

The Huntsville Historical Review

Winter-Spring 2006

Volume 31

Number 1



W.H.D. R.T.C. H.R.C. E.M.C. C.F.C. H.S.C. R.C.C. 1900

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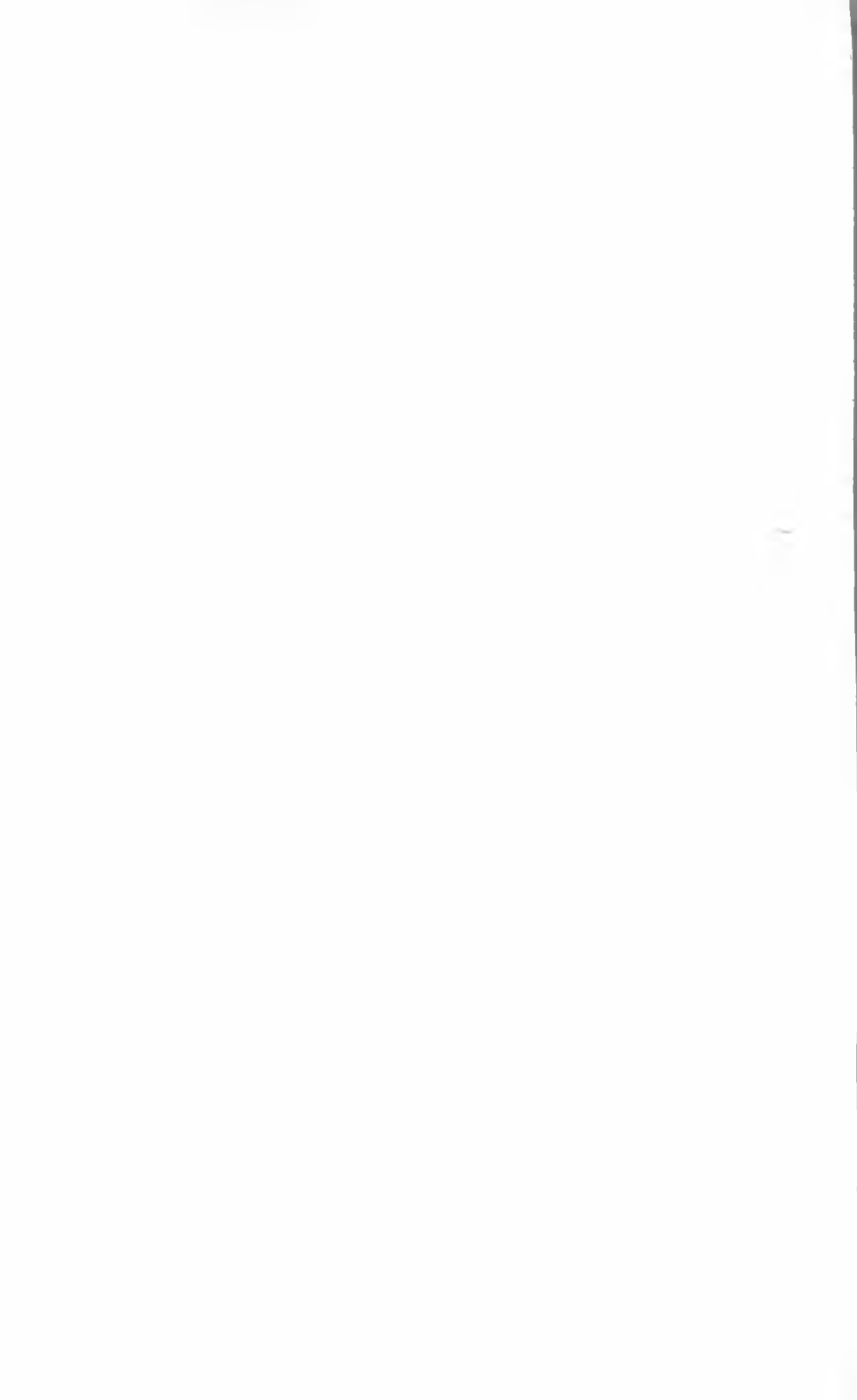
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H.H.C. B.T.C. H.B.C. E.M.C. C.F.C. H.S.C. R.C.C. Sr. R.C.C. Jr.

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President's Page

In the last few months, several great books have been published on local history. We are fortunate to have so much talent within our own organization: Nancy Rohr, who wrote "Incidents of the War - The Civil War Journal of Mary Jane Chadick" has been a valuable asset to the promotion of local history. Her book, for those who have not read it, is impossible to put down. I encourage all members of the Society to show your support by purchasing a copy of this book, not only because the proceeds from the book enable us to continue our historic preservation, but also because it is an outstanding book!

I feel fortunate to have been asked by Ranee' Pruitt, also a valuable asset within our organization and community as well, to research and write a chapter in her new book, "Eden of the South, A Chronology of Huntsville, Alabama, 1805-2005." Many of our Society's members, including Nancy Rohr, and our editor Jacque Gray, had a hand in this fabulous book as well. Proceeds for this book go directly back to the library to add to and maintain the historic collection.

Please see the book reviews in this edition for a better understanding of both of these books, along with the recently published book, "Through the Garden Gate" by our sister organization, the Historic Huntsville Foundation. Again, the proceeds from this book go back into the Foundation for their preservation endeavors as well.

Bob Adams
President

Editor's Notes

This issue of *The Huntsville Historical Review* showcases the Tennessee Valley's plants and the men and women behind them. Our rich soil attracted our earliest settlers, and many of them found other uses, besides the obvious wealth to be gained from growing cotton. Two of our members have gathered this history to share many facts new to all of us.

David Byers is no stranger to our organization, and although most of us know him for his quick wit and sense of humor, he is an outstanding writer as well. David's attention to detail and thoroughness make his stories very interesting and readable. Even more interesting are the little-known anecdotes he brings to his work, making the subjects he writes about more rounded. Sometimes the story behind the story explains so much more.

I've known writer Chris Lang for many years now and have learned so much from him in several areas of history. His interests branch in many directions, and he has an ability to focus his casual interests until he is thoroughly knowledgeable in the subject at hand. He would not appreciate me calling him an expert in what he knows, but that description would not be far off.

Readers of *The Huntsville Historical Review* will enjoy the outstanding work of these two writers, and we look forward to reading more from them, and about them, in future issues.

Jacque Gray
Editor

The Evolution of Nurseries in Madison County

DAVID BYERS

Several things happening in America affected the nursery industry in the period from the War Between the States to the start of the 20th century. In 1862 Congress passed the Homestead Act, stimulating westward population movement. This involved land in 30 states, including Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. Nurserymen were profiting as farmers needed windbreaks and woodlots for their newly acquired land. Fruit trees, shade trees, lumber, fence posts and firewood were essential for modern farm life.

Following the War, immigration from Europe set in with redoubled vigor. Congress passed the Timber Culture Act of 1873. The legislation augmented the Homestead Act by giving title to 160 acres of land to any person planting trees on 40 of the acres. Trees were to be planted not more than twelve feet apart, roughly 7500 trees per farm.

Although this began as a splendid time for the nursery industry, bad things happened. The winter of 1872-1873 was the most severe in twenty years. Most nurseries were terribly damaged by the freezing. The Panic of 1873 and the long and deep depression that followed shut off the flow of cash and closed the period of happy and progressive times.

Due to fraud and corruption in the administration of the Timber Culture Act of 1873, it was repealed by Congress with the passing of the Forest Reserve Act in 1891. The price of apple trees dropped from \$200 per thousand to \$30 per thousand. Most nurserymen were left with awful scars. The fine and productive nurseries in the northern states began seeking new markets and lower production costs to survive. Nurserymen were looking to the south.

Such a man was William Fletcher Heikes. The nurseryman from Dayton, Ohio, born in 1837, was looking for suitable southern land as a location for his horticultural venture.

Good fortune caused him to be caught by a storm in a small country hotel in the Ozarks of Missouri. Two other men marooned there also had needs. Herman L. Moss was seeking a profitable use for large land holdings in north Alabama. John Fraser, Sr., born 1842 in Lancastershire, En-

gland was trained as a plant propagator at the World Renowned Veitch's Royal Exotic Nursery near London. Then living in Glencoe, Missouri, he was looking for employment.

On that snowy night, several states away, Madison County's first nursery was born. It was to be called "The Huntsville Nursery."

HEIKES AND MOSS

The property chosen was at Gladstone, a community about twelve miles north of Huntsville on Pulaski Pike. On that land, owned by Herman L. Moss and his wife, Jessie S. Moss, Heikes' first experiments were made on fifty acres of cleared land, a part of their large wooded holdings. The plantings were so successful that in 1872 a decision was made to plant the entire acreage in fruit trees.

Heikes proved to his own satisfaction that it was better to grow plants where the soil was fertile and the land reasonably cheap than to take less favorable or more expensive soil to be nearer transportation. The location at Gladstone was eleven miles from the railroad.

The timberland, with a wonderful creek, gradually gave way to clearing operations and ultimately grew to have more than a thousand acres in cultivation. As the business expanded however, the problem of transporting enormous amounts of trees eleven miles over poor roads would have staggered many men. Heikes figured this handicap was offset by other considerations. Because of the nursery a considerable community grew up around Gladstone including a store, a church, a school, and all the appurtenances of a small village. About thirty tenant houses were built by the nursery and, according to Heikes, the profits from the commissary fully paid the cost of transporting the product to the railway.

An original thinker, Heikes developed a new method of sales which was later used by many large nurseries of the day. After digging in the dormant season, plants were packed into large boxes and shipped by rail, unsold, to St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Rochester. There they were placed in cold storage and sold to nurseries and peddlers in the area. First tried in St. Louis in 1887, the "for-sale" boxes were marked "Heikes and Moss."



William F. Heikes

Heikes, always looking forward, worked to improve conditions in the nursery business especially in regard to quality of stock. He developed and introduced a systematic standard of grading by caliper, the thickness of the stem or trunk. This standard was adopted by the entire nursery trade and is still in use today. His rule was that every plant shipped must be true-to-name, exactly what the customer ordered.



The device designed by William F. Heikes to measure the caliper of fruit trees and seedlings

Nursery records of the 1886-1887 season indicate a banner year for the pioneer firm. In the four hundred acres then cleared, the firm grew what was termed a "champion cherry block of America." That block of trees numbered 300,000 and was said to be largest quantity of cherry trees ever grown in one field at that time.

From its inception, this firm catered to the wholesale trade almost exclusively. In the spring season of 1887, records indicate one order became ten train carloads! Total sales amounted to the 300,000 cherry trees, 1,600,000 pear trees, 500,000 peach trees, 600,000 plum trees, and 100,000 apple trees. Records indicate they were unable to fill the demand for their plants.

Clearly, adequate, quality labor in the area was essential to the successful production. Able and smart laborers were required to do the various jobs necessary in a nursery. The Negroes who applied had to remember orders, use judgment, learn to prune, graft, bud, plow properly and use the right sprays. The wages were higher than those paid by neighboring farms causing the more competent workers to leave the farm and come to the nursery. Although the blessings of more pay caused pain to some, the business and cash brought to the area far outweighed the disadvantages.

Heikes was a member of the American Pomological Society, the State Board of Horticulture, and the first president of the Alabama State Horticultural Society. This society was organized in 1903 at Montgomery. Born in Dayton, Ohio, April 2, 1837, he was said to be a man of excellent address, calm and dignified in manner and a very modest man of splendid intellect. Heikes married Lettie Conrad of Dayton. He passed away in Cleveland, Ohio in 1911.

Jessie S. Moss, born 1836, powerful partner in the nursery venture, maintained her interest in the firm after the death of her husband in 1882. She was a woman of outstanding personality, keenly interested in a broad field of activities. Following the death of her husband, she and Lettie C. Heikes, wife of her partner, took up the study of medicine and each was awarded a doctor's diploma. They declared the studies were taken as a pastime and for use in the family. In 1885 the two women went abroad and lived in France and Germany for three years.



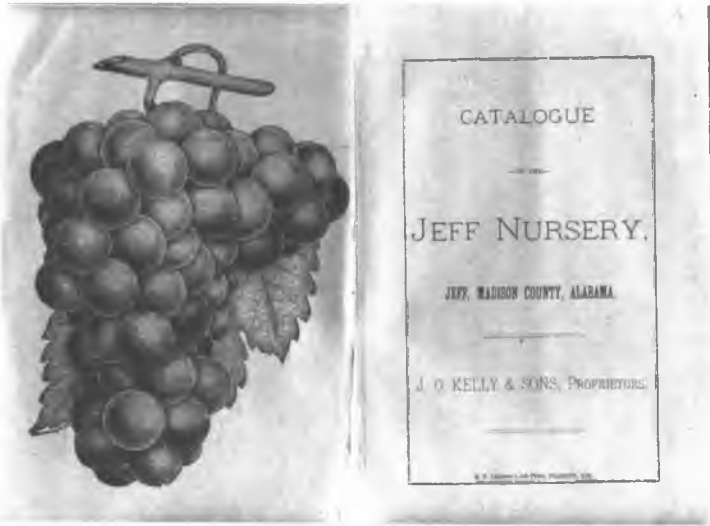
*Jessie S. Moss, a partner in Madison County's first nursery,
was smart, tough, and unafraid of risk*

In 1906 Jessie Moss built a most attractive home near Huntsville. The spacious colonial dwelling was situated on a commanding site which later became the Huntsville Country Club. She died in 1914. Her stepson, Dr. Milton Moss, born 1851, a professor at the Colorado School of Mines, returned to Huntsville and the nursery management team upon her death. Some reports list Dr. Moss as the husband of Jessie but her will clearly states he is her stepson. Jessie Moss, Milton, and the Heikes couple are buried on the same lot in Maple Hill Cemetery.

J. O. KELLEY AND SON

In this period, a shy genius began his nursery in Jeff, a small farming community west of Huntsville. George Lawson Kelley was born in 1862. In 1885 he named his nursery using his father's name, J. O. Kelley and Sons, because he did not want to use his own name. D. E. and J. O. Kelley, brother and father, were well-known farmers, storekeepers, and landowners in the county.

