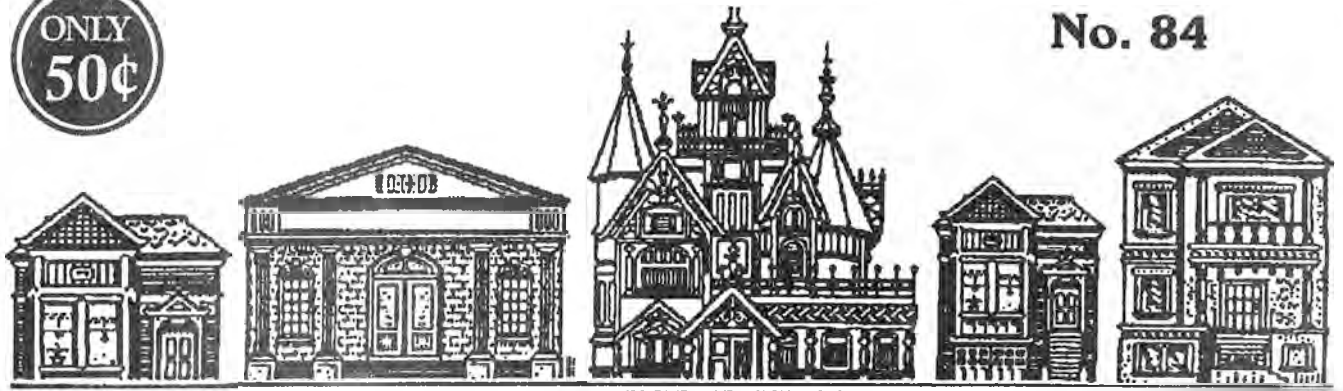


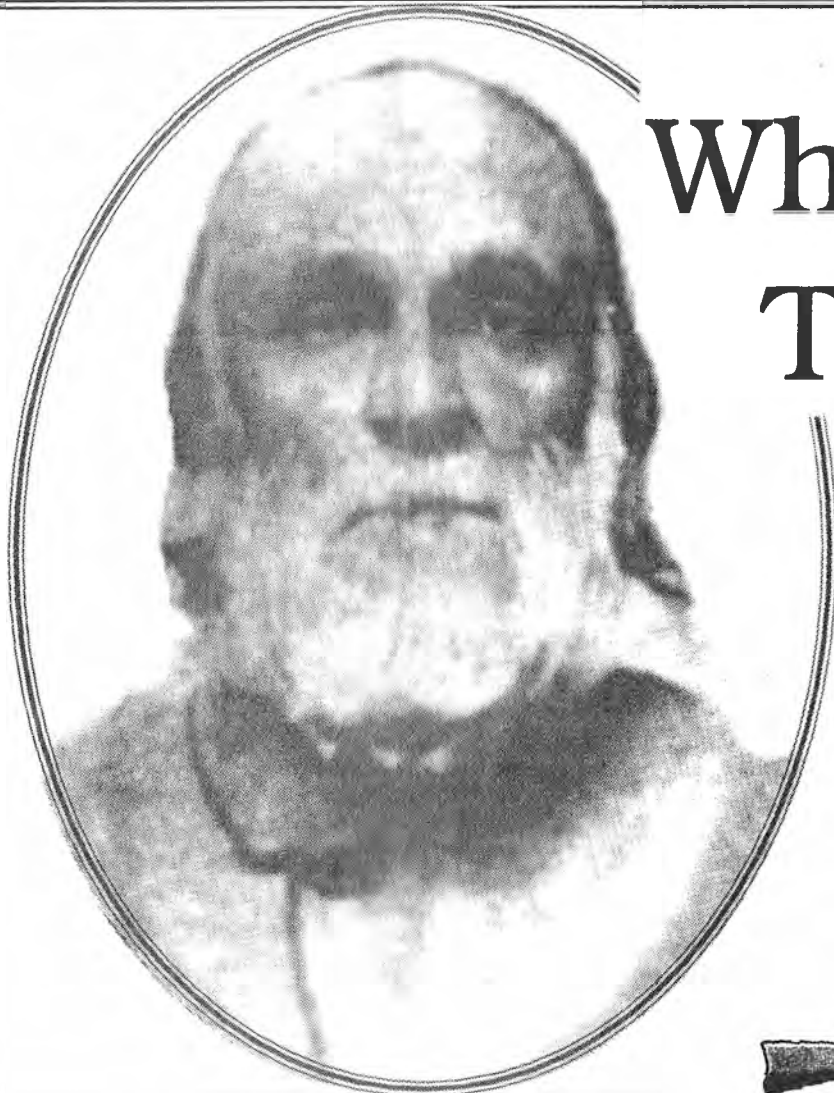
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No. 84



# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



## Why I Went To War

*by Milus Eddings Johnston*

The writer recollects distinctly to this day that upon reaching the south bank of the Tennessee River he called a halt and about faced, and staightening himself up, he looked northward and said: "Boys, I have come to the conclusion that God never yet made a man to be slobbered over by dogs; hence I'm going to give those fellows a turn."



Also in this issue: V-Mail From the Front

# Why I Went To War

by Milus Eddings Johnston

*Milus Johnston's role in the Civil War is almost a mirror image of the conflict in this region. Like most of the citizens of North Alabama, Johnston opposed secession from the Union. Once war became a reality, however, the residents were caught up in a situation not of their own making.*

*Reverend Milus Eddings Johnston, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was just one of the many peaceful citizens who would be driven to fight by the short-sighted retaliatory policy of the Union commanders who occupied the area. Nearly forty years old and the sole support of a large family, he had no desire to take part in the armed struggle. But, as he describes in the following narrative, "God never yet made a man to be slobbered on always by dogs."*

*-Charles Rice*

During the years 1860-61 the writer was on the Madison Circuit attending to his own business, and that business was preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As he went, he not only prayed for individual sin-

ners, but also for the entire nation. And his honest conviction is, that he never preached more earnestly for the salvation of the human soul than he pleaded with God to preserve the Union of the States.

We conclude at the start that the writer being a minister of the gospel and professing to have been called to that work, the reader would like to know how he came to be connected with the Confederate Army. You shall see it in as plain English as he can command.

A battle had been fought at Fishing Creek, Kentucky, on the 19th of January, where the Confederates were defeated. Fort Henry, on the Tennessee river, and Fort Donelson, on the Cumberland river, having been captured by the Federals soon after, the Confederates fell back to Nashville, Tennessee.

At this time the writer was in Lincoln County, Tennessee, having in charge the Fayetteville Circuit, and also Fayetteville Station, as the pastor of the latter had left and joined the Confederate army. Soon after this General Albert Sidney Johnston,



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who commanded the Confederate forces in the West, fell back upon Corinth, Mississippi, near where was fought the great battle of Shiloh, in which the Confederate commander was killed. It is believed by many that if General Johnston had not fallen, the main part of General Grant's army would have been captured. But as the latter was reinforced that night and the next morning, the Confederates were forced to fall back and give up all the advantage they had gained.

Fayetteville being on the direct road from Nashville to Huntsville, it was exposed to the invasion of the Federals at any time. So the writer, being in Fayetteville, one day after the Confederates had departed looked across Elk river in the direction of Huntsville and saw a considerable smoke rising.

Presently, there came an old citizen of the neighborhood on a bareback horse, riding at full speed, and exclaiming at the top of his voice, "Get your guns! Get

your gun's! A Yankee has burnt a wagon load of meat!" And off he bolted for his gun.

In a few minutes the town was full of Yankees. We suppose that General Mitchel, who was in command, had ordered a move on Huntsville. Immediately a number of the citizens were placed under arrest, the writer being among them, and from that time on the Yankees arrested him whenever they got in seeing, hearing, or smelling distance of him. That is, when they could.

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He was kept in custody until he slipped the pickets.


The pickets were placed on a rise along the road running west. From their position they had full view down the little valley that made off toward the river. The writer not being pleased with his company, concluded that he would take leave of absence and go to see his wife, who was then boarding four miles below. No sooner said than done, off he put. Reaching the lower part of town, he found the open valley hard to be crossed without detection. He picked up a rough stick, then humped himself up, and crept along, as if he had been down with the rheumatism for the last ten years. As soon as the valley was cleared the stick was thrown down, and you have better believe there was some double-quicking done, until we reached our home, which was outside the picket line. Then we hunted the nearest way to get somewhere else.

Mitchel soon moved on towards Huntsville, leaving behind a regiment and a provost marshal in Fayetteville. But before he reached Huntsville, the citizens there, hearing the Yankees were coming, raised a company, armed themselves, and went forth to meet them. We suppose they thought they would give them a "bit of a scare." But when they met Mitchel's men a few miles out of town, the Huntsville boys were all taken in. The citizen soldiers told the Yankees that they were hunting a fellow who had stolen a horse and buggy the night before. Mitchel's men answered that they were hunting for some fellows who had stolen a few States out of the Union long since.

The writer did not remain long at home, as he I should have

done, but was actually green enough to go up to the Yankees and ask them to renew his license to preach. Or in other words, asked for a "permit" to attend to his appointments civilly without being molested by their pickets. Before reaching the pickets he put his horse in a stable belonging to a family with whom he was well acquainted. But upon reaching the picket he

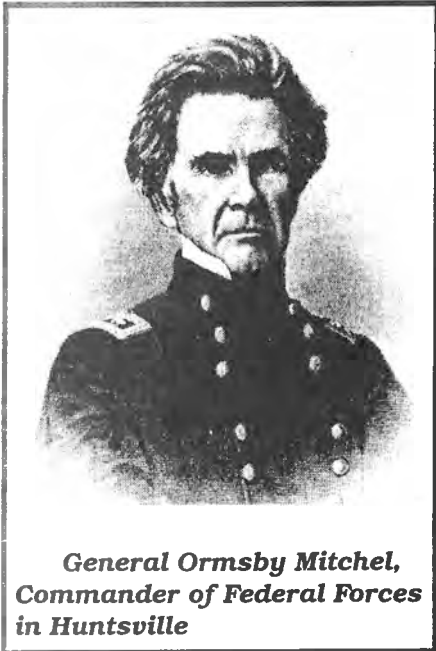
was not allowed to pass, remaining with them, talking freely and telling them the object of his mission, and that he was a Methodist preacher. While talking an officer was seen approaching with a squad of soldiers. The picket remarked, "Yonder comes the Colonel now. When he comes up if you will speak to him, he will attend to your business for you."



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As soon as the officer reached the proper point the visitor said, "Good morning, Colonel!"

