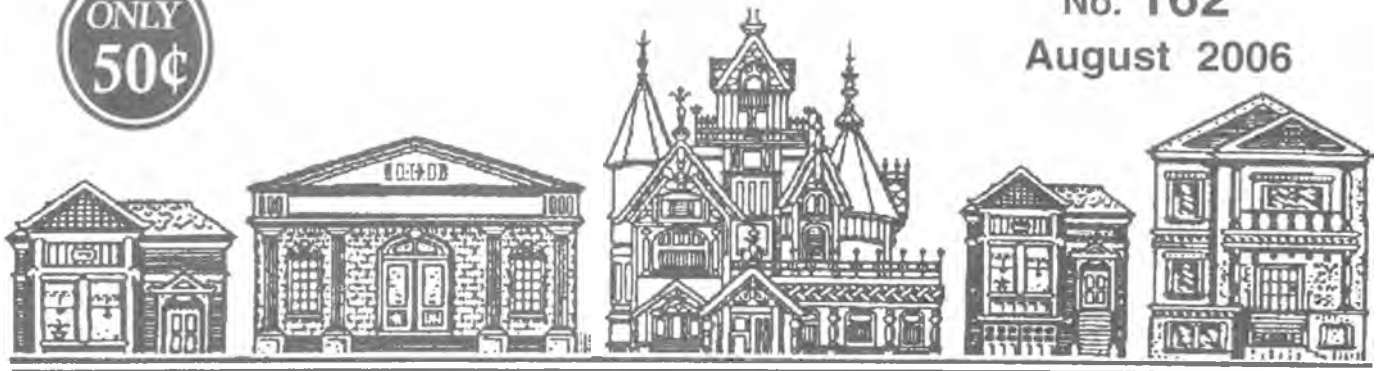


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August 2006



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



A Legacy of Hate

When Kinch Britt was killed, in 1864, there were few people in Huntsville who mourned his death. He was a hated turncoat who made his living by informing on his former friends and comrades.

The only legacy he left was a five year old son who would spend the next sixty-six years paying penance for the sins of his father.

Also in this issue: The Strange Career of Jack Applegate

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A Legacy of Hate

In 1931, an obituary appeared in the Huntsville newspaper telling of the death of Jim Britt. At first glance, there appeared to be nothing unusual about the death of the 72 year old man. He had been sick for four weeks and the account stated he had died from "infirmities of old age."

Toward the end of the obituary, however, it stated that James S. Britt had been a resident of the county poor house for 66 years. It was believed, the article said, to be a national record for the longest time anyone had ever spent in a poor house.

If anyone reading the paper that day had felt a twinge of sympathy, or perhaps curiosity, about the old man who had spent his whole life as a ward of the county, they quickly changed their mind when they learned he was the son of the infamous Kinch Britt.

"Good riddance," they probably thought, "and may God have

mercy on his soul!"

It was going to take longer than 66 years for Huntsville to forget its bloody past.

When Jim Britt was born in 1859 he was named after his grandfather, James Britt, a resident of Jackson County. His father, Kinchen, nicknamed Kinch but sometimes referred to behind his back as "Kitchen," had moved to Huntsville sometime prior to 1850 and married Susan Williams in 1858. The newlyweds settled on a small piece of land located a short distance west of the Huntsville Depot, where Kinch began earning a living as a farmer. According to available records the family was of modest means with the farm valued at just \$500 and personal property worth \$200.

If the couple had any hopes of seeing their son have a normal childhood, their dreams were quickly dashed as rumblings of war swept across the Southland.

On August 26, 1861, Kinch mounted his horse and rode to nearby New Market where he enlisted in the Confederate Army under the command of Captain David C. Kelly. Any doubts Kinch's wife had about his joining the army were probably cast aside by the fact that Kelly was the highly respected pastor of the 1st Methodist Church in



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Old Huntsville, Inc.
716 East Clinton Ave.
Huntsville, Ala. 35801
(256) 534-0502

Email - oldhuntsville@knology.net
Internet Home Page
www.oldhuntsville.com

Advertising - 534-0502

Sales & Mrktg. - Cathey Carney

Gen. Manager - Ron Eyestone

Copy Boy - Tom Carney

Features - Stefanie Troup

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She may have thought Kelly would be a good influence on Kinch, who was already developing an overly comfortable acquaintance with the whiskey bottle.

With her husband off serving in the army, Susan Britt's life changed drastically. Owning no slaves to work the fields and having no money to hire hands, making a cotton crop was out of the question. Like countless thousands of other women across the South, her sustenance depended on a small garden and maybe a few chickens, with her only cash coming from the produce she could barter in town.

Adding to many families' worries was the fact that Huntsville had been captured by Union troops on April 11, 1862.

Susan, like most of the other wives in Huntsville, became exiles in their own city. They were forbidden to have any communication with their husbands who were serving the Confederacy. Women could not travel out of town without a special pass and often what meager food and supplies they had were seized by the hated Union Army.

When they swallowed their pride and approached the yankees requesting to buy food, they would be told they'd first have to swear allegiance to the Federal government. Few women

were willing to betray their husbands in so callous a manner.

What little information Susan received about her husband came from whispered messages from soldiers who sneaked into Huntsville to visit their families and from letters smuggled across the Union lines. Though Jim was only three years old at the time, it is easy to imagine him sitting in his mother's lap as she read letters from his father describing his exploits in the Confederate Army. His company had joined Nathan Bedford Forrest's battalion and had seen action in campaigns throughout Tennessee and Kentucky.

When the Union army was forced to evacuate Huntsville in late August 1862, General Forrest marched in with his troops to give them a short furlough. Kinch returned as part of the liberating army.

His happiness was cut short however when he learned his wife had died only days before. True to the South to the last, she had half starved and finally died of disease rather than take the hated yankee loyalty oath.

Kinch was crushed and now had a son to take care of. But how could he, a soldier, provide the care young Jim needed? He found the answer soon enough.

Kinch's attention was soon drawn to 20 year old Louisa

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Betty's life was saved."



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Bradley, daughter of a semiliterate blacksmith. Flattered at the attention she received, Louisa quickly agreed to be Kinch Britt's wife. No doubt, she was thinking that his enlistment was almost up and he would be staying home with her.

Louisa may have been happy to be a wife, but she had little taste for the role of a caring stepmother. Much to her chagrin Kinch, having secured the services of a live-in baby sitter for his son, left her and promptly reenlisted in the 4th Alabama Cavalry for the duration of the war.

Louisa, still young and attractive, quickly tired of playing stepmother and war bride. All around her young women were going to parties and dancing until the wee hours of the morning. Unfortunately, as a married woman, she was expected to stay at home and wait patiently for her husband's return - whenever that might be.

Married life was definitely not what she had expected it to be.

If Louisa was unhappy in her role, her husband was not faring much better. His regiment had been transferred to Gen. Joe Wheeler's cavalry brigade and was seeing almost constant combat.

In the summer of 1863, Kinch was captured in Tennessee. The yankees paroled him and allowed him to return to Huntsville until he could be exchanged.

Although he had once been a

loyal Confederate, now he began to have doubts as to his allegiance. During almost two years of war he had seen countless men fall in battle, often leaving their families destitute and starving with nothing but a few hollow words of praise to show for their loss. By this time the war had lost its glamour and become a bitter, deadly struggle.

People both North and South were starting to say the same thing: "It's a poor man's fight, but a rich man's war."

Kinch Britt had hardly returned home when Union cavalry raids began targeting Huntsville. The Confederate army seemed unable to stop them. In September 1863, the yankees came to stay. Rather than return to the Confederate army, Britt decided to throw in with what he decided would be the winning and more profitable side.

He went to the Union headquarters and agreed to work for them as a civilian spy. They offered him \$3 a day as pay. At \$90 a month, this was probably more than he had ever earned in his life. (As a Confederate private he had received only \$13 a month, when he was paid at all.) Kinch quickly accepted the job and went to work.

Before long, Kinch Britt had earned the gratitude of the yankees and the hatred of his neighbors. His knowledge of Madison County was better than any map they could have purchased. Britt knew every Confed-

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erate in Huntsville by sight and could often be seen in town, accompanied by a detachment of yankee soldiers, pointing out the people he knew were loyal to the Southern cause.

Kinch Britt became a social outcast in his own town. The more Kinch was shunned by his neighbors, the more bitter he became towards them. Now, instead of merely informing on them, Britt began looting their homes, often at the point of a pistol.

Brazenly, he would kick the doors in, steal the silver and other valuables and return to the yankee camp where he would sell the loot.

Even the hated yankees had little love for the turncoat Britt. They well knew he was only in the war for money.

He was not the only one in North Alabama to succumb to such temptation, as a Union colonel named Lewis Merrill noted. "The men who are employed ... as scouts, guides and spies," wrote Merrill, "are, as a rule, thieves, and accompany troops who go out simply for chances to plunder."

Whatever Kinch may have been, it was even harder on his young wife and son. Once the wife of a Confederate hero, Louisa was now married to a social pariah. No one would speak to her any longer, and even her young stepchild was not allowed to play with his neighbors' children.

Spurned by the citizens of Huntsville, Louisa also became a turncoat. She seemed to take a special delight in appearing on the streets dressed in finery looted from nearby plantation homes. When entertaining her new found yankee friends she would proudly point out different items, identifying which homes her husband had "liberated" them from.

On November 10, 1864 Confederate Captain James Madison "Mack" Robinson made it through the Union lines to visit his father who owned the Forestfield plantation on the road between Huntsville and Meridianville.

Kinch somehow received word of the visit. Mack Robinson had once been Kinch's lieutenant in the 4th Alabama Cavalry, but Kinch no longer felt any loyalty to his old comrade. He promptly

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went to the Union provost marshal, Lt. Col. John Horner, and told him that Robinson had come home. Horner had already earned a reputation as, "The meanest yankee that ever set foot in North Alabama."

He was about to justify it.

The next day, Horner set off early for Forestfield, taking Kinch Britt along to show the way. The clinking and clanking of the cavalry gave Robinson warning, and he awakened his handful of men. Colonel Horner deployed his men around the house and ordered Robinson to surrender. But Mack Robinson had been in the war since the very beginning and was not about to give up without a fight.

Kinch Britt was cautiously edging along the wall of the house, trying to get a shot at Robinson through a window. Robinson spotted him first and shot him dead.

Robinson then stormed out of the door, blasting away with a six-shooter in each hand. Col. Horner had one of his shoulder straps shot off and the yankees scattered. The Confederates reached their horses and rode away to safety.

Furious, the Union soldiers murdered the caretaker, an innocent civilian who had not taken part in the fight, before returning to Huntsville.

The citizens of Huntsville breathed easier when they heard of Kinch Britt's demise. However, Col. Horner viewed the matter differently. The next day he led a

large detachment back to Forestfield and burned the beautiful home to the ground.

When news of the burning of Forestfield reached Huntsville, its citizens became enraged. Unable to wreak havoc on the now dead Kinch Britt, their anger turned toward his young widow. She had long before lost what little sympathy the town's people might have felt for her and her stepson.

Several nights later Louisa's home caught fire. Though it was never established whether or not it was an accident, none of the townspeople went to her aid. The house burned to the ground, severely burning her stepson, Jim, and destroying the loot her husband had plundered from their neighbors.

Though Louisa was young,

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3. *Through the Garden Gate: The Gardens of Historic Huntsville* by Donna Castellano \$30.00

4. *Ghosts of the Southern Tennessee Valley (Signed copies available)* by Georgiana Kotarski \$10.95

5. *Why is it Named That? 250 Place Names in Huntsville/Madison County* (new edition with a few corrections) by Dex Nilsson \$13.95

6. *Killingsworth Cove on Hurricane Creek* by Joe Floyd Royles \$12.95

7. *Scenic North Alabama - A travel guide to Canyons, Caverns, Bridges (natural & covered) and Waterfalls*, by Robert Schuffert \$27.95

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and possibly naive, she was still smart enough to realize she did not have a bright future in Huntsville. The next morning, after dropping the injured Jim off at the Army hospital, she boarded a train for Nashville, reportedly in the company of a Union soldier who had taken a liking to her.

The army hospital, known as the Huntsville Hospital and located in Fagan Spring, had the dubious distinction of being the only permanent structure the yankees built while occupying Huntsville. Though equipped to handle medical needs for the thousands of soldiers passing through Huntsville, it had scant facilities for a five year old boy.

After dressing the youngster's burns, the hospital authorities tried to find someone to take him off their hands.

This was easier said than done. The few openly Union sympathizers wanted nothing to do with the son of a Confederate turncoat and the Southerners wanted nothing to do the son of a Union spy.

