

# *The Huntsville Historical Review*

Winter-Spring 2007

Volume 32

Number 1



*Huntsville, Alabama 1819*

*Published By  
The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society*

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## President's Page

As I write this note to you, I have not yet had the opportunity to review the contents of this *Review*, but I am excited about the subject and eagerly await its publication. I believe most of us fail to appreciate the full significance of the momentous contribution early Madison County and many of our local citizens made toward obtaining statehood for Alabama. This was certainly a major achievement of our area and one we can be proud of.

On a sadder note, we all mourn the passing of Sarah Huff Fisk, a great Huntsville historian. While we enjoyed Sarah in life, we will continue to enjoy her through her bountiful works, stories, and books she left for us. To celebrate her life and contributions, we plan to devote an entire issue of the *Review* in her honor. If you would like to contribute, please contact Jacque Reeves at 536-5737.

Bob Adams  
President

## Editor's Notes

Many people do not know that Huntsville, Alabama served as the Provisional Capital of Alabama during, and immediately following, the Constitutional Convention of 1819. Our first governor, William Wyatt Bibb, was inaugurated here in November of that same year. This was the first momentous period in our local history. Representatives of 22 counties convened, tasked with writing our first constitution. Imagine the excitement!

For this issue, we have recruited several new writers who happen to be managers of Alabama's Constitution Village, the re-creation of the buildings on that very location in 1819. Lora McGowan, Susan Carr, and Shirley Mohler are proud of the new Statehood program offered at Constitution Village, a re-enactment of that historic summer. Leslie Gray, a junior at Huntsville High School, as well as my daughter, also wrote a piece for the *Review*. Janeal Nichols Shannon generously shared with us her award-winning essay on John Williams Walker. With this essay, she won first place in the state DAR essay contest on Alabama history. Janeal is a member of the General Sumter DAR Chapter in Birmingham. Dr. Frank Westmoreland, an esteemed Limestone County historian/writer and descendant of delegate Nicholas Davis, rounds out our talented staff for this issue.

Jacque Reeves  
Editor



## **An Excerpt of the Enabling Act published in the *Alabama Republican* on March 27, 1819**

The following statement was, for the Alabama Territory, official permission to write our constitution, which would pave the way for us to become the 22<sup>nd</sup> state. These words were welcomed with enthusiasm and the realization that the task at hand was not to be taken lightly.

“An Act to enable the people of the Alabama Territory to form a Constitution and State Government, and for the admission of such State into the Union, on an equal footing with the original States.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, that the inhabitants of the territory of Alabama be, and they are hereby, authorized to form for themselves a Constitution and State Government, and to assume such name as they may deem proper, and the said territory, when formed into a state, shall be admitted into the Union, upon the same footing with the original states, in all respects whatever.

Sec. 2. And be it further enacted that the state shall consist of all the territory included within the following boundaries, to wit: beginning at the point where the thirty-first degree of north latitude intersects the Perdido River thence, east, to the western boundary line of the State of Georgia thence, along said line, to the southern boundary line to the state of Tennessee thence, west, along the said boundary line, of the Tennessee River; - thence, up the same, to the mouth of Bear Creek; thence, by a direct line, to the northwest corner of Washington County; thence, due south, to the Gulf of Mexico; thence eastwardly, including the islands within six leagues of the shore to the Perdido River, and thence, up the same to the beginning.

Sec. 3. And be it further enacted, that it shall be the duty of the surveyor of the lands of the United States, south of the State of Tennessee, and the surveyor of the public lands in the Alabama Territory, to run and cut out the line of demarcation, between the State of Mississippi and the state to be formed of the Alabama Territory; and if it should appear to said surveyors, that so much of said line designated in the preceding section, running due south, from the northwest corner of Washington County, to the Gulf of Mexico, will encroach on the counties of Wayme, Green or Jackson, in said state of Mississippi, then the same shall be so altered as to run in a direct line from the northwest corner of Washington County to a point on

the Gulf of Mexico, ten miles east of the mouth of the river Pascagola.

Sec. 4. And be it further enacted, that all white male citizens of the United States, who shall have arrived at the age of twenty-one years, and have resided in said territory three months previous to the day of election, and all persons having, in other respects, the legal qualifications to vote for representatives in the General Assembly of the said Territory, be and they are, hereby authorized to choose representatives to form a constitution who shall be apportioned among the several counties as follows:

Madison, eight representatives  
Monroe, four representatives  
Blount, three representatives  
Limestone, three representatives  
Shelby, two representatives  
Montgomery, two representatives  
Tuskaloosa, two representatives  
Lawrence, two representatives  
Franklin, two representatives  
Cotaco, two representatives  
Clark, two representatives  
Baldwin, one representative  
Cahawba, one representative  
Conecah, one representative  
Dallas, one representative  
Marengo, one representative  
Marion, one representative  
Mobile, one representative  
Lauderdale, one representative  
St. Clair, one representative  
Autaga, one representative

And the election of the representatives aforesaid shall be holden on the first Monday and Tuesday in May next, throughout the several counties in the said territory, and be conducted in the same manner, and under the same regulations, as prescribed by the laws of the said territory, regulating elections therein for the member of the house of representatives.

And be it further enacted that the members of the convention, thus duly elected, be, and they are hereby, authorized to meet at the town of

Huntsville, on the first Monday in July next which convention, when met, shall first determine, by a majority of the whole number elected, whether it be, or be not expedient, at that time to form a constitution and state government provided that the same, when formed, shall be republican, and not repugnant to the principles of the ordinance of the thirteenth of July, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven, between the people and states of the territory northwest of the river Ohio, so far as the same has been extended to the said territory by the articles of agreement between the U.S. and the State of Georgia, or the constitution of the U. States....”

This act was signed by Henry Clay, Speaker of the House of Representatives, James Barbour, President of the Senate pro tempore, and approved by President James Monroe on March 12, 1819.

# The Delegates

**Autauga:** James Jackson

**Baldwin:** Harry Toulmin

**Blount:** Isaac Brown, John Brown, Gabriel Hanby

**Cahawba (now Bibb):** Littlepage Sims

**Clarke:** Reuben Saffold, James Magoffin

**Conecuh:** Samuel Cook

**Cotaco (now Morgan):** Melkijah Vaughn, Thomas D. Crabb

**Dallas:** William Rufus King

**Franklin:** Richard Ellis, William Metcalf

**Lauderdale:** Hugh McVay

**Lawrence:** Arthur Francis Hopkins, Daniel Wright

**Limestone:** Thomas Bibb, Beverly Hughes, Nicholas Davis

**Madison:** Clement C. Clay, John Leigh Townes, Henry Chambers, Lemuel Mead, Henry Minor, Gabriel Moore, John Williams Walker, John M. Taylor

**Marengo:** Washington Thompson

**Marion:** John D. Terrell

**Mobile:** Samuel H. Garrow

**Monroe:** John Murphy, John Watkins, James Pickens, Thomas Wiggins

**Montgomery:** John Dandridge Bibb, James W. Armstrong

**St. Clair:** David Conner

**Shelby:** George Phillips, Thomas A. Rodgers

**Tuscaloosa:** Marmaduke Williams, John L. Tindal

**Washington:** Israel Pickens, Henry Hitchcock

An article in the *Alabama Republican*, dated Monday, July 5, announced the opening of the convention:

“The Convention met today, in its opening session. Eight representatives from Madison appeared and took their seats as did three from Monroe, Blount, and Limestone Counties; two from Shelby, Montgomery, Washington, Tuscaloosa, Lawrence, Franklin, Cotaco, and Clarke Counties; one from Cahaba, Conecuh, Dallas, Marengo, Marion, Lauderdale, St. Clair, and Autauga Counties. From the counties of Baldwin and Mobile, no member appeared.

Col. Pickens from Washington County was called to the chair, and the convention proceeded to the choice of a President, when upon canvassing the ballots, it appeared that the Hon. John W. Walker, one of the Judges of

the Superior court, and a member from Madison County, was unanimously elected. Upon being conducted to the chair, Judge Walker returned his acknowledgements to the members in a short address, which was delivered in a feeling and dignified manner, calculated to inspire the members and the audience, with a due sense of the solemnity and importance of the occasion.”

Proceedings were reported throughout the convention, and finally on the last day, August 2, 1819, the *Alabama Republican* printed this article:

“The convention met today. The enrolled Constitution was reported by the committee to be correct, and received the signature of the President and members of the Convention. Mr. Pickens of Washington moved, the following resolution of thanks to the President. Resolved, that the thanks of this convention be presented to John W. Walker, President, thereof, for the dignity, ability, and impartiality with which he has discharged, the arduous duties of the chair. Mr. Walker made a speech in response to the resolution, after which the convention adjourned....Mr. Hitchcock resolved that all sign the document after which it was signed and attested. On motion of Mr. King, Resolved, that the secretary of the convention be instructed to deposit the enrolled Constitution in the office of the Secretary of State....”

Dr. Malcolm McMillan wrote *Constitutional Development in Alabama, 1798-1901* and described the background of the 44 men selected:

“Forty-four delegates were elected to the convention which assembled in Huntsville on July 5, 1819. Of this number there were at least eighteen lawyers, four physicians, two ministers, one surveyor, one merchant, and four planters or farmers...Nine of the forty-four had had prior legislative or judicial experience in the states from which they had come. Harry Toulmin of Baldwin County had been president of Transylvania University, Secretary of State for Kentucky, and an Alabama territorial judge since 1804. William Rufus King of Dallas County had served in Congress from North Carolina from 1810 to 1816 and after that was Secretary of the American Legation to St. Petersburg, Russia...Israel Pickens from Washington County had been a member of the North Carolina Senate and had represented that state in Congress from 1811 to 1817. Marmaduke Williams of Tuscaloosa County had been a member of the North Carolina Senate and had served that state in Congress from 1803 until 1817. John Leigh Townes had served in the Virginia legislature in 1815 and 1816. John Murphy of Monroe had been clerk of the South Carolina Senate for ten years and a trustee of South Carolina College, 1809-1818. Clement Comer Clay, Henry Hitchcock, Hugh McVay, James McGoffin, Gabriel Moore, Reuben Saffold, and John W. Walker had all been members of the Alabama territorial legislature and Samuel Garrow, Mayor of Mobile. At least eight of the men had had some college training. The potential ability of the delegates is best indicated by the fact that from them the state obtained six governors, six judges of the supreme court, and six United States senators.”