The colonel replied, in a broad and flat manner, "Good morning, sir!"

Then the visitor said, "Colonel, I have come to see you this morning to get a permit, that I may attend my appointments civilly without being molested by your pickets. "

"I will attend to your business when I come back, sir," replied the colonel as he rode off, placing his pickets beyond and hedging the visitor.

On returning the colonel reined up his horse, but still moving slowly, and said, "What business did you say you had with me, sir?"

The visitor repeated his request. Then the Colonel replied, "You can preach in town on Sunday, sir!"

"But my appointment is in the village of Mulberry next Sunday."

"I say you can preach in town on Sunday, sir!" And away went the colonel.

But in a few minutes a squadron of men returned and took the visitor into town, a prisoner. He was carried before the provost marshal, who proved to be the same whom he had met at the picket line before. There, in a very abrupt manner, he was asked a multitude of questions, and treated as contemptuously as a cur puppy. For the sake of

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

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5. To Hide In The Light - Poetry by Lee High School teacher Bonnie Roberts (\$12.00).
6. Alabama's Historic Restaurants and Their Recipes by Albertville's Gay Martin (\$16.95).
7. Storied Ground - Facts and Fiction of Maple Hill Cemetery by David Chamberlain (\$12.95).
8. Huntsville Entertains - A favorite cookbook back in print - by Historic Huntsville Foundation (\$18.95).
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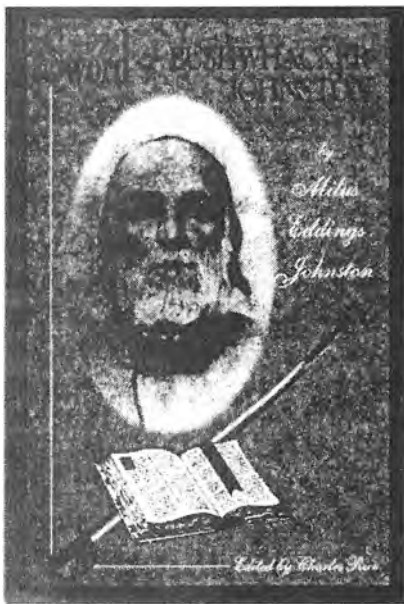
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feelings, we forbear giving the name of that provost. Suffice it to say that he fell in the battle of Perryville. It is reasonable to suppose that the writer did not shed many tears when he heard the news, on account of the way he had been treated by that officer. One thing is certain, he rubbed a few drops of secession blood into our constitution.

The writer asked the colonel if he intended to confine him, or would he allow him some liberty.

"You are at liberty to walk about the town, sir," he replied. The prisoner then left the office in disgust. Moving out, he found the streets filled with Federal soldiers, and some of them disposed to talk freely about present surroundings. When one of them remarked that "Every dog has his day," the prisoner, having his Irish blood stirred, replied, "That may be so, in a general sense, but my opinion is that there are more dogs at the present time than there are days."

While thus hedged up in town, the writer's horse was taken out of the stable three times and appropriated to the Federal use. The man who took the horse was chaplain of the regiment then occupying the town, and belonged to the Methodist Episcopal church. So said the soldiers. Such acts as this they call "pressing," but Southern gentlemen call it stealing. We wouldn't give the name of the man, if we knew it, for we do not wish to wound the feelings of any one at this late date. Our friends finally succeeded in getting the horse back to the stable.

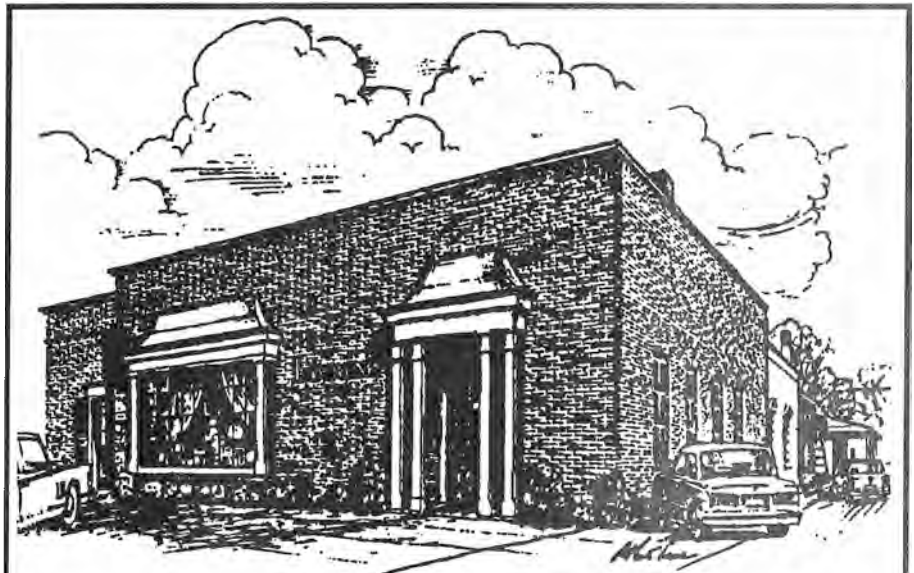
The time had now come for some of the troops to move southward. Hence the picket whose post was near the house was called in. We were then

standing on the pavement when the pickets passed, and the officer in charge threw up his hand and said, "The way is now open to your horse." On learning that the horse could be reached, the prisoner again gave the enemy the slip and went home to his wife.

It was evident that there was no chance to preach in peace. Therefore, husband and wife seated themselves in a buggy and rolled out southward through Madison county, Alabama, avoiding Federal pickets along the journey, until they reached the

home of the wife's father, in the southeast corner of said county.

On arriving home, we found there was no chance to preach the gospel. And having no disposition to go into the army, and most of the brothers-in-law having enlisted, the writer went to work, intending to take care of his family to the best of his ability. But lo and behold, he was not allowed to make a living by honest labor. On came the Federal army, laying waste to everything in their path, driving off hogs, cattle, horses and mules, arresting citizens, and shooting



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innocent men who had never been connected with the Confederate army, and abusing women and burning houses.

Before they seemed to be satisfied, they burned our family out three times, taking everything we had indoors and out. Even the boots from the writers feet were stolen. Not satisfied yet, they ran him three days and nights to take him individually and particularly, but failed to do so. He crossed the Tennessee river at the mouth of Paint Rock river, being sent over by some of Colonel Roddy's men.

The writer recollects distinctly to this day that upon reaching the south bank of the river he called a halt and about faced, and straightening himself up, he looked northward and said: "Boys, I have come to the conclusion that God never yet made a man to be slobbered over by dogs; hence I'm going to give those fellows a turn - the best turn I can get into the hopper!"

Immediately I went to the Confederate authorities and was commissioned an officer, and sent back inside Federal lines to raise troops.

We have not given anything like all the dots. Yet in as concise manner as we could, we have let the reader know the cause of our being connected with the Confederate Army.

# My Prayer

by Geneva Fielding Payne

Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older, and will someday be old.

Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking that I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.

Release me from craving to try to straighten out everybody's affairs.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details - make me fly straight as an arrow to get to the point.

I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains. Help me to endure them with patience. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains - they are increasing, and my love of relating them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint (some of them are so hard to live with) but a sour old person is one of



the crowning works of the devil.

Make me thoughtful, but not moody; helpful, but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all - but Thou knowest, Lord that I want a few friends at the end.

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# Excavation Reveals Indian Graves

*from a 1919 newspaper*

For some years past there has existed a tradition among the people of Lauderdale that an Indian tomb of some kind existed on the banks of the Tennessee River along the shores of the Muscle Shoals. There was invested in this tradition an interest enhanced by the stories of the older generation now passing away about the Indians that inhabited all this section and where lived a number of prominent men of the lost tribes of the red men. To the philosophic antiquarian these stories still hold an abiding place in their minds, and we yet hear interesting tales of mounds, caves, graveyards--of Indian relics innumerable, spread along the palisades and hillsides of the famous flowing Tennessee.

This train of thought is recalled by the discovery by workmen on the dam site of a tomb of the aborigines on the precipitate hillside between the Wagon Works and the dam site. Here, halfway from the river bridge to the top of the bluff, just below the dam site and at the mouth of a small stream, the steam plow drove its shovel into a tomb that contained the remains of five people, under what appeared to be a roof-like covering, or a vault. The skulls were well preserved, intact, and encased in loose earth that indicated careful

burial. The teeth of some animals and other bones were also found in what was evidently a carefully prepared sculpture. The tomb had the appearance of being hollowed out between the crevices of the rock, and was about five feet from the front of the precipice.

Major Watt had the relics carefully gathered, placed in two dynamite boxes, and carried to the officers' quarters near the dam site.

The entire Tennessee River

page 9  
Valley abound in distinct evidences of the Indian life here in the long ago, and the antiquarian would find here a rich field for investigation and adventure.

*The way to hold a husband is to keep him a little jealous; the way to lose him is to keep him a little more jealous.*

*--H. L. Mencken*

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## Tips from Earlene

If you're feeling queasy, suck on a piece of lemon. Rinse out afterwards, though, lemon juice can eat into tooth enamel.

A long to-do list can create undue stress. Keep your lists short, and mark them off as you complete each task.

Spring is coming soon, and many of us will be gardening. To make that job a lot easier on your back, many people swear by those Radio Flyers, the little red wagons. They come in different sizes, some with rails around them, roll easily, and can carry soil, mulch, your plants - all at once. I had a wheelbarrow that I used to use but if heavy it was unwieldy and a bit hard on the back. I found my wagon at Reid's Hardware on N. Parkway, next to Terry's Pizza - they'll remind you of the "good ol' days!"

If you suffer from migraine headaches, you need to avoid the following foods: Cheddar cheese, herring, chocolate, sour cream, nuts, lima beans, figs, raisins, sourdough bread and anything pickled, marinated or fermented.

If you're trying to kick the habit of visiting your fridge for snacks every night after supper, try this. Turn off the kitchen light, block the door and tell yourself the kitchen is "closed"

for the night.

To diminish age spots, use fresh pineapple juice. Make sure your skin is clean and oil-free, dip a cotton ball in the juice and place on the spot for 20 minutes. Rinse with tepid water. Do this every day for a week.

People who sweat profusely during a workout are generally more healthy than people who don't.

Meat and poultry dishes prepared in the following ways are high in fat: Stroganoff, Wellington, Cordon Bleu, Salisbury and Parmesan.

For men only - to help prevent prostate problems and increase vigor - add a handful of raw pumpkin seeds to your diet once a day. Raw or roasted sesame seeds are good - 2 tablespoons a day. Wash them down with sarsaparilla tea - this combination is supposed to aid in sexual stimulation.

