

# *The Huntsville Historical Review*

A History of Early Settlement:  
Madison County Before Statehood  
1808-1819



James Madison, President of the United States from 1809-1817

*Special Issue*  
*Published by*  
*The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society*



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# The Huntsville Historical Review

*Special Issue*

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## President's Page

On December 13, 1808, the land in the "bend of the Tennessee River" officially became Madison County by an act of the Mississippi Territorial Government. Although it was the second county of what was to become the State of Alabama, it became the most important county in those early years of settlement. Many residents of Madison County played a prominent role.

Madison County was home to Alabama's first bank, first library, first Masonic Lodge, and many other "firsts" too numerous to mention. More significantly, Madison County was the site of the Constitutional Convention that brought Alabama into the union as its 22<sup>nd</sup> state.

This issue is centered on the founding years from about 1804, when the earliest settlers began to arrive, until 1819 when Alabama attained statehood. At the suggestion of Ms. Rane'e' Pruitt, Archivist for the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society adopted this publication as our contribution to the Madison County Bicentennial. As with all other society articles and books, it was accomplished by local volunteer historians who spent untold hours researching, writing, and rewriting to provide a history of that era heretofore not available. I believe you will find this reading most interesting.

The Historical Society is most appreciative to these contributors and to the Madison County Board of Commissioners for underwriting the costs of this publication.

Bob Adams  
President

## Editor's Notes

The Huntsville Madison County Historical Society, with contributions from the Madison County Commissioners, is pleased to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Madison County, Alabama, with this special issue of the *Huntsville Historical Review*. It is our great pleasure to present a comprehensive outline of the people who lived in our corner of wilderness, when America was young. Our story starts in 1808, with the birth of Madison County in the Mississippi Territory.

To achieve our goal, the special issue committee decided to create an outline that would begin with the settlements in the foothills of Appalachia, unearthing family names, homesteads, and general information long lost in the last two hundred years. Those early settlements include: Hunt's Spring, Indian Creek, Three Forks of the Flint, Ditto's Landing, New Market, and Ryland/Maysville/Brownsborough.

Who were these early settlers? Why did they stay, and how did they survive? Perhaps you are a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student studying Madison county history, a member of the Historical Society, or one of the many 21<sup>st</sup> century settlers to this area. Whatever the case, there is something here for you.

This project was the brainchild of archivist Ranee' Pruitt, who is known far and wide to researchers who have passed through the doors of the Heritage Room in the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library in search of history. Her name appears in countless books by appreciative authors. Ranee', along with the hard work of Susanna Leberman, provided the facts and foundation of this issue.

This publication is the proud accomplishment of many talented writers and historians in Madison County who volunteered for this project, unaware that they would find themselves consumed by their interest in the stories of our forefathers. They have spent hours searching for clues and facts to bring us a collection of interesting stories for present and future students, young and old. Explore the history around you and the settlement from whence you came. Madison County is rich in history and steeped in great adventure.

Jacque Reeves  
Editor



## Dedication



Madison County Commissioners

Seated left to right: Faye Dyer, Chairman Mike Gillespie, Dale Strong  
Standing left to right: Roger Jones, Mo Brooks, Jerry Craig, Robert C. (Bob) Harrison

On December 13, 2008 Madison County, Alabama will celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday. Throughout these years this county has always been blessed with concerned and caring citizens.

Former County Commissioner James Record felt that his county and history just seemed to blend together. Mr. Record planned to write five volumes about his county's history, and before his untimely death, two books were in print. Mr. Record acknowledged he was not a professional historian nor did he intend to create a literary masterpiece. He also conceded that history books are not notorious as moneymakers. However, he had hoped the county commissioners who followed would recognize the need, and joy, of its history and continue to preserve the past. He earnestly hoped the Madison County Commissioners would publish other volumes and continue his work. In effect Mr. Record, in the dedication to his book, challenged the Commissioners and the people of Madison County to keep their history alive and well.

This was not just about the original family settlers but also about those who have moved in and enjoyed these communities. As Madison County grew, so grew much of the illustrious past of Alabama, the Old Southwest, the South, and the nation. Madison County has been a vibrant representation of Alabama progress. The links have been blurred, even obscured, but the connections are there to be made. Each is a part of the whole, and yet, much remains to be done.

As passionate as Mr. Record was about Madison County, the writers of these essays in the *Review* are no less so. Certainly these non-professional writers did not work for fame or fortune, to produce a masterpiece of historical literature, or to sway the public to any political ideology. Nevertheless these writers spent long, difficult hours

researching, writing, erasing, and rewriting to share what they learned and felt important to share.

And as Mr. Record noted in his work, some names were left out; some probably should not have been included. A few names might be misspelled, facts not straight or at the least a bit crooked along the way. Thus the editors of the *Review* challenge readers to write their own version and to share.

The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society wishes to thank the Madison County Commissioners, past and present, who have provided the means for this very special issue.

By Robert Williams Governor of the Mississippi Territory.

Whereas by the Ordinance for the Government of this Territory, it is provided that for the prevention of crimes and injuries and for the execution of process criminal and civil, the Governor shall from time to time, as circumstances may require, lay out the parts of the district in which the Indian titles, shall have been extinguished, into Counties and Townships, subject however to such alterations as may hereafter be made by the Legislature.

And whereas the Indian titles have been extinguished in a tract of Country lying and being within this Territory, principally on the north side of the Tennessee River, commonly called the great Bend of Tennessee, and bounded as follows;— beginning on the north bank of the Tennessee River on the Cherokee boundary, thence westerly along said boundary to the southern boundary of the State of Tennessee, thence West with said last mentioned boundary till it intersects the Chickasaw boundary line, thence southerly along said Chickasaw line, ending the Tennessee River twice to the beginning, agreeably to a Survey made under the authority of the United States, within which boundary there are several thousand inhabitants having no regular laws or officers among them.

And it being also provided by said Ordinance that the laws shall have force in all parts of the district.— For the use, therefore that the inhabitants residing in the said tract of Country may have the benefit of law.

I do in compliance with said Ordinance and for the purposes aforesaid lay out said tract of Country, described and bounded as aforesaid, into one County, to be called and known by the name of Madison, subject however to such alterations as may hereafter be made by the Legislature.



Given under my hand and the seal of the Territory at the Town of Washington this thirteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and eight, and in the thirty third year of the Independence of the United States.

By the Governor,  
(Signed) R. Williams Secy

(Signed) Robert Williams

Proclamation signed by Territorial Governor Robert Williams declaring the formation of Madison County, dated December 13, 1808

# Alabama Fever

NANCY ROHR

In early winter of 1816, James O. Crump returned to Huntsville, Madison County, Mississippi Territory with a shipment of 1,000 Christmas oranges. He had purchased the merchandise in Mobile and St. Stephens and had the cargo poled up the Tombigbee River to Tuscaloosa at the falls of the Black Warrior River. Then Crump's sturdy team hauled a wagon with 2,000 pounds of goods overland and up the three hills "of consequence," an eight-day trip. This second half of the journey, 128 miles, along the Black Warrior Road, connected with Bear Meat Cabin Road, down the mountain to "Old Man" Ditto's Landing, crossed the Tennessee River, and made the last ten miles into the town. His merchandise included "brown and Havana white sugars, coffee, rum, wine, a few dry goods" and those oranges. Apparently he suffered no losses to marauding Indians, robbers, or mishaps along the way. Delighted with his efforts, Crump boasted that not more than half a dozen of the 1,000 oranges spoiled.<sup>1</sup> One hopes Mr. Crump's financial records showed a profit for his effort.

Was James Crump a speculator, merely hoping for good sales of his merchandise? Who would be there in Huntsville and this still newly formed county of Madison, anticipating those specialty items? Indeed, Mr. Crump knew very well the demand for his goods. Merchant Crump's "storehouse" and dwelling were recorded in the deeds in 1813 and perhaps in existence even in 1811 or 1812 in Huntsville. Most likely he lived above the store or behind it on the North Side of the Square.<sup>2</sup> Merchant Crump recognized those members of the community only able to "window shop" when they walked by his store. He also knew his many real customers of the county, their wishes, and more importantly, their ability to pay for these delicacies.

After all, Madison County according to the 1810 census, numbered 4,699 citizens and was growing daily. By 1820 the number would be over 17,000. This Great Bend of the Tennessee River already had settlers eagerly waiting in several small communities. The federal government tried to establish order, but still the settlers came. It was illegal to settle here, but still they came. Obstacles had to be overcome, but still they came. Solutions obviously could not happen overnight, and still they came. Although official statehood did not arrive until 1819, it was Alabama Fever!

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One major obstacle to settlement was the many Native American Indians. Members of the five "civilized tribes" – the Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws, and Chickasaws – already occupied much of the land of the Deep South. As late as the 1760s, because of their allegiances with the British, the Cherokee were considered a world power, an important military ally. Actually all of the pre-existing tribes were politically sophisticated and militarily strong. Now as they interacted with traders and trappers, many of the Native American Indians had become settled agriculturalists. It was no easy task to induce these tribes to give up their substantial and prosperous enclaves. Pressure from the federal government continued, often with a sly combination of deception, bribery, and even armed conflict. Although they perceived that no one could own the air, much less the land beneath it, the Chickasaws and Cherokees had firmly

established themselves in the Great Bend of the Tennessee River that would include Madison County.

This was a common hunting ground laden with bear, elk, and bison. With patience, the hunter could find turkey, pigeons, squirrels, deer, wild geese and ducks and streams filled with bass, bream and jack salmon. No battles were ever fought in this land between the Indians and the settlers. Even horse “borrowing” had ceased. The federal government, after the Revolutionary War, made great efforts to teach the Indians “in the ways of civilization” of the white man. Indian agents instructed the Indian women in spinning and weaving. As part of the payment for their lands, tools and machinery for farming and milling were included. Even a few Indian schools were established. That intrepid traveler, Anne Royall, declared, “Why these Indians have been like us – cornfields, apple trees and peach trees. Fences like ours. The houses look tight and comfortable.”<sup>3</sup>



The first Great Migration to the Old Southwest began with the organization of the Mississippi Territory in 1798 that expanded to include what would become Madison County in 1804. Drove of settlers were already poised in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia to settle new lands. The outlook for agriculture in the Upper South had become bleak, and once fertile acres had been exhausted by continuous growth of tobacco. With the invention of Whitney’s workable cotton gin, a new short staple cotton could be grown profitably. Immigrants were lured toward this new land with the prospects of a new life and the promise of greater opportunities. Intangible as it seemed, life could be better than what they left. The Alabama River basin was called the “Acadia of Southern America” and the Tennessee Valley was advertised as “Happy Valley.” The area here was considered “the most buoyant and promising of all the settlements.” Huntsville became a rendezvous for settlers and speculators alike. Publications and promoters, newspapers, letters, and “wagging tongues extolled the wealth, the health, and the beauty” of the countryside.<sup>4</sup> The potential for any family that worked hard, was resourceful, and was

courageous, became “The American Dream.” And, anyway, who would know exactly where the land boundaries were or were not?

It is not surprising, then, that Alexis de Tocqueville, after touring America, remarked on the “strange unrest” of the Americans: “In the United States a man builds a house in which to spend his old age, and he sells it before the roof is on; he plants a garden and leaves it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he brings a field into tillage and leaves other men to gather the crops...he settles in a place, which he soon leaves to carry his changeable longings elsewhere.” He is not weary of the chase even when death overtakes him.<sup>5</sup>

After the Revolutionary War, Georgia held claims to vast western lands – all the way to the Mississippi River. The state legislature in 1789 sold huge tracts of land to the Yazoo Land Companies, some 20-25 million acres. This area included the highly desirable tract that was known as the Great Bend of the Tennessee River. Protests swept Georgia, and President George Washington issued a proclamation forbidding settlement. Any settlers, or intruders, were denied protection from the government in these areas.

Nonetheless, a second Georgia land fraud in 1795 brought an even bigger scandal. Among other sales, all of what would become North Alabama was sold for the sum of \$60,000. It was not a surprise to the citizens to discover that almost all the legislators had accepted bribes for their votes regarding the sale. Immediately another election was called, and newly elected members rescinded the act. Georgia historian, George Gilmer noted “all the members of Congress from Georgia, except one, were turned out of office...as the people said, they talked at all times upon every subject, but objected not a word against increased pay per day.”<sup>6</sup> However, by 1802, the federal government and the state of Georgia came to satisfactory terms, and Georgia ceded all her western lands to the United States.

After great pressure from the federal government, in 1805 the Chickasaws gave up their claims to what is now Madison County, and the Cherokees ceded their lands in 1806. These two land transactions totaled 345,600 acres. According to the Indian treaties, commissioners from the U.S. government and representatives from the Chickasaw and Cherokee nations were required to attend the running of the boundary lines to prevent any later misunderstandings. Thomas Freeman, chief surveyor, his crew, and the required witnesses gathered at Chickasaw Island (Hobbs Island) in September 1807, and the lines were surveyed and marked by blazes on the trees. This area, shaped somewhat like a triangle, was bordered on the south by the Tennessee River, on the west by the newly created Chickasaw line, on the north by the Tennessee state boundary, and on the east by the new Cherokee Indian border. (The Indians remained sovereign within their now much smaller nations, and a passport was required to enter their territory.)

Mississippi Territorial Governor Williams wrote Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin in August 1808 about “the settlements of the public lands in the great bend of the Tennessee River within this territory.... There were at least thirteen hundred families already settled on those lands.... There are no laws or officers, civil or military amongst them.” The Governor thought action by the federal government was necessary because these were “honest and well-disposed people.”<sup>7</sup>



Mississippi Territorial Governor Robert Williams  
(Courtesy Alabama Department of Archives and History)

Governor Williams, on December 13, 1808, proclaimed this triangular wedge a new county, named for James Madison, then Secretary of State, and soon to be the newly elected president. In preparation for federal land sales, a census was ordered.

This “Squatter Census” of January 1809 enumerated a total of 2,223 people – 353 heads of families, 473 free white adult males, 388 free white adult females, 1,362 people under the age of 21, and 322 slaves. This demonstrated, among other things, that the population was not made up of only rowdy frontiersmen. They came with their wives and children to settle. Some few among this population might be considered “poor whites.” They were considered not quite farmers who lived by hunting, fishing, or herding and dabbled in subsistence agriculture. Most of these settlers came not to make a fortune but simply for new opportunities and a new life. Their efforts went to build the home, clear the trees, and to plant corn. Cotton was not on their mind, yet. The yeoman farmer who owned any slaves was likely to work alongside his few slaves. As a group, the settlers were considered “sociable, democratic and almost universally hospitable.” Slavery was not unusual and 82 men, or 23% of those counted, owned slaves. Of the enumerated slaveholders, only nine had ten or more slaves and might be considered planters. Planters would develop large-scale cotton plantations on prime land. They were likely to be already well to do, well educated, and well able to enter into banking, mercantile businesses, manufacturing, and, of course, politics.<sup>8</sup>

Scanning the names on that first 1809 census, there were at least 67 duplicate surnames, suggesting brother-brother or brother-father combinations of these very first settlers. It would come as no surprise that few of the surnames ended in a, i, o, or u. These were Anglo-Saxon folks, and more specifically Scots-Irish of the borderlands already accustomed to moving. Dr. Samuel Johnson wrote earlier about their emigration from North Britain to America in 1773. “Whole neighborhoods formed parties for removal; so that departure...is no longer exile. He that goes thus accompanied...sits down in a better climate, surrounded by his kindred and his friends; they carry with them

their language, their opinions, their popular songs, and hereditary merriment: they change nothing but the place of their abode.”<sup>9</sup> These people would fill the southern Appalachians all the way to Alabama. Their concentric rings of friends and family formed a kind of clan whose members proudly embraced their intense pride. However, stubborn independence and loyalty combined with their sense of honor formed a strength that would see these pioneers’ children through the years of the Civil War and afterwards.

So they brought with them their immediate family, relatives of many connections, and neighbors from their old locality. For instance, near Hazel Green, Charles Cabaniss, who established the first known cotton spinning factory in Alabama, settled with his own large group of family and friends in 1809. They included the Allens, who would soon provide two sons-in-law, John and Drury; his father-in-law, Pines Ingram and his family; his widowed niece, Lucy Caldwell and her children; the wealthy Townsend brothers, Samuel and Edmund, and their nephews.

This group, like many others, was not together by accident. Most of them had lived near one another in Lunenburg County, Virginia. They planned and moved together first into Davidson County, Tennessee. In 1805 Charles Cabaniss received the contract to build the academy in Nashville for \$1,890. While Cabaniss was there prominent names were recognizable in Nashville besides Generals Jackson and Robertson and Col. John Coffee. John Brahan was captain of the military garrison, and Aaron Burr was just down the way at Stone’s River building boats for some inexplicable reason that very year.<sup>10</sup>

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Thomas Freeman continued to survey the public lands that would be offered for sale in the new county. To make land sales as equitable as possible in this vast area, a grid pattern was used. The Huntsville Baseline (east-west) was established at the Tennessee state line and the Huntsville Meridian (north-south) became the longitudinal line from which all lands in northern Alabama were to be surveyed. This concept allowed a subdivision of 36 one-mile-square sections (36 square miles) of 640 acres each with town-range coordinates. All land was then measured relative to that base Meridian. As a result, Madison County has two ranges west of the Meridian and two full ranges east of the line, plus portions of a third. Most settlers could afford the most common division,  $\frac{1}{4}$  section, or 160 acres.

Working from his base camp on the Flint River, Freeman offered additional information that a prospective settler and buyer might need to bid on land at the future sales – detailed field notes that included rivers, creeks, springs, cleared lands, types of soil, wooded area. Freeman was urged to hurry; the squatters were anxious and impatient.<sup>11</sup>

Surveyor Freeman, walking his chains, encountered most of these people. In his official report, he described them, arriving daily; they were not like other intruders of public lands. “With respect to the intruders on the public lands, there are an abundance of them.... In justice to these people I must remark that...they are quiet, peaceable, extremely industrious, and fully sensible to their situation.” He continued with examples of their industriousness. “Every cottage has its field of corn...small patches of cotton, tobacco, and wheat are also cultivated, all of which grown luxuriantly. Seven small mills for grinding corn will be erected by winter next, some are already finished and actually running.... A distillery is also in forwardness and will be in operation in a few days.”



Freeman added, these settlers looked forward to remaining and participating as full citizens of the United States with all that entailed.<sup>12</sup>

In the meanwhile, outside of what would become Madison County, several hundred squatters nearby were required to vacate lands of the Indian Nation. General Wade Hampton, who commanded the southern military district, built Fort Hampton on the Elk River in Limestone County in 1809-1810. (This was the only fort ever established in the United States to protect the Indians.) Soldiers stationed there forcibly removed intruders from the Indian lands. Being a squatter or intruder was considered a federal crime and treated seriously. As late as 1831 in the state of Georgia, citizens were convicted for illegal residence in the Cherokee Nation lands and were sent to the penitentiary.<sup>13</sup>

These relocated squatters, of course, immediately crowded into Madison County. Colonel Return J. Meigs, the Cherokee agent in charge of the squatter removal, also wrote about the settlers. They were “reputable, well informed, and rich in cattle and horses.... They request me to assure the Executive that they did not set down on these lands to exclude themselves from regular society, to evade the bearing of their portion of public duty, civil or military.”<sup>14</sup>

The Great Migration was about to become legal within Madison County. Now the area of the Great Bend was available for lawful purchase and settlement. To facilitate sales, Freeman was instructed to act as register to receive applications from squatters and grant them permission to remain as “tenants at will” on these lands until they could bid at public sale. This sale was in Nashville on April 5, 1809, and 23,960 acres were purchased at auction, most sold on credit to be paid within five years. Forty percent of the original settlers purchased their land. Not surprisingly, the largest buyer was the man who knew the land so well – Thomas Freeman – who secured 8,480 acres.<sup>15</sup>

If this all appears cut and dry as statements of treaties, proclamations, and sales, it was quite the contrary to the settlers living in this area in small clusters that would continue to expand. Except for individual homesteads, pioneers moved into the areas of seven early communities. Using Judge Taylor’s memoirs, Dr. Frances Roberts described many of the extended family groups and the areas of settlement. Generally, the pioneers were located near Hickory Flat and Mountain Forks of the Flint; Three Forks of the Flint; Ryland-Brownsboro-Maysville; Hunt’s Spring to the Tennessee River; Indian Creek; Hazel Green; and Meridianville.<sup>16</sup>

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The people had poured in on roads from nearby Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Most came overland and through Tennessee. The Walton and Cumberland roads lead from Knoxville toward Nashville, then still more southeast toward Georgia and became the Great South Trail. At some point, usually near Winchester, Tennessee, the way turned south and followed the old “Great South” Cherokee path down the Flint River into the heart of the territory. Other settlers, who had gathered near Nashville, entered down the Meridianville Road. These mere traces and trails, developed by the Indians and traders, continued to beckon prospective settlers. Some families rafted down the Tennessee River through dangerous waters to arrive in the territory, but one could only go in one direction – downstream. The Indian trails were more reliable.

The folk-saying heard in the southern highlands, “when I get ready to move, I just shut the door, call the dogs and start,” was a little more complicated for most of these

settlers on the move. Men often first came alone, as did John Hunt, before bringing their families. In many cases, “front parties” came with perhaps several male family members, oldest sons, brothers, or friends, to select a homestead. Once the extended groups decided where to locate, and the crops were harvested at home, everyone prepared to move. They often came in wagon trains. “One wagon carried all the people that it could, another wagon carried the food and one wagon was filled with rails – from which they made a pen and put up the hogs when they took up camp...cows and calves were tied to the back of wagons, chickens in a coop...as you cannot lead a hog someone sat in the back of the wagon and dropped corn along to keep them following...when they camped it was near a spring or creek.”<sup>17</sup>

Not everyone would have been fortunate enough to ride. Some pushed handcarts in front of them. Perhaps the family trudged along beside a yoke of oxen hitched to a pole that had been struck through a great hogshead in which their goods had been packed. Those who were more prosperous had covered wagons drawn by oxen or horses. Only a few miles could be traveled each day, if they were lucky. So everyone was up and ready at sunup for a simple breakfast that would get them on the road early. The day must have seemed endless with the slow pace made more difficult on rough Indian trails, or no trails at all. A few swamps and shallow places were made into corduroy roads with small poles cut nearby. They waded through creeks, and rafts were made to cross the rivers.



However, the immigrants needed to be alert at all times. This was a new, untamed land with few guides, except word-of-mouth directions and the blazes marked on the trees. Making way through the dense forests, one might expect wild animals, disgruntled Indians, dissatisfied French and Spanish, and just plain lawless, mean-spirited men who roamed singularly or in bands.

As evening came, the party stopped and prepared to camp for the night. The animals were rounded up, fed and hobbled for the night or enclosed in temporary pens. The younger children gathered wood, and a fire was made with sticks rubbed together or flint struck on iron. After the long day of travel, the meal was likely to be cornbread cooked over the open fire and called ashcake or Johnnycake. Certainly the utensil most used was the ever-present iron skillet. Sweet potatoes baked in the ashes and meat roasted on sticks over the fire included venison, opossum, or wild turkey killed along the way, offering a change from bacon or other cured meat. However, if the wood was too wet,

supper might well be cold, damp leftover biscuits or cornbread. As dark came on, the pioneers slept where they could on a bed of leaves, a blanket perhaps, and during rain under a tent of poles and blankets. The men took turns to stand watch during the night.<sup>18</sup>

The yeoman farmer's choice of land would be near the foothills and coves with a reliable source of water. "Each man blazed the trees surrounding his claim and laid down the first four logs of a cabin, and nobody would have thought of saying that he did not own the land." When they arrived, they cut logs and built cabins of one room with a dirt floor. If visitors came, and they were always welcome, an extra room could be made by hanging a quilt from the rafters. The children slept in the loft, reached by wooden pegs placed in the wall. The fireplace offered heat – too much in the summer time and seldom enough in the winter. But it was essential for meal preparation. Plates were made of wood and drinking cups of gourds unless some crockery or pewter was brought from the old home. They soon cleared enough land to plant their first crop in the spring. Corn was the necessary crop to the first settlers. Even that crop was a laborious effort that might not be completely successful. "One for the squirrel, one for the crow, three to come up, and two to grow."<sup>19</sup>

In this setting, everyone labored. If the yeoman farmer owned slaves, he was likely to work alongside them; to share living space and eat the same food. The woman worked as hard as her husband and paused to have the babies, too. She cooked over the open fire, washed at the spring, prepared the cotton, dyed it, and spun it into thread. Only then could she weave the strand on a clumsy homemade loom. She had the garden to make, tend to, and gather. Here the younger children could help along with the farm animals. Candles and soap had to be made, and hogs killed at the first cold snap. This work was from sunup to sundown, darkness only brought relief from the chores. It is no wonder that barn-raising, quilt-making, and corn-husking became social occasions among the neighbors in the small communities.

Mothers taught their children the alphabet and to cipher. Generally the yeoman farmer was self-taught, and the aristocratic planter was university-taught. Some lucky girls would go north to Knoxville or even Philadelphia to "finish" their education. Young men whose families aspired for them to become a lawyer or doctor were likely sent away to Virginia or Pennsylvania, and even Massachusetts. A law practice was often perceived by the son of the small farmer as a way to rise in the world, and of course as an entry into politics.

Locally, with further district land sales, early trustees for each township managed acreage set aside for schools. Those school lands were rented out and the money used to pay a teacher for a neighborhood school. A schoolmaster might come by for a while if the area could raise enough money for a salary, room, and board. Successful communities considered starting an academy to prepare children for higher education.

Although the largest sector of settlers was composed of middle class farmers, well-to-do pioneers also arrived. Because they were more likely to have precise information about where they wanted to locate, the planters often sent the slaves ahead with an overseer. Most likely the slaves dug, shaped, and made bricks on the site or nearby to build the plantation house, and then the family arrived by a carriage ride, albeit a bumpy carriage ride, to settle in. The planter aristocrat also traveled with a group of companions who shared a common education, kinship bonds, or business ties. They were more likely to perceive this relocation as an opening to new business ventures.

Slaves were kept on the property and performed the manual labor and fieldwork. The slave was at the mercy of his owner and the overseer, but in times of financial disaster slaves were considered as easily disposable assets, and the first “things” to be sold. Likewise the death of the master brought division of property and often slave families. They could be rented out on a yearly or monthly basis. Of course eventually it was against the law to teach any slave to read or write.

Within the household, although they were often called servants, many workers were needed. Most plantation households maintained a cook and her helpers, a mammy, menservants, and washerwomen. In addition households maintained workers for the stables, yard work, errands, kitchen garden, and more according to the status of the household. The mistress of the house supervised the care and health of the children and often the slaves. The squire managed his fields with the expectation of success. The crop – planted, hoed, and picked by slaves – would be cotton. This household was more likely to need to purchase surplus corn from the local farmers to feed their slaves and stock. The planters usually had ready cash or credit to bid for, and to win, the river basin land, which was the prized improved Indian properties called “the old fields.” Anne Royall wrote “This land is so clear of undergrowth that you can drive a wagon anywhere thru the woods; and this body extends, I am told 20 miles in width.”<sup>20</sup>

The 1810 census showed a population of 3,745 whites and 954 blacks for a total of almost 4700, one-fifth of the population were slaves. However, according to the 1810 tax returns, 78.6% of the heads of families were non-slaveholders. Those who owned slaves maintained from 1 to 31 slaves. In the first, non-slaveholding group, 52.8% of the people owned no land. In contrast the slaveholders owned between 160 to 1,280 acres of land. Furthermore, only 4 heads of families had more than 20 slaves. Within five years, the number of heads of households had doubled and the number of non-slaveholders decreased from 78.6% to 61.71% – workers were needed for profit.<sup>21</sup>

The rush for land became so great that the land office was moved from Nashville to Huntsville. By 1812, land that sold for \$2 an acre earlier now sold for \$20 an acre. Inflated land prices attracted thousands of settlers who were seemingly unmindful of the landslide sure to follow.

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Governor Williams recognized the need for law and order in these anxious times. Some pioneers were accustomed to solving troubles with little regard to the law enforcement that was located many miles away or non-existent. Judge Taylor in his recollections suggested that before laws were enforced, bands of men led by “Captain Slick,” took the law into their own hands. This frontier committee issued a warning to the alleged offender that it might be timely for him to leave town. If the advice was not heeded, perhaps the troublemaker was thrashed with a hickory rod, or if the offense was severe, the penalty delivered was also severe. A man’s ears might be cropped and the criminal branded by backwoodsmen using this vigilante justice when it appeared crimes were going unpunished. It was said Captain Slick’s Law “purified the moral atmosphere.” The alleged offender was lucky if he only got “fed a supper of Blue plums” from a double-barrel shotgun. When law and order finally appeared, Captain Slick and his men mostly faded from sight and memory. Historian Edward C. Betts, writing later and perhaps not wanting to recognize those rougher ways, offered that it might all be legend.<sup>22</sup>

In 1808 Governor Williams appointed Stephen Neal, “an active and intelligent man,” to serve as Sheriff and Justice of the Peace. Law and order would prevail. More civil appointments followed and within a year the circuit and county courts were established. Hugh McVay and Benjamin Williams became Justices of the Peace. Louis Winston was appointed Attorney General, Peter Perkins became Clerk of the Circuit Court and William Winston Clerk of the County Court. Later John Hunt was appointed coroner. Only one constable, David Cobb, was deemed necessary.<sup>23</sup> Federal soldiers opened the road to Athens. Meridian and Elkton Roads were laid out. As settlers continued arriving, Limestone Road was established. A spur of the Knoxville-Nashville Road was built to New Market and became commonly called Winchester Road. Brown’s Ferry Road opened and a road to Gilbreaths’ Landing was marked out. Road overseers were appointed for the road to Beaver Dam Fork. A horse path from Brownsboro and another from Flint River now led into town.<sup>24</sup>



Future Alabama Governor Hugh McVay

Surveyor John Coffee was chosen to map the official town plat. His employers, local land developers LeRoy Pope, James Jackson, and William P. Anderson, urged Coffee to make the plat appear as “dashing as possible.” Coffee bargained with the appointed commissioners, and the town was selected to become the county seat of Madison County.<sup>25</sup> LeRoy Pope had established the name of his community to be Twickenham in honor of the country estate of poet Alexander Pope. Sales of the town lots of Twickenham began on July 5, 1810, and the boom began. Later growing displeasure with anything British led many citizens to demand the name be changed to

recognize John Hunt, the town's first settler. By an act of the Legislature on November 25, 1811, the town was officially named Huntsville.

As confrontations with the British and the various Indian tribes were surfacing, Madison County's unit of the Mississippi Territorial Militia was established. Colonel Peter Perkins became commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment in January 1810 and by summer all able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 50 formed into eight companies. Community leaders James Titus, Allen C. Thompson, William Wyatt, William Howson, James Neely, John Grayson, Henry Cox, and Joseph Acklen led the companies. The first countywide muster was held in October of that year.<sup>26</sup>

As required, each militia company patrolled its beat and made bi-monthly tours to make their presence known to the slave communities at each household. Salary, while on duty, was one dollar per day.<sup>27</sup> The muster additionally gave a sense of order to public affairs. At the practice field county taxes were assessed and collected. Politicians posted election notices on the trees. Politics were discussed or argued often into the night, and regimental Muster Day allowed mingling of all citizens, whatever their social level might be. Children came to cheer and the women baked gingerbread to sell after the strenuous drills and marching. To ease aching muscles, not a little whiskey was consumed to lighten the way home after the successful training.<sup>28</sup>

## Attention!

**T**HE 14th Regiment Alabama Militia, will be mustered, on Saturday, 23d of October next, in the town of Huntsville, at which time and place all officers, non-commissioned officers and privates within the bounds of said Regiment, are required to attend equipped as the law directs.

Also, all commissioned and non-commissioned officers of said Regiment are required to attend, the two days next preceeding, for the purpose of being trained in conformity to the law.

The Col. Commanding avails himself of this opportunity, to make known to the Regiment his willingness to continue his command provided it is the wish of the Regiment, but not otherwise. The Regiment will therefore have it in their power on the day of General parade, to select a man to whom the command will be immediately resigned; or continue in command their present Commandant.

**GRIFFIN LAMKIN,**

*Col Com'l. 14th Reg. A. M.*

October 2.

3 tf.

From the *Alabama Republican*, dated October 2, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

Merchants, like James Crump, settled among the pioneers. In England the custom had been to shop at individual markets – the butcher, the baker, or the candlestick maker in each town. Considering the vast spaces involved and the cost of shipping, here one made purchases in a mercantile storehouse (store) that offered shelves of everything. Perhaps it was just as well that Mr. Crump was a solid merchant rather than an aspiring farmer. In a letter to the *American Gazette*, Crump wrote with enthusiasm that Madison County was the finest agricultural country in the world and that the “cotton grew eight, ten, even twelve feet high with trunks like forest trees.”<sup>29</sup>

Although travel was slow, the peddler of small wares made his rounds as did the horse trader his route. The peddler fixed and mended metal ware and traded what he might – he hopefully traded up if he were to show a profit. More merchants continued to arrive, and a storekeeper, who offered credit and even seed money for a share of the crop, served every community. Many businessmen purchased plantation lands of their own as

they expanded out into the county. The most lucrative business, which was land speculation, became the basis for many family fortunes.

In general, morality, rather than religion, was stressed in the lives of settlers. In an attempt to legislate principles, the 1803 Mississippi Territory legislators recognized Sunday as a sacred day and decreed that there would be “no worldly business...no shooting, sporting, hunting, gaming, racing, fiddling, or other music for the sake of merriment, nor any kind of playing, sports, pastimes, or diversions....”<sup>30</sup> Arriving settlers had those standards to live up to, and many more came with a zealous religious fervor. After all, this was the era of “The Great Awakening,” and revivals were dear to one’s heart and soul. In the countryside meetings might be held at a newcomer’s log cabin, in the open, at brush arbors, and camp meetings. Gatherings continued into the evening, lighted by pine torch or tallow candle.

It appears the Baptists may have organized first in Madison County. In the late fall of 1808, twelve men under the leadership of Rev. John Nicholson met at the home of James Deaton near the Flint River. A year later, Enon Church on the West Fork of the Flint was formed. William Harris, a slave, led a recognized African Baptist Church by 1820. Presbyterian Robert Bell held a camp meeting in homes along the Flint River, and John Ford led a meeting at Indian Springs in 1807.<sup>31</sup> The Methodist Circuit supplied a minister, James Gwinn, in 1809. One year later he reported 175 white and four colored members in his circuit that included the area from Tennessee to Chickasaw Island, Paint Rock, Blue Spring, Ford’s Chapel, Shiloh, and New Market. Presbyterian Gideon Blackburn, answering the invitation of the community, preached at the courthouse for three days.<sup>32</sup>

Apparently, there was still much work to be done. In December 1814, Reverend Robert Donnell wrote a colleague in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. “I am now in Madison County, and shall remain here till spring. The county is very destitute of preachers, and religion at quite a low ebb.... On tomorrow brother Stewart and myself commence a two-days meeting at Canaan, near Huntsville. Some are preparing for the meeting, and others for a ball on Christmas. What a strange and wicked perversion... Let us pray and preach for their salvation.”<sup>33</sup>





The most remarkable religious experience, perhaps, came with a noted traveling revivalist. Lorenzo Dow had preached for six months gathering crowds in North Carolina and Tennessee, when he made his way south to Huntsville in 1803. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, a Tuesday evening according to his journal, he arrived and rested at the welcoming home of James Clemens. Word had spread of his appearance, and on Sunday he preached to several hundred in the dooryard before traveling 14 miles on to his next stop.<sup>34</sup>

Madison County citizens appeared to settle into routine. However, the possibility of increased wealth and political power in the new territory caused more strain on an already fragile balance. The continued movement of the settlers produced tensions that prompted the Creek Indians to resort to acts of defiance and violence. The politicians and men who led the military forces to crush these Indians knew the significance of appropriating the Indian lands.

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Life on the Madison County frontier, and the entire nation, became even more insecure. On August 30, 1813, members of the Red Stick Creek alliance attacked the stockade at Fort Mims just a few miles north of Mobile. The resulting massacre of settlers, the largest ever in the United States, left perhaps as many as 500 dead. One can

understand today, the old adage “God willin’ and the Creeks don’t rise” had nothing to do with rivers or rain.



The Massacre at Fort Mims

As the word spread, terror gripped the old southwest. A runner from friendly Creeks reached Madison County with the news within a few days: Citizens could expect an attack from hostile Creeks at any moment! Colonel Perkins immediately ordered these reports relayed to Governor Blount in Nashville for help. Because there was no stockade here, under his own initiative, Perkins called up two local militia companies to patrol and build blockhouses on the north side of the Tennessee River.<sup>35</sup>

Writing from the safety of 1822, Anne Royall heard stories of the day. “Panic filled the county, and folks fled...for safety leaving food on the tables and animals not fed. It appeared that a large body of Indians was within a day’s march of Huntsville, coming toward town. The citizens of Huntsville and the whole of Madison County, were instantly panic-struck, and immediately fled towards Nashville.” Some left horses at the plow and fled on foot. Some mounted their horses with no saddle or bridle. “Four young ladies rode on one horse. One man took another man’s child, and left his own. Women on foot running with their nightcaps on, and no bonnet...husbands riding, and wives walking.... About a thousand people were on the road to Nashville.” Apparently only two families remained in Huntsville. They barricaded the door of the courthouse, then serving as a fort. Old Captain Wyatt, in command had only two guns, “but was well charged with

both whiskey and courage.” Fortunately the good Captain was not called into service. It was all a false alarm for Huntsville.<sup>36</sup>



1811-1837

Madison County Courthouse, the first on this site.  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Library)

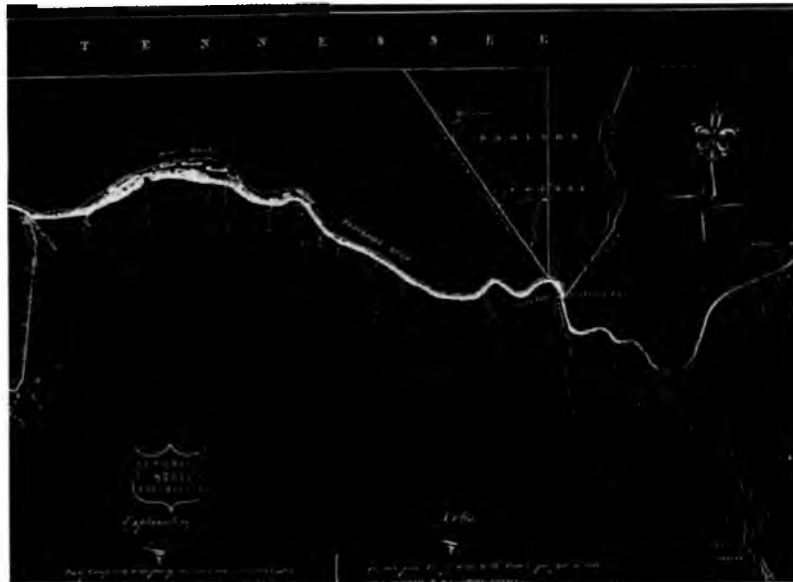
Because the federal troops were engaged in the north with the British army in the War of 1812, the militias of Tennessee, Georgia, and the Mississippi Territory were quickly mobilized. In September of 1814 General Coffee and his advance force of militia that included Sam Houston and Davy Crockett, came south to Huntsville by forced marches and halted where he could secure the safety of Madison County. General Andrew Jackson assembled his main force at Fayetteville, Tennessee and then marched his men through Madison County to join up with those of General Coffee. Local militia companies led by John Eldridge, Eli Hammond, David Grey, James Hamilton and Jack Mosley swelled their ranks. The army now of 3300 men included 600 friendly Lower Creek Indian allies.

These men continued on to Horseshoe Bend, near present day Alexander City, where the troops, after great hardships and few supplies, attacked and defeated the Upper Creeks. They killed 800 Indians braves, wives, and children who were protecting their homeland. This retaliation, as it was, accounted for the largest number of Indians killed in a single battle in the United States, ever. The decisive victory broke the power of the Creek Indians, and soon by treaty they relinquished much of their land – some 23,000,000 acres.

With this peace, the second wave of the Great Migration opened still more acres of land in the Territory. One traveler in late 1816 “counted almost 4000 immigrants in nine days travel.... So great was the influx that corn, which seldom sold for more than fifty cents per bushel in the Territory, brought as much as four dollars, and bacon and other foodstuff were practically unobtainable.”<sup>37</sup>

Old Madison County’s western boundary now extended to include more extensive rich river bottomland, and some land was detached. Madison’s western boundary became fixed as it currently remains. General Coffee became Surveyor General of this newly created area, and he assigned John Hutchings, a nephew of General Jackson, to map the

area. The federal government issued careful instructions to pay particular attention in this survey to tributaries feeding into the Tennessee River. These sites could expect to raise more money in the forthcoming sales. One might note in this map seemingly no streams flowing in from the northern side of the River. Hence, these lands might be considered unworthy of any substantial bid. The subsequent land sales became the largest and most reckless; seemingly without limits. Surveyor General Coffee and a small cadre of his friends, including Andrew Jackson, purchased that unremarkable area of land on the north side of the river.



Map showing Tennessee River and outline of Madison County  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

Further concessions of land continued from the Chickasaws in 1816 and the Cherokees in 1817 and 1819. An option was offered to allow Indian Reservations to be applied for with 640 acres for each Cherokee family who decided to remain in Madison County. Four families, Kananooluskah or Challenge, Giles McAnulty, Thomas Wilson, and William Wilson, formed reservations a square mile around their home sites.<sup>38</sup> The government set aside twelve square miles to be sold to fund education of the Cherokees who remained east of the Mississippi River.

The land sales in Huntsville in 1818 reached a sum of \$5,500,000. Men of wealth were able to keep the bidding active, leaving the less well-to-do frontiersman out of the bidding. The unfortunate settler with little cash in hand was now even more clearly at a disadvantage in the bidding. In case of disputes, he likewise had little money for lawyers, clerk's fees, or the travel costs often necessary. Those who purchased large acreage included names that were already prominent and continued to exercise power *within the county*: John Coffee, Henry Chambers, Clement C. Clay, Thomas Bibb, David Moore, John Brahan, Tom Percy, John McKinley, Hugh McVay, William Patton, to name only a few. These men would be recognized quickly as material as future leaders, governors and senators from north Alabama.

Still, times seemed more than good. Anne Royall wrote in January 1818 about Madison County that appeared to enjoy, "more wealth than half of western Virginia." Mrs. Royall was well-traveled and she recognized refinement when she saw it. She wrote in 1818 that there were 260 houses in Huntsville, many of them brick and some three stories tall. A solid wall of brick stores surrounded the public square. There was a courthouse, a market, and a bank. "The citizens are gay, polite, and hospitable and live in great splendor."<sup>39</sup>

Madison County was now firmly established. Some of the original settlers, for various reasons, had already moved on. Many simply moved into neighboring counties or further west. Even some entire hamlets disappeared from the map. Manchester, near Three Forks of the Flint, Hillsborough Town, Mechanicsville, even Lewis Deloney's racetrack, Fairfield, faded away. But most of the first settlers, typical pioneers, remained to pave the way for those to follow.

If one considers the extremes of settlers, red-neck and bluebloods, and all those in between, one must also reflect on toiling black hands. This group of migrants most likely was reluctant to leave behind their families and memories at the whim of their owner, but had no choice. Vast numbers of slaves transformed the Madison County wilderness into productive cotton fields and bustling towns. Madison County grew from 4,699 people in 1810 to 17,481 people by 1820; the population almost quadrupled. (However one must note almost half of Madison County's population was enslaved.)

Life continued much in the same way as small farmers continued to live in log houses and raise most of their food. They were an independent lot and proud of it. Planters often left their plantation sites and built a finer home to enjoy the gaiety of social life in town. Blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, masons, plasterers, and other skilled workmen were needed. More merchandise was available after the War of 1812 as goods had freer access. The particularly shrewd merchant could also use his extra cash to invest in cotton production and other investments.

The federal postal route was established through Huntsville and pony riders with bags of mail began their routes, later to be replaced by stagecoach on the roads – from Huntsville to Milton's Bluff or to the Black Warrior or to Cotton Port, Mississippi, or by way of "Pulasky" to Columbia, Tennessee. Mooresville and Triana were incorporated. William Leeman cut a gap in the mountain near Ditto's Landing and established a ferry there. Another road led to Round Top Mountain in the east.<sup>40</sup> And still settlers arrived.

## *To the Public.*

**T**HE public are hereby respectfully notified that a very excellent gap in the mountain, about three miles below the gap now made use of in crossing the Tennessee river at Ditt's Landing, having been lately cut out, the Subscriber feels himself warranted in informing the public, without fear of contradiction, that they can pass up and down the New Gap with the greatest ease imaginable. Good stock pens on each side of the river are prepared for the convenience of getting over stock— An excellent Ferry Boat fixed up for the same purpose, and cabins on each side of the river for the convenience of movers. The subscriber pledges himself that the utmost attention to the interest of travellers will be paid them.

**WM. LEEMON,**  
3 or 4 miles below Ditt's  
Landing, Madison Co.

From the *Alabama Republican*, dated December 18, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

In March of 1819 Congress directed the Alabama Territory, separated from the state of Mississippi since March of 1817, to draw up a constitution in preparation for statehood. From 22 counties, 44 select, and perhaps elite, delegates met in Huntsville for that undertaking. Adding excitement to the events, President James Monroe paid a surprise visit to town just the day before the delegates assembled. At the quickly-gathered dinner in his honor, toasts and cheers lasted into the evening; the most heartfelt perhaps for the frontier hero, Andrew Jackson – a sign of things to come.

## **Just Published,**

**AND FOR SALE AT THIS OFFICE,  
the Constitution of the State of  
Alabama."**

*Huntsville, Aug. 7, 1819.*      6148

From the *Alabama Republican*, dated December 18, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

The representatives produced a remarkably liberal document for its day. The constitution was approved by the delegates, sent to Washington, approved there, and in 1819 Alabama became a state. While the new capitol in Cahaba was being readied, the governor, William Wyatt Bibb, was inaugurated in Huntsville on November 9, 1819.



