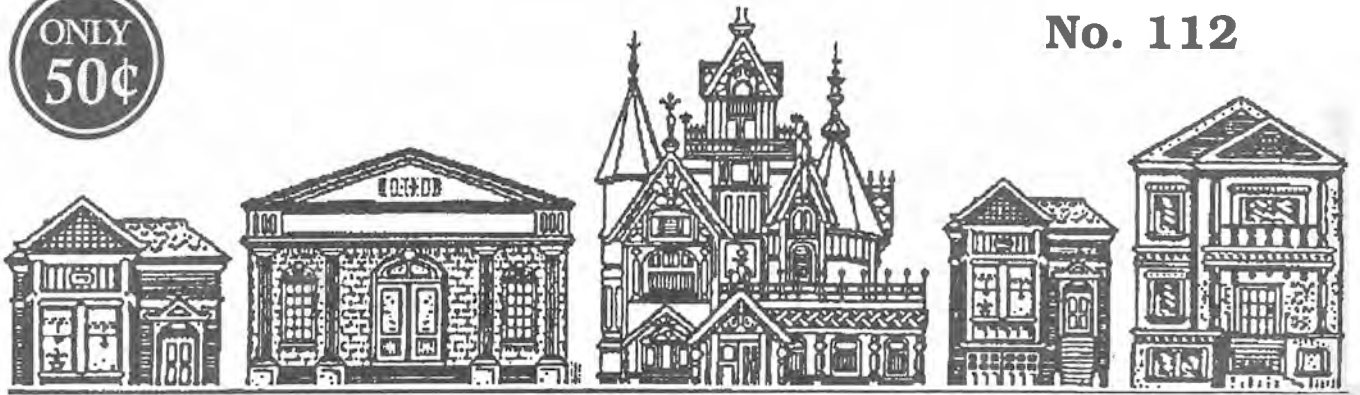


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Sal Vizzini

Sal Vizzini was controversial and his methods unorthodox. There was no middle ground; he was either hated or respected.

When he was hired to be Huntsville's Police Chief, few people knew anything about his background. Much of it was undocumented or labeled secret.

He was the top undercover agent for the Narcotics Bureau and worked with the CIA.

Officers of the Huntsville Police force, however, called him paranoid and a tyrant. It was not a match made in heaven.

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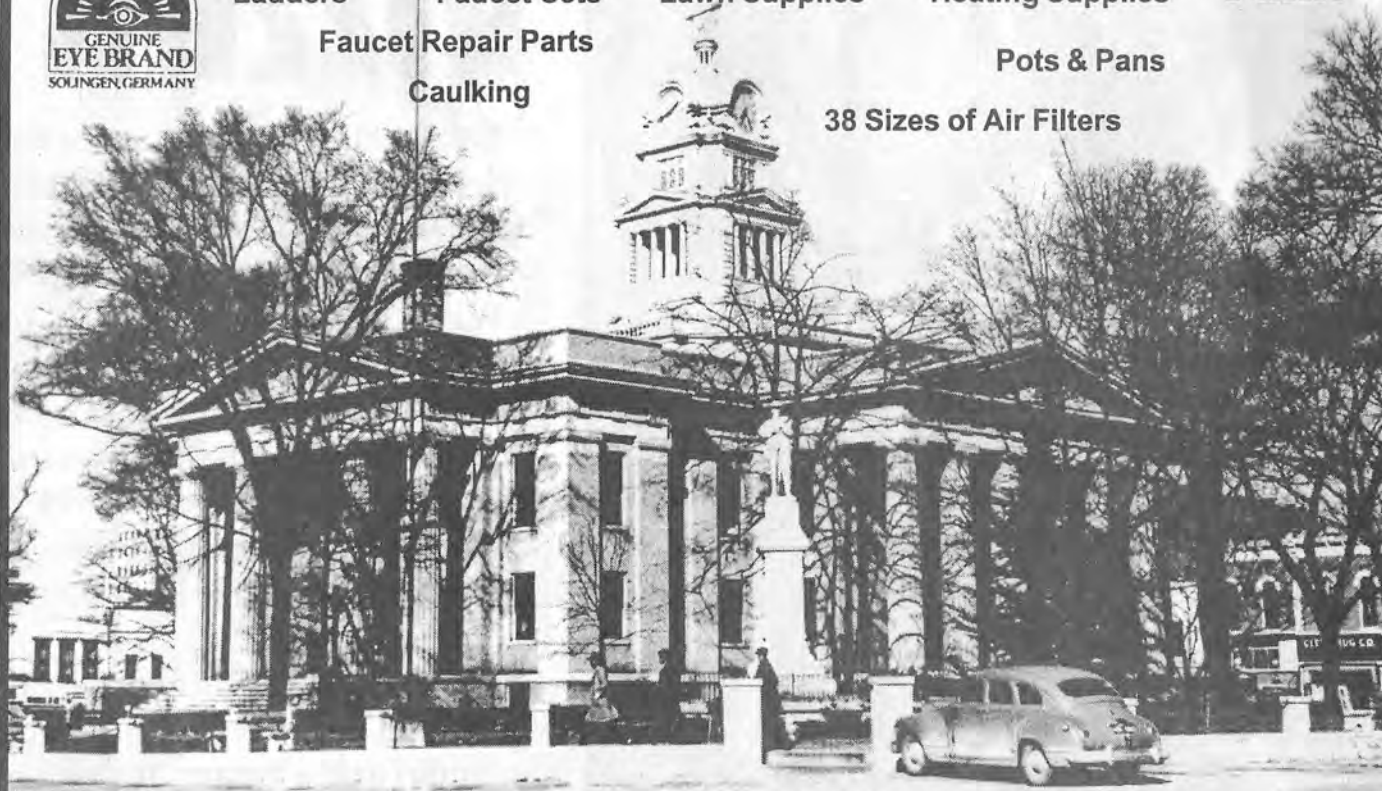


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Sat Vizzini

As the decade of the 1970's came to an end Mayor Joe Davis was faced with one of the biggest crises of his career. The police force, firemen and utility workers had gone on strike, crippling much of the basic services that Huntsville depended on.

Making matters even worse was an investigation of the Huntsville police department being conducted by the State Attorney General. Evidence pointed to officers being involved in crimes ranging from extortion, prostitution, blackmail, arson, gambling and running a protection racket. Some officers were accused of accepting bribes to protect truckloads of beer being transported to nearby dry counties. The report essentially alleged that Police Chief Eugene Sweeton had lost control of the department.

Matters were forced to a head in September of 1979 when the grand jury, who had also been investigating the police department, met with Mayor Davis and gave

him an ultimatum of three weeks "to remedy problems in the leadership of the Huntsville Police Department." Left unspoken was the threat of a devastating grand jury report that would be issued if Davis refused to comply.

Several weeks later Davis called representatives of the grand jury to his office for a meeting. After the normal pleasantries, Davis divulged that he had decided to replace Police Chief Sweeton. He had already begun making inquiries for a replacement and although nothing was definite, one person in particular had been recommended highly by top placed officials in Washington. A preliminary check with government law enforcement bureaus had revealed the person to have an outstanding background, although much of it was of a nature impossible to check out. Other parts of his history seemed to simply not exist, having been labeled "SECRET."

"If we can get the man," Davis continued, "we had better do it before some other city grabs him."

Members of the grand jury left the meeting pleased the Mayor was taking steps to correct problems with the police department. Although some of the members still had reservations, they were willing to give the Mayor the benefit of the doubt. While walking out of city hall, one person



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seemed to express the group's sentiment when he turned to the other members and asked, "Who the hell is Sal Vizzini?"

Sal Vizzini grew up in a Sicilian family in a rough part of Pittsburgh known as East Liberty. The family lived in an apartment over a pool room where he spent every spare moment practicing.

Before long, he earned a reputation shooting pool against much older and more experienced hustlers who refused to believe they could be beaten by a child. Later he moved to Chicago, to an even tougher neighborhood, where, during World War II, he enlisted in the Marines at the age of seventeen.

As a young Marine, Vizzini began to show traits that would follow him throughout his life. He was described as being "the perfect soldier who thrived on the strict military discipline." Officers began to take notice of the young soldier and he was posted to the Marine Corp Language School to learn the Japanese language before being posted to the South Pacific. Eventually he would become fluent in six different languages.

The next few years in Vizzini's life are some what of a mystery. It is known that he was involved in heavy fighting during the invasion of the islands and was later instrumental in pursuing Japanese war criminals. It is believed he served

in China for a period of time but like so much of Vizzini's life, exact details remain obscured.

After leaving the Marine Corp Vizzini worked as an investigator for the Air Force Provost Marshal. While working a case on forged government checks he made the acquaintance of a Secret Service Agent, Rufus Youngblood, who talked him into applying for a job at the Treasury Department. Youngblood was the Agent who was assigned to protect Vice President Johnson at Dallas when President Kennedy was assassinated.

When Sal Vizzini joined the Bureau of Narcotics in 1953, he already had all the abilities of a perfect agent. One person described him as a chameleon. He could work undercover posing as a sleazy pool hustler, or order fine wines at a four star restaurant with equal ease. He gave the persona of a gentle, well spoken and cultivated gentleman but had no hesitation in placing the barrel of a gun in a suspect's mouth if it would make him talk.

Vizzini was also hard core. When he was assigned to break up a major heroin ring operating across middle Alabama he used the alias of Jimmy Patrick, and with the aid of a junkie turned informer, began infiltrating the organization. One night after sending the junkie to make a buy, Vizzini picked the lock on the

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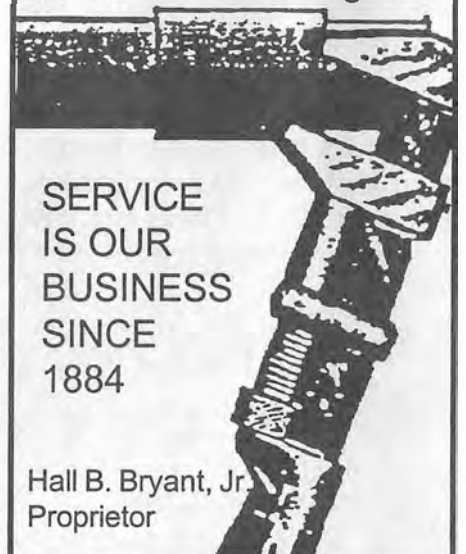