Done, in Convention, at Huntsville, this second day of August,  
in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixteenth,  
and of American Independence, the forty-fourth.

Hotelashor,

President of the Convention,

and Representative for Madison County.

Washington County

George Dickerson

Henry Hitchcock

Tuscaloosa County.

Mark Williams

Jno. P. Suddall

Lawrence County

Arthur P. Hopkins

Charles Wright

Franklin County

William McCall

Richard Ellis

Botetown County.

Thos. D. Brall

Michajah Naughton

Clark County.

Rubens Saffold

James Magoffin

Madison County

Colman C. Clay

John High Townes

Henry Chambers

Lemuel Mead

Henry Spicer

Gabriel Moore

John W. Taylor

Harro County.

John Murphy

John Waters

James Dickens

Thos. Higgins

Blount County.

Isaac Brown

John Brown

Gabriel Hardy

## 1819 – Alabama Becomes a State

SHIRLEY TUCKER MOHLER

The summer of 1819 was probably much like all the summers before – hot, humid, mosquito-laden, with ever-present horse flies buzzing around. However, one thing out of the ordinary was happening in Huntsville. A committee of 44 men, the best and brightest from throughout the Alabama territory met to frame a constitution. They had been elected by their peers to frame the document which would lead to statehood for the Alabama Territory. As part of the Mississippi Territory, Alabama had already passed the first stage necessary to become a state when the Congress of the United States appointed a governor, a secretary and three judges to manage the affairs of government for the area. Only a year before, a census had been taken that placed the population at 67,594 (45,871 whites, 339 free Negroes, and 21,384 slaves) – well above the needed 60,000 required for statehood.

Settlers had flocked to the territory when, in 1811, the horse path from Ocmulgee to Fort Stoddart was broadened to include a road. Senator Charles Tait, a prominent Georgian and close friend of Huntsville resident John Williams Walker, presented a petition to Congress to enable the territory to complete requirements for statehood. This same petition brought Mississippi into the Union as the 20<sup>th</sup> state. What was left of the Mississippi Territory now became the Alabama Territory and opened the door for statehood.

Three requirements had to be met for statehood: at least 60,000 residents, land, and a constitution. With the first two requirements having been met, it was time to tackle the writing of a constitution.

Huntsville, originally known as Hunt's Spring, was the first successful settlement in the Tennessee Valley. John Hunt and a few other hearty pioneers immigrated to the area because of the rich soil, the agreeable climate, and the peaceful Indians. It was the heaviest populated area in the Alabama Territory with 2,223 white people and 322 black people. In 1809, the town, re-named Twickenham for a brief period and later named Huntsville, served as the county seat.

On July 5, the Constitutional Convention convened in Huntsville. The men, representing Madison County, were Clement C. Clay, John Leigh



Townes, Henry Chambers, Lemuel Mead, Henry Minor, Gabriel Moore, and John M. Taylor. They were well educated and most had experience in the political realm of other states. Their role as Alabama's founding fathers is studied by every school child in the state.

Their leader was the well-liked and amiable John Williams Walker. Although his father-in-law, LeRoy Pope, was the leader of the "Georgia Faction," Walker had made it clear long before he entered the family that he would never bow down to his powerful father-in-law. In fact, Walker once said, "I drink buttermilk for the health of my body, wine for the exhilaration of my spirit and whiskey to prove and strengthen my republicanism. I sleep till 8 o'clock because I am lazy and smoke at all hours of the day and night because it is my good pleasure."

The end result, a new constitution, was considered quite progressive for the time. It had been patterned on other state constitutions obviously, but tweaked in ways that surprised the wise men of other states. It was something to be proud of, for sure. In fact, only three amendments were added between the years 1819 and 1861. But what became of these men, and the others who forged our Constitution, after that hot summer of 1819? Unfortunately, for some of these men, the only information available is simply a reference that they were attendees. Others went on to noble endeavors. Here are their stories.

# Madison County - John Williams Walker

JANEAL NICHOLS SHANNON

Perhaps to better understand John Williams Walker, we need to step back in time, before the Revolutionary War, to Chesterfield County, Virginia where the charismatic Baptist preacher, Jeremiah Walker was in jail. Because he was not ordained by the Church of England and yet persisted in preaching to the people of that county, he was forced to join other preachers in brutal close confinement. Thankfully, their treatment was improved by the intervention of Patrick Henry, who was to remain a friend for life. Later, Walker was released after successfully pleading his case based on the Act of Toleration.

Shortly after the Revolution, this popular and powerful Baptist leader decided to move to Georgia. In 1783, when John Williams Walker was born, the family included five sons and a daughter, Polly. Since it was not easy to provide for such a large family in post-war Virginia, the family settled in Elbert County, Georgia with other Virginians maintaining a community life that was to influence the entire development of the old Southwest. Jeremiah proved not only a distinguished minister, but became wealthy enough to own plantations, town lots, slaves, and even an island in the Savannah River.

But unfortunately, by the time John Williams Walker was nine, both his father and mother, Mary Jane Graves Walker, had died of tuberculosis. At the time of his death, Jeremiah Walker was financially well off and all of his possessions were left to his family. A trust was set up for John Walker who, when he came of age, was to have 250 acres of river land and several slaves as well as a portion of his father's books. But his initial training, despite his parents' early death, influenced his entire life.

For the next ten years, he was cared for by his four brothers. He was closer to Memorable who served as his guardian, and their love for each other was especially strong. Years later, John was able to return the love and care he received from his brother by lovingly caring for Memorable during his extended illness and death from tuberculosis. It is believed that John contracted at this time, the illness that would plague him for the rest of his life.

John received his preparatory education from Dr. Moses Waddell, who

had at that time, the most famous preparatory school in the South. He went on to graduate with distinguished honor from Princeton with a record of "untarnished moral character" and a reputation as an "excellent scholar." He was also something of a poet, and the Walker family has preserved and treasured copies of his poetry.

During his years at Princeton, he became close friends with Thomas Percy from Washington, in the Mississippi Territory, six miles from Natchez. Walker referred to him as "my chosen brother." They also made a pact with each other to name a son after each other. Years later, Thomas Percy Walker and John Williams Walker Percy were born and faithfully named.

Thomas Percy encouraged Walker to come for an extended visit. Fortunately, Dr. Samuel Brown, one of the nation's outstanding physicians, had settled on a plantation near Percy and had given up his practice "except for occasional calls to his sick friends and the neighboring poor." Walker was soon numbered chief among his sick friends. Under this wonderful doctor's expert care, the young man began to improve and recover his health and spirits. This trip also caused him to look with favor and fondness on the Mississippi Territory.

Returning home to Georgia in the summer of 1809, Walker courted Matilda Pope, daughter of the wealthy merchant, Colonel LeRoy Pope. The Popes were so outstanding in the area that they were known as the "Royal Family." "Matty" as he called her, had attracted him since she was twelve. Because of her youth, he had been hesitant to court her before, but the more he saw her, the more he loved her. He remarked that she possessed, a "tender, engaging and lovely disposition."

He wrote about her father, a shrewd businessman, "I like the man, I like his wife, I like his children, I love one of them, but I am determined never to crouch to him or abandon my lawful right for the uncertainty of obtaining at a distant period, an amicable woman." Fortunately, such a crisis never occurred.

In the early part of 1810, he married the lovely Matilda and soon moved across the mountains from Georgia to the territory of Alabama. Her father and several of his neighbors from the same village came as well. They became the first settlers of Madison County and founded what we know today as the city of Huntsville.

Tom Percy abandoned his Mississippi plantation to the care of relatives,

and purchased a plantation near the Walkers, where he courted and married Maria, Matilda's beautiful sister, much to the disappointment of John's older brother, James Sanders. Soon afterwards, Dr. Sam Brown bought a plantation near Percy and the three musketeers were happily united once again.

For the next few years, Walker practiced law and managed his plantation. Despite suffering a relapse in 1816, he recovered quickly and began his political career.

Walker was tall and slender with blue eyes and brown hair. He had a fine complexion and handsome features, according to descriptions of those who knew him well. He seems to have always been a very generous person and showed a deep concern for his fellowman. He was brilliant and witty, with a vivid and charming personality. He wisely stayed away from political intrigue, which made him popular with so many across the state and later, the nation.

He seemed to enjoy life and made the people around him have a good time just by being with him. Perhaps his greatest gift was the art of making friends. He seemed to make lasting friends wherever he went that would put him in good stead in the years to come. Not only were some of these personal friends, but they were also political allies.

Three of his most powerful friends were William H. Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury, and former neighbors and Senators, William Wyatt Bibb and Charles Tait. Tait was especially close, and the two maintained a constant correspondence. Among his other friends were General Andrew Jackson and General John Coffee.

On March 1, 1817, the Act enabling the Mississippi Territory to form a state government was approved, and on March 3, the Act creating the Alabama Territory was approved. William Crawford immediately sent President Monroe a list of possible appointments for the Alabama Territory. He suggested Dr. William Bibb for Governor, and John W. Walker for Territorial Secretary.

Hearing of the appointment, Walker wrote Tait (who was in Congress) that he could not accept as he had been elected to the legislature of the new territory, but thanked Tait for his kindness and his influence with the President on his behalf.

But on December 12, 1817, he was nominated, first as a U.S. Attorney for the Alabama Territory, and then as Secretary. He informed Secretary of State John Quincy Adams that his decision to turn down the nominations was due to the delicate state of his health.