All indications leads one to believe that Jim stayed at the hospital, perhaps as a ward, until it

burned the following year. At that time the county took over some of the property and converted one of the buildings into a poor house. With no one to turn to, Jim Britt, at the age of six, became its first resident, and ultimately, its longest.

The county poor house at that time was literally a dumping ground for the infirm, the homeless and the aged who had no one to take care of them.

Though Jim still bore terrible scars from being burned in the house fire, he was by no means disabled. While most lads his age were playing games, Jim was put to work as an unpaid hand at the poor house. Carrying firewood, fetching pails of water or helping in the kitchen became his everyday routine.

If Jim ever thought about schooling or playing with other

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youngsters his age, those thoughts were quickly put out of his mind by authorities who had no time to waste with "such foolishness."

A glimmer of hope rose in the fall of 1868 when Union Aid societies began identifying war orphans and placing them in foster homes. Finding a home for the son of a Rebel turncoat and a Union spy proved to be a formidable task however, and Jim was quickly passed by.

In 1872 Jim's stepmother, Louisa, returned to Huntsville. Any thoughts of her providing a home for Jim were discarded when she married a man almost 40 years her senior. Neither she nor her new husband wanted any-

thing to do with the son of the infamous Kinch Britt.

For Jim, the months turned into years and the years turned into decades and still no one cared about his fate. People came to accept him as a permanent fixture at the poor house; one that could also provide free labor.

Left unspoken was the fact

that perhaps Jim Britt was expected to pay penance, and be punished, for the sins of his infamous father.

Occasionally a stranger would inquire about the long time resident. They would be told, if they persisted in their questioning, that Britt suffered from "infirmities of the mind."



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No one ever questioned why, if in fact he was mentally disabled, he was never admitted to the state mental institution.

Other people would claim he suffered physical defects that made it impossible for him to care for himself, although the poor house authorities, during a budget crunch in the mid 1890s, did not hesitate to lease his labor to cotton farmers.

George Kenney remembers his parents talking about Britt. "They said he was the only person they ever knew who had absolutely no friends."

As Britt grew old, and no longer able to do the chores of a younger man, he was placed in charge of the garden at the poor house. In the evening he would return to the room he shared with three other men; a small box at the foot of the bed holding the few possessions he owned.

Other residents sometimes had visitors but for Britt there were none. The few people who tried to befriend him were quickly reminded of a time years earlier when the horrors of war had descended upon Huntsville. The mere mention of his father's name was enough to end any thoughts of befriending the lonely old man.

Occasionally, after he had become an old man, he would be seen wandering the streets downtown appearing, as one person described it, "as if he was lost in the past." Sometimes he would enter one of the churches and sit quietly for hours until someone would return him to the poor house.

As one old-timer in Huntsville recently explained, "Being in the poor house was all the man knew... or expected. That's the way he was raised."

When Jim Britt died in 1931, the local newspaper eulogized him as "The son of a Union spy."

Almost begrudgingly the paper added, "The county has spent almost \$15,000 on Britt's upkeep during the last 66 years."



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1845 - Education is gaining a strong foothold. There are seven colleges and high schools with an enrollment of 676 students.

1846 - The "Huntsville Volunteers," under the command of Captain William Wilson depart for Texas to join the fight for independence.

1851 - The town is scandalized by a young man, 19 years old, checking into a local hotel accompanied by his wife. She was 62.

1862 - The first defense industry arrives in Huntsville. J.R. Young and Company are given the contract to manufacture six pound cannons for the Confederacy.

1865 - C. C. Clay, a Huntsville native, is imprisoned along with Jefferson Davis in Fort Monroe, for conspiracy in the death of Abraham Lincoln. The charges were never proven and Clay was ordered released by U.S. Grant.

1866 - Fordyce and Rison Banking House opens its doors. They will remain one of the most influential banks in Huntsville until 1948, when they were acquired by First National

Bank.

1869 - Again, the townspeople are agog at the happenings at the Huntsville hotel.

This time the sensation is about a one year old child being exhibited. It had been born with four legs and a local shy-ster was charging fifty cents a head to view it.

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Bomber Crashes Near Huntsville

by Charles Wells

On an early summer morning in June of 1944, I decided to go fishing. I found my fishing pole, dug a can of worms, got my new (to me) bicycle and got ready to leave.

I had celebrated my fourteenth birthday about three weeks earlier and Daddy had scrounged together enough money (\$6.00) to buy me a Heinz 57 used bicycle. By this, I mean it had oversize handlebars, no chain guard, a 26-inch wheel in the back and a 24-inch in the front. I was always going downhill. I rolled up my right overall leg to keep it from being caught in the sprocket and headed over to one of my favorite fishing holes on Indian Creek.

After traveling about three or four miles, I had gotten to the hill on the west side of the creek and the north side of 72 Highway. I was pushing my bicycle along a cow path that ran about halfway up the side of the hill. As I was nearing the highway I heard a huge explosion to the south and looked that way. It appeared that the whole end of Rainbow Mountain was gone. There was fire and a lot of smoke, and I could see trees falling from the sky.

I looked up and saw a plane (B-26 Marauder) coming toward me. It was on fire and smoke was coming out of the cockpit and the bomb bay doors. It was losing altitude rapidly as it passed over me and headed toward a cultivated field at the top of the hill. Its nose was down at a very steep angle and did not flair out before impact. Upon impact, the nosewheel collapsed,

the nose of the plane dug into the ground, the tail went up into the air and a matter of seconds later, it blew up. The pilot had apparently dropped part of his bomb load on Rainbow Mountain. I made my way closer to the crash site. The pilot must have radioed the base that he was in trouble because only minutes after the crash, the area was crawling with MPs, police cars and ambulances. Within minutes, they had formed a circle of guards around the site.

No one questioned me as to what I may have seen. I was told to leave the area immediately. I guess a freckled face, barefoot boy dressed in overalls, carrying a fishing pole in one hand and a can of worms in the other and holding on to a weird-looking bicycle, could not tell them anything they wanted to know. I was not questioned then or later.

An article in the Huntsville Times stated that the only witness to the crash was a Negro woman who could not tell them very much.

I had seen the plane many times before. Almost daily, depending on the weather, it would come over the farm several times - always approaching from a southeasterly direction, pass over and then go on to the southwest. A few minutes later, we would hear the report of exploding bombs dropping on a mock

village on the Arsenal. Sometimes it would be flying low enough that we could clearly see the pilots. We would wave and sometimes they would wave back or dip their wings to let us know that they had seen us.

The crash site is now occupied by Huntsville Memory Gardens. Perhaps a fitting tribute to the three men who perished there.



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Riding The Train

by Austin Miller

Until the late forties, very few people living at Ryland had cars and the train was used by many for transportation to Huntsville. They rode a west bound passenger train to Huntsville that ran about 9:45 in the morning and returned on an east bound train about 4:00 PM. The morning train number was thirty-five and the afternoon train was thirty-six. The trains commonly referred to at Ryland as 35 and 36. The destination of the majority of the Ryland passengers was Huntsville. But as inconceivable as it may seem now bigger cities than Huntsville on the Southern line between Chattanooga and Memphis were Decatur and the Tri-Cities (Florence, Tuscumbia & Sheffield). According to the 1950 census, the city of Florence alone was twice as big as Huntsville.

In the thirties and forties, people rode the train to town in the morning, spent the day and returned home in the afternoon.

Residents that remember those days say that large crowds gathered to catch the train and passengers departed in droves in the afternoon. When it was too wet to work in the cotton fields, coming to the depot to see who arrived on the train was a popular pastime on Saturday afternoon. The depot was not an imposing or inviting structure. It was a small dark gray three sided shed open to the north with a bench running across the back. It did provide shade and shelter from the rain but in winter there was no protection at all from the north wind. The depot was located in the small triangular wedge on northwest side of the tracks at the Ryland Pike intersection.

The passenger trains also brought mail to Ryland without stopping. The Ryland Postmaster hung the outgoing mail on a special pole next to the track. A railroad employee stood in the doorway of the mail car with a

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specially designed device that snatched the mail bag from the pole. The incoming mail bag was simply thrown from the train mail car and usually landed somewhere in the vicinity of the depot and post office. Needless to say, you could not safely mail fragile items to or from Ryland.

Of the countless people that arrived and departed at Ryland, one arriving passenger stuck in the memories of local residents for decades. In February of 1931, a well dressed young man came to Ryland on the train. He stood out like a sore thumb among the local farmers and sharecroppers. His family who owned the Ryland cotton gin lived only two or three hundred yards from the depot on a seventy acre farm.. It was the usual Saturday afternoon and a crowd had gathered to see who arrived on the train. One in the crowd was my Uncle Gib Miller who has told me the story many times. The passenger's name was Dr. Alton

Sanford. Dr. Sanford was a graduate of the University of Alabama and Tulane Medical School. He was an outstanding football player, an accomplished musician and by all accounts an excellent doctor. At a very young age for a doctor, he had practiced in California, West Virginia and the Mayo Clinic. His brother Curtis was there to meet him and according to Uncle Gib, when they shook hands, Dr. Sanford told Curtis that he was near death. At thirty-one, Dr. Sanford had come home to die. Two days later he passed away at home. His niece, Carol Brewer, still lives on the Sanford family home site. The original house was destroyed by the tornado of 1974.

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The morning train had to be flagged. Flagging is how the train was stopped to pick up passengers. Someone had to stand in the tracks and wave a hat, coat, or handkerchief to get the engineer's attention. The waving would start when the train was about a quarter mile away. The distance was half way between Dug Hill Road and the depot. The engineer would give two short bursts on the whistle as an indication he was going to stop. Occasionally the two short bursts wouldn't come and the train would speed through Ryland without slowing down, sending the person doing the flagging scurrying to safety.

By the early fifties everybody had a car and very few rode the train. By 1956, a black man named Jody Rogers and I were

the only two Ryland riders left. I occasionally rode it on the weekend to visit my grandparents in Huntsville and Jody caught it once or twice a week. I could usually hitch a ride with someone with a car on Saturday morning but on Sunday afternoon had to catch the train. I walked from grandparents house on 1602 Toll Gate Road to the Huntsville Depot. The route took me down Wells avenue past the Maple Hill Cemetery, to Randolph Avenue, to Washington Street. The highlight of the trip

was on Washington Street at Lewter Hardware. I liked to stop and admire the new knives displayed in the window. The last stop was the depot, a very depressing place with very few people and a ticket agent. After buying a ticket, I waited outside on the Church Street side to watch for the train. One time after I boarded, the conductor showed his irritation by telling me that for a thirty-five cent fair it cost the railroad \$2.50 and a five minute delay to stop the train at Ryland.

The passenger trains stopped

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running almost fifty years ago and there is little evidence of a Ryland depot. The Huntsville depot has not changed. It looks the same as my childhood memory when Daddy would lift me to the depot window to see the train pull in the station. In my mind, it is Huntsville's foremost historical site.

Changes beyond our wildest imagination have occurred for those of us who grew up in Madison County during and prior to the fifties. Most of us of that era treasure any landmarks still around that remind us of how things once were.

New Broom Factory

Mr. Frank Laswell, who has been in Huntsville and Madison County for three weeks prospecting, has returned to his home in Arkansas to make his arrangements to move his family here in the spring.

Mr. Laswell will begin his broom factory in May at the latest. He understands the business from start to finish, thoroughly, from the tilling of the ground, planting and gathering the broom corn, to the manufacturing of brooms.

The corn will be grown in this county, the climate of which is admirably adapted to its growth, and several farmers have stated their willingness to undertake the crop and furnish the straw.

Mr. Laswell seems in earnest about his factory and has great faith in the promising future of Huntsville.

From 1891 newspaper

Factory Coming to Huntsville

The Church Cart Manufacturing Company, of Grand River, Ky., is in correspondence with Mr. W. S. Wells relative to the removal to this city of the carriage factory above named.

The company desires the citizens to contribute a site of two acres and the sum of \$1,500.00 to secure the industry.

From 1891 Huntsville newspaper

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Heard On The Street

by *Cathy Carney*



The winner of the Photo of the Month contest for last month was that famous **Ken Ward**, of Jackson Way Barber Shop. He was the first correct caller to guess the photo of **Emmett Sanders**, who was Huntsville License Director for many years. We probably had five hundred calls, with everyone claiming to be Emmett's friend. Congratulations, Ken!

It was great to run into an old friend - **Jim Vaughn** of South Realty was out and about recently and we were able to catch up with him. He sure is proud of daughter **Amy** and husband **Carson!**

We were so sorry to hear that **Elsie M. Miller**, of Ryland, died in July. Her sons **Berns, Greg** and **Austin Miller** and their families will miss her very much. She was a member of the Shiloh United Methodist church.