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# General Wheeler's Advice to Young Boys

Fighting Joe Wheeler, a veteran of both the Civil and the Spanish-American wars, delivered an address in New York City before the Church Temperance Society, in the course of which the following striking paragraphs occur.

"During all my life I have had requests from young men for letters which would help them to get situations. I always say to them, 'Go to the place of business where you want to get work, and tell the proprietor that you have come to make your fortune and are willing to work hard for it; and that if he will give you a trial you will come without pay for a month. After you have got a place, be always ready to work. To do that, you must not go to the theater; you must go to bed early and get up early, so as to be at your place of business five minutes before you have to. Then when you are told to do something, do it and come back so quickly that they don't know you've been gone. In a year, you, not they, will be dictating salaries.'

"In the last few years business conditions have undergone a great change. These big combinations have been created, and while some people believe they have done a great deal of harm,



*General Wheeler and family,  
circa 1900*

my advice to young men is to adapt themselves to conditions as they find them, and not try to change them, because they can't do it.

"I meet every night a man who nineteen years ago had no better chance than any man in this hall. He had a place at six dollars a week in the Homestead Iron Works. There he did his duty to the best of his power, and every time a man was wanted for a place, a little better than the one he held, he seemed to be the one selected. In that nineteen years he has climbed up, till now he controls a corporation with a capital of \$11,000,000.

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# Diary of a Yankee Soldier

*Throughout his service in the Union Army Colonel John Beatty kept a detailed log of his everyday life. The excerpts of his stay in Huntsville provides the readers a rare view of our city as seen by the enemy.*

**May 2, 1862** - Took the cars for Huntsville. At Paint Rock the train was fired upon, and eight men wounded. As soon as it could be done, I had the train stopped, and, taking a file of soldiers, returned to the village. The telegraph line had been cut, and the wire was lying in the street. Calling the citizens together, I said to them that this bushwhacking must cease. The Federal troops had tolerated it already too long. Hereafter every time the telegraph wire was cut we would burn a house; every time a train was fired upon we should hang a man; and we would continue to do this until every house was burned and every man hanged between Decatur and Bridgeport.

I then set fire to the town, took three citizens with me, returned to the train, and proceeded to Huntsville.

The week has been an active one. On last Saturday night I slept a few hours on the bridge at Decatur. The next night I bivouacked in a cotton field; the next I lay from midnight until four in the morning on the railroad track; the next I slept at Bridgeport on the soft side of a

board, and on the return to Stevenson I did not sleep at all. My health is excellent.

**May 5.** Captain Cunard was sent yesterday to Paint Rock to arrest certain parties suspected of burning bridges, tearing up the railroad track, and bushwhacking soldiers. Today he returned with twenty-six prisoners.

**May 8.** The road to Shelbyville is unsafe for small parties. Guerrilla bands are very active. Two or three of our supply trains have been captured and destroyed. Detachments are sent out every day to capture or disperse these citizen cutthroats.

**May 10.** Have been appointed President of a Board of Administration for the post of Huntsville. After an ineffectual effort to get the members of the Board together, I concluded to spend a day out of camp, the first for more than six months; so I strolled over to the hotel, took a bath, ate dinner, smoked, read,

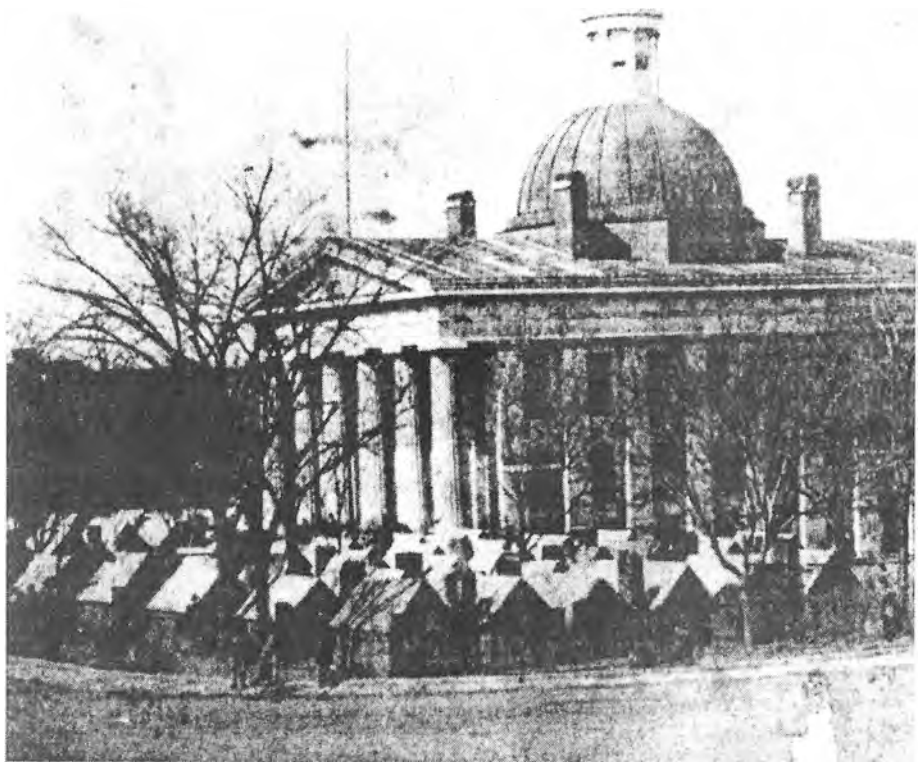
and slept until supper time, dispatched that meal, and returned to my quarters in the cool of the evening.

We have in our camp a superabundance of negroes. One of these, a Georgian, belonged to a captain of rebel cavalry, and fell into our hands at Bridgeport. Since that affair he has attached himself to me. The other negroes I do not know. In fact they are too numerous to mention.

**May 11.** Attended divine services with Captain McDougal at the Presbyterian Church. The edifice is very fine. The audience was small; the sermon tolerable. Troubles, the preacher said, were sent to discipline us. The army was of God; they should submit to it, not as slaves but as Christians therefore, just as they submitted to other distasteful and calamitous dispensations.

**May 12.** My letters from home have fallen into the hands of John Morgan. The envelopes

***Federal troops camped on the Courthouse lawn during the occupation of Huntsville.***



were picked up on the road and forwarded to me. My wife should feel encouraged. It is not everybody's letters that are pounced upon at midnight, taken at the bayonet, and read by the flickering light of the campfire.

**May 16.** Appointed Provost Marshal of the city. Have been busy hearing all sorts of complaints, signing passes for all sorts of persons, sending guards to this and that place in the city, and doing the numerous other things necessary to be done in a city under martial law. Captain Mitchell and Lieutenant Wilson are my assistants, and, in fact, do most of the work. The citizens say I am the youngest Governor they ever had.

**May 17.** Captain Mitchell and I were invited to a strawberry supper at Judge Lane's. Found General Mitchell and staff, Colonel Kennett, Lieutenant-Colonel Birdsall, and Captain Loomis, of the army, there. Mr. and Mrs. Judge Lane, Colonel and Major Davis, and a general, whose name I can not recall, were the only citizens present. General Mitchell monopolized the conversation.

A few days ago we had John Morgan utterly annihilated; but he seems to have gathered up the dispersed atoms and rebuilt himself. In the destruction of our supply trains he imagines, doubtless, that he is inflicting a great injury upon our division; but he is mistaken. The bread and meat we fail to get from the loyal States are made good to us from the smoke houses and granaries of the disloyal. Our boys find Alabama hams better than Uncle Sam's sidemeat, and fresh bread better than hard crackers. So that every time this dashing cavalryman destroys a provision



*Yankee tents on East Side Square during the Civil War.*

train, their hearts are gladdened, and they shout "Bully for Morgan!"

**May 19.** Fifteen hundred mounted men were within seventeen miles of Huntsville yesterday. A regiment with four pieces of artillery, under command of Colonel Lytle, was sent toward

Fayetteville to look after them.

**May 20.** The busiest time in the Provost Marshal's office is between eight o'clock in the morning and noon. Then many persons apply for passes to go outside the lines and for guards to protect property. Others come to make complaints that houses

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have been broken open, or that horses, dogs, and negroes, have strayed away or been stolen.

**May 23.** The men of Huntsville have settled down to a patient endurance of military rule. They say but little, and treat us with all politeness. The women, however, are outspoken in their hostility, and marvelously bitter. A flag of truce came in last night from Chattanooga, and the bearers were overwhelmed with visits and favors from the ladies. When they took supper at the Huntsville Hotel, the large dining room was crowded with fair faces and bright eyes; but the men prudently held aloof.

A day or two ago one of our Confederate prisoners died. The ladies filled the hearse to overflowing with flowers, and a large number of them accompanied the soldier to his last resting-place.

**May 25.** This indoor life has made me ill. I am as yellow as an orange. The doctors say I have the jaundice.

**July 2.** I am almost as well

as ever, not quite so strong, but a few days will make me right again.

**July 3.** It is exceedingly dull; we are resting as quietly and leisurely as we could at home. There are no drills, and no expeditions. General Mitchel departed for Washington yesterday. My horse is as fat as a stall-fed ox. He has had a very easy time during my absence.

**July 4.** Thirty-four guns were fired at noon.

**July 6.** The boys have a great many game chickens. Not long ago Company G, of the Third, and Company G, of the Tenth, had a rooster fight, the stakes being fifteen dollars a side. After numerous attacks, retreats charges, and countercharges, the Tenth rooster succumbed like a hero, and the other was carried in triumph from the field. General Mitchell made his appearance near the scene at the conclusion of the conflict; but, supposing the crowd to be an enthusiastic lot of soldiers who were cheering him, passed on, well

pleased with them and himself.

**July 7.** Am detailed to serve on court-martial. Convened at Athens at ten o'clock this morning. Organized and adjourned to meet at ten tomorrow. The first case to be tried is that of Colonel J. B. Turchin, Nineteenth Illinois. He is charged with permitting his command, the Eighth Brigade, to steal, rob, and commit all manner of outrages.

**July 10.** The court has been adjourning from day to day, until Colonel Turchin should succeed in procuring counsel; but it is now in fall blast. Nelson's division is quartered here. The town is enveloped in a dense cloud of dust.

**July 14.** There are many wealthy planters in this section. One of the witnesses before our court has a cotton crop on hand worth sixty thousand dollars. Another swears that Turchin's brigade robbed him of twelve hundred dollars' worth of silver plate.