His knowledge came from reading and trying unusual methods of propagation. His experiments led many others to successful ideas and practices of plant increases. Kelley's production often included large quantities of ornamental plants and trees. He was the first nurseryman to plant unrooted cuttings of *Juniperus* varieties in the open field to root them.



*Catalogue from Jeff Nursery, J. O. Kelley and Sons,
Proprietors, about 1900*

One crop of “President Hoover Rose” covered 40 acres. He commented at the time “This is a good rose, but a terrible name.” Toward the end of his career he planted 40,000 boxwoods, which were killed in a record-breaking freeze in 1951. Many of his trees are still a part of the landscape in Jeff. His nursery business ended in 1944; he was 82 years old and dying from tuberculosis.

HUNTSVILLE WHOLESALE NURSERY COMPANY

Huntsville Wholesale Nursery Company was the combined business of two firms. In 1885 John Fraser, Sr. started Fraser Nursery Co. on 280 acres purchased while an employee with Heikes and Moss Nursery. This property was at the northeast corner of the intersection of Pulaski Pike and Stringfield Road. In 1889 he began working for the Chases’ Alabama Nursery Company. Two years later, he returned to his Fraser Nursery and remained interested in that business until his death in 1920.

Fraser and his wife had two daughters, born in Missouri, then one daughter and three sons, born at Gladstone. All sons worked in the nursery and had very little formal education. The three sons were involved in Fraser

Nursery Company. A company letterhead in 1915 lists John Sr. as President, Oliver as vice-president, James as Treasurer, and John, Jr. as Secretary. The Huntsville City Directory in 1915 indicates James is the President and Manager and the offices were located in the Elks Building.

James W. Fraser, the eldest son, born 1882, experienced a troubled father-son relationship that caused him to seek his fortune away from that influence. He purchased land for his own nursery operation just south of Maple Hill Cemetery in Huntsville. The large property extended from California Street east and included the current subdivision developments of Monterrey, Monte Vista, and Blossomwood. James' home remains on the southeast corner of Locust Avenue and California Street. This nursery closed by 1929. James died in Tampa, Florida in 1950.

The second son, John Fraser, Jr. was born in August of 1885 at Gladstone. John, Jr. worked early in his life for his father's nursery and then became secretary of the new Huntsville Wholesale Nursery Co. In 1934 he became president of that firm. Through several land sales and exchanges, Heikes and Moss was absorbed by Huntsville Wholesale Nurseries.

Oliver (Ollie) W. Fraser, the third son, was born in 1887. After the training at home, he worked for several nurseries, bringing to them the expertise gained in the family work. His own Fraser Nursery location is now a part of Birmingham's Elmwood Cemetery. He died in 1978.

The third daughter, Helen, married Daniel Harrison, who with his brother, established Harrison Brothers Hardware, now located on the courthouse square.



These coins were used for currency at Huntsville Wholesale Nursery during the Depression. This allowed the employee to purchase his needs at the company commissary without draining the business's very short supply of cash.

Huntsville Wholesale Nurseries grew to more than one thousand acres in production and became an important nationwide supplier of plants. Although the growing fields were at Gladstone, its primary shipping location sat at a railroad spur on the site occupied now by a part of the Von Braun Center. John Fraser, III, born in 1909, became company president in 1956 at the death of his father. John, III died in 1968. John Fraser, IV, in 1969, after 96 years of nursery growing at Gladstone, dissolved the firm.

Maple Hill Cemetery holds the graves of all the Fraser family except Oliver who is buried in Birmingham.

CHASE NURSERY COMPANY

The Chase Nursery Company, the most widely known nursery in the area, began because two members of the family insisted their young nephews look into opportunities in the south or west. Brothers Lewis and Ethan Chase formed a partnership in 1869 named Chase Brothers, in Rochester, New York. It operated a nursery, which had begun in 1856, called New England Nurseries.

The four nephews, Herbert, Charles, Henry and Robert, after a stop in Hickory, North Carolina where Herbert had conducted a general merchandise business, arrived in Madison County in the early fall of 1889. The lure of faster plant growth and smaller expenses might have led them all the way to the west coast. The older Chases suggested a stop to visit William Heikes, a nursery friend for several years, at Gladstone, where he was managing Heikes and Moss Nursery.

Heikes welcomed them with "Gentlemen, you have come to the right place. No better soil and climate can be found than this. There is ample room for us all. Let's make this a nursery center." He drove them around the county for three days helping select 600 acres a bit west of today's Huntsville Country Club. The decision was made. The first peach seeds were planted there in the fall of 1889 on land owned by the newly incorporated Alabama Nursery Company.

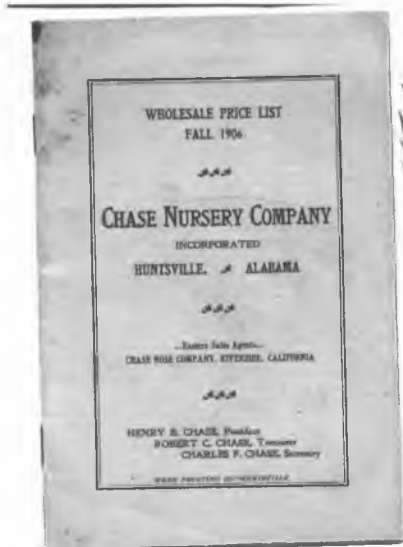


H.H.C. R.T.C. H.B.C. E.M.C. C.F.C. H.S.C. R.C.C., Sr. R.C.C., Jr.

The Chase boys, about 1918. (L to R) Henry Homer Chase, Richard T. Chase, Henry B. Chase, Dr. Edwin M. Chase, Charles F. Chase, Herbert S. Chase, Robert C. Chase, Sr., and Robert C. Chase, Jr.

Then, in 1904, more than 800 acres of new property, five miles east of Huntsville, was purchased. This became Chase, Alabama. The warehouse had a prime location between two railroads. The Southern Railway served doors on the south side and the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway the north. This made shipping plants to all parts of the country a much easier process.

In 1906, Herbert Chase sold his interest in the firm to the two youngest brothers and Henry Bellows Chase became the president of the newly formed Chase Nursery Company with Robert Collyer Chase as secretary-treasurer. Charles Chase sold his shares to them in 1910. The two brothers quickly built the nursery into one known everywhere in the nursery world. The virtues of thrift, hard work and honesty were guiding spirits.



Chase Nursery Company's first price list published in 1906

Henry B. Chase also served the city in many capacities; among them, mayor, president of the city council, founder of the Community Chest, Huntsville City School Board member, and founder of the Huntsville Historic Society. He was a world traveler, an often-sought speaker, a charter member of Rotary, an incessant letter writer, and a politically connected nurseryman.

In 1950, Chase reported in a speech to the Huntsville Rotary Club that the six wholesale nurseries in Madison County employed 350 people with a payroll of about \$350,000, farmed 2500 acres and had sales totaling over \$1,000,000. At that time the population of the county was 72,903. He pointed proudly to the fact "This essential and basic agricultural industry is not subsidized. American citizens pay no taxes to keep the nurseryman in business."

Robert Chase died suddenly in 1939 at age 63. Henry B. Chase continued with the nursery till his death at 91 years in 1961. His nephew, son of Robert, Henry Homer Chase, became president in 1957. His son, Henry Homer Chase, Jr. served as president until 1988 when the business was sold to Harvey Cotten and John Jordan. Much of the property is now a part of the holdings of Alabama A & M University and a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant.



*Henry B. Chase, president of Chase Nursery Company,
served the City of Huntsville as Mayor*



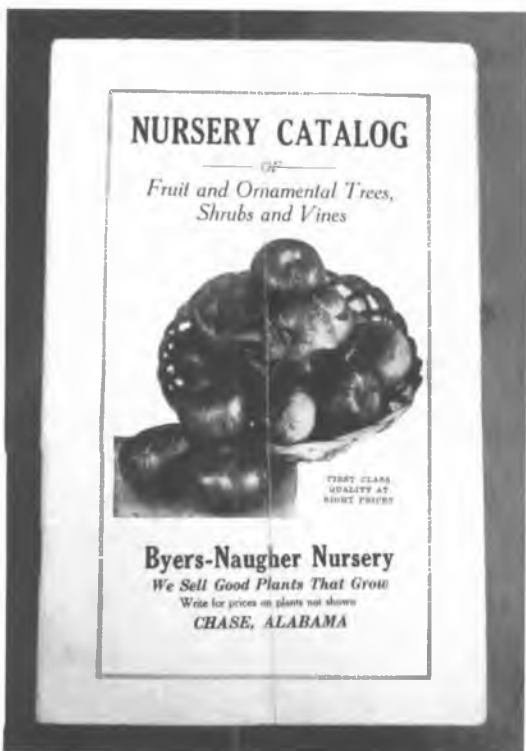
Young H.B. Chase

A number of young men who had worked with Huntsville Wholesale Nursery or Chase Nursery Company put together the courage and the capital to start their own businesses.

NAUGHER NURSERY COMPANY

Thomas W. Naugher (pronounced NAW-yer), born 1891, the son of a railroad man, worked as a Chase employee while a young man. After service in World War I, he was given responsibility for the commissary and post office at Chase. In March 1927 he and Marcus D. Byers, Sr. partnered in a growing operation on Naugher's property, purchased about 1920, on Winchester Road (then New Market Pike), Byers and Naugher Nursery, which lasted two years. Their principal crops were dogwoods, lilacs, and roses. Naugher and his half-brother, Lacy Naugher, then operated as Naugher Nursery until Lacy's death in 1951.

Tom Naugher's two sons-in-law, working in the automobile industry in Texas, were then persuaded to come to Huntsville and take the nursery. Robert "Bob" Reeves and W. D. "Dan" Cabe grew and sold plants, featuring bareroot Juniper liners, until about 1962. They also operated the Ford tractor dealership for several years.



*A nursery catalog
from 1927
from Byers-Naugher
Nursery of Chase.*



The wholesale price list from Naugher Nursery in 1956

BYERS NURSERY COMPANY

Charles Clinton Byers, the son of a Blanche, Tennessee nurseryman, came to Chase Nursery from Huntsville Wholesale Nurseries in 1911. His son, Marcus D. Byers, Sr., born 1901, worked as a youth for Chase until he was sent to Painesville, Ohio in October 1924, to intern with one of the foremost nurseries in the country, Henry Kohankie and Sons. After a year in Ohio, because he disliked Lake Erie snow and ice, he returned to the South where he spent a year in Birmingham with Fraser Nurseries, owned by Oliver (Ollie) W. Fraser, a brother of Huntsville's Frasers. Returning to Madison County, he and Tom Naugher, mentioned above, worked together, and in 1929, with the support of his parents, Byers began his growing operation.

ALABAMA NURSERY AND LANDSCAPE

Alabama Nursery and Landscape was a growing operation started by Herbert Sparkman about 1937. The nursery was located on Old Gurley Road near Chase. His brother, Howard Sparkman, moved to Chase from Tennessee to manage the nursery. Herbert Sparkman was the stationmaster for the Chase Depot and handled the passenger tickets sales and the Railway Express shipments for surrounding nurseries. This nursery closed in 1975 after the death of the partners.

E. F. DUBOSE NURSERY

E. F. DuBose, long time teacher and principal of Joe Bradley School, operated one of the most profitable nurseries in the area from about 1945 to 1990. He owned about 10 acres on Triana Boulevard which was totally committed to growing rooted cuttings, or "liners," for sale to other nurseries. Using students and neighbors as employees and relatively unsophisticated methods, he grew many thousands of groundcover and small ornamental plants for sale to landscape contractors and other growers. These plants were always shipped by bus. Happy customers' repeated orders were the backbone of his business. DuBose's outgoing personality was a special attribute leading to his successes. Several nurseries were started as a result of his openness and sharing.

WEBB NURSERY COMPANY

Another outstanding plantsman came from the Huntsville Wholesale experience. James Ansel Webb, born 1907, graduated from Clemson University in 1928 and was immediately hired by Huntsville Wholesale Nursery. He worked there until 1947 then began his nursery business on the west side of Blue Spring Road in 1951. His products included ornamentals of many kinds and especially flowering dogwood. He selected and named several special plants still grown and sold today. He retired December 1985 and died in the following February. His grandson Thomas D. Batt continued the nursery for several years before closing.

OTHER NURSERIES

Also from the Chase youth corps came Phillip Brosemer and Robert Lee Bradford. Brosemer Nursery grew trees and shrubs and served the local Huntsville market with landscape services. The farm and office were on Pulaski Pike near Winchester Road. He was interested in new kinds of plants and especially skillful in producing holly plants of many new varieties.

Robert Lee Bradford was one of six sons of Elmo Bradford, Sr., a field foreman for Chase. Bradford's Blue Spring Nursery began about 1960 on the east side of Blue Spring Road. He grew and marketed a good selection of ornamental shrubs and trees across the country. As the Blue Spring area developed his nursery was moved to Winchester Road just north of the Naugher Nursery farm. This business closed about 1985.

Proof positive that nurseries grow other nurseries, as well as plants, is illustrated by the Jones boxwood nursery story. Joseph M. Jones' wife, Frances, taught for E. F. DuBose. Jones wanted to give his three sons a farm-like experience as they grew up and to produce funds for their college education. Jones' first planting was small starter plants given to him by E. F. DuBose in 1967. DuBose's usual procedure was to feed the unused plants to his mule. Suspecting that this gift might bring more sales in future years he delivered 15,000 plants to Jones. On Jones' farm, 15 acres purchased from the Winchester Road property of Robert Lee Bradford, the four Jones planted, grew, harvested and sold, and Jones and Sons Nursery was on its way. In 1973 a 46-acre farm was added.

Joe Jones' day job was as the Director of Public Affairs at NASA. His time was spent telling the public about the exciting adventures of Wernher von Braun and America's trip to the moon. Previously he had been a reporter for the "Montgomery Advertiser" newspaper. Jones continues with a bit of propagation today.

