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CONTENTS

THE BIG SPRING OF HUNTSVILLE

Sara Etheline Bounds 3

ECHOES OF THE PAST

Ran'e Pruitt 16

Huntsville, Alabama

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THE BIG SPRING OF HUNTSVILLE

by Sara Etheline Bounds

The Big Spring of Huntsville was a focal point for almost every phase of development in early Madison County. It was a major factor in determining such aspects of Huntsville as the location of the city itself, the direction of its streets, and the installation of one of the first public waterworks in the United States.

In addition to the Big Spring, other large springs in Madison County include Braham, Bird, and Woolley Springs. The area surrounding Huntsville is, in fact, known for its numerous springs of pure limestone water. Such springs are scattered over Madison County, but most are located in the southwestern quarter of the country. These springs flow from hills or bluffs, and come out as deep well-like holes or springs which cover an area to form a pond. In whatever they occur, they run off as large creeks. The Big Spring of Huntsville is typical of these springs in its form, though it does have certain unusual features.

Two of these distinctions are the composition of the bluff and the temperature of the water. The bluff above the spring is about fifty feet high, and is composed mainly of cherty limestone, with the large portion of chert or quartz lying in irregular seams. The water, which flows from under the bluff, has a temperature in June of 60.8 degrees, while the air has a temperature of 80.6 degrees F.¹ According to a boastful Huntsville newspaper of 1884, tests proved the water to be several degrees colder than any other spring in the United States.²

Though the Huntsville Big Spring resembles the large springs in the Tennessee Valley, it does not furnish as much water as some. The big spring in Tusculumbia, probably the largest in North Alabama, runs off over one thousand cubic feet of water per minute.³ The Big Spring of Huntsville flows at eight hundred cubic feet per minute, or about twenty four million gallons a day.⁴ The Huntsville Big Spring was adequate, however, to completely supply the water required for Huntsville until 1957. It even furnished its own power for pumping, and

enough water for a canal to float cotton boats to the Tennessee River.

The Big Spring was known by this same name to the Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians of the region. The spring not only furnished life-sustaining water for the Indians, but also watered the teeming wild life area toward the Tennessee River. The two Indian tribes thus declared the tract a joint hunting ground for deer, bear, ducks, wild turkeys, and fish.

In searching for a big spring, John Hunt, one of the founders of Huntsville, came to North Alabama from Tennessee. In the fall of 1804, Hunt and a companion, David Bean, came to the Great Bend area of the Tennessee River to locate a large spring for a settlement nearby. While on their journey, they spent a night at the Joseph Criner cabin on the Flint River. Their host probably gave them directions to the Huntsville Big Spring. After finding the Big Spring and constructing a cabin near its banks for John Hunt, the two men returned to their homes. In the spring of 1805, John Hunt brought his family from East Tennessee to their new home. Those who soon followed Hunt also settled around the spring and formed the squatter community of Hunt's Spring and later Huntsville.

The Hunt family and others residing near the Big Spring quickly encountered a difficult problem with rattlesnakes. A large number of snakes lived in the crevices of the spring bluff. The dangerous situation was partly solved by hollowing out canes, filling them with gunpowder, thrusting them into the rocks, and then igniting the powder. The repeated blasts caused the retreat of the snakes to other cave-like crevices.

Before the United States government land sales for the North Alabama region in 1809, John Hunt made an application as squatter to purchase two hundred acres in the immediate area of Huntsville. He failed, however, to pay the necessary cash required to hold the land, which included the Big Spring. At the government land sales, Hunt signed papers for a section of land containing another spring. Due to poor financial management, he was again unable to make the payments, and the

land reverted to the United States Government.⁵

The first person to actually purchase the Big Spring was Martin Beaty of Lee County, Virginia. On July 11, 1808, Beaty paid one thousand dollars for a square of a thousand acres. He bought the land from Zachariah Cox, a grantor of the Tennessee Land Company of 1795, a private land company with doubtful jurisdiction to sell the land.⁶ Years later and after much confusion over land titles, Beaty reached a compromise with the United States Government and relinquished his claim to the land and the Big Spring.

Several hundred people lived near the Big Spring by 1809. Many were concentrated on the land extending eastward from the spring to a knoll, later named Pope's Hill and then Echols Hill. Settlements were also made southward from the spring along a trail, now Whitesburg Drive, to Ditto's Landing on the Tennessee River. The Madison County population in 1809 included 2,223 persons and 322 slaves, with 353 heads of families.⁷ Numerous people had evidently scattered into the Indian lands, despite orders to wait until the official land sales.

The Government Land Office in Nashville, Tennessee, was the scene of sharp competition for the southwest quarter of section thirty-six, township three, range one west, or the section containing the Big Spring.⁸ On August 25, 1809, LeRoy Pope got the prize by paying \$23.52 per acre.⁹ The price was four times the amount paid for any other land in the county. The sections adjoining the Big Spring only brought from two to four dollars per acre. Pope bought four quarter sections in all, the other sections lying north, east, and west of the spring section.

LeRoy Pope purchased this particular land hoping to have the county seat established on a portion of it. The Territorial Legislature appointed a five-man commission in December of 1809 to choose the seat. Even though the geographical center of the county was nearer Meridianville, the commissioners selected a location near the Big Spring. The decision was certainly influenced by the commissioners living near the Big Spring, and by a pledge from LeRoy Pope to deed thirty acres for the town site.¹⁰

As promised, Pope and his wife deeded the acreage to the city commissioners for \$750. He still controlled the Big Spring because he retained that portion of the land for himself. Pope did, however, promise the citizens of Huntsville free use of the water, in return Pope requiring access to the spring be maintained. He also stipulated no dams or machinery could be built at the spring that might harm the quality of the water and endanger the health of the population.¹¹

While the town site was being surveyed, the streets were plotted to run in a rather peculiar direction. Instead of following a true north, south, east, and west direction, they were set thirty-four degrees north of west from the true meridian. This unusual arrangement was chosen so the spring and bluff would be left in a square without crowding the adjoining building lots. Jefferson Street was the first street to run parallel to the line of the bluff, with all the others conforming to it.¹²

Water transportation improvements for Huntsville centered around the Big Spring. From an early date, the abundance of water in the semicircle pond at the headwaters of the spring and the stream or branch from the spring encouraged dreams of a canal to the Tennessee River. The realization of the dream began when the Indian Creek Navigation Company was chartered in 1820, under the direction of LeRoy Pope, Thomas Fearn, Stephen S. Ewing, Henry Cook, and Samuel Hazard.¹³

The drive for canal construction, led by Doctor Thomas Fearn, president of the company, generally met with an enthusiastic response from the Huntsville citizens. Knowledge that the proposed canal could furnish an easy method for shipping cotton by keelboats prompted the immediate start of construction. Furthermore, completion of the canal would also provide an all-water route from Huntsville to New Orleans, leading cotton port of the South.

