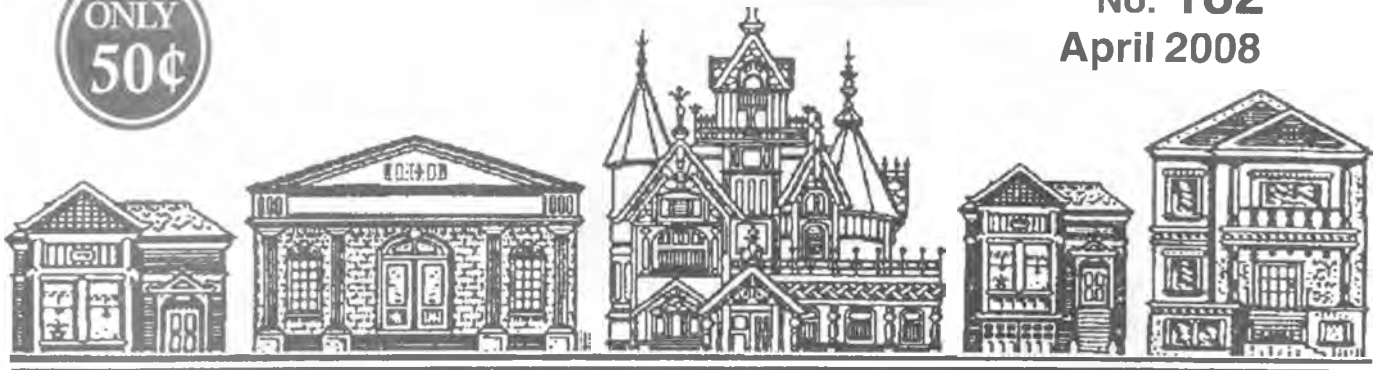


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April 2008



# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



## William Monroe Evans

The whole affair might have taken a different turn if Evans had not become smitten by a comely young lass on the outskirts of town. Soon he became a regular visitor to the young lady's farm in an attempt to woo her hand. The girl's father had no use for Evans. He repeatedly said that he would never stand for Evans marrying her as long as there was any life in his body.

To Evans that was talk he could understand. Riding up to the girl's home late one afternoon, he killed the father and carried the girl off into the mountains.

Also in this issue: The Tornado of 1974

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*Mac Lewter*

# William Monroe Evans

The townspeople had good reason to fear the man known as the "Devil of the mountains." William Monroe Evans, during a span of almost thirty years, terrorized the Tennessee Valley, killing, hanging, and burning anyone or anything that dared to stand in his path. Not even the Yankees, under General Ormsby Mitchel's command, would be guilty of such savagery and cruelty.

Evans was born on the Madison-Marshall county line around 1842 to a family whom history has forgotten. From the few accounts available it seems that his family eked out a living on a few acres of land where they worked halfheartedly growing a garden and raising a few pigs. The farm, if it could be called that, was located in the mountains now overlooking Lake Guntersville.

Evans learned at an early age that the mountains, almost completely inaccessible and hidden from prying eyes, were a per-

fect place to hide any livestock that happened to become separated from its rightful owners.

Finding the life of a brigand more to his liking than working on a hard scrabble farm, he quickly embraced his newly chosen career. Gathering about him a few other miscreants and establishing a base camp in the hills, he quickly established himself as the leader.

The years preceding the Civil War were good ones for the band of budding desperados. Money had no real meaning to them as there were few places to spend it in the hills. They were content to rustle an occasional cow, and driving it back into the mountains, slaughter it when they were hungry. The remainder of their time was spent lolling about the crude shacks and lean-to's they called home and drinking the cheap homemade whiskey they concocted.

If ever the need for hard money arose, all they had to do was to sneak into the outlying areas of Huntsville, New Hope, or Guntersville and burglarize someone's home.

Unfortunately, the lowlanders, as they were called, soon put two and two together and decided that they were financing the outlaws' life-styles through their involuntary contributions of beef. At first, the citizens were content to post



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guards, but try as they might, they could never catch the outlaws in the act.

Evans seemed to find this highly amusing. Repeatedly, after confiscating some cattle from its hapless owner, he would appear in town the next day as if daring someone to speak out against him.

Showing up in New Hope one day, after a particularly successful foray the night before, Evans began to taunt the farmer whose cattle he had stolen. The farmer was evidently afraid of Evans, and as the outlaw realized this the more brazen his abuse became. Finally the farmer, unable to take anymore, mounted his horse and left town.

The whole incident might have ended there if Evans had left town too, but instead he chose to stay, along with his comrades, and spend the day drinking in a saloon.

Late that afternoon, with the sun still shining brightly, the brigands wobbled out of the saloon and staggered to where their horses were waiting, when all of a sudden their drunken revelry was interrupted by a loud shout.

"Evans, I want my cattle back!"

It was the farmer and in his hands, pointed straight at Evans, was a shotgun.

Evans made a sudden move,

and when he did the farmer blasted away. Although the shot missed Evans, it tore a gaping hole in the shoulder of one of his men.

As Evans stood there unharmed, a cruel and vicious sneer spread across his face when he realized the farmer's gun was now empty. Slowly raising his revolver toward the defenseless farmer, Evans was heard to mutter, "self-defense" as he killed his first man in cold blood.

Where before, Evans had been a troublesome thief, now he was a killer. Many people later said that with his first taste of blood he had become the devil incarnate. With his hideouts in the surrounding mountains, it was not long before he became known as the "Devil of the mountains."

At first Evans seemed to relish his new-found notoriety. The people in the surrounding communities, never overly fond of him, now shunned him completely. Men who at least had tolerated him before now hung their heads and made excuses to leave whenever he entered a building.

This only served to enrage Evans and drive him to further extremes.