Alabama's first governor, William Wyatt Bibb  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

Boom times seemed upon the land; speculation came hand-in-hand as exorbitant prices were paid at land sales. Everyone wanted to get in on the action. Throughout the nation, firms failed, banks foreclosed and then failed themselves. As cotton prices dropped and debts could not be paid, the Panic of 1819 was followed by the Depression of 1820. But little was known of that yet. All eyes in every community of Madison County were turned from what they had accomplished so far toward a promising future. These settlers, many who had come illegally, built a place for themselves in the

wilderness, and they were here to stay. Hickory Flat and Mountain Forks of the Flint; Three Forks of the Flint; Ryland-Brownsboro-Maysville; Hunt's Spring to the Tennessee River; Indian Creek; Hazel Green; and Meridianville would only grow closer. Truly it was Alabama Fever.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Peter A. Brannon, "The Roads to Huntsville," *Alabama Highways*, (August 1929) Vol. 3, #5, p. 3.
- <sup>2</sup> Sarah Huff Fisk, *Civilization Comes to the Big Spring: Huntsville, Alabama, 1823* (Huntsville, Alabama: Pinhook Publ., 1997), p. 71.
- <sup>3</sup> Frances C. Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Alabama, 1956); Bessie Rowland James, *Anne Royall's USA* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972), p. 77.
- <sup>4</sup> Charles D. Lowrey, "Great Migration to the Mississippi Territory, 1798-1819." *Journal of Mississippi History* XXX (August 1968); Albert B. Moore, *History of Alabama and Her People* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1927); Moore, p. 111.
- <sup>5</sup> Quoted in Lowrey, "Great Migration," p. 173.
- <sup>6</sup> George R. Gilmer, *Sketches of Some of the First Settlers of Upper Georgia, of the Cherokees, and of the Author*. 1855 rpr. Baltimore, 1970, p. 86.
- <sup>7</sup> Rowland Dunbar, *Mississippi* (Atlanta: Southern Historical Publ., 1907), vol. 2, p. 161.
- <sup>8</sup> John Mitchell Allman III, "Yeoman Regions in the Antebellum Deep South: Settlement and Economy in Northern Alabama, 1815-1860" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Maryland, 1979); Roberts, Diss, p. 148.
- <sup>9</sup> Quoted in David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). This book is probably the seminal study of American cultural and social origins. Mr. Fischer particularly understands the making of the American South as different from the other English settlements. With a different objective Harriette Simpson Arnow's, *Flowering of the Cumberland* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1963) is an informative narrative of the American frontier.
- <sup>10</sup> W. Woodford Clayton, *History of Davidson County, Tennessee. 1880* (Nashville, Charles Elder Publ. 1971), pp. 254, 199.
- <sup>11</sup> Frances Cabaniss Roberts, "Thomas Freeman – Surveyor of the Old Southwest" *Alabama Review*, Vol. XL (July 1987) #3, 223-226.
- <sup>12</sup> Roberts Diss.; Elise Stephens, *Historic Huntsville: A City of New Beginnings* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publ. 1984); Roberts Diss, p. 150.
- <sup>13</sup> Gilmer, p. 329.
- <sup>14</sup> Roberts, Diss, p. 150.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.
- <sup>16</sup> Roberts, Diss., 141-146.
- <sup>17</sup> Allman, Diss., pp. 90, 91.
- <sup>18</sup> Susan Kirkman Vaughn, *Life in Alabama* (Montgomery, Alabama: Dixie Book Co., 1935), pp. 33-36..
- <sup>19</sup> Vaughn, pp. 37, 38; Allman, p. 91.
- <sup>20</sup> Anne Royall, pp. 130-134..
- <sup>21</sup> Roberts, Diss., p. 396.
- <sup>22</sup> Thomas Jones Taylor, *The History of Madison County and Incidentally of North Alabama, 1732-1840*, ed. W. Stanley Hoole and Addie S. Hoole (University, Alabama: Confederate Publ., 1976) [original MS dated 1886], 28, 92; James W. Bragg, "Captain Slick, Arbiter of Early Alabama Morals" *Alabama Review*, vol XI (April 1958) #2, 125-134; Edward C. Betts, *Early History of Huntsville, Alabama, 1804 to 1870*. (rev. ed. Montgomery, 1916), pp. 23, 24.
- <sup>23</sup> *Valley Leaves*, Special Issue, December 1969, vol. 4; James Record, *A Dream Come True*. (Huntsville, Alabama: Hicklin Printing, 1970), vol 1, p. 37.
- <sup>24</sup> Record, pp. 39, 40.
- <sup>25</sup> *Valley Leaves*, vol. 4, p. 5, 6.
- <sup>26</sup> Record, p. 36; "The Public Square in Madison County History," *Valley Leaves*, vol. 4, p. 3.



<sup>27</sup> Roberts, Diss., p. 216.

<sup>28</sup> Madison County was considered a healthy place to settle, but why take unnecessary chances. Whiskey was the cure-all of frontier days as it served as a tranquilizer, stimulant, disinfectant, vitamin, rubbing alcohol, and anesthetic.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Thomas Jones Taylor, *History of Madison County, Alabama*. WPA Version, p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> Maria Bankhead Owen, *Story of Alabama: A History of the State* (New York: Lewis Historical Publ., 1949), five vol. 3, p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> Record, p. 31.

<sup>32</sup> Roberts, Diss., pp. 462, 463; Ruth Sykes Ford, *History of the First United Methodist Church of Huntsville, Alabama. 1808-1983* (Huntsville, Alabama: Board of the 1<sup>st</sup> UMC, 1984), pp. 14, 15; Charlotte Forgery Shenk and Donald Hugh Shenk, *History of the First Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, Alabama 1818-1968*. (no. loc. Paragon Press, 1968), np.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Donnell, *Life and Labors of the Late Rev. Robert Donnell of Alabama, Minister of the Gospel in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*. (Alton, Illinois: S.V. Crossman, 1867), p. 102.

<books.google.com/book?id> Jan. 31, 2008. Canaan Meeting House was near the eastern edge of Oakwood University.

<sup>34</sup> Lorenzo Dow, *History of a Cosmopolite*. (Martin, Ohio, no publ., 1849), p. 318.

<sup>35</sup> Roberts, Diss., p. 253.

<sup>36</sup> Anne Newport Royall, *Letters from Alabama 1817-1822*, ed. Lucille Griffith 1830, rpt. Ed. (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1969), pp. 243-244.

<sup>37</sup> Lowrey, p. 182.

<sup>38</sup> Roberts, Diss., p. 296.

<sup>39</sup> Royall, p. 119.

<sup>40</sup> Record, p. 61.

## Indian Creek and Western Madison County

JOHN P. RANKIN

The western border of Madison County was defined by an 1805 treaty as part of the “Chickasaw Indian Boundary Line,” which ran from Hobbs Island to Ardmore and on to the southwestern corner of Maury County, Tennessee. West of the line was still claimed by the Chickasaws, who did not give up their rights to land westward to the Elk River until 1816. Even then, the land of western Madison County could not be legally settled until after systematic government surveys to establish sections (S) within township (T) and range (R) grids, culminating in sales that began in early February of 1818.

There were already numerous settlers, called “squatters,” west of the line when government land surveys and sales began. As the pioneers arrived in the area, they had no clear definition of such lines, and they saw uninhabited cleared lands around and west of Indian Creek. Back then, it was not called Indian Creek. That name first came into use around the time of the Civil War and referred to the creek lying just west of the Indian line. Prior to the Civil War, it was known as Hurricane Creek and as Price's Fork of Indian Creek.<sup>1</sup> Indian Creek was the name initially given to what is today called Huntsville Spring Branch, running from Hunt's Big Spring toward the town of Triana. Indian Creek and Spring Branch join on Redstone Arsenal, about three miles northeast of Triana. The old land records that refer to Indian Creek are actually referring to today's Spring Branch, not to the Indian Creek of the western part of the county.

Details of the rush to settle on Indian lands to the west of Madison County are given in a book about the Sims Settlement, available in the Heritage Room of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.<sup>2</sup> Because the squatters signed several petitions to the federal government to allow them to keep their lands, Dixon and Priest were able to list names of the heads of the families known to have taken up residence on Indian lands – mostly along today's Indian Creek, Limestone Creek, Piney Creek, Beaver Dam Creek, and other tributaries of the Tennessee River. Comparison of the petitioners' names to those of the land records later recorded in western Madison County gives a degree of proof of the squatter settlers of the area who were allowed to retain their farms.

Among the signers of the 1810 Sims Settlement petition were James and William Slaughter; James, William, and Thomas Mullens; David Capshaw; William Martin; and Elisha Rainbolt. These names are easily recognizable, among many others, as residents of the western portions of Madison County along Indian Creek in later years. In fact, today's Rainbow Mountain in the city of Madison is a phonetic distortion of Elisha Rainbolt's surname.<sup>3</sup> Mullens Flat on Redstone Arsenal property may well have taken its name from the Mullens brothers, as that community was west of the Indian Boundary Line on Arsenal lands today, and no other namesake for the community is known. The Martin family has been prominent in the history of the town of Madison and the land on the east side of Rainbow Mountain. Likewise, the Slaughter family has been notable in the area along Indian Creek, and David Capshaw's holdings gave rise to the community by that name today. Many of the Sims Settlement pioneers also defended the area during the War of 1812, when Elisha Rainbolt, along with James and William Mullens, served in Peter Perkins' 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Thomas Mullens, David Capshaw, James and William Slaughter,

and William Martin were listed in Burrus' 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the militia from Madison County. The Sims Settlement pioneers of western Madison County were civic-minded men of action and devotion to their country. They were not men looking to avoid taxes or public service.

Books such as *The Heritage of Madison County, Alabama*<sup>4</sup> and the City of Madison's sesquicentennial book<sup>5</sup> detailed the family stories of some of the notable early settlers along Indian Creek. However, there are many clarifications and detailed stories yet to be told.

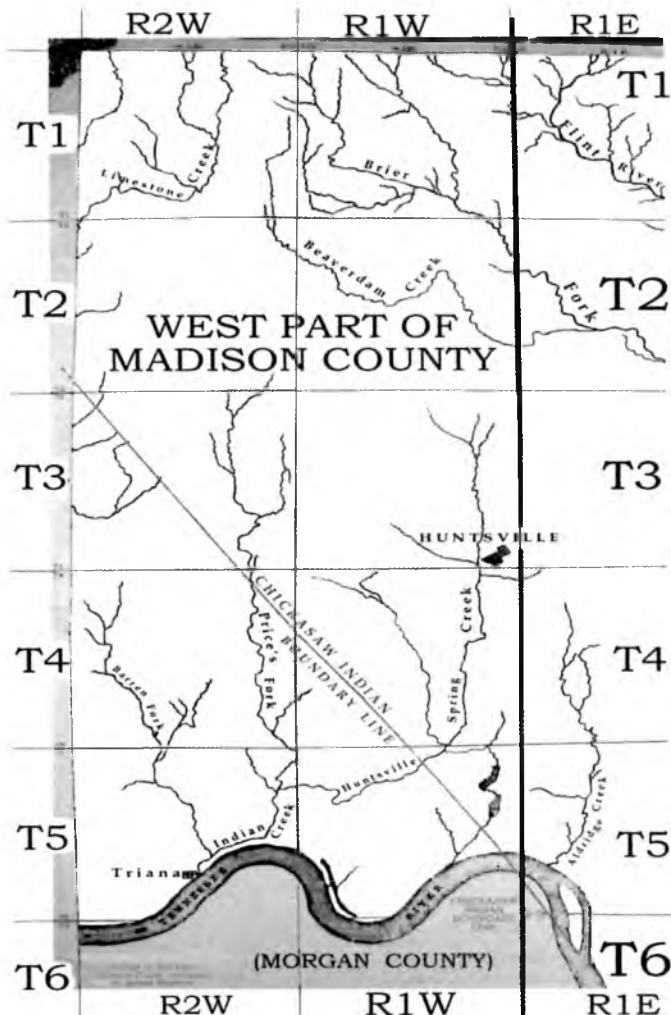


Few realize that Thomas Bibb, the second governor of the state, came to Huntsville with LeRoy Pope in 1808 from Petersburg, Georgia. He bought several parcels of land in Huntsville and Madison County and was reported to have helped in the construction of Madison County's first courthouse. However, before 1819 he must have moved to Limestone County, which he represented in the Constitutional Convention of that same year. In fact, Thomas Bibb and Waddy Tate were among the 197 "squatter" signers of the Sims Settlement petition of 1817. By 1826 he built his plantation home known as Belle Manor in Limestone County. The mansion became the namesake of the community of Belle Mina. However, Thomas and his wife, Pamela Thompson Bibb, lived out their final years in Huntsville, while their son David Porter Bibb occupied Belle Manor.

During the period of 1809-1819, Thomas Bibb purchased several parcels of land immediately west of Meridianville, along Patterson Lane and Monroe Road, mostly adjacent to land of his father-in-law, Robert Thompson. Bibb's parcels included land on the east side of Wade Mountain, where Mount Charron Estates is located today. He also had land at the halfway point of a line between Harvest and Meridianville, just east of Quarter Mountain, along Carter's Gin Road and north of Burwell Road. He owned several lots in Huntsville and in the areas of present-day University of Alabama at Huntsville and Butler High School. In 1818 Thomas Bibb, in conjunction with other trustees (John Lindsay, Dr. Waddy Tate, Henry Chambers, and William Adair) established the town of Triana by purchasing land where Indian Creek joins the Tennessee River in Sections 22 and 27 of Township 5, Range 2 West.<sup>6</sup> Triana was the second town incorporated in Madison County by an act of the state legislature in 1819. It is the only town in America named in honor of the first sailor to spot land of the new world from one of Columbus' ships.<sup>7</sup>

The site of Triana would have been one of the portals for settlement of the western part of Madison County during the Sims Settlement days due to the depth of Indian Creek at that point. The creek was navigable to flatboats for several miles upstream, facilitating the transportation of household furnishings and other goods before roads were established. Navigable waters also provided a good way to get crops and other

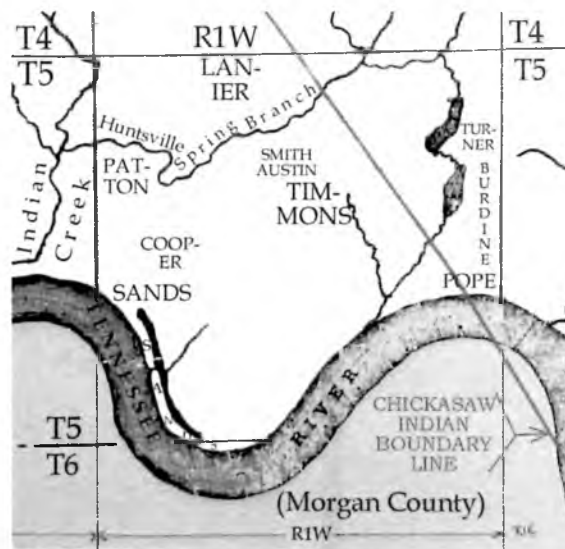
products to distant markets, so the land along the rivers and major creeks was usually settled first. This land likewise was more fertile due to deposits left by occasional floods.



The south and central portion of the western part of Madison County is drained by the Indian Creek watershed. Today's Indian Creek was known early in the history of the county as Hurricane Creek and Price's Fork (of Indian Creek). In the older county records, the name Indian Creek was applied to what today is known as Huntsville Spring Branch (of Indian Creek). The excerpt above is taken from an 1875 map drawn by James Mayhew with the Township (T) and Range (R) system of land grids. Later pages expand the detail within each township and range grid, showing selected pioneer names positioned approximately in the locations of the sections (parcels) of land that they purchased from the government. Due to image size limitations, the actual 36 section numbers in each grid are not shown. Section numbers begin at the upper right corner of each grid and progress in 6 rows right-to-left, then left-to-right and so forth (alternating row directions) until reaching the bottom right corner with Section 36.

The northwestern part of the county is drained by the watersheds of Limestone Creek and the Brier Fork of the Flint River. The northeastern part of the western half of the county is drained by Beaverdam Creek and Banyon Swamp Creek. The land distant from the streams was sometimes considered to be less desirable, since the streams could be used to carry crops to markets on occasion. Waterways were essentially early "highways" for the pioneers. Perhaps due to poor upper stream navigability, some of the land in the northwestern part of the county was not purchased until the late 1800s (and even the early 1900s) through government patents. However, almost all of the southern portion of the county was patented before 1819, again perhaps due to size of the streams in the area.

Naturally, not everyone who purchased land resided on the parcels that they bought. Much of it was patented in anticipation of profits to be realized from future sales, just as is done with deeds today. Accordingly, the old land records in the western part of the county include several known residents of Huntsville. Furthermore, adjacent parcels were often purchased by people who were related by blood, marriage, business, or other common interests. Therefore, land records provide useful clues to these relationships. Most pioneers bought a quarter of a section in each transaction, but some could afford a complete section (one square mile, 640 acres) when they made their purchases. Some purchasers patented land in parcels that were not contiguous or sometimes not even close to one another. Thus, land in various areas (and counties and states) must be considered to see all of a person's holdings.



Beginning in accordance with the early influx at the southern end of the county, along the river and creek confluences in Townships 5 and 6, Range 1 West, the pioneer landowners included William, Thomas, Burwell, and Clement Lanier plus their sister Clarissa Lanier Boddie. The Lanier family eventually owned several thousand acres of what is today Redstone Arsenal.

**Note:** T6 has only very small fractional sections of about 20 acres within Madison County, so those are not shown at the bottom of the map. However, the land of Section 4 in T6-R1W was obtained by John D. McCutchen, and the land of Section 5 was patented by Austin Sands.

The Lanier name originated in France, where as Huguenots they fled in the late 1600s to Wales and became noted in service as poets and musicians to English royalty.<sup>9</sup> The local branches descend from Thomas Lanier, who came to Virginia in Colonial days. He established a family connected to President George Washington's ancestors, as well as to ancestors of other families of this area, such as the Jordan, Pope, Looney, Dickson, Gillespie, Ford, Rison, Halsey, and McCrab families. In fact, there is a tombstone in the Lanier family cemetery on Redstone Arsenal to mark the grave of Louisa Shelby McCrab (1767-1846). Louisa was the mother-in-law of Burwell Clinton Lanier, and she was an

aunt of Absalom Looney II, a Revolutionary War patriot buried near Airport Road in southwest Huntsville. Absalom's sons, Absalom III and John Warren Looney, owned land just west of the Laniers. The Looney land included the confluence of Spring Branch with Indian Creek, where Looney's Mill and Looney's Landing were operated by John Looney. Burwell Lanier's uncle, the Rev. William Lanier, was another Revolutionary War patriot, and his grave is in the Jordan-Lanier Cemetery on the arsenal.

Tombstone of  
Louisa Shelby McCrab  
1767-1832



Tombstone of  
Rev. Wm. Lanier  
died Dec 26, 1840, age 76  
(Am. Rev. War Patriot)

The Lanier neighbors in this area included Austin L. Sands, John Timmons, James Cooper, William Patton, Sugars Turner, Richard Burdine, and Hughey Smith, along with Hughey's son-in-law, Pleasant S. Austin. As with the Laniers, all of these men owned far more land than just what is shown in T5-R1W. For example, Austin Sands was the 1818 "assignee" (took over payments) for a land patent of General John Coffee in Section 22 of T4-R2W, immediately north of Lady Ann Lake and west of Zierdt Road. He likewise patented in 1818 fractional Sections 30 and 31 in T5-R1W. (In this area, a fractional section is one that has less than 640 acres due to the incursion or demarcation of the Tennessee River or due to a portion being over the Indian Boundary Line and therefore legally unavailable to pioneer settlers.) In 1816 William Patton (believed to be the pre-WWII namesake of Patton Road, running from the end of Jordan Lane southward through the arsenal) patented land in Section 29 of T2-R1W, west of Pulaski Pike and along Carter's Gin Road today. It was 1818 when Patton patented Sections 7 of T5-R2W and T3-R2W. The latter parcel is east of Old Railroad Bed Road and south of Nick Davis Road. It was likewise in 1818 when Patton purchased land in Section 18 of T5-R1W. Sugars Turner was one of the most prolific land speculators of Madison County, buying numerous parcels for later resale, including land in Section 26 of T3-R2W. That parcel is east of Slaughter Road and along Highway 72 and Indian Creek. He patented the land of Section 12 in T5-R1W in 1810 and joined with LeRoy Pope in 1812 to patent part of nearby Section 24, wherein Richard Burdine obtained land in 1818. Although Burdine is normally associated with land in the northeastern part of Madison County, he left his name on the maps used by riverboat steamers. "Burdine Shoals" is the final obstacle to be circumvented in the approach to Ditto's Landing from the west. The Clement Comer Clay Bridge at Whitesburg was later erected very near that point in the river.



Timmons Cemetery on Redstone Arsenal

John Timmons has left a unique cemetery as his legacy on arsenal land. His family cemetery is full of above-ground box crypts, much like those found in New Orleans. The cemetery is in a heavily wooded area of the arsenal. There is no improved road to it today, but it is surrounded by a high brick wall and regularly maintained by the Army's groundskeepers.

The Timmons plantation house was nearby, but there are no traces left of it since the 1970s. The chimneys remained until that time. In 1818, Timmons took land in Sections 22, 23, 26, 27, and 34 of T5-R1W. Of course, he (like most of the other pioneer landowners) also entered into private transactions recorded in Madison County deeds that are not part of the initial government land records provided in Cowart's book. Therefore, his total holdings ultimately covered quite a large area. His nearby neighbors included Hughey Smith and Pleasant Austin. Pleasant married Hughey's daughter Mary in 1827, and both men patented government land in Section 15 of T5-R1W in 1818. In the 1830s Hughey bought land in Sections 10 and 22 to expand his plantation. The Smith and Austin families were well connected in Madison County politics and in the local circles of wealth in the early 1800s. Hughey died in 1857 at age 74, leaving his son, Stanhope, to control the estate. Stanhope was a doctor who apparently didn't like farming, so he moved to Morgan County. He later came back to live in Huntsville, however, and he sold the farm. A few years after Hughey's death, the plantation was in the hands of Henry W. Grantland. Henry Grantland's daughter, Beulah, married Bolling Rice, and she named their son Grantland Rice. Grantland Rice became the premier sportscaster in America. He used the phrase "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" for the Notre Dame football team's backfield in 1924. For many years thereafter, the college football championship trophy in America was called the Grantland Rice trophy in honor of the famous sportscaster who had ancestral roots in southern Madison County.

James Cooper purchased land in Section 20 of T5-R1W in 1818 that he expanded to over 640 acres. His story is tragic, in that he committed suicide by strapping an iron pot on his head and walking into the Tennessee River on December 7, 1834. He had married Charity Allison less than three years earlier. Charity was about ten years younger than her husband. About six years after James' death, Charity married neighbor Houston H. Lea, a man five years younger than herself. She must have expected him to outlive her, because, before they married, she recorded a prenuptial agreement banning Houston from inheriting any of her property. Houston already had land holdings that equaled hers, and since he passed away in 1853 before she did, Charity inherited his property. Even though she was a wealthy widow, the hard times of the Civil War wiped her out financially. She died penniless in 1872, after her lands were sold at auction in a sheriff's sale. The lands were purchased by Charity's cousins, James W. and Francis Fennell.

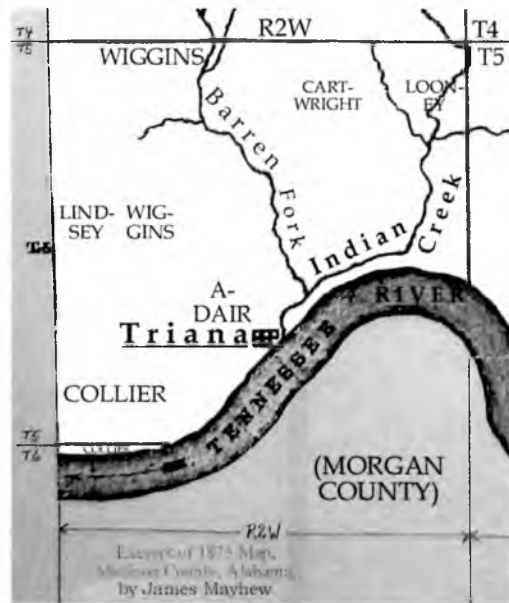


Allison-Cooper-Lea-Harris House from Redstone Arsenal, now in Madison



The house that James Cooper started for his bride and that Houston Lea expanded and completed was moved in 1977 to 104 Metaire Lane in Madison, where it still stands as a witness to its old plantation heritage. It sits near the crest of a ridge of the southern part of Rainbow Mountain, just north of Eastview Drive, with a panoramic view to the east, toward Huntsville and Monte Sano.

There were many others who obtained parcels in T5-R1W before statehood, and they all have significant stories that could be told. However, only a very few selected pioneer settlers of township-range quadrants will hereafter be mentioned with highly condensed snippets in order to fit within page allocations. The T5-R2W area contains the mouth of Indian Creek at Triana, where it joins the Tennessee River. In fact, the town of Triana was platted on land purchased from the government by its five trustees on February 4, 1818. These trustees have already been named in the earlier discussion of Governor Thomas Bibb. One of them, William Adair (a lawyer and nephew of Kentucky's Governor John Adair), also purchased land for himself in the area around the town, acquiring parcels in Sections 21 and 28, whereas the town is in Sections 22 and 27. Another of the trustees, John Lindsey, bought land in Section 18.



1875 Map Excerpt: T5-R2W



Triana Plat

In T5-R2W John W. Looney has already been mentioned as owning the land of Section 12 at the confluence of Indian Creek and Spring Branch, where Looney's Landing and Mill were located. By the 1830s that land was purchased by Dr. Thomas Fearn and others of Huntsville for the Indian Creek Navigation Company. This company operated a fleet of boats to transport bales of cotton from Huntsville to the Tennessee River landing at Triana for shipment to distant markets during the 1830s and 1840s. The coming of the railroad in the 1850s made the creek-based canal system obsolete. As a direct result, the railroad depot town of Madison was established a few miles to the north in 1857. That event was the death knell of riverboat transportation and of the town of Triana, as their roles in commerce of the area shrank dramatically.

Another connection to the later town of Madison is seen in the land ownership of John Cartwright. Early researchers thought that Cartwright was the first settler of Madison. However, it is now known that he died several years before Madison was founded, and he very likely initially settled his family near the riverboat town of Triana where he first owned area land. His subsequent holdings were several miles west of the site of Madison's historic district. He could not have been a pioneer of Madison, but he was a pioneer of Triana. Still another Madison connection comes from the plantation of James Wiggins. His son, Richard, owned the farm in the 1840s, and Richard's wife was Jackey Dunn. Jackey's brother, Dr. William B. Dunn, lived in the Wiggins household at the time of the 1850 census, but he became the first railroad depot agent and stationmaster in Madison from 1856 to his death in 1871.

Perhaps the most prominent of the plantation owners along the river in this area was James Collier. His plantation was called "Myrtle Grove," and his children were among the most influential people of north Alabama in their day. Henry Watkins Collier was a Supreme Court chief justice and governor of the state. Thomas Bouldin Collier married Mary Dent, a close relative of Julia Dent Grant, wife of Union General Ulysses S. Grant. Wyatt Collier married Janet Walker, daughter of James Walker of Nashville and thought to be connected to the William Walker who served as President of Nicaragua

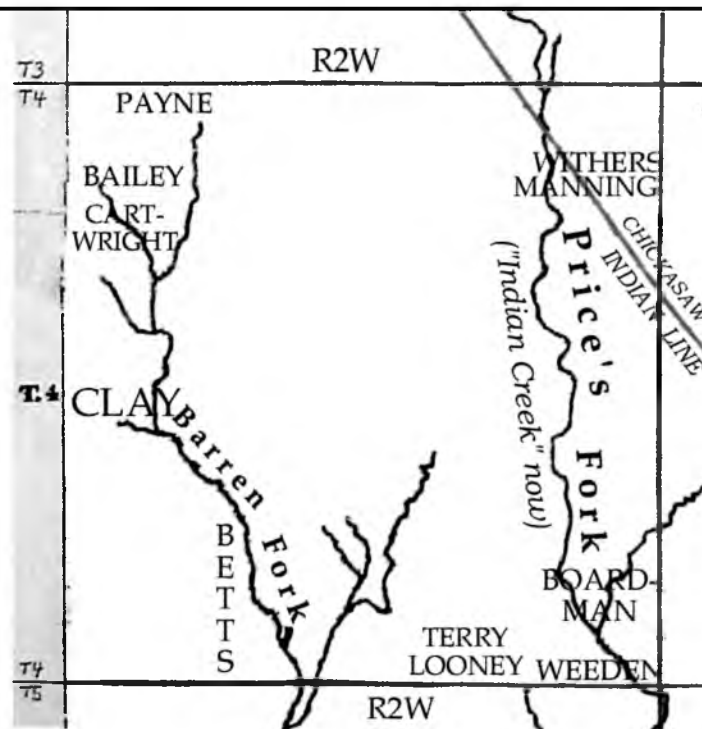
in 1856. Other Collier children married into the famed Blackwell and Pickett families of the area, connecting them to several more governors, judges, physicians, and notable military officers of the state.<sup>9</sup>



The pre-statehood pioneer landowners in T4-RIW included those who owned land near the southwestern portion of Huntsville, as shown on the map excerpt to the left. Among the notable landowners were LeRoy Pope (S1, 3, 4), Absalom Looney (S12), John Brahan (S2 & 32), Charles Cabaniss (S11), William Weeden (S31), Thomas Freeman (S27 & 28), and William Lanier (S27 & 34). Additionally, parcels in this area were owned by James Manning (S7, 18, 19), William Gray (S7 & 8), Batt Jordan (S9), and Robert Lanford (S3) and his son, William (S21). It was William Lanford who in the 1850s constructed the Lanford-Slaughter mansion which still stands today on Old Madison Pike at Indian Creek. He married Charlotte Fennell, a granddaughter of Batt Jordan.

Batt Jordan was a patriot of the American Revolutionary War, and he donated land for an early Methodist Church (located near the Botanical Garden site today) that became known as Jordan's Chapel. Batt is buried there according to family tradition. The church had first been chartered to meet on land of Robert Lanford, but it moved to Jordan's more favorable location in the 1820s. Another Revolutionary War soldier, William Gray, took land adjacent to Batt's holdings. William Gray's wife was Eleanor Wardrobe Blackburn, a widow and sister of Lord Wardrobe of Scotland.<sup>10</sup> Gray also served on the first jury selected in Madison County, and a grandson founded Huntsville, Texas, which he named after his hometown in Madison County. Another of Gray's neighbors was Dr. James Manning, who was quite possibly one of the wealthiest men of the area. Manning married a daughter of Robert Thompson, who owned land in Section 30, adjacent to Manning's holdings in Section 19. Another of Thompson's daughters was married to Governor Thomas Bibb, who owned land not far away from Manning. It was Manning who built "The Grove" in Huntsville, a large house occupied later by his son-in-law, General Bartley M. Lowe, who headed the bank there. After Lowe, the house was occupied by Lowe's son-in-law, Nicholas Davis, Jr.<sup>11</sup>

Several of the pre-statehood pioneers of T4-R2W were squatters on Chickasaw Indian lands before the cession of 1814 and legal purchase date of February 2, 1818. However, for the most part, they legitimized their claims as soon as possible after land purchases became legal for the area.



This is the area where the town of Madison was founded in 1857, in Section 16, near the grid center. That section in each township and range quadrant was always reserved by the government for use by the state to fund public education. However, in 1854, most of S16 of T4-R2W was sold by the state to James Clemens, who began development of a town beside the railroad tracks. Clemens purchased numerous parcels of land in north Alabama, including acreage in Sections 20, 29, and 30 of T4-R2W in 1818. Clemens died in 1860, and his son, U.S. Senator Jeremiah Clemens, died in 1865 before the estate was settled. John Cartwright, formerly considered to have been the first settler in the town of Madison, purchased land in Section 18, two miles west of where the town was located. Cartwright died almost 20 years before the establishment of the town.

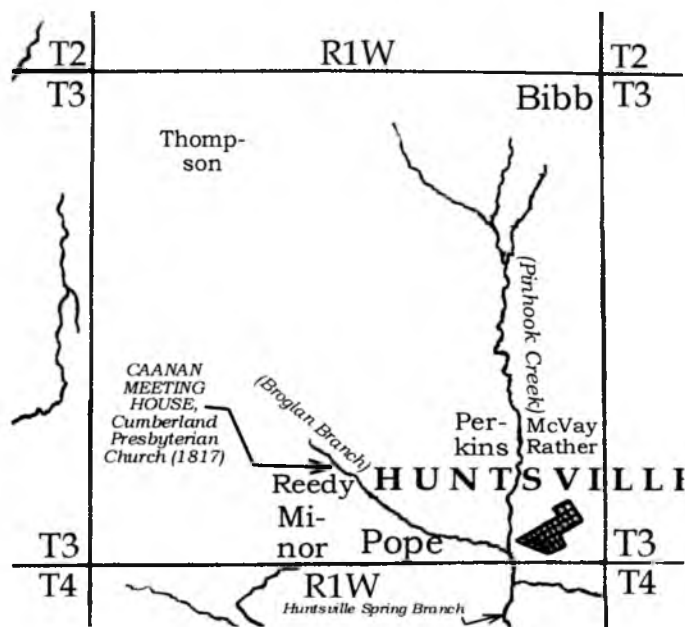
Clement Comer Clay, who became the 8<sup>th</sup> governor of the state, purchased land in Sections 19 and 20. His land adjoined that of John Withers, who became his father-in-law when Clement married Susannah Claiborne Withers in 1815. Withers held land in Sections 11 and 12. James Manning also had land in Sections 12, 13, & 24. His land in S24 was near that of Elijah Boardman (S24, 25, & 26), while nearby was land of William Weeden (S36) and of Nathaniel Terry and John W. Looney (both in S35). *Boardman and Terry* were names involved with the American Asylum (an institute for the deaf and mute) in Hartford, Connecticut. For a time, that institution was involved in ownership of portions of Boardman's land and his mill on Indian Creek before Richard Lipscomb later acquired it.

Charles Betts obtained land in Sections 28 and 33. His descendants included local judges and attorneys who achieved great acclaim.<sup>12</sup> In fact, one of his great-grandsons, Edward C. Betts of Huntsville, became chief of the legal staff for General Eisenhower during WWII and was the primary architect of the Nuremberg Trials. Robert Payne took land in Section 5 of T4-R2W, a portion of which he later deeded to the early Providence Presbyterian Church that disbanded in the 1920s. Payne moved to Mississippi, where he died in 1843.



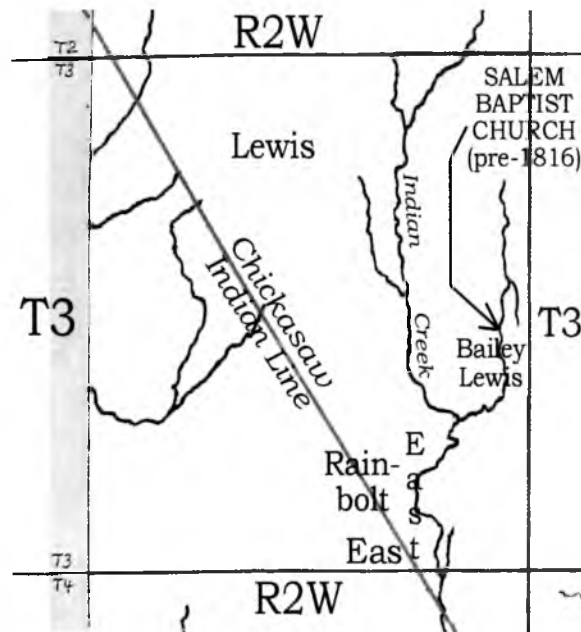
Bailey Cabin

Section 7 of T4-R2W was land of James Bailey, who was the father-in-law of famed Primitive Baptist preacher Reuben Crutcher of the area. Bailey was also a grandfather of Sarah Abernathy, who married Edmund James Hughes, progenitor of the historic local Hughes families and first public school educator of Madison. The two-story log cabin of James Bailey that served as the first stage stop between Huntsville and Mooresville in pioneer days is still preserved, incorporated into the modern home of Dr. Charles Whitworth on the south side of Mill Road near County Line Road.



Pioneer landowners in T3-R1W are shown in the preceding map segment. The town of Huntsville was then contained in Section 36, the southeastern corner. From 1810 Col. Peter Perkins held land in Section 26, now located south of Oakwood Avenue, north of University Drive, and east of the Parkway in this quadrant. Perkins headed the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Mississippi Territorial Militia during the War of 1812. He also was Clerk of the Superior Court in Huntsville in 1810, and he served in the Territorial House of Representatives 1812-1813. Just to the east, in Section 25, were Daniel Rather and Hugh McVay. Rather was county coroner in 1815 and served in the 1819 Constitutional Convention. McVay was Speaker of the Senate and in 1837 became Governor of Alabama.

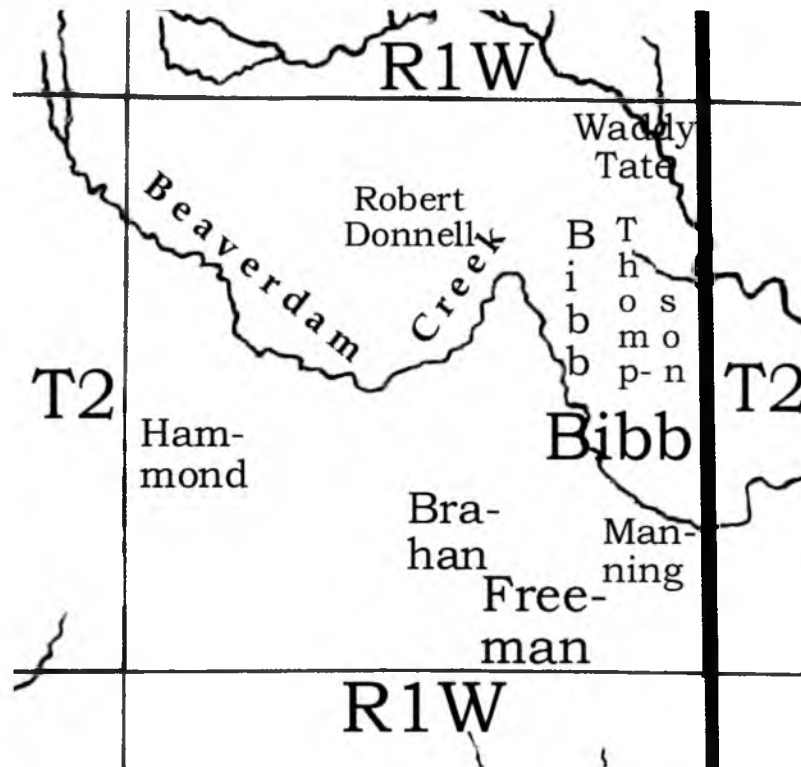
Henry Minor had land in Section 33. He served in the House of Representatives in 1819, at which time he joined with LeRoy Pope and Clement Clay to host U. S. President James Monroe at a banquet in Huntsville. Minor was elected Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court in 1823.<sup>13</sup> Pope had additional land in Sections 34 and 35, as well as the land of Huntsville in Section 36. Nicholas Reedy had land in Sections 27 and 28, from which he gave a title bond for an acre of land in 1817 to the Canaan Meeting House of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church that was meeting and camping on his land (along the eastern edge of Oakwood College property today). Robert Thompson held land in Section 8, while his son-in-law (Governor Thomas Bibb) had land in Section 1.



The pioneer landowners of T3-R2W included such notables as Phillip Dedman, Nathaniel Lewis, Elisha Rainbolt, David Bailey, and William East. Dedman was son of Samuel, who was son of another Phillip of York Co. VA, who died in 1770. Samuel's sons Henry, Frank, and Phillip came to Madison County around 1814. Phillip eventually owned about 1,000 acres and was considered a man of great wealth for the time. He was married twice, having 14 children. His descendants intermarried with the Wall, Tuck, Vaughn, Hilliard, and Halsey families of the area. Nathaniel Lewis was a son of Revolutionary War soldier Edward Lewis. Nathaniel came to Madison County before 1816. The Lewis ancestry in Virginia is closely allied with that of Nicholas Meriwether, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington.

Nathaniel Lewis' grandson, Meriwether Anderson Lewis, purchased land near Triana and had a plantation at the south end of today's airport. According to family

tradition, he also owned at least three riverboats to transport cotton. Meriwether's son, Arthur H. Lewis, became a pioneer citizen of the town of Madison. In 1818 Nathaniel Lewis purchased the land of David Bailey in Section 24, separated by about three miles from the parcel that he had obtained from the government in Section 9 on January 1, 1816. Bailey's land was less than a full quarter section, because in 1816 he had deeded three acres to the Salem Baptist Church, which was already meeting on his land. Bailey's parcel was stated as being along "Funnel Creek," which is now known as Dry Creek (a fork of Indian Creek), where it passes west of John's Road and south of Plummer Road. Bailey is believed to have been a son of Moses Bailey and a brother of James Bailey, who lived near County Line Road and south of Mill Road, in the northwest quarter of Section 18, T4-R2W.<sup>14</sup> Elisha Rainbolt had holdings in Section 27 of T3-R2W, on the north end of Rainbow Mountain, a name derived from phonetic distortion of his name.<sup>15</sup> He was part of the Sims Settlement and served in the local militia during the War of 1812. He had arrived in Madison County well before the 1816 Chickasaw cession and "squatted" on his land, along with neighbors Jesse Martin, Jesse Fitts, and William East. East acquired extensive lands in the area, including Sections 26, 34, and 35 with the parcel that he held in Section 27, where Rainbolt had his initial holdings.

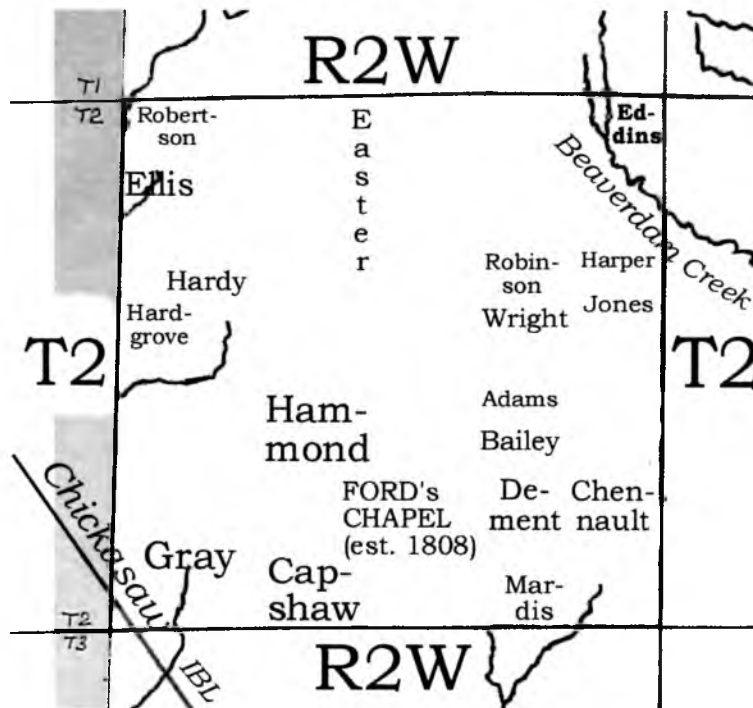


The pioneer landowners in T2-R1W included Waddy Tate (Section 1), Robert Donnell (S10), Robert Thompson (S12 & 13), Thomas Bibb (S11, 13, 14, 23, & 24), Thomas Freeman (S26 & 35), Eli Hammond (S19), James Manning (S25), and John Braham (S27). Thomas Freeman was the government surveyor of the county, and he apparently had first-hand knowledge of which parcels of land would be the best in each area. He made out his will (probated here in 1821) in Washington, Mississippi (the Territorial Capitol), naming his heirs as Caroline Elizabeth Neal (wife of Madison County's first sheriff, Stephen Neal), and her son, George Washington Neal, of Madison County.

Waddy Tate was a physician, already mentioned as one of the trustees of the town of Triana in T5-R2W. He also has the distinction of being involved in the first recorded duel in Madison County. It was reported that in 1811<sup>16</sup> at age 25, he duelled with Clement Comer Clay, who had just arrived in Huntsville, aged 22, that year. Clay became governor of the state 1835-7.<sup>17</sup> Obviously, no mortal wounds were inflicted, as both men went on to have long and highly productive careers. Tate's ancestors were connected to the Bibb, Harris, and Washington families of Virginia, including the ancestors of George Washington.<sup>18</sup>

Robert Donnell came to the area in 1809 as a Cumberland Presbyterian minister. His family had been members of the old Buffalo Creek Church in Guilford County, North Carolina at the time his father served in the American Revolution. "Father Donnell" was born in North Carolina in 1784, and sometime later, the family moved to Wilson County, Tennessee. Donnell was one of the authors of the 1814 Cumberland Presbyterian Confession of Faith.<sup>19</sup> He founded many churches of this denomination in the area and pastored the brick church in Mooresville later in life. He concluded his ministry in Athens, where his house remains today as a museum on Clinton Street. Donnell is further remembered for the assembly of Cumberland Presbyterian Churches in North Alabama named in his honor – the Robert Donnell Presbytery.

Thomas Bibb and his father-in-law Robert Thompson held land in T2-R1W just as they had in other quadrants. Not only did they often purchase adjacent parcels, but Thompson breathed his last breath in the house of his son-in-law at Belle Mina in 1829.<sup>20</sup>



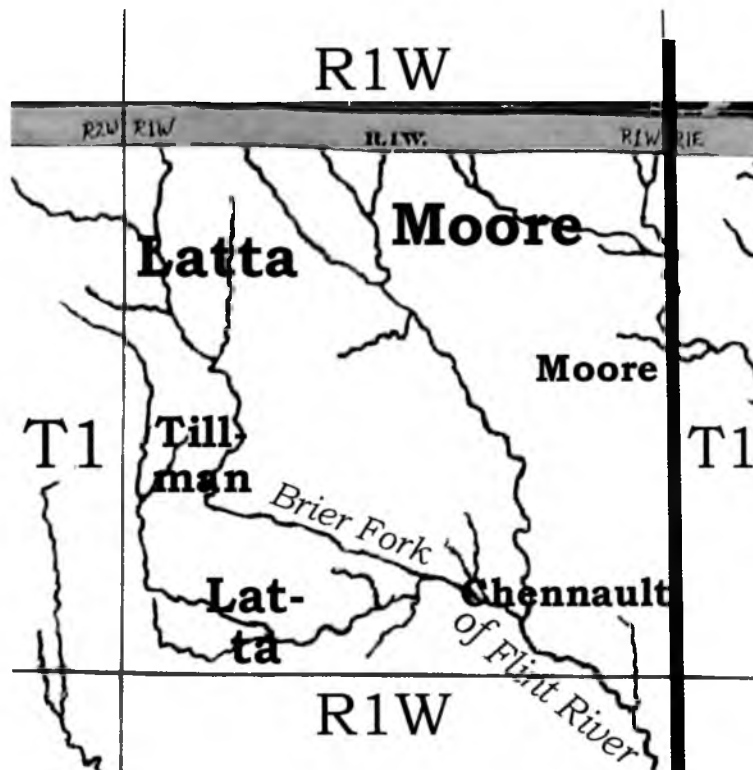
Pre-statehood landowners in T2-R2W included Eli Hammond (Section 21), Richard Ford (S27), William Chennault (S25), and David Capshaw (S33).