Rusty Dinwiddie, of Park Supply, recently celebrated a very memorable birthday. We're not giving his exact age, just let's say it's a huge milestone between 40 and 60!

The historic **Lowry House** was officially dedicated at the end of June. Owners **Louie** and **Jane Tippet** have done an outstanding job in renovating the old

home. In addition to **Mayor Loretta Spencer**, attendees included **Lynn Berry, Glenn Watson, Karen Yarborough, Leroy Cunningham, Annette Philpot, Susan & Richard Gulyas, Gloria & Jamie Cooper, Connie & Joe Lougheed** and **Marie Hewett** (as **Elizabeth Lowry**).

Trade Day is coming Sep. 9 this year - this will be the 18th year! It's that great event on the square in downtown Huntsville with antiques, food, drinks, crafts, and entertainment. Come early in comfortable shoes.

Congratulations to newlyweds **Bernice Harper** and **Ira Sutton** who married in April. You're a lucky man, Ira!

We send our condolences to the family of **Max A. Luther, Jr.**, who died in late June. Max was a great person and a solid part of Huntsville's history, and he had some great stories to tell.

Best wishes to our good friend **Joyce Russell**. Joyce, who is with

New York Life, had a July birthday and a fun celebration with friends at Sazio's. Celebrating with her were **Bill Drake** and his pretty wife, **Linda**.

Margaret Wlordarski recently turned 80 and her friends and family helped her celebrate this big event with parties held for her.

You can't meet a nicer person than **Tami Sims**, of Ladies First. I love to go in there and see her!

Well, it looks like the city council races may be getting very interesting. We hear that our good buddy **Ray Swaim** has decided to run against **Mark Russell**. We'll wait & see.

We send our love to **Jan Camp** who recently broke her arm. We know her sweet hubbie **Howard** is taking good care of her.

A very happy 59th. birthday wish to **James Garner**, from his **Aunt Jimmie Martin**.

We were very sorry to hear that **Arthur Morton Allen** had died, at 96. He had so many good stories, as a lifelong Huntsville

Photo of The Month

The first person to correctly identify the youngster below wins a 1-year complimentary subscription to "Old Huntsville" magazine.

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Hint: This little boy is retiring from the county and running for a city job.



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resident, and we will really miss his humor & kindness, and his memories of early Huntsville.

That darling **Hannah Troup** turns 6 in August with a gymnastics party. Our youngest subscriber has been reading the magazine for years now! Happy Birthday to you, sweetie!

Recently while at St. Pete's Beach, Fl., we talked with a fascinating man, **Tom C. Kilpatrick**, who has a sister living here in Huntsville, **Anita Jennings**. He has run the famous **Gayles Restaurant** in St. Pete since 1954. He sure had some great stories to tell! And what a great breakfast!

We recently caught up with our buddy, **Sheriff Blake Dorning**. He, along with **Chief Rex Reynolds**, gave a fascinating talk at a recent meeting of the Twickenham Republican Women. Did you know that eight years ago there were 4 or 5 illegal aliens arrested a year on criminal charges. Today, the figure has jumped to between 30 and 40 per month.

We can't wait to see the exclusive Huntsville preview of the movie about **Elvis Presley's** original guitarist & drummer that will be released next year nationally. It is called "The Blue Moon Boys" and will be shown at the **Coffee Tree** on Bailey Cove on Sat., Aug. 12 from 1-3pm. The author, **Dan Griffin**, will be on hand to sign his book as well, same title.

Just when you think you've heard everything, we learn our friend **Hall Bryant** was in Spain running with the bulls. We would have thought that serving on the city council once was hairy enough for anyone!

We spoke with **Fran Woodard** recently. She is very active with the Art Museum, Library, Botanical Garden and other volunteer agencies.

A big hello to our dear friend **Bill Whatley**. He was in the hospital recently but is on the mend and we send him best wishes.

Happy anniversary to **Stef** and **John Troup**, who have been married 8 years. John's birthday is the same day as their anniversary, so he can never forget it! John, who works at Theatrical Lighting, will be 43.

It is always so good to talk with **Mike Beck**, of Halsey Grocery. Halsey is so much a part of Huntsville's history, and Mike is just a really good guy to neighbor with.

Robert Martin, Sr. must say good-bye to his son, **Col. Randy Martin**, again as he heads off for his 2nd tour of Iraq. We're thinking of both of you!

If you haven't had a good cheeseburger lately, stop by the Dallas Mill Deli. **Curtis Parcus**, the owner, cooks a cheeseburger that is out of this world!

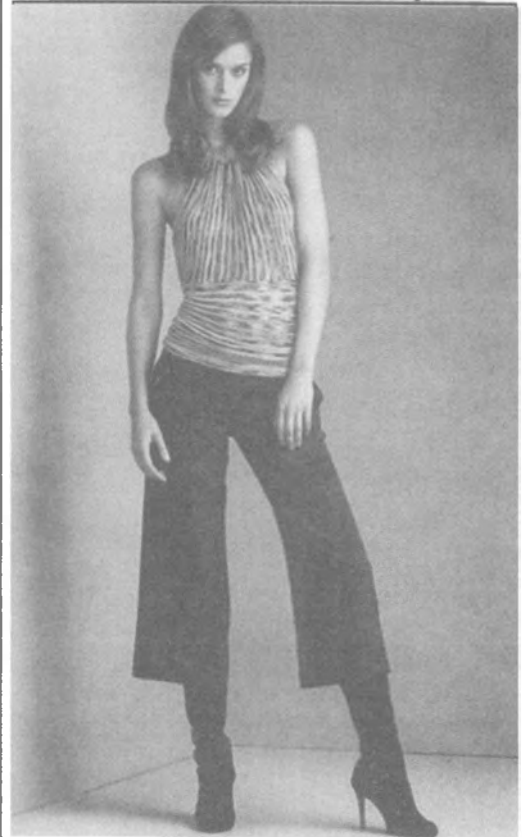
We ran across **Judge Bill Page** recently while grocery shopping. If that man ever writes a book we're buying the first copy!

Well, that's all this month. Just remember how lucky we are to live in Huntsville, Alabama!

"Adults are always asking little kids what they want to be when they grow up, because they're looking for good ideas."

Hannah Troup, 5 3/4

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Late Summer Snacks

Granny's Squares

1 can Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk
 1 c. chopped nuts
 1 c. chopped dates
 1 c. coconut

Mix all ingredients in a bowl. Pour into a 9x9" square pan. Bake for 45 minutes at 350 degrees and edges on side of pan are golden brown.

Bourbon Franks

1 14-oz. bottle catsup
 1 c. bourbon
 1 c. dark brown sugar
 4 8-oz. pkgs. miniature cocktail franks

In a large saucepan mix all ingredients except for the franks. Cover and simmer for 2 hours. Add franks and simmer for 5 minutes. Serve in a chafing dish. If you make this in advance it tastes even better.

Quick Fudgy Sauce

1 c. hershey's instant cocoa mix, sweetened
 1/3 c. boiling water
 1/2 t. almond extract
 1 T. butter, melted

Mix all ingredients and stir well. Serve over ice cream, cake or fruit.

Deana's Spicy Salsa

2 large tomatoes
 1 medium onion
 1/2 bunch fresh cilantro
 1/2 jalapeno pepper
 1/2 t. minced garlic
 Salt & pepper to taste
 4 T. lime juice

Finely chop your tomatoes, onion, cilantro, and jalapeno and add to bowl. Add garlic, season with salt & pepper, add lime juice & stir well. Cover and let sit on countertop til next day, when you serve it to cheers and accolades.

Pigs in a Blanket

2 lb. pork sausage
 3 cans biscuits

Form the sausage into thumb size pieces. Fry in skillet til done. Wrap each piece with an uncooked biscuit. Turn lapped side down; place on a cookie sheet and brush with sausage drippings. Cook for 15 minutes iat 375 de-grees. Serve with hot mustard.

Fresh Berry Soup

2 c. orange juice
 2 c. vanilla yogurt
 1 T. honey
 2 T. lemon juice
 2 pints fresh blueberries or strawberries

1/2 t. each of cinnamon and nutmeg

Mix all ingredients in a blender, chill. Place a few berries in bowls, ladle soup over top. Garnish with fresh mint.

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German Slush

3 T. green tea
 2 c. boiling water
 2 c. sugar
 7 c. water
 1 12-oz. can frozen lemonade
 1 12-oz. can frozen orange juice
 2 c. vodka
 Cold 7-Up as needed

Steep tea in boiled water for an hour. Strain. Boil water and sugar one minute and cool. Mix lemonade and orange juice and add this, along with the vodka, to the sugar/water/tea mixture. Mix and freeze 2 days in advance. Fill glass with 2/3 slush and the rest with cold 7-Up. Stir and Party!

Lady's Milkshake

1 qt. vanilla ice cream
 1/2 c. Kahlua coffee liquor
 1/4 c. Grand Marnier

Put all ingredients in your blender, a half at a time. Blend at highest speed til it's the consistency of a milk shake. If you like it more liquidy, add a bit of whole milk.

Invite your lady friends over for the afternoon, serve this drink and you'll stay cool & happy on these hot summer days!

Fruit Medley

Buy melons, blueberries, peaches, bananas, grapes, tangerines, kiwis, pineapples, nectarines, raspberries, blackberries, apples - any good fresh fruit.

Cut your fruit into bite-sized pieces and place into an attractive clear glass bowl. Sprinkle with Grand Marnier Liquor one hour before serving. Garnish with fresh mint or contrasting edible flowers like violets.

Annie's Nut Cake

1 box yellow cake mix
 1 pkg. vanilla pudding mix
 4 eggs
 1/2 c. oil
 1 c. rum
 1 c. ground pecans

Mix well and pour batter into a decorative Bundt pan. Bake in 325 degree oven for an hour. Sprinkle with powdered sugar while warm and serve with good whipped cream.

Cucumber Dip

1 8-oz. pkg. ceam cheese
 2 T. mayonnaise
 1/2 c. grated cucumber

Dash salt and pepper
 Dash Worcestershire sauce
 1/2 t. garlic powder

Mix all ingredients together and serve with crackers, chips, pita sandwiches, etc. Use your imagination!



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Oil Wells Discovered

from 1880 newspaper

Huntsville has a new sensation in the discovery of coal oil on the farm of Mr. T. Crawford, who resides on a part of the old Mack Jones plantation, 34 miles in a northwestern course from Huntsville.

We learn that Mr. Crawford commenced digging a well near his ginhouse last October and after reaching a depth of about 40 feet stopped digging, on getting to a seam of limestone rock.

Subsequently, he began to blast the rock, and reaching a depth of 12 or 15 inches more, encountered a strong smell of coal oil.

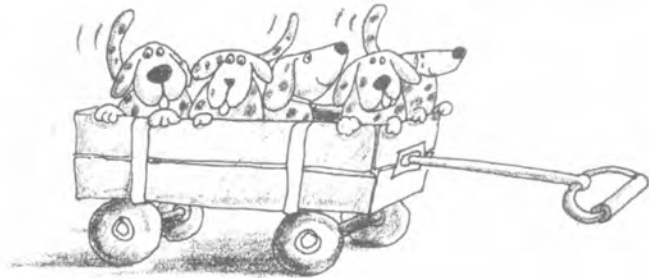
Having had some experience in supplying pumps for the oil wells in Pennsylvania, his attention was arrested, as he believed, by the discovery of an abundant source of oil. A piece of the excavated rock retained a strong oil smell some time after it was brought to the surface of the ground, and the surface of the water in the well is covered with oil.

These indications of a coal oil bonanza have so impressed Mr. Crawford and some of his friends that they set about get-

ting up a company to establish a coal oil factory.

The Company, under the name of T.B. Crawford & Co., believing that similar indications of coal oil exist in this section, propose to procure from owners of

land leases of large tracts - say 10,000 acres - with a view of sinking wells for oil, and we have seen one of their printed blank leases. We trust that the enterprise will prove successful, and that there may be "millions in it".



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Huntsville's Red Light District Closed

From 1913 newspaper

The so called segregated or red light district of Huntsville will go out of existence tonight at midnight and by tomorrow, practically all of the occupants of "the houses of our midst" will have departed from the city or changed their mode of making a living.

When the question of abolishing the district was brought before the City Commission in November by a committee representing the Men and Religion Forward Movement, proprietors of the houses agreed to close up quietly and get out provided they were not molested before the first of January. The commissioners entered into this agreement and the action of the police will not be necessary. The women declared their intention of keeping their promise to move away.

