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The Huntsville Historical Review

Winter - Spring 2010

Volume 35

Number 1



The Mystery of Susan Gee

*Published By
The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society*

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The Huntsville Historical Review Editorial Policy

The Huntsville Historical Review, a biyearly journal sponsored by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, is the primary voice of the local history movement in northern Alabama. This journal reflects the richness and diversity of Madison County and North Alabama. Although this publication focuses on local history, it should be remembered that our past has connections with state, regional, national, and international histories. In an effort to build on past traditions and continue to improve the *Review*, an editorial policy will be implemented to guide contributors who wish to submit manuscripts, book reviews, or notes.

Manuscript Preparation and Submission

- Please submit an electronic copy of your article or book review to john.kvach@uah.edu or send it to:
Dr. John Kvach
407 Roberts Hall
University of Alabama in Huntsville
Huntsville, AL 35899

Review Content and Style

- In matters of form and style, the *Review* follows the fourteenth or fifteenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*
- Please use footnotes, not endnotes, as the preferred citation method in full articles.
- Manuscripts should be in 12-point font and in Times New Roman.

Book Review

Please limit your book review to topics relevant to local, state, or southern history. A good review should clearly and concisely describe the nature, scope, and thesis of a book that would be relevant to Madison County history. Emphasis on local and regional history will be given in order to help readers expand and

contextualize their knowledge. Your review should be helpful to the general reader interested in Madison County or North Alabama. Here are some good rules to follow when writing a book review:

- Your first obligation in a book review is to explain the subject of the book and the author's central thesis or main points.
- Your second obligation is to evaluate how successfully the author has made his/her point. Is the author's argument reasonable, logical, and consistent?
- Your third obligation is to set the book into a broader context. If you can, place the book into a wider context by looking at broader issues.
- Your fourth obligation is to render a judgment on the value of the book as a contribution to historical scholarship.

News and Notes Submissions

Please keep your submissions limited to 250 words and please include contact information if you are making an inquiry or asking a question. The editor has the right to change or delete wording or information.

Little Reminders . . . Good Writing Rules

- Write in the active voice.
- Write in the past tense.
- Cast your sentences in the positive
- Topic sentences should be clear and straightforward statements of what the paragraph is about. Every sentence in a paragraph should work to explain the topic sentence.
- Write in the third person.

Editor's Note

The definition of history is change over time. In the past two hundred years Huntsville and Madison County have experienced great and not so great events that have transformed how the world has viewed the area. Although once known as the watercress capital of the world, Madison County has more recently become known for its contributions to the Space Age. In between watercresses and rockets, however, Huntsville and Madison County have been a part of local, regional, state, national, and international histories and events. It is important to preserve this history. The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society has worked hard to insure that people, places, events, and ideas that existed in our collective past remain a part of our present and future. The *Review* has allowed members of this community to research, write, and publish articles that have helped preserve an important history.

Like all institutions that have achieved longevity, the Historical Society also has its own history, which by definition means that it too changes over time. Just such a change has recently occurred within the pages of *The Huntsville Historical Review*. After years of service to the Historical Society and the *Review*, Jacque Reeves has stepped down as its editor. I will attempt to continue her legacy and assume the position of editor of the *Review*. You, the reader, will continue to receive biyearly reminders of just how rich our history is in Madison County. I will seek out and print the best articles that explore the past and that offer unique perspectives about our community's history. In addition, I get to enact changes that I think will strengthen the *Review*. I do not know if they will work and become part of the *Review's* history or if they will fail and I become history as its editor, but I hope to add elements that will broaden the scope of the publication and make it more interactive with its readers. I also want to highlight the next generation of local historians because I have access to them on a daily basis. As a professor of history at UAHuntsville, I work with young minds that share the same interests and passions as many of the older members of the Historical Society. These students will supplement the excellent

work done by more established local historians and writers. I hope to blend the past, present, and future to make the *Review* a true representation of the richness and diversity of Huntsville and Madison County.

The four articles that begin my tenure as the editor of the *Review* mark the excellence of four local historians who have embraced the challenge of recreating the past in a significant and readable way. Nancy Rohr explores antebellum horse racing in northern Alabama; Norman Shapiro offers insight into the life of Benjamin Sterling Turner; and Emily Burwell proves that a hobby and a little curiosity can lead to meaningful historical research. Lastly, Joseph Richardson, a UAHuntsville student and the first recipient of the Dr. John Rison Jones Award for Southern History presented by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society to the best student in southern history, highlights the life of a Civil War-era partisan ranger from Madison County. These authors spent countless hours crafting articles that highlight the uniqueness and interconnectedness of Madison County history. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I have, and you will consider writing an article of your own.

The biggest change you will notice in this issue is that I have added two new departments that allow those of you not interested in writing a full article to be able to contribute in a meaningful manner. I have added a “Book Review” department and wrote the first review so that you can have a model. The other new department is “News and Notes” which will allow interested readers to submit newsworthy items. If you know of a museum exhibit, lecture, or event and want to alert other readers then please write a short notice and it will be published. You can also submit notices if you have a research inquiry or need more information about a particular family or person. I want this section to become a biyearly clearinghouse for readers who hope to reach a broader audience. The parameters for book reviews and news and notes items will be included in the new editorial policy found at the front of the *Review*.

With this information I leave you to read, explore, and hopefully contribute to the *Review*. This project, like any other worthwhile institution, is what you make of it.

Dr. John F. Kvach

I.D.W. Cobb: North Alabama Partisan Ranger
By Joseph T. Richardson



Isaac Denton Winfield Cobb, circa 1870
(Courtesy of Lou Sams)

The Civil War in North Alabama encompassed a wide range of experiences and involved soldiers from many diverse backgrounds. Early in the war, men from Madison County enlisted in the Confederate Army in more than a dozen units that joined every major army in the eastern and western theaters. But the occupation of North Alabama by Federal forces in April 1862 brought the war to the home front. Units of a new type of soldier,

the partisan ranger, raised local men to resist their occupiers. Partisan rangers, though not as well documented as soldiers of the regular army, were nonetheless an important part of the conflict. A close examination of one such partisan ranger, Isaac D. W. Cobb, offers a glimpse into an experience that may have been common to other partisan rangers in North Alabama.

Isaac Denton Winfield Cobb was born on October 25, 1847, in Madison County, Alabama, near Owens Cross Roads. He was the only child of Azariah Cobb and his second wife Lucinda Childress. Both of Cobb's parents had been previously married and widowed, his father to a cousin, Jerusha Cobb, and his mother to Richard Medlin. He had a number of half-siblings from both of his parents' first marriages. Azariah Cobb was a first cousin of Williamson Robert Winfield Cobb, northeastern Alabama's seven-term United States congressman. The 'Winfield' in I.D.W.'s name was for Congressman Cobb, and he also had an older half-brother named Williamson Robert Winfield Cobb, Jr.¹

Federal land patents show that Azariah Cobb purchased two hundred acres of government land in 1831 and 1839, near present-day Owens Cross Roads. By 1840 he and two slaves were working the land. According to the 1850 and 1860 federal censuses, however, he owned no land and little personal property. By 1864, he had taken a job as overseer on the plantation of his cousin, Representative W.R.W. Cobb. It is uncertain what happened to Azariah Cobb during the 1840s, but by 1850, he had fallen on hard times, and it appears that his son Isaac was born to meager circumstances.²

¹ Madison County (Alabama) Records Center, Madison County marriage indices, <http://www.co.madison.al.us/mcrc/> (accessed 27 October 2008); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Population*, Madison County, Alabama, 401A; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Population*, Madison County, Alabama, 123; correspondence with Lou Sams, Cobb family historian.

² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixth Census of the United States, 1840*, Madison County, Alabama, 172; U.S. Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records Database, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov.>; 1850 Federal Census, Madison County, Alabama, 401A; 1860 Federal Census, Madison

Cobb's family took an active part in the early years of the war. Five of his older half-brothers served in the Confederate Army. Seymour Cobb, John A. Medlin, Josiah E. Medlin, and Richard H. Medlin enlisted in Captain Thomas Owen's Company, First East Tennessee Rifle Regiment on October 8, 1861, at Owens Cross Roads and fought in the western theater. This regiment later became the Seventh Tennessee Regiment, Provisional Army, and finally became the Thirty-Seventh Tennessee Infantry Regiment. The unit suffered heavy losses at both Murfreesboro (Stones River) from December 31, 1862, to January 2, 1863, and at Chickamauga in September 1863. Despite these heavy casualties, all of Cobb's brothers survived the war. A fifth brother, Williamson Robert Winfield Cobb, Jr., enlisted in Captain Frank Gurley's company of the Fourth Regiment, (Russell's) Alabama Cavalry on September 16, 1862, and survived the war to become a prominent businessman in Gurley, Alabama.³

At the beginning of the Civil War in April 1861, Isaac D.W. Cobb was a thirteen year old boy living with his father. After turning sixteen, however, Cobb enlisted in the Confederate Army on January 25, 1864, in Gurley, Alabama. He served as a private in Captain Milus E. Johnston's cavalry company, which was mustered into Mead's Cavalry Battalion under command of

County, Alabama, 123; Southern Claims Commission, *Southern Claims Commission Disallowed Claims, 1871-1880* (National Archives Microfiche Publication M1407, RG 233), Claim 5071, Claim of Bryant Cobb, Administrator of W.R.W. Cobb, deceased, Madison County, Alabama.

³ National Park Service, Civil War Soldiers and Sailor System, <http://www.civilwar.nps.gov/cwss/>; National Archives and Records Administration, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Tennessee*, Thirty-Seventh Tennessee Infantry Regiment (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration),; "Stones River Order of Battle," <http://www.civilwarhome.com/stonesriverorderofbattle.htm>; "Chickamauga Order of Battle," Shotgun's American Civil War Home Page., <http://www.civilwarhome.com/chickamaugaot.htm>; "Thirty-Seventh Tennessee Infantry Regiment," <http://www.angelfire.com/ego/37tninf/camp>; Lou Sams, "Williamson Robert Winfield Cobb, Jr." on *Gurley Community and Town History*; <http://gurleyalabama.contactez.net>

Colonel Lemuel G. Mead. In March 1865, Mead's Battalion was reorganized into a regiment of three battalions with Milus Johnston promoted to lieutenant colonel and placed in command of the Twenty-Fifth Alabama Cavalry Battalion. Cobb's company, then led by Captain John C. Drake, became Company C of the Twenty-Fifth Battalion. Cobb ended the war as a corporal.⁴

Lemuel Green Mead was a lawyer from Paint Rock, Alabama. In September 1861, he raised a company of area men known as the "Paint Rock Rifles" which joined the Twenty-Sixth Alabama Infantry Regiment, later renamed the Fiftieth Alabama Infantry. Mead led his men at Shiloh in April 1862, but in July, following the Union occupation of North Alabama, resigned his commission and returned to Alabama to organize a company of partisan rangers. In the fall and winter of 1863, Mead expanded his operation to a battalion of partisan rangers, including in January 1864 Milus E. Johnston's company, in which Cobb served.⁵

⁴ 1860 Federal Census, Madison County, Alabama, 123; National Archives and Records Administration, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, Mead's Cavalry (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration); Milus E. Johnston, *The Sword of 'Bushwhacker' Johnston*, edited by Charles S. Rice (Huntsville: Flint River Press, 1998; originally published 1903), 181, 191, 206, 6; Alabama Department of Archives and History, Alabama Confederate Pension Applications, application of I.D.W. Cobb; Madison County, Alabama, 1907 Census of Confederate Soldiers, #302, I.D.W. Cobb; Charles S. Rice, "Twenty-Fifth Alabama Cavalry Battalion" on Ken Jones' *Alabama Civil War Cavalry Regimental Histories*, <http://www.tarleton.edu/~KJones/alcav.html>; Jones M. Withers, Assistant Adjutant-General, CSA, Special Orders No. 52, 2 March 1865 in *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington., D.C002E: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901) (hereafter abbreviated *ORA*), Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I (1897), 1023. Corporal "J.D.N." Cobb, in the compiled service records of Captain Johnston's company of Mead's Cavalry, is apparently a transcription error for I.D.W. Cobb.

⁵ Charles S. Rice, introduction to *The Sword of 'Bushwhacker' Johnston*, iv-viii; Charles S. Rice, "Lemuel Green Mead" on Ken Jones' *Alabama Civil War Cavalry Regimental Histories*; Rice, "Twenty-Fifth Alabama Cavalry Battalion"; J.F. Belton, Assistant Adjutant-General, CSA, to

Partisan rangers were irregular cavalry who operated independently of the conventional army command structure, often near or behind enemy lines, engaging in warfare that hoped to harass, weaken, or thwart the enemy's actions. The Confederate Congress passed the Partisan Ranger Act in April 1862, legitimizing partisan rangers, authorizing officers to form partisan bands, and entitling them to pay. Although partisan rangers were a legal part of the Confederate Army, Union forces often perceived them to be little better than marauders, murderers, and thieves. Throughout the correspondence of the war, Union commanders referred to Mead and his men as guerrillas and more derogatorily as bushwhackers.⁶

Reverend Milus Eddings Johnston was a Methodist minister from Fayetteville, Tennessee, who had opposed secession. He aimed to stay out of the war, but soon the conflict became personal. The brothers of Johnston's wife's were serving in the Confederate Army, and for merely being associated, Johnston was arrested and harassed by the occupying Union army. In retaliation for Mead's attacks, Union forces under General Ormsby M. Mitchell carried out attacks upon the families of Confederates including Johnston's in-laws with whom he was living. They burned his family's property and threatened to arrest him again. Feeling threatened and pursued, Johnston enlisted in the Confederate Army in January 1864 and was commissioned to raise a company for Mead's Battalion. Cobb was among those who enlisted. Late in life, Johnston provided historians with a unique and invaluable firsthand

Captain Lemuel G. Mead, 15 August 1862, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XVI, Part II (1886), 758.

⁶ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 45-56; Robert Russell Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005) 5-7, 203, 205-206. For examples of derogatory references to partisan rangers, particularly to Mead, see W.A. Gordon, Assistant Adjutant-General, USA, to Major Lubbers, 28 March 1864, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XXXII, Part III (1891), 172; Report of Major Moses D. Leeson, 13 May 1865, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I (1897), 558-560.

account of life as a partisan ranger behind Union lines in the Tennessee Valley. In Johnston's memoir of the war, *The Sword of 'Bushwhacker' Johnston*—he proudly took for himself the epithet his enemies had applied scornfully. His memories were published serially in 1902 in the *Guntersville Democrat*.⁷

Mead's Battalion spent 1864 and part of 1865 in the Tennessee Valley, moving between Tennessee and Alabama, harassing the Union Army. At times Mead operated in cooperation with the regular Confederate army, notably General Philip Dale Roddey's brigade in North Alabama. Mead's Battalion was involved in skirmishes throughout Madison and Jackson counties. Johnston recorded with particular pride his company's capture of a Union wagon train at Moore's Mill on August 11, 1864. On December 31, 1864, Mead's men surprised a detachment of Union infantry guarding Paint Rock Bridge. Union commanders later reported, with some embarrassment, that Mead's men captured nearly forty men, burned the bridge, and damaged a Union artillery piece during the attack. According to one Union commander, "Mead's men . . . are considered the most reckless and daring in the country." Nearly all of the skirmishes in which Cobb fought while in Mead's service took place within ten miles of his home.⁸

Cobb described his service as that of a scout who mostly avoided heated fighting. In a 1933 interview with *The Huntsville Times*, he recounted a skirmish in which his company was attacked by a much larger body of pursuing federals while eating a meal in a wooded cove. The Confederates lay in wait for the Union troops. The orderly sergeant, Jimmy Lewis, watched from the edge of the bluff. The first Yankee bullet from below grazed

⁷ Rice, introduction to *'Bushwhacker' Johnston*, iv-viii; *The Sword of Bushwhacker' Johnston*, 19-23; Compiled Service Records, Mead's Cavalry.