The Indian Creek Navigation Company built a series of locks and dams to regulate the water flowing from the Big Spring Creek into the Indian Creek and then into the Tennessee River at the river port of Triana. The lower part of the canal nearest the river was

operational by 1822.¹⁴ In five years, cotton was shipped by water from Sivley's Mill, three miles below Huntsville to Triana. The first keelboats did not arrive at the Big Spring, however, until April 5, 1831. Naturally, the long-awaited event sparked a great celebration to welcome the boats to Huntsville.¹⁵

The boom period for the city of Triana and the use of the canal was shortlived. Except in high-water seasons, the canal lacked sufficient water to float keelboats. The building of a turnpike and later a railroad from Huntsville to the Tennessee River introduced greater speed and the use of modern science to local transportation. Many of the canal stockholders were nearly reduced to bankruptcy before abandoning the canal enterprise.¹⁶ The goal of a canal from the Big Spring, however, was achieved; and for a few years, the Indian Creek or Fearn Canal, the first in Alabama, was a success.

While the main interest of the Huntsville citizens was in the canal, a more significant and longer-lasting project was undertaken in 1823. In that year, the Trustees of Huntsville contracted with Hunter Peel for the construction of a city waterworks, the first public water system in Alabama. For the token price of one dollar, LeRoy and Judith Pope granted Peel the right to build a dam on their Big Spring property. The dam was to create a waterfall which would turn a hydraulic engine or wheel. The power from this engine was to raise the water above the spring bluff, and then to send it to various outlets in Huntsville and the surrounding area. Hunter Peel was also given the privilege of building a small house to cover and protect his machinery, and the title to control and to collect the proceeds from the waterworks. The contract with Peel, however, would be void if water was not pumped in sufficient quantity to supply the house and stables of LeRoy Pope, located on the west side of the Hill, now known as Echols Hill. Within one year from the signing date, Peel was to have the necessary water supply in the hydrant nearest the Pope house. This hydrant was in a most unfortunate location, about a hundred feet above the spring and

about a half mile away. The contract could also be canceled if the reservoir, named in the agreement, was not filled for a period of three months.

Soon after Hunter Peel received the contract in April of 1823, he formed a ten-year partnership with James Barclay, a practical machinist. Together, they designed the water system, including the reservoir and the pipes.¹⁷ A plank reservoir, with a capacity of one thousand cubic feet, was built on the courthouse square for fires and other emergencies. Actually connected to the end of the courthouse, this structure was often described as an extremely unattractive building.¹⁸ Hunter Peel supervised the making and the laying of the pipes. The pipes were hollowed-out cedar logs, shaped to a point on one end so that the point would be driven into the opening of the next log. According to specifications, the pipes were buried deep enough to keep them from freezing and to prevent any interference in the building and the opening of streets.¹⁹

The basic plan of the Huntsville waterworks was to pipe through the major streets, and then to allow every family the privilege of laying a waterpipe from the pipe to a hydrant in their yard. The system proved inefficient and the water supply inadequate.²⁰ General dissatisfaction with the operation grew quickly with the major grievances being the use of yard hydrants by neighbors and the habit of running the hydrants continuously. Since the hydrants were available to all and there were no meters, regulation seemed futile and waste apparently uncontrollable. Discontent increased in direct relation with the decrease in the amount of water. The local newspapers frequently printed complaints, along with appeals for water conservation.²¹

Popular interest and agitation led to an attack on the water system. The editor of the Southern Advocate wrote bitter editorials showing that not only had the waterworks not been finished, but the citizens of Huntsville had paid far too much for the completed work. By this time, Hunter Peel had already been removed from his contract because he had not fulfilled the provision concerning the supply of water to the home of LeRoy Pope.

For a brief time Joshua Cox administrated the operations and tried to complete the system. Finally in 1827, new management assumed control and made arrangements to rebuild and improve the waterworks.

Under the supervision of Sam D. Morgan, the installation of a new dam, a nine-inch pump, an engine house and machinery made the water system larger and more effective. The old reservoir connected to the courthouse was demolished and a new one built on the courthouse square. The expense of the reservoir construction was placed on the citizens of Huntsville, with some assistance from Morgan.²² The pipes for the new system were again red cedar logs, about eight feet in length and fashioned in the same way as the first ones. Unlike the earlier system, the joints or connections were held in place by iron hoops or bands.²³

Sam Morgan operated the system until 1836, when Dr. Thomas Fearn and George Fearn gained control of the water works and made it a private subscription operation. In their contract with the city, the brothers agreed to lay iron pipes and build a new reservoir.

Within a year, the main pipes to the corners of the courthouse square were replaced with five-inch iron pipes. Other pipes under the courthouse square and the major streets were replaced in five years. If they were in good condition, the remaining wooden pipes continued in use until repairs were needed. Except along sidewalks and sidetrenches, no more wooden pipes were to be laid.²⁴

The Fearn contract specified that the reservoir should be elevated forty feet above the surface of the courthouse square. The site selected for the reservoir was Echols or Pope's Hill, near the junction of Echols and McClung Streets. Since the construction of the base of the reservoir required drilling through a bet of solid limestone rock, the cost of construction was immense and was shared by the citizens and the Fearn brothers. The structure was seventy feet in diameter and ten feet deep, with a capacity of 287,532 gallons of water.²⁵

The Fearn brothers paid for repairs on the reservoir and added an iron pump to the spring. Further improvements included

the erection of more fire hydrants and more wells on the courthouse square and along the streets for use in extinguishing hydrants, they were in limited number and were only around courthouse square. The later additions greatly increased the effectiveness of the Huntsville Fire Engine Company, which had been incorporated by the state legislature in 1822.²⁶

City ordinances were enacted against wasting water, damaging the waterworks, and abusing the privilege of using the water. The fines from the violations were payable to the Fearn brothers. But of course, their principal source of money was from the sale of water.²⁷

For over a decade the water supply for the city of Huntsville came from the Big Spring and its waterworks without the city holding title to either the Big Spring property or the waterworks. During this span of years the spring and the vacant land attached to it became the property of William W. Pope, a son of LeRoy Pope.²⁸ On October 14, 1843, he and his wife deeded the Big Spring and all the land immediately around the spring to the city of Huntsville for one dollar.