Three nurseries now growing plants in the field in Madison County all had connections with Jones. William O'Meara, an Intergraph vice-president who took early retirement, bought the 46 acres and all nursery stock from Jones in 1986 (Jones' sons had left for college). O'Meara runs Boshancee Nursery located at Deposit.

A partnership of another Jones family (not related to Joseph Jones), Kenneth and nephew, Roger, (a Madison County Commissioner), and Roger's son, Jeff, was given a start by DuBose's and Joseph Jones' small plants and help in 1975. Their 175-acre ornamental business, New Market

Nursery, is an addition to Jeff's large cotton farming activity. The family also produces many acres of grass sod.

Posey and Son Nursery is located in Hazel Green. Raymond Posey was the only hired labor ever to regularly work for Joe Jones. The skills gained from the employment have resulted in a fine ornamental nursery.

Another wholesale nursery in the county is Brooks Nursery, which began in 1970. Billy Brooks and son, Greg, grow large quantities of American boxwoods on five farms. Earlier Brooks had run a large seed and feed business and opened a garden center called Brooks and Collier.

Dr. Robert Williams, a nephrologist, operates a retail nursery with growing facilities and wholesale landscape supplies as Huntsville Wholesale Nursery. It is located on Leeman Ferry Road in southwest Huntsville.

RETAIL NURSERIES AND GARDEN CENTERS

John Howard Weaver operated a small landscape nursery beginning in 1947 and ending with his return to the army for the Korean War. His location was on Governors' Drive (then Fifth Avenue) where the new medical school building is located. He planted the original weeping willows around the lagoon of the Big Spring (a few still exist in 2005), the boxwood at Burritt Museum, and the memorial elm trees on Whitesburg Drive.

Milton Giles managed a seed and feed business on Jefferson Street for many years. He opened Huntsville's first real garden center about 1957. Until then, retail sales were made by come-and-go sales yards, small divisions of the growers, or peddlers who traveled door-to-door. The Giles property became part of the Huntsville Hospital complex when the business closed in 1981. Giles Garden Center was followed by Lloyd's Garden Center, operated by Clem Lloyd on University Drive.

Then Chase Nursery Co. opened its modern and spacious retail store near the wholesale farms in 1964, managed by Henry H. Chase, Jr. David Byers opened Byers Nursery Center on the North Memorial Parkway in the fall of 1965. It is now owned and operated by George W. Bennett and his son, Jeff, as Bennett's Nurseries. Many more retail stores and garden centers came along until the entrance of the "big boxes." Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and similar stores changed the retail nursery business to what we have today.

The Southern Nurserymen's Association held its annual convention in Huntsville four times, in 1903, 1931, 1939, and 1948. The conventions of the Alabama Nurseryman's Association were held here in 1952, 1955, and 1960.



Many local nurserymen have served in leadership roles in the industry. Serving as President of the Alabama Nursery Association were John Fraser Jr., John Fraser, III, Henry Homer Chase, Marcus D. Byers, Sr., W. D. "Dan" Cabe, Marcus David Byers, Jr. Milton Giles, Thomas Dwayne Batt, Thomas Rudd Loder, III, and John Harvey Cotten, Jr.

Serving as President of the Southern Nursery Association were 1909, Henry B. Chase (1909), John Fraser Jr. (1927), Henry Homer Chase (1947), and Marcus David Byers, Jr. (1984).

In 1987, Marcus David Byers, Jr. served as President of the International Plant Propagator's Society.

Presidents of the American Association of Nurserymen were Henry B. Chase (1914), John Fraser, Jr. (1930), and John Fraser, III (1957).

About the Author:

David Byers is a native of Huntsville and graduate of Alabama Polytechnic Institute. Mr. Byers is a fourth generation nurseryman, retired, and was encouraged by the late Dr. Frances Roberts, and later Bob Adams, to write this article. In 1997, he wrote an article on Albert Russel Erskine for the Huntsville Historical Review. For Huntsville's 2005 Bicentennial Celebration, he was on the committee to research and create the elaborate historic street signs seen throughout Huntsville. He served as Chairman of Huntsville-Madison County History Society's History Festival in 2001, and is active in many civic and business activities. Mr. Byers is a member of First United Methodist Church.

End Notes

Conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Batt
Conversation with Mr. Josh Kelley
Conversation with Mr. Thompson Kelley
Conversation with Mr. Weiss Sisco
Conversation with Mr. Henry H. Chase, Jr.
Conversation with Mrs. Emmett Sanders
Conversation with Mrs. Robert Reeves
Conversation with Mr. Marcus E. Byers
Conversation with Mrs. William W. Herrin, Jr.
Conversation with Mr. Harvey Cotten
Conversation with Mrs. David Byers
Conversation with Mrs. Marge Edde
Conversation with Mr. Joseph M. Jones
Conversation with Mr. Billy P. Brooks
Conversation with Mrs. Patsy F. Jones
Conversation with Mr. Richard Smallwood
Notes from David Smallwood
Conversation with Mrs. Robert Perry
Notes from Mrs. Marcus D. Byers, Sr.

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Probate package, Jessie S. Moss, Huntsville Public Library.

Ollie Fraser Remembers January 1, 1900

INTRODUCTION BY DAVID BYERS

On January 2, 1978, Ollie Fraser wrote a letter to Mrs. James A. Webb. The letter discussed an essay he had written earlier telling of his memories of the first day of 1900. Fraser speaks of interests of the day, including his health and hopes for the future.

Oliver W. Fraser was the third son of the Scotsman, John Fraser, Sr., who was a part of the beginning of the first nursery in Madison County. His career began at that nursery and was completed as the owner of Fraser Nurseries, Inc., in Birmingham, Alabama.

The letter was circulated through the nursery industry because everyone in the trade had either business, social, or kinship connections with the Frasers.

Mrs. Webb, the recipient of this letter, worked in the downtown office for Huntsville Wholesale Nurseries. She married James Ansel Webb, the manager of the north Madison County Nursery Field Operations. Their warm relationship with the Frasers continued after the establishment of the Webb Nursery in 1951.

The following letter was written January 2, 1978

Dear Mrs. Webb,

Here 78 years later is the story of Tamus and his folks found in the snow in 1900.

This is poorly composed, I had several interruptions while trying to write, breaking the thread of thoughts. Too, I am seeing so poorly I often hit the wrong key or do not hit one hard enough but give me E for effort.

I hope you and all your folks had a very happy Christmas and extend best wishes for the New Year and many more to come.

My new doctor told me last week that after studying the data from St. Vincents and the former physicians I had used he thought he could treat my throat cancer with Laser and save my voice box rather than operate to remove it. This was good news but I have held off making any commitment pending consultation with the girls (Mary is out of town) and approval of our general practitioner, Dr. Grihan. This new deal seems to be to be an

answer to prayers offered by me and many others to our Good Lord to spare my voice – I still want to be able to chit-chat.

Happy New Year,

“Ollie” Fraser

Story of a Snow-Bound Family

OLIVER FRASER

January 2, 1900 was a bitter cold winter day with several inches of snow on the ground where it had fallen several days before. Going in to breakfast that morning, Dad had looked out a window on the north side of the house and announced that the thermometer showed 15 below zero!

We had spent a quiet New Year's day with no visitors. My brother John and I had been tremendously interested in the turn of the century – we expected something to click so we set our alarm clock to go off a few minutes before midnight and snuggled down in a deep feather bed, we lay and listened for some signal that we were entering a new century. As midnight struck, the only thing that happened was Dad in his woolen "longies" going out on the porch and firing his 38 Smith & Wesson revolver five times to be answered by a single musket shot from the quarters below our house!

After breakfast, John and I were told that we should go to Huntsville to pick up the mail (there was no rural delivery then), Dad's Illustrated London News and the Commercial Appeal, which was our main source of news from the outside world. It was approximately five miles into town (Huntsville), one mile down a narrow winding lane leading from our beautiful homesite in a quiet valley, then into Pulaski Pike, which was then only a crushed limestone road. Our transportation was a spring wagon, no top, windshield, or other protective cover, just a seat on an open bed mounted on four steel-rimmed wheels drawn by "Old Dick," a bay, slow-trotting horse. One might surmise that under such conditions with temperatures as low as it was we two would freeze to death, but Mamma had us dressed in flannel "longies," woolen socks, a flannel chest protector under our woolen shirts, plus ear muffs, woolen caps, etc. We sat on a Buffalo run (brought down from Missouri when the family came to Alabama in 1872) with two heavy lap robes covering our laps and lower limbs, and between rug and lap-robe a lighted lantern that in the space created enough heat to keep the lower part of our anatomy warm, and of course, we had on warm wool-lined gloves with wool wrist bands. Thus we set out for town at about 9:30 a.m.

At this date there were not many houses between where we entered Pulaski Pike and Fullers Corner. (Where the country club is now) First on the right was a Negro family's home, then on the opposite side, the Swingle place (John acquired this place when he and Frankie were married in 1907, paying \$3750.00 for the thirty odd acres), then on the right the McLain and Underwood homes, at the top of the hill the Hauer's, half-mile further on, on the left the Davis's, then the Fuller acreage on which was the popular (then) cave "Shelta Caverns." Passing this that morning we noted steam coming out of the entrance, which indicated the low temperature outside.

Between Fullers Corner and town limits, there were only a few houses, and opposite the Dr. Watts home (they later moved to Blue Springs Road) was camped the 10th Cavalry, a Negro regiment of regulars with white officers. They were housed in tents, many without floors and heated by a small wood stove that would be hot one moment and ice cold the next. The soldiers had become so cold they had sent their covered wagons with four mule teams into Monte Sano mountain and cut cedar and hickory logs to have huge fires in the Company and Regimental streets of the camp, and were standing around those huge fires by the hundreds!

Getting into town, John and I quickly attended to our few chores – pick up the mail from P.O. Box 56 (Dad was proud of having the same box over the years, but it was small and often there would be a notice to call at the Gen. Delivery window for an excess that could not be put in the box). Dad liked to brag that when he printed his first price list, he did not have money enough to buy the stamps and Maj. McGee, who was then the postmaster sold them to him on credit. From the P.O., we went to Hay's news stand to pick up papers and magazine and then headed home.

Turning off the pike into our lane, there was a deep drift on the right-hand side of the drive. We saw several broken places in the deep drift and then the movement of a hand. Stopping Old Dick, we both jumped out to pull a black woman and three small children out of the snow, all semi-conscious. We loaded them into the back of the spring wagon and, using the buggy whip liberally, made the horse go at top speed the mile home, where they were unloaded, faces and hands scrubbed with snow and then taken into Mama's warm kitchen where they gradually warmed up. The woman gave as her name Mary Judd, the older boy Frank Garner, age five, and the two younger boys, twins, aged 3 years. She said they had been deserted by her common-law husband at Toney and without money or food had started walking to Huntsville, hoping to find help there, but became so

tired they had decided to sit down and rest on the side of the road without realizing that they were at a deep drift. The twins were named Tamus and Luncie Judd.

In 1902, at age 15, I went to Monticello, Florida, to learn pecan growing under a Mr. Jones who, along with J.B. Wight, was one of the pioneer paper-shell or improved variety pecan growers. Dad thought there was a great future for growers of good varieties of pecans, and had been buying increasing quantities from Jones for several years, shipping some of them as far north as Bloomington, Ill. Returning in the spring, after helping graft all the Jones seedlings, I was assigned the job of supplying bud wood for the large crew of budders Dad was using to “June bud” some million peach seedlings under contract to Stark Bros., and I found Tamus and Luncy were old enough to help me – pretty soon they were able to trim a bud stick as quickly as I could, and I rated pretty fast! We paid them 5 cents per day and lunch!

One of the best sources of bud wood was the Kelley orchards at Jeff, Ala. Dad had sold the Kelley’s all the trees for their large orchards, and he knew their Elbertas, Georgia Bells, Slapppy, etc., were true to name, so we used that source to supplement what we could get from our own orchard.

Going to Jeff, we would go west using farm roads until we reached the pike about half-way between Monrovia and Jeff. The rather large operation at Jeff was divided between three brothers: Mr. David E. ran the general store, which was a large one; Mr. Josh ran the blacksmith shop with two or three assistants shoeing horses and mules, sharpening plow points, making needed iron articles like foot scrapers, fireplace tongs, etc.; and Mr. Lawson was the horticulturist. It was he that discovered the merit and value of Watercress, this growing abundantly in their clear, cold, spring-fed lake. As there were no barbecue stands or eating places between Jeff and Huntsville, the big dining room in the large ante-bellum Kelley home was always set to accommodate salesmen (they called them “drummers” then), unmarried clerks from the store, and any visitors, and, of course, the family, Mr. David E. being the only married man of the family and living in a separate house. I ate at this table every time I was there cutting buds and the boys ate in the kitchen with the other servants.

Turning out of our country road into the pike, we faced an old, abandoned mansion with two huge white oak trees growing in front, just off roadside. One morning, as was our custom, we left home at daylight and reached the intersection with the Monrovia-Jeff road just as the sun came

up full. There, hanging from the limbs of the oaks, gently swinging in the light breeze, were five black human beings, their feet tied, hands tied behind their backs, and the rope suspending them by their necks presented to our view a tragic sight. The boys shouted "Oh, Lawd!" and dived under the seat. I stopped long enough to be sure I was seeing right, then turned our vehicle into the pike heading for Jeff and lashed Old Dick into a full gallop till I got there, then rushed into the store, found Mr. D.E. and told him what we had just seen, 5 bodies, I believed there were. I was surprised that he showed little concern, saying, "Sure enough, Ollie? Well, we'll see about it."