⁸ Captain H.R. Hill to Captain E.A. Otis, 27 May 1864, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XXXIX, Part II (1892), 53; General Robert S. Granger to Major B.H. Polk, 17 January 1865, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XLV, Part II (1894), 607-608; Lieutenant-Colonel W.J. Clift to Captain E.T. Wells, 7 February 1865, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I (1897), 665; *'Bushwhacker' Johnston*, "Skirmishes" map; Charles S. Rice, *Hard Times: The Civil War in Huntsville and North Alabama* (Huntsville: Old Huntsville, 1994), 216-218.

the top of Lewis's head. "I can't take that," Lewis yelled, and he stepped out into the open and shot the Yankee captain below. "They had us outnumbered ten to one, but they couldn't stop us after that," Cobb recalled. "Bushwhacker" Johnston described the same skirmish in his memoir, and both accounts corroborated each others.⁹

On May 11, 1865, Johnston surrendered the Twenty-Fifth Alabama Cavalry Battalion at Trough Springs on the slopes of Monte Sano Mountain. Union General Robert S. Granger offered Johnson the same generous terms of surrender that had been offered to Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston. Union Major Moses D. Leeson of the Fifth Indiana Cavalry objected to the terms, calling Johnston and his men "demons, who had never been in the Southern army; regular parricides." Colonel William Given, the Union commander who oversaw the surrender, defended Johnston's honor and insisted that his men had been part of the Confederate army and had conducted themselves decently during the surrender. Johnston pledged his and his men's future loyalty to the United States. Insulted by Leeson's report, Given demanded that his subordinate be court-martialed for making a false report. Fifteen witnesses testified on Given's behalf, including Milus E. Johnston who had left the Confederate service. Despite their differences on the battlefield, Given willingly defended "Bushwhacker" Johnston and avoided further postwar problems between old enemies.¹⁰

Like his commander, Cobb surrendered and took the oath of allegiance to the United States in Huntsville on May 11, 1865. Standing five feet, five inches tall, with fair complexion, light

⁹ "13 Veterans Who Wore the Gray, All More than 84 Years Old, Survive in This County," *The Huntsville Times*, 23 May 1933; Johnston, *The Sword of 'Bushwhacker' Johnston*, 135-136.

¹⁰ Major Milus E. Johnston to General Robert S. Granger, 8 May 1865, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I (1897), 563; General Robert S. Granger to Major Milus E. Johnston, 8 May 1865, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I (1897), 564; Report of Major Moses D. Leeson, 13 May 1865, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I (1897), 558-560; Colonel William Given to Lieutenant Sam. M. Kneeland, 29 May 1865, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I (1897), 560-561.

hair, and gray eyes, he had survived the war unscathed. The next morning, he was paroled from the army, and left Huntsville to return home. For Cobb the war had ended and now the difficult process of rebuilding his life began.¹¹



**Isaac Denton Winfield Cobb and Family, circa 1895
(Courtesy of Lou Sams)**

Cobb returned to Owens Cross Roads and resumed farming. Azariah Cobb, I.D.W.'s father, moved to eastern Texas in 1869 to be closer to several of his children who had relocated during the war. He likely died shortly after arriving in Texas. I.D.W., then twenty-two, stayed in Alabama and married Mary

¹¹ I.D.W. Cobb's final muster card, and the record of his discharge and oath, is mislabeled and misplaced in the compiled service records of the First Alabama Cavalry Regiment, in which he certainly did not serve. National Archives and Records Administration, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Alabama*, First Alabama Cavalry Regiment (Washington, D.C. National Archives and Records Administration); General Robert S. Granger to Major M.E. Johnston, 8 May 1865, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I (1897), 564; Rice, "Twenty-Fifth Alabama Cavalry Battalion"; Colonel William Given to Lieutenant Sam. M. Kneeland, 29 May 1865, in *ORA*, Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I (1897), 561-563; I.D.W. Cobb Confederate pension application.

E. "Mollie" Bowers on December 26, 1873, and within the year the couple moved to Independence County, Arkansas. The young couple spent about seven years in Arkansas before returning to Madison County.¹²

The postwar years proved to be personally productive for the Cobbs and the young couple eventually had seven children while in Alabama and Arkansas. Lillie Irene Cobb was born September 25, 1874, in Alabama, married Alonzo Irvin Williams on December 23, 1901, and died March 25, 1952. Josiah William Cobb was born March 31, 1877, in Arkansas, married Hattie Ann Buford on January 31, 1899, and died April 4, 1961. Sadie L. Cobb was born October 20, 1879, in Arkansas, married John W. Brandon on December 27, 1902, and died July 23, 1939. Hattie E. Cobb was born November 1, 1881, in Arkansas, married Archie Lee Brazelton on November 28, 1902, and died January 29, 1978 in Huntsville. James Isaac Cobb was born September 1, 1886, in Alabama, married Bessie E. Esslinger on November 5, 1913, and died September 10, 1963. Jessie Edna Cobb was born May 9, 1892, in Alabama, married William Jack Esslinger on February 12, 1919, and died July 11, 1978. An infant son, Reuben F. K. Cobb, was born on September 26, 1894, and died on October 4, 1900. All of the Cobb children lived and died in Madison County, and those who lived into adulthood became farmers. All but two are buried near their parents at the Esslinger Cemetery; Josiah William Cobb was buried in Baker Cemetery at Owens Cross Roads, and Hattie Cobb Brazelton was buried in Maple Hill Cemetery in Huntsville. At the time of his death in 1933, Cobb had eighteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He remained in Madison County for more than

¹² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Population*, Independence County, Arkansas, Supervisor's District 1, Enumerator's District 124, Sheet 18B; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population*, Madison County, Alabama, S.D. 8, E.D. 105, Sheet 8A (72A stamped); I.D.W. Cobb Confederate pension application, widow's application; correspondence with Lou Sams.

sixty years. The 1910 federal census noted that Cobb and his family lived in the Colliers precinct near Cherrytree.¹³

Cobb became an active member of the Egbert J. Jones Camp of the United Confederate Veterans in Huntsville, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy awarded him the Southern Cross of Honor in commemoration of his service. In July 1904, at the age of fifty-six, Cobb applied for a Confederate pension. At that time he owned no land and roughly two hundred dollars worth of personal property, nearly all of it in livestock and farm implements. The examining physician declared Cobb unable to work, citing rheumatism, enlargement of the heart, vascular insufficiency, and severe lumbago (lower back pain). He described Cobb as having a “feeble appearance.” The pension was granted; but despite his poor health, he would live for nearly thirty years.¹⁴

¹³ 1880 Federal Census, Independence County, Arkansas, S.D. 1, E.D. 124, Sheet 18B; 1900 Federal Census, Madison County, Alabama, S.D. 8, E.D. 105, Sheet 8A (72A stamped); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population*, Madison County, Alabama, S.D. 8, E.D. 124, Sheet 9B; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population*, Madison County, Alabama, S.D. 8, E.D. 128, Sheet 4A (167A stamped), Sheet 4B, Sheet 5B; E.D. 144, Sheet 2B, Sheet 12B; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population*, Madison County, Alabama, S.D. 2, E.D. 45-14, S10A-11A, 12A (220A stamped); E.D. 45-45, Sheet 13A; *The Huntsville Times*, “Funeral Held for I.D. Cobb: Aged Confederate Veteran Died Friday of Pneumonia” (obituary of I.D.W. Cobb), 29 October 1933; State of Alabama, *Index of Vital Records for Alabama: Deaths, 1908-1959*; tombstones at Esslinger Cemetery (visited 19 September 2008); *The Huntsville Times*, 5 April 1961, obituary of Josiah W. Cobb; Madison County marriage indices; U.S. Social Security Administration, Social Security Death Index, <http://ssdi.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/ssdi.cgi> (accessed 18 November 2008), via Rootsweb.

¹⁴ 1910 Federal Census, Madison County, Alabama, S.D. 8, E.D. 124, Sheet 9B; Alabama Department of Archives and History, “Members of the Egbert J. Jones Camp of the United Confederate Veterans in Huntsville, Alabama” (2 February 1925), photographs collection, subjects vertical file, box 5; “Recipients of the Southern Cross of Honor from Madison, Jackson, and Marshall Counties,” abstracted by Charles S. Rice from original certificates, on Madison County ALGenWeb, <http://www.algenweb.us/madison/socross.htm> (accessed 27 October 2008);



**Members of the Egbert J. Jones Camp, United Confederate Veterans in Huntsville, Alabama, 2 February 1925
(Cobb is the fifth man from the right)
(Alabama Department of Archives and History)**

On May 23, 1933, when Cobb was eighty-six years old, he gave an interview to *The Huntsville Times*, along with a dozen other veterans who still lived in Madison County. The reporter provided a vivid portrait of Cobb, noting that “as he talks of his days during the struggle, his small stature causing the medal on his coat to seem twice its actual size, he smiles almost continuously, for 86 years have not spoiled his sense of humor.” Cobb’s interview provides a rare glimpse into the life of a common partisan ranger. On October 27, 1933, only five months after the interview, Cobb died of pneumonia at his home near Gurley, Alabama, at the age of eighty-six. He was buried in the Esslinger Cemetery near his home, the Southern Cross of Honor adorning his headstone. His widow Mollie was granted a

United Daughters of the Confederacy, “Southern Cross of Honor” on UDC website, http://www.hqudc.org/so_cross/ (accessed 29 October 2008); I.D.W. Cobb Confederate pension application; I.D.W. Cobb obituary.

widow's pension for Isaac's service, which she received until her own death on January 26, 1941, at the age of eighty-five.¹⁵

Although "Bushwhacker" Johnston's memoirs provide a good overview of his unit's service, Cobb's recollections and wartime record create a more personal narrative of a partisan ranger's life in occupied northern Alabama during the Civil War. Cobb's life before, during, and after the war may have been typical of many soldiers in a region devastated by war. He came from a humble background but fought to defend the South from Union invaders. He never owned slaves or a large plantation but responded to the excitement created by war and to the needs of his community. After years of fighting he returned home to a life of hard work and raised a large family. Though he never achieved fame or prosperity, Cobb carried the pride of his Confederate service for seventy years and helped rebuild the region that he had so willingly defended.



**Grave of Isaac Denton Winfield Cobb
Esslinger Cemetery, Madison County, Alabama**

¹⁵ "13 Veterans Who Wore the Gray, All More than 84 Years Old, Survive in This County," *The Huntsville Times*, 23 May 1933; I.D.W. Cobb obituary; tombstones at Esslinger Cemetery.

**Benjamin Sterling Turner:
Alabama's First Black Congressman
By Norman M. Shapiro**



Benjamin Sterling Turner

Eric Foner's masterful treatise, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution: 1863-1877*, was first published in 1988, and is generally thought to be the most comprehensive treatment of this most important subject. At the time, one reviewer of the book suggested "ironically, because this synthesis is so successful and thorough, it does raise the unsettling question and leave it unanswered – what is left to be done?" The answer follows from the large body of work produced over the last twenty years which indicates that the

subject is still popular, and the historiography continues to expand.¹

One development during the Reconstruction period that has received increased attention recently is the election of black Congressmen from the previous slave states. Benjamin Sterling Turner, whose history motivated this paper, was Alabama's first black Congressman. A resident of Selma, Alabama, for most of his life, he was elected and served in the forty-second United States Congress between 1871 and 1873, serving as the representative for Alabama's First Congressional District. Although he represented Dallas County, Turner had a unique connection with Madison County, Alabama.

Benjamin Turner's picture appears on the cover and jacket, respectively, of two new books: Stephen Middleton's *Black Congressmen During Reconstruction* and Philip Dray's *Capitol Men. The American National Biography* presents a Turner profile contributed by William W. Rogers whose paper lists many of the earlier sources including a book by Richard Bailey which covers Alabama's black officeholders during Reconstruction. And two recent profiles on the internet cite William Rogers's contribution.²

¹Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution: 1863-1877*, (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1988); Michael Perman, *Review: Eric Foner's Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Mar., 1989), pp. 73-78; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom- The Civil War Era*, (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

²Stephen Middleton, Editor, *Black Congressmen During Reconstruction: A Documentary Sourcebook*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002); Philip Dray, *Capitol Men: The Epic Story of Reconstruction Through the Lives of the First Congressmen*, (Boston-New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008); William W. Rogers, *Turner, Benjamin Sterling*, *American National Biography*, Vol. 22. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.9-11; Richard Bailey, *Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawag: Black Officeholders During the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878*, (Montgomery, AL: R. Bailey Pubs., 1991); Online 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica <<http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/4484/Turner-Benjamin-S-1825-1825-1894.html>>; Black Americans in Congress-Benjamin Sterling Turner, Representative from Alabama,<<http://baic.house.gov/member/profile.html?intlid=16>

Stephen Middleton's book provides a collective biographical and documentary portrait of the twenty-two African American politicians who served in the U. S. Congress from 1870 to 1901 and is the most recent book that provides more than just a few lines on Benjamin Turner. He writes in his Acknowledgements, "this project might not have ever moved forward had Professor Eric Foner, who probably knows more about the black Congressmen who are covered in this volume than any other scholar, not responded positively when I queried him about the potential value of such a project." Foner had provided some information on the black Congressmen in his 1988 book and in 1995 had published *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* which is a compilation of concise biographical data on some 1,400 black public officials of the reconstruction era from Congressmen to justices of the peace to constables.³

Dray's *Capitol Men* provides narrative portraits of two black senators and five of the fourteen black congressmen who served between 1870 and 1877. Facing massive prejudice and occasional violence, these men served their constituents with skill and passionate advocacy, promoting civil rights, education, and economic opportunity. The jacket of the book features the 1872 Currier & Ives lithograph showing the first seven black members who served in either or both the 41st and 42nd Congresses. About the portrait Dray writes, "the picture was considered an object of scorn among many Southern whites, however, who refused to countenance the sudden transformation of slaves into holders of public office," and that "faded prints of the engraving still hung in modest sharecropper's cabins when researchers from the Works Progress Administration visited the Southern Black belt in the 1930s." Benjamin S. Turner is second from the left in the portrait but his place in the group of sixteen is

³Middleton, p. xv; Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction*, (Baton Rouge: L.S.U. Press, 1996).

noted only on the first page of the Preface where the picture is described.⁴



Foner wrote an interesting review of Dray’s book in the November 3, 2008, edition of *The Nation Magazine*. Taking note of the impending presidential election, Foner began his article: “a few months ago, an article in the *New York Magazine* portrayed Barack Obama’s presidential candidacy as marking the ‘end’ of traditional black politics and the emergence of a new generation of black leaders whose careers began after the civil rights struggle and who strive to represent not simply black voters but the wider electorate.” He pointed out that this was similar to the situation that existed before the Civil War where differences led to debates among black abolitionists. “Then, as now,” he writes, “black politics was as complex and multifaceted as any other kind of politics, and one of the valuable implications of the new book *Capitol Men* (although its author, Philip Dray, does not quite put it that way) is that Obama’s candidacy represents not so much a repudiation of the black political tradition as an affirmation of one of its long-established vigorous strands.” Foner continues with descriptions of the contributions made by

⁴Dray, pp. ix,x.

the Congressmen, the problems they had to overcome. He noted that “For many decades historians viewed reconstruction as the lowest point in the American experience, a time of corruption and misgovernment presided over by unscrupulous carpetbaggers from the North, ignorant former slaves and traitorous scalawags. Popular histories like Dray’s, aimed at an audience outside the academy, have tended to infuse their subjects with drama by focusing on violent confrontations rather than the operation and accomplishments (public school systems, pioneering civil rights legislation, efforts to rebuild the shattered Southern economy) of the biracial governments of the South after the Civil War.” Foner then mentions Benjamin Turner although he was not one of the sixteen considered by Dray, “Benjamin Turner’s owner allowed him to learn to read and write and to run a hotel and livery table in Selma.”⁵

Thirty years earlier Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton, author of a short but thoughtful history of Alabama prepared for the Bicentennial of the American Revolution, highlighted how older historians portrayed blacks and Benjamin Turner, in particular, during Reconstruction:⁶

Describing Reconstruction, they saw freedmen as stereotypes like “darkies” and “big bucks,” and showered them with adjectives such as “jet black,” “sable,” “copper colored,” “burly,” and “ignorant.” Unaccustomed to the idea of black political leaders, they overlooked these men altogether or viewed them in the distorted mirror of a Carnival show.

