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Vol. 2 No. 1



VOL. 2 ISSUE 1

VALENTINE'S ISSUE

1991

# Old Huntsville

A PUBLICATION FOR HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE

## The Sleeping Preacher

### Huntsville's Own Clairvoyant Reveals Poignant Truths

His head split open from just above his eyes in the center of his forehead to the top, and from the top down near each ear. His head drew until the features of his face seemed to be reversed. His hands drew into an immovable position against his chest and throat. His feet and legs twisted into a position almost opposite their normal position. His eyes bled and the blood ran down his cheeks.



### This Issue

Don't Follow Charlie Daniels.....	5
Candles.....	6
Historic Mooresville Tours.....	8
Huntsville Trivia.....	11
The Unforgettable Count Rhoshard.	12
Letters From Matt.....	16
Absurd News.....	17
The Battling Little Sergeant.....	20
The Killer Wowser.....	30





# Old Huntsville

A PUBLICATION FOR HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE

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These grotesque symptoms were accompanied by an almost unbearable headache which caused him to cry out in pain. Sound like a scene from the latest "Friday the 13th" installment? Guess again. The above is a description of the Reverend Constantine Blackmon Sanders while under the influence of his secondary personality which oddly called itself, X + Y = Z.

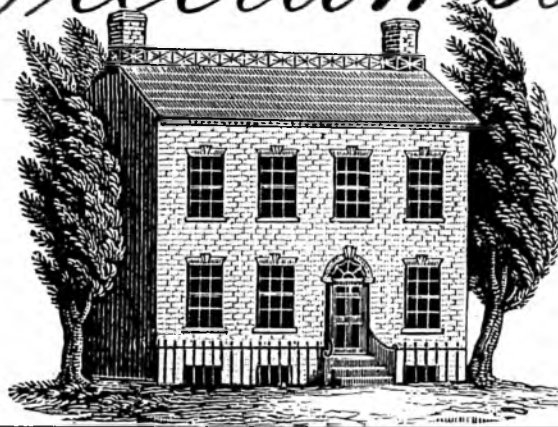
Mr. Sanders was born on July 2, 1831, in northern Madison County about sixteen miles north of Huntsville. He became intensely interested in religion after attending a revival meeting at a country church about twelve miles north of Huntsville on September 5, 1851. The next day he joined the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Concord. He had never received the benefit of formal education, but he wanted to become a preacher, so in 1854 he enrolled in a school in Elkton, Tennessee. Three months following his enrollment, the young Mr. Sanders became ill of a flux (diarrhea or

dysentery), followed by an attack of typhoid fever. This condition lasted for several weeks. It was during this illness in the home of Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Harlow, with whom he boarded, that Mr. Sanders received his first visit from X + Y = Z, and that he first showed the psychic powers for which he would become well known in the area.

Mrs. Harlow reported: "He remarked to me, 'There will be a burying here tomorrow evening, but it will not be any of your family.' About one hour after this, a gentleman (Mr. McNeely) rode up and requested the privilege of burying a corpse in our private cemetery on the next day, which was granted. This death occurred some three miles distant, and we had not even heard, and I am confident Mr. Sanders had not, of the sickness, nor the death of the individual" (Drake p. 232). Mrs. Harlow also stated that on this occasion the separation of the skull was large enough to lay her little finger in near the top.

A T I M E L E S S T R A D I T I O N

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In 1855, Mr. Sanders married Miss Duanna A. White of Madison County. After receiving his ordination in the Cumberland Presbyterian ministry in 1862, the Reverend and Mrs. Sanders made their home in the county and he served several churches including Maysville, Meridianville, and Mooresville. The visitations from the secondary personality continued. When he received a visit from  $X + Y = Z$ , he would fall into a semi-conscious state and would not remember what had occurred upon awaking. Since he gave the appearance of sleep, he became known as "The Sleeping Preacher." Often while in this state, Sanders would write, not knowing what he had written until he reviewed his notes later. His writings were discourses from the secondary personality. In the beginning, the writings were mainly religious in nature, but later covered diagnosis of illness for patients he had never seen as well as prescriptions for their illness. He also translated from Latin without error, even though he had never studied the language. He was also able to locate lost articles and often knew of distant deaths as soon as they occurred. The convulsions had stopped by 1859, but the headaches were almost continuous for more than twenty years beginning in 1854.

While experiencing one of his "sleeps", Mr. Sanders exhibited amazing psychic powers before scores of witnesses. The Reverend M. B. DeWitt, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister of Huntsville, asked Reverend G. W. Mitchell of Athens to assist him in a series of meetings he had planned for his church in November of 1867. Reverend Dewitt sent a letter to Reverend Mitchell confirming the dates. Mr. Mitchell never received the letter but was met by Mr. Sanders in Mooresville, where Sanders was visiting for a few days, and Sanders told him about the letter and related the contents to him. Reverend Mitchell met his appointment in Huntsville thanks to the information given him by Mr. Sanders. When asked about the letter by

Mr. DeWitt, although he had never received it, Mr. Mitchell was able to correctly quote its contents from what Mr. Sanders had told him.

As you might expect, not everyone in the community believed Reverend Sanders had the ability to perform the psychic feats for which he had become known. While many believed the power was the work of God, others credited it to the devil, and still others

thought that the accounts of his prowess was a complete hoax. The debate became so heated in the church as well as in the community that measures had to be taken to keep him from being dismissed from the ministry. His detractors called him "reverend mountebank", "a vile pretender", and a "specious hypocrite" among other things. This unschooled, back woods, itinerant preacher was causing quite a stir in North Alabama.

One evening in 1874, Mr. Sanders, who lived in Meridianville, desired to go to Huntsville, twelve miles away, to hear a sermon by a Dr. Ross but was unable to attend. That night, under the influence of the  $X + Y = Z$  personality, Sanders called for a pen, ink, and paper. In his "sleep" state he wrote for more than an hour. The following morning he was told by his wife about the writing. Upon reading what he had written, he found an outline of the sermon delivered by Dr. Ross the previous evening in Huntsville. Mr. Sanders took the train to Huntsville that morning and went directly to the home of Reverend H. R. Smith. Mr. Smith expressed his regrets that Mr. Sanders had not been able to hear the previous night's sermon. Mr. Sanders informed him that he had heard the sermon and enjoyed it all very much. He then preceded to give a detailed exposition of the sermon including text, major divisions, and leading thoughts from beginning to end. Mr. Smith stated that it was impossible for Mr. Sanders to have been informed of the sermon in such detail since it had been preached the night before while Sanders slept and he had come directly from his home in Meridianville to Smith's home in Huntsville early the next morning.

In February, 1866, Mr. Sanders was confined to his bed with a dislocated thigh and was being vis-

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ited by his friend, J. W. Pruitt. Mr. Pruitt reported that during the visit, Sanders began to laugh. When Mr. Pruitt asked him why he was laughing, Mr. Sanders said he was laughing at DeWitt who was "having a hard scuffle to keep from falling off the fence, for the top rail was turning with him and he was trying to keep from falling over it." Mr. Pruitt stated that about ten or fifteen minutes later, Mr. DeWitt arrived carrying a bowl of custard and a bag of peas his wife had sent to Mr. Sanders. DeWitt related his difficulty in negotiating the rail fence with his hands full. He stated that the fence shook and twisted and he nearly fell off. To Mr. Pruitt, it sounded curiously like what Mr. Sanders had laughed about fifteen minutes before.

Reverend G. W. Mitchell and Dr. J. S. Blair of Athens reported that on either October 31 or November 1, 1866, Mr. Sanders was sitting in front of a window when he began to say "poor fellow" and "what a pity." Sanders began to exhibit signs of sadness and distress and said, "He's gone! Gone! Gone!" When questioned about his actions, Sanders told the men that Lieutenant McClure had just died from an internal hemorrhage near Clarksville, Tennessee. Early the next morning, Lieutenant McClure's wife in Athens received a telegram informing her of her husband's death some one hundred and fifty miles away near Clarksville, Tennessee of an internal hemorrhage.

In October, 1866, Mr. Sanders encountered Mrs. Mary A. Brown in Meridianville. Mrs. Brown expressed concern for her relatives in Salisbury, North Carolina whom she had not heard from in a long time. Mr. Sanders informed Mrs. Brown that he had gone to see them the night before and they were well as usual. Mr. Sanders also told Mrs. Brown that there had been a fire in Salisbury the night before. He told her the fire had started in a tin shop and burned to the corner of the Wheeler block. He assured the woman that all her relatives were safe. Mrs. Brown wrote a letter to her sister living in the Salisbury area and inquired about the fire. In

time she received a reply which confirmed all Mr. Sanders had said including the time it occurred, the tin shop where it started, and the extent of the damage.

In the summer of 1867, Mr. Sanders told Miss Sallie Humphrey that Miss Mattie Banks in Decatur had just been struck by lightning and described her injuries. Miss Humphrey told her sisters what Mr. Sanders had said and the three decided to check the next newspaper to see if any account was given of the incident. When the paper arrived, it contained the story of Miss Banks' accident confirming what Mr. Sanders had said down to the time and specific injuries he had mentioned.

On several occasions Mr. Sanders directed people to items they had lost and had previously been unable to find. Once when an insane woman wandered off and could not be located, Mr. Sanders gave directions that allowed searchers to go directly to where she was and bring her back.