In the meantime, other friends were urging that Walker be appointed to a high office. Not the least of these was Andrew Jackson, who was in Huntsville racing his horses.

On June 11, 1817, Jackson wrote President Monroe a strong letter recommending Walker for Governor of the Alabama Territory. He suggested that the desire of the people was to select a man from among them, and "I will venture to assert that you will find few who unite the necessary requisites, honesty, and talents in a more eminent degree than Major Walker."

When the Territorial Legislature convened at St. Stephens in the fall of 1818, the House of Representatives unanimously elected Walker as its Speaker, despite the fact that Walker had expressed his sincere wishes to withdraw from public life for the sake of his young family.

Perhaps he did not resign because he felt that his services in bringing Alabama into the Union immediately were of vital importance. The unanimous support given Walker from the Georgia Faction and the Carolina-Tennessee opposition convinced him that he was the only person in Alabama public life who could hold the opposing groups together long enough to prepare the Alabama Territory for statehood, and his personal friends in Washington assured him that Alabama's application would be ably managed at the capital. Always in close touch with Charles Tait, he could count on him as a champion of Alabama and could work with and through this Georgia Senator.

On December 18, 1818, Senator Tait introduced the bill in Washington to enable Alabama to hold a Constitutional Convention and organize a state government in preparation for admission into the Union. The bill passed both houses and Walker was appointed one of the judges of the Territory.

At this time, he was pressed to run as a delegate for the Constitutional Convention, and he was elected though he continued to serve as Territorial Judge and then as State Judge. Here again, he was recognized as a statesman being elected president of the convention.

He later wrote to Tait, "I am no partisan man and I will not be one. I look at the whole, and not simply at a part." With Clement C. Clay, who Walker appointed as chairman of a special committee of fifteen to work out the fundamental provisions of the constitution, the constitution was completed in about a month, adopted, and sent to Washington for final approval.

When the members of the convention thanked Walker for his dignity,

ability, and impartiality he had shown as president of the convention, he gave the following address:

“Our labors are now at an end. We have given to the State of Alabama, a Constitution – not indeed perfect...yet emphatically Republican, and as such, gives us a clear and indisputable title to admission into the great family of the Union. If it has some faults, it has, at the same time, many excellencies; and for all its defects, it carries in itself the grand corrective of amendment. The people can mould it as they please. It proclaims the great first principle of liberty; it guards the equal rights of all, and some new features, of vital interest, seem to promise the happiest results. The offspring of mutual concession and compromise, it occupies that middle ground on which a majority was found to unite. Let us hope that it will be also approved by the people of Alabama, and that under its auspicious influence, they and their posterity may long be free, prosperous, and happy.”

On December 14, 1819, Congress passed and President James Monroe approved the resolution admitting Alabama into the union. In the meantime, a state government was established, and when it convened on October 25<sup>th</sup>, elected John Walker for United States Senator. He had already been given the assurance that he would be made one of the first senators from Alabama. One could almost say that Walker was unanimously elected to the U.S. Senate. On the day Alabama was admitted into the Union, Walker took his seat in the Senate in Washington City and assumed an active role.

Perhaps his greatest accomplishment in the Senate was the passage of the Land Relief Act of 1821, which helped land owners survive the economic depressions which ravaged the country. Alabamians owed half the national land debt and were in desperate straits. When Walker returned to Alabama after its passage, the public was riotously happy over the bill, and the press published Walker’s speeches in support of it and the full text of the bill. He was the hero of the hour.

Politically, Walker was a member of the Democratic Republican Party founded by Thomas Jefferson, whom he greatly admired.

During this time, while he and Matilda were in Washington, he entrusted his only daughter, Mary Jane (named after his mother) to his faithful friends, Dr. Sam Brown and Thomas Percy and wife, Mary Jane’s aunt, to take her from home 1,000 miles away to Madame Signoigne’s Finishing School in Philadelphia. Not even 11, she was the oldest of his children and the apple of his eye. Strange as it sounds, this was not an

unusual practice and she had several friends already there, including Dr. Brown's own daughter.

Promised that she would be there only a year while her parents were in Washington, she left her beloved Oakland Plantation, little brothers, and friends. Although her parents visited her, she would return home not one year later, but after four long years – a young lady of grace and fashion, an excellent harpist and dancer, fluent in French and a scholar of both English and French.

Many of Mary Jane's letters have been saved and tell of her longing to see her family, but at the same time, delighting in all the new knowledge and experiences available to her. Years later, after her marriage to Dr. Richard Lee Fearn of Mobile, she had only one child, whom as a lasting tribute to her beloved father, she named John Williams Walker Fearn.

John Williams Walker attended Congress in 1821 – 1822, but his health failed again, and in December of 1822, he resigned his seat in the Senate. Four months later, at the age of 40, he died in Huntsville of the tuberculosis that had plagued him most of his life.

In recognition of the high esteem in which he was held, the next county in the state to be named was given the name Walker County, in his honor.

Due to his extensive service to his state and nation, he left his wife and six children little wealth, but a rich heritage of patriotic service. Many people, including Congressmen, judges and generals, can, with pride, trace their family to this orphan, friend, and statesman, John Williams Walker. He was indeed a great Alabamian, a great American, and a great example to us all.

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# Madison County - Henry Minor

SHIRLEY TUCKER MOHLER

Henry Minor was born on January 4, 1783 in Dinwiddie County, Virginia. He came from a distinguished family from Somersetshire, England. In return for service to his country, Minor's paternal grandfather was given grants of land by Richard II during his reign as King of England.

Henry Minor was the son of Thomas Carr Minor of Spotsylvania County, and Anne Redd Minor, who lived at Topping Castle, Carolina County, Virginia. Thomas was a planter with extensive land holdings. Henry's grandfather, Garret Minor, was a former Justice of Middlesex County, Virginia.

Born into a family of scholars, Henry Minor was carefully educated. He read law under his uncle, Judge Minor of Fredericksburg, Virginia. He then relocated to Huntsville during a time when many young men of good Virginia families migrated to that section of the country. During the years that followed, he would be among those bright young men who contributed to the rich history of Alabama.

Minor served on the first University of Alabama Board of Trustees from 1821-1823. He was elected to the first legislature of the state and served as reporter of the Supreme Court. In 1823, he was elected to the Supreme Court of Alabama where he served for two years before his defeat for re-election. His ability as a judge was generally recognized; however he had a retiring nature and was not suited to the pioneer campaign spirit needed to gain votes. Therefore, he lost the election to his opponent. However, he was made clerk of the Supreme Court, the fees supporting the office being more than a judge's salary. He held this position until his death in Minorca on January 1, 1839.

In order that he might be closer to the capital which was in Tuscaloosa, Minor moved from Huntsville to Greene County in 1826. It was here that he built a three-story square shaped "frontier-style" Classic Revival house that is still standing today at 2606 8<sup>th</sup> Street and serves as the law office for Owens and Millsaps. This is the house in which most of his twelve children were born.

Henry, an Episcopalian, had married Frances Throckmorton on September 14, 1809 in Petersburg, Virginia. Her father had served in the Revolutionary War and her grandfather owned a gun factory that supplied

guns to Virginia troops during that war. Henry and Frances had twelve children; seven daughters and five sons. Of their five sons, Henry graduated from West Point and died at sea in November 1839. Lafayette graduated from the University of Alabama and served in the Civil War where he died in a Union prison in February 1865. Phillip, a physician, served as a surgeon during the Civil War.

During his lifetime, Henry Minor saw civilization engulf the Alabama frontier as new states were added to the Union west of the Mississippi River.

**Source:**

Owen, Thomas M., *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, Vol. IV, (Spartenburg, SC: The Reprint Co., 1921).

# Madison County - John Leigh Townes

SHIRLEY TUCKER MOHLER

John Leigh Townes was born in Amelia County, Virginia on November 15, 1774. He was educated at Hampden-Sidney College in Virginia. He finished his law studies under Judge Peter Johnson and was admitted to the bar in 1806. Townes then began his law practice in Amelia County.

During the War of 1812, often referred as the "Second Revolution," John L. Townes was a captain in a volunteer company stationed mainly in Norfolk, Virginia. At the close of the war, he received a commission as major in the First Regiment of Virginia Militia.

In October 1817, Townes joined the migration to the Mississippi-Alabama Territory where he settled in Madison County. It is from this county that he was elected to serve as a delegate to the first Constitutional Convention.

As soon as the election results were announced, Townes had the following letter published in the *Alabama Republican*:

"To the Citizens of Madison, Having tendered my services to you as a candidate for the convention, I am sensibly impressed with the importance of the trust which I ask at your hands. I deem it a duty indispensable on me to make known to you those principles which will regulate me in the performance of that political trust which I now solicit. I therefore avail myself of this medium to communicate to you those principles of action which have influenced my past and which will regulate my future life, whenever I shall be the voice of the people, be called to fill a responsible legislative station.

Having from my infancy enjoyed the blessings that flow from a free government, which has the happiness and liberties of the people for its basis, it would be truly strange if I should not be attached to it, and endeavour to retain unalloyed those features which have the general good for their object.

The principle that all power emanates from the people, either mediately or immediately, has been to me ever sacred and dear, and in a representative republic, those who are from the nature of that government delegated with momentary power, would ever be responsible to that source from whence they derive it, so that sovereignty being retained in the hands of the people,

a regard to the interests of those to whom the representative is amenable, should ever prompt him to act for their good.

A government founded on the basis of republicanism, which disseminates equal rights and equal privileges to all of its citizens, should be also so apportioned in its various branches, that each should be independent of the other, and all act for the general welfare the legislative, executive, and judiciary, should be so arranged, that by a wise and correct separation of interests, as well as of power, there should be no collusion, but all its parts being propelled by the same impulse, each should move in its own orbit, around the constitution, which should be the common centre of all.

No constitution which has not republicanism for its basis, strengthened by a regard to virtue and the happiness of the people, who are to live under it, and to be governed by it, can afford those blessings, which liberty requires, any which has fallen short of the happiness of the people has lost its end, and in vain if the fundamental principles of a government be impure, will those who are governed by it look for the blessings of civil liberty.

