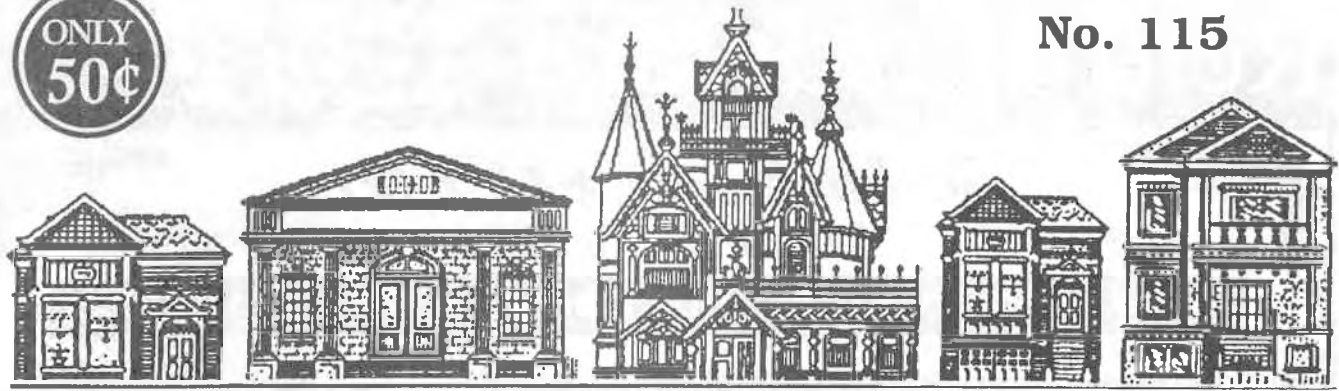


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Making Whiskey

The courtroom was silent as the judge shuffled his papers. Finally, after taking a long look at the man standing in front of him, he asked: "Well, what do you have to say for yourself?"

The defendant, remembering that his lawyer had told him to be honest and tell the truth, replied: "Your Honor, my name is Jim Brasemore and I make moonshine. Matter of fact, I make the best white whiskey in Madison County!"

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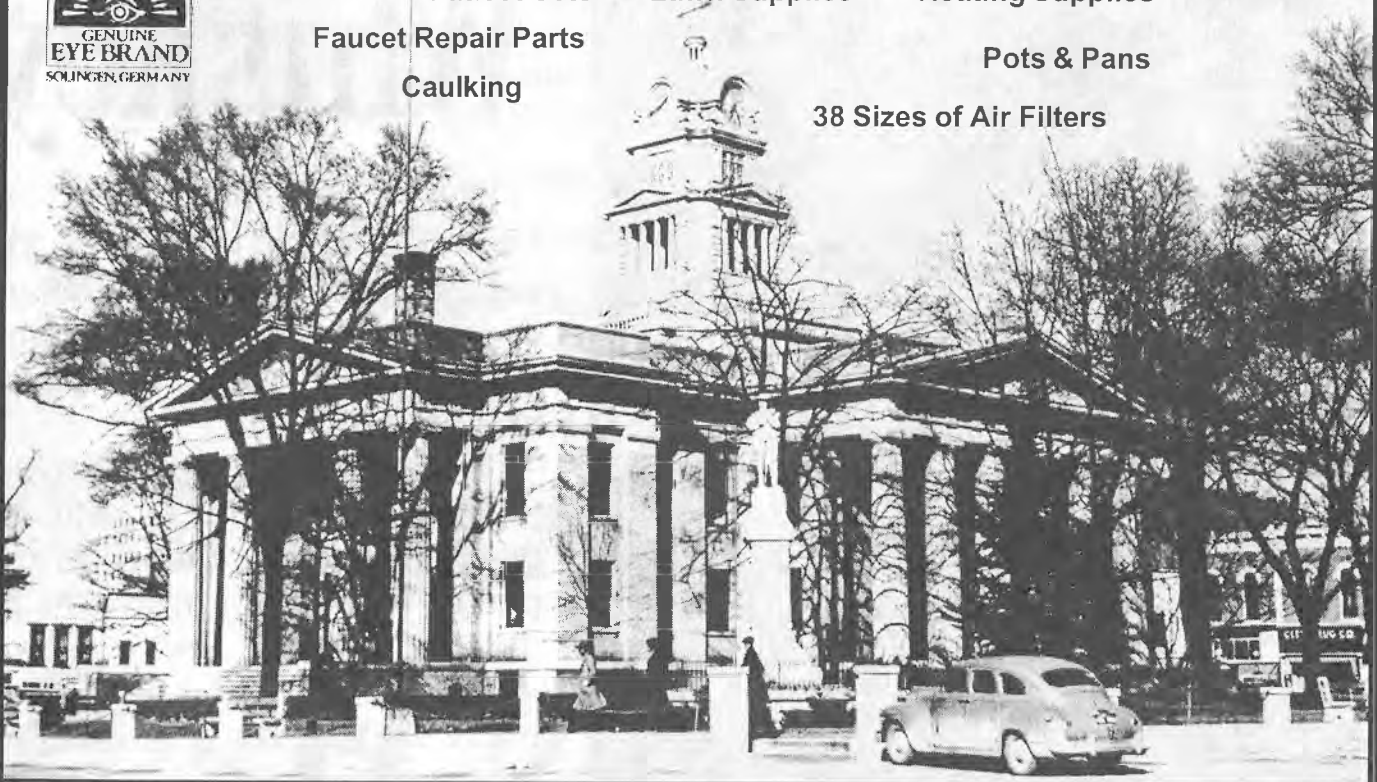
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Making Whiskey

This story was originally printed in Old Huntsville in 1992 and is being reprinted due to the large number of requests we have had.

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Jim Brasemore was a moonshiner and he talks freely about it, now that the statute of limitations has run out.

He learned the art of whiskey-making from his father, who had learned it from his father. Young Jim started feeding a firebox when he was only seven or eight years old.

"We had this 'groundhog still' out next to the Flint River," he says.

A groundhog was a still built into the side of a hill or cliff. Such distilleries were hard to detect.

"Every morning Mama would pack us a lunch of biscuits and fatback and we would set out walking. We had to walk about three or four miles to the still, but back then it didn't seem like a long way," he remembers.

The Brasemores had a reputation for making some of the best liquor in the county and, of course, that made a lot of people jealous.

"There was this family, Ricketts I believe the name was, that used to live close to us. The old man was what you would call shiftless, never did a hard day's work in his life. He used to come around and buy liquor from us and then sell it to the field hands," he recalls.

"Of course before he sold it, he would cut it down 'til it didn't even taste like good whiskey. Everybody knew it was Brasemore whiskey, so they didn't question it too much. When Daddy heard about what Ricketts was doing, he wouldn't sell him anymore. We had a reputation to maintain, you understand."

Not long after that, the Brasemores got to noticing that someone was stealing from them. Some culprit would sneak into their "holding areas" in the woods, where they stashed their whiskey



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until it could be picked up by the haulers. The whiskey started disappearing, a couple of gallons at a time.

They put together a plan to catch the thieves.

"One morning just after sunup, Daddy comes and wakes me up. We were ready to put our plan into action. We headed for the stash place and took along this old shotgun, a rabbit-ears Parker. After we got to the stash, we made us a hideout under some brush.

"On up in the morning, here comes old man Ricketts, just lumbering along like some ol' fat hog. We watched and sure enough, he goes straight to the whiskey and helps himself to a couple gallons.

"Ricketts was just about the fattest man I ever knew, and when he bent over his 'hind end looked like the broad side of a barn. I reckon it was more than Daddy could resist, 'cause he cut loose with that old Parker and when he got done it looked like termites had gotten hold of the rear end of Ricketts' britches!

"Fortunately, the gun was loaded with saltpeter and the shot wasn't very dangerous, although Ricketts had to eat his meals standing up for a few weeks."

When the younger Brasemore was born in 1902, homemade whiskey was a respectable and thriving industry in Madison County. Although many people

today would frown on the practice, at that time many families depended on it for a living. The alternative was to work in the mills (if they were lucky enough to find one that was hiring) or try to survive as a dirt farmer.

"Daddy got caught the first time in about 1916 or '17. The law was paying informers to tell on people. They put his bail bond at fifty dollars. That was on a Friday, and we didn't have any money, so the next morning Mama gets me to hitch up the mule and we loaded up the wagon with what whiskey we had left. Back then, Saturday was the big trade day downtown and the streets would be so busy you could hardly walk.

"We tied the wagon in front of the courthouse and just sat there all day, selling whiskey. Everybody knew what Mama was doing, so a lot of people who didn't even drink would stop and buy some. "For medicine," they would say.

"On up in the morning a deputy came by and asked her what she thought she was doing.

"I'm gettin' my man out of jail," she replied. Back then no one messed with Mama. "Anything else you want to know?" she asked the deputy.

"No ma'am," the deputy replied sheepishly, "but I reckon I'll take a gallon if you got any left, my croup has been acting up lately."