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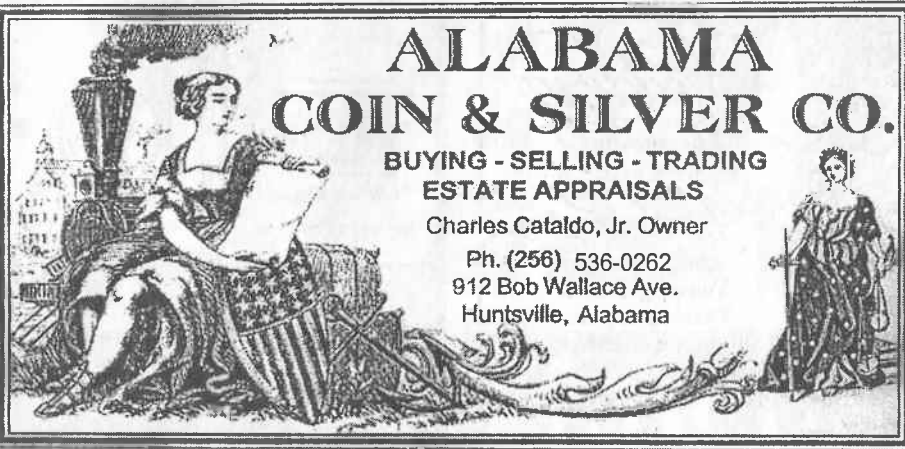
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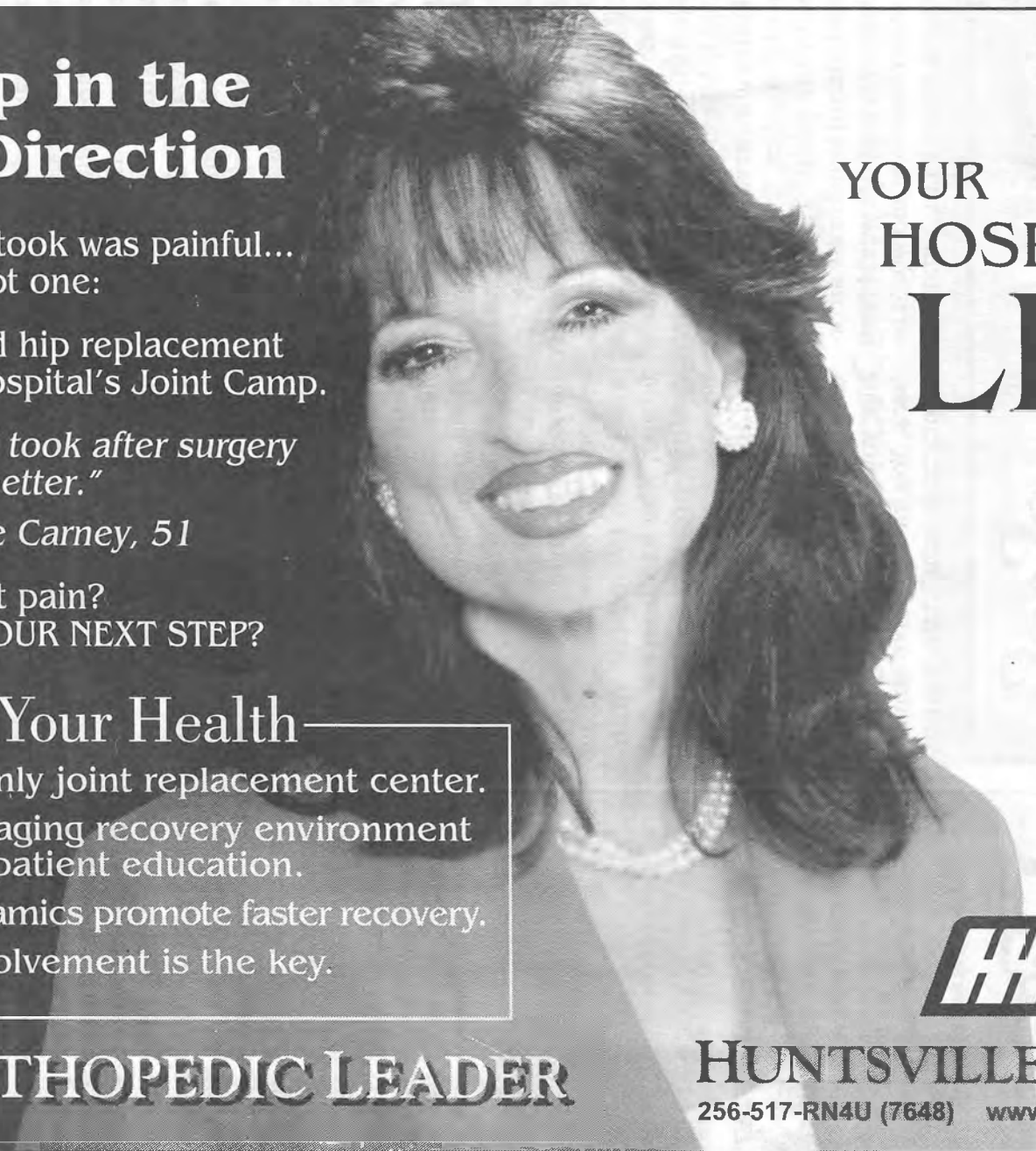
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junkie's motel room door and stole the kit he used to shoot up with. Vizzini knew once the junkie scored the heroin, he would probably hold some back for his own use. He also knew the junkie would be reluctant to inform on anyone once he satisfied his craving.

When the junkie returned to his room and found the syringe missing he anxiously confronted Vizzini, who confirmed that yes, he had taken it. The junkie listened in stunned silence as the agent explained the new rules. Every time the junkie shot up, he had to do it in front of Vizzini and answer any questions the agent asked him. If he lied one time, Vizzini would spill the heroin on the floor.

Although Vizzini's methods were highly unorthodox, he succeeded in breaking up the ring. He was quickly gaining a reputation as an agent who could work for long periods of time undercover without support. More importantly, he was becoming known as someone who produced results.

In 1958 Vizzini was summoned to Miami by John Cusack, the District Supervisor of the Bureau of Narcotics. Cusack came right to the point. The Bureau wanted Vizzini to infiltrate an organization in Italy. He would have top secret clearance and would be posing as Mike Cerra, a major in

the Air Force who was supposed to be stationed at Robbins Air Force Base in Georgia where he flew fighter jets back and forth between the States and Italy. Cusack went on to explain that he wanted Vizzini to pose as someone who was not reluctant to making a fast buck by flying contraband to the States. There would be no back ups; if he got into trouble he would have to handle it himself.

His mission, as Cusack explained, was to get close to one individual and try to gather intelligence that might be helpful in building cases. The individual was Lucky Luciano, the reputed head of the Mafia who was living in Naples, Italy. Although Luciano had been expelled from the States years earlier, he was widely believed to still control most of the Mafia organizations in America.

After traveling to Naples and spending a few days to acclimate himself, Vizzini appeared one afternoon at a bar which Luciano was known to frequent. An informer, who had been carefully coached, provided the introductions.

Another agent, now retired, described the next steps. "After you meet, then comes the hardest part. You have to make him like you so you can get invited back. You have to make him feel comfortable so he'll talk. You can't

talk too much and you can't be shy. You have to remember your cover story and act the part. One mistake and you'll end up in an alley somewhere with your throat cut. A good agent could win an Academy Award any day of the week."

Although Vizzini never won an award, he played the part well. Over a period of months, supposedly whenever he flew a jet in, he developed a strong friendship with Luciano, often attending the races and having dinner with him. At one point he was invited to Luciano's apartment where he took the opportunity to burglarize a filing cabinet. Among the papers were lists of politicians who were taking bribes, and a

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separate list of associates. Vizzini was furiously copying the names as fast as he could when his attention was drawn to another page where Luciano had made a list of narcotic and undercover agents.

As Vizzini quickly scanned the list, one name in particular caught his attention ... Sal Vizzini.

Part of Vizzini's strategy with Luciano was to not crowd him; to build a friendship slowly over a long period of time. By using the cover of a fighter pilot he had the perfect excuse to drop out of Luciano's sight for long periods, knowing he would be welcomed even more heartily when he returned.

During Vizzini's absences from Naples, the government recruited him to work other cases that required a certain expertise. As one senior law enforcement official in Washington recalled, "James Bond was fiction but Sal Vizzini was real. He got the job done and no one asked many questions."

In Turkey he posed as a big time opium dealer. When the suspect realized he had been set up he tried to kill Vizzini with a knife. In a furious struggle the knife blade broke off when it became lodged in Vizzini's arm. In Marseilles, France he posed as Joseph Vento to infiltrate a gang which was responsible for much of the opium being smuggled into the States. He went in as an illegal; if he got caught he could expect no help from the United States Government. His cover was blown when he ran into a man whom he had sent to prison years earlier. Vizzini barely escaped, seconds ahead, from a bunch of hired killers trying to collect the bounty placed on his head by the French underworld.

By this time Sal Vizzini was

using so many aliases and cover stories that even the Bureau was having trouble deciding who he was. In Beirut, Lebanon, Vizzini posed as Mike Warner, a black market gun dealer, while under assignment to the C.I.A. In Atlanta, Ga. he became Tony Tivoli, a convict serving time in a Federal prison. When he was ordered to infiltrate a large drug operation on the border of Thailand he met a local warlord deep in the jungle who had almost 150 million dollars worth of opium on hand. The warlord also had his own private army making any kind of seizure impossible. Unwilling to give up, Vizzini returned one night and

blew the camp up with satchel charges. Tons of opium, as well as a substantial part of a private army, went up in smoke.

In the mid 1960's United States intelligence had developed information that Cuban government officials were heavily involved in smuggling drugs into the United States by way of San Juan, Puerto Rico. The agent working the case had been murdered and Sal Vizzini was asked to take his place. This time he posed as a blackjack dealer in a casino who was also interested in buying large quantities of drugs.

The end of Vizzini's career as an undercover agent came late



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one night on a dark street in San Juan when four underworld enforcers accosted, and accused him, of being a cop. In the brief but furious struggle that followed, Vizzini managed to kill two of the assailants before losing consciousness. The other two men continued to work Vizzini over with blackjacks and knives until the sight of an approaching police car caused them to flee.

Sal Vizzini spent the next four months in a Miami hospital. He had suffered numerous knife wounds, had four broken ribs, three discs in his back were crushed and he was partially paralyzed in his legs. It took over two years of intensive therapy before he could walk without a cane.

In 1966 Vizzini resigned from the Bureau and became the Chief of Police in South Miami, Florida. The city had acquired a reputation as a drug haven and many of its police officers had been implicated in criminal acts. The new chief approached his job with a vengeance. He put word out on the street, and within the police department, that times had changed; drugs and police corruption would no longer be tolerated.

He was undoubtedly helped by his reputation. Many of the officers had contacts within the Nar-

cotics Bureau and had learned of Vizzini's exploits as an undercover agent. As a result, many regarded him with a certain amount of awe. His reputation was enhanced even more when he was shotgunned in the head and chest by a criminal he was apprehending. Even though he was a Chief of Police, a certain amount of evidence suggests that he continued to work for the government, traveling at least three times to Italy to infiltrate the inner workings of the Mafia.

In 1979 Sal Vizzini was approached about becoming the Chief of Police in Huntsville. Although people offered all kinds of speculations about why Vizzini would want the job, the truth was probably very simple. He was too well known in Florida where at least several contracts had already been placed on his life. One source close to Vizzini said "he just wanted to find a quiet place and put the past behind him."