Having thus fellow citizens given you a concise view of those general principles, which will direct my course in the performance of that trust which I now solicit should I succeed believe me, my feeble tho' best efforts, will be exerted for the advancement of those features in our State for their sole object and with a zeal for the public good commensurate with the importance of the trust I ask of you, and with a fidelity inspired by a sense of the obligations conferred as it will be my first duty never to impair a trust so important so it shall be my last never to forget the obligation created.

I am fellow citizens, your obedient servant, John Leigh Townes"

Shortly after the convention, Townes moved to Lawrence County where he settled in Town Creek. In 1824, he became an ordained minister and for the next few years, he pastored churches in Courtland, Russell Valley, Bethel, and other locations.

John Townes, a Democrat, was clerk of the Muscle Shoals Association for nine sessions and Moderator for two sessions.

Townes married Polly Segar Eggleston or Virginia on December 24, 1806. They became parents of four children: Julia, who married Rev. D. B. Bastor; Frances, who married planter and merchant William Gregg; Polly Segar, who married physician and planter Richard Leigh, and son

Eggleston Dick Townes.

Mr. Townes saw many changes in the world during his lifetime. George Washington became president of a new nation and Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in an old nation. The Louisiana Purchase changed the face of a continent and in France, Louis XVI was executed. From the original 13 states, the United States doubled in size by the time of Townes' death on July 28, 1846 in Tuscumbia.

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*Alabama Republican*

## Madison County - Gabriel Moore

SHIRLEY TUCKER MOHLER & JACQUELYN PROCTER REEVES

Gabriel Moore was born in Stokes County, North Carolina and graduated from the present-day University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1810. That same year, he came to Huntsville and began his law practice and served as tax assessor and collector. He also supervised the census which was necessary to determine the number of representatives from each county.

Moore served in the Mississippi Territorial Legislature from 1811 – 1817 and then in the Alabama Territorial Legislature where he was the speaker of the first Territorial Legislature in 1818. He represented Madison County at the first Constitutional Convention held in Huntsville in 1819.

Mr. Moore's popularity was with the small farmers, the non-elite constituents with whom he identified. He was a man of the people and opposed the "Georgia Faction" who attempted to gain a stronghold in all of Alabama's politics. He preferred the company of the common people and spent much time with them.



Moore presided over the State Senate in 1820 and served as chairman of the House Committee of Revolutionary Claims. He was elected to Congress in 1821 and again in 1827.

In 1829, Gabriel Moore was elected 5<sup>th</sup> Governor of Alabama and under his direction, the first railroad in Alabama was chartered. He

promoted the opening of the University of Alabama, began the Tennessee River Canal near Muscle Shoals, and advocated the revision of the state penal codes. During his term in office, the first penitentiary in Alabama was established.

Moore was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1831 and resigned his position as Governor. During his term in office, the Choctaw Indians ceded 11 million acres of land in Mississippi for 15 million acres of land in Oklahoma.

Unfortunately, though he had been a Jacksonian until that time, he was not afraid to oppose some popular ideas and Moore found himself out of favor. He did not support the appointment of Martin van Buren as minister to Great Britain in 1832 and this angered not only Andrew Jackson, but many of the constituents of Alabama as well. He was defeated when he ran in 1837 and moved to Texas in 1843. He died in Caddo, Texas in 1845 and is buried in an unmarked grave.

Governor Gabriel Moore was an outspoken advocate of his beliefs, but held himself back politically because he had married in 1818 for a brief time. His wife, according to her family tradition, was in love with another man and divorced him. At that time, the legislature had to approve all divorces and Moore worried that it would harm him politically. He then fought a duel with her brother though neither was seriously injured. These incidents were secret to all but a few and were not made public until the time of his death. He never married again.

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# Madison County - Clement Comer Clay

JACQUELYN PROCTER REEVES



Clement Clay was born in Halifax County, Virginia and moved to Tennessee as a child. He graduated from East Tennessee College in 1807 and was admitted to the bar in 1809. In 1811, he came to Huntsville, then part of the Mississippi Territory, with one slave and enough money to last three days. He served as an adjutant in the 1813 Creek Indian War with future notables Andrew Jackson, John Coffey, and Davy Crockett.

Alabama had been part of the Mississippi Territory, but with Mississippi's 1817 admission into the Union, Alabama remained a territory. Clay served in the 1817-1819 Territorial legislature and again in the 1819 Constitutional Convention held in Huntsville. At that convention, Clay served as chairman of the 15 men assigned to draft the constitution that, upon approval of the U.S. Government on December 14, 1819, would make Alabama the 22<sup>nd</sup> state of the Union. As a side-note, Clay was encouraged to run for the office of Alabama's first governor, but the constitution stated the governor must be 30 years of age. Clay was 29. In that same year, he was elected as a circuit judge.

Clement Clay served on the state Supreme Court from 1820-1823. In 1827, he was elected to the Alabama state legislature where he served as Speaker of the House. In 1829 he was elected to the U.S. Congress and in



that position, helped arrange the 1833 negotiations with Governor Gayle and Francis Scott Key to discuss the removal of Creek Indians.

In 1835, Clay was elected as the eighth governor of Alabama, and during this difficult term of office, the removal of Creek Indians resulted in the now-famous Trail of Tears. Many Alabamians served in the militia to fight against the Seminoles and in 1836, many Alabamians were massacred at Goliad, Texas.

In 1836, Clay helped establish Spring Hill College in Mobile, the third oldest Jesuit College in the United States. In 1837, he was appointed to the U.S. Senate and resigned as governor. He remained in that position until 1841 when he resigned to prepare a digest of state laws under the direction of the Alabama General Assembly. Clay's Digest, finished in 1843, is still referenced today. In 1843, Clay was appointed to the State Supreme Court, and in 1846, he served on a committee to resolve problems with the Bank of the State of Alabama. Other noteworthy appointments: he served as chairman of the Committee on Engrossed Bills and the Committee on Militia.

Clay encouraged his son Clement Claiborne Clay to enter politics and follow in his footsteps. But times were different and his son entered at a time when talk of a civil war was on everyone's lips. Young Clay announced Alabama's secession from the United States and took his place in the Confederate Congress. At the end of the Civil War, he learned that he was wanted by the Federal government and turned himself in, not knowing that he was charged with being part of the plot to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln. He was imprisoned at Fortress Monroe for one year in solitary confinement until his release. His mother died while he was in prison, and he made his way back to Madison County to spend the last remaining months of his father's life with him.

Clement Clay's second son, John Withers Clay, became editor of the Huntsville Democrat, and found himself in trouble with the occupying Union Army for publishing his opinions. Clay's third son, Hugh Lawson Clay, also an attorney, served in the Mexican War as a captain and later as a Colonel in the Confederate Army.

During the Union occupation in the Civil War, Clement Clay was arrested as a prominent Huntsville resident. Guerilla forces along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad route were wreaking havoc with the Union forces and he was one of 12 Huntsville leaders held in retaliation. His fortune, earned by tenacity and hard work, was decimated as a result of

the War. Clement Comer Clay died in 1866 and was buried in Huntsville's Maple Hill Cemetery. In 1931, a bridge was built over the Tennessee River and named in honor of Governor Clement Clay. It was torn down in 2006.

Clement Clay's early law office has been restored as part of the Alabama Constitution Village in Huntsville. At that time, he rented the upstairs to land surveyors and the other half of his office served as the first Huntsville post office.

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## Madison County - John M. Taylor

SHIRLEY TUCKER MOHLER

John M. Taylor came from an excellent Virginia family. He was well educated to practice law and came to Huntsville in 1817. For a short time, Taylor was a merchant, but soon returned to his profession as a lawyer. He married the sister of local merchant Phillip Foote.

Taylor was elected by his peers from Madison County to serve at the Constitutional Convention of 1819. Several years later, Taylor formed a practice with Judge Minor, whom he succeeded on the Supreme Court in 1825.

John Taylor was elected to the office as circuit judge and in 1832, the court was entirely reorganized. Taylor was elected as one of three judges to serve a six-year term in office. He resigned from office in 1832. A short time later, he moved to Mississippi where he practiced law until his death in 1860.

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# Madison County - Henry Chambers

SHIRLEY TUCKER MOHLER AND SUSAN CARR

Dr. Henry Chambers was born near Kenbridge, Lunenburg County, Virginia on October 1, 1790. He graduated from William and Mary College in 1808 and received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1811. He came to Alabama shortly afterward, and as a surgeon, served in the Creek Indian Wars alongside other notable Huntsville residents who fought under Andrew Jackson.

Dr. Chambers was described as being thin with a sallow complexion and dark eyes. He was over 6 feet tall and was a member of a prosperous family. He married a young woman named Smith from Tennessee.

Dr. Chambers was a candidate for the office of governor, but was defeated twice by Israel Pickens in the years 1821 and 1823. In 1824, Chambers defeated William R. King for a seat in the Senate. But unfortunately, during his trip to Washington on horseback in 1826, Henry Chambers died en route at age 40. Somewhat ironically, he was near his original home at the time of his death and was buried in the family cemetery near Kenbridge, Virginia. He was known as a man of high morals and character, and for that reason, an Alabama county, Chambers County, was named in his honor.

Dr. Chambers was elected presidential elector in 1824. It was his job to vote, on behalf of the people of Alabama, for Andrew Jackson as United States President. It was considered a re-aligning election year. The previous presidential elections had seen a one-party government with no real opposition. In this election, the prevailing Democratic-Republican party divided as four separate candidates sought the office of president: Andrew Jackson of Tennessee, John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, William Crawford of Georgia, and Henry Clay of Kentucky.

Later, the faction led by Andrew Jackson would become the Democratic Party and the faction led by John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay would evolve into the National Republican Party, and then even later, the Whig Party.

