

The Huntsville Historical Review

Summer - Fall 2010

Volume 35

Number 2



How History Has Changed in Madison County

Published By

The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society



1.00
4-11

The Huntsville Historical Review

Summer - Fall 2010

Volume 35

Number 2



How History Has Changed in Madison County

Published By The Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

©2010

The Huntsville Historical Review

Volume 35

No. 2

Summer - Winter 2010

Table Of Contents

Editor's Notes	1
“Racism, Manhood, and Femininity in the Alabama Suffrage Debate: 1915-1920” By Whitney Reid	3
The Open Range in Madison County, Alabama By Matthew Menarchek	29
The Quest for Certainty: Amos Blanch Jones’ Attempt to Recreate a Pre-Civil War Southern Mentality By Charity Ethridge	37
The McCrary Farm Enters Its Third Century By Joseph M. Jones	49
News and Notes	59
Editorial Policy	65

Editor's Note

For many of our older readers, uhh more mature readers, Joe Jones's name might be the only name they recognize in this edition of the *Review*. Although the other three authors might not have recognizable names yet, they are young, historically-minded writers who have a passion for the past. Whitney Reid examines how women's suffrage played out in early twentieth-century Alabama, focusing on the anti-suffrage movement and why gender matters in history. Reid earned her spot in the *Review* by winning this year's Dr. John Rison Jones Award in Southern History Presented by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society. Her paper stood out among her peers' work and highlights the excellent work being done in UAHuntsville's History Department. Matthew Menarchek also brings a fresh perspective in his article about the importance of the open range in early Madison County. Menarchek reminds readers of the economic and social importance of open land during the antebellum period. Charity Ethridge asks readers to think about the myth of the Old South and why it existed in Madison County. She follows the life and career of Amos Blanch Jones and the history of the Huntsville Female College to highlight how the Civil War changed southern society. Lastly, Joe Jones brings the stability and insight of an experienced veteran in his article about the Thomas McCrary Farm. Jones's contribution provides an excellent overview of the oldest continuously family-owned farm in Alabama. His article also serves as a primer and introduction to a larger article about the McCary Farm and its furniture that will be featured in the next edition of the *Review*.

I hope this infusion of new ideas and new writers provides a glimmer of hope for those worried about the younger generation not caring about history, or more specifically, Madison County history. Each article highlights an important part of our past and puts local events into a broader historical context. In addition to these articles, you can also read three examples of episodes created by tenth graders from Huntsville High School. These students participated in the History Channel's *Saving Our History* grant. Their written episodes,

along with fifty other short histories, will serve as the foundation for the website associated with the *Real People, Real History* project. Interest in this project has spread, and I have received correspondence seeking more information from Auburn University, New Mexico State University, The Ohio State University, and Ohio Historical Society. They want to see how regular people respond to having the opportunity to write local history.

So please enjoy what you see here and think about how history has changed in Madison County. Think about what has been lost and what has been saved by people like you. As this community moves into the twenty-first century it is important to preserve the memories of what has been and think about how those memories, both good and bad, have shaped the present and will shape the future.

Dr. John F. Kvach

“Racism, Manhood, and Femininity in the Alabama Suffrage Debate: 1915-1920”

By Whitney Reid

In 1848, the suffrage movement officially began in Seneca Falls, New York, with the first pro-suffrage convention, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Stanton presented eleven resolutions, in which the ninth included provisions for extension of the suffrage to women: “resolved, that it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.”¹ Of the three-hundred men and women attendance, sixty-eight women and thirty-two men signed the petition. The remaining two-hundred attendees, a majority of whom were women, refused to sign the Resolutions because of the addition of the suffrage referendum. Although the Seneca Falls Convention officially started a major movement to support the cause of women’s suffrage, the suffrage immediately met resistance from women. Organizations, clubs, and leagues formed by women dominated the anti-suffrage movement, which became proportionately political to the aggrandizement of suffrage as a prominent issue.

While northern anti-suffrage groups focused on protecting women’s sphere of influence and traditional gender prescriptions, southern anti-suffrage organizations existed as a more multi-faceted movement, extending beyond the reaches of an argument centered upon female gender roles. While part of the southern argument promoted women in traditional domestic roles and men as chivalrous defenders of the South, the main argument of the anti-suffrage movement in Alabama existed as an extension of pre-Civil War rhetoric. Southern “gentlemen” expressed trepidation to the suffrage, as it threatened to encroach upon white dominance, democracy, social order, and states’ rights. Anti-suffragists, both male and female, charged that the vote was discordant with the South’s heritage and infringed upon the patriarchal social order preserved even after the Civil War.

¹ “The Declaration of Sentiments,” US Constitution Online, available online at <<http://www.usconstitution.net/sentiments.html>> and <<http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/declaration-of-sentiments.htm>>

Many historians and scholars have speculated on the motives of anti-suffrage women from a socioeconomic standpoint, arguing that women of higher social standing sought to preserve their dominance over lower classes.² In Alabama, the anti-suffrage movement duplicated the motivations of their northern anti-suffragist counterparts, with the impetus as maintaining social and political dominance as defined by a distinct southern tradition of femininity, masculinity, and race hierarchy. White southern men and women regarded extending the franchise to all women as a breach in the social and political power of southern, white, male democrats and a threat to southern society's definition of femininity, masculinity, and chivalry.

Alabama Women in the Anti-suffrage Movement

Southern women, who fought both for and against the suffrage, involved themselves in highly public political activism for their cause. The South became the major force behind the anti-suffrage movement, as southern women formed leagues and clubs to oppose the amendment. By 1916, according to historian Elna C. Green, efforts to oppose the suffrage failed in many southern states, leaving Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee to fight against the suffrage without support from strong anti-suffrage organization of other states in the South.³

While northern women typically assumed roles in anti-suffrage organizations behind the scenes and let men assumed the public positions, southern women assumed direct political roles and attended legislature meetings and public rallies, and

² Historians such as Susan E. Marshall, Thomas Jablonsky, and Jane Camhi, among others. Marshall, Susan E. "In Defense of Separate Spheres: Class Movement and Status Politics in the Anti-suffrage Movement." *Social Forces*, Vol. 65, no. 2 (Dec., 1986): 327-351. Marshall, Susan E. *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997. Jablonsky, Thomas J. *The Home, Heaven, and Mother Party: Female Anti-Suffragists in the United States, 1868-1920*. Carlson Pub., 1994. Camhi, Jane Jerome. *Women Against Women: American Anti-Suffragism, 1880-1920, Scholarship in Women's History: Rediscovered and New*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Pub., 1994.

³ Green, Elna C.. *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question*. (The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 108.

even participated in protests. The *Huntsville Republican* reported in 1915 “no matter how modest a constitutional convention is nowadays, some female suffragist will find it out and insist on making a speech.”⁴ Although anti-suffragist women participated in political protest and utilized political avenues to further their cause, they contended they were not breaching the appropriate sphere of influence.

Although these anti-suffragists fought against the vote based on traditional femininity, they did not equate politicization against the suffrage with the added political responsibility through the suffrage. Instead, anti-suffragists, or antis, the shortened name used in public documents, utilized political avenues to protest the imposition of unwanted political responsibilities. These antis did not view their political activism as breaching the boundaries of their sphere of domesticity, but regarded their brief political involvement as compulsory to defending the private sphere of influence, as they viewed the suffrage as antithetical to traditional femininity. The only viable option to defeat this direct challenge to their views of traditional femininity was to utilize the same public venues to forestall the suffragist rhetoric.

Despite the fact that southern tradition opposed female politicization, Alabama women became politically militant, bombarding legislatures with messages, tracts, and leaflets. Anti-suffragist women rationalized their political actions as “keeping with the glorious past and unapproachable modesty of the South.”⁵ The women in these anti-suffrage organizations promoted three key pillars of southern tradition as stances against the anti-suffrage: white supremacy, political stability, and the re-gendering of both men and women.

As evidence that these women regarded their political activism as necessary for the defense of their private influence,

⁴ Marjorie J. Spruill, “Race, Reform, and Reaction at the Turn of the Century: Southern Suffragists, the NAWSA, and the ‘Southern Strategy’ in Context,” in Marjorie Spruill, ed., *Votes for Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 107.

⁵ Alabama Democrats, “A Protest Against Woman’s Suffrage,” 5. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, (Montgomery, AL).

anti-suffrage women promoted the public appearance of women as a protective measure for the private sphere. Mrs. J.R. Pinckhardt, the president of the Montgomery anti-suffrage organization, called upon the women of Alabama to “organize and oppose this insidious attempt...with all its attendant civic responsibilities.”⁶ One newspaper claimed, “Hundreds of women all over the state” appeared publicly at an Alabama legislature meeting to protest against the popularity of the “Anthony amendment.”⁷

Although Green claims that southern women were “less inclined to organize against the reform,” Alabama women joined political groups and participated directly in political activity, with women leaders sending petitions to judges and politicians, themselves.⁸ Alabama became a center for suffrage debate and a host for mainstream anti-suffrage organizations, such as the Southern Woman’s League for the Rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment based in Montgomery and the Anti-Ratification League of Birmingham. The Southern Women’s League for the Rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, known simply as the Southern Rejection League, existed as the backbone for the anti-suffrage movement. According to historian and sociologist Susan E. Marshall, the Alabama Association “spearheaded” the fight against the suffrage.⁹

Female Gender in the Anti-suffrage Debate

Early arguments against suffrage existed as a castigation against redefining and broadening the female gender. While this argument was prevalent in northern states, southern women leveraged geographical location alongside gender to oppose the amendment. Antis cited the special privileges afforded to white women through a southern tradition of femininity as reason why the South, especially, did not need the vote. Newspaper articles

⁶ Alabama Democrats, 13.

⁷ “Anti-Ratification League of City has Splendid Meeting,” Newspaper article in Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁸ Green, 108. Also, Pinckhardt sent letters to politicians, herself. (Invoice inside Woman Suffrage Files, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.)

⁹ *Splintered Sisterhood*, 212

and publications written by women highlighted the special status of southern women, and utilized loyalty to southern culture and heritage as reason to dispute the suffrage question.

Alabama anti-suffrage organizations dismissed the vote as an amendment unnecessary to southern women. In one of her public appeals for opposition to the suffrage, Pinckhardt wrote, "I believe the most favored creature in the world is an American woman and of American women is the southern woman."¹⁰ Southern women regarded themselves as a separate group, defined by a special version of femininity through southern heritage. Their specific definition of femininity afforded southern women a special status above other women, making the Nineteenth Amendment ultimately unnecessary for the South.

Alabama anti-suffrage women argued that universal suffrage opposed, and even directly challenged, the southern tradition of femininity. This southern tradition held its roots in the antebellum South, with men as the commandants of a patriarchal plantation. White southern women perpetuated the cycle of dependence upon the men of these estates to maintain their social dominance.¹¹ The suffrage, it seemed, existed as an equalizer between white prominent women and descendants of former slaves, defying standing social and gender norms in southern society.

Much like their northern counterparts, southern antis leveraged the rhetoric of "separate spheres" as an offensive claim against the suffragist threat of breaching the appropriate gender assignment.¹² In the South, women guarded antebellum privileges, while men sustained their dominant status in the

¹⁰ Mrs.J.R. Pinckhardt, Untitled Newspaper article in Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

¹¹ See works by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Thomas R. Dew, and Beverley Tucker. The authors discuss the reliance of women upon the institution of slavery. Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Gender and American Culture)*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988. Thomas R. Dew: "Dissertation on the Characterist Differences between the Sexes and on the Position and Influence of Woman in Society." *Southern Literary Messenger*. (May 1835). Beverley Tucker, *Series of Lectures on the Science of Government*. Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 296.