With no friends except his motley gang of brigands, Evans became embittered, some people

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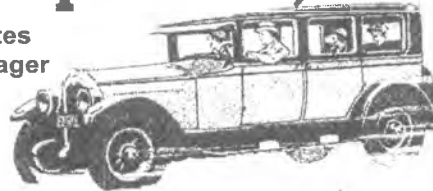
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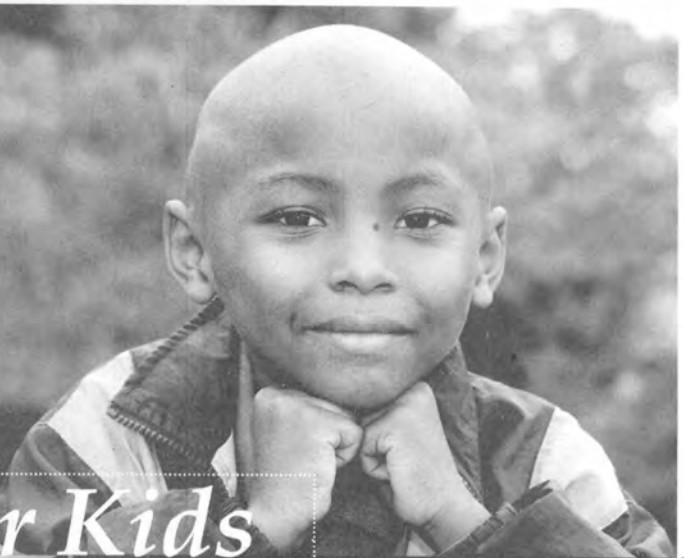
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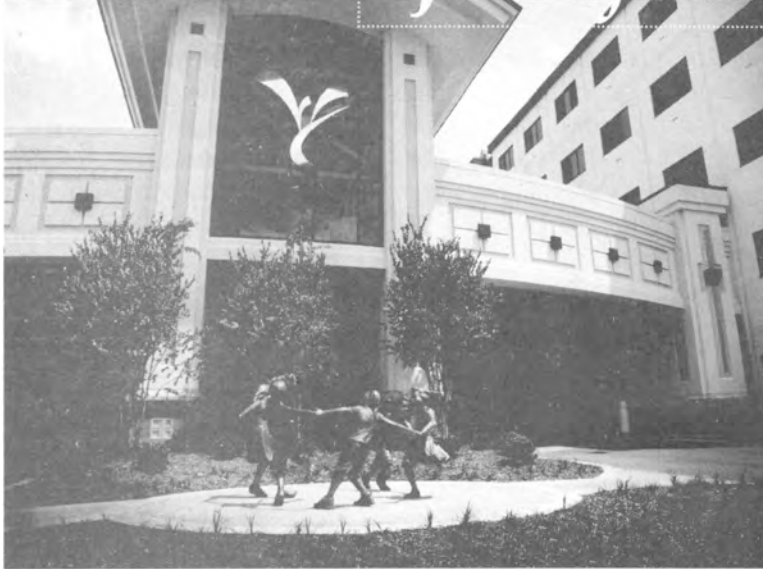
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claimed, at the whole human race. A person could look at Evans in a quizzical manner and find his barn burned the same night. A bartender who refused to serve him might end up with a load of buckshot in his back.

The law was helpless. With no witnesses or evidence there was little the sheriff could do. Anyone who spoke up against Evans was destined to feel his vengeance.

When the Civil War broke out, there lived in the northern part of Marshall County a man by the name of John Dickey; a man who was known for his hatred towards his neighbors. After federal troops took control of the area north of the Tennessee River, Dickey offered his services to the union commander. Dickey's hatred for his own people was wrongly interpreted as patriotism to the Union, and so the Yankees commissioned him a captain of scouts with the power to organize a company to operate in North Alabama.

This new company was composed mostly of men who had deserted the Confederate army or had been dodging conscription. Many of these men were also wanted by the law.

Lured by the opportunity to pillage and plunder at will, Evans joined the company and found, to his pleasant surprise, that he was in his element.

John Dickey and Devil Monroe Evans cut a swath of terror

across the valley that would remain unparalleled in the history of the Tennessee Valley.

Men were dragged from their homes and murdered, some of them in the presence of their families. Volney Elliot was shot in the back, Alfred Clark was hung near New Hope, Davis Russell was shot and his body cruelly mutilated. Fletcher Lewis was found hung a few miles outside of Huntsville.

For most of them, their only crime was in crossing paths with Devil Monroe Evans and John Dickey.

The Confederate army was powerless to stop these atrocities and the Federal government refused to. Evans, Dickey and men like them, the federals reasoned, were helping the Northern cause by keeping the Rebel sympathizers in check.

By war's end, Evans and Dickey were the most hated men in the Tennessee Valley. Although legally operating under the auspices of the Federal army, they had committed no crimes. The ex-Confederate soldiers returning home saw things differently.

John Dickey, deciding discretion was the better part of valor, pulled up stakes and moved to Texas. Evans, with his small band of cutthroats, retreated into the hills above New Hope in anticipation of impending retribution.

An uneasy truce seemed to prevail for a while. The people in the valley stayed out of the mountains and Evans rarely if ever

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went to town. When he did, he was always carrying his shotgun.

The whole affair might have ended there if Evans had not become smitten by a comely young lass on the outskirts of town. Soon he became a regular visitor to the young lady's farm in an attempt to woo her hand. The girl's father had no use for Evans. He repeatedly told his daughter that he would never stand for Evans marrying her as long as there was any life in his body.

To Evans, that was talk he could understand. Riding up to the girl's home late one afternoon, he killed the father and carried the girl off into the mountains.

The good folks of New Hope were outraged. A mob began to gather and there was talk of bringing Evans to justice. The sheriff brought them back to their senses. "No one witnessed the shooting except for the daughter," he said, "and if Evans is married to her now that means she can't testify."

In public, the men agreed with the sheriff but in private they had other ideas.

One of the little known facts

about New Hope concerned the Masonic Hall in town. Besides being used for other functions, it was also the meeting place for the local Ku Klux Klan. And it wasn't long before Evans and his wicked ways came to the attention of the local, night-shirted gentry.

According to popular legend, the Klan placed a two-hundred dollar bounty on Evans' head and within days, he was playing dodge the bullet whenever he wandered down from the hills.

This was more than Evans' pride could bear. Calling his men together he laid plans to dynamite the Masonic Hall and the Methodist church, both strongholds of his enemies. Fortunately for the townspeople of New Hope, word of the scheme leaked out and before Evans could act, warrants were obtained for his arrest.

After several long and hard days in the saddle, the posse cornered Evans and his men near the present-day city of Arab. The pack resisted arrest and in the ensuing gunfight six gang members were shot to death. Evans escaped, although severely

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wounded. He hid in the mountains until his injuries had healed sufficiently enough to allow him to travel. Deciding that both Madison and Marshall counties were dangerous to his health, he moved his wife and what was left of his gang to the mountains of Morgan County.

Cast out of the hills that he called home and with no friends, Evans began to look for other means of solace. It didn't take him long to find what he was looking for.

Cloaked in the veil of religion and casting himself as a modern-day Gabriel out to rid the world of wickedness, Evans proclaimed himself a converted man - a prophet of God.

Of course, cattle and hogs kept disappearing and he still carried the same shotgun wherever he ventured.

Traditional religion must have weighed too heavily upon his shoulders. Instead of spending his time in church spouting hell-fire and brimstone, he began to have visions.

"God," he said, "has told me to punish the nonbelievers."

This punishment usually took the form of larceny, to the delight of his slovenly gang.