The generous offer of William Pope had certain conditions! The city was to make some proposed improvements, as constructing a wall around the large pool at the spring, beautifying the spring branch and therewith benefitting the health of the citizens. All orderly, peaceful people were to have free access to the area for walks and pleasure at all times. The land occupied by the dam, the machinery, and a forty-five foot square between the dam and the pumping house went to Dr. Thomas Fearn for one dollar, with the stipulation that the land only be used to supply the city with water.²⁹

Although the city now owned the Big Spring, Dr. Fearn continued to operate the waterworks. In 1854, the City Council named a committee consisting of Irvin Windham, John Patton, and Oliver D. Sledge to inquire into the possibility of purchasing the waterworks from Dr. Fearn. At the next meeting of the council the committee asked for and received more time to investigate the purchase. But it was not until November 23, 1858, that the City Council passed a motion made by the committee to buy

the waterworks from Dr. Fearn. The city acquired the deed to the waterworks in 1858 for ten thousand dollars, with payments in ten equal annual installments. The order for the first payment of \$1,080 was on December 6, 1859.³⁰

The waterworks committee reported on the condition of the pipes, branch pipes, fire hydrants, and the building and the machinery at the spring on March 1, 1859. The estimated value of the entire system was \$17,020.53. On gaining control of the water system, the city fixed new water rates. A tax for the use of water became effective July 1, 1859. Since no meters were installed, the assessment of homes and places of business was according to the value of the house or the type of business. A partial list of these yearly water rates is as follows:

Dwelling House of \$1500	\$5
Dwelling House of \$1500-\$4000	\$10
Dwelling house of \$4000-\$8000	\$12.50
Dwelling house of over \$8000	\$15
Private bath house or bath	\$3
Shower bath	\$2
Public bath house (per tub)	\$5
Water closet in hotel or public building	\$3
Water closet in private house	\$2
Hotel or tavern	\$50 ³¹

There were no major improvements on the waterworks during the Civil War and Reconstruction Period. The waterworks were in such poor condition in 1886 that the City Council asked the state legislature for authority to issue fifteen thousand dollars in bonds to finance repairs. Another bond issue of ten thousand dollars was begun in late 1894. Although used in various ways, the money from the bonds was applied chiefly to laying more iron pipes and to increasing the size of the main pipe lines.³²

A new reservoir on Echols Hill was built between 1887 and 1890. It was sixty feet high, held 60,000 gallons of water, and cost seven thousand dollars. The land for the reservoir was given to the city by O.B. Pattins, in return for free water forever for himself and his heirs at his residence and stable.³³

In the late 1880's and 1890's, the city experienced some difficulty collecting the water tax and controlling excessive wastefulness. To eliminate the first problem, the water tax was made payable quarterly and in advance. Termination of the water supply followed without delay for the nonpayment of the tax after notice. To solve the other problem, the police had the authority to inspect any hydrant or pipe and to issue a five dollar fine for any unnecessary waste. Later, the mayor appointed an inspector for the waterworks who had police power to handle any violation that might occur.³⁴

Despite these problems, the system continued to improve and expand. According to the report of the water inspector, John G. Baker, on February 10, 1889, there were 591 hydrants, 162 water closets, 63 baths, 89 sprinklers, and seven soda fountains.³⁵

Visitors and travelers to Huntsville in the 1800's generally thought the Big Spring was a great natural curiosity and the outstanding feature of the town. Those who wrote journals or letters appear to have heard much about the spring even before their arrival. They seem to have been even more impressed after seeing it. All had the highest praise for the Big Spring, believing that Huntsville had the best natural water possible. The editor of the Detroit Press in 1884 thought the spring was one of the finest in the entire country.³⁶

Some travelers declared health conditions in the South, as compared with the East and the North, were rather lacking. When they reached Huntsville they definitely found an exception to their belief. The Big Spring water was a great health aid to the city, and several health resorts were established at nearby springs.³⁷

One writer thought a prominent part of the Huntsville landscape was the county courthouse square, with its hundreds of saddled horses. Another believed a distinguished aspect of the city was its friendly, intelligent and sophisticated people. Yet all the writers considered the Big Spring to be the main feature of the city.³⁸

¹Henry McCalley, Geological Survey of Alabama: Report on the Valley Regions of Alabama (Paleozoic Strata), Vol. I: The Tennessee Valley Regions, (Montgomery: Jas.

P. Armstrong, 1896), 139-139.

²Huntsville Independent, April 3, 1884.

³McCalley, Survey, 153.

⁴Robert Somers, The Southern States Since the War, (London: Macmillan and Company, 1871), 112.

⁵Thomas Jones Taylor, "A Diary of the History of Madison County", 7-9 A typewritten copy is on file in the Huntsville Public Library, Huntsville, Alabama.

⁶Deed Book EE, 1-2. Office of the Probate Judge of Madison County, Madison County Courthouse, Huntsville, Alabama.

⁷William Darby, View of the United States, Historical, Geographical, and Statistical; Exhibiting, in a Convenient Form, the Natural and Artificial Features of the Several States, and Embracing those Leading Branches of History and Statistics Best Adopted to Develop the Present Condition of the North American Union, (Philadelphia: H. S. Tanner, 1828), 487.

⁸Plat Book of Madison County. Office of the Probate Judge of Madison County, Madison County Courthouse, Huntsville, Alabama.

