattered around the blast scene. This feat was accomplished by laying a large mat of baling wire, collected from all the livery stables, over the hole containing the dynamite caps, and the mat of wire absorbed the shock of the blast. This opening is covered, but has since been used by state ground water surveyors.³⁴

The spring shared greatly in greatly in Huntsville's history and was indeed a prominent feature. As the Big Spring was a central place in the town, many incidents of local interest occurred there. In 1878 a lynching occurred just across the street from the spring branch. Two men were lynched, one a white man and the other a Negro who was a butcher by trade.³⁵ A few years later in the early 1900s, a carnival came to Huntsville and set up its tents in the vacant lot back of West Clinton School. Sometime during the performance a lion escaped from its cage and according to stores of several older citizens, pandemonium reigned. Carnival spectators were crawling over fences, screaming and running away from the tents. The lion was finally cornered and captured at the Big Spring.³⁶

Negro baptisms in the spring branch were a site to behold. On Sundays when the ceremonies were in progress, the banks of the branch were lined with spectators and the curious. Mrs. Lillian Taylor Wall, aunt of the historian Judge T. J. Taylor, told of a baptizing she saw at the branch just after the Civil War. She said that the pastor put the good sister under the cold, cold waters of the spring, and she rose with a mighty splash and shouted with great exuberance: "Hallelujah—I'm free from sin and slavery, praise the Lord and bless General Grant." These baptizings were a regular event at the spring well into the twentieth century.³⁷

No principal changes were made to the water works as an operation of the municipality except to expand the mileage of water pipe. In 1922 Raymond Jones became superintendent of the water works and in 1923 this function was taken over by Mr. J. D. Wall. With the coming of the arsenal in 1940, the growth of Huntsville became so rapid that during the 40s and especially during the days of World War II Huntsville was considered a boom town. The new industries arriving and the added population proved to be a strain on the grand old spring. During the late fall of 1942, the discharge of the spring dropped below or became approximately equivalent to the amount necessary for municipal consumption. Consequently, city officials requested that the state make an investigation. As a result of this review, restrictions on municipal use of water had to be enforced.

³⁴ Interview Mr. Claude D. Phillips, January, 1955.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Interview Mr. D.C. Monroe.

³⁷ Interview Mrs. Howard Jones, February, 1955.



Snapshots from a Scrapbook
The Big Spring
(Photos Courtesy of Clyde Martz)

During this period, no water flowed over the lower dam and pumpage was from storage in the upper pool of the spring, plus available discharge from the spring.³⁸

This survey also showed that the ground water of the Huntsville area was only partly developed and that much additional water could be obtained by developing some of the large springs in the area. Big Spring is developed to the maximum extent which is approximately four million gallons a day during periods of normal minimum flow.³⁹

As a precaution against any enemy sabotage during World War II, a high protective fence was erected. This definitely marred the beauty of the park; but when it was removed, the park once again became one of the beauty spots of the town. After World War II, the population of the city somewhat dwindled with the reduction in personnel at the Redstone and Huntsville Arsenals, leaving the water sources sufficient for supply and demand. However, with the merger of the two arsenals for research and development in the field of guided missiles, the population soared once again. With the growing population, the water supply became inadequate and in 1953 a well was tapped at the old Dallas Mill site. In 1954 additional wells were tapped on the property occupied by the Huntsville Manufacturing Company, the old Merrimack Mill site. In addition to the 600,000 gallon standpipe on Echols Hill, a new reservoir was erected in 1954 on U.S. Highway 431 with a capacity of one million gallons.⁴⁰ The rapid growth of Huntsville is also shown in the water taxes collected in 1954, the total amount being \$470,961.97.⁴¹

Today, the historic Big Spring that has been in constant use since 1805, with the aid of a few supplementary wells, is serving a growing metropolis of approximately 58,000, blending with the historic past and the ever-progressive present.

(Editor's note: this paper was written in 1955, and as residents of Huntsville will recognize, in the nearly half century since, the Big Spring and its environs have undergone a number of improvements and changes, and is today the central feature of a beautiful municipal park in downtown Huntsville.)

³⁸ "Ground Water Resources of the Huntsville Area," *Alabama Bulletin*, No. 62 (Montgomery), p. 67.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Interview Mr. Martin Phillips, March, 1955.

⁴¹ Interview Mr. Norris Payne, March, 1955.



Annual Report of the Treasurer
 HUNTSVILLE-MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 JULY 1, 1999 – June 30, 2000
 Norman M. Shapiro, Treasurer

Society Cash Available, June 30, 1999	\$ 4,680.69
Savings Account Balance, June 30, 1999	1,137.56
Certificates of Deposit, with interest, to date	<u>6,131.18</u>
TOTAL	\$11,949.43

Receipts:

Dues.....	\$3716.00	
Donations.....	142.00	
Sales.....	1195.50	
Marker Funds (Mad.CtyComm)	3200.00	
Interest on Savings.....	10.30	
Interest on CDs.....	<u>266.73</u>	
Total Receipts	\$8530.53	
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE		\$20,479.96

Disbursements:

<i>Historical Review</i> Printing	\$2,910.44	
Invitations	496.90	
Postage & Mailing.....	408.45	
Administration.....	366.62	
Meeting Room.....	200.00	
Storage.....	697.00	
P.O. Box.....	44.00	
Arts Council.....	<u>120.00</u>	
Total Disbursements	\$5,243.41	
Society Cash Available, June 30, 2000		\$8,838.64*
Certificates of Deposit, w/int.to date		<u>6,397.91</u>
TOTAL BALANCE		\$15,236.55

MAPLE HILL BOOK PROJECT

Cash Available, June 30, 1999	\$1,558.16
Sales	<u>665.00</u>
Cash Available, June 30, 2000	\$2,223.16
 Certificate of Deposit, with interest to date	 \$8,091.60
TOTAL, June 30, 2000	\$10,314.76

*This amount includes all funds in the Savings Account which were transferred to Checking Account when Savings Account was closed on April 10, 2000, and the \$3,200.00 obligated for Historical Markers.

If you know someone who may be interested in becoming a member of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, please share this application for membership.

HUNTSVILLE-MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. Box 666
Huntsville, AL 35804

Membership Application 2000-2001

Name _____

Address _____

Telephones: Home _____

Work _____

Annual Dues: Individual: \$10.00 Family: \$18.00

My check for \$ _____ payable to Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society includes a subscription to *The Huntsville Historical Review* and all the Society's activities.

Signature

The purpose of this society is to afford an agency for expression among those having a common interest in collecting, preserving and recording the history of Huntsville and Madison County. Communications concerning the organization should be addressed to the President at P. O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama 35804.

Manuscripts for possible publication should be directed to the Publications Committee at the same address. Articles should pertain to Huntsville or Madison County. Articles on the history of other sections of the state will be considered when they relate in some way to Madison County. All copy, including footnotes, should be double spaced. The author should submit an original and one copy.

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