¹² *Splintered Sisterhood*, 225

public sphere. The separate spheres paradigm assigns distinct socioeconomic areas of influence to men and women based upon traditional views of masculinity and femininity. This traditional view of gender roles restricted women to domestic roles, relating to the maintenance of the home, raising, and educating children. Women justified restricting gender roles based upon basic biological differences between the sexes, as “men and women are so different that they must have different duties.”¹³



¹³ Archibald Conn. Letter to the Editor. Birmingham Equal Suffrage Files, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

The paradigm of the “cult of domesticity,” often referred to as “true womanhood” or the “domestic ideal,” combined both of these ideologies to define the ideal woman. Through piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness, a woman exemplified the best qualities of femininity. These four qualities were, as the historian Barbara Welter first described, a “fearful obligation, a solemn responsibility” to society and to each woman’s family.¹⁴ This devotion manifested itself in the latter three qualities, as her pure nature granted her qualifications to care for a household.

The vote directly challenged the notions of domesticity and female submissiveness, as it granted women political power and authority to appeal for her needs in a public venue. Paralleling the gendered argument, antis portrayed women as “victims” of political interests, often encouraging male politicians to protect “innocent women, the silent, home-loveing [sic] women and children,” who must suffer from the implications of the suffrage upon the female gender.¹⁵

Women opposed the suffrage on the basis that it was not the social responsibility for women to protect themselves, as the traditional gender roles of men existed as a distinct public responsibility to provide protection and monetary support to his family. Although men and women were different in terms of separate spheres of influence, one anti-suffragist claimed, “men and women are so much alike that men with one vote each can express themselves and us, too.”¹⁶

Southern anti-suffragists advocated that southern women did not need the vote, and boasted that a majority of southern women, with statistics reaching claims of eighty percent, “do not wish the suffrage.”¹⁷ By dismissing the suffrage as an unnecessary infringement upon the sacred duties of femininity, antis promoted traditional femininity as the most desired and

¹⁴ Welter, Barbara. “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860.” *American Quarterly*, 18, no. 2, Part 1 (Summer, 1966), 151.

¹⁵ Alabama Democrats, 3-4.

¹⁶ *Birmingham News*, Oct 3, 1915. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁷ “Alabama Women Oposed [sic] to Ratifying Suffrage Clause Memorialize Legislature,” *Birmingham News*, July 17, 1919. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

honorable position for women, if not even compulsory. However, they did not dismiss that women held active interests in “social and civil concerns,” but only promoted a disinterest in creating an intersection between woman’s private sphere and the public sphere of men.¹⁸

In addition, antis charged that women could not handle the additional responsibilities the vote imposed, leading to abandonment of domestic duties, marital disputes, and the ultimate dissolution of the home. One anti wrote in a 1919 Birmingham newspaper article that if the Nineteenth Amendment passed, “no woman who votes will attend to her domestic duties,” if women would even “leave her domestic duties to vote,” at all.¹⁹ Women regarded the vote as an addition to the domestic responsibilities attributed to them by traditional gender roles. Antis leveraged, instead, that women would attempt to transform into a participant of the public sphere, and assume a masculine identity. Antis promoted a “subordination for general good,” a general belief that women participated in their distinct sphere for the advancement of humanity.²⁰

Furthermore, antis charged that the vote was a catalyst for the female desertion of duties in home life and would ultimately ruin her character. Politics, which was a sphere of influence in which women were not fit to participate, exposed women of sensibility to the evils of bargaining, rivalry, and campaign politics.²¹ Voting defied the protection offered to women through their basic gender associations. If women did not threaten to “corrupt our politics,” then certainly “bad politics will corrupt our women,” as it defeminized and demoralized them.²²

¹⁸ Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL., 131-2 “Women have an equal interest in all social and civil concerns...American women have no interest nor concern in politics.”

¹⁹ Untitled Newspaper article, *Birmingham News*, October 3, 1915. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

²⁰ Untitled Newspaper article, Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

²¹ *Birmingham News*, October 3, 1915.

²² Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

Politicians offered conflicting criticisms regarding the femininity of the suffragists. In 1917, the Democratic Party in Alabama published a pamphlet, in which it replied to a suffragist's editorial, calling her arguments "so characteristically feminine that it would be amusing if it were on a less serious subject."²³ At least in Alabama, white males dismissed the claims and arguments of suffragists as vacuous and absurd because they breached the female ability to discern logic from feeling. Southern civilization could not take such unreasonable claims against their culture seriously. Anti-suffrage women and men criticized female proponents of the suffrage as traitors to traditional femininity while dismissing their arguments as being overly feminine at the same time.

One account of a legislature meeting recalls the suffragist reaction to an anti-ratification presentation to the Alabama legislature. The author of this account claimed that the suffragists portrayed themselves as unfeminine and boorish, as many of them responded to a formal proposal to the legislature by anti-ratification women through "regrettable hissing of the reading."²⁴ Another account of encounters of pro-suffrage organizations resulted in legislators referring to the suffragettes as "frogs in the mill pond" for all their loud "clammorings."²⁵

²³ Alabama Democrats, 10.

²⁴ Letter to the Editor, *Birmingham News*, July 17, 1919. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

²⁵ Alabama Democrats, 3.



These public portrayals of suffragist women caused many suffs, as both suffragists and anti-suffragists referred to suffrage supporters, to defend the femininity of the suffrage cause. Suffragists promoted their femininity in public newspapers, editorials, and leaflets, assuring the public that they sought to preserve their femininity. To promote a suffragist event, a poem appeared in a 1917 Birmingham newspaper article, defending the femininity of its members:

Be sure to go to the fair,
The suffragists will be there;
In their lovely yellow booth,
They will prove, forsooth,
That for home and hubby still they care.²⁶

²⁶ Untitled newspaper article, *Birmingham News*, October 3, 1915. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

The suffragists assured the public that they sought to conserve the female dominance of the private sphere by continuing traditional responsibilities and loyalties to their husbands. The poem continued:

Your socks and shirts those suffs will mend,
Just to show you they don't intend
To forget their femininity
And take to masculinity
When at last they attain their end.²⁷

While the suffragists promoted themselves inside the appropriate definition of the female gender, they still acted outside the expected gender prescription for women by supporting the further politicization of women, and forcing antis to participate in politics to protect traditional femininity. Also, as historian Jean H. Baker states, "unlike suffragists, who needed to convert the American public to their way of thinking, anti-suffrage women articulated cultural values that were perfectly in keeping with this nation's tradition."²⁸

The implications of female gender evolving into traditional masculine identities threatened both public and private upheaval, as it rearranged the delicate balance of life in the private sphere of influence in the home. Specifically, suffrage would hinder femininity as it would "diminish the purity, the dignity, and the moral influence of women, and bring the family circle into a dangerous element of discord."²⁹ This discord would extend into marital relationships, as "it will make dissension between husband and wife."³⁰

²⁷ Untitled newspaper article, *Birmingham News*, October 3, 1915. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

²⁸ Jean H. Baker. *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited (Viewpoints on American Culture)*. (New York: Oxford University Press), 2002, 129.

²⁹ Thomas Jablonsky, "Female Opposition; The Anti-Suffrage Campaign," in Marjorie Spruill Baker, ed., *Votes for Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 119.

³⁰ Thomas Jablonsky, 119

Antis feared that if a woman did not vote exactly as her husband, as many antis assumed she would, voting would cause unneeded debate to enter the home.³¹ “The more women go out into the rough world to do men’s work,” one anti wrote, “the greater the loss to the home and the more she loses her delicate charm and sympathy, which is distinctly feminine.”³²

The one factor that altered the direction of the southern anti-suffrage movement compared to that of northern anti-suffrage movements ultimately existed in the “southern gentleman” factor. For the South, women heavily depended upon their men for protection, political representation, and to preserve their social influence. One anti bluntly stated “Women’s place implies women’s dependence,” as women relied upon men as “natural protectors.”³³ Repeatedly, throughout anti-suffrage articles and letters to the editor, authors not only questioned the extent that political identity would redefine the gender of women, but also prompted men to defend their women against the suffrage imposition, as they charged female suffrage would devalue masculinity alongside a new cheapened femininity.

Making women less feminine, as the suffrage threatened to do, also changed the female-male dynamic, as it made men less masculine by closing the gap between the sexes. While newspaper articles questioned women whether they would allow their men to “go home and fall into the arms of a constitutional lawyer or a politician for rest, consolation, and comfort,” publications also questioned whether men were masculine enough to prevent their wives and daughters from becoming less feminine.³⁴

Anti-suffragists questioned the desires of men and women to retain established gender roles and familial relations. Pamphlets and newspaper articles prodded men into the debate by asking, “Is your wife’s place in the home or in the jury box; in the home or in the political convention; in the home or in the

³¹ Thomas Jablonsky, 119

³² Hon. James E. Martine, “Article on Woman Suffrage”, 14. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL

³³ Hon. James E. Martine, 14 .

³⁴ Hon. James E. Martine, “Article on Woman Suffrage”, 14

Legislative halls; in the home or in the ‘political shute’?”³⁵ Women’s place was not in this “political shute,” at least in the eyes of Alabama women. Instead, southern men offered women the necessary protection, respect, and guidance. According to one anti-suffragist woman, the southern woman had her “natural guide and protector in the gentleman.”³⁶

Southern Gentlemen and Southern Chivalry

This political cartoon portrays a group of women, who wear masculine attire and facial expressions, as opposed to the soft features of women commonly portrayed in this era, picketing for suffrage in Washington D.C. The leader of the group of women is unmistakably an image of an “old maid.” “Old maids” defied the traditional associations of female gender, as marriage existed as the ultimate goal of traditional femininity. The politician in the front, Congressman Pearson Hobson, reveals his lack of masculinity by his empty sword holster, while a man, hiding behind this long line of masculine women, holds a sign, which reads, “My wife wants the suffrage.”³⁷ For a man to cower timidly and unassertively behind a group of political women, while the leader of the protest carries no sword, reveals the general fear against de-masculinity associated with de-feminization.

³⁵ “A Protest Against Woman’s Suffrage,” 5.

³⁶ Mrs. Pinckhardt, *Birmingham News*. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

³⁷ Cartoon inside the Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.



One common gender argument against the suffrage in Alabama that came from men was not an argument based on the implications of feminine gender identity, but that of masculinity and the implications of the suffrage on “southern gentlemen.”³⁸ This argument directly correlated to the de-feminization of women as holding sway over the masculinity of men. Newspapers and literature denounced the suffrage as an insult to manhood, and as a sweeping judgment on the ability and

³⁸ Pinckhardt, Untitled Newspaper article., Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

leadership of southern men to govern politically and protect the socioeconomic interests of their families.