⁹Government Tract Book of Madison County, 36, Office of the Probate Judge of Madison County, Madison County Courthouse, Huntsville, Alabama.

¹⁰Thomas Jones Taylor, "Early History of Madison County and Incidentally of North Alabama", Alabama Historical Quarterly, I, (Summer, 1930), 164.

¹¹Deed Book F, 307.

¹²Taylor, "Early History", 165.

¹³Harry J. Toulmin, Digest of Laws of the State of Alabama: Containing the Statutes and Resolutions in Force at the End of the General Assembly in January, 1823, (New York: Ginn and Curtis, 1823), 710.

¹⁴Alabama Republican, (Huntsville), August 31, 1821.

¹⁵Edward Chambers Betts, Early History of Huntsville, Alabama, 1804-1870, (Montgomery, 1916), 66-68.

¹⁶Huntsville Independent, February 7, 1884.

¹⁷Taylor "Diary", 31; Contract Between LeRoy and Judith Pope and Hunter Peel on April 14, 1823. A copy is on file in the Huntsville Public Library, Huntsville, Alabama. The original is in the possession of Mr. Spragins, President of the First National Bank of Huntsville, Alabama.

¹⁸Southern Advocate, (Huntsville), May 18, 1827.

¹⁹Taylor, "Diary", 31.

²⁰Williams, Huntsville Directory--City Guide and Business Mirror, (Huntsville, 1859), 12.

²¹Southern Advocate and Huntsville Advertiser, August 12, 1825 and December 9, 1825.

²²Southern Advocate, (Huntsville), May 13, 1827.

²³Betts, History, 74.

²⁴Deed Book Q, 596-598.

²⁵Williams, Directory, 19.

²⁶Deed Book Q, 598; Betts, History, 74; Toulmin, Digest, 847-848.

²⁷Deed Book Q, 598.

²⁸Deed Book P, 1.

²⁹Deed Book U, 155-156.

³⁰Minutes of the City of Huntsville, Alabama Council Meetings, Minute Book C, 34-35, 260, and 318.

³¹City Council Minute Book C, 283 and 296.

³²City Council Minute Book I, 270 and 288; City Council Minute Book II, 137.

³³City Council Minute Book I, 238.

³⁴City Council Minute Book I, 200, and 441; City Council Minute Book II, 112.

³⁵City Council Minute Book I, 445.

³⁶Huntsville Independent, April 3, 1884.

³⁷A Citizen from Maryland, The Rambler or, A Tour Through Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana; Describing the Climate, the Manners, Customs and Religion of the Inhabitants, (Annapolis: J. Green,

³⁸Charles Lanman, Adventures in the Wilds of the United States and British American Provinces, (Philadelphia: W. Moore, 1856), 153; Anne Royall, Letters from Alabama on Various Subjects to Which is Added an Appendix, Containing Remarks on Sundry Members of the 20th and 21st Congress and Other High Characters, etc. at the Seat of Government, (Washington: 1830), 44.

ECHOES OF THE PAST

By Ran'e Pruitt

In this issue of the Review, we are pleased to re-introduce a series of articles entitled "Echoes of the Past: Old Mahogany Table Stories," that were begun in the July, 1974 issue of the Review. First published in The Huntsville Democrat beginning in October, 1909, the articles were written by Virginia C. Clay. She and her sister, Suzanne Clay, owned and published the Democrat, which they inherited from their father, John Withers Clay.

"Echoes of the Past" contains stories of family and social activities of early Huntsvillians, and provide an insight into the culture of anti-bellum Huntsville. The articles were based on stories told by members of the Clay family as they sat around the old mahogany table, which first belonged to John Haywood Lewis, Virginia's maternal grandfather in 1825. As the mahogany table was passed down to Virginia, with it came stories of the prominent social life of early Huntsville.

Family tradition provides the background for the stories. During the 19th century, the Clays had been one of Huntsville's most prominent and interesting families. Virginia's grandfather, Clement Comer Clay, moved to Huntsville in 1811 and quickly became an important politician. He served in both the Alabama Territory and State Legislature. He was chairman of the committee to draft the Alabama Constitution and became the first Chief Justice of Alabama. Later he was elected Governor and U.S. Senator from Alabama.

Two of governor Clay's sons were prominent leaders of their day. Clement Claiborne became one of the most distinguished voices for Southern Rights in the U.S. Senate during the 1850's. He later served in the Confederate Congress and was imprisoned with Jefferson Davis for conspiracy in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. John Withers, the author's father, was editor of the Democrat for over 40 years until his death in 1896.

These stories told by the mahogany table are gathered here and there, and told by members of the family; many have tradition only as authority, the stories coming down thru the ages like the Norse Sagas. The early Ahbamon Indians kept a record of the important events of their tribe's history with a string of pearls, it is said, and each of the pearls had a story of its own that was told to each generation of the Red Man's tribe. The thought is a pretty one, and the mahogany table stories shall be like pearls: Some of them are perfect; others may be dimmed by the years and tears of memory, but if they are not all as some believe or recall, there is still a pearlaceous tinge, and a hundred years from now they will be still on the string of uncertainty, along with the Cook-Pearry controversy. A History, says Webster, is a "record of facts." History, said Dr. Watts--who knows his subjects, "is necessary to Divines." Neither the Democrat nor the table can boast of the divine afflatus, and will accept every pearl that is free from skeletons. For it is our intention to present these stories.

"Written not on tablets of stone but on fleshly tablets of the heart." -as did St. Paul in II Cor. ii-3.

Even Noah Webster is not without a doubtful historiographer: There is now a story told that the famous dictionary man was a great stickler for the correct use of English, and when his wife one day caught him kissing her pretty Irish maid, she exclaimed: "Why, Mr. Webster, I am surprised indeed!"

"My dear, why will you use English words so incorrectly? You are very incorrect--in this little instance. You are the person astonished and I am the one surprised!" Was the wise answer of the sage.

Thus, was the wife's mind diverted entirely from the little osculatory indiscretion of her learned spouse--so the story goes.

The old mahogany table promises to astonish some but surprise very few.

MINNIE F. COLEMAN WRITES HER FATHER'S STORY

Round the old mahogany table, one day we began talking over the number of Old Portraits painted by Mr. Frye, and the idea was suggested that a very interesting story could be gathered in a sketch of his life.