The Reverend Sanders suffered under the possession of  $X + Y = Z$  for twenty-two years. On many occasions over the years, he had begged the secondary personality to leave him. On February 2nd, 1876,  $X + Y = Z$ , calling Sanders "My Casket" as he always did in written communications to him, consented to leave him for an indefinite time. In this communication,  $X + Y = Z$  also promised (or perhaps threatened) to return at a later date. There is no documentation as to whether the secondary personality actually kept his promise to return.

Constantine Blackmon Sanders. Was he psychic or charlatan? He was investigated by the Boston Society For Psychic Research, and more than sixty people including physicians, ministers, civic leaders, judges, and people from all walks of life, of high moral character, gave written testimony to his psychic powers. Apparently those who saw him perform these feats believed. The believers saw the exit of the secondary personality as an act of God for the relief of His dedicated servant. Detractors thought otherwise. Some believed that the visitor left, not because of

a pact with God, but with the devil from whom it had come. Over a century and a half later it is impossible to determine the source of Reverend Sanders' power. Whatever your opinion may be, he will always be remembered in Madison County as "The Sleeping Preacher."





# Don't Follow Charlie Daniels

In 1983 a well-known entertainer by the name of Tony Mason was invited along with his band the Lynchburg Revue to play at the Alabama June Jam in Fort Payne.

The June Jam, sponsored by the group "Alabama", had become one of the most famous concerts in the country. Entertainers such as Loretta Lynn, Tanya Tucker, and Sawyer Brown performed, with the proceeds going to charity. People from all across the country attended, with many camping out for

days ahead of time to make sure they got good seats.

Tony had been performing for many years and was used to all of the "showbiz hype" that is normally associated with concerts, but to receive an invite to perform at "this" particular concert was the ultimate for any performer. Needless to say, they were excited.

The band decided to try something different, in the hopes that the crowd would really pick up on it. Normally, concerts begin with a fast, rousing piece, mellow out toward the middle and then pick up the tempo again at the end. They agreed to start out performance off with a slow, sad tearjerker, build on the emotions and wind up with a footstomping version of Dixie.

This was sure to make an impression on the audience that they would never forget. For almost two months they practiced the song "Desperado" until finally the song was done with so much emotion that Tony felt like crying himself whenever he sang the words.

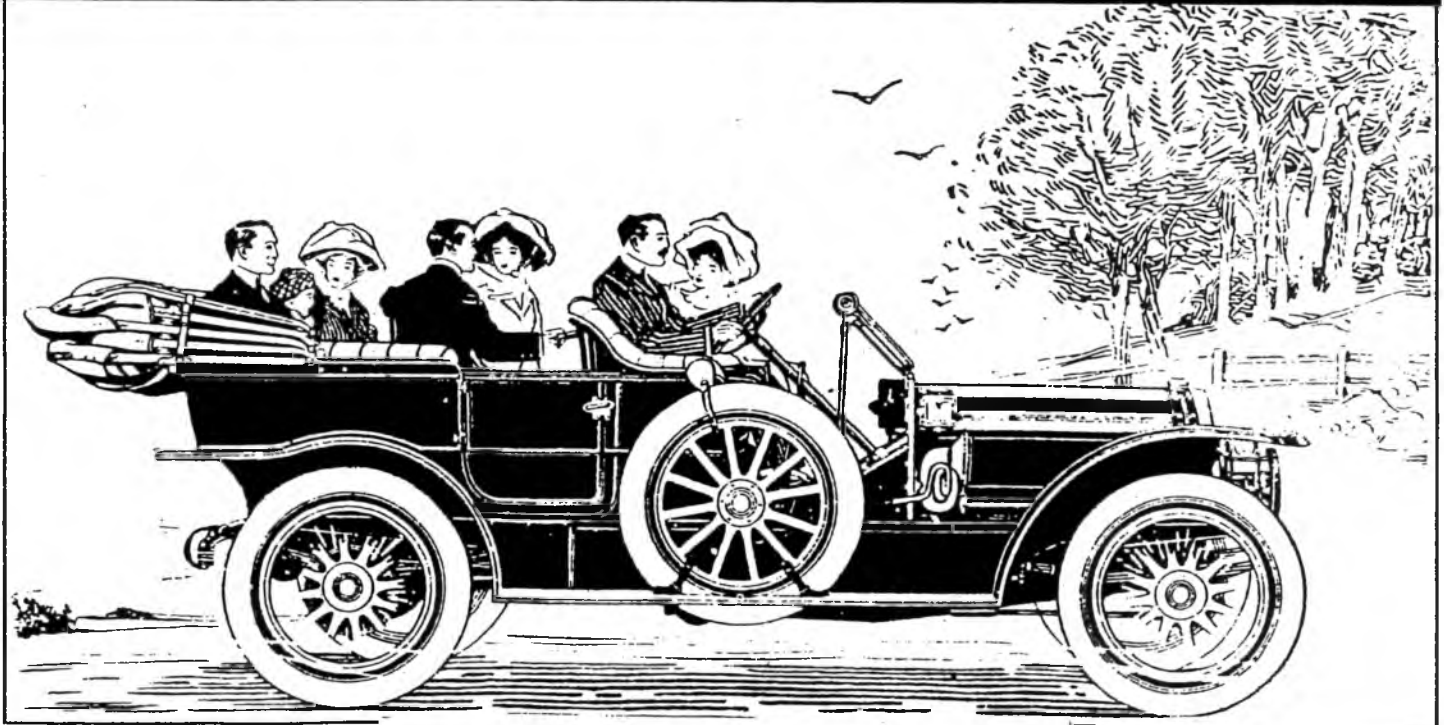
The day of the concert arrived, and they were escorted through the crowds by a police escort. It was the most awesome concert the band had ever been to - with over two hundred thousand fans spread out over the meadows and foothills of Fort Payne. Tony later said he remembered thinking - "in just a few hours they will all be listening to me."

Standing back stage, he was looking in a mirror and lip-syncing the words to "Desperado" when a stage hand ran in to tell him, "Three minutes!" While the band rushed to get ready to go on next, Charlie Daniels, the performer on stage, began his final song.

With two hundred thousand people out there waiting for Tony to give the performance of his life, Charlie Daniels began to sing the song "Desperado".

Tony says he doesn't remember what his band played as an opener that day, but he says it taught him a valuable lesson. "Don't follow Charlie Daniels."

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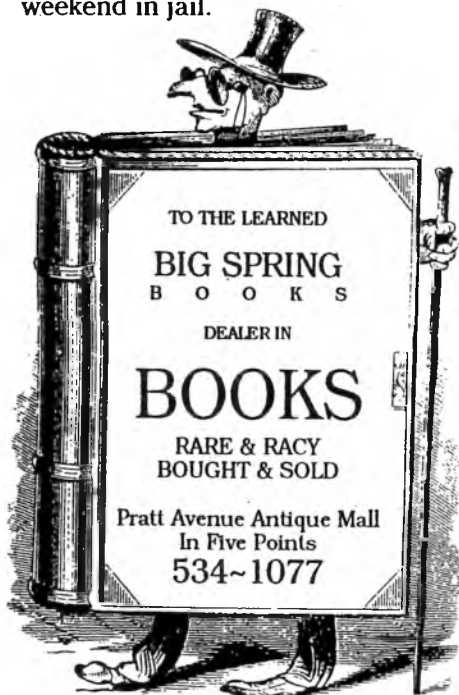
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# Buttermilk Please!

Green King was a moonshiner. He had the reputation for making the "most potent" and the "most best" moonshine in Madison County.

Unfortunately, he liked to drink his own product. Saturdays would find him downtown around the old courthouse square, peddling his wares, and as the sun got higher, so did Green King. And every weekend he would be arrested, to spend the rest of the weekend in jail.



Finally, the judge, after tiring of seeing King in his court every Monday, asked the defendant why he persisted in drinking whiskey.

"Because, your honor," Green replied, "I don't figure the town water is safe to drink."

Pounding his gavel, the exasperated judge fined the defendant two dollars and fifty cents, sentenced him to ninety-nine years, and suspended the sentence on the condition that Green would "hereafter forever drink only buttermilk whenever he came to town."



## CANDLES

There is something about writing in candlelight that makes it a really timeless art. In these days of high tech video productions, MTV, Nintendo games and the emphasis on faster, better, more and slicker, it is wonderful at times to slow the pace a little down a little, and just write.

Writing makes one think, therefore oftentimes it is avoided. With everything else that goes on in your life, there is no time at all to just get into a quiet place, alone, and explore the depth of your feelings and thoughts. It takes quite a bit of effort, but you may just find that the results are worth the effort. It's almost like therapy, in that it forces you to explore feelings and ideas that normally

you may not take the time to do.

Writing is a good way to find out what may be wrong in your life. You know how it goes - something upsets you and you immediately react. Either with anger, silence, words spoken that you regret later, actions - then when it's over, it's too late. You just can't take back what has been said and all you can do is apologize and go on. And maybe saying what you did makes you feel better at the time, but you spend the next six months feeling guilty about it. And some of that is bound to happen anyway. But you can really explore the wrong by writing about it.