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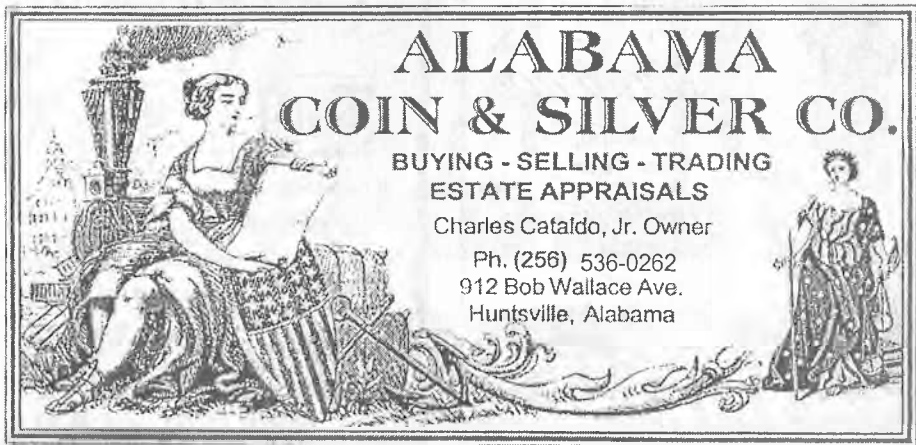
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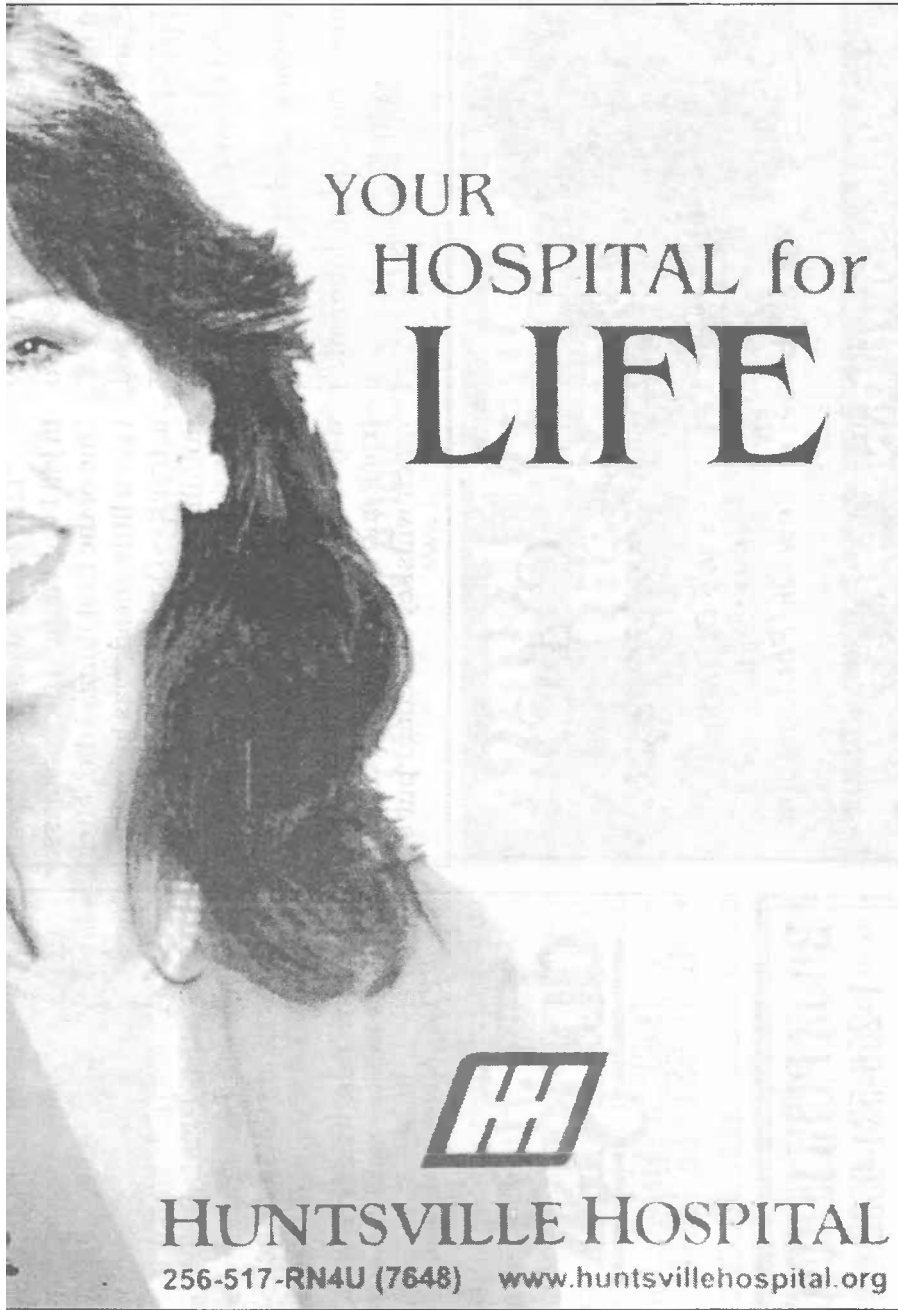
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They got their dad out of jail that day, but he didn't stay free long. When his trial came up, he was sentenced to 12 months on the county farm. "Pickin' peas," he called it.

"I was a pretty good size boy by then and with Daddy in jail it was up to me to run the business," the younger Brasemore recalls. "Before he got caught, Daddy had hid the worm (copper condensation coil) and I got a neighbor to build me a pot.

It wasn't but just a couple of weeks 'til I was back in business. When I run off my first batch they said the sheriff thought my father had escaped."

"Nobody makes whiskey that good," the sheriff said, "except for old man Brasemore!"

"I hadn't forgotten about the cur dog that had informed on Daddy, though. Giles was his name. Him and the deputy that arrested Daddy were big drinking buddies. This deputy lived out next to Chase Nursery and every Sunday like clockwork, those two would pitch a big drunk.

"Some of my cousins helped

me and we took this old worn-out still, it only had a ten-gallon pot, and we set it up out back of his house in a brush patch. First thing Sunday morning we loaded it with mash and started cooking. If you have ever been around a still, you know you can't hide the smell, and sure enough, on up in the morning the deputy gets a strong whiff and decides to investigate.

"Well, here we are, me and my cousins are hiding in the brush, and the deputy and Giles are stretched out in front of the still sipping free whiskey and acting like they are in hog heaven.

"Next thing you know, there's this big ruckus and when the deputy opened his eyes, there was the sheriff pointing this big pistol at him," he relates.

"You and Giles are under arrest for making whiskey," the sheriff said.

Seems as if someone had sent the sheriff a note.

"Like I said, while Daddy was in jail I was running the business. One of the first things I did, after I got a little ahead, was to buy me a truck. Daddy wouldn't have nothing to do with automobiles, he had worked with a mule all of his life. Well I was bound and determined to impress him, so the day he was to get out I took the truck and loaded it down with as much whiskey as I could put on

it. It hadn't been picked up in a while and we had a sizable load.

"Things didn't work out the way I figured and the truck broke down a couple of miles from the house. I got the mule, hitched it to the truck and began to pull it on home.

"Daddy was sitting on the front porch when I pulled up in front of the house. He took a long look at that truck I had bought and then took an even longer look at his mule that was pulling it. Finally, after spitting out a long stream of tobacco juice, he asked me, 'Well, what else can it do?'

"He never did like that truck. Every time I got stuck in mud or whatever, he was always there to tell me that with a mule it would

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not have happened.”

Young Jim got married in the fall of 1925 to a city girl who wouldn't have anything to do with making whiskey. One of her uncles got him a job in Merrimac Cotton Mill.

Jim wanted to quit the whiskey business, but working in the mill was not for him. He would come home at night spitting up lint and cotton dust and his wife Laurie could tell he wasn't happy.

“Finally, 'bout a year later I come home from work one day and she's packing our things in boxes. She told me we were moving back to the country.

“Kenneth Abbott and I set up a still down next to Byrd's Spring where there was this hunting club. We ran it most of one year and then we put another one down next to the bridge at Whitesburg.

“That was the biggest one I ever run, a 2,500-gallon groundhog.

“By this time we had two stills running and plenty of whiskey to sell, so we figured we would expand our business. Normally we would sell the whiskey to a tripper or hauler who would distribute it to the bootleggers. We figured that instead of paying the middle man we would take the money ourselves.”

Many people have sought Jim's advice about the whiskey business: “I tell all of them the same thing. Have lots of kin-folks. They are about the only ones you can really trust.”

“Anyway, we got Mickey, my second cousin who owned a Ford coupe, to start hauling for us. That went real good. Then George, another cousin, decided to come in the business. He was driving a milk truck and had a regular route at the time. Once a week we would load him up with whiskey and he would make

home deliveries all over town.”

It appeared that the Brasemore crowd was making all the money in the world and that's what caused the trouble.

At that time there was another family in Huntsville that was big in the whiskey business, too. They were connected to a bunch of moonshiners over in Cloud's Cove. Unfortunately they began to get angry when they realized the Brasemore outfit was cutting into their profits.

“The first we knew about it was when they shot Abbott, my partner, at the Whitesburg still. He had been tending it along with some hired hands when someone shot him from behind with a shot-

gun. It didn't kill him, but he was crippled for the rest of his life.

“Next, they started going after the boys who hauled the whiskey. They shot at them, ran them off the road, and they even set Mickey's house on fire.

“The law knew something was going on and they started to really crack down on whiskey making. This hurt us bad, as we couldn't keep a still running more

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than a month without it getting raided.

"I don't think it bothered that Cloud's Cove bunch, though. There was only one way in there and one way out. If you weren't kin you didn't get in!

"I was sitting in a shot house in West Huntsville when they shot me. It was Oct. 23, 1934. I had delivered some whiskey and had stopped to watch a dice game. When I walked out they were waiting for me.

"I knew exactly what was fixing to happen when I saw that car window roll down and I started to reach for my pistol. I never had a chance.

"Claude Murphy had been shooting dice inside and when he heard the gun shots he ran outside. When he saw me laying there, he said, he thought I was dead.

"After I got shot, we pretty well shut the business down. We laid low and just decided to let bygones be bygones."

Three months later, two of the assailants were ambushed near Meridianville and severely wounded.

When questioned about this, Brasemore's only comment was, "I reckon that's what you call bygones."

Things weren't the same after that. There had been too much trouble and the law was now watching every move the moonshiners made.

"I remember one time when Cousins, a boy we had driving for us, was stopped downtown. He was hauling a load of whiskey and was right in front of the movie theater when the law spotted him. Traffic was backed up for a red light and Cousins knew he couldn't get the car away, so he just jumped out and took off running.

