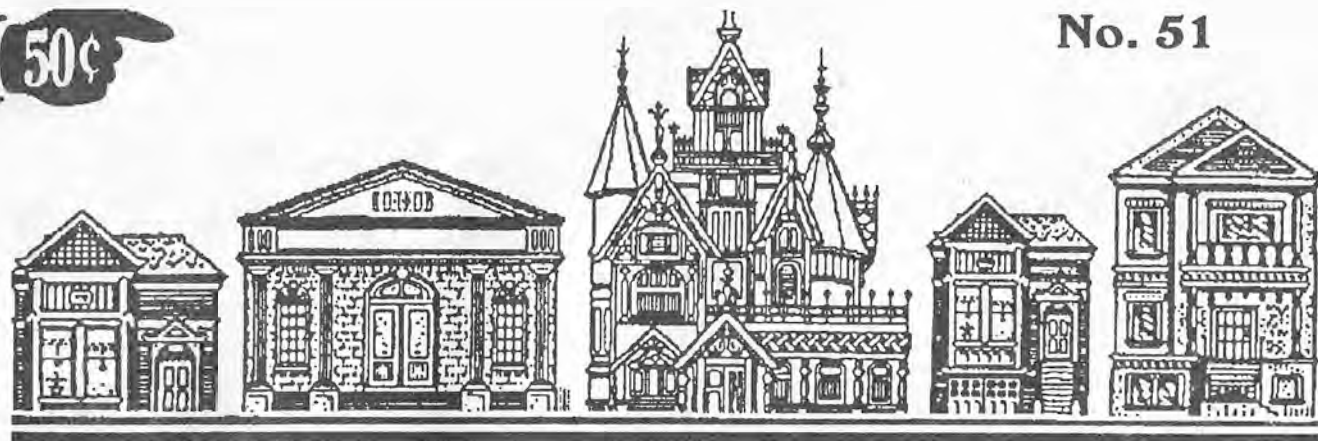


50¢

No. 51



# Old Huntsville

## The Day The Mothers Cried Dec. 7, 1941, a Day of Infamy



As word of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor began filtering into Huntsville on that cold winter day, the shock and disbelief was almost beyond comprehension.

The men began having visions of revenge, and glory on distant battlefields, but for the women, there would be no glory.

For many people it would be remembered as the day the Mothers cried.



Also in this issue: Remember Miss Kate?

# The Day the Mothers Cried

Dec. 7, 1941,  
a Day of Infamy

by Charles Rice

Eunice Merrill had just returned from visiting the doctor who had just informed her that she was expecting her first child. There was a cold chill in the air and the fireplace made the small house seem cozy as she and her husband sat in front of it and talked of the upcoming event. Suddenly, the calmness was shattered by a radio that had been playing softly in the background. "Stand by for a special announcement."

It was the familiar voice of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the President of the United States. Speaking slowly in his upper class New York accent that so many liked to imitate, Roosevelt made the unbelievable announcement. Three hundred and sixty airplanes of the Imperial Japanese Navy had just made a surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Six American battleships, three destroyers, and several smaller ships had been sunk, while four more battleships and three cruisers were heavily damaged. Army Air Force units in Hawaii had been virtually wiped out in the Sunday morning air strike of December 7, 1941.

People reacted with disbelief as the meaning of the

President's words sank in. Margaret Henson, then a young school girl, remembers she was playing bridge with some friends she was visiting at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Suddenly a student came in shouting, "Pearl Harbor has been bombed! Pearl Harbor has been bombed!" Mrs. Henson recalls thinking, "What is Pearl Harbor?" The name was by no means a household word.

Alvin Blackwell remembers thinking it another "Orson Wells hoax." Looks on people's faces quickly convinced him otherwise.

Doyle Ealy was a young employee of Redstone Arsenal, then under construction. Even though it was a Sunday, Ealy was at work in the supply room at the headquarters of the Chemical War Service. Shortly after the attack was announced, recalls Ealy, the unit's commander was startled to see two Asian men wandering through the building. The Colonel immediately ordered the MPs to arrest the enemy agents. The pair were quickly released, however, since they proved to be Filipinos employed by the U.S. Army. One irate Huntsville barber promptly put an add in the newspaper offering free shaves for Japanese. He found no takers.

Nevertheless, the Redstone commander's overreaction was understandable. For the first time since the War of 1812, United States soil had actually been attacked by a foreign enemy. Americans everywhere were furious. As the reality of war set in, people began to be concerned of what it would bring. Eunice Merrill recalls people standing in front yards and talking to their neighbors, with looks of shock



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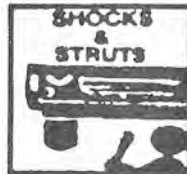
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on their faces. "The thing I remember most were the mothers and wives crying, and wondering if their loved ones would have to go to war."

The unprovoked Japanese attack galvanized Huntsville in a way few would have believed possible. Hundreds of men rushed to enlist, while the civilian front shifted from a peace time to a war time economy. Patriotism became the fashion, as the Lyric Theater began showing a steady diet of heroic (if sometimes hokey) war movies. Song writers joined in with offerings such as "Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition."

Over the next few months, Huntsvillians learned to tighten their belts as rationing became the order of the day. Virtually everything essential became subject to government restrictions--food, clothing, soap, coal, gasoline, tires, and even cars themselves. Rations books were issued and government stamps

were required to purchase almost anything.

The Federal government even set dress lengths, the War Production Board decreeing that "for the duration of the war, dresses can be shorter and shorter, or tighter and tighter—as fashion dictates—but neither longer nor fuller than those now worn." Every possible step was being taken to ensure that sufficient cloth was available to uniform the fighting men.

Women's coats and slacks, reported *The Huntsville Times*, could henceforth have no cuffs, while blouses could not have hoods or scarfs and no more than one patch pocket. Infants' and children's clothing, bridal gowns, "clothing for persons of abnormal size," and clerical robes were also subject to restriction. Men's fashions followed the ladies, and cuffless trousers became the style.

Women who made their own clothing at home were relieved to

find the restrictions did not apply to them. But any man who lived through this period will probably recall with delight just how short women's skirts did in fact become.



A Federal rubber conservation ban declared that after February 1, 1942, "no more crude rubber or latex may be used in manufacturing girdles or other foundation garments, golf and tennis balls, erasers, bathing suits and caps, lawn and garden hoses," as well as many common household items. Next, tire pur-

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chases were sharply restricted, and no one could buy a new tire even with a ration coupon unless he first presented an old tire that had obviously worn out.

Madison County was assigned a quota of 65 tires and 54 inner tubes for passenger cars for January, 1942. A local tire rationing board was set up consisting of Charles E. Shaver, C. S. Boswell, and George S. Elliott.

The Huntsville city council passed a special ordinance prohibiting the sale of any tire--car, truck, or bicycle--that had the trademark removed. Apparently, rationing had led to an outbreak of tire rustling in our town. Convicted tire thieves would be subject to a fine of up to \$100 and a maximum of six months behind bars. Guntersville was also hit by tire thefts, and Marshall County Sheriff Zeke Boyles suspected a bicycle theft ring was in operation.

The Alabama Pharmaceutical Association began a campaign

to salvage used toothpaste tubes for the tin they contained. Huntsville's drugstores placed containers for their customers to deposit their old toothpaste tubes. The Federal War Production Board liked the idea so much that it soon announced no one would be allowed to buy new toothpaste without first turning in an empty tube!

Those who grew up during World War II will remember doing their part by joining in scrap metal drives or saving tin foil from chewing gum wrappers. Mrs. J. E. Quinn and Mrs. Harry Nance of the local women's "victory food units" even asked Huntsville ladies to save glass bottles. They were to be used to store food in the school cafeterias.

Petroleum for cars was strictly controlled, and most drivers had to get by with a limit of five gallons per week. Many gas stations ran dry and had to

## Shaver's Top 10 Books of Local & Regional Interest

1. Decatur - Yankee Foothold In Dixie. Bob Dunnivant's Continuing Civil War Saga (\$17.95).

2. Mid-South Garden Guide - Best Guide for Zone 7 (That's Us) Gardening (\$14.95).

3. Wild Flowers of North Alabama - Over 100 color photos (\$16.95).

4. Railroad War - Nathan Bedford Forrest in North Alabama by Bob Dunnivant (\$16.95).

5. Maps of Old Huntsville - Reprints of 1861 and 1871 Maps (\$10.00 each).

6. North Alabama Frequency Directory - Access To Programmable Scanner Action (\$8.95).

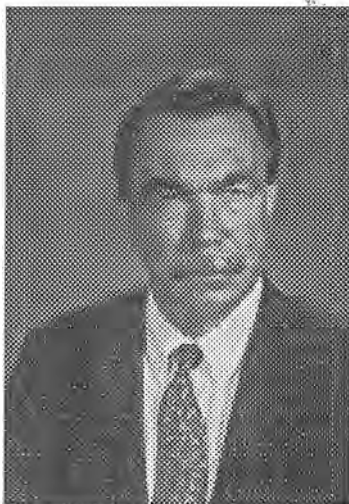
7. True Tales of Old Madison County - Reprinted by the Historic Huntsville Foundation (\$5.00).

8. Hard Times - The Civil War in Huntsville and North Alabama by Charles Rice (15.95).

9. The Way It Was - The Other Side of Huntsville's History. Rich and Bizarre stories of Huntsville's past by native Huntsvillian Tom Carney (\$15.95).

10. Glimpses into Antebellum Homes of Huntsville and Madison County, 8th Edition (\$10.95).

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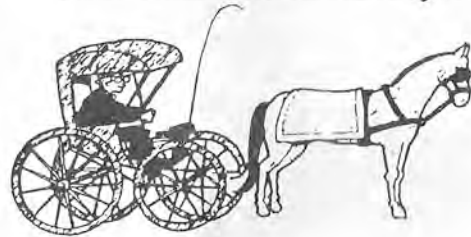
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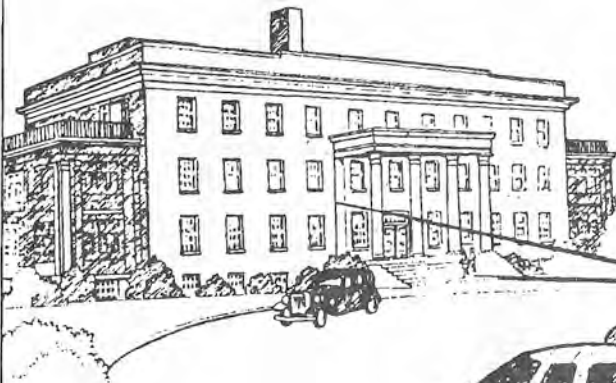
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shut down on weekends. Car pools came into fashion and bicycles became a common sight on Huntsville's streets. The Office of Price Administration then stepped in and rationed bicycles, an action which now seems rather counterproductive. The State of Alabama decided to help save fuel by reducing the speed limit to a maximum of 40 miles per hour.

On the positive side, drunk drivers became much less of a problem—if only because of the scarcity of alcoholic beverages. When the Huntsville ABC store closed in December, 1941, prices skyrocketed at the store in nearby Athens. Limestone County Sheriff Martin Whitt led Federal agents to shut down "six stills within a 100-yard area, within two miles of the courthouse," reported *The Huntsville Times*. Three of the moonshiners were caught and invited to stay in the Huntsville jail. Closer to home, a 20-gallon "baby still" was discovered and destroyed in Campbell Hollow, near Hobbs Island.

Meat and dairy products naturally came under rationing, since no one knew how long the war might last. Civilians were encouraged to start "victory gardens" to grow their own vegetables, and many Huntsville backyards were soon plowed and planted. Ironically, farmers—who were exempt from the draft—were enjoying renewed prosperity, a fact that caused considerable grumbling in view of the food rationing. Alabama Agriculture Commissioner Haygood Paterson urged people to, "eat two eggs a day and drive night-blindness away." That was probably good advice (disregarding the cholesterol) because of the "blackouts" designed and enforced to prevent enemy bombers from locating American targets.

Enemy bombers? Believe it

or not, Civil Defense volunteers went about teaching Alabamians how to defend their homes against enemy air attacks, no matter how ridiculous the idea must have seemed. One suspects it was done more for morale purposes than anything else. Fearing sabotage, the Army stationed New York National Guardsmen at Guntersville Dam, complete with machine gun emplacements, with orders to allow no one to approach closer than a half mile.

Since so many men had gone off to fight, woman took their place in the work force more than ever. Alabama State employees had their working hours increased, at the same time losing many of their paid holidays. February, 1942, also saw the introduction of national "War Time." The clocks were turned back an hour to gain extra daylight for work.

Redstone Arsenal, which had begun shortly before the war, now began operating in earnest. Less than a week after Pearl Harbor, Congressman John Sparkman announced an increase of \$4 million in Federal funds for Redstone.

While the arsenal offered employment for many, it did cause consternation to others. These were the 550 families who lived in the small towns and farms located on land included in the arsenal. One hundred thirty-four of the families were white. The remaining 416 were African-American. These unfortunates were offered a fixed price for their property: take it and go. Brigadier General R. C. Ditto gave them until midnight, January 1, 1942, to depart. "Anyone found living on the arsenal after that hour and date," said Ditto, "will be summarily removed." The Army then moved in behind them to bulldoze their homes and destroy everything they had worked their whole lives to build. The Army did relent and give them a few more weeks to leave, but at least a few Alabamians had their dreams rudely shattered by the Federal government.

Housing the thousands of arsenal workers also caused major problems for the city, and a large trailer camp was set up as a short term solution. Arsenal workers were eager to rent

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any space they could, and the Mayfair subdivision was built to provide homes for those workers able to afford them. Huntsville schools were quickly overcrowded with worker's children, as West Huntsville School discovered it had 1,100 students occupying facilities designed for only 300. By January, 1942, more than 12,000 people were already employed at Redstone Arsenal.

But if Huntsville civilians felt times were hard, they had only to reflect on the casualty reports that were beginning to come in. One of the first men lost from Huntsville was 21 year old Luther James Isom, a gunner's mate on the U. S. S. Arizona, missing in action at Pearl Harbor. A few days later T. W. Lincoln of Hazel Green, a Navy machinist mate, was reported killed in a plane crash near Norfolk, Virginia. Even civilians were in danger in this war, and J. F. Cullens, manager of the Twickenham Hotel, learned that

his brother, James W. Cullen, had been captured by the Japanese in the Philippines. Cullens was a field representative of the American Red Cross.

John Turner, a 21 year old African-American serving in the Merchant Marine, was luckier than most. Turner, son of the janitor at East Clinton School, was aboard two ships that were torpedoed and sunk by Nazi U-boats off the U. S. coast within weeks of each other. Turner survived both attacks.

Huntsville also took pride in the fact that the father and grandfather of the first soldier to win the Medal of Honor in the war had been residents of Madison County. Lieutenant Alexander Nininger, whose grandfather had been a Deputy U. S. Marshall in Huntsville in the 1890s, won the nation's highest honor for leading attacks on entrenched Japanese positions on the Bataan peninsula. Nininger, a member of

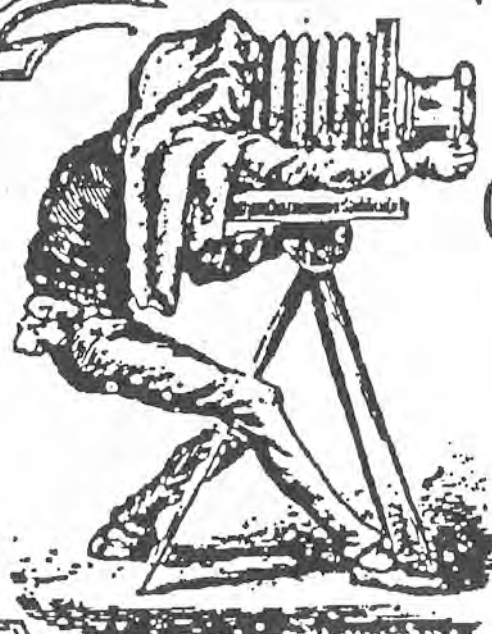
the Philippine Constabulary, was killed in the action on January 12, 1942.

