

The Huntsville Historical Review

Spring 2014 - Summer 2014

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Number 1



Carrie Nation Looking For Sin in Huntsville!

*Published By
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Editor's Note

At a time when we are commemorating events surrounding becoming Alabama, the Civil War, and Civil Rights, it is important to remember that Huntsville exists in a larger historical context than just Madison County. Because of Redstone Arsenal, Marshall Space Center, and dozens of international corporations, Huntsville's future is closely linked to events in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. People from around the country and world have made Madison County home without understanding the heritage of their new community. It is important that we blend past events with present and future experiences so that all citizens will have access to their community's historical roots. Instead of using the term "local history," I prefer to use "nearby history" as a way of expanding the historical scope of Huntsville and Madison County. Were the accomplishments of Andrew Jackson, Marie Howard Weeden, and William Hooper Council limited only to their experiences in the local area or did the influence of their accomplishments go beyond the Tennessee River Valley? Yet, as we are about to find out, three local historians have recreated elements of the past that highlight moments of time in which nearby history has influenced local, national, and international events and vice versa.

In this issue of the *Huntsville Historic Review* we are lucky to have authors who have taken the time to look for primary sources, read secondary literature, and put pen to paper. In the first article, Nancy Rohr explores the role of local militia in "Fife, Drum, and Ready Musket: The Early Militia and Muster Day in Madison County, Alabama." Nancy's contributions to nearby history have been many and of superb quality so I know you will enjoy her most current research. Likewise, David Byers, another local historian of note, has written a provocative article entitled, "Andrew Jackson Did Not Save Huntsville." Enjoy learning about Jackson's time in Huntsville and learn about what he did not do for the city! Norman Shapiro has written another

article on Andrew Jackson's time in Huntsville entitled "Andrew Jackson Camped Here." Lastly, we will end with another article from Nancy Rohr that explores the growing role of women in Alabama in "They Are Too Sweet and Angelic to Reason, or, How Women Got the Vote in Alabama." I am sure that you will learn from and enjoy each article as another historical snapshot of Madison County's past. So enjoy their hard work and before you know it another edition of the *Review* will be in your mailbox this fall.

On a separate note, as the founder and director of the first accredited Public History in the state of Alabama, I am pleased to announce that the University of Alabama in Huntsville has provided work space for a new Public History Lab to be used by students and scholars who want to work on projects that benefit the local community. In the short term, we want to create an oral history project that will become the foundation for a statewide project. We will be looking for people to interview as part of this project. As the director of an unfunded mandate, I would also like to ask for your financial help to create this Public History Lab. These donations will become the foundation for new student projects and serve as a reminder to UAH administrators that the local community supports our next generation of local historians and the work they do in the area. If you are interested in making a donation to the public history program, please send a check made out to UAH Foundation and write Public History Fund on the memo line. Send it to: Dr. John Kvach, 407 Roberts Hall, Department of History, UAH, Huntsville, AL, 35899. My students will benefit from your generosity and these donations will help keep the hard work of past generations alive for future readers interested in local history.

Thank you again for your support and enjoy the read!
John Kvach

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Fife, Drum, and Ready Musket: The Early Militia and Muster Day in Madison County, Alabama

By Nancy Rohr

“I hear the sound of fife and drum the other side of the village, and am reminded that it is the May Training. Some thirty young men are marching in two straight sections, with each... a bright red stripe down the legs of his pantaloons, and at their head march two [men] with white stripes down their pants, one beating a drum, the other blowing a fife.”

The history of a civilian militia is a long one and created by necessity. In England, musters became a periodic assessment of the availability of local men to provide defense when needed, thus to *pass muster*, or to be sufficient. This concept became critical in early America with the seemingly never-ending confrontations against enemies – Native Americans, the French, Spanish, British, and occasional roaming gangs of outlaws. When called upon during the few calm periods, the early American militiamen viewed militia camp as a temporary duty, in opposition to the English who regarded the colonial militiamen only as substitute manual laborers to build and maintain roads and bridges, cut firewood, and other distasteful assignments, traditionally done in Europe by peasants.¹

In the United States, local militiamen had already proved vital to success in the French and Indian Wars. During the Revolutionary War, as they felt assured of victory, the British planned to disarm the Americans. Then, by repealing the Militia Laws, all arms would be taken away from the Colonials and no foundry or manufactory of arms would be allowed; there would be no gunpowder or war-like stores, nor lead or arms imported without license.²

¹ Whisker, James Biser, *American Colonial Militia* (Lewiston, England: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), Vol. 1: 72, 73.

² Whisker, 1: 7.

Among other engagements, however, the southern militia aided to suppress loyalist activities and supported the regular army. They participated in the Battle of Green Springs against Cornwallis and the siege of Yorktown. Moreover, the patriot militia of the Over-the-Mountain men provided a particularly pivotal moment in the southern campaign. They soundly defeated the loyalists' militia at the battle at Kings Mountain, which certainly turned the tide of the War.

The Revolutionary War clearly reinforced the need for the militia on all fronts, and the Second Continental Congress codified regulations for it. The full-time regular army was created, but because it was always short on manpower, the militia provided short-term support to the regulars in the field. Of course Loyalist sympathizers were excluded even if they had formerly held positions in their militias.

The men, and boys, continued to prepare to meet any threat. The Militia Act of 1792 provided, in part:

“That each and every free able-bodied white male citizen of the respective States, resident therein, who is or shall be of age of eighteen years, and under the age of forty-five years (except as is herein after excepted) shall severally and respectively be enrolled in the militia.”

Furthermore, when called upon, the citizen soldier should be at the ready to appear with his own equipment: a good musket or rifle, two spare flints, a bayonet, and a knapsack. There were the usual exceptions: high government officials, ministers, ferrymen, mail handlers and justices of the peace were exempt. This militia formed into brigades, regiments, battalions, and companies. Fines were assessed according to rank, for those who appeared without proper uniforms and equipment. A colonel led the Regiment, each Battalion had one major, and each company had a captain, lieutenants and corporals. Most legislatures allowed the volunteer company to elect its own officers, write by-laws, select its own name, and design its uniform. On the frontier most uniforms were likely to be hastily donned, and

were perhaps even ill-fitting, linsey-woolsey and not particularly clean.³

The area between the Atlantic coast and the eastern side of the Appalachian Mountains seemingly settled quietly after those early conflicts. However in the vast spaces farther inland, beyond the once forbidden mountains among the sparse settlements, the need for readiness remained essential. Presenting a showy display was never an aim of the militia on frontier lands as they became available. The men folk and their families who immigrated to the frontier understood the need for protection. These men at the beginning of the nineteenth century had fought, or seen their fathers and heard their grandfathers' tales about the life and death struggle with the Native Americans. Indian raids continued to lead to loss of possessions and land, burning, scalping, and death. As a result most settlers knew how to shoot firearms, and even though their horses might not be the fastest, the men all showed good horsemanship. Settlers remained vigilant at their farmhouses or at outposts as they waited to enter the newly opened territories of the old southwest.

By 1805, John Hunt had begun his log cabin near the Big Spring and other pioneers followed – all illegal intruders, of course. Countless (at least as many as six or seven hundred enumerated settlers) decided not to wait, and entered unlawfully into the Indian territories of what would become Madison County, Mississippi Territory. Here they planted crops, shelters, and themselves. What did not always grow quickly, however, was law and order. Occasionally, the anonymous Captain Slick and his men took the law into their own hands as a speedy solution. Slick's committee might first issue a warning to the miscreant simply to leave town, perhaps adding a thrashing with a hickory rod to add emphasis. If forced by the committee to leave, the miscreant was lucky only to be "fed a supper of Blue

³ Owen, Thomas McAdory. *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography* (Spartanburg, SC, 1978, Reprint Co.), 2, 987-9. The Alabama Constitution written in 1819, among other liberal clauses allowed those who conscientiously objected to bearing arms to pay a fee in lieu of serving.

plums” from a double barrel shotgun. Apparently Captain Slick’s law “purified the moral atmosphere.”⁴

Nevertheless, the need for real order became pressing. In 1808 President Jefferson appealed to the governor of the Territory, Robert Williams, to select civil officers to provide law and order. Madison became a county on December 13, 1809, and later that month, Stephen Neal was appointed Sheriff and Justice of the Peace. Thomas Freeman was also appointed to serve as a Justice of the Peace and to take a census of the squatters. He became the official surveyor, and subsequently served as registrar at the sales held in Nashville – all in preparation for the coming land boom. Perhaps to no one’s surprise, Thomas Freeman became the largest purchaser – 22 sections, over 14,000 acres of Madison County land.

As the squatters continued to arrive, the federal government built Fort Hampton on the Elk River to secure the Indian property in 1809-1810. This was one of the few acts by the government to protect Indian lands. The crops and houses of the ninety-three “intruder” families were burned, and the displaced settlers crowded into Madison County. And yet they still came.

The way west and south had been long and arduous; no one wanted to make the return trip to their former homes. Those who arrived most likely came down the “Great South” Indian trail from near Winchester, Tennessee, before continuing south to settle along the way. The wagons, carts, riders and walkers found, to no surprise, roadways that weren’t roads, wagon tracks that disappeared into swamps, and raging creeks and rivers with no bridges. Of course it was always necessary to watch for possible hostile Indians. The new countryside and Big Spring were a welcome sight.

Old Man Ditto’s Landing was also a welcome site for those who descended the Tennessee River from Ross’s Landing, later Chattanooga. Traders had long used the river as the Indians

⁴ Taylor, Judge Thomas Jones. *History of Madison County and Incidentally of North Alabama, 1732-1840*. eds. W. Stanley and Addie S. Hoole. (University, AL: Confederate Publish. Co., 1976), 28.

had, but now the river opened the way to the new lands for settlement. As the pioneers successfully maneuvered their rafts or keelboats through thirty miles of the “The Suck,” where the river narrowed to half its width, they still intently watched the Cumberland Mountain bluffs above them. From there hostile Indians could fire down freely at passing boats. Now all that the settlers faced farther downstream were boat wrecks, accidental drowning, soggy food, wet powder, sand bars, shallow dips, and snag-infested rocky shoals.

With this continued influx of people who required law and order in the eastern lands of the territory, Governor Williams made the initial militia assignments. (The Governor was of course, Commander-in-Chief.) He appointed Nicholas Perkins to head the newly formed Mississippi 7th Regiment, and William H. Winston, Adjutant. Stephen Neal was appointed 1st Major; Alexander Gilbreath became 2nd Major. The first Madison County-wide muster was held on October 29, 1810. To add his formal approval, the new Governor, David Holmes, attended the grand ceremonies on the muster field, most likely on the flats below the Big Spring.⁵

These military appointees were extraordinary men. Well educated, they seemed driven to take advantage of what lay before them – land, progress, and, perhaps with luck, wealth. Commandant and Lt. Colonel Nicholas Perkins, trained as a lawyer, had already served his country well. He was a member of the Mississippi Territory House of Representatives for Washington County in 1802 and Speaker of the House in 1803. In February 1807, while serving as land registrar in Washington County, Perkins thought he recognized two mysterious men traveling after dark with their faces concealed. He rode for the sheriff who quickly enlisted more help from the nearby fort. These fugitives from justice, Major Robert Ashley and former Vice President Aaron Burr, were arrested by troops from Fort Stoddert and escorted north for federal trial in Richmond. Soon after, Perkins was appointed Attorney General of the Mississippi

⁵ Record, James. *A Dream Come True* (Huntsville, AL.: Hicklin Printing, 1970),1: 33-36.

Territory, eastern district, for 1807-09. Perkins did not purchase land in Madison County sales, however, and moved to Tennessee. During the War of 1812, he served as a Colonel of the 1st Regiment of Western Tennessee, and he saw action in the campaigns of 1814 under General Jackson. He led sixty-day volunteers who enlisted to fill the depleted ranks of Jackson's rapidly dwindling army, experiencing some of the fiercest action in 1814. Nicholas Perkins died in Franklin, Tennessee, "one of our most distinguished citizens" in 1848.⁶

First Major Stephen Neal was considered "an active and intelligent man," and he certainly his talents on many occasions. Among other dealings, Neal bought for \$500 a town lot facing the Square on Commercial Row and sold it to C. C. Clay and six others for \$8,000. By the time Neal married Frances Green in 1818, he was well able to support her and their family. While he continued to serve as sheriff until 1822, during these years he took advantage of his knowledge to purchase and sell over 2,256 acres of land in the county. Sheriff Neal died in 1839, age sixty-six. Mrs. Neal, thought to be the oldest living resident in Huntsville at that time, died at the age of ninety-six in 1883).⁷

Second Major Alexander Gilbreath, one of the enumerated squatters waiting to enter the county legally, along with five other men, were selected to serve as Commissioners, establishing locations for public buildings in Huntsville. These men were given authority to purchase land to be laid out in half-acre lots, three of which were to be reserved for public buildings. The remaining lots would be sold to defray the expense of

⁶ *Valley Leaves Special Edition* (Huntsville, AL: Tennessee Valley Genealogical Society, 1969), 21; Abstracted by Jonathan Kennon Thompson Smith. *Death Notices from Western Weekly Review*. (Franklin, TN. 2004), 289.

⁷ Taylor, 44; Pauline Jones Gandrud. *Marriage, Death and Legal Notices from Early Alabama Newspapers, 1819-1893* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1981), 280. The sheriff is not always the most popular person in town. In an election for delegates to the Convention of 1819, Stephen Neal came in last place. Neal garnered 63 votes; among others running James Titus had 416 votes and the winner, C.C. Clay, won with 1,683 votes. (*Alabama Republican*, May 8, 1819.)

erecting public buildings – courthouse, jail, and market. Gilbreath maintained a store near the spring and may have been the first merchant in town. He was later in partnership with James White, for whom Whitesburg was named.⁸

Perhaps it was already becoming too crowded in Madison County. Gilbreath purchased only thirty-nine acres in the local land sales before he moved to the Red Hill area of what would become Marshall County. There he married Polly Brown, half-sister of Catherine Brown. Catherine, a Cherokee educated at Brainerd, Tennessee, became a legendary teacher. (The sisters later taught Cherokee girls at Creek Path School.) In Marshall County, Gilbreath purchased over 360 acres and by 1840 owned thirteen slaves. Gilbreath died in 1860 at the age of eighty and was interred in the family cemetery. His wife, Polly, was not buried there with him, however. At the time of the Cherokee Indian Removal, Polly made the trek to Oklahoma with many others. Alexander, according to family stories, was unable to join them because of his great size, too large for a horse or the carriage, and he remained in Marshall County.⁹

Adjutant William H. Winston migrated from Buckingham County, Virginia. Here, Winston was also appointed Clerk of the County Court of Madison County in 1809. Citizens then elected Winston to the Mississippi Territory House of Representatives in 1810 and again for 1815-17. During these years Winston bought and sold over 2,248 acres in Madison County before he and his wife Mary (Cooper) Winston moved on to Tuscumbia.¹⁰ This house was begun in 1824 and the couple completed it nine years later. (The city of Tuscumbia has since purchased and restored their home.) Their son, John Anthony Winston, born in Madison County became the fifteenth

⁸ Taylor, 37; *Eden of the South*. ed. Raneer' G. Pruitt (Huntsville, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, 2005), 3.