Much like the argument opposing the suffrage based on southern femininity, anti-suffragists leveraged geographical heritage, as the suffrage was a “challenge to all the principles of southern manhood.”³⁹ These principles, rooted in chivalry, self-sacrifice, and southern patriotism, would cease to be a priority if women achieved political equality with men. The vote threatened to rob men of their authority or ability to protect their women from the corruption of politics. Some editorials warned men that their women would be “locked up all night in a jury room filled with men, black or white” without the protection of their husbands, fathers, sons, or brothers.⁴⁰

The suffrage was an ultimate insult to the power of men to uphold political civility and perfect their public sphere of influence. Men often addressed these implied claims against men, and even engaged in mild forms of *reductio ad absurdum*: “we are told that the men of the country cannot be trusted to make the laws for the women.”⁴¹ Although suffragists did not claim outright that they wanted the vote because men failed at their masculine duties, southern men especially regarded the suffrage as a judgment upon their leadership and masculinity. One man defended his masculine status by writing:

We deny the claim of the suffragist that men of this country have made a failure of government or that men have become such ‘mollycoddles’ or so weak that it is necessary to place the burden of government upon women, most of whom are opposed to having the additional responsibility imposed upon them.⁴²

³⁹ W.S. Goodson, “Walter B. Jones Scouts the Idea that the Amendment is Democratic Measure.” Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁴⁰ “A Protest Against Woman’s Suffrage, 5.

⁴¹ Hon. James E. Martine, 6.

⁴² “Race Suicide Can Never Be Laid at the Door of Birmingham Suffragists,” *Birmingham News*. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

Men defended themselves against the suffrage by citing specific successes in defending femininity and the private sphere. Throughout newspapers and literature, Alabamians challenged the necessity for the vote, on the basis that men sustained superiority in protecting their women and children through political avenues. One newspaper editorial defended men, stating that men, as defenders spent an “average of four-fifths of the earnings of the man over and above the necessities of the family is spent on the women and children.”⁴³

One newspaper defended male politicians by citing the rights women have in “states where men make the laws.”⁴⁴ He ultimately claimed that in these states, women had greater rights than men, as a “woman can desert her husband and all he can do is ask her to come back to him, while men can be imprisoned for deserting their wives.”⁴⁵ The editorial explores deeper into allowances of women into the public sphere, citing instances where laws created by men allowed women to “sell and convey their real estate without the husband signing the deed while men must have their wives signatures in order to convey their own lands.”⁴⁶

Although southern politicians promoted egalitarian political practices, they did so in only rhetoric, not practice, as Mississippi was one of the only southern states to offer women *femme sole* status to women, which offered very limited access to land ownership and other property rights. In Alabama, laws concerning land ownership favored men. In 1888, the National American Women’s Suffrage Association, or NAWSA, published *The Legal Status of Women*, an exposé of imbalanced laws regarding gender. Several laws NAWSA leveraged against Alabama existed in Alabama’s unequal law regarding guardianship, which allows a man “by his will” to appoint a guardian for his children.⁴⁷

Alabama’s laws regarding inheritance also favored men, as women did not automatically assume control of her husband’s

⁴³ Hon. James E. Martine, 6.

⁴⁴ Hon. James E. Martine, 11.

⁴⁵ Hon. James E. Martine, 11.

⁴⁶ Hon. James E. Martine, 11.

⁴⁷ NAWSA, *The Legal Status of Women*, (1897), 88.

estate after his death unless she was childless. If she had male children, however, she was entitled to only one-third to one-half of the estate.⁴⁸ While in most southern states, such as Florida, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas, men had full control over their wives' entire property; Alabama granted women some limited legal status regarding personal property and inheritance.⁴⁹ Furthermore, NAWSA listed Alabama as lacking a protection clause for women to receive financial and material support from husbands.

Although the vote did not repeal these laws, it granted women avenues to oppose and rewrite the laws. Giving women equal political interest not only posed a threat to the political investment of southern men, as women would "reduce the value of man's vote to one-half," but also to the socioeconomic interest of female dependence upon men.⁵⁰ Antis claimed that the best interests of women existed in the traditional spheres of influence allotted to their gender.

Consequently, one of the common themes throughout literature discussing masculinity, anti-suffrage men and women demanded that men not "subject the innocent and unsuspecting mothers, wives, and daughters of Alabama to such terrible consequences" of the suffrage.⁵¹ Anti-suffragists questioned the power of these men to protect their women from the threats of the "misguided few."⁵² Women claimed that men breached their duties to women by forcing the suffrage upon women.⁵³

However, intertwined with this dual-gendered debate was an even larger argument against the suffrage, which threatened to uproot centuries of southern tradition and destroy the major foundation of southern civilization: the "negro problem."⁵⁴

⁴⁸ NAWSA, 25.

⁴⁹ NAWSA, 19.

⁵⁰ Birmingham Equal Suffrage Files, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁵¹ Alabama Democrats, "A Protest Against Woman's Suffrage," 4.

⁵² Alabama Democrats, "A Protest Against Woman's Suffrage," 4.

⁵³ Birmingham Equal Suffrage Files, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL., 12.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

The Negro Problem

As portrayed in the political cartoon discussed in the previous section, a large group of women displays their rejection of femininity by wearing pants, marching behind the lead of Alabama Congressman Richmond Pearson Hobson, a war hero of the Spanish-American war and a supporter of both abolition and the suffrage. The artist also relies heavily upon racial stereotypes, portraying the black women with overemphasized lips, large eyes, and unfashionable clothing. Much like this cartoon, anti-suffrage depended upon both the de-feminization of women, the subsequent de-masculinization of men, and the argument of racial equality as the death of white supremacy to defend their cause.

While the reassignment of gender roles existed as a major argument against the suffrage, reassignment of social tradition based upon race appears in this cartoon alongside examples of gender implications. The race issue was just as important as gender arguments, especially as race amplified the gender problem. Alongside threatening gender roles, the question of how granting the black female population equal voting power would change the southern social structure magnified the urgency to suppress support for the suffrage. Many historians and scholars have speculated on the motives of anti-suffrage women from a socioeconomic standpoint, where women of higher social standing sought to preserve their dominance over lower classes.⁵⁵ In Alabama, the anti-suffrage movement duplicated the motivations of the northern anti-suffragists, with

⁵⁵ Historians such as Susan E. Marshall, Thomas Jablonsky, and Jane Camhi, among others.

Camhi, Jane Jerome. *Women Against Women: American Anti-Suffragism, 1880-1920, Scholarship in Women's History: Rediscovered and New*.

Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Pub., 1994. Jablonsky, Thomas J. "Female Opposition; The Anti-Suffrage Campaign." In *Votes for Women*, edited by Marjorie Spruill Baker. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Marshall, Susan E. "In Defense of Separate Spheres: Class Movement and Status Politics in the Anti-suffrage Movement." *Social Forces*, Vol. 65, no. 2 (Dec., 1986): 327-351. Marshall, Susan E. *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

the motivation as retaining social dominance based upon race, as the nature of their gender roles also depended upon their dominance in relation to the black race. While granting women the vote posed to make the boundaries public and private sphere less defined, it also made the vote of white men equal to those of black women. While making white and black women equal under the law certainly provided enough resistance, making the votes of white men equal to those of black women provided an entirely different dimension to the argument against the suffrage.

White women regarded the vote as an equalizer with black women. Without the vote, white women played dominant roles in the social sphere of daily life. With the vote, however, white women held the same political advantage as black women. One woman wrote against the suffrage because she “would have to share with thousands of black women in the South.”⁵⁶ Antis argued that Negro women were more likely to vote than white women and were expected to vote in large groups. One anti asked “Who would doubt that a larger per cent of negro women would vote than white women?”⁵⁷ Anti-suffragists promoted the notion that black women, as more highly aggressive than white men, would fight for the vote even more than white women. Once they had the vote, anti-suffragists charged, black women would “register and vote in large numbers if given the opportunity.”⁵⁸ One anti claimed that over two-million “negro women” threatened the social hegemony of white women.⁵⁹

Inside the tracts provided by female-led anti-suffrage organizations, were claims that the suffrage would grant greater political power to the “negroes.”⁶⁰ One letter to the editor claimed that the suffrage was “unwise” for the South, where “we have the negro problem.”⁶¹ This “negro problem” rooted itself in the dense populations of blacks in rural areas. The writer of this

⁵⁶ Alabama Democrats, 13.

⁵⁷ Hon. James E. Martine, “Article on Woman Suffrage”, 6.

⁵⁸ Kenneth R. Johnson, “White Racial Attitudes as a Factor against the Nineteenth Amendment.” *Phylon*, 31 (1970): 32.

⁵⁹ Alabama Democrats, 7.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁶¹ Alabama Democrats, 8.

editorial feared the suffrage would “restore the negro men under the Fifteenth Amendment with the additional votes of negro women.”⁶²

Arguments rooted in race also depended upon de-feminizing black women by portraying them as aggressive, masculine, and as a threat to the order of civilized society. Antis publicized black women as “more aggressive than men,” touting their desire to vote in large numbers.⁶³ Belle Kearny of Mississippi gave a keynote address, “celebrating the South for its Anglo-Saxon purity and political sagacity in devising means to counter the enfranchisement of ‘four million, five hundred thousand ex slaves, illiterate and semi-barbarous.’”⁶⁴ This portrayal of the black population as illiterate, unintelligent, and unable to uphold the standards of gender roles saturated newspapers and public literature.

Allowing all women the vote threatened the delicate balance of power held by white Democrats inside the state and in national elections. Even after the Fifteenth Amendment, Democratic legislatures had been successful at suppressing the black vote. The Nineteenth Amendment threatened to undo the poll taxes, literacy qualifications, and land ownership clauses required in southern states to vote. Democratic politicians were afraid of endorsing universal female suffrage, as allowing all women the vote threatened the delicate balance of power held by white Democrats inside the state and in national elections, as state politicians effectively limited who could vote. Democrats claimed that the Nineteenth Amendment posed a threat to states rights, as it really existed as a threat to the power of white southern Democrats to use state authority to deny “negroes” their political rights.

Political Implications of “Negro Suffrage”

Alabama Democrats made no secret that they sought to defend their dominance in Alabama, as they distributed pamphlets and published arguments against the suffrage in

⁶² Alabama Democrats, 8.

⁶³ Johnson, 32.

⁶⁴ Spruill, 108.

Alabama newspapers. The Democratic Party essentially controlled the South, and a greater black vote threatened the party's political hegemony. Universal suffrage, specifically suffrage for black women, would threaten their control over southern voting patterns and remove the voting restrictions that limited black voting.

Politicians serving during the early 1910s were one of the first generations after the Civil War, and many had parents or grandparents who witnessed the Civil War during their lifetimes. The memory of the Civil War was not far in the memories of southern antis. Alabama Democratic politicians and legislators leveraged Civil War rhetoric against proponents for the suffrage, claiming the amendment existed as an inroad to the well-structured society of the South.

The Democratic Party regarded itself as the last line of defense against northern invasion of ideology and culture. Its rhetoric, as described by Marshall, was "still stinging in defeat of the Civil War."⁶⁵ Democratic politicians promoted themselves as defenders of southern tradition, and without that protection, the very foundations of Alabama's heritage would dissipate into non-existence. Granting women the right to vote, black or white, did nothing to "preserve a white man's government in Alabama."⁶⁶

Whether these Democratic Party leaders truly believed the North led a conspiracy against the South to destroy southern heritage or whether they only feared the demise of their political hegemony is uncertain.⁶⁷ What does exist, however, are public arguments citing both of those as reasons to oppose female suffrage. They cited the suffrage as a "conspiracy between the negroes and Republicans to put over the woman suffrage amendment with the belief that the Negro vote would breathe life into the Republican Party again"⁶⁸

Democratic politicians and female supporters of the Democratic Party effectively utilized scare tactics to evoke

⁶⁵ *Splintered Sisterhood*, 211.