His appointment as Chief, replacing Gene Sweeton, created a whirlwind of controversy. Most of the policemen had known one another all their lives and had developed loyalties that were not easily discarded. Many were personal friends of Sweeton, whom they thought had gotten a raw deal. Others said that if Sweeton

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had to be replaced it should have been with Bobby Smith, who was the Deputy Chief.

The bottom line was that Sal Vizzini was an outsider and that was exactly the reason Joe Davis hired him. Most of the men on the force were either good friends, had gone to school together or, in many cases, had gotten their jobs because of whom they were kin to. While no one denied the fact the officers were good men, many people said the force lacked the professionalism a city the size of Huntsville needed.

From the first day he was sworn in as Police Chief, rumors about Vizzini fed the gossip mills. He had his car fitted with a remote starting system in case someone wired it for a bomb. He was supposed to have had officers assigned to him as bodyguards. At one point there was even a rumor about hired assassins from Atlanta who were supposed to kill Vizzini in his office at Police Headquarters.

Adding to the confusion and rumors was the fact that no one knew much about Vizzini's background. Several officers, with contacts in the Narcotics Bureau, began hearing rumors about the legendary undercover agent but, as one officer put it, "the stories were so outlandish no one believed them. We thought he was full of bull."

At first many of the officers thought Vizzini was doing a good job in bringing discipline to the force and openly praised him, but the honeymoon would not last. Officers began complaining about

the "imperial manner" in which he issued orders and about the strict "military" discipline he insisted on. Many officers claimed he was "nit picking" and micro managing. When several officers complained about these problems to the news media, Vizzini ordered that no officer could talk to any news media without permission from the department.

Vizzini was well aware that in the past, many department policies had been governed by the news media or the City Council and was determined to put an end to it. Any event that might cast the department in a bad light, regardless of how trivial, would be investigated.

Within six months battle lines were drawn between Sal Vizzini and the members of the police



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Events began coming to a head when an officer was photographed by the Huntsville News as he pulled a marijuana plant from a flower bed in front of the Huntsville Utilities where a prankster had planted it. It was a trivial event and the officer handled it the same as any other seasoned officer would. He pulled it up, got rid of it and forgot about it.

"Vizzini," according to one veteran of the police force, "went ballistic. He saw the photograph as embarrassing to the department and was furious that one of his officers broke his rule about the press."

Several days later the officer was hauled before internal affairs where he was grilled about the incident and questioned about why he did not fill out paperwork on the "drug seizure." He was relieved of patrol duty pending an investigation.

Needless to say, the morale of the department began to sink to an all time low. When Officer Danny Barnes made a statement about department morale during a television interview, he was brought before a disciplinary

hearing. He later quit the force in disgust. Another officer quit after being accused of drinking, even though he was off duty at the time. One officer was forbidden to go to a supermarket on his lunch break to eat with his wife, who was an employee there, because someone had seen him and thought he was shopping while on duty. Another officer, after having a disagreement with a supervisor, was ordered to report to the Mental Health Center for an evaluation.

Most Police Chiefs would have tried to work out any disagreements they had with their men. Sal Vizzini, however, was much more direct. When he learned one of the officers had made a comment about wanting to shoot him,

it was alleged that he invited the officer into the office, laid a gun on the desk, and told him to go ahead if he was brave enough. The officer later resigned.

Sal Vizzini clearly thought he had a mandate to clean up corruption in the Huntsville Police department but in fact there was little, if any, corruption to be found. Almost all of the previous charges against the force and its officers had proven baseless or trivial. In spite of this, Vizzini continued to relentlessly pursue every incident, real or imagined, with the same fervor he had pursued drug lords in the jungles of Thailand.

"He kept looking for something that wasn't there," recalled a retired police officer. "And when

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he didn't find anything, it just made him more determined to keep looking."

Many officers were openly accusing Vizzini of being paranoid and delusional, especially after an officer publicly accused him of having articles placed in police cars to test their honesty. Angry police officers became almost a regular feature at the City Council meetings where, in often highly emotional confrontations, they complained of being harassed to the point where they could not do their jobs.

By 1984 seventy five officers had resigned from the Huntsville Police force. Despite the claims raised by the officers, Mayor Davis and the majority of the city council continued to support the Chief. It was evident the department was acquiring a certain professionalism it never had before. Paperwork was being filled out on time, training procedures made much stricter and even the patrol cars looked a bit cleaner.

Troubles continued to build however. Many of the officers alleged they were pressured to make quotas in arrests which resulted in shoddy police work. Over a dozen citizens filed suits against the city claiming they had

been abused by the police department. One couple filed suit and received a \$10,000 settlement when their home was wrongfully searched by the police. Three other suits cost the city \$92,000 when officers served warrants on the wrong homes.

In 1984 the Dallas based Unimark Special Risk Insurance Co. canceled Huntsville's insurance policy against negligence and false arrests, citing the "high frequency" of claims against the city's policemen and other public officials.

The final straw came in May of 1985 when three police officers entered a church, handcuffed and arrested a member. After searching the suspect and placing him in the police car, the officers realized they had made a mistake. They had arrested the wrong man.

That incident, coupled with a Grand Jury report in March of that year, spelled the end of Sal Vizzini's reign as Chief of Police. In September of 1985 Vizzini resigned under terms that allowed him to continue on the city payroll as a consultant until the following year when he would be eligible for retirement.

Within hours of the announce-

ment a local shop was selling T shirts emblazoned with the logo "I Survived Sal." They sold out.

Sal Vizzini was controversial and his methods unorthodox. There was no middle ground; he was either hated or respected.

In the end, however, he succeeded in the job he was hired for. He laid the foundations for what would become one of the best, and most modern, police departments in the state of Alabama.

Old Huntsville wishes to thank the numerous individuals and members of organizations who took time to answer our many questions. Among these are the CIA, FBI, DEA, the San Juan, Puerto Rico Police Department, South Miami Police Department, members of the Huntsville Police Department and many individuals who were members of the Huntsville city administration.

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- Some excitement was created here today when it was learned that Dr. B. S. Pettus one of the physicians who was sent out by the authorities to vaccinate the people in accordance with the city ordinance, had been "treed" by an infuriated citizen of the cotton mill settlement and was in the Superintendent's office and the man was on the outside with a shotgun threatening to kill the physician for having vaccinated one of his children who is a mill hand. The city sent out and brought the enraged fellow in and locked him up, and rescued the medicine man from his perilous condition. The man with the gun will have to face the police court on a charge of disorderly conduct and will be vaccinated with a heavy fine.

- The curfew rule was unexpectedly enforced last night by a number of young men who thought some of their friends were on the streets too late. Some record breaking runs were made for home. As a means of persuading the other fellow to run faster a brick bat was shied close to his heels - and the way the poor fellow ran was a sin. One or two made the run in less than 1-0 in a four block race. The last seen of him was a big cloud of dust that many thought the street-sweeper was working Madison Street, while the other sucked the wind out of Walker street, only slacking his speed in turning corners, and jumping ruts. The curfew is being enforced very strictly in some parts of the city - and many record-breaking home runs are being broken.

- The "Tea Room" in charge of the Guild of the Church of the Nativity will be open again today from 12 to 4 o'clock. The menu embraces salads, croquettes, stuffed ham, potatoes, sandwiches, etc., served with tea, coffee or chocolate, charlotte russe, orange ice, chocolate cream, and cake. This is one occasion in which the ladies are glad to see gentlemen in their business suits.

- The ladies of the First Methodist Church will give their Bazaar and delightfully prepared meals on the 18th, 19th, and 20th of November.

- The Bank of Stevenson closed it's doors today, Charles Alston, the cashier, having disappeared and it is alleged leaving his accounts short. The amount is not known. He was conceded to be the best known and most popular young man in Jackson county, being related to some of the best families of this section, as well. He was also superintendent of the Methodist Sunday school.

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News From A Confederate Huntsville In 1863

- We have intelligence from Huntsville, Oct. 2nd that the enemy was expected there from New Market on the 1st, but the report of their coming was untrue. There were none nearer than Winchester, Tenn., and had not been for about three weeks.

- The family of Geo. W. Lane, Lincoln's U.S. District Judge for the State of Alabama, had arrived some two or three weeks before, and were making preparations for a permanent residence, his wife having returned to Nashville or

Louisville for groceries. It is said that they had an escort of 60 Federal cavalry on their trip to Huntsville. It was reported that Judge Lane got to Stevenson, en route for Huntsville, but was too drunk to proceed further. It is quite as likely that "discretion, the better part of valor," interposed a most potent reason for shortening his journey.

- Wood and coal were scarce in Huntsville - wood bringing \$10 to \$18 per load (little, if any, over half a cord) in Confederate notes and \$8 in Federal greenbacks. The planters around are so nearly stripped of horses, mules, oxen and wagons, that few of them can haul wood. Some offer to give it to citizens, if they will haul it, Others seem disposed to grasp all they can get of their fellow-sufferers. The coal mines, in the vicinity of Huntsville, were worked by a Northerner and an Irishman, when we left there, which may

account for the greenbacks entering the market, in competition with Confederate money to its disparagement.



Run Away

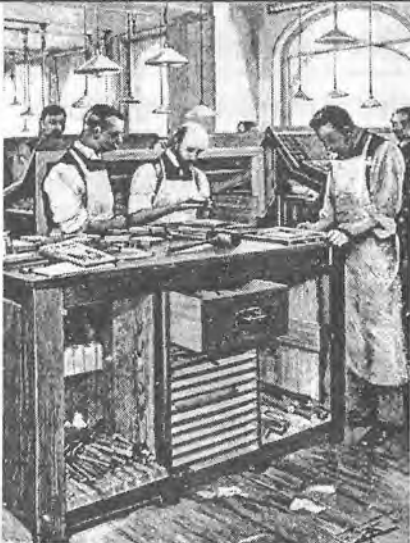
Ran away from the subscriber in Madison County, Ala., about the first of May, a Negro fellow, named Austin, of common height, very stout, and about thirty years old; has short narrow white teeth, those in front considerably separated, and has a scar on his forehead as a result of a dog bite. \$100.00 reward shall be paid to the person delivering this slave back to me.

Stith B. Spraggins

from 1832 Hunstville paper

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Yale Univ. professor in response to Fred Smith's (FEDEX founder) paper proposing overnight delivery service.

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Old Huntsville Trivia

1808 - First whiskey distillery opens in Huntsville, located next to the Big Spring, and its products are sold by the barrel.

1809 - Land containing the Big Spring is sold to Leroy Pope for \$23.50 per acre.

1820 - First tin can is sold in Huntsville. L. B. Williams reports throngs of people in his store to see the novelty of "Food in a tin can."

1835 - The courthouse is sold at auction for \$419.00. Jesse Scott was the auctioneer and James Fant, a surveyor, was paid \$5 to find the exact center of the square.

1853 - Citizens of Huntsville are in a uproar over the outrageous salaries paid to their public officials. The Mayor made \$300 annually, the clerk \$100, and the city Marshal made \$500.

1867 - Huntsville is under Yankee occupation. Military headquarters are set up at the Calhoun

House, and the Calhoun property on the East side of the square was used as a stable for Union horses.