⁹ Cowart, Margaret Matthews. *Old Land Records of Marshall County, Alabama* (Huntsville: AL M.M. Cowart, 1988), 81,84, 85, 345; Conversation with Larry Smith, Feb. 6, 2012, regarding family stories of descendants Sonny and Margie Lewis as told to Smith.

¹⁰ *History of Early Settlement: Madison County before Statehood, 1808-1819* (Huntsville, AL: Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, 2008), 9, 43.

governor, the first born within the state. HABS, Colbert Co. southernspiritguide.blogspot.com] *picture

The eight militia companies, established in 1810, were led by Captains John Grayson, Joseph Acklen, James Titus, Allen C. Thompson, William Wyatt, William Howson, James Neely, and Henry Cox. (Martin Beatty declined a captaincy.) These officers led the militia to provide defense and also a setting to administer public affairs. Throughout the county, under the leadership of the captains, court days and election notices were posted, taxes were assessed and collected, and of course politics were discussed, or argued, as the case might be.

John Clan Grayson, a surveyor himself, joined Thomas Freeman, to make the assessment that was so necessary for legal land sales. Grayson's interest was personal because he was also one of the squatters waiting to gain lawful entry. To begin their task Freeman and Grayson went to John Hunt's cabin to discuss the task ahead. The men and their team then began measuring from Chickasaw (Hobbs) Island north to establish the base lines. Certainly Grayson had a fine opportunity to see and judge the land of Madison County. In early spring of 1806, Grayson's family arrived in a train of covered wagons to settle east of the mountains. There were seven children (six more would follow), a governess, two slaves and other workers. Mrs. Grayson and the children stayed in the covered wagons while the men constructed a four-room house with a dog trot. Grayson eventually bought 640 acres. Adding to his militia duties, John Grayson was later appointed Justice of the Peace. He died in 1826 at the age of fifty-six; his wife died in 1838.¹¹

Joseph Acklen was also part of the 1809 "squatter" census with his household of four. In 1810 Acklen was appointed to be an Estate Appraiser, a significant post and an essential role in times of debt or death. His experience and leadership led to an assignment later as Captain of the 7th Regiment during the War of 1812. Although he paid poll taxes from 1810 through 1815 on

¹¹ Taylor, 72; William Sibley. *Welcome to Big Cove: The History of Big Cove, 1807-2000* (Brownsboro, AL., W. Sibley, 2003), 57, 10; *Heritage of Madison County, Alabama*. (Clanton, AL., Heritage Publishing, 1998), 215, 216.

160 acres purchased in what would be southwest Huntsville, by 1814 he had moved into the Elk River area of Tennessee, where he married in 1819. Joseph Acklen died in Winchester, Franklin County, Tennessee in 1841.¹²

Henry Cox purchased 480 acres in the Huntsville area and in 1816 married a local woman, Jane McClain. There is little information about his stay here except that he held 960 acres near Indian Creek and had 22 slaves. The number of slaves and the amount of acreage varied, but he paid taxes from 1810 through 1815. Cox also served as the paymaster for the 7th Regiment from 1808-1817.¹³

Although William Howson purchased 400 acres southwest of Huntsville, he, his family of six, and two slaves, probably lived in town where he served as county jailor (at least in the years 1831 and 1832). Although there were other settlers with that surname paying taxes during the years 1811-1819, those names were not on census and county records later. Others named Howson, paying taxes between 1811 and 1819, were Sally, Thomas, and John.¹⁴

Among other settlers in the area was the extended Drake family. In 1807 James Drake, a brother, and brother-in-law, James Neely, came down the Tennessee River on a flat-bottomed boat to Ditto's Landing. They settled, as squatters, near John Grayson. Members of the Drake family led by Capt. John Drake, a Revolutionary War veteran, and five of his sons and their families followed in 1810 and 1811 to purchase land. (Reflecting the close-knit ties of migrations, of the 10 Drake children, six of them had married Neelys in Virginia.) Captain James Neely bought 159 acres in the southeast but settled and built a home on Holmes Street in town. He was a pump maker, and, for six years, supervised the Huntsville water works. In addition to his duties with the militia, he was appointed as one of the road overseers in 1810.¹⁵

James Titus came down from Fort Nashborough, Tennessee where his family had relocated in the 1780s. After his first wife died, Titus married Nancy Holmes in 1808 and they

¹² *Franklin County, Tennessee Land Records, comp. Jeanna Gallagher; genealogytrails.com on 3/31/12; Tennessee Wills, 193-194.*

¹³ *Valley Leaves, Vol. 4, #4, 2-9.*

¹⁴ 1830 Federal Census: Acts of General Assembly of the Legislature of Alabama, 11.

¹⁵ Sibley, 78; Taylor 113; 296.

prepared to move south. His land holdings, over 500 acres, were in the Oakwood area. Holding credentials as captain in the new militia in 1810, he also became a member of the Mississippi Territory legislature from Madison County and served from 1812-1817.

Governor Holmes convened the Legislature, and members served from their home areas on the Mississippi Territory Assembly in 1814. Three men were appointed to the Council, similar to the upper house or Senate. Robert Beatty of Madison County resigned; Joseph Carson from Washington County died; and James Titus of Madison County remained to serve. Not singularly deterred, Titus rose to the occasion and elected himself president of the Council. He appointed doorkeepers, conducted the proceedings with appropriate formality, called the Council to order, answered the roll call, voted on bills, moved for adjournment, voted on his motion, declared the Council adjourned, and no one disagreed.

Duty called again, and James Titus and his son, Andrew Jackson Titus, participated in the removal of the Choctaws in 1831. During this time they lingered in the Red River area of Texas and decided to resettle there. Titus and his son were active in acquiring statehood for Texas, and Titus County is named for the younger man. James Titus was buried in a family cemetery in Savannah, Texas. In the same cemetery, buried only a few feet away, is another former Huntsvillian, Robert Beatty, who earlier had declined to serve in the Territorial Council with Titus.¹⁶

Captain Allen C. Thompson did not purchase land in the early sales of Madison County. However, he and his family appeared in the 1820 census of Franklin County, Alabama. His wife, Charlotte, died near Florence, at age sixty-four, in 1835. In 1837 Thompson married Elizabeth M. Fox, widow of John Fox, of Limestone County. Captain Thompson died not long afterwards and his widow became the head of the household of five, living next door to her son Allen Thompson.¹⁷

¹⁶ Taylor, 12; William H. Brantley. *Three Capitals* (University, AL.: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1947), 24, 225; Taylor 109.

¹⁷ Rev. Silas Emmett Lucas, Jr. ed. *Obituaries from Early Tennessee Newspapers, 1794-185* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1978), 366; Gandrud, 324; 1840 Federal Census.

As the small communities within the county were becoming organized, news of the disaster on August 30, 1813, at Fort Mims in southern Alabama raced northward. At least 250 settlers had been killed at the fort and 100 more were captured by the Creek Indians. This was the worst massacre in the history of America, and it flamed further momentum to eliminate the Indians. Fears quickly followed that a large body of warriors was on its way north. In panic, alarmed citizens of Madison County fled toward Nashville's fort over 100 miles away. Just a few years later, Anne Royall, that intrepid traveler, reported in her letters about the disarray as told to her. Apparently about a thousand people were on the road to Nashville that day, and only two families remained behind. "These barricaded the door of the Court house which served them for a fort; and old Captain Wyatt...assumed the command. He had but two guns, but being well charged with whiskey and courage, he kept up a constant fire...." It was a false alarm, thank goodness. Perhaps exhausted by his efforts, the brave "old" defender, Capt. William Wyatt died just two years later in 1815, aged fifty-six years. His steadfast partner, Susannah E. (Jones) Wyatt lived until 1836. Unfortunately the other couple defending the town that day is unknown to history.¹⁸

Few of these settlers came alone. A link that seems to run through the early years gives one pause to consider the possible connections between other local men sharing those first militia leaders' surnames – Louis, Joel, and John Winston; Peter and Constantine Perkins; Henry Gilbreath; John Neal; John, Sam, Alexander, and William Acklen; John, Ben, George, William, and Peyton Cox; Jerome, Ambrose, Benjamin, and others named Grayson; John Howson; John, Andrew and Eli Neely; George and Ebenezer Titus; John and Peyton Wyatt. Their stories remain for others to uncover.

As these officers and militia offered protection, the rougher days of early frontier life appeared to have passed. A

¹⁸ Anne Newport Royal. Ed. and annotated by Lucille Griffith, *Letters from Alabama 1817-1822* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1969), 244; *Valley Leaves*, Vol. 17, #2 (June 1983), 187.

newer class of settlers arrived with money in their pocketbooks ready to spend; wealthy entrepreneurs arrived with their families. Settlers like the developers LeRoy Pope and Gen. John Brahan came; doctors Thomas Fearn and David Moore; merchants James White and the Andrews brothers; lawyers C. C. Clay and John Williams Walker; newspapermen Phillip Woodson and John Boardman. These names remain a part of Huntsville lore.

Less remembered, perhaps, were the likes of Allen Cooper and John Bunch who offered hospitality at their taverns. Ebenezer Darby was a shoe and boot maker; Thomas Collins opened a bakery; the brothers Cain were watch-makers and gold and silversmiths; Richard Champion worked as a hatter. As the settlement continued to grow in size and safety, working-class settlers found jobs to fill the needs of blacksmith, tanner, brick-maker, and mason. More settlers with empty pockets continued to arrive with dreams and aspirations.

Countless and mostly nameless slaves arrived – men, women and children, many in chains – to work for and serve masters. Scores were separated from and left behind their own families. The same militia which protected the frontier also patrolled for runaway slaves, or any who might be out after hours without a pass.

The militia arrangement also allowed a system of convenient political units, or beats. Generally, one Justice of the Peace and one Constable were elected from each military beat, later to be called precincts. The Justice of the Peace, or Magistrate, held great power with jurisdiction over minor criminal offenses, performed marriage ceremonies, took legal depositions and arbitrated minor disputes; among other things. The constable held less power than the County Sheriff because his jurisdiction was confined to the military district or precinct from which he was elected. So the muster grounds became the meeting place where justices, constables, overseers of the poor, and militia officers were appointed or elected from the community.¹⁹

¹⁹ Sibley, 27, 28; *Valley Leaves*, Special Edition, 59, 60.

Law required an announcement of a muster in the newspapers, four times a year under a notice written ATTENTION. Fines were assessed if muster was missed. Locations were chosen conveniently at sites like the town square, old Blue Spring Camp Ground, John Connolly's Green Bottom Inn, over the mountains at Henry Brazelton's in Big Cove or any likely field big enough to hold the crowd.

Muster day and militia practice, like later political barbecues, elections, and religious camp meetings, offered a relief from the monotonous life of isolation so common at the time. All citizens looked forward to patriotic celebrations, holiday commemorations as the 4th of July, or Washington's birthday, but muster day came four times a year! Everyone gathered, and of course poor whites, free blacks and slaves could be onlookers to the excitement, too. There would be much to behold.

At the meeting grounds and after inspection, absences were noted for later court martial or fines. The disciplined drills and maneuvers followed a standard manual of the day and ended with the formal review by the highest ranking officer. After the drill, the men were ordered to be at ease. Now came the time to relax, socialize and perhaps for manly challenges or even settling old scores. A later City Directory acknowledged those earlier days:

Court days and muster day were the occasions upon which the people usually congregated *en masse*. Then it was that fist-fights and free fights were usually indulged in to the usual end of bruised faces and bodies, and a too ready access to stones often rendered these encounters more serious than the feelings of animosity really felt, would have otherwise dictated... A resort to the pistol or bowie-knife at that time was of rare occurrence, for that early day, when upon a man's physical prowess depended mainly his coveted position in the social circle or as a citizen, a test of his manhood.

Men settled the “ills they had suffered by a resort to natural defenses, than by the use of pistol or knife...” The reader almost felt with regret those proud days long gone.²⁰

No matter about the casual violence of the day. Of course a crowd always gathered of family, friends and on-lookers, black, and white, young and old. Spectators also included vendors, fiddlers, and perhaps a few gamblers. The women had prepared food, and there was enough for everyone to enjoy and linger about the entire day. Many women, with the tradition handed down by their mothers, prepared and sold gingerbread and other confections. Likewise, their men enjoyed the company of the others and shared an evening of drinking. Some few of the men, perhaps with muddled brains and unsteady feet, dragged themselves home at the end of the day. The prudent wife led the way, perchance with the jingle of a few new coins in hand, at the least with a head full of news from family and friends. Tired children slept in the back of the wagon if they were lucky, and there would be little back sass from that quarter. Thus another Muster Day would pass into the history of the county – with the eager anticipation of the next one to come.

All was not peaceful peaceful: the massacre at Fort Mims in the south on August 30, 1813, threatened every settlement. It was past the time for a strong defense but became a time for forceful action. General Andrew Jackson issued an order on September 24th to his “Brave Tennesseans” to rendezvous at Fayetteville for immediate duty against the Creeks...We must hasten to the frontier “or we will find it drenched in the blood of our fellow-citizens.”²¹

If there was any doubt of the threat, the militia continued to be called to action. “Brave Tennesseans! ...Your frontier is threatened with invasion by the savage foe! Already do they advance towards your frontier, with their scalping knives

²⁰ *Williams Huntsville City Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror*, vol. 1, 1859 (Huntsville, AL: Coltart, 1859), rep. Strode, 1972, 10, 11.

²¹ Remini, Robert V. *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (NY: Penguin, 2001), 61.

unsheathed, to butcher your wives and children, and your helpless babes.”²²

Fearing an imminent attack on Huntsville, on October 11th General Jackson’s volunteers and militia men, 4,000 strong, marched the thirty-two miles from Fayetteville, Tennessee to Huntsville in five hours. (Among the more notable men were Colonel John Coffee, David Crocket and Sam Houston.) Huntsville was not attacked but remained a staging area for supplies leading to the Battle at Horseshoe Bend. The Tennessee militia men clustered around Beaty’s Spring (now Brahan’s Spring) to be joined by the brave volunteers of Madison County. Armed and trained, the militia men of Madison County, Mississippi Territory would meet the call.

²² Cited in Hudson, Angela Pulley, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. North Carolina, 2010), 113 from “General Orders,” *Louisiana Gazette for the Country*, Oct. 13, 1813.