Later I found that in the lapse between this and our last visit several people, a clerk, Mrs. Kelley, Sr., and one of the Kelley sisters had passed away in what was suspected to be a poisoning episode. In fact, we had read about it in our Huntsville Democrat. It seems that following these deaths and serious illness of several others who had eaten at the Kelley home, one of the sisters was delegated to watch the servants very carefully. Peeping through the crack in the door leading to the kitchen one day, she had seen the cook get on a chair to reach an upper cabinet, take out a small bottle with a white powder (arsenic) in it and put some of it in the food she was preparing. The watcher, knowing that the cook could not read and write, wrote a note saying "I've just seen Ida May put poison in the food," and told the cook to take the note to Mr. D.E., as she wanted him to send her some sugar. Reading the note, Mr. D.E. grabbed the woman, who confessed and immediately the others involved in the plot fled, one woman dressed as a man and was caught near Athens trying to get to and across the Tennessee River. When all were captured, they were taken to the white oak trees and hanged. It seems that the cook told the Kelleys who was involved in the conspiracy which arose from some real or imagined injury to him by one of the clerks, and that clerk was not the one who died from the first poisoning.

When Tamus and Luncy were about five and began working with me I had just seen a circus where the clowns would signal and two would somersault, so I taught the boys to somersault when I said "snook, Sonny." This was amusing, especially so when we had a Yankee visitor or were walking down Holmes Street on Saturdays with the crowds of blacks sitting or standing in front of T.A. Thurston's store. When I said the magic words and they turned somersaults, the darkies would make all sorts of remarks among themselves like "look, them boys are hoo-dooed," etc. Refining the thing, I

taught them to somersault in different directions when I added the words "for me." It was very amusing to see the effect on onlookers.

When I went to Louisiana in 1905 to take charge of what then was the largest pecan nursery operation in existence, it grieved me to leave the boys with whom I had worked so closely these several years. However, when I came back to Alabama, the boys somewhat changed but still ready to tumble when I said "snook, Sonny," meantime Frank had left just before then going to a nursery we had dealt with in Kansas, as I seem to remember, then Luncy left to work in a coal mine in W. Va. I believe it was until he was killed shortly after in a mine explosion. Tamus and I remained close until we moved to Birmingham in 1917 and wanted to come here with me but his wife, one of George Jordan's daughters, did not want to leave her folks and that is where Tamus became John's man. I did bring several of the nursery crowd, Alex and Coleman Robinson, Robert Studdar, John Townsend, and one or two others.

This then tells of the finding of the family in the snow, and the relationship afterwards. I forgot to say that the mother, Mary, soon after becoming my mother's helper, took up and lived with Tillman Ellis, a big, loud-mouthed, banjo-playing darky living on the place, much younger than Mary, and was with him until she died.



*C. E. Dennis expanded his father's business
to become the "Watercress King."
(Photograph courtesy of Barbara Ward)*

The Huntsville Depot and Dennis Watercress

CHRISTOPHER LANG

On July 10, 1969, the *Huntsville Times* lamented the end of an era. That evening the last box of watercress was being shipped out of Huntsville to New Orleans. The importance of such an event lay in the fact that before becoming “Rocket City USA,” Huntsville, Alabama, was known as “The Watercress Capital of the World.” For half a century, from the early 1900s through the 1960s, watercress was a significant crop shipped from the area. Over two million bunches of watercress were transported annually from the Huntsville Depot, much more than from any other place in the United States. So why after such success had watercress gone by the wayside...or had it?

The success of Huntsville watercress spans three generations of the Dennis family. The story begins with Frank Dennis, who as a young entrepreneur in 1874, began supplying watercress to restaurants and hotels around his home in West Long Branch, New Jersey. Because demand was so great, his business grew to include a network of farms in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Harsh winters, which halted production of the delicate plant, were an ongoing problem. In 1908, Mr. Dennis was drawn to North Alabama. The combination of a mild climate and limestone springs made the area ideal for the growth of watercress, especially during the winter months. The productive winter season would last from December until May. To conduct his business throughout the year, Frank Dennis bought a series of ponds and dammed lakes from Moore’s Mill to Meridianville. Extensive property was also leased from the Kelleys in Jeff, the Acuffs in Ryland, the Drakes in Madison, and the Cochrans in New Market.

The largest and most developed cress ponds were located around Jeff, Alabama. Joshua Kelley and his family, who leased these cress ponds to Dennis, were actively involved with the process. The women prepared meals for the field workers while the men helped transport the watercress. Though some types of wild watercress native to North Alabama were cultivated, Dennis developed various strains referred to as Winter, Early Spring, and Late Spring, to maximize production. Before modern machinery, plow horses were used to cultivate and plant the manmade ponds. Dams were used to regulate the flow and height of the spring water. Field workers would

bring in wagonloads of watercress cuttings and scatter them over the shallow ponds to take root. Within a week, these plants started to grow and the pond water was raised to half a foot. In four to six weeks, the area became a massive green carpet ready for harvest. In a productive year, as many as five crops could be gathered from one planting. The cutters wore hip boots and worked in tandem across the ponds. With sharp knives and twine, the watercress was collected in bunches and delivered in tubs to the washing and pre-cooling plant. Because the watercress had to remain fresh and be shipped quickly, the packing house was located near the Huntsville Depot on Monroe Street. The watercress was packed with ice in barrels and covered with burlap for transportation by railroad. The close proximity of the ponds to the Dennis Watercress buildings and the Huntsville Depot made a successful combination.



Before modern machinery, plow horses were used to cultivate and plant the manmade ponds. (Photograph courtesy of Dennis family)



*The cutters wore hip boots and worked in tandem across the ponds.
(Photograph courtesy of Dennis family)*

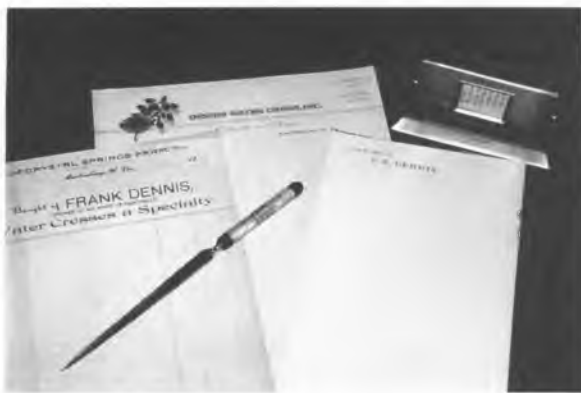


*Detail of watercress pond ready for harvest.
(Photograph by Christopher Lang)*

Frank died in 1922. His son, Charles Edward Dennis, took over the burgeoning business. At this time watercress shipments began to be packed with ice, in smaller custom made wooden boxes lined with parchment, which were designed to be sent via express service. Express cars moved on passenger trains and provided the country with a highly integrated transport system. A map of the Southern Railway, published in 1914, indicates how extensive and interconnected the railroads were at this time. Notably in 1918, the American Railway Express Company had been merged out of existing companies by the federal government, as a result of World War I. A decade later the main railroad companies of the country banded together, bought, and renamed the company the Railway Express Agency. Thus the Railway Express Agency was able to deliver boxes of Dennis Watercress to practically any destination quickly and cheaply.

C. E. Dennis possessed a keen interest in the growth of watercress, coupled with a strong work ethic and discipline, which produced a thriving concern. Besides packing and shipping innovations, he was responsible for improvements relating to soil conservation, insect and weed control, and water purity, and became a leading authority on watercress. C. E. Dennis was foremost an indefatigable promoter of the business and was nicknamed the "Watercress King." A remark he said in jest - "When I get Dick Tracy or Superman to eat watercress like Popeye eats spinach, then I'll be a contented man."- conveyed his almost missionary zeal. Numerous items such as matchbooks, playing cards, wildlife calendars, and recipe books were printed with the Dennis logo and distributed to customers. Before his death in 1951, the company had been incorporated and was able to continue under family control. His daughter Nancy, and two sons, E. Frost and C. E. Jr., all became involved with the business.





*Promotional items provided by Dennis Watercress.
(Photographs by Christopher Lang)*

From its inception, the company made a deliberate attempt to supply not only the food industry, but also very prestigious establishments. As wholesale dealers, Dennis Watercress sold to commissioned merchants, hotels, restaurants, steamships, and railway companies. Moreover, because of the favorable growing conditions, Huntsville became recognized as the most productive and desirable site for the cultivation of watercress. Building on this reputation as the best, the great chefs and restaurants wanted Huntsville watercress – Antoine’s and Brennans in New Orleans, the Waldorf–Astoria in New York, and the Drake Hotel and Palmer House in Chicago, even the White House in Washington D. C.

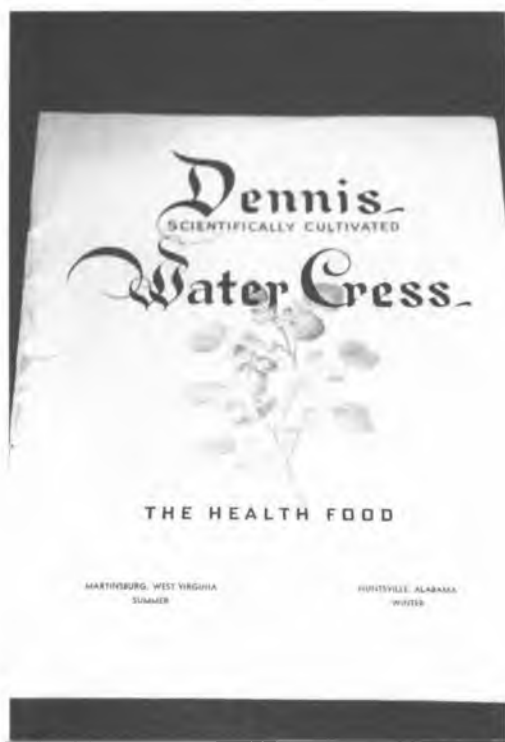
During their royal tour in 1939, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of the United Kingdom were served Dennis Watercress at the state banquet given in their honor at the White House. Mrs. Henrietta Nesbit, the White House executive housekeeper, provided the following recipe:

Frozen Cheese and Cress Salad

1 teaspoon gelatin	1/3 cup cold water
1 cup hot water	1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 lb. Cream cheese	1 small tin pimientos
1 cup heavy cream	1 bunch Dennis Watercress

Soak gelatin in cold water. Add the hot water, salt, and strain. Set aside to barely solidify. Then beat until fluffy. Fold in cream cheese. Add pimientos cut in bits and lastly the cream. Put in molds to set. Serve on a bed of watercress.

The popularity of the plant expanded among the American public. With such publicity, the tasty plant became the rage, and was distributed by railway express from the Huntsville Depot to every state east of the Rockies. Perhaps the biggest breakthrough that the Dennis Company achieved in expanding its business was placing watercress on the Defense Department Procurement List. This list provided guidelines for standard items to be stocked in commissaries. Public food stores were quick to follow such suggestions. So, in addition to some seven hundred and fifty regular accounts, supermarket grocery chains were now also full time customers.



Recipe booklet. (Photograph by Christopher Lang)

Martinsburg, West Virginia, was the main office of the company and Huntsville, Alabama, became the winter headquarters. When the Dennis family came down during the winter, they would stay at the Russel Erskine Hotel in downtown Huntsville, just a few blocks from the packing plant and the Huntsville Depot. The Yankee roots of the Dennis family were planted in Alabama soil in 1946 when Walter Jackson Byrne, a native of Huntsville and son-in-law of C. E. Dennis, was appointed Vice President and Huntsville Manager of Dennis Watercress. Though Huntsville was home to Nancy and Walter Byrne, their daughter Barbara (still a Huntsville resident) spent several summers as a child at Crystal Spring Farm in West Virginia, among the ponds of watercress. In 1947, the Huntsville packing house was enlarged. Under Byrne's long tenure, the Huntsville branch continued to expand, and employed as many as 40 people. During the next decade, a total of 50 acres of ponds were under cultivation locally.



Dennis Packing Plant and office in Huntsville. (Photograph courtesy Huntsville Madison County Public Library. Inset of young C. E. Jr. in foreground, courtesy of Barbara Ward)



Members of the Kelley family from Jeff, Alabama, by their trucks with carts of barrels filled with watercress ready for shipment from the Huntsville Depot. (Photograph courtesy of the late Catherine Gilliam)

In contrast to the 1950s, during which the Dennis Company flourished, the decade of the 1960s was a sluggish time for business. Perhaps as the novelty diminished and its availability increased, watercress began to be taken for granted by the public. Ineffective chemical fertilizers and increasingly cold winters were also hurting production. In 1965, many of the watercress ponds were infested with leaf spot fungus. After a bitter lawsuit, Railway Express, once the key to quick distribution, discontinued shipments of watercress. Management issues, inflation, and wage pressure also contributed to the demise of Dennis Watercress. Ultimately, the Huntsville plant closed when the building was condemned by the housing authority for an urban renewal project. In 1969, the Dennis Watercress Company moved to South Florida to take advantage of a milder climate and better trucking and road transportation. Most of the ponds in Madison County were sold at this time. The company did continue, however, to operate its successful watercress ponds in New Market under the direction of Bobby Billions. The springs there generated 20 million gallons of water per day, with an ideal constant temperature of 68 degrees in 18 ponds.



Watercress ponds near New Market, along the Flint River. Grassed dams used to separate the individual ponds provide truck access today.

(Photograph by Christopher Lang)



Watercress ponds near New Market. (Photograph by Christopher Lang)

Nearly a century after Frank Dennis began selling wild watercress from his property in West Long Branch, New Jersey, Dennis Watercress was taken over by an old rival company. Sharing many parallel experiences, B & W Quality Growers, a Florida based company, purchased Dennis Watercress in 1973. The owner, Richard Burgoon, comes from a family business over 130 years old. Robert Burgoon, his nephew, now runs the New Market operation. B & W Quality Growers, the largest grower of watercress today, operates in six states from Pennsylvania to Florida and employs about 60 people. Besides the traditional ice packed bunches, the innovative company also offers the bouquet style Euro Wrap sleeve and loose leaves in cello or re-sealable bags which are packed and shipped from the processing plant in New Market and its other locations.