Several of the inmates of the houses have already left the city, but a majority are still here however. A few will go to the homes from which they have long been absent but most of them will make their way to other cities and continue their life.

Other cities have driven the red light districts out before this and the outcome of the experiment in those cities as well as here will be watched with a great deal of interest.

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This 3 bedroom, 2 3/4 bath house and wonderful guest house contain 2741 sq. ft. and has been totally renovated. The property is offered at \$349,900. The property has been recently painted inside and out. The kitchen has just been redone.

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The Old Airport

by Johnny Johnston

There it was, the old Eastern Airlines Office where I spent so many years of my youth. I had just walked from the office next door which in 1953 was that of James McAlister who owned Huntsville Air Service and was the city's Airport Manager. Sometimes I can't remember my telephone number but now, after 39 years I could remember each item and where it was placed. The Operations Desk from the edge of that window to the middle of the floor. The Safe sat over there next to that Reservation desk with one of the original answering machines sitting on top of it. The walk-through closet which in addition to housing our personal coats, lunches and rain gear, housed the LF radio gear. We could talk to other cities on that powerful radio. The Teletype units sat under the see-through windows. The door going to the front was the entrance to our ticket counter which was shared with Capital Airways. The memories came easy. The big window between the office and outside ramp was our view of people milling around and airplanes taking off to the south.

Then I remembered that the building had not been air conditioned and how hot it became on a mid afternoon summer day. What made it especially unpleasant was the way we worked. We would go outside to load and unload an aircraft in the heat and get soaking wet from perspiration; then come inside, go directly to the ticket counter and sell someone a ticket. Regardless of our odor, there was no time or place to cool off and get dry. We just smelled bad and nothing we could do about it. Many times during heavy rains we would sell that ticket or check that bag in soaking clothes because we had just worked the aircraft in heavy rains.

There was the day when James Lindsay, our Eastern Manager, decided he would do something to cool off the office, so he placed an exhaust fan in

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one side of that outside window. The first day it was in place a Convair aircraft took off and was clearing the south hill when Jim looked through the fan and yelled loudly so everyone could hear "My God both engines have stopped on that airplane"! Later we discovered that when you look at spinning propellers through a fan it causes them to look like they have stopped.

Construction was completed on the building in 1952 and it opened to the public that year. I started work there in 1953 at the age of 16. My job was to learn aircraft maintenance, wash and wax airplanes, fuel and oil airplanes, cut grass and essentially be a gopher boy in addition to learning to fly. It didn't take long to meet the 10 other people who worked at the airport. Eastern had 3 people, Capital 4, and Huntsville Air Service 4... That does not count the two part time employees who observed the weather for the U.S. Weather Bureau... I had been pretty much confined to Lincoln and West Huntsville not knowing much about famous people, travel or public things and had never flown on an airplane. My new job would change all that and set me on to a career in aviation.

Mr. William P. Fanning and I were in my Mothers 1950 Ply-

mouth that September day trying to find a qualifying job to allow me to take Diversified Occupations in Butler High School for three years. We turned off Whitesburg Drive onto the desolated Airport Road and preceded to the buildings just over the railroad tracks. "T" hangars sat just to the left of the road (a continuation of Airport Road) which wound around a hill on the east side of the airport. The hill was on the north-east southwest runway. Just on top of the hill and close to the hangars sat the "temporary terminal building" which was occupied in 1941. In 1953 it was used for storage.

The Chief Mechanic, Raymond Sherrill and Chief Pilot Joel Williams were working on an old crop duster when we arrived. Mr. Sherrill stopped to talk to us for a minute. When Mr. Fanning asked him if they might have a job for me he sent us to see Mr. James McAlister in the Terminal Building. I remember so well meeting Mr. Mac, as I called him until his death in 1965. He was charming and offered me the job I described. The offer was a generous \$40 per month working from 1:00 p.m. until dark.

He didn't say anything about days off and I forgot to ask. Actually I was there more than I

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contracted for and loved most of it. When I applied to Eastern in October 1956, and listed the job at Huntsville Air Service, it came to 357 hours in one month. I know because I made \$1 per hour at that time. In the year 1954 I was off only once. That was July 4.

In the new brick building were 4 restrooms downstairs. A men's room and a lady's room were in the lobby just in front of the airlines ticket counter. Another set of restrooms were just down the hall in a small room. This was intended to be the "Colored" waiting room. The designer of the building and perhaps city fathers who approved the design intended for the building to be segregated, however, James McAlister never opened up the second waiting room. This old building, opening 54 years ago, may very well have been the first integrated public building in Alabama.

How well I remember the original astronauts walking around in that small place, some very friendly like John Glenn and others not so friendly like Scott Carpenter. In the early days they flew commercial airline or rode together in

a charter. A few years later beginning with the second group the space people started flying in their own jet aircraft.

The first thing I looked at in the terminal was the floor. The designer built in a very peculiar design in the tile floor that I haven't seen elsewhere. Many of the areas I remembered had since been encased in glass. The corner at the main entrance where the Coke machine sat was so familiar to me. That was one of my jobs as well, keep the Coke machine full. They cost 5 cents



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per bottle and had the name of the city where they were bottled engraved on the bottom. We paid a nickel for the coke then might have a "quarter on the bottle bet" with a friend. The holder of the bottle from the greatest distance was the winner. I even remember the little dial on the Avis desk that gave the distance to each major city around the country.

I have written before about the visits of Dr. Oberth and Dr. Von Braun. Several others of our German friends also came around the airport. One afternoon I was in the old "T" hangar and cleaning sawdust from my arms when one Dr. came in. I was using compressed air and simply blowing the dust from my arms. I'm 16 years old and what do I know? He grabbed the hose from me and shoved me against the wall. Startled I was ready to ask him why when he yelled at me with his heavy accent "Stupid, Stupid, the air will enter your bloodstream, go to your heart and kill you"! I am positive that in theory he was correct but I had never heard of that happening.

Another of the Germans proved to be more skilled in building rockets than flying airplanes. He might have been a little short on planning! This particular gentleman rented a Piper PA 11 on occasion and took a trip to Nashville, Muscle Shoals Airport and back to Huntsville. This one day the PA 11 was not available so he rented a Champion which had about 1 hour less fuel time. He flew the airplane out of gasoline while over the Tennessee River just short of the Muscle Shoals Airport. He found a rock wall just a few feet high to stop the airplane, hooked his landing gear on it, wiped out the gear and came to a gentle stop. Very little damage. And no injury to himself.

So many of my friends of those days are gone now. Lester Edwards passed away just a few weeks ago. Some 50 years ago Lester saved the life of our Airport Manager, Mr. Mason. There was a janitor who was quiet, neat, did a great job. He was a young white man recently from the military I believe who on this particular day was sweeping the floor just by the Hertz counter where Lester worked. When Mr. Mason walked in early that day, the janitor pulled a knife and attacked Mr. Mason cutting his leather jacket to shreds. Lester inter-

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vened, pulled the janitor to the floor and penned him until help arrived. Mr. Mason was not injured. Lester Edwards and that thick leather jacket saved his life. We never really knew what happened to make the man snap the way he did.

Prior to 1960, we only had one loading gate at the airport which simply was a 5 or 6 foot opening in the 4 foot chain link fence. I still remember the boarding calls which always ended with the words 'now loading at the main gate'. If there was more than one aircraft parked there (there was room for a couple) you simply directed passengers to the left or to the right. Capital operated Douglas DC-3 aircraft through Huntsville for a much longer period than Eastern. Later, 1960, when Southern Airways came here they started service with the same aircraft.

I remember only once when a starter failed on one of these aircraft. Mike tells me that a North Central DC-3 also had a starter go out. On Capital no one knew exactly what to do except Raymond Sherrill. He asked the Captain if he had a sling in the cockpit. The Captain said yes and threw it down to him. It was nothing more than a large rope about 15' long with a sling made on the end.

Raymond slipped that over the top propeller blade and we pulled the engine through a couple of times. Then with six people on the rope we ran and jerked the rope to rotate the engine. The engine started with the second pull and Raymond said "that's the first time I ever saw that work".

In addition to being Chief Pilot to Huntsville Air Services, Raymond was also a flight trainer, a crop duster pilot and was listed as Assistant Airport Manager. He was a country raised man who was quite a baseball player from Town Creek, Al. His baseball career was placed on a back burner when World War II broke out in Europe. Raymond was taught aircraft mechanics and believe it or not he spent the war at Cortland Air Base. He talked of slipping out of the base at night, under a fence and spending his nights at home.

Raymond was a tobacco chewer and talked me into placing a twist in my mouth once. I got extremely ill and never touched it again. He was one of the instructors who taught me to fly.

Frank Reynolds was another instructor who allowed me to solo with slightly over 4 hours. He caught the devil from James McAlister when he heard about it. It seems the standard was 10

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hours and he wanted all the aircraft rental money he could get.

I always enjoyed the end of the day. I was tired and ready to get some rest and also the flight trainers would be parked around the airport. I would start each of them and fly them around the field to a landing before I tied them down for the night. I logged a lot of flying time that way.

Huntsville Airport was a small field where you could get away with a lot of those little things on a regular basis. As the airport grew, services and people were added to make employees and customers much more comfortable.

In the early days we suffered for a place to get food. The closest restaurant was by the Huntsville Hospital. Eventually a lady opened a restaurant in the west end of the building. I can't remember her last name, we all called her Tooten. She loved to be at the airport and loved all the people who worked there. After the renovation of 1960, she was moved to the east end of the building when Southern Airways occupied the space where the restaurant had been.

One person who was superb in his job and known around the Eastern system for the quality of his product was our catering manager, Darnell Brooks. Just saying his name makes my mouth water for the food he placed on the airlines serving Huntsville. He prepared Lobster Tails, Broiled Fish, Filet, dishes that I couldn't even describe. He did it on time with absolutely the best tasting food on the planet.

Airlines including Eastern, Capital (later United), Southern and untold chartered aircraft used his services. Where I heard complaints about food for the 32 years I served Eastern Airlines, I don't remember any

complaints about Huntsville during that period.

During the 40's and 50's Alabama had a Governor who was known to imbibe spirits from time to time. He loved the Guntersville, Marshall County area where he established a nice airport especially for his use. He built or leased a home there so that from time to time a short visit to that area would be appropriate. The big problem for him was the dry county laws in Marshall County.

When he was in Guntersville I was one of the first to know. First an Alabama Highway Patrol Car showed up and parked beside the gasoline pit at the Huntsville Airport, then the Alabama State Airplane would land and taxi to the same spot. I would fill the airplane with gasoline, check the oil, then load two to three cases of whiskey, beer and wine into the airplane. The pilot would fly it to




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Guntersville Airport where he would be met by another state patrol car and it would be delivered to the compound.

Some of the best stories about the old terminal involve the restrooms. They sat side by side in front of the airline ticket counters. Quite often someone in a hurry would enter the wrong one. I know a lady who entered and used the Men's room. She wasn't disturbed but upon leaving several employees were lined up with cute comments.

Recently a Major General and I were talking about this when he admitted changing from his uniform into civilian clothing when a young teenage girl walked in on him. He realized at that point that no urinals were present so he must be in the wrong place. He exited and ran into the mens room quickly with clothing in hand.

I don't think plans have yet been made for this old building. It is sound and surely could be used for something. I for one would miss seeing it set in the middle of what used to be an airport.



The Lost Town of Ditto Landing

About ten miles south of Huntsville where Highway 231 crosses the river was once a prosperous town named Ditto Landing. The founder of the town, John Ditto, established a trading post where he soon built up a successful business trading with the Indians.

By 1820 the community boasted two stores, numerous warehouses and a boat-works. That same year 17,000 bales of cotton, each weighing 300 pounds, were shipped from Ditto's Landing to New Orleans.

The advent of the railroads spelled doom for the river community and by the end of the Civil War there were only a few dilapidated wooden buildings left. Today there are no signs that a town ever existed there.

Ditto's Landing has become just another footnote in our history books.