ANDREW JACKSON DID NOT SAVE HUNTSVILLE

By DAVID BYERS

The War of 1812 should never have happened. A period of uneasy peace followed the end of the Revolutionary War, as Britain continued to affect the Americans in many ways. The primary British insult was impressments of American seamen from sailing ships. This problem was exacerbated by pressure from the fleets of Napoleon on the English navy requiring they fully crew all ships. On occasion, American ships were stopped under the pretext of searching for deserters. Sailors were removed from ships and pressed into service in the British navy. Other squabbles were in the air. Dissatisfaction over the division of western lands after the war resurfaced when the British failed to withdraw from the Canadian border. Then, British/French competition for exclusivity of American shipping and exports resulted in legislation passed by Congress that aggravated the American shipping community. Additionally, British relationships with the Indians, including supply of weapons, ammunition, and food threatened westward movement. No apology bettered the situation.

Congress, meeting in November 1811 clamored for war. Henry Clay, Speaker of the House from Kentucky, John C. Calhoun and others, called "War Hawks," loudly pushed President James Madison toward war. They proposed we save "American Honor" by invading Canada. Land hungry westerners, an incensed shipping community, and Americans still angry after the Revolutionary War were itching for war. The country wasn't quite ready. The small navy, a scattered army with questionable leadership left from the Revolution, and a government still designing its methods of managing a third-rate county signaled it was not fit to fight a large, wealthy and well-armed power such as Great Britain.

Expansionists in Tennessee, Georgia and the Mississippi Territory had been entertaining designs to annex Florida, a Spanish territory even though Spain was an American ally. Andrew Jackson had said he would "rejoice at the opportunity of placing the American eagle on the ramparts of Mobile,

Pensacola, and Fort St. Augustine.” Many were willing to fight the war for many reasons. Woodrow Wilson wrote ninety years after the war, “The grounds of the War of 1812 were ‘singularly uncertain’.”

Both countries had pronounced weaknesses when the war began with American attacks on Canadian forts. The bulk of the British Navy was involved in the war against Napoleon. The conflict in America was only a distraction to the British. Just eleven ships of the line and thirty-four frigates were available in the western Atlantic. Many inhabitants of Canada were recent immigrants from the United States and did not want to take up arms against their former homeland. On the other hand disunity of the country was clearly a problem for Americans. In New England public opinion ranged from an outraged shipping community to mere apathy to actively expressed opposition to the war. Many continued to sell grain and provisions to the English.

In August 1812 battles at the northern Forts Michilimackinac, Detroit and Dearborn were fought. At sea the infant navy did well. Captain Samuel Nicholson and the *Constitution* outfought the British ship *Guerriere* resulting in a political lift for the Americans and a new name for the *Constitution*, “Old Ironsides.”

The war was also provoked by Tecumseh, a young Shawnee Indian chief, who was born near Tuscaloosa and raised in the Ohio Valley. His message of rejection of the white culture and protection of the Indian ways was widely spread from Wisconsin to Florida:

“Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narragansett, the Mochican, the Pocanet, and other powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and oppression of the white man....Sleep not longer, O Choctaws and Chickasaws... Will not the bones of our dead be plowed up, and their graves turned into plowed fields?”

In the Mississippi Territory the Indians, armed and encouraged by the British, were the center of the war. Especially in what is today Alabama the Indians were the enemy, not the British. A small group young and very aggressive Creek Indians, known as Redsticks, wanted to stop the changes brought by the

white settlers. The docile Indian majority chose to peacefully trade, farm, and live beside the squatters who had encroached on their land. This division in the Creek Nation was much like a civil war.

The belligerent Redsticks began attacks on settlers leading to a strong reaction by the militia that was attempting to protect the emigrants. Those pioneers had often broken the treaties and federal promises made to the Indians as they steadily moved southwestward. A major part of every agreement between the Indians and the government was wording in which the Indians ceded or released land to the United States and in return the Federal government would keep the remainder free from venturesome speculators and squatters.

Out-spoken William Weatherford, known as “Red Eagle,” a man of mixed parentage, and a strong ally of the British, secretly stirred the small, semi-secret segment, the Redsticks. A tiny contingent of Redsticks, returning from Detroit, murdered two families on the Ohio River. The killers were executed by the old Chiefs and ignited a civil war among the Creeks. Similar indiscriminate slaughters happened in Georgia and Tennessee.

In July 1813 Redsticks traveled to Pensacola, with the British provided money and a letter of introduction. There the Spanish governor gave them weapons and ammunition. Returning north the Indians were stopped in what is today northern Escambia County on July 27th by American forces from Fort Mims, causing the “Battle of Burnt Corn.” This first Alabama battle of the War of 1812 resulted in twenty Redstick casualties, including eight killed, while the Federal troops lost two soldiers and had fifteen wounded. History has called it a Redstick victory.

On August 30th the Redsticks, led by Weatherford, attacked Fort Mims, 35 miles north of Mobile near the bank of the Tensaw River. Local farmers, homesteaders and some mixed-blood Creeks, terribly frightened by the news and rumors of Indian horrors, had taken refuge in the fort. Three to five hundred (reports varied widely) were cruelly slaughtered and scalped as the small wooden stockade was swarmed. Seventeen escaped to tell the story. The Creek civil war became the War of 1812 and was happening in the Mississippi Territory.

About one year earlier, in November 1812, Major General Andrew Jackson, commander of the Tennessee Militia, had been directed by Governor Blount to move his troops from Nashville to Natchez in an attempt to thwart an expected attack by the British on New Orleans. In January 1813, the soldiers were moved by boat on the Cumberland River to the Tennessee River and down the Mississippi River to Natchez. Colonel John Coffee's mounted troops came cross-country to join Jackson. On arrival Jackson was given orders from John Armstrong, the Secretary of War, that his military units were no longer needed. Because the British threat did not develop as expected, he was told to dismiss his volunteers to return on their own, unpaid, to Tennessee. The abortive expedition ended after a march north up the Natchez Trace arriving back in Nashville in March with many unhappy volunteers. Jackson paid the men himself and later collected the cost from the Federal government.

News of the Fort Mims massacre traveled like a wildfire. Settlers and peaceful Creeks were panicked. Federal troops were focused on the fighting in the east and north leaving the south to be protected, best as possible, by militia. Governor William Blount of Tennessee was authorized by the legislature to call up 3500 men for a three-month enlistment with \$300,000 voted for their support. Then he directed Andrew Jackson to repel the approaching invasion. Jackson appealed to the volunteers who had gone to Natchez. Jackson's words were "Already are large bodies of the hostile Creeks marching to your borders, with their scalping knives unsheathed, to butcher your women and children: time is not to be lost. We must hasten to the frontier, or we shall find it drenched in the blood of our citizens." They were directed to gather in Fayetteville, Tennessee on October 4th.

Jackson was unable to attend on rendezvous day because he had been painfully injured, probably with a broken arm, in a bar fight at the City Hotel between him, John Coffee, and Thomas Hays on one side and Thomas H. Benton and Jesse Benton on the other. The argument was about a duel that was not fought. He did send a spirited address to be read to the troops. "The health of your general is restored. He will command in person. The bloodshed calls for vengeance, it must not call in vain." He reached the camp three days later, on October 7th. still

feeling the effects of his injuries.

Rumors were rampant. An Indian agent, George Gaines, sent word to Jackson from St. Stephens that help was needed. America's history has been dragged in wild directions because of rumors. In this period and place rumors were common because there was no substantial news. Long distances across poor roads in this wild southwest, with the always present threat of Indian ambush, led to many mistakes and disasters. As Hooper wrote in his *Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs*, "The more remote from the scenes of blood, the greater the noise."

On September 26th Jackson sent Colonel John Coffee to Huntsville to provide defense of the frontier until the infantry could come and to protect the supplies gathered there. Coffee arrived with his troops and a detachment of Choctaw Indian scouts on October 4th. He was instructed to have the Indians wear white plumes or deer's tails in their hair so they might be identified as friendly. Jackson suggested that Coffee spread the word that he was moving toward Mobile, hoping to confuse the Indians.

Huntsville was a new settlement. John Hunt had arrived only eight years prior and the federal land sales, begun in August 1809, were just getting a good start. Washington, near Natchez, was the capital of the Mississippi Territory and a very long way from Madison County. It is easy to understand the terror created by the Indian threat.

David Crockett, famed frontiersman, personality and legislator, wrote in his autobiography of his involvement. "When I heard of the mischief which was done at the fort, (Mims) I instantly felt like going." His wife begged him not to volunteer but "I reasoned the case with her as well as I could and told her that if every man would wait till his wife got willing for him to go to war, there would be no fighting done. The truth is my dander was up and nothing but war could bring it right again." Crockett enlisted in the Muster Roll Company of the Tennessee Volunteer Mounted Riflemen under Captain Francis Jones and Colonel Coffee.

Crockett stated, "We all met and went ahead till we passed Huntsville and camped at a large spring called Beauty's Spring, (a large spring in central Madison County, now known as Brahan

Spring). Here we stayed several days.”

On October 8th, Colonel Coffee’s letter advised two Indians had just arrived with information that a war party of 800 to 1,000 had been sent to attack the frontiers of Georgia and the remainder was marching to Huntsville or Fort Hampton. A second message came adding to the fear of attack. At 9:00 AM on October 11th Jackson’s troops and Jackson, with his arm in a sling and in severe pain, force-marched the thirty-two miles from Fayetteville to Huntsville. On arrival Jackson was told the information was erroneous and he camped his tired soldiers at with Coffee’s men at Beaty’s Spring. In 1950 the Acme Club of Huntsville erected and dedicated a roadside marker at the corner of Holmes and Greene Streets to remember this march.

Private Crockett, who scouted miles south into the Indian lands, remembered his observations were ignored. He reported to Coffee “and his information did not stir Coffee to action yet when Major Gipson stated the same facts it put our colonel all in a fidget. When I made my report it wasn’t believed because I was just a poor soldier. But when the same was reported by Major Gibson, why there was all as true as preaching and the colonel believed every word. He ordered breastworks to be thrown up and sent an express to Fayetteville requesting them to push on like the very mischief for fear we should all be cooked as a crackling before they could get here.”

The next morning Jackson led a leisurely march that crossed the Tennessee River at Ditto’s Landing then moved east and joined Coffee’s command at a position on a high bluff opposite a charming island, then called Chickasaw and later Hobbs Island. This encampment became known as Camp Coffee and continued to be an important spot during the Creek War.

Coffee’s letters to his wife, Mary, niece of Jackson’s wife, Rachel, who lived in Rutherford County, Tennessee, tell the story of the troop’s activities in this campaign:

October 9, 1813- From Camp Beaty he wrote, “---things are ready to enter the Indian country tomorrow morning. I shall go to Fort Hampton near the mouth of the Elk River, to Colbert’s Ferry and then towards Fort St. Stephens, our first place of destiny. There is no more appearance of Indians doing mischief here than there is on Stones River, and the best informed here

have always thought so, the alarm has arisen from the poor cowardly creatures that has run off and left this tale in every direction. We have sent spies seventy miles who say there is no appearance of the Indians coming this way. I have 1300 men and have turned off several hundred others that I could not provide for. When General Jackson comes on with his 2500 men now at Fayetteville, we shall overrun the Creek nation, they will fly before us---like a flock of bullocks." Supplies were a problem throughout the expedition. The lines of delivery and unavailable stocks kept the army on a short leash.

October 13, 1813- A letter, "Camp Coffee, South Side Tennessee," Coffee wrote, "Since writing the last letter we have had 'plauseable' intelligence of the enemy coming against Madison County, which halted me. I moved seven hundred of my men over the Tennessee River to build a small fort two miles above 'dittoes' landing on the south of the river. Soon after I encamped, there came other news that the whole Creek nation was moving this way and would reach us the same night we received the information. We prepared and have continued in expectation two days and nights, when Gen'l Jackson with his army arrived and joined me yesterday. We are now out of any apprehension of being attacked. The Gen'l will rest here a few days and I shall make a small excursion into the adjoining country with about 650 of my Reg't and return and move on with the Gen'l. Things are fine and there can be no doubt of the success of the campaign. Your brother, Jack, is also to accompany us. Your Uncle Jackson has performed the journey out 'asceedingly' well and enjoys good health. I never saw him in finer health and spirits than he now shows." Jackson was apparently overcoming the injuries that had previously slowed him. John Coffee took 600 to 700 men from Camp Coffee.

October 15, 1813- A letter, "He had several picked companies of mounted rangers or spies. They would scout ahead of the main army for enemy war parties." (13) They marched three days looking for Black Warrior towns and after 80 miles they found an abandoned village then 20 miles farther came upon another empty village. The first genuinely progressive action was the destruction of these towns. A main town was discovered and about 50 buildings were burned. Three hundred bushels of corn

were taken. (14) Supplies were constantly a problem. The forces experienced drastic food shortages.

Oct 24, 1813- A letter, "Headquarters, 24 miles south from Ditto's Landing,. My Dearest, I have this moment arrived here from a route into the Indian Country of ten days, have been to the Black Warrior Towns and found them deserted by the Indians, leaving their corn and some other plunder behind. I burnt three towns and never saw an Indian. Let me beg of you to be of good cheer. I assure you we are not in any particular danger here. I know you are a philosopher and now is the time to exercise it." These letters demonstrate his handwriting and his spelling and prove Coffee was well educated and a careful and caring writer.

October 25, 1813- A letter, "Camp Brown, 30 miles from Ditto's Landing. The Gen'l has gone on with his army and I will follow him tomorrow and join in the evening. We will keep together until we reach the heart of Creek country. There has not been a gun fired by either an Indian or a white man at each other and I am doubtful but a few will be fired. The Indians give up their country as we approach and I think that will continue to be the case." Colonel Smith and Colonel McKee in the Choctaw country reported the Indians had "fled to the center of their country from where they will move down to Pensacola to their friends and allies, the Spaniards and British." Coffee told Mary she could write to him, addressed to the port of Huntsville, Mississippi Territory because he could receive letters through a chain of army depots.

November 4, 1813- A letter, "Ten Islands, Coosa River. My love, I have again an opportunity to write you a line. We are progressing in to the Indian Country as far as we can get provisions. A few more days will bring the East Tennessee troops when the whole will move on together. I had a small 'scirmish' with the Indians where we killed two hundred and took eighty prisoners. We shall build a fort at this place for a deposit of provisions and to leave the wounded men in. The only man killed of my party is young Thomas Hudson who was killed with an arrow."