It has been said that this election is the first in which the president did not win the popular vote, however this is hard to determine since 20% of the states did not hold a popular vote, but chose their electors to vote on behalf of the state.

The election was handed off to the U.S. House of Representatives to determine who would become president. In accordance with the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment, only the top three candidates in the electoral vote would be considered: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and William Harris Crawford.

Henry Clay, who finished 4<sup>th</sup>, is reported to have said, "I cannot believe that killing 2,500 Englishmen at New Orleans qualifies for the various, difficult, and complicated duties of the Chief Magistracy." He then supported John Quincy Adams, who won the election. Jackson was later elected in 1828.

As an interesting side-note, his daughter Mary was 10 at the time of his death. She married William D. Bibb in 1835, the son of Alabama's second governor, Thomas Bibb. According to legend, she had been given oxalic acid or boric acid for her complexion by a family slave who mistook the bottle for Epsom salts. Although Mary was terminally ill as a result, she married William Bibb, but died three months later. Her mausoleum at Maple Hill Cemetery is a popular place for local schoolchildren to visit.

Another of Chambers' children, a son named Hal was living in Mississippi and represented the Confederate Congress. He got into an argument with William A. Lake and the two men decided to fight a duel in Memphis. Chambers was not quite adept with shooting a rifle, but after three days, became quite accomplished. When the shots were fired, Chambers had missed Lake's head and Lake's bullet had passed through Chambers' goatee. They decided to shoot a second time although others present tried to talk them out of it. Two hours later, the duel was re-fought and on this occasion, Chambers' bullet met its mark. Lake was dead with a bullet to his brain.

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## Madison County – Lemuel Mead

JACQUELYN PROCTER REEVES

Very little information is available about Lemuel Mead, one of the delegates from Madison County. Many of the references to him as a delegate erroneously list him as Samuel Mead, though his signature on the constitution is clearly Lemuel Mead. What is found in quick references is given here.

A branch of the State Bank of Alabama with a capital of \$150,000 was opened in Huntsville under Lemuel Mead and others.

Mead served as clerk of the circuit court in 1819 until 1835. He opened his law office in 1817 in the new building above the Brahan and Hutchings building on East Side Square.

On March 11, 1810, he purchased 159.70 acres for \$2 per acre, which was owned originally by Kaisear & Christian. On February 2, 1818, he purchased three pieces of property: 155.16 acres in one location; 159.48 acres in another location for \$2.50 per acre; and finally, 162.62 acres for \$2 per acre.

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## Dallas County – William Rufus King

JACQUELYN PROCTER REEVES

The men who hammered out the first constitution for the new state of Alabama were among the finest of the territory, but one man who stands out among them was William Rufus King. Although his personal life was tainted by rumors, he was unquestionably one of the hardest working politicians, not only for his adopted state of Alabama, but for the entire United States as well.

King was born in North Carolina on April 7, 1786. His paternal ancestors were from Ireland, and among the first settlers in Virginia. His maternal ancestors were from a Huguenot family driven out of France when the edict of Nantes, an order signed by King Henri IV of France in 1598 which granted freedom of worship to Protestants, was revoked in 1685 by King Louis XIV.



At the very young age of 12, King began his college education at the University of North Carolina. He graduated in 1803 and was admitted to the bar in 1806. His practice was started in Clinton, North Carolina and the next year he became a member of the North Carolina House of Commons, serving for two years. In 1810, he was the city attorney for Wilmington, North Carolina. From 1811 until 1816, he served in the Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Congresses, until his resignation.

After serving briefly as Secretary of the Legation at Naples, Italy and then at St. Petersburg in Russia, he moved to Cahawba, Alabama where he bought a plantation he named King's Bend.

William Rufus King was the only delegate to represent Dallas County at the first Constitutional Convention in Huntsville in the summer of 1819. He was a member of the 15 who were chosen to draft the constitution, headed by Clement C. Clay. King was described as an active, talented, and influential member of the convention.

As soon as the convention in Huntsville had finished, King returned to his family home in North Carolina to finalize his move to Alabama. As he made the slow journey back to Dallas County, he received word in Milledgeville, Georgia, that he had been elected as one of Alabama's two first senators (John Williams Walker was the other Senator). King had no idea that he was being considered for the position, but immediately turned around to make his way to Washington, just a few days before Congress would convene. Walker was there just ahead of him. King was appointed for a four-year term. As the Democratic-Republican representative to the U.S. Senate, he served from December 14, 1819 (Alabama's official birthday) to 1844. He then served as President pro tempore of the U.S. Senate in the 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> Congresses and was appointed Chairman of the Committee on Public Lands as well as the Committee on Commerce.

King had turned down the offer of an appointment as a foreign minister, but in 1844, a critical situation was brewing in the west. Residents of Texas were making noise to join the United States, but Great Britain was opposed. British officials turned to France for support, hinting that hostilities, in one form or another, would be the result if the United States would allow annexation. King gave up his seat in Congress in order to persuade the King of France, as the official U.S. Minister to France, not to stand in the way of the impending annexation. King had been a most influential politician in the U.S., and was very influential in France as well. After a meeting with the king, he declared that "he would do nothing hostile to the United States, or which could give to her just cause of offence." England would not fight the U.S. without the support of France, and so a possible world conflict was avoided. King served as ambassador until 1846, when he returned to America after asking for permission to resign.

In 1848, King was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Arthur Bagby's seat in the Senate. He was then elected, in 1849 to the legislature for six years. In 1850, President Zachary Taylor died and Vice-President Millard Fillmore succeeded him. William Rufus King was unanimously



voted to fill the office of Vice-President. But after only five months, King resigned due to his continuous struggle with tuberculosis. But his lapses of bad health were interspersed with periods of good health, and he continued his political career.



“King’s Bend” near Cahawba – Home of William Rufus King

In 1852, he was elected Vice President of the United States under President Franklin Pierce. But by the time he took the oath of office in March, 1853, his health was again precarious. He was in Cuba, hoping to recover or at least improve his health, when he took the oath on March 24. It took a special act of Congress to allow him to take the oath on foreign soil, but by then his illness was terminal and his death was close at hand. Though it was known he would never fill out the term of office, William King was most highly respected by his fellow politicians, and it was a special courtesy they wanted to bestow upon him.

As soon as King was able to travel, he returned to King’s Bend, his plantation in Alabama. He lived only two days after his arrival. He died on April 18, 1853, at age 67, and was interred in a vault on the plantation. Family members were divided however, on where his final resting place should be. Some wanted him to remain on his plantation while others

wanted him buried in Selma, as the town's co-founder. The decision was tabled until 1882 when the Selma City Council decided to move his remains. His final burial place is in the Live Oak Cemetery in Selma.

Strangely enough, at the time of the inauguration, the Washington Territory in the northwest United States was hoping for admission into the Union. Hoping to gain favor from Congress, King County was named in honor of William Rufus King. Pierce County was, at the same time, named in honor of President Pierce. However, Washington did not become a state until 1889. In a strange twist of historic revision, Washington's governor signed a bill in 2005 which designated that King County would from henceforth be known for Martin Luther King, Jr. instead of William Rufus King.

One of the long-time debates about William King was his close relationship with future president James Buchanan. The two men lived together for 16 years, and some of King's enemies implied that he was homosexual. Though historians will most likely continue the debate until the end of time, one point they can agree on is that William Rufus King was a dedicated and capable politician and leader. Had he lived longer, no doubt Alabama, as well as our United States, would have benefited even more from his great works.



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# Lauderdale County – Hugh McVay

JACQUELYN PROCTER REEVES

Hugh McVay was different from the other delegates in several ways. He looked angry in his only known portrait, and he was noticeably less educated than his counterparts. His manners were rough, though suitable to the rugged frontier. In addition to that, he named his second daughter Atlantic Pacific. His first wife had died and so he married again in 1828. His wife Sophia did not stay with him long however, she left town with Samuel Shull, but left behind large debts for her husband to remember her by. Two horses and two slaves accompanied Sophia and Samuel to their new horizons, unsanctioned perhaps, by her soon-to-be ex-husband.



But Mr. McVay served the people of Lauderdale County, and Alabama well. He was born in South Carolina in 1788 and had little education. In spite of that, he did quite well for himself. He moved to Madison County in 1807 and served in the Territorial Legislature from 1811 to 1818. In 1819, he moved to Lauderdale County, and represented the people of that county in the 1819 Constitutional Convention. He served from 1820 to 1825 in the Alabama House of Representatives and then in the State Senate from 1825 to 1844. When Alabama's eighth governor, Clement C. Clay left office in

July 1837 to take an appointment in the U.S. Senate, Hugh McVay filled his unexpired term and became Alabama's ninth governor. He served until November 22 until A. P. Bagby was elected governor. McVay served in the Alabama Senate until 1844. He then returned to Lauderdale County and died in 1851. He was buried at Mars Hill in the Moore-McVay Cemetery.

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# Limestone County - Nicholas Davis

## FRANK WESTMORELAND

Nicholas “Nick” Davis was born in Hanover County in 1781 in an area known as “the slashes.” His father had fought in the American Revolution, and as a neighbor and close friend of Henry Clay, it is no surprise that he had a great influence on young Nick. Henry Clay uprooted his family and moved to Kentucky, and Nick, his wife Hartha Hargrave Davis and their child moved to Kentucky as well.

Nick Davis was described as being tall, well-proportioned, with deep blue eyes that indicated kindness and charity. When war broke out against England once again, Nick felt obligated to join the fray, just as his father had done in the American Revolution. He had heard much about a Tennessean named Andrew Jackson as well as an abundance of good land further South. Nick sold out, lock, stock, and barrel, and headed to Limestone County where he purchased a large tract of land on March 17, 1817. Like many other early settlers, he began building a log cabin, which he named Walnut Grove. In time, his plantation would expand to include 2312 acres of land.

In 1819, it was announced that the convention to write the constitution would convene in Huntsville. Davis was chosen as a delegate from Limestone County, and was further honored when he was chosen as one of the 15 men who actually wrote the document under Clement Clay’s leadership. When their task was finished, Davis was again chosen as a delegate to the first legislature later that fall.