For instance, something has been bothering you for some time. You can't put your finger on it exactly, but you know you've been irritable with your family, not really communicating with them, and you're angry at yourself for feeling that way. What you do is this: get into a room all by yourself, bring a favorite pen and a clean pad of paper. If it's early in

*Continued on Page 23*

*It's quite all right to live it up,  
 as long as you can live it down.*

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## The Grants

The Grants first moved to Jackson county around 1834, settling on 200 acres of land granted to Thomas Grant for his services in the War of 1812. By the time the Civil War began Thomas Grant had nine grandsons. Five of them enlisted in the Confederate army while the other four became Union soldiers. All of them served in North Alabama, within a few miles of where they grew up. In 1864, while cutting wood, Thomas Grant suffered a fatal heart attack.

Word was sent to all the children and grandchildren of the upcoming burial. The next day saw the whole family gathered at the cemetery to pay their last respects. Five young men dressed in Confederate gray stood on one side of the casket and the four Union men stood on the other side. When the time came to lower the casket, all nine young men helped, and when it was done, they looked at one another across the grave. Slowly, and almost awkwardly they reached across the

still-open grave and shook hands with one another.

My great-grandmother was a small child back then but she said she remembered the tears on her uncle's faces that day. She said it was almost as if they were saying their last good-byes before they got back on their horses and went back to the war.

Out of the nine grandsons, four were killed in battle. One was captured and died in a federal prison and two were wounded.

The family never got together again.

Submitted by J.H. Grant

## Wealth Is Wasted

Most of America's millionaires live well below their means. Thomas Stanley, a marketing professor at Georgia State University, has been studying the habits of the rich since 1973. He contends that the average millionaire spends less than 10% of his/her net worth per year, sends the kids to public school, and drives an American car. Adds Stanley, "They are the most undershopped people in the world."



## The Majesty of the Sea

by Tony Mason

*The rain falls  
My love calls  
Night winds blow thru her hair  
Clouds pass by  
The moon shines  
Leaving clear, crisp evening air*

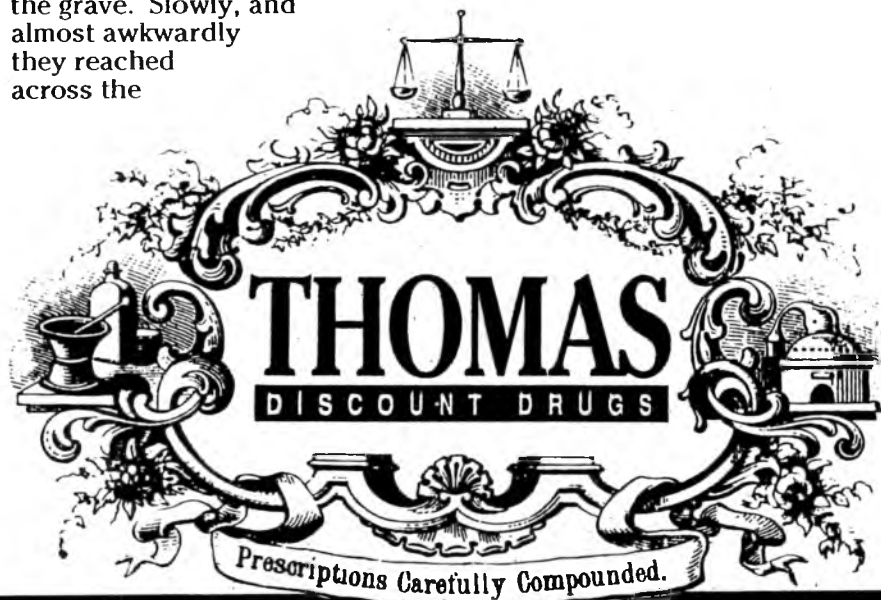
*Waves crash loud  
Sounds like crowds  
Cheering on a great event  
Song of Sirenes  
Music to Marines  
Forever is the sailors' lament*

*Here we stand  
Hand in hand  
Looking out over the sea  
We don't speak  
We're too weak  
From The Majesty Of The Sea*

## Old News Stories

A view of our Big Spring Branch, from the corner of the Square and Madison Street, as it widens its course to join the Tennessee, is a grand one. The whole scene is enchanting.

Huntsville Publication, 1891



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HOUSEHOLD TIPS BY

**EARLENE**

When you have a closet or bathroom that stays damp and has a musty smell, simply fill a one-pound coffee can with charcoal pieces and leave opened. In a few days the room will smell sweet again.

When mending broken glassware try melted alum. It is better than glue and doesn't show.

Onion vapors may cure the common cold. (Soviet scientists use onion vapors for war wounds - onion contains allyl sulphice, which is germicidal). Just slice a big onion, and boil for 5 minutes. Eat the broth at once.

Keep your sewing supplies in the room that you iron in. Needles, thread, buttons and tape will then be handy for fast fix-ups.

Cook two or three days of potatoes in their jackets. They will be then ready for the next few days when you may need them for salad, hash browns or creamed potatoes.

*If you have no enemies you are apt to be in the same predicament in regards to friends.*

## Historic Mooresville Hosts Tours and Festival

There is a living museum of our past, lying just a few miles west of Huntsville. The first settlers of Mooresville arrived there as early as 1805, taking over land that had previously belonged to the Chickasaw Indians. When you visit Mooresville today, it is as if you are in a time capsule of the early days of our state's history. Included in

Mooresville's colorful history are tales of President Andrew Johnson, who worked as an apprentice-tailor in that town, and President Garfield who supposedly left his Bible during a visit to a local church.

Mooresville measures one square mile wide in area and extends across Highway 20, on the way to Decatur. It is bordered on

one side by the Wheeler Wildlife refuge. The town was laid out with the same city plan that is in existence today. Some of the streets have disappeared or were never more than just lines on the plat. Water Street ran north and south on the west side of town, and at least one more street was anticipated on the east side. A street below Piney Street was also laid out in 1818, but never developed.

Even though the town appears untouched by time, many details have been altered over the years. Several residences and outbuildings have been lost due to natural causes and neglect. The business community has all but disappeared.

On March 3, 1818, by an act of Congress, Mooresville was linked to Huntsville by a road authorizing mail delivery to and from Huntsville and authorizing the establishment of a post office. Mail was carried by horse and rider.

The Stagecoach Inn and Tavern that housed the first post office was built by Griffin Lampkin and has had several owners, including David Putney who bought it in 1825 for \$1500.00. The building was listed on Tanner's Post Map of 1825, with supper costing two bits.

When town residents and mail carriers went to the post office to get their mail, they received it through a small slot on the right side of the building, where the original post office was located. Now the slot is a small window.

The tavern has been a tenant house as well as an antique and glass and china repair shop.

Saturday, May 4, 1991 is the date Mooresville will be hosting a festival to benefit the restoration of the Stagecoach Inn and Tavern.

Costumed guides will lead visitors through the homes, gardens and historic buildings that are on the tour. There will be craft sales, musicians, a Civil War re-enactment, as well as food available.

For more information call Shirley McCrary at (205) 355-2683.

What we now take for granted, our grandchildren may never experience. Please help to preserve our past for future generations, and also look for some unusual and unique crafts for yourselves.

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## Robbing By The Clock

In many of the dry good stores in almost every town in the country the size of Huntsville, where there are numerous employees, a time clock system has been installed guaranteed by the manufacturers "to pay for itself in less than a month."

It is a monument to the big-heartedness and christianity of Huntsville's business men that there is no such penny grabbing scheme in vogue in this city in any of the stores.

To prove the unjustness and unfairness of this time clock robbery scheme it is only necessary to know that to "pay for itself in less than a month" each employee who happens to be late to work is charged up for the loss of time at the rate of one cent a minute for every minute lost irrespective of the amount of salary drawn. Take for instance the girl clerk who draws \$3.50 per week of six ten-hour days. She pays the firm using this clock scheme, for the time she loses, at the rate of \$6 per day.

The inhumanity of a loan shark compares favorably indeed, with this business-is-business policy of many otherwise reputable merchants.

Bookkeepers for firms employing this questionable time clock method say there are few women workers who are not late from five to fifty minutes each week, for the time they spend waiting for the store to open its doors does not count, and the young ladies do not wish to loiter on the streets in front of the stores.

Huntsville is indeed fortunate in being free from this 20th century skin game.

Taken from Huntsville paper 1922

*Exhilaration is that feeling you get just after a great idea hits you, and just before you realize what's wrong with it..*

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## Thank You!

We would like to thank our many readers for their support. You are responsible for whatever success that we have enjoyed over the last six months. We hope we will continue to bring you Huntsville's history in the same manner as we have in the past.

## Money Talk

When you make an investment, take into account the long-term effects of inflation. Even a 5% rate of inflation takes a heavy toll eventually, and will reduce the dollar's purchasing power to 95.2 cents after one year. It drops to 61.4 cents after 10 years, and to a low 37.7 cents by the time two decades have passed.



# Health Shorts



As people get older, their eyes undergo a variety of changes. One of the most common changes is the development of cataracts. More than one million people in this country are afflicted each year by this condition.

A cataract is a clouding of the normally clear and transparent lens of the eye. By age 70 most people have begun to develop cataracts, but the condition can develop at any age. Cataracts can be caused by high bloodsugar levels, sunlight, and eye injuries. Recent studies indicate that cigarette smoking increases the risk of prematurely developing a type of cataract that forms in the center of the lens - nuclear cataracts.

The most common type of cataracts are called senile cataracts which develop during the normal process of aging. Common symptoms experienced with developing cataracts include blurred or double vision, sensitivity to light and glare which may make driving difficult, less vivid

perception of color, and frequent eyeglass prescription changes.