November 12, 1813- A letter, "Headquarters Camp Strother, Ten Islands, Coosa River. Thirty miles south, towards the enemy, we had a battle at Talladega creek. Our party

consisted of 2000 men commanded by Gen'l Jackson in person. The enemy were a little upwards of 1000 chosen warriors. We were advised by a friendly party of the approach and position, which enabled us by forced marching night and day to meet them thirty miles in advance of the main army. In the morning early we surrounded them and in a few minutes put the whole to flight having killed 300 of their best warriors and most of the balance were wounded. We have in two battles, one on the 3rd and the other on the 4th instant, killed 500 of the warriors and wounded at least as many other besides upwards of 100 prisoners. I lost five men killed and forty some odd wounded. In the latter battle we lost 15 men killed and eighty-five or six wounded. Upon the whole calculation we shall not lose more than 30 men killed in both battles. Although we regret the loss of our brave fellows, yet the great disproportion is beyond the most sanguine calculations on our part."

December 19, 1813- A letter, "Huntsville, I apprehend Gen'l Jackson will have been compelled to yield to the multitude and all be compelled to return, but this will be his last resort. Gen'l Hall's brigade has already left him thus we are clear of the Scotch-Irish in that quarter." Enlistment periods of sixty and ninety days expired quickly, forcing Jackson to strong measures to keep his army together.

Jackson's army continued the Creek War across the country and that finally concluded with a decisive battle at Horseshoe Bend, ending the threat of violence from the Indians. John Coffee appeared on every front of the new southwest and Mississippi Territory. He was not only the husband of Andrew Jackson's niece, but Jackson's best friend. Jackson said, "John Coffee is a consummate commander. He was born so, but he is so modest that he doesn't know it." Coffee, 41 years old in 1813, was a brave and unassuming frontier giant, six feet tall and about 216 pounds.

In 1809 Thomas Freeman was sent by the governor of the Mississippi Territory to take a census and begin the land survey of Madison County. John Coffee was a surveyor in that operation. The surveyors always had the best information on land. They often advised speculators on land purchases. Freeman was the largest purchaser of land when the federal sales began

and Coffee was not far behind. He had purchased eighteen parcels for a total of 2,659 acres. Coffee represented two Nashville land-owners/speculators in the effort to have the Madison County courthouse placed near the Big Spring. When he was able to arrange that, they wrote to him, "You have been the cause of all our profits in the Huntsville scheme." The beautiful and fertile valley of the Tennessee River received much interest from the soldiers of the Creek War. "Of the emigrants who afterward came from middle Tennessee, a large proportion had belonged to Coffee's command."

Coffee was appointed Surveyor General of the Alabama Territory in 1817, putting him in a position to speculate and amass a fortune. He was a key figure in the economic development of the area and became the richest planter in North Alabama. His Cypress Land Company developed the town that became Florence.

Huntsville was an important camp and supply depot during the Creek War. Jackson and his army passed through in October 1813 and several times during the war. There was never an imminent threat of an Indian attack on Madison County. Judge Thomas J. Taylor, an important local historian, wrote in the late nineteenth century "Madison County had always been a land of peace." "The county was a place of perfect security and the negro stood in mortal dread of the Indians and very seldom took refuge among them." "Little was heard about the war in our remote section of the country."

Many soldiers were recruited from the county as the fighting men were organized to hold off the menacing Indians. The Judge reported two companies of militia, captained by Gray and Mosley, were recruited in the county and they accompanied Jackson on the trek to Natchez. After the slaughter at Fort Mims a company was raised by Captain Eldridge in Huntsville and Meridianville and another by Captain Hamilton in the settlements of the mountains on the Flint River. "So the companies from Madison shouldered their muskets and marched away with the other, and were placed with some Tennessee companies in a regiment commanded by Jackson's intimate friend, Col. James Carroll." (20) Captain Mosley's men saw much hard service as scouts, to protect provision shipments and

to watch the Indian movements. Taylor reported, "I regret that the names of the killed and wounded in the Madison companies have not been preserved." Later in the war, "Captains Mosely's and Gray's commands were discharged on expiration of their term of service, but the other two companies before their discharge were at Mobile and at the taking of Pensacola." Like much of history, the rumors and stories of Indian attacks, Jackson's heroic march, and the city's place in the war, have expanded with the telling and the years.

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**ANDREW JACKSON CAMPED HERE,
OCTOBER 11, 1813
By Norman M. Shapiro**

In 1951, the newly formed Huntsville Historical Society (later renamed Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society) assisted the Acme Club in erecting a historical marker to commemorate Andrew Jackson's encampment in Huntsville on the way to what became the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. The marker stands in the triangular median at Holmes Avenue and Lincoln Street, Huntsville, Alabama and was dedicated on May 4, 1952. The marker reads:

ANDREW JACKSON

On this spot camped his army, October 11, 1813, after marching from Fayetteville, Tenn., - "32 miles without halting." - en route to the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.

Recent research by the late Ms. Renee Pruitt, Archivist of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, revealed the actual location of the campsite at Brahan Spring in Huntsville. Ms. Pruitt noted that David Crockett wrote on page 74 of his Autobiography, "We all met and went ahead till we passed Huntsville, and camped at a large spring called Beaty's spring."¹ She also found that Robert Beaty and his wife Sarah had sold the two hundred and fifty-one acres containing the spring to John Brahan and John Read in 1819. The spring is about two miles southwest of the Madison County Court House which was indeed "passed Huntsville" in those early days. The campsite at Beaty's spring is also confirmed by John Coffee's first letter of the campaign to his wife Mary which was written from Beaty's spring and appears in the Appendix. The reason for the unusually quick march from Fayetteville to Huntsville was because word had been received (and later proved to be false) that a war party of Creeks was rapidly approaching and planning to attack Huntsville.

The Battle of Horseshoe Bend was actually some five months in the future and it was thought that the Creeks would be defeated and subjugated long before then. A new marker was erected at Brahan Spring Park in Huntsville in 2012

The two-hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the War of 1812 was observed on the 18th of June, 2012, was fought between the United States of America and the United Kingdom and its colonies, especially Upper Canada (Ontario), Lower Canada (Quebec), Nova Scotia, Bermuda and Newfoundland. The war was fought from 1812 to 1815 on both land and sea. By the end of the war, about 1,600 British and 2,260 American troops had died. The number of American Indian casualties is unknown.

Great Britain had been at war with France since 1793, and to impede neutral trade with France imposed a series of restrictions that the U.S. contested as illegal under international law. The Americans declared war on Britain for this and a number of other reasons including: outrage of the impressments (conscription) of American sailors into the British navy; anger at British military support for American Indians defending their tribal lands from encroaching American settlers; and a desire for territorial expansion of the Republic.

The Creek War of 1813-1814 became associated with the War of 1812 because of the British support of the Indians in their raids on American settlers but they also had long been allies. The war was fought in two phases. The first phase occurred in what became the state of Alabama, then part of the Mississippi Territory and it included three distinct campaigns:

1. The Campaigns of the Mississippi Territorial Militia: These campaigns, which include the war's first battle and the attack on Fort Mims, were conducted primarily in what is today southwest Alabama.
2. The Campaigns of the Georgia Militia: These campaigns, which include the battles of Autossee and Calabee Creek, were conducted in portions of western

Georgia and present-day east-central Alabama.

3. The Campaigns of the Tennessee Militia: These campaigns, which include the battles of Talladega and Horseshoe Bend, were conducted primarily in what is today northeast and east-central Alabama. The second phase of overall conflict, a campaign of the larger War of 1812 resulted in the capture of Pensacola by U.S. forces and the defeat of the British at the Battle of New Orleans. This phase took place along the Gulf Coast in the present-day states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.²

It can be argued that the War of 1812 was a war that should never have been fought. Two days before Congress declared war on June 18, 1812, the British government stated that it would repeal the "Orders in Council", the laws which established the blockades that became one of the principal reasons for the conflict. If there had been telegraphic communication with Europe, the war might well have been avoided. Speedy communication would also have prevented the greatest battle of the war that was fought at New Orleans 15 days after a treaty of peace had been signed. But the war was fought and the conflicts dramatically altered the United States' history. In particular, the Creek War and the War of 1812 brought about several far-reaching changes in the Old Southwest, the frontier region of west Georgia, and the future states of Mississippi and Alabama. They gave rise to the development of slave-based cotton agriculture in the region, led to the forced removal of native tribes, secured large portions of the Gulf South against European powers and launched the career of one of America's most influential military and political leaders.

It is perhaps strange that the war which was essentially fought for freedom of the seas began with an invasion of Canada when General William Hull, governor of the Michigan Territory, led an unsuccessful invasion of the British colony on July 12, 1812. The

British and Native Americans threw him back, besieged him at Detroit, and forced him to surrender his whole army. After Hull's failure, it was feared the British would direct their released forces against the ports of the Gulf of Mexico, particularly New Orleans, and this brought Andrew Jackson into the war for the first time, if only temporarily. The War Department responded to the supposed threat and subsequently ordered Governor Willie Blount of Tennessee to detach fifteen hundred militia to the lower Mississippi to meet the British should they make an attempt on New Orleans. On November 1st, 1812, Governor Blount issued the requisite orders to Andrew Jackson who was Major General, Second Division, Tennessee Militia. Jackson immediately began the task of preparing for the descent of the Mississippi River with volunteers he had recruited earlier in anticipation of a need for his services. On the January 7, 1813, the infantry embarked from Nashville, Tennessee, and the flotilla sailed down the Cumberland River to the Ohio; down the Ohio to the Mississippi; down the Mississippi toward New Orleans, stopping here and there for supplies. Colonel (later General) John Coffee and his six hundred mounted men traveled across the country and were to rejoin General Jackson at Natchez.³

"I have the pleasure to inform you," wrote Jackson to the Secretary of War, just before leaving home, "that I am now at the head of 2,070 volunteers, the choicest of our citizens, who go at the call of their country to execute the will of the government, who have no constitution scruples; and if the government orders, will rejoice at the opportunity of placing the American eagle at the ramparts of MOBILE, PENSACOLA, AND FT. ST. AUGUSTINE, effectually banishing from the southern coasts all British influence."⁴

The flotilla reached the little town of Natchez, Mississippi, on the 15th of February and found that Colonel Coffee and his mounted regiment had already

arrived in the vicinity. Here General Jackson received a dispatch from General Wilkinson, who commanded in New Orleans, requesting him to halt at Natchez as neither quarters nor provisions were ready for them at New Orleans; nor had an enemy yet made his appearance in the southern waters. Wilkinson added that he had received no orders respecting the Tennesseans and did not know their destination. The troops disembarked at Natchez camped a few miles from town and passed their days learning the duties of a soldier.

And the days passed and the month of February frittered away and the army was still in camp, employed in nothing more serious than the daily drill. On the first day of March, Gen. Jackson wrote a letter to the Secretary of War in which he suggested that, if there was nothing for the Tennesseans to do in the South, they should be employed in the North. It wasn't until the end of March that Jackson received the following letter from the Secretary of War, dated February 6, 1813, terminating the expedition:

“Sir:--The causes of embodying and marching to New Orleans the corps under your command having ceased to exist, you will on receipt of this letter, consider it as dismissed from public service, and take measures to have delivered over to Major General Wilkinson all the articles of public property which may have been put into its possession. You will accept for yourself and the corps the thanks of the President of the United States.”

Jackson was distressed and furious with this result and resolved that the troops would be paid and not disbanded until he had led them back to the borders of their own State. At the last moment new orders were received from the government directing that the forces under General Jackson would be paid off and allowed pay and rations for the journey home.

The little army started the five hundred mile march from Natchez through the wilderness on March 25 and

made surprisingly good time. It was on the homeward march that the nickname of “Old Hickory” was bestowed on the General. From the time of leaving Nashville, General Jackson had constantly grown in the confidence and affection of his troops as they realized he could be a father as well as a chief. On approaching the borders of the State, the General again offered his services to the government to aid in, or conduct, a new invasion of Canada. His force, he said, could be increased, if necessary, and he had a few standards wearing the American eagle, that he should be happy to place on the enemy’s ramparts. But the desired response never came and so on the 22nd of May the last of his army was drawn up on the public square of Nashville waiting only for the word of command to disperse to their homes.. A pleasant little ceremonial preceded the separation.

During the following summer, Native American violence against ordinary Americans became very evident in the South. Some of the incidents were probably incited by the British that was considered as another of the causes of the War of 1812. But the idea for a general Indian uprising was a part of Tecumseh’s grand scheme of uniting all the western tribes from Florida to the Northern lakes in a confederation against the whites, with the design of recovering the Indian’s ancient heritage. Tecumseh went to the South in the spring of 1811 and preached his crusade in Florida, among the persistent Seminoles; in Georgia and Alabama, among the powerful Creeks and Cherokees; in Missouri, among the tribes of the Des Moines. Tecumseh also played a large part in Hull’s defeat when he invaded Canada early in the war.

The first battle of the Creek War of 1813-1814 took place in southern Alabama, then a part of the Mississippi Territory, on July 27, 1813. Relations between the whites and the Creeks had seriously deteriorated in that area after Tecumseh’s earlier visit and the start of the 1812 war. A group of about 80

hostile Creeks were returning from Pensacola, Florida to the Upper Creek towns along the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers in central Alabama, with guns and powder that they had purchased from the Spanish, when they were intercepted by about 180 white militia. The whites had heard about the gun purchase and were afraid of the consequences of such action. The militia swooped down on these Creeks (called "Red Sticks" because of the red-painted clubs they carried) as they were camped on the banks of Burnt Corn Creek about 80 miles north of Pensacola. The Red Sticks were routed at first and fled into the woods and swamps but they returned to the fight when they saw the militia plundering and gathering horses and guns. Now it was the whites who retreated in humiliation with the Creeks in swift pursuit.

William Weatherford, a Native American chief also known as Red Eagle, was the son of Scottish trader Charles Weatherford and a Creek chieftain's daughter. In his early thirties he became an ally of Tecumseh, and led one of the Creek factions to resist the advance of the white frontier. After the debacle at Burnt Corn Creek, Red Eagle assembled a force of a thousand warriors and trailed the attackers to Fort Mims, an outpost north of Mobile. Hundreds of men, women and children had gone to the fort for safety after Burnt Corn Creek. On August 30, 1813, the Creeks overran the poorly defended fort and killed almost all of its 550 occupants, who consisted of whites, black slaves, and Creeks loyal to the U.S. Many scalps were also taken and the affair has been called the most brutal Indian massacre in U.S. history.

The Red Sticks' victory at Fort Mims spread panic throughout the Southeastern United States frontier. After the bloodbath, parties of Indians roved about the country rioting in plunder. The massacre marked the transition from a civil war within the Creek tribal factions to a war between the United States and the Red Stick warriors of the Upper Creek Nation. And

since Federal troops were occupied with the northern front of the War of 1812, Tennessee, Georgia, and the Mississippi Territory mobilized their militias to move against the Upper Creek towns that had supported the Red Sticks' cause.