Portrait of Ford's Chapel by Judy Tuck

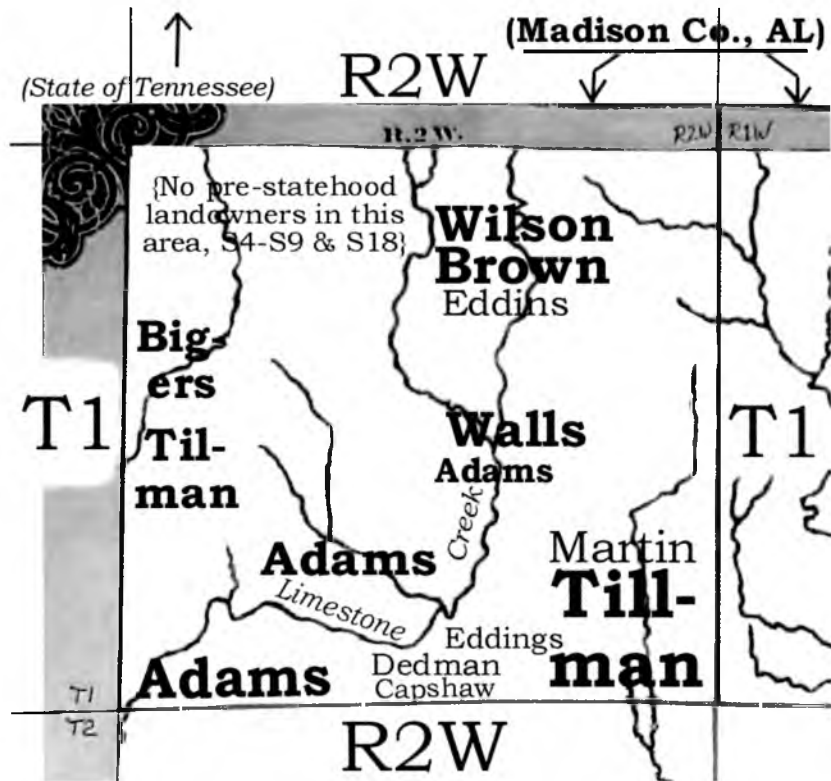
Ford's Chapel was established in 1808 on the land of Richard Ford in Section 27, making it the oldest Methodist Church in the state, according to a history of the church by Suzanne Schultz recounted in the Madison County heritage book of 1998.<sup>21</sup> Eli Hammond held land in Section 19 of T2-R1W, as well as in Section 21 of T2-R2W. His tombstone indicates that his lifespan was from 1761 to 1842, and it provides the title of "Captain." Research shows that he was a captain of a unit of Tennessee in the War of 1812. He was a friend of Andrew Jackson and father of Madison County's 1853-9 Probate Judge Ferdinand L. Hammond. As Executor of Eli's 800-acre estate, Ferdinand sold the land to his brother, Arthur, in 1844 for one dollar. The next year Arthur sold 361 acres of it back to Ferdinand for \$100, with no involvement by the several other heirs of Eli. Section 25 included land of William Chennault, a son of Stephen and a brother of Morris.<sup>22</sup> All three Chennaults held land in Sections 25 and 26 of T1-R1W.<sup>23</sup> According to an article written by Belle Chennault in the Madison County heritage book, Stephen had another son, John Nelson Chennault. John was a great-grandfather of General Claire Lee Chennault, commander of the famous "Flying Tigers" of World War II.<sup>24</sup> David Preston Capshaw (born 1779 in North Carolina) who owned land in Section 33, T2-R2W, was the father of David Granville Capshaw (1817-1872), for whom the community of Capshaw is named today. Some lines of their ancestry have been documented back to the 1620s in postings to Ancestry.com, with connections to the Tate and Watkins families.



The pioneer landowners in T1-R1W included Daniel Tillman, James and Jacob Latta, and Ezekiel, Gabriel, and David Moore. Daniel Tillman had land in T1-R2W and in T2-R2W as well as in T1-R1W. He was born in 1776 in South Carolina, and his estate began probate in 1827 Madison County. Allen Walls became administrator of the estate in 1849 after three earlier administrators. William Walls was among the men who made bond for the three initial administrators. Daniel Tillman was a 16<sup>th</sup> great grandson of English author Geoffrey Chaucer and a 6<sup>th</sup> cousin of Eli Whitney, per Ancestry One World Tree. James Latta was born around 1840 in North Carolina. He was reported by the Latta Organization (on-line) to have died in 1856 in Madison County.

It was reported in April 11, 1860 that James “Latty” had passed away at age 102. He was mentioned as a volunteer in the Revolutionary War, but his enfeebled father had arranged a substitute for him, per Thomas M. Owen’s listing of Revolutionary soldiers in Alabama. Jacob Latta was probably a son of James, but James’ records on Ancestry.com do not show him having a son, brother, or father of that name. The ancestry records also do not show any other children for James. However, it was reported in the *Southern Advocate* that James’ father-in-law was named Jacob Allen, so James may have named a son after that Jacob. Likewise, the relationships of the several Moore families that owned land in this area have been elusive. It is known from census and other records that Ezekiel was born in 1769 North Carolina, Gabriel in 1785 North Carolina, and David in 1779 Virginia.<sup>25</sup> David Moore owned nine plantations, was a physician, and a personal friend of General Andrew Jackson, with whom he served in the Creek Indian War of 1813-5 as Surgeon-General. David became a judge in Madison County and served in the Territorial Legislature as well as in both houses of the state legislature, becoming Speaker of the House in 1841. Gabriel Moore similarly had a long political career, becoming the 5th governor of Alabama in 1829. Not everyone liked him, as he was threatened with a

loaded pistol in Huntsville in 1821.<sup>26</sup> Of course, he was himself a man who fought a duel with his own brother-in-law. In 1843 he took his 8 slaves to Cincinnati and emancipated them, then moved with them to Panola County, Mississippi. In 1844 he moved to Texas, where he died a few months later in 1845. It was reported that while in Huntsville Moore had fathered a child by a slave, open knowledge of which may have further intensified dislike of him in the area.<sup>27</sup>



The earliest owners of land in T1-R2W included Littleberry Adams (Sections 22, 28, 29, 31, & 32), William Walls (S22), and Daniel Tillman (S25, 26, 35, 36). Daniel also had land in T2-R2W and in T1-R2W. The history of all three of these men is closely interwoven. Littleberry Adams had a sister Sarah who married Flooda Mitchell, with the two families coming together from South Carolina in 1808 to northern Alabama. Flooda and Sarah settled in Limestone County, where their descendants included connections with the Scruggs, Cartwright, Crutcher, Bailey, Hargrove, and Millhouse families.

The Adams and Mitchell connections<sup>28</sup> can be further associated with Tillman and other recognizable surnames of this area by a look at the early records of Edgefield District, South Carolina. There Frederick and Daniel Tillman had transactions with the Samuel Walker family, as did Thomas, Littleberry, Joseph Adams, Thomas Terry, and Joseph Eddins.<sup>29</sup> In the Madison County records, Littleberry Adams was defendant in a suit in Superior Court (1811-1819 minute book) brought by Robert Beaty regarding a keelboat. William Walls was previously mentioned as having made bond for the first three administrators of Daniel Tillman's estate, of which Allen Walls was Administrator in 1849. Both Walls may have been sons of Alexander G. Wall(s), who had land in T5-R1W, near the Tennessee River.

The associations among these settlers and early landowners are illustrations of the closely intertwined lives of those who lived here. The citizens of Huntsville often owned land well outside the city's boundaries, and even those generally associated with Limestone County sometimes owned land in Madison County. Perhaps we should learn to be less conscious of lines of separation and more willing to see ourselves as the pioneers did – just living together in an interactive community.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>1875 Madison County Map by James Mayhew, as reproduced by the Library of Congress, 1950, plus earlier maps.

<sup>2</sup>Ruth Dixon and Bob Priest, *Sims Settlement– Our Squatter Ancestors, 1806-1818* (Washington, D.C.: Ruth Dixon Associates, Inc., 1989), *passim*.

<sup>3</sup>(Judge) Thomas Jones Taylor, *The History of Madison County, Alabama* (written in Huntsville from 1880 to 1886, manuscript typed by WPA in Huntsville Library in 1940), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Madison County Heritage Book Committee (chaired by John P. Rankin), *The Heritage of Madison County, Alabama* (Clanton, AL: Heritage Publishing Company, Inc. and Walsworth Publishing Company, 1998).

<sup>5</sup>John P. Rankin, *Memories of Madison: A Connected Community, 1857 – 2007* (Donning Publishers, 2007) published for the Madison Station Historical Preservation Society and the City of Madison.

<sup>6</sup>Margaret Matthews Cowart, *Old Land Records of Madison County, Alabama* (Huntsville, Alabama, 2005), p. 88.

<sup>7</sup>James Record, *A Dream Come True, Volume II* (1978), p. 460.

<sup>8</sup>Louise Ingersoll, *Lanier*, (Washington, D.C.: Goetz Printing Company, 1965), pp. 1-17.

<sup>9</sup>Chris Edward and Faye Axford, *The Lure and Lore of Limestone County*, (1978) published for the Limestone County (Alabama) Historical Society, pp. 194, 195.

<sup>10</sup>Madison County Heritage Book Committee, p. 215.

<sup>11</sup>Edwards and Axford, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup>Rankin, p. 68.

<sup>13</sup>Edwards and Axford, p. 198.

<sup>14</sup>Rankin, p. 135.

<sup>15</sup>Taylor, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup>Alabama Department of Archives & History, *Alabama Governors*,

[http://www.archives.state.al.us/govs\\_list/g\\_claycc.html](http://www.archives.state.al.us/govs_list/g_claycc.html) says the year was 1823.

<sup>17</sup>Madison County Heritage Book Committee, pp. 2, 141.

<sup>18</sup>Edwards and Axford, pp. 172, 195, 196.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>20</sup>Madison County Heritage Book Committee, pp. 440, 441.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup>Lawrence County Heritage Book Committee, *The Heritage of Lawrence County, Alabama*, (Clanton, Alabama: Heritage Publishing Consultants, Inc. and Walsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1998), pp. 100, 101.

<sup>23</sup>Cowart, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup>Madison County Heritage Book Committee, pp. 136, 137.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 347, 348; Federal Census of Madison County, 1830, 1840, and 1850.

<sup>26</sup>Ranee' G. Pruitt, *Eden of the South, A Chronology of Huntsville, Alabama, 1805-2005*, (Boaz, Alabama: Boaz Printing, 2005) published by the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup>Harriet E. Doss, "Rise and Fall of an Alabama Founding Father, Gabriel Moore," *Alabama Review*, Vol. 52 (July 2000), #3, pp. 163-176.

<sup>28</sup>Edwards and Axford, pp. 68, 70.

<sup>29</sup>Judith F. Russell, *Database of 300 Citations With South Carolina Walker References, 1770-1820*  
<http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/r/u/s/Judith-F-Russell/FILE/0015page.html>

## Two Hundred Years – The Big Spring and John Hunt

DAVID BYERS

It was all about the “Big Spring.” The Indians talked of it long before recorded history. As they did before the first man came, its waters – clear and cool – flow away to the west and south to meet the river. Running through heavily wooded fields and swampy plains, it was home to the birds, fish, snakes and large animals of the wild. Many springs flowed from the land north of the Great Bend in the Tennessee River. None compared to the Big Spring.

After the Cherokees and the Chickasaws transferred title to the area, the Mississippi Territory was organized in 1798 and enlarged in 1804 to include the northern part of Alabama.

The first settlers arrived in 1804, and the next year John Hunt brought his family to live near the Big Spring. Soon many more came, seeking new opportunities and a new life. These pioneers were brave and resourceful people of modest means. They migrated with the hope of bettering their lot in life with rich, productive land bought at a reasonable price.<sup>1</sup> The angry divisions surrounding the Revolutionary War continued long afterwards and many just wanted to escape that situation. Over 100 veterans of that war moved to Madison County. They came, excited by Jefferson’s Louisiana Purchase, and driven by depressed conditions following the effects of Napoleon’s European War and the Embargo of 1807. This American population was young. The 1790 census revealed 49% of those surveyed were sixteen years of age or less.



Busy people were making a home around the Big Spring. Already in 1807 the Methodists and Presbyterians had held a church camp meeting. A church historian recalled "Baptists were present at the beginning, strong and numerous, but dissensions and divisions frustrated their growth."<sup>2</sup> A school was established by Wyatt Bishop, and Colonel and Mrs. J. L. Posey provided tutoring when the settlement was called Hunt's Spring.<sup>3</sup> Land speculators were crowding in, locating and squatting on the prime properties as they found them.

The governor of the Mississippi Territory, Robert Williams, saw the need to control the fast-growing activities in the area around the Big Spring. He was under great pressure to survey and systematize the new lands for sale to the hoards of newcomers. On December 13, 1808, he declared Madison County a new subdivision of the Territory and began to organize the business of the citizens. A census of the population was ordered. It revealed 353 families and total of 2,223 residents including slaves living in the county. Within four years, 5,000 settlers were in the area.

Slow communication between the territorial capital city of Washington, near Natchez, (about 400 grueling miles away) and Madison County caused delays. In April 1809, William Winston, who was elected to be a territorial legislator, wrote the governor that he was embarrassed about doing a job for which he had not taken the oath of office. Two months later the acting governor replied, "As soon as the Governor arrives, one of us will visit your settlement as I see no other way in which the county can be organized."<sup>4</sup> Later, the sheriff, Stephen Neal, was designated to give the oath to all officers.

Living conditions were crude. The village was composed of wooden houses scattered over the grounds around the spring. Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one Huntsville resident recalled how pioneers had seen the settlement, which gave little hint of the city to come. Judge Thomas J. Taylor wrote that, "two rough country roads, with stumps still standing came together near our intersection of Washington and Holmes. The town was a rough, rocky place with cabins stuck here and there over the level spots. The public square was a rocky knoll elevated considerably above the surrounding country at the base of which was a large pond. A thick growth of cedars wound irregularly down to the big spring into a deep and damp-looking basin. Patches of dead trees stood like masts of great ships where clearings were made by girdling the trees."<sup>5</sup> The primary inconvenience was a lack of mills. Corn, for example, had to be carried to mill at Winchester, Tennessee, a trip of several days.<sup>6</sup> Everyone lived by candlelight because coal oil for lamps had only recently come to the states.<sup>7</sup>



Things really began happening in 1809. Surveyor Thomas Freeman established the Huntsville Meridian as the north-south line from which all surveys in North Alabama were to be measured. (A monument stands in Maple Hill Cemetery to mark that line.) The first marriage, James McGuire to Elizabeth Thornby, was recorded, and the first will, that of Joseph York, was probated.<sup>8</sup> The governor sent Captain Stephen Neal to the county to serve as sheriff and justice of the peace. He would aid Thomas Freeman as they selected the militia officers, the justices of peace, and the five justices of the quorum who would serve as the Orphans' Court.<sup>9</sup> Neal served as sheriff until 1822. He also invested in real estate. He paid \$1,500 for the northeast corner lot just south of the courthouse. It was one quarter of that whole block, 150 feet square. Later, he was able to divide it into eleven narrow building sites,<sup>10</sup> on one of which is the Harrison Brothers Hardware store. Family records indicate Neal married a daughter of John Hunt.

Thomas Freeman, an Irishman, who had helped lay out the District of Columbia, completed the overall survey using the rectangle system of section, township and range. He had served under General George Washington and was appointed by the federal government to measure out the basic grid of the land. He was also instructed by the government to act as land registrar, taking applications from the squatters prior to the land auction so they might stay as "tenants at will" until the official land auction could begin in Nashville.

The federal land sales process was complex. Freeman first contracted with settlers already on the land as "tenants at will." The application was taken and permission granted for 282 farms. By paying a nine-shilling fee, they could remain at their chosen spot and harvest their crops until the land was sold at the auction. No advantage was given to the holder of this document at the auction. This was used to calm the settlers, who would be forced to move if they were unsuccessful at the auction. The federal government then held land sales in Nashville beginning in August 1809. Freeman feared the squatters and the speculators would band together to prevent competition and keep prices low. The move to Nashville was to prevent this.<sup>11</sup> The active competition the federal officials hoped for was rare. "The House Committee on Public Lands once observed, 'Few men are willing to incur the resentment of their neighbors by bidding for

their property, at public venue, even when other neighbors are the creditors; and when the public is concerned, scarcely a man will be found hardy enough to do it.' ”<sup>12</sup> Cash was needed for the first payment and must be found for the next four annual payments, an extremely hard requirement for squatters.<sup>13</sup> Freeman estimated, “not more than one fifth, perhaps one tenth, of the settlers on the land can probably purchase” the land they occupied.<sup>14</sup> Land was sold at \$2.00 per acre unless more than one person showed interest.

Financing for the sales provided for by Congress's Land Act of 1796 was equally involved. The Federal government offered to loan the purchase amount at 6% interest for a four-year term to those purchasing land. A successful buyer must pay 5% down and 40 days later, 20% was due as the first year's payment. He then had two years for the next payment. They offered an 8% discount for cash.<sup>15</sup> According to the regulations, if a purchaser failed to make a payment or desired to cease paying, another could make those payments and then take title to the land. This “option to buy” was called an assignment. Those options could be sold at a profit or held until the final payment caused the grant to be competed. No official written notice was made of an option sale until the next payment was due. Often land was assigned several times. If a payment was not made, the government reclaimed the land (it “reverted”), and it was auctioned again. This short four-year financing was a terrible mistake by the federals. It assured collapse of the farming settler's financial future. (Help came with the Federal Land Act of 1820 and the Relief Act of 1821.) Of the 282 permissions granted, only 18 paid completely and received their patents.<sup>16</sup> By October, 24,000 acres had sold for \$60,000.<sup>17</sup> In 1811 the land sales were moved to Huntsville where they continued from 1811 to 1861.

The land sales brought all the hopes and dreams of the new population together. John Hunt had built the cabin, cleared an area for crops, and he clearly intended to buy the parcel, a quarter section in Section 36, Township 3 South, Range 1 West, 160 acres including the Big Spring. On February 10, 1809, he paid his fee and was given the right to remain on the land (under “tenants at will”) and gather crops until the land sold.



(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)  
Artist's rendering of John Hunt's cabin at the Big Spring



LeRoy Pope was the highest bidder when the Big Spring land was offered for sale on August 25<sup>th</sup> and took that quarter section for the highest price bid for any land at the auction, \$23.50 per acre. John Hunt attended the Nashville sale and bought three quarter sections. Four days after failing to win the Big Spring, he bought two quarter sections on Indian Creek about two miles below the Big Spring for which only the 5% down payment was made. Probably he chose it for the two creeks that joined Indian Creek (now Spring Branch) but on return to Huntsville decided it was too swampy for his uses. He knew he must leave the cabin near the spring. (Those who remember Huntsville of the 1940s and 1950s, before the creeks were channelized, may recall that area was subject to flood.) Maybe his age and energy caught up with him. For some reason he let the parcels go back to the government for another auction. He did have money because in October (about 60 days later) he bought another quarter section in the northwest part of the county. It was assigned (sold to another) after he made the first year's payment of \$80.95. In fact, he paid no tax to the Mississippi Territory from 1810 through 1815. His son, George, and his daughter's husband, Samuel Acklin, both paid taxes in that period.<sup>18</sup> Hunt, by then 60 or more years old, probably lived with an adult child while he remained in the town.

The biggest change in the settlement came when the wealthy land and slave-holding investors from the Broad River area of Georgia and Virginia appeared. They were drawn by the potential of the wonderful farmland to enlarge their businesses. They brought the energy, know-how and money to drive the development of the county. LeRoy Pope was the titular leader of the many who came. One early twentieth century historian described him as "the 'moving spirit and dominant influence' of all positive action in the life of the settlement."<sup>19</sup> His suggestion to the Territorial Governor brought about the town name of Twickenham. It is said Pope held in high regard the widely quoted English poet, Alexander Pope, whose estate outside of London was named Twickenham.<sup>20</sup> The legislature changed the name to Huntsville in 1811 at the petition of citizens unhappy with the British and the troubles leading to the War of 1812.

In December 1809, the Governor of the Mississippi Territory appointed a committee comprised of William Dickson, Edward Ward, Lewis Winston, Alex Gilbreath and Peter Perkins to select a site for the county seat and to purchase 30 acres to establish the town and construct the necessary buildings. Three of those acres were to be used for public buildings and the others divided into half acre lots, to be sold and those funds used for construction of the courthouse and jail. Placement of the public section was important in every settlement since it determined the center of activity and the best chance for profit from land sales. Property owners always competed for the prize.

Once the site was chosen, the first lots sold for a total of \$8,000 at an auction that directly followed the commissioners' decision on the placement of the town. Pope withheld his lots until a later date, no doubt hoping for a higher price. These sales were only contracts, because the original purchase from the government had not been completed with a patent and a deed. Consequently, those who subdivided and resold could only offer a bond or a contract until the government received its payment and completed the paperwork.

General John Coffee, a soldier, friend and neighbor of Andrew Jackson, was appointed by the Secretary of Treasury, William W. Crawford, as surveyor general to work out of Huntsville and complete the surveys of the area. After he hired sufficient

help, the surveys were completed. Not by coincidence, Crawford belonged to the same political circle as Pope and his friends.



General John Coffee

There were many deals negotiated and stories told about the purchasers and their arrangements in this period. Those who did the actual surveying had the best and most complete knowledge of the area. They not only took advantage by buying parcels but also were advisors to others desiring the best land for their uses. William P. Anderson and James Jackson of Nashville, cohorts of Andrew Jackson, bought land on which most of Huntsville stands. The surveyor, Thomas Freeman, advised Anderson on selection of property. Surveyor John Coffee was hired by the two to persuade the committee that the town center and public buildings should be placed on their land. LeRoy Pope, the local powerhouse, had the same idea.

In a letter to Coffee, William Anderson wrote, "You are to make the best terms as you can with the commission and they shall be satisfactory and binding on us." A letter from Coffee replied, "Colonel Ward, Dr. Dickson and others are appointed to fix the site. Dickson is warm to the cause, the Colonel is rather cold." On June 26, Coffee received a power of attorney to act for the partnership. The letter said, "It matters not whether we sacrifice more or less than Colonel Pope. Unless the courthouse is fixed there, what little we own is a mere nothing. You are invested with a plenipotentiary power and everything you and Major Walker do will be right. A hundred things will turn up that cannot now be anticipated." The game was on. Hard jousting was underway.

John Coffee wrote back, "Major Walker and myself after several days hard negotiations with the commissioners, did on the 5<sup>th</sup> July enter into terms for fixing the seat of Justice and laying out a town at Huntsville. Huntsville may readily expect from

the delay that we had much difficulty in establishing that as the permanent site. We had Colonel Ward against us in and throughout the whole proceedings with all his eloquence and oratory, as well in the cabinet with closed doors as in a stump speech to the populace.”<sup>21</sup> The commissioners were undoubtedly influenced by personal interests in their decision to locate the county seat at Huntsville. Anderson and Jackson paid the commissioners who helped them, most likely in town lots. That price was greater than that offered to them by other speculators interested in the same scheme.

Indeed, Coffee was successful when the seat of justice was located at Huntsville. Anderson wrote in February 1811, “You have been the cause of all our profits in the Huntsville scheme.” Nonetheless, Coffee had a difficult time being paid. After many letters, Anderson acknowledged Coffee his compensation when he wrote, “They were all good fellows and that in any event no damage would be done.” Although it is difficult to calculate Coffee’s returns, he later stated the business proved profitable. “In the course of two years I was enabled to pay the arrearages of my mercantile debt amounting to \$6000 besides reserving to myself several valuable tracts of land.”<sup>22</sup> Surveyors, always the best informed, usually succeeded at the land game.

As the purchasers made their choices, downtown was given its shape. LeRoy Pope had the special land near the Big Spring. The arrangement made with the two Nashvillians and the committee placed the public buildings and the half-acre lots on the hill above the spring. All three of these investors were satisfied with the outcome. Pope ultimately bought their interests in the lots.

LeRoy Pope and his friends purchased large farms for about two dollars per acre. They brought slaves and fresh ideas to implement the land in more profitable ways. The land was cleared, planted to cotton and harvested at small cost by the use of slaves. The deep, red loamy-clay was far more productive than the soils to which they were accustomed. As the money rolled in, the men built beautiful plantation homes. Newcomer David Moore built a gristmill and a cotton gin in 1809.<sup>23</sup> Most of these men were happy with their role of country squire. Historian Gordon Chappell wrote, “No frontier enterprise could be a success without the dependable, intelligent, public-spirited individual who could contribute in a substantial way.”<sup>24</sup> Huntsville had its share of these men.

Instructions came, “Do let the plan of the town be as dashing as possible and the ground on which it shall stand as eligible as may be.”<sup>25</sup> Surveyor J. W. Leake laid out the streets. The jail was built first as required by the law, followed by the courthouse. It was made of wood, located northeast of the courthouse. In rainy times a pond beside it spread under the building. A pillory and whipping post were placed near the jail, permitting the public to watch as prisoners received their punishment.<sup>26</sup> John Hickman, the contractor for the courthouse, finished it in 1816.

The land purchased from LeRoy Pope by the commissioners ran through the middle of the public square. He stipulated that the Big Spring should be kept accessible to the public. No one should be allowed to dam the spring or otherwise obstruct or injure the water. He reserved several lots to build his beautiful home, Poplar Grove, there on the highest hill, overlooking the village.

Interestingly, names (chosen by the commissioners) for the original streets did not include Adams. John Adams, President of the United States, had directed the forcible removal of many of the original settlers from Indian lands and the bad feelings remained.

Later, Adams Avenue was added to those Revolutionary War heroes whose names were used. Nathaniel Greene, Benjamin Lincoln, George Clinton, Horatio Gates, Edmund Randolph and George Washington were the first. Also included were Patrick Henry, Albert Gallatin, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and the territorial governors, David Holmes and Robert Williams.<sup>27</sup> From the Big Spring, one street had two names; from the Big Spring, it was called Gallatin Street to the north and Henry Street to the south.



Settlers encroaching on Indian lands illegally

Cash was an endless problem during Huntsville's earliest years. Pioneers could not deal with deciphering values of the different monetary systems that circulated: Spanish doubloons, dollars, halves, quarters, pistareens, and picayunes. Other bank notes often appeared but most citizens preferred hard money. Often debts were paid with slaves or real estate. Tobacco sometimes served as currency in small exchanges.<sup>28</sup> In most places of the new west, large transactions were conducted, not with money, but with promissory notes. These were usually informal scrawls on a scrap of paper, with no witnesses. Obviously, personal relations were very important. The legislature of the Mississippi Territory created the Bank of Mississippi, headquartered in Natchez, attempting to settle the situation of lack of cash. Renamed the Planters' and Merchants' Bank, it opened in a building on the Big Spring bluff in 1816.

A most important member of the Georgia transplants was John Williams Walker. The very ambitious son-in-law of LeRoy Pope, attorney Walker also had political connections with the aristocratic gentry of middle Georgia. He was licensed to practice law in Huntsville at the first session of Superior Court of Law and Equity in 1810. Of those licensed that day, he was called "The most talented and popular." He was a close friend of General Andrew Jackson and General John Coffee.<sup>29</sup> Reluctant at first to move to the small town, he came only "because the earnest wish of my wife and family convinced me to leave my native state and friends."<sup>30</sup> Although he served as Pope's agent in land sales and other ventures, his relationship with his father-in-law, LeRoy Pope, was often strained.

Walker's leadership was important to continued progress. "When speculation and rapid settlement drove the price of land to all-time highs, Walker advocated a liberal land

policy. He joined a petition to allow those who purchased more than one-quarter section on the four-year credit system to place all their payments on one quarter section.”<sup>31</sup> This allowed those in financial distress to preserve a part of their purchase. It may have also allowed the wealthier to increase their holdings.

In addition to the Broad River Georgians, other smart and able men saw their opportunity in the town. Dr. Thomas Fearn came to practice medicine in 1810. A recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, the foremost medical college of the day, he was a man of great vigor and ideas. His work with quinine revolutionized the treatment of malaria. Immediately successful as a physician, he traveled with, and attended to Andrew Jackson during the Creek Wars. In 1816 he imagined and created the canal system using the Big Spring and Indian Creek to ship cotton to the river. Although this was not a long-term triumph, his community spirit led the small town forward.<sup>32</sup>



The Fearn Canal was also known as the Indian Creek Canal  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

Clement Comer Clay, the man who would become Alabama’s eighth governor, came to Huntsville to visit his sister, Martha, in 1810. He made his home in the town in November 1811, when he bought land from his sister’s husband, John Bunch, who farmed and also owned Bunch’s Tavern on the Square. It was in his tavern, one of the few places large enough, that the 1810 session of court was held. Sheriff Stephen Neal

spent \$3.70 to arrange the room for the court. He supplied the basics with "three home-made chairs with buckskin bottom, table, paper, and goose quills." Such were the legal facilities on the frontier. A story, repeated by historian Judge Taylor, established that proper formality was brought to the day when "Obadiah Jones entered the court room with great ceremony, clad in a Judge's gown, a cocked hat, with long plumes and a sword at his side. He was preceded by the sheriff, who advanced to the bench with a drawn sword."<sup>33</sup> A cowed defendant would be quite awed by this display.

Governor Clay was a giant in the political and legal circles of the town, state and nation. Clay, a Virginian, educated in Tennessee, fought in the Creek War, served in the Mississippi Territorial legislature, and was a member of Alabama's Constitutional convention. In addition to governor, he was a state legislator, a member of the U.S. Congress, U.S. Senate, and Chief Justice of Alabama's Supreme Court. In 1823 (one source says 1811) Clay fought a duel with Dr. Waddy Tate of Limestone County and temporarily resigned from public service for four years.

David Moore studied medicine in Philadelphia and served as a surgeon on Andrew Jackson's Creek War staff. In Huntsville he invested in land, served on the bank board, was elected to the legislature, and was a prominent member of the community.

Thomas Bibb was another powerful citizen of the town. His primary land holdings were in the west, but he matched the others with a splendid mansion in town. Farming was his first business, but politics, banking and land speculation were important to him. His brother, William, was Alabama's first governor. He died in the second year of his term. Thomas automatically followed him as governor, because he was president of the state senate.

James Manning, one of the wealthy planters from the Broad River region of Georgia, came to Huntsville in 1809. With one thousand of the most fertile acres and 50 slaves he maintained the pace set by LeRoy Pope. Both used four-wheel buggies, built columned mansions and involved themselves in the bank and land speculation across north Alabama. Manning's home, called the Grove, was built downtown on Henry (now Gallatin) Street.

Visitors to Huntsville usually dealt with a small circle of men. "A man appearing in court before LeRoy Pope and David Moore, two of the justices of peace and quorum, might first have consulted attorneys John Williams Walker or Clement Clay. His request for a loan made later that day would have had to clear the desks of those four men, who served as directors of the Planters' and Merchants' Bank. John Brahan was also a bank director; he might later have accepted the loaned money as payment for land because he also was the receiver of money at the federal land office."<sup>34</sup> This small circle of powerful men had all the inside knowledge and every advantage.

Quickly, the small community began to transform. Log houses began changing to brick after 1810 when masons Thomas and William Brandon came. The development continued as a Mr. Parham started the state's first newspaper, *The Madison Gazette*, a weekly, in 1812.<sup>35</sup> The ownership and name changed in 1816 when T. B. Grantland called it *The Huntsville Republican*. The territorial legislature chartered the Greene Academy, a tax-exempt school.<sup>36</sup> The trustees were allowed to raise \$4000 by lottery for a start. Many other signs of progress appeared. A Masonic Lodge, a library, several religious groups, a society of Thespians, and a Hayden society all were part of the social

activities. The economy diversified with a fine collection of lawyers, doctors and businessmen. In 1814 eighteen cotton gins were operating.

In 1819 Madison County, only eleven years after it's founding, was chosen to host a convention for forming the state of Alabama. This decision was influenced in a large way by the politically astute Georgians. Huntsvillian John W. Walker was chosen as presiding officer. "With the designation of Huntsville as the meeting place for the convention came recognition of its leadership in all Alabama Territory." A tribute to this supremacy was paid by President James Monroe, who, with two companions, visited in June 1819.<sup>37</sup>



At that time Madison County held more than half the entire population of what became Alabama.<sup>38</sup> Land values soared! For instance, the lot on the southwest corner of the square originally cost \$715. In 1816 it sold for \$7,500, a fair index to the advance in prices of property all through the county. Close-in land sold at \$100 an acre and \$20 per acre was considered cheap. General wealth kept pace with the land prices with much of that wealth invested in slaves.<sup>39</sup> The 1816 census showed 14,200 inhabitants in the county, and Huntsville was a crowded town with full hotels.

Frontier life in this town offered other encounters. "Amusements seem to be card playing, quarter-racing and hunting. Card playing and the association with improper women at an early date were indulged in. Court days and muster days people congregated *en masse*. Then it was fistfights and free fights to the usual end of bruised faces and bodies and a too-ready access to stones. A resort to the pistol or knife was a rare occurrence, for a man's physical prowess was a coveted position in the social circle or as a citizen to test his manhood."<sup>40</sup> The town probably had characters such as the fictional Captain Simon Suggs who often said, "It's good to be shifty in a new country."<sup>41</sup> Huntsville was not quite the quiet town some recall.

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There is mystery about the pioneer for whom the town is named. In contrast with the Pope crowd he seemed to be a rustic, rough and tumble pioneer who appeared in town only on the court and muster days. His early past is elusive but many contacts with the world left marks by which we can measure him. The common name, John Hunt, appears often in the records of the time, making the search for accurate information even more difficult.

The Big Spring was called "Hunt's Spring." For a very brief time the town was called "Twickenham," but the name that the people wanted was "Huntsville." That they chose to honor John Hunt speaks of his reputation, character and local fame. Yet some stories call him a squatter and worse. It is said he came to the spring, found and used logs prepared by another to build his two-room hut and that he lived by the spring for a few years, then disappeared and finally died a pauper's death.

The truth is a quite different story.

John Hunt was born about 1750 in Fincastle County, now Botetourt County, Virginia. Descendants believe he married Johanna Holbrook in 1770. Seven children were born to them.<sup>42</sup> The family moved south to Granville County, North Carolina, near today's Chapel Hill. There he is shown as a soldier in the Granville County Militia in a company commanded by Captain J. Kittrell on October 3, 1771.<sup>43</sup> It is likely he made acquaintances there, especially that of kinsman Memucan Hunt, that led to opportunities later. On a November 15, 1777 list of those who have taken an oath to support the state, Hunt's signature appears in the Island Creek District (Granville County). That year the Hunts and several other families moved to the frontier mountains of Washington County, North Carolina, in the very northeast area of what would become Tennessee.

There are some reports that Hunt did patriotic service in the Revolution. Some say he served as a private under Captain Charles Polk, Company of Light Horses in Salisbury District of the North Carolina Troops. He received no pension for his service because his regiment was not in the "Continental establishment."

There is no doubt he could take care of himself. Traveler Anne Royall later described him as "Standing 5 feet 10 inches in height, his 180 pounds were a mass of flexible steel. His courage and endurance were immeasurable. He was fond of hardships, adventure and daring but he was valued most among those early frontiersman for his caution."<sup>44</sup>

John Hunt was appointed sheriff of Hawkins County (which then extended to Chattanooga) and served twelve months beginning in 1787. Governor Blount, of the new "Territory South of the Ohio River," appointed him a Captain of Militia and swore him in at Rogersville, November 1790. Tennessee was then still a part of North Carolina.<sup>45</sup> He also served as sheriff of Claiborne County, now Tennessee, for four years beginning in 1801. Hunt was intelligent. With only the rudimentary education of the time, in almost every place he lived he was appointed or elected to a post of importance.

The subdivision of the very large Washington County, North Carolina, in 1779 created Sullivan County and in 1786 Hawkins County, and later in 1801 Claiborne County was created. Tennessee became the 16<sup>th</sup> state in 1796. The meeting to organize the county was held at Hunt's home in Tazewell, Claiborne County, and the first term of court was held there as well in 1802. He gave land for a church to be built there. Hunt held office and represented these three counties at various times.



John Hunt was sent to represent Hawkins County, North Carolina, at the convention to ratify the United States Constitution. At that November 1789 meeting, he was elected secretary, voted against a proposed change to the Constitution and then voted in favor of ratification.<sup>46</sup>

Hunt also had a steady job as the clerk of the House of Commons of the North Carolina legislature. From 1777 until at least 1789, excepting 1786, he served the House in a great many capacities. His duties included securing audits of accounts,<sup>47</sup> arranging for printing of laws and journals,<sup>48</sup> paying money to Continental officers for reenlistment bonuses,<sup>49</sup> signing all resolutions, appointments, and messages. He corresponded with Governors,<sup>50</sup> officers of the Federal government, State treasurer, and set up payments due to members of the house.<sup>51</sup> When the legislature chose to print currency, Hunt was one of two men chosen to sign the bills. (Counterfeit bills turned up later with the same signatures.)<sup>52</sup>

According to Volume 17 of *Published Colonial Records of the American Colonies* from North Carolina, Governor Richard Caswell wrote to Memucan Hunt on July 24, 1785: "If you have received any accounts lately from Mr. John Hunt, respecting the printing the Laws, I shall be much obliged to you to inform me. R. Caswell." Three days later, Memucan answered, "I happened to be able to take up your warrant, drawn in favor of John Hunt, as soon as it was presented. It is now almost a month since hearing anything from him. He was there endeavouring to exchange his money for Tobacco, or hard money. I hope this has been effected and that before now he has got the printing business in some forwardness. M. Hunt." The only printer at the time in North Carolina was in New Bern, on the coast, a long way from Hillsborough or the other locations where the legislature met. North Carolina script was valued poorly, probably the worst of any of the other colonies. So Hunt was a long way from home with a job to do and no real money to pay the printer. This delay may have something to do with Hunt's absence from the legislative employment in 1786. He was back on the job as clerk of the House of Commons in 1787.

John Hunt was outspoken on public issues. In 1784 he signed a petition of sundry inhabitants of Hillsborough district to the governor in behalf of an unfortunate youth charged with horse theft.<sup>33</sup> He signed a petition by inhabitants of the western country (soon to be Tennessee) to separate the state at the mountains in 1787.<sup>54</sup> In 1803 he and three sons, David, George and John, Jr. signed a petition for the county courthouse and prison to remain at Tazewell.

In spite of all the evidence of a public life, however, John Hunt was really a land speculator, and in fact the two roles were hardly separable. He followed the pattern of the many who moved ahead of the crowd, often into Indian lands, found a way to own a claim to property then sold it for a profit, sometimes after subdividing it. (His slaves were probably used to improve the land.) The following list from Hawkins County demonstrates his heavy involvement in the land business.

1780 - Hunt accepted then reassigned North Carolina grants #491 and #494 in Hawkins County.

1789 - Hunt received 100 acres in Hawkins County, North Carolina grant #73. He paid 50 shillings for the land.

1790 - Hunt purchased from Jonathan Douglass 200 acres in Hawkins County for 100 pounds.  
1791 - Hunt received 500 acres North Carolina grant #134 for 25 pounds.  
1791 - Hunt sold 100 acres in Hawkins County to Arthur Galbraith for 25 pounds.  
1791 - Hunt received 500 acres in Hawkins County, North Carolina grant #134.  
1795 - Hunt sold to John Galbraith 100 acres in Hawkins County for 50 pounds.  
1795 - Hunt sold 100 acres in Hawkins County to Henry Brown for 50 pounds.  
1797 - Hunt bought from William Hall 500 acres in Hawkins County for 90 pounds.  
1809 - Hunt sold 100 acres in Hawkins County to Christian Church for \$100.

And business was done in Sullivan County.

1791 - Hunt received 100 acres in Sullivan County, North Carolina grant #560. He was on the Sullivan County tax list for the year 1796.<sup>55</sup>

An index of deeds in Claiborne County, Tennessee, contains a total of 96 sales made by John Hunt and son John, Jr. from 1803 to 1837. His son was probably continuing sales of land bought by John Hunt. Purchases of land in the same period total 19 (one sale each to Senior and Junior with 17 unclear). Some of the transactions are shown here:

1803 - Hunt sold land to Sammie Wyatt.  
1803 - Hunt sold land to Ezekiel Craft for \$11.  
1804 - Hunt bought land from Nathaniel Austin.  
1804 - Hunt sold land to Joseph Coffey for \$25.  
1804 - Hunt sold land to his son, John, Jr. for \$185.  
1805 - Hunt sold land to Samuel Burk for \$200.  
1805 - Hunt sold land to George Brooks for \$100.<sup>56</sup>

The Hunts were in the land business. Actually, John Hunt's pattern was much like the wealthy farmers from Georgia, just on a much smaller scale.

When his term as sheriff of Claiborne County ended in 1804, Hunt decided to leave the mountains of Tennessee seeking a new opportunity to buy cheap land. (His son, John Hunt, Jr. then became Claiborne County's sheriff and served for sixteen years.) The Indian Territory around the Big Spring was interesting to all who dealt in land. This was proven by the Yazoo schemes. (Actually the Madison County land had been sold several times by companies from Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee.) In 1804 Hunt left Tazewell with a friend, Andrew Bean, to see the spring and surrounding property. He left a well-entrenched family, wife, children and five slaves.

After stopping for a time at a fine creek near Salem in southern Tennessee, he and Bean rested for a night with Joseph and Isaac Criner, the first settlers to establish themselves at Mountain Fork Creek near today's New Market. Then Hunt and Bean traveled the last few miles to the Big Spring.

Many stories have been told of their visit, and local historians have continued to research and discuss that trip to the Big Spring. Dr. W. A. Brown told of his grandfather's experience:

Living near Cold Water Creek in Lincoln County, Tennessee, he, with a negro man with packhorses, went to Ditto's Landing for supplies. On their return they stopped at the Big Spring for water and rest. A Mr. Hunt came down from the bluff above and explained his situation. He had just put up the logs as high as his strength would permit. The three men put up the rest of the logs and rafters and with a shower of thanks from Mr. Hunt they then went on their way. Neighbors were far apart in that day.<sup>57</sup>

Dr. Brown's letter, including this story, was written in 1913.

Robert C. Hunt wrote, "John Hunt with the help of his two oldest boys, William and George, built a two-room cabin near the spring. William felled the first tree to go into the house and shot the last bear to be killed in the vicinity of the spring."<sup>58</sup> George Hunt later moved to Texas while William remained in Alabama.

In a history of their company, the G. W. Jones family told their remembrances from diaries and memories. In the fall of 1804 Joseph and Isaac Criner, the first white settlers in the area, came to the Big Spring and cut enough logs to build two cabins. They intended to return in the spring from their Lincoln County homes to build and live at the spring. They changed their minds and settled at the side of the beautiful Mountain Fork Creek near New Market. The Criners had found the swampy area around the spring full of mosquitoes and bears. Shortly after the Criners were settled at the creek, John Hunt and a man named Bean stopped and asked about the Big Spring. Bean reported as he returned that Hunt stayed and he, Bean, was heading to the Salem area about 40 miles away to build a home there. Hunt probably constructed his cabin using logs the Criners had cut.<sup>59</sup>

The Davis family letters related that John Hunt was at least the third visitor to the Big Spring. Isaac Criner came in 1802. After him Samuel Davis came arriving the year before Hunt. Samuel cut the logs, laid the foundation and improved the spot then returned for his family. When Davis came back, Hunt had completed a house on Davis' foundation. Davis then went to New Market and settled there.<sup>60</sup> "Davis was infuriated when he found Hunt had used his logs and vowed he'd live neighbor to no man who'd use another's logs."<sup>61</sup> Davis, a veteran of the war, was a tough man. It is said every morning he would go to the spring and wash, sometimes returning with the hair frozen on his head.

Dr. Frances Roberts wrote, "After constructing a cabin for Hunt near the Big Spring, Hunt and Bean returned to their homes in Tennessee. In the spring of 1805, Hunt brought his family from East Tennessee to his new home."<sup>62</sup> Andrew Bean chose to live at the creek near Salem in Franklin County, now called Bean's Creek. Hunt preferred the Big Spring.

There is no record that Hunt's wife made the trip. John, Jr. remained and became the sheriff of Claiborne County. David, Elizabeth, George, Sarah and William came along with five slaves.<sup>63</sup>

However it happened, John Hunt was the first to live at the Big Spring and was to be an important part of the community. He was followed by the "advance guard of civilization, the types usually found on unsettled frontiers, who came from middle and east Tennessee and Georgia."<sup>64</sup>

Hunt was instrumental in opening up Madison County. When an order was issued for a public road from Winchester, Tennessee to Ditto's Landing, now Whitesburg, the old trail over which most of the early settlers came down into this section, John Hunt was selected as a guide. He led a party of 40 men, a part of whom served as guards because the Indians bitterly opposed the road. These men blazed the trail and cleared the route from Whitesburg, by the Big Spring and through New Market to the Tennessee line.<sup>65</sup> "When the surveyors, Thomas Freeman and John W. Grayson, came in 1808 to run the original boundary lines of Madison County, they came directly to Hunt's cabin and employed him to guide them in their way."<sup>66</sup>

Certainly, Hunt was held in high regard if the citizens chose to name the town for him. He and his children were valuable and important members of their communities. The governor of the territory appointed him coroner for a four-year term in 1810. He was a member, along with LeRoy Pope and other important men of the town, of the Masonic Order for a number of years.