John Witherspoon DuBose, a former planter, slaveowner and Klansman, mentioned Alabama’s first black congressman, Benjamin Sterling Turner, by his slave name of “Ben Gee” and paid him this

⁵Eric Foner, *Rooted in Reconstruction: The First Wave of Black Congressmen*, (New York: The Nation, October 15, 2008); Matt Bai, *Is Obama the End of Black Politics?*, (New York Times, August 6, 2008).

⁶Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton, *Alabama: A History*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), pp. 71-72.

patronizing complement; “a remarkably efficient and patronizing servant.” DuBose’s view of Reconstruction, capsuled in his title, *Alabama’s Tragic Decade*, first appeared in 1912 as a newspaper serial and was reissued in 1940 as a book wherein blacks were cartooned as comic figures with vapid expressions and outsized lips.⁷

This brings us to the remarkable story of Benjamin Sterling Turner. Turner was born March 17, 1825, to an unknown slave owned by Colonel Neville Gee near the town of Weldon in Halifax County, North Carolina. Colonel Gee, who married (ca 1797) Elizabeth Harwell, daughter of Sterling Harwell, was a naval officer in the War of 1812, a member of the House of Commons from Halifax in 1818 and a very prominent citizen of his day. His brother, Joseph Gee, had gone to Wilcox County, Alabama, in 1816 or earlier where he was engaged in cotton planting at a place which later became known as Gee’s Bend. Neville Gee also owned one or more plantations in Alabama which were also under the supervision of Joseph. In November, 1824, Joseph Gee, a bachelor, died suddenly leaving a large estate (including forty-seven Negroes) *intestate*. Neville’s son, Sterling Gee, went to Alabama to take care of his father’s plantations and to administer his deceased uncle’s estate. Sterling’s brother, Charles, was also in Alabama where at one time he was teaching school. This Alabama connection was revealed in a collection of letters between Colonel Gee and his sons in Alabama.⁸

After Neville Gee died on October 2, 1827, his widow, Elizabeth Harwell Gee, married Thomas Turner of Madison

⁷ John Witherspoon DuBose, *Alabama’s Tragic Decade: Ten Years of Alabama, 1865-1874*, ed. James K. Greer, (Birmingham: Webb Book Co., 1940), p. 311.

⁸W. J. Fletcher, *The Gee Family*, (Rutland, Vermont: The Tuttle Publishing Co., 1937). p. 83; Gee Family Papers, 1816-1850, Halifax County, North Carolina; and Wilcox County, Alabama. Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations—Series F Selections from the Manuscript Department of Duke University Library.

County, Alabama, on October 27, 1829. Thomas Turner and his brothers Simon and Sugars were early residents of Madison County. Thomas Turner's first wife, Martha Binford Turner, had died in 1825. Then only six months after the Turner-Gee marriage, Thomas Turner died on May 2, 1830, leaving a large estate of 2,600 acres and 50 slaves. One of these slaves was five year old Benjamin whom Elizabeth had brought to her second marriage and retained in her widowhood. Later that year Elizabeth moved to Selma in Dallas County, Alabama, with Benjamin perhaps to be closer to her sons Sterling and Charles Gee, who were only about thirty miles from Selma in Wilcox County. Benjamin grew up in Alabama without formal schooling though he surreptitiously obtained a fair education.⁹

One of the five legatees to Thomas Turner's estate was Major William H. Gee in right of his wife, Susan B. Gee. William H. Gee had married Thomas's daughter, Susan Binford Gee in Southampton County, Virginia, on January 30, 1819, and subsequently moved to Madison County, Alabama, and then to Selma after 1840. The 1840 census shows him living in Madison County but also owning a plantation and 49 slaves in Autauga County, Alabama, which adjoins Dallas County. William was from a Virginia branch of the same Gee family and a third cousin of his contemporaries, Sterling and Charles Gee.

In 1845 when Benjamin was twenty, Elizabeth Turner sold him to Major Gee to pay off debts, and Gee subsequently placed him in charge of the Gee House, a hotel which he had acquired in Selma. When Major Gee died in 1853, Benjamin became the property of his son, Dr. James Turner Gee, a physician, planter and also a hotel owner. Well aware of Benjamin's industriousness and business acumen, Dr. Gee permitted him to hire out his own time, operate a livery stable and to manage his hotel. (The antebellum hotel has been restored and is now known as the St. James Hotel). Benjamin's management of the hotel became particularly important when Dr. Gee served in the

⁹ N. M. Shapiro, "*Ditto's Landing*," *A History of Early Settlement, Madison County before Statehood*, (Huntsville, AL: Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, 2008), p. 79.

Confederate Army from 1861 to 1865. As a Lieutenant Colonel, Dr. Gee was in command of the First Alabama Artillery Battalion at the Battle of Mobile Bay in August 1864. The battalion handled the guns until they were all knocked out of position, losing 150 killed and wounded of about 500 engaged.¹⁰

Benjamin Turner was an affluent man by 1860 and was respected by both blacks and whites in the community. It will be convenient here to rely on the article by William Rogers who provides an acceptable account of the defining chapter of Turner's life:¹¹

When the Civil War began, Turner bought \$200 worth of Confederate bonds Throughout the conflict Selma was an important manufacturing and ordnance center for the Confederacy and Turner continued his own business affairs. . . . In the spring of 1865 Union general James H. Wilson's cavalry forces swept through the state, capturing Selma and burning two-thirds of the city. Turner's properties were lost in the general destruction. He later sought reimbursement of \$8,000 from the Southern Claims Commission. It is not clear how much if any compensation he received, but Turner went to work and soon prospered as a general merchant.

Concerned about the welfare of his race, Turner put up his own money to establish a school for black children in Selma. His efforts urging former slaves to make work contracts helped establish a peaceful return to order and earned him the respect of the white community.

After the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, Turner was appointed county tax collector with biracial approval.

¹⁰James T. Gee Papers, 1837-1864, Family & Civil War Correspondence of James T. Gee & Letters of Gee's Father, Guide to the Cataloged Collections of the Manuscript Dept. of the William R. Perkins Library, Duke University. William Rogers and the two Internet articles which cite his paper (Footnote 2) incorrectly identify James T Gee as a brother, instead of a son, of William H. Gee.

¹¹ Rogers, pp. 9-10.

He resigned after a year and, running as an Independent, was elected city councilman. He and another former bondsman were the city's first black city councilmen. When the town began paying them, Turner resigned, because he believed that in such destitute times a city official should serve without compensation. When Conservative Democrats failed to promise voting rights for blacks, Turner helped deliver the town and county in 1868 to the victorious Ulysses S. Grant.

Turner recouped economically to the point that in 1870 he had personal property worth \$10,000. He was nominated for Congress in that year with the aid of newly enfranchised blacks and native white Republicans (scalawags). His moderate political philosophy cost him the financial support of the First District's northern born Republicans (carpetbaggers). Undeterred, the candidate sold a horse to raise campaign funds, and, running on a platform of "Universal Suffrage and Universal Amnesty," he was easily elected. The district had a majority of blacks; in Dallas County alone, blacks outnumbered whites 32,152 to 8,522, and he was the first black elected from Alabama to the national House of Representatives.

In the House, Turner was appointed to the Committee on Invalid Pensions and impressed congressional colleagues with his political ability and judgment. Besides his general work with the committee, Turner introduced three bills providing pensions for individual Union army veterans, one of them a black. On two occasions his remarks before the House demonstrated a good command of parliamentary rules. During his term Turner established himself by deed and word as the antithesis of a Radical Republican. He introduced five bills to remove the Fourteenth Amendment's political disabilities from eight white Alabamians. Seeking aid for Selma, which was still rebuilding its demolished structures, Turner failed to

obtain federal money for repairs to a war damaged Episcopal Church.

Turner's tenure was marked by three main attempts, all unsuccessful, to affect the economy of Alabama and the South. Denied floor time for supporting speeches, he had his remarks placed in the appendix of the Congressional Globe. The neophyte congressman strongly opposed the cotton tax imposed by Congress. In effect from 1866 to 1888, the tax was justified as a means of having the South pay a part of the war costs. For years, southern states unsuccessfully petitioned Congress to refund the money. Turner presented a memorial from the Mobile Board of Trade asking for reimbursement and introduced his own bill to return the cotton tax to the southern states. He argued that the law was unconstitutional, favored foreign competitors over Americans, and hurt small black and white farmers as well as landowners, merchants, and manufacturers.

Turner also failed to obtain passage of a measure appropriating \$200,000 in federal money to construct in Selma a public building to be used primarily as a custom house, post office, and revenue office. The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds gave no serious attention to the bill.

Turner's most significant measure authorized U.S. land commissioners to purchase private lands sold at public auction, subdivide the acreage, and sell it to landless citizens living in the immediate vicinity. The property would be sold in tracts of 160 acres or as much less as the purchaser desired, and the buyer would pay 10 percent down and 10 percent annually. Turner intended "the landless and poor people of our country" to benefit, especially blacks. Calling the bill an act of justice made compelling by dire need, he asked priority of passage over various laws providing federal relief to foreigners. The measure never got past the Committee on Public Lands.

Turner returned to Selma and was re-nominated by the Republicans in the First District. His conservative course in Congress and nonpartisan patronage appointments provoked a challenge from Philip Joseph, black editor of the *Mobile Watchman*, who ran as an Independent. Joseph's action split the black vote and that of white Republicans and resulted in the election of Frederick G. Bromberg, a native white who ran for both the Democrats and the newly formed Liberal Republicans. After his defeat, Turner retired from seeking elective office.

The crippling economic depression of the 1870s forced Turner into bankruptcy, and he turned in desperation to farming. Actually, his land, 300 acres in Dallas County, was more than that owned by most whites and blacks. While not a candidate himself, Turner sustained his interest in politics. Through 1880 he served three times on the state Republican Executive Committee, he was a delegate at large to the Republican National Convention in 1880, and he was a Republican presidential elector in 1880. After that he withdrew from political affairs to concentrate on farming. Hard economic times continued, and he died in poverty on his farm near Selma.

Roger's statement about Turner seeking reimbursement for his loss from the Southern Claims Commission requires clarification. Turner did seek reimbursement of \$7,804.40 and was awarded \$4,958.21. Previous authors were perhaps not aware or did not have access to the report of the claim which was dated April 21, 1871, when Turner was serving in the Congress. The report provides useful information about Turner and his circumstances. Instead of the usual large number of questions that claimants were required to answer, Turner provided a previously unpublished narrative which follows:¹²

¹²Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871-1880, Microcopy M2062, Roll No. 6.

Washington,

D.C. Apl. 21, 1871
B.S. Turner (col'd) sworn,
To Counsel,

LOYALTY: At the time of the taking of my property by the Union forces I was residing in the city of Selma, Alabama. I was a freedman according to the laws of the United States, though I had not exercised my rights until the federal army came there. I had been hiring my time. In the month of January 1865 I paid the last payment of \$250 for my time. Being a slave I was necessarily compelled to serve the Confederates in the trenches or otherwise. But I never did anything for them voluntarily. I never was a slave voluntarily but was such in obedience to the laws of the nation. When the war broke out of course my sympathies were for freedom and when Gen. McClellan captured some negroes along his lines and sent them back to their masters, I did not know how to decide. But when Mr. Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, then I was for the federals; until then I was wavering. I was waiting to see which side would give me my freedom. In 1862, I heard a gentleman blowing considerably about the success of the Confederate armies and I made a remark to the effect that I did not think they could succeed without a navy. I saw after that they were going to do something with me and I went out and took some Confederate bonds. I do not know whether that was an act of disloyalty or not. I had either to do that or to run away or die. So I took these bonds and they gave me a puff in the newspapers for doing it. I took \$200 worth. I concluded that was the lesser evil of the three. I did buy these bonds as a matter of necessity, and I sold them in about ten days, and got my money back. I never served

the Confederates in any way except that I sometimes had to take care of some mules, or under labor for them as a slave. I gave my boss \$250 for the right of attending to my business while attending to his at the same time. I kept a livery stable in Selma and run omnibuses, hacks, etc. That was my business and my boss left me some business of his to look after, such as collecting money for him and attending to his affairs as a matter of encouragement to me and to make me behave myself and not run away while the war was going on. I was at Fort Morgan awhile with Dr. Gee as his body-servant and cook but I did not like the place and he allowed me to return home soon afterwards. With the exception of buying the Confederate bonds of which I have spoken, I never contributed any of my horses, mules, carriages, or money to assist the Confederate cause. Wilson's force was the first federal force I ever saw in Selma. I was pleased enough at the taking of the town and rejoiced until they took everything I had and then I got mad. I joined Wilson's army and kept with him until he disbanded his army. I got up a regiment of colored men in a few days after Wilson took the place and was Captain of Co. A, 4th Alabama Volunteers. I was the first tax collector in Selma, nominated and elected under the reconstruction acts. I was required to give a bond of \$40,000 and the assessments amounted to \$160,000. Of course, I could not have given the bond except by the confidence the people had in me as a man of business and enterprise. Since that time I have been elected councilman of our city and served in that capacity until I was elected to Congress here. I had been hiring my time off and on for three or four years before the surrender. In 1856 I offered to pay \$1000 cash in gold for my freedom, but as I found the laws of Alabama would not permit me to buy my freedom except through a third person who would stand in the relation of master to me, I preferred to remain with my old master and keep my money.

SEIZURE: My property was taken by a Dutch officer belonging to Wilson's command: I understood him to say "take the mules and horses to the 8th Iowa." I could not swear to that. I was excited at the time, considerably alarmed and sort of mad too. A squad of mounted men under command of an officer came to my stable and commenced taking out everything. I had a very large, strong mule named Tom to which I was most attached. He had become nearly blind. I asked them to leave me Tom and after receiving some bad words from them the officer pointed his pistol at me and took him and the rest away. I saw Tom afterwards in the dining room of the Mobile House in Selma: they had him there for show.

HORSES & MULES: They took 9 mules and 8 horses from me. The horses were worth on the average \$150, apiece; I paid \$225 for one of them. The mules were worth \$175 apiece. They were strong hardy mules and I could sell them now for \$250 apiece in Selma. The horses and mules were all taken by this same party at the same time.

CORN: They also took 760 sacks of shell-corn containing 2 bushels to a sack. Corn was worth a dollar and a half in greenbacks at that time: it was worth a dollar & 5 or 10 cents in gold. It cost me \$50 a bushel in Confederate money.