1873 - Much joy in Huntsville's police department when City officials agreed to furnish uniforms for "Huntsville's Finest."

1888 - The drugstore belonging to Dr. J. D. Humphrey causes quite a sensation among the young bloods in town by its ad about a cigar "with a hole, that you don't have to bite the end off of."

Old Fashioned Toothpaste

Want to make your own toothpaste? Take one teaspoon of dried Irish Moss, a cup of water, 1 tsp. salt and a tsp. baking soda. Bring the moss to a slow boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Strain the gel through silk cloth into a small container. Mix the salt and soda in, add a few drops of Chlorophyll and 2 drops of oil of licorice. Blend well, and use only a small amount when you brush.

I joined a health club last year and spent over \$400. I haven't lost a pound - apparently, you have to show up.
Sam Keith



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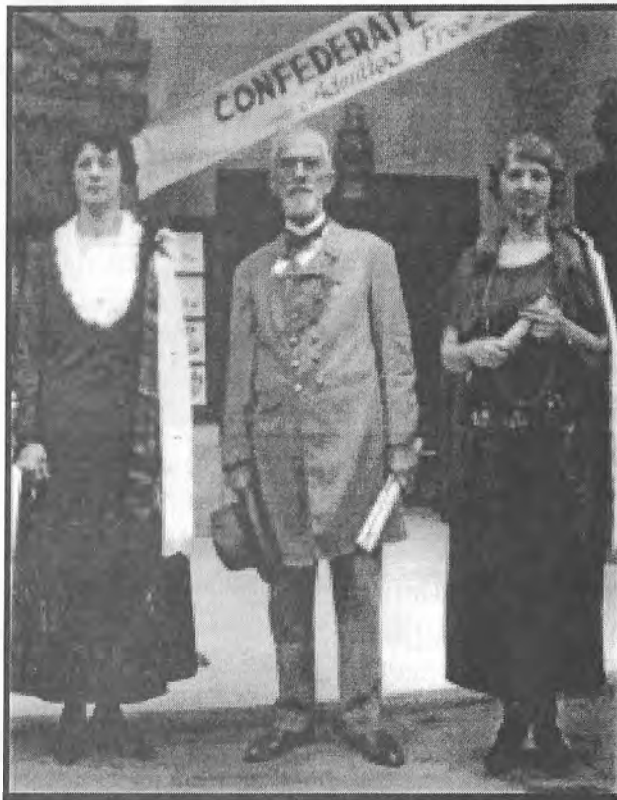
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Heard On The Street In 1880

- Last Saturday night some malicious scoundrel killed a horse belonging to Mr. H.W. Helm, the well known blacksmith. The horse, a very fine one, was in the pasture bordering the spring branch, and was killed by being struck just above the eye with a brickbat. We trust the perpetrator may be discovered and appropriately punished.

- Yesterday, in the Big Cove, a man named Stewart Wishard was shot and mortally wounded by a man named R.S. Buford, who was arrested. The trouble arose about a dispute in regard to crops. Wishard was cropping on Buford's place. It is thought Buford was justifiable.

- We understand it is reported through the country that yellow fever is in Huntsville. This is untrue. There has not been a single case of yellow fever in Huntsville up to this time.

- Mr. Timothy Murphy, of this city, received a dispatch last Friday from Canton, Miss., conveying the sad information that his

wife, daughter and granddaughter were all down with yellow fever. Mr. Murphy left on the next train for Canton, and it is reported he has been seized with the dread disease.

PS. Since writing the above we have been informed that all of Mr. Murphy's grandchildren have the fever, and that one of them has died of the disease.

- Appeal to Mothers - Clothing partially worn or outgrown, sheets or bedding of any description, remnants of calico such as always accumulate in families - any of all these articles are earnestly solicited for the Orphans of the plague stricken city of Memphis, and will be thankfully received and immediately forwarded if sent to Mrs. S. R. Cruse, Adams Avenue.

- Miss Kate Erskine will open a School at the residence of Mrs. S. C. Erskine, on Franklin Street, on Monday, the 2nd of September. The patronage of the public is respectfully solicited.

- Charles Rice, the one-eyed Negro from Mr. Frank McClung's place in Little Cove, was tried on a complaint before Justice Figg, last Saturday, charged with an attempt to rape Linda Beasley, aged 10 years. Rice was arrested after an investigation of the facts committed. He came from Jackson County.

- Wanted - 10,000 pounds dried fruit, for which the highest price will be paid. T. J. Humphrey, Hotel Building

I have to exercise early in the morning before my brain figures out what I'm doing yet.



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Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

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



Hi there! Hope all my friends are doing wonderful and enjoying life. Spring break has been great. We enjoy the traveling people that come from different towns when school is out. They come year after year and love this country ham. And we love them.

Last month's picture was great. We had so much fun with it. So many people called about it. And guess who it was? My dear friend **Floyd Hardin!** Finally, **Dorothy Garitt** guessed who he is, and she brought three of her friends to eat. They really had a great time.

First I'd like to say a great big hello to a sweet lady that I love very much who is having some health problems. She is **Carol Grasham** of Tusculumbia and the mother of **Brad**. We are praying for her, Brad and we love you.

Our dear friends, **Buddy** and **Billie Ruth Christian** have been married 48 years (not 8) last December 17. Congratulations and I love you.

Hello **Mrs. Bobby Clark** from Florence. She sure enjoyed the ham and had a great time.

A fine customer of mine wanted to tell his friends out there that he has retired (**James E. Hollingsworth**), and is really enjoying life (living it up, that is). Congratulations, James.

Does our mayor, **Loretta Spencer**, ever get tired? I have never seen anyone who attends so many events and has a smile for everyone.

Good to see **Clarence** and **Ida Mae Keel** again. He looks like he's doing real well after his cancer treatments. Also, it was good to see **Joyce Hoge**. She drives the Keels from Sand Mountain to the doctors here, and they always stop by to see me.

Unfortunately, everything isn't always fun in a place like this. Two of my dearest friends have gone through some rough times since I last wrote. My long time cooking pal, **Kurt Lineback's** father was killed in a train accident, and I

love Kurt so much and was very sad for him. Also, my long time friend **Rick Ottman** lost his lovely wife, and his best friend, **Sandy**, to cancer. Sandy always had a smile. They used to eat with me almost every Sunday after church. Rick, we love you and the family, and our sympathy goes out to you all.

My good friend, **Bob Brown's** niece got married Saturday to **Benjie Grigsby**. I know that **Jo Ann** and **Benjie** are a happy couple and will have a wonderful life together. Love you.

My good friend **Glenn Watson** is sure doing a great job on the **City Council**, but he needs to stay away from those "dang" cats!

At **Beck Perice Memorial Golf Course**, the Executive Women's Golf Association sponsored the 2nd Annual golf tournament to benefit the **Liz Hurley**

Photo of The Month

The first person to correctly identify the picture of this young boy, shown below, wins a free breakfast at Eunice's Country Kitchen.

Hint: A very smart restaurant employee who runs a restaurant for someone else.



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Sandra Steel, President

Breast Cancer Fund c/o the Huntsville Hospital Foundation. Last year they raised \$4,000. This year they did \$5,174. Isn't that great!

Governor Don Sigleman paid us a visit on the weekend. He is such a nice man and really enjoys stopping by to visit with everyone. Love you, Don.

Ron Eyestone, the mayor of **Sweetbriar Hollow**, is considering running again. The job doesn't pay anything, hardly anyone lives there and no one else has ever run so he really thinks he has a chance if he can come up with a catchy slogan.

Lieut. Governor Steve Windom has been by to see us several times recently. If he ever gets out of politics, I'll hire him to pour coffee full time. It's always fun when he comes by.

Bob Riley spent a couple of hours with us recently. He seems like a great guy and will run a good race. He is really concerned about the state of education in public schools

I've been to several of the political rallies and the excitement is really picking up! It's not easy to pick the best when they are all so good. We have eight great candidates running for sheriff and it's so hard to decide, but when I do, I'll tell you.

One of the most entertaining Governor hopefuls may be **Mark Townsend**. He says he eats pinto beans and cornbread and is proof that anyone can run for governor.

Linda Hall is working hard. So is **Fran Hamilton** and **Adam Ragland**. We love **Billy Bell**. He is such a great coffee pourer and really a sweet person!

Bob Burton from Madison Academy (we call him Bro Bob) paid me a visit lately. He's a fine person and we love him very much.

Sandra Rhodes is running for **Ray Swaim's** job as Superintendent of the Madison County Schools. This could be a fascinating race to watch as they are both hard workers.

Sherl Hirscher, of Hartman's Chevron, wants all of her friends to know that, no, she's not closing the station. Stop by and see her some time.

Ranee Pruitt and **Bonnie Hallman** did a great job on putting together the display of the **Monroe Collection** at the library. It's a wonderful collection of Huntsville photographs from the past hundred years.

By the way, did you know that our library is the most visited public building in the state of Alabama?

We hear that our good friend and congressman, **Bud Cramer**, has really been busy in Washington. It's so good to see him when he comes home.

That's all for now everybody. Next time we'll talk election. I love you all.

David Searles

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Hot and Spicy Mama

Mushroom and Cilantro Tostadas

- 1/4 c. vegetable oil
- 6 corn tortillas
- 1/4 c. onion, finely diced
- 2 T. jalapeno, seeded and minced
- 1/4 c. red pepper, seeded and finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 lb. mushrooms (button) sliced
- 3 T. fresh cilantro, finely chopped
- Salsa
- Sour cream

In a skillet heat the oil til hot, then add the tortillas, fry for about a minute on each side. Drain on paper towels and set aside. In skillet with 3 tablespoons of oil, heat and saute the onion and peppers about 5 minutes. Add garlic and continue to saute. Add mushrooms and cilantro and cook til mushrooms are soft, 7 minutes. Scoop the

mushroom mixture onto the tortilla and serve with salsa and sour cream if desired.

Spicy Slaw

- 1 small cabbage, shredded
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and julienned
- 1 t. Serrano pepper, seeded and finely minced
- 2T. vegetable oil
- 2 T. rice vinegar
- 1 t. brown sugar
- 2 t. fresh ginger, grated (not powdered)

Toss the cabbage and peppers in a bowl. Combine the oil, vinegar, sugar and ginger in a small bowl. Mix well, then pour into the cabbage mixture, combine all and serve.

Cucumber and Dill Salad

- 2 cucumbers, peeled, cut in half and seeded
- 2 t. sugar
- 1/4 c. white vinegar

- 1 1/2 T. fresh dill, chopped
- Cut the cucumber into slices and mix with remaining ingredients. Chill and serve. This is a great contrast with hot spicy foods.