When cataracts cause enough loss of sight to interfere with a person's daily routine or lifestyle, it is probably time to remove them. Cataract surgery is highly successful and over 90 percent of patients who undergo surgery regain useful vision. If blurred vision or other symptoms are noticed, an ophthalmologist should be visited as soon as possible for a comprehensive medical eye examination, and for the patient and the doctor to decide together when and if removal is necessary.

Submitted by Dr. Annelie Owens

Lovers of the baked potato should know that adding one tablespoon of butter or margarine, at 100 calories, nearly doubles the calorie count of that potato. If you add one tablespoon of sour cream, however, it adds but 30 calories.

For some interesting toppings, try the following: Sesame seeds, Canned stewed tomatoes, and a bit of grated cheese, plain yogurt mixed with chopped chives, dill, garlic or cucumber, Hot apple-sauce laced with cinnamon, Picante sauce

If you eat protein for breakfast - eggs, meat, fish, cheese - you'll usually go easy on lunch.

*Almost nobody listens to a commencement speech except, perhaps, a few parents engaged in one last attempt to get something for their money*

*A person who is too efficient is likely to be not human enough.*

## No Luck At All

Thos. Whitely, the Louisville & Nashville brakeman who was hurt last Sunday by falling from a moving freight train near Decatur, was out again yesterday. His experience lately has been quite varied. He is a youth about 20 years old, and has been employed for some time by the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company. About six weeks ago, as the train on which he was crossing the river, he was knocked from the side of the caboose as he was climbing up the ladder. He fell into the water and swam to shore, where he fell insensible. The train stopped and took him to Huntsville, where he remained lingering between life and death for three weeks. He was then taken to the Nashville infirmary and had just recovered and gone to work where he fell from the car at Cunningham, bruised and cut his head and sprained his knee. He is now walking with a hickory stick, and will be ready for another accident in a few days.

Taken from Huntsville publication 1879

## Barb's Kitchen

### CINDY'S OLD-FASHIONED OATMEAL CHIP COOKIES

Beat 1 1/4 cup margarine, 3/4 cup brown sugar and 1/2 cup sugar til fluffy. Add one egg and 1 teaspoon vanilla and mix. Add 1 1/2 cup flour, 1 teaspoon soda, 1 teaspoon salt and blend well. Stir in 3 cups regular rolled oats. Add 6 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips, 12 oz. peanut butter chips, and 1/2 cup nuts.

Drop by teaspoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet, bake at 375 for 9-11 minutes.

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**Old Huntsville Trivia**

**1811**

Residents of what is now Madison County passed the first Water Pollution Law, making it unlawful to pollute Indian Creek.

**1818**

The first library in Alabama is formed in Huntsville. The library was organized and set up at John Boardman's printing office, on the East side of Madison Street.

**1821**

Fifteen prisoners break out of jail. When recaptured, they complain that the jail was too cold.

**1839**

Lillian Malone, a local madam, is asked by city officials to leave town. Residents of the city rise up in protest.

**1857**

Browns Grocery advertises eggs for 12 1/2 cents per dozen.

**1863**

The Southeast part of Huntsville is destroyed by fire, supposedly started by Yankees.



Second hand designer & namebrand clothing... for men, women & children

THE ORIGINAL

**SWEET REPEATS**  
CONSIGNMENT BOUTIQUE

WE HAVE WEDDING GOWNS, COCKTAIL DRESSES, FORMAL AND RENTALS, 805 Regal Drive. On the corner of L&N Drive (Next to Parkway city Mall)

**539-5599**

**1867**

The Mayor turns down a request from the city council to buy a fire engine, explaining "If you have a fire engine, next thing people will want is a fire chief".

**1898**

General Joe Wheeler, ex-Confederate general becomes commander of troops stationed in Huntsville during the Spanish American war. Two of his top aides also served as his aides during the Civil War.

**1911**

Jim Pierce kills what is reported to be "the last wild bear in Madison County"

**1950**

Huntsville Airport is hailed as a thriving transportation center. Almost 1800 people had flown in and out of Huntsville that year.

*One of the most difficult things in the world is to know how to do something, and watch without comment, somebody else do it incorrectly.*

*The greater your accomplishment the more genuine will be the surprise of your friends.*

## He Tried To Sell Tennessee River Bridge

# The Unforgettable

Many books have been written about Huntsville and Madison County's history, but few have ever touched upon the subject of Count Rhoshard.

Apparently, this has been a "very sensitive" subject for several "local prominent" businessmen. Hopefully enough years have elapsed, so that they too can see the humor in their folly.

No one knew exactly who he was or where he came from. Some said he was from a noble house of Austria. Some said he was from Czechoslovakia, while others believed him to be the son of a Georgia sharecropper. Whoever he was, or wherever he originated, Count Rhoshard left his mark on Alabama.

The Count first appeared in Huntsville in late May of 1924. His smooth, polished appearance and European-styled clothing drew admiring looks everywhere he went. Count Rhoshard spent his first morning in Huntsville seeing the city and making conversation along the streets and in the shops around the square. That afternoon he presented himself in the office of one of the area's most prominent businessmen.

The Count produced documents identifying himself as an agent for the State. He then explained to his totally impressed host that the State, while having built several bridges over the Tennessee River, had no interest in maintaining them, and wanted to turn them over to private ownership.

Count Rhoshard further explained that the State would authorize the owners to operate the bridges as toll bridges. He pointed out that even after deductions for maintenance, the operation would be quite lucrative given the number of people who used the bridges on a daily basis.

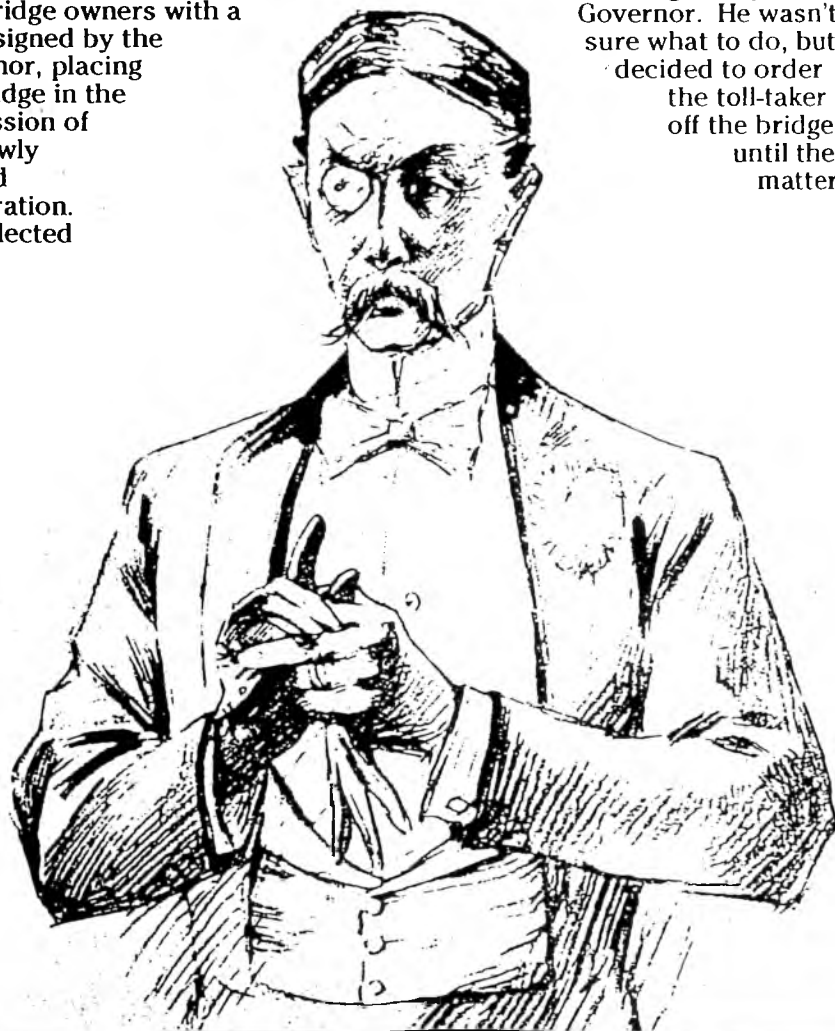
The local entrepreneur was intrigued by the idea but wanted to discuss it with him the following day. The following day's meeting was attended by Count Rhoshard, the original businessman, and two men with whom he had discussed the proposal. The three had formed a corporation under which to buy at least one of the bridges in question. The deal was made, and the count told the men he would be back in a couple of days to collect the money and give them the deed to the bridge.

Two days later Count Rhoshard appeared before the three new bridge owners with a deed, signed by the Governor, placing the bridge in the possession of the newly formed corporation. He collected

\$1,500, issued a proper receipt, and was gone.

June 1st brought some excitement to residents living around the area of the now private bridge. When they tried to cross the bridge, as they did every day, they found a toll collector who told them the trip would cost them five cents (eight cents for a two-way crossing made the same day). After considerable cursing and name-calling, someone decided to send for the Sheriff. The Sheriff, arriving late in the afternoon, was shown the receipt and the

deed, signed by the Governor. He wasn't sure what to do, but decided to order the toll-taker off the bridge until the matter





# Count Rhoshard

could be settled. A telegram to Montgomery, and the scam was discovered. Several parties, armed with rope for lynching, scoured the countryside, but the Count was nowhere to be found. "I told y'all he's from Georgia," one of the searchers remarked.