By the spring of 1942, however, Huntsville had settled down to do the difficult job they faced. A long hard struggle still lay before them, but they were confident America would be victorious. The words to a popular song summed it all up. "We did it before," it went, "and we can do it again."

And three and a half years later, they did!



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# Just For Kids

by Ed Friddle

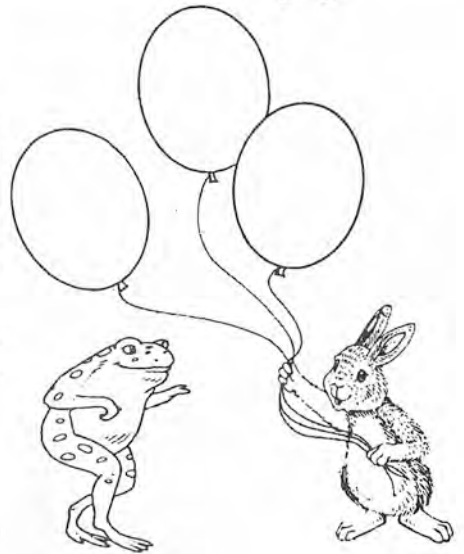
I don't have a dog  
I don't have a frog  
But I have a bump  
From jumping off a log.

A pearl  
A curl  
A little girl  
A toy  
A joy  
A little boy.



The books will be on sale at the Senior Center Gift Shop and other places starting in July, 1995. Mr. Friddle is donating all proceeds from his book to the Senior Center.

For more information please contact Mr. Friddle at 883-0409.



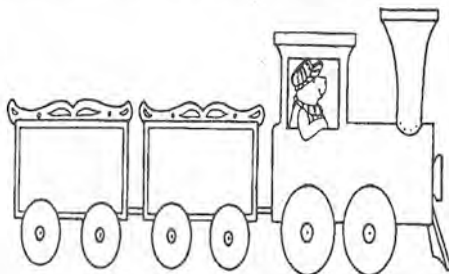
Doodle-dough; Doodle-day  
Please don't take my toys away.  
Doodle-day; Doodle-dough  
I just hurt my little toe.

I can throw the ball so high  
I can throw it far  
But dad says not to throw the ball  
When I'm in the car.

I like my doctor  
I like my nurse  
But I like chicken pox the worst.

Local poet, Ed Friddle, has written a collection of children's poems entitled, *Jingle Along With Me*. This collection is illustrated with charming characters and art. It would make a great gift for a young one or to keep on hand to read to little visitors in your home.

The author is a grandfather and has been a resident of Huntsville for over twenty years.



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# Walking Downtown

by Cathey Carney

Have you ever wanted to just "get away from it all" and do something good for yourself at the same time? Well, strap on a comfortable pair of walking shoes and hit the streets, downtown streets, that is.

More and more people are discovering the fun of walking these days, but it's still amazing how many people think that to get in shape you've got to run a couple of miles, or really work up a sweat. Not true at all.

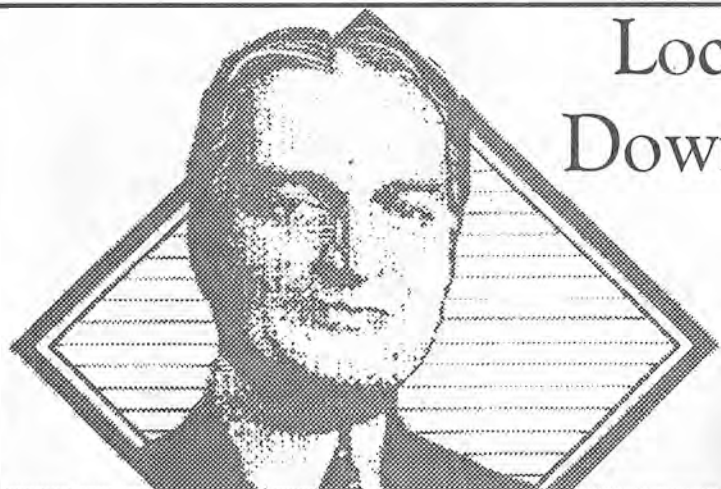


Magazines nowadays are telling us that just walking around the block is good for your heart. Especially for heavy people, for whom just going to the kitchen is an effort. If all you can do is walk to the sidewalk and back, do it. Once you begin, you've already come 50% of the way to better health, by just starting. But let's get back to downtown, the Old Town and Twickenham districts to be specific. These two areas have been

designated as the historic districts of Huntsville, and have been preserved as such.

Did you know that there is an elephant buried under a house on the 500 block of East Clinton? Or that there's an underground tunnel on Green Street? That there are some hundred year old trees on Randolph Avenue, near the Annie Mertz Center? Or that there's a Bed and Breakfast in Twickenham? Or that the huge old house located on Madison St. used to be a funeral parlor and is said to be haunted? That a homeowner on Lincoln Street built his home so tall that it completely blocked the view of his neighbor behind him, whom he hated? Look for the Spite House, and you'll see why it's called that.

Even without these amazing finds, just looking at the old homes and imagining what it must have been like to live back



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years ago in Huntsville is exciting. In front of several of the old homes you'll see the carriage steps, where the horse and buggy used to stop and the driver would give the ladies a hand as they stepped on to the block. There are markers on many of the older homes and it's interesting to look at the dates and try to find the earliest.

Many of the homes have been remodeled and upgraded, and with an older home the work just never gets done. It's fun to walk by a home frequently and watch its progress as it goes from being just a rundown old house to a loved and cared-for home. The older homes take well to unusual and colorful paint combinations, and it's interesting to see what colors really work for a house. Might even give you an idea about a new color combination to paint your home.

There are more and more people walking downtown these days, where there are interesting huge old trees and sidewalks. Many newer parts of Huntsville

don't even have sidewalks, but downtown is very safe and easy to get around in. Actually, some of the streets east of California are also quite nice, with beautiful cottage-type homes. It's fun to see what kinds of landscaping people are doing, what type of plants and color combinations are used that may give you an idea for your own garden.

But, back to your health. Unless your doctor says you absolutely shouldn't walk, you will find that the day you start walking you will feel better. Physically? No, not necessarily. It's the mental part that you will be amazed about. As soon as you begin doing something that you know is good for you, your spirits will lift. And that feels so good you'll want to get out the next day, and the next, and so on. It sort of feeds on itself. For many, the mental rewards are on equal par with the physical.

Finally, as an avid walker who finally got back into shape by walking around downtown, I finally found the sneakers that

are so comfortable, it's like walking on air. They also have about a two-inch high heel, which I had been looking for. Good arch support and it's leather, so they'll last awhile. They are Reebok's DMX Walking shoe, mostly white with touches of green and a large reflector pad on the back so cars can see you when you walk at night. They have them all over town I'm sure, but I found mine at Lady Footlocker in Madison Square, and the reason I'm telling you about them is because it took me years to find a good pair of walking shoes. But everyone's feet are different and Nike or Adidas may be more your speed.

So buy yourself some pretty walking duds, strap on your new walking shoes and hit the pavement. Downtown, that is! You'll be surprised at how good it makes you feel.

*The End*



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# General Lee's Cake



For years we have heard references to a mythical dessert called the "Robert E. Lee Cake." This cake was, according to legend, prepared and served at a Richmond, Virginia, hotel to honor the leader of the Confederacy.

The chef had served in Lee's command as a foot soldier and after the war went to work at a Richmond hotel where he quickly achieved notoriety for the dishes prepared under his supervision. In 1870, after receiving word that Robert E. Lee was contemplating a visit to Richmond, and would stay at the hotel, the chef ordered everyone out of the kitchen, and began preparing a dessert befitting the stature of his former commander.

Robert E. Lee's untimely death prevented him from ever sampling the dessert prepared in his honor. Because of the legend surrounding it, and its superb taste, the cake became a huge success, being prepared and served in restaurants all over the world. Strangely enough, as the years passed, the recipe became lost. For years people had passed the recipe down orally and no one had thought to write it down.

The recipe presented here was found in an Atlanta cookbook, dated 1884, and as far as we know, is the only one in existence. Certain parts of the recipe have been changed to allow for modern cooking convenience.

## Cake

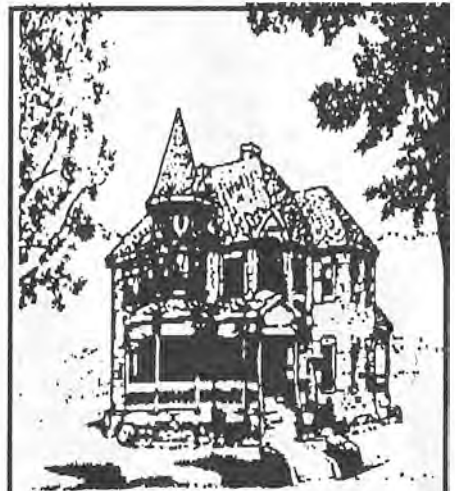
- 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 8 eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- grated rind of 1 lemon and the juice
- dash of salt

## Lemon Jelly Filling

- 6 egg yolks
- 2 cups sugar
- grated rind of 2 lemons
- juice of 4 lemons
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine

## Orange-Lemon Frosting

- 6 cups sifted confectioner's sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 or 4 tablespoons orange



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juice (fresh, frozen or canned)  
grated rind of 1 lemon  
grated rind of 2 oranges

## Cake

Preheat oven to 325 degrees: grease and flour four 9-inch cake pans.

Sift flour, cream of tartar and baking powder at least three times. (Actually, the more the better, but no more than six.)

Separate eggs and beat yolks, adding sugar gradually until mixture is satiny and pale yellow. Stir in lemon rind and juice.

In a separate bowl, beat egg whites with a dash of salt until they form peaks. Gently fold egg whites and flour alternately (about one third at a time) into the yolks-egg mixture. Divide evenly between the four pans and bake 20 to 25 minutes or until cakes begin to pull away from the sides of the pans. Loosen edges with a knife, invert on cooling racks and allow to cool, pans in place, while you make the frosting.

## Lemon Jelly Filling

Mix egg yolks with sugar, lemon rind and lemon juice in double boiler. Cook over boiling water stirring occasionally, continually stirring until mixture is smooth and thick. This will take about 20 minutes. Cool, then spread evenly between layers of cake.

## Lemon Orange Frosting

Work butter or margarine until soft. Stir in confectioner's sugar gradually until smooth. Beat in egg yolk and lemon juice. Stir in enough orange juice to produce a spreadable frosting.

Apply to sides and top of cake.



## Chased By Ladies

The following paragraph, which we clip from an army letter of *The Mobile Tribune*, may contain some truth; but as we have before heard nothing of the affair, we cannot vouch for its accuracy:

"We were driving Sedgewick's infidels across Bank's ford, when a Yankee officer was seen making his way through the streets of Fredericksburg, where we had no troops at the time, in order to gain the opposite side of the river. A number of ladies standing on the porch saw the runaway, and cried out, "Stop him, Stop him," when a Miss Philippa Barbour, a niece of Col. Phil Barbour of Virginia with a parcel of other ladies, gave chase and ran the Yankee officer nearly down, who, convulsed with laughter at the sport, became nearly exhausted, and gave up on being hemmed in at the corner of a garden fence. The ladies took him prisoner and locked him up in a room until our troops again entered the city.

from 1863 Huntsville newspaper



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## The People's Choice

by Charles Rice

Robert Burns Lindsay, Colbert County's only citizen to serve as governor of Alabama, had no easy time in taking office. Elected the state's chief executive in 1870 in a close contest with the Radical Republican incumbent, Smith, Democrat Lindsay found himself quite literally locked out of the governor's mansion. Amazingly, his predecessor, Reconstruction Governor William Hugh Smith, had barricaded himself in his office and refused to allow the newly elected Lindsay to be inaugurated!

Smith, a Georgia-born opportunist, is something of a puzzle. Historians disagree as to whether he was completely corrupt or simply hopelessly incompetent. In his first try for high office, Smith had failed to be elected to the Confederate Congress by just four votes. He had then switched sides and given his support to the Union for the rest of the War Between the States. Rewarded by the Radical Republicans with the office of

governor in 1868, Smith was not about to give up the goose that laid the golden egg—no matter what the voters might decide. The defeated candidate bolted the door to the governor's office and called on Federal troops to protect him. Smith's supporters kept him supplied with food and drink passed through an open window.

This farcical situation continued for weeks, while Governor-elect Lindsay went to the courts to demand that Smith allow him to assume his position. However, Smith remained firm, holed up in Montgomery and demanding a recount of the votes—to be done by Smith's supporters, of course. Finally, faced with a court order and with even Republican legislators speaking out against his action, William Smith gave in. Robert Lindsay became the first freely elected governor to hold office after the end of the Civil War.

Although he proudly claimed Alabama as his home, Governor Lindsay was not a na-

tive son. Like the great poet he was named for, Robert Burns Lindsay was a Scot, born on July 4, 1824, at Lochmaben, in Dumfriesshire. Lindsay had come to America at the age of twenty on what was meant to be a visit to his brother David, then a school teacher in North Carolina. However, Lindsay fell in love with the South and never returned home. He accepted a job teaching in North Carolina, at the same time studying law. He moved to Alabama in 1849, teaching in Tuscumbia until he passed his bar examination in 1852. The following year Lindsay was elected to represent his district in the state legislature. He moved up to the state senate in 1857. A contemporary wrote that Lindsay was "a fine debater, clear in his statements and conclusions, and dignified in his address, always exercising a marked influence by his superior information and conservative views." Lindsay's career was also advanced by his marriage in 1854 to Sarah Miller, widowed sister of Governor John A. Winston, one of the political powers in antebellum Alabama.

Like most people in North Alabama, Lindsay had opposed secession. A conservative Democrat, he had actively campaigned to keep Alabama in the Union. Once secession became a fact, however, Lindsay wholeheartedly gave his support to the South. He served in General Philip Dale Roddey's North Alabama Cavalry, until poor health caused his retirement. Lindsay was again elected to the state senate in 1865. He became eligible to run for governor in 1868, when the new Reconstruction state constitution permitted foreign-born citizens to hold the top

office. Ironically, this constitution was adopted while William Smith occupied the executive mansion.

Lindsay's administration was like a breath of fresh air after the corrupt rule of Governor Smith, who had left the state millions in debt over bonds for railroads that never seemed to get built. In fact the only blemish on Lindsay's term of office would come from a scandal involving the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad, a situation actually inherited from his predecessor. Lindsay could probably have succeeded himself if his health had permitted. As it was, he refused to run again and retired to private life.

Just two months after leaving office, the 48 year old Lindsay was stricken with paralysis. He would remain an invalid for the rest of his life. Nevertheless, he continued his law practice and was active in both the Presbyterian Church and the Tuscumbia Odd Fellows Lodge.

The former governor died on February 13, 1902, at the age of 77. He was mourned by citizens all across our state.



## Grandma's Kitchen Remedies



Store your marshmallows in the freezer. Just cut them with scissors when ready to use.

Once you have cut an onion in half, rub the leftover side with butter to make it last much longer.

Onions will stay firm for a longer time if you wrap them in aluminum foil.

For you tea drinkers, instead of using sugar, dissolve an old-fashioned lemon drop or hard mint candy in hot tea.

Get rid of a lot of that fat in link sausage by boiling them in water for 8 minutes before being fried.

To remove every strand from that corn cob, dampen a paper towel or terry cloth and brush downward on it.