Herbed Ziti

- 1 lb. ziti, macaroni or other pasta
- 2 Scotch bonnet or other hot pepper, whole
- 6 T. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 T. fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/4 c. fresh basil, chopped
- 3 T. fresh thyme and/or rosemary

Parmesan cheese

Bring water to boil and add the pasta and whole peppers, cook for 7-8 minutes. While the pasta is boiling, gently heat the olive oil, when the pasta is almost done, stir the chopped herbs into the olive oil. Drain the pasta, discard the peppers. Remove any seeds from the pasta as well. Toss the herbs and the oil with the pasta, and top with fresh grated Parmesan cheese. Hot and delicious!

Chile and Sour Cream Quesadillas

- 2 T. butter
- 3 T. olive oil
- 8 flour tortillas
- 2 c. grated jack or cheddar

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cheese

2 T. jalapeno or Serrano pepper, seeded and finely chopped
Sour Cream
Salsa

Melt half the butter with half the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Cover one side of a tortilla with cheese, then sprinkle the chopped peppers on top and cover with a second tortilla. Fry the tortillas in the butter and oil til slightly browned, then flip and brown the other side. Dry on paper towels and keep warm in the oven while preparing the remaining quesadillas. Add more butter and oil as needed, serve with a side of sour cream, guacamole and salsa.

Pineapple Stir-Fry Rice

1 3-inch piece of fresh ginger, grated
1 jalapeno, seeded and minced
1 clove garlic, minced
4 T. lemon zest
3 c. cooked cold rice
1 c. pineapple, finely chopped
1 c. fresh cilantro, finely chopped

Heat a skillet over medium high heat, add oil, ginger, pepper and garlic - stir-fry for one minute. Be careful not to burn the garlic or ginger. Add the lemon zest and rice and stir til heated. Stir in the pineapple and cilantro til heated.

Gruyere Potatoes

1 T. melted butter
2 T. fresh parsley, chopped
1 c. cream
2 baking potatoes, peeled and sliced

2 cloves garlic, minced
1 c. Gruyere cheese, shredded
Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Brush a baking dish with the butter, mix the parsley with the cream. Layer half the potatoes in the dish and sprinkle with garlic and half of the cheese. Pour half of the cream/parsley mixture over the potatoes. Repeat the process with the remaining ingredients and top with salt and pepper. Bake for an hour and top is brown.

Sweet Spinach Salad

1 bunch spinach, washed and torn
1/2 red or sweet onion, thinly sliced
5 mushrooms, sliced
3 T. vegetable oil
2 T. cider vinegar
2 t. brown sugar

Place the spinach, onion and mushrooms in a bowl. Whisk together the oil, vinegar and sugar til the sugar is melted, pour over the salad, mix and serve.

Hot 'N Spicy Fried Rice

4 c. cooked rice, cold

5 T. peanut oil
1 onion, diced
1 1/2 small red bell peppers, seeded and diced
1 carrot, diced
1/4 t. dried red pepper flakes
3 scallions, thinly sliced

Separate the rice with a fork. Heat a skillet over medium high heat til hot, add oil and swirl to coat the pan. Add the onion and toss til hot, reduce heat to medium, add pepper and carrot, toss for another 3 minutes. Stir in rice and red pepper. Remove from heat and stir in scallions.

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Legend Of The Huntsville Park Stalker

by Jerry Wilbanks

Huntsville park kids, like kids everywhere, loved to get together and talk about spooky things. They loved to scare each other with tales that COULD be true, that could affect their everyday lives that Could present a real threat to everyone in the village. Back around the summer of 1957, Huntsville Park was full of just such kids. We all lived in the village and we all attended Joe Bradley School. And one of our favorite pastimes was sitting around our houses, our hangouts, our schools and whispering about the Huntsville Park Stalker.

One of our favorite gathering places was the alley behind the line of stores directly opposite the school. We'd go there after classes (and sometimes before) and hash out all our cares and concerns about dangerous and/or supernatural happenings in the "Park", as it was best known then. Incidentally, the brickwork of the back of the store buildings was painted bright yellow and just

begged for the decoration and defacement that flowed from creative adolescent and preteen genius. Some of the ditties and illustrations we scrawled on those bricks would be unprintable in this or any magazine, but most were nothing more than attempts at cleverness by Joe Bradley's less than stellar scholars.

A group of us were in the alley behind the stores one day, drawing questionable pictographs and writing the witticisms which we considered to be humor and satire of the highest order, when an older kid (we'll call him Buster) wandered by. I guess he just couldn't resist scaring the bejabbers out of us.

"The stalker came right up this alley last night!" he said. We began to look over our shoulders uncomfortably and exchange meaningful glances.

"He was chasing two kids. They say it was the Schrack brothers," Here Buster paused for effect. "He grabbed one of them and was dragging him away when old Mrs. Cobbin's big dog Mangler broke his chain and jumped over the fence. He went after that psycho to make him drop Timmy Schrack."

Buster had our undivided attention now. We listened, slack-jawed and breathless, dreading and anticipating what would come next.

"Mangler tore into him like a

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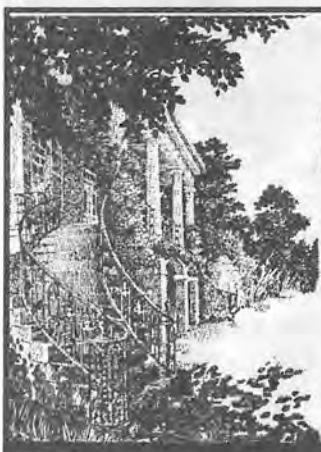
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mad dog, but the stalker guy fought him to a standstill. There was blood everywhere but the Schrack boys were O.K. The cops got here really quick. They said most of the blood was probably the stalker's and they followed a blood trail for a block or two. If I were you boys, I wouldn't hang out around the village after dark. Get in your houses and lock the doors!"

This story and others like it were told and retold in various versions until everyone was thoroughly confused. Of course, almost no aspect of any of the stories was true but that didn't keep us kids from relishing the details and being terrified. Sometimes the story had the Schrack kids being kidnapped for a day, a week; sometimes the dog Mangler would have his neck broken by the stalker's superhuman strength; sometimes the stalker himself would have his hand ripped loose from his body by the big dog. And then there were stories about the hand: that it was three times normal size, that it had six fingers, that it continued to choke Mangler after it was torn from the stalker's arm.

This was all just grist for the terror mill, the loathsome products of which nourished our imaginations through that long mid-fifties summer in the mill vil-

lage. Fear, as they say, can make man or boy believe the worst. New stories or even new details about old stories were great sources of excitement. We took each detail and each story, savored it and passed it along, with our own spin and embellishment firmly attached. Our greatest pleasure lay in finding some unknowing or skeptical kid and bombarding him with gory argument and logic until he was as scared and jumpy as the rest of us!

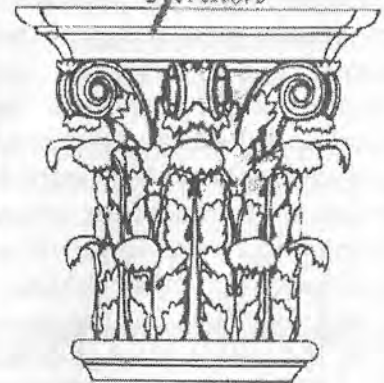
Willy Haines claimed he saw the stalker following two girls home from a baseball game and yelled for the girls to run, thereby narrowly avoiding tragedy. Willy described the stalker as tall and heavy, wearing a pullover cap and some kind of scarf wrapped around his face.

Al Moore, a big strapping teenager whom even the neighborhood bad guys considered to be a tough customer, supposedly recognized and tackled the stalker outside the ballpark late one evening, and even with the help of several buddies, could not overpower or control him. Or so the story went.

Gary Owens, whose uncle was on the police force, told us the cops had set a trap for the stalker using a couple of kids as bait (this part always sounded suspicious to me). They walked

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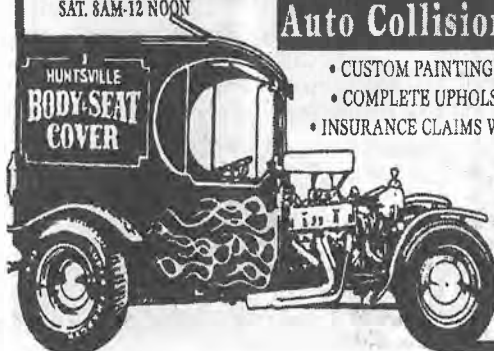
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the kids up and down the main street by the school, stores, ballpark and boarding house, several nights in a row but nothing happened. The night after they called off the ambush, kids were chased by the stalker in that same area of the village!

The legend of the Huntsville Park stalker grew and grew that summer, but sightings and encounters were somehow removed and distant. First hand experiences always happened to a friend of a friend, or the cousin of a neighbor; never to YOUR acquaintances and never to YOU,

As Labor Day and the opening of the new school year approached, there was less and less talk about the stalker. Wild stories and sightings began to taper off. Soon, days and weeks would go by without one mention of the neighborhood menace. There was never satisfactory closure to this creepy episode from my Huntsville Park childhood; possibly because there was never a flesh and blood perpetrator brought to jus-

tice. As far as I know, there was never an actual crime committed. Did the stalker exist only in our excitable imaginations? There is little hard evidence to the contrary. Our parents might have pointed out that a good scare is worth more than advice (and provides better entertainment as well.) We certainly experienced a good scare,

We were postwar children of the unthinkable, incomprehensible atomic age, just becoming aware of the global nuclear threat under which we writhed and squirmed, I think that deep down, we welcomed in some perverse way the legend of the Huntsville Park Stalker and missed it when it had fizzled out. It may have been our way of seeking out perils and horrors that to us were more simple and understandable than sudden, nuclear annihilation.

On some level, we knew that the stalker did not really exist. We knew there was nothing to be afraid of, And we also knew that he couldn't GET US if we stuck

together and ran as fast as we could!

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Pratt Avenue

Monument To A Businessman

by Jack Harwell

The man for whom Pratt Avenue is named is all but forgotten today. But in his time, he was Huntsville's best-known citizen. A century ago, when Huntsville was a small farming community, men like Tracy Pratt brought large industry here for the first time, setting the city on a path of modernization that continues to this day. Many men were involved in this effort, but Pratt was regarded, at the time, as the one individual to whom the greatest credit was due.

Like many Southern cities in 1880, Huntsville was struggling. Reconstruction had ended, and life was resuming some semblance of normalcy. But the population of less than 5,000 still relied on a cotton-based economy, and the absence of slave labor meant that cotton farming was far less profitable than it had been before the war. The city needed new industry, as well as men who could run it.

In 1886, a group of local businessmen formed the North Alabama Improvement Company, the primary purpose of which was to attract industry and development to the area. One of the group's promotional booklets, which were distributed nationwide, invited developers to come to "the Queen City of the South: Huntsville." Among those who accepted the invitation was Minnesota banker, Tracy W Pratt.

Tracy Wilder Pratt was in some ways, the stereotypical Northern industrialist that Southerners traditionally distrusted. He

was born in New York on September 1, 1861, but his family moved to Minnesota when he was still a child. He attended, but apparently did not graduate from, the University of Minnesota. Later he moved to Zumbrota, in southeastern Minnesota, and went into the banking business. Eventually, Pratt left Minnesota for South Dakota and settled in Pierre, where he became involved with developing the public schools.