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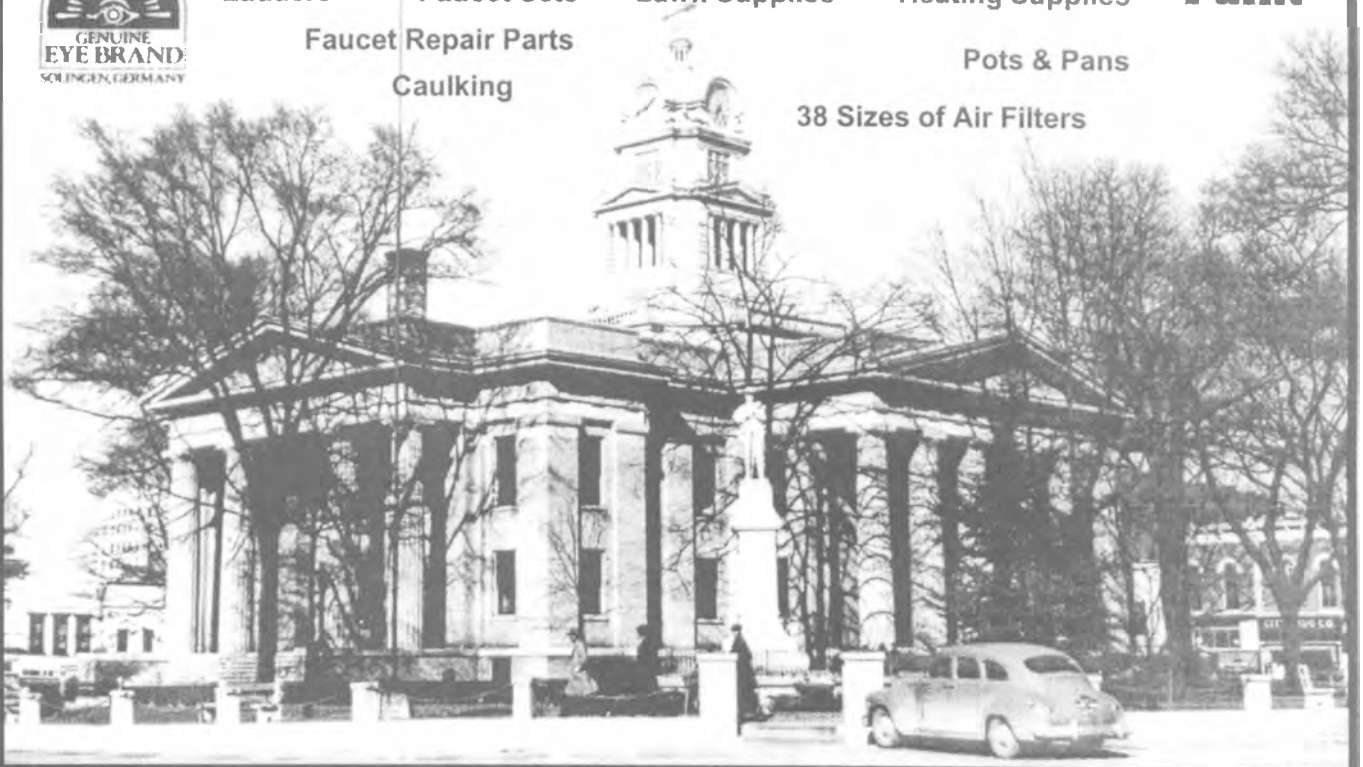
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* Ladies - use conditioner instead of shaving cream for your legs.

* For a dry shampoo, sprinkle cornstarch on your hair. After about 10 minutes, brush it out.

* Be sure and give your bushes and trees water this time of year - it's terribly dry for them.

* When you're finished eating that grapefruit or orange, place your elbows in the halves for 20-30 minutes to soften them.

* Ammonia sprayed on your outdoor trash can will keep animals away.

* When trying to lose weight, nothing will do it like portion control. Just eat little bites of whatever you want, and MAKE yourself not eat any more.

* Human hair will keep Rabbits out of your garden.

* Most bugs will not bother plants that are sprayed with just plain soap and water.

* When you go out for a drink or a good dinner, remember that your server relies on tips and will appreciate a good one - 20% is the norm now.

* Get your kids to help you with chores around the house and yard - most of them will love it.

* Make heart-shaped cupcakes by placing a marble between the muffin tin and muffin liner. Fill half full and bake as usual.

* Save one of your old spice bottles and put flour in it to dust pans for cakes.

* Make your pie filling as usual, put a sheet of Saran wrap over the pie dish, pour in your filling and cover with foil. Put in freezer, when frozen take filling out of the dish and wrap securely in the freezer for use later!



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The Strange Career of Jack Applegate


by Dick Turpin

Andrew Jackson Applegate (his real name) was born on October 14, 1833, in Georgetown, a small town not far above the Ohio River in Brown County, Ohio. Jack's parents, Benjamin and Rebecca Hall Applegate, had moved to Ohio from Mason County, Kentucky, around the year 1831. The Applegates were fairly prosperous farmers, and some members of the family had even been slave owners in Kentucky. A few of Jack's Kentucky cousins fought for the South in John Morgan's Confederate cavalry during the "late unpleasantness." Jack, however, had sided with Ohio and the Union.

Jack Applegate lost his father when he was quite young, and his education thus was somewhat less than it might have been. (Years later Alabamians would snicker at his spellings, passing around a note in which the Lieutenant Governor complained about "stomick" trouble which

took away his "happlytite.")

Jack attended the local schools and then went to work on the family farm. However, he tired of this hard labor and decided to study law. In those days, this largely meant memorizing legal books until you could pass a bar examination. In 1858, he married Lucinda Connor of neighboring Adams County and soon after began practicing law in Cincinnati. Jack probably would have remained there in obscurity the rest of his life. But in 1861 the War Between the States began, and many people would never



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Applegate went back to Brown County and volunteered as a private in the 4th Independent Company of Ohio Cavalry. He expected his local connections would help him advance quickly, and sure enough he was promoted to the relatively safe position of quartermaster sergeant.

On July 16, 1864 Applegate received his discharge and returned to Ohio. Seven months later, however, he volunteered again. This time he became a commissioned officer: captain of Company H, 189th Ohio Infantry. The 189th was sworn in on March 7, 1865 and was immediately sent by rail to Huntsville, Alabama. They arrived in Huntsville on March 17. Jack's regiment uneventfully guarded the railroad until the war ended in North Alabama two months later. The only Confederates they ever saw were those who came to Huntsville to surrender.

Most of the Ohio soldiers could hardly wait to get home and resume their lives, but Jack Applegate had other plans. He realized there was money to be

made in the defeated South and he intended to have his share. Jack stayed in Cincinnati only long enough to pack his belongings. Then he put his wife and two small children aboard a train and headed right back to Huntsville. It was undoubtedly a wise decision.

Applegate hung out his shingle as a lawyer in Huntsville, but one suspects clients didn't exactly beat a path to his door. To support himself, he took a position with the Freedmen's Bureau, which virtually controlled political life in Huntsville immediately after the war. It was his association with the Freedmen's Bureau that eventually brought Jack to high office in his newly adopted State.

The United States Freedmen's Bureau was an honest attempt by the Federal Government to try to educate the former slaves and integrate them into American society. While many of its employees were genuine idealists, the bureau unfortunately became a mecca for scoundrels. The trusting "freedmen" often became little

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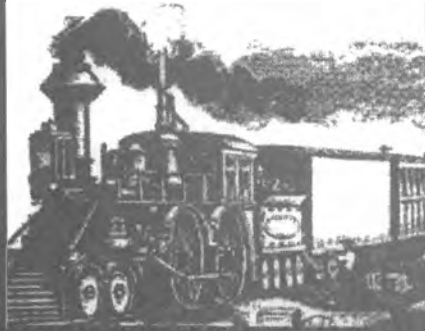
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more than pawns of a Radical Republican Party determined to maintain political control by any means possible.

President Andrew Johnson, a Tennessee Unionist and a Democrat, fully intended to carry out Abraham Lincoln's plans for a speedy return of Southern self government. However, the Radicals who controlled Congress declared the South needed to undergo a lengthy period of military occupation and Reconstruction. When President Johnson opposed them, they tried to impeach him and very nearly succeeded. These same Radicals threw out of office all of Alabama's elected officials from the Governor on down. Then they declared the State constitution null and void, and ordered Alabama to write a new one. What the Radicals really wanted was a constitution that perpetuated their own political domination.

Naturally, there had to be an election for the delegates to the new Constitutional Convention. However, the Radicals made sure their people got elected. Since the Freedmen's Bureau called the shots, two of Madison County's delegates were black men: Lafayette Robinson and Columbus Jones. The third delegate was Jack Applegate, who just happened to be an employee of the bureau.

Jack was a gifted speaker (William Lowe called him "the favored orator of the Freedmen's Bureau") and he probably would have been elected anyway. But Applegate intended to take no chances. It seems the Federal Government periodically sent food shipments to feed the unemployed former slaves.

The warehouse for all North Alabama just happened to be in Huntsville. Instead of distributing the food as soon as it arrived, Applegate held it back in the warehouse. The day before the election, he made a big show of

handing out hams, slabs of bacon, and sacks of flour, reminding the grateful recipients to vote for him.

Jack Applegate eagerly set off to represent Huntsville at the 1867 Constitutional Convention. This august assembly was actually nothing short of scandalous. An unbiased observer from New Hampshire called it a gathering of "worthless vagabonds, homeless, houseless, drunken louts." About a third of the delegates were carpetbaggers from the North, some of whom had not even lived in Alabama long enough to become legal residents. Many of these men had never set foot in the county they supposedly represented. Around 18 of the delegates were African-American, well intentioned but mostly illiterate. The remainder



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were mainly scalawags, Southern opportunists who had become pro-Union only after it was clear the South was losing the war. The carpetbaggers were definitely in control, however, as the black delegates and scalawags quickly discovered.

The convention delegates wasted their time debating such things as renaming Alabama's counties after Union heroes like Lincoln, Grant, or Sherman, and actually abolished three counties established the previous year. But they did finally come up with a constitution of sorts. Surprisingly, the new constitution created the position of Lieutenant Governor.

The office had never been needed before, critics claimed, and many Alabamians felt its only purpose was to put another carpetbagger on the payroll. Their suspicions were confirmed when the Radical candidate for Lieutenant Governor was named. It turned out to none other than Jack Applegate.

The Radicals still had one problem to overcome. The act of Congress that called for the convention stated the new constitution had to be approved by the people. If it did not secure a majority of the registered voters (not just who voted), it would not pass. Taking Congress at its word, most white voters stayed away from the polls and the carpetbagger constitution went down to defeat. Disappointed, Jack Applegate left the State, heading back to Ohio. He had not gone far, however, when he learned that Congress had ignored its own act and pronounced the constitution valid. Furthermore, the Radical candidates, including Jack, were all proclaimed elected.

Most Alabamians shook their heads in disbelief. The semiliterate Ohio carpetbagger had already gained his disparaging nickname when the Radicals appointed him a professor

of English Literature at the University of Alabama. (He drew his pay, but never taught a class.) Now, incredibly, "Jack Appletoddy" was the number two official in the entire State.

Jack was undoubtedly delighted with his new office and promptly took up residence in a plush Montgomery hotel. He could not even wait for Congress to confirm his appointment, declaring the State Senate open before he had any legal right to do so.

Applegate obviously enjoyed his new prominence. Once the legislative session closed, however, he did not return to Huntsville. Rumor claimed the Madison County Ku Klux Klan had placed a price on his head, and Jack felt discretion was the better part of valor. He purchased a home in a modest working class district of Mobile and declared it his official residence.

Surprisingly, not even high political office brought Applegate the wealth he had sought. In fact, the U. S. Census for 1870 lists his financial worth at a mere \$1,000. Jack probably had unreported money stashed away somewhere, but he was still far from rich.

Jack did reap one financial windfall thanks to a bit of larceny he had committed in Mississippi during the war. But once again he got much less than he had expected. It seems while he had been in the army Jack

had fallen sick and had been quartered in the home of former U. S. Secretary of Interior Jacob Thompson, a Confederate agent in Canada at the time. Either Jack or one of his colleagues stumbled across an assortment of deeds, patents, and other legal papers belonging to Thompson. Realizing the documents were valuable, Jack stole them.