Write to Miss Katie Frye, in care of the Treasury Department, Washington, D.C., where for a number of years she has been an expert clerk, the mahogany table advised, and I eagerly accepted the suggestion, and wrote at once to Miss Katie, receiving very promptly the following letter, replete with facts of the deepest interest--just as pretty a picture of sentiment and romance as could be found in a gold frame or the leaves of a novel: --

Washington, D.C.

September 14, 1909

Miss Virginia C. Clay
Huntsville, Alabama

Dear Virginia;

Katie handed me your letter with the request that I answer it. I will do the best I can, but have not an especially fluent pen, and am now under the weather. To begin: My father was born on September 13th, 1819--just ninety years to the day before the receipt of your letter inquiring about him.

The place of his birth was Reslau, on the border of Bohemia. He was reared in Vienna, Austria, where his father was a large cloth manufacturer. His art education was received at Prague, in Bohemia. His grandmother was a cousin of that grand old Author and Philosopher, Jean Paul Richter. His brother, Christopher, was an officer in the Austrian Army, the most magnificent body of men in the world. His sister, Ida, married the son of Joseph Lanner, "The Waltz King" of Germany. It was in his orchestra that the elder Strauss won his first laurels as a composer--and upon Lanner's retirement Strauss succeeded him as leader of the King's Orchestra.

A digression here may be of interest to you tho not relevant to my father's biography: It was Lanner's custom to compose a waltz each week to the King and, on one occasion, being indolent or indisposed he delegated the task to Strauss, whose composition met with approval, and paved the way to his receiving the title of "Waltz King" when Lanner laid down the baton.

Now to resume my father's history: While at College in Prague, he and a number of students became fascinated with the "Noble Red Man" as depicted by Fenimore Cooper, and they planned to run away to the New World. It was during the Christmas holidays when they were well supplied with funds that they made their start. My father had been the recipient of three purses, one from his "Godfather", who was the Forester to the King of Bavaria, one from his grandmother, and a third from his parents.

After the Christmas visit to their homes, the students proceeded to Bremen to take ship for this country. The others lost courage and turned back, but my father still felt the lure of adventure and the Indians -- so he set sail, and reached New York after a three months' stormy trip.

His cousin, Count Johann Schmidt, was then German Consul to New York. He gave him letters to influential men throughout the country, among others, to George D. Prentice. He, in turn, gave him letters to prominent citizens of Huntsville. There he met my mother, Miss Virginia Catherine Hale, fell in love and married her; then and there terminating his quest after the Red Man. From that year, 1817, until he passed away in 1872, he called Huntsville his home, having also taken out naturalization papers. I append a few of the notable people whose pictures he painted -- Jefferson Davis; Gen. Leroy Pope Walker, and his wife and children; and I think your father, uncles, Clement C. and H. L. Clay, and your Aunt Virginia Clay; Generals Lee, Morgan, Jackson, Forrest, and others of the Conferderate Army I cannot now recall.

Of the United States Army there were -- Logan, Stanley, McPherson, and Mrs. Logan and children. These, with General Logan's other mementoes, were for years kept in Mrs. Logan's home, Calumet Place, in Washington;

but I believe the General's memorials and portraits have been donated to the State House of Illinois.

In the last sixties all of the artists in the United States were requested to compete for a colossal sized portrait of Henry Clay. My father's portrait -- an immense full-length -- was selected and now hangs in the Capitol at Frankfurt, Kentucky.

You will be able to learn more of the people of Huntsville than I can tell you.

Outside of Huntsville I can recall a few only of the social world. You see I was a little girl when he died.

I remember my father painted Mrs. Corinne Goodman and Mrs. Brinkley, of Memphis; and the famous Sallie Ward, of Louisville, when at the zenith of her "belledom."

I know but little of the prices that he received. I think two and three hundred dollars was the average price for bust portraits.

You ask about Ida and me; Ida lives in San Francisco. She spent the two years following the earthquake with us but has now returned to California. Katie is still in the Treasury; Willie, poor boy, died three years ago. I have been happily married for twenty-five years to Mr. Thomas E. Coleman of the dramatic profession. We have one son who will be twenty-four years old today. Another birthday coincidence! He is named for our friend, Mr. Hugh Carlisle, of Gunter'sville; his full name being Thomas Carlisle Coleman; but we call him by his middle name. He has his grandfather's artistic gift -- but we have directed it along the practical lines, and he is a young architect.

Now I am well aware that this long story will need considerable pruning. Use as much or as little of it as you like.

We are much pleased that you desire to write about our father and hope you will send us copies.

Remember us to each of your family and believe me,
Most cordially yours,
Minnie Frye Coleman

In a later letter requesting the full name of Mr. Frye, Mrs. Coleman writes in a letter of September 18th:

My father's name was G. Wilhelm Frey--properly written--but as he had difficulty in getting his mail in this country, the post office people calling it "Fray"-- and everything but Frye -- so he anglized by making it G. Wilhelm Frye, putting the e after the y. The "G" was for George, but he never used that name.

I did not tell you that for ten years I have been taking my "walks abroad" in a wheel chair. I can walk about my flat and am not lame, but the nerves controlling the heart and limbs are weak, and I can only stand three or four minutes at a time.

The mahogany table was delighted with the result of the correspondence regarding Mr. Frye, and actually left a groove of portrait stories, and struck the hypotenuse of sweet Minnie Frye herself:

Don't you recall the time and grand ovation Minnie Frye received when she first began her professional career! A crowd of Huntsville friends greeted her at the Huntsville Female Seminary when she wore a rose colored gown of a soft, clinging material, her hair in waves and parted with a fluffy hood at the nape of her graceful neck; again at the old Opera House, and the round of applause; the shower of flowers, the ready, bright response to the encores demanded. Do you remember what an impetus her recital gave to the elocution here, and the furore of competition it created among Huntsville girls, who tried to recite "just like Minnie Frye"; and the one who recited most like her was the most popular, especially when she recited:

"Come over, come over the river to me

If you are my laddie, bold Charlie Machree!"