Pratt made frequent trips out of state to promote bonds for Pierre's schools. It was on one such trip, to New York City, that he met Major James O'Shaughnessy. O'Shaughnessy lived in New York, but had operated a business in Huntsville since 1881. It was he and his brother, Michael, who had formed the North Alabama Improvement Company, which had, among other things, built the Monte Sano Hotel.

The O'Shaughnessy's were enthusiastic supporters of Huntsville and the opportunities it offered for investors, and James persuaded Pratt to visit the town and see for himself. Pratt came away sufficiently convinced of Huntsville's potential so that in

1891 he left South Dakota and moved here to stay. Some of his South Dakota business associates came with him.

Pratt and his friends had been in town only a few months when he began construction on what would be Huntsville's third cotton mill, the West Huntsville Cotton Mill. The company was incorporated with Pratt as President.


Construction on the mill was completed in either late 1892 or early 1893. Initially the mill employed 125 workers, but this soon increased. According to the 1896-

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7 City Directory, the mill produced "high grade cotton yarns and ball twine." Within a year of its opening, the mill was doing so well that Pratt was able to grant a wage hike to his employees.

Two years after the West Huntsville Cotton Mills facility was completed, Pratt incorporated the Huntsville Warehouse company. This building was located adjacent to the cotton mill on Ninth Avenue.

By the mid-1890s Pratt had become quite well-off financially. In addition to his mill and warehouse concerns, he was treasurer of the West Huntsville Furniture Company. Only 35 years old, he could have lived comfortably for the rest of his life. But Tracy Pratt could not rest on his accomplishments for long, and soon he was looking for other challenges.

In 1895, the Merrimac Manufacturing Company of Lowell, Massachusetts began investigating the possibility of opening a mill in northern Alabama.

Athens, Anniston, and Hunts-

ville all were considered as possible building sites. All three cities competed fiercely for the opportunity, since this was to be no small operation. Merrimac promised that the facility, when built, would house 200,000 spindles, and employ 5,000 operators. The Huntsville *Weekly Mercury* announced that the mill would be three times the size of any other such operation in the South.

Both Athens and Anniston had better rail facilities and could offer lower freight rates - a major consideration. But Tracy Pratt spent eighteen months lobbying Merrimac on the city's behalf. He pointed out that the suggested site for the mill, near Brahan Spring, contained the chemicals needed for the dyeing process that was critical to the mill's operation. In the end, it was Pratt's persistent salesmanship that made the difference. In early 1899, Merrimac announced it had chosen Huntsville as the location for its new mill. Construction began that spring, and was completed the following year.

The acquisition of the Merrimac mill was a major victory for Huntsville, and was perhaps the accomplishment for which Tracy Pratt was best remembered. The *Weekly Mercury* predicted confidently - if somewhat grandiosely that the mill would double the population of the city, which at

that time was 8000. Although the population of the mill village reached 3,000 within five years, that of Huntsville was almost unchanged, since the mill, at that time, was outside the city limits.

By 1901, Pratt had also helped secure the Lowe Mill, located at 9th Avenue and Seminole Drive, and was a subscriber of the W.H. Rowe Knitting Company (9th Avenue and 10th Street). He was thus associated with every textile company in West Huntsville.

But Pratt's efforts were not confined to West Huntsville. In 1892, he worked with the South Dakota based Northwestern Land

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Association in laying out a subdivision on the east side of town. This was a 285 acre tract, purchased from the North Alabama Improvement Association, that became known as East Huntsville. It was bounded by Pettigrew (now Oakwood Avenue, Wells Avenue, 15th Street (now Maysville Road), and 1st Street (now Dallas Street).

Most of the east-west streets in East Huntsville were named for members of the Northwestern Land Association, of which Pratt was one. The only exceptions are Clinton and Randolph Avenues, which were extensions of existing streets; Pettigrew Avenue, named for a senator from South Dakota, and Melette Avenue, named for that state's governor. Obviously the South Dakotans had found a way to transplant a little bit of home to Alabama!

Not long afterward, Melette Avenue was renamed McKinley Avenue, in honor of President William McKinley, who passed through town in 1901.

Pratt also contributed to Huntsville's first public transportation system, a streetcar system linking East and West Huntsville. He put up \$100,000 toward the establishment of the Huntsville Railway, Light & Power Company, which would operate the streetcars. Pratt was awarded the franchise for the streetcar line in 1900. The new company used track and equipment from an earlier attempt at an interurban railway, and was able to begin service in February of 1901.

When the United States went to war with Spain in 1898, Pratt and Milton Humes, a local attor-

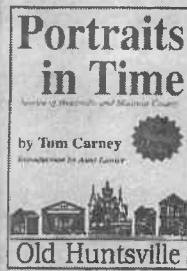
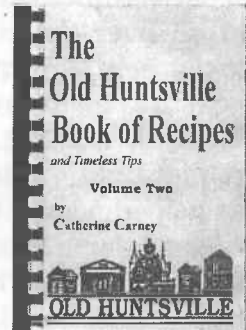
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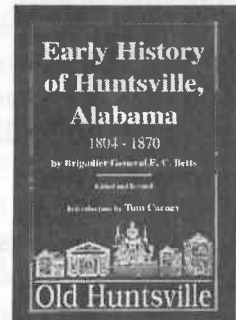


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ney, went to Washington to promote Huntsville as a military encampment site. Impressed by Pratt's and Humes's enthusiasm, government inspectors visited the town and decided that Huntsville was an excellent site for an encampment.

That summer military units from all over the country bivouacked here enroute to Cuba. One cavalry unit from Ohio stayed at Brahan Spring, near the Merrimac mill. After the war, Pratt helped secure a convalescent camp for soldiers coming back from the war. A hospital was set up at Oaklawn Plantation on Meridian Pike. Of the 1,600 patients treated there, all but 1 recovered. Among the visitors to the camp was General Joseph "Fighting Joe" Wheeler.

One of Pratt's few failures was the Huntsville-Nashville Railroad. Huntsville had no north-south rail service, so when the project was proposed in 1905 Pratt threw himself into it as he had all his endeavors. At first it appeared that the railroad would go through; nearly all of the money had been raised by 1908, and ground was actually broken for the line that year. For whatever reason, this particular project fell

through.

Pratt spent the rest of his life working on civic projects in the area, including drilling for natural gas in Hazel Green, and hotel construction in Huntsville.

On October 29, 1928, after attending a Rotary Club meeting, Pratt suffered a fatal heart attack at his home on Eustis Street. He was 67 years old. "One of Huntsville's foremost citizens yields to the Grim Reaper," proclaimed the *Huntsville Daily Times* solemnly. After a funeral service at his home the next day, he was laid to rest at Maple Hill Cemetery. At exactly 2:30 that afternoon, as the service began, every business in town ceased operations for five minutes.

In the years following Pratt's death, many of the signs of his passage began to disappear. The West Huntsville cotton mills ceased operation. The building was leased to another firm, which lasted only two years. The streetcars stopped running in 1931, replaced by buses. The Merrimac mill, Pratt's crowning achievement, was demolished several years ago. Today, the textile mills that Pratt worked so hard to bring to Huntsville are all gone. The aerospace and related industries,

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working for NASA and the U.S. Army, now dominate the local economy.

Only Pratt Avenue remains as a reminder of the Northerner who worked so hard to build up a Southern city. Tracy Pratt may be little remembered today, but his adopted home town continues down the path he helped established a century ago.

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A Bitter Legacy

No one in Huntsville, in 1902, was surprised when they learned the Rodgers and Ricketts families had been involved in a gun-fight. The families had been feuding for years; so long that most people had forgotten what the feud was originally about.

The latest incident began when the elder Rodgers was accosted by members of the Ricketts family while on his way to town. Harsh words were exchanged and both parties returned home to "gather their kinfolk."

Late that evening Jim Ricketts and Halbert Rodgers met on the

banks of the Flint River. Both were armed with shotguns.

Hatred between the two families was so great that both parties immediately began firing.

The first blast caught Ricketts full in the chest and neck. A second later Rodgers fell to the ground grievously wounded in both legs.

Although Rodgers and Ricketts would live many years after the gun-fight, they would both remain crippled for the rest of their lives.

Jim Ricketts and Halbert Rodgers were both only thirteen years old.

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News From New Market

(Editor's Note: In the late 1800s, New Market was a bustling town second only to Huntsville in size in Madison County. Mrs. S.H. Hambrick, whose family had connections with early New Market, in 1968 found a bundle of 17 issues of the New Market Enterprise from 1888 and 1889 in the attic of her home near Manchester, Tenn. Following is the sixth of a series of articles based on the contents of those eight-page weekly tabloid newspapers.)

by Waylon Smithey

Volume 1, No. 11, September 1, 1888

It apparently was a slow week for local news in New Market. So, the editor ran a story from the Huntsville Mercury about a dead-beat visitor that had a local angle:

"About a week ago one of these smooth talking young men, whose business it is to beat their way through the world, got off the train here and put up at the boarding-house of Mrs. Lloyd, on Jefferson street, near the depot. He said his name was Ostill, and he represented himself as being a merchant actively engaged in business

at Tullahoma, Tenn.

"He remained at Mrs. Lloyd's five days, and grumbled at the transfer men of the city because they did not deliver his baggage at his boarding house. Subsequent developments, however, show that he never intended to have any baggage delivered here, as he handed his checks to the express driver in this city and instructed him to forward his trunks by express to Miss Media Parks, Cowan, Tenn.

"He was a frequent visitor to the livery stables of Mr. C. Hamaker and got a horse and buggy there on several occasions. On Monday last he called at the stable again and got a rig, saying he would be absent two hours. This was the last seen of him in this community.

"He got a rig about 8 a.m., and was in New Market about three hours later, having made the trip in three hours. On reaching New Market he drove to the livery stable of Mr. Fanning and placed

the hired horse and vehicle there until he would call for it. Then he proceeded to the station and purchased a ticket for Cowan and left on the next train. Mr. Hamaker got back his turn out safely from Mr. Fanning's stable, but Mrs. Lloyd is left to mourn the loss of five days board.

"On reaching New Market he gave his name as Osborne, and had in the buggy with him a woman and a baby. He is doubtless the same Osborne who ran off from Tullahoma with a woman named Media Elliotte, of disreputable character, leaving a wife and four little children in destitute circumstances."

This article was headlined "Unique Discovery."

"A surgical operation on Mr. W. was performed by Dr. H. yesterday. Mr. W. had a severe boil or rather, carbuncle, and Dr. H. embolised it by using traction with a ligature of steel made from and old hand-saw, well disinfected in water of a spring near the mill-



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pond. He also used the same water as an anaesthetic, at the same time putting in his mouth a stick of carbolised candy to suck during the operation, which was a complete success. The whole tumor was detached without pain, and the ulcer left was healed in a short period, using the water of the spring alone as a dressing, being death to Bacteria."