"The police jumped out of their cars and started chasing him on foot. Mickey was standing on the sidewalk and when he saw what was going on, he jumped in Cousins' car and when the light changed, took off.

"It didn't take the police long to catch Cousins, but when they got back they discovered the evidence was gone! They roughed him up a bit, but finally had to let him go.

"Was the law honest back then? Let me ask you a question. How many policemen do you know that never took a drink? All of them knew what was going on, but you got to remember back then, most everyone was kin to one another. We never worried too

Shaver's top 10 Books of Local & Regional Interest

1. Old Huntsville Photo Albums on CD Rom. Vols I, II and III (The Monroe Collection). A priceless collection of Old Huntsville photographs, \$15.95 each.

2. Lily Flagg - The story of Huntsville's prize-winning Jersey cow, by Doris Benefield Gilbreath, \$10.95.

3. Glimpses into Antebellum Homes of Historic Huntsville Alabama - \$16.95.

4. Wildflowers of Tennessee - Including North Alabama and the Tennessee Valley. Over 780 color photos by Jack Carman, \$27.95.

5. Historic Mooresville: A Guide to the First Town Incorporated by the Alabama Territorial Legislature, \$25.00.

6. Alabama Gardens Great and Small; a Guided Tour. Over 250 original color photos by Givhan and Jennifer Greer, \$26.95.

7. Cemeteries of Madison County, Vols I and II, \$25 each.

8. Historical Markers of Madison County, Alabama, \$18.95.

9. Some Like It With Herbs by the Huntsville Herb Society, \$14.95.

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much about the city or county police unless there was an election coming up, and even then they tried not to bother us too much. They never came right out and asked you for money, but you knew you had to give. I remember one election back in the late 30's when the judge was making speeches. He'd be up there talking about getting rid of the bootleggers and I would be outside passing out free drinks to everyone who would vote for him. One time the judge's car broke down up around New Market, so he hitched a ride with us. All day long, we drove him around while he was spitting hell and brimstone about whiskey and the whole time he was sipping the white whiskey that we were giving him. When we got back to town that night, he was so drunk his wife made him sleep on the front porch.

By the time the Second War came around, it had become difficult for an independent whiskey operator to make any money. There were too many "big" family names in the business.

A hardware store owner manufactured various-size stills in the basement. For an extra twenty-five dollars a nearby furniture store would deliver the distillery to its intended site. When sugar became rationed during the war, a downtown grocery wholesale house sold sugar under the counter. Often, when they would receive a large shipment, the wholesaler would sell it off to moonshiners at a private auction

to the highest bidder. One prominent family in Huntsville even financed moonshine operations - at a high interest rate, of course.

Many successful businesses in Huntsville today were founded with the profits of the whiskey business.

"They didn't have sense enough to come in out of the rain back when their grand-daddies was making whiskey, now they got fine houses and put on airs like they are blue-bloods or something!

"Now look at this," he said, pointing to a recent society page from *The Huntsville Times*. "That girl used to sleep on the back seat of a Ford coupe, sucking a sugar tit while her daddy delivered whiskey for me."



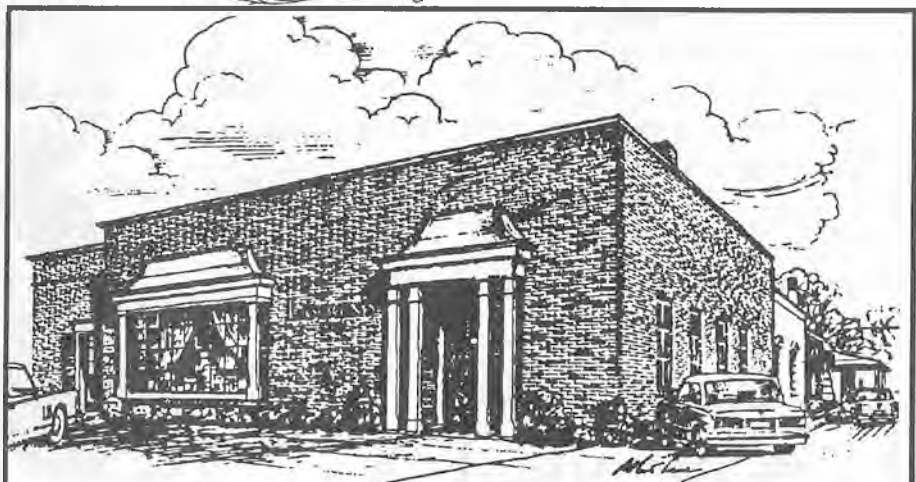
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News From Huntsville

The following letter was printed in a Savannah, Georgia newspaper. It was signed "exiled."

"It is but a short time since I left Huntsville, Alabama. This iron hand of despotism is upon the people; not perhaps as roughly, nor as grossly, as two years ago, when the impotent Mitchel commanded there.

The people, as a body, are true to our cause, and the principles involved in it; yet there are few, four or five at the most, who are not only untrue, but vilely and fetidly dishonorable in their conduct towards men who are honorable, and whose degradation to their unholy level is a prime object in

their movement. It would do no good to name them, the absentees, refugees, and exiles from Huntsville know them.

A few days ago, a body of gentlemen, unexceptionable in character, and conservative by age, were exiled upon fourteen hours order to leave, because they refused to take an oath of allegiance to a Government they abhor in their inner souls.

The officers in charge have determined not to make any more exiles, by sending the recusants of the oath South; they will, hence-

forth, be ordered North, and buried in Northern bastiles. Already they have immured one heroic old soul, William McDowell, in the penitentiary in Nashville.

The venerable Ex-Governor Chapman received an order, on the 19th of January, to leave his house and family at nine o'clock A.M. on the 20th; and when in the arms of his family, bidding adieu to the loved ones, on whom the winds of heaven had never blown roughly, - at that painful moment a Yankee order was thrust into his hands, requiring wife and daughters to vacate their premises by two o'clock P.M. the same day, not allowing any article to be removed- and a guard was placed to carry out that order.

Whilst speaking of the hero-

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ism of the old Governor, I will mention an incident that occurred in an interview between him and the Yankee colonel commanding the post. The Governor, knowing he would be compelled to leave in a day or so, to secure some of the commonest claims of humanity towards his family during his absence, approached the Colonel, who replied: "Governor Chapman - I believe that is your name. 'Yes, sir.' Did you not, in a public speech, in Huntsville, say, that to secure secession, you would sacrifice your property and your life?' After a moment's hesitation, the venerable man replied, with emphasis, 'No sir. To the best of my recollection, Colonel, I have made no public speech since the revolution commenced. I was in Europe at the time. You know my principles, Colonel, from the conversations I have had with you - and though I do not recollect any such "speech," I will say it now, and more - not only will I sacrifice myself and property, but, sir, wife and children, to the preservation of our holy cause.'

Greenbacks' are two and a half for one in gold in Huntsville and Nashville. The Yankee troops in Huntsville, whose term of service has expired, are converting

their 'greenbacks' into Confederate currency to take home. I state this for an incontrovertible fact. Not in one instance only, but I witnessed several of the same.

The streets are becoming foul - the groves and woodland around the town being swept away, all the lesser houses about the town are being torn down to floor and weather-board winter quarters for them. Every house in the city has been surveyed for occupation by them - not in a desultory manner, but regularly and systematically. It is the duty of an officer, one Lieutenant Cliff, to assign these quarters; thus, according to rank or personal standing (if any) at home, are they placed in places of average respectability in appearance. Colonel G. P. Birney's mansion is assigned as headquarters for General Sherman & Co.

But, through all, the people are true and devoted. I would mention more, but already I have written at too much length. You may rely on the women - God Bless them - in North Alabama. I do know, however, one or two disgraceful and unpatriotic exceptions."

"signed" Exiled

10 Dollar Reward

Ran away from the subscriber within seventeen miles north of Huntsville on the Meridian road on the 4th July, a negro girl named Sally, speaks English and the French language, twenty years of age, 5 feet 4 or 5 inches high, of a yellow complexion, full face and a pleasing countenance, had on when she went away a white cotton frock. She has all her clothes with her, and it is likely she may alter her dress in yellow calico. She wears a handkerchief on her head and has a scar on one of her arms, some marks of the small pox. The property formerly belonged to Mr. Loyd, who brought her from Pensacola, to which he expects she will aim to get back again. Whoever takes up and brings home the said negro or secures her so that I can get her again shall receive the above reward. Burwell Harton, July 13, 1817.

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News From 1878



Deadly Family Feud

Mathias Jolly was shot and instantly killed by Sam Green last Wednesday night at Brown's Bend on the Tennessee River. The particulars so far as we were able to gather them from persons in the neighborhood are about as follows: It seems that Jolly and his wife, who is a sister of Green's fell out about some trifling matter, when Jolly slapped her in the face. The wife told her brother what had happened, when he deliberately took down a rifle that was hanging in the boat, and when Jolly saw Green go for the gun he jumped off the boat to the shore and fled., but he had not gone more than 75 yards before Green fired and the ball went through Jolly, killing him instantly. All the parties lived on a trading boat on the Tennessee River, which was moored at the time to the bank of the river on the Limestone County side. Green is still at large, but the officers are in search of him.

Poison Brandy

The supposed poisoning of a young man named Childers, in the lower end of Morgan County, has caused some excitement. The fact that he was at a grog-shop

and, after taking a drink, complained of feeling badly, went home and suddenly died, seems to have caused the belief that he was poisoned. We strongly doubt the correctness of this conclusion. The fact that the vendor of the brandy refused to test the brandy afterward, by taking a drink himself, does not change our opinion in the least. It may have been mean brandy, as much of the brandy sold is. It may have been adulterated, as much of it is. But we prefer, from accounts which reach us, to think he had no business with brandy at that time, and in his then condition, and died of some valvular derangement of the heart, or of apoplexy. There are moments in the lives of many men when a drink will prove fatal.