⁶⁶ *Alabama Democrats*, 11.

⁶⁷ Letter to the Editor, July 17, 1919. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁶⁸ Johnson, 35

feelings of southern pride against the “frenzied desire of carpetbag scalawaggery” that existed in the suffrage.⁶⁹ Politicians charged that the suffrage would disrupt the changes inside the state since the Reconstruction. One politician called suffrage the “most dangerous blow aimed at the peace and happiness of the people of Alabama and white supremacy since the Civil War.”⁷⁰ Democratic leaders charged that the South would “return to Reconstruction days,” and “Jim Crow legislation would be repealed.”⁷¹ The northern conspiracy of offering suffrage to all women challenged the southern ideals of white supremacy, femininity, and masculinity.

Anti-suffrage organizations called the suffrage a northern movement created as a conspiracy against the tradition and civilization of the South.⁷² Similarly, one letter to the editor claimed, “such women as Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, the late Dr. Anna Shaw, Jane Addams” decided that “republicans, the women suffragists and the negroes would combine” to conspire against the culture and traditions of the South.⁷³ Similarly, Pinckhardt wrote that Susan B. Anthony and her compatriots conspired against the “supremacy of the South” through the amendment.⁷⁴ The suffrage threatened to “put a sword in the hands of the immodest and of those who would tear down the traditions of the South.”⁷⁵ This northern conspiracy, anti-suffragists charged, intended to “break the ‘solid South’ by means of the votes of ‘negro women’ and break down race and

⁶⁹ W.S. Goodson, “Walter B. Jones Scouts the Idea that the Amendment is Democratic Measure.” Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁷⁰ Alabama Democrats, 3.

⁷¹ Johnson, 36.

⁷² “Is this keeping with the traditions and civilizations of the South?” Alabama Democrats, 4.

⁷³ Letters to the Editor: “Suffrage, Negroes, and Radical Propaganda.” Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁷⁵ Worthington, Amelia. “Woman Suffrage.” *The Birmingham News*, May 23, 1915, 16

sex distinctions.”⁷⁶ Leveraging traditional female gender roles, prominent citizens promoted that it was “more becoming” of the women of Alabama to follow the “lead of the statesmen of the South instead of the northern enemies to the South.”⁷⁷

Antis still relied upon the Civil War southern ideology of states’ rights to oppose the suffrage, even exemplifying the Confederate soldier as an upholder of southern tradition.⁷⁸ Martin C. Calhoun, son of the politician and former slave-owner, William Calhoun, wrote:

Any southern state which ratifies this amendment will repudiate the principals [sic] for which the Confederate soldier struggled through four long years, and such a state should in all justice, dismantle every monument which has been erected to the heroic memory of ‘the men who wore the grey’.⁷⁹

The racist argument of the anti-suffragists claimed the suffrage would “inevitably result in striking down those barriers which you and your fathers have raised between Anglo-Saxon civilization and those who would mongrelize and corrupt it.”⁸⁰

In newspapers, politicians charged that the suffrage threatened to “revive the two party system,” removing complete dependence and hegemony of the Democratic Party in Alabama.⁸¹ Furthermore, these newspaper writings claimed that with the suffrage “the solid Democratic South would be broken,” as women participated in partisan politics and divided the white vote, granting greater leveraging power to the black population,

⁷⁶ “A Protest Against Woman’s Suffrage, 4

⁷⁷ “A Protest Against Woman’s Suffrage, 11

⁷⁸ “The principle of states rights was the principle of the Confederate soldier. The principle for which our fathers fought and bled and died.” *Montgomery Times* “In Opposing Ratification.” Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁷⁹ “In Opposing Ratification.”

⁸⁰ “Alabama Women Oposed [sic] to Ratifying Suffrage Clause Memorialize Legislature,” July 17, 1919 Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁸¹ Johnson, 35.

and effectively decreasing the “power of politics of our rural communities.”⁸²

Although many Democratic leaders mobilized against the suffrage on a race basis, anti-suffrage organizations bombarded legislatures, courtrooms, and public venues with literature warning of the potential damage that the suffrage would cause between race and sex relations in the South. “They constantly reminded southern legislatures of the danger inherent in enfranchising female ex-slaves, particularly for counties in which African-Americans possessed a numerical superiority.”⁸³

Anti-suffrage women realized that the Democratic legislature would never pass an amendment that was antithetical to its own interests. The Montgomery-based Anti-Suffrage organization sent a petition to the Alabama State Legislature in 1919, which contained signatures of women who opposed the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.⁸⁴ The petition read,

We the undersigned women of Alabama do earnestly petition the state legislature that they decline to ratify the Susan B. Anthony amendment, which violates time honored principles of States’ Rights, and that they preserve to our own state the right to make its own laws.⁸⁵

Along with the petition, antis sent letters to individual legislators, informing the politicians that all members of the anti-suffrage organization “look with confidence to you, in whom the high traditions of the South still live, to protect us from this device of northern abolitionists.”⁸⁶

Conclusion

⁸² Johnson, 35.

⁸³ Jablonsky, 128.

⁸⁴ “Anti-Ratification League of City has Splendid Meeting,” July 3, 1919. Elizabeth Sheehan Anti-Ratification Scrapbook, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, AL.

⁸⁵ “Anti-Ratification League of City has Splendid Meeting.”

⁸⁶ “Alabama Women Oposed [sic] to Ratifying Suffrage Clause Memorialize Legislature.”

Superficially, the northern argument against the suffrage paralleled the southern anti-suffrage movement, as both northern and southern opposition leveraged gender-charged rhetoric against the suffrage. Obviously, both northern and southern antis regarded the suffrage as a direct challenge to traditional gender assignments. However, southern antis rooted their arguments inside a special definition of southern femininity and masculinity. Southern anti-suffragists regarded the suffrage as a breach of established southern tradition of female domesticity and motherhood. This distinct femininity existed as a separate identity for many white women in the South. While the anti-suffrage debate in the South centered on southern culture and southern heritage, the northern movement operated as a movement outside regional identity. Throughout anti-suffrage literature, anti-suffragists wrote that the exceptional nature of southern identity prevented the necessity of the vote.

In Alabama, the suffrage debate manifested itself as a debate as to whether granting the vote to women breached the threefold definition of southern tradition: race, femininity, and masculinity. While much of this debate rested inside a gender argument based upon femininity, the female suffrage held implications on masculinity and the race hierarchy in the south. The female suffrage threatened the foundations upon which the South built its cultural traditions: race hierarchy, Democratic political hegemony, and distinct gender identities.

The Open Range in Madison County, Alabama

By Matthew Menarchek

The open range, upon which livestock grazed and roamed the public domain, constituted a major portion of the antebellum South's economy. As southerners moved westward, they found plentiful and undeveloped land through which an open range system could thrive.¹ Western settlers from Georgia and the Carolinas first moved into the Mississippi Territory, of which Madison County became a part. Thus, it developed as one of the first frontier counties of the old Southwest. From its beginning, county residents relied on an open range system for sustenance and the basis for economic development. Despite the county's growth in plantation owners and Huntsville's urbanization in subsequent decades, herding and grazing remained an important part of the economy. Those who owned and looked after grazing livestock, the herdsman, left little evidence of their existence. Yet, court records, newspaper land advertisements, and United States Census records provide evidence of the role herdsman and the open range played. Madison County, from its beginning until the Civil War years, maintained an open range system that provided an occupation, a source of food, and a source of wealth for its inhabitants.

At first Madison existed as a county within the Mississippi Territory, and from this early time the territory protected the open range through legislation. The Mississippi Territory in 1807 required that land owners build fences "five feet high, well staked and ridged, or sufficiently locked, and so close that the beasts breaking into the same could not creep through . . ." if they wished to protect their land and crops from wandering livestock. If an animal broke through a lawful fence, the livestock owner became liable for damages. However, if

¹ Frank Lawrence Owsley's *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), and Grady McWhiney's *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways of the Old South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988), provide excellent descriptions of southern open range herding and how this system shaped the antebellum South in general.

lands had no fences, were not built to legal specifications, or had fallen into extreme disrepair, then land owners had no legal recourse for damages incurred by an animal to his land.²

The record of several Madison County court cases involve disputes over livestock and affirm the county's reliance on open range herding. These court records about livestock owners reflect the legal principle of *animus revertendi*, translated "the intention to return," which became part of the English common law. Under *animus revertendi*, an owner of livestock may brand his herd, let the herd freely roam the public domain, and still retain ownership. The act of branding served as proof that the owner intended the animal to return for the owner's personal use. Others could not legally take branded livestock, even if the livestock had wandered from the direct control of their owner. These laws emerged to accommodate open range practices that existed in England since medieval times and which then came to the American South through Celtic immigrants. The court cases mention branding, pointing to use of the practice in Madison County.³

² John G. Aikin, comp., *Digest of the Laws of the State of Alabama: Containing all the Statutes of a Public and General Nature, in Force at the Close of the Session of the General Assembly, in January, 1833* (Philadelphia: Alexander Towar, 1833), 193-194; J. Crawford King, "The Closing of the Southern Range: An Exploratory Study," *The Journal of Southern History* 48, no. 1 (1982): 53-54.

³ John H. Ingham, *The Law of Animals: A Treatise on Property in Animals Wild and Domestic and the Rights and Responsibilities Arising Therefrom* (Philadelphia: T and J. W. Johnson and Company, 1900), 5-7; Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald, "Celtic Origins of Southern Herding Practices," *The Journal of Southern History* 51, no. 2 (1985): 166-170. JSTOR, www.jstor.org.



One Madison County case in 1814, *The [Mississippi] Territory vs. William Campbell*, involved “a certain Brown steer four years old branded on the left horn with a small ‘S’, the property of Stephen Jones.” Jones alleged Campbell “did . . . feloniously steal, take and drive away” the cow valued at fifteen dollars. The court record described both men as “yeoman.” Jones and Campbell likely grew some crops, but they relied on their livestock for economic independence. Fifteen dollars represented a sizable investment, especially for a small farmer such as Jones. Furthermore, the court found Campbell not guilty, a decision that occurs almost without exception in cases such as this one. This suggests the difficulty plaintiffs encountered in actually proving another had stolen one of his herd in an open range system. Even if branded, free roaming animals caused reasonable doubt that the defendant intentionally stole another’s livestock.⁴

In 1815 *The [Mississippi] Territory vs. Thomas George* claimed that George stole a “red heifer marked with a crop in the

⁴ K. Loughton, comp., *Mississippi Territory Minute Book Superior Court of Law and Equity Madison County M. T. 1811-1819* (State Department of Archives and History: Montgomery, Alabama), 74.

left [ear] and a split in the same ear.” The court again protected the ownership rights of the accuser, Michael Strasen, acknowledging his claim to the branded animal. The county estimated the value of the cow at five dollars, not an enormous sum but still representing an important investment for a yeoman farmer such as Strasen. Furthermore, this indicates how Madison residents measured wealth. Livestock, not crops, determined wealth during Madison’s early development. The court eventually cleared George of wrongdoing.⁵

Numerous other cases in the years leading up to Alabama’s statehood involved hogs. The recurrence of these types of cases reveals the prevalence of livestock in the lives of Madison County’s earliest residents. These cases almost always record the value of the hog or the cow, usually determined at five or six dollars. The open range constituted Madison’s most significant economic development during its early days and provided the basis for the county’s agriculture.⁶