This obituary signed by L.C.H. of Carmichael ran:

"I ask space in the columns of your paper to pay a last tribute of respect to the memory of Mr. John Naugher, who died at his home, near Meridianville, Ala., August the 25, 1888, in the 29 year of his age. John was a kind, affectionate young man, of cultivated mind and agreeable manners. He was loved by all who knew him. I don't suppose he had an enemy on earth. In the language of another, he was a noble young. To his sorrowing relatives and friends I offer my heart-felt sympathy. I know it was hard to give him up, but God knows best. He had use for John, and he does all for the best. Death takes the young as well as the old. One day we hope to meet him where all is peace, joy and love."

The weather observer noted

that the lowest temperature during the week was 64 degrees, and the highest being 82 degrees. Rainfall totaled 0.42 inches.

The editor added this note:

"The circulation of The Enterprise still increases, and has exceeded our expectations. We hope, however, our friends will not

cease their work in behalf of the paper. We want a thousand subscribers by the first of January."

Following is the next installment of the History of New Market column:

"Elder David Jacks, of the Primitive Baptist church, pastor of the Bethany church, three miles

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from New Market, was also a very remarkable and prominent man, preacher and citizen. Bethany church was a resort for the whole country on Sundays, the elite of the country was always present with their carriages and buggies, while the woods adjacent was filled with horses. The people assembled early and filled the large house to overflowing, while the doors and windows were thronged with earnest people to hear the word of God expounded by their favorite preacher, while the young people occupied vacant seats in the carriages, etc., not being able to get into the house, which suited them very well. Elder Jacks was well known as an earnest and devoted child of god and faithful expounded on the Word. He was a man of great probity. His word was his bond, and although not educated, according to the usual acceptation of the term, yet he was plain, pungent and eloquent. He fell asleep in Jesus, aged about 85.

"Dr. F. Rice furnishes the following additional more interesting items of the earliest settlement of New Market, obtained from his father, Joseph Rice:

"The first settlement made in New Market was in the fall of 1806 by Spencer Rice, Levi Methvin and Jas. Crump. About the same time Samuel Davis settled two miles north of New Market, Isaac Criner three miles northeast and Hezekiah Bayless, two miles southwest. These early settlers were from Tennessee, Virginia and North

Carolina. Spencer Rice died in the fall of 1807, James Crump was killed at battle of Talladega, Levi Methvin died about the year 1850, Hezekiah Bayless died in 1835, Samuel Davis about the year 1844, and Isaac Criner died since the late war, at the advanced

age of 98.

"Mr. Crump established a tan-yard a little west of the railroad depot. George Smith settled in New Market in 1814, and opened the first store of general merchandise, then Wm. Estel, Wm. D. Hayter, Dr. W.W. Humphries, Wm. Patrick, D. W. Staples, Wm. B. Miller & Bros., Staples & Childers, Smith & Johnson, Webb and Johnson, Ford Brown & Co., Holden & Echols, Echols & Rice, J.H. Pierce, Geo. W. Vaughn, Fernando Rice, Carr & Scurlock, Scurlock & Robinson, R.L. Pulley, J.H. Clopton, Calvin Criner, and Hale Whitman & Co., and perhaps some others prior to 1861.

"George H. Britton, who died only a few years ago on Hester's creek, established the first blacksmith shop- then followed Wm. Hill, Jesse K. Webb, John Williams and Hiram Carrigan.

"A Mr. Shott was the first to make spinning-wheels and chairs, and a Mr. Stillwell established the first pottery, and like the late lamented John G. Gendraugh, actually broke with the yard full of mud.

"The Murphy brothers (who were dudes in their day) and

Barney Dirgin were the first saddlers. Stafford & Houndshell were the first tailors; then Pike Edmondson (who shot off his commission as town constable), Firmalt, Forbes, Joseph A. Brown, Fred Spivy and others, not remembered.

"In 1809 Levi Methvin sold his improvement to a Mr. Rowan, and in a few years he sold to John Miller, who settle the place where Dr. P.M. Hall now resides."



I want to die in my sleep, like my Grandfather - not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car.

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When I Was Young

by Carty C. Vining

When I read a column in the Huntsville Times, long ago, written by Bill Easterling announcing the end of the light-green, returnable Coca Cola bottle memories of my own life in the country began to stir.

I, too, tasted my first Coca Cola in a country store many years ago.

It was in this same store that I first saw a radio, and heard a broadcast of the Grand Ol' Opry on a Saturday night. It was a battery radio with three tuning dials on the front and a horn type speaker that sat on top. A Philco, I think.

Childlike, I'd stop and gaze at the speaker. The music was so real and natural I'd wonder why I couldn't see the artists. It was a miracle to my small mind how music could be sent like that from one place to another. There wasn't much music in our lives in those days.

The Coca Cola box was just an icebox with a sliding top. A chunk of ice inside and a lot of cold water. Ice was never plentiful in the country. It had to be brought from Huntsville twenty miles away. There was no delivery service either.

The Coca Colas were never cold, just cool. But they were good!

Mr. Reynolds owned the general store, and stocked most of the

things country people needed. Everything from dry goods to hardware. But in those days of no electricity or refrigeration, meat and produce were limited. Most country people grew and preserved their own anyway.

Sometimes on Saturday night I'd help Mr. Reynolds' sons restock their peddling trucks. "Rolling Stores" they called them. Often I'd candle the eggs they had collected and place them in crates. Twelve dozen to the crate. They were then taken to Huntsville where they were sold or exchanged.

Candling eggs was easy and didn't require much skill. The candling device had a small light in it. An egg was placed in a slot and the light came on. If the egg was fresh it would be clear, if it had dark spots, or was completely dark, it was discarded.

Country folk were pretty honest in those days. Not many of them had money, so their produce was about all they had to trade on.

After work we'd all sit around on nail kegs and listen to the Grand Ol' Opry. My reward would be a Coca Cola, and I really enjoyed it!

In those years the store was lighted by gasoline lamps. Compared to the kerosene lamps used in most country homes; they were great.

Gasoline lamps had a metal base; usually of brass. A small amount of gasoline was poured

into the base which had a small, built in compression pump, to force the gasoline upward to the twin mantles. There was a small valve in the stem to regulate the flow of gasoline and air. The mantles were lighted by a match.

The store's gasoline tank was underground just as they are today, but gasoline was pumped by a hand pump into a round measure at the top of the pump. It was then drained into a car, or a can by a hose similar to the ones on modern pumps.

Later Mr. Reynolds installed a Delco generator in a shed at the back of the store. This was a real revolution in lighting for the countryside.

The generator was powered by a Briggs & Stratton gasoline engine, and provided 32 volts of direct current to the entire place.

At night the light on the front porch could be seen for miles shining through the darkness.

Old Huntsville Magazine

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State News From 1895

- A negro by the name of Columbus Hicks in Birmingham robbed the commissary of the Woodward Iron Company, and Officer Sharpe went to arrest him. The negro resisted, and Sharpe shot him, inflicting, it is said, a mortal wound. Hick's body is being brought back to Huntsville for burial.

- William Wilson, alias William Stevenson, has been arrested in Huntsville, charged with having robbed the mail in Texas and Arkansas. There is some doubt as to his being the right one, but if he is, those who made the arrest will receive a \$700 reward. He is also wanted in this state for murder in Marshall County.

- Judge McClure was badly hurt Saturday night by being thrown from his buggy while returning home. His son James was thrown out, and the judge became entangled in trying to jump and was caught in the running gear. He was badly bruised and hurt and has been confined to his home ever since.

- The bucket factory at Gurley operated by the Nininger-Craver Company is now running up to its full capacity. The present output is seventy dozen cedar water buckets, thirty five dozen well buckets, fifty dozen lynn and candy buckets and eighteen dozen churns. The proprietors have in contemplation the manufacture of other grades of woodenware, and they may also add washboards to the list.

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How To Keep A Husband

From a 1952 Home Economics book

Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal- on time. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal is part of the warm welcome needed.

Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so that you'll be refreshed when he arrives.

Touch up your makeup, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh looking. He has been with a lot of work weary people. Be a little gay and a little more interesting. His boring day may need a lift.

Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the house just before your husband arrives, gathering up school books, toys, paper, etc. Then run a dust cloth over tables. Your husband will

think he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too.

Prepare the children: take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair, and if necessary change their clothes. They're little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part.

Minimize all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer, dishwasher, or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet. Be happy to see him. Greet him with a warm smile and be glad to see him.

Some don'ts: Don't meet him with problems or complaints. Don't complain if he's late for dinner. Count this as minor compared with what he might have gone through that day. Make him comfortable. Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or suggest he lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.

Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low,



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soft, soothing and pleasant voice. Allow him to relax and unwind.

Listen to him. You may have a dozen things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first.

Make the evening his: Never complain if he does not take you out to dinner or to other places of entertainment. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure, his need to be home and relax.

The goal: Try to make your home a place of peace and order where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.

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Six Dead Husbands

Murder or Coincidence?

The mysterious happenings that took place in a home near Hazel Green may have been accidental, or may have been violently purposeful. The only sign left of Elizabeth's six husbands was an old hat rack upon which hung six hats - one for each. For some curious reason known only to her, she kept the hat rack in the foyer of her home, in plain view, perhaps as a morbid reminder, or maybe as a warning to the next unfortunate lover.

The antebellum home, recently burned to the ground, was built on the site of an Indian mound about a mile east of Hazel Green. The original log cabin was erected in 1817 in the heart of a 500-acre by Alexander Jeffries, an early Madison County settler. He was an older man who met and immediately became infatuated with the young widow.

They married in 1837, and unfortunately for him, Mr. Jeffries died the same year. By this time Elizabeth had experience in burying husbands. As a young girl she had met and married twice in short succession. Her first husband was a Mr. Gibbons. They were married for only a couple of months when he died suddenly, and mysteriously.

Shortly afterwards, she set her sights on Mr. Flannigan, whom she also married. Mr. Flannigan lasted only three months before he also died of unexplained circumstances. He was in his grave before the neighbors were even informed of the tragedy.

By this time the young widow was well on her way to becoming a wealthy landowner in Madison County. Not wishing to marry beneath her newfound status in life, she decided to try her hand at politics. Her next husband was Robert A. High, from Limestone County, who was a State Legislator for the state of Alabama. He probably spent much time away from home, as it was almost two years before he also expired suddenly and mysteriously at their home.