Later, when he was living in Huntsville. Applegate wrote Mrs. Thompson informing her

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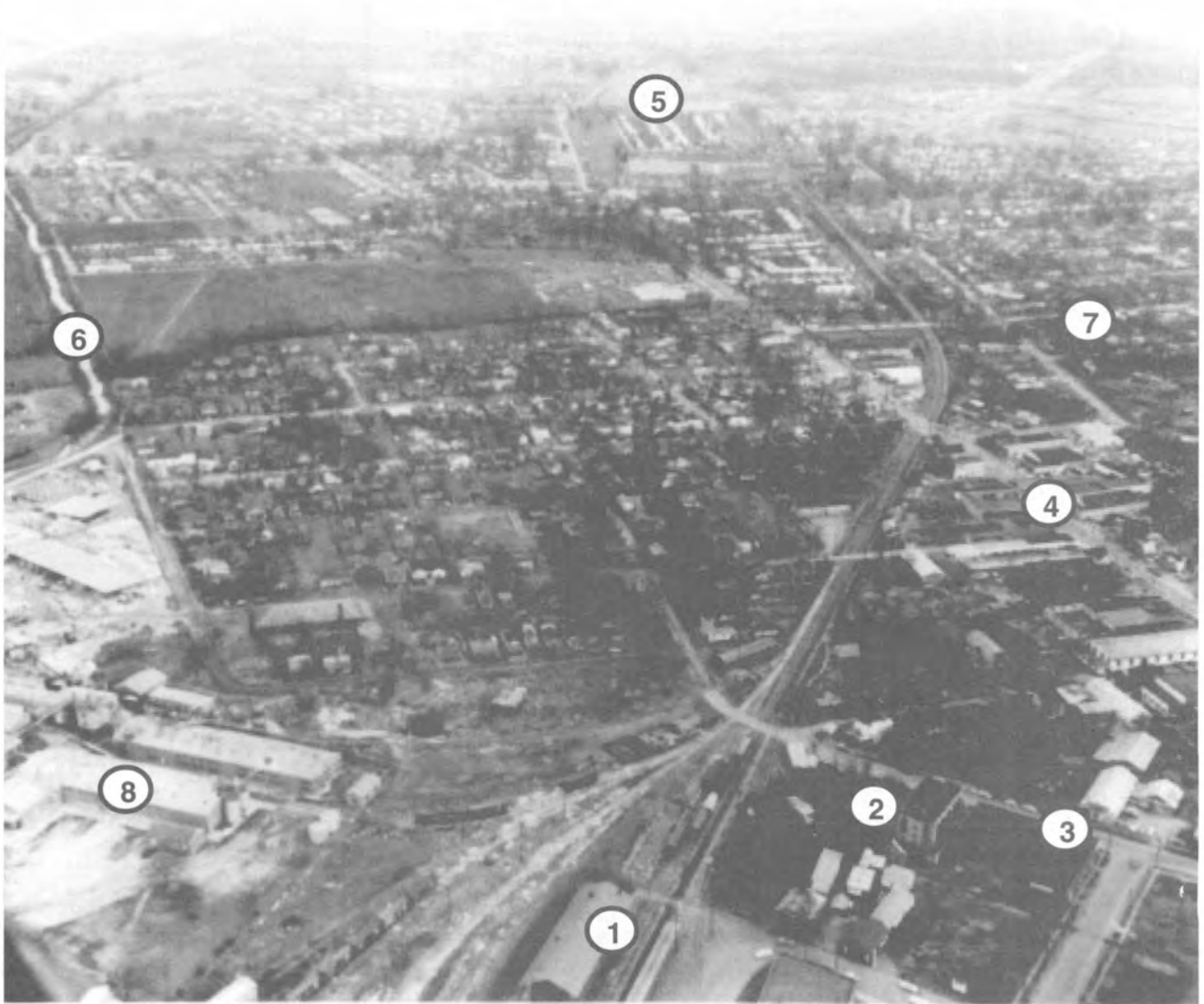
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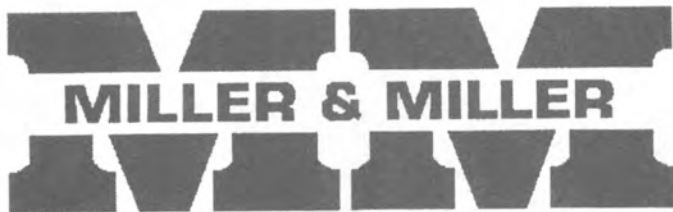
Honey Hole Neighborhood - Circa 1950's

1 - Freight depot
2 - Old county jail

3 - Washington St.
4 - Meridian St.

5 - Lincoln Mills
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bluntly, "If you want these papers better than \$10,000, send the money and you'll get your papers."

Mrs. Thompson forwarded the letter to Huntsville's Leroy Pope Walker. Walker confronted Jack, who denied having the papers. Knowing better, Walker told him to produce the papers the next day in return for \$300 or he would get nothing. Jack suddenly recalled where the documents were and accepted the greatly reduced extortion. William Lowe sent copies of the correspondence to Democratic newspapers, and the sorry story was publicized all across the country.

Yet even in Mobile, Jack was not beyond the reach of the Ku Klux Klan. Supposedly he received a warning to leave Alabama if he wanted to keep on living. Never one to trust fate, Jack decided it was a good time to go somewhere else. Strangely, he fell sick after arriving in Chattanooga and died a few days later on August 21, 1870. He was only 36 years old and had not even completed his two year term as Lieutenant Governor. His widow and children then returned to

Ohio. The saga of "Jack Appletoddy" had come to an sudden end.

To complete our tale, once Reconstruction finally ended in Alabama, the democratically elected government promptly called for a new constitutional convention. Reflecting largely on Applegate's time in office, the 1875 convention decided to abolish the position of lieutenant governor. It would not be restored until 1901.

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Gold Mines

Guntersville - August 3, 1894

Mr. Degg, superintendent for the new gold mines near Guntersville, brought down supplies and fixtures on the steamer R.C. Coles, this week, preparatory to starting work. The heavier machinery will follow.

The company is preparing to go to work on a large scale and is much encouraged from reports by Colorado and California experts who have visited the mines near Guntersville and pronounced them some of the richest places they have ever seen.

Alabama could well become the center of the next gold rush if the vein plays out.

"A psychiatrist is a person who gives you expensive answers that your wife will give you for free."

Joe Johnson, Scottsboro

Homemade Play Dough

Mix the following in a saucepan: 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 1 teaspoon cream of tartar, 2 tablespoons oil & 2 cups water. Cook over medium heat, til mixture forms a dough (6 minutes). Dump onto waxed paper til cool enough to handle and knead til pliable. Add food coloring for different colors.

Store in a covered container or plastic bag. Makes about 2 pounds.



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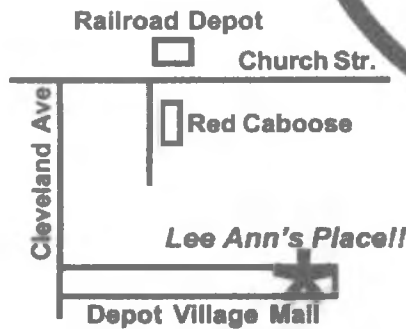
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News From The Year 1927

News From Huntsville and Around The World

Lindbergh Flies Atlantic

Nearly 100,000 Parisians rushed onto the tarmac of Le Bourget Airport tonight to cheer a new international hero. Charles Lindbergh has touched ground safely, completing the first solo non-stop flight from New York to Paris.

Until a few weeks ago, Lindbergh was a dark horse in the hot race to win the \$25,000 prize offered for the first non-stop flight from New York to Paris. Only his backers, St. Louis businessmen, believed in him.

But he made a daring one-stop flight from California to New York to gain the lead over his rivals. Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field on Long Island at dawn yesterday, a departure making front-page news on both continents.

Overloaded with gasoline, his plane sailed like a drunken seagull, barely clearing the trees at the end of the runway. Alerted

by newspaper and radio stories, thousands of spectators watched for Lindbergh's airplane as he flew north along the coast, turning eastward over the Atlantic at St. John's, Newfoundland, at 7:15 p.m. New York time.

From then on, Lindbergh flew by dead reckoning, sometimes dipping to within ten feet of the sea, sometimes climbing as high as 10,000 feet. The flier stayed alert munching on a stash of five homemade sandwiches.

Lindbergh saw the lights of Paris at 10 p.m. and touched down at exactly 10:24, setting off a celebration as non-stop as the flight. While a few may see his feat as a money-making stunt, to others it has greater implications.

The flight could signify the beginning of world wide aviation with countries once separated by weeks of travel now accessible in a matter of hours.

Al Jolson Makes First Talking Movie

Al Jolson stars in "The Jazz Singer," a talking film that opens today. The rendering is slightly mechanical, with less clarity than a telephone transmission. Movement of the actors is not faithfully reflected in their voices; sound never fades in or out as on radio. Still, it is a first. The plot of "Jazz Singer" partially reflects Jolson's real life. Like his character, Jolson comes from a Jewish family that frowned on a jazzsinging career. Estrangement from his parents and ensuing success are the tensions that move this motion picture.

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Henry Ford Sells 50,000 Model "A"s On First Day

Henry Ford's new Model A went on display in New York's Waldorf Hotel this morning, with an instant back order of 50,000. The auto boasts non-shatterable glass for the windshield and a gearshift raised for easy manipulation. The Model A reaches speeds up to 71 mph, having twice the horsepower of the old Ford. Prices run only \$10 to \$35 higher than previous models, but Americans are not feeling tightfisted anyway.

As President Herbert Hoover asserted in his yearly fiscal report today, American workers' wages remain "higher than anywhere else in the world or than at any other time in world history."

The flourishing economy is expected to drive the sales of automobiles to record highs as the common man sees the American dream within his grasp.

Mae West Found Guilty of Indecency

Miss Mae West, author and leading player of "Sex," her Broadway production, has been found guilty of indecency. She was given a ten-day sentence and fined \$500. The diminutive Miss West who also produced "The Virgin Man," claimed police viewed the opening of "Sex" and could not fault it. But the court found it lewd and ordered the show closed.


Long Distance Call Between San Francisco and London Sets Record

A new record for long distance telephone service was set today when a line between San Francisco and London went into operation.

The first call, at 9:05 a.m. San Francisco time (5:05 in the afternoon in London), was between H. D. Pillsbury, President of Pacific Telephone, and H. E. Shreeve, who represents American Telephone and Telegraph in London. Although they were 7,287 miles apart, both said they heard each other's words clearly. This is clearly one of the milestones of history.

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A Woman's View of the Civil War

Taken from the Confederate Veteran published in 1895

Mrs. Andrew Erwin was formerly Miss Mary Webster, of Maury County, Tenn., a daughter of Mr. Jonathan Webster, who was a prominent planter on the Little Bigby River. When barely nineteen, she was married to Col. William Tait, of North Carolina, a cousin of Gov. Zeb Vance of that State. He lived but a few months, and she afterwards married Col. James W. Camp of Virginia, a highly educated and wealthy planter living near Huntsville, Alabama. This union lasted for nearly twenty years, and was regarded as "the romance of her life." When she was thirty-nine years of age she was again married, her choice being Col. Andrew Erwin.

She has the following to say about her sojourn in Huntsville, Alabama.

"In 1862, in order to get away from the Yankees, I went to Huntsville, Ala., but it was from the frying pan into the fire, as the Yankees poured into the city, and I was arrested a few days later by Gen. O.M. Mitchel (Cincinnati), of geography notoriety.

"My offense was having been seen with a tiny Confederate flag in my hand. My niece, Miss Rosa Turner, and Miss Matthews

had played with a grace hoop with one of these flags attached, and the three of us were summoned to his tent.

"He began his questioning, saying to me, 'Don't you know I could send you to Fort La Fayette in five minutes?'"

I said, "That would be very rapid traveling; I do not know that I could make the trip in that time." I could see a lurking smile in his eyes, and he said, "What is your jail made for, Miss?"

I answered, "To put outlawed men in, sir."

He then said, "No man, woman, or child shall say in my tent that they are Rebels."

I said, "I am a Rebel, open and above board. You know

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where to find me."

Said he, "Are you a lady?"

"Who doubts it?" I said.

"You women get to your homes," he replied, and if I had had a pistol I should have shot him dead.

"He was a poor, cowardly man - sat all the time behind his desk buying cotton in gold while he paid his soldiers in greenbacks. He never went to the front, but sent the Fourth Ohio and other soldiers to fight his battles. This regiment went out fifteen hundred strong, and at the close of the war there were but fifty left! They were brave men, and we women were wicked enough to count the empty saddles on their return.

"This Gen. Mitchel had some bad men in his command, and was bad himself. He died of yellow fever on the coast of Charleston."

Mayor Fines Himself \$10

Huntsville Mayor R. E. Smith, who engaged in a fight with J. E. Pierce, editor of The Huntsville Times, sat on his own case in the police court this morning.

The case of Pierce was called first, and the defendant was discharged although he entered a plea of guilty. The mayor next called his own case and entered a fine of \$10 against himself because of the fact that he was the aggressor in the affray.

from 1912 newspaper

"I'm my own boss. Yet, oddly, I can't stand that jerk."

Jeremy Virgil, Arab

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The Baby in the Bottle

by John Hughes

My father was a druggist in the town of Madison, Al. for 50 years. His store, Humphrey-Hughes Drug Co., had been Burton-Wise Drug Co. since 1871. The store is a two-story building still standing, facing the railroad tracks in downtown Madison. The name Humphrey-Hughes Drug Co. can still be seen on the building, although it was sold in 1974.