In Nashville, the man destined to lead Tennessee's response to the Creek's campaign of terror spent most of the next month sick and defeated, laying wounded in bed with his arm bound up, and his shoulder bandaged, waiting impatiently for his wounds to heal and his strength to return. On 4th of September he had suffered these wounds in an unfortunate and intangible incident with brothers, Jesse and Thomas Hart Benton. Jackson had served as second for William Carroll, one of his young officers, in a duel with Jesse Benton earlier in the summer where each of the participants received minor wounds. Words about the affair continued over the Summer and Thomas Benton, unhappy with the fact that the General had taken a part against his brother, joined the dispute which ended in an armed quarrel between Jackson and the Bentons. John Coffee was also present and participated in the struggle on Jackson's behalf as did Stokely Hayes, a nephew of Mrs. Jackson. The General received balls in his arm and shoulder from Jesse Benton's pistol and Jesse suffered several flesh wounds from the blade from Stokely Hayes' sword cane. Thomas Benton had served previously as Jackson's military aide and as one of his regimental commanders and their relationship, unfortunately, was estranged for many years after this affair.

On the 19th of September, eighteen days after the massacre, the people of Nashville assembled in town meeting to deliberate upon the event. A committee, of which Colonel Coffee was a member, was appointed to confer with Governor Blount and General Jackson and report on the following day. The next day a series of resolutions were made urging immediate aid for the southern settlers. It was

announced that that Governor Blount supported the measure. "We have to regret," said the committee, "the present indisposition of our brave and patriotic General Jackson; but we have the utmost confidence, from his declaration and his convalescent state, to announce that he will be able to command as soon as the freemen of Tennessee can be collected to march against the foe."

The Legislature of Tennessee passed on the 25th of September an act empowering Governor Blount to call thirty-five hundred volunteers to the field, in addition to the fifteen hundred already enrolled in the service of the United States, the State guaranteeing their pay and subsistence in case the general government should refuse to adopt the measure as its own. A sum of three hundred thousand dollars was voted to defray immediate expenses. Subsequently, Governor Blount visited General Jackson with General John Cocke of East Tennessee. They found the General extremely worn and debilitated. Governor Blount said that he had just ordered General Cocke to summon the troops of East Tennessee to rendezvous at Knoxville and he was prepared to give General Jackson a similar order for the western division, if he was able to take the field. Jackson replied that his wounds were improving and he thought that by the time the troops could assemble he would be ready to assume the command. General Blount then gave the order. Jackson inquired if provisions could be procured in East Tennessee for both divisions. General Cocke thought it possible and promised at, General Jackson's request, to make the necessary requisition upon the government contractor at Knoxville. The availability of munitions, food and fodder for an army on the move is always a most important consideration.

The ailing General gave the task his full attention. On the 25th of September, in another of his spirit-stirring addresses, he called his division to the field naming the 4th of October as the time and Fayetteville, near the Alabama border, as the place. On

the 26th, he dispatched his old friend and partner, Colonel Coffee, with his regiment of five hundred horse, and such mounted volunteers as could instantly join, to Huntsville in northern Alabama to restore confidence to the frontier. One of these volunteers who would prove to be invaluable as a scout was "David Crockett, then the peerless bear-hunter of the West (to be a member of Congress by and by, to be a national joker and to stump the country against his present commander) was there with his rifle and hunting-shirt, the merriest of the merry, keeping the camp alive with his quaint conceits and marvelous narratives." On the 4th of October, the energetic Coffee had reached the place, his force increased to nearly thirteen hundred men; and volunteers, as he wrote back to his commander, flocking in every hour.

The day named for the rendezvous at Fayetteville was exactly one month from the day that the commanding General received his wounds in the brawl with the Bentons. He could not mount his horse without assistance when the time came for him to travel to Fayetteville. His left arm was bound and in sling. He could not wear his coat-sleeve; nor, during any part of his military career, could he long endure the weight of an epaulette on his left shoulder. Often, in the crisis of a maneuver, some unguarded moment would send such a thrill of agony through his attenuated frame as almost to deprive him of consciousness.

Traveling as fast as his healing wounds permitted, General Jackson reached Fayetteville on the 7th of October and found that less than half of the two thousand men that he had ordered out had assembled. But good news from Colonel Coffee awaited him. He had previously been very concerned about the safety of Mobile and had anticipated a long and weary march into Southern Alabama. He now learned from Colonel Coffee's dispatch that the Indians seem to have abandoned their designs upon Mobile and were making their way in two parties toward the borders of Georgia

and Tennessee. This was joyful news to the weakened but fiery commander. "It is surely," he wrote back to Coffee the same evening, "high gratification to learn that the Creeks are so attentive to my situation as to save me the pain of traveling. I must not be outdone on politeness and will therefore endeavor to meet them on the middle ground."

At one o'clock on Monday, the eleventh of October, a courier dashed into camp with another dispatch from Colonel Coffee announcing the approach of the enemy (toward Huntsville). This information had come from David Crockett who had been on a scout into Indian lands about sixty-five miles south of the Tennessee river.⁵ The General then exhibited his impetuous energy in command. The order to prepare for marching was given *immediately*. A few minutes later, the courier was galloping back to Coffee's camp carrying a few hasty lines from Jackson to the effect that in two hours he would be in motion with all his available force. Before three, he had kept his word; the army was at full speed on the way toward Huntsville. Excited more and more as they went by rumor of Indian murders, the men marched at an incredible pace in order to reach Huntsville, *thirty-two miles* from Fayetteville, by eight o'clock the same evening! It is hard to believe that an army could march six miles an hour for five hours, but the fact is stated on what may be considered the authority of General Jackson himself.

At Huntsville, It was found that the rapid approach of the Indians was exaggerated. The next day, therefore, the force marched leisurely to the Tennessee River, crossed it at Ditto's Landing, and toward evening came up with Colonel Coffee's command, encamped on the south side of the river. Here Jackson continued to be concerned about supplies for the campaign and on the 14th of October he sent Col. Coffee on a scout of the adjoining country while he gave the infantry who remained some hard drilling.

The camp on the bluff broke up on the 19th of

October and three days of marching, climbing and road cutting brought the little army to Thompson's creek, a branch of the Tennessee, twenty-two miles above the previous encampment. He was terribly disappointed to find there neither provisions or word of provisions. He halted at Thompson's creek, and while his men were employed in throwing up a fort (Fort Deposit) to be used as a depot for the still expected provisions, he sat in his tent for three days writing pleading and pathetic letters to all he knew who might have the authority or ability to help. Colonel Coffee rejoined the army on the 24th October. He had burnt three Indian towns but had not seen a hostile Indian. Runners were still arriving from Ten Islands with entreaties from the friendly Indians for relief and Jackson, with two day's supply of bread and six of meat, resolved to march and depend for subsistence upon chance and victory.

Leaving Fort Deposit on the 25th of October, Jackson marched southward into the enemy's country as fast as the state of his commissariat permitted. A week brought the whole force, intact, to the banks of the Coosa within a few miles of the Ten Islands near a town called Tallushatchee where it was known that a large body of the Indians had assembled. Tallushatchee was thirteen miles from General Jackson's camp. On the 2nd of November came the welcome order to Colonel Coffee to march with a thousand mounted men to destroy this town.

Early on the morning of November 3, 1813, Coffee's troops had progressed to within a mile of Tallushatchee at which point they split and completely surrounded the Red Stick village. Two detachments of scouts were then sent into the heart of the village in an effort to draw the warriors out of their houses. In response, the Red Sticks rushed to the outer perimeter of federal soldiers, where they were driven back by a hail of lethal gunfire. Fighting lasted until the last warrior fell. In all, 200 Red Sticks were killed, including a number of women and children. The

remaining women and children were taken prisoner. Coffee's troops, by contrast, suffered only five killed and 41 wounded.

On the evening of the same day, General Coffee, having destroyed the town and buried his dead, led his victorious troops back to Jackson's camp, where he received from his General and the rest of the army the welcome that brave men give to brave men returning from triumph. A brief dispatch from General Jackson to Governor Blount, written on the 4th of November, and soon published in all newspapers, was the first of a long series of dispatches that associated his name with victory: "We have retaliated for the destruction of Fort Mims. On the 2nd, I detached General Coffee with a part of his brigade of cavalry and mounted riflemen, to destroy Tallushatchee where a considerable force of the hostile Creeks was concentrated. The General executed this in style."⁶

"One of the Creek children orphaned by the fighting was taken from the battlefield to Fort Strother, where he caught the eye of General Jackson. The ten-month-old boy, named Lyncoya, was the same age as Jackson's adopted son, Andrew Jr. When Creek women prisoners refused to care for him, Jackson arranged to have the baby sent to Huntsville and provided financial support for his immediate care. The boy later was adopted into the Jackson family and lived at their home near Nashville, Tennessee."⁷

It was General Jackson's turn next. Thirty miles from his encampment on the Coosa stood a small fort, Fort Leslie, into which a party of a hundred and fifty-four friendly Creeks had fled for safety. The site of this fort is now covered by part of the town of Talladega, the county seat of Talladega County, Alabama. While General Coffee was returning in triumph from Tallushatchee, more than a thousand Red Sticks suddenly surrounded the friendly fort and invested it so completely that not a man could escape. Some days passed. The suffering of the beleaguered Indians began

to be intolerable. A noted chief of the party resolved to make one desperate effort to escape and carry the news to Jackson's camp. Wrapping himself in the skin of a large hog, with the head and feet attached, he left the fort and went about rooting and grunting, gradually working his way through the hostiles until he was beyond the reach of their arrows. Throwing off his disguise he then fled and not knowing precisely the location of Jackson's camp, he did not reach the camp until late in the evening of the next day and told his story.

This was on the 7th of November, four days after the affair at Tallushatchee. The army was still, as it had been from the beginning of the campaign, only a few days removed from starvation. Despite this and other problems, he decided to go to the relief of the friendly Creeks, justly supposing that the massacre of such a body, within so short a distance from an American army, would intimidate all the friendly Indians and tend to unite the southern tribes, as one man, against the United States.

“On November 9, 1813, Jackson's forces encircled the Red Sticks surrounding Talladega in the hope of entrapping all of the warriors in a manner similar to that accomplished by General Coffee's troops at Tallushatchee. In the ensuing battle, Jackson's forces killed approximately 300 Red Stick warriors and were successful in breaking the siege. Despite orders to the contrary, three companies of militia retreated as the Red Sticks advanced, creating a gap in Jackson's encircling forces. This error allowed approximately 700 of his warriors to escape. Jackson, nevertheless, characterized the battle as a significant victory and was praised throughout the United States for having inflicted two devastating defeats upon the Red Sticks within just six days.

Jackson's victory at Talladega was significant in two respects. The rescue of Creeks trapped at Fort Leslie further strengthened the alliance between the

Creek Nation and the United States in the war against the Red Stick faction. Also, the combined victories at Tallushatchee and Talladega, which left more than 1,000 warriors dead, wounded, or missing, seriously depleted the number of Red Stick warriors available for the later Battle of Horseshoe Bend, which effectively sealed the fate of the Creek Nation in Alabama.”⁸

After the battle, there was a significant lull in the fighting between the Red Sticks and Jackson's army. By December, the U.S. force was down to almost 500 because of desertion and enlistments running out. The sharp contrast between John Coffee's last two letters to his wife in the in the Appendix exemplify the state of affairs. And by the end of 1813, Jackson was down to a single regiment whose enlistments were due to expire in mid January.

Although Governor Blount had ordered a new levee of 2,500 troops, Jackson would not be up to full strength until the end of February. When a draft of 900 raw recruits arrived unexpectedly on January 14, Jackson decided to get the most out of his untried force who had enlistment contracts of only sixty days. On January 17, 1814, Jackson started his army southward again. The elusive Creeks under Red Eagle answered by attacking his army twice during the month - at Emuckfaw Creek and at Enotachopco Creek. Neither battle was decisive, but the Creeks suffered much higher casualties than did Jackson's soldiers. Following these engagements, Jackson returned to Fort Strother in February to gather the reinforcements that had arrived from Tennessee. He spent the next month building roads and training his force.

In mid March, he moved against the Red Stick force concentrated on the Tallapoosa at Tohopeka (Horseshoe Bend). He first moved south along the Coosa, about half the distance to the Creek position, and established a new outpost at Fort Williams. Leaving another garrison there, he then moved on Tohopeka with a force of about 3,000 effectives

augmented by 600 Cherokee and Lower Creek allies. The Battle of Horseshoe Bend, which occurred on March 27, was a decisive victory for Jackson, effectively ending the Red Stick resistance.

A proud but defeated Red Eagle surrendered himself to General Jackson in April, stating that "If I had an army, I would yet fight, and contend to the last: but I have none; my people are all gone. I can now do no more than weep over the misfortunes, of my nation." Red Eagle's surrender set the stage for total capitulation by the entire Creek nation, consummated by the Treaty of Fort Jackson in July 1814. The Indians were forced to turn over some 23 million acres to the United States, land that would constitute most of the future state of Alabama.

The Creek War of 1813-14 thus ended favorably for the United States. The campaign that seemed doomed to failure by a mutinous army, an inadequate supply system, and an elusive enemy was waged successfully by a sick but determined commander who kept his army together and maneuvered it against the enemy through the sheer power of his will.⁹ And when the victorious army was returning home to Tennessee they paused in Huntsville on the 18th of May, 1814, to receive the applause and toasts of all of the grateful citizens of Madison County.¹⁰

APPENDIX

Excerpts from John Coffee's Letters to his Wife Mary Donelson Coffee¹¹

Camp Batey near Huntsville Date not given (probably Oct. 4 1811)

* * * I have been here five days getting ready to enter the Indian country. Tomorrow morning I shall take up my line of march, shall go from this to Fort Hampton, near the mouth of Elk river, from there by way of

Colbert's ferry and then on towards Fort St. Stephens, our first place of destiny. There is no more appearance of Indians doing mischief here than there is on Stones river, and the best informed here have always thought so. The alarm has arisen from the poor cowardly creatures that have run off and left their all in every direction, and without knowing for what. We have sent spies over the river that have been seventy miles direct into the Indian country who have this day returned and say that there is no appearance of the Indians coming this way at all. Seeing the people here are perfectly secure, I shall now proceed to the relief of the poor suffering people on the Mobile (river). George Smith and Sandy with twenty men have gone on. I have under my command upwards of thirteen hundred men and have been compelled to turn off several hundred others that I could not provide for. I am sufficiently strong to go anywhere without any kind of danger and when Genl. Jackson comes on with his 2,500 men now at Fayetteville we shall be able to overrun the Creek nation and I fear we shall never see an Indian for as they hear of our strength they will fly before us and never risk an action. If men flock in to the Genl. in the proportion of what they have done to me he will have an army that can drive the Creek nation like a flock of bullocks and from all I can learn they will and more so.

