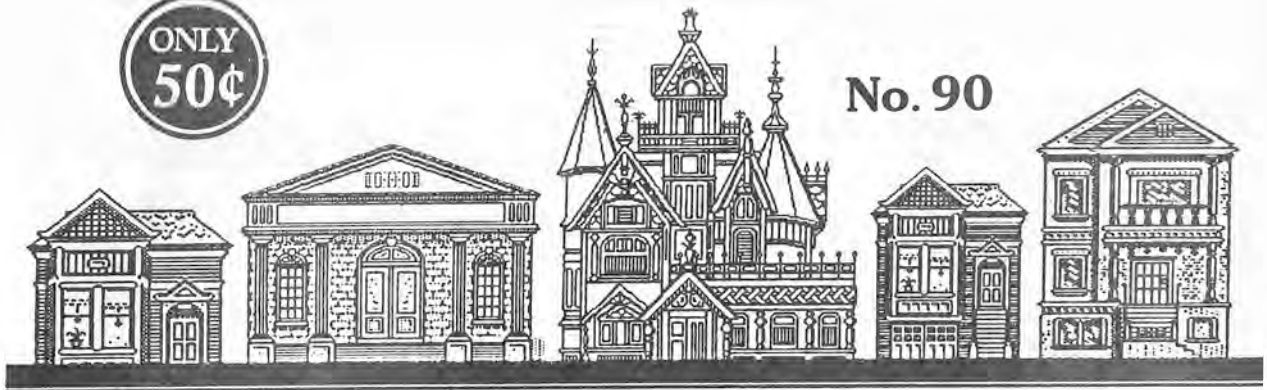


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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



STALAG REDSTONE

Few Tennessee Valley residents know that there was once a prisoner-of-war encampment in their midst. During World War II, an elite regiment of German paratroopers was captured and brought to North Alabama, where they were housed in a hastily-constructed camp at Redstone Arsenal.

After the war's end, the camp was completely demolished and all records pertaining to it were "Classified." Almost half a century later, personnel files of the POW's were shipped to Germany where they remain sealed under tight security. The only trace of the camp's existence are the memories of the men who worked or were once imprisoned there...

Also in This Issue: Boogertown Remembered

Stalag Redstone

The area along Dodd Road on Redstone Arsenal looks almost serene today. Off in the distance the remnants of a long ago dirt road meanders aimlessly through the tall grass and overgrown brush while a rabbit sits in the middle of a small clearing, basking in the warmth of the early morning sun. Occasionally you spot a stray piece of broken concrete or a piece of wire that, in your imagination, might have been part of the barbed wire enclosure.

Regardless of how hard you search though, there is nothing to tell you that the area was once a prison camp for one of Adolf Hitler's most elite fighting groups.

The 6th Regiment of the 2nd Fallschirmjager (Paratrooper) Division, under Major Freiherr von der Heydte, was considered by many military experts to be the premiere airborne force of the German Army in World War II. Often jumping into the midst of raging battles from an altitude of less than four hundred feet, the regiment was constantly in battle as the German High Command shifted it from one front to another in an attempt to stave off the

inevitable defeat.

Part of the regiment, under the temporary command of SS-Hauptsturmführer Otto Skorzeny, was used to rescue the Italian Fascist premier, Benito Mussolini from atop Gran Sasso, a 2,130 meter peak in Italy, where he was being held captive by Italian forces after they had negotiated a surrender with the Allies. Afterwards the regiment was transferred to the Russian front where the unit suffered 60% casualties in the bitter hand-to-hand fighting before being ordered back to Germany to rest and regroup.

Many German citizens thought joining the Fallschirmjagers the same as committing suicide but others, drawn by its elite spirit and bold exploits, eagerly signed their names to the enlistment papers. Typical of the young men who joined the regiment was Karl Spitzenpfeil, a native of Oberfranken.

Spitzenpfeil, born in 1922, grew up in a country where the youth were immersed in the Nazi dogma. At the age of 11 he joined the Hitler Youth and in 1940 became a member of the Labor Front. That same year he officially became a member of the N.S.D.A.P. (Nazi Party). Perhaps drawn by party ideology as much as glamour, Spitzenpfeil joined the Fallschirmjagers in 1941.

In 1944 the regiment was transferred to Normandy, France to be held as reserves for the ex-



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**We need all types of photographs of Huntsville
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A rare, never before published, photograph of Union soldiers camped around the courthouse during the Civil War. This photo was donated to the Library Archives by a man in Wisconsin whose great-grandfather was stationed here at the time.



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pected Allied invasion. Ironically, though designated as reserves, the 6th Regiment was the only German fighting force fully prepared when the invasion occurred, on June 6.

The regiment was in the middle of live-fire field exercises with troops deployed and artillery dug in when suddenly Allied paratroopers began dropping into the middle of the training grounds. One of the first allied soldiers to hit the ground was Reverend George Woods, who later became a priest at the Church of The Nativity in Huntsville.

The same troops who were firing at Father Woods would soon know Huntsville well.

Using a combination of armor and overwhelming air superiority, the allies rolled over the makeshift German defenses. Within days the 6th Regiment was reduced to small pockets of men fighting desperately to survive against overwhelming odds. A German private, George Remer, later recalled the battle.

"We couldn't move. Every time we tried, airplanes spotted us and artillery would fire at our positions. We were fighting tanks and

airplanes with rifles. The worst thing was the thirst and the smells – we had run out of water days before but to move was almost certain death – we had to stay in our holes with dead cows and bodies lying just feet from us."

Although the Germans had been taught that surrender was the ultimate disgrace, reality soon won out and the Allies began taking vast numbers of prisoners. Among the captives were 272 soldiers of the Fallschirmjager. After being relieved of their weapons and helmets the prisoners were marched to the beach where they

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were loaded into the empty hull of a cargo ship destined for Glasgow, Scotland.

In Scotland, the prisoners were transferred to a temporary POW camp that held almost 135,000 captives. No preparations had been made for the large number of prisoners and as a result the camp was hastily thrown together with an unruly and disorganized mob held behind the barbed wire.

The noncoms of the 6th Regiment POW's immediately set about restoring order among their troops. While other units deteriorated into leaderless masses, the 6th Regiment set themselves apart by the rigid military discipline they submitted to willingly, a trait that would follow them throughout their captivity. According to the *Glasgow News*, the regiment, when ordered to board a

Liberty ship destined for the United States, infuriated its guards when it formed ranks and marched, goose-stepping, to the embarkation point while singing German military anthems.

After disembarking in New York the POW's were shipped by train to Camp Forrest, near Tullahoma, Tennessee. Private Heinz Pabel described the train ride.

"We laughed and jeered at the flimsy construction of the wooden houses. All the cities we passed through seemed built haphazardly with no plan in mind. How could a country like this defeat the Reich? But as the miles grew longer we began to realize the vastness of the country and our bravado turned into hopelessness."

Camp Forrest had originally been authorized, in 1942, as an internment camp for Japanese

civilians. As the war in Europe grew in intensity, however, it was decided to convert the camp to a German POW camp with the capacity to hold 3,000 prisoners. By June of 1944, the camp held almost 22,000 prisoners. Much of the overcrowding was alleviated by the establishment of sub-camps throughout Tennessee and Georgia where they were employed in non war essential jobs.

Upon arrival at Camp Forrest all POW groups went through an informal classification. Class 1 was considered suitable for employment with minimum control; class 2 was employment with guards and class 3 were to be segregated from other prisoners and not allowed employment away from camp. Normally the last classification was reserved for the elite, such as paratroopers and submariners who might have an

**Ready or not,
here I come.**

*Nana came to paint
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**EVERYONE CAME TO
THE BABY SHOWER.**

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influence over ordinary troops.

The submariners were transferred to Anniston, Alabama and the remnants of the 6th Regiment, apparently the only paratroopers at Camp Forrest, were ordered to the newly established Camp Huntsville.

Chambers Construction Company of Athens had been awarded a contract on July 24, 1944 to construct the basic camp which consisted of three wooden buildings and a barbed wire enclosure with guard towers at each corner. A sick bay was located in one end of the mess hall, although seriously ill patients were sent to the University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa where McFarland Hall had been converted for use as a POW hospital. The enclosure was approximately 600' by 400', fronting on Dodd Road. A motor transport pool was located across the road.

Two weeks later 250 of the 6th Regiment POW's arrived and were immediately separated into groups of six. Each group was then assigned a tent with a small wood burning stove and given a "kit" bag in which to store personal belongings.

Almost from the beginning the POW's seemed determined not to

appear defeated. "They were haughty," said one former guard. "You could give them an order and they would look at you like you were nothing. I've seen them stand at attention in the hot sun for hours without flexing a muscle, waiting for one of their people to give them an order. But an American couldn't even get them to pick up a cigarette butt."

The camp quickly took on the appearances of a regular German army camp. Reveille at 6:00 in the morning, formation and roll call at 6:30 and breakfast at 7. The prisoners worked from 7:30 until 4:30 when they would fall in for another roll call. After dinner there was usually another formation, this time called by the

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Germans, to take care of camp business, mail call and other items relating to the welfare of the prisoners. In one instance, when a POW was accused of stealing from a tent mate he was tried by his own comrades, before the entire camp. After being found guilty, was ordered to walk sentry duty four weekends in a row (inside the barbed wire).

After helping to complete the construction of the camp, the POW's were assigned to work in a rock quarry where they broke rocks with a 12 pound hammer for eight hours at a stretch. More important than the gravel used in road building was the cooperation gained by such labor. While most POW's initially resisted being assigned to work details, a month's hard labor at breaking rocks caused all but the most fanatical to volunteer. After the first several months, the stone quarry seems to have been used primarily as a punishment detail.

About half of the prisoners were assigned regular jobs such as kitchen detail, barbers, sanitation and grass cutting. The other half were "temporary workers." They would stand in formation every morning while civilian "foremen" would tell the guards how many prisoners they needed that day for certain jobs. The guards would then inform the German noncoms, who would order the appropriate number of people to "fall out" and board the trucks. Most of these POW's were used in road construction and spraying for mosquitos in the malaria infested marsh lands of the Arsenal. Each prisoner was paid 80 cents a day, in canteen script.