How the girls thrilled and audiences stamped and clapped at the finale.--

"Ye've crossed the wild river--Ye've
risked all for me!

And I'll part from ye never, dear Charlie
Machree!"

Just a mahogany leaf from memory for you -- Sweet
Minnie Frye!

Virginia C. Clay

The mahogany table turned to its mythological and literary lore, for its comparisons is one of its recent great reminiscential moods; Egypt had the famed statue of Memnon among its art treasures; it was surmounted on top of a temple, and when the rays of the sun first fell upon it at the dawn of each new day, there was emitted a harp-like sound that filled the natives with the greatest awe and superstitions, and set scientific minds to cogitating the real cause.

At the first real dawn of civilization in Madison County, Hunt's Spring had been re-christened to Twickenham Town, and, in two years reincarnated as Huntsville by a citizenry who were pleased to extend naturalization papers to the memory of John Hunt, who was the earliest pioneer settler in the 19th century; the rays of light grew warm and powerful, and with them came the influence on our vale; there was emitted a sound of axe, hammer, and saw, that fell on the ear as harmonious as a Memnon chord. Again the natives in a wonder fled, and the sounds reached the far outside world, and armies from all nations sprung up, as if sown with a measure of dragon's teeth, as strong as that of Cadmus, and finally drove out the "Poor Los" from their native lair or reduced them to a safe minimum.

Wigwams were replaced by log huts and cottages, and mansions were soon dotted over this

"Valley, steep in sunshine"--

as Carolee Pleasants poetically limed it with her artistic pen.

Mackenzie, in his "Man of Feeling", said there is a rust about everyone at the beginning. There may exist just a little oxide that steals over the sensibilities of some, caused by the uncongenial social atmospheric conditions in their environments; but to view thru the long vista of years, society in the distance--just a peep at such a world as Grandparents lived in, and to invest it with all the pageantry of sentiment, poetry and imagination soon wears off the oxide--and after all it is a glorious privilege. The sun's rays have softly touched the memory and sounds from Auld Lang Syne are emitted and fall sweet on the ear. All the diversified

scenery of the affections may proclaim the evanescence of those days, yet the love of roses--without the thorns--if alone transferred to paper, will blossom in friendly fields forever; in their transmigratory state, the fragrant spirit of the leaves will wander in the rich garden of memory, sparkle with the dew of attar--and--Lo!--

"We will gather fragrance for Life's
Wintry day!"

Well, there are too many grand, old landmarks left in the brick and mortar sentiment of the old homes still here to allow them to vanish.

There is the Beirne home, a splendid specimen of that old-time sentiment; it was built by Governor Thomas Bibb, the son-in-law of "Old Grandpa Blue"--as Mr. Robert Thompson's present day descendants call him.

This home was presented to Adeline Bibb Bradley, the daughter of Governor Thomas Bibb, Alabama's second Governor, and thru some unfortunate financial mismanagement it was sold for a debt, and Col. George P. Beirne was the purchaser.

The story goes that Mrs. Bradley was first informed of the sale by a servant. She was seated on her rear porch when a Negro gardener walked in her garden and began digging. He was summoned by Mrs. Bradley and asked what he meant.

"Miss 'Liza saunt me fer ter plant de taters", he replied. "Miss 'Liza" was Mrs. Beirne.

"Didn't you know dat Marse George done bought dis place?"

Just imagine the surprise and chagrin that this domestic queen experienced! It was hard indeed! Raised in the lap of luxury, yet her spirit was not broken--her energies were not debilitated. In an humbler home she moved and still reigned the queen of her little kingdom called home.

Susan Wells Bradley, eldest daughter of Adeline Bibb and James Bradley, became the wife of Thomas Wilson White, and the mother of twelve children. The wedding occurred in this old mansion.

On the walls of the dear old home--On the Hill-- is a portrait of Governor Thomas Bibb's daughter, Mrs. James Bradley, with her baby Susan on her lap.

This portrait was painted by Grimes in the early twenties--at the same time that those of Sarah Sophia Providence Thompson Manning, with her little son Felix, and Susanna Claiborne Maclin Withers Clay, with her son John Withers, and Pamela Thompson Bibb and her little son William, were painted and some dozen or more famous "Early Settlers", whose beauty, grace and gallantry were handed down to us thru "art preservative" and from a gold frame on canvas.

These old Portraits on the Hill are rarely limned: The one of baby Susan and her dainty mother is one that wins attention. The mother was scarcely 17 years when she married and in her 19th year when this portrait was painted. She is very lovely; seated in her red velvet arm chair; her gown is dark blue silk with tiny black figures; her beautiful throat is modestly exposed, and the empire waist is finished with a high ruching of the filmiest reallace, and a full string of red coral entwines the throat, clasped with gold. From her shell-like ears, are long pendant "ear bobs" of coral. The glossy dark hair is dressed in two loops slightly over the forehead and caught in a high coil, surmounted by a tall empress comb of tortoise shell. Tho in her teens, yet a dignity of the matron is hers, as with a mother's art, she holds chubby Baby Susan in close embrace. Susan is in her first short dress richly embroidered with a ruffled cap to match.

Now, says the old mahogany table, if you would really like to see a flesh and blood replica of baby Susan just look at her granddaughter, Nan Fickling, daughter of Susie Wells White--Mrs. Frank Fickling.

Fair Adeline and Baby Susan are on the right side of the folding door, and on the left side is her handsome and artistic young husband in a suit of black, full ruffled shirt, high collar, and a black stock cravat. A typical gentleman of the Old School.

At the right of the mantel, is "Old Grandpa Blue" seated in a red velvet chair; dressed in a suit of dark blue colonial cut, double-breasted, with the brass buttons and a white stock collar. His gray hair is combed straight up in the center, and forward at the temples.

A pipe of peace and comfort; with a pendant cord and tassel is in his left hand; in the right a gold head cane; an air of the genial companion, pleasantly disposed to hospitality and the shrewd man of business pervades the portrait.

Remember, says the old mahogany table, that Col. Robert Thompson was a Revolutionary soldier at 16; and he is the progenitor of the families of Mrs. Robert H. Watkins, Mrs. James Manning, and Mrs. Thomas Bibb.