African Princess

Died in Nashville, TN. this Thursday morning past, Abigail Robinson, an old colored woman well known in the community. She was reputed to have been more than 120 years old and the daughter of an African King who sold her into slavery at the tender age of 13 years old.

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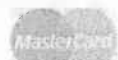
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The Last Will and Testament of Rebekah Stegar



To my son Benjamin Stegar \$250, to my son Allen Stegar \$500 with what they have received from the will of their father makes their portions equal to the other children. To my sons Kennon H. Stegar, Francis E. H. Stegar a tract of land conveyed by Mitchell and wife to Benjamin Stegar containing 160 acres it being the place I now reside and be equally divided between them.

My granddaughter Martha Sophie Nash the child of my daughter Martha Nash, and my three grandchildren by my daughter Mary P. Roach deceased to take charge of the legacies named in this will, William R. Patton to hold in trust three negroes Betsy about 27 years, Matt, a boy about 19 years, and Lucy about 18 years of age for the sole and separate use and benefit of my daughter Sally R. Cawthon and her children and upon the death of Sally R. Cawthon to be equally divided among her children.

Two slaves Sam about 50 years of age and Joe about 48 years of age to be sold and the proceeds received therefrom to be paid to William R. Patton, Trustee

for the sole use and benefit of my granddaughter Martha Sophia Nash and event of her death to be equally divided between all my children, share and share alike, 3 slaves - Charity a girl about 25 years of age, Matilda a girl 9 years of age, Henry a boy 5 years of age, to be sold and paid to William R. Patton,

To the children of my daughter Permelia Scruggs 4 slaves, Lucy a girl about 10 years of age, Nany a woman about 48 years of age, Albert a boy about 8 years of age, Bob a boy about 5 years of age to be equally divided among them if practical otherwise to be sold and the money divided equally among them.

To my daughter Ann M, Stevenson 2 female slaves and their children named a girl Charlotte and her children, a woman Mahala and her children being those left her by her father subject to be retained in my possession during my life. Sell my two male slaves Peter and Daniel and from the proceeds pay my son Benjamin Stegar \$250.

Signed this day of January 14, 1851 - Rebekah Stegar

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Breaking The Law Doesn't Pay

- A 21-year old Arkansas beauty who made numerous speeches against alcohol abuse has surrendered her crown after being convicted of drunken driving. Just a few hours after addressing a local civic club on the dangers of drinking and driving, the woman was observed weaving down a highway. The arresting officer said the woman's blood alcohol level was well above the state's limit. The now former Miss Northeast Arkansas may face further charges for allegedly harassing members of the local chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers who were on hand to monitor her trial.

- A man in Cincinnati man tried to break into a bar by shimmying down the chimney. He got stuck halfway down the chimney

and had to be rescued the next morning by police. The plan turned out to have been a complete waste of the burglar's time: the chimney he was trying to get down didn't even open into the inside of the bar. It was connected to the building's water heater.

- Police in Michigan were taking a man to jail on a misdemeanor arrest warrant when he suddenly got loose and broke his handcuffs. The 280-lb. Suspect then used the cuffs to cut a hole in his stomach and tried to assault the officers by throwing his internal organs at them. Even tho he was bleeding profusely, it took seven policemen to subdue him and get him into an ambulance. A psychological evaluation is pending.

- A man in Pittsburgh Pa. didn't feel like walking down the long steps to the sidewalk from his 6th floor apartment to throw his Christmas tree out, so he simply threw it out the window. The tree hit a power line on the way down, knocking out electricity to 400 customers and putting a portion of Philadelphia's 911 system out of service. The man has been

arrested and charged with criminal mischief.

- After being shot by a pawn shop owner he had just tried to rob, a would-be holdup man from Huntsville, Alabama staggered off down the street, forgetting all about his getaway car that was parked on the curb. Investigators later searched the vehicle and found a "to-do" list that included the item - "Rob pawn shop."

- A group of thugs burst into a tavern in Las Vegas and announced they were robbing the place. Unfortunately for them, the house band at the tavern was a combo called "Pigs in a Blanket." They were made up entirely of off-duty police officers. After a brief intermission and a quick arrest, the band came back on stage to finish their second set.



Junk is something you've kept for years and then throw away just three weeks before you need it.



It's an honor to be a part of Huntsville's past and its future. Thank you for letting me continue to serve you in Congress.

Bud Cramer

Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

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



cently and is doing great. Was here for breakfast looking good. I'd love to say hello to her this morning. She is **Mrs. Clara Pugh**.

James and Nell Long came to breakfast as a part of their **63rd. anniversary** celebration. Congratulations! **Peggy**, keep them on the go so they'll stay young. They both look great and we were all school pals (years ago).

Missed my friends **Bruce and Rick Hudson** this summer. Their mother **Peggy** was here and told me they're coming later in the year. So, a great big hello to them. Good to see you back.

If you are looking for back copies of *Old Huntsville* be sure and visit Trade Day, Sept 14 around the courthouse square. **Golden K Kiwanis Club** will be there again this year manning the Old Huntsville table. Starts at 8 a.m.

Bud Cramer sure had a great

Hello everyone. I hope you have had a wonderful summer. It's about over and the children are back in school. I want this to be a great year for our schools. Let's pray for the safety of all the children and teachers.

We enjoy so much the Picture of the Month. I believe every woman in Five Points was guessed last month. Finally, Larry Contrell guessed Janice at the Five Points Beauty Salon. It was fun, Janice. If anyone has a picture they'd like for me to use, just bring it on by.

My dear friend **Gail Taylor** hasn't been well the last few months, but is now feeling better and looking real good. She brought her dad, **R.H. Vanderburg** from South Carolina several times to eat this past month and he really liked the country ham. He may decide to move here, ha ha!

Mr. and Mrs. **Edd Doll** moved to Huntsville about 3 1/2 years ago, and soon started to eat with me

and were wonderful people. We became very fond of the two. Mr. Doll died the first of this year and Mrs. **Wilma** died in July. Our sympathy goes to the family. We will miss them very much and want the family to know that we love you all. All of you became a part of our restaurant family. Mr. and Mrs. Doll were both 93 years young. We love them lots.

My good buddy **Loyd Tomlinson** hasn't been by to see me lately. He's so busy with his own restaurant, **The Outback**, he doesn't have time to visit. I love you, **Loyd and Marcie**.

Our sympathy goes to the **Glenn Manning** family in the death of Glenn. I remember as a child his family and my family were all friends.

Mark and Melisa, Lily and Andrew Teague have moved to Charlottesville, Virginia—we miss you very much and look forward to hearing from you.

I have a dear friend 92 year's young who has had surgery re-

Photo of The Month

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

Hint: He's doing a lot of handshaking and coffee pouring lately.



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Sandra Steele, President

town meeting at the **Methodist Church** downtown. The food was good and the fellowship was wonderful. Bud really works for us. We should all go to the polls and vote for him.

Congratulations to our friend **John Stallworth**, who was inducted into the pro football **Hall of Fame**, plus many other honors this past month. What a blessing to have someone like John and his family in Huntsville.

The **Cole** family brought these friends from Los Angeles, California to breakfast. **Cara Cole** and son **John** and daughter-in-law **Joanie**, with **Joe Mathis** and wife **Joyce** and **Bob** and **Becky Mathis**. They sure had a wonderful time.

Our good friend **Blake Dorning** is really out shaking hands and campaigning for the Sheriff's job. Both he and his opponent, **Mac McCutcheon**, are both such fine men.

Happy birthday to my son and grandson in Orlando—**Joe Donald** and **Stan Merrell**. Joe was home for his birthday and his wife had a beautiful party for him at my granddaughters and grandson (**Donna** and **Todd**). We got to see their beautiful new home. It was just lovely.

Sympathy goes to my cousin **Bebby Jane** on the death of her husband **Bill Young**. I was very saddened to hear of his death.

Great **Big 50**? Guess who? My dear friend **Sandra Steel (Wilson)**. Happy birthday Sandra. I love you so much.

Leah Heard came by with friends and had breakfast on her way to Miniot, North Dakota to enter college at **Miniot University**. She's going to major in broadcast journalism. Luck to you Leah.

I've never seen an election year with so many fine candidates. In every race this year most of the

campaigners have been wonderful people. We've got November 5th coming up for the big election. Please go vote.

We missed **Reba** being around for a few days. She fell and fractured her ankle. She says hello to everyone, and I say happy birthday to her (she's had a birthday).

Our city elections brought a lot of surprises. I guess now we must go head to head for the run-off.

Great big congratulations to **Mrs. Sandra Moon** (fine lady), **Bill Kling** and also **Doug Martinson**. Good luck to **Dick Hiatt** and **Mark Russell** in the run off. Wish all of you much success and I know you will work hard for our wonderful city. Huntsville is such a great place to live.

Hey, isn't it great that the city is repaving a lot of our streets? Pave on, City Council! And have you noticed the beautiful flowers downtown? Thanks Mayor!

I guess that's about it for now. Don't forget to go to the polls and vote in November. So long for now, but always remember that I love you all.

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Colonial Cooks

The following recipes are taken from the cookbook "In the Kitchen with Miss Annie", with recipes contributed by the Colonial Bank employees of Huntsville. Enjoy these!

Date Nut Bread

1 c. sugar
1 c. self-rising flour
½ c. oil
4 eggs
2 cups pecans, chopped
1 pkg. sugar coated dates, chopped

Cream the oil and sugar. Add the beaten eggs, flour, pecans and dates. Line a pan with wax paper. Put in cold oven and bake at 300 degrees for 2 hours.