To eliminate food sticking in your pans, always heat the pan before adding the butter or oil. Not even eggs will stick with this method.

Perk up soggy lettuce by adding lemon juice to a bowl of cold water and soaking it for an hour in the fridge.

If you are getting ready for a big night with a bottle of wine but have lost the corkscrew, try this. Run hot water on the neck of the bottle. Heat expands the glass, causing the cork to pop out. (I can't vouch for how long this may take.)

If your brown sugar is hard as a rock and you need it soft, just grate the amount you need with a hand grater. Or, buy the liquid type of brown sugar.

Greasy gravy? Add a small amount of baking soda to help out.

Meat loaf will not stick to the bottom of your pan if you lay three slices of bacon on the bottom before adding your meat.

# Star Market

## A Huntsville Tradition

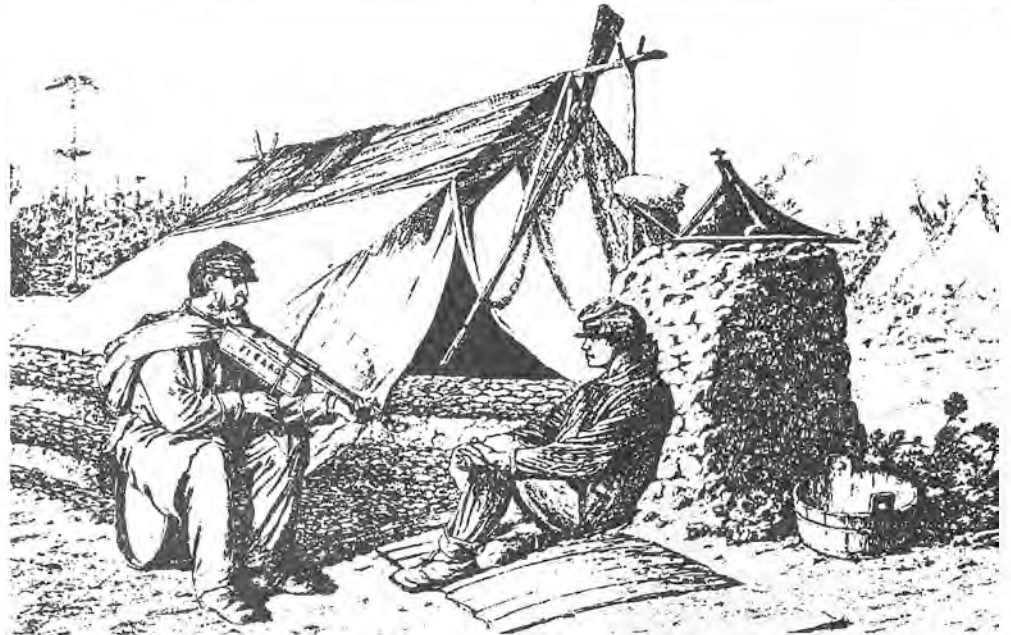
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# A Civil War Letter From Huntsville



*Submitted by  
Raymond W. Nelson*

Huntsville, Ala  
March 14th/62

My dear Mother

As time and opportunity present themselves now better than they have in a month I will write. One month today I left Bowling Green, and am as you see in Huntsville. We were encamped near Shelbyville Tenn, and on the Twelfth our company was ordered on with the wagons and led horses (sick men's horses). Two or three days before starting I was taken sick with chills and fever and Capt Gaines gave me and Malone who was also sick, permission to come by rail. This is the reason why I am here so soon. Our Company will reach here in a day or two more. The reg't comes on behind them A great many sick are at this place from our Company and from the reg't generally. The way sick soldiers are treated in this department (I can't speak for others) is a

shame and will always be remembered by those who know, as a libel and stigma upon the Chief Officers of this Division. They are sent here in the cars, and very often box cars with no accommodations or seats of any kind are placed. They come with the inten-

tions of entering the Hospital - but such a one as I have seen here I would sooner remain in my tent and risk all chances than enter one of our Company. George Riley, brother to Frank, now lies in one of those houses, dignified by the name Hospital.



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It consists of three small rooms, with about twenty or thirty sick, in chairs - no beds except their blankets on the floor and in fact no conveniences of any kind. They are not even allowed to have medicine. Riley is lying at the point of death with—pneumonia and has no one even to nurse him or attend to his wants except it is his sick comrades around him. Charley Malone is acquainted with Gen Hardee and he says he intends to lay the matter before him. I hope he will. We, Malone and myself succeeded in getting a private house and we are fixed as well as we could wish. I am staying with Mr Leftwich of this place a hardware merchant. He kindly invited us to his house and promises to cure me. The citizens are doing their best for the sick. They have been going to the hospital every day and are carrying

them to their homes. I did not intend entering one (hospital) when I came if there was any possible chance of doing otherwise. Having some business to transact for the Company we slept in the gentlemen's store and in the course of conversation he found out our circumstances and offered room and cheer at his house. So you see I am well attended to, even if I am on the sick list. I don't know where to tell you to write; for I think we will be migrating for some time yet. The rest of Hardee's forces are at Decatur, we may go there but how long we will stay I can't say. Your letter by Sergeant Allen is the only letter I have received in some time. I am anxious to receive another. I have heard no new news lately that would be news to you. I hope the state of Ala. will fur-

nish the no. of men to Gen. Shorter calls for. If my bad health continues, and if the Government pays me off, I will apply for a furlough. Give love to all and don't be uneasy about me. I will write again in a few days.

Your affectionate son,  
Burton

*Editor's Note: This letter is one of approximately 40 written by Isaac Burton Ulmer. Ulmer was from Mt. Sterling, Alabama. He enlisted in 1861, held the rank of private and sergeant in Company A Third Alabama Cavalry and served throughout the Civil War. The letter is transcribed from the original. Spelling and punctuation are as written.*

*The above material is from the Isaac B. Ulmer Papers, #1834 in the Southern Historical Collection, Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*



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# Somedays Are Better Than Others

by Gov. Fob James



Several years ago during my first term as Governor, I had occasion to spend several days in Huntsville attending a series of meetings. The second day I was there I awoke early with a ravishing hunger. As I lay there thinking about it, I remembered Eunice's Restaurant, a place I had visited several times before, and which was well known for its ham and biscuits.

Quietly getting dressed, so as not to awaken anyone, I slipped out of the hotel room and, after sneaking by the guards stationed in the hall, caught a ride with a taxi that was waiting out front.

Eunice's had not changed very much. The autographed pictures of many famous people were still on the walls, and the coffee pot was still brewing.

Trying to be as incognito as I could, I slipped into a back booth and ordered breakfast. I was halfway through my second biscuit when I noticed this elderly gentleman staring at me. Every few minutes he would turn excitedly to his companions and, after pointing at me, would engage them in a spirited conver-

sation.

"Oh well," I thought, "I should have known I would be recognized."

Deciding to make the best of it, I hurriedly finished my breakfast and walked over to shake hands and introduce myself.

"I'm. ...." I began.

"I know who you are!" The old gentleman exclaimed, with a grin stretching from ear to ear.

"You're that TV fellow who announces the wrestling programs on TV every Saturday! Can I have your autograph?"

Suffice to say that the gentleman got an autograph.



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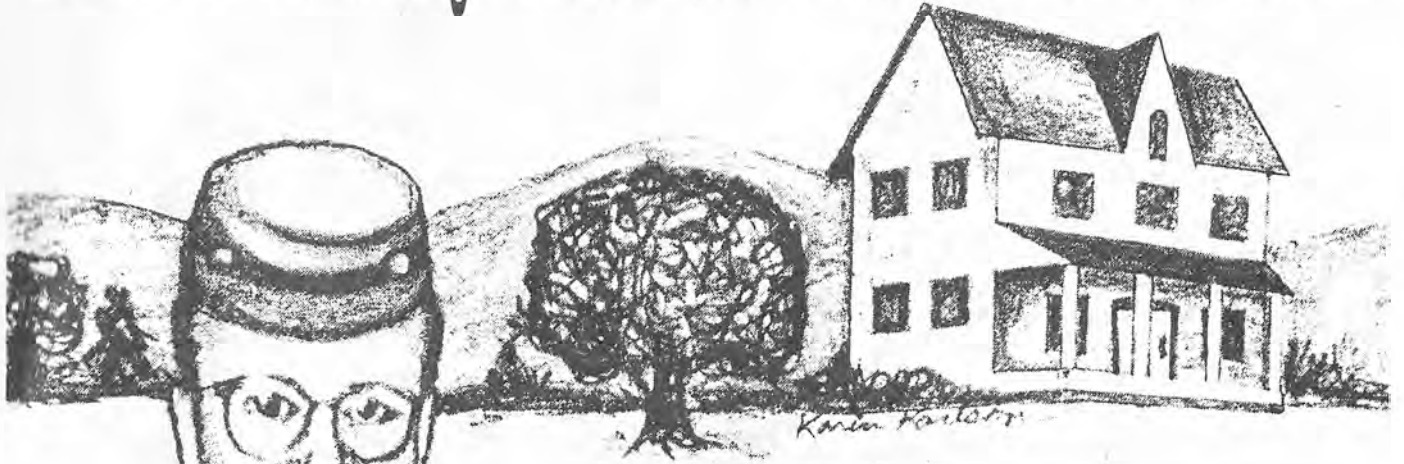
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# Our Favorite Recipes

## Vidalia Onion Pie

1 c. saltine cracker crumbs  
5 T. melted butter

\*2 1/2 c. thinly sliced Vidalia onions  
2 T. oil 2 eggs 3/4 c. milk  
Salt and Pepper to taste 1/2 c. grated Cheddar Cheese

Combine crumbs and butter, press into 8-inch pie pan. Bake for 8 minutes at 350 degrees. Saute onions in oil til tender, and pour into the pie pan. Mix remaining ingredients, except cheese, and pour over onions. Top with cheese and bake at 350 for 45 minutes. Margaret Hunter

## Garlic Pasta

1 package Rotini pasta, boiled for 8 minutes

In a large frying pan saute 2 tablespoons of minced garlic cloves in 4 tablespoons olive oil. Add about a teaspoon of either oregano or basil, dried. Heat the oil and mix well with the garlic and herbs. Pour the pasta into the frying pan and mix well. Let set for a few minutes to blend the tastes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Nicole Delay

## Chicken Casserole

Boil 4 chicken breasts,

deboned. Place in greased casserole dish.

Mix:

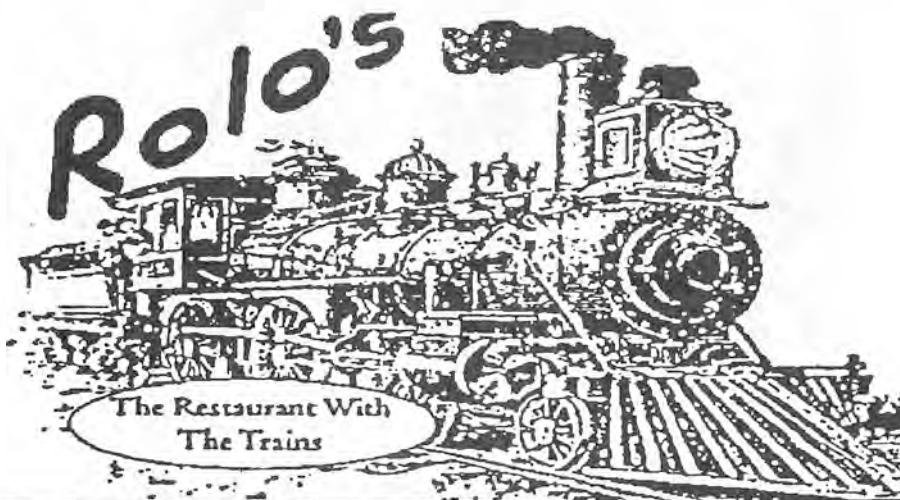
1 pkg. Pepperidge Farm Stuffing with herbs  
2 cans cream of mushroom soup  
2 chopped onions  
2 eggs  
3/4 c. milk

Spoon the mixture over the chicken. Pour 1 cup chicken broth over all. Bake for an hour at 350 degrees. Eunice Cantrell

## Swedish Lemon Squares

1/2 c. butter  
1 c. flour  
1/2 c. confectioners sugar  
2 eggs, beaten  
1 c. granulated sugar  
3 T. lemon juice  
2 T. Flour  
1/2 t. baking powder

Melt butter in a 9x9 inch pan. Mix 1 cup flour and confectioners sugar and pat evenly. Bake at 350 degrees for 18 minutes and lightly browned. Combine rest of ingredients. Pour over baked crust and bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes. Cool and cut into squares. Sprinkle with confectioners sugar. Gail Black



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## French Chocolates

1 12-oz pkg semi-sweet  
chocolate chips

1 c. chopped walnuts

3/4 c. sweetened condensed  
milk

1 t. vanilla extract

1/8 t. salt

1 c. chocolate sprinkles

Melt the chips slowly in a double boiler. Stir in the walnuts, milk, vanilla and salt. Cool the mixture for about 5 minutes or until easy to shape. With buttered hands, shape the mix into 3/4 inch balls and roll each immediately in chocolate sprinkles. If you will be serving these within a couple of days, chill them for an hour and pack in an airtight container. These also may be frozen. If frozen, thaw them out 1 hour prior to serving. Makes 50 small ones. Jeanne Kurtzahn

## Bourbon Bites

2 lb. all beef hot dogs

1 c. brown sugar

1 c. bourbon

1 c. chili sauce

Cut up the hot dogs into bite-size pieces. Combine the other ingredients and pour over the hot dogs. Bake at 325 degrees for 3 hours. Serve hot - can also be prepared in a crock pot. Fix the day before for better taste. Chris Wallace

*Thanks to Hewlett-Packard  
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# The Great Hartsell Bank Robbery



The most sensational bank robbery ever to occur in Alabama took place in Hartselle early on the morning of March 15, 1926, when the Bank of Hartselle was looted by a gang of robbers who held the town captive almost four hours while they stripped the bank of all of its cash and gold and some silver coins. *The Birmingham News* called the Hartselle robbery "the boldest invasion of robbers in Alabama's history." The writer also said the brazenness of whomever plotted the crime made people think that "the resurrected spirit of a Jesse James" had made an appearance in Hartselle. The robbers had "descended upon this town in Wild West fashion."

An exact accounting of the number of thieves who staged the daring deed has never been made but the evidence points toward at least fifteen.

The robbers arrived in Hartselle about 1:00 a.m., on the 15th. The bandits first went to the telephone exchange, climbed up the steps, and used a hand saw to cut the three cables linking Hartselle with the outside world. Every phone in town was now useless.

Other members of the gang began patrolling the streets to round up the few people still out at that hour. Seven men would be bound and gagged and placed for safekeeping in the rear of the

bank being robbed.

Less Williams, the night policeman, was captured first as he was making his regular nightly rounds near the bank. At that point he saw a man with a five-gallon gasoline can. The man told Officer Williams he needed to know if there was a place where he could buy some gas at that late hour. Officer Williams said there wasn't, but obligingly offered to walk with the stranger to the home of the service station operator.

Minutes later another stranger came on to the scene and he and the man with the gas can pulled their guns on Williams who was told to "stick 'em up." Their next victim was Ernest Mittwede, vice-president of a rival bank, Farmers and Merchants, who had stopped briefly at his own bank and was now walking home after a late Sunday evening date. It is ironic that the only bank employee taken hostage worked for another bank.

Now several of the robbers marched Williams and Mittwede toward the station where they had more work to do. J.B. (Brad) Huie, the L & N night agent, was seized when he came outside the station to get the mail and baggage which had been thrown off No. 8, the northbound train. His son Jack Huie recalled that his father, "laughed when someone yelled 'Hands up!'" "He thought," younger Mr. Huie continued, "that one of

the boys was playing a prank. However, when he felt the muzzle of a gun in his stomach he reacted immediately for he was half scared to death."