Next he had visions of many wives.

"God," he was reported to have said, "has instructed me to take more wives so that our truth might be spread."

Devil Evans believed in practicing his newly discovered religion and it wasn't long before there

were seven wives living in his shanty, with a multitude of miniature devils playing in the dusty yard.

It would be satisfying if we could, at this point, record that Devil Evans became a changed man, but alas, if anything, he became even more cruel. Despite his many wives, (or maybe because of them) he began spending more time with his gang of brigands.

And now, with a bible in one hand and a shotgun in the other, he considered any livestock that wandered his way as donations for the Lord's work.

Evans would call on some hapless farmer, and with his shotgun lying across the saddle in



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front of him, inform the man that he would surely die and go to hell unless he saw it in his heart to make a sizable contribution.

Whenever someone would protest he would find his home or barn burned to the ground. If he continued to protest, he became a leading candidate for a midnight ambush.

Every grand jury that was impaneled between 1875 and 1891 tried to indict Evans for his many crimes, but through perjured testimony and intimidation of crucial witnesses he managed to overcome their every effort.

Many people began to think that the Devil was truly invincible.

In the summer of 1891, Evans and his son John were again out collecting contributions for their work. Unfortunately, a man by the name of Pierce Mooney returned home in time to catch the duo burglarizing his home. Mooney pulled his gun and began shooting, and father and son headed for the woods. The next morning as Mooney was feeding his livestock, he was ambushed in the back by someone firing a shotgun. Although in critical condition, Mooney was able to crawl back to the house, and there, his wife sent for the doctor.

A live witness could cause trouble. Evans knew Mooney was in critical condition, so he waited in hiding for the doctor on the way to the patient's house.

The physician, after being warned not to attend the wounded man, made as if he was going back to town. Instead, he cut through the woods and returned to the house by another route.

Next, Evans and his son tried to run Mooney's wife off. Hiding in the woods, they fired their weapons at the house and in loud voices warned her that if she did not leave, she too would be shot.

Meanwhile, word had

reached town of the dastardly attack and the Devil's attempt to silence the witness. That same afternoon Evans' son rode into town to pick up some supplies and was promptly arrested by an enraged mob and carried to Baileytown for trial.

When Evans received word of his son's arrest, he mounted his horse, and carrying his shotgun, rode into town. As he slowly made his way down the street he could not help but notice the small groups of men gathered on every corner, eyeing him with utter hatred.

Suddenly, mobs of people began swarming out of every door and alley. People who for years had been afraid to confront Evans were now determined to seek vengeance.

After being pulled roughly from his horse, Evans was locked

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in an empty store building with his son until the authorities could decide what to do with them.

The father and son duo were not unduly worried. There were no witnesses to any of their crimes.

The same stark realization began to dawn on the townspeople. Evans would probably go free and their families would continue to be terrorized.

Late that night, August 15, 1891, a mob of almost two hundred people approached the store and demanded custody of Monroe Evans and his son. The guards offered no resistance. The condemned men were marched a few blocks down the street to

where a massive oak tree stood. A rope was thrown across a limb and a preacher said a final prayer.

Devil Evans departed this world with a curse on his lips and the gleam of a fanatic in his eye. His son, John, began crying and begging for mercy as the noose was placed around his neck.

According to one account, just seconds after the hanging took place, a violent thunderstorm swept over the valley, with horrendous claps of thunder and solid sheets of rain pulverizing everything in its path.

"The Devil," they said, "was taking his due."

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item appeared in the Alabama Tribune newspaper:

*"Rube Burrow was shot down by Carter and his name was lauded to the skies as a hero. Ford, in a most cowardly manner, shot and killed Jesse James, but the state of Missouri paid him large sums of money. Both of these men had some redeeming qualities. They were true to their families and true to their friends. But this man had none.*

*"He was not true to his country or his family. But the men who relieved North Alabama of the presence of this man are called by some misinformed persons brutes and murderers.*

*"Evans' poor wife is in a better condition. The man who wrecked her life and educated her son for the gallows is gone. She will no longer be insulted by the presence of her husband's harem. His gang is scattered to the four winds and peace and order have taken their place. The last stronghold of the Devil in the Tennessee Valley has been destroyed and the people say Amen."*



**"If a turtle doesn't have a shell, is he naked or homeless?"**

**Stevie Jones, Decatur**

## Loose Cows May Find Buckshot

Some people in Huntsville are showing an utter and total disregard of other people's rights by turning their cows out at night to destroy the gardens and front yard flowers, as is now being done. The fine should be increased tenfold.

Several cows have been allowed to run at large on East Holmes street the last few nights and are playing havoc with the beautiful yards in that neighborhood. Wednesday night they found an entrance into a gentleman's garden and swept things clean. Under such provocation, a man is excusable if he fills the cow's hide full of bird shot.

*from 1904 newspaper*

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# Loveday Hollow

by Malcolm Miller

Traveling east on Highway 72 over Chapman Mountain, then a few miles down Old Gurley Road there is a country lane winding its way all the way back to the edge of the mountain and ending in what I believe has been known since before the civil war as Loveday Hollow.

As a small boy I remember quite vividly my family's trips to visit the Lovedays of Loveday Hollow. Daddy would load all our family in the two horse wagon early on a Sunday morning and head out for an all day visit with his nephew Bill Loveday and family. It was a very exciting time for me and I can still remember all the good food and fun we had.

Sam Loveday's family lived down in the flat before the climb up to where Bill Loveday lived. I still remember the house where we spent those summer days long ago. It was probably a pre-civil war house with the kitchen built separate from the rest of the house. The women would cook the food and then bring all that good food steaming into the dining room in the house.

Unfortunately this house burned down in nineteen fifty nine and Bill Loveday was severely burned in the fire and died from his burns but another house or two were built and the remaining family stayed on



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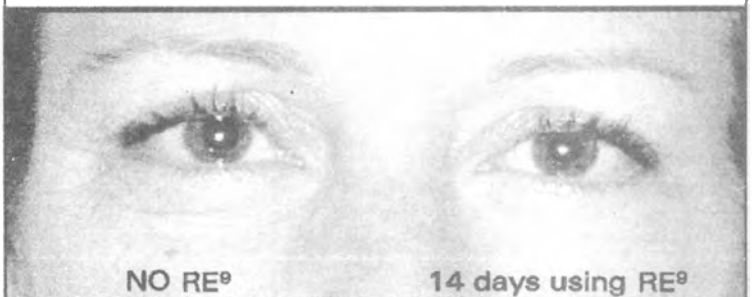


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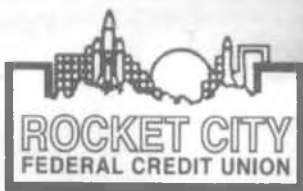
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in the hollow. Several years prior to Bill and his wife Dovey's death, slowly one by one the kids left the home place leaving only John and Neal, known as "Butch," in the hollow. In the mean time John had met and married a pretty young lady named Mildred League, then Mildred's sister Jinny came visiting I guess, and she and Neal were married. I say she came there because, knowing Neal as I did, I am quite sure he didn't leave the hollow to go courting her. Neal was one of the quietest and kindest people I have ever known but he just wasn't one to venture out of the hollow for any reason.