**July 15.** The post at Murfreesboro, occupied by two

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regiments of infantry and one battery, under Crittenden, of Indiana, has surrendered to the enemy. A bridge and a portion of the railroad track between this place and Pulaski have been destroyed. A large rebel force is said to be north of the Tennessee. It crossed the river at Chattanooga.

**July 19.** Returned to Huntsville this afternoon; General Garfield with me. He will visit our quarters tomorrow and dine with us. General Rousseau has been assigned to the command of our division. He sent the Rev. Mr. Ross to jail today for preaching a secession sermon last Sunday. He damns the rebel sympathizers, and says if the negro stands in the way of the Union he must get out.

Turchin has been made a brigadier.

**July 23.** Garfield and Ammen are our guests. An order has been issued and is now being circulated from General Ammen. It recites the fact of his promotion and forbids anyone hereafter to call him Uncle Jacob, the title being entirely too familiar and undignified for one of his rank.

**July 24.** The rebel cavalry was riding in the mountains south of us last night. There was some firing by our pickets but nothing occurred of importance.

**July 30.** General Garfield is lying on the lounge unwell. He has an attack of the jaundice, and will, I think, go home tomorrow.

**August 1.** The gentlemen of the South have a great fondness for jewelry, canes, cigars, and dogs. Out of forty white men thirty-nine, at least, will have canes, and on Sunday the fortieth will have one also. White men rarely work here. There are, it

is true, tailors, merchants, saddlers, and jeweler, but the whites never drive teams, work in the fields, or engage in what may be termed rough work.

Judging from the number of stores and present stocks, Huntsville, in the better times, does a heavier retail jewelry business than Cleveland or Columbus. Every planter, and every wealthy or even well-to-do man, has plate. Diamonds, rings, gold watches and chains, and bracelets are to be found in every family. The negroes buy large amounts of cheap jewelry, and the trade in this branch is enormous. One might walk a whole day in a northern city without seeing a ruffled shirt; here they are common.

**August 7.** General Buell's staff, who informed us that General Robert McCook was murdered near Winchester, yesterday, by a small band of guerrillas. McCook was unwell, riding in an ambulance some distance in advance of the column; while stopping in front of a farmhouse to make some enquiry, the guerrillas made a sudden dash, the escort fled, and McCook was killed while lying in the ambulance defenseless. When the Dutchmen of his old regiment learned of the unfor-

tunate occurrence they became uncontrollable, and destroyed the buildings and property on five plantations near the scene of the murder. McCook had recently been promoted for gallantry. He was a brave, bluff, talented man, and his loss will be sorely felt.

**August 9.** A negro came in about four o'clock to report that the enemy's pickets were at his master's house, five miles from here, at the foot of the other slope of the mountain. He was such an ignorant fellow that his report was hardly intelligible. We sent him back, telling him to bring us more definite information.

**August 29.** The whole army is concentrated here, or near here, but nobody knows anything, except that the water is bad, whiskey scarce, dust abundant, and the air loaded with the scent and melody of a thousand mules.

**Sept. 4.** Army has fallen back to Murfreesboro.

*...and thus ended Col. John Beatty's stay in Huntsville. Undoubtedly, the citizens were glad to see him (and his friends) depart.*



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# Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

*With pearls of wisdom contributed by the Liar's Table*



Congrats to **Sandra Steele** on her new job as President of Enfinger Development Corp. I know she will do a bang-up job and Jeff sure is proud to have her on board. Good luck and I love you.

**Rodger Christopher** guessed last month's picture of **Erin Dacy** of Channel 31 fame. He sure enjoyed his country ham breakfast!

I want everyone to mark their calendars for Tuesday, March 9. I'm helping to give a breakfast to raise money for the Crime Prevention Academy for Seniors.

Others helping with the breakfast include **Sheriff Joe Whisante, D.A. Tim Morgan, Police Chief Compton Owens and Madison Police Chief Cecil Moses**. This is a worthwhile cause to help the Senior Citizens and I'm counting on all my friends to show up!

My sympathy to the family of

**Pam Mitchell**. Pam was with the D.A.'s office for 17 years and her friends will miss her greatly.

I think it's great that Channel 31 is broadcasting their 6:00 news from different cities each week. A friend of mind said they were in Decatur and sure did enjoy it.

My friend **Susan**, from the Senior Citizens Center, is sure excited about the **Wal-Mart Senior Expo** coming up May 26-27. She said that **John Malone** has agreed to be the M.C., for the event. John is as good a person as you could ever hope to know. I love you John and keep up the good work.

**Mike Glenn**, one of our Huntsville boys who is pastor of the Brentwood Baptist Church in Nashville, brought his staff to breakfast recently. It was good to see you Mike!

A special congrats to one of

my employees, **Judy Rush**, who just celebrated her big 40th. We wish you many more to come.

Remember **Jimmy Taylor** who had a restaurant on Whitesburg Drive? He and his lovely wife brought their friend, **Rebecca Starling** from Atlanta, to breakfast this week. Great seeing them again!

Heads up to everyone! My friends **Tom Carney** and **Bo Scott** are working on a new book that will be all pictures of Huntsville in the "old days." You better get in line for this one when it comes out for it's great! If anyone has any old pictures, drop them off here and I'll make sure they get them.

Congrats to **Linda Drace** who just celebrated her birthday. Both of her children came home from college to celebrate Valen-

## Photo of The Month

The first person to identify the little boy in the picture below wins a breakfast at Eunice's Country Kitchen. So stop by and tell Aunt Eunice who you think it is!

Hint: People around the Courthouse say, "he is a chip off the old block."



Last month's photo was Erin Dacy

## A Helping Hand

- \* Grocery shopping
- \* Last minute shopping
- \* Laundry & dry cleaning pickup or drop off
- \* Post office visit
- \* Parcel pick-ups
- \* Carry pets to veterinarian
- \* Flower or gift delivery
- \* Standing in line
- \* Waiting for delivery or repair person
- \* Help with parties



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tines day with her and she was one proud mother.

Rumor has it that **Fred Simpson** is almost ready to publish his book about lynchings in Madison County. It should be interesting.

Two special people, **Todd and Melody**, came by to see me last week. They are the grandchildren of the late **Grady Reeves**, and boy was he ever proud of them! Their father, **Robert**, is with Channel 19, and also a great person.

**Congressman Bud Cramer** came by and spent his morning pouring coffee. He is one politician who really cares about people!

The Homebuilders Singing Valentine came by on Valentines day and sang a beautiful love song for me. They were all so sweet!

**Jim Kirkland** has had knee surgery, and besides being an "ole crip," is doing fine.

This thing about the sewers has me puzzled. If someone else can make all that money, what are we doing wrong? Maybe that's what we should be looking at.

If you go to the **Outback** you'll get a great meal but good luck on seeing the owner! He taught his wife, **Marci**, to play golf and now that she's become an expert he has to spend all of his time on the golf course practicing to stay up with her! Stick to what you know **Loyd** and leave the golfing to Marci!

World famous author **Ken Follet** will be visiting us this spring. He's working on a spy thriller based partly here in

Huntsville in 1958. We'll feed him some ham and biscuits and he may never go back to London!

We hear that **David Milam, Rance Pruitt and Margaret Ann Hanaw** recently returned from some wild parting in New Orleans. From the looks of David, he must have had a great time!

For all of you people who read *Old Huntsville*, you should thank the **Golden K**

**Kiwanis** club. They distribute the magazines and all the money goes to help children here in Huntsville. They are a great bunch of retired guys who never get the recognition they deserve.

Congrats to **June Cope and Edward Riddick** who have announced plans for a May wedding. Her diamond would put Liz Taylor's to shame.

That's all for now but remember I love you.

Join us Tuesday March 9, for a Special Breakfast, benefitting The Crime Prevention Academy for Seniors. Call 859-3919 for reservations

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## Cold Weather Comfort Foods

### Potato Soup

- 3 slices bacon
- 1 sweet onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped fine
- 3 c. potatoes, sliced thin
- 1 t. garlic powder
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 c. water
- 1 c. cheddar cheese, shredded
- 3 c. milk
- 1/2 c. cream

Cook your bacon in a heavy sauce pan til crisp. Remove, drain, keep for later. In the drippings, saute onions and carrots. Add the water & potatoes, and simmer til the potatoes are tender. Add the seasonings and milk, heat to boiling point and add cream.

When serving sprinkle the

crumbled bacon and top with cheese.

### Chicken Pie

- 1 fryer, cut up
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 small can pimento, chopped
- 1 t. garlic powder
- 1/2 t. cayenne powder
- 2 c. chicken broth
- 1 c. self-rising flour
- 1 c. milk

Put the chicken pieces into a saucepan with enough water to cover. Boil until tender, 40 minutes. Debone the chicken, keep the broth. Place the chicken in a baking dish. Mix your broth, pimento, spices and soup. Pour this mixture over the chicken. Mix the flour and milk together

pour over the chicken. Dot with butter, bake at 350 degrees for an hour. This should serve 6.

### Hot Brown Rice

- 3 green onions, chopped
- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1 c. rice
- 1 small can mushrooms
- 1 can beef consomme (or beef broth)
- 1 can water
- 1/2 t. each oregano, thyme and garlic powder
- salt and pepper to taste

Preheat your oven to 325 degrees. Spray a 2 quart baking dish with cooking spray. Add all ingredients and bake for an hour. Stir after 30 minutes, cover for the balance of the baking time. Makes 8 servings.

### Macaroni and Cheese

- 1 c. uncooked macaroni
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 3 c. milk
- 1 1/2 pounds of cheddar cheese, slices

Cook your macaroni in boiling water for 8 minutes - no more. Drain. Mix the eggs and milk, pour the macaroni into egg mixture. Spray a 9 x 13" baking dish with cooking spray and layer in the dish, in this order: macaroni, cheese, macaroni, cheese. Sprinkle top with black



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pepper. Bake in a 400 degree oven til done, about 35 minutes.

### Wonderful Coconut Pie

- 1/2 c. self-rising flour
- 1 1/2 c. sugar
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 1/2 stick butter, melted
- 7 oz. flake coconut
- 2 c. milk

Blend together the sugar and flour, stir in the eggs and remaining ingredients. Pour into 2 greased 9-inch pie plates. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

### Fudge Cake

Melt together:

- 2 squares of chocolate
- 1/2 c. butter

Add:

- 1 c. sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten well
- 3/4 c. self-rising flour
- 1 c. pecans, chopped and dusted with extra flour

Beat the ingredients well and stir in the pecans. Pour into a greased 13 x 9" baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes, remove from oven and add one cup miniature marshmallows over the cake while it is still hot.