PEAS: They also took 50 sacks of peas of the same size as the corn sacks and worth about the same as the corn.

FODDER: There were 118 bales of fodder taken averaging 415 pounds to the bale – some nearly 500 pounds - which was worth 150 a hundred in greenbacks.

HAY: I had 67 bales of hay taken also. I made a memorandum of the things that were taken the next day and my petition in this case was made up from that.

OATS: They took 30 sacks of oats, worth \$4 bushel. That is a fair price. We were getting that for them there.

WAGONS & HARNESS: They took them. They were worth more than \$200, each. They had been used about 6 months. They were made for army wagons for the Confederate army and I bought them from parties who had more than they wanted on hand. I bought them for the purpose of hauling wood. Afterwards I saw them used in the U. S. Army in the place of broken ones.

CARRIAGES & HARNESS: They were ordinary street hacks, in good order, made to carry 6 persons. They were of the style of private carriages of the day. I would give \$600 for the same kind of carriages and harness today. These things were all taken by the same parties. I saw one of these carriages broken down on the road between Montgomery and Selma after most of the army had gone over the road. I saw an officer riding in one of them and a man driving him and the other one I never saw again. The horses and mules were first taken. There was an officer in command of the men who ranked as Captain or Lieutenant, I judge. The officers marched in there and turned the soldiers loose on my property. I never heard any orders given to the men to take my property. I went to an officer and complained about it and all he said was that I would have a chance now to make it back again. Officers were in command of the squads of soldiers that took my property. There was probably three acres around my stable. It was a garden and on one side was my stable. They just rode in there and knocked down that fence and put there horses right in there and there they stood and fed out of it as long as there was any there. They knocked the plank off the

stable so that they could go in and out. They put their horses in the lot and in the stable also. The officers were there and I suppose they must have controlled them. I understood these horses and mules were to be taken for the use of the army. I saw one of the mules dead at a creek about five miles from Montgomery. I also saw three of these mules at Atlanta, Geo., in an army wagon. The balance of them I never saw. I had a mare with a young colt that they took and I afterwards saw her dead on the banks of Mush Creek about 20 miles from Selma right along where the army was traveling. The mule that was dead was also on the line of march of the army, as was also the carriage. I marched in the rear of the army: everything was ahead of me except the rear guard.

The narrative is both illuminating and insightful in its description of how Turner coped with the conditions of his unusual servitude: His purchase of \$200 in Confederate bonds, for example, was not just a symbol of his affluence, as implied by most of the authors, but simply a ruse to forestall retaliation for appearing to be a dissident, and he even got his money back.

His service in the Union army was previously unknown. Foner indicates that only four black Congressmen served in the Union armed services: Charles E. Nash of Louisiana, Robert Small of South Carolina, Josiah T. Walls of Florida, and John R. Lynch of Mississippi. Josiah Walls was one of the first seven black members and is also shown in the 1877 Currier & Ives lithograph discussed earlier. The 4th Alabama Volunteer Infantry Regiment (African Descent) was renamed the 106th U.S. Regiment Colored Troops on May 16, 1864. The roster is unavailable.¹³

The extensive testimony of only one witness, a slave named John Ford, appears in the claim. Ford had made his way to Selma

¹³Foner, *Reconstruction*, p. 10, Note 18; Only about 100 blacks received commissions in the USCT (United States Colored Troops). At this stage of the war, local commanders occasionally and haphazardly made appointments that were never officially recognized

after his master, a young man from Texas, had been captured near Nashville. He was employed by Turner to drive a wagon, mostly hauling wood, and one omnibus up until Turner “got ready & fixed up and went off with them (Wilson’s army).” He also said, “He got a suit of clothes to put on – blue army clothes – and he had a sword & one of these carbines or guns.” Ford verified that just about all of Turner’s property (rolling stock, animals and fodder) were used or taken and that was the basis of the settlement

Turner’s written testimony for the Southern Claims Commission is obviously in his own words and is quite different from the elegant and grandiose language of his supporting remarks for the two bills for which he was denied floor time. The remarks are published in the Appendix to the Congressional Globe for the second session, 42nd Congress. The complete remarks for both bills: the first – On the bill providing for the erection of public buildings in the city of Selma, Alabama, dated May 30, 1872, page 530, and the second – On a petition and memorial praying Congress and the country to refund the cotton tax, dated May 31, 1872, page 540, are printed in Middleton’s book but are also available on the internet. The first paragraph of the former bill illustrates the character of the approximately 2700 words in the bills:¹⁴

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, in April last I had the honor to introduce a bill in this House providing for the erection of public buildings in the city of Selma, Alabama, suitable for the pressing demands of business and commerce in that growing city. That bill has been referred to the Committee on Public Grounds, and without knowing what their report might be, I desire to offer some reasons to this house why the bill should pass at once. And before proceeding further, let me say to the members of the House that I am earnest and pressing for the passage of this bill, and I shall not

¹⁴<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwcglink.html#anchor4>

relinquish one foot of ground until I shall have succeeded in my efforts. The people of Selma have been magnanimous toward me; they have buried in the tomb of oblivion many of those animosities upon which we hear so many eloquent appeals in this Chamber; and I intend to stand by and labor for them in their need and desolation. In doing this I repay personal kindness, resent wrong by upholding right, and at the same time advocate a measure of necessity to the Government of my country.

In 1985 two black fraternal organizations began a campaign to erect a monument on the grave of Congressman Benjamin S. Turner. A bi-racial committee was formed and the *Selma – Times Journal* reminded Selma’s citizens of Turner’s roll in winning amnesty for their grandfathers, and the money for an impressive marker was quickly raised. United States Senator (and Admiral) Jeremiah Denton, Alabama’s first Republican Senator since Reconstruction attended the ceremony and paid tribute to Turner’s patriotism.¹⁵

¹⁵ Alton Fitts III., *Selma – Queen City of the Black Belt*, (Selma, Alabama, Clairmont Press, 1989), p. 166.

**Off to the Races:
Horse Racing in the Tennessee Valley
By Nancy Rohr**



In the darkness of the evening of November 12, 1833, many southerners, and Alabamians in particular, suddenly found religion. The exception may have been Archibald Clemens, who earlier that night had apparently abandoned his religion and attended the horse races in Florence, Alabama, and won, it was said, a large sum of money. He might have changed his mind about religion on the way home, however, because almost everyone who experienced the amazing Leonid meteor shower recalled it as “The Night the Stars Fell on Alabama.” Closer to Huntsville on that same night, at the nearby Pulaski Pike Track, reports of “wild confusion erupted as sportsmen, planters, sinners and angels alike sought refuge – under chairs, tables, beds – even squatting in corners with their heads covered by their coats.”¹

Although the unique meteor display astounded those living in the Tennessee Valley, horse racing had become commonplace in northern Alabama by the 1830s. Practically

¹ John Withers Clay to his brother, C. C. Clay, Jr., Nov. 22, 1833, in Clement C. Clay Papers, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; James Record, *A Dream Come True*, Vol. I, (Huntsville, Alabama, John Hicklin Printing, 1970), p. 81.

every family owned at least one horse that could be used for work or transportation. Probated inventories noted strawberry roans, bays, yearling colts, sorrels, a gray horse, and even a flea-bitten mare. Most were listed by name, unlike other anonymous animals of a household estate. Stray horses and other animals were taken up and held at the county seat, advertised, and sold by the stray-master or ranger. Tavern owners often charged more for keeping a horse overnight than for keeping its master in a shared bed with three or more other bedfellows. By 1838 the county government taxed residents ten cents for every hundred dollars of town property, fifty cents on every hundred dollars worth of pleasure carriages and harness, fifty cents on every race, saddle, and carriage horse; and ten dollars for every race track. Not to discriminate against other possible “sins,” the county also assessed a twenty-five cent tax on every deck of playing cards and \$150 for every billiard table.²

Because horses were so necessary and valued by their owners, there was a universal loathing of horse thieves. Local citizens would immediately spread the word of a horse theft, telling neighbors of their loss and whom they suspected of the crime. Communities often hanged horse thieves as punishment for their offense. In East Tennessee, one culprit had his ears nailed to a board, and then cut off, a punishment many deemed too tenderhearted. After he was freed from the board, the thief was branded with a T on one cheek. Such visible marks led some to look suspiciously at newcomers who wore wigs long after the fashion had faded in post-Revolutionary War America.³

Whenever men gathered it was only natural to see whose horse might be the fastest. Quarter racing, the most popular form of local racing, required participants to race a quarter mile, rewarding quick acceleration and sustained speed. Horse owners often spent the day repeating these quarter races for enjoyment and sport. Young southerners learned to ride at an early age, and before their teens, most boys had learned how to handle a horse

² Record, *Dream Come True*, p. 214.

³ Harriette Simpson Arnow, *Flowering of the Cumberland*. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 211.

well. This was apparently an equal opportunity event with one observer noting that in the South “the poorer sort are fond of drinking, gambling and horse racing, the rich are fond of the same sports.” Not surprisingly, many races ended in fisticuffs and duels, ruining an otherwise nice day or even ending a life.⁴

These gatherings became a time when white women, men, and children, both rich and poor, could mix freely. Of course, after the women and children went home, the men likely lingered to discuss the merits of the races while enjoying cigars and whiskey and perhaps playing cards. Many of the men would have added up their losses along the way home, perhaps already planning how to make it up at the next race day.



1879 *Harper's* Sketch of Horse Gambler

Northerners did not embrace horse racing as much as southerners, because, as one observer noted, the historical legacy of “the Puritan fathers had punished any citizen who fished, hunted, sailed, danced, jumped, rode – except to and from church – or worked on Sunday.” Northerners might suggest superiority in many things, but life was different in the South, where “They

⁴ Grady McWhiney, *Cracker Culture*. (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1988), p.106.

work, run, swear, and drink here on Sundays just as they do on any other day of the week. They have boat parties, riding parties, hunting parties, fishing parties, drinking parties, gambling parties, and dancing parties. And the Sabbath is almost invariably the day for horse races, and military parades.”⁵

After all, in this new country almost anyone with daring might succeed. Gambling was not uncommon, perhaps even considered “manly.” Andrew Jackson became one of the most admired men in the South, according to legend, after he, in the spring of 1788, entered “Jonesborough, Tennessee riding one horse, leading another, and followed by a pack of fox hounds.” Within his first year there, Jackson practiced law, fought a duel, and rode his horse in a race. One modern historian has suggested that “It was not customary for frontiersmen to fight duels or for newly licensed young lawyers without financial backing to own a race horse. His [Jackson] legal fees could hardly have supported his establishment and his pretensions. The only obvious conclusion is that he found racing profitable. And the gambling that goes with it.”⁶

As more settlers arrived in Madison County, the landed gentry made every effort to be seen as culturally refined. Wealthy residents paid to send their children to good schools and financed a library and a theatre. They also invested in good horses for racing. The studhorse or broodmare became a fixture on many large plantations. A slave often worked and slept with top horses because they were seen as being “a valuable animal, an especial object of taxation, carefully tended, fattened, and rested.”⁷ Gentlemen often gathered to swap or race their horses as a way to show off their investments.

In September 1819 the Green Bottom Inn Jockey Club announced that it would sponsor the Madison Colt Sweepstakes just four miles northeast of Huntsville. There may have been

⁵ McWhiney, *Cracker Culture*, pp. 180, 179.

⁶ Abernethy, Thomas Perkins, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee – A Study in Frontier Democracy*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Univ. North Carolina Press, 1932), p. 123.

⁷ Arnow, *Flowering of the Cumberland*, 205.

some sort of unseemly behavior during previous races, because in January of the following year John Connolly placed a notice in the *Alabama Republican* to “Gentlemen Sportsmen.” He encouraged those interested in breeding and racing horses to form a new jockey club that would enforce rules and regulations that would stop unfair racing and cheating, noting that “as my race ground was originally opened for the admission of *Gentlemen* only, I hope none others will presume to intrude themselves upon the new club.” The initial meeting of the new club would be on the first Thursday in August.⁸

Cyclops, a horse originally owned by Willis Pope, LeRoy Pope’s son, might have been one of the horses at the Sweepstake, but unfortunately, according to the local newspapers in 1820, Alfred Davis had been accused of stealing the horse. Young Mr. Pope offered a reward for his “nicked tail sorrel horse 13 hands high, paces and walks remarkably fast, a snip in the forelock, short thick neck, very deep through shoulders, long back and one of his fore and hind feet are white.” There was a reward of twenty-five dollars for delivery of the horse or fifty dollars for horse and thief. This amount was surprisingly substantial considering that the reward for a runaway slave in the same issue of the newspaper had been set at two dollars or twenty dollars for the slave and horse he took. Eventually Cyclops was returned but was stolen again with a new article noting that the horse was “about 5 feet high, paces at rate of 12 miles per hour and walks remarkable fast.... He is a horse that would attract very little attention unless when moving, then looks remarkable fine... Seen on Georgia road 8 days ago.” The new owner, Alexander Erskine, offered a reward of \$100. Indeed a fine horse.⁹

Local horse owners interested in racing became consumed with improving their stock. They imported thoroughbreds from Europe as a way to gain an edge. James Jackson had imported prize horses to New Orleans and enjoyed prestige at agricultural shows that were becoming important

⁸ *Alabama Republican*, September 25, 1819; January 29, 1820.

⁹ Nancy M. Rohr, “News from Huntsville, 1820,” *Huntsville Historical Review* vol. 26, #1 (Winter-Spring 1999), pp. 18, 19.

throughout the South. John Connolly, a local breeder and owner of racehorses in Huntsville, advertised in March 1820 that the celebrated turf horse, Telemachus, would remain in his stable for the racing season. Another prominent local sportsman purchased Gray Gander, considered by some to be the fastest horse in the world, for \$10,000.¹⁰

It was at Connolly's Green Bottom Inn that Andrew Jackson brought his fighting cocks and racehorses for the fall season of 1819. An astute politician, Jackson's timing served him well because he knew that Huntsville was bursting with delegates to serve at the state Constitutional Convention. He stayed at the inn during his appearance while representatives met. Jackson, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, made new friendships and renewed old ones during his visit. Most likely General Jackson knew James Jackson (no relation), who had moved from Nashville to Florence, Alabama. James Jackson was recognized for his imported horses that he bred and raced from his fine home, Forks of Cypress. His horses included: Leviathan, imported in 1830; Galopade in 1835; and Glencoe in 1836. Jackson had two stallions and a mare that produced offspring that made his stables a prominent fixture in American turf racing. Jackson's nephew, Thomas Kirkman Jr., continued Jackson's legacy after a horse he owned became immortalized in a Currier and Ives print that showed 70,000 plus spectators attending the "Race Between the North and the South" in 1845.¹¹

Captain Nick Davis Sr. was also noted as "a patron of the turf and carried out in his Alabama home all the attributes of a Virginia Gentlemen of the approved school." It was common knowledge that he and his friends might ride or walk their horses around the town square of Athens on many Saturday afternoons.

¹⁰ James Douglas Anderson, *Making the American Thoroughbred, Especially in Tennessee, 1800-1895*. (Norwood, Massachusetts: Plimpton Press, 1916), pp. 9, 87 <<http://books.google.com/books?id> > April 7, 2009; *Alabama Republican*, March 11, 1820; Edward Chambers Betts, *Early History of Huntsville, Alabama, 1804-1870*. (Birmingham, Alabama: Southern University Press, 1909, rpt. 1966), p. 34.

¹¹ Curtis Parker Flowers, "Thoroughbred Horses at Muscle Shoals, *Alabama Heritage*, Spring 2006, p. 29.