*Box of B & W Euro Wrap sleeved bunches of watercress.
(Photograph courtesy of B & W Quality Growers)*

Evolving marketing factors have changed the distribution of watercress. Back in 1960, during the heyday of Dennis Watercress and railroad transportation, terminal markets, such as New York, Chicago, and New Orleans, comprised 70 percent of the distribution. Sales staffs were located at each of these main hubs. By contrast, in 1990, only 20 percent of watercress was shipped to terminal markets. The customer and the public at large are more savvy about shelf life, sanitation and preserving temperature. To ensure a quality product B & W Quality Growers operates a microbiology lab full-time. For efficiency, refrigerated express trucks “make the cold chain” deliveries direct to the dealers and marketplaces. Outside the United States, B & W Quality Growers deals with a broad international market, exporting watercress via airfreight to England, France, Canada, South America, and the Caribbean Islands. Perhaps what has allowed this agribusiness to succeed into the 21st century is that young family members are willing to carry on the tradition.

Most people probably still think that watercress is just a tasty garnish. Not so! It appears watercress is a healthy food, as well as a medicine. Used in earlier days to stave off scurvy, watercress may also help inhibit tobacco-related cancers and other lung diseases. The plant, a member of the mustard family, is rich in vitamins A, B, C and E and also contains both calcium and iron. The American Indians used watercress to dissolve kid-

ney stones and purify the blood. Irish monks called it “pure food for sages” and the Greeks believed that watercress combined with vinegar would cure an individual with a deranged mind. The Greeks and Persians fed watercress to their soldiers and noticed the improvement of their health. Lewis & Clark found watercress growing in several areas during their two year odyssey. Watercress has been recommended to cure migraines, and in some countries, people hold a bunch together by the stems and eat the tops as one eats an ice cream cone. Considered a traditional Southern treat, watercress can be used in sauces, sandwiches, soups, salads, stuffing, breads, vegetable and main dishes, and cocktails. If cooked later, watercress can be frozen so that it lasts longer.



*Promotional Items from Dennis Watercress.
(Photograph by Christopher Lang)*

The Dennis Company published a booklet of recipes for domestic and institutional use promoting the numerous fine qualities of their superior “scientifically cultivated” watercress. A disclaimer gave fair warning: “Only Dennis Watercress was used in testing the recipes, however, so we do not recommend them for use in the preparation of dishes which include the use of any watercress other than Dennis Watercress.” A simple family favorite was:

Watercress a' la Dennis

½ teaspoon white pepper	1 cup olive oil
½ teaspoon horseradish	1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon mustard	1 teaspoon Lee & Perrins
1 teaspoon sugar	1 teaspoon paprika
⅓ cup cider vinegar	bunches of Watercress

Put all ingredients in bowl with a piece of ice about the size of an egg. Whip until completely mixed. For each portion of salad, chop 1 slice of crisp bacon, 1 shallot. Toss with an ample dish of Dennis Watercress.

Cream of Watercress Soup

1 tablespoon butter	2 celery tops
1 tablespoon flour	1 slice onion
1 teaspoon salt	1 bunch Dennis Watercress
⅛ teaspoon pepper	2 cups milk

Melt butter in top of double boiler. Blend in flour and seasonings. Add milk, celery and onion. Cover and cook over hot water until slightly thickened, stirring occasionally. Remove onion and celery. Add watercress which has been put through food chopper or blender. Heat and serve.

Carrot Watercress Sandwiches

1 ½ cups shredded carrots	¼ teaspoon grated onion
1 teaspoon salt	⅓ cup mayonnaise
half bunch Dennis Watercress	

Combine all ingredients except watercress. Mix thoroughly. Add finely chopped watercress and mix well. Yield: about 10 medium size sandwiches.



In Grateful Appreciation

*To thank you as we'd like to do,
Is far beyond our power,
For if we had no friends like you,
There'd be no firm like ours.*

C. E. Dennis
WATCHMEN



COLONIAL FIRESIDE

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the Dennis family history and mementos shared by Barbara Byrne Ward, great granddaughter of Frank Dennis. Much appreciation to the late Catherine Kelley Gilliam for her vivid recollections of watercress cultivation on her family's farm in Jeff, Alabama. I am also indebted to Elizabeth and Roy Wallace, former employees of Dennis Watercress here in Huntsville. They supplied me with much interesting background information. Robert Burgoon, manager of the New Market operation for B & W Quality Growers, also provided me with insights into the watercress business. Many thanks to Raneé Pruitt who let me delve into the records of the Huntsville - Madison County Public Library.

About the Author:

Chris Lang graduated from the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio where he majored in history and art. He trained in furniture conservation at Smithsonian in Suitland, Maryland. He also trained at the Conservation Laboratory at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Williamsburg, Virginia. While at Colonial Williamsburg, Chris worked at the Anthony Hay Cabinet Shop as a cabinetmaker and historical interpreter for three years. During that time, he was the featured craftsman on the subject of marquetry on Roy Underhill's "The Woodwright Shop."

For 11 years, Chris was the master cabinetmaker at Walker Allen's Cabinet Shop at Alabama's Constitution Village in Huntsville. He also served as a curator at Early Works Museum and curator of exhibits and collections at the Humphrey Rodgers House, which was also a part of the Early Works Museum. Chris opened the Humphrey Rodgers House as a decorative arts center, and put on art exhibit and lecture series about Alabama craftsmanship. Many of his reproduction pieces are on display in the museum. In 1999, he received the Alabama Preservation Alliance Merit Award for his faux-graining restoration on the Humphreys-Rodgers House.

Chris continues his study on local historical furniture, and has published articles in Antiques Magazine, Alabama Heritage, and the Chronicle of Early American Industries. Today he specializes in restoration and conservation of antique furniture. Chris has been a speaker for the Alabama Humanities Foundation for several years. His latest lecture is entitled, "Huntsville Watercress Capital of the World; the Dennis Family Dynasty." He also lectures on "Furniture with Taste in Mind" which explores different types of furniture designed around food. Chris has studied local furniture makers and in particular, two 1800s furniture makers in Huntsville: Hugh Easley and Andrew Hentz.

A Revolutionary Plant Comes to Madison County

JACQUELYN PROCTER GRAY

On March 6, 1944, the *Huntsville Times* ran an article explaining that farmers in Madison County had received a sample of a new plant which would end the erosion of soil caused by excessive cotton farming. This new plant would not only stabilize the shifting soil, but it would further benefit the farmers by providing fodder for the stock. The Soil Conservation Service announced that local farmers had done a good job in establishing this new plant on their farmland.

This new plant that would revolutionize farming as we knew it was officially named *Pueraria Montana*. In America, it would be known by a different name - kudzu.

This trifoliolate-leaved, semi-woody climbing vine is thought to be a native of China, Taiwan, Japan, and India. The roots have been used for medicinal purposes for over 2,000 years. Kudzu made its U.S. debut in 1876 at the Plant Exhibit of Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition. It was advertised as an inexpensive forage for animals or as an ornamental plant, and was sold through mail order catalogs.

It seemed that, at that time, the virtues of kudzu were very much appreciated, and for that reason, came to the attention of the Soil Conservation Service. When it was recommended in the 1930s for agricultural purposes, it quickly became popular by city-dwellers as a decorative vine which added beauty and shade climbing over trellises and across porches and columns. Ah, but while the growth was held in check in the Far East, kudzu *loved* the growing conditions of the United States – a little too well.

With the mild southern climate and soil, kudzu grew like a wild fire. In the early summer, kudzu can grow a foot a day and as much as 60 feet in a single season. Because the roots can reach as much as 12 feet and weigh as much as 300 pounds, it is nearly impossible to get rid of once it has taken hold. Whatever it covers is completely blocked off from sunlight, and consequently dies. Even the brilliant idea that it would be good fodder was a bust. Except for goats, most animals find it distasteful and farmers discovered it was too bulky and awkward to contain.

In Alabama alone, kudzu covers as much as 250,000 acres of ground. There are an astonishing 17 known species. Kudzu is a pest to farmers and

landowners. Once it starts to grow, it covers trees, buildings, cars, transforming them into shrouded creatures rising from a swamp, yet bound to the earth by the long-reaching vines.

Kudzu isn't the only pest known to American farmers. Russian thistle was introduced accidentally on burlap bags brought from the Ukraine. Known also as "wind witch," the noxious weed is more commonly known by the name tumbleweed. It was first noticed in 1877 in Bon Homme County, South Dakota, and in a short 20 years, it had already taken hold on the Pacific Coast.

Tumbleweeds prefer to grow in disturbed soil in arid climates. This explains why it is so often seen on roadways and near railroad tracks out west. They can grow to the size of a small automobile and wreak havoc on roadways during high winds. At maturity, they resemble a skeleton of a bush and break off from the root. At this point, the spiky branches contain as many as 250,000 seeds, and with the help of a healthy wind, leave the seeds to sprout as they roll across the prairie. Conditions left by the desperate Dust Bowl Days were just right for the repopulation of tumbleweeds as they rolled across the flat plains.

Tumbleweeds aren't without their fans, however. A 1932 song by the Sons of the Pioneers romanticized the obnoxious western plant, and a town in Arizona decorates the city Christmas tree, made entirely of tumbleweeds tied together in the shape of a tree. You can even buy them by mail order in different sizes. If they are well cared for, according to the advertisement, your precious tumbleweed will last for years! Why would one want to order tumbleweeds? For your western themed party, of course! They are even used in western weddings, though the advertisement cautions against the bride carrying one as a bouquet.

For all the rancor they attract, it seems that tumbleweeds are useful for one purpose. Scientists discovered that the tumbleweed has a knack for soaking up depleted uranium at weapons testing grounds, perhaps purifying the contaminated soil in the process. Scientists don't know what it is that the tumbleweed does with the uranium, but the importance of that fact appears to be secondary. Still, almost everyone who has ever driven out west has met the business end of the tumbleweed on the highway and not remembered the incident with particular fondness.

The parasite known as mistletoe has an interesting history attached to it. According to ancient Druids, the cross Christ was crucified on was made of mistletoe wood, and thereafter it was consigned to be a minor plant that

would forever be dependent on other trees for survival. In later years, it was thought to hold magical powers, and the ancient priests cut the mistletoe from trees being careful not to let it touch the ground, which was believed to take away the magic.

Mistletoe was hung from doorways to protect against evil, and because the Druids used it, the Christians banned it, like so many of the ancient Druid practices. No one knows exactly where the custom of stealing a kiss under a bough of mistletoe originated, but apparently the idea caught on so well that mistletoe-kissing got way out of hand! The rule was established that for every kiss, one berry was to be plucked from the bough and thrown away. When all the berries were gone, it no longer had magic powers.

Not all plants that grow with a mind of their own are considered pests. In the South, the growth of the groundcover periwinkle usually signifies that an old graveyard is either under the growth or nearby. Periwinkle, an old plant popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, was planted in family graveyards to stave off soil erosion. Our pioneer ancestors frequently planted cedar trees over the resting places of their loved ones as well, perhaps because there are no shedding leaves to fall over the graves. Cedar trees represent strength and protection and so symbolism may have something to do with their popularity as well.

Periwinkle, whose delicate blooms flower in April and in the fall, thrive in dark places, such as under trees, beneath shrubs, on slopes, and on the north side of buildings. The low maintenance groundcover is a suitable substitute for grass, and an excellent clue for historic sleuths in search of old cemeteries whose headstones have disappeared or crumbled. An interesting side note is that when daffodils bloom in vacant fields and woods, one can reasonably assume that there was once a house nearby.

Scottish thistle is also considered to be an unwelcome weed in the South. So how could it have attained the lofty status of the national emblem of Scotland? Some time prior to 1286, legend has it that the Norsemen had embarked on a night time raid of Scotland with the idea of conquering the country for their own. On the Coast of Largs, the Norsemen removed their shoes to quietly surprise the sleeping Scotsmen. Unfortunately for them, they walked into a field of spiny thistle and the sounds of their *painful* yelps alerted the Scotsmen who were able to fight off the would-be conquerors.

END NOTES

Pruitt, Raneé', *Eden of the South, A Chronology of Huntsville, Alabama 1805-2005*. Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, Huntsville, Alabama, 2005.

Conversation with attorney Jere Trent, founder of Trent Nurseries, Athens, Alabama, January 2006.

Kudzu (*Pueraria Montana* var. *Lobata*), <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/pumol.htm>

Invasive Species: Kudzu Profile, www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/profiles/kudzu.shtml.

King Cotton in Madison County

JACQUELYN PROCTER GRAY

It would be impossible to write about watercress and the importance of local nurseries without at least mentioning the significance of cotton in Madison County. After all, it made many men rich in the early days of our history. No one knows exactly how long cotton has been grown in the world, but it is believed to be at least 7,000 years old, based on examples of cotton found in caves in Mexico. Columbus found cotton growing in the Bahamas when he came to America in 1492. The early Mexican Indians wore brightly colored clothing that intrigued the Spanish explorers. Egyptians were growing cotton early as well, but separating the lint from the seeds was labor intensive, and not economically sound. In 1783, 77% of clothing worn in Europe and the United States was made of wool, 18% was made from flax, and cotton only provided 5% of clothing. Slave labor in the South made cotton growing more profitable after the Industrial Revolution in England made it easier to spin and weave the cloth. When Eli Whitney invented the gin, short for “engine,” cotton production skyrocketed.

When the early settlers from Petersburg, Georgia came to buy up the rich land of the Tennessee Valley, it was to grow cotton. Many of them had been tobacco farmers, but the soil had been depleted of minerals and so by the end of the 19th century, Petersburg was a ghost town.

In 1809, the slave population of Madison County was about 300. In only seven years, there were 4,200 slaves, a strong indication of the labor force brought in to cultivate and pick cotton. By 1820, that number was up to 9,255 or 47% of the total population.

Huntsville is situated about ten miles from the Tennessee River, immediately round one of the finest springs in the world, issuing from a fine perpendicular cliff fifty feet high, in a sheet of water one hundred feet wide in a semi-circle forming instantly a fine bold creek, which it is now confidently believed can at a trivial expense be rendered navigable for bateaux to the Tennessee...In the suburbs are five cotton gins....The soil is for the most part excellent and admirably adapted to the culture of cotton, corn, wheat and tobacco. Cotton is the staple, of which the average product is one thousand pounds per acre. Upwards of five thousand bales were shipped down the river last season besides considerable quantity sent to Kentucky

and elsewhere by wagons....The county possesses some twenty cotton gins besides those in Huntsville, and many more will be erected in the fall....The crop of cotton for the present year will be not less than eight thousand bales.