Icing:

- 1/4 c. butter
- 3 T. milk
- 2 c. powdered sugar
- 2 T. cocoa

Warm the butter and milk, sift together the powdered sugar

and cocoa. Add the warm mixture to powdered sugar mixture. Beat well and drizzle over marshmallows on the cake. Let cool in pan and cut in squares. This should make about 15 pieces.

### Fruit Medley

Select a variety of colors and textures of fruit such as melons, plums, grapes, strawberries, tangerines, kiwis, pineapples, blueberries, peaches, bananas, apples, nectarines, raspberries and blackberries. Cut them into bite-sized pieces and place into an attractive bowl or carved watermelon basket. Sprinkle with Grand Marnier Liqueur one hour before serving. Garnish with mint or contrasting colored flowers.



*The press secretary of one of our presidents defended his boss by saying, "the president mis-spoke himself. ..."*

*That same president defended himself by saying, "I was not lying, I said things that later seemed to be untrue."*

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## Absurd News

Bobby Joe Allen, sentenced to death for his role in the murder of a security guard shot in a holdup, appeared in Federal court resentencing. The U.S. District Judge gave Allen, 20, the death penalty for using a gun in the robbery, and life in prison without parole for his part in the robbery itself. At issue was which sentence was to be carried out first. The Judge put Allen under the death penalty first.

Jeff Rankin, of Tucson Arizona, was acquitted of speeding and reckless driving when he was able to prove that the arresting officer, who had chased him for 12 miles, did not have a driver's license.

In a small town in England, an electrician was rewiring a telegraph pole when he realized there was a stone in his shoe. To move the stone to a less annoying position within his shoe, he started shaking his leg. Luckily he lived in a good natured area, and some of those good-natured, helping citizens noticed him. Thinking he was being electrocuted, they quickly pushed the ladder out from underneath him, which caused him to fall 15 feet to the ground, breaking both legs in multiple places.

"What are you in for?" Asked Gov. Oglesby while visiting Joliet prison. The man, who was exceedingly homely, replied: "Abduction, sir; I tried to run off with a girl and they caught me."

"I'll pardon you as soon as I get back to Springfield," said the Governor. "I don't see how you

could get a wife any other way."

A twenty-five year old man in Buenos Aires, suspecting his wife of infidelity, picked her up and threw her off the 8th floor apartment they shared. Instead of plunging immediately to her death, she became entangled in some power lines just above the street. Infuriated, he jumped after her-- evidently with the intention of finishing the job. He missed the lines, however, and died when he hit the pavement. His cheating wife was able to swing to a nearby balcony and survived without a scratch.

An animal rights group in St. Louis filed a complaint against a woman who had repeatedly told her friends that she was in the habit of sleeping with a pig. The judge dismissed the case after meeting the husband.

*Thunder is very impressive but it is the lightning that does the work.*  
Mark Twain



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# Wild Shootout Leaves Editor Wounded

Called A Lying Cowardly  
Puppy, Editor Seeks  
Revenge

From 1896 Huntsville newspaper

The rapid firing of pistol shots a few minutes of 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon, alarmed the citizens and caused many to run up near the Masonic Hall to learn the cause. Those first on the scene found Mr. Frank Coleman, surrounded by several ladies and gentlemen, standing with a pistol in his hand and a few feet distant, Mr. R.E. Spragins, also a pistol in his hand, talking to several gentlemen.

The two gentlemen had been firing at each other with pistols. The facts, as gathered by witnesses who saw the shooting, show that Mr. Spragins was passing up the street toward his home, and when in front of the Masonic Hall, Mr. Coleman came up rapidly following him and when within a few steps, Mr. Spragins looked back and saw him. Mr. Coleman immediately cried, "What you said yesterday was unwarranted! Defend yourself!" and fired two shots before Mr. Spragins could get his pistol out.

Spragins fired and Coleman began retreating and fired two more shots. Spragins fired a second shot, the ball striking Mr. Coleman's watch in his vest pocket, shattering it. Mr. Coleman immediately cried out, turning to Col. Scruggs, "I am hit and my pistol is empty." Scruggs raised his hand to Spragins who

was in the act of firing, and asked him not to shoot. Spragins replied, "All right, Colonel," and raised the muzzle of his pistol in the air.

Coleman then stepped out from behind Scruggs and fired again, the ball going through Spragins vest pocket and out through a bank book in his coat pocket. Spragins answered the shot quickly, the ball entering Coleman's body under his right arm and passing into his lungs.

Coleman then claimed again his pistol was empty and Col. Scruggs took it from his hands, asking Spragins not to shoot again. This pistol had an undischarged round in the chamber.

Mr. Coleman did not fall but was assisted into a buggy and carried to his home where he



**R.E. Spragins fought duel  
on Huntsville street**

was attended to by several physicians.

The cause of the matter originated last week when Mr. Coleman published an article critical of the County Democratic

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party and especially so about their solicitation of Mr. Spragins to become a member of the Central Committee. Many people believed this as a direct and unwarranted attack on Spragins.

The following Friday morning, meeting Coleman on the street, Spragins called his attention to the article. Not receiving a reply, Spragins then called Coleman a liar and a cowardly puppy.

There the matter rested until yesterday afternoon when the shooting occurred.

The affair is much regretted by our citizens, but the fact that Mr. Coleman used his paper, *The Argus*, to vent his personal spleen upon citizens precludes the possibility of his receiving the sympathy that would naturally be extended one who is worsted in an encounter of this character.

# Free Access



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So important was the spring that in 1843 it was transferred to the city for the sum of \$1 by William W. Pope, son of the original owner. Perhaps fearing that future city governments would restrict access to the spring, or charge for use of the grounds, the deed specified that "...the mayor and aldermen, and their succes-

sors shall furnish free access at all times through the lands herein conveyed to said spring, and hold the same for the promenades and pleasure grounds of all such peaceful persons as may choose to visit same."

The spring, and the park, remained unrestricted except for a brief time in December, 1941, when the city government posted barbed wire and armed guards around the spring, and the entire park, to prevent poisoning by Japanese agents.

A public outcry quickly forced the city to remove the fence (the guard remained) and the park has since remained free to all people at all times.

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# Dear Editor

In your last issue of Old Huntsville magazine you had a letter to the editor asking to see an article about "The Huntsville Coffee Company."

I am 91 years old and probably the only one living who could write about this company, so here goes.

The Huntsville Coffee Company, Inc., was organized in the early 1920s by my father, Horace O. Hayden, and Henry M. Hughes. It was located on Washington Street, diagonally across from Lewter Hardware Co. Its purpose was to roast and grind coffee for sale to merchants.

They hired employees to run the office and operate the large ovens where the coffee was roasted, then ground and packed. The green coffee was imported mostly from Brazil and Columbia, South America. It was divided into a mixture called "Twickenham Blend." Then it



was roasted, ground and packed into tin containers with a picture of the Twickenham Hotel on them.

They made another blend which was packed in paper bags. But I have forgotten the name of this blend. My father, H. O. Hayden, traveled all of southern Tennessee and north Alabama, calling on merchants to sell them coffee from the Huntsville Coffee Company, Inc. The Huntsville Coffee Company closed its doors in the late 1930s and went out of business.

*Evelyn Hayden Hodge,  
Huntsville*

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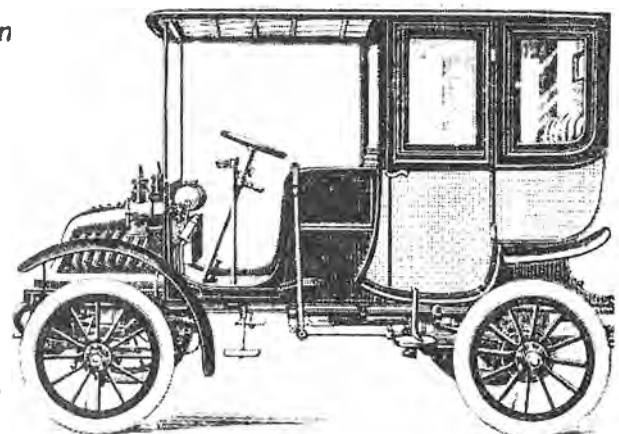
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# DELIVERING THE MAIL



This may be hard for Huntsvillians to believe, but as German rocket scientists were preparing to move here to set up an arsenal that would change the world, our mail was still being delivered by horse and buggy!

A mail carrier for the Huntsville Post Office for over 30 years, Clarence Celia Powers refused to change to the automobile and delivered mail to his customers by horse and buggy until he retired in 1948.

Clarence was a familiar sight to all on his route. He knew all his mail recipients by name and would often carry candy to the young children along his route. The children especially liked to run alongside his buggy until he would get out of their neighborhoods. On several occasions he had stopped to help people in

distress, and was known to have a kind heart and a good sense of humor.

Clarence served several territories throughout Huntsville. His last route covered the area of Pulaski Pike and West Clinton Avenue. One of the few black men working for the post office at that time, Clarence was born in March of 1878 and was the youngest of five brothers. His father was a farmer and a Methodist minister, and Powers had always taken an interest in church work. When he wasn't delivering mail, he was usually found at the church. Powers' high school education was received at Central Alabama Academy, located on Franklin Street.

Clarence became a mail carrier on June 1, 1917, after working for Chattanooga, Memphis,

and other Huntsville employers. He especially liked carrying the mail, he said, because he liked seeing the same people every day. The fact that ladies along his route often times would have pies and cakes waiting for him just provided an extra incentive. For all the eating he did Clarence was a tall, slim man.

The last day that he served, January 27, 1948, was one of the most difficult he had ever experienced, due to the severe icy conditions of the Huntsville streets. His horse had gotten quite old by this time and found it very hard to maneuver the slick roads. There were very few days that Clarence was not able to deliver the mail to his customers. He had many friends, both black and white, among the people who knew him and respected him. Powers was recognized by the post office for all the years of dedication he had given by a dinner in his honor, and the gift of a beautiful pocket watch.