Brad Huie was told that he would not be harmed if he obeyed orders. This firm and somewhat humane counsel was frequently repeated as the group of hostages grew larger. Another member of the gang then went inside and got Oscar Willis who, at the time when abducted, was trying to catch a little shut-eye.

Meanwhile, other members of the gang continued to patrol the mostly deserted streets of Hartselle to apprehend any additional people who might put a successful bank robbery in jeopardy. Newspaper accounts of the robbery say that Chester Young (otherwise unidentified) was spotted on the streets and placed for safekeeping in the coal storage area in the rear of the bank which had now been broken into and where Less Williams, Mittwede, Huie, and Oscar Willis now were. Black rural residents Mack MacGinnis (sometimes spelled McGinnis), and Bob Grigsby were captured next. According to most accounts of the robbery, Messrs. McGinnis and Grigsby had come to town to see about getting a coffin in which to bury a deceased uncle.

With the streets virtually cleared, the robbers now did the first thing that aroused any attention from the mostly sleeping townspeople. They shot out the lights in the park area near the depot. Mrs. Schuell didn't know exactly when her wires were cut. She discovered it, however, when



she heard the shots being fired outside her window and, going to her switchboard, found the lines dead. This was after midnight, and based on the usual custom of firing shots to signal a fire in progress, she thought a fire was blazing somewhere in town.

The only casualty (not fatal) during the robbery occurred during the time the gang's marksmen were shooting out the lights. Dr. J.D. Johnston, a dentist, had rooms upstairs and just across the street from the bank. When gunfire brought an abrupt end to his night of rest, he thought that, as was customary, the firing of shots was being used as a fire alarm.

So convinced was he that there was a fire in progress, he got his own gun, went to the window, and, to help alert his fellow

townsmen, simultaneously fired it and shouted "Fire! Fire!" He was immediately shot in the fleshy part of the leg by a marksman stationed across the street.

Dr. Johnston limped to the Central Hotel and was taken to Benevolent Hospital in Decatur by Dr. John Kimbrough who was driving through town at the time. Once at the hospital, Dr. Kimbrough himself operated on Dr. Johnston and then returned to Hartselle to see what else he could do to help.

A system of clicks was used for communication between the robbers. For example, three clicks were heard from some sort of clicking instrument (it sounded like telegraph clicks) after Dr. Johnston was shot. This meant that all was well from the robbers' prospective and they could continue their work undis-

turbed. Each time one robber approached another he gave three clicks. The clicking may have been done by tapping on the butts of the pistols the men carried.

Probably, the robbers had not wanted to shoot anyone. Those held hostage inside the bank were not harmed. They were told by the gang leader that they would be OK if they kept quiet. One was quoted as saying, "We are gentlemen and we have no desire to hurt anyone. We are simply out for money and we want cash, and cash only." One robber said the men were "hard up" for money. When one of the hostages told a robber he was cold, the robber put a couple of overcoats over his lap for warmth.

*continued on page 28*

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# billy joe cooley

AN EDUCATED MAN

**THOSE GREAT** Monday night gazebo concerts (7 to 8) are held this year on the beautiful campus adjacent to the UAH Union Building. Plenty of free parking without having to walk across dangerous streets. **Bianca Cox**, after 10 years, has finally got the free shows away from Big Spring and deserves a pat on the back after her much-publicized flap with the Silly Council.

A bunch of us helped Opryland launch its Hangman rollercoaster ride the other day. **Helen Sockwell** was first to ride. It flips you upside down five times at 60 mph, but is a smooth and quiet non-jerk attraction, contrary to those Six Flags ce-

ment-mixer types. I rode with our Pascagoula pal **Danny Myrick**. He's part of the Western Flyer band.

Our poet friend **John Chambers** entertained with a garden party for writers at his Athens home on Sunday. Some came from far away places, State Rep. **Paul Parker** of Hartselle, **Krissie Foshee** of Pisgah and **Eric Smith** of Dutton among them. Even the exciting **Ruth Weems** and daughter **Dorothy** were there. **Steve Bailey**, **Patricia Golden**, **Judy Downing**, **Tom and Terri McDougle**, **Kathy Petersen** and **Amy Johnston** made sure all present were well hosted. Writers **Chris Fuqua** of Athens and **Sue Scalf**

of Prattville were the honorees. A kitchen volunteer was **Charlotte Fulton**. Musicians were from Gazebo Campus Concerts: **Mary Nell Linney**, **Susan Goldman**, **Marilyn Verdier** and **Bianca Cox**.

We've discovered a super oriental food place, *The Formosa*, on University Drive next to Red Lobster. Not since the days of Mr. Jackson's Mandarin have we enjoyed Chinese food as much. Several of our favorite staffers are there, too, including a few from Mandarin of old. Especially enjoyable are their luncheon and dinner buffets. **Samuel Woodward**, a muckety-muck with Huntsville Symphony, was there when we entered. That's when I knew it had to be good.

Our Connecticut-yankee carpenter friend **Mark Abbenante** of Thomaston was part of the scene this year at Nashville's Summer Lights festival. This year's fest was the biggest and best ever. It's the first weekend in June, so mark your calendars.

## HUNTSVILLE'S OWN IRISH PUB

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Floridian **Gary Bridge** drove his big white Cadillac up from Jacksonville a few days ago, spending time with **Sandy Taylor, Billy Baldwin** and **Al and Mary Larsen**.

**THE ROCK GROUP** "Plaid," debuted its second album of alloriginal songs two weeks ago before a large crowd at The Depot. The group is comprised of Huntsvillians **Alan Little, Brent and Hunter Copeland, Hank Gravel** and **David Schrimsher**.

That new daytime cashier at Shoney's, University and Parkway, is **Nona Kendrick**, whom we know from attending all those gospel quartet concerts. Her brother **Billy Blue** sings and plays gospel piano.

Auburn grad **Sean Spillane** is home from world travels to attend the 20-year Grissom reunion. He's been escorting mama **Mary** and **Polly Schuster** to all sorts of outings around town.

**THAT WAS A VERY** successful Panoply last month. The impressive ultra-modern McDonnell Douglas stage is owned by **David and Janet Milly's Theatrical Lighting Systems** (TLS). Everybody in town showed up for the events, including **Larry Reach** and **Rusty**

**Greer** of Myrtle Beach, S.C., guests of **Pete and Nancy Milly** (and their offspring **Paul and Justin**). Even **Matthew Fairless** of Johnson High was there to cheer his pals on stage.

Butler High thespians did great with their "**Marvelous Clothes**" play the other weekend. Our neighbor **Daniel Smartt** and his fellow student **Stephen Wade** really strutted for awhile. One of the outstanding cast members was pretty **Shannon Pitts**, who died a few days later in a tragic car wreck.

There are three fascinating merchants adjacent to each other at Limestone Flea Market: **Ules G. Reid Jr.** deals in every kind of new and old-time recording you can imagine. Next is **Catherine Wilson**, who deals in herbs, jams, preserves and chow-chows. The other is Gadsden native **Jack Paris**, who deals in all sorts of magnification devices and who almost sold a house once to gospel-singing legend **Jake Hess**.

**WELCOME** to Huntsville our new neighbors, the New York **Morgans** (from Apalachin). There are **Fred and Shirley** and **Barry and Kristen**. A fine family, indeed.

**Lisa Edwards Byles** is back in town at Ryan's (Univer-

sity) with sons **Nick** and **Josh** after waitressing for years in Fort Walton.

**Bess Hereford's** wedding the other day attracted old pals from everywhere, including famous names you know: **Charlotte Johnson** of Washington, **Nancy Kling** ("his" sister) of Montgomery, **Margaret Von Braun** ("his" daughter) of Idaho and **Linda Wright**, who has just moved back here from somewhere.

Congrats to **Betsy Battle** on winning this year's JFK scholarship, awarded by the county's Democrat Women. She's Judge **Joe's** daughter.

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# Robbery Reported Of Constable Jim Overton

A band of professional sneak thieves is at work in Huntsville and during the last few days they have secured quite a large sum of money in small amounts as well as a considerable quantity of "junk."

Most of the work of the thieves has been done in daylight. The police have a record on each of the following cases: Boston Shoe Company, cash drawer robbed or \$40 in silver. M.S. Barnett, cash drawer robbed of \$7 in money. A. Campbell, cash drawer robbed of about \$8 in money. Gilbert & Clay's brokerage office, robbed of small sum of money. Constable James Overton reported the latest piece of thieving this morning.

Overton left his trousers near the window of his room at his home in Patton Grove last night and when he got up this morning they were not to be found anywhere. The pockets of the garment contained a gold watch, \$11.25 in money and several valuable notes.

No trace of the thief has been secured. It is believed that the thief reached in the window and made off with the booty. The work of the thieves shows that they are accomplished in the thief profession and they are finding easy pickings here in Huntsville.  
from 1907 Huntsville newspaper

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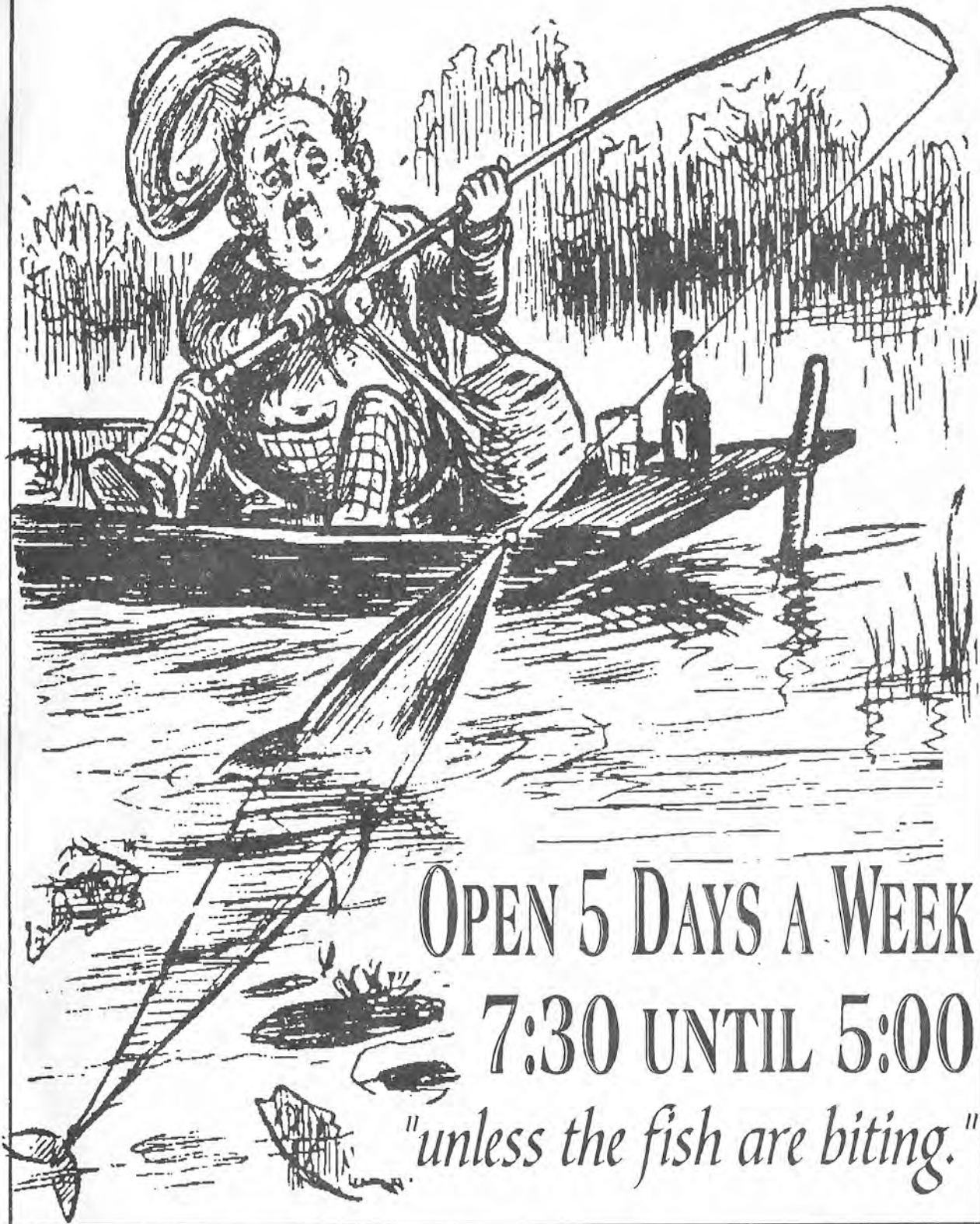


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cont. from pg. 23

However, when one of the hostages became overly upset, it was necessary for him to receive a blow to the head as a calming antidote.

This prisoner, who most unnerved the robbers, was McGinnis, the most demonstrative of the hostages. He prayed repeatedly for divine intervention. One of his prayers was: "Oh, Lord, I ain't done anything-Just trying to buy a coffin. Please help me, God. These men aim to kill me."

One of the gangsters was so provoked by McGinnis' praying that he told one of his comrades, "If he don't shut up, I'm going to have to kill him." McGinnis resumed his praying, but quietly after the warning.

As the nitroglycerine blasts were going off, the bandits made sure the hostages were at a sufficient distance that they would not be harmed. However, the captives believed that they might be entombed when the bank building caved in on account of the force of the explosives. Also, the hostages' anxiety undoubtedly grew even more intense when, at one point, one of the gangsters confessed after a particularly frightening explosion, "I'm afraid that's all this old building will

take." Nevertheless, he was ordered by the gang leader to, "pour more in."

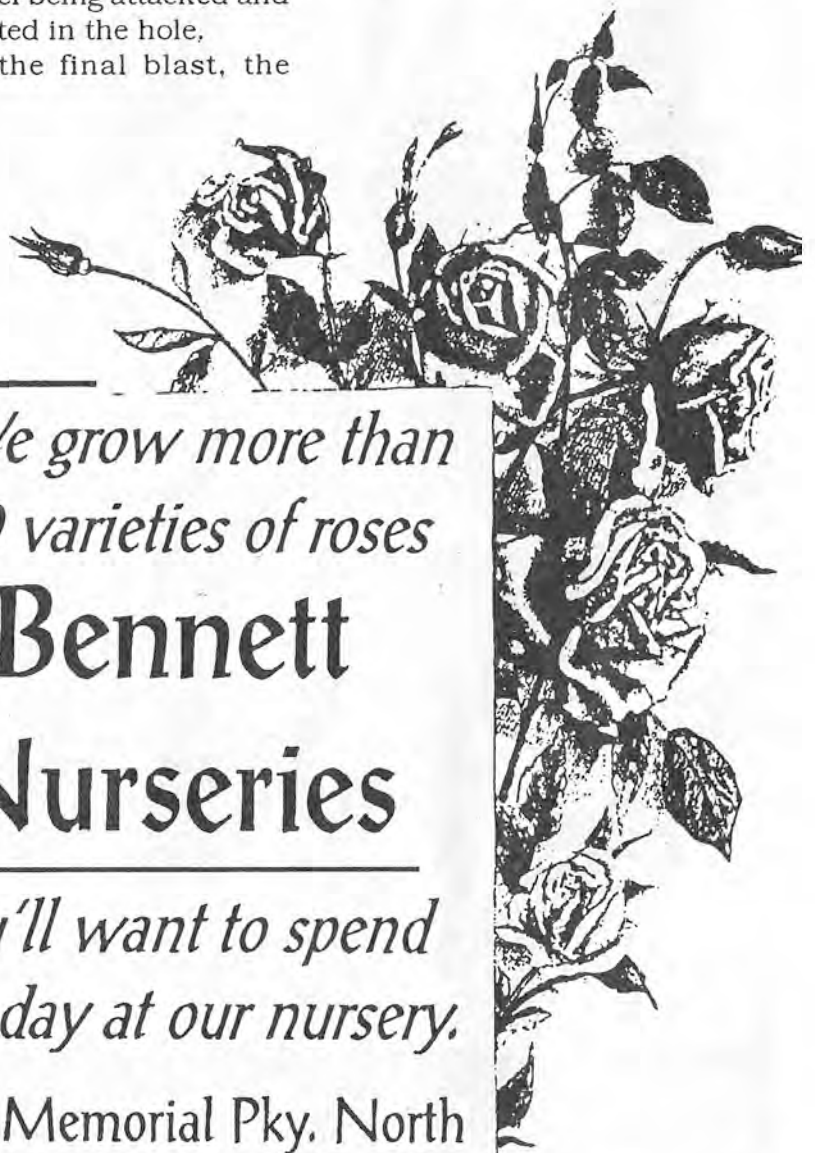
Huie recalls that what most impressed him was the workmanlike attitude of the robbers. "They talked quietly, never seemed to rush, and showed no panic."