Many stories persist today about German POW's being used to manufacture chemical weapons at the Arsenal - there are many people still living who actually saw

them in the workplaces. The truth, however is much simpler. Although the POW's were elite soldiers, they were still virile young men who would go to great extremes to be around the fair sex. Often when sent to the area on a garbage detail the men would loiter as long as possible hoping for glances of the female workers. In several instances POW's actually posed as janitors until they were discovered and sent on their way.

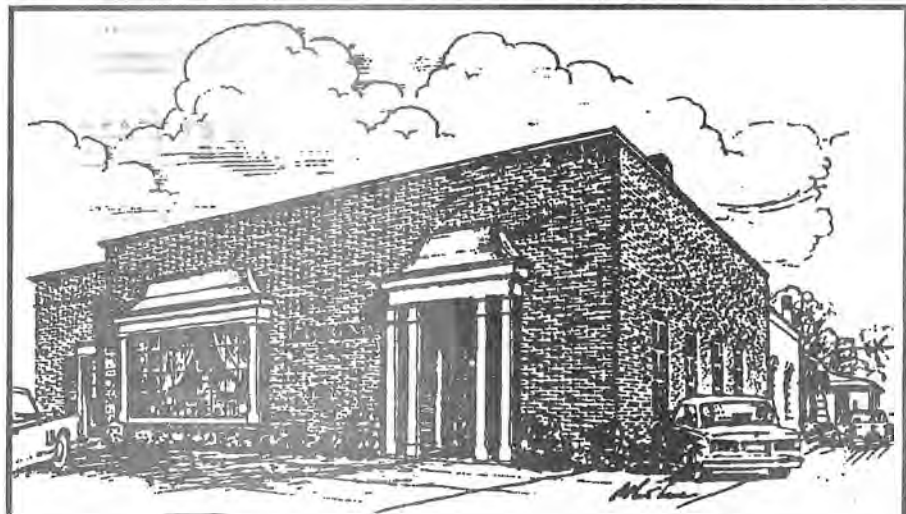
At one point the loitering became so bad that the Base commander was forced to issue an order detailing exactly what chores the POW's were allowed to perform.

The POW's favorite job assignment was the garbage detail. Not

only did they get to travel all over the base but it gave them the opportunity to "organize" items such as reading materials, radios and odd pieces of clothing.

In a typical case of government bureaucracy, the prisoners were not allowed to purchase any type of reading material but could receive it if someone sent it to them. Many of the POW's took advantage of this by writing relatives who lived in the states. An aunt of Karl Spitzenpfel, who lived in New York, sent a large box of books along with packets of flower seeds which were planted along the camp walk ways.

"All the prisoners were treated correctly," Spitzenpfel later said, although probably with a certain



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German POW's in a photograph taken in the early spring of 1945. They are standing at the rear entrance of Fox Army Hospital, on Redstone Arsenal, where they worked as orderlies and kitchen attendants.

amount of exaggeration. A former guard laughs at the story of POW's getting two cases of beer each for their birthdays. "The truth was they would trade us cartons of cigarettes they had gotten from the canteen and we would trade them in town for beer. For every three cases we would give them two and we would keep one."

In all POW camps there was a constant struggle for the "souls" of the POW's. Prisoners who would renounce Nazism and agree to cooperate with the authorities were deemed "progressives" and offered better

working conditions as an incentive, as well as being sent to re-education camps. In most camps becoming a "progressive" was viewed as being a traitor and was severely dealt with, often with a beating in the middle of the night. An ex POW from another camp, now living in Huntsville, later told how the "fanatics" terrorized the prisoners, sometimes administering beatings for offenses as simple as talking to a guard. As far as is known, no one in the 6th Regiment ever applied for "re-education."

Oddly, few people in Madison

County even knew there was a German POW camp in their midst. All news of the camp was censored and even the guards were under strict orders not to talk about it. In one case two POW's actually walked off from a work detail and hitchhiked into Huntsville where they went to an evening matinee movie and then went next door to a restaurant and enjoyed a large meal. When it came time to pay the bill they calmly told the restaurateur to call the base so they could turn themselves in. Even though they were clad in prisoners uniforms with large white letters painted on the legs and sleeves, no one had thought it was unusual!


From the original contingent of 250 prisoners the camp had grown to hold over 1200 by March of 1945. Small groups of prisoners were continuously being transferred in and out but the total number appears to have remained at between 1100 and 1300 until the camp was closed down.

As the days turned into months the prisoners began to realize the hopelessness of their situation. In Europe, if a prisoner could escape, he at least had a chance to make it back to his own lines. In America, a prisoner had no chance whatsoever. Even more bitter was the realization that with an Allied victory they would be able to return home, but as a nation defeated. Most of the men were torn between wanting to go home and wanting the war to continue. Though there were no escapes from Camp Huntsville, in nearby Camp Forrest there were four escapes and seven suicides as the war entered its final days.


Henry Gibbons, a former guard, described the end of the war. "We received orders to double the guards around the fence but

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they didn't tell us why. The base sent over a detachment of M.P.'s and we posted them next to the gate. In a little while an American officer drove up and entered the camp where he stayed for a few minutes and then left. Shortly afterwards the POW's lined up in formation and one of their officers gave a speech. I couldn't understand him but they told me later what he said.

"The Fuhrer is dead. He has fallen in the defense of the Fatherland. You are reminded that you have taken an oath as a German soldier and shall be expected to act accordingly.

"For the first time," Gibbons continued, "those boys really looked whipped. You could just see all the hot air going out of them."

The elite 6th Fallschirmjager Regiment had finally been defeated.

If the POW's had been expecting a quick return home, they were to be disappointed. Almost immediately new regulations went into effect. Whereas before officers and noncoms, under the Geneva Convention, could not be forced to work, after the surrender all POW's were required to work regardless of rank. The recalcitrants who refused were placed on a special diet, called the "Camp Forrest dinner," consisting of milk and herring. Huge quantities of herring had been shipped to the States by Great Britain in partial payment for war loans but when the United States troops refused to eat it, a large amount ended up in Camp Forrest from where it was shipped to other camps.

A few days of this diet usually persuaded even the die-hards that work in the rock quarry was an acceptable alternative.

An event that was to have even more far reaching effects oc-

curred on June 5, 1945 when all the POW's were assembled and ordered to fill out new forms. This form, unlike others they had already filled out, asked for information on political organizations they had been a part of.

Karl Spitzenpfeil, as many others did, while not realizing the implications, acknowledged being a member of the N.S.D.A.P. (Nazi party).

Preparations to close Camp Huntsville began in September of 1945. For the first time the men of the 6th Regiment were separated with many being sent to the Midwest to help with the harvest and a few to a camp outside of

Chicago.

The last group of POW's left Huntsville at the end of October after helping to demolish the camp. Lumber from the buildings were stacked in neat piles, later to be used for other construction on the Arsenal. The tents were returned to Army warehouses and even the gravel walkways in the camp were completely erased.

The United States government marked all the records concerning the camp as "Classified," thereby effectively erasing it from history. Almost a half century later personnel files of the POW's were shipped to Germany where they remain sealed under tight secu-

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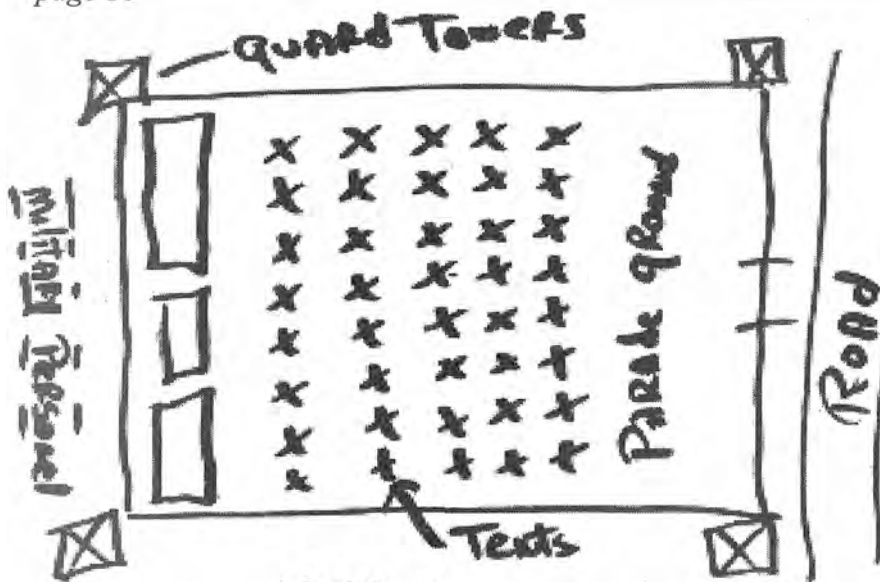
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Rough sketch of Camp Huntsville as it appeared in the fall of 1944

been Germany's elite.

In 1982 Karl Spitzenpfeil returned to Huntsville for a visit. After touring Redstone Arsenal and seeing the site where he once broke rocks, he asked to be taken to the site of the camp.

There was nothing left of the camp to stir his memory. All traces had long ago disappeared. Spitzenpfeil stood for a long moment staring at the site before finally turning away.

"It's good," he said. "It's good that it is gone."

Karl Spitzenpfeil died in 1996 in Michelau, Germany.

rity.

For Karl Spitzenpfeil, the war was far from being over. After leaving Huntsville he was sent to Nebraska where he helped to harvest potatoes. At this time they were slowly beginning to return POW's to Germany with the "politically correct" being sent first. Others who had acknowledged being members of the Nazi party suffered a different fate.

In January of 1946

Spitzenpfeil was sent to San Francisco where he boarded a ship bound for England with most of the other POW's from Camp Huntsville. There, they were joined by another 900 members of the 6th Fallschirmjager Regiment who had been held in other POW camps.

They were held in England for another two years after the war helping to repair war damage, "doing penance" for having once



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Heard on the Streets January 1895

W. W. Darwin, one of Madison's best citizens and a Republican of the first water, was in the city Wednesday.

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tation will be paid.