Cream Cheese Dip

16 oz. cream cheese, softened
16 oz. sour cream
½ lb. Cheddar cheese, shredded
3 slices ham, finely chopped

½ bunch green onions, finely chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

1 loaf Hawaiian bread

Mix all ingredients well. Hull out a loaf of round Hawaiian bread, leaving the top in one piece (keep the middle for dipping pieces). Place cream cheese dip in bread and place top back on. Cover with foil and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Rich Caramel Pie

1 - 7oz. Pkg. shredded coconut
1c. pecans, chopped
¾ stick butter
1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
1 can Eagle Brand condensed milk

1 - 16-oz. tub Cool Whip

1 t. vanilla

1 jar caramel topping

1 chocolate pie crust

In a pan melt your butter, add the coconut and chopped pecans, toast in oven til just light brown.

To prepare the filling, mix together cream cheese, condensed milk, Cool Whip and vanilla. Layer ingredients as follows:

Filling, then toasted coconut/pecans, then drizzle with caramel topping

Make 3 layers of each - there won't be much left once your family tries this!

Refrigerator Tea

8 tea bags
4 mint sprigs
½ can frozen orange juice
1 c. lemon juice, bottled or fresh
1 ½ c. sugar

In a saucepan, steep the tea bags and mint in boiling water for about 15 minutes. Strain into a one-gallon container. Add the remaining ingredients and enough water to make one gallon. Refrigerate. Stir each time before pouring over ice. This is a timesaving and refreshing drink.

Spicy Crispy Chicken

6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 1 ½ lbs.)

1 egg, beaten

½ c. grated Parmesan cheese

½ c. crushed cornflakes

¼ t. cayenne pepper

Preheat your oven to 400 degrees. Dip chicken in egg, coat with combined remaining ingredients. Place in a shallow, greased

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baking dish. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until browned.

Sante Fe Soup

2 lbs. ground beef
1 small onion, chopped
2 c. water
2 pkg. taco seasoning mix
2 pkg. Hidden Valley ranch dressing mix

1 can black beans
1 can pinto's
1 can red beans
2 cans white kernel corn (shoepeg)
1 can Rotel sauce
1 can tomato sauce or stewed tomatoes

Brown the ground beef with the onion, drain. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for 2 hours. Serve with sour cream, shredded Cheddar cheese, chopped green chiles and flour tortillas.

Pecan Chicken Salad

3 c. chicken breast, cooked and diced
1 1/2 c. celery, diced
3 T. lemon juice
3/4 c. pecans, toasted and broken

Combine all ingredients and chill one hour

Dressing:

1 c. mayonnaise
1/4 c. sour cream
1/2 T. salt

1 T dry mustard
Mix the dressing ingredients and combine with the chicken mixture. Makes 6 servings.

Hot Spinach Casserole

1 large jar marinated artichoke hearts
3 packages frozen chopped spinach
1 - 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
6 T. margarine
1/2 c. shredded Parmesan cheese

In a 2 quart baking dish, spread the drained artichoke hearts. Cook the spinach according to package directions, drain and layer over artichokes. Beat the cream cheese with margarine til smooth, spread over the top of the spinach. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese on top, bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes. 2 recipes will fill a 13" x 9" pan,

Broccoli Cornbread

1 box Jiffy cornbread mix
1 c. shredded Cheddar cheese
1 c. chopped frozen broccoli, thawed and drained

3 eggs
1 c. chopped onion
1 stick melted butter

Combine all ingredients, bake in iron skillet at 400 degrees for 30 minutes.



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Too Late The Story, Too Little The Glory

by Tommy Towery

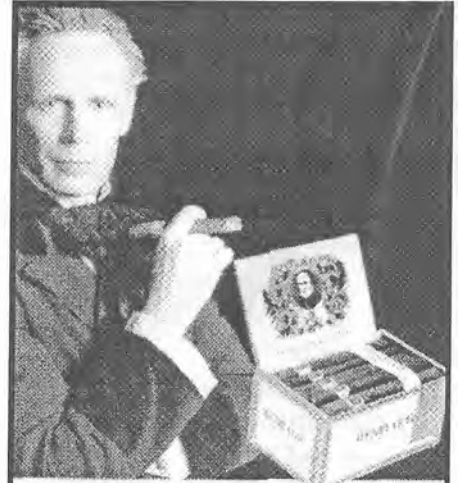
Carl Fleming "Jack" Towery was born in Fayetteville, Tennessee, in 1919. His mother died before he turned one and he was raised by an aunt and uncle who adopted him. He moved with them to Huntsville where he attended and graduated from Lincoln High School in 1940. For a while he drove a delivery truck for Brown's Grocery Store, but like many of the young men with which he graduated, he eventually joined the Army to serve his country. He was assigned to the 29th Infantry Division and after his initial training he was shipped overseas to await the invasion of Europe. He was lucky to return alive.

I was born in 1946, a year after my father returned from the fighting of World War II. My concept of that war was John Wayne's heroics at the Lyric or Grand Theaters, with bullets flying and bombs falling as I sat in the dark and ate popcorn and drank soft drinks. I knew that my father had been in the army and had gone off to a war before I was born, but he was no hero like John Wayne. I remember overhearing him telling someone that he had never

even fired a shot in combat. All that he had done was run ashore with a bunch of other soldiers at some place named Omaha Beach during something called D-Day. I also knew that before he could make it off the sands of that beach he stepped on a landmine that blew his leg off. He had one medal that I saw as a child - a Purple Heart. One medal did not make him a hero.

My dad came back from the war on crutches to the girl he had married just months before he joined the army. The citizens of Huntsville welcomed him with open arms. He was given one of the first automatic automobiles in the area since he could no longer use a clutch because of his missing leg. He received training as a draftsman and started to work at Redstone Arsenal.

My earliest recollections of him were the seemingly constant trips he made in and out of the VA hospitals with one medical problem or another. We moved from 9th Avenue to East Clinton Street in 1952. Somewhere along the way, he started drinking and in the days before the medical profession made us aware of the problems associated with the



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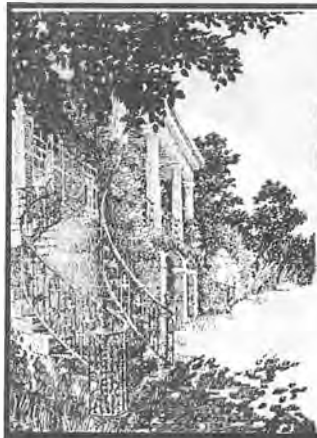
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strong drugs he took for his pain and the alcohol that he drank to forget the nightmares, he was not a very nice person to be around. I'll never know all the problems that he and my mother endured, but when I was eight years old they were divorced. That was in 1954, only 10 years after D-Day.

Although we lived in the same town, I never saw much of my dad over the next 10 years. He remarried and moved out to Chase, but drove by our house almost every day going to and from work. I thought about him in 1962 when John Wayne starred in *The Longest Day*. I causally mentioned to my buddies that my dad had been in D-Day, but that was about it. His drinking continued, he remarried and moved to the country, and we did not seem to find a way to be a part of each other's lives. On the day I graduated from high school, he never showed up for the ceremony. I don't even think I bothered to send him an invitation to my college graduation nor to the United States Air Force commissioning ceremony that followed when I pinned on my 2nd Lieutenant Bars.

I married shortly thereafter, and while I was awaiting my first assignment, I took my new wife back to Huntsville to meet my father. No, he had not come to the

wedding. I could never put my finger on it exactly, but for some reason, from that period on, we communicated more through letters, cards, and phone calls.

Whenever I came home, we would get together for a meal or an evening of sitting around and small talk, but nothing much more serious than that. Throughout the years, I never found out much more about D-Day from him than the basic facts I had learned secondhand as a kid. I guess I always thought there was going to be a better time when we could sit down and talk it over, man-to-man, but I moved about, as military people do, and the times we had at home had to be divided between so many people and so many other things to do.

I kept telling myself that someday when he was retired and I could get home, we'd sit down and fill in all the gaps of that part of his life. I needed to better understand the cost he paid for the Purple Heart he had long ago stuck away in a drawer somewhere.

Near the end of my own military career, I was stationed in England, where I found people that seemed to better appreciate the cost and sacrifices of war. I visited the war museums, went to the military parades, and saw the respect showed to the war pen-

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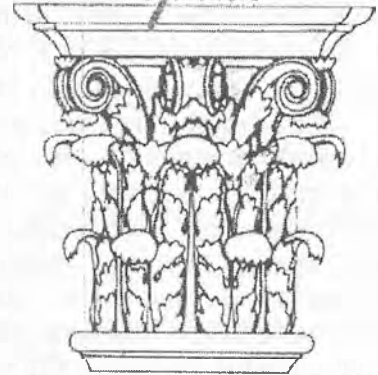
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sioners on the streets. I vowed then that upon my return to the states, I would finally ask him about his D-Day experiences. Six months before I returned home, I received a phone call that he had died in his sleep. He was 68 years old.

His death took from me any chance to find the answers to the questions that I had stored in my head most of my life. I had not only lost a father, I had also lost a comrade in arms. I wore my uniform to his funeral. On my chest were awards for meritorious service, the Air Medal, awards for service in Vietnam and other conflicts, and a dozen other colorful ribbons that reflected my almost 20 years of service.

I thought about his one medal - his Purple Heart. The bugler played Taps, and when the American flag was lifted from his casket and ceremonially folded, the color guard commander turned and presented me with the flag, with the hallowed words "With the thanks of a grateful nation." Tears came into my eyes for this fellow warrior that I hardly knew.

When Saving Private Ryan came to the screen, I saw more graphically than I wanted how terrible it was for the men during the invasion. It may have been the first time that I came even

close to actually understanding what my father suffered through. I watched the movie, and wished that I had taken the time to talk to him.

Using the internet I have started putting together some events in my father's short military life that led him to that beach. I know facts about his unit and where he was stationed. I know how many men were killed and how many were wounded and how many were missing in action. I have lots of statistical facts that tell only half the story I really want to know. What I don't know, and never will, are the personal feelings of the man that would survive that hell to become my father. Those and so many other questions will forever remain mysteries, maybe because I never realized that I would not have forever to ask him.