The first two blasts of nitro still left the cash untouched. Successive blasts (eight in all) nearly wrecked the inside of the building. Octagon soap was used to contain the explosive in cracks of the door and concentrate its force. After this step was completed a hole was bored into the layer of steel being attacked and nitro inserted in the hole.

With the final blast, the

vault lock was blown 50 feet, where it implanted into the ceiling of the bank. The door itself was blown 10 feet off its hinges. With regard to the force of the last nitroglycerine blast, the local newspaper noted that, "the final shot was so successful it all but wrecked the front of the building." The blasts were heard as far away as two miles.

The shooting out of the lights in the town square quickly aroused many Hartselle citizens, especially in the immediate vicinity of the bank. Apparently, the shooting of Dr. Johnston was a visible warning to other Hartselle



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citizens not to attempt any interference with the robbery in progress. Anytime someone was brave enough to approach within sight of the robbers he was commanded, "Keep off, or have your brains blown out."

People who had come out after hearing the initial gunshots did not bring their firearms since, like Dr. Johnston, they believed the shots constituted a fire alarm. Pierce Pattillo, the vice-president of the bank being robbed, is reported to have advanced toward the bank but, at the railroad tracks, was forced back by one of the gang of armed men.

In the dark it was impossible for the townspeople to organize any counteraction. Some observers told reporters that they had watched the robbery in progress for a couple of agonizing hours.

Journalists expressed surprise that possibly no more than two sentry gunmen could hold a hundred curious citizens at bay, particularly when every one of them surely had one or more guns back home which they could have easily retrieved. However, there are good explanations both for what did and did not happen.

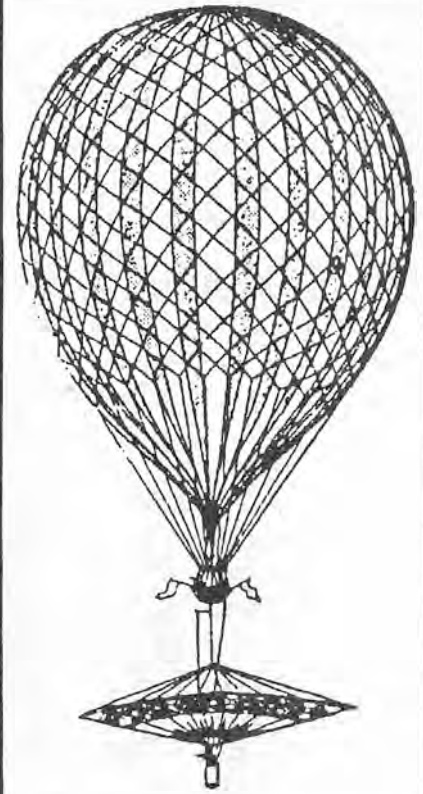
J.M. Lindsay was aroused from his bed by the shots and walked toward the downtown area to see what was the matter. When he got close to the area a shot buzzed by his head as a warning to keep away. Lindsay was understandably upset. However, he later told an acquaintance that he, "didn't mind being shot at so much, but the gunman"—possibly not as gentlemanly as some of his colleagues—"called me an SOB, and I don't take that from any-

body!" When someone turned on the lights of the Pucket and Orr Drug Store across the street from the bank, a marksman inside the bank shot through two plate glass windows to return the drugstore to a darkened condition.

I.V. Griffin, cashier of the Bank of Hartselle, was reached and informed that a robbery was in progress. He then sent word to Arthur Stephenson, the bank president, who was sick in bed at his home on Hickory Street. Stephenson asked that word be given out to the townspeople not to risk their lives by trying to stop the robbery. The deposits were insured. More importantly, the welfare of the hostages would be severely jeopardized. A more humorous account has it that Mr. Lindsay went to Griffin's house and, as he did so, Griffin called out: "What's going on out there?" Lindsay replied that a robbery was in progress. At this Griffin is supposed to have said, "Well, it's insured." and closed the window.

The citizens of Hartselle wanted to do something and, at one point, two men went to the national guard armory and got a machine gun. Apparently, Griffin was not as nonchalant about the robbery as he is portrayed in some accounts. Upon discovering the machine gun, he refused to allow them to continue, believing that indiscriminate firepower would kill the hostages.

The bank robbers were concerned about the crowd outside the bank. Toward the latter part of the robbery, Mittwede said that the guard who was watching over the hostages was told that there were too many people out front and he was



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needed to handle the crowd. The hostages were left largely unattended at this point.

While the robbery was in progress, L & N Train No. 7 arrived at the station. This was about 2:00 a.m., and the robbery was well underway. The conductor, baffled at seeing neither agent nor passengers, began an investigation. Assembled townspeople told him that a robbery was in progress and that hostages, (including the missing agent) had been taken. Train conductor Taylor also discovered that the station wires had been severed. However, there was an emergency line which had escaped detection by the bandits and Taylor used this wire, located a half-mile up the tracks, to alert Cullman and Birmingham about the robbery in progress.

At this point the conductor told the townspeople, "Well, I've got to get back. I've got \$125,000 on that train." The train left Hartselle as instructed since rail officers feared that the bandits might next attempt to rob the cargo of the train and its passengers.

When at last access to the vault was gained, the robbers hoisted the money onto their shoulders and, as they bade good-bye to their hostages, they commanded them to lie still. According to a report, the command was put none to congenially. "You sit still or the man outside will kill you."

The robbers had worked about three hours before being able to effect their escape. When the money was theirs, members of the gang outside the bank were called inside. All the robbers then left the bank through the back door.

They waded for the distance

of a block northward through the branch creek behind the bank ("Nasty Branch"), got out, and into their parked cars. The water departure meant they left no immediately detectable tracks. The escape by water also prevented bloodhounds from picking up a scent. One hunch is that the robbers had parked the cars in the vicinity of the Hartselle cemetery. Then, it was believed, they headed south, toward Birmingham. According to another account, the robbers split upon leaving town. Seven or eight supposedly went to Birmingham and the rest went to Nashville. One man was reported to have bought a car in Tennessee and paid for it with gold, which was unusual.

The loot taken was gold, paper currency, and silver. Most of the silver remained in the bank after it was robbed. Following the robbery it was scattered all over the floor. Initial estimates reported a loss of between \$10,000-\$20,000.

One account said that \$11,000 of the money taken was in bills, \$4,000 in gold, and \$1,000 in silver. The bills were in packages of \$500 each. They were in small denominations, making in virtually impossible to trace them. The bank's assistant cashier, James E. Peck counted \$14,302.78 as missing.

The hostages remained as they were for a few minutes before untying each other. Less Williams freed himself first by getting access to the knife he still had on his person. He then cut the bonds of the other hostages.

Amazingly, the bank was open for business the following Monday morning. Prior to the bank's opening, the broken windows were boarded up. Towns-

people pitched in to help with the massive cleanup job. At 9:00 a.m., the bank opened for business as usual with money temporarily made available by other banks. It was reported that the employees' confident smiles discouraged any tendency of their customers to make a "run on the bank." Many depositors did at first withdraw their funds but, just as quickly, put it right back where it had been in the first place. Also the money tempo-

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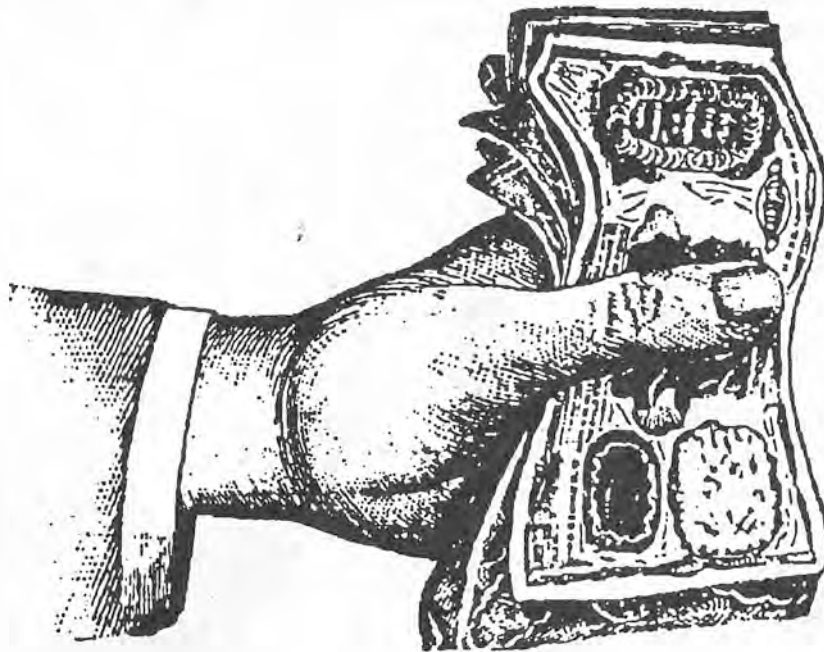


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rarily loaned by the other banks was publicly displayed.

Right after the robbery there was much optimism that the thieves would be captured rather quickly. One Birmingham newspaper account read confidently: "The Hartselle bank bandits are in Birmingham and will be rounded up within a few days." The upbeat altitude was attributed to private detectives investigating the robbery.

The regular law enforcement authorities were more realistic in their assessment of prospects for solving the Hartselle Bank robbery. The local police were reported to be "without clues" as they wrestled with the problem of trying to identify the robbers. *The Hartselle Enterprise* reported in its first edition after the robbery that, "numerous clues have been obtained and still are being pursued but to date no tangible results have been obtained. So thoroughly did the robbers cover their tracks, no reliable hint of their whereabouts has come to light."

This is still true 68 years after the robbery occurred. Officer Williams was questioned for details of the robbery by approximately 35 detectives. The Morgan County sheriff investigated the robbery but he said his investigation found nothing to give the slightest indication as to the identity of the robbers. The Cullman sheriff and chief of police had sped to Hartselle early on the morning of the holdup but by the time they arrived the bandits had been gone for well over an hour.

Several tools apparently used in the robbery could have yielded fingerprints but they were handled by so many people

that they were useless as a means of trying to solve the crime.

Guy West, in the crowd the night of the robbery, said he recognized one of the bandits as a man who had been in town a few days previously working as a street vendor selling a small bottling device. The lead seemed to have some merit since Mayor S.E. Gibson told investigators that no one had been licensed in that period as a street vendor. Some speculation was that he was the man who worked out the details of the robbery. He canvassed the Hartselle streets for several days. Apparently, the robbers' preliminary work had revealed Hartselle—except for the depot—pretty well shut down af-

ter 9 o'clock.

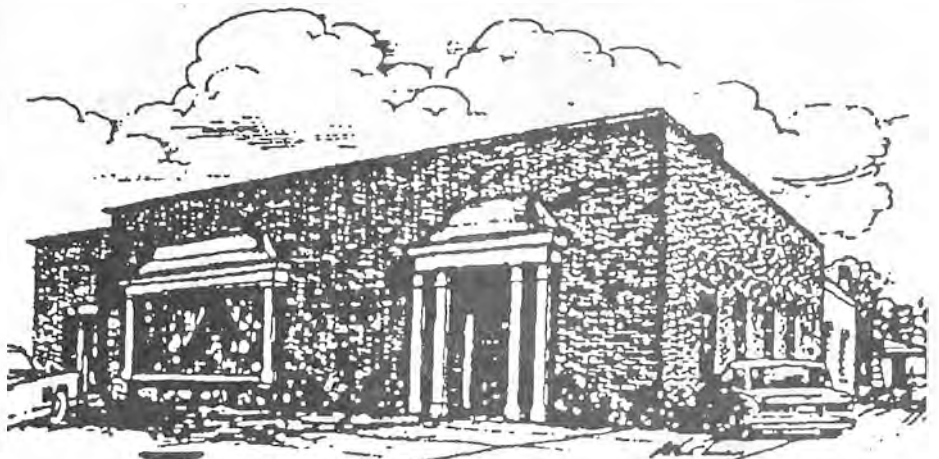
None of the thieves were ever apprehended.

*To prevent further robberies the bank installed poisonous gas pockets in the vault. If unauthorized entry was ever attempted, the gas would be released and the would-be bandits immobilized.*



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# Huntsville Landmarks: Sanders Cleaners Sanders Diamonds

Mrs. Margaret Carter hadn't heard about J.C. Sanders, Sr., until the year 1937. That day she was sitting next to the window in her home, sewing by the light, when a neighbor told her that Sanders Cleaners in Scottsboro needed an alterations lady. When Mr. Sanders met with Mrs. Carter and offered her \$5 a week for the job, she told him that she made more than that by taking in sewing. He upped the offer to \$7 a week, and she took the job.

Back then a suit was cleaned for 25 cents, and shirts for only 8 cents each. There were 50 people employed at the cleaners in Scottsboro, and they had

to use a converted school bus to haul the clothes from Huntsville to Scottsboro to be cleaned, then back to Huntsville the next day. At that time, Mr. Sanders had cleaners in several cities around Huntsville and Scottsboro.

Traffic from Scottsboro has certainly changed, Mrs. Carter said. When J.C. Sanders, Sr., sold the Scottsboro cleaners and moved it permanently to Huntsville, Mrs. Carter began a daily commute that would last for many years. At first, she rode a Trailways bus. "That was when the bus station was where the von Braun Civic Center is now. The office was just across the

street, by the Coca-Cola plant, so I rode the bus in and just walked across the street to work."

There weren't many cars on the roads back then, and very few wagons. "The road around Gurley to Paint Rock would often get covered over in water and you couldn't get through. They've put all sorts of work under those roads to take care of the water. You just wouldn't believe the amount of work that's gone on under that road."

Mrs. Carter was bookkeeper for the Sanders for 50 years. At one time the Sanders had 10 offices and routes, including Decatur, Athens, Gadsden, Scottsboro and Huntsville.

Vogue Jewelers started as part of Sanders Cleaners in the building on Clinton Street next to the Coca-Cola Co. In 1979, they sold the building to Coca-Cola and moved to the Colonial Bank Building across from Huntsville Hospital. At that time the name of the jewelry business was changed to Sanders Diamonds.

J.C. Sanders Sr. passed away in 1972, and J.C. Sanders, Jr. who had been a Graduate Gemologist since 1921, died in 1987. The business is currently owned by Mrs. J.C. Sanders, Jr., and she is assisted by John Gill, a Graduate Gemologist. There are currently two locations of Sanders Cleaners in Huntsville—one on Jordan Lane and the other on South Parkway.