My older brothers told stories about Neal throwing his books off the school bus and when the driver stopped he would jump off and head back to the mountain. I recall on one occasion when we pulled up at the foot of the mountain in the wagon I saw Neal heading into the mountain running. Later that day I got real thirsty and their water was awful because it had sulphur in it. Then one of the girls told me there was a spring of good water up the mountain so I went up the mountain a short distance and found the spring along with Neal, I guess he wasn't retreating any further. Trouble was there was a hound dog laying in the spring, but I was so hot and thirsty I ran the dog out, found a rusty tin can and got a drink.

I guess Neal got his love for the hollow naturally from some of his ancestors. Court documents show that before the Civil War the owner of what was then a huge plantation, a man named David Moore, made an agreement that George Loveday was granted permanent tenant rights to live on the plantation. George Loveday was Bill Loveday's uncle. My older brother James "Gib" Miller who passed away earlier this year at age ninety four knew George



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Loveday's three sons well and he related that two of the three sons of George Loveday never once ventured out of the hollow. The other brother looked after them and gave each of them a new pocket knife each year.

The owner of the property where Loveday Hollow is located is, I believe, the prominent Rhett family and they decided to turn the place into a dairy farm, which they did. John and Neal and their wives ran the dairy for many years until John got disabled and he and Mildred left the hollow leaving Neal and Jinny to run the dairy. Finally the dairy shut down but the land owners let Neal and Jinny live on until Neal passed away.

Bill Loveday, Neal's nephew, a Baptist minister, told me at Neal's funeral that Neal had told him many times if he ever left the hollow he would be carried out and he said he stood and watched them carry him out and as they did this marked the end of an era

The Lovedays are forever gone from Loveday Hollow but my memories of the trips there as a boy will remain with me as long as I live.

## Men Arrested for Fornication

*from 1901 newspaper*

John Griffin and Jim Brown were arrested and placed in jail here by Deputy Sheriffs Pierce and Robinson on charges of fornication and public drunkenness. Deputy Pierce also found a concealed razor on the person of Brown.

Griffin, it is believed, is wanted in Gadsden on a charge of murder and will be held here until officials of that place advise disposition.

# Bicyclists Helping Budget

*from 1888 newspaper*

The city is now realizing a nice income from parties who are making it a habit to ride bicycles on the sidewalks. In the past few days not less than fifteen or twenty cyclists have been arraigned in the city court on this charge, the fine they receive for the first offense being one dollar, the second two dollars and so on. The police wish to thank the bicyclists who are doing their part to help maintain the department's budget.

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# Remnants of War

*From 1891 newspaper*

From a reliable source a Mercury reporter was informed that on last Saturday at a point in the vicinity of New Hope, but on the Marshall County side of the river, an explosion occurred that has recalled the war and nearly scared the life out of an honest old man.

It seems that John Roberts was burning logs for the purpose of clearing up, and he had set fire to a heap which ignited a large dead tree. Suddenly a most terrific explosion occurred, one that was heard for miles, and the old tree was shivered and scattered to the winds. Roberts, who was a hundred yards distant, took his departure without troubling himself with an investigation.

A party who finally visited the spot where the tree once stood and made an investigation found from the surroundings every evidence that the explosion was that of a bomb-shell that had been imbedded in the tree during the war. It is known that there was a good deal of firing from cannon loaded with shell at this point during the war, a point that commanded the river. The circumstances can admit of two theories, one that the shell became imbedded in the tree by being fired from a cannon and failed to explode. The other that it had been left in the hollow, if there was any in the tree, as a sort of keepsake, hoping at some future day that it would get in its work. The first theory, however, is the most probable. The report was heard far into Madison County and occasioned considerable wonder.

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# Memories

by Escoe Henley

The CMTC (Civilian Military Training Camps) were started by Franklin Roosevelt about 1936 to instill military training in men who could be called in the future with little cost to the government. Conditions in Europe and Asia were approaching a crisis and it was apparent that the current Regular Army, consisting of about 120,000 men, would be too small to handle a world-wide conflict.

Members met for one month each year for training at an army installation. They received no pay except for five cents per mile by rail from place of residence to place of training.

Boys from Huntsville were sent to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, home of the 6th Cavalry. We boarded the train in Huntsville and upon arriving in Chattanooga, army trucks were waiting to take us the rest of the way.

We dismounted from the trucks and lined up in front of rows of concrete slabs. On each side was a tent, folded and ready to be erected. The concrete slabs served as the floors when the tents were erected (one for each six men). We were each given a straw tick (cotton bag) to make a mattress by filling the bag with straw from a straw pile.

The only buildings were mess halls, one for each troop. Discipline was very strict. In the

evening we could go to the army PX or theater but were not allowed to go to Chattanooga or Rossville.

After two or three days one of the boys from Huntsville decided he had had enough and wanted to go home. No provisions were made for such events so he was locked up in the Guard House. The next day he decided that army life wasn't so bad after all.

The first year trainees learned "dismounted drill" and were not allowed to ride horses. The 3rd and 4th years we trained on the horses of the Regular Army Cavalry.

Immediately after dismounting for the day, the horse had to be groomed. It was gone over carefully with a curry comb and brush

and its hooves cleaned. The saddle was then cleaned with saddle soap. Very often the soldier of the regular army, whom the horse was assigned to, was standing by to make sure we did a good job.

Some of the people from Huntsville who attended C.M.T.C. at Fort Oglethorpe with me were: William A. Burgess, Jarrett (Jack) Griffin, Charles Hooper, Elliott R. Matthews, and Guy Haislip, who was from Gurley.

**"The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the church would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday."**

*Seen in local church bulletin*

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# Tips from Liz

\* When I spray my perfume, oftentimes it just sprays in the air since I can't see the hole, so I started putting a black mark with permanent marker where the hole is - now I can see it!

\* Also about perfume, spray a bit into your hair before going out - it lasts longer in your hair than it will on your skin!

\* Adding "miracle foods" to your daily diet can add years to your life! Here are some of them:

- 5 oz. glass of red wine
- 2 oz. dark chocolate
- 4 c. fruits & veges
- 1 clove garlic
- 2 oz. nuts
- 5 oz. fish or seafood

\* Olive oil will take off paper that is glued to your wooden furniture.