Davis was elected to the Senate in 1820 and presided over the session in Cahaba that winter. Historian and writer Albert James Pickett wrote that “his impartiality, honesty, firmness, talents, and efficiency caused him to continue in the office of President of the Senate for the period of ten years.”

In 1829, Davis ran for Congress, but was defeated by his old friend Clement Comer Clay. He ran for governor, but was defeated by John Gayle and yet another time by Reuben Chapman. When he retired from politics in 1844, his loss was felt immensely.

Nick returned to his home in Limestone County, which surprisingly had not changed too significantly from when he first built it in the early 1800s. Although he had acquired much wealth over the decades, his lifestyle,

and his home, remained unpretentious. It had been enlarged however, to accommodate the many friends who spent days upon days visiting the Davis home, including the Henry Clay family.

Nick did acquire one expensive habit – that of horseracing. He brought his ponies to the Green Bottom Inn, John Connally's racing establishment in Huntsville, on many occasions. Though Davis had once admired Andrew Jackson, he found his ponies in direct competition with Jackson's, and as a result, developed a dislike of the Tennessee hero. He transported his horses to compete as far away as Mobile, New Orleans, and Nashville.

Nicholas Davis died in 1856, having never achieved his political aspirations. Still, he was known for admirable qualities, and although history will not list him as an Alabama governor, he will be remembered for his kindness, generosity, manners, and character. His children and descendants were well-known and accomplished in their own right. Among them, Zebulon Pike Davis was a five-time mayor of Huntsville.

A large monument to commemorate the lives of Nick and Martha Davis still stands near the site of the old homeplace, probably razed by fire. Nick Davis Road was appropriately named in his honor, and there are many of his descendants left in Limestone County today, including this author.

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## Limestone County - Thomas Bibb

LESLIE E. GRAY

Thomas Bibb was born January 1st, 1784 in Amelia County, Virginia of Welsh descent. He later moved to the Petersburg, Georgia, and came to this part of the Mississippi Territory along with LeRoy Pope to assess the land which had been ceded by the Indians to the United States Government. In 1811, he became a merchant and planter in the Tennessee River area, which later became known as Limestone County, Alabama. Many members of his family came to what would become known as Alabama and served in many capacities. His older brother, William Wyatt Bibb, became the first territorial governor for Alabama. Thomas Bibb represented Limestone County as a member of the Constitutional Convention held in the summer of 1819. His brother John Dandridge Bibb represented Montgomery County at the Convention. His brother William was elected to the office of governor, making him the first to serve in two capacities. The following year on July 10<sup>th</sup>, his brother William Bibb died due to complications from a fall from his horse a few days earlier. He was buried in Elmore County, AL.





At this time, Thomas Bibb was the president of the Alabama Senate and acting accordingly with the new state constitution, resumed his brother's post six days later, making him the second Governor of the new state of Alabama. His brother had worked to move the government to Cahaba, but died before the task was completed. Thomas managed to complete the move on the 6th of November, 1820.

When the term was up in November of 1821, Thomas Bibb did not run for re-election. He was succeeded by Israel Pickens, but not before urging the Annual Session of General Assembly to begin setting up the state bank and giving some recommendations on obtaining funds. He remained active in politics, being re-elected to the Alabama House of Representatives in 1828-9. He also worked as the director of the Huntsville Branch of the Bank of the State of Alabama.

The Bibb-Hutchens home at 300 Williams Avenue in Huntsville is attributed, in part, to Thomas Bibb. Stories vary from this point, but according to one source, Thomas Bibb bought the property, built the house on it, and sold it to his son-in-law James Bradley who was married to Bibb's daughter Adeline. Financial problems resulted in a depression in 1837, and Bradley was not able to keep the home. According to family legend, Adeline Bradley learned of the foreclosure when she confronted a gardener digging up her flowers and planting others. According to the gardener, the new owner wanted the flowers replaced. After many years, this home is once again in the Bibb family and is a near replica of the Belle Manor plantation mansion in Limestone County. Thomas and his wife Pamela Thompson lived at the mansion with their eleven children.

Belle Manor, name of the town as well as the plantation, was finished in 1826. When the railroad came through the Bibb property, according to legend, the map-maker asked a local what the name of the community was. Spoken with a very Southern accent, Belle Manor became Belle Mina and so it was recorded as such, and has been known by that name ever since.

The home took two years to build. It was built in the center of Bibb's property, on a hill with his property extending one mile in every direction. A sawmill and brick kiln were built on the property to furnish boards and bricks, which were constructed by slave artisans. The walls were two to three feet thick and a curved staircase graced the hall. Bibb took his infant daughter Eliza to the kiln and placed her footprint in one of the soft bricks, which was then placed in the front porch floor. It is believed that the six Doric columns are, at the center of each, an entire poplar log surrounded by bricks and plaster. One of the interesting, but untrue legends told by

children about the house is that the columns still held traces of bloody handprints left by wounded soldiers of the Civil War, some 75 years after the war was over.

Another unsubstantiated legend says that Thomas Bibb died unexpectedly while visiting New Orleans in 1839. In order to preserve his remains so he could be buried at his Limestone County family cemetery, his body was put into a barrel and filled with brandy. What we do know however, is that he was first interred at the Limestone County Bibb family cemetery, but 20 years later, re-interred at Huntsville's Maple Hill Cemetery, making Thomas Bibb one of five Alabama governors buried at the historic cemetery. At the time of his death, Thomas Bibb was 56 years old.

Another interesting story, with very little available information, related to his grandson Thomas, born to son Porter Bibb. Thomas had left home on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1858 to go hunting when he was attacked by a slave named Larkin, who wanted his gun so he could kill the boy's father. When the boy's body was found, it had been partially eaten by animals. Young Thomas, not yet 15, was buried in the Bibb family cemetery with the inscription, "Died in young manhood."

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## Monroe County – John Murphy

JACQUELYN PROCTER REEVES

John Murphy was born in North Carolina in about 1785. Among his classmates, at the school he attended in South Carolina, was another future Alabama governor, John Gayle. After Murphy's 1808 graduation, he was elected clerk of the South Carolina Senate. He also served as a trustee to the University of South Carolina from 1808 to 1818, at which time he moved to Monroe County, Alabama to become a planter. He was soon into politics and became a delegate to the 1819 Constitutional Convention in Huntsville, one of the four delegates from his county.

Murphy was elected to the Alabama House in 1820 and in 1822 to the Alabama Senate. As a member of the "North Carolina Faction," he ran unopposed for governor in 1824 and received 12,511 votes, succeeding Alabama's third governor, Israel Pickens, another member of the North Carolina Faction.



But Governor Murphy had inherited one of the contentious topics left over from the 1819 convention in Huntsville. At that time, the issue of where the state capital would be located was very much debated and discussed. It was finally decided that it would be located in central Alabama, ironically, but perhaps not accidentally, near the plantation home of Alabama's first governor, William Wyatt Bibb. Cahaba/Cahawba was prone to flooding and the residents were at the mercy of insect-borne diseases. For that reason, it was decided in 1826 to move the capital to Tuscaloosa. Cahaba was virtually abandoned, but revived briefly after the railroad came through in 1859. However, during the Civil War, the Confederate government took up many of the rails to use nearby on another line that had more military importance. The death knell of Cahaba sounded in 1865 when a flood covered the town, and the Dallas County seat was moved to Selma. Today Cahaba is maintained as a state historic site by the Alabama Historical Commission.

Governor Murphy had to deal with other matters, not as easily solved. The removal of the Creek Indians, which would eventually be known as the Trail of Tears, was a continuous and hotly-debated topic. Problems with the Bank of the State, the branch of the Bank of the U.S., financial disputes between the states of Mississippi and Alabama, and boundary lines between Georgia and Alabama were among the issues.

John Murphy was elected for a second term. After his term expired in 1829, he ran for U.S. Congress, but was defeated by Dixon Hall Lewis. He was elected however, in 1833 after defeating his classmate from his days in South Carolina, James Dellet. But Dellet did not go away quietly, and in 1839, the two men squared off again. This time, Dellet defeated Murphy. John Murphy retired from politics and died in 1841 at age 56.

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## Monroe County - John Watkins

JACQUELYN PROCTER REEVES

Dr. John Watkins was the first physician in the area and served as the first state senator from Monroe County. His home was in the Burnt Corn community and his home, a 2 ½ story frame structure built about 1812, is still standing. On his way to fight at the Battle of New Orleans, General Andrew Jackson passed through this community and is believed to have stayed with Dr. Watkins in this home.

Dr. Watkins had come to the Tombigbee settlement in 1813, moved to Claiborne in 1817 to Burnt Corn in 1825. He was buried in the graveyard of Bethany Baptist Church and re-interred in 1874 when the church was rebuilt nearby.

In *Pickett's History of Alabama*, an Indian massacre was described, having taken place in March 1818 on the Federal Road near Pinchoma. Red Stick Indians approached a cabin at night and massacred three adults and seven children. One child survived, thanks to the medical attention of Dr. John Watkins.

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# Washington County - Henry Hitchcock

LORA MCGOWAN

Henry Hitchcock's maternal grandfather was Ethan Allen, known as one of the Green Mountain Boys and hero of Ticonderoga during the American Revolution. Hitchcock was born in Burlington, Vermont on September 11, 1792 to Judge Samuel Hitchcock and Lucy Caroline Allen. His father was an outstanding attorney and helped write Vermont's first constitution. Little did he know that his son would provide the same service to the fledgling State of Alabama in 1819.

Henry graduated from the University of Vermont in 1811 and was admitted to the bar in 1815. He made his way to Mobile, Alabama, but moved to St. Stephens, Alabama's territorial capital, in 1817. He described the area as "a rude place – 200 miles from civilization, surrounded by Indians. Isolated from the world, it was the logical refuge of rogues fleeing from justice." The local citizens were "rough and disagreeable" and he claimed that there was no organized system of educating young people.