For most of my childhood, the upper rooms above the drug store were empty except for an apartment at the top of the stairs where the Madison Telephone System was located. The switchboard was in an apartment occupied by the operator. I remember that our home phone number was 22J. The drug store's number was 10.

At the end of the hall were two rooms that had housed a beauty parlor. In between the telephone office and the beauty parlor were rooms where my father stored things needed in the drug store below. One of the rooms was vacant except for three items. Once was a device that resembled a medieval torturer's rack. I later learned that it was a chair with stirrups attached used for gynecological examinations. In a glass bowl resembling a Pyrex oven dish were three ovarian cysts that looked like large ostrich eggs. The third object on a shelf by itself was a human baby in a tall wide-mouth bottle.

The baby was full term. Its fingernails were fully developed and its hands and feet were perfectly formed. The baby was head down in the

fetal position and it looked like it was waiting to be summoned to the world outside its mother's womb. The sex of the child could not be determined without breaking the seal on top of the bottle. Since it seemed to be perfectly preserved in the liquid, this was not an option. There were no visible signs of trauma.

I would often be sent upstairs to retrieve something my father might need down below in the drug store. I was not forbidden to go into this room and

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did so on every occasion. Only when I stayed too long would he come to the bottom of the steps and yell for me to hurry up. When I got older I would take my friends up for a viewing. Strangely, they were always very quiet, as if afraid of waking up the sleeping infant.

No one knew whose baby it was. Some of the drug store customers who remembered the doctor who had had an office upstairs years earlier had speculated that the mother was a certain lady who lived in Madison and the father was the doctor himself. It is not hard to get a rumor or an opinion in a small town.

For years the baby remained where it was when I first found it - upstairs, in a vacant room on a shelf. In later years, some adventurous cousins borrowed the baby for a show-and-tell science project at their high school in Albertville. I don't know what grade they received, but I can imagine the reaction. After the project was finished they took it home.

Their mother insisted that it be returned to Madison immediately. She could not stand opening the closet door and seeing it. So, the baby was returned to Madison to my parents' home since my father had sold the drug store in 1974 and retired. It remained on a shelf in my parents' basement until they both passed away. Then, I inherited the baby and it stayed in my home for a while.

One day my wife and I realized that the people who knew the story of the baby were getting fewer. We realized that times had changed and that we possessed an un-buried human. Who was left to say that the baby had been above the drug store before I was even born? We only knew a few and they were scattered. My wife insisted that I take it to the Madison Police Station.

When I gave it some more thought, I realized that there was no longer anyone there who knew me. Would my explanation of the baby's origin suffice or would it involve a full-blown investigation? I decided to solve it my own way.

I got my posthole digger from the shed and took the baby to a hill over on Slaughter Road. The late November sun was reflecting from the windows of the houses on Monte Sano's western side. I dug the deepest hole I could with the posthole digger and gently lowered the glass bottle coffin to the bottom. I replaced the dirt in the hole and lay the sod back over it.

The next morning after the cows had grazed the area the previous night, I could not find where I had dug the grave.



Information Wanted

During the war I was captured near New Market, Al. and held prisoner in Huntsville. One of the guards was a Union soldier named Figgs. He is red haired, strongly built and will be about thirty five years of age now. He was well known for tormenting prisoners under his care. I have information that he is now living in Madison County. I desire to meet this man once again, face to face, and will pay for all services rendered.

From 1873 newspaper



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Famous Belled Buzzard Seen near Huntsville

from 1904 newspaper

The famous belled buzzard that has been seen in nearly every part of the United States since the Civil War, was seen on last Friday sailing in the sky five miles northeast of Huntsville.

Two Negro men, James Boyles and Bob Robertson, were out in an open field together last Friday when they heard a sheep bell somewhere near. They looked for the supposed sheep and could find no sign of him. The tinkling continued and they were quite frightened when one of them happened to glance skyward.

There above them was the old buzzard sailing placidly in the warm sunshine and his eery motion would cause the bell around his neck to clatter. The old buzzard is the most famous of his tribe and so far as known he has never had a rival in his distinction.

He was captured by Confederate soldiers in Virginia during the Civil War and the bell placed around his neck. He was

then released to roam at will.

It is said to be his custom to visit the South every winter. He is not in the habit of staying long in one place and even now he may be a thousand miles away.

"It was a woman who drove me to drink and I never got the chance to thank her."

W. C. Fields

Peach Crisp

- 4 lrg. peaches, peeled & sliced
- 1 T. lemon juice
- 4 T. sugar
- 1/2 stick butter, melted
- 1/2 c. flour
- 1/2 c. oats
- 3/4 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 c. chopped pecans

Mix first 3 ingredients & pour into glass pie dish. Mix remaining ingredients well & cover peaches. Bake at 350 for 35 min.

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Lessons from the Great Depression

by John Nelson

People who lived through the Great Depression learned to make do with very little. They were frugal people and did not waste things.

John Rush was a truck farmer whose produce stand was several miles from his house and farm. When he woke up every morning, he would look over the things that he needed to take to his stand. If he could carry it, he would simply walk the few miles with his arms filled with produce. It was common to see this man walking to his produce stand with a bushel or more of beans. He had a truck but he was saving his gas.

His house was electrified but he still used kerosene lanterns and wood stoves. To save matches, he would keep little rolls of paper around to move fire from one place to another. Why waste a good match when a scrap of paper will do the same job?

When he got his first radio, he kept the volume down low. He had to sit with his ear almost touching the speaker to hear anything. He figured that you wouldn't wear out the radio as fast if you were careful with it! If he was right, that radio must still be playing somewhere today.

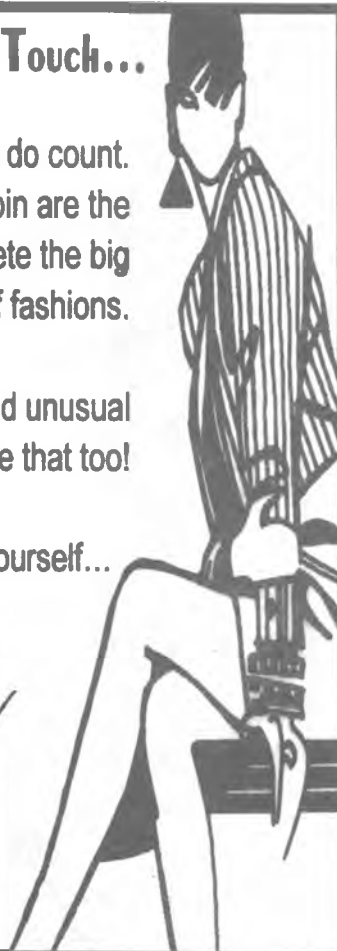
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The Nineteen Twenties

by Cecil Ashburn

So many have written about the Depression, and how tough the times were. Sure the 30's were hard time but how about the twenties, the roaring twenties? And I was born in 1920 so I remember some good times in the twenties.

My parents had a store; I remember the ice truck coming to fill up the soft drink boxes, and the ice boxes. People would walk to the store from miles away to get an ice cold Coca Cola. Cokes were better in those days. Whatever it was that made them so good they took out later. The store had a porch and that was the gathering place for the community. There were always enough flats or nail kegs to sit on and plenty of red cedar whittling sticks. On hot days just open the screen door and have another ice cold Coke.

In cold weather, the meeting was adjourned to the pot-bellied stove in the back of the store and let the yarns begin. We got a weekly paper called the "Grit." My brother Virgil was the carrier. We argued about Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, and that fellow Lindburg flying across the Atlantic Ocean; yes, we kept up with all the important news.

Coke sales fell off in winter but the black coffee pot took over and it was free. The hoop cheese was handy to the cracker barrel and a nickel's worth of cheese and crackers served on a piece of wax paper from the big roll, or maybe nickel's worth of bologna and crackers or a can of pork and beans with another ice cold Coke was

good even in the dead of winter.

Since this was the roaring twenties, there was usually plenty of Buffalo Nickels for the big spenders, or for the big sports to put a nickel in the nickel slot machine or buy a space in the punch card.

For boys growing up in the twenties, the creek was just a half a mile away. The water was sparkling clear and always cold. When you tired of swimming just call your dog and grab your .22 rifle - there was a 10,000 acre hunting preserve nearby with rabbits and squirrels just waiting. Tired of this, most of us had a bicycle and a horse to ride.

About once a week the fruit truck would come to the store. A banana, or out of season apples or peaches were mighty good.

For the men there were plenty of cigarette papers

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for rolling your Country Gentleman, Old North State, Bull Durham, or Prince Albert tobacco. For chewing tobacco there was Red Ox Twist or Red Apple. A good chew of tobacco could be made to last a half a day.

The store was large for a country store with four counters running the length of the building and we stocked a lot of different things. I still have part of the old ledger that my mother kept. Here is a list of some of the things that they sold in 1924: axle grease for 25 cents, lye for 15 cents, a file for 20 cents, raisins 10 cents, slippers 2.25, lap link 5 cents, hay wire 1.25, dope 5 cents, 2 shoes 20 cents, trace chains 1.25, overalls 1.75, single trees 50 cents, pitch forks 1.25, jar rubbers 10 cents, moon pies 5 cents, work shoes 4.00 and gasoline 17 cents a gallon.

School was two rooms, one teacher for first, second and third grade. The other room for the third, fourth and fifth grade. It was walk to school or ride your horse, since for most of us it was less than two miles so most of the time we preferred to walk.

For me, growing up in the twenties, I never tired of hanging out at the blacksmith shop and watching the mules get two pair of new shoes. The blacksmiths would tap the mule on the shoulder - the mule would raise his hoof and the blacksmith would take his sharp knife and cut it down flat just like a manicure. Then he would heat the shoe red hot and shape it to the hoof. Then dump the red hot shoe in a tub of water and check it for size. He had done

this so many times the shoe always fit perfectly.

Of course that was not all. The shoe had to be nailed on. I never saw a mule or horse acting up when it came time for this operation. Some how they knew they were getting two pairs of new shoes and simply stood there with a proud look.

Uncle Tom Hawkins didn't know it but he had the first Day Care Center. To add a little spice he would let me turn the blower on for the forge.

We didn't have lawn mowers but we did have some four legged kind called goats. We sometimes hooked the goats to a little wagon and of course we had

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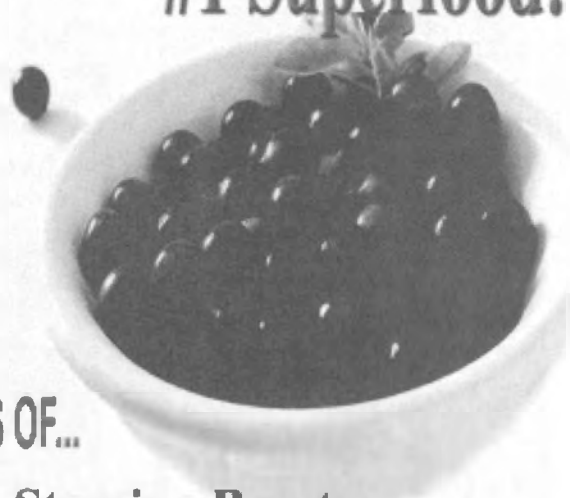
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Angela Adams, 8

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plenty of goat milk and cheese.

It wasn't always happy days in the twenties. My baby brother named Robert Edward died in the terrible influenza outbreak that swept the country. As an infant I contracted pneumonia; the doctor was there and when I turned black he said well he's gone and walked out to his car.

My great grandmother had some onions frying on the stove so she grabbed them up and applied a poultice to my chest. They said I kicked and started breathing. They called the doctor back and he said he'll be

alright now.

Later in the decade, I think I was seven years old, I became sick with malaria fever. For several days I lay flat of my back and watched these horrible things

crawling on the ceiling, dancing on the furniture, or climbing the walls, I can see them now but I don't have the words to describe them. It was like the worst horror movie I've ever seen. The only

"The toilet is blocked, and we cannot bathe the children until it is cleared."

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medicine they had to treat it was iodine, and I'm sure they soaked me in it.

Part of the decade of the 1920's we lived in the big house on what had been a plantation during and before the Civil War, Aunt Judy lived in one of the slave cabins. At the time (1925) she was about 85 years old, which means that she was born in 1840. She had been freed when she was 20 but she had never given up her little cabin. She had garden privileges, smokehouse privileges, corn crib privileges, and orchard privileges, plus, she had a son named Big Jim and a nephew named Sam who worked on the farm. She cooked on an open fire and when I would come in from school she always had a glass of buttermilk with cornbread for me.