\* To get rid of ants in your home, put small piles of cornmeal where you see them. They will eat it, take it home and can't digest it so it kills them. It may take a week or so but works!

\* Olive oil, when mixed with a bit of lemon juice, also makes a great furniture polish. Use it two parts oil to 1 part lemon juice, put in a spray bottle and spray. Buff dry with a dry cloth.

\* When you want to double the amount of frosting you have for a cake, just use your mixer to whip it for a few minutes.

\* Cream of tartar will take stains out of aluminum cookware. Fill pot with water and add 2 tablespoons cream of tartar for each quart of water, bring to boil, simmer for 15 minutes, pour out water, wash and dry.

\* If you are being pulled down by complications in your life, simplify by removing them from your life. And that could include people.

\* When you buy a new bike for your child, put a picture of him/her inside the handlebar be-

fore placing the grips on. That way if the bike is ever stolen, just remove the grip and there is proof of who owns the bike.

\* When you host a bridal or baby shower, buy a pack of thank you cards for the honoree. Have each of the guests put their address on the envelopes, so when the bride/new mom gets ready to send out her thank yous, they are already addressed!

\* Cornstarch is a great grease-absorber for countertops and around the stove.

\* An easy way to clean the inside of your microwave is to put a slice of lemon in a dish of hot water and boil it in your microwave til it creates a steam. This will help

loosen the grime inside so you can just wipe it off, and the lemon gives you a great fresh scent.

\* To attract and trap those pesky fruit flies, just fill a small glass with 1/2" apple cider vinegar and 3 drops of dish washing liquid. Mix well and wait. Flies love this and will drown in the mixture!

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# Depression Days

by Ruby Crabbe

I remember during the Depression days how hard it was for people to provide for their families. Survival was on the minds of everyone and a prayer in their hearts that God would provide them the knowledge and the strength to stay strong and not to give up hope that tomorrow would be better.

Most of the children wore hand-me-downs, and a lot of the clothes were made from feed sacks. There was coal and wood to buy for the cook stove, and the open fireplaces provided warmth for the families.

Many a pot of beans or soup has been cooked over the flames of those fireplaces. The hearth was used in roasting corn and peanuts.

Even though times were hard in those days, and despite the

hardship everyone experienced, there was fun and enjoyment to sort of break the gloom of those dark days.

My mother, Josie Allen, along with half the kids from Dallas Village following behind her, would walk to Sharps Mountain to pick watercress. Sometimes she would cook it and sometimes she made salads with it. Either way, it was delicious. And it was a supplement to the rest of the food on the table. The watercress came from a natural spring of water flowing from

beneath an old wooden shed that sat on the north side of the mountain.

Sometimes Mama would walk around the foot of Chapman Mountain and gather wild sallet. While Mama hunted for wild sallet we kids would climb trees, play hide and seek, and hunt for wild animals.

Somehow we never found any wild animals but we did sport a few skinned knees and a case or two of poison ivy.

About that time the "itch" breezed in. Don't know how

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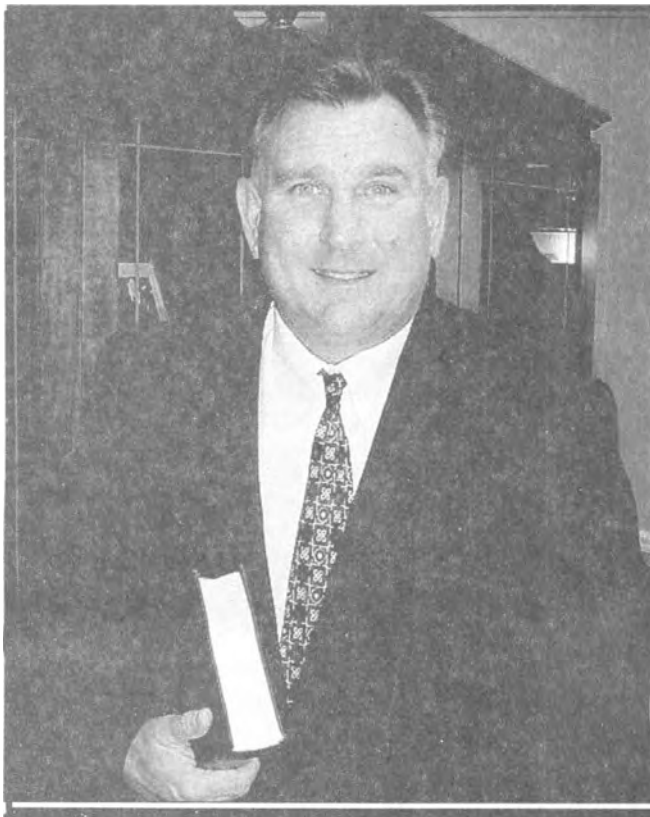
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many people caught it but I think it's safe to say, more people caught it than didn't. Most everyone was busy at the same time SCRATCHING. Word got around that if a person would boil polk root and take a bath in the water, it would cure the itch.

One brave soul dared to try it. The month was January and the big ditch on Rison Avenue was half full of water with a thin coat of ice on it. That brave soul came out of that polk root bath and hit that ice coated ditch with a wild dive. The bath had made his itch worse and all that man could do was sit in the ice water and do his scratching. And scratch he did! He was stirring up that water as if a thousand demons were after him.

Then there was the WPA. My brother Earl Nelson worked on the WPA and he would take his lunch with him. He carried his lunch in a cloth sack so he could tie it on to a tree limb to keep ants from getting into it.

One day at lunch time he went to get his lunch but an old cow had beat him to it. Earl said the old cow had chewed on that sack so long that the sack was longer than his leg.

A lot of the men took their lunches with them in paper sacks. They would sit their sacks under a big tree til it was time for lunch. One of the men said that since all the paper sacks were just alike someone had grabbed his sack by mistake. He said he was sure glad they did - there was one sack left and it had delicious biscuits and pork chops in it. He didn't know who got his lunch but he did know that whoever it was had biscuits and gravy for lunch.

Yes, the Depression days were bad, but it didn't dampen our joy and excitement of just being alive, to enjoy the laughter and pleasures of life that God had so freely given us.



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# Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Congratulations to our winner for the March Photo of the Month. **Joe Patterson**, who was Sheriff of Madison County for many years, was the first caller and wins a free year's subscription to "Old Huntsville!" Joe has been retired a while now but loves to help sweet wife **Jane** around the house. They are especially proud of sons **Brent Patterson** (a deputy sheriff for Madison County), and **Jason Patterson**, who is district manager for Reebok shoes in Chattanooga.