John Williams Walker, early Huntsville settler and first U.S. Senator from the new state of Alabama wrote those words sometime prior to 1819. In those early days, cotton brought planters and their slaves from all over in what became known as Alabama Fever.

Anne Royall, an early visitor to this area wrote extensively of her experiences as she traveled. She wrote that the cotton fields “are astonishingly large; from four to five hundred acres in a field! – It is without a parallel! Although the land is level, you cannot see the end of the fields either way. To a stranger, coming suddenly amongst these fields, it has the appearance of magic.”

While the conditions in Madison County were just right for growing the crop that would make many rich, the problem of getting the bales to ships bound for the cotton mills of England was a huge problem. Once the cotton bales were taken by wagonloads to the Tennessee River, a difficult process in itself, at times the barges would be delayed until spring rains brought enough water to safely pass over the shoals. The cotton was shipped from the Tennessee River to the Ohio River and then down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. Finally the long trip to England could begin.

While transportation was a real problem, it was multiplied when the Financial Panic of 1819 hit hard. While cotton had been selling for 34 cents per pound in 1818, land speculators bought huge tracts of land and the slaves to work the fields. By 1820 it was down to 18 cents per pound. Planters, who had bought farm land in 160 acre increments for one-fourth down and the rest on credit, lost everything. Within a few years, 80 acre increments were offered for sale and credit sales abolished.

For many landowners, it was a case of too little, too late. People who had done business on credit were calling in their loans. It was not uncommon to owe several people money for one transaction or another, and yet have other people owe money to you. It was also not uncommon to trade these promissory notes on to other people to settle your own debts. This system became very complicated during the financial panic while people were scrambling to call in debts to satisfy their own. On a regular basis, the newspaper contained many notices of foreclosures, auctions, and threats of

legal action if debts were not paid immediately.

It was a temporary crisis, and those who could survive financially found themselves in “high cotton” again within a few years. Nearly two hundred years later, cotton still plays an important role in Madison County. Although many of the old fields are now covered with subdivisions and asphalt, there are still fields, white as snow, much like those described by Anne Royall, with “the appearance of magic.”

END NOTES

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Royall, Anne Newport. *Letters from Alabama 1817 – 1822*. Edited by Lucille Griffith. University of Alabama Press, 1969.

Betts, Edward Chambers, *Historic Huntsville from Early History of Huntsville, Alabama 1804 to 1870*. Southern University Press, Birmingham Publishing Company. Reprinted 1966.

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Letters from Another Century

The following letters are housed in the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee. These letters are found in the Donnell Papers and have been brought to our attention by Huntsville-Madison County Archivist Rane'e Pruitt. This assortment, of no particular subject, is interesting because of familiar names and not-so-familiar incidents. Some of these letters, as well as many more, can also be found in the late Faye Axford's book, "The Jones-Donnell Papers, being the Correspondence, Accounts, and Activities of the Jones and Donnell Families, 1817 – 1994."

Misspelled words, as well as the style, have been retained as written.

The following letter, dated August 4, 1837, was addressed to J. N. S. Jones, who had a law office in downtown Huntsville in the early 1800s.

Sir.

I have understood that you have corn for sale at two dollars per barrel, & standing in want of this article, I have thought proper to write you to let my overseer have ten barrels. I have not the money by me or I should have sent it, tho. I shall be able to hand it to you very shortly, if you should be pleased to let me have the corn –

*Yrs Respectfully,
(name unreadable)*

*Mr. J. N. S. Jones
Mooreville*

New Orleans, Sept. 1, 1837

Dear Sir

Having relieved ourselves from the responsibilities and embarrassments that caused our suspension in April last, we are prepared to continue business as factors, and while we offer our thanks for the confidence you placed in our integrity, during a period of difficulty and distress; unparalleled in mercantile experience, we solicit a continuance of your patronage –

In our future business, we do not contemplate coming under heavy responsibilities in anticipation of shipments, but will always be prepared to make liberal advances on Cotton consigned to our address and, as all our time and energy will be devoted to the interest of those who confide their business to us, we hope to continue to merit the favor heretofore extended to us as agents. –

Relative to the approaching season, it is yet too early to give any valuable information but a business is adapting itself to circumstances, and confidence being gradually restored, both in England & this country, we may expect it to assume a settled & healthy aspect, particularly if congress will act promptly to improve the monetary affairs of the country, without producing unnecessary excitement in the community. –

The cotton crops in this & the adjoining states are promising but as planters have turned some of their attention to making an ample supply of corn & provisions, and there being no accession of force, we do not calculate under the most favorable circumstances, on a larger crop than was produced last year. –

Some small parcels of the new crop have already made their appearance, but the receipts will hardly be worth noticing until next month. –

The market is expected to open at 10 to 12 ½ per lb for good Louisiana & Missi Crops. –

Hoping soon to have this pleasure again

We are

very respectfully yours

Morton Pleasants Co.

SHIPPED in good order and well conditioned by *J. N. S. Jones*



J. N. S. Jones
Mooreville
on board of *1* flat bottomed boat now
lying at *Mooreville*
whereof *W. C. & M. H. H.* are own-
ers and masters and bound to New Orleans,
to say; *Thirty One bales cotton*
weighing in all

being marked and numbered as in the margin, &
which said owners & masters promise to deliver
in like good order and condition, at the aforesaid
port of New Orleans, (the danger of the river
only excepted) unto *Martin Sharkey & Co*
or assigns *White & Quarry* paying freight for
the same at the rate of *forty cents*
per hundred pounds. *in Mooreville*

In witness whereof, the owners and masters of said boat have affirmed to
Three Bills of Lading, all of this tenor and date, the one of
which being accomplished, the others to stand void. Dated at

Mooreville 16th April 1835

J. N. S. Jones
Mooreville

*Receipt for shipping cotton to New Orleans on a flatboat, dated 1835
and signed by J. N. S. Jones, who apparently had a business in
Mooreville. (Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)*

LaGrange Ala. Oct 15th 1837

Mr. Weems,
Manager & Steward for J. W. S. Donnell Esq.
Town Creek farm Lawrence Co. Ala.

Dr Sir:

I have been thus tedious and specific in your address because I am not certain I have the right name.

I send my boy, Guss for a lot of flour which my friend Mr. Donnell informs me by letter, is at your place. 1,000 lbs. from my bro's mill in Limestone Co. You will deliver it to the boy Guss as it was sent to you in the boxes and oblige your obt servt.

? Robinson (page torn)

Jany 12th 184?

John N. S. Jones

To C. Edmundson for

1 candle stand	\$4.50
1 small table	4.00
repairing dining ?	5.00

13.50

Mr. Jones,

Sir you will please send me in the amount of the above account as I stand in particular need of some money at present.

Respectfully yours,
Covington Edmundson

*Office of M.C. Rail Road Co.
Huntsville, A.*

June 12, 1852

James W. S. Donnell Esq.

Dear Sir:

I hand you enclosed one thousand dollars (\$1000) amount of your May "Estimate No. 1 Section No. 83" for R.W. Coltart, at the request of Major Cooper Chief Engineer, who has handed me your receipt for same. –

*Yr. Ob. Servt.
S. Cruse
Treas. for Ala. –*

*Engineers Office
Memphis and Charleston Rail Road*

Huntsville Sept 19th 1854

Mr. Donnell

Dear Sir,

I find in looking over my notes that we have let a full number of cross ties to carry our track to Flint River and from that point to ? Creek we have closed contracts by the mile.

But as a few more may be needed, we are ? to secure an extra number provided we can get them the same time with the others, hence I am willing to close with you for 15,000 at 28 cents per stick, payments made entirely in bonds, and the ties made after the following specifications.

To be made of 8000 sound straight growing timber to be hewed on two opposite sides to parallel faces of not less than eight inches at the narrowest point and one fourth of the whole number to have faces of not less than ten inches at the narrowest part, to be full eight inches thick and no more, to be eight and a half feet long, the end sawed off square and the bark carefully removed to be up on line of ? either at grade or on side of ? in equal cross piles of 50 each.

Timber of the following kind, white oak, post oak, cup oak, mountain red oak, red cum cedar black walnut, elm, chestnut oak, and young thrifty chestnut.

If you are disposed to close upon the above ? terms, please let me hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully your obt ser

G. Jordan Jr.

Huntsville Jan 24th 55

Mr. James Donnald

Dear Sir I am compelled to call on you for some money on your account I have to pay an ? order from Nashville on the first day of March and cannot do so unless you can help me. Send me an order for as much as you can spare if you cannot the whole amount and in so doing you will confirm a fellow in time of need.

The portraits of your mother has been completed some time since but have not had an opportunity of sending it down will do so by the first chance.

Very Respectfully Yours

Wm. J. Halsey

A notation, probably from Jim Donnell, was written at the bottom of the page:

17th Mar 1855 Paid on the above \$50. sent back from ?.

One could possibly assume that Mr. Halsey was more interested in painting than accounting, and that Mr. Donnell was tight with his money or perhaps had an ax to grind with Mr. Halsey. We will never know. Descendants of the Jones and Donnell families assume that copies were made, by

Mr. Halsey, of two or more of these paintings. The original of Rev. Robert Donnell and his second wife, Clara Lindley Donnell, are hanging at the Donnell House museum in Athens. Mr. Halsey also painted one of Rev. Donnell's first wife, the mother of J.W.S. Donnell. It is in the possession of a descendant, possibly in Texas. However, the Donnell House also has a primitive copy of the same portrait, painted on wood. The obvious difference between the two paintings is the lace collar.

There were probably at least two copies, maybe three, made of John Nelson Spottswood Jones. One is now held in the archives in Montgomery because Mr. Jones once served as a Legislator. It is in a state of severe deterioration and is in storage, covered with cheesecloth. Brian Hogan, Huntsville historian and member of the Huntsville-Madison County Historic Society, has recently seen it. There are no plans in Montgomery to have the portrait restored. At least one other copy is owned by a descendant in San Antonio, Texas.



*Halsey's deteriorating portrait of J. N. S. Jones in Montgomery archives.
(Photograph by Brian Hogan)*

*Transportation Office
Memphis & C RR
Tuscumbia Nov. 30/55*

JWS Donnell Esq

Dr Sir,

We can put the 50 or 60 bales cotton you wish to deliver at Bibbs Lane on construction train as it returns from Huntsville. You will have to inform the conductor Mr. Harrison (?) what day you will have it ready also give him instructions (written) what you wish done with it. The train generally returns from Huntsville in the evening sometimes quite late. Have the cotton watched to prevent fire by sparks from passing trains. It is impossible to leave car for it that would interfere with the passenger trains which now carry nothing but mail and passengers. I notice ? to Mr. Halsey relative to ?. I would like to engage 35000 for the road at 5 cents delivered at Mooresville Station to be delivered when the weather is such that there will be no doubt about saving it. If there is a prospect of making such an engagement please let me know.

*Yours truly
W. J. Ross*

We will be prepared in the course of 8 or 10 days to do business at Mooresville Station.

Huntsville Ala. April 19th 1856

*Mr. J. W. S. Donnell
Athens, Ala*

Dr Sir

Enclosed we have your Invoice of good order by you 8th Inst together with statement of the cottonades delivered you when here in all \$82 47/100 Dolls. Ck to your act 6 mos. Your Bale of goods goes to Mooresville station to day we sent your order to factory – where they happened to have what f

? you wanted. Your letter of the 11th Inst was not rec until yesterday. Not in time to send Bill of Cottonades with Mr. Mason, Bill Awaiting yr further orders we are most Truly yours,

Patton Donegan & Co.
By Chas Cabaniss

September the 11th 1856

Mr. Donel

Dear Sir I understood you wanted an overseer at the place where Mr. ? is this year if so I would like to get the business if you have not got eny one as yeat I would like to move I can come to you with as good a rickemendation as eny one and if you think I would suit you you can git to me Huntsville and I will come and see you forth with.

Yours respftfully

B. W. Gibbs

M. & C. R. R. Superintendent's Office
Huntsville, Ala

Oct 11th 1856

J. W. S. Donnell Esq

Dear Sir

Your note relation to fuel is to hand – our estimate day has been changed to 15th of each month instead of the 10th as heretofore – as regards to contracting for the delivery of wood next year at Jonesboro will say we would like to close a contract with you or other responsible man for the delivery of wood at that point, put up in 1/8th cords, 2 ft. long, ready for use – the

conducting to your receipts for the wood the time it is taken. It is our intention to adopt this plan of receiving wood on the whole line of road – you will plan make a proposition to delivery stated quantity and price and how much you wish to or desire to furnish monthly. The payments for wood to be made monthly.

Yrs truly

W. J. Ross

Supt of Transportation

Huntsville Nov 8th 1856

Mr. James Donnell

Mrs. Russell, a widow lady in this place, is about employing a Mr. Severz (?) as her overseer; and not being well acquainted with his qualifications as such, and having heard that he lived with you last year, requested me to write to you and ask you confidentially. to do her the kindness to inform her through me, of Mr. S's qualifications as an overseer. By complying with this request, at your earliest convenience, you will confer a favor on her and on me, as her friend.

I have no news of interest.

Yours Truly

Wm D. Chadick

Reverend W. D. Chadick was the husband of Mary Jane Chadick. See book review in this publication on “Incidents of the War, the Civil War Journal of Mary Jane Chadick” by Nancy M. Rohr for more information on the Chadick family.

M & CRR Superintendent's Office
Tuscumbia
Dec 29, 1856

J.W.S. Donnell Esq.
Dr Sir

Your order without date to ship 84 bales cotton marked JWSD from Jones Lane to Mr. John Libby & Son Augusta Ga is to hand this evening your first explaining is not to hand yet.