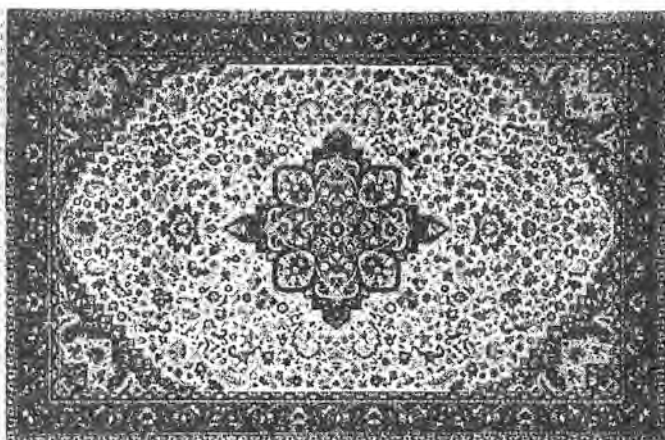
The new man, who was to take over Clarence's route, when asked if he was going to use a

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horse and buggy, replied he was going to use a "gas burner, not a hay burner!"

Clarence Powers was 70 when he retired.

Upon his retirement, the horse and buggy were consigned to the county barn. Two months later, a group of people led by

farmer Ben Lucas, bought the buggy and horse and presented it to the retired mail carrier in appreciation of his years of dedicated service. For several years thereafter, Clarence and his horse remained a familiar sight to Huntsvillians.

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# Memories In Voiceless Stone

by Jacquelyn Gray

"Yon marble minstrel's voiceless stone  
In deathless song shall tell,  
When many a vanquished year hath flown,  
The story how you fell."  
Theodore O'Hara, *The Bivouac of the Dead*

Maple Hill Cemetery contains nearly 200 years of Huntsville's history, the remains of men and women who helped shape our country and share the same hallowed ground with their descendants. Ethereal works of art carved in granite and marble are as interesting as the lives they represent.

On Sunday, April 11 from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., the annual Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll will once again bring to life 50 men and women from Huntsville's historic past. Sponsored by the Huntsville Pilgrimage Association, this event is free to the public. Donations made towards the stroll will help repair the many monuments and markers ravaged by time.

An example of a recently restored monument is the Erskine mausoleum.

The Russel Erskine Hotel, a landmark in downtown Huntsville's skyline, was once a popular place for important events. It was originally to be named in honor of Confederate General Joseph Wheeler, but in the process of planning, the financiers discovered their funds would not be nearly enough. They turned to millionaire Russel Erskine for financial help. He agreed to help on the condition that it be named for him instead.

Albert Russel Erskine was named for Revolutionary War ancestor Albert Russel, who is also buried at Maple Hill. Erskine was born in 1871, destined for greatness. Although a school dropout by 15, he managed to work his way up to become president of Studebaker Automobile in Indiana. His Indiana estate was even named Twyckenham, a slight variation in spelling of Huntsville's historic district. Although Studebaker appeared to thrive in the wake of

*History comes alive...*

*Sunday  
April 11<sup>th</sup>  
2:00-4:30*



## *Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll*

*Hear the voices of Huntsville's most illustrious  
and fascinating residents tell their life stories.*

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the depression, by 1933 the company went into receivership, financially ruining Erskine in the process. After a life of hard-earned fortune and fame, this was one failure he could not cope with. In 1933, Russel Erskine was found in his Twyckenham Hills mansion by his son, dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. An excerpt from his suicide note read, "Nervous System Shattered I Cannot Go On."

Tallulah Bankhead, one of Huntsville's most colorful natives, will visit the grave of her beloved mother. Tallulah's raunchy humor and scandalous public displays kept her from the most coveted role of the day, that of Scarlett O'Hara. Southerners cried in outrage when she was not chosen. Alabama's governor even wrote in support of Tallulah, but her irreverence in real life was not compatible with the genteel fictional heroine of "Gone With The Wind."

Virginia Clay Clopton, daughter-in-law of Governor Clement Comer Clay will be on hand at the Stroll to talk about her days in Washington, D.C., where she was the wife of U.S. Senator Clement Claiborne Clay. After her husband announced

Alabama's secession at the Senate, she moved to Richmond as the wife of Confederate Senator Clay. While Huntsville was occupied by Federal soldiers, Union Gen. Ormsby Mitchel's daughter boldly rode about town on Virginia Clay's mare, while wearing Virginia's fine dresses.

Confederate Senator Clay was accused of taking part in the plot to assassinate Abraham Lincoln, and was imprisoned, along with Jefferson Davis at Fortress Monroe. Virginia relentlessly pleaded for their release, making personal pleas to President Andrew Johnson and Ulysses Grant. They were finally released one year later.

History is more than books and buildings. The people who made Huntsville's history can still be seen on April 11, accompanied by the graceful monuments erected as tributes to their lives.



*Sometimes I wake up  
grumpy. Other times I just  
let her sleep.  
Groucho Marx*

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Please renew my subscription and send the bill to my wife. She refuses to let me see the magazine until after she is finished so she may as well pay for it too.

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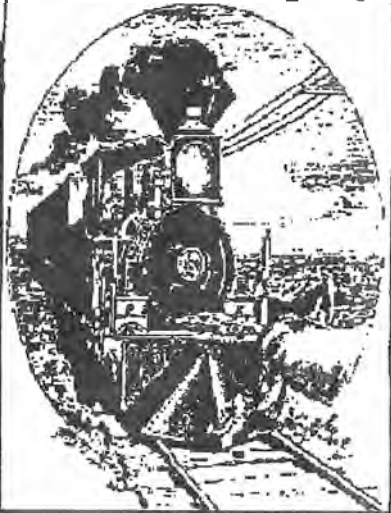
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# My Ragtime Baby



Born in 1873, as the son of a Methodist Preacher, Willie Handy decided at a young age he wanted to be a musician. His family, however, all stalwart hell-fire and brimstone God-fearing people, thought a musician was nothing but a blatant sinner in disguise.

In an effort to pacify his father, who wanted him to become a minister, Willie agreed to finish school and take the examination to become a school-teacher. After graduation, and unable to find a position as a teacher, he and a friend moved to Birmingham where he went to work at one of the iron mills working as a laborer.

Willie had not lost his desire to be a musician, though. He quickly became friends with most of the black musicians in Birmingham and it was not long before he had formed his own group and was playing around town at night while still working in the mills during the day.

One of the first gigs he had in Birmingham, according to legend, was playing in a notorious dive. The owner, after listening to the audition, asked what the group's name was.

"Don't have one." Willie replied.

"Well, what's your name?"

"Willie."

"Sounds like a damn Uncle Tom name to me. What's your whole name?"

"William Christopher."

"Hell, that's even worse! We'll just call you by your initials."

W.C. Handy soon tired of Birmingham, though, and moved to Huntsville where he got a job teaching at Alabama A&M as a music instructor. Among his many duties as an instructor, Handy was also responsible for organizing recitals for his students.

Unfortunately, the headmaster at A&M believed that classical music was the only music that should be performed. He even insisted on personally approving

the programs for every recital.

For his first recital Handy chose a piece, written by an obscure song-writer, he said, entitled, "La' Overture Toussaint." With a name like that, it was no trouble getting the headmaster to approve it.

Handy diligently rehearsed the students, who were by this time enraptured with the new musical composition.

The day of the concert arrived and it was an instant success. Even the staid headmaster was seen sitting in the front row



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tapping his foot to the music.

W.C. Handy's career as an instructor did not last long. He was still determined to make his mark as a musician. After leaving Huntsville, he moved to Memphis where he wrote the all-time classic, "Memphis Blues," which he sold for \$100.

Still a poor man, he next ended up in St. Louis, and after being forced to sleep in alleys and pool rooms, composed the song "Saint Louis Blues," a song that made him wealthy and famous and earned him the title of "Father of the Blues."

Ironically, he was to become best known for the piece he had composed while teaching at A&M - after he changed its name - to "My Ragtime Baby."



A&M College band - circa 1900

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# I Remember When

According to a new pilot program recently spotlighted in USA Today, it seems that listening to family stories and reminiscing about the past may be healing both physically and emotionally.

"I remember when" stories that bring back good memories may actually lower your heart rate and increase a sense of overall physical well-being, says a team of researchers at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. This study is an outgrowth of a four-year study of 10,000 people, exploring the health benefits of listening to and telling meaningful stories of the past.

Remembered stories often rekindle thoughts of love and



connection with others, both alive and deceased, and help to distance today's worries and concerns, and the stress of everyday living. A primary goal of the research team was to find ways to increase the quality of life for elderly people who live in assisted living homes and nursing institutions, and those who are suffering extended illnesses.



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### How To Settle With an Uninsured Motorist

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If the uninsured motorist fails to meet the financial responsibility, the Department of Public Safety will suspend the owner's drivers license and owner's vehicle registration. The Police officer's accident report must show that the uninsured motorist was "at fault" in the accident. The uninsured motorist has a right to a hearing with a State Trooper before the license is suspended, if the request for a hearing is submitted within 15 days.

At a hearing, an uninsured motorist can keep his drivers license if: (1) (s)he can convince the hearing officer that no jury would find him/her at fault in the accident. (2) (s)he has posted a cash bond (for the amount of claimed damages) with the Alabama Dept. of Public Safety, (3) (s)he has obtained a conditional release agreement with the other party, or (4) (s)he filed for bankruptcy.

Many people are not able to pay damages in a lump sum and if the parties agree, the uninsured driver can keep his/her drivers license if (s)he agrees to pay the damages in regular payments over time. A special form for this is available from the Dept. of Safety.

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# V-Mail from the Front

from V-mails sent to his wife.