Big Jim was a giant of a man and my favorite. I would guess that he weighed near 300 pounds and he wasn't fat. He could pick me up with one hand and put me on my horse. While ordinary people could pick the cotton on two rows, Big Jim could pick three rows. Big Jim was born too early. Later he would have likely been a star for the New York Giants football team.

Sam was younger and more mechanically inclined, as far back as 1926 he drove our Fordson Tractor.

These were happy days for me, the big house had a first floor porch and a second floor porch, I don't ever remember there being a hot night and in the winter the big fire places kept the whole house comfortable.

There were no power lines in Killingsworth Cove so we made

our own electricity with an outfit called a Delco system. In 1938 when I resigned from farming I met the power company coming to string the lines.

My teachers for grades 1-2-3 were also my aunt and our next door neighbors. Her name was

Mae Gray, wife of my mother's brother Doug. He died in 1937 from being kicked by a horse.

In order to get her teachers certificate Aunt Mae volunteered to be my baby sitter. And so she practiced on me. I guess she had enough of me so she shoved me




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 William Faulkner about Ernest Hemingway

up a grade or two so as a result I went through high school as the baby of the class. Aunt Mae taught elementary school at Riverton for many years. She was a good teacher.

After all of the good years of the 20's came the crash of 1929. The bank at Gurley closed its doors. The hard times of the Depression had arrived. But for now that's all I'm going to say about that.

Most of what I have written so far is about a kid growing up in the twenties, but what about the grown folks? I knew several veterans from the great war, World War I. One or two that I knew had been gassed. It was not good times for them as they never got over it.

I was acquainted with two veterans of the Civil War. They would come by the store on special days, always proudly dressed in their

gray uniform, complete with medals shining.

Although I was less than ten years old, I was impressed by one veteran who came by the store frequently in his buggy. He sold my mother a Singer sewing machine. He lived just a few houses down the road and his name was Captain Frank Gurley.

Every Saturday night they had barn dances, square dances, hay rides, swim parties and you name it. Every community had their string band, a fiddle, a guitar, a mandolin, a banjo, and

a bass fiddle. I was just an observer but I believe they were having a good time. My father was a justice of the peace. So he stayed busy marrying the young couples.

My family was always inter-

"When I was a kid my parents moved alot, but I was always able to find them."

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ested in politics but they had a hard time in 1928 when the choice for President was a Republican. Herbert Hoover was definitely a no-no and his opponent, Al Smith, was a Catholic. Killingsworth Cove had a low turnout in that election.

They followed carefully the county races because my grandfather was county road commissioner starting in 1923 and old friends like Joe van Valkenburg was the chairman. We also followed the Huntsville races. Mr A. W. McAllister was elected mayor in 1926 and was relected through 1952. Thus when me and Pat Gray, my uncle and business partner, came out of World War II in 1946 and started Ashburn & Gray, Mr. Alex was still mayor. I am proud that I knew him, he was one of a kind. It took a lot of courage on his part to entrust a young outfit like us with city contracts.

One of the fun things we looked forward to each year was the Madison County fair. My grandfather's two horse, two seat, surrey would get over full so we would hitch up a hay wagon. The loose hay was just the thing for us kids to sleep on during the return trip. The merry go round, the ferris wheel, hooche-cooche line, the dare devil motorcycle riders, the cotton candy; this was heaven for a ten year old.

There was one booth where we could always win prizes - the shooting gallery. Having grown up with rifles we quickly figured out how much they had bent the barrel. I won so many kewpie

dolls one night that they made me quit.

When crops were laid by (which means you had it planted and plowed and you stood back and prayed for rain) one not so fun thing the men would do was to go to the mountain and cut timber.

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Much of the mountain land still belonged to the government, in other words it had never been sold since they took it away from the Indians. Since it had never been surveyed a little timber cutting here and there happened. If it was a large tree mules would snake it down the mountain to a wagon road. Then using cant hooks they would load one log on a wagon pulled by a two horse team to be delivered to the nearest sawmill. To the best of my recollection most of the people worked for Mr. Henry St. Clair. In later years I had the privilege of working at his saw mill and he taught me how to calculate the number of board feet you could get out of a round log. I have forgotten how to do it but let me assure you it isn't simple.

Mr. St. Clair of Hurricane Creek was one of the smartest men I ever knew. He was a one man conglomerate. In addition to the sawmill he had a cotton gin, a coal mine and extensive farming operation. Plus a country store and a blacksmith shop.

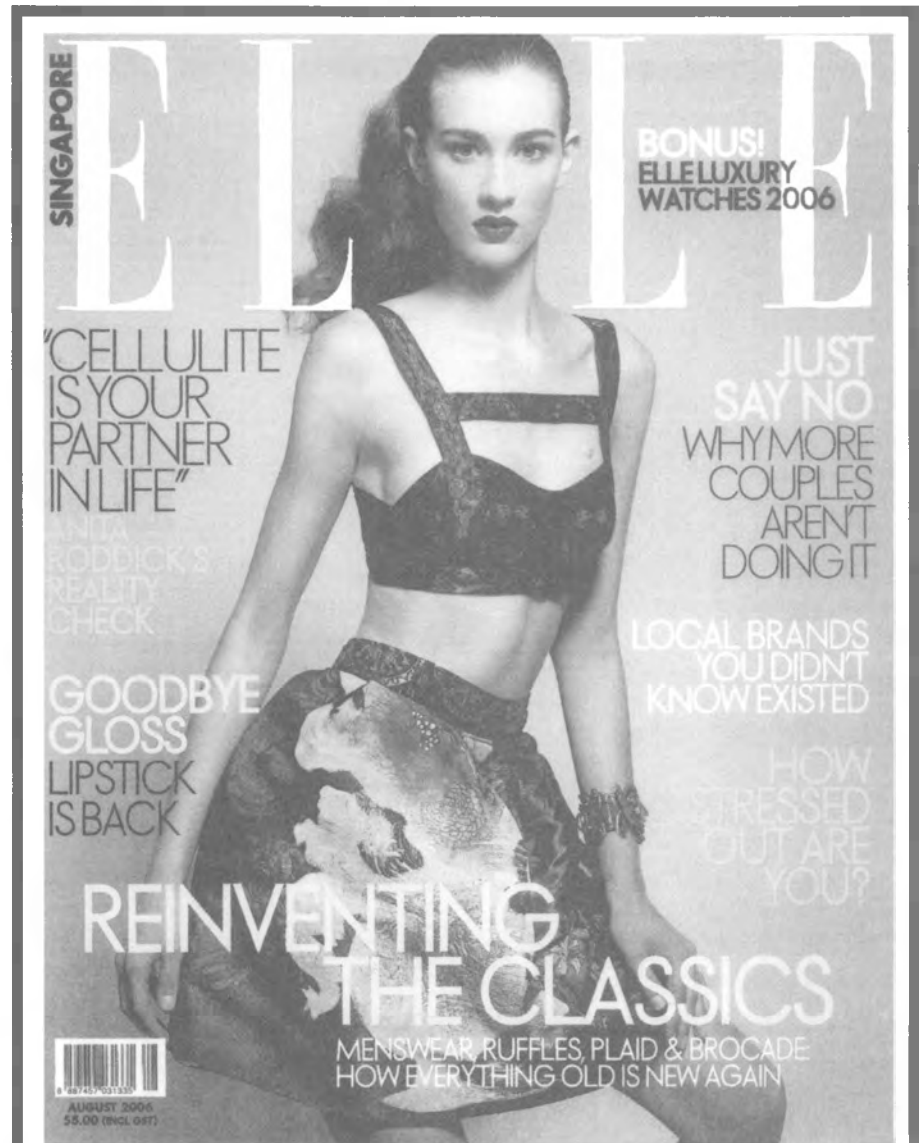
One of the best things that happened for the economy of Killingsworth Cove happened, I think, in 1926. This was the National Prohibition Act. The big companies had to shut down their stills so the enterprising farmers in places like the Cove started to see if they could fill the gap. The two main ingredients in wildcat whiskey were corn and sugar. They had the corn and my father, in his store, couldn't keep enough sugar. He had a T Model pickup truck so he would get ten 100-pound

sacks of sugar at a time but even then he was quickly sold out.

These people making the whiskey were known as moonshiners. They would bottle it in gallon fruit jars having it ready for the people to pick up. These people were known as bootleggers. Their stills were tucked deep in the head of the coves and hollows and hidden from the officials called revenuers.

A story is told on me, which I don't think is true but it goes something like this. A revenuer drove up to the store one day and offered me a dollar if I would go with him and show him where the stills were. I insisted on being paid in advance. "No," he said. "I will pay you when we come back."

And I said, "Mister, if I show you where the stills are, you won't



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be coming back.”

Like I said, I think this is a made up story, because I was acquainted with three or four of the still operators and they were the kindest folks you could imagine and wouldn't hurt a flea. I believe Uncle Sam didn't care about these people making whiskey; he just wanted his cut.

Our store was located at the entrance to the cove on a major highway then called the Bellefonte Road at a place then called Hill Crest. When U.S. 72 was built traffic bypassed our store. In later years Ashburn & Gray built a lot of bypasses and I always had a lot of sympathy for the businesses that were bypassed. For instance, Memorial Park-way got practically every business downtown.

I am not proud of that. But of course similar things happened in Athens, Scottsboro, Decatur, Arab, Gurley, New Hope and many other places.

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Migration North

by Jim Harris

In the late thirties we moved from Front Street to Davidson Street, which backed up to the railroad tracks. The section of track from Oakwood Avenue to a quarter of a mile or so north of the highway 72 overpass where it turns east, is uphill. The grade is so slight, though, that it looks as if there is no grade at all. However, a long freight train pulled by a single steam engine couldn't be fooled.

It was common to have the engine at the curve on the north and the caboose at Oakwood or below on the south. If the train stopped in Huntsville, it couldn't get up enough speed to make it around the curve.

They had to stay there until another, and sometimes two more, engines were called in to help push the stalled train up the grade. Long through trains usually made it but were slowed considerably, enough so that hobos had an easy time catching a ride.

In the late thirties and early forties until the war started, Southerners by the thousands migrated north to find jobs. Hopping a freight train was often the only transportation they could afford. Walking was an alternate, and, no doubt, many of them did just that for most of their journey.

They traveled with only the clothes on their backs. They ate

whatever they could beg whenever they could and slept where they were at the time, even when it was on a precarious perch on a freight car.

Our house was the last house on the north end of Davidson Street. It was the last chance many of these people (usually men - we rarely saw a

woman) had for something to eat before hopping a train. Often a couple of them would wait for the next freight train on our back porch.

We called them hobos because they rode freight trains, begged for food, and slept on the ground. We thought that was what hobos did, and they did,



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"Clouds just keep circling the earth around and around. And around. There is not much else to do for them."

Johnny Adams, age 7

but a hobo did it by choice. There probably was not more than one in a hundred of these "hobos" who was doing this by choice. It was really unfair to label them as such.

During the three years or so that I recall seeing this migration, we never had a single item stolen, not even food.

My Dad always killed two hogs every fall. There was always meat in the "smoke house" out back, except in late summer when about the only thing left was fatback and soup bones. It was always unlocked. The house was always unlocked. Most of our "hobos" were honest, hard-working men who had simply fallen on hard times. They were always polite and grateful for any small favor.

Mama and Dad never turned anyone away without something to eat first. Often it was just biscuit and gravy or jelly and maybe a piece of meat. Sometimes

Mama would have to bake the biscuits first. They were always grateful.

There was one man, though, who didn't like the treatment he got. It was a hot day and we had already started eating dinner. A

man on crutches stopped at the house and asked for food. We remembered him from the year before. There was no room at the table so Mama fixed him a plate and Dad took it to him on the back porch. It insulted him. He asked Dad if he wasn't good enough to eat at the table. Dad told him that it was much cooler



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on the porch than in the kitchen. After dinner Dad went out to ask if he would like more food. He was still angry. He offered Dad 50 cents for the food and indicated that he would not be stopping there again. He never did.

From late spring until early fall, several a day would stop by for a hand-out. Usually, no more than two at a time would stop. If someone was already there, others passing by would not stop.

I'm certain many of them were just as hungry, but there seemed to have been an unwritten code of ethics among them that said one does not infringe upon another's good fortune.

With few exceptions, we saw none of these men again. The migration ended when the war with Japan started. Since most

of them were in their forties or younger, we assumed a lot of them were drafted, and probably many killed.

I was too young at the time to appreciate the plight of those

men. Hungry - only the lucky ate one meal a day, sleeping on the ground, traveling with only the clothes on their backs, destitute and reduced to begging - but maintaining their moral dignity.

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