Just as there are unanswered questions about Hunt's coming to Huntsville, there are those about his leaving. No one knows exactly when, how or where he died and was buried. Some think he lived with his daughter, Elizabeth, who married Samuel Black Acklin and that he was buried on their farm, which became Huntsville's first airport in the 1940s. Others believe he lived his last days with his son, David, and died in the Salem, Tennessee community.

Among the jobs John Hunt had were soldier, politician, lawman, guide, and land dealer. Considering the limited education available at the time, he served well and proved to be trustworthy, unafraid of risk, a vigorous woodsman, dependable, and well-respected. It seems only appropriate that such a beautiful city should bear his name honorably.

**Is this the right John Hunt?** Authors Judge Thomas J. Taylor and Edward C. Betts along with many local historians have long speculated about the life of Hunt. John was a popular name for the Hunts. His father, his cousin, his son and he all shared this same name. There is no doubt our John Hunt was a dominant character in Claiborne County and left there to come to Madison County with friends and family. This same person was sheriff of Hawkins County.

The *Published Colonial Records of the American Colonies, North Carolina* led to the discovery that our John Hunt represented Hawkins County at the Ratification Convention for the United States Constitution. There he was appointed secretary. Original documents viewed at the North Carolina Archives in Raleigh allowed the comparison of signatures to other Hawkins and Claiborne County records including the many deeds and other items. North Carolina currency printed in 1783 (counterfeit version) has the same signature. A signature in Huntsville's Masonic Lodge records would have tied this together nicely but he was never an officer there and another just listed his name. No records exist that include his service as coroner. It's not perfect proof, history rarely provides that, but this evidence is certainly convincing. This is our man.

## END NOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> Anson West, *History of Methodism* (Nashville, Tennessee: Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1893).
- <sup>3</sup> Sarah Huff Fisk, U.S. Bicentennial Essay, 1976.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Madison County Record*, November 1973, p. 6.
- <sup>5</sup> Thomas J. Taylor, *History of Madison County*, Manuscript.
- <sup>6</sup> Thomas M. Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, p. 924.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Madison County Record*, November 1973, p. 6.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- <sup>9</sup> Daniel S. Dupre, *Transforming the Cotton Frontier* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), p. 24.
- <sup>10</sup> Sarah Huff Fisk, *Civilization Comes to the Big Spring Huntsville, Alabama 1823* (Huntsville, Alabama: Pinhook Press, 1997), p. 132.
- <sup>11</sup> Dupre, p. 26.
- <sup>12</sup> Malcolm Rorhough, *The Land Office Business* (New York: The Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 45.
- <sup>13</sup> Sarah Huff Fisk, *Civilization Comes to the Big Spring Huntsville, Alabama 1823* (Huntsville: Pinhook Publishing, 1997), p. 3.
- <sup>14</sup> Margaret M. Cowart, *Old Land Records of Madison County, Alabama*. (2005), p. ii.
- <sup>15</sup> Edward C. Betts, *Early History of Alabama*. (Huntsville: Brown Printing Company, 1909), p. 13.
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- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.
- <sup>23</sup> Owen, p. 719.
- <sup>24</sup> Chappell, p. 180.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.
- <sup>26</sup> Fisk, p. 84.
- <sup>27</sup> Jane Parks, *Huntsville Times*, July 11, 1971.
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- <sup>29</sup> Hugh C. Bailey, "John W. Walker and the Georgia Machine in Early Alabama Politics," *The Alabama Review*, Volume XIII, Number 3, July 1955, p. 183.
- <sup>30</sup> Dupre, p. 30.
- <sup>31</sup> Bailey, p. 184.
- <sup>32</sup> Dr. John M. Ennis, *Dr. Thomas Fearn and Medicine in the early 1800's*.
- <sup>33</sup> Taylor, p. 120.
- <sup>34</sup> Dupre, p. 40.
- <sup>35</sup> *Madison County Record*. November 1973, p. 6.
- <sup>36</sup> Fisk, p. 3.
- <sup>37</sup> Betts, p. 44.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.
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- <sup>41</sup> Johnson Jones Hooper and Johanna Nicol Shields, *Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs*. (The University of Alabama Press, 1993).
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- <sup>43</sup> *Published Colonial Records of the American Colonies, North Carolina*, V. 22, p. 165, State Records of North Carolina, microfilm.

- <sup>44</sup> Anne Royall, *Letters from Alabama 1817-1822* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1969).
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- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 12, pp. 876, 236, 619, 815.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 19, p. 399.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 12, p. 876.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 21, p. 438.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 32, p. 433.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 20, pp. 100, 666.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 19, p. 133.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 22, p. 705.
- <sup>55</sup> Registry of Deeds, Hawkins County, Tennessee.
- <sup>56</sup> Index to the First Deed Books of Claiborne County, Tennessee. Volume 1, 1801-1865, Books A-Z.
- <sup>57</sup> W. A. Brown, A letter to Ben P. Hunt of Huntsville, Alabama, July 4, 1913.
- <sup>58</sup> Hunt, p. 88.
- <sup>59</sup> *The Story of G. W. Jones & Sons, Our First Century*, (Huntsville, Alabama: The Tennessee Valley Press, 1986).
- <sup>60</sup> *Huntsville Independent*, January 24, 1877, from the Davis family.
- <sup>61</sup> Frances Cabaniss Roberts quoting Judge Thomas Taylor's manuscript, p. 8.
- <sup>62</sup> Kathleen Paul Jones, information contained in the Davis Family Files in the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Heritage Room; Judge Thomas Jones Taylor.
- <sup>63</sup> Betts, p. 7.
- <sup>64</sup> Hunt, p. 90.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

## **New Market - First and Fairest of Them All?**

JOSEPH M. JONES

Proud citizens of New Market have for the last century or more been quick to proclaim their locality to be the site of the first settlement of European man in north Alabama. They contend that the Criners came to this region in 1804 and thus clearly arrived before John Hunt's arrival at the Big Spring in 1805. This Spring, first known as Hunt's Spring, was a spectacle of geology and geography that drew admirers, investors and tradesmen to gather around it, thus creating the capital of the region and namesake fame for the pioneer Hunt.

Then other Madison Countians point farther south, proposing that riverman James Ditto arrived first and established an Indian trading post, known later as Ditto's Landing, on the Tennessee River in 1802. Some might say that claim is unsubstantiated because of the lack of legal land records, although there can be no doubt Ditto played an important early pioneering role in the provision of the commerce on the Tennessee River.

A fair answer might be that it is hard to say precisely, in that frenzy of national expansion, who arrived first. And, does it really matter? The time was ripe. All the circumstances had come together, and there was a headlong rush as hundreds came to a new land for a beginning in what was to become the second county of a new state.

This much can be said: If New Market was first, it was not because that area held a charm above that of a score of other places in Madison County. It was because the venturesome pioneers, traveling down the old Indian Trail from Winchester to the previous forbidden land south of the Tennessee state border, viewed that area at the outset. They rejoiced in it and saw no reason to go farther. (The path that brought them south, known as the "great south Indian trail" continued to lead more pioneers, and the road became known as Winchester Road.)

Isaac and Joseph Criner were the first in the New Market area, followed in the next years by droves of settlers – Samuel Davis, George Smith, the Whitmans, Millers, Baylesses, Braggs, Moores and others. These families were not novices in the wilderness but hardened, seasoned frontier dwellers who knew how to select and settle new land. Many were tired of spent land in the Carolinas, Virginia and Tennessee and sought fresh soil and greener pastures.

These settlers knew the area immediately south of Tennessee was opening up, as it had in 1805 and 1806, as a result of treaties with the amenable Cherokees and Chickasaws. They also knew the tenor of the times – they had heard their national leader, Thomas Jefferson, talk incessantly about the great western expansion. Jefferson backed his words with leadership in executing the Louisiana Purchase. It was a national "fever," and by the 1840s Jacksonian Democrats would call it "manifest destiny."



Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, Madison County's first historian, left his notable book as a primary source for today's historians. He wrote in spurts over several years, and successors have assembled at least two volumes from his material. The Huntsville Public Library and the WPA assembled the first volume in 1940. In 1976 The University of Alabama Press offered a condensed volume. However, recently re-discovered was his original writing in an old circuit court record book in Madison County's official records, possibly written as he sat at the bench or in his office. In it, cited here for the first time, Taylor wrote in a careful, well-schooled hand about the founding and development of New Market:

"The waters of Flint among which New Market is situated furnish some fine water power that was not utilized for some years after the country was settled and the only reason why there was not more attention paid to its water facilities for manufacturing purposes is that it is such a fine agricultural country that a population devoted to agricultural pursuits got control of most of the land and found farming in that section so remunerative that they did not cast about for an easier road to competence or even wealth.

The white population has always largely predominated in that section and in its early occupation was cut up into small farms whose traffic soon built up a considerable village at New Market and it has remained for near 40 years with about the same population though very much improved in the style of its buildings and public edifices. George W. Smith entered the lands east of the Main Street in 1809, and Labon Rice and others soon afterward entered the lands on the western side. The Whitman and Rice families were pioneers in building up the town and its vicinity close along the old Indian line and in Hester's Creek and Mountain Fork....At an early date the Millers, Rices, Baylesses, Braggs, Bakers, Criners, Joneses, Moores, Davises and a host of others (came)



whose descendents now rank among the best of the orderly, industrious and thrifty people who inhabit that vicinity and who would be no dishonor to their ancestry however exalted.”<sup>1</sup>

Judge Taylor raised a point that deserved elaboration. The settlers who peopled the high lands of northeast Madison County were in the main small farmers with no enslaved laborers. Very soon most of the remainder of the county would be occupied, and many of these newcomers had resources for large holdings, with slaves to help produce the new American cotton, a far superior variety. In a short time this cotton would provide fifty per cent of U. S. exports, a quarter of it coming from Alabama alone. For some, out of Virginia and Carolina, cotton replaced tobacco which had been the mainstay and which had depleted the land they now sought to leave. The price of lots in the village of Twickenham, which became Huntsville in 1811, shot up in value as wealthy investors (speculators, as they were called) in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century bought and sold and built up a town that was soon considered a model, the envy of the region.

As noted by Judge Taylor, in northern Madison County the presence of water for industrial purposes did not play a role in the settlement of the New Market area. There were important creeks – Hester, Barren and Mountain Fork – that did increase the attractiveness of the region and did play a part in later development. In 1819 John Miller moved from Richmond, Kentucky, and bought land at Section 32, Township 1, Range 2 east. He excavated a millrace, then built and operated a gristmill and saw mill.<sup>2</sup> (It was much later that the renowned watercress operations were begun using the cool and plentiful water of Mountain Fork, an operation that continues today almost two centuries from the town’s founding, although there have been many interruptions.)

### **‘Market’ Was the First Name**

New Market, some 18 miles northeast of Huntsville, is on a pinpoint of the southern fringe of the north-spreading Cumberland Plateau, which rises steeply in Tennessee and Kentucky. The rise in elevation, however, is hardly perceptible to the traveler when approaching from the south of Madison County.



Cumberland Plateau

New Market, first simply known as “Market,” was not the only town struggling to establish itself in that region in the first two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Two miles to the northwest the community of Hillsboro was beginning, and its whereabouts is still marked by the presence of Hillsboro Road. This town eventually had “a few houses and two stores, one kept by Esquire John Angel who was a merchant and a justice of the peace.” The first voting place in the area was established at Hillsboro and remained there until after the state was admitted to the union.<sup>2</sup> By 1832, however, the stores were closed, giving way to the emerging town nearby.

Still farther north by a couple of miles and quite close to the Tennessee state line, arose the settlement of Hickory Flat, which was established by or before 1816. That settlement eventually included at least four stores and a post office that with the coming of the railroad made possible daily mail deliveries. Hickory Flat was renamed Plevna, at the suggestion of a citizen who had an attraction for that particular Russian place name. However its facilities of commerce, public schooling, cotton ginning and other evidences of social and business interactions are gone today.<sup>3</sup> Remaining at the country crossroads are one place of business, an attractive expanse of large, level farm lands beautifully cropped, and a historical marker which recalls that nearby in 1862, Federal Gen. Robert L. Cook was killed in a skirmish by a Confederate unit captained by Frank Gurley.

Hillsboro’s and Hickory Flat’s rival, New Market, thrived almost from the first coming of the settlers. It became the mercantile and gathering place for that section of the county. Reflecting the early settlement of the community, the first citizen to be buried in the local cemetery, later to become known as Mount Paran Campground and Cemetery, was Spencer Rice, a Revolutionary War veteran purportedly laid to rest in 1807 in an unmarked grave. The cemetery, known locally as “graveyard hill,” would eventually accommodate 400 graves including those of several Revolutionary War soldiers. The cemetery generally has been unused but is occasionally cleared and made presentable, only to fall again to invasive bushes and other undergrowth. Pickett Esslinger, a 93-year-old New Market native, remembers attending one burial there in his youth, but none since. Perhaps the most notable citizen interred there was the pioneer Isaac Criner, who died at 93 in 1876. (Madison County Commissioner Roger Jones maintains a rear section for the burial of county indigents; 30 have been interred there in recent years.)

Isaac Criner has always been noted as the first settler in north Alabama. Unlike most early comers, who were Scots-Irish in ancestry, Criner was among a handful of German origin. He was born Nov. 22, 1773, in Wayne, Tennessee, and was a mere 20 years old when he first cast eyes on the north Alabama wilderness. This first trip scouting in 1803, led to his return in 1804 with his uncle, Joseph Criner, and a cousin, Stephen McBroom. Isaac selected a settlement site on the Mountain Fork; Joseph distanced himself somewhat in the same region; and, McBroom chose a site in what would become Gurley. In 1814 Isaac married Nancy McCain of Madison County, and they had 12 children.<sup>4</sup>



Home of Isaac Criner in New Market. Only the chimney remains.  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)



Isaac Criner's tombstone  
(photograph by Alan Jones)

Isaac Criner is buried at Mount Paran Campground and Cemetery in New Market. His tombstone reads:

“IN MEMORY OF  
Isaac Criner Was  
Borned Aprile 22  
1783 and died  
Dec. 15, 1876”

## **Development of New Market**

Historian Dr. Francisco Rice wrote, “The first settlement made in New Market was in the fall of 1806 by Spencer Rice, Levi Methvin and James Crump. About the same time Samuel Davis settled two miles north of New Market, Isaac Criner [settled] three miles northeast and Hezekiah Bayless two miles southwest. These early settlers were from Tennessee, Virginia and North Carolina.”<sup>5</sup>



George Smith settled in the town in 1814, built a log house in 1815, and opened the first store dispensing general merchandise according to Dr. Rice. Apparently there would also be a large number of businesses in the town indicating the commercial and cultural center New Market had become. In addition to community facilities such as a Masonic lodge and female seminary, Rice listed a tan yard for the making of leather goods, a blacksmith shop, a shop making spinning wheels and chairs, a pottery shop, saddlers, tailors, a mill-wright shop, a cotton-spinning establishment for the making of cloth and carpet, and several saloons whose keepers were identified. They included Peter S. Baker, Wilson Hamilton, Peter Turner, Peter Webster, Seaborn Robinson, J. Scurlock, William Clunn, James Clunn, A.J. Morgan, Joseph Ghornley and Levi Methvin.

New Market apparently was a rambunctious town, particularly on Saturdays when blood often flowed freely from fisticuffs among the men folk. At one point the state legislature enacted a bill forbidding the sale of alcohol within three miles of that municipality. (At the time corn was selling for 10 cents a bushel, and whisky at 25 cents a

gallon.) The drinking of alcohol, however, it seems was not confined to the taverns in town. Pioneer James Walker wrote his last will and testament in 1817 which was probated in 1824 following his death, which among other provisions, left to his wife Peggy "the still and tubs and everything thereunto belonging."<sup>6</sup>

Events had already occurred that allowed that first surge of newcomers. On July 23, 1805, the Chickasaw Indians ceded their interest in the future county to the U. S. government. Six months later on January 7, 1806, the Cherokees did the same, leaving the federal government as the only claimant to 345,000 acres of a piece of the Mississippi Territory in a roughly triangular configuration, stretching on the north some 25 miles aligned with the Tennessee border, southward narrowing to about three miles on the Tennessee River. The government gradually acted through the fledging Mississippi Territory authorities, which had been in place since 1802, and sent a survey team. Finally land sales procedures were initiated. Settlers were more than ready.

These pioneers could not wait – they began to come in droves, so that in early 1809 when a census was taken, 2,224 white people and 322 slaves were present.<sup>7</sup> These settlers were, all of them, illegal and owned not one square inch of the land they settled on. They knew the federal government was benevolent and wanted to encourage settlement. The government approved by taking applications and giving tacit approval of the "squatters" as "tenants at will" for a small fee of nine shillings. This allowed the settlers to be in position to occupy and later bid on the land when land sales began.

Madison County, as it would become, was the fourth county among the United States to be named for President James Madison; nearby Kentucky was the first. Eventually that number increased to twenty. (Madison County is the second Alabama county, the first being Washington in extreme southwest Alabama, just north of Mobile.)

The long-awaited land sale began on Aug. 7, 1809, in Nashville, and many Madison County settlers were there on opening day. For that period of several days, and for succeeding sales periods during the new few months, most land sold at \$2 an acre. That is unless someone was there to bid it up. A slight discount was offered for cash payment, and slightly increased if payment was deferred, as was the usual case. (In later years the price was as little as 12 ½ cents an acre for presumably less desirable property.) The next year the sales office was moved to Huntsville, making the process easier for these early settlers.

## Surveying

Present-day examination of the old land sales records will quickly note an oddity. In that first land sale, several small tracts in the New Market vicinity, totaling more than a thousand acres, were sold to one man, who made the necessary five per cent down payment. However, within a short period of time, normally not many months, this man would assign the property to another individual who would complete the payments, usually within the course of years. That one buyer, it is found, was also doing the same thing in other portions of Madison County? Was this typical of pioneer land sales?

That one buyer was Thomas Freeman, surveyor-extraordinaire, who had a national reputation for precision and trustworthiness. An Irish immigrant who had come to the colonies in 1774, he had worked for the government before, and had caught the attention of master surveyor George Washington and Treasury Secretary Alexander

Hamilton. As a result Freeman had a significant role in laying out the District of Columbia. Freeman was engaged in 1808 as the chief surveyor of the Mississippi Territory.<sup>8</sup>

While surveying township and ranges Freeman would take note of choice properties for which there was no petitioner – easy to determine for him, for not only did he have the job of conducting the 1809 census, but he also sold tenant-at-will contracts. This afforded him, and him alone, complete information on the whereabouts of the populace and desirable land. While attending sales, if choice property was offered for which there was no bidder, Freeman, would, it seems, buy the land. He then put up the necessary minimal down payment and sometime thereafter located a buyer and transferred ownership and obligation to him. One might assume there was a personal profit to be had for Surveyor Freeman. This seems not to have been a problem for the government, for he continued to function for many years in several locations. When Alabama became a state in 1819, chief surveyor, Gen. John Coffee, succeeded him. Coffee, who had laid out the town of Huntsville earlier, functioned in his appointment in the same manner. This was a new country, and these men were making the rules as they went along, and, perhaps, such was considered a part of the surveyor's normal responsibility and remuneration.

Thomas Freeman played a major role in the settlement of Alabama and Mississippi. He established the Huntsville Meridian by which all the land in north Alabama was measured and sold. This was the principal north-south line that established, along with the previously designated Tennessee east-west boundary, the assignment of all property. The Huntsville Meridian goes through Huntsville's Maple Hill Cemetery, where Thomas Freeman was laid to rest on November 8, 1821. His grave remained unmarked for 170 years until 1999, when the Tennessee Valley Society of Professional Land Surveyors erected a monument in his honor. One writer noted, "Today, Freeman is highly respected for his accuracy in the field."<sup>9</sup>

Surprisingly, perhaps, among the first legal settlers-owners in the New Market area are not found the names of Isaac and Joseph Criner, who were the first settlers. Apparently at the beginning they chose to live in an area that turned out to be a short distance east of the Cherokee Indian Boundary established in January 1806. This meant their squatter holdings were in an area which continued to be held and used by the Cherokee Indians and thus illegal to the whites.

It remains unclear just how the Criners were able to continue their illegal occupation of that land for a number of years. The federal government had earlier dispossessed more than 200 squatters who were deeper in the forbidden territory. Some observers noted that the Criners were "almost legal," being less than a mile out of bounds. Apparently U. S. authorities chose to ignore the situation and allowed them to remain. Also, the Cherokees were not a warring tribe, and it may be they were amenable to the Criners' homestead in deference to their early arrival and their presumed friendship. But family stories mention that Isaac Criner, an affable man who enjoyed a chat, was said to have told stories about being chased by the federal authorities. He would retreat to a friend's house over the border on legal ground, stay for a short time until the federal agents gave up, and return then to his home and hearth.

After an additional treaty with the Cherokees made available land east of the original Indian boundary, the records show that Isaac Criner did purchase four tracts of

land in that region in 1830, and thereafter, some for as little as 12½ cents per acre and none more than \$1.25 per acre.<sup>10</sup>

The production and sale of cotton was profitable. While a few of the early settlers had slaves when they came, most of the first arrivals were yeoman farmers whose prosperity depended upon the sweat of their own, singular brow and that of their families. Nevertheless, as their fortunes improved, many pioneers purchased slaves. An example of this progression was Thomas McCrary who in 1809 and 1810 patented three quarter-sections north of the Three Forks of Flint.<sup>11</sup>

McCrary had arrived in 1809 after the initial census had been taken earlier that year. Thus it is not known whether he had slaves upon his arrival. However, he used cash to pay for his land, presumably derived from his father's estate in Laurens County, South Carolina. He may well have been able to afford a few slaves. At the 1815 tax census here, he listed his land holdings at 400¼ acres with nine slaves.

McCrary's business seemed to prosper, and after a few years he began to add more property and slaves. Apparently, no additional land was available at an acceptable price near his original holdings, so he maintained his home place and began to acquire land about two sections northeast, now off the Maysville Road south of Buckhorn High School. He ultimately bought about 1,500 acres in that area. In 1840 he had 65 slaves. By the 1850 census he listed his property as 950 improved acres and 1,300 unimproved acres, with 89 slaves.<sup>12</sup>



Two distinguished citizens of New Market at the monument for the Criner family at Mount Paran Campground and Cemetery. Thomas McCrary, left, is the descendant of the early Madison County settler by the same name. Pickett Esslinger, right, is a lifelong resident of New Market.  
(photograph by Alan Jones)

## Religious Activities

In the earliest days, citizens had to travel 10 or more miles to a meetinghouse. These were a social and religious people, however, and they surely gathered in one another's homes to welcome a circuit rider. Occasionally, there were camp meetings sponsored by various denominations as at Mount Paran.

The closest meetinghouse was Enon Baptist Church on the Briar Fork of the Flint River. Established in 1809, one of its three founders, and its first pastor, was a preacher who lived and owned two pieces of property in the region, John Canterbury. There is no evidence that he was a slaveholder, but the second Enon pastor, Richard Shackelford, was a major landowner who at his death had more than a dozen slaves. He was called as pastor in 1815 and served until his death in 1823. Enon's first meetinghouse was a log building constructed in 1813 on the Briar Fork. (This is on land of the present Madison County Executive Airport.)

Joseph Powell and John Birdwell, charter members of the Enon Church, jointly owned the land adjacent to land owned by both Canterbury and Shackelford. The church building had been erected and in use for a year before Powell and Birdwell themselves received title to the property that they had provided to the church.<sup>13</sup>

Such was the informality of that early day.<sup>14</sup> Preachers were highly respected citizens who made their way in ordinary pursuits, mostly farming, because their ministerial functions provided little or no income. Another example in the Flint River community was the prominent Baptist preacher Bennett Wood.

A place of early religious importance to the New Market area was ultimately known as the Mount Paran Campground and Cemetery. The heirs of Samuel Davis donated the land, about 3.7 acres, to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1842, although the land had been used for burials for many years previously. Davis was a Revolutionary War soldier and along with other revolutionaries, Moses Poor and Spencer Rice, was buried there.<sup>15</sup>

The cemetery eventually received some 400 known burials, many of them slaves. About 135 markers remain; however, most graves have probably never been marked. A prominent early use of the site, was not for burying but for worship. In the era of great revivalism, people of various faiths, for religious and social gatherings, attended camp meetings lasting several days. A nearby spring provided water making it a convenient and refreshing site to camp. Samuel Davis was considered to have been a devout Presbyterian, and the list of his personal property after his death reveals that he owned several important religious literary works.<sup>16</sup>

A significant number of Revolutionary War soldiers were among the early settlers who came "west" when land became available. Later many were interred in established cemeteries. However, the story of William Pettey, another soldier-pioneer who settled in the New Market area, had a different ending. William and Lucretia (Lucy) Wright Pettey came to this area, with some of their children in 1814. "They patented *land in the Blouchers Ford area*," according to a kinsman, and raised a total of 13 children. Apparently, Lucy had William buried in the yard where she could sit by the window and see his grave. She was later buried beside him. When the public road was widened years later, the graves were destroyed. With great respect and ceremony, the Daughters of the



American Revolution had the tombstones mounted in a retaining wall on Macon Lane as near as possible to the original graves.<sup>17</sup>

## Madison County Records

The historical writer, when primary narratives are scarce, must depend heavily on land records and other legal documents. Ordinary land records have limited reader appeal, and the writer may turn to Probate Court records for insight into the life and lifestyle of early settlers. In Madison County such records are in abundance and are available in the Huntsville-Madison County Library.

A sample of wills and court actions pertaining to early New Market area residents can be examined. The reader must always be aware that such examinations tend to place undue emphasis on the more prosperous members of society, to the neglect of plain working people who had little personal property and no real estate. There were likely more pioneers of this category than the wealthy. Unfortunately, for these poorer people, few or no such records are available.

Samuel Davis began life in the New Market area before 1809. The squatter's census in early 1809 showed the Davis household to consist of three males over 21, three males under 21, one female over 21 and one female under 21. The researcher will see that probably Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Davis, two older sons, three younger sons and one younger daughter, and no slaves, lived within that household. The Davis family supplied abundant manpower for taming the wilderness and growing crops. The elder Davis died at age 88 in 1842. The court-appointed executors, one of whom was a son, William, effected disposition of real property among survivors and conducted an 1842 sale of "perishable property" as the law provided.

Among the estate of Samuel Davis there were about 175 items, or groups of items, inventoried and sold for a total value of \$3,937.91. Davis family members purchased many of the items at the auction. By far the most expensive "items" were two adult and seven child slaves of varying ages, all of whom brought \$3,351. Most of the items were farm implements such as plows, which typically brought a dollar or two, a "cotton scraper" which brought \$1.18½, a shovel at 37½ cents, and a shotgun for \$2. Household property included a coffee pot at 12½ cents, a tea "kittle" at 25 cents, and a counter pin at \$2. Of the livestock, four sows and their pigs brought \$6.15, one cow, \$4, and two yearlings, \$3.50. A library of about 15 religious books included four volumes of Scott's Bible sold at \$5, one "Key to Popery," \$1.31¼ and \$1.12½ was the value of his "Confessions of Faith."<sup>18</sup>

A sale under similar circumstances on Sept. 15, 1824, brought the James Walker estate \$20 for the four-volume set of Scott's Family Bible, \$5 for a concordance of the Bible, and \$3 for "Buck's Theological Dictionary." Three beds and furniture sold for \$80 at the sale. A Negro woman named Nancy brought \$300, a Negro man named Tom, \$550, and a Negro woman named Ailey and child named Eli, brought \$550.<sup>19</sup>

Reflecting the widespread interest and social importance of the legal action, a major court case arose immediately following the death of Samuel Townsend on Nov. 29, 1856. Townsend had come to Madison County from Virginia in the 1820s and became one of the largest and wealthiest landowners in the region. His home-place was near

Hazel Green, but he owned land over much of north Madison County and into nearby Jackson County.

Samuel Townsend was a bachelor of thrifty habits, known for his humane treatment of his slaves. His relatively modest properties flourished under his attention and by the time of his death he owned 7,560 acres in eight plantations and 190 slaves. The problems began when he attempted to free some of the enslaved workers by his last will and testament.

Samuel Townsend's brother, Edmund, who had come to Madison County about the same time had also prospered. Edmund, who died earlier, had a similar goal of slave emancipation, but his will was thwarted by an Alabama law that declared such was possible only if provisions were made to transport the freed persons to a state not allowing slavery.

Therefore, Samuel Townsend, attempting to circumvent the results of his brother's will, had a will drawn the same year he died. It provided for "emancipation and colonization" of 40 of his especially worthy slaves, nine of whom were acknowledged, privately, to be his children, some, if not most or all, by his housekeeper, Elvira. The emancipated slaves were placed in two categories, first class and second class. The first class, which included Elvira, were to be treated far more liberally with respect to resettlement, education, and continuing support from a trust fund, whereas the second class group would receive freedom and \$200 each. The cost of all this would be borne from the sale of his complete estate.

The case dragged on for 32 years. The will was twice contested and twice held valid. The children of the first class were removed to Ohio and enrolled in Wilberforce School. Adults of the first class and all of the second class settled in Kansas, all before 1860. The estate property had been sold by then for \$200,000, much of it on credit and never collected because of the start of the Civil War. The second class group received their allotments, and those of the first class got a total of \$33,719.57. Historian Dr. Frances C. Roberts wrote about these events. "The plan was well conceived, but the War and its aftermath defeated whatever chance it had for success. The legatees received less than one fourth of the original value of the estate."<sup>20</sup>

A more usual disposition of property among heirs occurred in 1826 after the death of William H. Clopton. His farm site was two miles southwest of New Market in the Bloucher's Ford community. "After reserving to the widow her dowry," the court document stated, the remaining acreage was to be allotted to the ten children by means that may have been somewhat like a lottery. The property was divided into ten sections, from 23 to 37 acres, then "drawn for by ballot" by the ten heirs. It was not noted whether the heirs had opportunity to swap properties to suit their personal choices. Regarding personal property, each heir was to receive a value equal to \$405. As a result Robert Clopton would receive, "Negroes Mary and Sally" who were valued at \$387, plus \$18 cash.<sup>21</sup>

Truly, New Market became quite a center for commerce, family and social life. It never attained a population beyond five or six hundred, but the entire area of 75 or so square miles settled quickly, and most residents looked to New Market as "town" and there they converged. The town has been incorporated at least twice (1838 and 1868) and that charter has been given up as many times. The coming of the automobile and the blessing of a good, paved road to Huntsville brought a gradual decrease in the town, and

although the general surge forward of Madison County in recent decades has swelled the population considerably, it remains an unincorporated portion of the county, essentially a bedroom community with a diminishing number of old-timers with long memories of more active days.

This is a brief account of the settling of a favored section of the first county in North Alabama. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of those early adventurers have stories no less worthy to tell. Two hundred years after the first white man committed ax and plow and hoe to the taming of a wild domain, the New Market region still offers its original promise as uncommonly productive and an attractive farming realm. It has in addition become a rural retreat for many city-workers who luxuriate in the open countryside, living mostly in a less-crowded style, perhaps somewhat akin to days of old.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Dr. George D. Norris and Dr. Francisco Rice. Published originally in installments, date unknown, by the New Market *Enterprise*. Clippings preserved by Mrs. Sophronia Hambrick and reproduced by the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> Judge Thomas Jones Taylor. Transcription by Huntsville-Madison County Public Library with WPA.

<sup>3</sup> *Heritage of Madison County, Alabama*. (Clanton, AL: Heritage Publications, 1998), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12; "Story of G.W. Jones & Sons, 1886-1986" (Huntsville, AL: Monroe Printing, 1996), p. 1; Tom Kenny, undated narrative, Madison County Probate Office.

<sup>5</sup> Norris and Rice, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> James Walker Will, file #1079, Madison County, Alabama Probate Office.

<sup>7</sup> *Valley Leaves*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (June 1972), p. 188.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Frances C. Roberts, "Thomas Freeman – Surveyor of the Old Southwest," *Alabama Review*, (July 1987) Vol. XL, No. 3, p. 217.

<sup>9</sup> Bob Baudendistel, "Laying Out Alabama," *Point of Beginning*, Dec. 4, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Matthews Cowart, *Old Land Records of Madison County, Alabama*. (Huntsville, AL: n.p., 2005), p. 302.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 221.

<sup>12</sup> Alice McCrary Thomas, "Early Settlement and Development of North Madison County, Alabama." Undated and unpub. manuscript in private collection.

In 2008 the McCrary home place is intact, still in the hands of the McCrary family and farmed by the present Thomas McCrary, 96, of New Market. This modern-day McCrary, descendant of the original, now holds title to 520 acres, virtually all of it from the original McCrary holdings off Maysville Road. Some of his land was inherited and some bought from McCrary heirs and others as it became available.

<sup>13</sup> Personal interview with Thomas McCrary, January 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph M. Jones, *The First 200 Years*, (Huntsville, AL: First Baptist Church, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> *Historical Markers of Madison County, Alabama*. ed. Alex Luttrell III, (Huntsville, AL: Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, 2001), pp. 112, 113.

<sup>16</sup> *Historical Markers*, p. 113.

<sup>17</sup> *Heritage*, pp. 371, 372.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Davis, sale of perishable property, Madison County, Alabama Probate file #82,

<sup>19</sup> James Walker, Madison County, Alabama Probate file #1079.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Frances C. Roberts, "An Experiment in Emancipation of Slaves by an Alabama Planter," M.A. thesis, University of Alabama, 1940, p. 107.

<sup>21</sup> William Clopton, Madison County, Alabama Probate File #573.

# Ditto's Landing

NORMAN M. SHAPIRO

With apologies to pioneers Isaac Criner, John Hunt, David Bean and perhaps, "Big Foot," it is now believed that the honor of being Madison County's first white settler belongs to John/James or "Old Man" Ditto. These are the three names that are variously applied to this singular gentleman in the available records and literature. A recent study, *In Search of a Man Named Ditto*, was performed in conjunction with the dedication of the Ditto Landing Historical Marker in 1985.<sup>1</sup> This paper reports that "Ditto came to the Big Spring in the fall of 1802 and constructed a lean-to pole shelter against a bluff. Soon realizing that he was close to a suitable location to carry on business with the Indians in the vicinity, he moved to the nearby Tennessee River and established a trading post. (The area was known as the "Chickasaw Old Fields.") Thereafter, Ditto established a ferry and a boat yard near the trading post and then faded into oblivion."<sup>2</sup> But not quite into "oblivion" as the author relates that "Although Ditto (a squatter) never held title to Ditto's Landing, he did live on 160 acres of land with his family in the Southwest Quarter of Section 28, Township 5 South, Range 1 East of the Huntsville Meridian Line."<sup>3</sup> He died in 1828 and has many descendants.



Ditto's early history is not well established but he was probably born before 1755 somewhere in Pennsylvania or Maryland and migrated eventually from South Carolina to the "Great Bend of the Tennessee."<sup>4</sup> An article by an old "River Man," George W. Swartz, in the Huntsville *Daily Times* of March 3, 1931, tells much of the story of Ditto's Landing: "As the Clay Bridge is nearing completion and will soon be dedicated, I believe it is fitting that the present generation should know something of the site's early importance to the Tennessee Valley, especially Huntsville."<sup>5</sup> (The Clement C. Clay Bridge which was supplemented by another span in 1965 was removed in the fall of 2006 and will be replaced by a three lane span.) About the ferry, Swartz writes:

In 1810, Ditto built a ferry boat at the keel boat yard which he had established, and built many for the river trade as liters [sic] over the shoals. This ferry boat was of the flat bottom gunwale type, propelled by sweep oars pulled by man power.

There had been by 1810 much traffic south through the valley to points in Brown's Valley. (The map shown here is the 1818 Melish map from <http://alabamamaps.ua.edu>.) The new highway will traverse much of this old trail on the south side of the river, and it has much historical significance.

When Gen. Andrew Jackson went to the Creek Indian War on the Coosa River in 1813 he crossed at Ditto's ferry. Ditto had many flat boats built at his boat yard near the ferry. These were used to ferry Jackson's small army of men across the river.



Map of Alabama, 1818, according to John Melish. Courtesy of Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Davy Crockett was one of the "Tennessee Volunteers" who made that crossing, and in 1834 he wrote about being picked to join a scouting party to cross the river into the Creek nation to find out the movement of the Indians: "We took our camp equipage, mounted our horses, and thirteen in number, including the major, we cut out. We went on and crossed the Tennessee River at a place called Ditto's Landing; and then traveled about seven miles further, and took up camp for the night."<sup>6</sup>

Ditto's letter to General Jackson about the ferry was written in his own hand and is transcribed here as follows:<sup>7</sup>

Dear General

The ferry on Tenesee River is very badly attended too People has frequently to wait half a day on the south side of the River let their

business be ever so urgent & then perhaps Give an Extravagant fee to  
Get over

I would Suppose that all persons going or coming who is attached to  
the army would have their forages paid by the publick, should your Honor  
think it ought to be the case & would wish to appoint suitable hands to be  
Ready at all times to work the flat or canoe as the case may Require. I  
would only add that I have kept a ferry six years at this and the Lower  
Landing therefore my two sons must be well acquainted with the  
management of a flat & should your honor Direct me to have it done it  
should be done with punctuality The work is Laborious Should your  
Honour, say so Much pr day or so much pr man & horse & also for foot  
pasingers -- pr day is much the easiest act I am with due Esteem your  
most obedian Servant

10<sup>th</sup> November 1813

James Ditto

P S. Maj. Alex. Gilbreath is aquainted with me \_\_\_ wind at west & the  
River low 3 hands will do - high tide will take five boat is heavy<sup>7</sup>

Swartz mentioned that he knew “two early keel and steamboat men who knew  
John Ditto personally” and “told him much in 1897 and 1899 about Ditto’s Landing, and  
the first steamboat over the shoals in 1828.” (It should be noted that although Swartz  
wrote “John Ditto” the above letter is signed, “James Ditto.”)



## NOTICE.

Those who wish to avail themselves of an opportunity of becoming stockholders in the Huntsville Steam-Boat company will apply to the undersigned between now and the twenty-first instant, as on that day the subscription for taking shares will be finally closed.

And it is requested that the stockholders in said company will meet at the office of Henry Minor Esq on Friday the 22d inst. at 3 o'clock P M for the purpose of adopting such measures as they may deem necessary to carry the same into effect

LERROY POPE.

Huntsville Ga. 15 1818 of

From the *Alabama Republican*, dated January 9, 1818  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

Swartz also commented, "Ditto's Landing road was an important thoroughfare and much traffic was engaged over it, taking all products from Huntsville to the river to be shipped south. Also was much barter brought down the river and discharged for the interior section of the country, Flour was a big item shipped in via Ditto's Landing road. There was [an] inspector kept at Ditto's [who] was called in those days a flour inspector, [but] really was a surveyor of customs in a simple way in those days." It wasn't until 1823, however, that the need to facilitate the transportation of goods to and from Ditto's Landing resulted in the chartering of the Madison Turnpike Company. This enterprise was authorized by the state legislature to convert the public road from Meridianville to Ditto's Landing by way of Huntsville into a paved turnpike at least 20 feet in width. Tolls varying from six cents for a foot traveler to a dollar and a half for a wagon and team of horses could be charged for a period of 35 years. Ten years later the company was re-chartered, and Whitesburg Pike, as it came to be called, was macadamized from Huntsville to Ditto's Landing and remained a toll road throughout the ante-bellum period.

**NOTICE.**

THE proprietors of the fractional sections that contain the well known place called Ditto's Landing, containing about 672 acres of land, on the north side of Tennessee river will offer them for sale at Huntsville on Saturday the sixth day of March next, for liberal credits, for part, and the particulars made known at the sale. Men of enterprise wishing to vest money in one of the valuable properties in the Alabama territory, are invited to attend this sale.

GARNER BOYLES & Co.

Feb 27

21—ids.

From the *Alabama Republican*, dated February 27, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

But back to the beginning. Ditto wasn't the only white settler for very long as he was soon joined by many other squatters. The census of the newly established Madison County which was taken prior to the 1809 land sales indicated that there were 2223 whites and 322 slaves living in the area.<sup>8</sup> Only about a third of the original settlers, however, purchased land at this first sale. The other buyers included small farmers and planters from the other Southern states and speculators.

The squatters and new settlers were obviously influenced by the stories told by early explorers, trappers and hunters about the beauty of the mountains and valleys of the "Great Bend of the Tennessee," about the fertility of the soil and the abundance of good water from its many rivers and streams. Travel to the area was also possible via pioneer trails and roads and the Tennessee River. But most of all, these venturers had to be attracted by the low prices and generous terms proffered by the government land office. Whereas agriculture remained the principal occupation in the Southern states after the founding of the Republic, soil exhaustion and erosion caused by decades of over planting crops like tobacco, for example, in tidewater and Southside Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia had resulted in the abandonment of many acres of land. Many planters wanted to move to Alabama and Mississippi in order to recoup declining fortunes in the ongoing cotton boom of the Deep South.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Frances Roberts listed the land along the trail to Ditto's Landing and eastward in Drake's Cove along Aldridge's Creek as one of several areas of concentration of these early residents. This community included James Drake, George Blackburn, Redin Criss, Edward Webster, Charles McCartney, Michael Montgomery, James Moore, Thomas Williams, Israel Standifer, Ezekiel Craft, John Grayson, Robert Wright, Jesse Evans, Francis Bell, Thomas Nesmith, John Nesmith, George Hallmark, Minor Winn, Amos and Thomas Roland, Maynard Colley, Benjamin Stedham, Benjamin Williams and Thomas Battle.<sup>10</sup> Dr. Roberts attributed her listing to Judge Thomas Jones Taylor's early history



of Madison County, but Judge Taylor's original manuscript noted that "In and around Huntsville Westward towards the Indian boundary and Southward along the Whitesburg road was a large settlement. Among those who located in this neighborhood were the Drakes, Peyton Cox, Richard Harris, John M. Leake, John W. Walker, George Dilworth, Allen Christian, Moses Vincent, Haynes, the Turners, Robert Lanford, \_\_\_\_\_, Egbert Harris, Mr. Simpson, Silas Fuqua, John Ellis, Andrew and Jacob Sivley, Daniel Carmichael, Archie McDonnell, and Joseph Acklen."<sup>11</sup> (The "Ditto Landing Road" was called "Whitesburg Road" after the port town was incorporated as Whitesburg on December 23, 1824.)

The two examples above generally overlap Ditto's Landing Road south of Huntsville with the center of Range 1 on the west to Flint River on the east. They also differ in topography being relatively flat to the west and split by the mountains to the east, but both areas were fertile, eminently well-watered and desirable for plantations. The western area which once accommodated several large plantations is currently dominated by Redstone Arsenal's 40,000 acres.

The evolution of Madison County was characterized by "boom and bust" during its first decade. Its initial development was further stimulated by the successful conclusion of the War of 1812, but the rapid expansion that followed was halted by the Panic of 1819. Many of the early families survived this and other crises and have descendants here today still contributing to the community's progress. Some families moved on to other challenges. Capsule chronicles of a few of the families follow.

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As noted earlier, Ditto never owned any part of Ditto Landing. LeRoy Pope first entered the land in 1812 and assigned it to John Brahan who later sold it to Colonel James White.<sup>12</sup> Brahan and Pope were both residents and speculators. Today, the kinder term "developers" might be substituted for some of the speculators. Within the present footprint of Ditto's landing, however, is the SW Quarter of Section 20, Township 4S, Range 1E, which was entered by William Simpson on June 21, 1811 and patented August 3, 1815. He also purchased two additional quarter sections nearby. Simpson, who paid \$2.00 per acre, was a physician and has an interesting history. Born in Ireland before 1780, he emigrated about 1804 after being sentenced to death by hanging for political activity. He joined the Mississippi Militia as a private and is reputed to have saved Sam Houston's wounded leg at the battle of Horseshoe Bend, March 27, 1814. Along with John Hunt, he was a founding member of Madison Lodge #1, Alabama's oldest Masonic group, which is now known as Helion Lodge #1 in downtown Huntsville. Dr. Simpson died in 1816 and is buried in an unmarked grave on Hobbs Island which was then called Chickasaw Island. The Simpson family cemetery is in Section 20, TS 5S, R1W on the Arsenal reservation.<sup>13</sup>

In 1807, James Drake, his younger brother William and their brother-in-law, James Neely, traveled down the Tennessee River by flat-bottomed boat and arrived at Ditto's Landing, Mississippi Territory. They settled as squatters in an area which was called Little Cove and prepared for the arrival of the rest of the Drake clan. The brothers' father, Captain John Drake, a Revolutionary soldier, and his five other sons and their families moved to the newly established Madison County, Mississippi Territory in 1810 and 1811. Little Cove was renamed Drake Cove, and in 1881 the Drake estate was sold to William Garth. Carl T. Jones purchased the Drake-Garth land in 1940, and it is now

known as Jones Valley. Captain Drake, who participated in the siege of Yorktown, is buried in the Drake Cemetery which is near the intersection of Carl T. Jones Drive and Garth Road.<sup>14</sup>

The Turners were members of a large family from the Southside Virginia counties of Southampton, Greensville and Brunswick who made land purchases in the area of the trail to Ditto's Landing shortly after the 1809 land sale. Three brothers, Sugars, Simon and Thomas Turner, sons of John and Pricilla Blunt Turner of Greensville County, developed plantations in the area. John Turner, who died in 1797, was a Revolutionary soldier (Ensign, 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Regiment). The brothers' first cousins, John and Donaldson Turner of Brunswick County, and nephews, Henry Blunt Turner and Alexander Gray Wall, also had plantations in the area. In addition, Sugars and Thomas had plantations near Indian Creek and the road west to Limestone County. John Turner sold his plantation of about 1200 acres which included most of the Byrd Spring to Dr. David Moore about 1830 and moved to a plantation near Holly Springs, Mississippi. The brothers were also distinguished, perhaps, by the fact that their second cousin, Benjamin Turner of Southampton County, was the owner of the notorious slave, Nat Turner, perpetrator of the 1831 slave rebellion.<sup>15</sup>

**NOTICE.**

BY virtue of a writ of Fi Fa to me directed from the honorable superior court of Madison county, A S. will be sold for cash, to the highest bidder, at the court house in the town of Huntsville, on the 4th day of January next, eighty acres of Land, lying on the waters of the Hurricane fork of Flint river; it being a part of a fraction section No. 26, township No. 3, range 2 east—taken as the property of John Benton, to satisfy one execution in favor of John Turner, for the use of Joseph and Robert Woods. Sale about 12 o'clock, if not previously satisfied. Attendance by

**JOHN BROWN, D. S.**

From the *Alabama Republican*, dated December 18, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

Silas Fuqua, son of Revolutionary soldier Joseph Fuqua and his wife, Celia Bondurant, was born in 1783 in Bedford County, Virginia. He purchased several quarter sections of land in Township 4S, Range 1W, Sections 11 and 14, in 1809, 1810 and 1813. It is reported on the Internet that Silas married a Sally Taney, born September 18, 1797, in Madison Co, Alabama. This is obviously incorrect for the Madison County Marriage Index for this period indicates that he married Sally Young in Madison County on May

25, 1814. After his wife died, about 1828, Silas and his five children took up land at or near Gonzales, Texas. He died in 1834. His son, Galba, is particularly celebrated in Texas where as one of the 32 volunteers from Gonzales, he went to the aid of Lt. Col. William Barrett Travis who was being besieged in the Alamo by vastly superior numbers of the Mexican Army on March 1, 1836. He died on the final day of the fighting, March 6, 1836, three days before his 17th birthday, the youngest fighter of the Alamo.<sup>16</sup>

Ezekiel Craft was born in Dublin County, North Carolina, in 1762 and joined the North Carolina Militia in 1768 at the age of 16. He fought in several campaigns and was wounded. He moved to Claiborne County, Tennessee, where he bought some land from John Hunt. In 1808, he moved to Mississippi Territory and purchased land in Township 5S, Range 1E and 2E. He was the founding pastor of Meridian Line Baptist Church and minister of the Big Cove Church. On April 20, 1820, he was appointed Justice of the Peace and became a member of the first county commission of Madison County.<sup>17</sup>

John Hobbs, eldest son of Revolutionary soldier Hubbard Hobbs and his wife, Martha Meredith, was born in Greensville County, Virginia, ca 1780. John purchased the land of what was then called "Chickasaw Island," in July 1821, and received his patents in November and December 1822. The rest of the family settled in Limestone County, Alabama. "The island which came to be known as 'Hobbs Island' was originally inhabited by Indians in the 18th Century and abounded with aboriginal graves. Although the actual settlement of the Chickasaw Indians was three miles above Ditto's Landing on the bank of the Tennessee River, the island was settled by Indians related to the Creek Nation."<sup>18</sup> Hobbs bought more land in the area in 1830. In 1833 he bought the west half of the NE Quarter of TS 5S, Range 1E, Section 9 which contains the Hobbs Cemetery and his burial place. This cemetery deserves special recognition as an excellent example of "Historic Cemetery Preservation." Although the tombstones had for the most part been previously vandalized, the cemetery is attractively marked and fenced in the midst of a residential neighborhood on Siniard Drive near Camelot Drive in Southeast Huntsville.