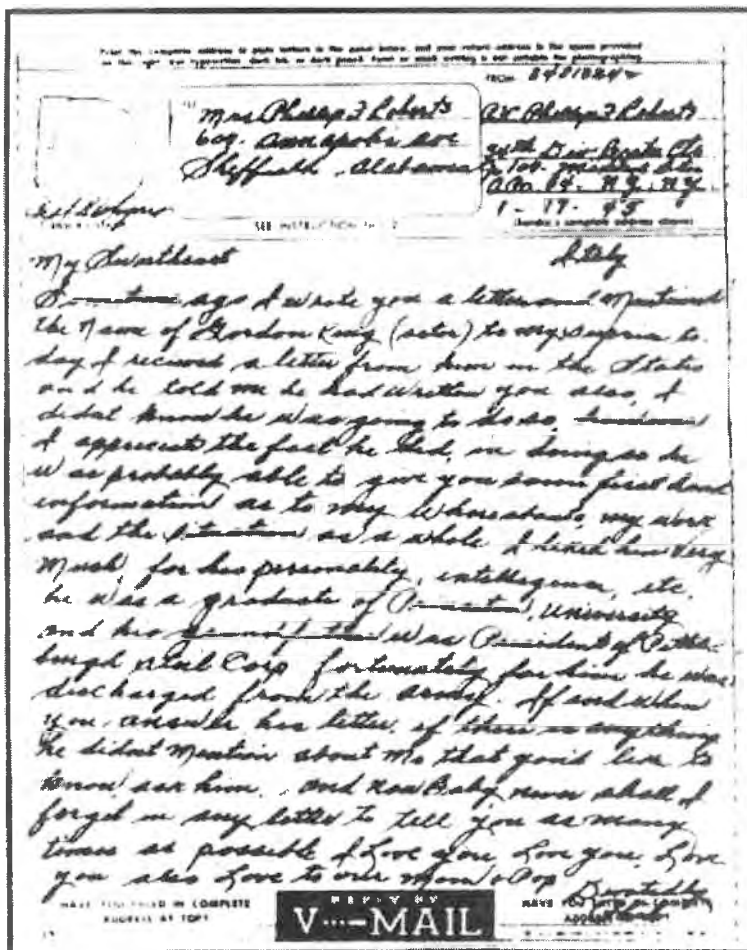
4/17/44: "Dearest Susie Q, I managed to find this paper in another hole, so knowing that you wanted me to write a fairly long letter, here goes. Today is rather wet and dreary but at all times I'm fairly comfortable, have plenty of food and enough blankets to keep warm. The days over here are pleasant but at night it gets real cool. Speaking of food we are getting a good ration now consisting of vegetables, meat, canned butter, jam or jelly, coffee or lemonade component and always plenty of cigarettes & matches. We have a small stove we use to warm our food or boil water for our coffee so all in all it could be worse. Certainly it isn't as bad as I always thought it would be. Every night our mess officers send us a big juicy sandwich of some description. Usually we get cake or doughnuts, too. The only thing that is scarce is water. We only get about enough to make our drinks and certainly not enough to ever wash. Then too there is a shortage of writing paper, and no ink at all. That is the reason I asked you to be sure to include that in the box I asked for, and if you haven't already sent it you might as well send about 3 bottles and plenty of stationery. Sweetheart, as much as I'd like to there is very little I can tell you about what we are doing or what is being done. As for sight-seeing I don't care if I never see anything

V-mail was an ingenious system set up by the War Department during the second World War to handle the hundreds of thousands of letters that were exchanged between American soldiers in foreign lands and the loved ones they had left behind. A V-mail letter was written on one side of a 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper. Technicians would then photograph each 1 to reduce and transfer microfilm; in this way a single reel of film could 117,000 letters. The reels were then flown back to the States where micro-filmed letters were slightly enlarged, printed onto 4" x 5" sheet paper, put into envelopes and delivered. Due to limitations, a V-mail letter couldn't convey a great of information, but it was enough to let wives and mothers know their loved ones were safe.

Uncle Sam was concerned. He spent one year, eight months and a day in what was termed the "European Theatre." He was a member of the 34th Division of the 5th Army, which had more combat time against the enemy than any other outfit.

The following are excerpts

### Actual size of V-Mail



Phi Fontaine Roberts was in his mid-thirties, still prime soldier-material as far

else in either Italy or North Africa. All that I ever think about or care about is an end to this war and home. The Italians and Africans can have it. I'll take where I was bred and born. We are not lacking for news. Every night we get a paper known as the STARS & STRIPES, and our mail is delivered right to our fox-hole. I've just found out we are allowed to tell where we are and I'm sure it will be interesting for you to know we are on the Anzio Beachhead & Nettano beach. I'm sure you've seen quite a bit in the papers about it. Well, Angel Baby if I had more paper and ink I could probably write some more but due to the fact it is so scarce I'll have to use what I have left in reminding you how very very much I love you. I've always worshipped you with all my heart and I owe everything to you for the happiest days of my life. Certainly no two people have been as happy as we. I'll always love you, just my Susie Q, and now lots of love to Mom & Pop Noffell, and if there is anything you want to know in your next letter just let me know and I'll try to answer. Again with all my love to

the Sweetest Wife in this whole wide world, Devotedly & Lovingly, Your Husband, Phil."

**5/19/44:** Anzio Beachhead. "My Dearest Wife, There is quite a bit being written in the papers about the 34th Div. There is a lot I can't tell you about so I suggest that you read the papers for information that I might not be able to tell you. Everything I've told you lately of my whereabouts and the places I've been, we have just been permitted to tell, that is the reason I couldn't say anything about it heretofore. You asked me in one of your letters how long I usually had to stay at the front and how much rest period. That happens to be a military secret, Sweetheart.

All I can say is that I've been in combat and am now in a rest area.

**12/2/44:** Our last stop was at Colara, Italy where I joined the 34th. They were at an end of a rest period after Cassino, as a matter of fact, we only stopped there 5 or 6 days until we broke camp loaded in trucks back to Naples. From there we got on L.S.T's bound for the Anzio Beachhead, which is an over-

night trip from Naples. The distance is only about 100 miles, possibly 120, but the boats are very slow. When we unloaded we found what was once a beautiful little village on the Tynnhenian (if that is the way to spell it) Sea a mass of rubble. We were given a hearty welcome by soldiers of the 3rd Division whom we relieved, saying "welcome to Anzio." After we got there we went out of town a few miles and dug our foxholes and rested a few days before going on the line. Every night there was an air raid



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and ack-ack guns of ours were plentiful. There wasn't a single place on the Beachhead that was safe nor was there a place that couldn't be shelled. Time came to go on the line. The old veterans knew what the score was..."

**12/3/44:** "...The next part of the story takes us to the front lines. All the new fellows were excited, including myself, but not afraid. We again loaded in trucks. The weather was cold, the ground very muddy. On the way of course we had to black out the lights on the trucks and be very quiet on the way. We could see flares the Germans threw up from their lines to spot patrols and enemy activity. We only traveled about eight miles until we were told to unload. From that point we walked about 2 miles to the Mussolini Canal and then I began to realize I was in war. The Jerry machine guns, as the Germans are commonly known, were really barking and their big ones weren't exactly quiet, to say nothing of our own. Well, it was rather late at night when we finally got to our new home - a foxhole on the banks of the canal. They were already dug by the boys we relieved. I got in one and the hole was just about big enough for me but one of the other fellows got in with me so I slept sitting up until I was finally called to go on Guard, also my first experience at this..."

**12/4/44:** "...After having stood Guard the first night, about daybreak I was relieved and I proceeded to get some sleep. We usually stood 2 hours at a time. After I awoke, my buddy and I decided to improve our living quarters. First we enlarged our hole by digging in the side and smoothing the bottom. We put our blankets down and were prepared for a good night's

sleep. We went to bed and finally dozed off. Evidently the vibrations from the big shells caused the walls of our hole to cave in. When we did finally awake, to our surprise, we were completely covered in dirt. The next day then we threw out all the loose dirt and made ourselves as comfortable as possible. We didn't have anymore trouble at this particular location with the exception of getting muddy when it rained..."

**12/5/44:** "...We were about 1/2 miles at this location from the place where we had to go for rations and water. Our food consisted of meat & beans, Hash, and vegetable stew better known as C Rations. We only used water that was tested and approved by the U.S. Army. There was plenty of water in the canal, although one end was full of dead German Bodies, also carcasses of dead animals, so we dared not drink from there. Carrying rations is an every night job whether an army is on the defensive or offensive. Sometimes rations have to be brought up

**12/7/44:** "...My last V-mail told of the ration situations and



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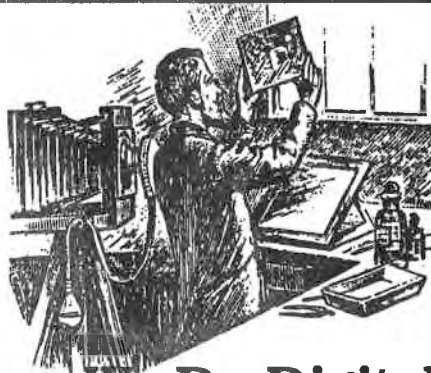
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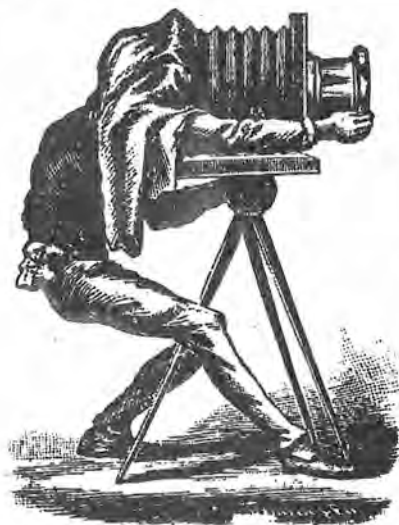
the details on Anzio and elsewhere at night. During the day we would stay in our foxholes and about all there was to do was to write letters, hence the reason for hearing from me so often while on Anzio. During the night we stood guard. This lasted all night in shifts every 2 hours. Then we had to go on patrols, out looking for the enemy, etc., sometime to our sorrow we found him. I was caught out in the open in the heaviest artillery barrage of any I've experienced since being overseas. This was truly another time I thought for sure you'd collect on my insurance. About the scariest I've ever been was the time I was on outpost Guard in no man's land. I threw a hand grenade at what I thought was a German patrol slipping up on us about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and it turned out to be our own Sergeant who was bringing a machine gun back to the outpost we were in. Through an Act of Providence he wasn't killed, for which I'm truly thankful. I've shot at plenty of Germans with a rifle,

also with mortars. I don't actually know whether I've killed any or not ...

**12/16/44:** "...Our Colonel informed all the noncoms and the commissioned officers that we were going on the offensive. We were in a rest area when this announcement was made. To me this was bad news 'cause I already knew what it would mean. At the time I realized we couldn't stay in one place and ever win a war. We then went on maneuvers, so to speak, with tanks. We trained with our weapons we were supposed to use. We had lectures and demonstrations of all kinds, getting in readiness for that big day. Finally that day came. The English and the Americans started the biggest artillery barrage I'm sure there has ever been. Planes were roaring overhead with death & destruction to the Germans. This is known as a softening up process. After quite a bit of this our tanks started off firing as they rolled along, the Infantry behind the tanks, mopping up all enemy resistance that was left. We made

rapid progress as you already know. One of our Lts., was killed on about the 3rd day after the push-off. Casualties on our side were comparatively light, but there were numbers of dead Germans. My next letter to you concerns incidents that really happened during this period..."