After his funeral I had to go help clean out his apartment. I found his Purple Heart in the bottom of a drawer along with a clipping from The Huntsville Times that was written on the 25th anniversary of D-Day. The article had his photograph and quoted my dad saying that he had strayed off the path during the landing assault and had stepped on a landmine. It went on to tell how he had laid on the beach for 18-hours with that mangled leg before being evacuated. I thought about the

term "the longest day" and knew that I would never in my life understand its meaning the way that my father had. The most haunting thing about the article was that it proved to me in black and white that my father was willing to talk about his experiences, if only someone took the time to ask him. How often I have wished that someone had been me.

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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 twelfth of a series of articles based on the contents of those eight-page weekly tabloid newspapers.)

by Waylon Smithey

Volume 1, No. 23, November
24, 1888

News making Page 1 this week included: "A band of gypsies are encamped just south of town, beyond the old colored church, who have been plying their trade of horse-trading, and humbugging some with their pretensions to 'fortune telling.' Their camp was crowded all day Sunday by whites and blacks - especially the latter, who were eager to learn what the future has in store for them."

"The rain during the past week has greatly retarded building operations in this place and interfered with the farmers' work in gathering corn, picking cotton, etc."

"We understand that the Motlow tract of 6,000 acres of land has been sold to a South Alabama firm, represented by Capt. Taylor. This land is rich in both timber and coal, and the intention of the purchasers is to fully develop it."

"Some forty or fifty car loads

of square cedar timber, purchased here by the firm of Joseph Steiner, Sons & Taylor, of Greenville, Ala., is being prepared for shipment to Beruth, Bavaria. This timber is valued at about \$16,000."

A run-away train created a little excitement when it sped through the village, but no one was injured and there was no damage done. "Some flat cars loaded with logs broke loose at Plevna and passed here at full speed, a day or two ago, but the heavy grade a mile below checked them and they ran back to the depot here. They were captured by the engine in a few minutes and carried back."

It is difficult to understand how, in 1888, fresh oysters could be served to the public so far from the seacoast, but that is what the ladies of the M.E. church intended to do on Christmas Eve night.

Some 250 bales of cotton were reported to have been sold in the local market this season, ranging in price from 8-1/2 to 9 cents a pound.

The following items ran in a Personals column on Page 8:

"Mr. Lit Estes is now wielding the yard-stick behind the counter in Mr. Cochran's store.

"George Fanning brought us a turnip last week that weighed four and a half pounds. It was a whopper.

"We regret to hear of the illness of Mr. Isaac Cook. Mr. Cook is

our oldest citizen being in his eighty-first year.

"New Market School is entitled to \$210 in the apportionment of the school fund."

Announcement was made that every person buying a dollar's worth of goods at one time at W.F. Yarbrough's store would be entitled to a chance to win a fine watch.

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The Road To Whitesburg

by Jack Harwell

Roads between cities have traditionally been named for the places they lead to. Meridian Street was once called Meridianville Pike, because that was where it went; the same idea held true with Athens Pike, which today is part of Holmes Avenue. In the same way, Whitesburg Drive, the old Whitesburg Pike, once lead to the town of Whitesburg, on the banks of the Tennessee. The town of Whitesburg no longer exists, but the road that leads there has been around, in the same location, for nearly two centuries.

Like many cities in the early 19th century, Huntsville was dependent on water transportation, for both passenger and freight traffic. Railroads were not yet common, and overland transport was limited to what a good team of horses could carry. Only boats could carry goods in the amounts needed to support a growing community. So providing an efficient and reliable route between Huntsville and the Tennessee River was a priority for the city's founders.

One attempt at a city-to-river route was the Indian Creek Canal. This project was part of the

"canal craze" that swept the country in the 1820s. The idea was to take boats from the head of the canal, at Big Spring, to the river port of Triana, where cargo would be transferred to riverboats for the trip to New Orleans and other markets. A few small boats did make the trip, but the canal soon proved impracticable. In time, it would be abandoned completely in favor of the overland route to the river at Whitesburg.

The road from Huntsville to Whitesburg was already well travelled by the time the Indian Creek Canal was opened. Even before the area was known as "Whitesburg", a trader named John Ditto was operating a trading post on the Tennessee River at the mouth of Aldridge Creek.

The road to Ditto's Landing, as it was known, became well travelled after public land sales began in 1809, for it was the only route by which land purchasers could reach their claims in the southern part of the county. One of those who bought land along the road was Joseph Acklen, son-in-law of John Hunt.

The opening of public lands in North Alabama attracted many adventurous souls from the eastern states. Many came to farm; the area's suitability for farming was already well known. Others, though, saw profits to be made in the new western lands. One of the latter was a wealthy Virginian named James White. White came to town not long after the land

sales began, and went into business with one Alexander Gilbreath. They set up shop in a building at what is now the corner of Gates Avenue and Fountain Row. This is believed to have been the first business in Huntsville.

White and Gilbreath did so well with their business, they decided to expand. In 1820, they began distributing their goods through John Hardie's store at Ditto's Landing. By that time, White owned considerable amounts of land on both sides of the river. Eventually, the community at the landing became known as Whitesburg in his honor. The town of Whitesburg was incorporated by the state legislature on December 23, 1824. It included the area where Ditto Landing marina and park are located today. A post office was opened there in 1827.

Whitesburg was a busy place

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in the 1820s. In addition to his business with Alexander Gilbreath, James White also owned an ironworks and a salt firm in east Tennessee. He shipped his products to Hardie's store by way of the river. But cotton was the main business in Whitesburg. Cotton from all over the county was brought there and loaded on flatboats for the trip to market. Sometimes shoal pilots would board the boats also, to guide them past the treacherous Muscle Shoals. In a letter written in 1820, Hardie noted that each riverboat carried 250 to 350 bales, each weighing about 300 pounds.

Before long, the Whitesburg road itself attracted the attention of private enterprise. Back then, highways were not the exclusive domain of the government which they have become today. Private firms would construct and oper-

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White and Read, Huntsville,

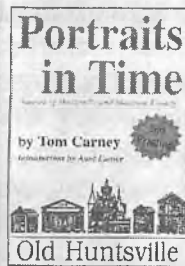
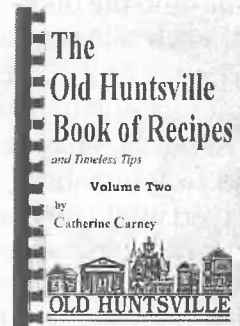
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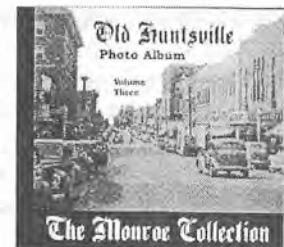


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ate roads, or pikes, and collect tolls for their upkeep. One such firm created the Whitesburg Turnpike in 1834. (The Meridianville Turnpike was opened that same year.) The term "turnpike" probably came from the turnstiles used at the toll gates to control traffic onto the pike. The toll gate on the Whitesburg Turnpike, according to an 1850 map, was located just north of what is today the Airport Road intersection. The road to Whitesburg remained a toll road until 1895, when all turnpikes were sold to the county.

During the Civil War, a local Episcopalian minister, John Murray Robertson, was locked overnight in a chicken house at Whitesburg by Union troops. His crime was leading his congregation in a prayer for Jefferson Davis. It was midwinter and bitterly cold, but Robertson surprised and annoyed his captors by surviving the night. The frustrated Federals then took him across the river and released him.

In the 20th century, Whitesburg Pike changed along with the city. In 1919, two plaques were placed at the end of the street

near Huntsville Hospital. These plaques contained the names of the 48 Madison Countians who had died in the recent Great War. Forty-eight sugar maples were planted along the side of the street as part of the memorial. The maples were soon destroyed by traffic, and were replaced by American elms. The elms met the same fate as the maples, and were finally replaced by Chinese elms. These not only survived, but were supplemented by other trees planted along the street by local landowners. The line of trees eventually stretched for more than five miles. Another sign of change came in 1924, when the first rural electric line in Alabama was strung along Whitesburg Pike from Huntsville to Lily Flagg.

Whitesburg Pike was unpaved as late as 1934. By then it was known as state highway 38, and crossed the river on the new Clement C. Clay Bridge. The bridge was named to honor the former state governor and chief justice, but due to its location came to be known as the Whitesburg Bridge. Whitesburg Pike was now part of the main



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highway to Birmingham, and would remain so until the completion of Interstate 65 in the 1960s. Eventually the road was widened to handle the increasing traffic, and then in the mid-50s, it was bypassed by Memorial Parkway.

Today, the road that once carried cotton to the river is no longer a major intercity route, except for that portion south of Weatherly Road that was incorporated into the Parkway. The original concrete pavement, laid before World War 11, still carries northbound traffic into the city from Morgan County. At present, the city is considering plans to finally replace the old pavement with asphalt, which is easier to maintain. It will be just one more change for the old Whitesburg Road, which has seen plenty of change since the days of James White.



Heard On The Streets In 1911

- John Griffin and Jim Brown, colored, were arrested and placed in jail here by Deputy Sheriffs Pierce and Robinson on charges of gaming and public drunkenness. Deputy Pierce also found a concealed razor on the person of Brown, Griffin it is believed is wanted in Gadsden on a charge of murder and will be held here until officials of that place advise disposition.

- We have a good heavy draft horse in good work condition for sale cheap. Address "Horse" care of the Times. P. Hay, proprietor of the Huntsville Hotel News Stand

this afternoon moved in his new quarters in the building adjoining the north side of R. E. & W. E. Pettus' wholesale house in Jefferson St in front of the McGee hotel. Mr. Hay is elaborately fitted up for business and invites all of his fiends and the public to call and see him.