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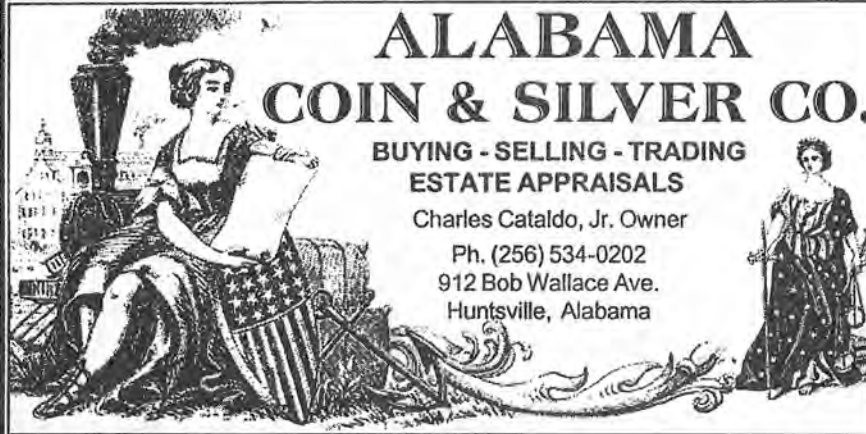
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Lincoln After The Election

from 1895 newspaper

His Pathetic Leave-Taking of His Old Law Office and Neighbors

I was in 1860 a reporter on the New York Times and was designated as the one to go to the house of Mr. Lincoln. I did so, and subsequently, after the election, I lived at the house with him for four weeks prior to his going to Washington, and when he went there for the inauguration I accompanied him.

I had ample opportunity to study him in every relation of life. He was a magnetic talker, an excellent story teller, but above all a square man, to whom two and two made four, all the time, and no amount of trickery could ever make it three and ninety-nine hundredths. He always said pre-



cisely what he thought and nothing else.

I remember distinctly the night before he left his home in Springfield. It was raining hard. I saw him hunt up a lantern and then get a candle and put it into the glass case and light it. He took his old long overcoat, which I thought at the time a funny looking garment, but which I see all the dudes wearing now, and opening the door he went out into the rain and darkness. I followed

him, and we picked our way through the unpaved slippery streets until we got to his office.

It was a very little office. There was a stove, some shelves laden with books, and a picture of a judge of the Supreme Court or of the court of appeals, and by the



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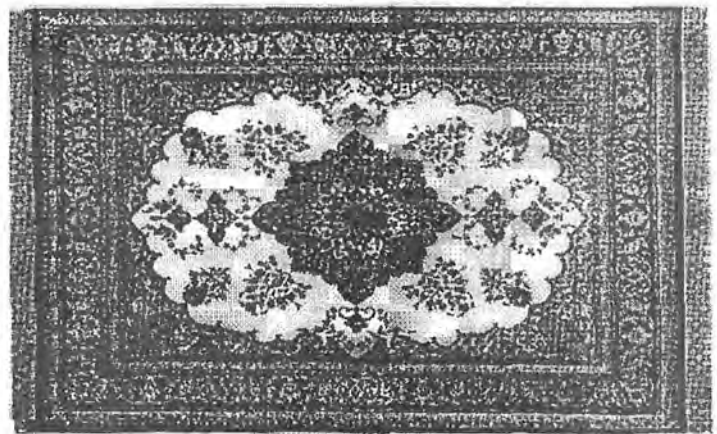
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From Around the World

way, I never went into a lawyer's office that I did not find a picture of a judge of the Supreme Court or of the court of appeals. There is always sure to be one or the other.

Well, when we got there he put his lantern down, and walking up to a table and running his hand over the books there, he said, "Well, good-bye, old friends." He stood a minute in silence, then furtively wiped away a tear from his eye, walked out, locked the door, and home he went. That did not amount to much, but it showed that the man had a little sentiment about him.

The next day it was raining great guns, but everybody round-about for 30 miles had turned out to see the president-elect start for Washington.

I remember him as he stood just under the eave of the house wearing his old high hat and the water dripping down upon it from above. The crowd wanted a speech, and he gave it to them. It was brief and was about like this - that for reasons beyond his understanding he had been selected to bear what he felt was a burden greater than that which had been put upon the shoulders of any citizen since this country was started, save possibly Washington, and all he had to say was: "If I have offended any of you, forgive me. I go to do my best. I ask your prayers. Friends and neighbors, good-bye. I hope to see you again soon."

Everybody cried, and the rain was really coming down, and he never went back there again.

*I don't need a man to
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- Dale Cassidy*

Huntsville Road News from 1895

Bridge in Bad Shape

The much talked-about Clinton Street iron bridge is in terrible shape today. It seems that the flood caught it propped on temporary supports, and knocked out the supports, causing the iron work to drop down full eighteen inches and in some cases breaking the iron.

This shake-up twisted loose some of the top stones on the masonry. The foundation work of the masonry and the masonry itself seems all in good shape, that is with the exception of top stones which were attached temporarily two feet too low. In fact it will be liable to the same disaster at any time unless it is built up higher.

The Gates Opened

The opening of the toll gates on the turnpikes leading to Huntsville heretofore owned by the Madison turnpike company, is certainly a grand victory for the progress and enterprise of Madison County. The opening of these gates was hastened by the negotiation of the county bonds, W. R. Rison & Co., bankers becoming purchasers.

Our farmers, especially those who use the turnpikes, will certainly feel that quite a burden has been lifted from their shoulders.

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Mooreville Home To Presidents



In the early 1800s, the Tennessee valley was beginning to see the establishment of villages and towns, complete with merchants and tradesmen to cater to the needs of the populace. Limestone County, Alabama was no exception. In November of 1818 two towns were incorporated in Limestone County. One of these towns was Athens, the present county seat. The other, incorporated three days before Athens, was the village of Mooreville.

Mooreville was home to an excellent tailor by the name of Sloss. Mr. Sloss was extremely adept at cutting the "Prince Albert" style frock suit for gentlemen. One day in the early 1830s, a young tailor's apprentice named Andrew called at the shop for Mr. Sloss.

Andrew had come with the purpose of learning the art of cutting this stylish garment. He was a good student and even managed to sell some of the suits he made in the village. In a few weeks he had mastered the desired skill and was gone. This incident would not be worth mention except for some notoriety this young man received before arriving in Mooreville, and some he would receive later in his life.

Andrew, originally from Raleigh, North Carolina, ran away from his home for fear of being arrested after throwing rocks at a neighbor's house. He fled

through South Carolina, and in 1826, came to Greenville, Tennessee, a town he would call home for the remainder of his life. In Greenville he worked in a tailor shop, eventually opening a shop of his own. Shortly thereafter, he sought Mr. Sloss in Mooreville. A few days after Andrew left North Carolina, the following article against harboring or employing said apprentices, on pain of being prosecuted was published by James J. Selby.

TEN DOLLAR REWARD

"Ran away from the subscriber, on the night of the 15th instant, 2 apprentice boys, legally bound, named William and Andrew Johnson. The former is of a dark complexion, black hair, eyes and habits. They are much of a height, about 5 feet, 4 or 5 inches. The latter is very fleshy, freckled faced, light hair and fair complexioned. They went with two other apprentices, addressed by Messrs. Wm., and Charles Fowler. When they went away, they were well clad-blue pants light colored homespun coats, and new hats,

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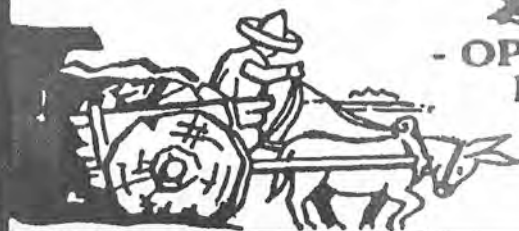
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the makers name in the crown of the hats is Theodore Clark. I will pay the above reward (\$10) to any person who will give the above reward to Andrew Johnson alone. All persons are cautioned against harboring or employing said apprentices, on pain of being prosecuted. James J. Selby"

Perhaps Mr. Selby would have upped the ante had he known that one of those rock-throwing, black-habited escapees for whom he was advertising was to become the seventeenth president of the United States.

For a village the size of Mooresville to be able to boast a future President as a resident, even for a short period of time, is a source of pride. But Andrew Johnson's leave-taking did not mark the end of this extraordinary burg's flirtation with future presidents.

Approximately thirty years after Andrew Johnson received the tutelage of Mr. Sloss, Abraham Lincoln was President, Andrew Johnson, Vice-President, and the nation was embroiled in civil war. Following the fall of Nashville, North Alabama was occupied by Union forces. In the summer of 1863, the 42nd Ohio Volunteers were camped at Bibb's Spring, a short distance behind the Bibb residence at Mooresville. One of the officers of the regiment was James A. Garfield.

Garfield, a native of frontier Ohio, was reared by his mother and older brother after the death of his father. Though young James had to work to help the family, his mother and brother provided for him a good education. He attended Geauga Seminary in Ohio, and worked his way through Williams College, graduating with honors. After graduation, Garfield returned to his home in Hiram, Ohio where he obtained a post as

a school teacher. In addition to his duties as teacher, he sometimes preached at the local church and made political speeches. When war came, he received a commission in the U.S. Army and served his country with distinction.

Some of the villagers at Mooresville learned of Garfield's presence and invited him to preach at the Christian Church. General Garfield, in writing to his wife, mentioned the invitation.

"There is a church in the village of Mooresville near by and they have sent up (an invitation) inviting me to speak to them on Sunday. If I am not too unwell I have a notion to speak to them." Apparently the General was not "too unwell" because he delivered several sermons in the Mooresville Church.

General Garfield left

Mooresville with his unit to fight at Chicamauga. Following the battle, the General resigned his commission to enter Congress. In 1880, Mr. Garfield was elected the twentieth President of the United States.

The building in which Mr. Garfield delivered his sermons is still used for worship every Sunday morning. It is now known as the Mooresville Church of Christ. When General Garfield left Mooresville, he left his Bible in the church building. The Bible remained on display in the building for many years before it was moved to a private home to ensure its safety.

It has been well over a century since Johnson and Garfield walked the streets of Mooresville but their presence can still be felt as you wander the streets of the historic village.

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Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

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



Thanks to all of you who stopped by to visit with me this past month. I feel truly blessed to have so many dear friends.

Mrs. Jean Reed guessed last month's photo - it was Sandra Rhodes of the Madison County School System.