Alabama became a state in 1819 and quickly passed its own laws to affirm and build upon Mississippi Territory statutes concerning the open range. Madison County operated under these laws until the Civil War. In 1820 the state legislature passed a law that required land owners to report all strays taken on their lands to the county court, with the finders taking note of the animals’ marks, brands, stature, color, and age. The law further provided that “if any person shall take up or use a stray of whatever description, contrary to the meaning of this act, such person shall . . . forfeit and pay one hundred dollars,” a significant sum for that time. The state forbade finders to sell or trade any strays within twelve months of discovery. During this period, the original owner could reclaim his livestock through certificates and brands. In addition to these restrictions, strays could not be taken up under any circumstances between the months of April and November, when herders fattened their livestock during the spring and summer months to drive them to

⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-6, 7-8, 31, 36, 118, 126.

town markets from August through November.⁷

The open range remained a large part of Madison County's economy for the next three decades. Despite the county's and Huntsville's growth, open land and livestock existed in large amounts within the county. Numerous advertisements appear in *The Democrat* and *The Southern Advocate*, two Huntsville newspapers of the antebellum period, revealing the prevalence of open land in Madison. In 1837 Francis M. Phillips advertised his land for sale noting that 240 acres out of his 1,000 acres were in cultivation. In other words, 760 acres of Phillips' land remained unobstructed and undeveloped. Similarly, a farmer named Mason advertised that he had cleared 600 acres of his 1,000 acres. These advertisements indicate the general clearing pattern of local land owners. These farmers had improved about half of their land.⁸

Two advertisements deserve special attention because of their content and the time period in which they appeared. First, a Mr. Hewlett advertised a land sale in *The Southern Advocate* in 1857 that stated his land "can be divided to advantage to suit small planters and [live]stock raising" and that his land only had "100 or 300 acres in cultivation" out of a total of 960 acres. Hewlett specifically targeted livestock owners in his advertisement indicating that, even as Madison County experienced rapid development in the 1850s, hogs and cattle still constituted an important part of the economy.⁹

⁷ Aikin, *Digest*, 400-402; Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsmen: A Reinterpretation," *The Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 2 (1975): 161-162. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org.

⁸ *The Democrat* (Huntsville), 11 March 1837. Microfilm; *The Democrat* (Huntsville), 31 October 1837. Microfilm.

⁹ *The Southern Advocate* (Huntsville), 12 November 1857. Microfilm.



The second advertisement in 1858 tells of a deceased Elias Wellborn. He, by authority of his will, wished his land sold. Wellborn possessed 860 acres of land about half cleared. This indicates that Madison land owners, even if they possessed their land for a long period of time, might leave major portions of their land undeveloped. This contributed to the continuance of



the open range, even as large planters and small farmers moved into the county in the decades leading up to the Civil War.¹⁰

Census data from 1850 and 1860 confirm the impressions given by the newspapers regarding Madison County's society.

¹⁰ *The Southern Advocate* (Huntsville), 19 August 1858. Microfilm.

In 1850 farmland accounted for 64 percent of the county's land. Unimproved farmland, however, taken with the county's land not in farms constituted 68 percent of total land area. In essence, around 68 percent of Madison still remained open for roaming livestock. At this time, 8,572 cattle and 63,080 hogs lived in Madison, a major portion of county livestock valued at \$642,978. By 1860, numbers in most of these categories had declined. 58 percent of Madison's land remained free for the open range. 7,673 cattle and 49,723 hogs still lived in Madison, with total livestock valued at \$1,107,685.¹¹ Yet, despite a significant amount of industrial growth in Huntsville, the majority of Madison's land remained free. From its beginning, Madison's economy relied on livestock, and the immense amount of hogs by 1850 shows the growth of a livestock economy. This, coupled with laws supporting the open range in Alabama, gives a different perspective to Madison County's economic development.

Open farmland and large numbers of livestock also characterized Alabama and the antebellum South in general.¹² In 1850, 63 percent of Alabama's farmland remained open range, while all other southern states' farmland constituted between 50 and 75 percent of open range. 1,904,540 hogs resided in Alabama, while 20,115,088 hogs resided in the South. The latter number constituted 66 percent of the entire nation's hog population. By 1860, the openness of southern farmland and the prevalence of livestock remained essentially unchanged. Livestock also held a substantial amount of wealth. In 1850, livestock held \$225,977,972, and this amount had climbed to \$497,340,511 by 1860.¹³

Madison County possessed many facets of antebellum

¹¹ Bureau of the Census, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington, D. C., 1853), 429-430; Bureau of the Census, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860 . . . Compiled from . . . the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C., 1864), 2-3.

¹² The percentages in this paragraph are derived from the Census statistical data of those states which eventually joined the Confederacy, in addition to the states of Kentucky and Missouri.

¹³ Bureau, *The Seventh Census*, lxxxii; Bureau, *Agriculture . . . 1860*, cxxiii-cxxviii, 184.

southern society, including large and small planters, yeoman farmers, businessmen, and herdsman. In short, Madison presents the antebellum South in microcosm. The same open range system that existed in Alabama existed in most, if not all, southern states. Slavery certainly constituted a major portion of the antebellum South's economy, but the majority of southerners provided for themselves without slavery. Herding and grazing animals provided an occupation and a source of wealth for those of Madison County as well as many southerners in several states. The open range significantly affected the development of the antebellum South's economy. Madison County's development provides insights into the antebellum South's development outside of King Cotton's influence and the economic system it created.

The Quest for Certainty: Amos Blanch Jones' Attempt to Recreate a Pre-Civil War Southern Mentality

By Charity Ethridge

Although many modern historians have struggled to create a comprehensive definition of the Old South, fewer have attempted to figure out why postbellum southerners felt the need to create a mythical Old South. Some historians believe that the loss of a distinctive southern lifestyle after the Civil War created a regional void in identity that needed to be explained. The development of this memory manifested itself in the idealization of ancient southern morals such honor, gentility, and republicanism and created the cultural foundation for the postwar New South. The life of Amos Blanch Jones allows modern readers to understand how the Old South mentality manifested itself in the New South. Jones's life mirrored many of the regional changes that occurred around him. He remembered the world he knew before the Civil War and attempted to instill those values as the president of the Huntsville Female College after the war.

Amos Blanch Jones led a childhood of privilege and wealth. He was born on December 4, 1841, in Boydton, Virginia, and grew up in Jackson, Tennessee.¹ His parents were Amos Westley Jones and Caroline Matilda Blanch.² Jones lived a life of fortune because his father owned four hundred acres of land and forty slaves with the property value of all land and goods at

¹ "Amos Blanch Jones Family Tree," Ancestry.com, <http://trees.ancestry.com> [accessed November 1, 2009].

² Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1248.

around \$15,000.³ His father held the position of president of the Memphis Conference Female Institute and oversaw the well-being of the faith, morality, and education of young women throughout the South.⁴ Records show that Jones's family lived in a frame house with ten rooms instead of the common log houses of poorer farmers. They also had an additional building with eighty rooms for classes and female residents for the institute.⁵

Amos Blanch Jones's lifestyle differed from the majority of most poor farmers in the antebellum South. According to James Oakes in *The Ruling Race*, slaves and land were the two indicators of wealth for southerners during the antebellum period. As land diminished or became infertile in areas of the South, farmers and slaveholders pushed west in search of new land.⁶ Jones's family mirrored Oakes's sentiments as his family moved to the Old Southwest like many other southerners. The stability that Jones's family achieved after their westward migration gave them power and credibility in a world where many struggled. Their success could be perceived as an achievement that represented a born right to lead. This type of success catered to the idea of republicanism that the South held

³ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1246-1247.

⁴ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1246.

⁵ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1247.

⁶ James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* [New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998], 73.

to justify slavery and aristocratic leadership. Republicanism in the Old South allowed the elite planter class to rule and maintain control over poorer citizens. Since the Jones family found power and wealth in a variety of occupations and slave ownership, they became responsible for the welfare of their more needy neighbors in Jackson. Amos Blanch Jones would later recall that common farmers and non-slaveholders were friends of his family, and when they needed assistance, his father sent help. Elite planters in the Jackson community helped by providing loans to those who needed them in order to increase land holdings or buy slaves.⁷ Jones's attitude proves that elites perceived poor farmers as members of the society, regardless of their status. According to Jones, elite planters did not consider themselves above poorer farmers as long as they were gentlemen. Different classes spent time together at churches, schools, and public occasions and even participated in the same communion services.⁸ The aid the Jackson elite gave to poor farmers allowed planters to maintain their prominent status by reminding those farmers of their capability to lend aid. The camaraderie also allowed planters to create the idea that all southerners were equal to ensure peace within the community.

It is possible that Jones was oblivious to class differences and the use of wealth to earn prestige because he belonged to the South's ruling class. He was in college at the start of the Civil War, and being a child, it is likely he misunderstood the concept of power and wealth and viewed the relations of his family with

⁷ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1247.

⁸ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1247.

other families as simply friendly relationships in much the same way his childhood friendships developed. Children tend not see class or race; therefore, it is possible Jones saw only the physical connection in relationships not the motivations behind them. This childlike naivety portrays the same mind set southerners used to maintain a society that allowed for the perception of positive class relations, which also led to the ferocity by which they fought the Civil War and tried to mend their ideals through the Old South myth.

Although many planters and their sons managed to avoid serving in the military early in the war, Jones left Auburn University to enlist in the Sixth Tennessee Regiment, Company H on May 15, 1861, in his hometown of Jackson, Tennessee.⁹ The first battle his company fought was the Battle of Shiloh, and he later participated in the Battle of Chickamauga and the Siege of Atlanta.¹⁰ His life was riddled with loss. Jones laid beside fellow soldier, Joe Cock, when he was shot and killed at Kennesaw Mountain on June 27-28, 1863.¹¹ Prior to this near death experience, Jones was injured at Chickamauga and later at

⁹ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1246-1247.

¹⁰ Robert Gates, "Those Who Served from Madison County Tennessee: Civil War, Sixth Regiment Tennessee Volunteers," Genealogy Trails, <http://genealogytrails.com/tenn/madison/milcivil6.html> [accessed November 1, 2009].

¹¹ Robert Gates, "Those Who Served from Madison County Tennessee: Civil War, Sixth Regiment Tennessee Volunteers," Genealogy Trails, <http://genealogytrails.com/tenn/madison/milcivil6.html> [accessed November 1, 2009].

Atlanta.¹² Even after Jones' valiant serve and his injuries, his treatment after the war left him wondering what happened to the society that he knew and loved.

The type of treatment Jones faced after the Civil War helps examine the southern need to create an Old South myth to regain their strength and pride after the destruction of war. After the Confederate armies surrendered in the Spring 1865, Union forces disenfranchised Jones and he snuck back to his hometown at great risk because the Union army already had possession of his childhood home.¹³ Jones held no possessions after the war because Union troops confiscated his family's property.¹⁴ He became dependent on odd jobs to find ways of making money and support himself. He started as a farmer and earned money selling cotton. He farmed for two years and then began work as a traveling salesman.¹⁵ Jones' lifestyle was characteristic of many southerners after the Civil War as he fell into poverty. This diminishment of status for southerners led to the development of the Old South myth because southerners wanted to identify with the genteel and stately living the aristocratic planters held before

¹²Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1248.