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A Civil War Letter

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in an 1861 issue of the Huntsville Democrat. It was written by a local man who had joined the Madison Rifles, a company of local volunteers who were sent to Fort Morgan for training.

Fort Morgan,

March 30, 1861 - The Madison Rifles arrived here at 2 o'clock, on Thursday, aboard the regular Mobile and Fort Morgan packet, Crescent. The privilege of feeding us was transferred to two white barber-looking men and a very handsome yellow girl. They had a table set out on the lower deck, covered with ginger cakes price, three for a quarter - biscuit and ham - one biscuit and a slice of ham, ten cents; cup of coffee, fifteen cents; small oranges, ten cents a piece - together with many other eatables at proportionate prices.

There are about twelve hundred men here - all of whom are volunteers from the State of Alabama. There are about two hundred and fifty more troops expected here every day, who will

complete the First Regiment of Alabama Volunteers. Col. Hardee, formerly U. S. army, and author of Hardee's Tactics, is in command here. He is a fine looking man, with a strictly military bearing. He seems to be about fifty years of age; hair slightly gray, and as he appears upon review, every afternoon, he looks every inch the soldier. I am unable to find out what other officers of the Confederate service are here, as frequently find myself in a wilderness of red sashes and epaulettes.

The Rifles are encamped upon the sand in the rear of the fort. We occupy seventeen tents, besides the officers' marquee. Each tent is occupied by six men, called a "mess," each mess is furnished with a large camp kettle, a camp frying pan, and each man with a tin plate, tin cup, one knife and fork - bone handle, an iron spoon, and a tin canteen to hold water in. The canteen is fixed with a strap, so as to be carried about the person, and they see constant

service too, as the hot sun over head and the heated sand under foot, are well calculated to engender a pretty constant thirst.

A part of the time since we have been here, one man in each mess has acted as cook and dish washer, whilst the rest of the mess bring wood and water; our meals are now all cooked by four or five detailed every day for that purpose; and as the tents are called by numbers, the men come forward and get their half-cup of coffee, half cup of peas, and vinegar,

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if we choose it. Our mess bought a cabbage head today, and we will have it tonight.

As yet, we wear the clothes we left Huntsville in; our uniforms are promised very soon. We have been furnished each with two mixed jean outer shirts, two flannel undershirts; one grey and one white, two pair of drawers, and two pair of socks.

There are no fruit or vegetables grown here, on account of the sand. Oysters can be bought here for \$1.50 a barrel, in the shell, and our camp now presents quite an interesting scene, as I sit looking at a party of the Madison Rifles, assembled around a large fire, with bags of oysters around them, some stewing them in their tin cups, some roasting them in the fire, and others eating them out of the shell.

Sunday, March 31, 1861 - This is Sabbath morning, and soon after cannon fire this morning, I discovered (for it was a discovery) many of the soldiers reading their Bibles, some, col-

lected in squads, whilst one read aloud to the rest. Some have gone fishing, whilst the air is laden with the shouts of some 200 men in the Gulf, sea bathing. This is the greatest luxury of camp life, and partaken of by all but a very few, who are scared off by the fear of sharks.

Many amusing little scenes come off in our camp life, which have much pith and point in them to us, and would not be devoid of mirth to you at home, were I at liberty to call the names of the parties.

unsigned

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Memories Of Slavery

Thomas Cole was born in Jackson Co., Alabama, on the 8th of August, 1845. His master, Robert Cole, was a prominent physician who owned a large plantation near Woodville as well as a home in Huntsville.

Thomas Cole was interviewed in 1932 and gave the following account of his memories as a slave.

"I might as well begin far back as I remember and tell you all about myself. I was born over in Jackson County, in Alabama, on August 8, 1845. My mother was Elizabeth Cole, her bein' a slave of Robert Cole, and my father was Alex Gerrand, cause he was John Gerrand's slave. I was supposed to take my father's name, but he was such a bad, ornery, no count sort a human, I just took my old massa's name. My mother was brung from Virginny by Massa Dr. Cole, and she nursed all his six chillen. My sister's name was Sarah and my brother's name was Ben and we lived in one room of the big

house, and all of us had a good bed to sleep in and good things to eat at the same table, after the white folks got through.

"I played with Massa Cole's chillen all the time, and when I got older he started me workin' by totin' wood and such odd jobs, and feedin' de hawgs. Us chillen had to pick cotton every fall. The big baskets weighed about seventy-five to a hundred pounds, but us chillen put our pickin's in some growed slave's basket. The growed slaves was just like a mule. He work for grub and clothes, and some of dem didn't have as easier a time as a mule, for mules was fed good and slaves was sometimes half starved.

But Massa Cole was a smart man and a good man with it. He had respect for the slaves' feelin's and didn't treat them like dumb brutes, and allowed them more privileges than any other slaveholder round here. He was one of the best men I ever knows in my whole life and his wife was just like him. They had a big, four-room log house with a big hall down the center up and down. The logs was all peeled and the chinkin' a different color from the logs. The kitchen was a 3 one-room house behind the big house. That was where all the meals was cooked and carried to the house.

"In the winter massa always killed from three to four hundred hawgs. Some of the slaves killed

the hawgs, some scalded and scraped, and some dressed them and cut them up and rendered the lard. They hauled plenty hickory wood to the smokehouse and the men works in shifts to keep the smoke fire going several days, then hangs de meat in de meathouse.

First we got the chitlin's, then massa begin issuing back bones to each family, and then come the spareribs, then the middlin' or a shoulder. Each family got the same kind of meat each week. If one git a ham, they all git a ham. All the ears and feet was pickled and we ate them, too. If the meat run out before next killing time, we got wild turkeys or killed a beef or a goat, or got a deer.

"Massa let us plant pumpkins and have a acre or two for water-melons, if we work them on Saturday evenin's. There was an orchard of 'bout five or six acres peaches and apples and he allow us to have biscuits once a week. Yes, we had good eating and plenty of it then

"Massa had one big, stout, healthy looking slave 'bout six foot, four inches tall, what he pay \$3,000 for. He bought six slaves I knows of and give from \$400 up for them. He never sold a slave 'less he got unruly.

"Massa allus give us cotton clothes for summer and wool for winter, 'cause he raised cotton and

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sheep. Then each family hade some chickens and sold them and the eggs and maybe go huntin' and sold the hides and got some money. Then we buy Sunday clothes with that money, such as hats and pants and shoes and dresses.

"We'd git up early every day in the year, rain or shine, hot or cold. A slave blowed the horn and there no danger of you not waking up. He climbed up on a platform about ten feet tall to blow that bugle.

We'd work till noon and eat in the shade and rest 'bout a hour or a little more iffen it hot, but only a hour if it cold. You is always tired when you makes the day like that on the plantation and you can't play all night like the young folks does now.

But we was lucky, 'cause Massa Cole didn't whip us. The man that had a place next to ours, he sure whipped his slaves. He

had a cat-of-nine tails of rawhide leather platted round a piece of wood for a handle. Some folks call dem bullwhips, 'stead of cat-o-nine tails. The first thing that man did when he buy a slave, was give him a whipping. He call it putting the fear of Gawd in him.

"Massa Cole allowed us read the Bible. He was awful good about tat. Most of the slave owners wouldn't allow no such. Uncle Dan, he read to us and on Sunday we could go to church. The preacher baptized the slaves in the river. That was the good, old-time religion, when we all got to shoutin' and having a good time. This generation too dignified to have the old-time religion.

"When baptizing time comes, it was almost like going to the circus. People come from all over and they all singin' songs and everybody take their lunch and had a good time. Massa Cole went one time and then he got sick, and next

summer he die.

Missy Cole, she moves to Huntsville, but she left me on the plantation, 'cause I was big and stout then. She took my mother to cook and that was the last time I ever saw my mother. Missy Cole buys a fine house in Huntsville and my mother told me to be good and do all the overseer tells me, I told her goodbye and she never did git to come back to see me, and I never saw her and my brother and sister again. I don't know whether they were sold or not.

"I thinks to myself, that Mr. Anderson, the overseer, he'll give me that cat-o-nine tails the first

Statistically, 100% of all divorces started with a marriage.

Ken Doan

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chance he gits, but I made up my mind he won't git a chance, cause I's going to run off the first chance I get. I didn't know how to git out of there, but I's going north where there ain't no slaveowners.

In a year or so there was another overseer, Mr. Sandson, and he gave me the log house and a gal to do my cookin' and such. There was war talk and we started going to the field earlier and staying later. Soldiers came and hauled off the corn, then the cotton was hauled off, then the hawgs and cattle were rounded up and hauled off and things were lookin' bad.

That winter, instead of killing three or four hundred hawgs like we always done before, we only did one killing of a hundred seventy-five, and they were not all big ones, neither. When the meat supply runs low, Mr. Sandson sends some slaves to kill a deer or wild hawgs or jes' any kind of game.

He never sends me but I hoped he would and one day he calls me to go and says not to go off the plantation too far, but be sure and bring home some meat.

This was the chance I been wanting, so when we got to the huntin' ground the leader says to scatter out, and I told him that me and 'nother man would go north and make a circle round the river and meet about sundown.

I crossed the river and kept going north. I's going to the free country, where they ain't no slaves. I traveled all that day and night up the river and followed the north star. Several times I thought I heard blood hounds trailing me and I's so tired I couldn't hardly move, but I got in a trot.

Near the present day Woodville, Cole was apprehended by a patrol of Union soldiers. After satisfying themselves that Cole was indeed a runaway, and not a spy, he was carried to Bridgeport

where he was "ordered" into the Union Army. With no uniform, or training, he was assigned to an artillery company.


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"I helped set them cannons on Chickamauga Mountain. I had to go with a man and wait on him and that cannon. First thing I knew, bang, bang, boom, things had started, and guns were shooting faster than you can think, and I looks round for a way to run. But them guns were shooting down the hill in front of me and shooting at me, and over me, and on both sides of me. I tried to dig me a hole and git in it. First thing I knows, the man was kicking me and wanting me to help him keep that cannon loaded.