Well, another year and lots of fun was had by everyone at my annual Arthritis Breakfast this past month. Thousands of dollars were raised for research and every politician got to carry a coffee pot and really put in some real work. I saw many dear friends, like Dr. Louis Horn who dropped by to be a part of this very special day. I hope everyone had a good time and thanks for supporting this event.

Happy Anniversary to Cathey and Tom Carney on their 10th. They are a sweet couple and the best is yet to come.

Get well wishes go to Jane Smith, who was recently released from the hospital for a bad case of pneumonia. I really hope you're feeling better, so you can start politicking for Circuit Court Clerk. Come see me!

It's always so good to see Rick Hutson, from Texarkana, Texas, and Bruce Hutson, from Seattle, Washington. They are frequent visitors to my restaurant every single time they come back home to Huntsville. They come here to visit their Mom, Peggy Hutson. I'm always so glad to see those young fellows - they used to live next door to me.

Well it's to start planning for the Senior Center and their Walmart Senior Expo to be held next June 9 and 10th. Susan Kirkland is already selling booths and remember everyone, that all proceeds go to benefit the Senior

Center. This year I helped to emcee the Expo and I got to introduce Mr. Boots Randolph. Wonder who I'll be introducing in June? Hope he's handsome!

Congratulations to Glenn Watson on his being elected as President of the Huntsville City Council. Bill Kling did a great job during his term and we look forward to more exciting events from our Council men and woman.

World famous author Ken Follett is going to be in town this month researching his newest novel. It's going to be about the space program and much of the plot is centered in and around Huntsville.

Another Crime Prevention class has graduated! There was a big cook-out for everyone. Pat and Willadene do a super job, way

Photo of The Month

The first person to identify this child 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: "Local news girl."



Last month's photo was Sandra Rhodes

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- * Standing in line
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- * Help with parties



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to go, folks!

For all of you looking for the perfect Christmas Gift, call me for one of the funniest books of short stories written by our very own local author, **Byron Laird**. I sure was proud to open my restaurant to host a book signing party for Byron and he sold over 200 books that morning! People came in for ham, sausage and biscuits all morning. I'm so proud of him.

I'll tell you one thing - if you want a great meal and service with a smile go to the **Outback Restaurant** and ask for the Assistant Manager Brian - what an asset for Outback - a great young man.

Bill Easterling, I'm thinking about you all of the time and know that you are in my prayers everyday. I'm truly blessed to have a friend like Bill and so many others.

Barb and Ron Eyestone just returned from a Mexican cruise celebrating their 20th anniversary. Congratulations! The next 20 will be easier and even faster!

Bryce Davis, the father of astronaut **Jan Davis** and missionary **Ronald Davis** is working on a book that should be out after the first of the year. Knowing Bryce, it's going to be a good read!

Ranee Pruitt, Jacquelyn Gray, David Milan and Charles Rice were all seen down at **Bubba's** singing along with **Tony Mason** recently. Charles is visiting from Thailand where he teaches at a University there.

Chuck and Jo Shaffer, publishers of *Old Morgan County*, have been hosting friends from England. They especially liked the Southern food - pinto beans, turnip greens, fried potatoes and corn bread, but they couldn't understand the ham hocks!

Rumor around town is that **Gary Dobbs** and **Toni Lowery**

will soon be doing another morning show. We miss seeing both of them on T.V. every morning.

Remember the story "Old Huntsville" did about the cemetery that was once located where Huntsville Hospital is now? We hear the hospital authorities were shocked to learn about it and are taking definite steps to erect some type of memorial to commemorate the cemetery. The people at **Huntsville Hospital** are some really good folks who care a lot about Huntsville and its people.

We heard that a certain city councilman flipped his lid when he heard about the proposal to make people pay for gas before they pumped it. He was overheard telling someone that "government needs to stop telling small business how to run their affairs."

Be safe and remember I love all of you.

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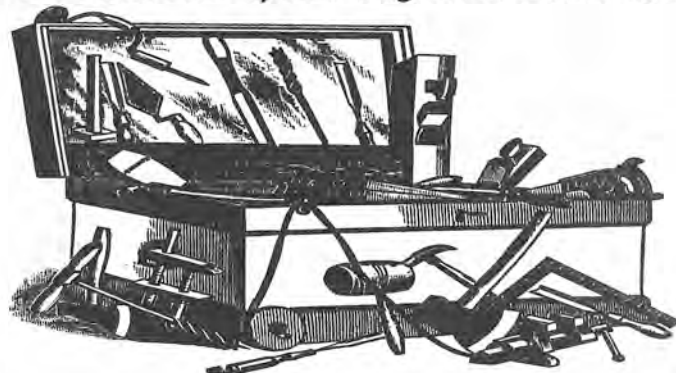
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These are some of the recipes from the cookbook entitled Kurtzahn Kriefall Family Cookbook, from 4 generations of the German family. Try some of these, we thought they sounded great.

Old Dutch Caramel

Corn

- 1 c. butter
- 2 c. brown sugar
- 1 c. light syrup
- 1 t. salt
- 1/2 t. soda
- 2 large bags hullless corn puffs

(50 oz.)

- 1 c. nuts
- 1 t. vanilla or almond extract

Melt the butter, then add the

sugar, syrup and salt. Boil for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Take off heat and add soda and vanilla. Pour over corn and place on 2 greased pans. Bake at 225 degrees for an hour. Stir every 15 minutes. Spread out on brown paper to cool.

Rhine Wine Cup

- 1/2 c. water
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 1/2 c. lemon juice
- 1/2 c. brandy
- 1 1/2 c. dry sherry
- 3 bottles dry white Rhine wine
- 1 qt. carbonated water

Combine water and sugar in pan, boil for 5 minutes. Chill. Mix all ingredients together in a chilled punch bowl. Add ice and serve.

Hot German Potato Salad

- 12 medium potatoes
- 1 c. diced bacon
- 1 c. chopped onion
- 4 T. flour
- 3 t. salt
- 4 T. sugar
- dash pepper
- 1 c. vinegar
- 1 c. water
- 1 T. butter

Boil potatoes in their jackets; let cool. Peel and slice. Fry bacon slowly in skillet til crisp. Add onions and cook til transparent. Drain most of grease off. Add flour, sugar, salt and pepper. Cook over low heat until bubbly. Add vinegar, water and butter. Cook til thoroughly blended. Pour over potatoes.



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Berlin Cream Pancakes

- 1 c. flour
- 4 eggs (separated)
- 2/3 c. sour cream
- 1/3 c. milk
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 T. sugar
- butter
- 1/4 t. ground cinnamon
- 4 T. jam
- 1 c. whipping cream

2 T. sugar
1/2 t. vanilla extract

Whisk flour, egg yolks, sour cream, milk, salt and 1 tablespoon sugar til batter is smooth. Beat egg whites til they're very stiff, then stir them into the batter. Cook 6 pancakes in a frying pan that is greased with butter or margarine. Use about 1/2 cup of batter for each pancake. Beat whipping cream until it is stiff, stir in vanilla and 2 tablespoons of sugar. Spoon jam and whipped cream on top of pancakes. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

Hot Dish

1 1/2 lbs. ground beef
1 large onion, chopped
1 c. diced celery
1 can chicken rice soup
2 cans cream of mushroom soup
1 can VEGALL and juice
2 c. chow mein noodles
1 t. soy sauce
1 can mushrooms

Brown meat, onion and celery. Mix into the rest, bake in casserole dish in oven for an hour at 350 degrees.

Mushroom Rice

1 can onion soup
1 c. long-grain white rice
1 4-oz. can mushrooms
3/4 stick butter, cut up

Mix all ingredients in 1 1/2 quart casserole. Bake at 350 degrees for an hour.

Bavarian Pork Roast

3 1/2 lbs. boneless pork shoulder roast
Pepper to taste
5 T. butter
2 1/2 c. onion, chopped
8 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
2 T. caraway seeds
1 T. Marjoram
1 c. water

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut the roast in 6-8 slices. Sprinkle both sides with pepper. In a large roasting pan melt the butter on top of the stove. Put the meat in the pan and cover with onion, garlic, caraway seed and marjoram. Add the water and bake for 2 hours. Do not cover. Turn the meat over; add more water if necessary and bake for another hour.

German Meatballs

1 beaten egg
1/4 c. milk
1/4 c. fine dry bread crumbs
1 T. snipped parsley
1/4 t. poultry seasoning
1/2 t. salt Dash pepper
1 lb. ground beef
1 can beef broth
1 4-oz can chopped mushrooms, drained

1/2 c. chopped onions
1 c. sour cream
1 T. flour
1/2 t. caraway seed

Combine egg and milk, stirring bread crumbs, parsley, poultry seasoning, 1/2 teaspoon salt and dash of pepper. Add meat; mix well. Shape into 24 (1 1/2 inch) balls. Brown in fat. Add broth, mushrooms and onions. Cover, simmer 30 minutes. Blend in sour cream, flour and caraway seeds. Stir into meatball sauce until thickened.



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Legends From The Grave

by John Crow

If you look at any tourist information on Huntsville, Alabama there almost always is reference to the beautiful Maple Hill Cemetery. The literature will usually make reference to the beauty of the dogwood trees in full spring bloom, or perhaps the fact that five former Alabama governors are buried there, or maybe tell of the section where the Confederate soldiers are laid to rest. What it won't tell you are the many legends associated with the cemetery.

Now my archaic but trustworthy Webster's Dictionary defines, for our purpose anyway, a legend as being a story of some wonderful event, handed down for generations among a people and popularly believed to have a historical basis, although not verifiable: distinguished from a myth. What follows is a humble effort on my part to relate to you a few of the legends surrounding Maple Hill Cemetery, and then go one step beyond and provide the historical basis for the legend.

When the night is strangely still, and the quiet is not even broken by a cricket's chirp or a night breeze rustling, a lonely sound comes from a lonely mausoleum. It is the whispered creak, creak, of a rocking chair rocking. It is the young



ghost of Mary Chambers Bibb, tragically poisoned in the full bloom of her youth, and buried upright in her rocking chair by her grief-stricken husband, where she rocks the years away ... rocking ... back and forth ... rocking.