The Count next surfaced in Birmingham. This time, instead of staking the business district, he found a junk dealer on the outskirts of town. Once again he produced identification. This time the papers showed him to be an assistant to the Mayor.

Count Rhoshard explained that he had sought out this particular business because he needed a big job done, and knew of the good reputation of the owner. He told the junk dealer that the city was fearful that the Vulcan statue, located at the fairground, was becoming unsafe, being now twenty years old. City officials, he said, had decided to have it removed. The Count then offered to sell the

statue to the dealer for scrap if he would remove it. The wife, skeptical of her husband's big deal, went into Birmingham and sought out city officials who told her that no plan had even been discussed for the destruction of the Vulcan. The woman hurried home to find her husband making plans to claim his grand acquisition. Upon hearing what his wife had learned, he immediately stopped what he was doing and went in search of the man who had sold him the Vulcan.

Count Rhoshard was not about to stay around, and he was never found. News reached Alabama about eighteen months later that Count Rhoshard had been caught in Arizona trying to sell a tract of government land and put in prison. The same report stated that recognizing his ability as a printer, the prison had given the Count a job in the prison print shop.

He was a model prisoner for some months and did beautiful work. One morning, the warden

received in the mail a pardon for Count Rhoshard. The pardon was signed by the Governor and was accompanied by a letter in which the Governor instructed the warden to free the Count, who was to be sent on an important mission for the State. The warden was further instructed to give the Count \$1,000 and a vehicle so he could carry out the important business the Governor had assigned him. The following day the warden called the Governor's office to confirm the release of Count Rhoshard. The Governor had not sent the letter. The letter came from Count Rhoshard, and the prison print shop. Count Rhoshard was never seen again in this country. Some later reports said he was living in Paris. Though this was never confirmed, security at the Eiffel Tower was increased for some time after that report.

Submitted by Butch Crabtree

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# The Bridegroom Arrested

They said he was a thief  
but he loved his wife

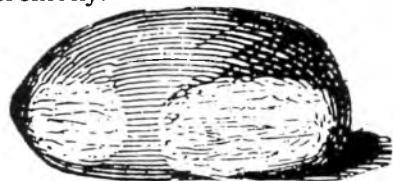
**SPECIAL** - A sensation occurred at the union depot today. An old man caused the arrest of a raw-boned swain and a country bride. She looked not more than sixteen years of age.

When the procession reached police headquarters, the prisoner turned to the old man who had caused his arrest and said:

"Say, look here, Jim Burns, I've done married the gal, and you can't do no good by kicking up a row."

"I don't believe you are married to Ginnie. You've got to prove that," the old man replied.

Someone was sent to the courthouse and it was ascertained that a marriage license had been issued to Ben Morris and Virginia Burns, and Pat Owens had performed the ceremony.



## Advance In The Price Of Bread

The great advance in the price of flour, which has followed close upon the heels of the advancing price of wheat, is to be followed in turn by dearer loaves of bread. Many bakers insist that they must charge seven cents a loaf hereafter for a loaf which is now selling for five cents.

Taken from 1820 paper

*Every adult needs a child to teach;  
it's the way adults learn*

"Good God, is my gal the wife of a horse thief?" the old man exclaimed when the news was told him. "But I'll make them suffer, Ginnie," he said, turning to the girl, "you and Ben stole \$45 when you left my house, and you've got to give it back to me."

"I love Ben," the young girl said, "and now we are married. I am happy. We didn't take but \$18, and you can have it back."

"Then, Mr. Policeman, take that fellow to jail for stealing my money," exclaimed the old man, who was white with rage. The policeman took hold of the young man, and after some trouble, with a pistol as a factor, the bridegroom was behind the bars. When he saw this, the old man's heart softened, and upon the payment of \$18 by the girl he agreed not to prosecute her husband. As Morris was traveling, and his pistol was not loaded, the other case was also withdrawn. The couple left for Anniston on the afternoon Georgia Pacific train.

From 1890 Newspaper

## THE WORKING MAN'S FRIEND



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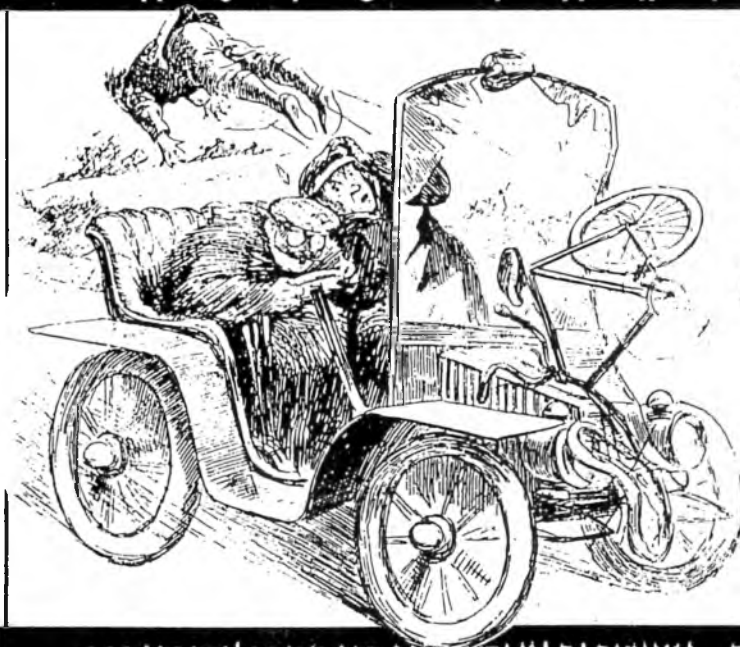
*Well done is better than well said..*

*Thinking is easy; action is difficult;  
to act in accordance with one's  
thoughts is the most difficult thing  
in the world*

*Goethe*

# TRI-COUNTY

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*"For all  
your  
spare  
parts."*

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## The Marriage Was A Failure

A friend of ours several years ago married a widow, and after the ceremony went to live with her somewhere out West. She was a blooming widow, young, pretty and as sweet as a peach. About a year afterwards we happened to meet our friend again and he looked thin and pale, and was evidently a suffering man.

"What is the matter with you?" we asked, "you look a glum as an owl!"

"Married life don't agree with me," he answered, with a forced smile.

"Why?"

"I've caught a Tartar."

"In the widow?"

"Exactly."

"Tell me about it, old fellow."

"Well," he explained, in strict confidence, "she is a perfect she-fiend. She abuses me, and is continually throwing that first husband of hers to me."

"Widows generally do that."

"I know it. I knew it before we were married. But I thought I had her there, for her first husband was hung."

"Hung!"

"Yes, but do you know she gets the best of it even then. If I taunt her with it, she calmly declares that hanging is a hundred times too good for me!"

Taken from 1909 Publication

## Electric Bitters

Edward Shepherd, of Paint Rock, says: "Having received so much benefit from Electric Bitters, I feel it is my duty to let suffering humanity know it. Have had a running sore on my leg for eight years; my doctors told me I would have to have the bone scraped or leg amputated. I used, instead, three bottles of Electric Bitters and seven boxes Bucklen's Arnica Salve, and my leg is now sound and well." Electric Bitters are sold at fifty cents a bottle, and Bucklen's salve at 25c per box, by John P. Hutchings.

From 1890 Huntsville publication

## Sentinels

by John Crow

*Concrete giants  
grimly guard the seething gashes  
slashed through the city.*

*Soon, giant backs  
will carry the highways  
that to and fro  
provide the deadly nourishment  
that festers and feeds  
the cancerous  
metropolis.*

*At dusk  
tiny tribes of mourning doves  
cry the sun to sleep.*

*The trouble with growing older is  
that it gets progressively tougher to  
find a famous historical figure who  
didn't amount to much when he  
was your age.*

Bill Vaughn

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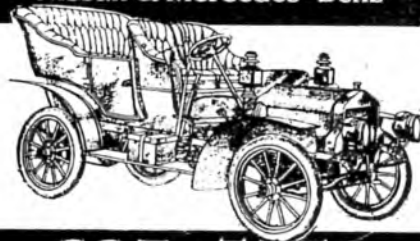
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# Letters From Matt

*Twenty-three year old Huntsville native Matt Crow was pursuing his education at University of North Alabama when Iraq invaded Kuwait this past August. Matt was also a member of the 167th (4th Alabama) Mechanized Infantry Battalion of the Alabama National Guard. As a child Matt spent part of his grammar school years growing up in Abqaiq, Saudi Arabia. While there, Matt acquired a passable command of the Arabic language. Figuring he might be useful to the Army, Matt volunteered to serve in Saudi Arabia and was called up in September 1990. Once in country he was assigned to a military intelligence unit of the 82nd Airborne Division. He returned from this tour of duty in November and was called back up this time as a scout for the 152nd Armor Brigade assigned to the 5th Infantry Division. As of January 20, he is at Fort Hood, Texas, training and waiting on orders to go back to Saudi Arabia. We don't know where he will be when you read these letters. The following are excerpts from his letters to his family here in Huntsville, written during his first tour of duty.*

Dear Dad, Sue and Lucius,

.....Greetings from afar. Well, I tried to call you from Fort Benning and later from Kennedy the Wednesday I departed. Sorry I haven't tried to write sooner, calling is almost out of the question here.