Camp Coffee - South Side Tennessee River
13th October, 1813

We have had plausible intelligence of the enemy intending to come against Madison County (Alabama) which halted me here until the facts could be ascertained. Seeing I had to detain, I moved about seven hundred of my men over the Tennessee river to build a small fort and encamped at this place which is two miles above Ditto's Landing on the south side of the river. Soon after I encamped, there came other news that the whole Creek nation was moving on this way in

one body and would in all probability reach us the same night that we received the information. We prepared and expected an attack and continued in expectations two days and nights when Genl. Jackson with his army arrived and joined me, which was yesterday. We are now without any apprehension of being attacked, being strong enough to meet the enemy anywhere we can find them. They will no doubt try to evade a meeting, which they can easily accomplish, as they know the situation of the country much better than we do. The Genl. and the principal part of his army will necessarily detain here a few days preparing for their further march. Tomorrow I shall make a small excursion into the adjoining country with about 650 of my Regt. and return and move on with the Genl. The East Tennesseans are in motion and we will all unite before we enter the Creek nation when we can be able to drive them out of their country or cut them off if they attempt to support it. Things are fixed in such a train that there can be no doubt of the success of the campaign. I hope and flatter myself that it will be a short war and that we can again return home to our families and friends. * * *

Headquarters – 24 Miles South from Ditto Landing
24 October 1813

I have this moment arrived here from a scout into the Indian country of ten days. I have been to the Black Warrior towns. * * * I burnt three towns and never saw an Indian. I am now convinced that the Indians will never meet us in action. All our fighting will be scouting parties. We move out from here this day and will not halt again until in the heart of the enemy country. Our spies have been to the place where the Indians were said to be embodied and find no sign of their ever being there. They will certainly desert their country before us. * * *

Camp Brown – 30 miles from Ditto Landing
25th October 1813

I wrote you yesterday by Col. Hays from Genl. Jackson's camp, 10 miles below this (place), where I mentioned to you that I had just returned from a tour in the interior of the enemy country. The Genl. has gone on with his army and I will follow him tomorrow and join in the evening when we will keep all together until we reach the heart of the Creek country. To the end of any engagement should take place our forces should all be present to act together in which event there will certainly be * * * . I expect the East Tennessee troops will join us before we get to the Creek country, which will still strengthen us.

After writing you yesterday, Col. Hays detained while I wrote your father. By the Col., I read a letter from him wherein he mentioned never having reached you of Major Gibson being killed – the report is false. There has not been a gun fired by either an Indian or white man at each other of our army? and I am doubtful but few will be fired. The Indians gives up their country before us as we approach. So far as we have yet been and I think that will continue to be the case.

Yesterday I received letters from Capt. Geo. Smith and Col. McKee in the Choctaw country who had gone in expecting me to follow. They state that the Indians had fled from that part and had all gone to the center of their country from where they will move down no doubt to Pensacola to their friends and allies, the Spaniards and British. * * *

Ten Islands – Coosy (sic) River
14th November 1813

We are progressing onto the Indian country as fast as we can get provisions. And a very few days more will bring up the East Tennessee troops when the whole will move on together.

I have (had) a small skirmish with the Indians, and a part of my Brigade, where we killed 200 & took 80 prisoners, the particulars of which I have this day to Captain Parks and who will show it to you for your information

The die is now cast and I don't expect after this the enemy will ever meet us. They have no kind of chance. Our men will drive them wherever they find them. We shall build a fort at this place for a deposit of provisions and to leave the wounded men in. The only man killed of my party that you have any knowledge of is young Thomas Hudson, son of Mr. Hudson of Haysborough. He was killed with an arrow. Our loss is so small when compared with that of the enemy that it's not felt here. Our men are in excellent spirits. We shall very soon finish the work of destruction of those

will and return home, which time will afford me the greatest pleasure on earth, but not withstanding my inclination to be at home, I cheerfully yield it to duty, until the work is completed. * * *

Headquarters- Camp Strother, Ten Islands, Coosy (sic) River

12th November 1813

Last night we returned to this place after having advanced thirty miles south of this (place) towards the enemy where we had a battle at Talladega Creek. Our party consisted of 2000 men commanded by Genl. Jackson in person. The enemy were a little upwards of 1000 chosen warriors sent in to meet us and intercept our march. By the friendly party we were advised of their approach and position which enabled us by forced marching night and day with our detachment to meet them thirty miles in advance of our main army.

We met them in the morning early, when we surrounded them, and in a few minutes put the whole to flight, having killed 300 of their best warriors on the ground and the most of the balance were wounded.

Thus the two first chosen sets of our enemy have been completely cut off and destroyed. We have in the two battles, one on the 3rd and the other on the 9th Instant, killed 500 of the warriors and wounded at least as many others besides upwards of 100 prisoners of their families now in our possession. In the first battle, I lost five men killed and forty some wounded. In the latter battle, we lost 15 men killed and eighty-five or six wounded, the most slightly. Upon the whole calculation we shall not lose more than 30 men killed in both battles. Whereas the enemy on as fair calculation will have lost 600 killed, counting on such as must die of their wounds. Although we regret the loss of our brave fellows, yet the great disproportion, is beyond the most sanguine calculations on our part.

We only want supplies to enable us to finish the campaign in three weeks. We will wait here until we get them which it is supposed will be in a week from this time when we will advance forward and not stop until we reach the Georgia army in the Creek nation, which will be easily done. And when done, our work will be completed and we can return home where I hope we can remain in quiet with our families and friends and not be called upon again during the present war. * *

Huntsville, 19th December 1813

I have been confined at this place by the complaints I labored under when I left home having increased to a very aggravated state. Since the 11th Inst., I am much mended. So as I think I can leave this (place) tomorrow or next day and proceed on my march.

Great discontent hath prevailed in all our camps; men in all directions deserting; some going off in companies. I apprehend before I reach Genl. Jackson he will be compelled to yield to the multitude and all be compelled to return. But this will be the last resort and I hope may not be the case, yet I fear it.

General Hall's Brigade has already left him. Thus we are clear of the Scotch Irish in that quarter. My Brigade are ordered to halt (since I marched them) at Fort Deposit and there wait for further orders. When I shall be called on to march I cannot say, perhaps in very few days. I have now no expectation of any fighting being done this campaign.

1 David Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, (Philadelphia: E. Carey & A. Hart, 1834), p.74.

2 Mike Bunn & Clay Williams, *The Creek War and The War of 1812 in the Gulf South*, (Charleston SC: History Press, 2008).
<http://creewarandwarof1812.com/overview.html>.

3 The information herein on Andrew Jackson's military campaigns in 1812-1815 was adapted without attribution (except where noted) from James Parton's *Life of Andrew Jackson*, Vol. 1, (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861). James Parton (1822-1891) was the most popular biographer of his day in America. In his Pulitzer prize winning biography *American Lion-Andrew Jackson in the White House*, (New York: Random House, 2008), p. 365, Jon Meacham writes: "Anyone who contemplates Jackson owes a special debt to three important historians and their monumental work. James Parton's three-volume life of Jackson is indispensable." The other historians mentioned are Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Robert V. Remeni.

⁴ Parton adds, "Not yet, General, not yet. Two years later, perhaps."

5 Crockett, *loc.cit.*

6 In Coffee's letter to his wife on the 4th Nov. 1813 in the Appendix he modestly describes the engagement as "a small skirmish with the Indians * * * where we

killed 200 and took 80 prisoners.”

7 In *Encyclopedia of Alabama*,
<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2350>

8

<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2620>

9 <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/army/csi-battles.htm#IV>

10 Nancy Rohr, *Jackson's Victorious Return to Huntsville One Fine Day*, (The Huntsville Historical Review, Summer-Fall 2000, Vol. 27, No. 2), pp. 1-20.

¹¹ From the Dyas Collection of John Coffee Papers, Tennessee State Library & Archives, Nashville, Tennessee

**“They Are Too Sweet and Angelic to Reason,”
Or,
How Women Got the Vote in Alabama**

By Nancy M. Rohr

At the beginning of the twentieth century, women wanted to participate in the world around them. Up until that time, women could be acknowledged publicly on only two occasions: at marriage and with their death. For instance, on Judge George W. Lane’s mother’s tombstone, he had written simply, “My Mother.” For instance Daniel Hundley’s 361-page book written in 1860, *Social Relations in Our Southern States* lists the chapters that he would write about from first-hand knowledge. He begins with, to no one’s surprise, The Southern Gentleman, then, The Middle Classes, The Southern Yankee, Cotton Snobs, The Southern Yeoman, The Southern Bully, Poor White Trash, and The Negro Slave. Women, black or white, were lucky to be noted interspersed anywhere within his text. However he understood the one sacred institution, “...a Southern matron is ever idolized and almost worshipped by her dependents... to whom no word ever sounds half so sweet as mother and for whom no place possesses one half of the charms of home.” She “...faithfully labors on in the humble sphere allotted her of heaven – never wearying, never doubting, but looking steadfastly ...to God for her reward.” Life for women will only be good at her death?

The long, hard fight to achieve suffrage for women in the United States, and eventually Alabama, began in 1848 when Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and others met in Seneca Falls, New York to form the first public protest against women’s political, economic, and social inferiority. The demand for suffrage quickly became the central issue in the women’s rights movement. Newspapers throughout the state immediately voiced their opposition. Things were different in the south. Southern women were not expected to “bother their pretty little heads”

about day-to-day affairs whether uneducated countrywomen or sophisticated town ladies.

Historically, Southern women were not as socially organized as their northern counterparts, however the ladies at the home front during the Civil War initiated relief societies to provide bandages, clothing, and supplies for their men at the front. In Mobile a society formed to provide clothes for the needy children of Confederate soldiers. Women soon volunteered to become nurses in the field and organize hospitals, a job formerly considered to be a male occupation. Alabama's Sallie Swope, Kate Cummings, and Juliet Opie Hopkins were among the many hundreds who served. (In this new field of service Dorothea Dix suggested female volunteers should be over 30 and preferably plain of looks.)

As the Civil War continued, women organized in Mobile for a more immediate crisis. In 1863 amidst famine, women carried signs reading "Bread or Blood," and Confederate soldiers kindly looked the other way as the women looted bread stores to feed their children. Desperate "corn women" in Alabama gravitated to the Black Belt and stripped the productive fields of corn and grain to take back to their starving families.

With their fathers, brothers, and husbands away, women faced hardships and challenges during the War years that also increased their share of responsibility. In most cases women assumed the management of the farm or the town house and found, even if they didn't want to, they could perform these tasks.

After the War women helped rebuild churches and formed missionary societies. There was so much that needed to be done. Religious activities naturally led to and established the validity of their ventures into the public arena. Furthermore, as the South tried to reestablish itself, women were lured to the drama of their Lost Cause. Many patriotic groups formed and reunions were held for veterans. For the ladies, the Daughters of the Confederacy became a powerful social organization. Within a different setting, rural white women were allowed to hold office in the local Grange, and in the Farmers' Alliance.

By 1890 the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was formed, and the movement slowly found its way into the South. The myth of Southern womanhood made the fight for the vote in the South very difficult. Remember that, in the past, essential female qualities were to include beauty, gentleness, modesty, domesticity, moral superiority, and submission to the doctrine, of – what else – male superiority and authority.

In the Victorian era, however, many of the life experiences acquired during the Civil War had faded from view. Women were again admonished to be submissive, and they were expected to reign only over domestic life. Ah, the Victorian woman, from all appearances, was wrapped tightly in corsets and long skirts that hid her legs as the legs of the pianos were draped from a roving eye. Women who showed discontent or protest were often ridiculed, or worse, considered not to be ladies at all. As a result, the ordinary lives of most Alabama women at the new century did not extend far beyond home, fields, church, and a few occupations. One might aspire to be a teacher, secretary, or a nurse, but more likely women served as a beautician, seamstress, cook, maid, or washerwoman.

In Huntsville two female members of the prominent Clay family, after their father's stroke, had taken over complete management of the family newspaper, the Huntsville *Democrat*. In 1892 Susanna Clay, as associate editor, attempted to attend a public program at the Court House. One of the speakers, Mr. E. J. Taliaferro from Birmingham, objected to a lady being in the audience while he spoke. Miss Clay reported to her readers she did not mind missing his speech, but she felt any citizen should be admitted to hear the speakers – Gen. Edmond W. Pettus, U. S. Senator and Honorable A. C. Hargrove, president of the Alabama Senate.

Miss Clay attended as a reporter, a working female, and this was clearly a man's job to Mr. Taliaferro. She was making herself masculine by this appearance. "If she put herself in a man's place she should be treated as a man," stated Taliaferro.

“Exactly,” she said. “I should be admitted to public meetings exactly as any man.”

Her reply only inflamed the enemy for, “A female should not practice that type of repartee.”

In 1894 Virginia Clay-Clopton and other women founded the Huntsville League for Woman Suffrage. Within two years Mrs. Clopton became president of the Alabama Woman Suffrage Association. The group was small but sincere. Like many other communities Huntsville struggled with the issue of woman’s suffrage. Mrs. Milton Humes had often entertained local political leaders for her husband; she knew how to organize. She understood how the system worked, and she and her friends resisted the influence of the Huntsville *Weekly Mercury*. This newspaper asserted that involvement with politics, just as women daring to ride bicycles, would strip them of all femininity.

Through the efforts of Ellelee Humes and Alberta Chapman Taylor, the town was about to be in a tizzy. These women – daughter and sister of former Governor Reuben Chapman – led the social scene in Huntsville. Excited by the time she had spent in Colorado, Mrs. Taylor was already filled with the success of the 1893 suffrage campaign there. Suffragists Miss Susan B. Anthony and Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt were invited to speak in Huntsville on January 29, 1895. The town quickly was abuzz with this bold staging.

How dare they? How could women be involved in politics? What would become of their babies if mothers were out campaigning – who would prepare meals for the men folk? And yet keen observers pointed out that, at Dallas Mills, mothers already were away from the home from six in the morning to six at night, and no one asked who was taking care of *their* children. Furthermore, to keep from having unattended children at home, the cotton mills were quite willing to hire their youngsters for the same ten-to-twelve-hour day.

In the week before the women’s appearance, the *Mercury* continued to print its opinion. The editor noted he was anxious for Huntsville to enjoy every modern convenience and believed there was nothing too good for its people, but there were some

things which were *not* good enough: the “Wimin” Suffragist party, for instance.