In the early 1830s two pretty cousins were always at the center of the many prominent social gatherings in Huntsville. It seemed that where ever the girls were you would also find the dashing Bibb brothers, the sons of Alabama's second governor, who would come



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to the parties by carriage from their family estate at Belle Mina. It wasn't too long before gossip had it that the two couples were smitten and a double wedding seemed to be in the offing. This was confirmed when it was learned that the girls were having wedding gowns specially designed and made in Paris, France.

Whenever the stage coach would arrive there would be the girls, eager to check the baggage for any package addressed to them. But alas, there would be no gowns, for Paris had run out of the proper fabric. Finally, in early 1835, a parcel did arrive, but it contained only one gown. It was decided that Mary Chambers would proceed with her wedding plans to William Bibb and the wedding was then scheduled for February 26, 1835.

Oh, gentle reader I hesitate to put to paper what follows next, for in steps a grim and sinister Fate. It seems, as is common with young people, that the excitement and anticipation of the coming event created a "pimple" situation on the young girls' complexions. Their faithful and dutiful "Mammy" had a remedy for such situations. She took from a cabinet a bottle of "salts" and Mary Chambers volunteered to take the first spoonful. After taking that tragic first swallow, Mary grasped her young throat and in gasping breath rasped out, "I've been poisoned!"

The poor Mammy had grown farsighted in her old age and had taken from the cabinet a bottle of oxalic acid instead of "salts."

The shocked, heartbroken William Bibb made the honorable and loving decision to proceed with the wedding plans. Exactly three months after the wedding, Mary Chambers passed away. The sorrowful, heartbroken Will-

iam Bibb erected for the remains of his beloved wife the city's first mausoleum.

This new structure in the cemetery was a rather startling sight for the citizens of Huntsville. They had never seen a "grave above the ground" before. For the bewildered townsmen there could only be one explanation. Poor melancholy William had entombed his wife in her rocking chair.

Nevertheless, true or not, I have been told by reliable personages, that on a quiet night, if you listen carefully, and if you are walking by old Maple Hill Cemetery, you can hear the creak, creak of a rocking chair rocking ... back and forth ... just rocking.



Some Fine Writing

From 1895 newspaper

A postal card has recently been received at the Cincinnati Inquirer office on which 3,808 words were legibly inscribed with an ordinary steel pen. The writing was extremely difficult to decipher with the naked eye, but a powerful magnifying glass brought out each letter clearly. The words would fill over two columns and took the writer six and a half hours to finish.



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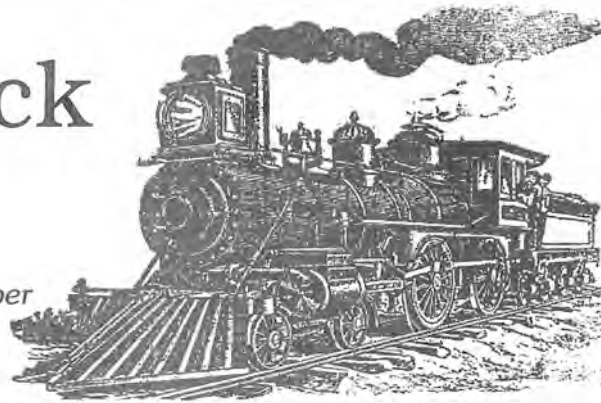
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No Luck At All

from 1888 newspaper



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

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Your rights are protected under the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act.

If your application for credit was denied because of information supplied by a Credit Reporting Agency, that agency's name and address must be supplied to you by the company you applied to. If you request it, the Credit Re-

porting Agency is required to tell you about every piece of information in the report and, in most cases, the source of the information. You also have the right to be told the name of anyone who received a report on you in the past six months.

This information will be provided to you free if you request it within 30-days of receiving a notice that you were denied credit because of information from the Credit Reporting Agency. Otherwise, the agency can charge a reasonable fee.

If the information is incomplete or inaccurate, you should notify the Credit Reporting Agency. The agency is required to reinvestigate the items in question. If the new investigation reveals an error, a corrected version will be sent, on your request, to anyone who received your report in the past six months.

If the investigation does not resolve your dispute with the agency, you can have the agency include your version or a summary of your version of the disputed information in your file and in future reports. At your request, the agency will also show your version to anyone who recently received a copy of the old report. There is no charge for this service if it is requested within 30-days after you receive notice of your application denial.

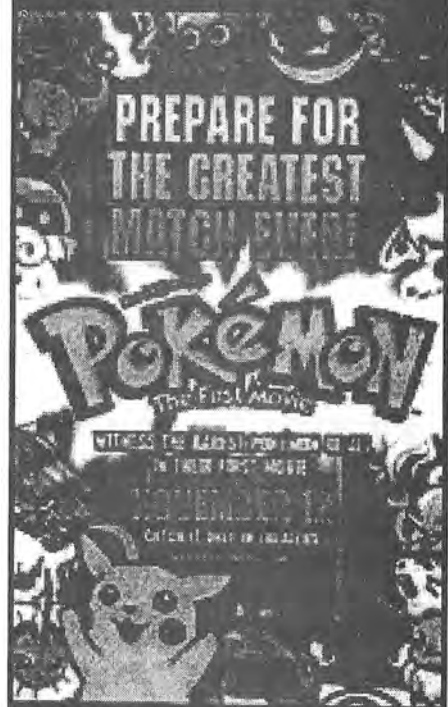
Beware of businesses that offer to 'clear up' your credit report for a fee. Such businesses cannot improve a factually correct report. They can do no more than you can do by yourself to correct errors in the report at (practically) no cost.

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Growing Up Southern

by Fred Ashcraft

Something few people realized in the little Southern hamlet of my birth was how close my friend "Slick" came to never living long enough to fulfill his destiny as a brain surgeon.

In those times, growing up Southern in our town meant boys must ratify their status by climbing the 150 foot steel derrick at Dewey's lumber mill.

You climbed the derrick via structural steel straps which afforded a "ladder." Unfortunately, the straps got further apart as the derrick widened on the way up, plus they were generally slippery with dew during our nocturnal ascents.

Despite the risks, all of us sur-

vived the initiation.

Then came Slick. ...

Slick's middle name was calamity. He possessed the physique of King Kong with less than half Kong's brain. At age 12, he could rip apart a bowling ball. Sadly, as he grew— and grew— he kept right on breaking things— legs, arms, collarbones, tailbones, whatever. He spent half his life in a cast.

The prospect, therefore, of Slick scaling a 150 foot tower and living to tell it seemed dim. But the Code of Manhood was calling and who were we to say nay merely because Slick had trouble walking and chewing gum?

So we all dutifully showed up on the designated night to witness Slick brave our revered Rite of Passage. It was a less than propitious night for the adventure. A sullen, gusty wind whipped dust about and lightning flickered amongst lowering cloud banks.

Mercenary Marvin, our village bookie, was giving 8 to 5 on Slick going ker-splat and getting few takers as intensifying lightning outlined the derrick. Slick was visibly worried but he set his teeth and commenced to climb. He made it to the top but we all knew climbing DOWN was another matter because you had to feel with

your feet for each step.

Meanwhile, the thundercloud had moved nearer with lightning flaring continuously and the first fat raindrops starting to fall. Just as Slick began his descent the storm struck in a full, raging blast with wind-whipped torrents of rain, incessant lightning and ear-splitting thunder. Even so, Slick hung on gamely and was doing a passable job picking his way down the derrick until lightning struck a nearby transformer with the biggest flash-bang since daddy's home-brew blew up in the hall closet.

Every light in town went out but we could still see clearly because Slick had commenced to glow like a giant lightning bug as he literally flew down that derrick with sparks spitting from his nose and his hair afire!

"Remember this, boys," cried Marvin. "There ain't a chance in hell you'll ever see such a thing again!"

He was right about that. They're all gone now— Slick, Ray, Marvin and most of the others, except for a few stragglers like me. But that just enhances the privilege of having been around when it took place en route to growing up Southern so long ago. Shine on, Slick, wherever you are.

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Robbing By The Clock

from 1919 Huntsville paper



In many of the dry good stores in almost every town in the country the size of Huntsville, where there are numerous employees, a time-clock system has been installed guaranteed by the manufacturers to "pay for itself in less than a month." It is a monument to the big-heartedness and Christianity of Huntsville's business men that there is no such penny grabbing scheme in vogue in this city in any of the stores.

To prove the injustice and unfairness of this time-clock robbery scheme it is only necessary to know that to "pay for itself in less than a month" each employee who happens to be late to work is charged up for the loss of time at the rate of one cent a minute for every minute lost irrespective of

the amount of salary drawn.

Take for instance the girl clerk who draws \$3.50 per week of six ten-hour days. She pays the firm using this clock scheme, for the time she loses, at the rate of \$6 per day. The inhumanity of a loan shark compares favorably indeed, with this business-is-business policy of many otherwise reputable merchants.

Bookkeepers for firms employing this questionable time-clock method say there are few women workers who are not late from five to fifty minutes each week, for the time they spend waiting for the store to open its

doors does not count, and the young ladies do not wish to loiter on the streets in front of the stores.

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



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Twilight On Kildare Street

by Jacquelyn Procter Gray

A wild cat scampers into a dark hole in the porch, as the light fall wind scatters leaves across lion statues that stand as mute guardians to a once graceful walkway. Down the street a woman waters her flowers as three mothers enjoy an afternoon walk before their children return from school. Life on Kildare Street is much the same as the streets that surround it, save for the imposing home, number 1205, that in an era long gone, once hosted celebrations of love and laughter.

John Lowry came to this territory in 1809 from Virginia during an exciting time in Alabama's history. On September 18, 1809, John bought 162 acres on the Meridian Road. That particular day was a busy one for pioneers buying large tracts of land, according to the old Madison County land records. John immediately began building a log cabin for his family in conjunction with his job as contractor for the first courthouse,



finished sometime after 1811. Much later, his home was flanked by neighbors Milton Humes, who named his home "Abingdon Place" and Michael O'Shaughnessy who lived at "Kildare," which lent the name to the street where the Lowry home now stands. It is one of the few remaining links to the opulent past once enjoyed in Huntsville.

The first documented structure at 1205 Kildare was an 1850 Federal Period home. It was probably constructed using boards and mantles from the original log cabin built by pioneer John Lowry. In 1880, the current wood frame Italianate structure was built using mantles, fireplaces, floors, doors and windows from the 1850 house, as well as the log

cabin. In 1920, an addition was made to already enormous house.