The Sivley family descended from German immigrants Joseph and Catherine Sivley who first settled in the Dutch colony in Pennsylvania and then moved to Shenandoah County, Virginia. Three sons served in the Revolution including Jacob who

moved with his family from Virginia to Jefferson County, Tennessee around 1786 and then to Alabama in 1809 by flatboat down the Tennessee River. On August 28 of that year, Jacob and his eldest son, Andrew, purchased adjoining quarter sections in Madison County in Section 13, Township 4S, Range 1W. They built their homes across from each other on Huntsville Spring Branch. The families farmed, raised cattle and operated a grist mill known as Sivley's Mill.<sup>19</sup>

The Acklin and Hunt families moved to Madison County from Claiborne County, Tennessee, where John Hunt was sheriff from 1801-1804. Joseph and his brother, Samuel Black Acklin, purchased land in Township 4S, Range 1W. An Acklin GEDCOM (Genealogical Data Communications) File published on the Internet indicates that the brothers were twins, born November 15, 1767, in Washington, County, Virginia. Samuel married John Hunt's daughter, Elizabeth, probably in Claiborne County. Judge Taylor included Joseph in his list of early settlers but not Samuel which is puzzling because Joseph and his family moved (possibly as a result of the Panic of 1819) to Franklin County, Tennessee, where he purchased 150 acres on March 15, 1821. Samuel and many of his offspring remained in Madison County.

William Robinson (listed as Robertson in the Land Records) was also from Claiborne County, Tennessee, and purchased almost 2000 acres in Township 4S, Range 1E, during the sales in 1809, 1810 and 1811. Born in Virginia to William Sr. and Caroline Kennedy Robinson, he established several plantations on these lands before he died on January 18, 1820. The inventory of his estate showed 62 slaves, approximately 400 head of hogs, 40 head of horses, 90 head of horned cattle, 2 cotton gins and 2 copper stills with fixtures complete for business, etc.<sup>20</sup> During the War of 1812, Colonel William Robinson operated a mining facility at Sauta Cave in Jackson County which produced saltpeter for the manufacture of gunpowder.<sup>21</sup> His son, Nelson Robinson, an attorney who had moved to Bellefonte in Jackson County, also succeeded in operating a saltpeter facility there for a time during the Civil War.<sup>22</sup>

This Robinson family had a significant and lasting impact on the architectural history of Madison County. William "Black Bill" Robinson was the son of the above William's brother, Littleberry Robinson, who purchased land in Madison County in 1818. "Black Bill" was a planter and the Sheriff of Madison County from 1840-1843. He died in 1852 at only 44, and his widow, Caroline, completed the mansion "Quietdale" to his specifications.<sup>23</sup> His grandson, Dr. William Burritt, built the unique and interesting home on Monte Sano that is the core of Huntsville's Burritt Museum.

John and James B. Robinson were the sons of William and Littleberry's brother, Jacob, who died in White County, Tennessee, in 1828. John Robinson built the mansion "Oaklawn" on Meridian Street in Huntsville, and James built its twin "Forrest Field," which burned during the Civil War, a little further north on the same street.<sup>24</sup>

Although he was not one of the early settlers of Madison County, Colonel James White of Abingdon, Virginia, who operated a store at Ditto's Landing around 1820 in partnership with John Read and John Hardie, had a significant impact on the area. Colonel White was born near Carlisle, Pennsylvania, February 22, 1770. When quite young, he was clerk in the concern of Talbot, Jones & Co. of Baltimore, Maryland. He remained with them two or three years, and that firm advanced him a small stock of goods with which he made his first trip to Southwest Virginia. He quickly sold the goods and thus began his business ventures in that area when he was about 21 years old. Upon

his marriage to Miss Eliza Wilson, he settled in Abingdon in 1798, and all of his enterprises seemed to prosper. When he learned that salt had been found in Clay County, Kentucky, he went there and bought some land which became part of the Goose Creek Salt Works. He later formed a partnership with his brother, Hugh, who moved to Clay County to manage the operation while he remained in Abingdon to take care of business in Virginia. Then in 1820 Colonel White took over the lease of the valuable salt-works of William King at Saltville, Virginia, and held it until 1833. His control of the salt-works and its markets for salt enabled him to establish a great number of mercantile concerns in several southern states. In North Alabama, he owned plantations on both sides of the Tennessee River and a large plantation in Jackson County. He was worth at least \$750,000 upon his death at Wytheville, Virginia on October 20, 1838. Two of his sons, Addison and Thomas Wilson, moved to Huntsville, Alabama, within a year of his death.<sup>25</sup>

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> William Stubno, "In Search of a Man Named Ditto," *Huntsville Historical Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring-Fall 1985), pp. 3-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5.

<sup>5</sup> George W. Swartz, *Ditto's Landing Once Very Important as Trading Post*, (*Huntsville Daily Times*, March 3, 1931), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Arpad, Ed., *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, (New Haven: College and University Press, 1972), p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> *The Papers of Andrew Jackson, 1770-1845*, National Archives Microfilm Series, Microform Reel No. 3, Jan. 7, 1813 to Aug. 24, 1814.

<sup>8</sup> *1809 Census of Madison County Mississippi Territory*, Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. 5, pp. 684-692.

<sup>9</sup> *Virginia*, Encyclopedia of American History. Answers Corporation, 2006. *Answers.com* 02 Mar. 2008. <http://answers.com/topic/virginia>.

<sup>10</sup> Frances Cabaniss Roberts, *Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County* (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Alabama, 1956), p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Jones Taylor, *A History of Madison County and Incidentally of North Alabama, 1732-1840*, (Original handwritten copy in Heritage Room, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Stubno, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Dennis William Simpson, *The Descendants of Dr. William Simpson*, (Chelsea, MI: BookCrafters, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> *The Heritage of Madison County, Alabama*, (Clanton, AL: Heritage Pub. Consultants, 1998), pp. 161-168.

<sup>15</sup> June Turner Shapiro, Personal communication.

<sup>16</sup> <http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~fuqua>

<sup>17</sup> *Heritage*, pp. 150, 151.

<sup>18</sup> William Stubno, *History of Hobbs Island*, Unpublished paper in files of Heritage Room, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Heritage*, pp. 409, 410.

<sup>20</sup> Pauline Jones Gandrud, *Alabama Records*, Vol. 189, Madison County, Alabama, (Greenville, S.C: Southern Hist. Press, 1980), p. 90.

<sup>21</sup> Richard C. Sheridan, "Production of Saltpetre from Alabama Caves," *Alabama Review*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, (Jan. 1980), p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> Marion O. Smith, *Confederate Saltpeter Mining in Northern Alabama*, *The National Speleological Society Bulletin*, Vol. 43, No. 4, Oct. 1981, p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> *Glimpses into Antebellum Homes of Historic Huntsville, Alabama*, Huntsville Branch American Association of University Women, Ninth Edition, 1999, p. 68.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas L. Preston, *Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*, (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson Pub. Co., 1900), pp. 62, 63.

# Hazel Green and Meridianville

DAVID MILAM

The northern lands of what would become Madison County were so inviting. However, life on this new frontier was rough and hard. The first settlers had no schools, churches, social halls, or courts of law. They would settle and build these institutions to fit their background and traditions around two central settlements, Hazel Green and Meridianville. Here were large sections of land for farming and water for industry. Local yeomen farmers and prosperous planters became customers who needed gins, mills and stores. These two sites developed as local trade centers. Huntsville, in the day of the ox-cart or mule-driven wagon on uncertain roads, was still a hard day's travel away.

## The Establishment of Hazel Green

How the community of Hazel (sometimes spelled "Hazle") Green, got its name is uncertain. Perhaps it was for hazelnut trees growing there, particularly colorful in springtime, or it could be, according to lore, that Robert Irwin, a store owner and postmaster back in 1809, named the settlement for his wife.<sup>1</sup> Located just four miles from the Tennessee border, Hazel Green became a convenient stopping point for travelers on the Huntsville-Nashville Road, the Winchester-Athens Road, the Limestone Road that led to the Natchez Trace, or on south to Huntsville and the Tennessee River. Settlers quickly purchased land for crops and sites for mills.

On the waters of the Briar Fork and Barren Fork, a sizeable population soon settled. Charles McGehee created a mill near the ford on Barren Fork on Meridian Road two miles above Hazel Green. There was considerable traveling over both roads, and Hazel Green soon became a resting place for travelers. It boasted two inns, several stores and groceries, and all the usual necessities of a country town. However, the fertility of the soil attracted large slaveholders who bought out the small farms, and the white population eventually made way for more slave workers. On Friday, June 15, 1821, the bill to incorporate Hazel Green was passed by the Senate and approved by Governor Thomas Bibb.<sup>2</sup>

Charles Cabaniss, Jr. and his family were among the many early settlers. The textile industry in Alabama began before the state was admitted to the union. The Cabaniss Cotton Spinning Factory was under construction near Hazel Green in 1809. A former Tennessee contractor, Cabaniss chose an engineer named C.P. Poole to assist him in building a spinning mill on Barren Creek of the Flint River. This accomplishment by Cabaniss, from the years 1809 to 1816, was concurrent with his building of a house for himself, a large smokehouse, a large barn, a storehouse, and a building for his tools and a forge. The earliest record of the Cabiness & Company is a partnership settlement between Cabiness and Poole in 1815. In an advertisement in the Huntsville *Republican*, prices were listed, but the firm offered to exchange their product, thread, for raw cotton. (This was a useful barter exchange. At the time the more modest farmers were only able to purchase the thread, and their womenfolk used a loom to produce the cloth they needed.) Cabiness made a very fortunate decision to locate an enterprise near Hazel Green at this time, because an economic boom would soon ensue.<sup>3</sup>

**COTTON**  
**Spinning Factory,**  
*CHARLES CABANISS & Co.*

Respectfully informs their friends and the public in general, that they have their Cotton Factory now in complete operation and, will sell thread at the following prices

400	at	20 50	per lb.
500	.	0 62	1 2
600	.	0 75	
700	.	0 87	1 2
800	.	1 00	
900	.	1 12	1 2
1000	;	1 25	

N. B. They will also exchange thread for raw cotton.  
*Robert Fletcher, Manager.*  
 February 16 241

Notice placed in the Huntsville *Republican*  
 (Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)



Site of Cabaniss & Company, 1949  
 (Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)



Others with the Cabaniss family from Lunenburg County, Virginia, had lingered only a while in Tennessee before they settled in these new lands. The Caldwell, Ingram, Allen, and White families, all with connections to Cabaniss, also came. The Townsend brothers, Edmund and Samuel, purchased acreage during the early years and accumulated a large force of slave labor.



Ruins of the Cabaniss smokehouse  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Library)

According to Judge Thomas Taylor, “Old Hazle Green” was thought of as a lively and thriving town. A considerable village grew up there at an early day, and men of wealth and influence located on the fertile lands around old Hazel Green and on the Meridian and Limestone Roads. The Meridian Road, or Nashville to Huntsville Road, had been conceived and begun as early as 1810:

Ordered that John Duke, Jacob Nicholas, Asa Street, William Street, Jesse Daniel, James Nicholas, Wm. Clampet, Charles Stuart, Thomas L. Trotter, John Nicholas, William Rosenbrough, and Cornelius Darnell, be viewers, to view and lay off a road the nearest and best way from Elk River (at the mouth of Mulberry to the State line, on a direct course to Huntsville), ordered issued 6th March 1810.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the most noteworthy planters to settle in the area were three friends Tom Percy, John Williams Walker, and Dr. Samuel Brown. Bringing with them their

connections of education at Princeton College, marriages into the family of LeRoy Pope and one another's families, these men purchased vast plantations in the area.

Thomas Percy was born in Natchez, and his father Charles, was known as Don Carlos Percy because he was an alcalde (magistrate) in the Mississippi area owned by Spain. Charles had inherited the genetic propensity for depression, and in 1794, he secured a heavy pot around his neck and walked into a lake to drown himself. This affliction manifested itself in many future generations of the Percy family, many of whom were talented writers.

Thomas Percy came to Huntsville at the urging of his friend John W. Walker and built his plantation home, called "Belfield," on his 1400 acre piece of land near his friend John W. Walker. They, along with their good friend and relative by marriage Samuel Brown, vowed to name their sons after each other.

John Williams Walker, who knew the Popes when they all lived in Petersburg, Georgia, lost his parents while he was young. He contracted tuberculosis while taking care of his older brother who succumbed to the disease and suffered for the rest of his short life. Walker was the chairman of the Constitutional Convention that convened in Huntsville in 1819 and became Alabama's first senator. While he and his wife were in Washington, they left their children in the care of Thomas and Maria Percy. Young Charles, not yet two-years-old, became sick and died after six days of torturous treatment from local doctors. Walker is probably buried in a plantation cemetery, but the location is now unknown. Although his family remained in Madison County, the early death of Walker led to a change of plans for those remaining. The Percy family returned to Mississippi, and Dr. Brown moved on to Lexington, Kentucky where he became affiliated with the college there.<sup>5</sup>

## **Meridianville**

The community of Meridianville was established along the major north-south road, six miles south of Hazel Green on the line of the base meridian. This village site, like many others, first attracted squatters and small farmers. However Joseph Fenwick recognized the possibilities of a town, purchased land, and offered lots for sale in 1818.<sup>6</sup> Settlers, legal or illegal, always needed stores, gins and mills, and the area grew.

Plantation owners came, like Dr. James Manning, who was an early arrival to Northern Madison County, having entered on August 23, 1809, two weeks after the territory opened to settlers. In 1810 Dr. Manning contracted Woody Loyd to build a two-story cabin near what is now Meridianville. The cabin caught fire before completion, and Manning refused to pay Loyd his fee because Manning contended that the structure was not ready by the agreed date. Manning had the cabin rebuilt in 1811. Dr. Manning sold the home in Meridianville to John Mosley and Arthur F. Hopkins on March 28, 1818, and subsequently moved to Huntsville.

Charles W. Strong, born in Goochland County, Virginia in 1804, moved to a tract of land south of Meridianville with his parents, George and Sally Strong, before 1820. In 1828 he married Didama Humphrey, who had arrived about 1816 near Meridianville with her parents via oxcart. Having first considered settling in Tennessee, David Wade, Berry Wade, and John Wade arrived in Madison County in the spring of 1817. David Wade sent word to his wife Eliza Grantland Wade, and she and the children joined him at Ditto

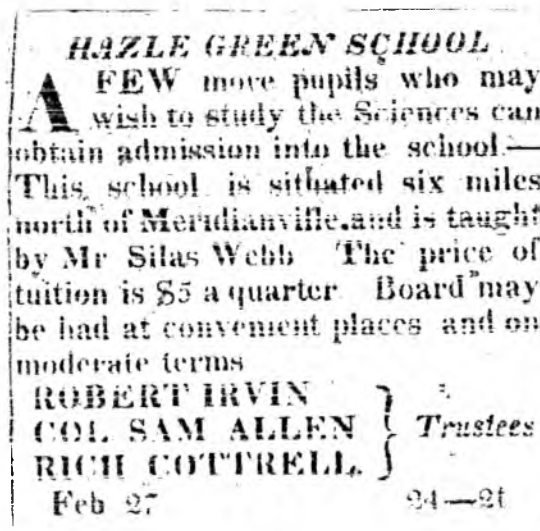
Landing. On April 10, 1817, David Wade purchased two half sections of land from Peyton Cox for \$3,525. (In a letter to his niece in Charlottesville, Virginia, David Wade gave the names of his five children as Margaret, Amanda, Malvinia, David, Harriet, and Robert B. Wade.)

Among the many industrious men who, with their families, settled nearby were Rodah Horton, Josiah Battle, Daniel and William Wright, David Humphrey, the Darwins, Eldridges, Pruitts, Wyches, Oteys and Robinsons.<sup>7</sup>

## Schools

Generally early schooling was in the hands of the pioneer mother or a traveling schoolmaster. Some townships maintained 16<sup>th</sup> section schools, often called old field schools, from the use of rent money on public lands. However, education was extremely important to these pioneers.

As early as 1819, a school was located in the community of old Hazel Green, as an advertisement announced in a local newspaper:



From the *Alabama Republican*, dated February 27, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

## Madison County Records

Land records and legal documents offer information about these early settlers. Some of the dates of other early land patents of the Hazel Green-Meridianville area are given as follows:

Samuel Allen, Davidson Co. Tenn.	September 18, 1809
William S. Allen, Davidson Co. Tenn.	December 23, 1812
Daniel Atkins	February 11, 1813
Bartlett Milam	January 23, 1814

Read Atkins  
John Milam

October 31, 1815  
January 18, 1816



Transfer of Power of Attorney from Bartlet Milam to Rich Cottrell

Know all men by these presents that I Bartlet Milam of the county of Madison Mississippi Territory have this day transferred all the right, title, claim and interest that I have to a certain discharge for a tour of service in guarding the frontiers of Madison County in Capt Saml. A. Allen's Company 16<sup>th</sup> Regt. M. M. T. to Rich' Cottrell of the aforesaid county Madison in M.T. for value received of him. The said Rich' Cottrell is hereby authorized and commissioned to receive & retain for his own the money due me from the United States for said discharge as witness my hand and seal this 16 day of September 1814.

Some of the early Madison County, Alabama Territory and State Appointments in the Hazel Green-Meridianville area were as follows:

Isaac Wellborn, Adjutant, 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment, November 12, 1818  
Henry King, Captain, 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment, November 15, 1818  
Randolph Sullivan, Justice of the Peace, September 12, 1820  
John Milam, Constable, September 12, 1820<sup>9</sup>

## Early Religious Life

On Saturday, June 3, 1809, a small gathering of Baptists met in northern Madison County and formed a church under the name of "West Fork of Flint River." A week later, the name was changed to "Enon Church," a Biblical reference from the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse of the Gospel according to St. John mentioning a place near water. It is believed the first meetinghouse was near the bank of the Briar Fork of the Flint River near the present day intersection of Meridianville Bottom Road and Bolling Road. John Canterbury served as pastor from 1809-1815, and Richard Shackelford served the congregation from 1815-1823.<sup>10</sup>

Robert Donnell, a Cumberland Presbyterian circuit rider, conducted an early Camp Meeting at Hunt's Spring in 1809. He also preached in other areas of northern Madison County. It is believed that the Concord Cumberland Presbyterian Church had its beginnings near what is now Joe Quick Road, on a portion of the road, then the main road

from Winchester, Tennessee to Athens, Alabama. The site has been considered as the location of the Camp Ground.

According to present-day members of Concord Cumberland Presbyterian Church, a large bell (perhaps a plantation bell) was rung in the early days to summon members of the congregation when a member had died. If they were able to, and within hearing range of the bell, they would leave the fields and come to the church to help dig the grave in the nearby graveyard. When it was rung properly, the sound of the bell sounded eerily like "He's gone! He's gone!" There is a bell outside the church today, the second at that site.<sup>11</sup>

Bishop Francis Asbury, who presided over the annual meeting of the Western Conference of the Methodist Episcopalians at Liberty Hill, Tennessee, October 1-7, 1808, assigned James Gwinn as a missionary to the Cherokee Indians. The immediate land that he served was along the Flint River, or the "Flint Circuit," whose membership reached six hundred white settlers and forty-five blacks by 1817. The Methodist Society had been established by 1816 two miles south of the state line, and the "McGhee Society" held meetings located on the bank of the Flint River by McGhee's Mill.

## **Revolutionary War Veterans of Hazel Green**

Madison County has a proud heritage of veterans of the Revolutionary War. Moreover, the follower of history or personal genealogy can learn a great deal from other legal records of Madison County, Revolutionary War records of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Alabama Society D.A.R., Revolutionary War pension claims, and the state archives in Montgomery.<sup>12</sup>

Edward Beville (1762-1847) was a private in the Virginia Continental line under Captain Clay. He and his wife Mary, who also died in 1847, had emigrated from Virginia to North Carolina, and finally to Madison County in 1823.

Charles King (1753-1824) served in the American Revolution in North Carolina and first bought land in Madison County in 1815. At the time of his death, he left a number of articles to his wife along with the quarter section of land and plantation they had lived on and 100 acres of land. His son, Stephen King, additionally received two-quarter sections of land, the one he lived on and another to the north. Percival Bush, King's grandson, received 100 acres of land to balance the quarter of which 60 was given to Stephen King. Granddaughter Flavilla Evalina King was also listed in his will.<sup>13</sup>

John McCartney was born in 1759 in Guilford County, North Carolina. He enlisted at Washington County, North Carolina (later Tennessee), in the Fall of 1777. He served in Capt. P. Wilson's Company of Colonel Robeson's North Carolina regiment. McCartney fought the Chickamauga Indians and aided in burning their towns. After moving to Greene County, North Carolina (later Tennessee), he served six weeks as an Indian spy in Capt. James Stinson's Company in Colonel Sevier's North Carolina Regiment. McCartney was in battle at Boyd's Creek. He served at various times for about eight months defending the frontier against the Indians. Then he moved to Wilkes County, Georgia, where he enlisted in Captain Ellsboro's Company in Colonel Freeman's Georgia Regiment and was in the Battle of Beaver River. McCartney bought land in Madison County in 1811 and was said to be a close friend to Alexander McGilvary, son of the famous Creek Indian chief. McCartney had a large family and left many descendants in the area.<sup>14</sup>

Isaac Wellborn (1758-1839) who first bought land in Madison County in 1814, had served as a private in the North Carolina Continental Line and Militia under Captains Hargrove, Barton, York, and Hynds. His wife, Mary Barton, whom he married in 1778, was born in Orange County, North Carolina. His daughter, Nancy, married their Madison County neighbor, Henry King.<sup>15</sup>

The particulars of the death of Wellborn's son, 41-year-old Shelton Wellborn (spelled Welbourne in the newspaper), reflect the difficult times on the frontier. Shelton was memorialized in an obituary in the local newspaper. He was apparently trying to cover a corn crib when he fell across a rib pole on the house and died as a result of his injury within an hour. He left a widow, six children "and a numerous host of friends and acquaintances to mourn their irreparable loss."<sup>16</sup>

Robert Higginbotham, who arrived before 1813, was a member of Capt. James Deport's Company of Washington County, Virginia. Higginbotham served in the Battle of King's Mountain and died in October 1825, leaving twelve heirs.<sup>17</sup>

Adam Dale (1768-1851) was only fourteen when he volunteered in a company for home defense. In 1781 this company, boys from 14 to 16 years of age, was raised in Snow Hill, Maryland, to oppose the progress of Cornwallis through Virginia. Dale died in Madison County on October 14, 1851 at the home of his daughter, Elizabeth Routt, and he was buried in the Jefferies Cemetery near the house. His body was moved later to Rose Hill Cemetery in Columbia, Tennessee.<sup>18</sup>

John Ammonette served as a private in Captain Franklin's company, 10th Virginia regiment. He was born in Virginia and died at age 82 in Madison County, Alabama, on March 30, 1833. The newspaper contained the following obituary for John Ammonett:

...another revolutionary spirit has sunk into its rest. Rarely are we called to record the death of a more virtuous man. He has been a citizen of this county upwards of twenty years.... In youth, he boldly met the foe and nobly defended the cause of liberty—few have ever so well prepared for their last great change—he settled his earthly concerns— ate a hearty supper—called his family around him—addressed the throne of grace lay down in perfect composure—fell asleep in the arms of his Savior, and awoke in the Paradise of his God. Thus died Mr. Amonit, without a groan....<sup>19</sup>

Robert Davie (1757/58-1846) was buried in the Davie graveyard, about three miles west of Hazel Green on the north side of West Limestone Road. There three tombstones read: In memory of Robert Davie, a native of Person Cty., N. Carolina who departed this life October the 7<sup>th</sup> A.D. 1846 in his 89<sup>th</sup> year. In memory of Levicy Davie, Consort of Robert Davie, Daughter of Isaac Wellborn and Ma(ry) Wellborn. Born September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1781. Died September 8<sup>th</sup> 1849. In memory of Robert Wellborn Davie, the eldest son of Robert and Levicy Davie who died October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1837 in his 28<sup>th</sup> year.<sup>20</sup>

John Milam (1753-1838), who lived on the Athens Pike, now Grimwood Road, was born June 12, 1753 in Brunswick County, Virginia. In the spring of 1776, he enlisted in the 7<sup>th</sup> Virginia Regiment of Foot and marched to Petersburg, Williamsburg, Morristown, and Valley Forge. He also served at the Siege of Ninety-Six in South Carolina. He resided in South Carolina about 30 years before moving to Madison County,

Alabama. It is known that he was a horse aficionado, as he advertised a reward for a rack horse stolen from his plantation. His executors in 1838, in an effort to settle his estate, described his home as an ideal location for a public house.<sup>21</sup>

Benjamin Atkins arrived in Madison County from Laurens County, South Carolina. He served in North Carolina during the Revolution. One of his many descendants was Bishop James Atkins of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

## **Revolutionary War Soldiers of Meridianville**

Richard Cavett (1763-1845), "an old and respectable citizen of this county, died at his residence on the 11th inst., aged 80 years and 5 months. His health had been declining for many years, and his departure from this world was anticipated by him with resignation and composure. He was a soldier of the Revolution and also of the late war; and had given frequent proofs of his devotion to this country. He was long an acceptable member of the Baptist Church and died in the faith of a happy change of existence. He was an industrious and enterprising citizen, and has realized by his own exertions an independent fortune. He has left a number of descendants and connexions to lament his loss." Mr. Cavett as a youth lived with his family that included five or six brothers in the Knoxville fort, "Cavitt Fort." During an Indian attack all of them were killed except Richard Cavett and his wife.<sup>22</sup>

Robert Clark, a native of Halifax County, North Carolina, was born in 1756 and spent more than 20 of his final years in Madison County. His obituary revealed that "...he had for a long time been a man of affliction, and for the last, two weeks of his life he was confined by exceeding painful affliction. Yet amidst all he neither murmured nor repined, but sustained it with patience, fortitude and resignation.... [His] kind and mourning friends ministered to the hours of illness, and watched around his dying couch, but all availed not to avert the fatal stroke...."<sup>23</sup>

Daniel Long (1756-1838), also a resident of Madison County, served as a dragoon in the Virginia Continental Line. At the age of 80, he received his pension from the federal government for military service. Under the act of Congress, June 7 1832, Long enrolled for his pension on Nov. 22, 1833.<sup>24</sup>

John Peyton Powell was born in 1780 in Loudon County, Virginia and served as a lieutenant in the First Regular Virginia Line. He first wife, Tabitha Harris was a daughter of Benjamin and Anne (Eppes) Harris, providing another set of fine Madison County connections.<sup>25</sup>

## **Washington Masonic Lodge #23, Hazel Green**

The strong cultural ties between Tennessee and Madison County, Alabama, may well be illustrated through Masonic jurisdictions. Although the Grand Lodge of Alabama Masons was formed in 1820, Washington Lodge #23 in Hazel Green, Alabama, remained in the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee for a number of years. (Most Lodges in Alabama came under the jurisdiction of Alabama's Grand Lodge.) According to the Grand Lodge of Tennessee, none of the annual returns for Washington Masonic Lodge #23 at Hazel Green have survived. Certain historical facts, however, were noted in the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee regarding the Lodge at Hazel Green. On

Monday, July 6, 1818, at a quarterly communication of the Tennessee Lodge, it was announced that Grand Master Wilkins Tannehill had granted dispensation to Daniel S. Leonard, Samuel Noble, and Sutton F. Allen as Master and Wardens for Lodge #23, to work at Hazel Green in the Alabama Territory.

Sutton F. Allen represented his Lodge in Nashville at the Grand Lodge Communication on October 5, 1818 when the official charter was granted. Incidentally, this was the same date that the charter was granted for Alabama Lodge #21 (now Helion Lodge #1 in Huntsville, formed in 1820). At the Tennessee communication in 1820, Thomas Slaughter represented Washington Lodge. It was reported that 11 members had been initiated; 11 members had been passed to the degree of Fellowcraft; 10 members had been raised to the degree of Master Mason. The total membership for Washington Lodge #23 in 1820 was 28 members. By comparison, Lodge #21 in Huntsville reported a membership of 29 members in 1820.

The membership of Washington Lodge #23 would have surpassed the Huntsville Lodge had Thomas W. Littlepage and George Shackelford not been expelled from Washington #23 for unmasonic conduct. Other disciplinary actions by Washington Lodge #23 included the suspensions of John Eastland and Samuel A. Allen for “abusive and unmasonic language.”

Masonic activity in Hazel Green was at a height in 1827 when the Lodge sustained a membership of 62 brethren. However by 1830, the location of Washington Lodge #23 was listed as New Market, Alabama.<sup>26</sup>

## Changing Times

As financial success allowed more leisure time, unfortunately for Hazel Green and Meridianville, many of the leading planters moved to Huntsville to enjoy the social scene particularly during the long dreary winter months. Overseers were left in charge of the plantations, and an owner might inspect his rural domain at his convenience. His children would have the opportunity of better schools, and his wife could enjoy the company of other sophisticated women in the town setting.

In the meanwhile, this vast acreage of uninterrupted fields attracted even more landowners with large slave labor forces who often replaced the yeoman farmers who had worked so hard. Many of these settlers moved on again to begin again. Those pioneers who remained in northern Madison County left a proud legacy for their descendants.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Dex Nilsson. *Why Is It Named That? Stories Behind the Names of 250 Places in Madison County and Huntsville, Alabama* (Huntsville, AL: Twinbrook Communications, 2003), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Judge Thomas Jones Taylor *History of Madison County and Incidentally North Alabama*, eds. W. Stanley Hoole and Addie S. Hoole (University, AL: Confederate Pub., 1976); James Record, *A Dream Come True*, Vol. I. (Huntsville, AL: Hicklin, 1970), p. 301.

<sup>3</sup> *Historical Markers of Madison County, Alabama*, ed. Frank Alex Luttrell, (Huntsville, AL: Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, 2001), p. 118; Dwight Wilhelm, (Montgomery: no date, no publ.), pp. 33-35; Huntsville *Republican*, February 17, 1818.

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, pp. 27-29; *Alabama House Journal*, Special Session, June 7, 1821; Lincoln County, Tennessee, Court Minutes of Court of Pleas and Quarter sessions, Tuesday, Feb. 27, 1810; Helen Marsh and Tim



Marsh, *First County Court Minutes of Lincoln County, Tennessee*, (Southern Historical Press, 1989), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Percy Family File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Heritage Room, research by Emily Burwell. Percy, Walker and Pope pledged to name their children after one another. Thus the confusion of descendants named Leroy Walker, Walker Pope, Percy Walker, Walker Percy, and others. Descendants include notable political and literary figures such as Sen. Charles Percy of Illinois, and novelists Walker Percy and William Alexander Percy. Four of the Walker sons became prominent in Alabama politics.

<sup>6</sup> Frances Cabaniss Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County" (PhD diss., University of Alabama, 1956), p. 428.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.

<sup>8</sup> *Alabama Republican*, February 27, 1819.

<sup>9</sup> "Madison County, Alabama Territory and State Appointments, 1818-1822," *Valley Leaves*, Special Issue, December, 1969, Vol. 4, pp. 5, 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Heritage of Madison County* (Clanton, AL: Heritage Publ., 1998), p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Jacque Reeves' interview with Louise Brown, member of Concord Cumberland Presbyterian Church, August 2008. Mrs. Brown is descended from early pioneers, the Manleys, Stewarts, and Smiths; Jacque Reeves' interview with Richard Armstrong, member of Concord Cumberland Presbyterian Church, August 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Madison County, Alabama Record Center, D.A.R. Records, *A Roster of Revolutionary Soldiers and Patriots in Alabama*: Revolutionary War pension claims, ADAH, and newspaper accounts have been used to flush out the available stories of these men.

<sup>13</sup> Louise Milam Julich, *Roster of Revolutionary Soldiers and Patriots in Alabama* (Parchment Press, c. 1979), pp. 50, 51; Huntsville *Democrat*, October 27, 1847.

<sup>14</sup> Julich, p. 341; Madison County, Alabama Probate Record Book, #449; Huntsville *Southern Advocate*, August 31, 1824; Huntsville *Democrat*, April 19, 1828.

<sup>15</sup> Julich, p. 375; Taylor, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> Julich, p. 611.

<sup>17</sup> Huntsville *Southern Advocate*, March 1, 1820.

<sup>18</sup> Julich, pp. 289, 290.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158, 159.

<sup>20</sup> Huntsville *Democrat*, April 11, 1833.

<sup>21</sup> Julich, pp. 165, 166.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 415-417.

<sup>23</sup> Huntsville *Democrat*, November 27, 1844; Julich, pp. 110-112.

<sup>24</sup> Huntsville *Democrat*, November 25, 1837; Julich, 119, 120.

<sup>25</sup> Julich, p. 367.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 485, 486.

<sup>27</sup> Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of the State of Tennessee, <http://www.grandlodge-tn.org/>.

# Ryland-Brownsboro-Maysville

JACQUELYN PROCTER REEVES

What we now know as Madison County encompasses portions of the fertile soil contained in the Highland Rim region, as well as the steep canyons and bluffs of the Cumberland Plateau. Burned wood, preserved in the form of charcoal, was discovered in long ago campsites in Madison County and proven to date back at least 10,000 years by the process of carbon dating. Perhaps the wood from that campsite warmed the chilly air, or roasted venison for a meal for our earliest settlers, members of the Paleo Indian Tribe.<sup>1</sup>

A history of Madison County would be incomplete without information about the Indians who first came here, the original Americans, who greeted the white man upon his arrival. In North Alabama the Paleo Indians, dating back as far as 12,000 years ago, hunted woolly mammoths and mastodons. Petroglyphs discovered in remote regions of North Alabama indicate the Indians were quite artistic. The Paleo Indians were descended from Asians who immigrated over the Bering Strait land bridge to North America some 20,000 years ago and spread throughout the continent. Other artifacts (sharks' teeth, fossils, and skeletons) from the prehistoric era remind us that Alabama was once under seawater.<sup>2</sup>

The Paleo Indians were followed by the Archaic Indians, who lived here from about 8,000 B.C. until 1,000 B.C. They were followed by the Woodlands and Indians of the Mississippian Period. Over the next several hundred years, the Indians in Alabama were divided, mostly, into the four main tribes we study today: the Creeks, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Cherokees.<sup>3</sup>

By the 1500s, many changes had taken place in the lives of the Indians of the Southeastern United States. Spanish Conquistadors brought horses, metal weapons, diseases, and a hunger for wealth to the New World. Hernando de Soto missed the area known as Madison County when he entered Alabama, but his difficulties with the Indians and attempt to subjugate them formed a foundation that would forevermore define the relationship between the red man and the white man.<sup>4</sup>

The Indians of this era painted their faces and bodies, punctured themselves with bone needles and rubbed home-made ink in their wounds to create crude tattoos. They prepared and drank a liquid known to the white settlers simply as "black drink." Their hoes were made of fish bones or wood, and planting was done by the women of the tribe.

The Tsalagi, or Cherokees, were the principal Indians that inhabited Madison County. They were described as being taller and lighter-skinned than the Creeks, and more friendly to the white travelers. Their custom was to slit and stretch their ears and shave off all of their hair except for a small patch on the back of their head. When a Cherokee died, his or her hair was anointed and they were buried immediately. A heap of stones commemorated the graves of those who had died away from home and those who passed by added a stone onto the pile.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Indians frequently fought with one another, those most feared by all other Indians were the Chickasaws. These were the Indians who clashed with the Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto and his men, and 200 years later, the French. The Chickasaws plundered and hunted down their enemies.

The Cha'hta or the Choctaws, were known as Chatas Cabezas, or "flat heads" by the Spaniards because of their custom of flattening the heads of infant males. When the medicine man decided that his patient's illness was incurable, members of the tribe "terminated" the sick individual immediately.

The Creeks, or Agusas, were divided by region into what is identified as the Upper Creeks and Lower Creeks. Following the massacre at Ft. Mims, the Creeks were defeated by General Andrew Jackson and his men in the Creek Indian Wars of 1813-1814.

White settlers who came after 1800 fared better. Many of them formed a symbiotic relationship, a mutual tolerance if you will, but those tolerances were likely to change in a flash. Indians were courted by the French to fight against the British, by the British to fight against the Americans, and by the Americans to fight against other Indians. These settlers, who encroached too close at times to the Indian settlements, learned early on that if they left anything outside of their cabin, they could expect that it would be gone by morning. The women, whose large and awkward looms might be kept in a separate cabin to conserve living space inside the home, discovered that it was better to finish their weaving project and bring it into the house for safekeeping, or they could expect that their cloth had been cut off the loom overnight. One settler, whose bee hive was "borrowed," was served honey from his own stolen hive when invited to eat with neighboring Indians.<sup>6</sup>

Understandably, the Indians did not appreciate being pushed out of their homes and away from their lands, even though, in some cases, it was their own chiefs who offered up their removal for their own personal gifts and cash. Some of the white settlers did not make it any easier. Having moved from other states where much of their lives had been spent fighting against Indians, the settlers greeted their new Indian neighbors in Alabama with much hostility.

## **Brownsborough/Brownsboro**

Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, credited with putting pen to paper to create Huntsville's first written history, recorded that, "...below the three forks of Flint and extending from the mountain spurs east and northeast of Hunt's Spring to spurs just east of Hurricane Creek...the largest group of early settlers were concentrated in Ryland-Brownsborough-Maysville area."<sup>7</sup> Some 200 years later, many of the surnames belonging to the earliest settlers are still common in these three areas.

Soon after John Hunt set up housekeeping at the Big Spring in 1805, the rumor of fertile land in the Great Bend of the Tennessee River spread to Americans looking for adventure and fortune. In those days of word-of-mouth communication, news items were few and far between, and taken very seriously. Before long, settlers streamed in, sometimes in caravans, sometimes one or two at a time. By 1807, the settlements of Brownsboro and Maysville had attracted other hardy pioneers. Those men, women, and children, who hoped to find a better life for themselves, were welcomed by John Lambertson, John Sprowl, and Soloman Massengale, who had patiently bided their time until land was offered up for sale in Nashville in 1809, and they could legally make their homes their own.<sup>8</sup>

George Taylor was one of the area's earliest settlers in Brownsboro (as we spell it now). Taylor was a native of Virginia, and had fought for American Independence in the

Revolutionary War under Lighthorse Harry Lee. Years later, while reminiscing to his friends and family at Brownsboro, Taylor recounted that after the June 28, 1778 Battle of Monmouth, fought on a miserably hot day, British bodies littered the field, victims of neither musket nor sword, but of the oppressive heat<sup>9</sup>

Prior to their move to Madison County, George Taylor and his wife, Hannah, were living in Lexington, South Carolina in very trying times. The Indians and white settlers were at constant odds with each other and hostilities, one toward another, escalated. White people were captured, Indian villagers slaughtered in retaliation, houses burned, horses stolen, and murder was rampant. Gradually, with the influx of many more veterans of the Revolutionary War and increasing numbers of white settlers, the hostilities began to subside. At this time, George Taylor moved his family to Oglethorpe County, Georgia.<sup>10</sup>

By 1806, Taylor was ready to leave Oglethorpe County and head west to Tennessee. But he had already proven that he was a restless man, and would not remain content in any place too long. He was beginning to hear more about the fertile property in and around what was simply known as the “Big Spring” by local Indians, and “Hunt’s Spring” by pioneer John Hunt. Although Taylor had been quite pleased with his home in Tennessee, the ever-growing number of men passing through on their way into the territory that would become Alabama was impossible to ignore. They reported that several streams merged into a river known as the Flint with a beautiful view of the mountains nearby. Those men who passed through wore buckskin clothing and longed for the frontier life, away from laws and the control of other men and the prying eyes of civilization. Perhaps George Taylor was called to the new territory by simple wanderlust. In 1810, the adventurous spirit took hold once again, and with the call of Alabama Fever on his mind, George Taylor sold out and left his Tennessee home on the Elk River.<sup>11</sup>

When George Taylor arrived via a newly cut road, he stopped at the Flint River where he rekindled his friendship with some of his acquaintances of years past at the community of Brownsboro. It was the extreme southernmost settlement east of the mountains, and located in the east-central portion of Madison County.<sup>12</sup> Taylor put down his roots on a high hill north of Brownsboro. The land had already been surveyed, and by 1810, a horse path had been carved out leading to the town of Huntsville. However, a wide enough road that would accommodate wagons would not be ready for several more years.<sup>13</sup> Those who wished to take their wagons into town to grind their corn took the Winchester Road which crossed the Flint River near Wood’s Mill. They then passed through the Mastin Farm and near John Connally’s Green Bottom Inn, the well-known horse-racing track which had just been completed. The sport of horse-racing would soon beckon to a man from Nashville whose name would eventually be known to Americans everywhere, future U.S. President Andrew Jackson.

The land between Brownsboro and Huntsville was described as being heavily wooded with cedars and poplars. In the lowlands were oaks, walnut, and hickory trees. Wagons could pass through the woods in some places, with a protective canopy of branches overhead. It offered exactly what those early pioneers wanted – a wilderness to live in when they wished to be left alone, but neighbors and civilization not too far away when they got lonesome or needed help.<sup>14</sup>

Although the initial influx of pioneers and planters was rapid, the arrival of newcomers began to taper off with the rumor of war with England and the not so peaceful

coexistence with the Indians. Still, for the most part, the local Indians were trading with the white people and enjoying a measure of prosperity for themselves. Near Hurricane Creek, many German settlers made their home. Other early settlers were Ben Lawler, Henry Harless, Richard Pockrus, and John Paueur.<sup>15</sup> For the most part, the majority of the pioneers were of Scots-Irish and English descent.

It was time for some religious direction to come in to the settlements. Circuit riders who traveled long distances on horseback set up impromptu “brush arbor” services. The first Baptist church established in the territory was the Flint River Primitive Baptist Church, organized October 2, 1808. Today, it is located on Moontown Road in Brownsboro.<sup>16</sup> Their pastor, John Nicholson, held the first meeting at the home of James Deaton.<sup>17</sup>

George Taylor built a square log house for his family, as did all of the other pioneers. Some were built more elaborately, with plank or puncheon floors and shingle roofs. It was unusual to see a brick building - the nearest was in Huntsville. The Taylors’ abode featured a white ash floor with chestnut roof shingles. The kitchen, smokehouse, and slave quarters were more crudely built, most had dirt floors. Fish was plentiful, though the commodities of sugar, coffee, and tea were rarely available. The men, both black and white, spent the spring clearing more land, cutting timber, splitting rails, and putting up fences, oftentimes with crude wooden tools.<sup>18</sup>

George Taylor had never tasted tea, though whiskey made in the country was common for every male head of the household. The families wore homespun and buckskin the winter, cotton and flax in the summer. In the summer, few boys actually wore shoes until their late teens. Hats were popular, made of fur in the winter and woven grass in the summer.<sup>19</sup>

The descendants of George Taylor stayed on in North Alabama. The first history of this area was written by Judge Thomas Taylor Jones, whose work is still cited by students, writers, and researchers of Alabama history. He had been a teacher, a surveyor, and finally a judge. George Taylor, whose final resting place is now unknown, was remembered in a ceremony at the Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll in Huntsville in May 2008 when a marker was erected in his memory in the same plot as his grandson, Judge Thomas Jones Taylor.

Another early pioneer was John Brown, a tobacco farmer from Cumberland County, Virginia who lived next to his father-in-law Thomas Moore. Brown had a large family, a number of slaves, and was obviously financially quite comfortable.<sup>20</sup> However he and his father-in-law heard of the fertile Tennessee Valley and made their move together. The reason is not known today, but perhaps it stems from the fact that the soil in Virginia was becoming depleted and the population was ever-expanding. They too were consumed with Alabama Fever.