.....As soon as we landed in D'haran the heat, the smell, everything all came back in memory. My body however didn't remember too well and suffered tremendously from the heat. Any significant amount of physical exertion in this Saudi sun will bring about stiff, unrelenting penalties - passing out is common.

.....The food, however, is terrible. I've already lost 5 lbs. Because I'm in an airconditioned building at this time, I only drink about a gallon and a half of water and two soft drinks (Coke) a day. They have Catholic and Protestant services on Sunday, and even Jewish prayer meetings which are held in secret.

.....They've got me stuck here in a place called Dammam right outside of D'hran. I'm staying within a walled compound with around 250 others, including some thirty or so vehicles. Security is simply a joke. They did not take that into consideration when they rented this place. A freeway overlooks the main gate. A silo of some nature overlooks the shower area and the north and east walls of A company's sleeping quarters are nothing but glass (burlap-covered) separating them from the street.

.....There have actually been some small terrorist incidents near here in the form of drive-by shootings and such, just a few injuries, no deaths yet that I'm aware of. The amount of foreign workers here is tremendous. One for every Saudi citizen. So terrorists, including Iraqi, or the threat of, is no small matter.

.....The Arabs still drive like maniacs, in fact, two of the GI's killed thus far (as well as numerous injured) have been killed in auto accidents.

.....There's a lot of info I would like to include about Unit and Division locales, but I feel that's classified, actually I'm not sure. I can tell you that the \_\_\_\_\_ is in and around Abaq. When looking on a map, the Iraqi's have a \_\_\_\_\_ load of people to throw at us. If and when we decide to attack, the going will be hard.

.....My Arabic is coming back slowly and I'm learning a lot more besides. Well I guess that's it for now. Write back soon. Lucius had better be doing well in school. Tell me of any financial matters I should know of. Hopefully my Army pay is going to the bank smoothly. Tell all I said hello. Pray for an end to Hussein. Until we meet again, farewell and God Bless.

Matt



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ASSETS  
WITH  
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Cotton States  
people!*



**534~1814**

*A man's age can be measured by  
the degree of pain he feels on  
coming in contact with a new  
idea.*

*You're getting old when the only  
thing you want for your birthday  
is not to be reminded of it.*



HARD TO BELIEVE

**ABSURD  
NEWS**

WEIRD & WONDERFUL

**Lady Swallows Snake**

Miss Mamie Nolan, of Holmes Ave., has been in the habit of drinking water directly from the aqueduct by putting her mouth to the tap. She will not do it anymore, however, for she had an experience today that showed her the folly of such a course. While she was drinking, a water snake about ten inches long passed through the faucet, and went halfway down her throat. She could not yell, but she managed to attract attention by throwing herself down on the floor and kicking. The snake was pulled from her throat, and she fully recovered from her fright in an hour, but her throat is still sore.

From Huntsville newspaper 1913

**103 Year Old Man  
Sweeps Young Lady  
Off Her Feet**

The grandfather of Mr. Walls, now living near Athens, Alabama, never married until his 103rd year. His wife was just 20, and they lived happily together. "It was no unusual sight," says the Athens newspaper, "to see the old man, at the age of 130, plowing in the field. But he was taken sick when is his 138th year and lived but a few months.

Taken from 1902 Birmingham newspaper

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INTRODUCING



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## Tiny Ancestors Or Tiny Clothes?

When I visited a Civil War museum, I was amazed by how small the uniforms and boots were. At other historical costume museums, I've seen tiny suits of armor, tiny dresses with tiny waists, tiny shoes, and minuscule gloves.

The logical conclusion: We are large, compared with our ancestors, probably because we eat better today. People used to be much smaller. Witness how tiny our grandmothers and grandfathers are, not to mention great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers.

There's an alternative explanation, however.

So says the curator of arms at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, in science writer Horace Freeland Judson's book, "The Search for Solutions."

The argument goes like this: Suppose you are a person of normal size. If your clothes are expensive and not worn out, you pass them on to someone else, perhaps a younger brother or sister. Normal-size clothes are normally passed on, and get completely worn out.

Larger-than-normal clothes also get used up and worn out. They can be cut down to fit as they are passed on.

But it is difficult to pass on small-size clothes. Not too many people can wear them. So, they survive and end up in costume collections.

The armor in the Metropolitan

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Museum's large collection is mostly tiny, to be sure, but the curator believes the collections does not accurately represent the stature of the population of knights in the Middle Ages.

He believes that the knights were normal-sized, but that their armor was caught in the pass-down/wear-out phenomenon. A young man, knighted at 17, quickly grew out of his first suit of armor. So he hung the too-small suit in the closet and had a larger suit made, normal adult size, which he or someone else wore out.

Years later, when HIS young son was knighted, the dad's first suit was hopelessly out of style, thus impossible to wear, so the son had his own suit made, which he also grew out of quickly.

The grandchildren of the first knight remember their shrunken

old retired grandfather as a little man, and there's his first suit of armor hanging in the closet to prove it.

In his prime, the knight was five feet ten, the curator says, but nobody remembers.

Submitted by Jill Carpenter

*Almost no one feels indifferent about clothes: If their own clothes do not concern them, somebody else's do.*

*Some women show a lot of style, and some styles show a lot of women.*





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# The Battling Little Sergeant

**I**n the 1930's, Huntsville boxing fans talked proudly of Sammy Baker, the toughest boxer to come out of the city in that era. Baker fought throughout the Deep South under the tutelage of Bushy Bolton and "Kid" Glant, two of Huntsville's early boxing promoters. Glant died in the mid-thirties while hitting a punching bag.

Baker was born on February 20, 1902 in New Hope. At age 16 he went to work as a weaver in the Merrimack Mill. He enlisted in the Army at age 18, and began boxing. Baker fought in the Army Olympics in Hawaii in 1924. He earned a seat on the U.S. Boxing Team and went all the way to the finals before losing a disputed decision to Al Mello. Mello went on to win a gold medal in the Paris Olympics.

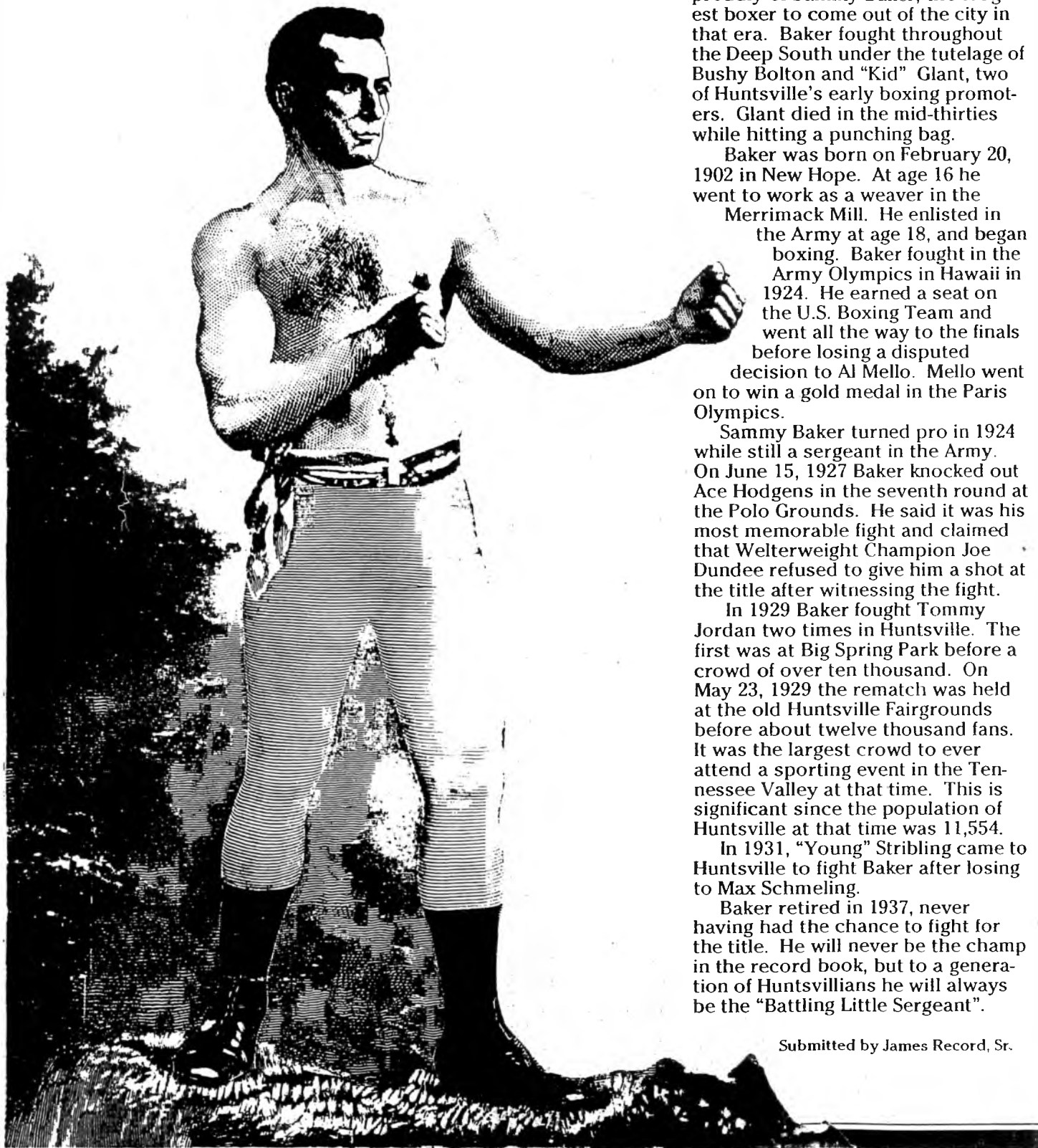
Sammy Baker turned pro in 1924 while still a sergeant in the Army. On June 15, 1927 Baker knocked out Ace Hodgens in the seventh round at the Polo Grounds. He said it was his most memorable fight and claimed that Welterweight Champion Joe Dundee refused to give him a shot at the title after witnessing the fight.