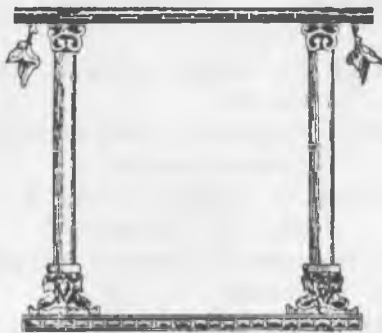
By the way, the mahogany table has advised that a history of the two Bibb brothers would make most interesting reading, and we feel interest since a sweet daughter of "Blue Thompson"--Pamelia--was the wife of Gov. Thomas Bibb, whose pretty daughter, Adeline, became the wife of Mr. James Bradley, of the Portrait on the Hill.

THE GROWING OF MONTE SANO

The Sun had rolled back the blanked of
 mist
 From the brow of the Mountain--then,
 softly it kissed
 The stony old face, so rugged and
 seamed,
 By the frosts of Old Time, till it fairly
 beamed
 And smiled with delight at the warm
 demonstration
 From the Fountain of Light--bless'd
 gift at Creation!
 With delicate fingers it wove a bright
 crown
 Of crimson and gold, that it gaily
 placed down,
 With gaudy pomp, upon the old
 head;
 And wild Flowers, entwined, a vermeil
 he spread;
 The Birds a blithe Coronation Hymn
 sang;

And the Woods caught the strains the
 glad Echoes rang;
The Heavens o'erhead formed a canopy
 blue
Above the brown throne of the Mountain
 in view;
Then Twilight's soft hands, with purple
 quilt deep,
Hid the wrinkled-faced Monarch, who
 went fast asleep
In all the gay robes, that the Frost and
 Sun lent;--
And Night reigned supreme o'er Love
 and Age blent!

Virginia C. Clay



COLONIAL MOBILE, by Peter J. Hamilton: edited by Charles G. Summersell (The University of Alabama Press, \$17.50).

"Colonial Mobile," still regarded as the best history of Mobile and the surrounding area in colonial times, has just been reprinted by the University Of Alabama in its "Southern Historical Publications" series.

First published in 1897 and revised in 1910, it long has been a scarce item in Alabama bibliography, even though it was reprinted in 1952.

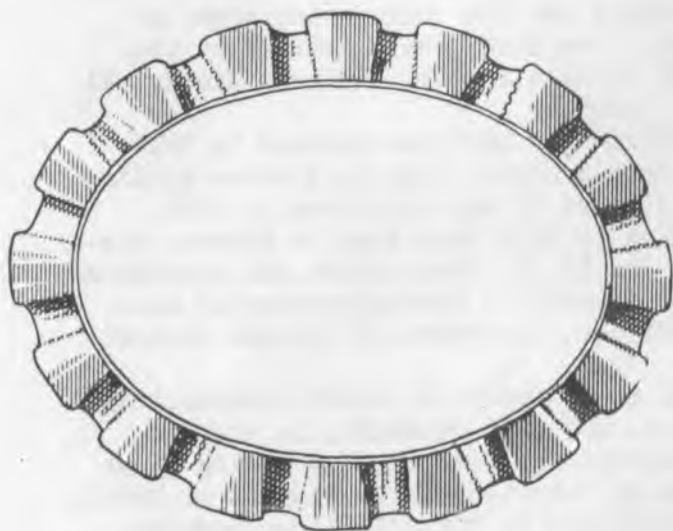
This edition is very important in Alabama historiography, for it has been edited and annotated by Charles Summersell of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, the doyan of Alabama historians.

Summersell has prepared a superb introduction about Hamilton, not only providing us with an excellent biography of the man, but giving us at the same time an overview of the history of Mobile and placing Hamilton in historical perspective.

Summersell has also included a select bibliography that could well serve as a vasis for developing a library collection of material on Alabama history. Libraries around this state would do well to check their holdings against this bibliography, and add any missing titles. Individuals interested in Alabama history should do the same.

The price of the book is high, but you certainly get your money's worth. A "must" acqui-

sition for all libraries and individuals interested in Alabama history.



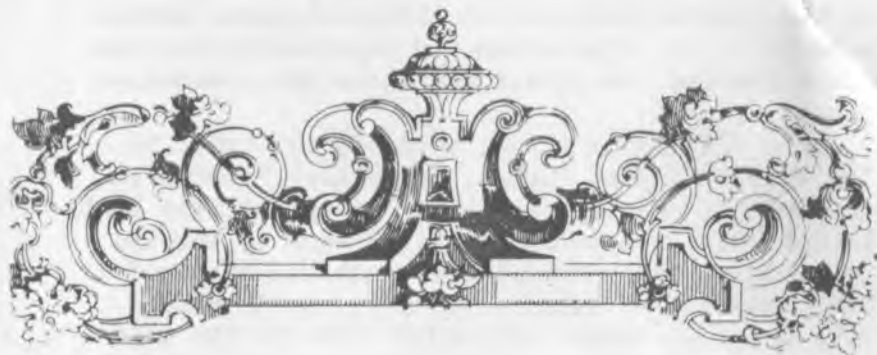
Here are three books anyone interested in Southern history and life should read; together they explain much of the Southern make-up and why we are what we are today.

Edgar Thompson for many years was a professor of sociology at Duke University who specialized in the study of Southern society. Now many of his papers have been published by Duke University Press under the title "Plantation Societies, Race Relations, and the South: The Regimentation of Populations" (\$12.75). To Thompson the pivot of Southern society was the plantation and he began to study the society that made up the plantation. Most of the papers presented in this work cover social aspects of the plantation and especially the relations between the slaves and those who controlled them.

Duke University itself owes its existence to the Duke family of Durham, and Robert F. Durden, chairman of the Department of History at that institution, has written an excellent work on the two Dukes most responsible for the establishment of this leading Southern University. Aptly titled "The Dukes of Durham 1865-1929" (\$9.75) its main importance lies in the generally objective treatment of the Dukes by the author and the portraying of Benjamin Newton Duke as the family's primary agent for philanthropy until physical infirmities forced him somewhat to the sidelines after 1915.

Benjamin has always been overshadowed by his younger and more flamboyant brother James, and it is good to see that at least Benjamin is placed in historical perspective.