But Henry stayed and tried to make the best of it. His law partner was William Crawford, receiver of public monies for the St. Stephens Land Office. Henry Hitchcock was making a name for himself as well. He received an appointment as secretary of the Alabama Territory in 1818, and was chosen as one of two delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Huntsville in 1819. Israel Pickens, who would go on to become governor, was the other delegate from Washington County.

Hitchcock and Pickens were among the 15 delegates chosen to write the constitution under the leadership of Clement C. Clay of Madison County. During the Legislative session held in Huntsville later that year, Henry Hitchcock was named Alabama's first Attorney General, like his father before him who served as Vermont's first Attorney General. He moved to Cahaba, the new capital established as Alabama's first permanent capital, but after the capital was moved to Tuscaloosa, Hitchcock returned to Mobile. He was held in such high esteem that he was asked to give the eulogy at the funeral of Governor William W. Bibb after his July 1820 death.

In 1822, Henry Hitchcock wrote a moving letter to John Williams Walker upon learning of his resignation from the Senate. "I regret extremely that your ill health has driven you to this measure. The loss of

your public services will be severely felt. I regret it much on this account, but I regret your resignation more from the cause which has produced it.... Your friends here feel the greatest anxiety for your recovery....” Within a few short months, Walker died of tuberculosis.

In later years, Hitchcock and Israel Pickens had a bitter falling-out. Hitchcock continued to thrive financially through investments in a hotel and several buildings he financed. He was visited in 1825 by General LaFayette, who wished to pay his respects to the grandson of General Ethan Allen during LaFayette’s famous Alabama visit. Hitchcock once traveled to Nashville to present himself to General Andrew Jackson, and so impressed the general that he was invited to Jackson’s home, Hermitage, for a two-day visit.

In 1835, Hitchcock served as Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, becoming chief justice the next year. He left this position however to return to the practice of law and try to reverse his financial misfortunes caused by the Panic of 1837.

In 1839, Henry Hitchcock was elected as representative to Mobile County, but died on August 11, 1839 during a horrendous yellow fever epidemic. He was 47 years old. He had already lost several children to death in infancy.

After Henry’s death, his widow and remaining children moved to Nashville. Their son, Henry, Jr., moved to St. Louis and became a well-known attorney, and as such, helped establish the law school of Washington University. In 1889, young Hitchcock was elected as president of the American Bar Association, and wrote numerous books on law. Another son, Ethan Allen Hitchcock was influential in the Republican Party and closely tied to William McKinley. He was appointed minister to Russia in 1897 and Secretary of the Interior in 1898.



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## Washington County - Israel Pickens

LORA McGOWAN

The ancestry of the Israel Pickens is quite interesting. Several traditions were passed down by Pickens family scholars. In the late 1600s, a man named Robert Pickens, who was probably born in Scotland, was living in France and served as the Chief Justice of the Court. His wife was a Huguenot, and when the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685 (see William Rufus King biography for explanation of the edict), Robert Pickens and his wife left France to settle in Scotland. Records then show that they apparently moved to Limerick, Ireland at some point. Some of their children were born there and this is where Robert and his wife died. Three sons had come to America. One of those sons had a child he named Israel.



Israel Pickens was born January 30, 1780 in what is now Cabarrus County, North Carolina. He graduated from Jefferson College in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania in 1802. He read law and served in the North Carolina Senate from 1808 - 1810 and then in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1811 - 1817. Soon after, he came to St. Stephens in the Alabama Territory where he served as the land registrar from 1817 to 1821. In 1819, Pickens was elected to represent Washington County at the Constitutional Convention.

With the death of Governor William Wyatt Bibb and decision of his brother not to seek re-election, Israel Pickens looked toward the office of governor in 1821 as a candidate of the “North Carolina Faction.” Here was a person who represented the non-elitist “everyman” against the “Georgia Faction’s” candidate, Dr. Henry Chambers, who had been a delegate to the convention from Madison County. He also felt there was a need for a state bank, as opposed to Chambers’ support of private banks. Even though Dr. Chambers had the full support of influential men like Georgia’s Charles Tait and Alabama’s John Williams Walker, Pickens won the election by just less than 2,000 votes.

Israel Pickens, the third governor of Alabama, was inaugurated on November 9, 1821. Still, he had trouble getting approval for his state bank plan because of the influence of Georgia Faction men until two other North Carolina men were elected: William Rufus King and William Kelly. In 1823, he ran again against Dr. Chambers, and once again, won by a margin of just over 2,000 votes. A banking bill was passed by the General Assembly, and a state bank opened in Cahaba in 1824.

Israel Pickens served during a very interesting time in Alabama’s history. He was the governor that welcomed Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette, even though his visit to Alabama cost Alabama \$15,715.18 and nearly bankrupted the state. Pickens was interested in science and was a member of the American Colonization Society, a group of men who wanted slaves sent to the Free State of Liberia for re-introduction into the African culture.

After his term as governor, Pickens was appointed to the U.S. Senate to fill a vacancy. He moved to Cuba for his health (bad lungs), and died near Matanzas, Cuba on April 24, 1827 at age 47. He was buried in Greensboro, Hale County, Alabama.

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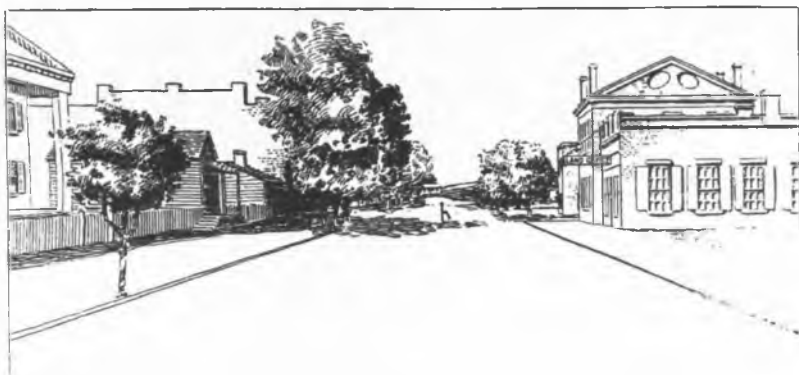
# Cahaba – Alabama’s First Permanent Capital

FRANK G. WESTMORELAND

The Cahaba River begins as most rivers do as a simple stream. It begins on top of the 1,500-foot Cahaba Mountain and grows to a 190-mile long river as it drains 1,870 square miles of the heart of Alabama. It remains the longest free flowing river in the state of Alabama and it has become a recreational, biological and geological treasure. Near Selma, Alabama it joins the Alabama River, and the fork of these two rivers is a place where important events occurred in the history of the state.



Surveyor General Thomas Freeman visited this site in 1817 and noted signs of early Indian inhabitants. He is buried in Huntsville’s Maple Hill Cemetery.



Vine Street, located between Capitol Avenue and  
First South Street – Old Cahawba



The Old Capitol at Cahawba



*The State House at Cahaba*

In 1818, a law was passed which established a committee to determine the most eligible site for establishment of the Seat of Government for the Alabama Territory. Competition was intense between the several backers of various sites that suited their political and economic purposes. The commission was prepared to recommend Tuscaloosa as the permanent site, but they were unaware that Governor William Wyatt Bibb had acted on his own authority and obtained a federal land grant at the site where the Cahaba and Alabama Rivers converged. The Governor stated his reasoning as follows: "The necessary advantages, approaching certainly nearer to the center of the Territory, and probably of its future permanent population than any other place equally eligible." Furthermore, the site itself was "beautiful" with "springs of good water and the prospect of good health."

In Huntsville, on October 26, 1819, the Governor announced the receipt of land grants that increased the size of the proposed site to 1,620 acres. He further advised that he anticipated at least \$300,000 from the sale of lots that he considered "amply sufficient to provide permanent building and accommodations for several departments of government." Profiteers and politicians began to flock to Cahaba making it one of the wealthiest and most populated towns in the state. Bibb carefully planned the town after colonial Philadelphia with wide tree-lined streets and avenues. As he had predicted the new capital city prospered and doctors, lawyers and merchants set up offices in two and three-story buildings on Vine Street. Almost immediately, two fine hotels appeared and by 1820 there were two newspapers.

Political factions in Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, and north Alabama remained unhappy with the Governor's choice of Cahaba as the capital city and they began to undermine the choice by exaggerated reports of flooding in Cahaba. After a big rainstorm in the spring of 1822, the Montgomery paper reported that legislators were forced to enter the capital building by rowing up to the second story window. The complaining continued until 1826 when the capital was moved to Tuscaloosa where it remained until 1846 when Montgomery became the permanent location.

Cahaba survived as a town although times were hard until the 1830s when several cotton warehouses were built and the situation improved. When the railroad came in the 1850s, the town went through another boom. As the Civil War approached, approximately 2,000 people lived in the town although most of them were slaves who worked for the prosperous plantation owners and merchants. Some have estimated that the population grew to nearly 6,000 during the Civil War as refugees sought safety in the Alabama heartland from other areas of the state.

As the war progressed, the cotton warehouses at Cahaba were taken by the Confederate Army and used as a prisoner of war camp. The Confederates crowded as many as 3,000 prisoners into the 16,000-foot prison compound, which was surrounded by a tall brick wall. As it was in both Federal and Confederate prison camps, conditions at Cahaba, or Castle Morgan as it was called, were extremely poor. Prisoners slept on bare floors with only one fireplace in the building to keep them warm. The water supply was an artesian well, which had become extremely polluted by the sewer runoff from the town and the prison itself. The daily meal consisted of 10 to 12 ounces of corn meal and 5 to 7 ounces of bacon. In February of 1865, a devastating flood swamped the town and the prison camp. The floodwaters were so deep in the prison stockade that prisoners were forced to stand in water up to their waist for four days and nights until arrangements were made to move 700 of them to Selma. Others were allowed to leave the compound in search of driftwood that could be used as flotation devices.