¹³ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1248.

¹⁴ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1248-1251.

¹⁵ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1248.

the Civil War. Many southerners lacked the ability to gain upward mobility after the war, and they depended on the notions and memories of the pre-Civil War South to create goals for their New South lives.

Few were fortunate enough to achieve the goals of returning to the old ways of honor, loyalty, and gentility, but some, like Amos Blanch Jones, managed to rebound in the New South. The few men who regained status held the responsibility to recreate the honor of Old South ideals. Jones used his teaching as a way to instill southern pride and gentility into the New South way of life. His major accomplishment at attempting such a merger of ideals in the New South was becoming president of the Huntsville Female College and other female institutes. Prior to his appointment as president of the college, Jones worked as a teacher in Mississippi and then as a steward for his father at the Memphis Conference Female Institute until he rented it from his father and became president of it for two years.¹⁶ After these two years, he became president of the Huntsville Female College in 1880.¹⁷ Jones only retained sixty dollars upon coming to Huntsville and left two-hundred dollars in debt. Upon arriving at Huntsville, Jones quickly managed to change his position because in six years he bought his wife a large house on college property.¹⁸ With his presidency and rising status, Jones quickly put himself in a position to maintain the Old

¹⁶Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1248-1251.

¹⁷ Correspondence to Reverend A.H. Nabors, Pastor, First Methodist Church, Huntsville, Alabama, December 25, 1952.

¹⁸ Amos Blanch Jones, interview by Gustavus W. Dyer and John Trotwood Moore, in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires*, edited by Colleen Morse Elliott and Louise Armstrong Moxley [Easley: Southern Historical Press, 1985], 3:1248-1251.

South republican value that everyone had a specific place in society.

After the Civil War, the South became a region with little continuity as the status of individuals changed. The commemoration of the Old South dealt with the reestablishment of the different class stations for the New South. As women in the North used the Civil War to begin to assert their own rights and northern factories allowed women workers, the idea of separate spheres proved important to regaining principles of Old South republicanism by ensuring women stayed in the home. The genteel and moral women who worked at home became a major symbol of the Old South, and this ideal was one status that southerners could maintain, unlike slavery. Jones' presidency at the Huntsville Female College placed him in a position of leadership where he upheld the southern thinking of women's domesticity in the face of New South industry. Jones held responsibility for the moral, physical, and intellectual growth of the female students. In order to maintain this sense of southern identity, he portrayed himself as a father to the students, and the parents put their trust in his ability to teach their girls. The yearly college catalogs described the institution as a Christian family with the president as the father of the family. He sat at the same table with many of his pupils during their meal times suggesting devotion to the well-being of the students as if he was a father wanting to know about his daughter's day.¹⁹ Jones had a say in the physical and mental growth of the girls by being present during all of these occasions. He appeared chosen to look after the girls like wealthy planters looked after poor farmers in the Old South.

¹⁹*Annual Catalogue of the Huntsville Female College*, 41st ed. [Nashville: Publishing House M.E. Church, South, 1891], 19-20.



The morality of women played a major role in their status during the Old South; therefore, to remember southern ideals and encourage fixed status, Jones focused on the morality of his female students. The catalogs required that students wear the same type of garments. In the winter, students were required to wear a black dress, coat, and hat. In the summer and spring, the students wore white dresses and hats with no pattern or color. They did not wear any silk or satin. The reasons for such a strict and plain dress code were to prevent vanity and to aid the southern economy by buying items manufactured in the South.²⁰ This plain dress prevented any chance of appearing too sexual or feminine so the focus could be on the mind and domestic nature of the students. Jones also limited the type of information female students obtained and the company they kept. Rules hindered women from communicating with the opposite sex or circulating any outside information without approval.²¹ Lack of

²⁰ *Annual Catalogue of the Huntsville Female College*, 32nd ed. [Cincinnati: Elm St. Printing Co., 1882], 24.

²¹ *Annual Catalogue of the Huntsville Female College*, 41st ed. [Nashville: Publishing House M.E. Church, South, 1891], 20.

communication with men ensured the students would not engage in any distasteful activity or even know about any immoral behavior. Old South ideals wanted women to be pure without the understanding of sexual activity or vanity. They attended school to become better daughters and mothers not to assert their own sexual or physical independence. Without this naivety and purity, southern women lost their status in southern society, and they became no better than liberal northern women.

The last regulation Jones placed on female students was their domesticity. During the Old South, women were mothers and took care of the household. In order to control at least one status from the Old South, Jones ensured the education of women stayed within the arts and domestic fields. Teachers taught the basics of math and science but all other eight schools in the curriculum fell under the arts.²² During the Old South, southerners believed women should be educated in order to be better mothers, but they did not need skills they could use outside of the home. Science and math only proved truly important outside of the home for women; therefore, Jones skimmed briefly over those subjects. A graduation speech from Huntsville Female College by Reverend O.P. Fitzgerald signified the belief of keeping women in domestic roles after the war because of republican principles. The speech recognized that God ordained limitations for all individuals to fall into a specific job, and for women, it was to stay a homemaker. Fitzgerald argued that women should not be fashionable. He encouraged that women learn to do their best while in school but to use the education they achieved to mold the minds of their children and not further

²² *Annual Catalogue of the Huntsville Female College*, 32nd ed. [Cincinnati: Elm St. Printing Co., 1882], 13.

their own education to move into the work force.²³ By allowing Fitzgerald to speak, Jones used his power and prestige to mold the New South minds back toward the ideals of republicanism. He practiced republicanism through the education of young women by encouraging them to maintain the pre-Civil War ideals of morality and domesticity.



Huntsville Female College burned down in 1895, and the local newspaper reported it as, “The Once Proud Alma Mater of Thousands of Southern Matrons and Maidens a Pile of Smouldering Ruins.”²⁴ This description enhanced the ideals southerners sought to return to after the destruction of the Civil War. Amos Blanch Jones became a patron of achieving this Old South identity because of his past and present. He grew up with

²³ Reverend O.P. Fitzgerald D.D., “Finish What You Undertake” [speech, presented to the 1889 graduating class of Huntsville Female College, Huntsville, AL, June 5, 1889].

²⁴ “In Ashes: The Huntsville Female College Guttled by The Flames,” 1894 Madison County, Alabama Archives, Madison County Public Library.

the ideal of republicanism as a member of a prominent planter family, and his family taught him to look out for the poorer classes as a duty. He fought to revive his status after the Civil War by becoming president of the Huntsville Female College. Once he achieved that status, it became his duty to instill southern identity through his power. He did this by following his republican ideology, from his childhood, to ensure that southern females maintained their Old South roles of domesticity. After the fire, Jones continued to move to other female institutions sharing the same principles at each. Jones was a direct product of the Old South ideals, and after the Civil War, he revived the Old South memory by using republican ideals of status and gentility to teach female students at Huntsville Female College and maintain the original status quo.

The McCrary Farm Enters Its Third Century

By Joseph M. Jones

In Madison County's "Three Forks of Flint" community, the Thomas McCrary farm has entered its third century. With its nineteenth-century dwelling and attendant structures, it appears to be the oldest such establishment in Alabama, that is, still owned and operated by the family of the original settler who bought the land from the United States government soon after the Cherokees and Chickasaws relinquished their claims.

It was 1809 when Thomas McCrary, a bright, young, single Carolinian with growing ambitions, moved into the Great Bend of the Tennessee, and bought a promising half-section of fertile land on which to cultivate cotton and a future. The next year he added an adjacent quarter section, 480 acres in sum. More than 200 years later his descendants still live on and operate that farm, still growing cotton in addition other crops and beef cattle.

Its principal owners today are two cousins, the eldest a great-grandson of the original Thomas McCrary who bears the exact name of his ancestor: Thomas McCrary, 98, who lives in nearby New Market. The other main owner until recently was a first cousin, Miss Alice McCrary Thomas, who died May 30, 2008, at age 98 and was buried "at home" with earlier McCrary generations. The land has been handed down through numerous McCrary generations, and the residence, which dates from about 1824, has been altered substantially by three of them.

Miss Thomas's successor is Mrs. Marguerite Ellison, a widowed niece of hers who is raising four children on the farm. Miss Thomas, a retired school principal and a renowned authority in area historical and genealogical research--a past president of the Huntsville/Madison County Historical Society--was a major source of this article, which was written with her assistance and reviewed by her prior to her death. The story, therefore, is allowed to stand with only minor revisions.

Alice McCrary Thomas was the last of the generations which substantially altered the old domicile, which was built of bricks made on the premises by slaves. When she inherited title

in 1971 she built on the rear a “keeping room,” essentially a modern apartment, in which she largely lived, but she slept at night in the old portion of the house in a canopied four-poster where her grandparents and great-grandparents had slept. The house is filled with antiques, many of them dating to the establishment of the residence, and even earlier. In the immediate area sloping down toward the Flint River are archaic outbuildings including a carriage house and a commissary used to provision slaves and later tenant farmers.

In the course of its 200 years, the property has been divided among heirs and reconsolidated. Today all except twenty acres of the original 480 acre farm is held by McCrarys, the twenty acres released to a medical doctor, Dr. Joseph S. Macon, in the 1890s “as payment for medical bills and in appreciation for friendship,” according to Miss Thomas. The residence and attendant farm buildings now belong to Mrs. Ellison, whereas the farm lands are held by Mrs. Ellison, and the present Thomas McCrary and his daughter, Miss Rosemary McCrary.

It is, according to the 1981 application by which it was added to the National Register of Historic Places, “an unusually intact 19th century farm complex.”

When the farm was settled Alabama was not yet settled and would not be for another decade. The area was in the Great Bend of the Tennessee River, in the eastern part of the Mississippi Territory, a most favored part with flat and rolling terrain, well watered, rich soil, auspicious climate – everything just right for growing cotton, the magic fiber that was taking the country, now that the cotton gin had been invented and was in common use, and abundant labor was available.

The first Thomas McCrary was twenty years of age and not without means when he received the land. He was among the first to make application to the government for the purchase of land in the area of the even-then renowned Big Spring, around which the town of Huntsville was later built. Soon after the government land office in Nashville opened August 5, 1809, for the sale of land in the locale, he obtained title to 320 acres, paying cash, no doubt derived from his father’s estate in Laurens County, South Carolina., where the McCrary family had prospered for two or three generations as people of the soil.

In 1810, he added more acreage and began a gradual elevation to a position of major farmer, cotton factor, manufacturer, public official, and merchant. His finally owned more than 2,000 acres before the Civil War, a majority of it two miles eastward near the Deposit community.

Many, maybe most, of the landed gentry of the Huntsville vicinity had extensive farming operations outside the town but resided themselves in Huntsville. Not so with McCrary. He stayed in the countryside where his fortunes were. He did later establish a substantial business interest in the city, but he continued to live in the county.

It is noteworthy also that perhaps four-fifths of the newcomers were subsistence farmers, so in that sense McCrary was not typical. The very first Madison County settlers, Isaac and Joseph Criner of New Market, arriving in 1804-5, were clearly yeoman farmers, whereas in a few years moneyed farmers and speculators came en masse. When land sales began in 1809, a census of the Madison County area (somewhat larger than the present county) dated January 1809 showed there were 2,223 whites and 322 slaves in residence, squatters all. An early historian, Judge Thomas Jones Taylor, wrote in 1883 that of the early 1809 population "not a man had a title to a foot of land and many of them had been anxiously awaiting an opportunity to secure the home they had located in the new country." Eventually most of them did become legal owners, thanks to a benevolent government, many buying "on credit" at \$2 per acre.