The photo was of **Rolo Weaver**, of Rolo's Restaurant, and we must have gotten 400 correct callers after Joe!

It was great meeting **Joyce Rutland** and **Lauren Bragg**, those two charming young ladies who are the owners of that popular new eatery off Ryland Pike just past the railroad tracks, called Lauren's Cafe. Our breakfast & latte's were very good, and we were honored to meet up with **Malcolm Miller**, his wife **Lois**, and their nephew **Austin Miller**. There is so much history in Ryland, and many may remember when the terrible tornados of 1974 destroyed several homes, the local store and the cotton gin

there.

**Sam Zeman's** 80th birthday party was attended by many friends & family, and was held at Valley Hill Country Club, arranged by his sweet daughter **Jill** and son **Mark**.

I spoke with a delightful lady recently. **Jeanetta Toney Moore** just loves Huntsville history and she says she learns something new each and every day!

**Mark H. Hassell**, 59, passed away unexpectedly at his home in March. He leaves behind his beloved family **Margret** and **Jonathan**. Mark was a member of the Redstone Fire and Emergency Services since 1990.

**John Henegar**, of JTH Grading & Demolition, Inc., is sure proud of his family. His son **John Jr.** (wife is **Shelia**) and grandson **Parker** are all race-car drivers (along with John, Sr.). His daughter **Jennifer** is married to **Doc Smith** and they have two kids - **Connor**, 7, and **Elizabeth**, 5. His daughter **Joannie** is married to **Jeremy Woosley** and they have **Taylor**, 18, and **James**, 13.

It was with sorrow that we heard **Mildred Butler** had died, at age 88. Mrs. Butler was a nurse in Huntsville for many years and took good care of many of Huntsville's residents. She leaves **Joyce Russell**, her daughter, and sons **Ralph, Mark and Cliff**, in addition to grandchildren and great grandchildren. We send our love to you all.

While having a great lunch at Chef's Table recently, we talked with one of the servers there who was really nice - **David Stripling** is the professional young man who took great care of us!

**Judy Butler**, who works for **Dr. Louis Horn III** and takes care of you when you go to the Orthopaedic Center, is having a very important April birthday! We won't say how many, but she's sure proud of it!

**Edgar James** recently celebrated a major milestone - his 100th birthday! He partied with friends & family at Redstone Village, where he is a resident.

A special hello to **Bonnie**

## 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 hung around airports while younger but now he just likes to talk.



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**Campbell**, whom we talked to the other day. Her dad just loved Huntsville history.

We all have read in the newspaper that Huntsville is ranked #18 in the United States as far as going Green. **Joy McKee** heads up the city's **Green Team** and recently told us about a program underway that everyone can participate in. All you have to do is go to their website which is [www.hsvcity.com/greenteam](http://www.hsvcity.com/greenteam) and register your own ideas for how we can go green. It can be as simple as turning off the water when you brush your teeth!

The program runs through May 31 and here's the incentive if you win - you get a \$1500 gift certificate to Across the Pond, and a \$600 Troybuilt Garden tractor that mows, mulches, etc.

Happy birthday to **Kevin Kirkland** of Hazel Green from his mother-in-law **Judy Cothren**. Judy is having a birthday as well - happy birthday to both of you!

I met the sweetest guy the other day while at Fresh Market. **Lawrence Yeargin** had retired years ago and just decided to get out and do something else. He really enjoys working there and gets to meet great people!

**Bob Landers** of Decatur works at JC's Gun & Tackle shop there, and is a really interesting guy to talk with. He sure loves his pets!

Residents in the historic Old Town district are so happy to welcome **Blake & Jan Dorning** and their sweet Black lab **Uther** to our neighborhood. We feel it's one of the best places to live and since everyone has front porches, it's easy to meet new friends.

We were so sorry to hear of the death of **Miriam Gowan**, who was 93 years of age. Her granddaughter **Audra Wilson**, of Salon Bella, loved her so much and enjoyed the stories Miriam told. Our condolences go to Audra and the family, this feisty lady will really be missed.

**Ty Rhoden** turned 15 recently. His proud Dad is **Jeff Rhoden**. Happy Birthday Ty!

**John Troup** of Huntsville works for ASCAP, the music licensing company, and recently he was awarded the prestigious Team of the Year Award for the U.S. John is the team leader, which is an added bonus. Congratulations!

One of my favorite guys in the world is **Mr. Robert Martin**, who lives in Morningside Assisted Living in Madison. He was relieved when his son **Randy Martin** came back safely from Iraq, where he commanded 1,100 soldiers. Robert wants to send a special hello to his dear friend **Dot Jennett**, whom we understand is quite computer-savvy!

**Jim Gaston** is President & CEO of Die-Matic Tool Co. in Meridianville and we met him recently while eating at Lee Ann's. He hasn't lived in Huntsville that long but just loves it here!

A good friend of **Margaret and Cecil Ashburn** is **Barbara Crutcher**. We met her recently and can see why the Ashburns think so much of her.

**John Bzdell**, of Marathon Painting, is going to be a grandpa! And he's so YOUNG! His daughter **Heather** and husband **Ben Luthy** are thrilled about the baby, who is a girl. This baby will also be the first great grandchild for

**Stephen S. Bzdell, Sr.**, also **Jr.** and **Ann Louallen**. **Teresa Davis** is the proud grandma.

**Wayne Marshall** started calling his wife **Joy** "squirrel" in 1977, (short for sweet cute little girl) and since then she's collected squirrels from all over the world! She's even getting them from anonymous donors!

Have a wonderful April and keep an eye on your older neighbors who may live alone.

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# Spring Confections

## Forgotten Crispies

- 2 1/2 c. powdered sugar
- 4 egg whites
- 1 t. cream of tartar
- 1 t. vanilla
- 1 c. chopped pecans

Beat all ingredients except nuts until stiff, then add nuts and drop by teaspoonfuls onto a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 225 degrees for an hour, turn oven off and remove crispies when oven is totally cool.

## Honeyballs

- 1 c. honey
- 1 c. peanut butter
- 2 c. dry powdered milk
- 1 c. corn flakes, crushed

Cream honey and peanut butter, mix with powdered milk, shape into balls. Roll in cereal and serve.

## Best Dark Fudge

- 3 c. chocolate chips, semi-sweet
- 1 dash salt
- 1 1/2 t. vanilla extract
- 1 can Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk

1 c. walnuts or pecans, chopped

In a heavy saucepan over low heat, melt the chips with the Eagle brand and salt. Remove from heat, stir in the nuts and vanilla. Spread evenly over wax-paper-lined 9 x 11" pan, quickly, because it will harden.

Cover and chill overnight - next day turn fudge onto cutting board and remove wax paper, cut into small squares.