This demonstration often enticed men to complete their business on the town square and join in the sport. Riders, watchers, and gamblers mingled, cheered, or bemoaned their fate at the quarter mile racetrack at the edge of town. If that was not enough to attract spectators, other men might organize cock fights, dog and bear fights, often intermingled with fistfights. On occasion these races halted the judicial process so that the judge, the accused, lawyers, witnesses, and the jury could attend.¹²

Gentlemen gathered to race in nearby Morgan County at Valhermosa's White Sulphur Springs Resort and at Simeon Gideon's Sulphur Springs sixteen miles northeast of Huntsville. In 1824, Lewis H. Deloney established a new track called Fairfield, located four miles west of Huntsville. Otey Robinson organized jockey races at the Pulaski Pike Race Track. If the sweepstakes or the club purse was not enough to gather a crowd, a challenge was issued to anyone within hearing distance for a match race for pride and vanity and perhaps a little money.¹³

John Connolly, "an extensive breeder of blood stock, and a turf-man of some renown, also bred a racehorse he named John Bascomb." Apparently a Methodist camp meeting had been held on Connolly's plantation, and the Reverend John Bascombe was a distinguished preacher at the revival. As a compliment Connolly asked Bascombe if he could name a colt in his honor. Connolly later sold the horse to his son-in-law, Major John Blevins. If Connolly lamented selling the colt to his son-in-law, Blevins likely regretted his sale of the horse to Colonel John Crowell of Fort Mitchell, Alabama, in 1835. Extraordinary influential, Crowell served as a delegate to the Alabama Territory and state of Alabama in the United States House of Representatives between 1818 and 1821. A year after the purchase and after a victory that secured a \$17,000 purse in Augusta, Georgia, Crowell took his Huntsville-bred horse to

¹² Thomas McAdory Owen, *Dictionary of Alabama Biography* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publ., 1921), p. 469; Robert Dunnavent Jr., *Historic Limestone County* (Athens, Alabama: Pea Ridge Press, 1993), vol. 1, p. 7.

¹³ Record, *Dream Come True*, pp. 64, 65, 79; Anderson, *Making the American Thoroughbred*, p. 13.

New York and offered to race Post Boy, an unbeaten dark chestnut from New York at the Union Race Course on Long Island. John Bascomb's handlers walked the horse the entire 850 miles to allow admirers a chance to see the famed colt. Gamblers from across the country placed bets on the race, mostly on the northern horse. In what would become one of the most celebrated horse races of the nineteenth century, the contest began, as one poet remember, as "the drum was sounded by the judge . . . Bascomb won the first and second heat . . . taking in the knowing Northerners by the witty minded Southerners." Southerners rejoiced at the victory, and John Bascomb returned to the South amid great fanfare.¹⁴



Painted by Edward Troye

The painting is currently on loan from Yale and on display at the Museum of Racing in Saratoga Springs, New York.

¹⁴ *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*. July 1836, American Periodicals Series Online, pg. 305 (hereafter cited as *Turf*); *Turf*, May 1837, APSO, p.385; Untitled 1836 poem by Isaac Michael Dyckman.

Elijah Henry Boardman and John Boardman, brothers from Whitesborough, New York, helped change early Madison County and local horseracing after their arrival in 1818. John Boardman (1791-1844) entered the Alabama Territory and first settled in Cotaco (now Morgan) County, where he was appointed county clerk. He resigned this position because he had already moved to Madison County in time for the meeting of the delegates to write the new state constitution. His residence, which also housed his printing office, was located on the corner of Gates and Madison Streets, now reconstructed within Alabama Constitution Village. Seven slaves and at least one apprentice maintained his household and businesses ventures. He became the editor of the *Alabama Republican*, a highly-respected newspaper distributed throughout the old Southwest. In January 1818 he was appointed to publish Alabama's public laws because he was likely one of the few residents in Madison County to own a printing press. Boardman was also given the business of printing the new state constitution in 1819. Within a year he became an attorney, noting that he would attend to the collection of debts in the Tennessee River counties. Boardman pledged that any business entrusted to his care would be promptly and faithfully conducted; something that would haunt him in later years.¹⁵

With the power of the newspaper behind him, Boardman gained a great deal of political influence and helped establish important community institutions. He supported the establishment of a state bank and later the development of the Muscle Shoals Canal, of which he became a director. He organized the first library in Alabama with the help of local citizens who raised thousands of dollars in subscriptions to buy books. Boardman served as the library's director, secretary, and librarian. Located next door to the printing office on the street leading to Ditto's Landing, the library was open to readers on Tuesdays or Fridays between 11:30 and 12:30. Along with his business enterprises in Huntsville, Boardman was also appointed

¹⁵ *Alabama Republican*, August 18, 1819; December 14, 1819; Federal Census Madison County, Alabama.

County Ranger to take care of stray animals, return them to their owner, or dispose of them through sale at the courthouse. For a fee he also used his newspaper to print lists of animals captured in the county.¹⁶

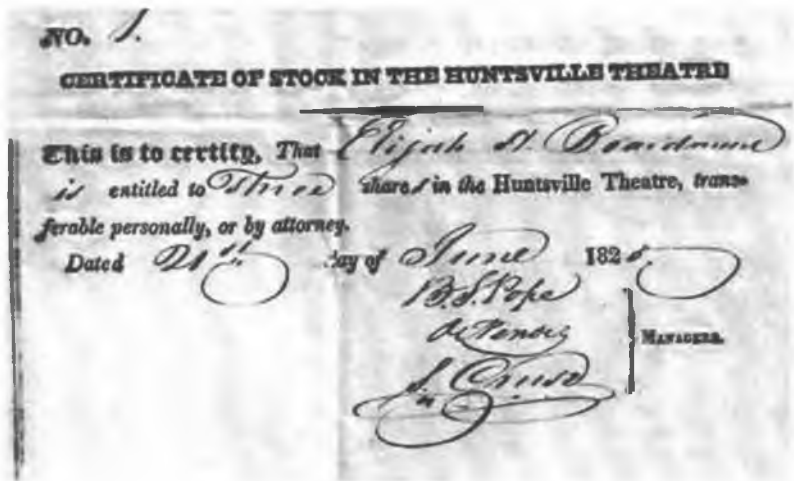
Not everyone was pleased with this Yankee interloper. It was perhaps fortunate in the days when men still challenged one another to duels with pistols that newspapermen mostly fought their duels in print. William B. Long, editor of another local newspaper, assailed Boardman as that “butter-faced Editor,” and “sweet-mouthed Editor” full of tricks. He even ridiculed Boardman’s looks, describing Boardman as having a “smooth-gourded pate.” When Boardman decided to put his press for sale in December of 1824, Long seemed sorry to hear that, “for we wish to keep him as our fool.” In 1825 the Huntsville *Democrat* had lambasted Boardman as “the pompous little Yankee schoolmaster...a stripling of a Yankee, of whom we know nothing. How he came here and how he left Yankee land nobody knows.”¹⁷

Elijah Henry Boardman, John’s brother, also purchased land in the newly opened section of Madison County on the first day it was legal to obtain property from the Chickasaw Indian annexation in February 1818. He settled on just over 1,000 acres, conveniently located nine miles southwest of Huntsville and seven miles northeast of Triana. His property extended from just west of what is now the Redstone Arsenal airfield to east of Zierdt Road. Boardman had married into wealth while still living in New York, and he and his family quickly settled into a

¹⁶ Daniel S. Dupree, *Transforming the Cotton Frontier: Madison County, Alabama, 1800-1840*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 7, 109, 139, 120; Sarah Huff Fisk, *Civilization Comes to the Big Spring: Huntsville, Alabama, 1823*. (Huntsville, Alabama: Pinhook Publ., 1997), pp. 119, 120, 140, 159; Fisk, *Civilization Comes to the Big Springs*, pp. 119, 120; *Alabama Republican*, August 3, 1821; Rhoda Coleman Ellison, *Early Alabama Publications*, (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1947), pp. 26, 90.

¹⁷ See Alabama Constitution Village (formerly Constitution Hall Park) Factual History of Constitutional Hall Complex manual F008, no date, no page number.

comfortable planter lifestyle in Huntsville. By 1830 Boardman was firmly settled in Madison County and owned thirty-five slaves on his plantation called Boardman's Mills. It would be here that he decided to create a breeding stable for race horses.¹⁸



Boardman's rise as a horse breeder coincided with broader regional coverage of races in Huntsville and Florence in the *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*. Although the magazine published articles about fishing, fox hunting, the newly invented cartridge rifle, mule races, and pigeon shooting, it also reported on horse racing and breeding and in the United

¹⁸ Margaret Matthews Cowart, *Old Land Records of Madison County, Alabama* (Huntsville, Alabama: self published, no date), pp. 163-165; Cuyler Reynolds, comp. *Genealogical and Family History of Southern New York and the Hudson River* (New York: Lewis Historical Pub., 1914), vol. 3, p.1244; Frances Cabiness Roberts Collection, Dept. of Archives/Special Collections. M. Louis Salmon Library, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Huntsville, Alabama, Series 9: Fearn & Donegan Papers, Box 9, Boardman folder, #9. (Hereafter cited as Boardman Papers.)

<<http://books.google.com/books?id=>>, February 7, 2009; Edward DeSantis, Oneida County, New York Historical Society, telephone interview by author, April 27, 2009; 1830 Federal Census, Madison County, Alabama.

States. Horse breeding had become so important that the magazine refused to report on any horse without an established pedigree. It was more important to catalog the success of each stallion's offspring rather than the runners themselves. Although many news items in the *Turf Register* were anonymous or signed with a single letter, John Broadman, newspaper man and the brother of a well-known Alabama horse breeder wrote with flair and knowledge and signed his full name.¹⁹

Breeders and owners in Madison and Limestone County enjoyed extended coverage in the magazine over the years. For instance, at the Huntsville fall meet in 1832, James W. Camp's horse, Whalebone, and John Connolly's Molly Long won heats. On the second day, winners included Simon Kenton, owned by Nick Davis, and Pocahontas, owned by John Connolly. The next day Camp's horse, Longwaist; Davis's horse, Purdy; Connolly's Lincoln; and Major Gee's horse, Sally Moore, were big winners. On the fourth day, winners included Connolly's Pocahontas, Camps' Frozenhead, and Gee's horse, Hercules. The times of the heats were posted by John W. Otey. Clearly some of these men were racing from a stable that included several horses. And these are just the listed top winners. More horses would have participated. At the spring meet next year, the usual owners and their horses raced, but also newcomers, at least to the winner's circle, included locals Valentine G. Pruitt and Maj. William M. Robinson. The purses on the first day were \$382, on the second day, \$282 and on the last day, \$266.²⁰

The trading of these racehorses involved more than local owners. For instance John Blevins' horse, Wild Bill, ran in the Union Course on Long Island and traveled to races in the North. He raced in Virginia, New York, South Carolina, again in Virginia, and before eventually ending in Tennessee. At the Huntsville Jockey Club's fall races, Wild Bill easily beat Camp's Longwaist and Captain Davis's Brunswick, setting a course

¹⁹ *Turf*, Sept. 1832, APSO, 30; *Turf*, September 1832, APSO, 30.

²⁰ *Turf*, May 1833, APSO, 648.

record. After traveling 160 miles to Tuscaloosa, he won all three races that fall and ran at Montgomery and Lowndes County.²¹

The July 1836 issue of the *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine* contained a lengthy article about the horse John Bascomb. Much of that material had been recounted earlier, but the writer referred to other horses bred by John Connolly, noting "it is performance that stamps their value; without they can excel in that, they are worthless for the turf, and still worse for improving the breed." The writer suggested that the farmer and breeder should have frequent meetings for judging and testing the powers of the horse. At the same time, the writer noted several good breeding establishments such as "Mr. E.H. Boardman, Esq. [who] has an extensive stud, both of native and imported mares." Although the article had been written by someone named "Amateur," the amount of local information provided suggests that John Boardman might have been the author.²²

Elijah and John Boardman used British racing standards and breeding to change American racing trends. In 1837 Elijah traveled to England, perhaps with his brother, to buy new horses. With the assistance of Richard Tattersall, a noted British horseman, Elijah purchased nineteen select mares to export to the United States. Elijah first imported the stallion Berners' Comus, a son of the famous racer, Lottery, and a few mares. All the horses he purchased were from noted English studs, several from the royal stables. This was the largest shipment of brood mares brought over by a single breeder, and Boardman established a stud farm of almost wholly English-bred animals. The descendants of these horses included Miss Foote, one of the United States' greatest racehorses, that won thirteen of her fifteen races. Hamlet, bred by Boardman in Madison County was a grandsire to the great American broodmare Dixie. The imported Shamrock, arrived *in utero* with his mother at the New

²¹ *Turf*, May 1836, APSO, p. 385.

²² *Turf*, July 1836, APSO, p. 490.

York City dock.²³ One might wonder how these imported thoroughbreds found their way to Madison County—the old fashioned way, of course, one hoof at a time, walking.



The editor of the most prominent horse racing journal, *Spirit of the Times*, wrote of Boardman's Madison County enterprise. "It is the only establishment of its kind in the United States and conducted upon a scale so grand, both in regard to the extent and quality and value of its stock, as to rival the most celebrated studs in England."²⁴

The October 1836 issue of the *Turf Register* contained detailed articles on two of Boardman's imported horses. Design, a bay filly, had an extensive list of race accomplishments in England. She had even better points for racing in the United States where longer heats and her higher form indicated "endurance as well as speed." Delight had arrived also in the fall

²³ *Turf*; May 1844, APSO, p. 305; Anderson, *Making the American Thoroughbred*, p. 127; <<http://www.thheritage.com/Portraits/Dixie.html>> Feb. 2, 2009; Hervey, *Racing in America*, pp. 105-110.

²⁴ Anderson, *Making the American Thoroughbred*, 127.

of 1835 in New York City with a colt foal at her feet. Delight's performances included extensive victories at fashionable English courses. One editor of the magazine noted that "if she breeds as she has run, she is herself a fortune!"²⁵

Despite the financial problems created by the Panic of 1837, the organizers of the autumn races in Huntsville increased the entry fees and race purses. On the last day of racing the entry fee was \$50, and Samuel Ragland won the purse of \$700. Similar races were held in Greensboro and two weeks later in Tuscumbia. Three different horses owned by Captain Davis placed in the three-day meet at Florence.²⁶ Race reports made it clear that local men were maintaining respectable stables in order to win the growing purses. These purses were comparable to or excelled those awarded at tracks in Virginia and Kentucky. The Huntsville Association Course offered four days of racing in early November of 1838. Interest in them was so high, two additional races were held on Tuesday and Saturday with the Tuesday offering a \$2,500 purse. Among the winners during the four days were some of the usual names—James Camp, Ragland & Davis, William Fleming, John Connolly, and newcomers Waddy Tate, James T. Skykes and Charles McLaran, who entered three different horses.²⁷

In the winter 1839 issue of the *Turf Register*, organizers announced plans for the "Peyton Stakes" in Nashville. Although they were not specifically named, four of the thirty subscribers were from Alabama and each put up \$5,000 for the planned race. The "manly sports of the turf" was gaining interest as jockey clubs were "organizing race courses laid out by gentlemen of character, wealth and spirit to breed stock." John Connolly offered to race Gander, a half brother to John Bascomb, to race a four-mile heat against any horse, mare or gelding in the United States for \$5,000 at the track in Huntsville by June 1844.²⁸

²⁵ *Turf*, October 1836, APSO, p. 73.

²⁶ *Turf*, April 1838, APSO, p.177.

²⁷ *Turf*, January/February 1839, APSO, p. 91.