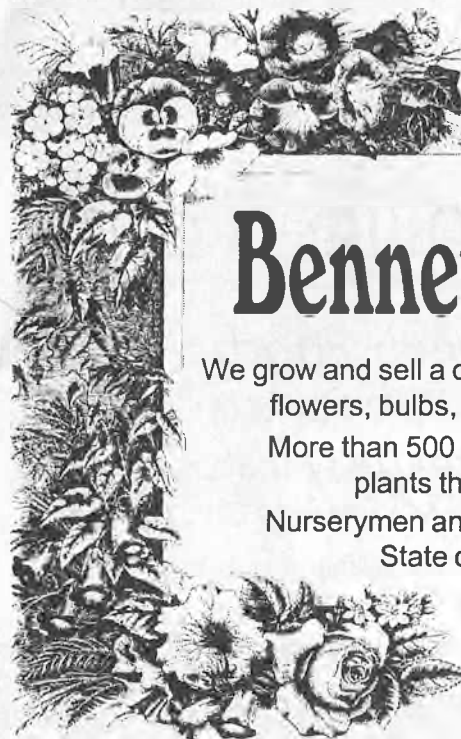
Having tried politics and plantation life, Elizabeth decided to next marry a merchant. Absalom Brown was a wealthy merchant from New Market. After spending most of his fortune on his new wife, he died as well. This came as a shock to everyone, as Mr. Brown was a very healthy and virile man. The unknown ailments he was stricken

with caused his body to swell so much that it was necessary to bury him immediately after his death. None of the neighbors ever saw the body.

Not believing in long spells of mourning, Miss Elizabeth Flannigan Gibbons Jeffries High Brown roused herself out of her depression long enough to marry Willis Routt, her sixth husband. He died amazingly just like the others in a short time.

At about this same time Elizabeth, or Mrs. Routt, became involved in a controversy with a neighbor, Abner Tate, over loose livestock and other matters. Tate was completely blind to her beauty, which infuriated her, and had been observing the home and its occupants for many years. He openly charged her with murder. He backed up his suspicions with the hat rack in the parlor that was in open sight, on which hung old hats - the blatant proof of Tate's accusations.

Maybe Abner Tate should have been forewarned of crossing the notorious widow, for shortly afterwards he was wounded by a shotgun blast. Though proof was lacking, gossip had it that Mrs. Routt had hired one of Tate's slaves to do him in. The slave, not having the courage to do the dirty deed himself, in



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turn hired another man, who allegedly pulled the trigger. Mr. Tate, shortly afterwards, sold all of his slaves.

By this time Tate was furious with his neighbor and determined to see justice done. When he went to the authorities he was informed that "nothing could be done unless you can find some evidence. Maybe all of her husbands did die natural deaths. Maybe the slave did shoot you by accident. Maybe it's just all coincidence. There's nothing we can do."

Beside himself with rage, Tate was determined that his neighbor would not get away with her dastardly deeds. He began writing a book in which he described the mysterious happenings at the antebellum home. He wrote about how the succession of husbands made her prosperous and wealthy; how she would treat them all with disdain, once she had captured them. He noted how the intervals between weddings and deaths became shorter and shorter, as she acquired "more experience and practice."

When the book was published, it created a scandalous sensation in Madison County. Half of the county believed she was guilty, while the other half swore to her innocence. Regardless of opinion, the book was the major topic of discussion any place people gathered.

Needless to say, the merry widow was not a pleasant lady to be around when she heard news of the book. She immediately drove her buggy into Huntsville where she consulted an attorney and brought charges against Abner Tate for defamation of character.

When the case finally came to trial late that fall, the courtroom was packed. The courtroom became a battleground, with plain-

tiff and defendant hurling insult after insult at each other. Accusations followed from each of the attorneys, while the judge rapped repeatedly for order.

The crowd of onlookers became so large that it overflowed onto the courthouse grounds. It was said a tavern in town was taking bets as to how the trial would end.

The judge, after listening to as much as he could stand, continued the case, hoping both parties would calm down enough to be rational.

After a short while Mrs. Routt

dropped the charges. Even today, the debate goes on in Madison County. Why did she drop the charges? Was it because she was tired of constantly being the topic of gossip, or was worried about some new information that Tate's attorney had recently uncovered?

Shortly afterwards Mrs. Routt and her son moved to Mississippi. She never again returned to Madison County. No one knows why she moved, but the day of her departure, witnesses swear that they saw her in a carpenter's shop, getting a seventh peg added to her hat rack.



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The Dead Children's Playground

By Amber Chattee Saunders

Dead Children's Playground is a place clouded in mystery and lore. According to legend, children who have died more than a hundred years ago linger there, while the retched spirit of their murderer remains veiled in the darkness. The steel blade in his hand glimmers on even the blackest of nights. He is waiting to reenact a bloody scene that has been repeating itself for over a century.

The playground itself seems harmless enough. Hidden amidst a ring of trees and a solid wall of natural rock formation, lies a secluded safe-haven for children and picnicking families. Two swing sets, a slide, and a seesaw with metal saddles atop it stand firmly on a circle of sand. The playground is almost ancient in its layout, like a Stonehenge for children, though its equipment seems almost new. Except for the occasional rustle of leaves of curious passer-by, the general atmosphere is as peaceful and quiet as a grave. It is hardly the type of place where one would expect to hear of a

"haunting", though that is the reputation this place has acquired.

Teenagers of Madison County have come to view the playground as an unorthodox rite-of-passage, daring to go there on summer afternoons at twilight to see if the stories are accountable. Swings sway by unseen hands, phantom feet leave prints in the sand, and shadows of children float across the stones, or so it has been told. Some people say that on humid summer nights the death cries of little children can be heard reverberating off the rock.

In 1988, three teenage girls entered the playground just as the sun was setting for the day. They came in hopes that something out of the ordinary would happen. It did. Only a few short moments after entering there was a change in their surroundings. The air was deathly still and yet the swings began to move, slowly at first until they were at a steady pace, as if someone was on them. The wind began to blow violently in large circles around them, stirring the sand at their feet. One of them claimed to have heard the sweet soft whisper of a child's voice. And then they saw something that burned a deep hot scar on their brain forever: the unmistakable figure of a man. He was standing stock-still on the rocks above them. His figure was faint, almost

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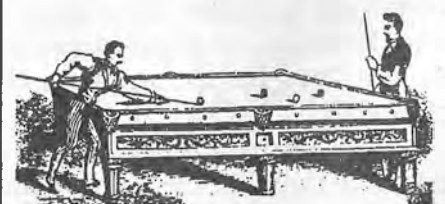
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a shadow, although he was standing in the sunlight. The girls did not stay long enough for "him" to make his identity known.

Another girl claims that when she was nine years old, her parents took her on an outing to Dead Children's Playground. She enjoyed the day, dining on ham sandwiches her mother brought from home and gliding down the slide into the safe open arms of her father. The day remains memorable to her, but for a different reason. Her mother and father had already turned their backs and were walking away when she felt a strange compulsion to glimpse behind her. She later swore that she had seen little kids in "old-fashioned" clothing running and skipping in the hot Alabama sun, even though the place was empty only minutes before.

Many people swear to have seen the infamous forms of children darting back and forth as if playing an unearthly game of hide-and-seek while casting their shadows upon the rock. A few people say that they have heard the diabolical laughter of a mad man.

The story of how these children became eternally trapped here is sad but not unfamiliar. According to local myth, the playground rests atop the tiny graves of babies who died sometime in the early 1900s. (one has yet to give an exact date)

Supposedly, a wild eyed crazed man bent on the destruction of the innocent, and some say in a alcohol induced rage, brutally ended the lives of three young children at play. His murder weapon of choice was a rusty knife, or ax depending on who is telling the tale. He crept silently onto the rocks and looked down over the children, studying them for al-

most an hour while plotting his next move. The children below continued to play, unaware of the danger lurking just yards away. Eventually, he crept down the rock and in a fit of fury, silenced their laughter before fleeing the scene of the horrible crime.

By late afternoon, the parents of the children began to grow worried. One parent visited another, who talked to another and it was not long until they realized that none of their children had re-

turned home that afternoon. Frantically they searched for their missing children, crying out their names in the darkening shadows of the late evening

They were far too late. Night had fallen and the moon had cast an eerie glow before the victims' parents discovered the grisly scene and the bodies of their offspring. In a fit of hysteria and desperation, the citizens, now turned angry mob, searched for the slayer. Their efforts were in vain. The murderer was never found.



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Some locals say the mad man escaped to the next town while others say that he committed suicide after he realized what he had done.

Some people claim to have heard the voices of the parents, still calling for their children, almost a century after the gruesome murders.

Another popular myth about Dead Children's Playground is just as mysterious, although not as chilling as one of a crazed killer. It was a normal and lovely spring morning in the early to middle 1930s when a group of kids decided to go hiking in that area. One of the kids got the idea to climb up high enough to look over the edge of the cliff and gaze at the spectacular view below. Here is where the story gets a little hazy. No one knows what exactly happened. Some people say that the boy completed a successful suicide attempt. Others say that one of the other hikers purposely pushed the boy, although it is un-

known as to why. Still others say that it was pure accident and that the boy fell without the assistance of anyone else. Regardless of what happened the result was the same. The boy plummeted to his certain death. Maybe it is his ghost that haunts the cliffs of Dead Children's Playground, warning others not to come too close.

The one thing all the stories have in common is the playground. Supposedly, when it was built the construction disturbed the souls of the children who had died there. According to legend the children are now supposed to spend eternity playing and laughing, while the murderer is condemned to wander the park reliving the horrors of his deed.

The greatest question is: are the stories true? Perhaps they were invented by high school seniors with the intent to frighten lower classmen. Were they dreamed up because of the location? A nearby cemetery can be viewed from the road. Venture

there sometime and decide for yourself. The answers you seek could be right over the next cliff. Just don't go there after dark, not for fear of ghosts but because it is closed to the public after nightfall and you may end up spending the night in jail.

Blind Justice

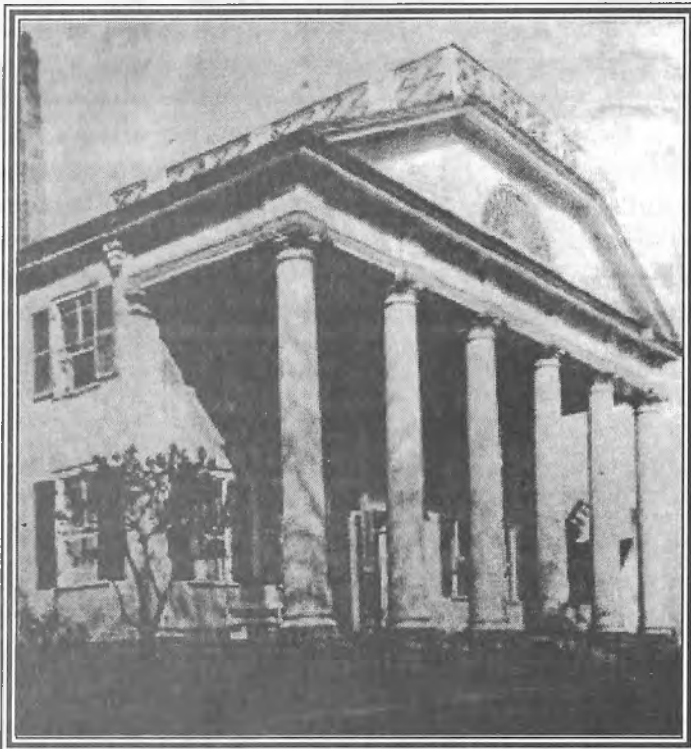
from 1901 newspaper

There were little doings in the courts today.

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