In 1929 Baker fought Tommy Jordan two times in Huntsville. The first was at Big Spring Park before a crowd of over ten thousand. On May 23, 1929 the rematch was held at the old Huntsville Fairgrounds before about twelve thousand fans. It was the largest crowd to ever attend a sporting event in the Tennessee Valley at that time. This is significant since the population of Huntsville at that time was 11,554.

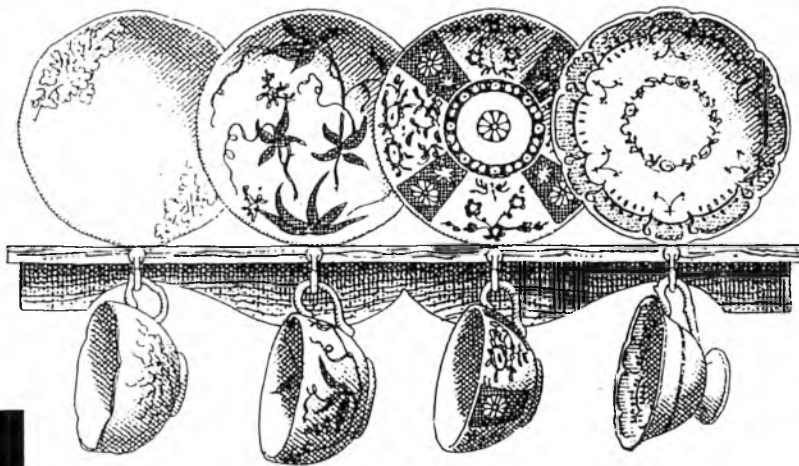
In 1931, "Young" Stribling came to Huntsville to fight Baker after losing to Max Schmeling.

Baker retired in 1937, never having had the chance to fight for the title. He will never be the champ in the record book, but to a generation of Huntsvillians he will always be the "Battling Little Sergeant".

Submitted by James Record, Sr.







# Sage Tea Helps Lifeless, Gray Hair

Look Young! Common garden Sage and Sulphur darkens so naturally nobody can tell you use sage tea in your hair.

Grandmother kept her hair beautifully darkened, glossy and abundant with a brew of Sage Tea and Sulphur. Whenever her hair fell out or took on that dull, faded or streaked appearance, this simple mixture was applied with wonderful effect. By asking at any drug store for "Wyeth's Sage and Sulphur Compound" you will get a large bottle of this old-time recipe, ready to use, for about 50 cents. This simple mixture can be depended upon to restore natural color and beauty to the hair and is

splendid for dandruff, dry, itchy scalp and falling hair.

A well-known druggist says everybody uses Wyeth's because it darkens so naturally and evenly that nobody can tell it has been applied - it's so easy to use too. You simply dampen a comb or soft brush and draw it through your hair, taking one strand at a time. By morning the gray hair disappears; after another application or two, it is restored to its natural color and looks glossy, soft and abundant.

from Huntsville publication 1881



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*'A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast' Proverbs 12:10*

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*The only competition worthy of a wise man is with himself.*  
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# Leon Crawford

R E A L T Y

*If you think Americans no longer have a competitive spirit, watch the shoppers in a supermarket when a cashier opens a new checkout lane.*

*Every advantage is a disadvantage.*

*To expect common sense of people proves you're lacking it yourself*

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## CANDLES

Continued from Page 6

the morning or late at night, light a candle and put it by your pad of paper. Then begin writing down every possible thing that you think may be wrong at that moment. It's like brainstorming - put down anything that comes to mind. If you find you're getting bogged down in thoughts of what you've got to do tomorrow, concentrate on the flame on the candle and really go inside.

Try to exhaust every possible reason for your feeling upset. Then on another piece of paper begin to list all the actions you can take to alleviate that particular problem. There may be some circumstances that you will not be able to do anything about; i.e., an illness you're trying to shake, a recent death in your family, etc. But for a majority of the sources of upset, there just may be something that you can begin to do to change that situ-

ation. And once you are back in control of your life again, you will see that your attitude will change completely. You will probably even begin to feel better immediately, for the simple reason that you are doing something for yourself.

Finally, but most importantly, reward yourself for going through the process and being successful with it. Take yourself out to eat, or buy that new VCR, go on that short weekend trip you've been putting off.

One thing, though. Don't leave home without your pad of paper and pen, and your candle.  
 Submitted by Catherine Carney

*To be content with little is hard; to be content with much is impossible.*  
 Marie Ebner von Eschenbach

*A good conversationalist is like a defensive driver. Both yield the right of way.*



### Old Huntsville Sweat-Shirts

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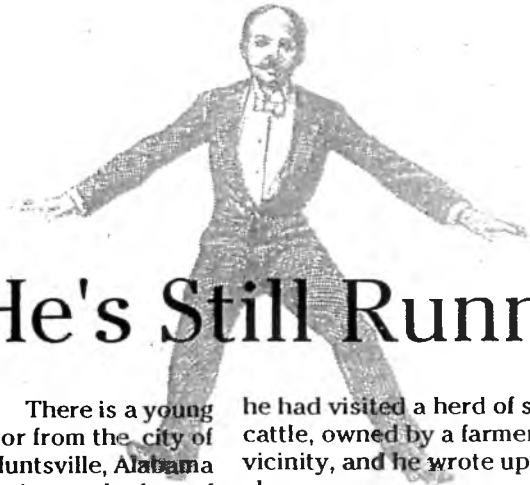




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## He's Still Running!

There is a young editor from the city of Huntsville, Alabama wandering on the face of the earth who formerly wrote for that paper. He left there the day after the issue of his last article, and is supposed to be crossing the State on foot to get away from an infuriated female populace. It seems there was a concert given by young ladies of the City, and the gallant young editor wrote it up in splendid style. The same day,

he had visited a herd of shorthorn cattle, owned by a farmer in the vicinity, and he wrote up the cattle also.

The cross-eyed foreman of the office got the two articles mixed with the following result: "The concert given last evening by sixteen of Huntsville's most beautiful and interesting young ladies was highly appreciated. They were elegantly dressed and sang in a most charming manner, winning the plaudits of the entire audience, when pronounced the finest shorthorns in the country. A few of them are a deep, rich brown color, but the majority of them are spotted brown and white. Several of the heifers were fine-bodied, tight-limbed animals, and promise to prove good property to their lucky owners.

From 1898 Huntsville paper

## Note to our readers

If you have any old letters that you think would be interesting to publish, please send them to:

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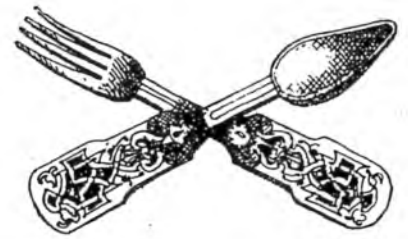
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A Public Service  
Announcement From  
Old Huntsville Magazine

# Elegant Stationery

*A severe simplicity marks the best and newest styles in fashionable papeterie. Ranged edged, burnt edged, leather paper, sliced lemon paper, ye olde English paper, scarlet paper and other eccentric fads in this line are all things of the past, and this winter it is predicted that nothing will be used but white (always most correct, by the way), a dull pearl tint, the very palest gray or blue flecked with tiny fibrous dots all through it and a greenish blue. On some of these papers the address, crest or monogram is stamped in dead white, which is very effective on the dark tone of the paper, but the only ornament in general is the house address and crest, if one is used, in plain black lettering in the upper right hand corner. The crest should on no account be printed on the envelope flap. This is secured with wax, in which white is the favorite and most correct color, followed by dull blue, pink or green; bright scarlet is not fashionable. The wax is stamped with the crest, or one large, heavily cut initial. The sheet of paper remains large and folds once to fit a square envelope.*

From Huntsville Publication 1915



## Ron's Winding Road Corn Pone And Potlikker

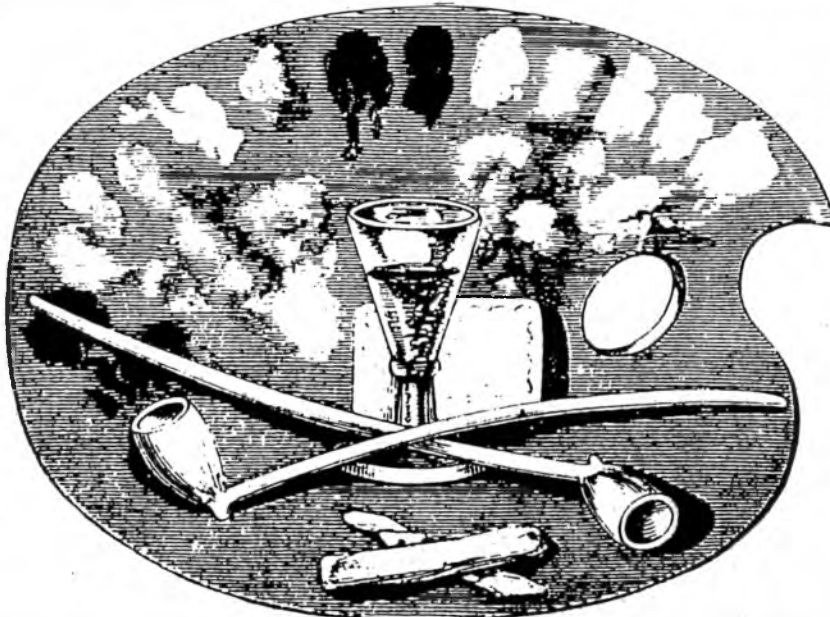
Like an old horse, some folks have been known to founder from overeating when faced with this traditional Southern dish.