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# "Doctor's" Remedies Suspect



from 1897 North Alabama newspaper

"Dr." Charles Donaldson, a patent medicine fakir by profession, and who claims to be a painter by trade, is in jail here charged with the murder of the wife of J.D. Key. Last Thursday, he gave Mrs. Key a dose of medicine and in less than two hours the lady was dead. Color is given to this case by the fact that previously he gave it to a child, who at once sank into a stupor and it took the combination of physicians and a nurse to revive it.

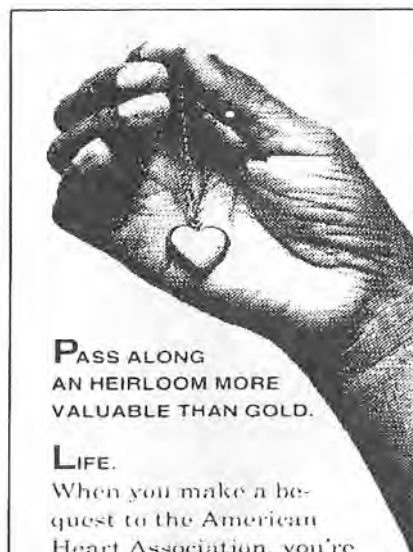
Donaldson claims the medicine administered is made from

herbs and he has been making it and selling it for twenty years, having disposed of much of it in East Alabama. A quantity of his medicine has been sent to the state chemist and the "herb doctor" will remain in jail awaiting developments.

Donaldson is about 50 years of age, and is accompanied by a lady of about 18 years of age, whom he claims is his wife. He says he married the former Miss Miller, about eight months ago in Goodwater, Ala., and that she has a father who is a carpen-

ter and a brother, who is a painter living there. "Dr." Donaldson had visited Goodwater in March, 1897. He was engaged in painting and peddling a liniment and smelling bottle of his own manufacture. No one knew from where he came, and, while possessing of mystery, he was, while in Goodwater, quiet and law abiding.

When the pair first arrived here, they had spent a night in a thicket on the edge of town and said they were enroute to Florence. The universal verdict is that something strange is connected with the couple.



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## Natural Well

by W.W. Varnedoe, Jr.

Natural Well, the name of a popular pit and cave located on the east side of the inhabited part of Monte Sano Mountain in Huntsville, Alabama, is number five in the Alabama Cave Survey. It has a 173 foot sheer drop (as measured April, 1984) entrance to the top of a rubble slope which descends another seventy or 80 feet. A large canyon leads off eastward for about 200 feet. A crawl then leads southeastward to several domes and passages with a total length of 1,150 feet. We know all of this today, but this paper traces the exploration of Natural Well from its earliest mention in print.

The forty acres containing the Natural Well (NE 1/4 of SE 1/4 of Section 33, T 5 S, R 1 E) was unowned until it was patented to Thomas E. Evans on September 1, 1887. In 1897 Evans sold it to James R. Stevens, III, who sold it to the present owner, the State of Alabama. Neither of the first two owners ever entered it to the best of our knowledge.

The first written reference to the well found so far is taken from page nineteen of Williams' *Huntsville Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror*, dated 1859/60. In discussing Monte

Sano the following is written, "A greater curiosity: is the existence of a natural well, known to be two hundred and five feet in depth, but measured by sound, indicates the extraordinary depth of nine hundred feet. It is perfectly circular and regularly formed." Who measured it and how is not mentioned, but this account apparently gave the cave its name, "Natural Well," which it retains today. This name began the custom in Alabama, and lately in Tennessee, of naming caves with pit entrances "wells." Williams' description, word for word, is also repeated in the

*Philadelphia Inquirer* of April 15, 1862, on page four.

A clue to an earlier exploration is contained in the *Weekly Mercury*, an early Huntsville newspaper, of April 17, 1889. This article talks of an early attempt to enter about 1849 that was reportedly thwarted by hoards of bats. None of the later accounts of Natural Well ever mention bats and it contains no colonies today. Perhaps the whole thing was just rumor, or if an attempt was made, fear of the depth more than bats aborted that try. The names of these timid explorers, if any, are

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not known. However, the first SUCCESSFUL descent is documented in that same article.

This exploration was due to the curiosity of one Major James or Joseph R. Schrimshaw, who organized and underwrote the project. Major Schrimshaw had just recently come from New York City as the landscape architect for the new Monte Sano Hotel. His job was to plan the hotel's gardens, and after this task he apparently moved away from Huntsville as he disappeared from the local scene. But while at the hotel, starting in the summer of 1888, the Major constructed a platform extending over the pit entrance of Natural Well and equipped it with a windlass. He had to send off to New York for a suitable cable for his systems patterned after a standard mining technique of his day. He made a bucket, thirty inches square and four feet deep to ride in. Finally, he sent down a load of ballast to test the system. It was the spring of 1889 when he was satisfied that all was ready. He then assembled his team, consisting of himself, John Broad, Frank Dennison, Charlie Halsey, and a black man, Jackson Lines. The new owner, T. E. Evans, was not in this party, and his role in this first descent if any, is not known.

But now, after all this preparation and expense, our intrepid explorer, Major Schrimshaw, began to get cold feet. His apprehension was to cost him the honor of being the first human to descend into Natural Well and of being Alabama's first vertical caver. At this point it is well to quote the Major's exact words:

"But when I saw our bucket ... going down on its trial trip

[with the ballast], and looking in the great space no bigger than a peck measure, I felt as if I would like to sell out my position as explorer to some younger man. And when my main support and stand by, Jackson Lines, insisted on going down first so as to see that everything was right, it did not take much persuasion to gain my consent, and down he went, and returning reported matters OK, and nothing to do but walk right out from the bot-

tom of the well into the cavern, and so I started down, Jackson having preceeded [sic] me soon after leaving the surface.

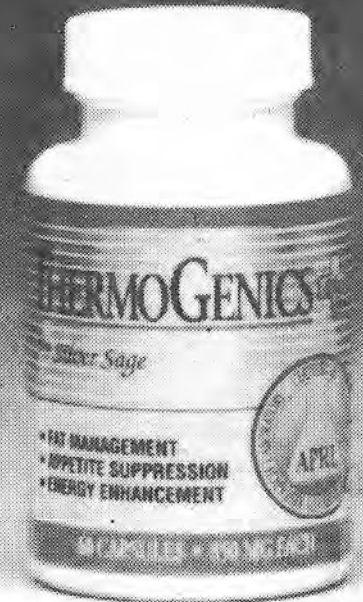
So we see from the Major's own words that a black man, Jackson Lines, entered a the Natural Well twice before anyone else, and became Alabama's first vertical caver.

But continuing the Major's account, "The bucket commenced to revolve, gaining in velocity at every turn, until by the

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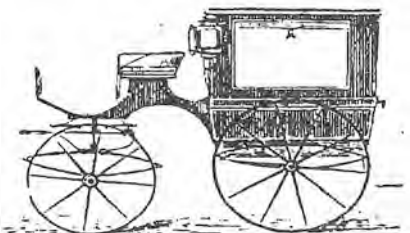
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time it reached the bottom, it seemed to be making about one thousand revolutions per minute." The spin was not all that was unexpected. Walking "right out ... into the cavern" proved a trifle exaggerated also. The two faced, what seemed to the Major, a perilous and exhausting scramble and climb down an additional 150 feet [the Major's estimate] of steeply dipping rubble slope. But with Jackson's help our explorer made it, as did the entire party.

The descent itself must have been quite enough for these "dare devils," for after a "very short exploration" and taking just enough time for the Major to write his name on the wall, they wasted no further time in getting out and never entered again! The name, "Jas [it might be Jos] R. Schrimshaw" is still on the wall and was observed by Bobby Whorton and others in April, 1984.

Major Schrimshaw described the cave at the bottom as being about twenty feet wide and a hundred feet high. He thought that if the talus slope were cleaned up, the Natural Well could be one of the wonders of the country. No one was willing to undertake such a labor, and nothing further happened until memories faded and a new exploration was implemented thirty eight years later.

In the meantime, however, the Natural Well continued to be known locally and its entrance often visited. For example, Elizabeth Humes Chapman (1884-1967) wrote in her diary that she visited it about 1895 and her guide told the party that "marked articles" were thrown in which "came out severally at Huntsville Big Spring, the Tennessee River

and Byrd Spring." This seems to be the beginning of the legend that a duck placed in the Natural Well came swimming out of Big Spring in downtown Huntsville. Another legend from the fertile minds of these Monte Sano guides tells of a local tribe of Indians who hid their treasure in a sealed room in this cave to save it from a stronger tribe. This story, at least in part, helped fuel the next assault on Natural Well.

On the front page of *The Huntsville Times* of May 12, 1927, this attempt is described. The party was headed by Dr. W. L. Williams, and consisted of Raymond Jones, Phil Bloom, Julius Williams, Fern Sparkman, Glenn Jordan, S. W. Judd, and two Scrimsher boys [apparently no kin to Major Schrimshaw]. This group also built a platform over the opening with a hole through it in the middle. They used a block and tackle rig to descend and ascend. Phil Bloom was the first of the group to go down. Judd with a camera and much flash powder was next. None of his pictures, if he made any, have been found to date, however.

Although it was one of their stated aims, this group of course found no treasure. However, two of them did crawl on for an estimated 250 more feet. These two reported a dead end. Since the passage is actually about three feet high at that point, and continues, apparently they did not want to crawl more or were too scared to do so, and so made up the dead end story, knowing no one was going to check up on them. This account should have laid the "duck and Big Spring" story to rest, yet, the author heard it repeated as late as the summer of 1984!

The treasure story was too juicy to drop based on mere facts and was simply transferred to other caves in the area, such as Fagan Springs Cave. In any event, the length of Natural Well stood at 450 feet until an exploration two years later.

The next trip to Natural Well was made by some responsible people. The *Birmingham News-Age Herald* and the *Tuscaloosa News* of November 3 and 10, 1929, both give accounts of a

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scientific trip led by the State Geologist, William D. Johnston. His party consisted of himself, Dr. Walter B. Jones (later to become State Geologist himself), Carl T. Jones, and Raymond W. Jones, who was on the 1927 trip. This group studied the rock strata, identified the various units, and made an accurate but incomplete map. Their description and the map were published by the Alabama Geological Survey.

In personal conversations with the author, Dr. Walter B. Jones related how he hired a sailor to construct a rope ladder for this trip. This ladder was made of one inch diameter treated manila rope and hand carved wooden rungs, spaced about one foot apart and about eighteen inches wide. It consisted of four thirty foot sections and one sixty foot section. These rope ladders were used by Dr. Jones in numerous other Alabama caves.

The CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) came into being in 1933 as a useful way to hire the unemployed in the fight against the Great Depression. One of their projects was to create Monte Sano State Park, with cabins, trails, picnic areas, etc. The Natural Well was, and is, within the park boundaries and the CCC cut an improved trail to it. They also undertook a cleanup program of the well itself and assessed its potential as an attraction in the park.

The CCC made another windlass system of descending into the well, and Dr. Walter B. Jones came back to make numerous descents with it. On one of these trips a reporter, Pat Jones, went along and gave a detailed account of the trip in

*The Huntsville Times* of June 3, 1934. In this article he also gave some additional data on the original descent in 1889, such as the last man out on that first trip was John Broad. His source was John himself, the only member of that party still alive in 1934. According to Pat, John is quoted as saying, "I'll never forget that adventure. The lantern at the top of the well as I came back up in the bucket was so far off it seemed no bigger than a star."

Pat describes the rig for the trip in 1934 as follows. A platform was (again) built completely over the well with a small opening in the middle. One of the CCC workers, Mr. M. L. Easter, who helped build it, verbally described the platform to the author. He stated that huge logs two feet in diameter were laid over the pit. Then smaller logs "only" ten to twelve inches in diameter were laid across these bigger logs. Finally, a deck made of oak planks three inches thick was placed on these logs. Now, continuing Pat's description, a second platform was built ten to twelve feet higher which contained the winch and windlass geared down to cranks. A 22,000 pound test cable was attached by a bridle to a plank, used as a seat. The descender sat on the plank with his legs through the bridle. He then placed a leather belt around his waist and the cable to act as a safety.

Six CCC men were used on the cranks. Pat describes the winch as "clicking" which tells us it was equipped with a safety ratchet. Our CCC worker also stated it had two brake levers. The men used whistles to signal the winch crew. This elabo-

rate and seemingly safe elevator had its hazards, however. In going up through the rather small hole in the lower platform, the plank had to be maneuvered into an exact position to pass through. But since control of ascent was at the winch on the second platform, the ascender had only indirect control of his rate of rise by means of his whistle. One of the crew got his leg caught between the plank and the platform, and in his panic yelled rather than blowing the proper code. He did recover and blow his whistle in time to sustain no more serious injury than a sore leg. It could have been worse.

Pat's group entered about 9:30 a.m. and did not come out until dark. Pat tells us that Dr. Jones busied himself most of the time collecting beetles. That was indeed the Dr. Jones some of us knew.

The CCC began to remove the talus slope at the bottom of the pit using this winch and a bucket. As winter approached they enclosed the two platforms in a small house, which was kept fairly comfortable in the winter by the well. But also at times, water falls down the shaft. To partially protect the workers on the bottom another platform was built about ten or twelve feet from the bottom. It was only partially successful, yet from thirty to forty feet of rubble was eventually removed.

The plan as reported in numerous press releases from March through September in 1937 was to install an iron spiral staircase down the pit. This plan was never implemented because it rested upon Federal funding, which was not forthcoming.



Perhaps the following incident told to the author by one of the CCC workers, who requested his name not be used, had some bearing on the Government not funding the Well project. This fellow said, "I was in charge of the winch when a Government inspector came to review the project. After he had descended a few feet below the platform, I told my workers to let go of the brake handles. We stopped him just a few feet off of the bottom, which we could tell because the cable was marked. He screamed all the way down. You can see why I never went down, myself." It is easy to imagine how favorable the inspector's report must have been.

In fact, funding became harder and harder to come by, and as time wore on letters in the files of Monte Sano Park show that the appeals for funds shifted from work on the well to more fundamental things, like roads and the cabins.

While all of this was under-

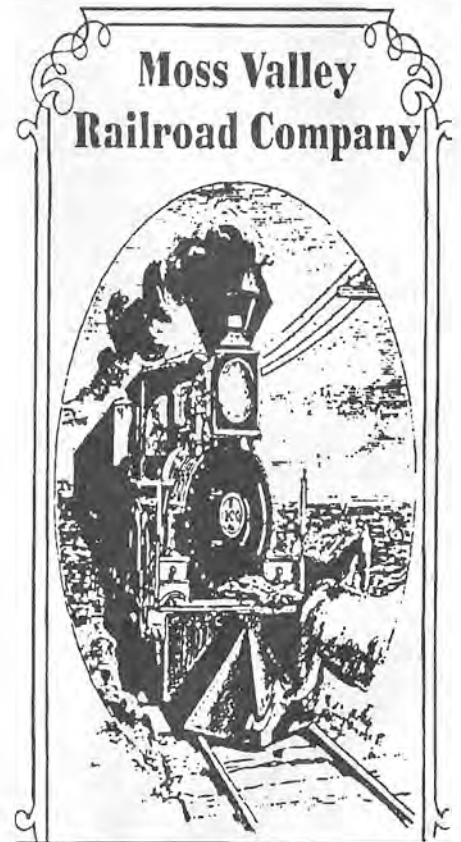
way, the CCC workers found evidence of a cave rat in Natural Well, although they never saw it and at the time were not sure what kind of animal was down there. This set off a flurry of exploration in quest of a lower entrance. None was found but the cave did get thoroughly probed, if not mapped. This activity is recorded in *The Huntsville Times* of December 6, 1936.