## Macaroons

- 1 16-oz pkg. angel food cake mix (1 step)

- 1/2 c. water
- 1 1/2 t. almond extract
- 2 c. flakes coconut

In a bowl beat the cake mix, water and extract - use low speed for 30 seconds. Scrape, beat on medium speed for another minute.

Fold in the coconut, stir. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto a parchment paper-lined baking sheet.

Bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes, remove paper with cookies to a wire rack to cool completely. These can be drizzled with a bit of melted semi-sweet chocolates when cooled.

## Simple Carrot Cake

- 2 c. sugar
- 4 eggs
- 2 t. cinnamon
- 1 1/2 c. cooking oil
- 2 c. self-rising flour
- 3 c. grated carrots

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1 c. chopped pecans  
 Mix sugar, oil, cinnamon and eggs well. Fold in the flour. Add carrots and nuts, mix well.

Bake at 325 degrees for about 45 minutes.

**Icing:**

1 box confectioners sugar  
 1 8-oz pkg. cream cheese

Mix well and ice cake when completely cooled.

## Caramel Apple Treat

1 Granny Smith apple, seeded & sliced

1 t. lemon juice  
 1/4 c. caramel topping  
 1 T. honey-roasted peanuts  
 Cool Whip

In a small bowl toss your apple slices with the lemon juice til coated.

Layer into a dessert bowl the apples, then the caramel, then the peanuts, then top with a dollop of the Cool Whip. You won't believe how good this is!

## Heirloom Cookies

1/2 lb. butter, room temps  
 1 c. powdered sugar  
 2 c. plain flour  
 1 T. vanilla extract  
 1 T. water

1/8 t. salt  
 1 c. chopped nuts

Cream butter and sugar together, add flour, vanilla, water, salt and nuts. Roll in little balls and press with fingers.

Bake on greased cookie sheet in 350 degree oven til slightly browned, about 12-15 minutes. While still hot, dredge the cookies in powdered sugar.

## Brown Bread Pudding

1 c. brown bread pieces  
 2 c. milk  
 3 eggs  
 2 T. pure maple syrup  
 2 egg whites  
 1 T. sugar  
 2 T. whipping cream

Soak bread pieces in half a cup of the milk for 20 minutes, then make a custard of the rest of the milk, eggs, and maple sugar by just cooking them together over medium heat til thickened.

Pour it hot over the bread. Beat egg whites with the sugar and cream. Fold into the custard, bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

**"Grandma's are just Moms with lots of frosting."**

**Evan Troup, age 4**



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# Delivering the Mail

by Cathey Carney

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

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

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

Having served several territories throughout Huntsville, his last route covered the area of Pulaski Pike and West Clinton Avenue. One of the few black men working for the post office at

that time, Clarence was born in March of 1878 and was the youngest of five brothers. His father was a farmer and a Methodist minister, and Powers had always taken an interest in church work. When he wasn't delivering mail, he was usually found at the church. Powers' high school education was received at Central Alabama academy, located on Franklin Street.

Clarence became a mail carrier on June 1, 1917 after working for Chattanooga, Memphis and other Huntsville employers. He especially liked carrying the mail, he said, because he liked seeing the same people every day. The fact that ladies along his route often times would have pies and cakes waiting for him just provided an extra incentive. For all the eating he did, Clarence was a tall, slim man.

The last day that he served, January 27, 1948, was one of the most difficult he had ever experienced, due to the severe icy conditions of the Huntsville streets. His horse had gotten quite old by this time and found it very hard to maneuver the slick roads.

Clarence Powers was seventy years of age when he retired.

Upon his retirement, the horse and buggy were consigned to the county barn. Two months later, a group of people led by farmer Ben Lucas bought the buggy and horse and presented it to the retired mail carrier in appreciation of his

years of dedicated service. For several years thereafter Clarence and his horse remained a familiar sight to Huntsvillians.

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Dad: Howard L. "Jack" Copeland with daughters.  
Front: Janet Wells, Back (l-r): Jackie Butler, Judy Tetz and Jenny Copeland

another daughter. "Daddy doesn't have to worry with yard work or home upkeep. They take care of everything."

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privileges at a local country club.

Jack still leaves plenty of time to continue the good-natured lectures on independence to his family. "He's relentless," his daughters laugh. "All of our lives, he's told us how to be financially independent and take care of ourselves." Then they begin reciting the advice they've heard over and over from their father: "**Never limit your options. Make sure you're investing in your future. Think long-term.**" These are words he lives by every day at Redstone Village.

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South on Memorial Pkwy., Left on Veterans Dr. [2/10 of a mile past Hobbs Rd.]



# Civil War Memories

by Peter Cunningham  
(written in 1914)

Dear Friend:

Today my mind runs back to February 17th, 1865, forty-nine years ago, when Capt. Joel Cunningham and I, his brother, were being held prisoners of war in the city of Fayetteville, Tenn. We had been prisoners fifteen days and on the 17th day of February, 1865, General Milroy, U.S.A., whose headquarters were at Tullahoma, sent Col. Stauffer to Fayetteville with a message to Col. C, ordering him to turn us over to Col. Stauffer to be executed. Col. Stauffer, when he first reached Fayetteville, surrounded the Provost Marshall's office with his men. He left his men in front of the Provost Office while he and the Provost Marshall crossed over to Col. C's headquarters in a room of Dr. William Bonner's residence. I was at the northeast corner of the square when the squadron came into town. I had been in bed sick and had not eaten a bite in the last twenty-four hours and had not

seen my brother. I was feeling bad but the worst was seemingly an awful dread on my mind. Finally I left the bed and started to look for my brother, and when I reached the northeast corner of the square I learned that Col. C had ridden up the pike. While I was standing on the corner immediately south of Thomas Goodrich's store house, we saw the Yankees (I think they were mounted infantry) making the curve on the street coming around in front of the old Pres-

byterian Church, I remarked to the citizens that I was talking with, "I have seen a great many Yankees but there goes the hardest looking gang that I ever saw."