John Lowry may have been buried on his property somewhere near the family home. His son was a prosperous merchant, and John Lowry's grandson was a wealthy plantation owner by the outbreak of the Civil War. He received a pardon from the President of the United States after signing a contract promising never to own another human being. Samuel Hickman Lowry, great-grandson of John Lowry, was a well-known Huntsville doctor.

The home, now known as the Lowry-Terry-Tippett house, was built with no expense spared. A walkway of basket weave bricks accentuate the once-formal gardens, now long neglected. The inside of the house, boarded-up to prevent vandalism, contains an elaborately-carved staircase and beautiful fireplace mantles. The flickering flames of those fireplaces once warmed the most prominent figures of the day as they spent long hours discussing the threat of war that eventually came to Huntsville. In happier times, the enormous pocket doors to the formal dining room would

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have been thrown open to welcome special guests to a holiday feast. At twilight, the occupants would look out through the hand-blown rippled glass of the windows in time to see, from afar, the lights come on at the Monte Sano Hotel Resort during the 1890s.

The wide floor planks and primitive stone hearth in the parlor may have been retained as symbolic reminders of the pioneer's first home. Another room bears scars of an intruder who cut gaping holes in the floor in search of the gold rumored to have been hidden from the Yankees during the Civil War. Had he realized that any gold would have already been discovered when the current structure was rebuilt in the 1880s, this beautiful home could have escaped the indignity at the hands of some lawless miscreant.

Unfortunately, the future days of this historic home appear to be limited. Slated for razing, the house was bought last year by Mr. Louie Tippett, whose goal is to get it restored to its former glory. Sadly, 1205 Kildare Street may become a victim of bureaucratic red tape, as the application for inclusion on the National Historic Register gathers dust in Montgomery offices.

If anyone can help Mr. Tippett's quest to restore this historic home and vital link to Huntsville's past, please call 533-7163.



Tips from Earlene

Stuff a miniature marshmallow in the bottom of a sugar cone to prevent ice cream drips.

Use a meat baster to "squeeze" your pancake batter onto the hot griddle for perfectly shaped pancakes every time.

To keep potatoes from "budding," place an apple in the bag with the potatoes.

Run your hands under cold water before you press your Rice Krispies treats into the pan - this way the marshmallow won't stick to your hands.

Spray your Tupperware with nonstick cooking spray before pouring in spaghetti sauces - no more stains.

When a cake recipe calls for flouring the baking pan, use a bit of the dry cake mix instead.

If you accidentally over-salt a dish while it's still cooking, drop in a peeled potato - it absorbs the excess salt for an instant "fix."

Wrap celery in aluminum foil when putting in the fridge - it will keep this way for weeks.

Brush beaten egg white over pie crust before baking to yield a beautiful, glossy finish.

When boiling corn on the cob, add a pinch of sugar to bring out the corn's sweet taste.

Cure for headache - cut a lime in two and rub the cut side against your forehead - the throbbing will go away.

If you have leftover wine and hate to throw it away, freeze it in an ice cube tray, bag it and save the cubes for future use in casseroles and sauces.

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Booger Town Remembered

by Garland Derting

Not far from the hum of Rocket City's buzzing traffic, a few acres of prime land is the sight of a quiet and lovely apartment complex. Located just west and north of Bob Wallace Avenue and Triana Boulevard, it is a far cry from what it was.

There are very few old times that history shied away from. This cotton mill village didn't deserve one letter that spelled its name—Booger Town, because the name was signed, sealed and branded by a bunch of pack rats that drug in after the mill closed. But come to think of it, the name fit these varmints like a glove.

Let's think about a name. A name can affect the lives of people from all walks of life. The name Booger Town is a good example. The name bewildered the brightest and puzzled new people that made Huntsville their home, and brought amazement to the curious. The name Booger Town did something sinister for the village. It put a weight on the good people's shoulders and hung out a welcome sign for trouble.



My Dad and mother had a good reason for moving into this cotton mill village. My family needed to eat and the cotton mill provided our needs for a hard day's work. This was in the twenties. Booger Town had decent hard working people. The village was one big happy family.

Whenever someone was in need the word got out. A cup of flour, sugar, potatoes, lard—what little the others had would find its way to the needy's front door. If one of the family had a cough, Vick's salve would be sent to their house.

The real name of the cotton mill village was the Old Nitten Mill. The village was a place of survival.

Hard times was the name of the game. But bad times wasn't as harsh to people in those days, because people weren't acquainted to what modern days had to offer, so desires and wants didn't burden the hearts of people. Everybody knew each other by first name. The mill was running full blast. Things were peaceful even though people were a little ill. There was peace in the village but things were going to change. The strain of life's burden would slowly pull a man down. Most families were large. The average family numbered from four to eight.

Coming from a young boy's thoughts I would say there were from forty to fifty houses. Each house had four rooms for each family to occupy. Four kids, six kids—it didn't matter.

Don't get me wrong—Booger Town had its own luxuries. By the grace of a woman preacher, who got the village folk to dig deep for pocket change and some folding money, she managed to buy a large tent—it was our church no matter what kind of material it was made of. The prayers got out

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and the blessings got in— and Booger Town had its own cemetery. Being a young boy I can't remember any burials in the small unkempt plot— and it was said that no permission was required to bury a loved one there. But beyond any doubt it was a cemetery all right. Because I remember the remains had to be moved to another place. The people that built apartments there had to locate the next of kin to remove the bodies. And the talk was then that some of the bodies could have been overlooked. Because some of the people had seen and heard strong sights and movements.

In 1929 a slow and killing kind of ghost hit all over our great land. It was the Great Depression, and so help me I will never figure out why people called it Great. It took a depression to bring silence to that hum of the cotton mill. It took a while for the truth to soak into the heads of the working people. If a cotton mill shut its gates, what else was waiting in the future? Not only was Booger Town going to face pain and hunger, the village was turning into violence and darkness. Empty houses were plentiful. Most folks that were there had kinfolk living in the country. They left the village to plow, plant and survive. So Booger Town was wide open for the undesirables.

The empty houses were occupied by what the old folks called carpetbaggers. The good folks had to hold their ground against the no good that tried to take over. It wasn't long until all the mill house windows were broken out. And when a house became empty it would eventu-

ally be torn down. There's an old saying— there's a little good in everyone. But when it came to survival all good turns to bad. Like the time I was coming from the store with a few slices of bologna for my dad's lunch. Two guys grabbed the sack and as I looked back they were fighting over it. These self-surviving men were mean to the core. But the more you watched them the more crazier they became. Like the guy that went from house to house with a ham bone on a string. He would

tell the lady cooking beans; I will dip my ham bone in your beans for a nickel. But two dips will be a dime.

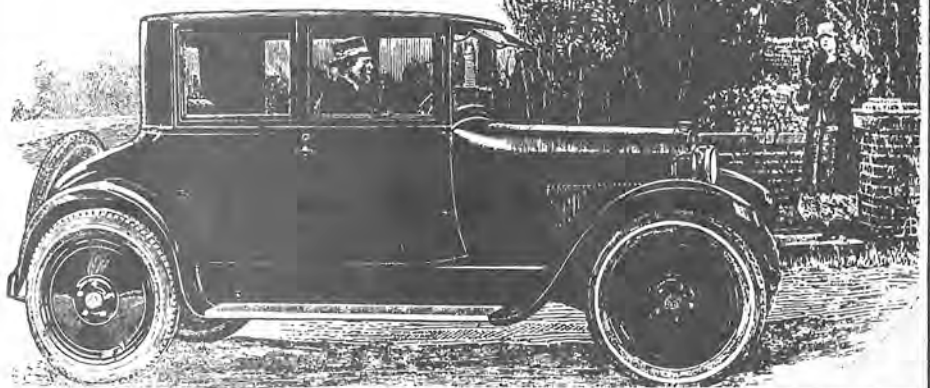
If you have a desire to ride over to Booger Town, head to the old Center Theatre and go to Black's on Ninth Avenue, but don't expect to hear the roar of the old cotton gin or to see long lines of wagons loaded with cotton. You will hear the noise of half drunks standing out in the open and see them passing wine bottles from one to another.

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Back then, it didn't have to be drunks to give you a hard time. I remember what ice we got in Booger Town was delivered by a flat bed truck. It was brought from the ice plant down town. Sometimes we had an iceman that didn't mind us getting the small chips of ice that fell as he chipped a small piece from the five hundred-pound chunk. For a dime Mom could get enough to last twenty-four hours, if it was put in a tub and covered.

On one hot August day the iceman, Mr. Grunch seemed upset. As my friend Soupy reached for a chip of ice, like a streak the ice pick went through Soupy's hand and pinned it to the wooden truck bed. As old Grunch pulled it out of Soupy's hand he had a pleased gleam in his eye. Later we heard Mr. Grunch fell in a ditch and broke his leg. His house and truck burned putting him out of business, probably a blessing wouldn't you say?

My dad didn't depend on the mill job altogether to make ends meet. He made a few extra bucks trading. He kept around an old mule, a goat and a run down T Model Ford. He had all kinds of



odds and ends laying around for a person to trip on. Dad always tried to raise a hog to feed his family. Neighbors would help to slaughter and prepare the fresh meat and when the Depression hit it was a full-time job guarding anything that was eatable or valuable at any price.

We always had a few chickens for fresh eggs. And maybe if we were lucky, Mom would surprise the family with chicken and dumplings for dinner. But to get fresh eggs you had to be ready for

the cackle of the hen, and grab the eggs before they hit the nest. If you weren't watchful a hungry hand would grab it and hit the back alley.

I was just a lad when my family moved from Elora, Tennessee to the Nitten Mill village. But I learned quick that a switchblade knife and brass nucks weren't boy's toys. But every day more and more friends were moving from Booger Town. Dad knew it was time to be getting ready to leave the old run down place. It was in the thirties and we were just kids. But we knew what was going on. One day Dad got an extra pair of pants and shirts. We watched as Mom put a few biscuits and fat back in a brown bag. As Dad kissed us all good-bye, I heard Mom ask where he was going. Softly he said, I will write when I get there. In four weeks a letter came. Mom quickly read the one page. Something fell from the letter and Mom smiled as she picked it up. It was a five-dollar bill. I will never forget her words. "Thank the good Lord for that man. And this here money."