Man, I didn't want no cannon, but I had to help anyway. I just wanted to get back to the old plantation and pick more cotton. I'd been willin' to do most anything to get out of that mess, but I done told those soldiers I wanted to fight the Rebels and they sure was letting me do it. They wasn't just letting me do it, they was making' me do it.

"There was men layin' wanting help, wanting water, with blood running out of them and the tops or sides of their heads gone. I just promises the good Lawd if he would just let me git out of that mess, I wouldn't run off no more, but I didn't know then that he wasn't going let me out with just that battle.

Next morning the Rebels starts shooting and killing lots of our men, and Gen. Rosecran orders us to retreat, and they didn't have to tell me what he said, neither. The Rebels came after us shooting, and we ran off and left that cannon that I was with sitting on the hill. I didn't want that thing no how.

"I never did git to where I wasn't scart when we went into battle. I never seen the like of dead and wounded men. We picked them up, the Rebels and the Unions, and doctored them the best we could. I hope I never live to see another war. They say the World War was worse but I was too old to go.

"I sure wished lots of times that I never ran off from the plantation. I begged the General not to send me on any more battles, and he said I was a coward and sympathized with the South. But I told him I just couldn't stand to see all them men laying there dying and hollering and begging for help and a drink of water, and blood everywhere you looks. Killing hawks back on the plantation didn't bother me none, but this was diffrent.

"Finally the General told me I can go back to Chattanooga and guard the supplies in camp there

end take care of the wounded soldiers and prisoners. A bunch of men was with me and we had all we could do.

"When Spring breaks and all the snow was gone, making you think you ought to be plowing and planting a crop, that was when the

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fightin' started all over again.

"But when they had a battle they always left me in camp to tend the supplies. They called me a coward, and I sure was glad thought I was.

"I shifted from one camp to another and finally got back to Chattanooga. I bet during my time I handled enough ammunition to kill everybody in the whole United States. .

"After de war was over we was turned loose, nowhere to go and nobody to help us. I couldn't go South, for they called me a traitor and would kill me iffen they knew I fought for the North. I did any little job I could git for about a year and finally gots work on the railroad, in Stevenson, Alabama.

"Things begin to git bad for me when the white men found out I run off from the South and joined the North. I had to quits the job. I went up north but they ain't interested, so I came back and buys me a team and wagon and starts for Texas. We were on the road about six weeks or two months. We fished and hunted every day and the trip didn't cost much,

"My son-in-law rents land in Chambers Creek bottom, and he usually gits his crop before the flood gets it, We have some hawgs to kill every winter and we have our cornmeal and milk and eggs and chickens, so the depression ain't starved us yet.

"I believe the slaves I knowed as a whole were happier and better off after the emancipation than before. Of course, the first few years it was awful hard to get adjusted to the new life. All the slaves knowed how to do hard work, but they didn't know nothing about how to depend on themselves for a living. My first year was hard, but I was glad to be free and didn't want nothing else.



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Huntsville Park Summer Vacation

by Jerry Wilbanks

On the first Monday of school vacation, we would stroll down to the playground at Joe Bradley School and register for what amounted to supervised play and daycare. Volunteer Moms from the neighborhood would be on hand each day to organize and generally oversee the recreational activities in and around the school playground and adjacent ball park. This was the mill village of Huntsville Park in the nineteen fifties and the summer school break was on!

We were free to play on any of the school playground equipment (to include swings, slides, monkey bars, etc.) and use the ball park facilities for any kind of team sports. We also were encouraged to play cards and board games at the picnic tables. Of course we made the most of these opportunities, and although this program was designed to keep us occupied and out of trouble, we also got up to some tricks of our own outside the purview and the observation of the volunteer Moms.

There was a small creek which flowed behind Joe Bradley School. It was actually a concrete structure which served as a drainage conveyance for the area. We enjoyed jumping back and forth between the concrete banks. It was just wide enough to offer a small challenge to the jumpers in our crowd. Beyond the creek was a tangled and overgrown field, a bridge with more water running along underneath, providing

home and shelter to snakes, turtles and crawdads. Further back still, in the direction of Brahan Springs, there was an area known as the Pines. In those days the Pines covered a pretty large tract of land with symmetrically spaced pine trees and a soft floor of pine needles. This area had the reputation as a lover's rendezvous and trysting place for as far back as I can remember.

We often swam in a blocked off portion of Brahan Springs. After the swim we would have a dropper full of isopropyl alcohol

squeezed into each ear to ward off any kind of infection. I don't know if there was any good medical science behind it, but it didn't seem to do anyone any harm and I, for one, was not bothered with ear infections.

The area now occupied by Milton Frank Stadium was all brush and second growth in those days; a kind of badlands territory and a playground for children. We tramped and explored, hunted turtles and avoided snakes, played Army and wilderness survival until it was too dark to see. Beneath the bridge mentioned



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earlier, there was a few inches of water moving slowly through a wide ditch. We liked to wade out and turn over the rocks in this little stream. It was always a surprise: turtle or crawdad underneath was a pleasant surprise, any kind of snake was not!

The baby turtles could be sold to other kids in the neighborhood for a quarter each. Some of the bigger kids added an interesting twist to these business transactions. They would find out how much money you had in your pocket and then "insist" that you spend that amount on turtles. Some of these dealers in wildlife exotica could be very persuasive; especially the Frye brothers, Dan and Randy, neighborhood tough guys. Some of their young customers often possessed enough turtles to open a roadside attraction.

The Frye brothers were well known in the village as serious businessmen. They were not twins, but resembled each other in size and looks so much that some people could not tell them apart. This sometimes led to interesting situations. On one occasion, Odell Noonan waited in ambush for Dan Frye to avenge some real or imagined wrong-doing. When he spotted him, there ensued one of the most vicious fights ever witnessed behind the Joe Bradley ball park.

The combatants punched and wrestled tirelessly to the great amusement and entertainment of an army of onlookers who had assembled on the spot as if by magic. The two fought to a draw and only then was it discovered that Odell had not attacked his intended target Dan, but rather his brother Randy Frye!

He no longer felt like "taking it up" with Dan and wound up shaking hands with both of them. There is a heartwarming footnote to this story. While brother Randy was defending himself against the crazed onslaught of Odell Noonan, Dan Frye (ever the capitalist entrepreneur) was skillfully working the crowd of entranced onlookers and managed to sell sixteen baby turtles!

Around noon, if you were playing by the school or ball park, you might stroll across the street to the Huntsville Park Cafe and order sandwiches or soup. Hamburgers were good, but the Huntsville Park Cafe chili dogs were just extraordinary. It was generally acknowledged around town that the Park Cafe chili dogs were far and away the best you could get anywhere. I think there is very little argument about this fact. Just ask anyone who ever had the pleasure of experiencing the taste of one of these exceptional treats. I'm sure they would agree.

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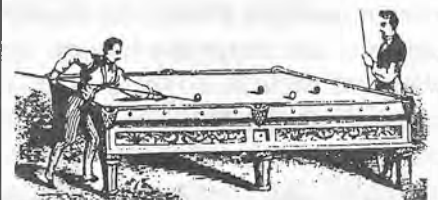
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merit activities was camping. We would camp just about any place where the practice was not prohibited, but most often we wound up in one or another of our own backyards. As the summer wore on and the heat and humidity grew to unbearable on the comfort scale, our camping out adventures became more and more like extreme exercises in survival. And I have not yet even mentioned the ever-present mosquitoes. Still, we preferred the life of the camper.

Throughout the summer months, which seemed endless to a kid, I sometimes went fishing with my next door neighbor Mr. Becker, an elderly retired gentleman who seemed to know everything there was to know about fishing the local ponds and creeks. He made his own lures and mixed up stinking concoctions that he called doughballs for bait. Using worms and crickets, we landed dozens of bream and other small freshwater sunfishes on any given sultry summer afternoon. The aromatic doughballs, Mr. Becker used for more unusual strains of game fish.

Nothing arrives more slowly and passes more quickly than a really good summer vacation. Because the past can sometimes be the blueprint of the future, we can only hope that we spent our free time wisely. The memory of those long ago summer activities have a sort of Huck Finn flavor for me (not that I would compare Pinhook Creek to the mighty Mississippi River!) I'm sure that Mark Twain would have understood perfectly. As he may have said himself, "When I was younger, I could remember anything, whether it had happened or not."



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A Letter Home

Camp Taylor
Apr. 13, 1862
Huntsville, Ala.



It may surprise you to hear from me so far south, but nevertheless we are today lying in camp on a plantation just outside the corporate limits of the very aristocratic and equally rebellious city of Huntsville, Ala.

I believe in my last letter I stated that we had "orders" to prepare two days rations and on Wednesday at 4 A.M. when we entered the town of Fayetteville on the gallop and without opposition. The place is secess to the back bone. All the stores and houses were closed and what few citizens could be seen looked like they could eat the Yankees without pepper or salt.

Just before entering Fayetteville we captured a Southern mail which among other things contained Memphis papers of a late date with news of the first days battle at Cornith in which our troops were worsted.

With encouraging news the citizens of Fayetteville were very haughty and defiant in their manners and if it had not been for the rigid discipline to which our troops are subject to, many a young rebel would have had the conceit knocked out of him with the butt of a musket or sabre.

We are in a dangerous position but I don't think they will dare attack us. The day before we came to this place 5 rebel regiments passed through here for Corinth and three more trains left here the day before to bring troops. We were prepared and waiting for them but they must have heard that we were here and postponed their visit to Huntsville until the Yankees had retired.

You can judge by the manner this letter is written that I was in a hurry. Forrest's Rebel Cavalry is said to be in our rear and will no doubt interfere with some of our mails. I am well and so are all the folks.

(signed) Jim

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