Norman D. Brown, professor of history at the University of Texas, has written a first-class biography of one of the most controversial characters in Southern history. "Edward Stanly: Whiggery's Tarheel Conqueror" (University of Alabama Press, \$10) is about the North Carolina Whig before the Civil War who moved to his native state as the first Union military governor. Appointed in 1862 by Lincoln, of course he became anathema to Southern leaders, many of whom, right or wrong, regarded him as the premier scalawag of them all, even though Stanly resigned his position when Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.



THE GOVERNORS OF ALABAMA by John Craig Stewart
Publishing Company, (\$12.95).

Over the past few years Alabama has begun to receive her just recognition in print and presses located in the state which have published important bibliographic works.

Now a number of presses, located in other states in the South, have begun to publish histories and travelogues of our state. One of these newer presses is Pelican Publishing Company of Gretna, Louisiana. The latest addition to their Pelican Governors Series is this one by John Craig Stewart, who has impressive credentials as a writer and Alabama historian.

Stewart has written several novels and many articles about Alabama. He is the co-author of "Know Alabama", first published in 1957 and used as a school text. He has been associated with the University of South Alabama since its founding, currently serving as director of the institution's Creative Writing Program.

Unfortunately, this book is not ideally suited for any particular audience. It may be read by the secondary school student seeking information for term papers, reports, and reviews. It is certainly not meant for the advanced student in either Alabama or Southern history, for whom it is too general in coverage to provide sufficient information.

There are several major flaws in the material presented. I had hoped that the old Dunning School concept of Reconstruction was now past. So many articles and books written over the past two decades have finally put this conception to rest among the majority of Southern historians. Yet Stewart still views Reconstruction as the trampling of the Constitutional rights of the Southern States, including Alabama, and his coverage of Alabama governors of the period 1849 to 1874 reflects this outmoded philosophy. For example, he categorizes

the administration of David P. Lewis (1972-1874) as "represents the last surge of irresponsible Reconstruction government in Alabama."

There are other flaws in Stewart's concept of Alabama history. He states that "Alabama stagnated during the 17-rule of the British" over that portion of West Florida that later became part of Alabama. He ignores the writing of Robert Thea of Auburn University (this year's president of the Alabama Historical Association), who more than a decade ago, began to publish in the "Alabama Historical Review" and the "Florida Historical Quarterly" that the British period was not a period of stagnation. Stewart also sees the Spanish period of occupation of this same area as unimportant and states that "the Spanish influence in Alabama was small." Here he evidently completely ignores the voluminous works of Jack D. L. Holmes of the University of Alabama in Birmingham. Holmes is the leading authority on the Gulf coast area and his conception of the influence of the Spanish is quite the opposite. One would have to accept the credentials of Holmes as a scholarly historian over that of Stewart, who is not a professional historian.

In checking the bibliography I also found that besides the omission of Rhea and Holmes, other important works were not cited. T. P. Abernathy's "The Formative Period in Alabama 1815-1828" is not cited, for example, yet it still is the standard work on this period of Alabama history.

In conclusion, I can not recommend this work. Alabama still must wait for a well-researched and written history of her governors.



POLITICIANS, PLANTERS AND PLAIN FOLK, by Ralph A. Wooster (University of Tennessee Press, \$9.75)

NORTH CAROLINA ATLAS, edited by J. W. Clay, S. M. Orr, Jr. and A. W. Stuart (University of North Carolina Press, \$17.95)

Here are two "must" books for aficionados of Southern history and life.

Ralph Wooster of Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, has produced a most important book on the ante-bellum South. Here he covers political life in the upper South from 1850 to 1860, having covered the lower South in his "The People in Power", published in 1969.

During the period 1850-1860 the upper South served as a great border between the states of the lower South and the free states of the North. At first the political leaders of the upper South attempted to preserve the Union through compromise between the lower South and the North. But when compromise failed they withdrew from the Union and joined their sister states to uphold the political, social, and economic structures of the South.

This book provides many of the reasons for the actions of these political leaders. Probably the most important thing Wooster does in this book is give us the major differences between the upper and the lower South. Far too many people still regard the South as one region, with no internal differences. Wooster certainly proves otherwise.

Many state presses have recently produced atlases of their states, but I have seen none better than "North

Carolina Atlas."

It is broken down into six sections: "Introduction", "Human Settlement and Profile", "Physical Resources and Environmental Quality", "The Economy", "Services and Amenities", and "Retrospect and Prospect".

The atlas is beautifully illustrated, with maps, charts, tables, photographs, and etchings. Each section is concluded by a bibliography that will enable further study by those interested in doing so.

The University of North Carolina Press is to be congratulated for this lavish production.



YANKEE BLITZKRIEG Wilson's Raid Through Alabama and Georgia, by James Jones (The University of Georgia Press, \$12).

There are many reasons why this is a MUST book for anyone interested in Southern, Alabama, Civil War or military history. It should be acquired by all libraries, both public and institutional.

The Civil War was almost over when young General James Wilson crossed the Tennessee River with almost 14,000 cavalymen armed with repeating rifles, which gave them almost the firepower of infantry. Wilson's "raid" in just two months, twice defeated the cavalry genius Forrest, captured Selma, Montgomery, Columbus and Macon and destroyed the military potential of the deep South to continue the war. In addition, Wilson's men captured Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the Confederacy.

Military historians still study Wilson's tactics, for he believed in the most rapid movement of troops possible, and his raid has been accurately described as a blitzkrieg, using horses instead of machinery for mobility.

"Yankee Blitzkrieg" is the only work to focus solely on Wilson's raid. Well documented, it describes the feeble attempts of Confederates to protect such invaluable cities as Selma, the arsenal of the deep South. Jones, professor of history at Florida State University, provides full page maps of Selma and Columbus which enable the reader to keep abreast of Wilson's movements.

Wilson's raid is also still fraught with controversy in history. Many historians blame Wilson for wholesale depredations, yet Jones reminds us that "charges of brutality and unnecessary destruction against Wilson and his men should be shared with the governors of Alabama and Georgia and Confederate military leaders in the region." In contrast to Sherman on his "march," Wilson destroyed little of non-military value.



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