John Brown, then 47, and his father-in-law were among the first to arrive in Nashville in order to patent land in August 1809. The Cherokee Indian lands were to the east of his property, but by this time, most of the hostilities and tension with the Indians had subsided. By 1811, John Brown had 319.2 acres and he increased that number over the next several years to 350 acres along the Flint River. He built a log cabin and enjoyed companionship with his neighbors, George Thompson and John Sprowl. In later years, they would become related through marriage. In addition to growing cotton, John Brown established a mill, known simply as Brown’s Mill, located a half mile above “Old

Brownsboro.”<sup>21</sup> (It was eventually sold to Captain Robert Scott and became known as Scott’s Mill.) It was hoped, by those early settlers, that Brownsboro would do much more than thrive – it would grow and flourish and become a showpiece on the frontier. Another Brownsboro pioneer, Charles McCartney, laid off the western part of his tract of land in optimistic anticipation of building an impressive town.<sup>22</sup>

John Brown also dabbled in investment land located on the north side of the courthouse square, where he built two cotton warehouses. In the meantime, perhaps unsure that his relocation to Alabama would be permanent, he retained some property in Virginia where his wife and children remained.<sup>23</sup>

This period was difficult for Brown and many of the new settlers. The War of 1812 brought rumors of Indian uprisings against the Americans encroaching near their land as well as a possible British/Indian alliance. Brown left his wife and 12 children in Virginia until he was certain it was safe to bring them farther south. Eventually, he decided that the time was right and they could live in safety and even prosperity. In 1815, his family finally joined him in the area of Brownsboro.



The quality of local cotton was good and plentiful. With slave labor, it was cheap to grow and harvest. The biggest hurdle was the difficult task of transporting cotton to mills up north and to Great Britain. The Tennessee River was the nearest large water source, but it wasn’t easy to get the cotton to the river. While the frontier beckoned these pioneers initially, there would be disadvantages as well.

It was necessary for the farmers to find a way to get cotton from their farms to the Tennessee River. The Flint River Navigation Company was established in 1820 and comprised of a number of men who had a plan to haul cotton on flatboats from Captain Scott’s Mills to the Tennessee River via the Flint River. Among those members of the corporation were: Fleming Jordan, George Taylor, James McCartney, John Sprowl, Stephen Pond, John P. Brown, John Grayson, Dave Peevey, David Walker, Ebenezer Byram, Stephen McBroom, William Derrick, and David Cobb.<sup>24</sup>



This plan had apparently been contemplated by other cotton planters, for the following day, Indian Creek Navigation Company was chartered in Huntsville. Neither venture, however was particularly successful.<sup>25</sup> Legislation was enacted to help promote the success of this venture – anyone who cut or caused a tree to fall into the river would be required to remove it immediately or pay a fine of three dollars per day until it was cleared. Money from fines would be used to improve the venture. It soon became evident that the movement of the water was inadequate to wash fallen timber out of the Flint River and into the great Tennessee River.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, it really wasn't adequate for navigation of cotton barges either. Before too many years had passed, the arrival of the iron horse would ease the problem of transporting cotton altogether.

In 1819, 28-year-old Caleb Brown bought the 350 acres from his father, John, for \$17,500. This allowed John to buy 640 acres that were located about two miles south of his original 350 acre parcel. He purchased his larger piece of land from a North Carolina land speculator named John Evans.<sup>27</sup> But the promise of vast wealth from King Cotton nearly fell flat with the depression of 1819. Cotton prices plummeted<sup>28</sup> and many simply could not overcome the debts left in the wake. In the meantime, Caleb Brown died with no heirs, and the 350 acres reverted back to his father, John, who kept the land in trust for his remaining children.

## FOR SALE,

**T**HREE hundred and fifty acres of the first rate cotton corn and wheat lands, about 60 acres of which is cleared well enclosed and now in a high state of cultivation, lying on the north east side of Flint River, in the county of Madison, on said land is an excellent spring of freestone water about 80 yards from the house in which I live, a small peach orchard of the best kind of fruit, also, attached to this land, is a saw and grist mill now in good repair equal if not superior to any mills in the county, these mills made last year, 5000 dollars. The dwelling house stands on a high, dry, and as healthy a place as any in the county. The aforesaid property will be sold for cash or on a credit for 3 or 4 years, good and lawful right and title shall be made to the purchaser or purchasers: for terms apply to the subscriber who resides on the premises.

**CALEB BROWN.**

Sept 11.

52 if 52.

From the *Alabama Republican*, dated September 11, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

John Brown struggled to get out of the land deal he had made with John Evans who evidently pressured him into signing a contract that would have Brown pay far more than the agreed upon price. John Evans lured Brown into buying property by pretending to be a Methodist minister and convincing him that they were of the same mind. Under Evans' sale, Brown would pay a total of \$38,400 or \$60 an acre, at a time when land and cotton prices were at rock bottom due to the recession. Incredibly, it was Evans' dream that a town named Evansburg would be erected in the area that would become an everlasting tribute to him.

John Evans had John Brown arrested, and Brown brought a suit against Evans for fraud. Evans promised clear title on property that would never be his to sell. *He then had* an imposter pose as another investor in order to convince Brown to enter into the deal with him. The details of the transaction were complicated and convoluted, but in the end, Brown was successful in his bid to have his initial payment returned to him, although it would take many years to finally settle Evans' debt to him. This property now borders the northeastern corner of U.S. Highway 72 where it crosses the Flint River and near the



intersection of the Southern Railroad tracks, Flint River, and closest point of Highway 72.<sup>29</sup>

By this time however, John Evans had returned to North Carolina. John Brown had taken his family and moved to Louisiana, perhaps disillusioned with his financial difficulties in Alabama. He died in Louisiana in 1830.<sup>30</sup>

Along with the pioneers and the hopes of prosperity in cotton, came the ministers to establish churches. William and Martha Derrick sold a tract of land for \$12 to a church member to establish a permanent Baptist Church of Christ on the Flint River. The boundaries were described as “beginning at a dogwood above Simmon’s Spring and running along a marked line to the mouth of said Spring branch to the River, thence up the River a straight line to a marked white oak from thence a marked line to a poplar, thence to a white oak, thence to a hickory, from thence to the beginning, containing three acres, more or less.” These, and other similar boundary descriptions would eventually cause endless headaches as trees died and rivers changed course.<sup>31</sup>

The first Baptist church in Alabama was organized in the home of James Deaton on October 2, 1808. Their first church home was constructed shortly afterwards and it was duly named Flint River Baptist Church of Christ. Among the charter members were well-known local names: Bayles, Brock, Brooks, Byram, Erwin, Green, Hinds, Hockaday, Hollingsworth, Lawler, Isoms, Moon, Smith, Strong, and Williams. They were associated with the Flint River Association of Baptists in 1814 at their Lincoln County, Tennessee meeting.<sup>32</sup> The church has served the community continuously with occasional interruptions during smallpox and flu epidemics, as well as the Union occupation. Today, it is known as the Flint River Primitive Baptist Church and is located on Moontown Road in Brownsboro.

Primitive Baptists embrace the original doctrines and simpler practices of the first Baptists. The preferred scripture is that contained in the King James version of the Bible published in the year 1611.

Brownsboro continued to grow until about 1840. The Flint River Navigation Company dwindled and disappeared and settlers moved on to Mississippi or on to neighboring communities. The Bell Factory moved in nearby and much of the land that had served as the heart of Brownsboro was planted into cotton. Though the once-thriving town of Brownsboro never again reached the heyday of the early 1800s, it did not disappear altogether. The businesses/homes on the east side of the Flint River remained, and this area then became known as Brownsboro.<sup>33</sup>

East from the Meridian Road toward the Flint River, about a half mile from Barren Fork, Hardan’s Mill was built in 1812. Those who were eligible to vote did so at the mill. This community, like another began on the highlands south of the river known at first as Manchester, and later Glascocks, would wither away into a ghost town almost before it began. The Bell Factory Company tore down the mill and the people moved on.<sup>34</sup>

## **Maysville**

In his manuscript, completed in 1886, Judge Thomas Jones Taylor wrote that Maysville “...is a pleasant healthy place with an abundance of fine water and is the

center of an orderly farming community. William Stewart is the only survivor of the pioneers of the place....”<sup>35</sup>

Maysville and Brownsboro were both settled on the eastern side of the Flint River, one of the largest tributaries to the Tennessee River. The lush land bordering the river provided perfect farm land for growing food and the important cash crop – cotton. The clear water beckoned wild game and served as home to at least 83 species of fish. Today it is one of the last free-flowing tributaries inside the Tennessee Basin and branches out to serve much of the land in Madison County.<sup>36</sup>

The communities of Ryland-Maysville-Brownsboro were closely intertwined through work and marriage. Many of the surnames are interchangeable in each community. These were not exactly bustling communities, but they were self-reliant, hard-working people who took care of their own. Occasionally they went into Huntsville, the county seat, for whatever supplies they needed. A trip to Huntsville was at least an all-day event, but was eased considerably when the railroad eventually came through.

At the crossroads of Sections 16, 17, 20, and 21 in east-central Madison County, was a portion of the old Cherokee boundary line known simply as “Section.” The name was eventually changed to Maysville. Levi Hinds was among the earliest known settlers, and like many before and after, he came from Tennessee. He settled about two miles north at Berry Mountain in about 1805. As more and more white people streamed into the area, he became the justice of the peace. Levi Hinds, a native of North Carolina, and his wife, Huldah, had 12 children. In 1809 he purchased 159.50 acres to increase his holdings to 320 acres of land that adjoined the Flint River.<sup>37</sup> When Hinds died in 1842 without a will, he left his family with the task of dividing his assets. On November 29 the Clerk of the Orphans Court of Madison County asked questions regarding the estate. It was decided that the land could not be equally divided among the heirs, nor could the distribution of slaves be accomplished equitably. According to county records, his six slaves were sold for \$1,487.00 in February 1843.<sup>38</sup>

Still, a most interesting story about the property of Levi Hinds was written by descendant Leon Hinds some years later. This good farm land, which he had to acquire through court proceedings because ownership was in dispute, was bisected by an old road known as the Deposit Road, supposedly cut by Andrew Jackson’s army as they came through this area on their way to the fight the Creek Indians. One of the trees near or on the Levi Hinds property bore the carved initials of Andrew Jackson. This road now connects Maysville and Buckhorn.<sup>39</sup>

Another early settler was John Derrick, who was born in Virginia in 1785. According to the 1809 census, in his household with him was his wife, Catherine, one female under 21, and one slave. His 160 acres purchased on February 6 1809 were along the Flint River.

Many other settlers came from Virginia as well. Among them was Richard Gipson, of Scottish ancestry, who arrived in 1813 at the tender age of 17. Gipson’s journey had begun with his mother, father, and sister. Unfortunately they all died in Kentucky. Perhaps their intention was to come to Alabama or maybe Richard Gipson longed to leave bad memories behind. Whatever the reason, by 1816, he was living with a family named Hess and making his living as a carpenter.

Richard Gipson would take, as his wife, a Cherokee girl named Mary Elizabeth Hogue from one of the three Indian reservations in nearby Hurricane Valley. Later,

members of her family passed by her home and pleaded with her to make a journey with them to a new home out west on federal reservations. This journey is known today as the Trail of Tears and is remembered as a tragedy in American history. Wisely for Mary Gipson and her descendants, she decided to remain in Alabama with her white husband.<sup>40</sup>

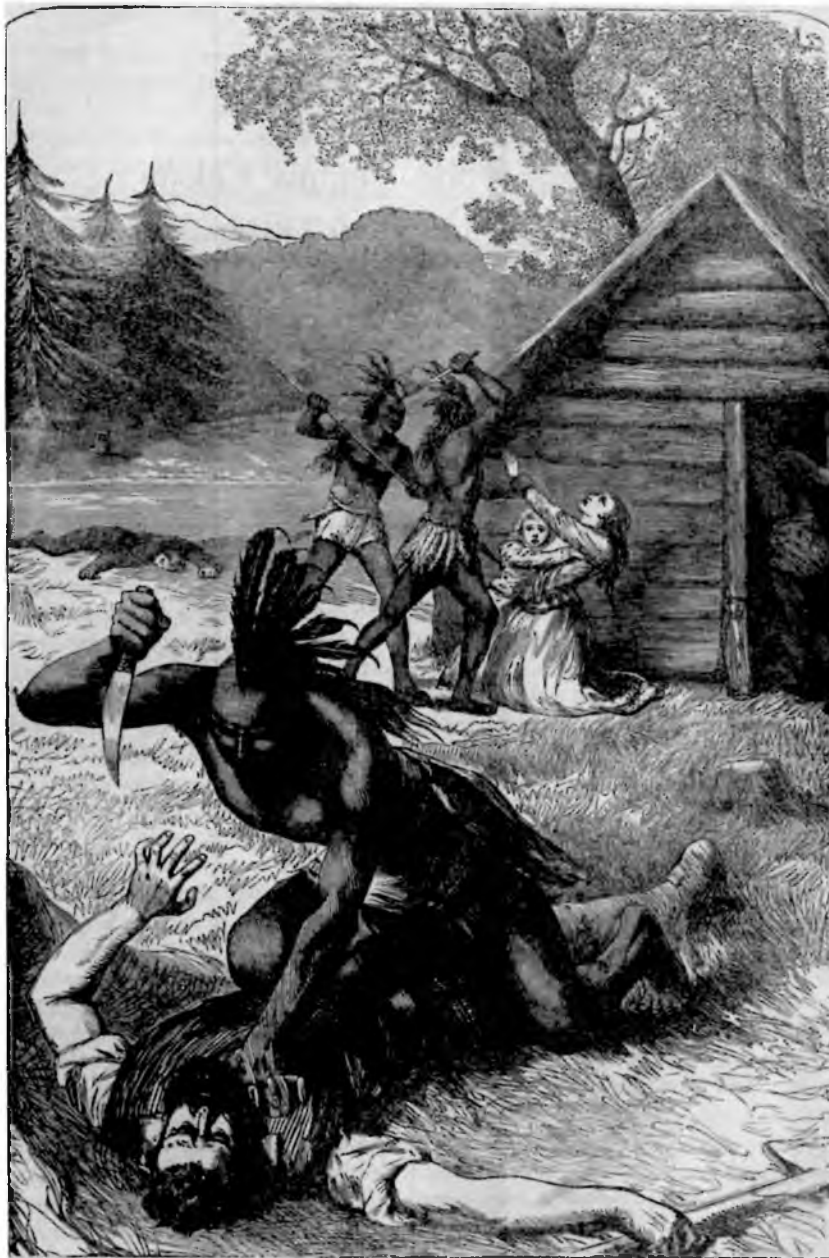
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A profound speech was given by Cherokee Chief Speckled Snake in response to the decision of Andrew Jackson that Indians would be relocated to reservations out west. Roots of the historic removal known as the Trail of Tears, were directly related to the early migration of whites *into this region, which includes Madison County. With the readers' indulgence, a portion of this speech is included for interest:*

Brothers! We have heard the talk of our great father; it is very kind. He says he loves his red children.... When the white man first came to these shores, the Moscogees gave him land, and kindled him a fire to make him comfortable; and when the pale faces of the south (Spaniards out of Florida) made war upon him, their young men drew the tomahawk, and protected his head from the scalping knife. But when the white man had warmed himself before the Indian's fire and filled himself with the Indian's hominy, he became very large; he stopped not for the mountain tops, and his feet covered the plains and the valleys.... Then he became our great father. He loved his red children; but said, "You must move a little farther, lest I should, by accident, tread on you." With one foot he pushed the red man over the Oconee, and with the other he trampled down the graves of his fathers. But our great father still loved his red children, and he soon made them another talk. He said much; but it all meant nothing, but "move a little farther; you are too near me."... Brothers! When he made us a talk on a former occasion, he said, "Get a little farther; go beyond the Ocone and the Oakmulgee; there is a pleasant country. It shall be yours forever." Now he says, "The land you live in is not yours; go beyond the Mississippi; there is game, there you may remain while the grass grows or the water runs." Brothers! Will not our great father come there also? He loves his red children, and his tongue is not forked.<sup>41</sup>

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Dr. Fleming Jordan (1763-1831), whose ancestry was traced back to William the Conqueror, was a descendant of Samuel Jordan, who left his home in Wiltshire, England on June 18, 1609 and came to America aboard the *Sea Venture*. En-route however, the ship wrecked on Bermuda in May, 1610. Passengers built two ships, the *Patience* and the *Deliverer*, from the wrecked original, and finally arrived at Jamestown on July 25, 1610, eight months later than their expected arrival.<sup>42</sup>



Samuel Jordan appropriately named his plantation "Jordan's Journey," and the home itself he named "Beggar's Bush." In March 1622, the Powhatan Indians attacked the Jamestown settlers in retaliation of the murder of the Indian, Nemattanew. Samuel Jordan's home was fortified against the attack, and served as a safe haven for some 42 settlers. Over 340 settlers had been massacred by the Indians, including Samuel Jordan's son, Robert.

In turn, the colonists destroyed the Indians' corn crops. Powhatan Chief Opechancanough found it necessary to negotiate a peace settlement. The Jamestown residents were not satisfied that their measure of revenge had been met. At the peace talk, two Jamestown leaders poisoned the Indians' liquor for the ceremonial toast, killing about 200 Indians. Another 50 were killed as well. It would not be the end, nor the worst of the clashes between the Powhatans and Americans.<sup>43</sup>

Samuel Jordon (pronounced Jer'-den), died a year later and left his second wife an enormous inheritance, which included several coats of chainmail (perhaps handy when protecting oneself against Indian attack). His widow agreed to marry the reverend who conducted the funeral, then changed her mind and accepted a proposal from the attorney who settled her husband's estate. The reverend sued for breach of promise, but lost. He had to sign a release to the widow agreeing never to pursue any further claim, right, or title to her.<sup>44</sup>

Four generations later, Fleming Jordan had inherited land in Buckingham County, Virginia, and served 35 days in the county during the American Revolution in public service to the Americans. From there he went to Georgia and served as a private in the First Brigade of Georgia Militia. Records indicate that, as a patriot in the American Revolution, he received land in Georgia in the 1805 land lottery. He married his wife there<sup>45</sup> and came to Madison County where he purchased 160.65 acres at two dollars per acre in 1810.<sup>46</sup> Many of the Jordan descendants were professional men, and by the time of the 1830 census, there were three Jordan families living in Madison County.



Jordan Family Home, built ca. 1833  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)



The grave of Dr. Fleming Jordan is located near Shiloh Methodist Church which serves the Ryland/Maysville communities. Although he died in 1831, this headstone is in remarkable condition. The weeping willow on this headstone represents sorrow.

Dr. Jordan's grave, marked and dedicated by Hunt's Spring Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution in 1996, is in one of the oldest cemeteries in North Alabama.

## Ryland

The community known today as Ryland is also located in eastern-central Madison County. It was originally known as Kelly's Crossing, named for Russell Kelly, a landowner whose vast property had to be crossed by anyone traveling through the area. Kelly had been born in Georgia in 1804, but married in Madison County in 1825 to Jane Derrick, whose family had come to Madison County by 1810. His wife died in 1849 however, and Russell Kelly went on to marry two more times. At the time of his death in the 1890s, his property was sold and the name of the community was changed in 1897 in honor of Virgil H. Ryland, who served as the community's first postmaster. Virgil Ryland married Bettie Ross Steger, another surname well known in the Ryland-Maysville-Brownsboro area. Ryland is today located at Township 3 South, Range 1 East, Sections 13, 14, 23, 24 and Range 2 East, Sections 18 and 19.<sup>47</sup>

In 1809, John Perratt Steger Jr., and his wife Rebekah/Rebecca Macon Harris moved to Madison County. They had been married 13 years and would have nine children. Their son Benjamin Steger served as justice of the peace until his death in 1854. His son, James Oliver Steger, married into the Nuckolls family, also of Ryland, and they

took refuge in Georgia with their family during the Civil War. He was only 41 when he died there.<sup>48</sup>

Francis Eppes Harris Stegar, son of John Stegar, Jr., and Sarah Eppes Harris Stegar built Maysville Manor, a grand home for his family that would serve as his medical office. This house survives and is known as the Stegar-Nance home. Many of the Stegar descendants married into other Ryland families: the Lawlers and Mellettes, among others. Most of those early family members were buried at Shiloh Cemetery.

Religion was an important part of the settlers' lives. The Flint Circuit of the Methodist denomination was created in 1808 to encompass southern Tennessee and Madison County in the territory that would later become Alabama. James Guinn, a circuit riding minister of Welsh descent, served the Tennessee River Valley. His circuit included the areas known as Jordan's Camp Ground, Ford's Chapel, Blue Springs, McGhee's Camp Ground, and Shiloh. (Two hundred years later, three of these congregations remain in their original locations.)<sup>49</sup>

Prior to 1808 however, the Shiloh congregation was already active, west of the Flint River in the community which became known as Kelly's Crossings and then Ryland. Shiloh Methodist Episcopal Church remained part of the Flint Circuit until 1823 when the church joined the Madison Circuit in the Huntsville District.<sup>50</sup>



The brick wall surrounding one of the oldest sections of the cemetery serving the Shiloh congregation is well tended and in good repair – an indication that many descendants of these early settlers are still in the area. The earliest bricks have been shored and fortified for future generations.

In 1819, a law was passed which allowed churches to own property. In 1820, one-half acre was deeded to the Shiloh congregation for \$50. This property was originally purchased by Richard Crowson on February 3, 1809, and it was part of his 160 acres located on the northwest quarter of Section 24, Township 3, Range 1 East. Richard Crowson (1770-1826) came with his first wife Huldah Lindsey, and after her death, Crowson married Sarah Moore in Madison County.<sup>51</sup>

The congregation now known as Shiloh United Methodist Church held their services in a building on the southwest intersection of present-day Dug Hill Road and Ryland Pike. The property was known as "Shilow," (sometimes spelled "Shilo") and remains forever in trust as a meeting place for members of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of America. (Shiloh remained a "circuit charge" until 1953 when regular full-time services were approved.) They sold this property in 1815 to Nathan Green, Sr.<sup>52</sup>

Early ministers who served the circuit were James A. Gwinn, who founded six Madison County Methodist congregations, Jedadiah McMinn, John Phipps, Thomas Stillwell, David Goodner (1788-1848), Zachariah Witten (1791-1815), John McClure, Valentine Derry Barry (1794-1853), John Craig, Moses Ashworth (1799-1837), H. McPhail, James Farris, Ebenezer Hearn, Robert Paine, and William McMahan.<sup>53</sup>



This building served as the sanctuary for Shiloh Methodist Church. Later it became the Shiloh School until 1917 when the communities of Maysville, Brownsboro, and Ryland Pike combined to create one school, appropriately named Central High School. In the 1920s, the high school students started attending Madison County High School.



Near the northeast corner of present-day Shiloh Church are three old cemeteries that served as the final resting place for members of the Jordan, Steger, Ormond, and Kelly families. On the southwest corner, land was donated by Thomas Franklin Vann to bury slaves and former slaves. Near that is the Shiloh Cemetery and location of the church building used from 1820 to 1896.<sup>54</sup>

This historic cemetery reflects the hopes of the many early settlers who shaped the towns they lived in, as well as Madison County and the State of Alabama. Many of their descendants have remained and continue to contribute to this area's prosperity. They appreciate the toils of their ancestors, as they should, and give back the only way they can, by lovingly tending to their graves.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Leah Rawls Atkins and Dr. Harvey H. Jackson III, *Alabama, the History, Geography, Economics, and Civics of an American State* (Montgomery, Alabama: Crystal Clear Press, Inc., 2005), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 16, 23, 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> W. G. Brown, *History of Alabama, State History Series*, (New York and New Orleans: University Publishing Company, 1900), pp. 12-20.

<sup>6</sup> Virgil Carrington Jones, "True Tales of Old Madison County, (Alabama)," (Huntsville, Alabama: Johnson Historical Publication, 1992), p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas J. Taylor, *Early History of Madison County*, manuscript in possession of Douglas Taylor Family, Huntsville, Alabama, p. 143.

<sup>8</sup> Margaret Matthews Cowart, *Old Land Records of Madison County, Alabama (GLO Tractbook)*, (n.p.: 2005), p. 338.

<sup>9</sup> Mai Taylor, "Early Recollections of Madison County," *Huntsville Historical Review*, Issue 2, No. 2 (April 1972), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Ann Blomquist, *Taylors and Tates of the South*, (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1993), p. 124.

<sup>13</sup> James Record, *A Dream Come True, The Story of Madison County and Incidentally of Alabama and the United States*, Volume 1, (Huntsville, Alabama: John Hicklin Printing Company, 1970), pp. 39, 40.

<sup>14</sup> Mai Taylor, p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Website for Shiloh United Methodist Church: <http://www.shiloh.1808.com/>. researched and written by Teresa Harbin Cowles.

<sup>17</sup> Record, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> Mai Taylor, pp. 27-30.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 33.

<sup>20</sup> Ricky L. Sherrod, "Planters in the Making: The Brown Family's Alabama Years," unpublished manuscript.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, *The History of Madison County, Alabama*, A Manuscript Copy, prepared by the WPA, 1940, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Sherrod.

<sup>24</sup> [www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/acts\\_and\\_journals/annual\\_session\\_1820.html](http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/acts_and_journals/annual_session_1820.html): Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, p. 38

<sup>25</sup> Daniel S. Dupre, *Transforming the Cotton Frontier: Madison County, Alabama 1800-1840*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> Sherrod..

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Dupre, p. 56.

<sup>29</sup> Sherrod.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Website for Shiloh United Methodist Church: <http://www.shiloh1808.com/> (follow the prompts into the Shiloh Community link and Local Church link).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, pp. 38, 39.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, pp. 38, 39.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>36</sup> Tennessee Tributaries: [www.riversofalabama.org/Tennessee/TN\\_Tributaries.htm](http://www.riversofalabama.org/Tennessee/TN_Tributaries.htm)

<sup>37</sup> Cowart, p. 330.

<sup>38</sup> Levi Hinds' probate packet, Probate records, Huntsville-Madison County Library, Huntsville, Alabama.

<sup>39</sup> Hinds Family File, Huntsville-Madison County Library Heritage Room.

<sup>40</sup> Author's interview with descendant Tommy Gipson, August 2008.

<sup>41</sup> Marcius Willson, *American History: Comprising Historical Sketches of the Indian Tribes; a Description of American Antiquities, with an Inquiry into their Origin and the Origin of the Indian Tribes*, (Cincinnati: William H. Moore & Company, 1847), pp. 46, 47, 48, 50, 51.

<sup>42</sup> Ancestors of Jabe Fincher: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jabe0321/pafn15.htm>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Jordan family records held in the Jordan Family File, Heritage Room, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

<sup>46</sup> Cowart, p. 334.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.shiloh1808.com/>

<sup>48</sup> Jimmy Oliver Steger, Steger Family File, Heritage Room, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

<sup>49</sup> Kay Campbell, "Celebrating the Past, Area Churches Marking Historic Milestones," *Huntsville Times*, August 22, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.shiloh1808.com/>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

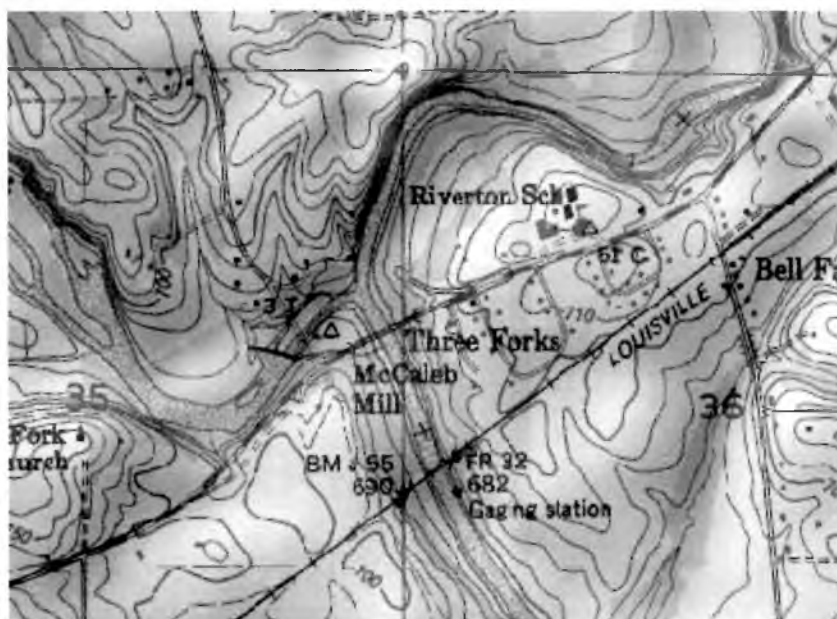
<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

## The Three Forks of Flint

DONNA DUNHAM

If a river and a land could reveal events now obscured or recall names erased by time, there would be no need to write history. In a timely season of inquiry, every available document, letter, book and manuscript is sought to bring a valley of dry bones to life. This year, a river and a land become metaphors for the lives of real people, their vision, their work, and their institutions.

In northeast Madison County, two streams of water converge and become the single, continuous flow of the Flint River. The name of that place, Three Forks of Flint, is greeted with both amusement and disbelief. The story of how two divergent currents became the erroneous Three Forks is now lost to memory. The river and the coveted land lying between and beyond the forks become a vehicle for retelling something of Madison County's early history.



Present-day map of the Three Forks of the Flint

Before the Flint was harnessed for wilderness enterprises, and before the land was tamed for subsistence and eventual prosperity, an aspiring people walked, rode, and pushed their way southward. The footpath that generally lay between the newly created Indian Boundary line and the Flint River widened with every step of human and beast. A fervent people camped along the Briar Fork and the Mountain Fork, and also along that stretch of the river from the Flint Bridge all the way down to Brownsboro. Hopeful people were there, imagining and creating their role as landowners before the government surveyor could set his transom and mark his chain.<sup>1</sup>

The 1809 public land sales in Nashville was an important step towards making a permanent settlement, but not all who camped around the Three Forks bought their land during that first year. Those who remained "squatters" in the Territory heightened the

sobering reality that the squatter path was not always the road to proprietorship or prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

Bennett Wood, Uriah Bass, and William Haughton understood the privations of a new land. They were savvy businessmen for their time. Unlike the squatters, they remained poised at the threshold of their established eastern settlements. They each understood that timing was everything and investment capital was necessary. These three men were the principal players, among several, in what became a lively competition to control important waterpower sites on the Flint River. They each came to the Three Forks with a similar vision of how to transform an untamed river into capital.

Bennett Wood was approximately fifty years old when he and his wife, Nancy, arrived in the Territory accompanied by their two young adult sons, James and John. They came from Rutherford County, Tennessee, but how soon they came for permanent settlement is not known. One indication, however, occurred in April of 1810, when the Flint River Baptist Church received Wood as a member of their congregation. In July, the same year, Wood appeared before Orphan's Court Justices William Dickson, Edward Ward, and John Withers in a different role. It was the *Reverend* Bennett Wood who petitioned the court for authority to solemnize the rights of matrimony in Madison County. His petition was granted after he produced the proper credentials showing his ordination and good standing with the Baptist Church.<sup>3</sup>

Early nineteenth century Baptist historian, Hosea Holcomb said, "Mr. B. Wood removed from York District, South Carolina, to Madison County, Alabama, at an early period, perhaps about 1810, and used to preach to the Indians." Holcomb also described Wood as "a good minister of the New Testament, a sound doctrinal preacher...kind, liberal, charitable to all."<sup>4</sup>

Wood's reputation for charity and kindness was irrelevant when he arrived in Nashville, Tennessee, August 9, 1809. The land sale had been in progress two days when he found himself among a group of cautiously optimistic buyers, some of whom could have been familiar faces. Among the anxious bidders were Levi Hinds, Deverux Jarrett, John Ridenaur, Levin Gray, Charles Kennedy, John Gibson, Thomas Bibb, Jesse Wilson, Magnus Teague, Reuben Stone, Robert Davis, Benjamin Busy, James Hewlett and the elusive Rudolph/Robert Boshart.<sup>5</sup>

Fifteen, or more, men were bidding for land in the Three Forks of Flint area. Of that number, six bidders (or one of their relatives) had previously made "application" in January to live on their specific parcels, and they were ready to finalize their plans. When the day was over, ten people encountered no competition and paid the minimum \$2 per acre. According to predetermined conditions of five percent down payment and liberal credit arrangements, they each walked away with a claim to one-quarter section of land.<sup>6</sup>

Four bidders faced opposition and perhaps had to re-evaluate their financial investment. Levin Gray was fortunate to pay only eleven cents more per acre than he had planned. Jesse Wilson's final bid on a tract, located 2 ½ miles south of the Three Forks, was \$4.40 per acre. If Benjamin Busy placed bids on the tract where he had lived as a "tenant at will" since January, someone else bought it. He bid and bought another quarter section some distance away, but like other squatters he later assigned it to another interested buyer. The situation was different for John Ridenaur who bid to own a potential waterpower site on the Briar Fork of the Flint. While others pondered the same

idea, they did not contest Ridenaur's final bid of \$4 per acre. Like Busy, however, he later assigned to still another buyer.<sup>7</sup>

One half of the August 9<sup>th</sup> purchasers of the Three Forks area paid the five percent down and may or may not have returned in forty days with the required twenty percent payment. Some later time, for reasons known only to them, they assigned their interest and claim to land they may have begun to improve. Some assignments were made as a result of financial necessity. Some buyers were restless and decided to take a chance on finding cheaper land. The very speculative nature of the situation caught people in a credit trap before they realized how far reaching the effects would be.<sup>8</sup>

Elder Bennett Wood was possibly the most ambitious contender of the Three Forks of Flint bidders. It appeared that he was determined to locate a sufficient waterpower site on the Flint River. Additionally, he needed the adjacent fertile land, not only to diversify, but also to serve as a deterrent to disputes over a possible flooding millpond. Wood's buying power surpassed them all. He bid, unopposed, on five quarter sections. Like his new neighbors, he paid his five percent down and took the friendly credit arrangements.<sup>9</sup>

One cannot determine with land records if and when Wood realized he might have overlooked more desirable places on the Flint to construct his mill. Clearly though, records indicate he actively pursued other land purchases. With the choice tracts along the water already taken, Wood took another approach. He sought out those willing to assign to him their interest or claim in their purchase for a negotiated consideration. Elder Wood was particularly interested in the tract just south of the Three Forks that was originally taken by John Ridenaur. The Briar Fork entered this section from the northwest and followed the north boundary for almost a half-mile before turning sharply northeast and joining the Mountain Fork. While the typography probably justified the value, Ridenaur was faced with payments and interest for land that sold for \$4 per acre. Wood readily accepted the terms of Ridenaur's assignment.<sup>10</sup>

Bordering the Ridenour parcel on the east was a quarter section originally purchased by John Gibson of Davidson County, Tennessee. Gibson bid \$2.52 an acre but later assigned his interest to Levi Hinds, who in turn assigned it to – Elder Wood! Adjoining the newly acquired Gibson tract on the south was another one purchased in September of 1809 by Magness Teague. Wood was interested in it as well.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to a common interest in the new Territory, Magness Teague was also of the Baptist faith; or at least he became persuaded after attending services in 1809. He presented himself to the Flint River Baptist Church for membership "by experience," that is, through a profession of faith in Christ followed by baptism. This event likely took place in the Flint River. The church received him into their fellowship at their Sabbath meeting in July of 1809. About a month later Teague and Wood were face to face in Nashville, but neither Wood, nor anyone else, bid against Teague. Some time later, however, the two men came to an agreement and Teague relinquished his interest, or equity, in his land to Wood.<sup>12</sup>

Nine months after Teague began his new spiritual walk with God and the Flint River Church, Elder Wood united with the congregation to be their pastor. By then, however, something had soured the relationship between the two men. Had Teague assured Wood of a good mill site on the Mountain Fork? Whether it was a problem with the assignment of land, or something of a more personal nature, Wood was offended. On

his first Sabbath as their pastor, following the “divine services,” the usual conference was called. Wood unleashed his feelings. The church clerk was discreet in the meager details as he revealed that Wood brought a complaint of “deception” against Magness Teague. Teague retaliated in kind and brought a complaint against Wood, though the minutes did not specify what it was. The church typically responded to such unpleasant matters by counseling, or “laboring” with the parties to resolve the difficulty. The issue between the two men was not resolved, and it lingered until August when Elder Wood was allowed to speak of his allegation in front of the church. When the church members took a vote, they declared Magness Teague “unfellowshipped” for deception and for disobeying the injunction of the church.<sup>13</sup>

Elder Wood continued buying land until he had nine tracts, eight of which lay parallel to each other. His land began at a point just below the convergence of the Briar Fork and Mountain Fork and extended south approximately two miles. It can be located in Madison County, south of Winchester Road, east of Homer Nance Road, and includes Mt. Carmel by the River.<sup>14</sup>

In a puzzling move, Wood abandoned one of his quarter sections that comprised the last pair on the south end. Perhaps it was his reputation for charity and kindness that allowed a neighbor and a deacon in the Flint River Church to take his assignment.<sup>15</sup>

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In Craven, North Carolina, Uriah Bass, another experienced businessman, had acquired all that he needed to be considered materially successful. He was born January 11, 1766, to Richard and Sarah McKinnie Bass, affluent plantation owners in Wayne County. Bass had an aptness for business affairs and profited as well as his father had. Through his connections with extended family and their occupations, he became knowledgeable of river commerce in North Carolina. His uncles owned and operated a watermill on Brook’s Spring and a ferry on the Neuse River as well as managing their own large land holdings.<sup>16</sup>

Uriah Bass was about thirty years old when he began to speculate in real estate. Wayne County deed records show his vast accumulation. He owned 1,000 acres in 1793. Six years later, when Sarah Green accepted his hand in marriage, he owned six other plantations. His generous father-in-law, Colonel Joseph Green, deeded to them a large tract of land in what is now Grainger County, Tennessee. Within six years, Bass acquired an additional 1100 acres in North Carolina.<sup>17</sup>

About 1813, Uriah Bass made his commitment to a future on the new western frontier. He came to Madison County seeking land with access to water. Bass found a suitable 160-acre tract on the Mountain Fork of the Flint. With his prior experience, he could have calculated the potential of the site to support a mill. If Bass knew in advance of the river and land development already in progress near this tract, he was not deterred. He had, after all, begun to sell some of his holdings in North Carolina and knew that currency could remove obstacles.<sup>18</sup>

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William Haughton was another representative of North Carolinian stock who came to the Three Forks. He was one of eight children born to Jonathan and Deborah Haughton, Sr. of Chowan County, North Carolina. Records there indicate that the Haughtons were a prosperous family. In addition to managing their land holdings and slaves, they were also active in the civil and religious affairs of their community.<sup>19</sup>

When Jonathan Haughton, Sr. died in 1817, his Last Will and Testament determined what portion of his estate each heir should receive. The distribution devised through his will inferred that William had already received most of his legacy at an earlier time. That would suggest that William's early allowance gave him an advantage commensurate with his ambitions in a new territory.<sup>20</sup>

The timing of Haughton's arrival in Madison County is conjecture, but one reliable event gives a clue. The second Sabbath in January of 1811, Haughton introduced himself to the congregation of Flint River Baptists and requested membership. He presented his "Letter of Dismission" from his church located at a previous residence. This was required evidence of his prior experience, baptism, and good standing in a church of like faith and order. It would have been unlikely for him to present such a letter had he not already moved from his prior residence.<sup>21</sup>

Since Haughton did not make any purchases at the land sales in Nashville, it is reasonable to surmise that he came to the Territory to investigate for himself what was available. And there it was – the same excellent waterpower site located on the Mountain Fork that had attracted other buyers.<sup>22</sup>

About 1½ miles upstream from the Three Forks, the southwest flow of the Mountain Fork made an abrupt, almost 90 degree turn eastward. The stream continued for almost a half mile before turning again sharply to the west. Near the last turn, the underlying river channel plummeted several feet creating a fall line. The combination of the turns and the fall significantly increased the velocity of the stream. It had all the physical elements of a good mill site and Haughton wanted it for himself.<sup>23</sup>

Haughton also realized that the Three Forks would be a desirable place to work and to prosper. The people in the surrounding area would need a gristmill to turn grain into the necessary staple food. Everywhere, there was timber to be cut and sawed. With capital, planning and a good labor force, the site would be a dual operation of sawmill, gristmill, and quite possibly a distillery. There were, however, two obstacles for Haughton to overcome. An inhabitant and a preacher with money were already there.<sup>24</sup>

Benjamin Hinds (Hines) was one lone squatter claiming the Mountain Fork prize when Thomas Freeman came along to take a census in the winter of 1809. Perhaps like other squatters, he was making improvements to the site. Freeman returned a month later to receive Hinds' application to legitimize his squatter status and live peacefully on the land. Freeman's earlier census indicated that there were no other people enumerated in the Hinds household. His nearest relatives were squatting about 2½ miles southeast from him, claiming their own 320 acres of land. Before William Haughton could have a chance to purchase the prized quarter section that was already claimed, he would have to convince Benjamin Hinds to sell out or leave.<sup>25</sup>

On the third day of the land sales in August of 1809, Levi Hinds stood among the participants. He knew his status as a legitimate squatter would soon expire when his chosen 320 acres came up for auction. On this day, however, the land office "crier" presented the valuable Mountain Forks parcel for consideration. Benjamin Hinds had paid the nine shillings for application to reside there, but it was Levi Hinds who entered the bidding. His minimum bid was met with counter offers; however, he remained a competitor as the price went higher. If Elder Wood, who was also seeking a mill site, entered the contest at all, he lost the bid. After paying the down payment and accepting the credit terms, Levi Hinds walked away with the prize at \$3.05 per acre.<sup>26</sup>

Did Levi Hinds make the Flint River purchase on behalf of Benjamin and plan to assign it to him later? Or, was he a calculating speculator who knew he could profit by selling his interest and equity to a more serious capitalist? Whatever his intentions, he did not assign the tract to Benjamin Hinds. Instead, he found another buyer ready and willing to assume the risk of establishing a business on the river. In 1812, or possibly earlier, there was a mill in operation on the Mountain Fork. It went by the name of "Horton's Mill." William Haughton obtained the Hinds' assignment, made the payments, and received his official land patent on November 14, 1814.<sup>27</sup>

Were it not for an Act of the Territorial Legislature, Haughton's name might never have been remembered as being associated with Flint River commerce. Soon after his investment, his vision of a profitable and industrious community became a reality. The population in the area of the Three Forks settlement reached such proportions that "Horton's Mill on the Flint" was named the second polling place in Madison County in December of 1812.<sup>28</sup>

While the Mountain Fork mill site eluded Elder Wood, he and his sons, James W. and John, made improvements to their land and built a mill downstream from the Three Forks. The mill's location is unknown now, but at that time, its position would have depended on the topography of the river and the land to produce a sufficient water power site. The Flint River flowed across Wood's eastern tracts into Rudolph Boshart's property and re-entered Wood's land further south. Brief acknowledgement of the mill in historical writings places it further south than Boshart's property. Boshart erected his own grain mill along the short stretch of the river that crossed his land. (It was Boshart's mill location that eventually came into the hands of William Haughton's brother, Richard. After two decades and several mill owners and operators, the last mill in operation there was the Bell Factory Cotton Mill.)<sup>29</sup>

**To Cotton Planters.**  
**T**HE subscriber wishes to purchase One Thousand bales of good Cotton, to be delivered as early as possible, for which a liberal price will be given in Cash on delivery.  
**LEROY POPP.**  
*Huntsville, Nov. 13. 1819*

From the *Alabama Republican*, December 15, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

Elder Wood continued to farm and to carry out his obligations to his congregation. On one occasion in 1814, William Haughton, and another member, Brother Hellums, were cited by the church for neglecting their attendance of divine services. Reverend Wood was chosen to deliver the injunction to the busy mill owner. Time passed and Haughton was either irregular in attendance or did not attend at all. By February of



1815, the faithful had enough of his indolence and excluded him from fellowship. However, the membership roll indicated that in later years he repented and returned to the church.<sup>30</sup>

There were times when the church did not have jurisdiction to resolve problems between settlers, especially if it involved crimes against the peace and dignity of the Territory. One such case involved James Lay who was indicted for stealing William Haughton's black mare "heavy with fold" and valued at fifty dollars. A county court jury found Lay guilty and unleashed the full penalty of the law. He was ordered to pay \$100 fine, followed by a branding with the letter 'T' on his right hand. In cold November, Lay was led to the public whipping post and received 39 lashes on his bare back. Mr. Lay then went to jail for the remainder of the winter to consider his deed.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, Bennett Wood's occupations expanded beyond planter and preacher to politician when he was appointed county treasurer in 1812. Years before selling his plantation and moving to Lawrence County, Alabama, he was credited with building the first bridge over the Flint River, very near the mouth of the Briar Fork. "The bridge was insured for many years by the builder, who not only contracted to construct it, but gave bond to keep it in good repair for that period of time at his own expense." Also, Commissioner's Court Minutes made passing reference to Wood's Ford, a little known Flint River crossing situated further down from the later "Flint Bridge."<sup>32</sup>

The Three Forks of Flint settlement was well populated when Uriah Bass arrived in the Territory. Four years had passed since the first land sales and the resulting development was swiftly changing the economic, social, and political climate. A seat of county government was formed in Huntsville. The Three Forks had its own polling place. More fledgling businesses were starting. More finished goods, machinery, and slaves were coming into the valley overland and by water. More cotton went south to New Orleans. The Federal Land Office was relocated from Nashville to Huntsville to handle the government's bureaucratic overload.<sup>33</sup>

In North Carolina, the wealthy Uriah Bass began preparations to move his family to Madison County by selling a large segment of his land holdings. In 1813, he sold two large tracts and a plantation in Wayne County. His investments of time, money and energy had greatly appreciated the value of his sale. He disposed of 985 acres north of the Neuse River for an estimated \$8500. He had quite a handsome purse to start again on the new frontier with a wife and ten young children!<sup>34</sup>

By November the same year, Bass was equally busy in the Huntsville Land Office reinvesting his capital. He lost no time locating land in the Three Forks vicinity and took four quarter sections at the minimum bid. He followed those in the Spring with three more quarter sections. His new seven tracts provided him with ample space and fertile soil for cotton production, but he did not have access to the river. To further solidify his single tracts into 320 and 480 acre farms, he began negotiation with four men who could put him in a better position. Charles Kennedy, Garland Ellington, Deverux Jarret, and Elisha F. King each held their own original claim to a quarter section near the checkerboard arrangement of Bass's land. For unspecified considerations, the four men released their assignment to Bass.<sup>35</sup>

For all his effort and money, Uriah Bass had only one piece of property that interfaced with the river. If the newly acquired Kennedy tract on the Mountain Fork gave him hope for a mill, it was soon diminished. Precious little of the stream flowed across

his northwest corner. William Haughton, whose land bounded Bass on the west, was the primary beneficiary of the waterpower. Haughton had by this time, constructed his mill and it was in operation. More importantly, Haughton had built his millrace further upstream and was diverting some the water before it reached the Bass boundary line. Bass was not dissuaded, there were, after all, Three Forks.<sup>36</sup>

**Mill Stones &c.**

The subscriber will commence immediately to cut mill and hand stones a few miles above Ditt's landing, on the south side of the river. From the place there is convenient land and water carriage, the grit is of a superior quality, either for corn or wheat. From a long experience the subscriber flatters himself he will give general satisfaction and will either deliver them at the quarry or any place on the river.—Written or verbal orders will be punctually attended to.