²⁸ *Turf*, January/February 1839, APSO, p. 107.

The May/June 1839 issue of the *Register* announced the death of Consol. The horse had gained an enviable reputation on the turf before becoming a breed stud. On April 23, 1839, Consol died from an intestinal illness after a few days of suffering. He had been considered the best son of Lottery which had been imported by Elijah Boardman. Another article noted that Boardman sold Malibran, an imported brood mare, for \$3000 to Charles McLaren Esq. of Decatur, Alabama.²⁹ Later in September 1839 the *Register* published a detailed list of Boardman's bloodstock used for breeding at the Mills. Each horse was listed with pedigree and performance. The listing ran for six pages and finished with a recapitulation of two imported stallions, nineteen imported brood mares, one native brood mare, two two-year fillies, nine yearling colts, six yearling fillies, six colt foals born in 1839, and eight fillies born in 1839. Boardman's farm housed fifty-three horses. The list did not mention any horses for sale.³⁰ Boardman's excellent stock proved to be productive and in the winter 1839 Shamrock won a race. Unfortunately he lost a \$2,000 side bet race the same day, and his horses were not winners in any of the remaining five races. By the time of these races Boardman had entered into a partnership with Charles McLaran. Six weeks later under this partnership, Shamrock won another race in Florence as did another one of the partner's horse. Two weeks later, Shamrock placed first on Thursday and Friday, and their horse Maria Brown won first on Saturday at the races in Tuscumbia. Boardman and McLaren continued to win. Three of their horses placed or won five of the races including a \$500 side bet. The horses may have been the drawing cards, but it is clear that large sums of money were being wagered.³¹ The influence of the Panic of 1837 eventually hit Madison County like the rest of the nation, however, and the severe economic depression may explain why Boardman and McLaran had become partners. They split their

²⁹ *Turf*, May/June 1839, APSO, p. 354; September 1839, APSO, p.

530.

³⁰ *Turf*, September 1839, APSO, p. 532.

³¹ *Turf*, December 1839, APSO, p. 25.

winnings equally and surviving documents suggest that McLaran boarded all of Boardman's horses and hands by 1840.³²

At the October 1840 Huntsville races, horses owned by Boardman and McLaran won or placed in two of the five races. Six of their horses, however, won races for different owners after being sold because of economic necessity. Later in early 1841 Boardman had one horse place second out of the eight races. Although races were listed at other Alabama locations that included Hayneville, Tuscumbia, Florence and Selma, Boardman had no horses racing at those locations.³³ At a larger race in Nashville in May 1841, Boardman and McLaran ran two horses that did not perform well.

The postmaster at Holly Springs, Mississippi, submitted the next major Huntsville-related racing news. The *Turf Register* announced with poignant regret the death of John Boardman. Boardman had been a frequent correspondent on the subject to which he was almost exclusively devoted. He, by "industry, probity, and the faithful discharge of Literature of the day, will vie with the most valuable and interesting essays in the language."³⁴ Boardman had suffered extensive financial losses during the Panic of 1837 and many of his schemes had caught up with him. His power of attorney to the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb School in Hartford, Connecticut, had been revoked. At that point he owed \$37,000 to the school for sales of Alabama land grant the school had received.³⁵ There is little doubt that he had other debts that he could not pay in Madison County. It is impossible to know if the panic or gambling debts caused his financial collapse, but Boardman fled to France before returning home to face his obligations in Alabama and Connecticut. Family members rallied around him in order to help him and save their personal reputations. Elijah Boardman absorbed the bulk of the debt by offering his farm, slaves, and

³² Boardman Papers.

³³ *Turf*, December 1841, APSO, p. 41.

³⁴ *Turf*, May 1844, APSO, p. 305.

³⁵ That amount today would convert to approximately \$1.5 million; in actual buying power it would be even more. Thank you David R. Grzybowski.

most of his horses as collateral. In May 1841, while in Nashville, Boardman sold slaves named Harry, Minnow, Lee, Tom, William, Richard, Virgil, and King to McLaren after the New Orleans races in the fall of 1842. In the same agreement he planned to sell the blood colts Hamlet by Miss Filly and a bay, Chronometer, by Consul.³⁶

Financial woes eventually forced the Boardman to offer his best horse up for stud. A handbill in February 1842 noted that Shamrock had been bred at Boardman's Mills in 1836, and that his pedigree had been one "of the richest and purest strain, combining the stoutest, the speediest and the hardiest crosses." Shamrock had won his first race in Huntsville in 1839 and continued to do well through 1840. He lost his only race in New Orleans in 1840 because he was not acclimated to the track. At Nashville he won twice and at Columbia, four days later, he won the purse. He "won 6 out of 7 races, and those who saw them, will not soon forget the ease with which he caught, passed and beat, the fleetest and stoutest of his competitors, and the game style of finishing his work." Shamrock would be available to cover mares at the Huntsville Race Track that season at \$15 cash when the service is rendered. Mares from a distance would be kept at the track, or nearby, at a reasonable price.³⁷

³⁶ Gary Wait, telephone interview by author, March 20, 2009; Boardman Papers.

³⁷ Boardman Papers.

SHAMROCK,

Will cover more of the Haverhill Race Track the Season of 1862, at \$15 each down when the entries is rendered. Mares from a distance will be well kept at the track, or in the neighborhood, at a reasonable charge, to be paid when taken away.

SHAMROCK is a rich Chestnut, a short-legged, strong and compact horse, about 15 hands high, with a broad, deep and capacious chest, heavy as many of 16 hands, and very well fitted—He is in the highest form and best size for useful and betting service, either under the saddle or in the race—immense speed, easy action and great power—in every particular perfectly sound and in blooming health—with the best temper in the world, he has the heart of a Lion, reflecting courage and high spirit. He could beat all his contemporaries for speed, and so has ever foisted a race in more beautiful style.

Shamrock's get will probably mature early, which is a consideration with owners, at the same time, his price is so low, that all who have good common or half bred mares, may improve their stock at the cheapest rate by sending to him. No horse of equal merit has ever been offered to the public in such advantageous terms, less than one third the price his owners would command in England, where he was got.

PEDIGREE.

Shamrock was bred at Boardman's Mills, near Haverhill, Mass. in 1850—was got in England by St. Patrick (who covered at the stud of Mr. Thornhill, owner of the celebrated Election, sire of Prison—Delight by Reveller—and of Dodman by Robson—out of Lavinia Polly by Highland Flieg—out of Harriet by Valentin (son of Eclipse) out of Lady Sarah's dam by Alfred (son of Matchless) out of Magnolia by Mark's (sire of Election)—Buckingham—Cincinnati—Childers, &c. &c.

St. Patrick (sire of Shamrock) was by Walton (son of Sir Peter) out of a Dick Andrew mare, a rare union of speed and stamina. He won all his races at 2 years old, among them the great St. Leger of 1820—17 horse starting, and was the best of his year.

Delight (dam of Shamrock) was an uncommonly good racer; she lost the celebrated Hurdson—won the Drawing-room stakes at Goodwood for 3 years old, carrying 117 lbs. 2 1-2 miles, 20 minutes, and was a good winner at long distances over the most popular courses in England.

Reveller (sire of Delight) was got by Cannon out of Rosette by Donistrough—was winner of the great St.

Lager, 21 horse starting, among them three of the get of Cannon, which ran for 24, 25, and 26.

Dodman (dam of Delight) was a famous brood mare, having produced Delinee, a very popular stallion, Douglass, winner of the Derby in 1823, and now a distinguished sire in the French King's stud—Design (sire of Despair &c. &c. Delight and Design were both imported to E. H. Boardman, Esq. in 1825 and were sold to James Jackson and Capt. Davis for \$2000 each.

Those who are acquainted with the English Stud Book and Racing Calendar, will see at once that the pedigree is of the richest and purest strain, combining the greatest, the speediest and the hardest cross, and constituting in a single individual all that gives value to the thorough bred horse. Shamrock's size and the size of his dam were winners of the great St. Leger, which placed them at the head of the turf; his dam was also a very successful racer, and so certain as "like begets like" his colts must be good racers. His deeds upon the turf have obtained in this country the well earned fame of his progenitors in England, but from a casualty which occurred in 1840, the career was cut short in his prime.

PERFORMANCES.

Shamrock's first appearance was at Haverhill, fall of 1850, when he won a sweepstakes for 3 years old, \$200 each, \$100 forfeit, 2 mile heats, 5 subdivisions, beating Maj. Gov's br. C by Levitation, and a Ludlowham filly of Maj. Ragland's, in two heats.

At Florence, same fall, he was J. Chas. Paine, 2 mile heats, beating Folly Fisher and Emily Speed, both by Levitation, in the remarkable good time (for that course) of 2 58-3 24—was chief.

At Taunton, the next week, he was J. C. Paine, 1 mile heats, beating two others.

1840—At Mobile, Spring meeting, he was beaten when in bad condition, by Albee Brown, 2 mile heats, after winning 1st heat. This is the only race he ever lost, having arrived at Mobile a few days previously, and not acclimated, he was unable to run.

At Nashville, fall of 1840, he won J. C. Paine, 1 mile heats, beating Marie Williams by Levitation, Lady

Franklin by Ludlowham, and another, in 1 58-1 29—was easily in deep mud.

At some places, two days afterwards, he was puny, 2 heat in 3, beating Wesley Madison, Betz (winner of 1st heat) both by Levitation and another, in 2 58-1 58-3 01 and 1 57—course still very muddy.

At Columbia, four days afterwards, he was J. C. Paine, 2 mile heats, beating Emily Speed, Alfred, and two others, in 2 54-3 25—A capital race for that course.

After this race, the injury to one of his fore legs, caused long previously, by striking some hard substance in his track, increased to such extent that it was thought expedient to withdraw him from the turf. Thus it is shown, that he won 6 out of 7 races, and those who saw them, will not soon forget the ease with which he caught, passed and beat, the fastest and stoutest of his competitors, and the game style of finishing his work.

JOHN MENIFEE.

FEBRUARY, 1862.

The Boardman brothers hoped to reestablish themselves in Holly Springs after losing so much in Madison County. Rumors of new railroads and exciting opportunities lured them to Mississippi. By early April 1843, John Boardman had moved to Waterford, Mississippi, a small town near Holly Springs. James J. Donegan, Elijah's cotton factor in Huntsville, wrote to John, noting that Elijah had become incapacitated with rheumatism. Donegan worried that Elijah would not be able to tend to his business, and Donegan was looking for instructions from John.

Mired in Chancery Court and burdened with heavy debt, Elijah eventually sold about 1,055 acres at \$11 per acre to Thomas Fearn, Donegan, Samuel Cruise, and George P. Beirne. Elijah's wife had to also relinquish her dower interests in the land. The Asylum would then deduct the amount owed from the land sale and the balance would go to the Boardman brothers. If the Deaf and Dumb Asylum accepted the offer, the title would to be conveyed in fee simple. On the same day George P. Beirne became trustee of any funds for Elijah Boardman in Madison County. An inventory of Boardman's possessions sold, including the horses and slaves, totaled \$3,976.77 after paying off debts.³⁸

THE ENGLISH RACE HORSE

CONSOL,

Imported by *E. H. Boardman, 1825*, is now offered to the public, to improve the breed of Horses in the South West he makes his first season, the present year, commencing 1st March and ending 1st July, at **BOARDMAN'S MILLS**, Madison County, Alabama, 9 miles South West of Huntsville, and 7 miles North East of Trona, at \$600, within the season, or \$750 paid at the end of the year.

E. H. BOARDMAN.

Boardman's Mills, January 25, 1826.

³⁸ Ibid.

News of John Boardman's death must have come as a surprise to many in Madison County. On December 24, 1844, the probate court in Holly Springs assigned Hugh Walker to serve as the administrator to Boardman's estate. By the next court session, however, Elijah Boardman had replaced Walker as the estate administrator.³⁹ The inventory and value of the goods, chattels, and personal estate of John Boardman included one wagon valued at \$15; one yoke of oxen, \$25; one cow, \$8; one yearlin [sic], \$5. Fifty-three dollars was the sum total of his worth, less \$13 for a hired man in 1842, less taxes, leaving an estate of \$38.94.⁴⁰ Elijah traveled to Mississippi to settle his brother's estate but died soon after arriving in Holly Springs. He also died *in testate*, and some of the same men who had originally been appointed to administer John's estate now assumed responsibility for Elijah Henry Boardman's estate on April 28, 1845. Elijah Boardman's estate consisted of one horse, one pistol, one stallion, six slaves over the age of five and two under the age of five, four parcels of land that included one ½ section of land and three ¼ sections of land; taxes were paid for the sum total of \$42.18. The slaves included the man Lee; Tom; Tom Ky; Jim; a woman, Patsy; a boy, Henry; a boy, Tom; and a child, Hetty.⁴¹ The Mississippi appraisers' inventory of Elijah Boardman's estate included the two stallions, Denison and Chronometer, and one mare and her colt—all that remained of his Madison County stud farm. The total value of his property in Mississippi was \$4349.25. Boardman had been ill for twelve days before dying and had accrued doctor's expenses that had to be paid. As a result Mrs. Boardman's inheritance, after expenses, totaled \$2959.00, far less than the cost of any one of the

³⁹ Betty C. Wiltshire, comp. *Minutes Probate Court, Marshall County, Mississippi*, (Carrolton, Mississippi: Pioneer Pub., n.d.), vol. 3, 1839-1842. p. 76.

⁴⁰ Betty C. Wiltshire, *Minutes Probate Court, Marshall County, Mississippi*, vol. 2, 1840-1845, pp. 44, 45.

⁴¹ Wiltshire, *Minutes Probate Court, Marshall County, Mississippi*, vol. 3, 1839-1842, p. 46; vol. 4, 1845-1847, pp. 99, 121.

imported horses from the 1830s or even some of the bets placed on the outcome of his horses at the races.⁴²

Mrs. Boardman and their daughter must have planned to join Elijah in Mississippi because the two women had left Huntsville on December 16, 1844, with two servants and two horses. They returned to Huntsville on May 20, 1845, where they remained until June 9th.⁴³ The widow and her daughter could not remain in Huntsville for the same reasons the brothers had begun the move to Mississippi. If once socially acknowledged in Madison County, Elijah Boardman and his embezzling brother, John, were now recognized as men not to be trusted, much less acknowledged socially. If southerners were true gentlemen, it was by the good regard of their word. And if New Englanders felt deeply about conscience and guilt, “southerner’s behavior was guided by a sense of honor and its inverse, shame.” Even though the money was returned, in Huntsville the Boardmans would live in judgment of the court of public opinion.⁴⁴

The two women most likely boarded a stagecoach in June 1845 for family or friends who lived in the North. James J. Donegan, who had served as the family’s cotton factor, made arrangements to settle their local debts by July of that year. Household items were put up for sale in Huntsville. The list was long—candle stands, the settees, salt stands, beds, pillows and quilts—all of the accoutrements of breaking up housekeeping. Books took up two pages of the inventory and included titles on horticulture, London and Edinburgh’s Review, four volumes of stud books and three of the racing calendar. Mrs. Boardman authorized James J. Donegan to represent her in any acts involved in settling and arranging the affairs of her deceased husband. Sale of his slaves and horses, less a few debts owed, provided \$3,976.77; sale of their household possessions, less debts owed, provided another \$993.21. After twenty seven years

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Boardman Papers.