**CORN PONE.** (This ain't no fancy cornbread, so pay attention Mix about 1/4 cup of cornmeal with 1/8 teaspoon salt for each cake. Blend with enough water to make an easy-to-shape dough. Mold into cakes about 2 inches square by 1, inch thick. Now comes the tricky part. Wet brown wrapping paper and wring it out. Wrap each PONE tightly in wet paper and bake in the ashes of your fireplace. (For those of you less adventurous, bake at 450 degrees for 20 minutes.)

**POTLIKKER.** Put a ham shoulder into about 3 quarts of water and simmer for about two hours. Wash young turnip greens and put them in the pot with the ham. (Cabbage can be used if preferred. Add 2 teaspoons salt, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper and pinch of red pepper. Cover and simmer another 2-3 hours. Add water as required to keep original volume. Chop the greens, slice the ham, put the greens and ham on top of the PONE and pour some POTLIKKER over the whole mess. Lordy, Lordy, I think that's why Grandpa died!

Submitted by Ron Eyestone

## Avenue Graphics



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## Visitor At The Monte Sano Hotel

Among the visitors at the famed Monte San Hotel above the town of Huntsville was James S. Porter, a young man whose wealthy parents lived in Birmingham. Porter had been roughing it on the mountain since the latter part of May. One of the first objects to catch his eye was a mountain lass, who lived two miles or more from the hotel..

The young people became acquainted casually, but the girl's fair cheeks and ankles were too much for Porter, and he visited the home of his sweetheart time and again.

Unfortunately for him, Porter's knowledge in games led the girl's mother, an old lady whose Bible and spectacles were her Sunday companions year in and year out, to suspect that he was a gambler. The girl refused to believe anything was bad of Porter, and in the face of her mother's opposition, she continued to receive her lover's attentions.


Last week she agreed to quit her home and to go with Porter to accompany him to Boston as his wife. They left the girl's house together, on foot, and took a wagon a quarter of a mile down the road. When a few minutes after they had started, the bride's father missed his daughter, he set out in hot haste and in anger to stop the runaways. He came upon them at a point where the road was steep and rocky, and when they whipped up their horses, he gave his animal such a furious cut that he was thrown from his wagon down the mountainside.

The mad horse ran past the lovers, and they knew that their pursuer had been injured. They went back, found him, took him home and restored him to consciousness. Subsequently, the young man won the confidence of the mountaineer couple and they gave their consent to the marriage.

From a 1897 Publication

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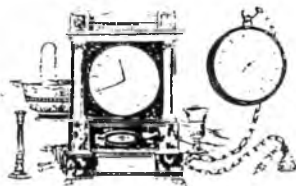
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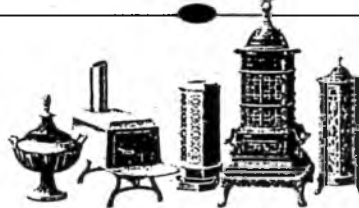
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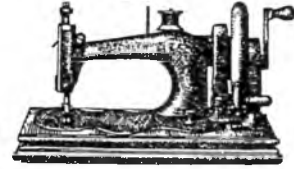
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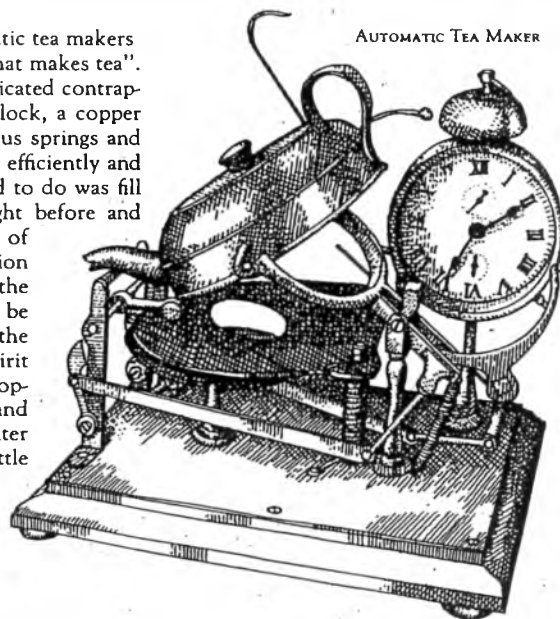
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Taken from Forgotten Household Crafts - John Seymour

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Old houses fascinate me so:  
I'm glad I live in one!

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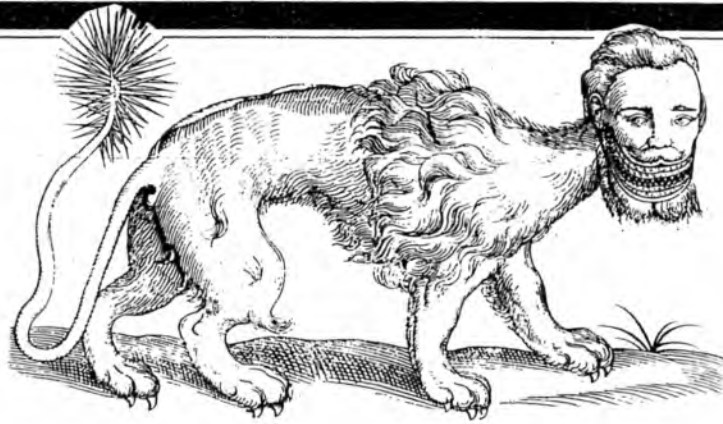
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# The Killer Wowser Of North Alabama

They are called by a variety of names, depending on what part of the country in which you reside. Some call them wampus cats, she-monsters, mountain hyenas, etc.

They are generally referred to as wowsers cats in Cumberland Mountains of the mid-South, the mountains around Huntsville being part of that range.

These strange animals, which possess certain human features, are - like bears and panthers - found almost entirely in mountains. As a teenager I was the Chattanooga News-Free Press's country correspondent for several small towns in North Alabama and my own hometown of South Pittsburgh, Tenn., a small community sandwiched between the Cumberland Mountain and the Tennessee River.

It fell my duty to report several items concerning the wowsers cats. The story related here can be easily verified through the files of the Chattanooga paper, circa 1949-1951.

A family living in Coldwater, along the Tennessee state line just north of Huntsville, was the first to report a wowsers cat incident. Such a varmint, which was described by witnesses as "half panther and half woman, with the pitiful moan of a screaming banshee," came down from the mountain during a harsh

winter night and killed a cow, on which it and other hungry intruders fed. Families - along the Cumberland foothills said such beasts killed and devoured numerous other livestock. Several sightings were reported, with all witnesses giving similar descriptions, although such witnesses lived towns apart in some instances.

The winter of 1949 was quite severe and laid the mountains somewhat bare of small animals on which the bigger ones feed. This was believed to have been the reason the wowsers - which are very elusive, normally - dared to venture near to civilization in search of easy prey. Domestic livestock, of course, make easy pickings.

Several South Pittsburgh laborers, en route before dawn to their jobs at the local stove foundry and the Lodge skillet works, took to toting heavy sticks - and in some instances, pistols - after seeing the creatures of horrors.

It was at first ascertained that wowsers are not normally aggressive to humans, except when someone comes between them and food, and are quick to run for cover. However, the winters of 1950 and 1951 were even more devastating than the one of 1949, and wowsers sightings became more frequent. Several farmers fired shotguns at them, but none

were killed.

Two adventurous young men - James "Fig" Newton of Bridgeport, Ala., and John "Snake" Stewart of Richard City, Tenn. - had been among many who reported taking shots at wowsers in 1949. A Presbyterian Sunday School teacher named Mrs. Friels, whose home abutted the mountains at Richard City, phoned me one morning, exclaiming in hysterics that she had gone into her backyard at 4 a.m. to see why her chickens were in a ruckus, and came face-to-face with the most horrendous creature she had ever seen. Her description would fit, quite accurately, the blood-red-mouthed monsters depicted in some of today's horror films.

I went off to the Korean war in 1952 and never returning to South Pittsburgh except to visit, opting instead for the bright-lights atmosphere of the big city newspapers. I sometimes - during the visits - inquire if wowsers still prowl the mountains and am assured that they do, indeed. Not as openly, however, since severe winters are not so numerous.

Submitted by Billy Joe Cooley  
Senior Editor, Huntsville News



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