If the grit is not good the subscriber will cut again gratis.

**JAMES KAY.**

Jan 2, 1819 16—

From the *Alabama Republican*, dated June 9, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

Uriah Bass turned again to Charles Kennedy, a settler from Pendleton County, South Carolina. Kennedy had made his final payment and obtained a land patent to a 160-acre tract on the Briar Fork in 1813. If he had plans for river improvements before Bass approached him with an offer, he obviously put them aside. It was a deal made in heaven – Kennedy had the land, Bass had the money. Bass offered him \$4000 for a tract that Kennedy had purchased from the government for \$2 per acre in 1809. Kennedy took the money and secured for himself some good Madison County soil further away from Bass and the river.<sup>37</sup>

On the south boundary of the Bass Briar Fork trophy was Elder Bennett Wood's northern tract. Soon after the Kennedy/Bass deed was made, Bass offered Wood \$500 for eighty acres of his section. Perhaps it was Wood's reputation for charity and kindness that compelled him to allow Bass to have it so cheaply!<sup>38</sup>

Uriah Bass built his mill on the course of the Briar Fork, a respectable distance from William Haughton's on the Mountain Fork. By 1816 he had formed a partnership and established a mercantile business. The mill and the business were in operation a few years when tragedy struck. Bass became desperately ill and died in 1819.<sup>39</sup>

About a month before his death, Bass had devised a carefully worded will providing his young family every opportunity for continued success. He gave direction

concerning lands yet to be sold in his old settlement. He apportioned his land and slaves to his wife, Sarah, and the children. He directed that each of his sons and daughters have a “classical” education. He gave every detail of his wishes, down to the last pound of pork.<sup>40</sup>

Uriah Bass, the man who brought his good name, as well as his experience and wealth to the Three Forks, had fully immersed himself in frontier commerce. If he had lived longer, his energy and work might have influenced the growth of a more permanent village. Today no one remembers his name. With some difficulty, however, one can find his final resting place about ½ mile from his prize on the Briar Fork – under a pigsty.<sup>41</sup>

## **Families Clustered in the Three Forks Settlement**

Very few women received a government land title in early Madison County. Like the men, however, Hannah Frost’s interest in 160 acres of land was confirmed and government financed. By the time her last payment was made and the final certificate was issued, Hannah was no longer on the Three Forks landscape. A name on a page and a legal description of property is the beginning of her story.<sup>42</sup>

The Frost family came from Lee County, Virginia to Tennessee in the 1790s and settled on unclaimed lands on the edge of the western frontier. In Anderson County, Thomas Frost, Jr. and his father purchased a 640-acre tract of land. In a verbal agreement, Thomas Jr. and Hannah Frost claimed 107 acres of the land, even though they decided to move to Rutherford County, Tennessee.<sup>43</sup>

Thomas died in Rutherford County leaving Hannah with several young children. Hannah, Joseph Frost, and Benjamin Wilson were appointed administrators of his estate. Among his inventoried possessions, they recorded the farm animals and household furniture typical of self-sufficient families in a remote and less traveled area. Sadly though, Thomas had not obtained a deed to his shared acreage in Anderson County. Subsequently, it was attached to his father’s estate until the 1830s. With or without assets from her husband’s estate, Hannah soon recognized an opportunity to leave the Frost family and Tennessee.<sup>44</sup>

Some time later in the Mississippi Territory, Thomas Freeman, surveyor, and the recently appointed census taker, found Benjamin Wilson with a large family and two slaves squatting near what is now the Ryland community. Wilson indicated to Freeman that he intended to bid on his particular 320 acres when the land sales opened in Nashville.<sup>45</sup>

True to his word, Wilson was there on the fourth day of the land sales. He came to bid against anyone interested in his claim. He faced a volley of competition as the minimum bid was soon forgotten. When the land office crier called for \$6.30 per acre, Benjamin Wilson’s acknowledgment won him his squatter land. However, as time went by and his circumstances changed, Benjamin assigned his highly contested quarter section to LeRoy Pope.<sup>46</sup>

The Wilson family’s attempt to buy land was then vested in the other brother. Jesse Wilson was a trailblazing, pioneering farmer with an eye on the horizon and his purse. His one bent towards speculation in Madison County was a quarter section just north of the one his brother bought and then lost to LeRoy Pope. This particular tract interfaced with the Flint River.<sup>47</sup>

Facing some competition, Jesse Wilson entered the final bid at \$4.40 per acre. The following day, however, he easily bought one of the Wilson squatter tracts for \$2 per acre. Wilson's subsequent late summer trip to Nashville produced an equal amount of land within the same section Benjamin had originally claimed. Before all the payments were made and certificates were issued, Jesse assigned one of the squatter quarter sections to Benjamin Wilson.<sup>48</sup>

Hannah Frost was in Madison County by 1810 as evidenced by the Madison County Tax List. She owned no land at that time, but was assessed with one slave. One year later she had taken an assignment for 160 acres from Richard Crowson who had purchased it in December of 1809. Crowson had other land nearby but he failed to make his timely payments and it reverted back to the government. His assignment to Mrs. Frost may have been a necessity to repurchase his reverted property, which he did some time later. Crowson's loss was Hannah's gain. Hannah was then in close company with her brothers, Jesse and Benjamin Wilson, whose combined three tracts joined hers on a southeast corner stake. It was all in the family.<sup>49</sup>

By August of 1814, the Creek Indians were forced to give up most of their lands by the Treaty of Fort Jackson. "Between 1814 and 1820, three fourths of the state was opened up to white settlement."<sup>50</sup>

October of 1814, Jesse Wilson and his wife, Elizabeth, deeded to his brother, Benjamin, 8½ acres of their squatter tract. A few days later, they sold more land, including the river tract, to LeRoy Pope for \$4500. The Wilsons were preparing to move farther south and start again. The following summer LeRoy Pope fattened the purse of Benjamin and Hannah Wilson with \$2300 when they deeded to him their quarter section. The 8½ acres were left unaccounted. Hannah Frost's land title was lost in the shuffle of real estate deals, somehow conveyed without the benefit of filing deeds.<sup>51</sup>

Tethered to the Frost-Wilson family through matrimony, land deals, and pioneer experiences in their old settlements were other collateral connections in the Three Forks area. Hannah, Jesse, and Benjamin were the youngest of seven Wilson children. Their older sister, Elizabeth, married Jehu Lawler and they resided nearby in the Maysville settlement. Another sister, Nancy Ann, married John Baker after arriving in Madison County in 1811. When John Baker died in 1815, Widow Baker joined her brothers and Hannah in their move south.<sup>52</sup>

Prior to coming to the Territory, Benjamin Wilson had married Hannah Harless in Anderson County, Tennessee in 1801. She was a daughter of Revolutionary War veteran Henry Harless, Sr. When the Wilsons sold their land in the Tennessee settlement, Harless followed suit and sold approximately 600 acres by 1811. Henry resided on a plantation in Madison County when he died in 1815. He was survived by his wife, Elizabeth, and five sons: David, Henry, Jr., John, Daniel, and Philip. There were also six daughters: Eliza, Mary Riddenour, Susannah Middleton, Hannah Wilson, Nancy Tilmon, and Sarah Wall. Most of his sons-in-law connected the Harless family laterally to pioneer families in Anderson County.<sup>53</sup>

Benjamin and Jesse Wilson's brother-in-law, Henry Harless, Jr. and his wife Margaret (Bazore), occupied the land that touched both Wilson tracts. (Nearby were two Baysore squatters each claiming 320 acres of land.) A few years after the Wilsons moved, Henry, Jr. and Margaret sold their land and followed them to Shelby County, Alabama. Henry, Jr.'s brother, David, entered lands that now lie between Bell Factory Road and

Saint Clair Lane. He died in 1815 about the same time as his father, Henry, Senior. Harless willed property to his unnamed wife and these children: Charity, Henry, Adam, William, Charles, Hiram, and Elizabeth.<sup>54</sup>

On the other side of the family tree, Hannah Frost's sister-in-law, Phebe Frost, married Israel Standifer, and they also settled in the Territory and reared a family on the west side of present day Highway 431 North (near Steger's Curve).<sup>55</sup>

The story of Hannah and her brothers and sisters, and the entourage that followed them into Madison County, and then on to Shelby County, Alabama, did not end at the Flint River. In 1818, Jesse Wilson found himself representing Shelby County in the House of Representatives of the Alabama Territory. In the distinguished company of Clement C. Clay, James W. Walker, and Samuel Walker, all of Madison County, Representative Wilson began to articulate laws to govern a people. By his legislative decisions there, his influence was felt as far away as the Three Forks of Flint.<sup>56</sup>

On a Thursday in January 1811, the Federal Land Office in Nashville opened for business as it had for 1½ years. On this particular day America M. Allison appeared among the bidders. At the appropriate time, Allison offered a bid of \$2 per acre on a tract north of the Winchester Road, lying now between Bradford Lane and Pleasant Hills subdivision. There was no competition. Allison paid the \$16 down payment and, presumably, went to Madison County to occupy the land. No documentation yet found can place Allison in Madison County. The person (he or she), America M. Allison, became an ephemeral silhouette on the landscape. The Tax Lists for 1810, and forward, in Madison County do not reflect a person of such a name owning property.<sup>57</sup>

The story continued though, with a baby girl whose name was the embodiment of political freedom, religious liberty and economic possibility. Her father was an Irish immigrant born in Londonderry County about 1769. He landed in the Port of New Castle, Delaware, in 1797. The Irishman migrated southward with the tide of land-seekers and eventually to Madison County. The baby's young mother came from Henry County, Virginia, to the Mississippi Territory and met the Irishman. They were married in Madison County in 1810. About a year after the newlyweds settled near the Three Forks of Flint, America was born!<sup>58</sup>

John and Duanna (Hewlett) Allison reared baby America and her three sisters, Harriet, Parmelia, and Emily, in a dwelling off the north side of Winchester Road. In 1811, John Allison served the community as an appointed constable and also as an overseer of the road. In addition to his civic duties, he and Duanna were devout Presbyterians who designated part of their land as a campground. They supported the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church with financial gifts and gave to the Flint River Total Abstinence Society.<sup>59</sup>

America grew up and married Thomas Lyle (Lile), an ambitious man, whose ethics and energy afforded them considerable wealth in the plantation economy. Thomas and America Lyle were affluent and respected citizens of Morgan County, Alabama.<sup>60</sup>

A curiously interesting circumstance played out in legal records between the Lyles and the Allison, and it has remained a mystery. About one year after the Lyles were married, they deeded to America's father the very same quarter section of land sold to America M. Allison in 1811. Available records allow no explanation of how they came into possession of America's birthplace, and why they deeded it to John Allison for \$1500.<sup>61</sup>

It would be disingenuous to suggest that the Lyles had acted improperly towards the Allison. When John Allison devised his will, he in no circumstance betrayed any misgivings about his daughter, America, or her family. To the contrary, he affirmed her as an equal in the division of his property. However, when Allison died, the administration of his estate was difficult. The slaves were sold first, and then the personal property and real estate to cover his debt and the bequests. Duanna, his widow, was forced to reclaim many of her household furnishings in the estate sale. Finally, when the land was auctioned, Duanna was the highest bidder. For a second time, she bought her home and the surrounding land for \$700.<sup>62</sup>

Mrs. Allison lived to a great age of 90 years. During her last decade, she deeded all of her land to her granddaughter and namesake, Duanna Trewwhitt, while retaining use of her home and personal property. She made a will disposing the remainder of her estate through which the matriarch had her last say: "I make this condition in this my last Will and Testament, that my grandchildren treat me with that love and respect that is due from grandchildren, to a grandparent, during my lifetime. Those failing to do so to have no part of my estate, but what I have herein given to them, shall go equally to those of my grandchildren who are dutiful to the last." No Lyles were mentioned.<sup>63</sup>

Today, the renovated Allison home is located a short distance north of Trailwood Drive on the left side, north bound, of Winchester Road. Unknown to passersby, the Allisons are buried in a small adjacent graveyard – on the same land they purchased at least twice. Perhaps America M. Allison lies there as well.<sup>64</sup>

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Approximately two miles south of the Allison plantation, between present day Naugher Road and Shields Road, was another family with interesting connections. Robert and Joanna Davis originally settled on 320 acres of land in that locality with intentions to purchase it in Nashville. It was a familiar scenario involving families who worked in tandem to settle, to buy land and assign to each other. Robert Davis did not keep any of the land for which he made commitments. Sometime after his 1809 and 1810 purchases, he assigned one quarter section to a minister and another one to Joanna's brother.<sup>65</sup>

Reverend Andrew K. Davis was a Presbyterian minister who had married Patsy Hewlett of Henry County, Virginia. They followed Robert and Joanna to Madison County and established their family on land where Robert had previously applied for permission to settle. Reverend Davis was one of the earliest Presbyterian leaders in the Mississippi Territory. Madison County court records indicated that he was in the county about the same time as his better known contemporary, Reverend John Allan of Huntsville.

Among the many marriage ceremonies that he officiated, Davis heard the vows of Mr. Alexander Erskine to Miss Susan C. Russel, thus, consolidating two prominent families and their fortunes. More notably in the Three Forks of Flint area, he conducted the marriage of Miss America M. Allison to Mr. Thomas Lyle.<sup>66</sup>

Beyond their own plantation experiences, the Allison plantation held a special connection to both Robert and Andrew Davis. The three families were united in friendship and kinship. Robert's wife, Joanna; Andrew's wife, Patsy (Martha); and John Allison's wife, Duanna, were three of five Hewlett sisters. The Hewlett name was well represented in Madison County. The sisters had four Hewlett brothers throughout the

settlements. John W., Thomas, William, and Augustine Hewlett and their families were in Madison County at an early time.<sup>67</sup>

For Reverend Andrew Davis, the Allison plantation held an important spiritual connection. No doubt the Allisons' own convictions led them to designate a portion of their land as a Presbyterian campground. In the beautiful woods near a natural spring, Reverend Davis would have carried out his commission to bring light and hope to the faithful who worshipped there. He was described as an entertaining preacher who could instruct his congregation and illustrate Bible truths concisely. Davis was also a proficient Greek and Hebrew scholar who brought a touch of classical learning to the Three Forks of Flint.<sup>68</sup>

Reverend Davis died suddenly at the age of fifty-two. His gravesite has been lost to the passing of time and memory. There remains today, however, what could be an unusual legacy to Madison County. One needs only the county map to see the tracks and influence of earlier inhabitants. In 1815 Davis sold 21 acres of the south part of his quarter section, creating zig-zagging lines to mark the new boundary. Over time, the boundary line became a footpath. And then, a footpath became a minor thoroughfare between Naugher Road and Aurora Road. One can walk or drive Voekel Road, a path that a pioneer minister traveled. Imagine the ways that Madison County became a more easily traveled place because of Rev. Andrew Davis and his legacy.<sup>69</sup>

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Among the lesser-known settlers of the Three Forks of Flint was a bachelor from New York named Stephen Pond. Mr. Pond bought public land adjoining Reverend Davis's north side and also took an assignment of land from Amos Eliot several miles south. While Pond was settling into the community life of the Three Forks, he became interested in a woman fixed in a more comfortable setting. He either found love or better living arrangements. (There is more evidence of the latter than the former.) Naomi (Naomi) Carlisle, while already established, may have found some measure of security, as well as affection, in Mr. Pond. They were married in early August of 1813.<sup>70</sup>

As they began their life together, Stephen Pond set about putting their combined assets to full capacity. They each owned land, but Naomi held possession of ten slaves, two of which were skilled blacksmiths complete with tools. Additionally, she had farm implements, a wagon with gears, several mares, and a horse. Perhaps the prize of her plantation was the ample supply of pork. When Stephen and Naomi married, she had 111 head of hogs. Pork was as basic to the pioneer diet as cornmeal. In the vernacular of the common man, a good table of cornbread and fatback could stave off many a cold, hungry night.<sup>71</sup>

Life appeared to be good for the Ponds. In 1816 Stephen purchased a Huntsville town lot from LeRoy Pope located at the corner of Gallatin and Holmes Streets. He was a good citizen. When summoned to serve on the county court jury, he did so. He paid his taxes. As time passed, however, Pond became entangled in financial and legal affairs of his own making, and he suffered as lawsuits were brought against him in Circuit Court. Naomi and Stephen began to experience some unhappiness in their marriage until it became clear to both that they should live separately.<sup>72</sup>

Stephen Pond went to Mr. John Sprowl, a noted entrepreneur in Brownsboro. With Sprowl's approval, Stephen arranged for a deed of trust to be created. He placed most of the possessions that Naomi had brought to their marriage in trust with Sprowl

acting as trustee. During their separation, Sprowl would manage the assets for her benefit until other arrangements could be affected.<sup>73</sup>

The doomed marriage was possibly the result of inefficient business management or the wrong kind of love. When Stephen married Naomi, she was the widow of the very recently deceased Lawrence Carlisle. The Orphan's Court had made her administratrix over her late husband's estate in May of 1813. The court also appointed Rev. Andrew Davis, Rev. Bennett Wood, and Francis E. Harris appraisers of the Carlisle estate. They completed their inventory of all property in July, and Naomi and Stephen were married a month later. Soon after their marriage, Pond took over the administration of the Carlisle estate. After the separation became known, the Orphan's Court revoked his letters of administration saying, "that a part of the property of said estate is misapplied and a part thereby wasted." The court then appointed Mr. William Rountree, a highly respected and well-known gentleman of the Maysville-Ryland settlement, to administer the estate.<sup>74</sup>

Divorce proceedings were initiated in the local Chancery Court; however, it took, as required then, an act of the legislature to order the final decree. In 1825, Naomi Pond was successful in having her Bill of Divorce from Stephen approved in the Alabama House of Representatives. The legislative proceedings revealed one other surprising development during that same session. William Rountree, the court-appointed administrator working closely with the Carlisle estate, obtained approval for his own divorce from his wife, Sally.<sup>75</sup>

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Imagine a name that summons the essence of the Mayflower experience and the romance of Longfellow's prose. Alden Byram, and his brothers and sisters, descended from a family name now indelible in American history. The Pilgrim romance of John Alden of Essex, England, and Priscilla Mullens, a Huguenot from Holland, is familiar to young and old alike.<sup>76</sup>

The Byrams, like the Aldens, claimed Plymouth County, Massachusetts, as their first roots in America. They were people of strong convictions whose migration patterns reflected a greater sense of consciousness. When the churches in Bridgewater were, in their opinion, "becoming lax," they moved to Mendham, New Jersey.<sup>77</sup>

A generation later, Alden and his brother, Samuel, were born in Mendham. Alden took his name (which means "old friend") from his grandmother, Abigail Alden Byram. She was the great, great, great, granddaughter of John and Priscilla Alden. Like their ancestors, Alden's and Samuel's life experiences translated into a great adventure. Their parents, Ebenezer and Lydia Gueron Byram, migrated far south and uprooted the family from their closest relatives, familiar occupations, and their faith family. They settled at Beaver Creek in what is now Knox County, Tennessee. Several other children were born to the Byram family in Tennessee: Huldah, Elizabeth, Sarah, Ebenezer IV, and Levi.<sup>78</sup>

The Byram family met the challenges of frontier life with determination and courage, and reshaped their belief system as well. Ebenezer and Lydia were model citizens, patriots, and Baptists. Over time, they became wealthy landowners with slaves.<sup>79</sup>

Before Ebenezer Byram and several of his adult children moved to Madison County, important family alliances were made in Tennessee. His daughter Huldah married Levi Hinds in 1787. Alden married Elizabeth Horner in 1788. And later in 1803, Ebenezer IV, married Sarah Hinds, a sister of Levi. The combined children of the three



siblings kept the Byram and Hinds names on the western landscape for many years. Huldah's and Ebenezer's children were double first cousins.<sup>80</sup>

Alden Byram was in his early forties when he brought his family to the Territory. They were enumerated by Thomas Freeman in the squatter census of 1809. In addition to Alden and his wife Elizabeth, the designation of three boys and four girls under the age of twenty-one seemed to agree with Byram genealogy.<sup>81</sup>

Another clue that the Byrams had arrived at an even earlier time was that their strong religious conviction had led them to a people of the Baptist faith. The only congregation of Baptists in the Territory before 1809 was the Flint River Church. It was organized three months earlier in October of 1808. The minutes of the church's activity does not record the constituting members. However, the clerk left a wonderful account of the many subsequent members who united with them. Alden Byram's name was on the membership list without date. He was an implied constituting member, and therefore, was in the Territory sometime earlier than October of 1808. The church minutes also gave some insight on how soon the Byrams were in settled living arrangements: "October, 1809. Friday before the Second Saturday, the church met for divine services at Brother Alden Byrams." One additional and more practical reason for having settled in an accommodating environment was the birth of their ninth child, Lewis Byram, in July of 1809.<sup>82</sup>

While settlers were encouraged earlier that year to register and make application to remain on the land as "tenants at will," Alden's name did not appear on Freeman's list of 282 families. However, as Freeman explained in his letter to Washington, D.C., there were about 30 more individuals who had applied but for whom no permission had yet been granted. Alden Byrams apparently had not paid the required nine shillings.<sup>83</sup>

Levi Byram had paid his nine shillings and applied for a 160-acre tract on the south perimeter of the Three Forks of Flint area. He and his family were legal squatters. By August, though, the demographics had changed. Three days into the land sales at Nashville, Reuben Stone and Elder Bennett Wood each bought 160-acre tracts on or near Levi's claim. By December, James Douglass of Sumner County, Tennessee, purchased the remaining 320 acres in that particular section. Levi relinquished whatever interest he had in his squatter claim and bought land closer to his brothers Samuel and Ebenezer IV, about half-way between Moontown and Gurley.<sup>84</sup>

Where were Alden Byram and his family and slaves? In an unexpected turn of events, they remained on Levi's original squatter tract. Alden, the ever-devoted Baptist servant, found himself in the good graces of Elder Bennett Wood!<sup>85</sup>

Wood had extensive land to clear and cultivate as well as a waterpower site to develop and to operate. His two young adult sons and their wives either lived with him, or they occupied dwellings nearby and worked for him. In 1810, he had 21 slaves to labor in his fields and to build his houses. Perhaps Wood decided that he needed more workers or less land. Sometime between August of 1809 and October of 1814, Wood and Byram worked out an arrangement between themselves that either involved money, other considerations, or both. Byram took assignment from Wood for 160 acres and made the final payment in 1814 – just in time for their tenth baby!<sup>86</sup>

The Flint River entered Byram's land on the northeast corner and flowed diagonally across it, dividing the quarter section into unequal east – west parcels. The topography made it impractical, if not impossible, for cultivating the land as one farm.

Alden and his family developed the larger eastern portion making it their home. Four months after taking title to their land, Alden and Elizabeth deeded the western parcel, across the river, to Bennett Wood for \$100.<sup>87</sup>

The Byrams lived in Madison County several years and experienced their share of the joy and tragedy of life inherent to the human condition. Their oldest child, Miriam, married John Ruchenbacker in 1810. She died in 1813, sometime following the birth of her second child. Three years later, their eldest son Silas married Martha Blythe and started his own family. One month following the happy occasion, another married daughter, Lydia Hill, passed away.<sup>88</sup>

Alden Byram continued to work in his own field and to labor in the Lord's vineyard. He requested a "letter of recommendation" from Flint River Church, which indicated he wanted to try preaching the Gospel himself. He was appointed a deacon in his church in 1812. Several entries in the church record showed his strict doctrinal convictions. On several occasions he accompanied the ecclesiastical, hair-splitting Elder Wood on missions to restore sinners to righteousness. Finally, in summer of 1817, the Flint River Church record spoke the last time of its loyal servant. "Brother Alden Byram made application for dismissal and it was granted."<sup>89</sup>

Six months later, Alden signed a deed to his brother, Ebenezer, for \$1500. Ebenezer took possession of Alden's home and the remaining eastern parcel of land. A signature noticeably missing from the deed was Elizabeth Byram. It would have indicated that she was deeding away her dower rights to her husband's land. There was no further evidence of her whereabouts in Madison County.<sup>90</sup>

The Byram's journey, from Plymouth, Massachusetts, to the Three Forks of the Flint, embodied the best of America's strength and spirit. Whatever hopes and dreams Alden and Elizabeth may have had for their future could have been vested in their tenth and last child, Cavalier H. Byram – the perfect continuation of an historic and romantic legacy.<sup>91</sup>

Approximately 1½ miles northeast of the Three Forks, the Lollar (Lawler) Creek enters the Mountain Fork of the Flint River. The land north of the creek to present day Buckhead Run was occupied in 1809 by a settler named Daniel Bayless. Mr. Bayless was not compelled, as some were, to buy his land as soon as it was available. But rather, he waited until summer of 1810, and traveled to Nashville to make his purchase. He owned the land until 1812 and then assigned it to another settler named Spriggs.<sup>92</sup>

Thomas Spriggs was an unmarried yeoman farmer who soon found a young woman with whom he could share life, work and his modest farm. It is not known how, when, or with whom "Syndirella Lynch" came to the Territory, but on June 30, 1813, Thomas went to Huntsville to obtain a license to marry her. In less than a month after their wedding, Thomas returned to Huntsville and went to the land office. Spriggs bought the northern adjoining quarter section and doubled his acreage.<sup>93</sup>

The Spriggs began their life together near the east side of the Flint River. They planted crops and tended to their stock of a few cows and hogs. Thomas was also a beekeeper. Life was sweet for Thomas and Syndirella and sweeter still when their baby son, Milton, was born in 1814. However, by harvest time of 1815, Thomas Spriggs had died. The young widow was barely twenty-six years old, had a one-year old child, and a 320-acre farm. Winter was coming and one could only speculate how a woman could cope with seemingly overwhelming circumstances.<sup>94</sup>

Fortunately for Syndirella, there were good neighbors who guided her through the legalities of widowhood. Some helped her secure bond to administer her late husband's estate herself. John Bayless, Stephen Smith, Joseph Mason, John Rogers and John Wood were appointed to inventory the personal property and prepare for the estate sale. Also, the Orphan's Court allowed Mrs. Spriggs some measure of freedom to dispose of the perishable property.<sup>95</sup>

On Friday, January 12, 1816, the young widow bought from the estate three cows, two calves, some hogs, a horse and bridle, and a crib of corn. In addition to the stock, she purchased a shovel plow, axe, hoe, and an iron wedge to continue some means of crude cultivation. Syndirella bid for two beds and bedclothes, as well as other household furnishings. Like many settlers, her only kitchen appliances were a Dutch oven and a skillet. She had three chairs, a chest, two baskets, a flat iron, and a frontier necessity – the loom. The sum of her worldly goods was exposed for the community to see.<sup>96</sup>

Syndirella Spriggs kept the farm, paid the taxes, and somehow provided for herself and her son. Nearby, there were other neighbors who had survived war, want and loss, and they understood her grief. Major Daniel Wright and Col. Williams Wright and their families were there. Major Wright's daughter and son-in-law, Betsy and Thomas McCrary, and their family were close by as well. Thomas Couch, Richard Griffin, William Wells, and a possible in-law named Ezekiel Spriggs, were also aware, if not already involved, in her circumstances. And, there was another settler, James Bell, who also began to notice the young widow.<sup>97</sup>

The road from Winchester, Tennessee was a major thoroughfare that entered James Bell's land on his north boundary. It was near that point that a lesser trail diverted from the Winchester Road in an eastward direction for a short distance, until it crossed the Old Deposit Road. The trail continued through the hills and divided again. One trail led to the east side of Berry Mountain and the other divided again and threaded its way deeper into Hurricane Valley.<sup>98</sup>

The frequent movement of people, ox-carts, wagons and droves of animals across the intersection of Winchester Road and the diverging trail may have proven disconcerting for some. The property changed hands several times. Uriah Bass's son-in-law, Dr. William B. Green, had taken assignment for the land from the original owner, James D. Walker. When Green failed to make payment on the land, it reverted back to the government. Then, John Bunch, a tavern keeper in Huntsville, bought the property. Finally, it came into the possession of James Bell. His quarter section lay diagonally southeast of Mrs. Spriggs's land and joined her property on a corner stake.<sup>99</sup>

The circumstantial evidence derived from probate estate files and cemetery records indicate that James Bell was ten years older than Syndirella (sometimes spelled Cindarella) and that he was possibly a widower with older teenage sons. Without benefit of details surrounding their introduction and courtship, the record shows that James Bell and Syndirella Spriggs obtained a license to marry in January of 1818, a respectable 2½ years following Thomas Spriggs' decease.<sup>100</sup>

The new couple retained all of their original land and began acquiring more. Their first purchase was a 162-acre tract on the north side of County Lake Road owned by William B. Green. It lay east of Winchester Road and included the present day Locust Grove Baptist Church and cemetery and extended as far north to include "The Oaks" subdivision. The deal was made for \$1300 and bridged together their two individual

properties. The Bells then owned a total of 640 acres. Later, when they sold 91 acres of the same tract for \$700, the transaction revealed that a quarter acre lot had been granted for a meetinghouse.<sup>101</sup>

The descendants of a subsequent owner, Thomas Hunt Bayless, have kept alive a family narrative concerning an old log structure, perhaps a schoolhouse, located north of County Lake Road and east of Winchester. While the exact location of the meetinghouse lot remained uncertain, the evidence that one existed gives validity to their claim. According to a Bayless grandson, Harry B. Lawler, there was another log building across the road from a schoolhouse. "Its dimensions were 18' x 35,' and it was used for a store with an upper story to live in," he said. At some point in its existence, the property became a stagecoach way station. When the coach stopped for a change of horses, the passengers alighted for respite and refreshments. "Four horses were driven hard and changed every twelve to fifteen miles. Spare horses were kept at Bell Tavern." The reference to Bell Tavern, made by Mr. Lawler, was not the one called the old Bell Tavern in Huntsville, but the one called Bell's tavern near the Winchester Road. The Locust Grove Inn was a name later applied to the property.<sup>102</sup>

The story goes on to say that a man named "Teemer" Bell sold the log building and surrounding land to Thomas Bayless's father, John Bayless. Madison County deed records support the narrative so far as to say that John Bayless did indeed buy that tract of land, and several other large tracts in that locality, not from Teemer Bell, but rather, James and Syndirella Bell.<sup>103</sup>

Whether or not Teemer and James Bell were the same man is speculative. However, *teamer* is an archaic word usage once equated with *teamster*, and by some stretch of the imagination, could have been a nickname for James Bell. If it were so, then Teamer and Syndirella Bell, in their roles as teamster and tavern hostess would have had a lucrative business on the confluence of two well traveled, dusty trails. Bell also bought his land from John Bunch a known innkeeper.<sup>104</sup>

The Bell family lived and worked in the Three Forks area for about twenty years. When Syndirella's son, Milton, by her first husband, reached legal age, he and his mother and step-father sold the Thomas Spriggs legacy of 320 acres. Milton Spriggs married and went to the Maysville settlement where he became a merchant. A few years following, Syndirella and James sold all of their remaining property and left the Three Forks area. Today, a marker can be found in the Farmington Cemetery of Alcorn County, Mississippi, which reads, "Cindarella - Wife of James Bell." It marks the end to a story about hard-working settlers in the Three Forks of Flint settlement.<sup>105</sup>

## **The Friends of Freedom**

In the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of American Independence, two surviving patriots of the Revolution moved into the newly created Madison County. Reuben Stone and Rudolph Boshart were squatters, then legal settlers, and finally, land-owning citizens near the Three Forks of the Flint. In a late life pension application, Stone gave a lengthy account of his military service that took place both before and during the war. Likewise, Boshart made application, but his recollections were sparse by comparison. Stone made his home near the Flint River until he died at the age of 94. Boshart lived for a short period of time near the river, built a mill, then, he left his land and the mill to other hands. These two

men had once served a common cause, but the direction of each man's life was an individual expression of his political and economic freedom. They passed to their descendents, and all Madison Countians, the legacy of choice and the right to create it—for all time.<sup>106</sup>

**Mountain Fork of Flint  
Flour Mills.**  
**H**AVING prepared a MILL for grinding wheat, also, a good screen and superfine bolting cloth, enables me to make flour equal in quality if not superior to any imported into the country.  
**HEZEKIAH FORD.**  
July 29, 1819. 3t46.

From the *Alabama Republican*, dated August 12, 1819  
(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

When Rudolph Boshart applied for a Revolutionary War pension, he believed he was 84 years old. He said he had volunteered for a six-month tour of duty, between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of March of 1781. However, when asked about the specifics of his service, his answers revealed an old man less sure of himself. He believed he had served in a South Carolina militia company headed up by a First Lieutenant named Lewis Hogg. This company served with a regiment commanded by a Col. Baird. Boshart said his camp was near Bacon's Ridge (or Bridge) until his enlistment expired in December of the same year. He remembered that his company did not engage the British at any time during his service. Unfortunately, the fact that he had volunteered and was ready to defend his country did not earn a pension for him.<sup>107</sup>

Rudolph Boshart was born in Newberry County, South Carolina, on land his immigrant grandfather, Felix Buzhardt, had received as a land grant in 1753. The land was then located in Craven County, one of South Carolina's three, expansive proprietary counties. Felix sold it to his son Rudolph Bushart, Sr. four years later. In the years following, South Carolina established a western border on the Savannah River and formed seven districts. Rudolph's land was then located on the east side of the Old Ninety Six District. When he died, Rudolph Boshart, Jr. received 100 acres of his father's estate in 1786 about the time Newberry County was formed.<sup>108</sup>

The land and the Buzhardts did not move, but the county boundary lines and the family surname changed. Buzhardt became Boussard, Bushart, Buzzard, and Bosheart. Rudolph's uncles and cousins kept the Buzzard spelling alive in South Carolina while the name grammatically mutated to Boshart as he moved south.<sup>109</sup>

When Boshart moved his family into the Mississippi Territory, he brought his Anglicized name and his prior experiences in his old settlement. His father, who had occupied the original Buzhardt land on the Broad River, was a planter and a miller. Boshart was already familiar with those occupations and found land in Madison County where he could apply them. By February of 1809, he had settled on land near the Flint

River about a mile south of the Three Forks. From the demographics of his household, it appeared that his wife Sarah, and his two daughters, Sarah (Sallie) and Rebecca, and a son named David came with him.<sup>110</sup>

Very near the Bosharts was another family with early roots and close ties to them. Kennamer family oral history asserted that Hans Kennamer had settled in the Mississippi Territory among the Indians as early as 1798. Kennamer's sons, Jacob, Samuel and Stephen, were in Madison County before the land sales in 1809. Within a mile of Boshart's eastern boundary were two Kennamer sons, Samuel and Stephen. Samuel and a large household of individuals were settled on a 336-acre claim that extended to the Indian boundary on the west side of Berry Mountain. Between Boshart and Samuel was Stephen Kennamer with his own 320-acre claim. Boshart and the two Kennamer men bought their land in August of 1809.<sup>111</sup>

With the close proximity of the two households, apparently there were opportunities for the two families to have social contact. Perhaps it was not a surprise when the land-owning, bachelor farmer Samuel Kennamer proposed and married Susannah Boshart in February of 1810. Over a four-year period the remaining Boshart siblings married into the Kennamer family. Stephen married Rebecca Boshart in May of 1811. During the month following, David Boshart married Stephen's sister, Rachel. In the summer of 1813, young bachelor David Kennamer and Sarah Boshart were also married. Unfortunately, their life together was shortened when Sarah died before 1816.<sup>112</sup>

By 1815, David Boshart (also known as Little David or L. D.) and Rachel were living west of his father's land on an adjacent tract owned by Elder Bennett Wood. It was comprised of approximately thirty-three acres that lay on both sides of the river, but mostly on the west side where the elevation was higher. Negotiations between the two men culminated in May of 1815, and Wood deeded the property to Boshart for \$80.25. As a result of the purchase, the Boshart men controlled the river further upstream from an alleged mill. Passing references to Boshart's Mill in court records, county history, and Kennamer family recollections re-enforced the belief that the Bosharts had begun to develop a mill operation on the Flint. The family said their "grandady Robert built the first mill dam across Flint River, near Old Bell Factory." It was built of logs and brush.<sup>113</sup>

Apparently, Robert Rudolph did not remain on his land long enough to make the mill a competitive operation. In February of 1819, William and Martha Derrick deeded the land and mill site to Richard Haughton from North Carolina. No one knows how or when Rudolph Boshart disposed of his property or how the Derricks came into ownership. The deed clearly described the land as the northwest quarter section where "Rudolph Boshart formerly lived" and included the 33 acres that "David Boshart formerly owned." The entire 193 acres sold for \$5000, resulting in at least \$4000 appreciation since the original government sale in 1809.<sup>114</sup>

As more Indian land was opened, the Bosharts, and eventually the Kennamers, went east and entered lands in what became the short-lived Decatur County. David became the first sheriff of Decatur County and was active in politics there before moving on to Lawrence County. The Kennamers sold their land in the Three Forks neighborhood and returned to the land of their ancestor, Hans Kennamer. Kennamer's Cove was located near Woodville in Jackson County. Robert Rudolph Boshart and Sarah finally settled in Marshall County where one day he decided to apply for a Revolutionary War pension.

He died there an old man, full of days and with many Kennamer grandchildren – but no pension.<sup>115</sup>

In 1777 a zealous colonel raised a regiment in Laurens County, South Carolina. One man among the prospective recruits became so taken with excitement that he enlisted for three years, even though his wife was gravely ill. It was a mistake he soon regretted. However, another man, just 20 years old, had pity on him and his family. Reuben Stone proposed that he would go into service as the man's substitute, and his offer was gratefully accepted.<sup>116</sup>



Reuben Stone was born in Facquier County, Virginia in 1755 and moved with his father's family to Laurens County, South Carolina. Reuben was no stranger to a soldier's life. He had earlier volunteered to defend the county from hostile Indians and had marched on the frontier and into Indian country. During his proxy enlistment with the South Carolina Continental Line, he marched down the Carolina and Georgia coast into Charleston and engaged British forces at Savannah. After surviving a perilous expedition to St. Augustine, Florida, and back to Charleston, he was taken prisoner by the British. When an opportunity for escape was realized, Reuben went home to Laurens County and did not enlist again. The whole of his service was three years and five months. Two years and nine months, he said in his pension application, were spent in the Revolution.<sup>117</sup>

In 1786 the state of South Carolina granted Stone a 200-acre plantation on Ferguson Creek for his service. He started a family, worked on his plantation and remained in South Carolina for 22 years.<sup>118</sup>

By 1808 Stone was a squatter in Madison County. The lure of land and money to be made in cotton were certainly strong motives for migrating southward. Like many men his age and place in life, he was prepared to abandon an established home for one in an unfamiliar and challenging wilderness.<sup>119</sup>

Reuben Stone was about 53 years old, and he was not starting over alone. From the result of Thomas Freeman's census enumeration, it appeared that his family was in the territory with him. In addition to himself and his wife Polly, there were three males under the age of 21, and one over 21. Also, there was one young female. One could

easily, and possibly inaccurately, assume that these individuals were his children. However, if they were his children, they could have been the motivation for moving. With a household of older teenage and young adult males, and the added labor force of two slaves, Stone had an excellent chance of success.<sup>120</sup>

In February of 1809 Reuben Stone applied for and obtained a permission to live on 160 acres in Section 11 (Township 3, Range 1-East). Then he made good his intention to buy the land in August. At the land office in Nashville, Reuben encountered Rudolph Boshart, Elder Bennett Wood, Jesse Wilson and several other potential buyers in the Three Forks area.<sup>121</sup>

Only two tracts of land from section eleven were sold on August 9<sup>th</sup>. No one bid against Elder Wood and he easily obtained the northeast quarter. The other piece of land, the southeast quarter, was the likely place where Stone was squatting. The Flint River entered from the north boundary and took the shape of a gentle curve as it flowed through the land and exited on the southeastern boundary. There was more than one serious buyer vying for the tract. The price doubled the minimum bid, and finally, Jesse Wilson took the land at \$4.40 an acre.<sup>122</sup>

If Reuben Stone had already settled his family on the southeast quarter of Section 11, then he returned to them with new plans. On the same day that Wood or Wilson squeezed him out of his squatter tract, Stone bid unopposed on land immediately east of Wilson in the southeast quarter of Section 12. He would not have far to move. And apparently, before leaving Nashville, Stone had time to consider bidding on other land. He returned to the land office the next day and bought the adjoining 160 acres on the south side of his original purchase. His combined 320 acres put him one half mile north of present day Ryland and the Shiloh Methodist Church.<sup>123</sup>

A month later Stone presented his letter of dismissal from a previous Baptist church to the Flint River Church. He was accepted as a doctrinally sound believer into their congregation. Stone was a quiet and consistent member who did not involve himself in the feuds that played out in their "conferences" (business meetings). The minutes bore record to his steadfast attendance. The faithful had no tolerance for those who were not. Finally, true to the "Rules of Decorum," Stone departed the church as he had come. He requested a letter of dismissal in January of 1815, and it was granted.<sup>124</sup>

Sometime between joining Flint River in 1809 and leaving in 1815, Stone took an interest in land located north of the Three Forks. In what may have been a land swap, John Brahan took assignment for one of Stone's original tracts. Likewise, at some unknown time, Stone took Brahan's claim on a quarter section located about three miles north of the Three Forks. In a strategic move to increase his acreage in the new locality, Stone found another assignment across from it, and then, another further north. Most of his new land lay west of the Mountain Fork of the river and was divided on the section line by present day Rube Robinson Road.<sup>125</sup>

It was evident that Stone had moved to his new home above the Three Forks by the summer of 1815. On June 3<sup>rd</sup> he presented his letter of dismissal from *Flint River Church* to the congregation of Baptists at Enon. By his letter, they understood that he had been a member of good standing at his previous church and received him into their own fellowship. Reuben and his wife, Polly, lived and worked the remainder of their lives on their land near the Flint River.<sup>126</sup>



The Stone-Fanning Cemetery lies west of the Flint River on the southern boundary of what was Reuben Stone's land. The gravestones mark the final resting place of some of his descendants and their allied families. There is no original marker for Reuben. In 1997 the Hunt's Spring Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, placed a monument honoring his service. Records show that he was added to the Revolutionary War pension roll in 1829, and his own words express the merit of that decision. "My sufferings in the march through a wilderness country to Florida and back to Charleston was very severe; and that was the only expedition by which I met privations beyond the actual peril of life in battle." May Reuben Stone, the Friend of Freedom, rest in peace.<sup>127</sup>

There were four other men in the Three Forks settlement who were recognized by the Daughters of the American Revolution. There is some evidence that Uriah Bass, Henry Harless, and Elder Bennett Wood played some role in the war effort. Major Daniel Wright left a clearer record of his sacrifice.