The Thomas McCrary place is located ten miles northeast of the settlement first known as Twickenham and later Huntsville, in a section known locally as the "Three Forks of Flint," somewhat of a misnomer to some in that it is merely the confluence of Briar Fork and the Mountain Creek Fork of the Flint. A mile or so north of the confluence, he was in historic territory, where the first bridge spanning the Flint and a grist mill were built, and the famous five-story brick Bell Factory was established in 1832 as the state's initial major manufacturer of cotton goods.

Coming into the virgin cotton country with McCrary was Daniel Wright of Surrey County, N. C, who was followed two years later by his brother Williams Wright, sons of a prominent

Virginia family with both blood and property ties to soldier-aristocrat George Washington. The Wrights bought land on either side of McCrary and were both to become, in turn, father-in-law to McCrary. Daniel Wright, a Revolutionary War soldier, had a daughter named Betsy, whom McCrary married in 1812. They had three daughters and a son (the latter dying in infancy) before Betsy succumbed in 1821. Thomas McCrary, then 34, married Betsy's first cousin, 17-year-old Nancy, the daughter of Williams, in 1823. That union endured and prospered for 42 years, as did the fortunes of McCrary. It is through Nancy that the present McCrary line runs—she mothered the prevailing family, outliving her husband by thirty years.

It is not clear that McCrary brought slave labor with him when he came to the region, but he likely did have minimal assistance. After five years the tax records show that he had nine slaves, a number which at maximum grew to eighty-nine. An existing family Bible reveals that he owned a cumulative total through the years of more than 300.

What is clear is that he deliberately engaged his workers in diversified trades. Of course they cleared land and raised cotton, which was the king of all enterprises. He also operated, with "servant" help, two tanneries for making shoes and other leather goods, a blacksmith shop, a brick manufacturing operation, and a small sugar refinery—the latter indicated only by a court record at the time of his death, about which nothing else is known, although it is assumed they grew cane to support that operation.

It was with his own slave-made bricks that he built his two-story residence, probably in 1824, replacing a less permanent wooden structure he built upon arrival. Although there is no physical evidence of a brick "factory," family and community lore seems to make that a certainty. He also built about the same time a number of brick "cabins" for his slaves. The late Alice Thomas said her mother quoted her father, Williams Wright McCrary, as saying there were five such cottages. Another source lists the number as eight.

Here, an oddity appears. There is strong circumstantial evidence that McCrary, of a Presbyterian background but apparently never an active churchman, also had a major role in

building at this time a small brick Baptist church in the open countryside on what is now Moores Mill Road, about two miles west of his farm. Enon Baptist Church had been formed in 1809, near the present Meridianville. In 1825, one year after McCrary's own brick house is thought to have been built, a small brick church house appeared; Enon voted unanimously, with no prior hint of such an activity in its official record, to quit its log building and move into the new brick meeting house. Both of McCrary's fathers-in-law were important members of Enon and had roles (indicated in court records, not church minutes) in raising funds for a new meeting house, and it is assumed they employed McCrary's demonstrated brick-making capability, assisted perhaps by his considerable labor force, to erect the new building. But church records are silent in this regard. Enon, the oldest missionary Baptist church in Alabama, later moved to Huntsville and became the city's First Baptist Church, now celebrating its 200th year. It is the writer's supposition that McCrary's in-laws prevailed upon him to assist in building a new meeting house, and he, having bricks and labor, complied.

And what a spectacle that must have been--a brick church in raw open country otherwise known for its cotton, timber, and modest (mostly log?) homesteads. The new church house, much closer to the McCrary-Wright home places than the old log Enon, became a landmark, cited even in land deed descriptions.

McCrary's residence, never palatial but a substantial masonry home, was expanded significantly in the 1830s when, upon the untimely death of Nancy's parents, Thomas and Nancy McCrary assumed the responsibility of rearing Nancy's young siblings, several in number. The house has been altered again at least twice, including the deletion of a separate kitchen and incorporation of an in-house kitchen. When she added her "keeping room" apartment in 1971, Miss Thomas retained the hand-hewn limestone steps that allow access to the bed chamber used by her progenitors for nearly two centuries.

The tall bed is one of scores of relics of the past, some of them built on the farm by black laborers, some purchased from an accomplished cabinet-maker in 19th century Huntsville, and some brought back from New Orleans by McCrary on his trips there as a cotton factor. An exception is a massive, square grand

piano which bears a silver plate indicating it was bought in Huntsville, of Baltimore manufacture, in 1859. The original house has thick exterior walls, transoms over interior doors for light and ventilation, fireplaces in every room, and other indicators of long-ago construction.

Of the nineteenth-century outbuildings, they are still standing but mostly in a frayed condition, little used now and certainly not for the original purposes. The carriage house was converted to a garage for a Model-T Ford almost a century ago. No living McCrary can remember the commissary being used for its initial purpose, the provisioning of farm families. The smoke house that once accommodated the carcasses of ten or more hogs at a time has long been unused. The barns, host in 1850, according to a tax inventory, to 15 mules, 14 work oxen, 16 milk cows, 360 hogs and 50 sheep, now mostly contain hay and a modern tractor used to dispense it to a herd of Angus cattle. Much of the farm is given over now to beef cattle operations, along with small grains, and the growing of cotton --still the main crop -- is done by an outside large-scale farmer on a share basis.

In the middle 1800s, Farmer McCrary developed major interests away from the farm. An 1859 Huntsville directory lists him as a partner in the firm of McCrary, Patterson, and Sprague; advertised as grocers, ropemakers and cotton-goods manufacturers. He bought and sold cotton. He purchased stock in the Madison Turnpike as well as the Memphis and Charleston Railroad which connected Huntsville with the outside through steam engines rather than horses. He became a Madison County commissioner, serving 1856-59. Then came the war, at the end of which he was devastated financially and without a work force. He died at war's end, August 31, 1865, at age seventy-six, without a will and insolvent. The court administered the estate, leaving the home place as well as a portion of the more distant land intact but heavily in debt.

Recent owners have had no long-term separation from the land from infancy. Miss Thomas owned the residence and outbuildings as part of her almost 200 acre total, now bequeathed to Mrs. Ellison. The present Thomas McCrary owns an adjoining 190 acres, and two cousins, Rosemary McCrary and Marguerite

Ellison, own the remainder. The present Mr. McCrary actively oversees farming operations of the whole—as well as of more than 500 acres he owns nearby, which includes another beef cattle operation. His ninety-eight years do not thwart his role as manager as well as active doer—he's abroad every day in his pickup, directing hired help, and operating farm machinery as he has done for eight or more decades, himself baling hay, combining wheat, and feeding cattle. His farm service was interrupted briefly by World War II military service.

Miss Thomas taught school in Huntsville and Madison County for most of her professional life; her last position was as principal of the lower grades of Huntsville's prestigious, private Randolph School. She was a teacher/administrator throughout except for a six-year period around World War II in which she lived in the nation's capital, working for the FBI and later U. S. Senator Richard Russell of Georgia. Until death she was in reasonable health and vibrant personality, bothered mainly by failing eyesight.

The McCrary plantation "home-place," named "McVile" by a possessor (Aunt Hattie) many decades ago, is reached by traversing a half-mile of lonely, picturesque lane through fields and woods, well separated from the heavily-traveled Riverton Road that provides access, passing the site of the now-gone mule-powered cotton gin the first McCrarys operated but which is remembered by later McCrarys only as a delightful place for childhood romps. In recent years the quiet pastoral scene was interrupted momentarily by the construction of a spacious new residence near the original home place where Marguerite Ellison cared for Miss Alice while rearing her four children. Mrs. Ellison's father, John R. Thomas, was the twin brother of Miss Alice. He, a Huntsville lawyer, died at age 58 in 1968. Mrs. Ellison's early professional life was as a federal court reporter.

In today's Huntsville area phone book the rather uncommon name of McCrary appears eighty-five times--almost always belonging to an African-American descended from McCrary slaves, their having taken the name following emancipation. They are mostly not blood kin to one another but they share an ancient bond their forebears having been in bondage to the first Thomas McCrary. Although he bears a

different name, one such progeny is Willie Jay Walker, 79, who, like his father, grew up on the place. He is immediately on call from a few miles distance, a jack-of-all-trades to fix whatever needs fixing, to work in the yards, or to befriend the seemingly indestructible English boxwood hedges bordering the front walk that Williams Wright McCrary and his wife Alice Ellet planted soon after their marriage in 1858. Willie Jay's wife, Maggie, was a part-time helper to Miss Alice, and continues so to Mrs. Ellison.

With the post-Civil War financial ruin and the end of the patriarch's life in 1865, the survivors required years, and the patience of a sympathetic justice system, to satisfy debts and retain the main farmstead and much of the detached acreage. The generations passed, and with that the necessity of assigning bestowals from the departed to surviving family members. There seems to have been through the two centuries a strong family attachment to the land and a determination to keep it together.

Of the outlying acres to the east of the core farm, the present Thomas McCrary has been able to keep much of that ancient original tract together. Through industry, foresight and an allegiance to perpetuity, as heirs there have desired to sell through the years he has been able to repurchase the acreage from his kinsmen, to the point that he individually owns more than 500 acres in the off-site location, all but nineteen of which are of the original McCrary holdings.

Although pieces of the core farm have been divided by title several times, its segments have been owned by family members who were unusually unified and of a single purpose--honor the forebears by holding on to the land, and keeping it a single unit. It continues today as one entity, under one McCrary manager, providing an extraordinary tapestry of Alabama farm life from the present stretching back 200 years to the taming of the wilderness.

FOR THE RECORD

This article, written in March 2008 and revised later, was prepared with the careful collaboration of Alice McCrary Thomas, Thomas McCrary and Marguerite Ellison. All have read it for accuracy and signified acceptance. The writer, Joseph M. Jones, is a former Alabama newsman, the first news chief of the Huntsville's NASA-Marshall Space Flight Center, and later its director of public affairs, now retired. JMJ

News and Notes

Examples of Episodes from the Real People, Real History Project and Huntsville High School's Tenth Grade Class

As part of the History Channel's *Saving Our History* grant, the tenth grade classes of Diane Blocker and Amber Hall at Huntsville High School recently contributed to the newly developed website for the *Real People, Real History: Madison County and the Civil War* project. High school students in conjunction with UAHuntsville undergraduate and graduate students worked to write 500-word episodes that described a person, place, event, or idea that existed in Madison County during the Civil War. This project will serve as the foundation for the larger sesquicentennial commemorations of the Civil War in 2011 and beyond. These students used historical research and writing skills to build episodes, that once linked together on the project's website, will create a narrative history of the Civil War five hundred words at a time. No professional historians involved, minus me, to alter or change the direction of a history written by people like you. Although we are still working on the website you can visit it and see what has been done so far at www.uah.edu/realhistory. This site has been "seeded" with over fifty episodes written by high school students and will be opened for those interested in history to contribute their research and writing as part of a collective history. This is your website so please use it and contribute your knowledge in preparation for remembering the Civil War. The following episodes are examples of what the high school students have created so far. Hope you enjoy the hard work and the interest the next generation is showing in history.