As the old saying goes, time sure slips away. Because in no

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time my Dad walked in the front door, hugged everyone and with a look of achievement, he quickly locked the doors, ordered us all to the kitchen and emptied his pocket on the table. It was more money than our eyes and mind thought existed. Dad said that's the foundation of a house— and the freedom of Booger Town. Dad had been working in a Detroit car factory. The year was 1941. The Japs had pulled their sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. No more cars would be made until '46. The end of the war.

Just three blocks from Booger Town, Dad bought a lot to build our house on. He got it for two hundred dollars. That was when things started sky rocketing. Our government bought 35,000 acres of land from dozens of farmers. Redstone Arsenal sits there now. Just six miles from old Booger town. Boy what time can do.

When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, never in history has any country put a fighting force together so fast. The Huntsville arsenal seemed to have grown out of the ground overnight.

But something seemed

strange. It took a while for me to grasp what was wrong. Then it hit me - the men were scarce - they were joining all parts of the service. So the women who were only used to having babies and making lye soap were slipping on pairs



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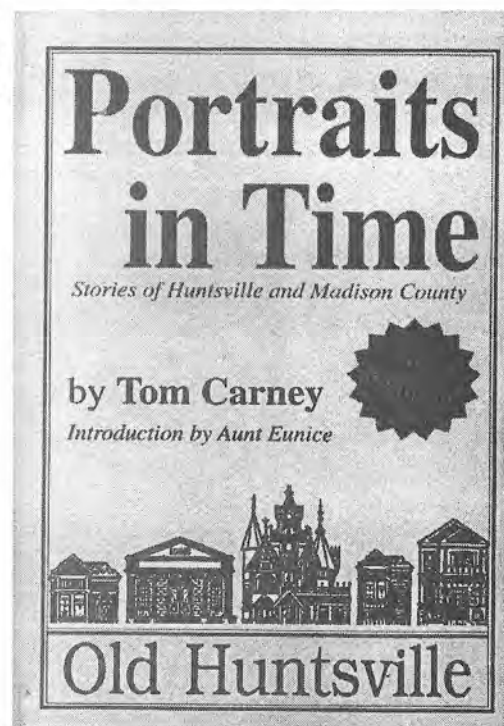
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of coveralls and going to work on the assembly lines at Redstone Arsenal. The women were turning out bombs so fast the arsenal was named the bullet plant.

They had three shifts— day and night. Bombs were rolling out like marbles. Every thing was rationed from sugar to gas, and even building material. My Dad went to work as a painter and being the talker he was, he met this man who would come in handy. The man had a brother who owned a sawmill in Paint Rock Valley. He traded the man for enough rough saw mill lumber to almost build our house. I was young and Booger Town strong. So Dad hired a carpenter and I was put through the mill. It wasn't long until our family would say "so long" to Booger Town. A few roughnecks said they were staying no matter what.

After moving I would go back. I watched as bulldozers destroyed and dumped truckloads of what used to be Booger Town. Some of the down and dirty stayed until the last moment and had to be dragged out screaming and fighting. As I watched through the dust from destruction of falling shacks, I remembered the neat rows of houses and ladies planting pretty flowers— I seem to hear my

mother bidding Dad good-bye as he walked through the cotton mill gates. But the home we built is only five blocks from that lovely apartment complex. My sister owns the old home place today.

I'm sure I have removed some of the mystery around Booger Town, but maybe I have helped the curious to know more about it. If you come from a large city you have seen everything that Booger Town had to offer. But maybe in a more civilized way—the expert burglars, bootleggers, gamblers and muggers didn't wait for night fall, I could go on and on.

About the dark corners— like the time one of the big-time gamblers staggered into a card game and said deal me in— they shot him six times, then threw him into a hog pen to be devoured.

As long as there's people, there will be a Booger Town. And every person's story is different. But you can bet your peg leg it won't hold a light to the Booger Town that we survived in and still look back at with a tear for the good and bad.



Old Huntsville Trivia

1829 New City Hall is occupied. On January 2, the Mayor had been authorized to secure one stove, a dozen chairs, and one desk to furnish the new building. Total cost of furnishings - \$67.85.

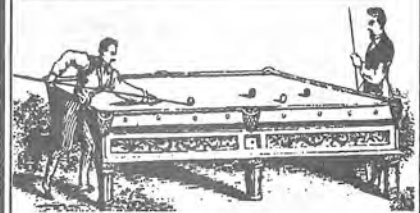
1831 Huntsville citizens are irate over the new tax increases. The tax rate was 27 cents on each \$100 and a poll tax on white males of 25 cents each.

1832 Francis Scott Key, the author of the National Anthem, visits Huntsville. He had been sent as a representative by President Andrew Jackson to investigate the Indian situation in Alabama.



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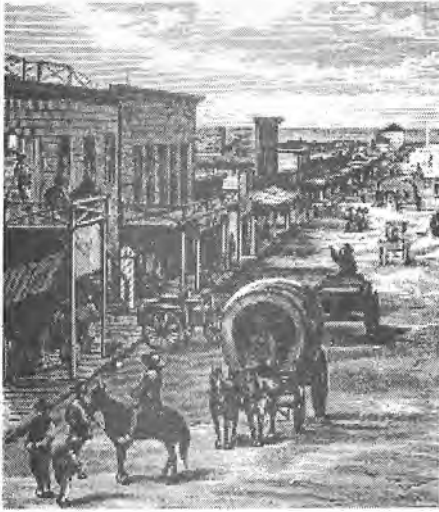


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Editor's Note: This letter was provided by Billie J. Haines of Huntsville. It was written by his grandfather George Hartsock Haines to his wife, Libby while prospecting in Idaho. His grandparents are buried in Shiloh Cemetery at Ryland, Alabama.



A Letter

From Quartzburg, Idaho
April 26, 1895

Dear Libby,

I wrote a little last night, will try to add a little noontime. The boys are complaining a little now about not getting any money. Hope we will hear from Charlie tonight, will tell you if we do. I do not like to take your money for myself, my little girl. Yes I can meet you in Boise if you want me to but do you think we can stand the extra expense it will (be) an additional \$2.50 at the Hotel beside \$1.00 for dinner two days providing I would walk both ways and if I road one way it would be \$7.00 both ways. \$10.00 with your fare added to the above then all baggage over 40 lbs costs two cents per lb. so you can see what it will cost.

Night. It has been raining a little the first for some time. Just showers is quite hot through the day but cool at night. Now if this falls through we could get work in Chicago that we could live on all right. Anything to make a good honest liveing. Mother says (Gyfr?) has a baby that is the reason she got her breath so harde. What was

it that was broken. I do not think you will not kneed a smaller trunk you can bring that much with you and send the rest by freight just as you please. If we have to build we can put up a shell large enough to put up a partition of cheap calico and make it do untill we find out wheather the mine will pay or not. I do not like to invest very much in a house as it is not worth one cent when you leave it. As no one would buy it and it is just that much lost. I will not get to write enough in this but will try and write some more in a day or two again. Yes I will tell you when ever I feel bad or any thing goes wrong did you think I would not. I am in a hurry to night as the P Master wants all our letters mailed at the burg. They have to have so many letters to cancel or it seases to be an office and at present the number is getting small. I have been just handing them to the stage driver in the morning as he goes by. If the office is changed will have to walk 3 mi. to get our mail. Yes you can not come to quick to suit me. Although I have no place to take you and board is only \$6.00 per week. And just common at that. Will have to close for this time will love you hugely when you get out here don't you forget it. Good by with love to you and Ernest and you.

From the old boy Geo.



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Stars Still Falling On Alabama

by Jim Green

November 13, 1833 began as any night, with the exception of a few shooting stars at about 11:00 o'clock. By midnight, the streaming parabolas were raining down with increasing intensity. From about 2 AM until 5 in the morning, the density was alarming. Bright streaks falling from the sky, hundreds and thousands of them. The vast numbers, estimated at 10,000 per hour, literally turned night into day. Frantic observers watched in restrained terror as they called to their neighbors to come outside and witness the phenomenon. The Huntsville Democrat later reported that the entire population of the city of 2,000 was out in the streets watching the spectacle. Indeed, some groups of them were still there at daybreak.




The hysteria began to subside, but the talk was incessant. People were bubbling with countless explanations while seeking a hearing for their hastily formulated theories.

Unlike a supernova spectacle in the constellation of Taurus in 1054 which went unrecorded in Europe because they were in the dark ages-- on that night in 1833, the stars fell and the people of Alabama saw and took note.

Some were pretty farfetched as accounts of reactions from the

countryside began to drift in. Much commotion from the slaves had been reported from the Woodlawn Plantation in Lauderdale County. They prayed, shouted, and rolled on the ground, moaning all the while that the day of judgment was surely upon them. The mistress of the plantation came out to read the Bible, only to find that it inflamed their agony more. The master of the plantation came out cussing and hollering for them to be quiet. Strangely, it had a calming effect. After all, they reasoned, if it was close to the judgment, surely the master would not take the liberties with the English language directly prohibited by one of the Ten Commandments.

A story came in about 13-year-old Luke Pryor. He had been sleeping in the stables near the horses at the Pulaski Pike Race Track, when the stars began to fall. Many Tennessee Valley sportsmen had gathered for the annual holiday of horse racing, card playing and cock fighting. Now these men had been warned in numerous sermons by the fire-



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and-brimstone preachers about the evil of their ways, but paid no attention. Luke told of being awakened by the commotion when in the midst of a wee-hour poker game, all hell broke loose. There was wild confusion as sportsmen, planters, sinners, and workers literally saw the light. Some gathered their horses and fled. Other white men confessed their sins and asked forgiveness. One man acknowledged the theft of a number of horses and confessed that he was planning to rob the Decatur bank. Loud prayers of terrified sinners were heard as they sought refuge under tables and other shelter while seeking forgiveness.

Someone brought a large jug of coffee and some cups and directly the descriptions began to take a more rational flavor. By now, the less hysterical observers traced the radiant point near the sickle in the constellation of Leo. This did not suit the others who were more intent in pinpointing the meaning behind the sign that had been sent.

The meeting finally broke up. The world did not end as many had fearfully anticipated. But the falling star storm was said to be the main topic of conversation for many weeks to come.