By the late 1930s war clouds were gathering and funding began to shift from all CCC programs to the National Defense. As the whole CCC program wound down the camp on Monte Sano closed shop on June 30, 1940. The shed over the opening was padlocked and forgotten. In time, local kids found ways into the building and someone, fearing an accident on the rotting floor, set it on fire. Another version claims a woods fire set the shed on fire. The building burned completely and most of the debris fell down the shaft. This event, sometime between

1940 and 1943, went unnoticed by the press. Presumably the winch and other metal parts had been removed for the war scrap metal drives before the fire.

It was not until eighteen years later that the Natural Well again broke into print. *The Birmingham News* of March 3, 1955, carried a story about a group of Auburn University students under Professor J. D. McClung entering the cave. Their technique consisted of a pulley and one rope plus ten "pullers." This was the first single rope technique used at Natural Well.

The Huntsville Grotto of the NSS was chartered in the spring



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of 1955, but it was 1958 before any members tackled Natural Well. It was on one of the early Huntsville Grotto trips in the late 50s that one of the first mechanical ascenders was used in Natural Well. It was a contraption made by Jack Allen consisting of a water pipe, a cam, and a wire sling.

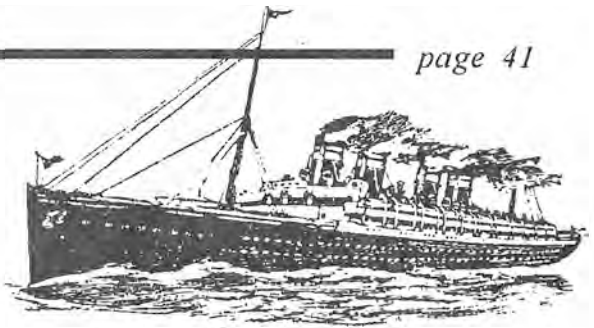
The Huntsville Grotto first mapped the entire cave on July 10, 1959. This map was published in the 1965 edition of *Alabama Caves* of the Alabama Cave Survey. The latest map, now on file with the Survey, and appearing in their later publications, was made by Bill Torode of the Huntsville Grotto in 1969.

Due to its notoriety and easy access, there have been several serious and not so-serious accidents and rescues by the Grotto's Cave Rescue Unit at Natural Well. The park has made noises from time to time about gating, closing, or fencing the entrance. The Huntsville Grotto has been contacted more than once to assist. However, despite the Grotto's willingness to help supply labor, the Park has been heretofore unable to get the State to fund any project. A fence and railing installed in the 70s is presently in place.

Natural Well continues to be a very popular vertical cave among visiting cavers from all over the world. Some of these visitor's names are recorded in a register placed by the Huntsville Grotto in one of the remote domes.



## A Slight Misunderstanding



The famous ocean liner, *Queen Mary*, is said to have been named as the result of a misunderstanding.

The Cunard Line had planned to name the ship, *Queen Victoria*.

A representative from the company visited King George V and began to explain to him that Cunard wanted to name its new ship after one of Great Britain's greatest Queens. The King interrupted, saying how pleased *Queen Mary* would be.

The company had no choice but to name the ship the *Queen Mary*.

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## Remember Miss Kate?

by Lee Sentell

Sleepy steamboats eased away from the Bank Street landing, laden with bales of cotton bound for market up-river in Chattanooga. The angle of the sun showed it mid-afternoon, yet the dozen or so saloons near the river rang with noisy laughter. In the street, youngsters side-stepped bogs of mud and strolled around town instead of heading home after school.

A legend of the most famous sporting house on the Tennessee grew against this background of a small, rough river town. Years after the death of Kate Lackner, the house she ran remains indelibly linked to that era of Decatur's history.

Old-timers cherish memories of evenings spent in the company of beautiful young women clad in floor-length gowns. Gold-leafed mirrors reflected the flocked wallpaper surroundings as couples danced to piano music in the parlor, sipped whiskey and stole private moments upstairs in numbered rooms.

It was a "high type" place where only those invited by men known to Kate Lackner could enter. The girls in their twenties wore jewelry and men wore coats and ties. Miss Kate's, in the early

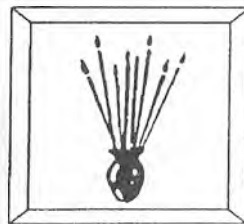
days at least, was an experience in sweet comfort.

This house was widely known in the community as a business to people who did not approve of the activities. It was accepted as a fact of life.

Bawdy houses were nothing new in Decatur when Kate Lackner arrived from Illinois. City records frequently mentioned such establishments; none, however, attained the degree of respectability as did this one.

The reason for this unusual acceptance was the woman behind the house. Miss Kate, or Aunt Kate as she was later called, is remembered as a compassionate, helpful person who regularly donated to charities and assisted families in need.

Born Katherine Carey of Irish decent in central Illinois on February 17, 1866, she married a jeweler named Lackner and had a son, Robert, while living



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in the Mississippi River town of Hannibal, Mo.

Her arrival in Decatur soon after the birth of her son was marked by the acquaintance of Capt. Simp McGhee, a stocky riverboat captain. Some tales say that the captain was infatuated with the lovely young blonde and paid her husband to leave town. Others relate that the husband never came to Decatur. Regardless, the captain played a major role in the adult life of Kate Lackner.

Her son was raised mostly in the northeast Arkansas town of Paragould. He later settled in the southern tip of Texas at Brownsville, where he opened a jewelry shop in 1907.

Most of Kate Lackner's friends and customers did not know she was ever married and used the term "Miss" perhaps as much to designate marital status as to be polite.

One account has it that Simp McGhee packed Kate and several other young women aboard his steamboat and fled to the Whitesburg area near Huntsville during the yellow fever epidemic of 1889. If that's true, she was then only 23.

The captain helped her open a sporting house at the corner of Market and Bank streets, conveniently adjacent to the boat landing at the end of Bank. This insured that new arrivals in Decatur could find Kate's. It was also close to his saloon. He helped recruit employees for the place during his weekly trip to Chattanooga, always docking here on Thursdays and staying overnight at Kate's. Her house was closed when the captain was there.

In later years, federal authorities caught McGhee racing

his boat full-steam and jerked his license leaving the famed river man beached. He died sometime later of unremembered causes sprawled across a bed in Kate's house.

Kate told women in her employ that she never loved another man after he died. But there were other men in her life, and she entertained them in the manner expected of such an establishment. Her upstairs room was handsomely painted with mirrors, a large fireplace, beautiful furniture and a bed.

The Lackner property consisted of "the big house" which was set back from the street corner, and a smaller house to the rear. Hired men kept a garden that furnished food to the household which varied at times from four to eight young women.

Times were not always pleasant as the Market Street

house was an easy target for new sheriffs or mayors intent on cleaning up the cluster of houses and saloons which dotted the area near the river. A change in law enforcement once forced the women out of the county and across the river to a house on Beaver Lake where the temporary exiled women resumed business.

The Market Street house was occasionally raided by police, no doubt terrorizing respectable men who couldn't afford to be caught socializing in such a place. During a raid one winter, two men jumped from a second-story window, realized they had left their overcoats upstairs, ran back in the front door and jumped out the same window again with the raid still in progress.

Another time a Birmingham man parked his car on Bank for

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a visit. Later, he obviously forgot which way Bank Street was and walked north, falling into the river. He agonized enroute to the hospital how he would explain a busted leg to his wife. He didn't have to: he died the next morning of a gangrene infection.

Those who never visited the house would often see Mrs. Lackner and "the girls" motoring to the doctor's office or enroute to an afternoon in the country for fresh air. The chauffeur was careful to avoid downtown streets. It is said when business was slow, they would go for a ride through the downtown to attract attention.

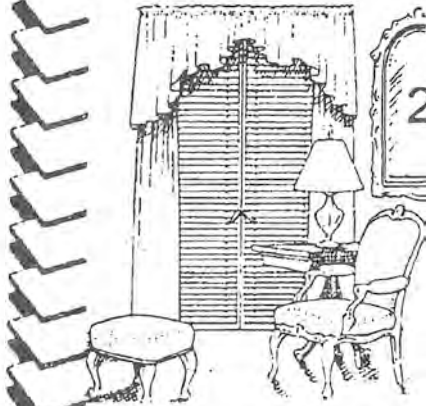
Miss Kate's acts of charity abounded. The American Legion decided about 1946, shortly after obtaining the Old Bank Building, that it was too formal for some of their activities and approached Mrs. Lackner about the adjoining building, which she owned. It housed a "soft drink" store (meaning bootleg whiskey). She quickly consented to donate it, apologizing for not thinking of it before the Legion did.

Once she learned that a prominent citizen was ill and required daily supplies of buttermilk. She got several bottles and went to the man's house, arriving at the back door. The family was extremely grateful for the gesture but told her never to use the back door, always come to the front. Touched by that kindness, Mrs. Lackner saw that the man had buttermilk every day until he died.

Miss Kate and the women of her house were always fashionably dressed. The cars—Buicks, Hudsons, closed cars and roadsters—were always the latest models. She prized a collection of diamond rings, indica-

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tive that business had been good over the years.

Each February 17th meant a festive celebration. Capt. McGhee returned with bottles of campaign, wines and the best whiskey. The reason? It was Kate Lackner's birthday.

"She gave herself a great party and invited her friends. Everything was on the house.

The whiskey and the beer flowed freely," one friend recalled.

The dedication of the Keller Memorial Bridge in 1928 was one of the grandest celebrations ever held in Decatur. For the first time the Tennessee River people could cross to Limestone County without having to hazard a trip on a ferry which, until the bridge, had been only way to get across.

Exemplary of the festive mood, a beautiful young woman attending Peabody College in Nashville was brought to town as an "attraction" for the many visitors expected in town. She made \$25 entertaining one night and the next day went to see a prominent doctor, spending the entire sum to make certain she wasn't

*continued on page 54*

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# Avenues Of The Generals

by Jack Harwell

When John Hunt built his cabin at the Big Spring, the American Revolution was only a quarter century in the past, almost as recent as Vietnam is today. Four years later, when the town that would bear Hunt's name was laid out, some of the heroes of that conflict were remembered in the naming of the streets. Lincoln Street, originally the eastern limit of the city, and Green Street, one block west, both honored important figures in the struggle for American independence.

Benjamin Lincoln and Nathanael Greene (over time, the final "e" was lost) were generals in Washington's army. Both were Northerners; Lincoln was from Hingham, Massachusetts, and Greene from Warwick, Rhode Island. Both commanded large armies in the South, and both were considered indispensable by George

Washington.

Lincoln was born in 1733, the son of a well-to-do farmer. Initially a farmer himself, he later entered politics and served two years in the Massachusetts legislature. He was a member of the provincial congress when the war broke out. Greene, born in 1742, was also the son of a farmer, but was educated at Yale. Later, he was a member of the Rhode Island Assembly. He was from a family of Quakers, which conflicted with his participation in the war.

The first years of the Revolution did not go well for the American cause. The colonial militias were ill matched against the better equipped and better trained British. On June 17, 1775, the colonial troops besieging Boston were beaten back at Bunker Hill. Nathanael Greene was there with his Rhode Island brigade, which he had organized

barely a month before, but they saw no action in the battle. Greene remained at Boston until March, 1776, when he was ordered south to New York.

During a reconnaissance of Manhattan, one day, Greene watched a company of artillery being drilled, and was very impressed with the young officer in command. The officer's name was Alexander Hamilton. Afterward Greene introduced himself and invited Hamilton to dinner. The two men were the best of friends from then on.

By the summer of 1776 Greene had been a soldier for over a year but had seen no action. Then, just as he was preparing to do battle with the British at Long Island, he contracted a serious fever in the swamps that then surrounded New York. The illness, which nearly proved fatal, prevented him leading his troops into the battle. The



American forces were crushed, and Washington was forced to abandon New York. Had General Greene remained healthy, the course of history might have been changed.

Over the next year Greene became one of George Washington's most trusted commanders. During this time Washington was assembling a large army which, he hoped, would be able to engage the enemy decisively. In May, 1777, he had enough men to organize five divisions. Commanding two of the divisions would be Nathanael Greene and Benjamin Lincoln. Like Greene, Lincoln had entered the war as a militia commander. Earlier in 1777 he had been seriously wounded at Saratoga.

Seven months later, Greene joined Washington in winter quarters at Valley Forge. There, Washington would deal with the two most serious problems facing his army. His soldiers were seriously deficient in military discipline, and spent very little time drilling and learning the maneuvers that would be necessary in combat. In addition, supplies of just about everything were low, and the men were perpetually hungry and ill-clothed.

To take care of the discipline problem, Baron von Steuben arrived in February, 1778, and with his Prussian bearing and sharp tongue soon had every man in the army marching and drilling in perfect formation. Then Washington saw to the supply situation by naming Nathanael Greene as his new quartermaster general.

Greene, who had yet to lead an army into battle, most certainly did not covet his new position. "There is a great differ-

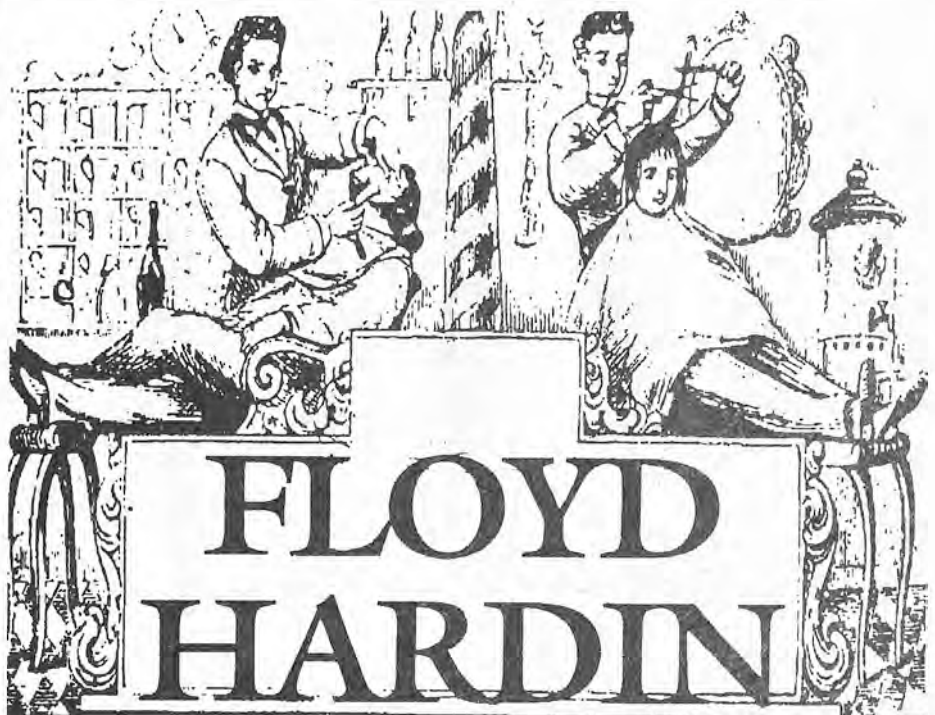
ence between being raised to an office and descending to one, which is my case," he wrote to Washington a year later. "Nobody ever heard of a quartermaster in history." But Greene may have helped his cause more than he realized. He scoured the country for food, clothing, shoes, horses, and all the things an army needs to remain effective. Then he dunned Congress for more money. George Washington was properly grateful to his QM, without whom the ill-equipped soldiers might have abandoned their cause.

In 1779, Benjamin Lincoln asked to be relieved from his command because of his wounds. Greene eagerly asked to be named to succeed him, but Congress, feeling he was more needed in his position as quartermaster general, turned him down. Greene was forced to spend another year at his unwanted post. Lincoln,

meanwhile, was having considerably less luck at the head of his division.

He had arrived in Charleston in late December, 1778 facing a British force based at Beaufort. The British general, Sir Henry Clinton, had failed to take Charleston in 1776 and now sent a force southward to attack Lincoln. Outnumbered nearly two to one, Lincoln surrendered on May 12, 1779. Lincoln was a prisoner for over two years, finally being exchanged for a British prisoner in the summer of 1781.