Occupation of Huntsville

Huntsville was a lively city before its Occupation. Some of the important buildings in Huntsville during 1860 were the bank, the courthouse, and the Masonic Lodge. The bank helped fund farms to flourish their plantations and farms. The courthouse was the center of all the county and city governmental affairs. The Masonic Lodge was formed by the intellectuals of the city; many people went to its meetings. When the war began most people in Huntsville were supporters of the Union. Huntsville did not want to secede, but Madison County wanted to, so Huntsville was forced to.

The Battle of Shiloh was one of the turning points in the beginning of the Civil War. Although Shiloh could have been a major victory for the Confederacy, it was a devastating defeat. With the great number of lives taken, it proved to both the Confederacy and the Union it was going to be a long fought war. 23,746 men were killed in this battle, 10,694 Confederate soldiers and 13,047 Union soldiers. The battle took place on April 6-7, 1862 at Pittsburg Landing where Grant had established his army of west Tennessee. There, they waited for Johnston. Early the next morning on April 6, Johnston launched a surprise attack on the Union army. Then reacting to the attack, Sherman's division bombarded the Confederates leaving them with heavy casualties. In response, Johnston attacked Sherman's left flank by sending five brigades. Sherman then fell back on McClellan's division.

After fighting a two day battle, The Confederacy retired from the field surrendering to the Union. The Union army reclaimed possession of the field and the bivouac. Then, Mitchell headed to Chattanooga, Tennessee and to Huntsville, Alabama. The battle of Shiloh made it easier for the Union army to occupy Huntsville. On April 11th 1862 Ormsby Macknight Mitchell, better known as O. M. Mitchell, took over Huntsville, Alabama. Mitchell was born in Kentucky in 1809. He went to the United States Military Academy. There he excelled in mathematics and graduated 15th out of 56 students in his class. After he graduated he became an astronomer. He was married to Louisa Mitchell. They had four kids aging from 15 to 20 years old. In July of

1862 he was named Commander of The Department of The South. In April, after the victory in Southwest Tennessee and occupying Chattanooga, he decided to invade Huntsville. He led his troops from Shelbyville in a surprising manner. He took Huntsville without a shot being fired or a man dying. He also captured 200 soldiers without incident. On 320 Church Street, there is the Memphis and Charleston Depot home to a very important train during the Civil War. This was the train taken by General Mitchell and his Union soldiers. They used the train for capturing the Confederate soldiers. The train was transferring some wounded soldiers, some going to their home, and others, who had been on furlough, rejoining their regiments. The Union entered at daybreak, first taking possession of the railroad and some 15 engines. The train endeavored to make its escape, but the Union responded by firing cannons into it. One fireman was severely wounded and all passengers were taken as prisoners. The healthy soldiers were confined in the depot house and wounded soldiers remained on the cars of the train.

During the invasion the Union captured many things such as, 200 prisoners, 15 locomotives, and large amounts of box platforms. Since then, the train has been refurbished. Next, the telegraph office and post office were captured. Wounded soldiers quartered in town and the prominent citizens and refugees escaped during the day. After the attack General Mitchell allowed some women from the college to nourish and treat their soldiers.

The Huntsville *Democrat*

“Unawed by the influence of the rich or the great, the people must be heard and their rights vindicated”

-Democrat motto

The Huntsville Democrat was one of many Confederate newspapers in antebellum Alabama. On October 18, 1823, Phillip Woodson founded the newspaper in Huntsville, Alabama. There he edited, owned, and wrote for it for thirty-three years until October 28, 1856. The Huntsville Democrat was an emancipation newspaper that was published weekly and

geographically covered Madison County, Alabama. Some other authors of the newspaper were William B. Long, John Withers Clay, and Thomas J. Sumner.

The newspaper came into the possession of John Withers Clay in the year of 1859. In 1862, Huntsville was occupied by Union troops and the name of the paper changed to The Huntsville Confederate due to hostilities from the Unionists. The first publication of this paper was October 8, 1862. Under J. Withers Clay, the paper was warped from an emancipation newspaper to a southern sympathizer. It was one of many southern advocate papers.

Given that Huntsville became occupied by Union troops during Clay's edition, the newspaper caused uproar and Clay packed up the printing press and its supplies and moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee. There it ran by the name of Daily Huntsville Confederate from July 21 to August 18, 1863. Volume one, number one of this paper was published on May 18, 1863. It used the M&C Railroad, which was highly significant to the Confederacy at the time. The railroad was used to send the printed papers back to Madison County, AL. From September 1 to December 24, 1863, Daily Huntsville Confederate was published in Marietta, Georgia, and from January 23 to February 16, 1864, it was located in Dalton, GA. From 1884 to 1911, J. Withers Clay's daughter, Virginia Clementine Clay was the newspaper editor. J. Withers Clay died in 1911 and the paper stopped being published in 1919.

Cotton

Northern Alabama is composed of the Tennessee Valley Counties: Lauderdale County, Limestone County, Madison County, Jackson County, Colbert County, Lawrence County, Morgan County and Marshall County. Most of these counties have large amounts of limestone. Limestone is made of fossilized rock and is full of calcite. It has minerals that fertilize the soil so that the crops, such as cotton, flourish there. In order for cotton to be grown in an area it needs a long hot season and plenty of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium in the soil. The Tennessee Valley Counties were the largest producers of cotton in the mid 1800's. In the South, "cotton was king". The search for land to grow cotton attracted the first settlers into Alabama's river valleys. Cotton attracted many pioneers, families, traders, and merchants.

In 1815 there were five cotton gins running in the city of Huntsville. Eli Whitney, the third best know inventor in America, invented the cotton gin in 1794. Two of the most prominent mills in the area were the Dallas Mills Manufacturing Company, which had a capital stock of \$500,000, and the Huntsville Cotton mill Company, which had a capital stock of \$140,000. Even though the production of cotton was getting better, slavery was getting worse. Field owners used slaves to pick cotton and tent to the cotton fields.

The early cotton economy that started in North Alabama centered around Huntsville. Cotton also created the two dominate labor systems: Slavery and Sharecropping. Here are some factory prices in 1862:

Pounds	Price
400lb.	\$0.50
500lb.	\$0.62 ½
600lb.	\$0.75
700lb.	\$0.87 ½
800lb.	\$1.00
900lb.	\$1.12 ½
1000lb.	\$1.25

(A bale of cotton weighs 500lb.)

Once the Civil War started, it immediately affected the south in the form of high taxes on cotton. For example, the federal government put a tax of \$5 per bale of cotton, and later raised prices again, adding an outrageous \$15 per bale. The tax was repealed by the United States Congress in 1867. The South could not buy manufactured goods without growing cotton at a profit. The Boll weevil (*Anthonomus Grandis*) is an insect that is notorious for destroying cotton crops. It caused the production of cotton to go down in the South. Because of this, the South was forced to surrender to the North in the Civil War. The travesty helped the Southern farmers realized that they could not depend on cotton crops as their sole source of income, which lead to the production of soy bean, corn, and peanut crops. The Bollweevil was so important to the South that a monument was dedicated in its honor in Enterprise, Alabama. This monument was built in *Italy* and shipped over seas. The unveiling of this great monument was on December 11, 1919.

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

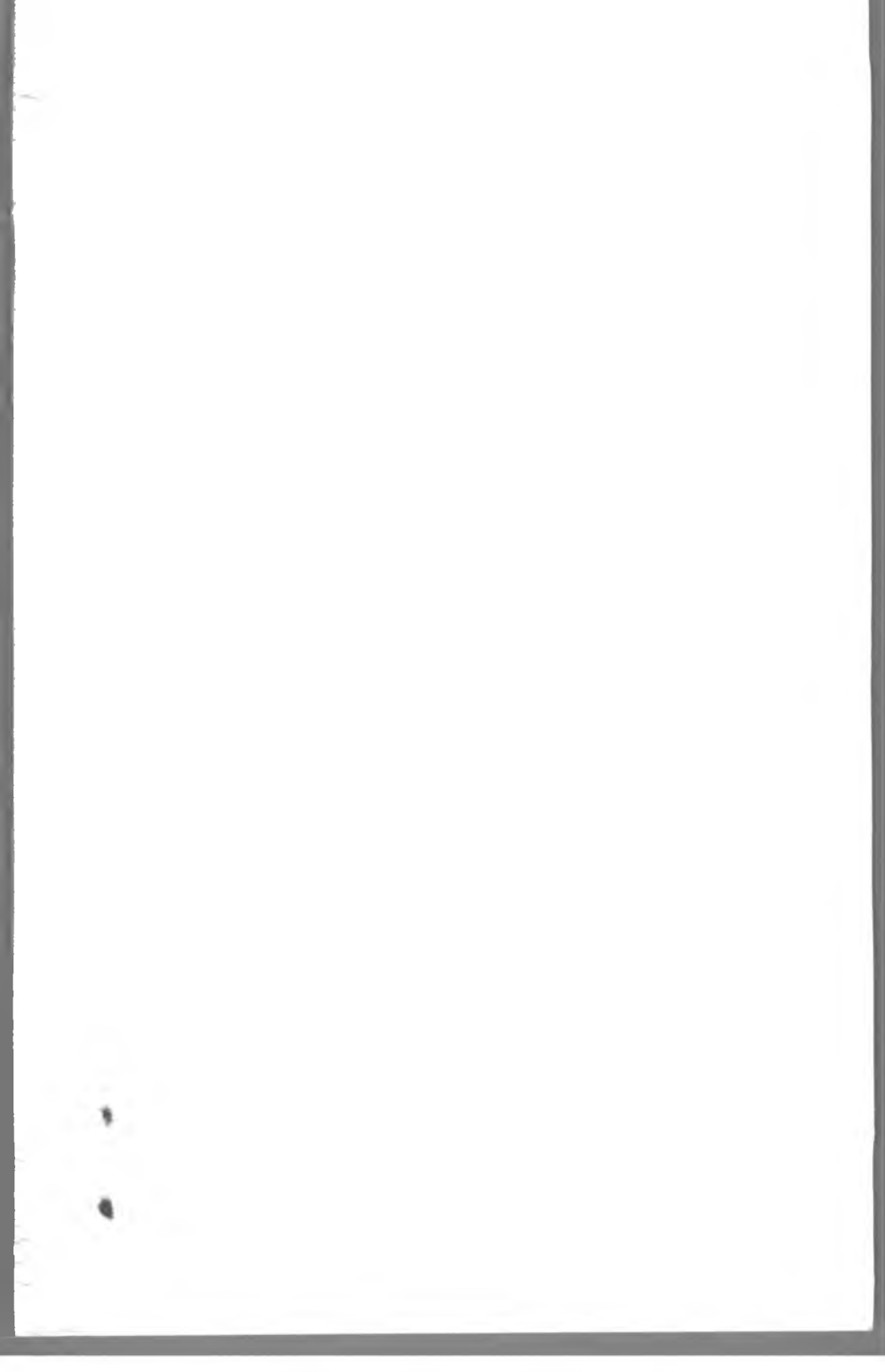
Please keep your submissions limited to 250 words and please include contact information if you are making an inquiry or asking a question. The editor has the right to change or delete wording or information.

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.

NOTES

NOTES



**Huntsville-Madison County
Historical Society**

Box 666
Huntsville, Alabama 35804

NON-PROFIT ORG.


U.S. POSTAGE
PAID

HUNTSVILLE, AL
PERMIT NO. 4