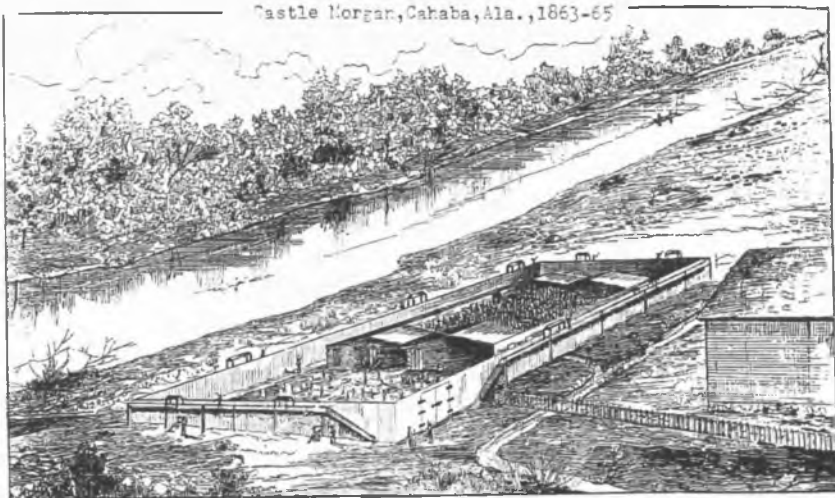
Among the Union prisoners were many that were captured by Forrest during his September 1864 raid into north Alabama and at the battles at Athens' Fort Henderson and Sulphur Trestle north of Athens. Once the Union prisoners were free, they became desperate to return to their northern homes. As quickly as possible, they made their way to Vicksburg where they hoped to find riverboat transportation up the Mississippi. A riverboat known as the *Sultana* was waiting at the Vicksburg wharf. The



crew and passengers of the *Sultana* numbered about 200. An additional 1,800 to 2,000 Union soldiers were allowed to board and the capacity of the *Sultana* was greatly exceeded. Very unsafe conditions resulted.

For 48 hours after casting off at Vicksburg, the *Sultana* made its way upstream without trouble, making a few scheduled stops and finally docking at Memphis on the evening of April 26, 1865. While taking on coal for fuel at Memphis, a leaky boiler was discovered. A crew was called in to repair the boiler and on April 27, the *Sultana* disembarked on her way to Cairo where most of the soldiers expected to disembark. As she swung around a bend about six miles north of Memphis, the leaky boiler exploded. Those men who were not killed in the explosion were thrown into the ice-cold water. Many could not swim and there was little wreckage to cling to. It is estimated that 1,500 to 1,900 lost their lives in the tragedy. Some of the dead may have been those who had served the Union at Fort Henderson in Athens and Sulphur Trestle north of Athens. The wreck of the *Sultana* is considered to be one of the most devastating boat disasters in history.

Castle Morgan, Cahaba, Ala., 1863-65



EXPLOSION OF THE STEAMER "SULTANA," APRIL 27, 1865.

As the Civil War came to an end so did the slave-based economy of Cahaba. As the prisoners were set free, they left Cahaba on their journey home. Most of the white citizens of Cahaba fled to the emerging industrial town of Selma. Later, many dismantled their homes and took them to Selma. The free black people chose to remain in the town, and they converted the town lots into fields and formed a rural community of their own. By the turn of the century, there were practically no traces of the glory days of Cahaba left. Only 70 houses were left standing empty, but they eventually collapsed. Today, Cahaba is a ghost town although the original streets are still very visible. Archaeologists are working on uncovering the past of Cahaba Prison and town. It has become an important archaeological site as well as a place to visit and see the ruins. There is a visitor's center where one can find knowledgeable people to provide maps and other tourist information.

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# William Wyatt Bibb – Territorial Governor and Alabama's First Governor

SUSAN CARR

Although William Wyatt Bibb did not serve as a delegate to the first Constitutional Convention, nor did he make his presence known, this series would be incomplete without acknowledging his influence and background.

William Bibb was born in Amelia City, Virginia in 1781. He moved with his family to Georgia, where his father, Captain William Bibb, a colonial officer and Virginia Legislator, died in 1796, leaving his widow with eight young children.



William Wyatt Bibb, the oldest child, attended William and Mary College in Williamsburg. He received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1801 and began his practice of medicine in Petersburg, Georgia. He took as his wife, Mary Freeman, daughter of Col. Holman Freeman of Wilkes County, Georgia.

At age 21, Dr. Bibb was chosen to serve in the Georgia House of Representatives from 1803 to 1805. Though barely old enough, he was elected to Congress and served from 1806 to 1813. He was re-elected to fill the vacancy left by William Crawford, and served until 1816.

In 1817, at the time Mississippi Territory divided and achieved statehood, Bibb was appointed by President James Monroe as Territorial Governor of Alabama. He went to St. Stephens, the temporary seat of government in the Alabama Territory.

At some time during his tenure as governor, Governor Bibb and his servant Peter had stopped near Fort Dale and had a meal with a resident family there. An hour after they left, Creek Indians slaughtered the family that had just fed the governor. Even though the Indians had been defeated finally at Horseshoe Bend, attack from hostile Indians was still an ever-present threat.

William Wyatt Bibb defeated Marmaduke Williams (delegate from Tuskaloosa County) to become the first governor for the State of Alabama. The election, which was somewhat close, came down to the members of the "Georgia Faction" versus all others. Many people felt that the Georgia immigrants had too much power and control over important decisions in the establishment of the government, including where the new capital would be permanently settled. In the end, the "Georgia Faction" prevailed and William W. Bibb was inaugurated in Huntsville, the provisional capital, on November 9, 1819. On December 14 of the same year, Alabama was awarded statehood.

During the convention in Huntsville, the first permanent capital was chosen to be Cahawba/Cahaba which was more centrally located and coincidentally, near the new governor's plantation. Governor Bibb oversaw the plan of the streets and the design of several buildings, but he would not serve for long in that capacity. His health was always somewhat tenuous due to tuberculosis and kidney ailments, and at times he expressed a desire to resign his office due to poor health, but he was tragically killed in a horseback-riding accident. In July 1820, at the age of 40, Governor Bibb was riding his horse when a surprise thunderstorm appeared and a clap of thunder frightened his horse. The horse bolted, throwing the governor to the ground. He was seriously injured and lingered for several days before his death on July 10 (some sources say July 9). His successor, the President of the Alabama Senate, was his brother Thomas Bibb, who agreed to finish his brother's term, but would not seek election for himself as governor.

In honor of Alabama's first governor, the county of Cahaba was

renamed Bibb County. The state of Georgia has also honored one of her early citizens by naming a county for him as well. Governor William Bibb's gravesite is believed to be in a family cemetery in Elmore County, although its exact location is unknown.

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# Book Review

## When Spirits Walk

By

Jacquelyn Procter Gray

Illustrated by

Leslie E. Gray

Purchase from: Shaver's Book Store, 2362 Whitesburg Dr., South, Huntsville, Al 35801. 1-(256) 536-1604.

Once in a while a book comes along that entertains and teaches, not to mention makes us relax into a world of enchantment. When Spirits Walk is such a book. Everyone loves a ghost story and Ms. Gray has given us seventeen delightful stories in this small book.

Many of the seventeen stories in this book are quite familiar to us, i.e., the ghost of Sally Carter and the ghost of Hazel Green. But I've never known them to be

so refreshingly given without fake flourishes of an author's imagination and hearsay. Ms. Gray has stuck to the facts. She has gone back to the sources including court records where available. A tremendous amount of research has gone into the background of these stories and is reflected in the believability of each.

Not the least of this book's charms are the illustrations by the author's beautiful daughter, Leslie, who, incidentally is also pictured on the cover.

This delightful book would be a welcome gift for any occasion. Enjoy.

- Reviewed by Dorothy Scott Johnson



## Book Review

### **The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics**

By

**James Oakes**

Probably no president has been the principal subject of as many books as Abraham Lincoln. Recent years have seen at least three works, including the one under review, dealing specially with his relations with other people. The other two are Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals* (2005) and *Lincoln and Chief Justice Taney* written by James F. Simon (2006).

Now comes James Oakes with *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery*, which is about as close to a page turner as non-fiction can be. The reader sees Lincoln and Douglass, two of the great minds of their time, juxtaposed, each wit his own agenda, sometimes in apparent conflict with each other, but each determined to prevail in seeing his respective cause justified and upheld.

And their causes were not exactly the same. Lincoln's was to preserve and restore the Union. Douglass's was to end slavery, and it can be said safely that he intended to do this by virtually any means, including armed rebellion, if that proved to be the only solution.

Professor Oakes reinforces the public image of Lincoln as a man of almost unlimited patience when dealing with political issues, and portrays him as possibly more conservative than we might impulsively think of him as being. Oakes suggests that many of Lincoln's actions and *statements* that would today seem racist were, in fact, only for political consumption, designed so as not to lead Northern white voters to believe that what he was actually about was more than preserving the Union.

Undoubtedly, Lincoln was one of the master politicians of all times, but Douglass was certainly at least almost as great. However, one thing that must be remembered when these two great leaders are considered together is that their constituencies were entirely different. Douglass



said, with some justification, that Lincoln was a “white man’s president.” And that is the way he comes through most of the time. In spite of their differences, Oakes makes it clear that each man considered the other as his friend, and that there was great mutual respect between them.

One criticism that some might have of *The Radical and the Republican* is the scarcity of footnotes. But Oakes relies heavily on quotes, which seem to be adequately documented. It is actually somewhat refreshing not to deal with overabundant footnotes. (Goodwin’s book, referred to above, contains 120 pages of footnotes.) But a more expansive bibliography and an index would probably be helpful. This book was published by W. W. Norton & Company, 2007. The hardcover book sells for \$26.95 and the ISBN-10 is: 0-393-06194-9.

- Reviewed by Hartwell Lutz

# **Administration**

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