The industrious and wealthy Uriah Bass enlisted in July of 1778. He served as a private in Lieutenant Colonel Quinn's company, Col. John Williams Ninth Regiment in North Carolina. He died a few months before Alabama became a state. Bass's unmarked gravesite, already mentioned, is part of a neglected cemetery in a private pasture overtaken by farm animals.<sup>128</sup>

Henry Harless, Sr. was born near Lexington, Virginia in 1752. He served as a private in three militia companies during the war. Captains James Byrne, John Taylor and John Preston commanded Harless and other patriots. By 1801, Harless and his family were in Anderson County, Tennessee where they resided for more than a decade. Harless died in Madison County, Alabama in 1815. Although his burial place is not known, a Revolutionary War marker was placed to his memory at Bellvue Cemetery located off Bell Factory Road in the Three Forks area.<sup>129</sup>

Elder Bennett Wood, the planter and preacher, was recognized as a patriot by the Daughters of the American Revolution. As reported in their records, Wood was born August 23, 1764, in North Carolina. He served as a private in a North Carolina militia company. He died in Lawrence County, Alabama while serving as minister to the Birdwell Springs (Enon) Baptist Church in 1831.<sup>130</sup>

By the time Williams Wright was born in 1779, his older brother, Daniel, had volunteered to fight Cherokee Indians on the North Carolina frontier. While Williams was yet a toddler, Daniel was appointed a militia captain and raised a company of mounted infantry to fight in the Revolution. Williams saw little of his brother during the war years. Captain Wright and his men fought at Salem, North Carolina, and then marched to Wilmington, skirmishing with the Tories along the way. He and his company helped to liberate Wilmington from a British stronghold. Following that campaign, he returned home to engage the Tories as the occasion required until the hostilities ceased. Even then, Williams may have seen little of his much younger brother. Daniel married Nancy Young about 1782, and they started their own family three miles from the Wright plantation. Two years later the two brothers grew farther apart when Daniel moved his young family to Laurens County, South Carolina.<sup>131</sup>

Daniel and Williams Wright were two of 18 children born to John Wright, III and Anne Williams. The Wrights were sweethearts from adjoining plantations in Fauquier County, Virginia. Daniel was the fifth child among the 12 born there. They moved to

Surry County, North Carolina in 1771. Five more children were born to their family, and Williams was likely the youngest child. He was only 10 years old when his father died in 1789. Perhaps Williams saw his brother, Daniel, as a father figure, a war hero, a community leader and a compassionate friend. By 1812, the two brothers were in Madison County, Mississippi Territory, surrounded by their families and ready to cast their fortunes in a new land. More importantly than the 20 years difference in their ages, were their common kinship and ambition.<sup>132</sup>

During September and November of 1809, surveyor Thomas Freeman purchased five tracts of land north of the Three Forks of Flint. His knowledge about where to buy good land (or who wanted to sell) gave him an obvious advantage. Buyers like the Wright brothers and their allied families kept Freeman, and others, in the revolving door of real estate business. No less than five other households moved to Madison County that were connected to the Wrights, either by kinship or friendship.<sup>133</sup>

Lucy (Lucretia) Wright, a sister of Daniel and Williams, married William Petty, a Revolutionary War veteran. The Pettys took their assignment for 160 acres from William Robbins. They brought their family and settled east of what is now Macon Lane. Daniel and Nancy Wright's son, John Wright, Sr., took assignment of one of the Freeman tracts located west of the Mountain Fork of the Flint.<sup>134</sup>

Due west from his son's location, Daniel Wright took assignment for 320 acres of Freeman's land. His daughter Betsy married Thomas McCrary in December of 1812. McCrary bought the remaining two Freeman tracts, and their land joined Wright on the north side.<sup>135</sup>

The Reverend Richard Shackelford, a Baptist preacher from Laurens County, South Carolina, and his wife, Mary Ann, settled and bought land in the area as well. Their son, William, married Daniel Wright's daughter, Nancy. The marriage between the two families, and the fact they were all of Baptist sentiment, may have influenced the Shackelford's decision to join the Wrights in Madison County.<sup>136</sup>

Daniel Wright took one other assignment of land from Sheriff Stephen Neal. The tract was located between his property and that of his son, John. Later he re-assigned the 160 acres to his daughter and son-in-law, Nancy and William Shackelford. When Shackelford died in 1817, Nancy was literally encircled by her nearest kin. In the day-to-day routine of plantation economics, it was the family and community support system that often made the difference between survival and success. Nancy's father served with her as administrator while her Uncle Williams Wright and her brother-in-law, Thomas McCrary, signed as sureties on the \$10,000 administrator's bond. Her neighbor Reuben Stone, whose family had known the Wrights in their old settlement, served as one of the estate appraisers. Together they assisted Nancy in preserving her husband's estate consisting of land and slaves. She lived there at least another two decades.<sup>137</sup>

Williams Wright, whose specific military service is not known, became Col. Wright in the new Territory. He had married Sally Mitchell in 1802 and four or five young children were with them when they arrived in Madison County. Like his older brother, he accepted assignments for land in the Three Forks area from previous buyers. Williams's 320 acres was bounded on the west by what is now Macon Lane and divided by Rube Robinson Road. The land of his sister and brother-in-law, Lucy and William Petty, joined his property on their south boundary.<sup>138</sup>

Sometime after Betsy McCrary died, her widowed husband, Thomas, found new love and companionship with Nancy Wright. She was Betsy's first cousin and the daughter of Williams and Sally Wright. They married shortly before her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The marriage and other events brought the two families together in ways they could not expect. Williams Wright died in July of 1825, followed by Sally within three weeks. Thomas McCrary's household was soon composed of children from his marriage to Betsy, his young brothers and sisters-in-law, and the additions to his family with Nancy.<sup>139</sup>

Thomas McCrary was an organized and meticulous record keeper who kept a close eye on his business. He was already a busy man, but the burden of his father-in-law's estate administration, with the additional 320 acres of land and slaves to manage, must have been a challenge. In a few years McCrary saw an opportunity to entrust his young brother-in-law, John M. Wright, with responsibility and to help him contribute something to his own worth. McCrary articulated an "Articles of Agreement" between himself and the 23 year old, appointing him overseer for the Williams Wright estate. In exchange for John's faithful performance, he would pay him "\$150 for the year and do his washing, mending, and feed his horse." Estate records indicated that John accepted the terms of the agreement.<sup>140</sup>

Daniel Wright, the patriarch of the family, died in 1838 at the great age of 80. An inscription once marked the Wright family burial site which read, "The earth within these walls is dedicated to the dead therein." Therein lies Daniel Wright who was eloquently remembered as a "Soldier of Liberty and a Captain of Free Men."<sup>141</sup>

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There was another population at the Three Forks of the Flint settlement who was numerous enough to be counted, even in January of 1809. They were neither squatters nor squires, neither yeoman farmers nor planters. They were a nameless host of Negro slaves. Their presence and availability were affixed to the Southern culture as firmly as land and credit. The slaves are mentioned here, not as subjects of debate in morality or rationalization, but rather, to recognize their role in shaping Madison County.<sup>142</sup>

At the Three Forks of Flint, there were households with large and small numbers of slaves. In 1819, the planter and capitalist, Uriah Bass named 26 in his will and allocated 48 more to heirs. The 1815 Tax List for Madison County enumerated several slave owners in the Three Forks area. William Haughton, the mill owner, reported eight slaves. Daniel Wright had 17. Thomas McCrary reported nine and acquired many more in his lifetime.<sup>143</sup>

Some of the pious clergy felt no moral obligation to avoid slavery. The silver-tongued, Reverend Richard Shackelford and his son, William, held seven and nine, respectively. The eloquent and educated Reverend Andrew K. Davis, and his brother, owned three each. The zealous and doctrinal Elder Bennett Wood had 20 slaves in 1815 to labor on his 1108 acres.<sup>144</sup>

Slave ownership was not confined to men. Stephen Pond was assessed for five slaves, but they were the property of his new wife who obtained them from her first husband's estate. The widows, Hannah Frost and Syndirella Spriggs, each owned one Negro helper.<sup>145</sup>

As one historian expressed the plight of slaves, “Negro slaves were the entire property of their respective owners for life...and found themselves involved in all the complicated miseries, of a tedious, laborious, and unprofitable servitude.”<sup>146</sup>

In conclusion, there was Peggy Pickings – one other worthy pioneer woman. In 1812, she bought 160 acres of land near John and Duanna Allison in Section 3, Township 3, Range 1 – East.<sup>147</sup> All that is known about her is that she did not receive a final certificate for her land. She represents the nameless forgotten women, who bore children, bore hardship, died young, or endured widowhood on the frontier. Only the promise of future reward softened the reality of endured hardships.

Peggy Pickings would not be known at all if she had never lent her name to a plot of Madison County’s soil. She serves to humbly remind us that on some common level, and in any age, all of Madison County is hallowed ground to be nurtured and protected for future generations.

## END NOTES:

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<sup>2</sup> Margaret Matthews Cowart. *Old Land Records of Madison County, Alabama (GLO Tractbook)* (Huntsville, Alabama: p.p. 2005), p. iii.

<sup>3</sup> Hosea Holcombe. *History of the Rise and Progress of Baptists in Alabama*. (1840: reprint, Birmingham, Alabama: West Jefferson County Historical Society, 1974) p. 177; Cowart, 2005, p. 229; *Flint River Baptist Church (Primitive), Alabama, October 2, 1808 – October 5, 1868*, Microfilm publication, (Nashville: The Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention), Heritage Room Microfilm, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, Huntsville, Alabama, April 1810. (Hereafter cited as Flint River Church (Primitive Minutes); Madison County, Mississippi Territory Orphan's Court Minutes, 1810-1817, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Holcombe, p. 177.

<sup>5</sup> Cowart, 2005, pp. 229, 232; Donna Dunham, "Compiled list of buyers of public land, August, 1809-1819, in Township 2, Ranges 1 and 2-East and Township 3, Ranges 1-East and 2-East, Madison County, Mississippi Territory," unpublished research, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Madison County, Mississippi Territory, "Register of Applications and Permissions," *Valley Leaves*, (June 1972), Vol 6, No. 4, pp. 189-196; Cowart, 2005, p. ii.

<sup>7</sup> Donna Dunham, Comparative study of Cowart's land sale data to the 1809 Madison County Census and 1809 Register of Application and Permissions, including plats, charts, and lists of 1809 purchases, 2008. (Hereafter cited as Dunham, Comparative Study.)

<sup>8</sup> Dunham, Comparative Study.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Flint River Church (Primitive) Minutes, July 1809; Cowart, 2005, p. 229.

<sup>13</sup> Flint River Church (Primitive) Minutes, April and August 1809.

<sup>14</sup> Map of Madison County Alabama, 1969.

<sup>15</sup> Cowart, 2005, p. 232.

<sup>16</sup> "Bass Family Genealogy," Vertical Files, Heritage Room, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, Huntsville, Alabama.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid; Cowart, 2005, pp. 222, 224.

<sup>19</sup> Clifford N. Brandon, Jr., "Haughton-Brandon Family History," unpublished research. [246 Inverness Dr. Huntsville, Alabama 35802], 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Chowan County, North Carolina, Wills 1694-1838, A, p. 57, 58, Haughton Will, Xerographic copy by North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Photocopy held by Clifford Brandon, Huntsville, Ala.)

<sup>21</sup> Flint River Church (Primitive) Baptist Minutes, January 1811.

<sup>22</sup> Dunham, Comparative Study.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Dept. of the Interior, *Geological Survey. Topographical Map: Alabama, Maysville Quadrangle, 7.5' Series*, Photorevised 1974. (Hereafter cited as U.S.G.S., Topo Map, Maysville Quadrangle, 1974.); *Huntsville Democrat*, August 25, 1838. "Splendid Water Power and Farm," p. 2; Microfilm production, Heritage Room Microfilm, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, Huntsville, Ala.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> 1809 Register of Applications and Permissions; 1809 Madison County Census; Cowart, 2005, p. 330.

<sup>26</sup> Cowart, 2005, p. 225; Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, *A History of Madison County, Alabama and Incidentally of North Alabama 1732-1840*, ed. W. Stanley and Addie S. Hoole, (University, Alabama: Confederate Publishing, 1976), p. 29. (Hereafter cited as Taylor, Hoole Edit.)

- <sup>27</sup> Cowart, 2005, p. 225; Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, "History of Madison County Alabama, 1732-1840," Manuscript, p. 19, Heritage Room Archives, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, Huntsville, Alabama. (Hereafter cited as Taylor, Manuscript.)
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- <sup>32</sup> "Madison County, Mississippi Territory Appointments, 1808-1817," Valley Leaves, (Sept. – Dec., 1969), Vol. 4, p. 35; Madison County, Alabama, Commissioner's Court Minutes, 1831-1844, p. 76, Madison County Records Center, Huntsville, Alabama. (Petition and order to change road leading to Wood's Ford.)
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- <sup>38</sup> Madison Co., Miss. Terr. Deeds, B, pp. 58, 59, Wood to Bass.
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- <sup>42</sup> Cowart, 2005, p. 232.
- <sup>43</sup> Katherine B. Hoskins. *Anderson County, Tennessee – Tennessee History Series*, (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1974), pp. 6, 7.
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- <sup>72</sup> Madison Co., Miss. Terr., Deeds, F, pp. 488, 489; Madison Co., Miss. Terr. County Court Mins. 1811-1819: 187/151, 226/183, 229/185, 230/186 Madison County, Alabama; Circuit Court Loose Papers, Case #'s 4687, 4882, 7273.
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- <sup>77</sup> Byram, pp. 12, 13.
- <sup>78</sup> Byram, p. 26.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- <sup>80</sup> Byram, pp. 53, 55.
- <sup>81</sup> 1809 Census of Madison County.
- <sup>82</sup> Holcombe, p. 107; Flint River Church (Primitive) Minutes, October, 1809; Byram, p. 53.
- <sup>83</sup> 1809 Register of Applications and Permissions.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid*; Cowart, 2005, pp. 232, 339, 426.
- <sup>85</sup> Cowart, 2005, p. 232; Flint River Church (Primitive) Minutes, January, 1812.
- <sup>86</sup> Madison Co., Miss. Terr. Personal Tax Rolls, 1810; Cowart, 2005, p. 232; Byram, pp. 53, 82.
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- <sup>88</sup> Madison Co., Miss Terr. Marriages, 1, pp. 15, 266; Byram, p. 82.
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- <sup>91</sup> Byram, p. 53.
- <sup>92</sup> Map of Madison Co., 1969; Cowart, 2005, p. 221; Madison Co., Miss. Terr. Personal Tax Rolls, 1811-1812.
- <sup>93</sup> Madison Co., Miss. Terr. Marriages, 1, p. 108; Cowart, 2005, p. 221.
- <sup>94</sup> Map of Madison Co., 1969; Madison Co., Miss Terr. Probate Estates, File #1030, Thomas Spriggs, deceased; Johnson, Vol. II, (M. Spriggs's birth date on tombstone.); Mrs. Gaye Stokes, "Bells in Alcorn County, Mississippi Cemetery Census," Bell Family Files, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Heritage Room, Huntsville, Ala.
- <sup>95</sup> Madison Co., Miss. Terr. Orphan's Court Mins. 1811-1817, p. 60.
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- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>98</sup> Taylor, Original Manuscript, p. 13; Map of Madison Co., 1969.
- <sup>99</sup> Cowart, 2005, p. 323. (Township 2, Range 2-East, NW ¼ of Section 30.)
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- <sup>110</sup> Holcombe. *Newberry Co., SC Deed Abstracts*, p. 72; 1809 Register of Applications and Permissions; 1809 Madison County Census; John Robert Kennamer and Lorrin G. Kennamer. *The Kennamer Family*, (Nashville: McQuiddy Publishing Co., 1924), pp. 53, 101, 105, 153.
- <sup>111</sup> Kemmamer, p. 14; Cowart, 2005, pp. 229, 230; Map of Madison Co., 1969.
- <sup>112</sup> Madison Co., Miss Terr. Marriages, 1, p. 17: S. Cananore to S. Buchart; 1, p. 39: S. Canamore to R. Burchart; 1, p. 41: D. Boshart to R. Conameare; 1, p. 103: D. Kemmemere to S. Bosahrt; 1, p. 259: D. Kinamer to A. Hollinsworth.
- <sup>113</sup> Madison Co. Miss Terr. Deeds, A, p. 123, 124: Wood to D. Boshart; Map of Madison Co., 1969; Kennamer, p. 101.
- <sup>114</sup> Madison Co., Miss Terr. Deeds, E, p. 411: Derrick to Haughton; Cowart, 2005, p. 229.
- <sup>115</sup> Alabama, Acts of Senate and House of Representatives, 1823, Section 37, ([http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/acts\\_and\\_journals/Act...](http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/acts_and_journals/Act...) accessed 9 August 2008), payment appropriated to David Boshart, Sheriff of Decatur Co.; Madison Co., Miss Terr. Deeds, B, p. 179: Kennamer to Pence; Also, H, p. 400: Kennamer to Haughton; "Felix Buzhardt Family," database.
- <sup>116</sup> Rubin Stone, File S32539, Digital Images 681-682.
- <sup>117</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>118</sup> Reuben Stone, State of South Carolina Land Warrant, (<http://heritagequestline.com/dvimage/genealogy/stage/dvimage?filename=/heritag>, accessed 28 April 2008).
- <sup>119</sup> Rubin Stone, File S32539.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid; 1809 Madison Co. Census; Madison Co., Ala. Deeds, Q, p. 584 (Names Polly as wife.)
- <sup>121</sup> 1809 Register of Applications and Permissions; Cowart, 2005, p. 232.
- <sup>122</sup> Cowart, 2005, p. 232; Map of Madison Co., 1969.
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>124</sup> Flint River Church (Primitive) Minutes, September 1809, January 1815, (Minutes for this period show no disciplinary actions taken against Stone.)
- <sup>125</sup> Cowart, 2005, pp. 217, 232, 312; Map of Madison Co., 1969.
- <sup>126</sup> "Minutes of Enon Baptist Church, June 1809 – April 1861," June 1815.
- <sup>127</sup> Johnson, Vol. II, p. 233; Rubin Stone File, S32539; DAR grave marking ceremony, 1997.
- <sup>128</sup> North Carolina Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. *Roster of Soldiers From North Carolina in the American Revolution* (1932; reprint, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co.), p. 107.
- <sup>129</sup> *Harless Genealogy*, p. 29; Bellvue Cemetery. (Information from Revolutionary War Marker obtained by author.)
- <sup>130</sup> Millennium Administration, *National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution Patriot Index – Vol. III*, (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1999), p. 3008.
- <sup>131</sup> Johnson, Vol. II, p. 231; Will Graves, transcriber, Daniel Wright Pension Application, S32616, Published in Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements, ([www.southerncampaign.org/pen/](http://www.southerncampaign.org/pen/), accessed 15 June 2008); Marie Bankhead, Editor, "Daniel Wright" *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Winter Issue, (Montgomery, State Department Of Archives and History, 1944), pp. 675, 676.
- <sup>132</sup> Reaves-Wilson Family, William Reaves, Contact, "Capt. John Wright III," ([http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:1772099&id=121508&printer\\_friendly](http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:1772099&id=121508&printer_friendly), accessed 15 June 2008); "Daniel Wright," *Ala. Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 6, pp. 675, 676.
- <sup>133</sup> Cowart, 2005, pp. 216, 217, 220, 221.
- <sup>134</sup> Wright W. Frost, *The Frost and Related Families of Bedford County, Tennessee* (Knoxville, p.p. 1962), p. 81; Cowart, 2005, p. 221; Map of Madison Co., 1969.

<sup>135</sup> Cowart, 2005, pp. 220, 221; Frost, p. 79.

<sup>136</sup> Mildred Burden Bobo and Catherine Ryan Johnson, *First Baptist Church of Huntsville, Alabama. The First 175 Years, 1809-1984* (Huntsville, Alabama: First Baptist Church, 1985), p. 6; Cowart, 2005, p. 217; Madison Co., Ala. Probate Estates, File #1044, William Shackelford, deceased.

<sup>137</sup> Cowart 2005, p. 221; Madison Co., Ala., Estates #1044, Administrator's bond, Appointment of appraisers; Madison Co., Ala. Deeds, O, pp. 546, 547: (N. Shackelford's residency.)

<sup>138</sup> Madison Co., Ala. Probate Estates, File #254, Col. Williams Wright, Estate account; Frost, p. 83; Cowart 2005, pp. 217, 220; Map of Madison Co., 1969.

<sup>139</sup> Mrs. Atwood Hill Mathes, "Wright Family of Madison County, Alabama," Tyler's Quarterly Magazine, Vol. 8, July, (1927; reprint New York: Kraus Reprint Corp., 1967), pp. 195, 197, 198.

<sup>140</sup> Madison Co., Ala., Probate Estates, File #254, Williams Wright deceased, Final settlements and Articles of Agreement.

<sup>141</sup> "Wright Family of Mad. Co., Ala.," pp. 196, 197; Daniel Wright Obituary, *Huntsville Democrat*, (Huntsville) 9 June 1833, (reprint, Alabama Historical Quarterly, Winter Issue, 1944), pp. 675, 676.

<sup>142</sup> 1809 Census of Mad. Co., (322 slaves); Elise Hopkins Stephens, *Historic Huntsville: A City of New Beginnings* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, 1984), p. 30.

<sup>143</sup> 1809 Madison Co. Census; Madison Co., Ala. Probate Estate File #102, Will of Uriah Bass; Madison Co., Miss. Terr. Personal Tax Rolls, J-Z, Roll #30, 1815.

<sup>144</sup> Miss. Terr. Personal Tax Rolls, J-Z, Roll #30, 1815.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Donald H. Sheehan, Editor, *This is America My Country*, Vol. 1, "Colonial Growth and Problems," (USA: Veteran's Historical Book Service, Inc., 1952), p. 126.

<sup>147</sup> Cowart, 2005, p. 229.

# Epilogue

NANCY ROHR

This flood of migration into what would become Madison County, Alabama faced a tide of frontier experiences. At the time of settlement, the entire Old Southwest was involved in aggressive expansion into the territory recently held by the French, the Spanish, and the English – not to mention that of the Native Americans. It might seem the Indians had already suffered enough from the white man’s diseases, but their ownership of lands quickly changed also. Moreover, the recent Yazoo Land Frauds left a generation of distrustful and suspicious American pioneers. Virginia Congressman John Randolph announced loudly and often that the Yazoo frauds were a “many-headed dog of Hell.” Despite knowing all this, the uncertainties of the political situation, the knowledge that they were settling illegally, and the difficulty along the way, settlers – poor and wealthy – came nonetheless.

Usually a scouting party advanced into the territory first. Word of mouth provided some faint knowledge about where they should settle. Experience provided the insight to recognize future farmland. The new house site should be near a spring or a stream and yet away from lowlands that might flood. Madison County would have all of these features and then some. These settlement sites would appear rather like the ones the settlers had left behind: the men would recognize the features when they arrived. This advance party cleared and planted the unbroken soil in often-debilitating heat and built temporary housing, all the while swatting mosquitoes and watching for poisonous snakes, hostile Indians, outlaws, foreigners, land-grabbers, and perhaps federal agents.

Life on the frontier involved tasks hardly imagined two hundred years later – raising a cabin, clearing forests, planting crops, crafting furniture, spinning yarn, weaving cloth, and tending to endless chores. They toiled together as best they could as the women in a sunbonnet worked alongside the man in the coonskin hat. And she paused to have the babies, too.

There was not time, as often pictured, to gaze toward the west, steadfastly with a smile to the future. The early days of settlement have perhaps been glorified with the drama of the heroic man-against-nature-and-Indians frontier life. The description by William H. Ely, who came to Alabama in 1820, recorded a more realistic picture:

I am weary with traveling over Mountains, thro Swamps & Mud & living in the middle of Piles of Logs with no other windows than the large spaces between them (there not being a Pane of Glass to 5,000 People in the Country) of living on Hog & Corn, with a few raccoon....The Buildings throughout this Country are, almost wholly miserable Log Cabins or Pens so open as not to require Windows either for the purpose of lighting or ventilating them.<sup>1</sup>

A large number of the farmers with small holdings moved on for a variety of reasons. The earliest squatters were often intimidated and forced out. Many were never

able to purchase their preferred land. Some others, who acquired title to their land, assigned or quickly sold it for a profit, sometimes before the ink had fully dried. One might only point to the surveyor, Thomas Freeman, who purchased 8500 acres of land. This man was not a farmer, and never intended to become one! He was a leading example of the speculators who grabbed nearly half of the land offered. However, 85 per cent of the individual purchasers were settlers who bought farms ranging in size from 160 to 960 acres, future well-intended and responsible settlers here to stay.

This was a restless time. Texas and Arkansas became particularly attractive sites to relocate. Families from Alabama settled much of the land in Mississippi. It is no accident that a town named Huntsville is a county seat in Texas. Brothers, Pleasant and Ephraim Gray, from Madison County, Alabama, established that town around a large spring in the 1830s. Henry and William King of Madison County, Alabama, scouted northwest Arkansas in 1827. Henry died there, and the Kings River was named in his honor. Two years later five families, all King family members, returned to that area and founded what would become the county seat of Madison County, Arkansas. This Huntsville was also named purposely for John Hunt. Nearby are two Arkansas small towns, Alabam and Old Alabam.

The pioneers who settled here represented America at its best. Many of the men had soldiered during the Revolutionary War and during expeditions against the Indians. Those families that had previously left the comparative safety of the east and crossed the mountains, quickly learned about the hardships of life in the Old Southwest. They already knew the ways of the frontier and what might be successful in Madison County.

In spite of tales about misfits – the desperados, debtors, runaway husbands and the like – they were the exception. Those who stayed came to settle down and work together – the yeoman, planter, and the slave who helped shape this county. If not every settler made it from the cabin to the mansion on the hill, it was not for lack of trying. They were acknowledged to be an independent lot, sometimes feisty, but also known for their ability to make outsiders feel welcome. So many settlers came that at one time Madison County contained half the population of the Mississippi Territory.

These essays reinforce, again, the connections of friendship, kinship, marriage, business, and school ties that led 200 years ago to this new place, Madison County. Most of the people knew one another already. Furthermore, once the process of settlement began, this was not a set of seven small totally isolated communities. Settlers were mixing at “bees,” barn-raising, church services, weddings and funerals, camp meetings, muster days, bar-b-ques, and arguing politics at the county seat. They sent their children to northern schools, purchased merchandise and sent their products to major cities. Citizens here might be informed of the news slowly, but they participated in county, state, and national politics.

It is unfortunate that only the well-to-do and educated provided the major accounts of the events of these early days. As informative as their stories are, it is a loss not to have more complete understanding of the less educated farmer and the uneducated slave who were the majority of settlers.

Madison County was legally established, even if a few settlers had “slipped” in a little earlier, on December 13, 1808. Those early pioneers, who appeared on the first census valued bravery, honor, hard work, and endurance. They survived against great

odds and left a legacy that grew beyond their wildest dreams. Hickory Flat and Mountain Forks of the Flint; Three Forks of the Flint; Ryland-Brownsboro-Maysville; Hunt's Spring to the Tennessee River; Indian Creek; Hazel Green; and Meridianville, these seven original communities are now difficult to distinguish separately. We have become, after 200 years, one – Madison County, Alabama.

<sup>1</sup> Eugene M. Wilson, *Alabama Folk Houses* (Montgomery: Alabama Historical Commission, 1975), p. 2.

## Appendix

### The War of 1812 in Madison County

#### **16<sup>th</sup> Regiment (Lieutenant Colonel Charles Burrus') of the Mississippi Militia<sup>1</sup>**

(The 16th regiment was mustered in Madison County, and it reads like a who's who of early settlers of Northern Madison County.)

Captain Samuel A. Allen's Company  
Captain Daniel Atkins' Company  
Captain William Crawford's Company  
Captain William Evans' Company  
Captain Stephen Griffith's Company  
Captain Grief Johnston's Company  
Captain William Moseley's Company

Adams, Benjamin, private  
Adams, Joseph, private  
Adams, Thomas, private  
Albright, John, private  
Aldridge, William, private  
Allen, John A., Lieutenant  
Allen, Samuel, private  
Allen, Samuel A., Captain  
Allen, William, private  
Allen, William S., private  
Almon, John, private  
Amonet, James, private  
Arnold, John, private  
Atkins, Daniel, Captain  
Atkins, Daniel, private  
Babb, Asel, private  
Baker, John, private  
Baker, William, private  
Bayless, John, private  
Beason, Jahu, private  
Bennet, John, private  
Berrimon, Burrel, private  
Bigham, William, private  
Bird, Isaiah, private  
Birdwell, Moses, private  
Black, John, Private  
Bledsoe, Lewis, private

Box, Michad, private  
Bradwaters, Charles, private  
Bragg, Thomas, private  
Bragg, Benjamin, corporal  
Bragg, William, private  
Brown, John, private  
Brown, Leonard, private  
Brown, Thomas T., private  
Broyles, George, private  
Broyles, Jacob, private  
Brunson, Larkin, private  
Brunson, Samuel, private  
Bryan, William, private  
Buckner, John, first sergeant  
Buie, John, private  
Burchfield, Thomas, private  
Burks, Benjamin, private  
Burrow, William J., private  
Burrow, William Sr., private  
Burrus, Charles, Lieutenant Colonel  
Cain, Samuel, private  
Busby, Reves, private  
Campbell, John, private  
Campbell, Theophilus, fifer  
Cannon, Skip, private  
Capshaw, David, private  
Carriel, Benjamin, private

Bloodworth, Timothy, private  
Boggs, Samuel, private  
Boggs, John, private  
Boggs, John O., private  
Boling, Alexander, private  
Bonds, James, private  
Boon, Isaac, private  
Boren, John, private  
Bossley, John, corporal  
Bounds, Solomon, private  
Clem, Benjamin, private  
Clemens, Jacob, private  
Coffman, Daniel, private  
Cole, Martin, private  
Coley, James, second lieutenant  
Connor, Jacob, private  
Cook, Benjamin, private  
Cook, John, private  
Cook, Randal, private  
Cook, Robert, private  
Cooper, George, private  
Cornelius, Ira, private  
Cotton, Abner, private  
Cotton, Loftin, private  
Cottrell, John, private  
Craig, Adam, H., private  
Crawford, Alexander, corporal  
Crawford, William, captain  
Crowder, Robert, private  
Curuthers, Redrick, private  
Cummings, Levi, private  
Cuoy, Charles, private  
Daley, Joseph, private  
Daniel, William, private  
Davis, John, private  
Davis, Richard, private  
Davis, Samuel, private  
Davis, William, private  
Day, David, private  
Dean, Samuel, private  
Dearman, William, private  
Donahue, Joseph, private  
Doughty, William, private  
Dublin, James, private  
Dublin, John, private

Carroll, William, private  
Caruthers, Robert, private  
Casey, John, private  
Cavett, Thomas, private  
Chilcoat, William, private  
Childress, Jesse, sergeant  
Childress, John, sergeant  
Childress, William, private  
Clark, Gilliam, private  
Clark, Thomas, sergeant  
Ellington, Garland, private  
Elliott, Thomas S., private  
Ellison, Lewis, private  
Emery, John M., private  
Erwin, William, corporal  
Fields, Moses, corporal  
Finch, William, private  
French, Amos, private  
French, Benjamin, private  
Gailey, Andrew, private  
Gallaspy, James, private  
Gambol, James, sergeant  
Ganda, John, private  
Garrett, William, private  
Gibson, Aaron, sergeant  
Gillace, Dougald, private  
Goor, Bledsoe, corporal  
Gragg, Henry, private  
Gray, Thomas, sergeant  
Green, Benjamin, private  
Greenhaw, Jonathan, private  
Greenhaw, William, private  
Griffith, Isaac, sergeant  
Griffith, Stephen, Captain  
Grooms, William, private  
Guin, Henry, private  
Guin, William, private  
Hamilton, Asa, corporal  
Hancock, Benjamin, private  
Harbin, James, private  
Hardy, John, private  
Hardy, Jonathan, private  
Hargrove, Valentine, adjutant  
Harper, Edward, private  
Harper, John, private

Duncan, Charles, private  
Dupree, William, corporal  
Durkins, Smith, private  
Easter, Champion, private  
Eddins, John, private  
Eddins, Theophilus, corporal  
Eddins, Washington, sergeant  
Eden, Samuel, private  
Edmonson, William, second major  
Hitchcock, Denton, private  
Hodges, Allison, private  
Holland, John, private  
Holland, Tillman, private  
Holmes, James, private  
Holmes, Jesse, private  
Hood, Frederick, corporal  
Howard, John, private  
Howard, Samuel, private  
Howard, Thomas S., private  
Hubbard, Ezekiel, private  
Huder, Michael, private  
Hughs, Thomas, private  
Hunt, George W., 1<sup>st</sup> sergeant  
Hutchison, Thomas, corporal  
Ingram, Samuel, private  
Ingram, William, private  
Isbell, Jabez, private  
Jackson, Jacob, private  
Jackson, John, private  
Jackson, Sterling, private  
Jackson, William, private  
John, Asahel, private  
Johnson, Burrel, ensign  
Johnson, Grief, Captain  
Johnson, Henry, corporal  
Johnson, Nehemiah, private  
Jones, John, private  
Jones, Moses, private  
Jourdan, Jesse, private  
Kennedy, Lexington, private  
Kent, Elbert, private  
Kent, William, ensign  
Kent, Abraham, ensign  
King, Elijah, private  
King, Henry, lieutenant

Harper, Robert, private  
Harris, Matthew, private  
Hartgrove, James, private  
Hatton, Allen, private  
Hawkins, Thomas, private  
Helms, John, private  
Henderson, Pleasant, private  
Hester, John, sergeant  
Hester, William, private  
Livingston, Jesse, private  
Loyd, William, private  
Loy, Henry, private  
Magby, William, private  
Manson, William, private  
Martin, James, private  
Martin, Joel, private  
Martin, Nathaniel, private  
Martin, Rial, private  
Martin, William, private  
Martindale, Thomas, private  
Martindel, James, private  
Martindel, Thomas, private  
Mathews, George, private  
Mathews, James, private  
Mathews, John, private  
Mathews, Joseph, sergeant  
Mathis, George, private  
Matthews, Charles, private  
Matthews, John, private  
Matthews, Joseph, sergeant  
Matthis, George, private  
McAfee, Moses, private  
McBroom, Stephen, private  
McCrachran, Daniel, private  
McCachron, Veill, private  
McCain, James, private  
McCain, John, private  
McCartney, Jacob, private  
McCowey, Samuel, private  
McGehee, Zachariah, private  
McGlamery, Sovereign, private  
McGowan, Prewett, private  
McKinney, John, private  
McKinney, Lynch, private  
McMillan, Absalom, private



Kinsey, James, corporal  
Lacy, Caleb, sergeant  
Lancaster, Thomas, private  
Landrith, Thomas, private  
Lay, Simeon, private  
Lee, Isaiah, private  
Lemon, Reson, private  
Lenard, John, private  
Lesuere, Littleberry, private  
Leveston, Samuel, private  
Levinston, Anthony, Private  
Miller, Henry, private  
Millikin, James, private  
Mills, William, private  
Mitchel, Randol, private  
Mitchel, William, private  
Mitchel, William, private  
Modrell, Robert, private  
More, Joseph, private  
More, John, private  
Morice, John, private  
Morriss, Elisha, corporal  
Morrow, James, private  
Morrow, Thomas, private  
Morrow, William, private  
Moseley, William, Captain  
Mosier, Daniel, private  
Mosier, Joel, private  
Moys, George C., private  
Mullins, James, private  
Mullins, Thomas, private  
Murfrey, John, private  
Murphey, John, private  
Murphey, Thomas, private  
Murrell, Jeffrey, private  
Murrell, Richard, private  
Nabors, William, private  
Nelms, Jacob, private  
Nichols, Thomas, private  
Nixon, Uriah, private  
Norman, Barney, private  
Norman, Elisha, private  
Norwood, John M., private  
Paise, James, private  
Parkman, Joseph, private

McMurtrey, John, private  
McPhail, John, private  
McRay, Silas, sergeant  
Meacham, Banks, private  
Megee, John, private  
Mendingall, Eliasha, lieutenant  
Merrimoon, Woody, private  
Michell, James, private  
Milam, Bartlet, private  
Miller, David, private  
Miller, Garland B. private  
Power, Thomas, sergeant  
Prewit, William, private  
Priest, James, private  
Priest, Samuel, private  
Raney, Zebelon, private  
Redding, George, private  
Redin, Leman, private  
Renno, Robert, private  
Rice, Spencer, private  
Riddle, George, corporal  
Riddle, Uriah, private  
Roberts, William, private  
Robertson, Eli, sergeant  
Rogers, Lemuel, private  
Rogers, Samuel, private  
Rogers, James, private  
Romine, James, sergeant  
Roper, Green, private  
Sanders, Henry, private  
Sanderson, Elijah, private  
Sanderson, James, sergeant  
Sanderson, Lewis, sergeant  
Scallion, John, private  
Scruggs, James S. ,private  
Sebott, Lewis, private  
Sharpe, George, private  
Sheckles, William, private  
Simmons, Dudley, private  
Simons, Zachariah, private  
Siscoe, Jacob, private  
Slaughter, James, private  
Slaughter, William, private  
Smith, Abraham, private  
Smith, Asa, private

Patterson, Archibald, private  
Patterson, Daniel, private  
Peer, Daniel, private  
Pennington, Jacob, private  
Phillips, Duncan, private  
Phillips, Parky, private  
Phillips, Glen, private  
Pierce, Richard, corporal  
Plant, Charles, private  
Poor, Jeremiah, private  
Poor, Martin, private  
Power, Edgel, corporal  
Power, John, private  
Taylor, Isaac, sergeant  
Taylor, Larkin, private  
Therill, David, private  
Thomas, Moses, private  
Thomerson, John, private  
Thompson, Swan, private  
Tidwell, David T., private  
Tilman, Daniel, private  
Trump, Green H., private  
Turnbo, Robert, sergeant  
Turnbow, Jacob, private  
Tyrone, Jacob, corporal  
Vaughn, Robert, private  
Vaught, John, private  
Vickers, Joseph, private  
Vaught, William, private  
Vining, Wade H., private  
Walker, Robert, private

Smith, Isaiah, private  
Smith, Jacob, private  
Smith, James, private  
Smith, Nathaniel, lieutenant  
Smith, Robert, private  
Speaks, Hiram, private  
Speaks, Wiley, private  
Speer, Moses, private  
Spurrs, William, private  
Staggs, Thomas, private  
Stephens, James, private  
Steward, John, private  
Sulcy, Henry, sergeant  
Weaver, Elijah, private  
Wells, Humphrey, private  
West, George, private  
Wilkerson, Meredith, private  
Williams, William, lieutenant  
Williamson, Parkey, corporal  
Wilmouth, David, corporal  
Wilson, Harden, sergeant  
Wilson, John, private  
Wilson, Thomas, ensign  
Winn, Robert, private  
Witt, Lewis, private  
Woke, David, private  
York, Joseph, corporal  
York, John, private  
York, Uriah, private  
Young, Henry, private

## END NOTE

<sup>1</sup> "List of Soldiers in Burrus' 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment," *Valley Leaves*, March 1968, Vol. 2, Number 3, pp. 99-102.

## Contributors

**David Byers** is a Huntsville native and graduate of Alabama Polytechnic Institute. He is a fourth generation retired wholesale nurseryman. He is the author of the book *Crapemyrtle, A Grower's Thoughts* and has written several articles on Huntsville history. He and his wife, Janie, have three sons and three grandchildren.

**Donna Dunham** is a fifth generation "lint head" whose ancestors worked at the Bell Factory until it closed in 1883. Her father later bought the Bell Factory superintendent's house, and Donna grew up exploring the "Old Bell Factory" area. Mrs. Dunham has also served on the Madison Baptist Association Historical Committee. She is an outstanding self-taught, independent researcher who has navigated local public records on behalf of individuals and organizations for many years. Mrs. Dunham resides in Huntsville.

**Joseph M. Jones** is a newspaperman who came to Madison County in 1956 to work for the Army at Redstone Arsenal. He transferred to NASA in 1960 as part of a small group that laid the foundation for the establishment of the Marshall Space Flight Center, of which he is a charter member. Serving for 14 years as the center's news chief, he became the director of the MSFC Public Affairs Office in 1974, a position from which he retired in 1981. He has written extensively on space exploration and historical matters. He has also operated a nursery, growing ornamental plants. He and his wife, Frances, former city and county school teacher, have three sons, all in the medical profession.

**David Edward Milam** is a seventh generation Madison Countian who is descended from early families in the Hazel Green area: the Milams, the Atkins, and the Coles. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Athens State University, and has served as the President of the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, the Tennessee Valley Genealogical Society, and the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. He is a Knight Templar and a 32nd degree Scottish Rite Mason.

**John Patrick Rankin** attended school in Washington, Mississippi, and went on to become an engineer with Boeing for 31 years in the aerospace industry. Mr. Rankin moved from California to the Huntsville area in 1986. He has served on committees to write books on the history of Madison and surrounding counties. He researches the history of Madison and its pioneer families and participates in various projects with the Madison Station Historical Preservation Society. Additionally, he has volunteered to assist the Army in researching the history of its land pioneers. Mr. Rankin and his wife, Mildred Marie, live in Madison.

**Jacquelyn Procter Reeves** is a native of New Mexico and graduate of New Mexico Highlands University. She teaches history via distance-learning for Early Works Museum, is curator of her ancestral home, the Donnell House museum in nearby Athens, writes and edits for *Old Tennessee Valley Magazine*, the Tennessee Valley Genealogical Society's *Valley Leaves*, and *The Huntsville Historical Review*. She wrote over 30

commercials for WHNT-TV celebrating Huntsville's bicentennial, and has authored or co-authored six books, some under her former name, Jacquelyn Procter Gray. She also conducts local historic tours through her company, Avalon Tours. She has served on the Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll Board for 12 years and counting. Jacque's ancestors, the Jones, Donnell, and Hundley families were residents of Madison and Limestone Counties before Alabama became a state.

**Nancy M. Rohr** is a native of West Virginia and moved to Huntsville in 1968. She is a graduate of Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia, and holds a Masters degree from Alabama A & M in reading education. A former school teacher in the Huntsville school system and tutor, Mrs. Rohr is a true Huntsville philanthropist, giving back to the community through her love of historic preservation, writing of local history and her many gifts to the Library Archives. She has also written numerous articles and two books about Huntsville and North Alabama History. As a volunteer, she researches, transcribes and indexes for the library archives; reads for the local public radio for the blind; leads historic tours through Huntsville; and reenacts for the yearly Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll.

**Norman Shapiro** was born in New York, New York and has been a resident of Huntsville, Alabama, since 1952. He retired as Deputy Director of the U. S. Army Missile Command's Research Laboratory in 1977 and has been writing North Alabama history since 1985. His wife, June Turner Shapiro, descends from the Turner family - early residents of Madison County, Mississippi Territory, and noted in his paper, Ditto's Landing.



Judge Thomas Jones Taylor  
(1829—1894)

(Courtesy Huntsville-Madison County Public Library)

Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, whose name appears frequently as a reference, wrote this about our early pioneers:

“They were honest settlers and were not troubled by Indians.... The settlers who came to this country up to 1809 were plain, honest homeseekers, who had fought the Indians in Tennessee and Kentucky, and now learned of the country in the Great Bend of the Tennessee River, a land of peace and the most beautiful and fertile country trodden by the foot of man.”

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## **Administration**

### ***Statement of Purpose***

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

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

### ***Editorial Policy***

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

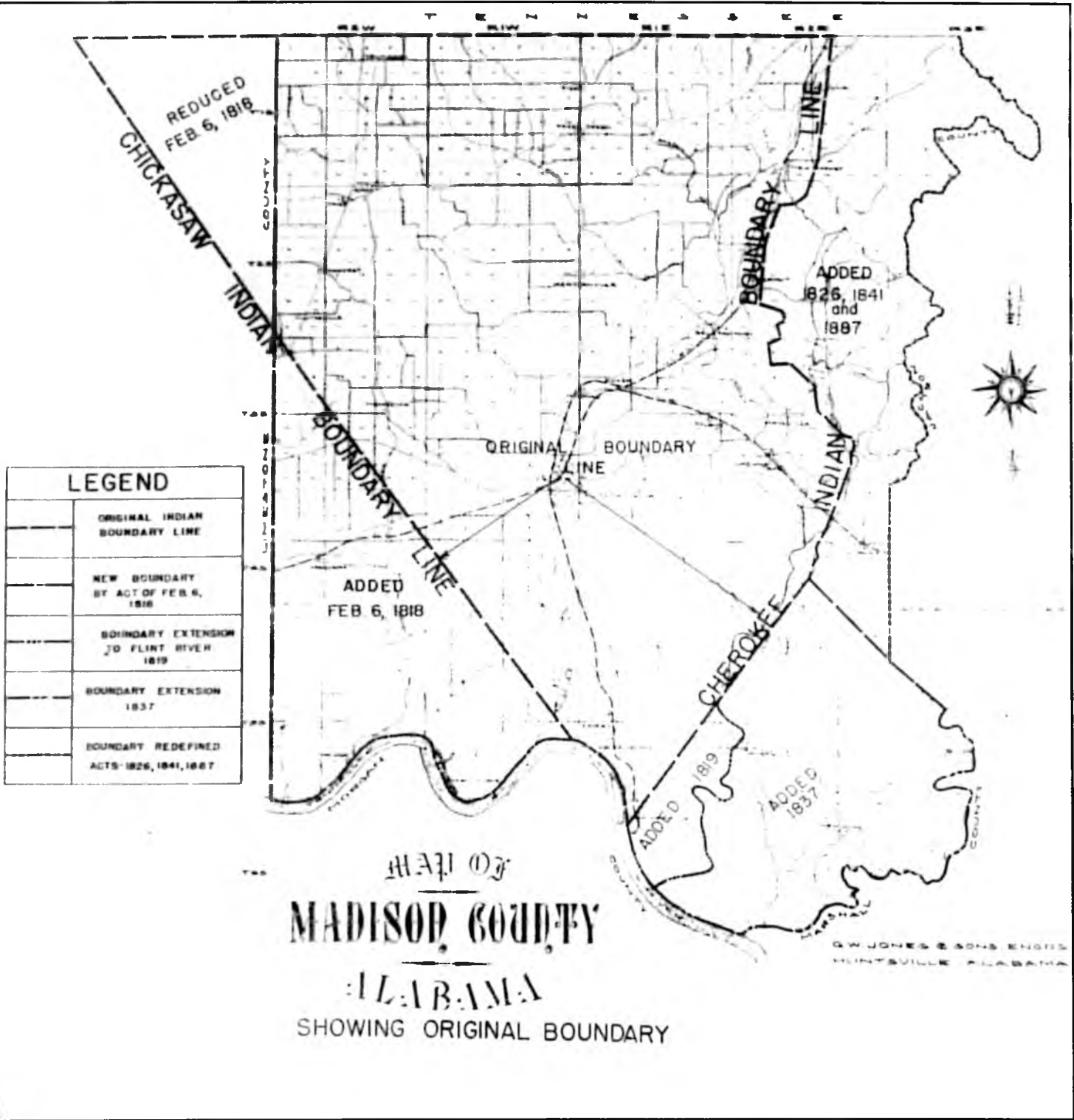
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REDUCED  
FEB. 6, 1818

CHICKASAW INDIAN BOUNDARY LINE

BOUNDARY LINE

ADDED  
1826, 1841  
and  
1887

ORIGINAL BOUNDARY LINE

BOUNDARY LINE

ADDED  
FEB. 6, 1818

CHEROKEE INDIAN BOUNDARY LINE

ADDED  
1819

ADDED  
1837

LEGEND	
	ORIGINAL INDIAN BOUNDARY LINE
	NEW BOUNDARY BY ACT OF FEB. 6, 1818
	BOUNDARY EXTENSION TO FLINT RIVER 1819
	BOUNDARY EXTENSION 1837
	BOUNDARY REDEFINED ACTS 1826, 1841, 1887

MAP OF  
**MADISON COUNTY**

ALABAMA

SHOWING ORIGINAL BOUNDARY

G.W. JONES & SONS, ENGRS.  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

# Dedication



## **Madison County Commissioners**

Seated left to right: Faye Dyer, Chairman Mike Gillespie, Dale Strong  
Standing left to right: Roger Jones, Mo Brooks, Jerry Craig, Robert C. (Bob) Harrison

Madison County is a county that is older than the State. Established by order of the Governor of the Mississippi Territory in 1808, Madison County is the second oldest county in what is now the State of Alabama. Alabama entered the Union in Madison County in 1819. For the 200 years since its inception, Madison County has continued to lead Alabama – from being Alabama’s leading cotton-producing County, to putting a man on the moon, to being a great place to live. Now in its third century, Madison County and its people rank first.

Extra copies may be obtained for \$10 from the  
Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

Box 666

Huntsville, AL 35804