I will instruct the conductor to stop and load the cotton Tuesday morning next. You will please have a sufficient number of hands at the spot to load with dispatch as the train must not be detained but a few moments. It must be on time at station to pass passenger train.

Very Truly
W. J. Ross

Huntsville Jan 6th 57

Mr. James Donald

Dear Sir

I have just recd yours of the 4th inst. And hasten to try again to explain but having done so on several occasions I fear that I will not succeed in the present effort.

I will give you an exact copy of the accts as they stand on my book, I admit that it is not done in a businesslike manner, but at the same time I search for the correctness of them.

The first charge is January 1854. Haywood Jones to painting two portraits one of father and one of son agreed on at 100. dollars. ? this as I have stated before was a contract made before the death of Mr. Jones and in keeping with all of my contract for small jobs as to price the ? is the painting one for Nina and one for Dearing at 35. each. To one for Alexander Jones 35. to ? same (there was also a gentleman present when the contract was made) to frames for same at 20 dollars each. Then the next charge is James Donald to painting portrait of Mr. Jones \$35. frame \$20. to painting portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Donald 35. each frames for same \$40. then

the portrait that I have of your mother 35. (his calculations are totaled to 487.00.)

The next few paragraphs are difficult to read, but the final paragraph of the letter is clearer:

To the best of my recollection I am right and I positively say I know I am as to my account you can think it over and let me hear what you have to say.

I am indeed sorry that I have to explain at such length, but I could not do it otherwise, God knows that I do not want anything but what is right and I will not have it knowingly (this is the first time that I have been supposed to do so) hoping that you will see as I think any business man as you are that you have labored under a mistake in making out your account as well as mine. Very respectfully yours,

Wm Halsey

S. TATE, Pres't.,
Memphis

S. CRUSE, Sec. & Treas'r.,
Huntsville

*Memphis and Charleston Rail-Road.
Treasurer's Office,
Eastern Division,
Huntsville, Ala. April 30th 1859*

J.W.S. Donnell Esq

Dear Sir.

Our co. are redeeming the Bonds hypothecated for Loans. We do not desire to pay any more Interest on them after 1st May – Please give instructions to when I shall pay the \$1000 (or 1600) borrowed of you –

Very respectfully

S. Cruse

Sec

When sending for yr money, please transmit me all the papers you have in reference to these hypothecated Bonds. –

Editor's Note: According to the dictionary, hypothecate means to pledge property as security.

Huntsville Ala.

July 16th 1861

J.W.S. Donnell Esq.

Dear Sir

I have received from the Treasurer of the Memphis & Charleston R.R. two hundred and nineteen and 35/100 dollars for you and have had it put ? in a package to itself directed to you and will hand it to the agent at Decatur on my return Westwood, which will be in a day or two.

I have not as you see, been able to get away from here as soon as I expected my old friends here protesting against it and insisting on my remaining sometime with them. Huntsville is a pleasant place abounding in luxuries and pretty women and you know it would not require much persuasion to detain me a short time in such a place – the party I came here to see is all right but as I am merely prospering for the present I must look further before acting.

With much respect

I am yours Mr. J. Hall

Thursday Morning, Dec. 26, 1861

Dear Sir,

In view of the gloomy prospect already for our business being sufficient to divide the profits between us and feeling confident that it will require an extra effort to even support my own, I most reluctantly propose a dissolution of our partnership which to me has been the most pleasant of

my life. We have a large debt due us and in view of the war ? and rascals it is decidedly our interest to wind up – and unless our customers are watched and made secure their indebtedness to us great will be the loss – this shall have my personal attention – we have a small lot goods on hand which I am willing to take at their value or I am willing for you to take half and I do the same or further you take all you want at cost and me the remainder. There are many goods you will need for your family. You can investigate the matter until my return which will be on Friday evening next year should we dissolve. I intend adopting the cash system rigidly, but of course it would not apply to you. Neither would your percent be changed.

*Most Truly Your Friend,
Wm. P. Tanner*

Superintendent's Office, Memphis and Charleston Railroad

Eastern Division

Huntsville, Ala. Jan 7 1862

*J. W. S. Donnell Esq
Athens Ala.*

As I have not troubled you for some time hope you will give this your immediate and personal attention. The wood your overseer is now delivering at Jonesboro is but little better than green timber. We can not use it to any advantage unless you can furnish according to contract good seasoned wood. We must have it to Jonesboro at your expenses and with present demand upon us for transportation other scarcity of power ? it will be an expensive aspiration. I learn your manager treats with perfect indifference any and all remonstrances made to him. I appeal to you knowing ? in the contract.

*Very Respectfully,
W. J. Ross
Gen'l Supt*

Washington City May 22 1862

J. W. S. Donnell Esq

Huntsville Alabama

Your letter of the 26th ultimo addressed to me at Stamford Connecticut has been forwarded to this city and was received yesterday morning. I am truly glad to hear from you and much against you should be a sufferer by the ? deplorable civil war. I shall ever recognize you as a man of honor ? as a fast friend of the Union and an utterly opposed to any and all meanness tending to sectional irrational disturbance. In short, I am convinced you have at all times taken the part of an intelligent upright and patriotic citizen and if you have been induced by the ? circumstances to ? in a ? adopted by unscrupulous men looking to the overthrow of the government I am quite sure you deeply deplored that they and heartily wished it had not been entertained for a moment. I have not the honor of a formal acquaintance with Genl Mitchel but I shall enclose this letter to him (open) with a letter from the Hon Secy of the Treasury introducing me to the Genl and shall ask him (the Genl) to extend to you, your family and your property all the protection in his power. I shall say to him that ? ? implicitly ? on your word? That I am perfectly willing to be held personally responsible for your fidelity.

War is and ever has been the greatest scourge that our ? humanity and of all wars an ? or civil war is by far the most destructive and appalling shame poor human nature is almost ...

I am happy to inform you that my family are quite well as I am myself. I presume you are aware that I experienced ? about four years ago a ? of attacks of ? upon my character which received for about two years and a half but I am happy to inform you that my health is now fully restored I do not know what it was now better. My oldest son (a very fine boy) I lost near six years ago but we have three living sons the youngest one year old last Feb. and all well and doing well. Whether all will be spared to grow up to manhood depends on the disposition of an all wise Providence but if they are I trust they will be permitted to enjoy all the benefits of blessings of a Union fully restored and a good wise or a truly paternal government which shall foster and sustain all interested and do justice to all classes and every ? which shall circle the country not by brute force but by the hold which it shall have on the confidence and affections of the people.

I wish to be most kindly and affectionately remembered to Mrs. Donnell

and to your daughter who made us a short though very acceptable visit some two or more years since. I am sorry to hear that she is in feeble health. God bless you and yours my dear sir and believe me to be as ever truly and faithfully

Yours

Truman Smith

Senator Truman Smith and his wife had been married at the Donnell Home in Lawrence County known as Seclusion.

The following letter was written by J.W.S. Donnell to his wife Maria Jones Donnell. She was in Athens, struggling through the difficulties of the Union occupation and the safety of her family. He was at their Lawrence County plantation named Seclusion. His letter rambles somewhat, as if he doesn't know exactly what to do next. He refers their daughter Clara, their son Bob, who was a major for the Confederate Army, Cisaro, a slave, and Mr. Weems, the overseer for Seclusion. J. W. S. was also a member of the Confederate Legislature, all of which is referred to below.

Seclusion 14th Nov 1863

My dear wife,

I am still here having Job's affliction upon me – I leave tomorrow for Montgomery, scarcely know what road to go. The late raid attempted by the enemy down the Tuscaloosa Road has rather ? than ever and all say it is not safe to travel. A young Georgia Soldier in bad health going home on furlough will go with me in my buggy. I think I shall go to Athens, Ga. to see Clara and her aunt and thence to Chattanooga, perhaps to the latter place first to see Bob. I wish Jackson to repair Cisaro's Iron axle wagon and bring it home and I will send it loaded to Bob. I will ask Mr. Weems to see to it. He talks of going to see his son John. I shall leave Montgomery about the 10th or 12th Decr. The session of the Legislature closing on the latter day.

Make a list of what you wish to send Bob and his ? which I brot home to have filled with butter – Tom ? will make a larger one. Send him every

ounce of provisions the wagon can take – I shall have two good mules ready. Have a cover ready for the wagon, tho then if one of them – Jackson says the two ? wagons will be easiest repaired and I will leave it to him and to Mr. Weems.

Send Fred a pair of stout boots and have a pair ready for Bob. After consulting, Mr. Weems and Jackson think it best to send the two horse wagons and as it is heavy put 4 mules to it. Send for Bob to keep – 1 for the driver to ride back and 1 to be sold. We can send Bob 1000 lbs provisions and take feed for stock all the way. Begin to make out a list of what you wish to send him, flour-meal-salt port-bacon-beef tongues-dried beef-lard-butter-eggs-fowls-onions-irish and sweet potatoes-cabbage-pickles-catsu-molasses-vinegar-string of red pepper-some provisions cooked-soda-some ?. Boots for Bob and Fred and clothes-a hat or cap for each-dried fruit-say nothing of sending anything-the enemy may hear it-make out a list of what you want Mr. Weems to bring from Mrs. ?. The report that Gen. Bragg had fallen back to Dalton is contyradicted by persons just in from the Army. All quiet in this valley. The enemy are at Eas?-all gone from Florence and our people crossing at all times. Col. Coffest right ordered to report to Genl Forrest, who has command of all cavalry from Vicksburg to ?. Sam Moore's company from Limestone is in Col Forrests Righth – Gen. ? belongs to it and is in Little Billy Warriar(?) Co. who by thirty now commands the right – Col. Forrest being wounded Col. Windom under arrest and Major Haley away. If Mr. Weems cannot load up any of the wagons to be sent to Bob you must send Spot or Haywood. Spot I guess would do best.

I may go to Chattanooga and ride Bob's horse home. I think I shall leave my horse with Webb Ridley some 20 miles beyond Tuscaloosa and take stage to the Southern Railroad thence Eastward to Montgomery. I cannot say certainly what I may do but propose the above at present. By all means have the celery killed & bleached The Cavalry have foraged upon ? more out of the field...nor paying anything...the country is in a ...all having suffered...Genl command is nothing...(the rest is faded and unreadable).

Aff. Your Husband -

*Executive Department of Ala.,
Montgomery, Nov 27th 1863*

*Col. L. C. ?
Sup ? Corp of Cadets
University of Ala.*

Sir,

I have been applied to by the Hon. J. W. S. Donnell, Representative from the County of Limestone, for the admission of his two sons, Spotswood Jones Donnell and John Haywood Donnell, into the Corps of Cadets. Owing to the invasion of his section of the state by the enemy, and the uncertainty of convenient communication with you as to future vacancies which may occur, I deem the application in behalf of his sons an exceptional one, and I therefore wish that they be admitted into the Corps without delay.

Respectfully

Yr ob servt

? Shorter,

I concur with and approve the above, Dec 8th 1863

*J. H. Watts,
Univ. of Ala.*

Athens Dec 30th 1863

Dear Donnell

Col Phillips will require of you to give bond not to cross the Federal lines without permission from the commanding officer at this post during their occupation. I would advise you to come home by all means. Your friends are all here and expect to remain. We are getting along as well as we could expect. Col. Phillips and Capt. Clements are disposed to do all in their power for the citizens.

Truly Yr Frd

J. T. Tanner

Athens, Ala. Nov 20th 1865

D. Straight

Dear Sir,

I have seen Gen Wagner on his return South. He says that you are under the impression that the stock taken from me 28th Apr. 1863 by your command for use of the U.S. Govt. was restored. It is true that subsequently a good many captured mules were turned over to me and I placed them to the ? of the C.S. Govt for impressments for overreaching the value of the stock received. Had this Government of the U.S. done the same the proper credits would have been given. I did not have the stock which your command took (43 mules and 9 horses) returned - it was very fine, which you may remember, and never restored. It was an object of the G.C. Govt to have all the stock not needed for the service put at work to produce subsistence and hence it was distributed to those who had and who had not lost stock if needed. It was all miserably poor and rejected by the authorities. The heavy cannonading and approach of Gen Dodge towards Town Creek induced Mr. Weems to move back across the mountains when he unwittingly fell in with your command who took all his mules and horses. The heavy forces engaged at Town Creek, Gen Dodge from the West and Gen. Forrest & Roddey on the East in my plantation the latter being all Cavalry subsisted upon us several days to say nothing of the immense damage thereby running up a large debt for reclamations.

Most of the stock I received was in East Tenn where the road ?. Mr. Weems went for them. We got several abandoned ? Being on the front these occurrences often took place on or near ? of my plantations resulting in great injuries to me. I had no other resource than to keep an oath with both parties and when I received anything place it to the proper credit - this is wise and businesslike. Now I need not be at the trouble to place the claim referred to in hands of "Claims Agents" if you will take charge of it, collect and pay me a fair and reasonable share of it.

It may not be amiss to say that Gen. Thomas has endorsed my application for a special pardon which was granted. He advised me individually ?also made a general order advising everyone who had property taken for use of the U.S. Govt. to present them to the proper authorities. Please advise me of your view in regard to the above. Trusting that the ? we are now fairly and calmly discuss and adjust all our difficulties. I have often con-

curred to your opinion on the issues of the war and the results and can accord full justice to your foresight.

Your obt. Svt.

J.W.S. Donnell

The following letter would have been received by J. W. S. Donnell, nearly a year after the end of the Civil War. Note that the writer was Governor Robert Patton.

Washington City

March 21, 1866

My Dr Sir

Before leaving this City this afternoon for New York, I write you this line to say I submitted to Agent of the Freedmen of the Bureau, your applications for release (of) your plantation. Genl ? now in this City, promised me to write today ordering the property surveillance to say it is hard at this time, when all desire harmony and restoration that our property should still be subject to annoyance and trouble from Military Occupancy and the Freedmens Bureau. I do hope the day may not be distant when we will have no more interference with our property and civil rights.