An overflow crowd filled the auditorium of City Hall, then at the corner of Washington and Clinton Streets. During the daytime the ground floor of the brick and stone building served as the municipal market for farmers. For this special evening, a wooden platform had been built at the far end of the meeting space. The hall was tastefully decorated, with bunting and Jackson vine around the newly completed stage. Capt. Milton Humes and Mrs. Humes, Mr. Ben P. Hunt, and Mrs. Alberta Chapman Taylor escorted the speakers, accompanied by sparse, even anxious, applause from the audience. Already in her place on the stage was the indomitable Virginia Clay-Clopton, now 70. The crowd, except for a few supporters, had not come to be convinced; they were there to see the show. No one really expected to be converted.

The nation’s foremost suffragist, Miss Anthony, soon to be 75 years old, spoke first and gave the history of the progress of women’s suffrage during her lifetime. No one could find offense at her appearance; she was slender figure in a simple dress, with wire-frame glasses and a bun of straight silver hair. She looked like an elderly schoolmarm, perhaps, even harmless. She appeared to be speaking to a friendly audience, although some may have uncomfortably squirmed in their seats perhaps trying not to be recognized by their neighbors as having a favorable reaction. However Miss Anthony was warmly applauded, paving the way for the second speaker.

Carrie Chapman Catt truly charmed her listeners. Mrs. Catt, about 35, was stylishly dressed, assertive and confident. Her speech was eloquent and dramatic, and she captivated her listeners, drawing rounds of applause during her 75-minute talk. One listener said, “I have never heard any speaker, not even William Jennings Bryan with the flow of language that Mrs. Chapman Catt had.... It was like listening to silver waters purling over a rocky bed. It was incessant beauty; music in the making.” Afterwards Captain Humes invited members of the audience to come forward and enroll in the Huntsville League for

Woman Suffrage. A number of ladies and several gentlemen did so.

In varying degrees the local newspapers were impressed. Although not easily convinced, Editor O'Neal of the *Weekly Mercury* acknowledged Miss Anthony "spoke with ease and presented her facts in a plain direct and coquettish manner." The *Mercury* did not comment on her supposed lack of femininity with his use of the word "coquettish." Of Mrs. Catt he wrote she had a "charming personality, intelligent culture and eloquence, which completely captured the large audience and held them charmed, from the open to the close of her remarks which lasted an hour and fifteen minutes. From her standpoint her position and argument are almost unanswerable." Faint praise, indeed.

However, the *Mercury's* position was adamant. "The Southern ladies will never endorse the movement, preferring as they do to preside as queens in the hearts and homes of the men they love.... Their duties to God, their families and society sufficiently employ the minds of true Southern women, without entering the political arena."

The *Tribune* editor, Charles P. Lane, noted Miss Anthony's "unanswerable questions" and Mrs. Catt's cultured intelligence. The editor thoughtfully considered, "Women may yet be the means of preserving our free Republican institutions in America. Who knows? Stranger things have happened."

Having already visited Decatur, the women completed their Southern tour and went on to Atlanta for the 29th annual convention there. In 1898, however, Virginia Clay-Clopton gloomily noted, "Opposition is so great that it has been deemed wise to do nothing more than distribute literature and present the arguments in the press."

The battle continued in Gadsden with the column entitled, "A Matter of Regret." There the *Times-News* wrote, "It is regretted that a few of the leading women of Alabama are making themselves ridiculous by organizing a branch of the Women's Suffrage party. They may be conscientious and earnest in the movement, but they should remember that a woman's sphere is the home and not in the corrupt political parties of today. Let her stay at home and with a mother's influence raise

the standard of politicians. The good women of the South do not want the power to vote – and any attempt to organize a ‘wimmins right party’ will be useless.... No man that ever fought for the South and its women can believe that they desire to enter a political life, which is necessarily corrupt.” Perhaps the Gadsden newspaper revealed more than its readers really wanted to know.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Alabama prepared to write a new Constitution for the state. Amazingly, future U.S. Senator “Cotton” Tom Heflin invited Miss Frances Griffin, president of the Alabama Equal Suffrage Association to speak at the state Constitutional Convention of 1901. (You will remember that Cotton Tom Heflin originated the phrase, regarding the ballot, “he would vote for an ole’ yeller’ dog if it was on the Democratic ticket.)

Miss Griffin assured the men that her group was seeking the vote for “good women...not the naughty, fast damsels, adventuresses and the like.” There was prolonged applause from her supporters in the gallery but not from the delegates, and the proposal was defeated, 87 to 22. As former governor Emmet O’Neal pontificated, “Woman’s suffrage was contrary to ‘the theory of southern civilization,’ which held ‘that woman was the queen of the household and domestic circles...’” and should stay as such. The women, not defeated completely, bided their time. What next?

Women would lead a social revolution with issues of temperance, prison reform, social clubs, child labor laws, and women’s voting rights. For this era of rapid change in an increasingly industrialized society presented a new set of social problems. Reformers attempted to alleviate these problems during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Recent historians have characterized the concerns and actions of women in the Progressive Movement as “social housekeeping – perhaps an extension of the traditional home-based role as nurturer and caregiver in a public sphere. And Alabama women would be a part of it all. But where and how should they begin?

The issue of temperance led the way. Once convinced that “demon rum” threatened the home, which was, of course woman’s proper domain, the temperance movement quickly gained support. Reformers like Julia S. Tutwiler won the loyalties of traditional Victorian Southern women. (This remarkable woman had already persuaded the University of Alabama to open its doors to women in 1893, and then she lobbied, with other women’s groups, to have female dormitories built.) And once the Temperance movement was organized, the numbers swelled to thousands moving from the private to public arena. Locally the need must have been great, in Huntsville Carrie Nation made an appearance – twice. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), as it was known became a powerful force.

This social network led naturally to the formation of women’s clubs. More likely to be formed by affluent women, they studied public issues, read books and debated issues of reform. For example there was the Mobile Reading Club, the Tuscaloosa Kettle-Drum Club, Montgomery’s 20th Century, and Birmingham’s Cadmean and Highland book Clubs. (Cadmus, founder of Thebes introduced the alphabet to ancient Greece.) Alabama Federated Women’s Clubs by 1895 had become one of the first umbrella federations combining 130 women in six clubs. By 1915 there were 153 clubs with 4250 members in the state. Black women formed a similar group four years later. The study of flowers, drama, books, music and art led to activity in civic and community problems.

With fervor women like Elizabeth Evans of Birmingham had the courage to teach Sunday school at the Pratt Coal Mine convict camp. Her enthusiasm led to the establishment of an industrial school for orphaned and troubled boys in East Lake. Lillian Orr and Nellie Murdock of Birmingham led the crusade to abolish child labor.

Perhaps one of the most sensitive issues taken on by the women was that of the eradication of ruthless and dangerous child labor. Clearly within the realm of the family issues, the women now marshaled all their newly acquired social skills. Social worker, Nellie Kimball Murdock, served as chair of the

Alabama Child Labor Conference. She and Mobile's Lura Craighead organized efforts to lobby in 1903.

The women, again led by Julia Tutwiler, became involved in the arena of prison reform. Her efforts spread to literacy courses for convicts, heating and sanitary inspections of prisons, separate prison facilities for women, and reform school for youngsters.

In Birmingham Martha Spencer lobbied for the poor. For over half a century she served on the board of the city Mercy Home that cared for poor women with tuberculosis, pregnant girls, orphans, transients, and delinquents.

Another female leader of this Progressive Era who saw needs in her own community and made a commitment for change was Sue Berta Rankin Coleman. Sue Berta was born in Huntsville where her widowed mother supported the family working as a cook for a white family. Somehow her mother was able to send this daughter to Fisk University, a private black college in Nashville. After her marriage, Mrs. Coleman moved to Birmingham, and began teaching in rural Jefferson County. In 1914 she moved into a company school system sponsored by a United States Steel subsidiary. She became the primary supporter of her family, now including four children. She worked for health programs and community activities. Mrs. Coleman became the first black community supervisor for the company. She considered the newly recruited workers from a rural setting to be like immigrants coming into a new environment. She borrowed money from a Bessemer bank, traveled to Chicago, and spent six weeks studying with Jane Addams, the renowned founder of the settlement house Hull House. On her return to Alabama, Mrs. Coleman was able to begin innovative programs in nutrition, kindergarten work, mothers' clubs, baby clinics, sewing, and library facilities for the families of black workers in the company town.

The photographs of Lewis W. Hine were critical in raising public awareness to the unacknowledged brutality of child labor. Pictures did not allow room for denial or ignorance of the harsh realities of the lives of American's working children.

Lewis Hine had photographed in the North – slums, coalmines and in the South – cotton fields, cotton mills, and coastal workers. Throughout the Deep South poor whites who sharecropped and tenant farmed were eagerly welcomed for new mill jobs. Entire families worked and lived in villages where they had company owned mill housing, mill stores, mill doctors, and if they were lucky – mill schools, and even baseball teams. It was taken for granted as children had worked on the farm; they would work in the factory to help support the family. A Huntsville newspaper boasted, “Huntsville Cotton Mill employed 100 boys and girls who would otherwise be out of employment.”

Moreover Hine felt that child labor was “making human junk,” and continued a vicious circle. “Child labor, illiteracy, industrial inefficiency, low wages, long hours, low standard of living, bad housing, poor food, unemployment, intemperance, disease, poverty,” over and over and over. Hine made three trips to Huntsville between 1910 and 1930 taking 30 pictures that are still available. Mill owners banned him from the factories, and he could not gain entrance. However he was able, to take pictures during shift changes and at individual homes. Although the photos were made in the wintertime, many of the children are wearing ragged and torn clothing, no jackets, and no shoes.

At the same time, overseas, the women’s rights issue gathered attention as women organized. In the 1906 the London *Daily Mail* referred to the women in a new and insulting manner as Prime Minister Arthur J. Balfour received a deputation of the “Suffragettes.” The newspaper label implied something not genuine, rather diminutive, or even to be ridiculed. The movement was something less than the real thing, as a small kitchen became a kitchenette. Thus suffragists became suffragettes, and the title stuck. In England the movement was thought so vile by many that, in 1913, George Bernard Shaw used them as an example, “That is the sort of thing that you vaguely lump into a cloud of abomination as Suffragettism.”

In England the fight for women’s rights had truly become a battle. In March of 1912 women with stones and hammers smashed windows in Regent St., Piccadilly, and Oxford Streets. The Prime Minister’s house was attacked, and 120 women were

arrested. As the actions intensified, bombs were ignited and more fires started. The violence continued to increase, and by 1914, thousands were in prison and many on hunger strikes. As the politicians tried to coup with the state of affairs, unacceptable solutions were tried. At first most of the striking women were forced-fed. Some of the women were allowed to starve, and then once they were too weak to protest, they were turned out into the streets.

In Alabama women were not idly sitting about. In 1892, the first woman's club had been formed in Decatur with Ellen Hildreth leading the way. Frances Griffin helped the women of Verbena to organize in 1892. Calera, Gadsden, and Tuskegee next formed statewide suffrage organizations. In Huntsville one of the most respected women in Alabama, Virginia Clay-Clopton, served as president of the local suffrage club. Sensing the bigger picture, Mrs. Hildreth formed a statewide organization that aligned with the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

After the 1901 Constitutional Convention disappointment, the suffrage movement barely survived in Alabama. Nevertheless, by 1910, the Selma Suffrage Association was organized with Miss Mary Partridge serving as president. Soon, a new generation of suffragettes offered fresh life to the movement, particularly in Birmingham. Mrs. W. L. Murdoch, Mrs. Solon Ruffner Jacobs, and Mrs. Oscar R. Hundley led the way as a state association was formed. Part of their plans called for missionary work in other parts of the state, and Miss Partridge made the first effort to form a political club in Montgomery. Annual conventions were held in Selma, Huntsville, Tuscaloosa, Gadsden, and Birmingham.

Pattie Ruffner Jacobs pursued reform causes and worked to abolish child labor and the convict lease system; she supported the Salvation Army and the Anti-Tuberculosis Association. (Mrs. Jacobs learned her organizational skills early. For instance, she circulated a petition that was eventually signed by 400 local women asking the city commissioners to sponsor a musical performance in city parks. The politicians denied her request. Mrs. Jacobs quickly realized if 400 voters had been on the

petition instead of un-enfranchised women, her request would have been treated differently. Thus began her activities for women voting rights.) She worked to open an equal suffrage office in downtown Birmingham where clerks could rest, eat their lunches, use toilets, and read conveniently placed suffrage literature. Mollie Dowd also organized that city's first local of the National Women's Trade Union. Because a great deal of energy was spent by the women in club programs, training members, and raising money, the Birmingham group maintained a downtown office from 1913 to 1919.

The ladies sponsored free public lectures, distributed literature, and sponsored debates and essay contests. At the state and county fairs, wearing gaily-colored yellow sashes to call attention to their cause, they maintained booths and distributed handbills. They also spent time performing social services and humanitarian works, promoting good public relations for the cause. The ladies persuaded merchants in Birmingham to close their stores on Thursday at noon in the summer and before 10 o'clock on Saturday evenings. Gadsden women established a playground, and in Tuscaloosa women led story-telling hours for children. In Huntsville they presented each prisoner in the local jail with Thanksgiving dinner in 1916.

In Huntsville publishing suffrage sections in the newspaper raised additional money. Even the *Mercury-Banner* offered a supplement in the fall of 1913. Birmingham and Selma newspapers followed suit. Also, by 1915 there may have been as many as 14 suffrage columns in Alabama newspapers. But no newspaper endorsed this radical cause, and many ridiculed the women's efforts.

Meanwhile political leaders in the state such as Tom Heflin dismissed the women as "restless, dissatisfied products of unhappy homes." It was not that Rep. Heflin personally disliked women, but he referred to the suffragettes as "a few cranks trolling over the state." In 1914 he and Sen. Morris Sheppard of Texas introduced a joint resolution naming the 2nd Sunday in May as Mothers Day nation-wide and the resolution passed.

Church leaders (all men) just knew that suffragettes hardly represented the submissive woman of biblical injunction. Reverend H. C. Hurley, of the Jasper Baptist Church, produced a 25-page pamphlet suggesting that women should stay home and keep quiet.

Moreover, the opposition gathered steam. Adding insult to injury, prominent women began to organize and lead the Southern Anti-Suffrage Association. The opposition mobilized a formidable array of arguments – some related to states' rights. This should be a matter for the state legislature, not the U. S. Congress, and everyone knew traditional southern women had no desire to socialize with uncouth male politicians anyway.

Across the state, women continued their efforts. The Montgomery chapter of suffragettes formed in 1913 after Miss Partridge of Selma presented an inspiring speech, and Mrs. Sallie B. Powell became the first president.

One of Mobile's female leaders, Alva Erskine Smith, was a rarity even among the extraordinary women of her time. She had married William K. Vanderbilt, grandson of Cornelius Vanderbilt, and the couple moved to New York City. There the new Mrs. Vanderbilt found that "society," or Mrs. William Astor, did not accept her. Mrs. Vanderbilt then built a three million dollar mansion on 5th Avenue and invited her neighbors. (Mrs. Astor did not come to call.) Alva's next social festivity was a masked ball for 1200 of her nearest and dearest friends. In order to obtain a ticket, Mrs. Astor did make an afternoon call at the mansion, and she was invited to the gala.