The newspaper, being the prime mass media in 1833, now had fuel for countless descriptions, theories, omens, and just plain wild tales. It was reported that the November star storm, soon to be called the Leonids had been visible over almost all of North America. The scene in Huntsville had been duplicated in many cities and communities, but because of the weather conditions and earth alignment, North Alabamians and others in the Southeastern states experienced the most spectacular display of all.

It made a lasting impression

on the state of Alabama which was very much wide awake at the time. The merchants in Madison County were generally prospering. An insurance firm and the Triana Academy had recently been opened. Machinery was coming into use with the McCormick reaper to harvest the grain more efficiently.

It almost seems uncanny that the stars that fell over a large part of the eastern United States had such a special meaning for the people of this state, but the impression lingered for over 100 years before finding expression in Carl Carmer's 1934 book "Stars Fell on Alabama." Then in just a few months, a ballad by the same name by M. Parish and F. Perkins cemented this state's firm connection with the stars that fell that November night. Now some say that the special celestial event may

well have pointed to the day when Huntsville and NASA would together make great contributions toward reading the stars.

It took some time for the scientific community to get to the bottom of it all, but they did and here is that story.

Following the meteor storm of 1833, many newspapers exposed theories and explanations which had come to them in torrents. A few of them edged remarkably close to the truth. A New York Journal of Commerce correspondent wrote that the meteor storm may have been caused by "the passage of the Earth through the tail of a comet which always leaves luminous matter for several million miles behind it." Another observer, Yale philosophy professor Denison Olmsted, noted that the radiant was in the sickle of Leo. It moved with the stars across the sky during the night,



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staying at a point fixed with respect to the outer cosmos rather than the Earth. Here was proof that the shower's origin was independent of the Earth and its atmosphere. Olmsted's basic premises are essentially what we know to be true today. He declared that the meteors were part of a nebulous body revolving around the sun in an elliptical orbit and that the storm resulted in the Earth's passage through the swarm. As interest in the Leonid meteors picked up, many facts began to surface.

In 1860, another Yale professor, Dr. Hubert A. Newton, searched through Arab, Chinese, and European chronicles for earlier accounts of the Leonids. He found records of 13 great displays between the years 902 and 1833. An obvious 33.25 year cycle emerged and Newton confidently forecast that a great shower would occur in 1866. His prediction was verified when Europeans reported seeing 5000 counts per hour in 1866, 1000 per hour in 1867, and even some in 1868. Newton was unable, however, to determine the path of the orbit.

The key to the mystery lay hidden in the accounts which he had studied, but would be explained in 1867 by John Couch Adams of England. Adams found that the Leonid storms had crept forward an average of one day every 70 years from 902 to 1833. This was very close to the change in the calendar due to the procession of the Earth's axis. Mr. Adams was able to prove that only a 33.25 year orbit could account for the changing dates of the Leonid storms. This indicated that the swarm followed a trajectory that carried it out to the orbit of Uranus. The shape of the "cloud" also became apparent: it is a very long thin ribbon. The ribbon is so thin that the

Earth passes through it in just a few hours, but so long that the meteor storms can recur two or three consecutive years in a row. Further study showed the Leonids to be almost identical to that of a known comet called Temple-Tuttle. This identified once and for all the source of the 1833 extravaganza.

If it is cyclic, it will surely come again. The period of the cycle makes 1999 a candidate year. On the early morning of November 17 or 18, 1999, the most famous of all meteor storms is likely to blow across our planet once again. Although it is difficult to predict the part of the world that will receive the best show, stars will fall on Alabama again.

The astronomers may have taken away the mystery of that long ago night, but the mystique and romance still remains. The people of Alabama will always

claim an affection with the Leonids and should celebrate the wonder every 33.25 years when the stars will once again fall on Alabama.

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Growing Up With Aunt Annie

By Gale Nichols



Growing up as a child with a single working Mother, (who passed away at a very young age) it was necessary a lot of times that I was dropped off on my Aunt Annie Price's door step. I'm sure that while raising four children of her own, I probably wasn't always a welcome sight. She never let me feel that way because whenever the Easter bunny came to see her children, I also woke up with an Easter basket.

She always made sure that God was a part of mine and her children's lives. She practiced what she preached-- she helps with the sick and visits the ill that may not have close family members in Huntsville. I still, in all these years, don't know how she finds the time. She gives of herself freely and asks nothing in return. She's truly an angel on earth.

As I approach my senior years, we sit and talk about her selling one of her Mama's chicken's eggs for one piece of gum, and how she had to pick cotton, to have the money for a nickel movie. We've laughed about the night before my wedding, when her housekeeper dumped my wedding cake, upside down on

the carport. She took it all in stride though and held a reception for me the next day.

There aren't any awards or major recognitions for good people in this world but I hope that somewhere in everyone's life there is an Aunt Annie.

Happy Birthday, Aunt Annie.

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Hunt Family Letters

Feb. 13th 1896
Miss Jennie R. Powel
Rogersville, Tenn.

Dear Cousin: Our cousin, Wm. R. Larkin of Larkinsville, Ala., was down the other day, told me of your letter which he sent to George Clayton Hunt for us to read and requested us to write to you. I heartily commend your undertaking and will be more than glad to aid you in any way in my power. I don't know that I am able, or shall be, to give you any information as to our ancestry as those who could have given me the information died before I was old enough to realize and appreciate its possible value and real interest.

While equally as proud of my Hunt blood, I have always felt pleased when told I was the Powel in our family. I am very much like my sainted Mother in all respects, though my most intimate friends tell me I have the will power and temper of my father. Well, it's a good mixture. I am a native of Franklin County, Tenn., where my mother was born and reared and died. She was Priscilla J. Powel. Her father was Benjamin Powel, a merchant for many years at Winchester, Tenn., who came from near Philadelphia, Penn., so my mother told me. After coming South, he married Ellen Rutledge. All their children are dead unless Uncle Joe Powel is living who

went to La., early in life. Some 20 years ago I had a letter from one of his sons, but have not since heard from them. I was named for my maternal grandfather. My father is George W. Hunt, in his 83rd year and still a very active man barring a sore on his face from which he has been annoyed many years.

My great-grandfather, John Hunt, was the founder of this City and for whom it took its name. Uncle Wm. Larkin, a brother of Cousin Billie's father, David, often has told me when I was a mere child of living here with him when he built the first log cabin above the Big Spring and of his cultivating a crop or two of Irish potatoes just below it. My office, where I now write, is above that spring east, whose music, as it rolls over the dam, I hear most of the year and from the rear door look out and see where once was that "tater patch." I have often regretted and un-regretted coming here.

In Nov. 1882, my father married Mrs. Tulliola McCalley whom he had known in his early life when he lived here and run the old Huntsville Bell Tavern for Woods & Yeatman of Nashville,

Tenn. My stepmother is a most excellent woman in comfortable circumstances and took a great fancy to me - alone because she couldn't help it - and would have me to locate here to practice my profession. I had enjoyed a fine practice at Winchester for the previous ten years. Having heard of Huntsville, its wealth and culture, I decided to stay here - alone on the strength of its prestige, and 'durn me, if I ever struck a "deader" town. I didn't have a dollar, not a book, and my mother never seemed - and has not yet realized that made any difference.

She was like the fellow who came into my office a few year's ago, after hearing me make a "celebrated" speech in a criminal case, and said, "Why in thunder haven't you been practicing law since you came here." I replied, "I have been trying to make money to buy me a library." "Damn it," he says, "you don't need any books, a man who can talk like you. I never heard such a speech." Cousin Billie Larkin happened to be in town that day, and in hunting a man he wanted to see, wandered up in the courthouse and heard me. He is one of the "Old Guard" who is proud of and loves

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his kin. If I have aroused your curiosity, you can get him to tell you about the speech.

To go back: after practicing law a year or so my partner, Paul Jones, died of consumption. On his deathbed he said, "Hunt, next to my family, my greatest upset in dying is that I can't live a year or two longer so as to leave you in a fine practice." In 1884 I bought an interest in a weekly paper, The Mercury, and took sole editorial charge advocating protection, more railroads, turnpikes & diversified farming, I was at the inauguration of the branch railroad which came in from Nashville and got it built.

In 1885 Aug. - I turned my paper into a daily— established it - and in 1887, bankrupt in purse & health, retired. Then Col. J. F. O'Shaughnessy of N.Y., who was the chief spirit of the North Ala. Improvement Co., took me in to assist his Genl. Manager, Capt. S. H. Buck, who resigned the P.O. of New Orleans to take the position here. That enabled me to rest and regain my health. I have gone back to my first love - the law - though as a diversion. I represent about 12 foreign papers in correspondence from here, and If you read the Chattanooga Times you will see my "work."

I was born and reared on a

farm and am proud of it. Have done all kinds of work on a farm. Although my father had plenty, at 9 years of age I was making shoes and for 8 years made all our family used - finally had a full set of tools - gave them to one of the negroes and all I have now to point to my childhood genius and glory is a pair of Morocco slippers I made for my youngest brother, George Rutledge Hunt, when I was 14 yrs., of age and he 5. For this heirloom, I am indebted to my sister who preserved them. She has three very lovely and interesting children and lives with us. Her name is Adaline Bradford Hunt Nelson-- named for her Aunt Adaline Powel who married Col. Joe Bradford of this State, a very wealthy man when the war broke out. He equipped a Company and went to the front. He had a daughter, Lavinia, a very brilliant woman, who married Col. Chilton who was killed during the war. A brother, John Bradford, was killed at Battle of Seven Pines, Va. Mr. Nelson is a partner in the "Alcorn Woolen Mills," Corinth, Miss. Three of us are dead-- Ellen, Margaret, & David Hunt.

Our Hunt kin were the founders of Huntsville, Texas; Missouri, Ala., Tenn., Hunt Co. Texas. I have gotten to talking to you and telling you all I know of our

people, simply to let you know us as we are and have been, only for your personal information and not for any publication. I must stop. Come to see us. We will be glad to see you and will try to make it pleasant for you. Geo. and I are "old" bachelors, but I hope the ... (illegible word) of redemption will yet save us. Now, I mean what I say-- come to see us. Will be glad to hear from you. Love to all the kin.

Ben P. Hunt

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