⁴⁴ Ariela J. Gross, *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom* (Athens, Georgia, University of Georgia Press, 2006), pp. 47, 48.

of living in Madison County, the Boardman family left with little to show for.⁴⁵

One might only guess about the remaining years of Lucretia and Caroline Boardman. The 1850 federal census found them in a boarding house in Schenectady, New York; at this time, Lucretia was sixty and Caroline was twenty. There was no occupation given for either of them and personal assets. By 1860 they lived in Princeton, New Jersey, but were still together. They owned real estate valued at \$5,000 and had a personal estate estimated to be worth \$16,000. According to one source, Lucretia Miller Boardman died on April 17, 1871, in Huntsville. There is no notation of her burial here. But it is not unreasonable to consider that she could be buried on the former Boardman property in Madison County at the Lipscomb Cemetery or one of the other two unnamed cemeteries nearby.⁴⁶

The story of the Boardman family proved to be an unhappy one. Just consider that Alabama, not Kentucky or Maryland, could have been the home of the Derby or Preakness. Unfortunately for the future of thoroughbred racing in northern Alabama, the fall of the Boardmans' stud farm and stables represented the risks of high stakes horse racing. The brothers were pioneers in the truest sense—leaving home, confronting a frontier, and gambling with imported race horses. Their antebellum passions might be understood by a more recent song about horse racing in American culture:

As fast as you can Your fate is delivered
Your moment's at hand.
From sire to sire It's born in the blood.
The fire of a mare and the strength of a stud.
It's breeding and its training and it's something unknown;
that drives you ...
It's the chance of a lifetime, In a lifetime of chance.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Boardman Papers; Thank you Pamela Marples.

⁴⁶ 1850 Schenectady County, New York; 1860 Federal Census Mercer County, New Jersey; Reynolds, *Genealogical and Family History*, p. 1244.

⁴⁷ Dan Fogelberg, "Run for the Roses."

**The Search for Susan B. Turner Gee:
A Miniature Portrait from Antebellum Huntsville
By Emily Burwell**



Susan B. Turner Gee

Several years ago my husband and I came across a miniature portrait for sale with a Huntsville connection. On the back of the miniature was written, "Painted by John W. Dodge from New York. Huntsville Alabama April 2nd 1839. Likeness of Mrs. Susan B. Gee." Because we try to collect southern antiques, especially those with a Huntsville connection, we purchased the painting and decided to discover what we could about Susan B. Gee. Who was the woman in the miniature, and what was her connection to Huntsville? Although Gee only lived in Huntsville for fifteen years, she left an interesting history; one that we wanted to share.

Susan Binford Turner was born in Virginia in 1802, the third child of Thomas Turner and Martha Binford Turner.¹ In 1819 she married William Henry Gee in Greensville County, Virginia.² William had been born in Southampton County, Virginia, in approximately 1797.³ In 1821 Susan gave birth to James Turner Gee, and in 1826 the young couple had a daughter, Martha C. Gee.⁴ As the young family grew, however, Susan's parents decided to leave Virginia and move to Madison County, Alabama.⁵ Shortly after moving to Alabama in April 1825,

¹ Manuscript entitled "Descendants of Thomas Turner" prepared by Norman Shapiro, page 1.

² Knorr, Catherine Lindsey, compiler, *Marriage Bonds and Ministers' Returns of Greensville County, Virginia 1781-1825*, 1955, p. 24.

³ Norfleet, Fillmore, *Bible Records of Suffolk and Nansemond County, Virginia, Together With Other Statistical Data*, 1963, page 94, reports that William Henry Gee was born 18 April 1797. In addition, the 1850 Alabama census for Dallas County, page 293, shows W. H. Gee's age as 53 years old. But Volume III of the Dallas County, Alabama Genealogical Records, which records inscriptions from the Live Oak Cemetery in Selma, Alabama, reports that William Gee's tombstone inscription states that he died in 1853, aged 58 years. I have not been able to discover whether or not William Henry Gee was related to the Gee's of Gee's Bend. William Henry Gee's mother was Mary Wilkinson, whose first husband was Cordall Norfleet. After his death, Mary Norfleet married James Gee, by whom she gave birth to William Henry Gee. These facts are given in an 1805 lawsuit, *Blunt & al. v. Gee & al. in Virginia Reports 1730-1880*, pp. 481-514.

⁴ The Dallas County, Alabama 1860 census, page 801, shows James T. Gee, age 38, born in Virginia. The Mobile County, Alabama 1860 census, page 651, shows Martha Jones, age 34, born in Virginia.

⁵ Madison County land records show that Thomas Turner was purchasing land in Madison County, Alabama, in 1821. Also see Gandrud, Pauline Jones, *Marriage, Death and Legal Notices From Early Alabama Newspapers, 1819-1893*, p. 470, which reports that a Huntsville, Alabama newspaper stated in 1830 that Thomas Turner was a native of Virginia "but for the last 10 years of this state" (1981).

Susan's mother died of unknown causes.⁶ Four years later, her widowed father married Elizabeth M. Gee, the widow of Nevil Gee, in Halifax County, North Carolina.⁷ Elizabeth's sons, Sterling and Charles Gee, had also moved to Alabama in 1825 in an attempt to inherit land owned by their deceased uncle, Joseph Gee, in Gee's Bend, Alabama.⁸ Six months after being remarried, however, Thomas died on May 2, 1830, leaving Elizabeth a widow for a second time in her life. *The Southern Advocate*, a Huntsville newspaper, reported that he "died at his residence in this vicinity on Sunday morning the 2nd instant in his 51st year, Thomas Turner, Esq. a native of Greenville [sic] County, Virginia, but for the last 10 years of this state . . . Richmond Enquirer please copy. He had but recently returned from Virginia where he had united himself to a most excellent lady."⁹

Several months before his death, Thomas Turner had written a will that specified how he wanted his estate divided. Although he had been remarried in North Carolina, evidence suggests that he had moved back to Alabama after the wedding. Dated on January 20, 1830, the will began with the words "In the name of God amen I Thomas Turner of the County of Madison & State of Alabama." Thomas's will specified that if Elizabeth relinquished her right of dower she would inherit \$3,000 and nineteen slaves, including two slaves named Ben. It is possible that one of the slaves named Ben could have been Benjamin Sterling Turner, who would later become one of the first African-Americans to serve in the United States Congress. Current biographies of him state that he was born in Halifax County,

⁶ Gandrud, Pauline Jones, Marriage, Death and Legal Notices From Early Alabama Newspapers, 1819-1893, page 287 shows that the Huntsville Democrat issue dated May 3, 1825 reported, "Died on Thursday 28th instant Mrs. Martha Turner, consort of Capt. Thomas Turner of Madison, formerly of Greenville [sic], Virginia" (1981).

⁷ Internet website AncestryLibrary.com - North Carolina Marriage Collection, 1741-2004, shows that Thomas Turner married Elizabeth Gee on 27 October 1829 in Halifax County, North Carolina.

⁸ Beardsley, John, and William Arnett, Paul Arnett, and Jane Livingston, *Gee's Bend The Women and Their Quilts*, p. 24, (2002).

⁹ Gandrud, Pauline Jones, Marriage, Death and Legal Notices From Early Alabama Newspapers, 1819-1893, p. 470, referencing the May 7, 1830 issue of the *Southern Advocate* (1981).

North Carolina, in 1825 and moved to the Selma, Alabama, at the age five with his owner, Elizabeth Turner.¹⁰ Elizabeth Gee Turner likely moved to Selma, Alabama, after her husband's death because it would have been much closer to her sons in Gee's Bend than if she remained in Huntsville.



Turner's last will also directed that his estate be divided among his five children, noting that "William H. Gee in right of his wife Susan B. Gee" inherit ten slaves and 491 acres to the west of Huntsville in Ranges 1 and 2 West, Township 3 South. This land currently borders present-day Oakwood Road on the south, Booker Drive on the west, and Baker Road on the east. Susan, as a woman living in antebellum Alabama, could not be legally named her father's heir because state law followed the

¹⁰ Bailey, Richard, *Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders during the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878*, pp. 100-101, (1991).

English common-law doctrine of covertures, by which a married woman's legal identity was merged into that of her husband's property. A married woman could not control or manage property—her husband had to manage her property for her.¹¹ Although it is not known precisely when William and Susan B. Gee moved to Alabama, by 1836 William served as a member of the Executive Committee of the North Alabama Jockey club.¹²

An interesting side note involving the Gee family concerned a free black man named London Urquhart. According to court records from Lauderdale County, Alabama, William H. Gee appeared in court on March 22, 1831, and stated that he was acquainted with the black man named London Urquhart and knew him to be free. Also in the Lauderdale County records are Urquhart's emancipation documents signed in Southampton County, Virginia, including a statement from Martha P. Urquhart on December 14, 1824, that expressed her willingness to emancipate him. The deed of emancipation dated in 1825 and a supporting document signed by William H. Gee as Justice of the Peace in Southampton County, Virginia, certified that Urquhart was "a man of rather a light complexion of the height of five feet six inches about thirty nine years of age and inclined to be bold is the same person named in the above deed of emancipation and who has sustained an extrodenary [sic] Good Character."¹³ Urquhart later moved to Madison County, as evidenced by a probate file on him in the Madison County probate records. In his will, dated May 22, 1837, he described himself as a free man of color and bequeathed real estate to James T. Gee, the son of William H. and Susan B. Gee. Urquhart further provided that "the said James T. Gee shall have my Negro woman Judy, who is my wife, also, during her natural life; upon this trust & confidence that he shall permit her, during her life to enjoy her freedom & the use & benefit of said lot & its appurtenances, as far as the laws will permit -- the lot & appurtenances to be his

¹¹ Knowles, Marjorie Fine, "The Legal Status of Women in Alabama: A Crazy Quilt," pp. 432-33, *Alabama Law Review*, Vol. 29, No. 3, Spring 1978.

¹² Gandrud, Pauline Jones, *Marriage, Death and Legal Notices From Early Alabama Newspapers, 1819-1893*, p. 317.

¹³ Internet website www.rootsweb.com/~allauder/aa-london.htm

absolutely after her death. I will & devise the balance of my estate, real & personal, absolutely & in fee simple, to William H. Gee." The Madison County probate file also contained a document dated August 5, 1837, showing that William H. Gee had been appointed "administrator with the annexed will of London Urquhart, a free man of color, deceased."

On February 28, 1839, the Huntsville *Democrat* ran an advertisement that apparently caught Susan Gee's attention. The advertisement read:

A RARE OPPORTUNITY.

J.W. DODGE, ARTIST,

In the branch of Miniature Painting, from New York, Respectfully announces to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Huntsville and its vicinity, that he has arrived at this place, where he intends pursuing his profession for a few weeks only. His Studio is in the brick building, the private part of the Bell Tavern, where many specimens of his Painting may be seen; as also numerous testimonials from the first artists and connoisseurs in the Union. For the information of those who might not have heard of Mr. Dodge, as an artist, he would say, that all pictures coming from his hands shall be equal to any painted in the United States. Such as wish to avail themselves of this favorable opportunity, would do well to make early application, as the artist's stay in Huntsville will necessarily be short. He has the pleasure of being allowed to refer to the following gentlemen:

Yeatman & Cox, Rv. John Allan,
Dr. Thomas Fearn, Dr. G.F.
Manning, P.T. Posey. Huntsville,
January 16, 1839 39tf

Excited by the opportunity to sit for John W. Dodge, Susan had her portrait painted by the noted New York artist on April 2, 1839. The Gee family continued to live in Madison County and enjoy the growing town. The 1840 federal census shows that the household included William, Susan, and an unknown female between the ages of 40 and 50. They had settled into a nice lifestyle in Huntsville and the portrait reflected their status in southern society.

By 1841, however, the Gee family began experiencing financial troubles. Madison County courthouse records indicate that William had transferred all of his lands, personal property, and slaves for one dollar to Theophilus Lacy, an officer of the Branch of the Bank of the State of Alabama at Huntsville. Lacy had been instructed to sell the properties at public auction and pay Gee's debts as they became due. William H. Gee had gone bankrupt. On July 2, 1842, the auction began and one of Susan's brothers, James B. Turner, bought some of the slaves, including "Big Albert and his wife Judy and their four children, little Albert, Turner, Sally & Independence." Not all was bad for the Gee family, however, and on September 20, 1844, the *Southern Advocate* reported "married on Thursday evening 12th instant by Rev. John M. Robertson, Mr. Joel W. Jones of Pickens County to Miss Martha C. Gee, only daughter of William H. Gee, of this county."¹⁴

The Gee's financial problems even extended back to Elizabeth's first marriage to Nevil Gee. In Gee's Bend, Alabama, a small community in Wilcox County, Elizabeth's sons from her first marriage had to deed their land to Mark H. Pettway, a relative who had moved his family and slaves from Halifax

¹⁴ Gandrud, Pauline Jones, Marriage, Death and Legal Notices From Early Alabama Newspapers, 1819-1893, p. 481 (1981).

County, North Carolina, to Alabama in 1846.¹⁵ Shortly after that transaction, a document signed and dated on May 15, 1832, was filed with the Madison County Probate Court that certified that Pettway had received \$818.46 from the estate of Thomas Turner to satisfy debts owed by Elizabeth.

William and Susan Gee eventually decided to move away from Madison County. On January 28, 1846, a court document noted that James B. Turner purchased slaves from the Gee family except for “which said Negro slaves, the said Susan Gee is anxious to carry to South Alabama, with her, to assist and aid her in making a support.” Susan also sold the rights to her husband’s land to James B. Turner. It appears that Turner, one of Susan’s brothers, wanted to do her a favor during such difficult times and let her take Big Albert and Judy to South Alabama.



According to sources associated with Benjamin Sterling Turner’s life, the future congressman moved to Selma in 1845 or 1846 with William and Susan Gee. The historian Richard Bailey notes that Turner “was the property of Elizabeth Turner, a widow, who moved to the Southern part of Dallas County when Turner was five. He worked for her until he reached the age of

¹⁵ Beardsley, John, and William Arnett, Paul Arnett, and Jane Livingston, *Gee's Bend The Women and Their Quilts*, p. 24 (2002).

20, when she sold him to pay off debts. Advantageously for him, Elizabeth Turner sold Turner to Major W. H. Gee, her step-daughter's husband. The Gee family had recently removed from Huntsville to Selma. His new owners placed him in charge of the Gee House Hotel, the Gee family's new business enterprise."¹⁶ Federal census records also place the Gee family in Selma in 1850. The census taker noted eighteen other people living with the Gee family with different last names. Census records also list William H. Gee's occupation as a tavern keeper.

On January 31, 1851, an advertisement in the *Selma Reporter* provided information and rates on the Gee's hotel known as the Dallas House. Susan Gee wrote and paid for the following advertisement:

DALLAS HOUSE

THANKFUL to my friends and the public generally, for their former patronage, a continuance of the same is solicited at the Dallas House a new and commodious brick building just erected and newly furnished. Every effort will be used to contribute to the pleasure and comfort of visitors.

RATES. Board and Lodging per month, \$18.00

Board without Lodging per month, 12.50

Board and Lodging per week, 7.00

Board and Lodging per day, 1.50

Single meals, 50 [cents]

Lodging per night, 25 [cents]

Children and servants half price.

Responsible only for baggage placed in charge of the Barkeeper.

¹⁶ Bailey, Richard, *Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders during the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878*, pp. 100-101 (1991).