R. M. Patton

Gov. of Alabama

I hope to be able to arrange Alabama Federal land tax to our satisfaction

Huntsville Jan 17th 1867

Mr. James Donnald

Dear Sir I recd your letter several days ago and would have answered it on this but for the want of time.

But in doing so I cannot inform you much on the subject, as my books went the same way your papers did. My room being sacked by the enemy and every thing scattered or destroyed.

But from what I can recollect and some ? I painted first 2 portraits for Haywood at \$50.00 each and furnished 2 frames at twenty dollars – each. I then ? Mr. Jones for each member of the family at 35 dollars and furnished frames for all at \$20 each. I also painted your father and mother and frames at the same rates – I think I painted eight or nine portraits and frames the same. But as to how much money I recd I cannot tell now from this ? state above I ? this was some little misunderstanding between us in regard to the final settlement.

*Yours very Respectfully
Wm Halsey*

*Banking House of
P.D. Roddey & Co.
No 2 ½ Wall Street,
(Petty, Sawyers & Co., Mobile, Ala.)*

New York, Sept. 24, 1867

*J.W.S. Donnell Esq
Dear Donnell*

It is at this time utterly impossible to negotiate for money on real estate outside of the State of N York. I did all in my power to effect a loan for you when money was very easy at 4 per cent for call loans on the street and offered to pay ten per cent interest and obligate to keep the money five years.

New money is at 7 to 8 percent on call loans with gold for collateral and a heavy demand on the street with the prospect of continued stringency up to the first of October.

Whenever I can do anything for you I will not lose the opportunity.

Most Truly Yr Friend & Obt Servt

P. D. Roddey

By now, the family is penniless.

Athens Feb 26th 73

Maj. J. W. S. Donnell

Sir I have rec'd of R. A. McClellan \$110.00 on your taxes. This leaves \$89.52 unpaid which you will please arrange without delay as my time fast drawing to a close.

Respect y yours,

D. A. Carmon

The following letter was handwritten by Paul Lewellen Jones on the stationary of the law firm Brandon & Jones in Huntsville. The date is December 23, 1875. He wrote the letter to his sister, Maria Louisa Jones Donnell, whose husband J. W. S. Donnell was terminally ill.

My Dear Sister,

You have my deepest sympathy in your affliction and were it possible I would come ? at once. I will come as soon as possible. Our only hope and comfort ? comes with grief is an abiding faith in the mercy of Him ? "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." We must submit ourselves to the desires of an elusive and ever merciful God....Hoping that God in his mercy will give you that comfort which He alone can give and with love and prayers for our dear sick brother and completely trusting in God's mercy. I am your aff. Bro.,

Paul L. Jones

J. W. S. Donnell died the next month of pulmonary disease. Paul Jones died less than five years later of tuberculosis.

The following letter was written by one of the daughters of J. W. S. Donnell and his wife Maria Jones Donnell, Octavia Donnell Carney, who

had lost her money in the Depression, as did many people. She had carefully collected all of the family letters she could find, and had tried, unsuccessfully, to sell the collection in order to survive financially. Although she never received money for this valuable information, it was preserved for future historians.

Belle Mina Ala
May 16th

Dear Dr. ?,

Is there anything saleable in the old papers I sent you, if so would so like to have it – First National Bank of Decatur threatens suit – 21st this month unless I pay for stock I have in this bank. They closed their doors 1st Jan. taking every penny I had and now threatening suit. Would you please write me by return mail telling me if any papers can be sold. I will appreciate it so much.

Cordially
Mrs. (Octavia Donnell) Carney

The following letter was received in reply:

May 18 1932

Mrs. O. D. Carney
Belle Mina,
Ala.

My dear Mrs. Carney

Your card to hand, with a great deal of regret I must inform you That I have not found in any way, a sale or consideration for any of your old papers communicated to me. I have been through them carefully and am persuaded that they are of such a personal nature largely, that it limits their sale.

They have been very interesting indeed to me because of my memory and associations of my father with the Donnell family and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The Church historical data within them, incidentally, would be sufficient for the preservation of many of them and I wish indeed that you were willing to deposit them permanently with my large collection of Cumberland Presbyterian history which eventually, will fall to the Tennessee Historical Society.

The Lindley history is interesting indeed, and the marriage lists of Dr. Donnell are valuable for reference. I certainly appreciate the embarrassing circumstances that have come upon you and if I were able I would willingly make a small investment in your papers in order to help you out. Such is the situation with me, personally, and the Society is in no better situation as we can get no appropriation from the state.

For fear of such changes as may await you in the future, I would advise you let these papers remain on deposit here in our fireproof building, at least until you have some special offer for them. I still hope against hope that I can solicit a gift from somebody when these critical months have passed, by which I can offer you a modest price for these papers. Regretting I can not report more encouragingly to you I remain

Very truly yours,

Curator

*30 Memorial Bldg.
Nashville, Tenn.*

Book Review for “Incidents of the War, the Civil War Journal of Mary Jane Chadick” by Nancy M. Rohr

This much anticipated book, a diary of Mary Jane Chadick’s memoirs of Huntsville’s occupation during the Civil War, will not disappoint those of us who have been harrasing author Nancy Rohr to finish her work. Thanks to Huntsville resident Mary Jane Chadick, we are left with the telling of events from the point of view of the every day citizen. Although military official reports can be dry and newspaper reports were oftentimes sensationalized, Mrs. Chadick was a level-headed woman, not in the least bit overly dramatic. We can overlook the fact that her husband was fighting for the Confederacy at the time and she was quite consumed with worry about him. Mrs. Chadick, a Northerner by birth, met with and knew the leaders of the occupying Union army as well.

Nancy Rohr deserves kudos for her research and exhaustive annotation. Her ability to “translate” Mrs. Chadick’s remarks in a way we understand, 140 years later, makes this book so much more valuable to historians, history buffs, and more importantly, people who appreciate excellent writing. Nancy researched the people and events casually mentioned by Mrs. Chadick, and because of her excellent interpretation, the reader is able to be right there with Mrs. Chadick as she wrote her words, and feel the same anticipation the people of Huntsville felt. Nancy expertly described tactical information in a way we can all understand. She also helped the reader understand some of the gossip Mrs. Chadick supplied. As the wife of a minister, she would never have engaged in idle gossip, but the rumors can be excused in the context of recording history.

Mrs. Chadick was among the early visitors who went to see U.S. General Ormsby Mitchel about helping the wounded and hungry Confederate soldiers captured at the Huntsville Depot. She described their reaction to his statement that he had expected a reception in his honor: “I had it in my heart to let him know ‘we had one grand reception prepared for him at Corinth,’ but considering ‘discretion was the better part of valor,’ kept silent.”

Although the reader doesn’t necessarily come to adore Mrs. Chadick throughout the course of this book, perhaps that part of her personality was

not, in her mind, necessary for future readers, if in fact that ever crossed her mind. It is certainly clear to the reader that Mrs. Chadick loved her family, her friends and neighbors, and Huntsville. But more than that, she despised the war.

As one reads the entries in Mrs. Chadick's diary, it is natural to wonder why she kept this record of events. Was it to show it to her husband when, and if, he returned from fighting? Was it because she anticipated that a historic record would someday be needed? Her first and dramatic last entries lead us to believe that it wasn't her habit to keep a diary. As terrible as the War was, as much as the pain and suffering devastated the entire country, the reader will finish this book wishing that at least the writing would go on.

"Incidents of the War, the Civil War Journal of Mary Jane Chadick" is priced at \$16.95. It can be ordered by sending a check or money order for \$20 made out to the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society at P.O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama 35804. Proceeds from the sale of this outstanding book will be used to continue to preserve local history. For more information, call (256) 883-1933 or e-mail rohrrs@att.net.

Book Review for “Eden of the South, A Chronology of Huntsville, Alabama, 1805-2005” edited by Raneer’ G. Pruitt

Coming at the tail end of Huntsville’s Bicentennial, this outstanding book encompasses what this celebration is about – the first 200 years of Huntsville’s history. Raneer’ Pruitt, archivist at the Huntsville/Madison County Public Library, came up with this brainchild with several purposes in mind. First, this book was to provide an easily accessible timeline of events that shaped Huntsville’s history, and second, the proceeds would bring in much-needed funds for the library.

Raneer’ is known far and wide to everyone who has ever had a question about Huntsville’s history, and she was the perfect person to spearhead this project. Under her direction, a number of volunteers researched the events that were selected for the final cut, which could have gone on for several more volumes, had all of the information been included. Raneer’ envisioned a book which included, not only the major events of the day, but also the little-known humorous and interesting facts, such as what items were for sale and how they were advertised.

This book also contains never before seen photographs of people and places, and excerpts from the actual newspapers of the day. Signs of the times, such as the 1908 ordinance that “the hitching of horses on the square is a nuisance and a menace to the health of the community and should not be permitted,” offer humorous insight into the growing community. Day to day reports of deaths by the 1918 flu epidemic impress upon the reader the urgency of the situation. Area residents who died in combat during the wars of the last 200 years are sadly reported as well. There were many interesting tidbits of trivia uncovered, such as the fact that Dr. Wernher von Braun was on a flight that was the last to leave the old airport and the first to land at the new airport in the 1960s.

Other interesting entries enlighten the reader about their current events, such as the March 10, 1868 entry: “The remains of Steptoe Pickett, son of Governor R. Chapman, who died during the War, was brought to Huntsville and interred in the graveyard.” On November 5, 1869, it was announced that “A committee, under the direction of trustee Bartley Harris, was appointed to purchase a lot and build a Church for the colored Baptists of

Huntsville.” This church is today known as St. Bartley’s Primitive Baptist Church, in honor of the former slave who led the congregation. Another former slave, William Hooper Council, championed the education of black people, and became the president of Alabama A & M. In addition, a school was named in his honor and that school is a.

The volunteers who worked on this project were: Susanna Leberman, Nancy Rohr, Donna Dunham, Jacque Gray, Brian Hogan, Thomas Hutchens, Jeanne Henry, Patricia Ryan, Jim and Linda Maples, Bob Adams, Judy Purinton, Martin Towery, Julie Blackwell, Glenda Smallwood, Robert Reeves, David Milam, and Rhonda Larkin. Raneer’ researched two a half decades herself, and filled in when new information crossed her desk at the library. Richard Smallwood edited this book, not an easy task, and Jim Maples was responsible for the incredible layout design. Dennis Waldrop created the beautiful cover, which represents the Big Spring as it must have looked to pioneer John Hunt.

Sources for this 287 page book include all area newspapers, minute books of the city clerk’s records, records from probate court, orphans court, city directories, and books on local history.

“Eden of the South, A Chronology of Huntsville, Alabama, 1805-2005” is available at Shaver’s Bookstore and the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library for \$29.95. All money collected from the proceeds of this book go directly back to the library to maintain and add to the extensive collection of resource material for future generations. This is a worthy book and a worthy cause!

Book Review for “Through the Garden Gate – The Gardens of Historic Huntsville” by Donna McPherson Castellano

Another outstanding book deserves recognition for the talented people behind it. Author Donna McPherson Castellano writes in a manner that is very descriptive and appealing. In interviewing the owners of the 27 gardens featured in “Through the Garden Gate – The Gardens of Historic Huntsville,” Donna was able to pull out facts that probably came out by accident, and then turned them into gems of extreme interest.

Donna had help from very able and equally talented individuals: Charles Seifried took amazing pictures with some rather interesting angles. Designer Betty Altherr Howard expertly combined and arranged pictures and words. Copy Editor Jeannie Robison made sure it all went together well with a talent few people possess. Assistants Katie Castellano and Nathan Castellano, who coincidentally share Donna’s last name, were her assistants! The gardens featured in this book are the product of decades, or even centuries in some cases, of the imaginations of several generations. They showcase favorite flowers, textures, colors, and even eras. Some were designed to be enjoyed personally, others designed to share with guests. Each and every garden, as well as photograph, is a true work of art.

Gardens have always reflected the current times. There was a time when people spent much time outside – long before the days of air conditioning and televisions. Porches with views were popular. When streets became noisier, the porch life moved to the back of the house and by then the family milk cow was gone and the back yard landscaping deserved a second look. Our lives got busier, our jobs more demanding, and central air and heat beckoned us back indoors. The tide has turned once again. Improved technology has given us more free time and stressful lives have demanded that we take a break to refocus our energies. Each one of these gardens represents a safe haven and though we may not all possess the skill and imagination to create our own garden, we appreciate the opportunity to enjoy them through this beautifully created book.

“Through the Garden Gate, The Gardens of Historic Huntsville” is available for \$30.00. Proceeds go to the Historic Huntsville Foundation, an organization that promotes restoration of historic buildings. See their website for more information on this outstanding organization.

Administration

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society and *The Huntsville Historical Review* is to provide an agency for expression for all those having a common interest in collecting, preserving, and recording the history of Huntsville and Madison County. Communications concerning the society should be addressed to the President, P.O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama 35804.

The Huntsville Historical Review is published twice a year, and is provided to all current members of the Society. Annual membership dues are \$10.00 for individuals and \$18.00 for families. Libraries and organizations may receive the *Review* on a subscription basis for \$10.00 per year. Single issues may be purchased for \$5.00 each.

Editorial Policy

The *Review* welcomes articles on all aspects of the history of Huntsville and Madison County. Articles concerning other sections of Alabama will be considered if they relate in some way to Madison County.

Statements of fact or opinion appearing in the *Review* solely those of the authors and not imply endorsement by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, the Publications Committee, or the Editor. Questions or comments concerning articles appearing in the journal should be addressed to the Editor, P.O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama 35804

Notice to Contributors

Manuscripts, editorial comments, or book reviews should be directed to the Publications Committee, P.O. Box 666, Huntsville, Alabama 35804. All copy, including footnotes, should be double spaced. Authors should submit two copies of manuscripts, as well as a MS Word for Windows version of the article on disc. Manuscripts should clearly identify the author and provide contact details. The *Review* follows the style and format conventions of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), and follows conventional American spelling. The Publications Committee and the Editor do not accept responsibility for any damage to or loss of manuscripts during shipping.

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