**12/17/44:** "...After we started the big offensive I began to realize one could really get killed. I saw Germans slumped over their guns, dead. Also a few G.I.s that someone had stuck their rifles in the ground beside them and put their helmets on the rifle. This is to signify they are dead. We would gain as much during the day as possible by advancing house to house, wine cellar to wine cellar, and I say here the most disgusted I've ever been were the times we made our beds in a wine cellar with straw in comparative safety, all set for a good nights sleep, and then to have orders to move out. We have been in plenty of Jerry dugouts that they had just left and we ate their food for a change. It consisted of a dark bread of some



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kind & Portuguese Sardines - the latter being very good canned products. We would find photographs they would leave behind of their homes, relatives and places of interest to them of Germany. My next V-mail has to do with the 4th Day and Hell in Death's Valley. I named this particular spot and the name stuck..."


**12/18/44:** "...We left the line of departure early one morning toward the enemy. After having marched about 1 000 yards, a heavy machine gun fire started zooming overhead. Our company commander instructed us to find cover. Most all of us including myself rolled into a deep ravine that turned out to be the most dreaded Death Valley. After we had been in there awhile our Company Commander, with a few riflemen, went out to look for the machine gunner. In doing so he was shot in the neck. After we had been in this location awhile in what we thought was comparative safety, the enemy started throwing mortars and artillery where we were. In turn I started digging, as well as numerous others who were in the same predicament. Just after I completed this task I naturally got in it and it seems that just when I did a mortar shell came in and blew a Soldier's leg off directly in front of my hole. He in turn was cared for by the medics and evacuated to the hospital. Several more during the day were either killed or wounded in this locality and I might say it is the only stream of water I saw turn to blood. Tomorrow will be a continuance..."

**12/19/44:** "...To go on with the story as of yesterday - after I had been in this entrenchment practically all day and had witnessed the most gruesome

things, about 4 o'clock over here we were told to move forward, which we did. Consequently I dug the same kind of hole that I had in the first position due to the fact the first one was safe. The ground where we dug was wet and soggy yet it was to be my bed for this night and maybe several. Any place for safety was the utmost in our minds. Finally we bedded down for the night. Most uncomfortable due to dampness. In the early morning I awoke to get outside and just a very few feet from where my bed was I saw several dead G.I.s who had been killed by mortar shells during the night, and early that morning the litter bearers brought a patient directly in front of our hole and seemingly lost their minds, left the patient stranded in this body of water

and ran off. This I'm sure was due to fright incurred in the immediate area where we were. The boys in the hole with me of whom I've referred, Eugene Russell from Brooklyn, N.Y. and Harry McCarty, suggested we all get out and take the patient to first aid..."

**7/9/44:** My Dearest Wife, For the past few days I haven't written to you or Mama either. I have been so busy I just haven't had the time, but as usual I always get those you write to me and unless you did I don't see how I could take it. At present I'm resting for a few days. The doctor says I have a mild case of concussion. You asked me to tell you everything, so that's the reason I'm telling you this. A big shell landed pretty close to me causing my trouble. Now I'm very nervous and afraid. I don't know



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what the outcome will be. As long as I'm behind the lines I have a feeling of security, but when the front is mentioned I go all to pieces. Keep all of this to yourself. Don't tell Mama. You know how she is. In time I might overcome this..."

**11/25/44:** "...Darling, I've never told you this but when I was shell shocked the name of the town was Roginano-by-the-Sea. I thought you might be interested in knowing. I'm all right as long as I'm back here where I don't hear the burst of shells, otherwise my nerves are shot to pieces. In fact, to be truthful about the matter, I was shell shocked twice in less than 24 hours in the same town. Both times I had buildings completely torn down on me and I didn't get a scratch. Lucky, I call it. My buddies thought I was killed the first time but this letter is proof I wasn't..."

**10/19/45:** "My Sweetheart, If nothing unforeseen happens, I leave here tomorrow enroute to the United States for my discharge. I just received my shipping orders... I'm so happy I hardly know what to say. I'll be sure to call as soon as I arrive... Good-night, my Dear, I'll see you soon. Your Loving Husband, Phil."

# Sweet Potato Fruit Cake

- 3/4 cup butter
- 1 3/4 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp ground cloves
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- 1 bottle maraschino cherries
- 1 box coconut
- 1 cup cooked, mashed sweet potatoes
- 1 Tbs peanut butter



Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, milk and dry ingredients and mix well. Add other ingredients and mix well to make a very stiff dough. Bake in a greased loaf pan or tube cake pan at 375 degrees for 3 to 4 hours.



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# A Beautiful City

When Colonel D.C. Kelly and his Confederate forces appeared on the outskirts of town on Sept. 30, 1864, many of Huntsville's citizens thought their salvation was at hand.

Huntsville was occupied by Federal forces under the command of General Granger and its citizens chafed at the harsh military rule.

With his troops poised to attack, Colonel Kelly entered the city under a white flag of truce to present a demand to the Federals for an immediate surrender.

Granger refused, sending

back word that he would burn the whole town, and giving the inhabitants two hours to leave.

The next day Kelly sent another message into the city, warning its inhabitants to be out by 7 am.

Granger replied he would set fire to the whole city in 30 minutes if the Confederates came within 300 yards.

As word of the threatening exchanges leaked out to the Huntsville citizenry, a mass panic began. Families and slaves alike loaded their possessions into whatever conveyance they could procure and began a frantic de-

parture. In many cases, people fled the city with only the clothes on their back.

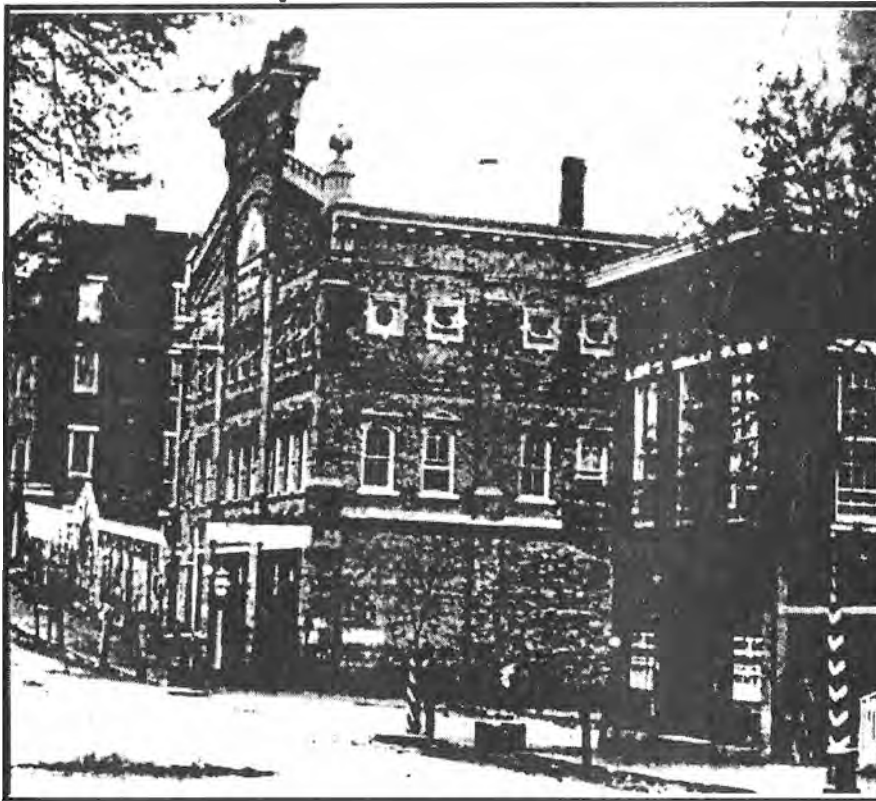
The Federal garrison, convinced they would be attacked at any moment, spent the evening and night fortifying their positions and preparing for battle.

Salvation did come to Huntsville, but in a way no one expected. The next morning, as the sun began its slow climb over the horizon, it was discovered that the Confederate forces had disappeared.

Colonel Kelly remained convinced for the rest of his life that he could have easily defeated the Union Army stationed in Huntsville, but as a friend said later, "It wasn't worth burning a beautiful city."



**No... This property is no longer for sale, but if it was, we would have been the Agent!**



City Hall, more commonly known as the Opera House (ca. 1890). Built in 1872, it was located on the corner of Jefferson and Clinton. In 1911, it was destroyed in a fire. On the right is the McGee Hotel where the KaffeKlatch is now located.



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# Good Luck, Mr. Gorsky

When Apollo Mission leader Neil Armstrong became the first human to walk on the moon, he had comments in addition to the historic "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

After making that statement, and some discussion between himself and Mission Control, Armstrong made an enigmatic remark, just before reentering the lander: "Good luck, Mr. Gorsky."

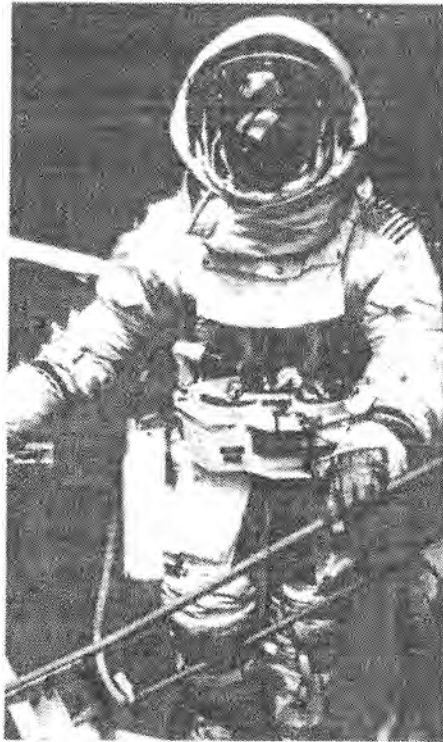
Many of the crew at NASA thought the casual remark was directed to some rival Soviet Cosmonaut, but a check of the rosters revealed no Gorsky in the Russian or American space program.

Over the years, many people questioned Armstrong as to what his statement had meant, but he always just smiled and said nothing.

On July 5, 1995 in Tampa, Florida, following a speech, Armstrong surprised a reporter by saying that he could now address the twenty-six year old comment. It seems that Mr. Gorsky had recently died, so Neil felt he could tell the story at last.

When he was a small boy, Armstrong was playing baseball with a friend in the backyard. The friend hit a fly ball that landed in front of the neighbor's bedroom window. The Armstrong family's neighbors were Mr. and Mrs. Gorsky.

As he leaned down to retrieve the ball, young Armstrong overheard Mrs. Gorsky shout at her



husband, "Sex! You want sex? You'll get sex when the kid next door walks on the moon!"

*I weigh the same now as I did when I was 20 years old... It's just in different places.*

*Bob Hope*

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