Every pains will be taken to prevent all accidents. In no case will I be responsible for any horse that may escape or be stolen from my stables. S. B. GEE, Selma, Ala., Sept. 27

By 1852 Selma had become a town “crowded with all classes and professions of people, and all doing a thriving and prosperous business. Among them we mention . . . Dallas House, by W. H. Gee.”¹⁷ Disaster soon struck, however, and in the summer of 1853 yellow fever hit Selma as well as other southern cities such as New Orleans, Mobile and Pensacola. On August 13, 1853, a steamboat from New Orleans arrived in Selma, and within a few days people began dying from yellow fever. City records reveal that on October 17, 1853, “Albert, mulatto man of Maj. W. H. Gee” died of yellow fever, and on October 18, William H. Gee also died from the same disease.¹⁸ On October 27, 1853, the fever claimed “Judy, mulatto woman of the late Maj. W. H. Gee.”¹⁹ Susan buried her husband in Selma’s Live Oak Cemetery, and inscribed his tombstone with “Major William Gee. Born in Southampton County, Virginia, Died October 18, 1853, Aged 58 years. Where the generous and hospitable patriot is esteemed, there will he be admired the most.”²⁰

After the death of her husband, Susan sought the help of her son James Turner Gee, and the two lived together in Selma. James took over the Dallas House and eventually renamed it the St. James Hotel.²¹ In 1927 a newspaper article mentioned that the “old hotel on the river was known as the Gee House and later the

¹⁷ Hardy, John, *Selma; Her Institutions and Her Men*, p. 42 (1879), (facsimile reprint from the original published by Bert Neville and Clarence DeBray in Selma, Ala. 1957).

¹⁸ *Id.*, p. 43.

¹⁹ *Id.*, p. 44.

²⁰ The Sturdivant Museum Association, Dallas County, Alabama Genealogical Records, Vol. III, p. 84 (date of publication unknown).

²¹ Fitts, Alston III, *Selma Queen City of the Black Belt*, p. 47 (1989).

Troup House.”²² The 1860 federal census listed James T. Gee as the hotel keeper and S. B. Gee as part of the household. It also listed thirty other people who were guests in the hotel with occupations such as steam boat agent, physician, dentist, lawyer, architect, civil engineer, stage agent, clerk, bank cashier and horse trainer.

In 1862 Susan B. Gee died in Selma and was buried with her second husband in the Live Oak Cemetery. Her marker bears the following inscription: “Susan B. Gee Our Mother, Died December 30, 1862, Her children arise up and call her blessed.”²³ The Civil War disrupted daily life in Selma, and the probate court did not settle her estate until January, 1865. A Dallas County probate document from January 1865 recorded that her son James purchased a large omnibus and four sets of harnesses and a team of two mules and two horses for \$15,000. Susan B. Gee's son-in-law, Joel W. Jones, also purchased one omnibus and four sets of harnesses and a team of four horses for \$10,000. Jones also purchased another omnibus for \$2,000, a baggage wagon for \$830, and a cooking stove and fixtures for \$850. These prices reflected the inflation of Confederate money, and the cost of doing business during the last year of the Civil War.

Aside from the St. James Hotel, the Gee family left another lasting legacy in Alabama. The family had been instrumental in the life of Alabama's first black Congressman, Benjamin Sterling Turner. Turner had been born in North Carolina circa 1825 and brought to Dallas County around 1830 by Elizabeth Turner, Susan's stepmother. He worked for her until 1845, and then was sold to William H. Gee.²⁴ Although Elizabeth Gee Turner's marriage to Thomas Turner has not been mentioned in history books about Benjamin Turner, it seems

²² Central Alabama Genealogical Society publication dated April 27, 1993, Vol. 19, No. 2, p. 40, containing a reprint of an article for the Selma Times-Journal written in 1927 by W. O. Perry.

²³ The Sturdivant Museum Association, Dallas County, Alabama Genealogical Records, Vol. III, p. 84 (date of publication unknown).

²⁴ Bailey, Richard, *Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders during the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878*, pp. 100-101 (1991). Also see The H. W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb article about Benjamin Sterling Turner, vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.

likely that the slave named "Ben" who was inherited by Elizabeth from Thomas in 1830 in Madison County was the same person who grew up to be Benjamin Sterling Turner. If Ben had always belonged to Thomas Turner, he may have been born in Alabama instead of North Carolina, because Thomas had lived in Madison County for almost ten years. Another explanation could be that Ben and the other named slaves inherited by Elizabeth Turner via Thomas Turner's will had actually been owned by Elizabeth Gee in North Carolina before she married Thomas Turner. In this event, Ben would have been born in North Carolina and then come to Alabama with Elizabeth Gee Turner. Because any personal property owned by his wife would become her next husband's assets, perhaps Thomas wrote to will to make sure that his wife would be able to keep the slaves she owned before meeting him.²⁵ This is the more likely explanation, especially since the 1870 federal census for Dallas County shows that Benjamin Sterling Turner had been born in North Carolina. The historian Richard Bailey states that after the deaths of William and Susan Gee, the ownership of Benjamin Sterling Turner passed to James T. Gee.²⁶ At some point, James became the owner of the St. James Hotel. Benjamin learned to read and write and made himself an invaluable servant to James.²⁷ When James joined the Confederate Army, Benjamin ran the St. James Hotel. He set up a stable and wood yards of his own and is said

²⁵ Knowles, Marjorie Fine, "The Legal Status of Women in Alabama: A Crazy Quilt," pp. 432-33, *Alabama Law Review*, Vol. 29, No. 3, Spring 1978.

²⁶ Bailey, Richard, *Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders during the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878*, p. 101 (1991). (Mr. Bailey states that James T. Gee was the brother of W. H. Gee, but in reality James Turner Gee was the son of W. H. Gee. According to Fillmore Norfleet's *Bible Records of Suffolk and Nansemond County, Virginia, Together With Other Statistical Data*, p. 94, William Henry Gee did have a brother named James Henry Gee, but he was born and had died by the time William H. Gee was born).

²⁷ Atkins, Leah Rawls, and William Warren Rogers and Robert David Ward, *An Alabama Legacy -- images of a state*, p. 24 (1995)

to have had more money than his former master by the time he was freed in 1865.²⁸

After the war, Benjamin quickly became the wealthiest black man in Dallas County.²⁹ In 1867 he was elected county tax collector, and in 1869 he was elected to the Selma city council. In 1870 voters elected him to become Alabama's first African American Congressman.³⁰ While serving in the United States House of Representatives, Turner fought for civil rights for both freedmen and disenfranchised Confederate leaders, remarking that "the people of Selma have been magnanimous toward me, and I intend to stand by and labor for them in their need and desolation." In 1872 he lost his bid for reelection and he returned to Selma. Turner died in 1894 and is buried in Selma's Live Oak Cemetery, the same cemetery as William and Susan Gee.³¹

When I first started researching Susan B. Gee, I had no idea that her life would have involved so many subjects—free persons of color, married women's legal rights and status, the hotel business, yellow fever, inflated Confederate currency, and Reconstruction politics in Alabama. Learning about history is one of the main advantages of owning antiques, and the search has been truly fascinating. Although Susan died in 1862, her personal and family histories continue to interest me and help add life to that small portrait of a Huntsville woman.

²⁸ Internet website

www.selmaalabama.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=49 sixth entry under "Cemetery Tour."

²⁹ Atkins, Leah Rawls, and William Warren Rogers and Robert David Ward, *An Alabama Legacy -- images of a state*, p. 24 (1995).

³⁰ Bailey, Richard, *They Too Call Alabama Home -- African American Profiles, 1800-1999*, p. 383 (1999).

³¹ Atkins, Leah Rawls, and William Warren Rogers and Robert David Ward, *An Alabama Legacy -- images of a state*, p. 24 (1995).

Book Reviews

Railroads in the Old South: Pursuing Progress in a Slave Society. By Aaron W. Marrs. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, c. 2009. Pp. [xx], 268. \$55.00, ISBN 978-0-8018-9130-4.)

Recent historians have begun to reexamine the industrialization of the antebellum South and have concluded that many southerners valued technological innovation and the benefits of modernization. As part of this growing historiographical trend, Aaron Marrs provides a broad overview of railroad development in the Old South. He explores how southerners used railroads, a symbol of modernity, to strengthen their premodern commitments to slavery and agriculture. In seven chronological chapters that trace southern railroads from conception to locomotion between the late 1820s and the early 1860s, Marrs makes four major conclusions: northern and southern railroads had much in common, railroads allowed southerners to modernize on their terms, no single regional response to railroad development existed, and railroads helped standardize time and work in the South. The use of slave labor stood as the most obvious difference between northern and southern railroads. Despite this important dissimilarity, however, northerners and southerners viewed railroads as an important technological advancement, source of profit, creator of cities, aid to farmers and industrialists, way to reach western land, and a convenient, if not enjoyable, means of transportation. Marrs correctly concludes that southern capitalists understood how to manipulate the South's conservative social order to work within a modern market economy. He notes the irony of using slave labor, a premodern institution, to build and operate the most modern form of transportation in the pre-Civil War South. Based on these clearly developed themes, Marrs effectively argues that antebellum southerners were neither fully premodern nor completely modern but a mixture of both that allowed them to embrace innovative technology while defending slavery and the world planters had created.

Southern railroads changed how people and communities worked and interacted with each other. Train schedules, based on clock time, amplified the importance of efficiency and profit. People planned their travel and business around train time. Reliable transportation allowed planters to maximize their cotton crops and thus further entrench slavery into southern society. Planters sold and leased slaves to railroad companies, providing railroad officials with a pliable workforce. Railroad platforms became impromptu sites for slave auctions that forced potential buyers to bid not only against each other but also against the next train that would arrive at a set time and remove the human stock to the next station and to a new group of buyers. Slaves, according to Marris, even noticed an increased workload as cotton became more profitable because of railroads.

Despite drawing from a strong source base of railroad company records, individual memoirs, and regional newspapers, Marris neglected to use *De Bow's Review*, perhaps the most important antebellum journal dedicated to southern economic development and railroads. This lapse is problematic because between 1846 and 1861 J.D.B. De Bow published 154 articles dedicated to southern railroad development and dozens of shorter dispatches about individual railroad corporations in the South. The narrative might have also benefitted from a closer study of one railroad so readers would have a foundation to draw upon when learning about broader trends and innovations. At times it is difficult to remember which railroad he discusses and which acronym belongs to which railroad. Although these minor issues do not detract from Marris's conclusions, his failure to engage *De Bow's Review* creates a significant dilemma.

Railroads in the Old South provides a factual and stimulating reminder that many southerners embraced modern technology in the antebellum period. Railroads helped shape this period in the South and allowed southerners to create a world in which slavery and innovation could coexist. By providing a broad overview of railroad development in the Old South, Marris reminds readers that the New South was perhaps not so new after all.

News and Notes

Although many members already know that the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society received a *Saving Our History* grant from the History Channel, I thought it might be helpful for all members to have information about the grant and project. Congratulations to all of you who support the Historical Society because only 11 out of 535 organizations that applied actually received a grant. This is a testament to the importance of what you all support with your time and talent. The title of the project is "Real People, Real History: Madison County and the Civil War, 1861-1865." Below is part of the project narrative that describes the project and what we hope to accomplish.

Project Narrative

To create an online historical resource and exhibit area that preserves the public and private memories of Civil War-era individuals who lived in Madison County, Alabama, between 1861 and 1865. Tenth grade students from Huntsville High School (HHS), in conjunction with upper-level undergraduate and graduate history students from the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), will conduct primary source research in the Special Collections Department of the Huntsville/Madison County Public Library.

This research will be used to create a website from which the public can read and explore period documents such as diaries, letters, and photographs; explore their community's involvement in the Civil War; and challenge individuals to adopt, research, and post their findings on a Civil War-era individual from Madison County. This project will be both the intellectual foundation and public portal for Madison County's planned commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War that begins in 2011.

As part of its overall mission to preserve and engage local history, the Huntsville/Madison County Historical Society (HMCHS) will oversee the project. Professional historians and archivists will guide students in the preservation, interpretation,

and digitization of these records during the 2009-2010 school year. At the end of the school year, a week-long summer institute, sponsored by the UAH and HMCHS, will allow students to bring their individual projects together and collectively create an online resource dedicated to the preservation of local Civil War history within the broader context of state, regional, and national histories. This project has well-defined and practical objectives that include:

- To preserve letters, correspondence, photographs, and diaries from individuals who lived and worked in Madison County, Alabama, during the Civil War.
- To create opportunities for high school and university students to work together and with professional historians and archivists to create an online resource for the local community.
- To use primary sources to educate the public about the diverse memories of Madison County during the Civil War within the context of the American South.
- To cultivate public-private partnerships that encouraged future preservation of local historical documents and sites through community action.
- To build a free standing website that will house an online exhibit and other features based on student participation and research.
- To develop a project prototype for other communities interested in preserving their past through individual and collective programs such as this one.
- To provide practical field experience to students interested in history and preserving elements of the past.
- To create an educational resource for local, state, and regional history teachers.

This project allows individuals and groups to preserve diverse northern Alabama memories of the Civil War. As a focal point for southern unionism in the Deep South, the unique history of Madison County reminds students and the community that broad stereotypes and generalizations rarely match the reality of history. By providing students with an opportunity to

use and preserve their community's history, this project will allow students to preserve their past while enriching their futures.

Regardless of race, class, or gender, all contemporary Madison County residents were affected by the Civil War. Although no major battles were fought in northern Alabama, the diverse group of people who lived in Madison County struggled to understand how the war would change their lives and community. They expressed their fears in letters and diaries that still exist today. These documents will allow students and the general public to understand the past better. Students will touch, use, and preserve the past by creating digital records of Civil War historical documents. This interaction with tangible reminders from the past will promote historical thinking skills, empathy and understanding, and create an interest in preserving history.

Through the collaborative work of students, teachers and professors, local history groups, nonprofit and governmental organizations, schools, and community associations; this project will make primary sources available to the public and encourage the community to engage its history and create the framework to preserve its past as part of the sesquicentennial celebration of the Civil War.

In order for high school and university students to understand the importance of reaching out to the community, they will be required to help promote the project by writing newspaper articles, conduct radio interviews, and write promotional literature. Because so many different groups have agreed to participate in this proposed project, the responsibility to raise public awareness will be divided among each organization. The following organizations have already or will be approached about promoting the project: UAH's Public Relations department, UAH National Public Radio campus affiliate station, local television stations, Huntsville Times, Huntsville/Madison County Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the Huntsville City School system. In addition to these media outlets, the editor of the Huntsville Historical Review, a bi-annual history journal, has agreed to publish articles and papers written by high school students who participated in the project. Because this project and the resultant website will serve as the foundation for a larger

sesquicentennial celebration, public awareness will be a key element built into every component of the project.

This project will produce tangible resources for the community by allowing high school students to create a webpage that will document and preserve the letters, photographs, and diaries of individuals who lived in Madison County during the Civil War. These primary sources, currently stored at the public library, will become the basis for articles, short biographies, and online exhibits that will serve as the foundation for the project's website. Individual students will work on components of the project that best match their interests and skill sets. Students will be encouraged to think about other ways in which they could use these documents. Local historians associated with the Huntsville/Madison County Historical Society will provide direction and guidance in conjunction with faculty from UAH and HHS. The final website created by the project will be maintained by the Historical Society as part of its mission statement to preserve the past to enrich the future.

The Huntsville/Madison County Historical Society (HMCHS) has dedicated itself "to preserving the past to enrich the future through local education and preservation." As the sponsoring organization for this grant, the HMCHS has promised to supply local historians for the school year, provide access to The Huntsville Historical Review, and host the project's website. This project embodies the mission of the organization by promoting an interest in local history and historical preservation. It would be impossible to entice future students to become interested in the history of Madison County if historical documents and other primary sources did not exist. A project such as this allows for students to see history in a different manner because they can become part of the historical process. Their efforts will insure that future members of the community will have access to records and memories from the Civil War.

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