Later after her daughter, Consuelo, married the Duke of Marlborough, Alva Vanderbilt divorced her husband and married Oliver Hazard Perry Belmont. Comfortable with both her wealth and newfound position in society, Mrs. Belmont invited English suffragist Christabel Pankhurst for a speaking tour in the United States in 1914. Mrs. Belmont and other women wrote a suffragist operetta with Elsa Maxwell and staged it at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in 1916. Mrs. Belmont was likely the originator of the phrase, "Pray to God; She will help you."

Nationally, the suffrage issue attracted much interest and intense feelings. In 1915 poet, Alice Duer Miller, wrote a

column for the New York *Tribune*. Here she gave full vent to the emotions of many women. For instance lines from one of her poems asked the rhetorical question from her son, “Are women people?” The answer from the lad’s mother, “No my son, criminals, lunatics and women are not people.”

In Birmingham, Alabama, efforts became quite sophisticated for the times. As the legislative session prepared to meet in 1915, time became of the essence. Bossie Hundley prepared a file on each legislator and his position on the movement. This master file contained a picture and available news stories on each representative. Mrs. Hundley prepared a survey, a short list of questions for each representative, and a volunteer was assigned to interview each delegate. These questionnaires included the man’s occupation, religion, politics, if he was a preacher, married, a Civil War veteran, and his views on women’s suffrage – in favor or opposed and if opposed why. Some of the replies were very telling. For instance:

Benjamin F. Ellis of Orrville spoke for many men, “I think it will ruin the women. Their place is in the home.” His female interviewer noted that he was “an elderly man, of the old school and violently and unreasonably prejudicial.”

A.M. Tunstall, Greensboro, fervently led the opposition. Mr. Y. L. Burton, of LaFayette, turned the question and asked Mrs. Hundley why women desired the ballot, a surprising issue to him. He thought women occupied, socially and otherwise, a more enviable position, in the South especially than they enjoy anywhere on the face of the earth.

Huntsville’s David A. Grayson noted in a long handwritten reply,

“If I thought that women entering politics (and that is all it would be) would make them more attractive, more modest, more retiring, more congenial, or illuminate that halo, if reference and respect that we feel when in their presence, and I thought they would make better citizens, better women, better

mothers, better sisters, better wives, better church members, and if I thought it would add to the sum of happiness of ...I repeat if I believed all these things, or even half of them, I would vote for equal suffrage, yes, I would fight for it. But I believe it would have the very opposite effect." For "the government is the best government that has the happiest homes."

In answer to the question "Why opposed," his female interviewer said, "He doesn't know himself."

N. W. Scott, a real estate broker from Ensley, personally supported women voting, but he didn't think the majority of people who elected him were – of course his electorate was all men. Even H. H. Snell, President of the Men's League for Women's Suffrage, said he could only vote his conscience.

John A. Darden, Goodwater, added an element that many considered, but few said aloud except to friends. He was opposed to statewide suffrage, principally because of the possible Negro women voters.

An interviewer spoke to John W. Lapsley, he was young and impressionable, but unfortunately for the cause, "He thinks it was not in the Divine plan of salvation." (Who could argue with God?) Ernest Jones of Clio surmised, "I heartily concur with you that it is proper to hear the voice of the people." But how would he vote? Jones was known to be the most violent and active anti-suffrage person in Barbour County. Mr. Ira. B. Thompson perceived his constituency of Baldwin County 10 – 1 against the women. He smugly said, "I do not wish to criticize the move, but if women will take it down to reasoning with me, I am sure that I will convince her against it if she can accept a reasonable argument but the greatest drawback to a matter of that kind, they are too sweet and angelic-like to reason."

Even Helen Keller of Tuscumbia rebelled against her close-knit Southern society. Besides being blind, deaf, and mute, when she spoke out against injustice, politically powerful leaders belittled her comments as though they came from an inferior

being, attributing her with still another handicap. Keller donated money to the NAACP years before the civil rights movement. She also was a self-proclaimed socialist, an activist for people with disabilities, and a suffragist.

From her column in the newspaper the New York *Call* in 1913, her remarks give one consideration even today. She began her column:

“Many declare that the woman peril is at our door. I have no doubt that it is. Indeed, I suspect that it has already entered most households. Certainly a great number of men are facing it across the breakfast table. And no matter how deaf they pretend to be, they cannot help hearing it talk.

“Women insist on their ‘divine rights,’ ‘immutable rights,’ ‘inalienable rights.’ These phrases are not so sensible as one might wish. When one comes to think of it, there are no such things as divine, immutable or inalienable rights. Rights are things we get when we are strong enough to make good our claim to them. Men spent hundreds of years and did much hard fighting to get the rights they now call divine, immutable and inalienable. Today women are demanding rights that tomorrow nobody will be foolhardy enough to question.

“The dullest can see that a good many things are wrong with the world. It is old-fashioned, running into ruts. We lack intelligent direction and control. We are not getting the most out of our opportunities and advantages. We must make over the scheme of life, and new tools are needed for the work. Perhaps one

of the chief reasons for the present chaotic condition of things is that the world has been trying to get along with only half of itself. Everywhere we see running to waste woman-force that should be utilized in making the world a more decent home for humanity...

When women vote men will no longer be compelled to guess at their desires – and guess wrong. Women will be able to protect themselves from man-made laws that are antagonistic to their interests. Some persons like to imagine that man's chivalrous nature will constrain him act humanely toward women and protect her rights. Some men do protect some women. We demand that all women have the right to protect themselves and relieve man of this feudal responsibility.... The citizen with a vote is master of his own destiny.”

Time appeared to be running out in Alabama. The revitalized suffragists opened campaign headquarters in January of 1915 in a part of the historic Grand Theater building in Montgomery. The women proposed a bill to have a constitutional amendment submitted to the voters in the next year.

The women campaigned actively to ensure an amendment to the state constitution to enfranchise women. Leaders campaigned throughout the state. Funds were raised at county and state fairs. Rep. J.H. Greene of Dallas County (remember that name) offered to introduce a measure in the House and H.H. Holmes of Baldwin County introduced a similar bill the state Senate. The women had a hearing at a joint session of the legislative committees. Patti Jacobs and Julia Tutwiler, the strongest speakers, argued both a change and the status quo at the same time, for the proposed amendment would not enfranchise black women, just as existing election laws barred black men from voting.

There was strong opposition to the amendment, from prominent people. Individual males might lend their support, but not one single influential male organization declared for equal voting rights. Nor did the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs voice an opinion. Women teachers did not declare, and no church group supported the women. With great anticipation on the day of the House vote, women filled the balcony. A suffrage banner was displayed draped with yellow and black bunting. Many legislators wore yellow flowers in their lapels.

The ladies still felt confident; after all, their bill was sponsored by J.H. Greene. To the dismay of the group, the sponsor of the measure, Mr. Greene, with no warning, reversed his position. Was this the Mr. Greene who had months earlier driven a group of women in an "engine" to a suffrage convention in Selma? Mr. Greene at that time told the ladies that he would aid them and he had introduced the bill. He said then the only types of man which opposed the extension of the franchise to women were, "That mistaken type which holds that woman with the vote would lose her place in the heart and mind of man, that type which represents the whisky politician." Mr. Greene declared he was glad he changed his mind because of certain utterances of Dr. Anna Howard Shaw who said that "womanhood should be independent of any man..." Mr. Greene had no apology to make for decision. In committee the bill was postponed and on the actual day of vote, Mr. Greene, the author of the bill, and the possessor of the deciding vote in a 6-6 tie, was not present.

One also must consider that a valid reason might have been, "To confer suffrage on women in the south would double the Negro problem by adding to it the more vicious and aggressive element of the race. For this reason I think it is far better to stay as we are."

An anonymous pamphlet appeared which suggested that most Alabama women did not *want* the vote. Although the measure received the major vote, the suffragettes did not obtain the necessary three-fifths majority. The Senate agreed and the resolution to bring the issue before the voters in 1916 was defeated.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D. C. hundreds of women were parading for suffrage rights, much to the embarrassment of President Wilson. Many of these women were arrested and sent to the district's workhouse in nearby Lorton, Virginia. This was an institution for criminals guilty of minor law violations. Adding insult to injury, they slept on the floor and some were force-fed, which came as quite a shock to the public when pictures of these events appeared in the papers.

However the urgency of the suffrage mission was set aside as women groups assisted in World War I efforts. Already organized, women's groups capably helped with draft registration, enlistment of women for volunteer home service, Liberty Bond Loan drives, and Red Cross projects. They offered free classes in practical subjects, such as stenography, nursing, telephone and telegraph operation, and automobile driving to help train women for better home service during the war.

In Decatur, the clubwomen were appalled at the government statistics during army registration. Alabama had the second highest rate of illiterate soldiers in the nation. (Thank goodness for Mississippi.) Furthermore 20% of the adults in this state could not read. Women's groups met in Montgomery to begin a campaign against illiteracy. (With the leadership of the women from Decatur like Mrs. Louis A. Niell, Clara Wyker, and Margaret Shelton, the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs promised to fund this campaign.) Six teachers were hired to teach the young men at military camps in the state. Textbooks were printed and distributed. The Illiteracy Commission reported 6893 men of draft age were taught to read and write. The hard-working Decatur women were also instrumental in building the Benevolent Society Hospital there.

After the war President Wilson and Congress acknowledged that women's war work should be rewarded with recognition of their political equality. Wilson began to support woman suffrage in public addresses. A year later both the House and the Senate endorsed the proposed 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

As the country settled down in 1919, the U.S. Senate and House submitted the woman suffrage amendment to the states.

For Alabama this was an ideal time. The state legislature was scheduled to reassemble on the 8th of July. The suffragettes were ready. They began this session with a ratification dinner in Birmingham. Prominent members of the legislature, Governor Kilby, and other major leaders were interviewed. The national association sent organizers to Alabama, and the nation watched as this vigorous campaign might lead to the first state passing the amendment.

Meanwhile, of course, the opposition was not sitting idly by. The Women's Anti-Ratification League of Alabama showed growing numbers led by Mrs. James S. Pinckard and Maria Bankhead Owen, daughter of Senator John H. Bankhead. Others opposed to enfranchisement by the Federal amendment joined this group, including J. Lister Hill. US Senators Oscar W. Underwood and John H. Bankhead viewed the amendment as a threat to states' rights. Clarke County politician, John Simpson Graham, noted in 1919 that women's workweek was already reduced to 56 hours – a little over nine hours a day, with Sunday off. “Men had prohibited night work, secured women's property rights, and limited child labor. Women have gotten everything they have coming to them...and they should be satisfied.”

Representative Tom Heflin felt giving women the vote was a threat to family life. The newly formed Alabama Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage campaigned through the South at this very crucial time. The anti-suffragists of Alabama won absolute victory.

On July 8, 1919, the legislature reassembled and Representative J. Lee Long of Butler County introduced a resolution to reject the proposed federal amendment. This not only would secure defeat of a ratification resolution, but would also secure adoption of another resolution, which specifically rejected the amendment. Thirteen rejections were needed to defeat the action by the Federal government. Senator James B. Evins pleaded for their side that they not be forced “from the quietitude of our homes into the contaminating atmosphere of political struggle.” After the voting it was quite evident who had won and who had lost. The voters of Alabama (all male) had rejected the 19th Amendment.

At the same time, voters across the country took action for female suffrage. When 35 of the necessary 36 states ratified the amendment, the battle came to Nashville, Tennessee. (One concerned matron sent a desperate plea to the Tennessee legislature not to ratify the suffrage amendment. She regretted that suffrage had already come to the west coast because “there has been a large increase in immorality, divorce and murder in California. Women’s suffrage has made cowards and puppets of men; it has coarsened and cheapened women.”)

The final vote was scheduled for August 18, 1920, and it appeared the vote would be tied at 48 to 48. Harry Burn, 24, a young legislator, had previously voted with the anti-suffrage forces, but his mother urged him to vote for the rights of women. She sent a telegram, “Dear Son: Hurrah, and vote for suffrage!” And on that day, as all good sons could, he did what his mother told him to do! Tennessee became the deciding state to ratify. The governor sent the required notification of the ratification to Washington, D.C., and on August 26, 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution became law.

In Alabama, Governor Kilby called a special session of the state legislature to ratify the already ratified. As a side effect, polling places, long notorious for card playing, drinking, and raucous behavior, was forced to become more sanitary and decorous. Men still dominated society, but women had taken a major step toward equality. Women voted in the 1920 elections. Progressive female reformers could point with pride to the passage of the 18th Amendment (prohibition) and the 19th Amendment (women’s suffrage) as major accomplishments. Alabama women were there.

The material for this monograph has come from these following sources:

In 1860 Daniel R. Hundley interspersed among his chapters the perpetuated myth of southern womanhood. Hundley, *Social Relations in Our Southern States*, (NY: Arno Press, 1973 reprint).

Local newspapers from 1870 carried reports of the women's activities. There was often a touch of scorn and disbelief in some of them – Huntsville *Weekly Mercury*, *Weekly Argus*, and *Weekly Advocate*. Not so with the Huntsville *Weekly Democrat* edited and published by the Clay sisters, Susanna and Virginia.

Elizabeth Humes Chapman reminiscences, in her Columbia University M. A. of 1932, *Changing Huntsville 1890-1899*, about social life in Huntsville. This was reprinted in 1989 by the Historical Huntsville Foundation.

The comments by Helen Keller ran in the New York *Call* in 1913.

All of the Lewis W. Hine photographs from the beginning of the 20th century speak more than any words as he documented the misuse of children in the labor force in America.

Lura Harris Craighead recorded the meetings of Women's Clubs in *The History of the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs*, (Montgomery: Paragon Press, 1936).

The amazing scrapbook maintained by Bossie O'Brien Hundley in 1915, "A Records of the Unsuccessful Campaign Waged by Alabama Suffrage Association" is available at the Birmingham Public Library's Linn- Henley Room.

Lee N. Allen's article "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Alabama 1910-1920" can be found in the *Alabama Review*, April 1958.

Anne Firor Scott offered great insight with *The Southern Lady, from Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1970).

Alabama: The History of a Deep South State by William Warren Rogers, Robert David Ward, Leah Rawls Atkins and Wayne Flynt, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994) was such an asset.

Inside Alabama by Harvey H. Jackson (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004) cheerfully comments on the uphill battle for women against the already established male political machine.

Wayne Flynt's *Alabama in the 20th Century*, (Tuscaloosa: Univ. Alabama Press, 2004) follows the efforts of Alabama women to establish a more modern role.

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