Nathanael Greene returned to active service in July, 1780. In December, he took command of the army in the South, with headquarters near Charlotte, North Carolina. The army was in scandalous condition. On paper its strength was over 2,000, but only about half of those were actually present.



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Those were so badly clothed and equipped that the fighting strength of the army was only 800 men. The army was, "rather a shadow than a substance, having only an imaginary existence," wrote Greene. He set about with characteristic determination to rebuild his army, going so far as to hang one man for desertion.

Greene began a strategy of retreating northward through North Carolina, goading the British commander, Lord Cornwallis, into pursuing him. Cornwallis caught up with Greene at Guilford Court House on March 15, but the ensuing battle left his force so weakened that he was forced to retreat to the coast for resupply. Now it was the British who were being pursued. Cornwallis managed to reach Wilmington but then, fearing another engagement with Greene, he marched north into Virginia and into history, for it was there, at Yorktown, that he surrendered his army on October 19. Benjamin Lincoln received Cornwallis's sword at the formal surrender, and the Revolution was over.

Generals Lincoln and Greene returned to their homes after the war. By then Lincoln was out of the army and had served two years as secretary of war. Greene moved to a plantation in Georgia in 1784; two years later, he fell ill and died in Savannah. He was not yet forty-four years old. Lincoln served briefly as lieutenant-governor of Massachusetts and died in Hingham, his hometown, in 1810.

By the time of his death, Benjamin Lincoln had already been honored in Huntsville with the street that still bears his

name, although Lincoln Street no longer marks the city limits. Lincoln and Greene Streets stood one block apart, in memory of these two men who had contributed so much to the American cause. The layout of the streets was unchanged for a century and a half. Then in the 1960s, as part of the renovation of the downtown area, Lincoln Street was extended northward and westward away from Holmes Avenue to a point where it intersected Greene Street. In view of history, this seems somehow fitting.



The old believe  
everything;  
The middle-aged  
suspect everything;  
The young know  
everything



## You Stopped Me For What?

After police pulled him over, a motorist in North Alabama jumped out of his car, ripped out a radar detector, threw it on the ground, stomped it to bits, and said, "I paid \$500 for this d\_\_ thing, and it doesn't work! Go ahead and write me out a ticket, I deserve it for my stupidity!"

The police then explained that he had been stopped because one of his brake lights wasn't working properly.

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# Household Tips by EARLENE



When your child is crying and angry, just whisper to her. She will have to stop crying in order to hear what you're saying.

Loosen glue with a cloth soaked in vinegar.

If you have toilet rings that can't be removed, try using a mixture of borax and lemon juice. Make a paste, wet the rings and apply the mixture. Wait for 2 hours and scrub off - try a fine grade of sandpaper if cloth doesn't work.

Place a fabric softener sheet in your bathroom wastepaper basket for a pleasant aroma.

Keep your clear plastic wrap in the refrigerator to prevent it from ever sticking together again.

Store your favorite negatives behind the picture it pertains to in your photo album.

Put a piece of chalk in your jewelry box to keep your costume jewelry from tarnishing.

To wash your delicate things, drop them into a pillowcase and fasten the loose end with a plastic garbage bag tie. Wash on gentle cycle.

You can eliminate a lint problem in clothes washing by adding a cup of white vinegar to the final rinse cycle.

If metal screws keep working loose on your home appli-

ances, try putting just a dab of fingernail polish under the heads before tightening them, hold in place for a minute and let dry.

Toothpaste will remove small scratches on glass.

To keep your wicker furniture from turning yellow, wash with a solution of warm salt water.

If you get a grease stain on fabric, sprinkle cornstarch or talcum on the spill immediately. Rub in well, and let stand til the stain is absorbed. Brush off and wipe with a damp cloth.

If you have a damp closet, fill a large coffee can with charcoal briquettes. Punch holes in the cover and put the container on the floor of the closet. For large closets use 2 or 3 of the containers.

Store those winter garments in a large plastic trash can with lid. It will stay dry as well as moth-proof.

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## The Doctor Sez

by Annelie M. Owens, M.D.

The immune system is a complex and remarkable array of organs, cells and molecules distributed throughout your body with an immense power to combat disease and infection by destroying infectious microorganisms that invade the human body. It works in the blood, in the lymph, and even inside the organs of other systems.

A good way to understand the immune system is to imagine it as a highly mobile, thoroughly disciplined military organization.

The foot soldiers are white blood cells, or lymphocytes. Large numbers of them man bases in the lymph nodes and spleen and also circulate throughout the body. They arise in the bone marrow and later grow into specialized cells with particular functions.

New lymph cells report to "training bases" where they mature and acquire their special features. Those that attend boot camp in the thymus gland are called T (or thymus-medicated) cells. T cells include killers, which fight the enemy directly; helpers, which aid in the recognition and attack; and suppressors, which turn off the immune

response when the battle is won. They also serve a variety of regulating, communicating, and combat functions.

The main function of B cells is to produce antibodies that attack specific antigens (anything that triggers an immune response).

Given the immense number of invaders, attackers, and chemicals potentially present in human blood and tissue, one of the immune system's most remarkable features is that its members, as a group, can precisely recognize and react to so many different ones.

They accomplish this through a combination of extreme specialization and great variation. Each individual B and T cell, for example, has one--and only one--kind of antigen receptor. It is permanently committed

to recognizing only that intruder and no other.

The immune army includes numerous other components. There are lymphocytes specially designed to eliminate tumor cells. Macrophages Lymphocytes whose Greek name, "big eaters" indicates both their size and one of their main functions--can digest unwanted organisms and materials.

Bringing all these forces to bear against an enemy requires both a grand strategy and ingenious tactics.

Sometimes the cells overdo their vigilance and attack substances that are harmless, or even beneficial. An allergy, for example, is a case of mistaken identity--the body mistakes such items as eggs or ragweed pollen for harmful invaders and calls

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out powerful chemical defenses, including histamine which leads to the familiar symptoms of allergy and asthma with sneezing, redness of eyes, difficult breathing and hives.

The system can even turn dangerous.

In autoimmune diseases - arthritis, lupus, rheumatic fever - it falsely identifies certain of the body's own tissues as foreign, and directs antibodies and T cells against your own cells.

Sometimes the foreign matter the immune system attacks is not threatening but beneficial, as in the case of lifesaving organ transplants. A transplanted organ provokes a furious response by your immune system, which treats the transplanted tissue as foreign.

Research work is successfully developing drugs and other techniques that dampen this side

of your immune system, but still allow your body to defend against infection. It is a major challenge to physicians to keep the body from attacking a transplanted liver, kidney, or heart.

Your immune system was relatively weak when you were born but as you grew, your natural immunity matured and became stronger. Generally, your immune system may be enhanced with age because you acquire immunity to more diseases, such a viral illnesses, as you grow older.

Through much research, scientists continue to unravel the mysteries of immunity and to harness some of its unique capabilities.



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# Josie and Charlie

by Mike Hall



"Josie! Look at me!" Maryanne Josephine West slowly lifted her a head allowing her eyes to meet those of her father. She was sitting at the kitchen table. He was standing with his back bent slightly, allowing his hands to rest on the spot where, minutes before, his dinner plate had occupied. Josie's mother sat quietly off to the side of them.

Her father, visibly struggling to keep his composure, continued. "His last name is Foote - as in "Blackfoote" - as in Indian! He drinks, he's irresponsible, he doesn't have a steady job - I will not allow you to marry him!"

Josie did not attempt to argue with her father. She noticed that he had left out the word "reckless." In his effort to communicate his feelings with his daughter, he had left out a word he usually included in this speech. As she rose from her chair to finish clearing the table of dishes, she faced the fact that her father had not changed his mind about Charlie. But neither had she.

Charnor Allen Foote had been born in 1896. It was true

that he was part Indian (Choctaw). It was also true that, at times, he allowed alcohol to stir the demons that lurk inside every man. And, although her father had forgotten to allude to his reckless nature, it was, perhaps, the one quality Josie found herself most drawn to.

Charlie (Although his given name was Charnor, he preferred to be called Charlie) was obli-

ous to social standing. Time and circumstance had robbed him of any knowledge concerning his heritage. Had he known much of his ancestry, he might have possessed an after speech of his own.

Charlie Foote had no way of knowing that his Family Crest is "a lion's head erased (signifying great strength and a willingness to fight for what is right). He was unaware that the Foote Family Motto is "Pedetentim" (Latin meaning Step By Step). He might have been interested to know that George Washington, in his will, left a "mourning ring" to Elizabeth Foote - a lifelong friend that some refer to as having been Washington's "one true love." He might have laughed at the knowledge that another relative, Henry Foote, had become Governor of Mississippi; and that others in the family had been justices, doctors, and lawyers.

Nevertheless, it was Charlie Foote and Josie West who, in the early 1920s slipped off to Georgia to be wed. They returned



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Alabama after they were married and settled on Cumberland Mountain in Jackson County. Charlie had family living on the mountain and, soon after their marriage, began building a house there.

Charlie worked as a well digger to support he and Josie. Several times, he and Josie moved to Huntsville and worked in the mill, to support their growing family. But, invariably, they would always return to the mountain they both had grown to love.

As Josie's father predicted, Charlie often drank too much, causing financial hardship on the family. He was often irresponsible and reckless, leaving his wife and family for days in the attempt to find the bottom of the bottle.

But there was a day in the life of Charlie Foote that lived years beyond his death. A day all men deserve and too few find. It was a day that, for many, would seem insignificant and trivial. But it was a day that Josie spoke of till the day of her own passing- some thirty years after her husband's death.

"Charlie," she would begin, "was the first man to drive a vehicle up Cumberland Mountain. Until the day Charlie tried it, in a borrowed well digger's truck, only horse-pulled wagons had gone up that mountain. But that didn't stop Charlie from trying it. He had to stop all along the way, clearing trees and brush, driving around the rocks that were too big for him to move. Nobody thought he could do it, but he surely did!"

Josie Foote never remarried. When asked about her husband, she never spoke about the lapses in his life. She spoke of

the love he had for her and his children. She spoke of the day he drove the truck up Cumberland Mountain. She told, with pride, how he was the first man to ever accomplish such a feat. She usually told this story after dinner, just before she cleared the table.

*The End*

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continued from page 45

in trouble.

That's how she got to Decatur and stayed on at Miss Kate's to become the "number one" girl. Several years later she left Kate's place and went into business for herself, opening a house in northwest Decatur. A local resident recalls stopping by Josephine's in the late 1930s: "Both houses were booming and we used to go by because there was always a party going on."

It didn't take long for the Air Force to hear about Kate's and put the Market Street establishment off limits to flyboys.

"Kate hated to see all that money go somewhere else," it was recalled.

Some speculate that Miss Kate's began declining when the woman from Nashville left and took another with her. When they left, the customers followed. Others say the decline of Kate's was the Courtland Air Base. "There was suddenly a lot of men and

women around. Kate didn't want the money to get away, so she opened her place up, lowering the standards for her clientele." Going "public" meant that the respectable men of town could not be sure it was a safe place to visit.

If any animosity existed between Kate Lackner and the other madam, it did not show on the day of Mrs. Lackner's funeral in April of 1947. Except for pallbearers, her son and another relative, the madam was the only other person to show up for the last rites.

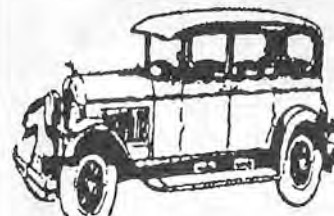
An era had ended. Although other houses of ill repute remained open, the passing of Kate Lackner was noted sadly by the countless numbers who had passed through the plush parlor of the house at the foot of Bank Street. Her memories were theirs: the girls dressed in evening gowns, the ban against drinking in the early days, sudden raids designed to "clean up" Market Street, the quiet nights

and good times.

The large, handsome house was torn down in the early 1960s. Only the steps at the street which led to the rock wall remain.

*The End*

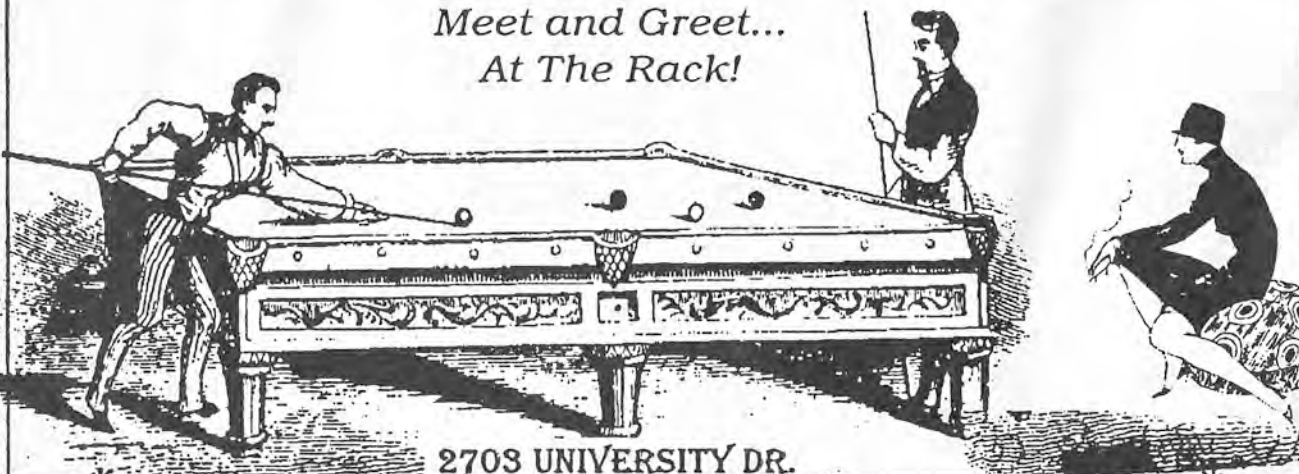
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## Going Home

by Lynn Roberts

Grandmother died and was buried in one of the worst blizzards ever to hit the land. People talked about it for years. Of her, they spoke little, death being the way of things.

I couldn't go to the funeral, being away at some convention or other, but I sent a nice wreath, expensive too.

I did well on my job, got several promotions, even bought a townhouse, all brick and modern with not one piece of claw-footed furniture in it, though I did buy an antique frame the other day on a whim.

I don't know just when I began to think of strawberry turnovers or just why I restored the old quilt that had lain in a trunk for years. Nor could I explain why the sudden sight of a peony bush or a lemon lily would sting my eyes and stop me short.

When I went home to visit, the Old Bedford Church was gone and in its place was a gas station, a few houses and a small sign that proclaimed, "New Bedford."

The old cemetery had new gates, a marbled entrance, paved roads and smoothed lawns.

Gone were the dirt paths and cactus plants, except farther

back into the older section. There were the pillars of great grandmother on the Grantham side, and Uncle John Hinshaw and Aunt Ola

... and my grandmother, leaning, but sturdy.

There was a kitchen fragrance in the air, though I knew it must be the newly mowed grass, for even here, the lawn was tended, but for some subtle nagging at my feet.

Stooping, I found a cactus plant, withered, but still living. I plucked it gently, turning it over, amazed it had escaped the mower's blade.

"Are you afraid to die?" I whispered.

"Why no, honey, I've gone home."



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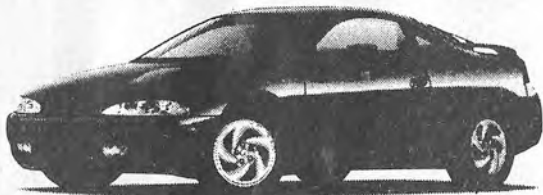
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