When they were even with the courthouse they filed left and went to the Provost Marshal's office where they formed a halfcircle line in front of the office. The Provost Marshal went with the Colonel across to Col. C's office to deliver General Milroy's orders to Col. C. In the meantime I walked across the square to look for my brother and as I approached the

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*Seen on recent high school quiz on Analogies & Metaphors*



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southwest corner of the square I noticed him and White Buchanan sitting with their backs against Dr. Bonner's yard fence engaged in conversation. Just then I noticed Col. Stauffer and the Provost Marshal coming through Dr. Bonner's yard gate from Col. C's office, and I noticed the Provost look at my brother, then say something to the Colonel and the Colonel turned and set his eyes on brother and gave him a long, wicked, vicious look until he had walked some distance. The Marshal glanced to me but the Colonel kept his eyes on brother until they had passed without seeing me. I spoke to White Buchanan and my brother and passed on to meet Parson Gill and another friend who had just then driven up and stopped on the street in front of Col. C's office. I walked up and was standing with one foot on one of the front wheels when Col. C's office guard walked up to me and said in a low voice for me and brother to come into his office and stay there. The guard passed on to brother and notified him. Brother glanced at him and we both walked into Col. C's office. The Colonel was walking the floor seemingly in much trouble, and without delay made known to us General Milroy's orders, and he said for us to get out of town without delay and report to General Johnson at Pulaski and referred us to his adjutant for further instructions.

The adjutant was also excited and informed us of General Milroy's orders and told us to make our escape if we could and report to General Johnson

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at Pulaski, who would protect us.

I remarked that I was sick and had not eaten since yesterday morning and I was not able to make the trip to Pulaski. The adjutant replied, "Get away from here. Avoid the pickets if you can." Then he turned to brother and said, "Captain, you have the pass that I gave you yesterday to pass you and your brother outside the pickets?" "Yes," replied brother, "a pass for me and one other man." "That will do. Your brother is the other man: avoid the pickets if possible as they may have heard the news. But if you meet them show them your pass without excitement and pass on."

Brother asked the adjutant: "Do you know where the pickets are on post?" He said, "No, but I believe there are none west." He then opened the door for us to pass out. We passed out down the hill, across the street, and going directly west went up through a beautiful blue grass lawn where we meet a Yankee soldier driving some loose horses off the pasture. He was the only Yankee we saw,

We addressed him and leisurely passed on, pointing at and talking about some fine cows grazing on the blue grass, and occasionally turning our eyes toward town. Continuing west we crossed over the hill south of the college and at the head of a ravine we stopped where we could see back over town and took a good look, but could see no sign of excitement or unusual movement in any way. As we started down the ravine we increased our gait and were soon under cover of the hill so we could not be seen and we began to feel more safe. We struck the river at the head of a small island about one-fourth the distance across. Both up and down the river as far as we could see the water looked as though it was deep. But, deep or shallow, we must cross to the other side. I began by taking off my shoes. My brother asked if I meant to remove my clothes and I answered that I was too feeble to travel in wet clothes.

We found the water about the same depth all the way across, reaching to our hips. We felt thankful that it was not any deeper. We climbed up the bluff to where the bush would partly hide us and

rubbed our limbs dry and dressed and then climbed to the top of the bluff and crossed a field keeping to the southwest we reached a beautiful grassy woodland.

The tall grass killed by frost, made a fairly good bed; the sun was shining nice and warm and I was feeble and needed rest so we chose a nice place with a large log on the south side which hid us from passersby. The sun warmed us from our cold bath in the river and a half hour's rest made us feel better able to travel. About half an hour before the sun set we were passing a house and I had passed four meals without eating and our little

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jaunt that day had made me quite fatigued and hungry.

While I was resting brother asked the lady of the house if she could furnish us something to eat. She said nothing was cooked but if we could wait we could have supper. Brother gave fictitious names saying we lived in Jackson County, Ala., and that we belonged to General Hood's army and that I was sick and he, my brother, was detailed to wait on me and we were now trying to get home.


My physical appearance verified the sick part. While we were waiting, brother stated that in passing west of Fayetteville that

day we heard the Yankees had captured Captain Cunningham and his brother and were holding them prisoners at Fayetteville and General Milroy had sent a squad from Tullahoma to execute them. The lady said, "Yes, they are prisoners but I don't think they will be executed. My husband is acquainted with them and he is in town today. I am looking for him home now; he will know." In a short time he came in and said it was a false report; that he had just came through town that afternoon and would have heard it if it had been true. He said he said he was acquainted with the Cunningham boys especially Peter whom he would know any where they met. Peter was our County Register before the war began. Yes, I (Peter) and the gentleman were intimately acquainted before the war, and I recognized him but he did not recognize either of us while we stayed and talked an hour.

After supper we left

**"At my sister's wedding, I chipped my front tooth on a Mint Julep, bent over to spit it out, hit my head on a beer keg and was knocked unconscious."**

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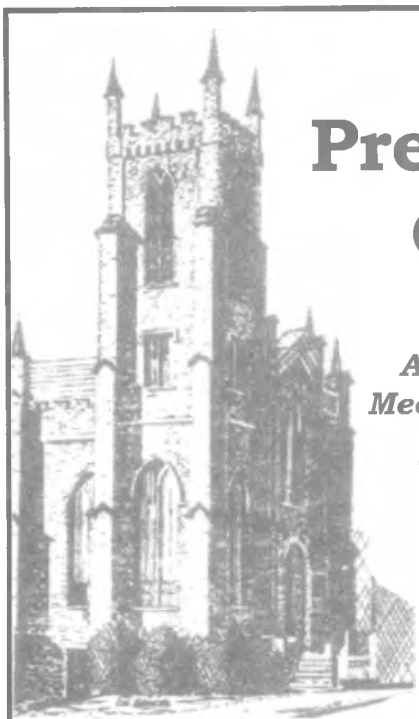
him in ignorance as to our identity and then we followed the road east. After a little it became so dark that we could not follow the path so we went a few steps to one side and lay down in the underbrush and took a nap until the moon rose so we could see the path. Then we arose and traveled on until were within a half mile of Esquire Myrick's where brother's family was stopping. We moved on cautiously to the house and awoke Mr. Myrick. He had not seen or heard of any Yankees being about. Day was now coming on so we retired to an out of the way place for the day. During the day one of Col. C's captains with his company passed within half a mile of Esquire Myrick's house and went on to John Smith's a mile further on. The captain requested Smith to go to Esq. Myrick's and tell Captain Cunningham's wife to tell the boys to lay low for a few days and all would be well.

The day following we took some large wagon covers that we had captured from the Yankees a short time back and went two miles from home to a dense woods where a cyclone had passed two years before and uprooted all the trees in its way; and saplings fifty feet tall on down to under brush and briars had grown up thick; and in this thicket we set our tent made of wagon covers. We made our fire where a large tree had been blown out so the fire could only be seen a short distance. We made a good bed out of forest leaves and had blankets and quilts. Our tent did not leak and we did our cooking at night. There was a small stream of running water within a few feet of our tent.

We never fared better at any time of the war; well protected from the bad weather, a cozy bed to sleep on, fire wood convenient, good water at the door, enough to eat. But we deemed it advisable not to stay in one place long, consequently we moved several times before the eighth day of May when we were finally paroled. I will not weary your patience further.

Yours, Peter Cunningham

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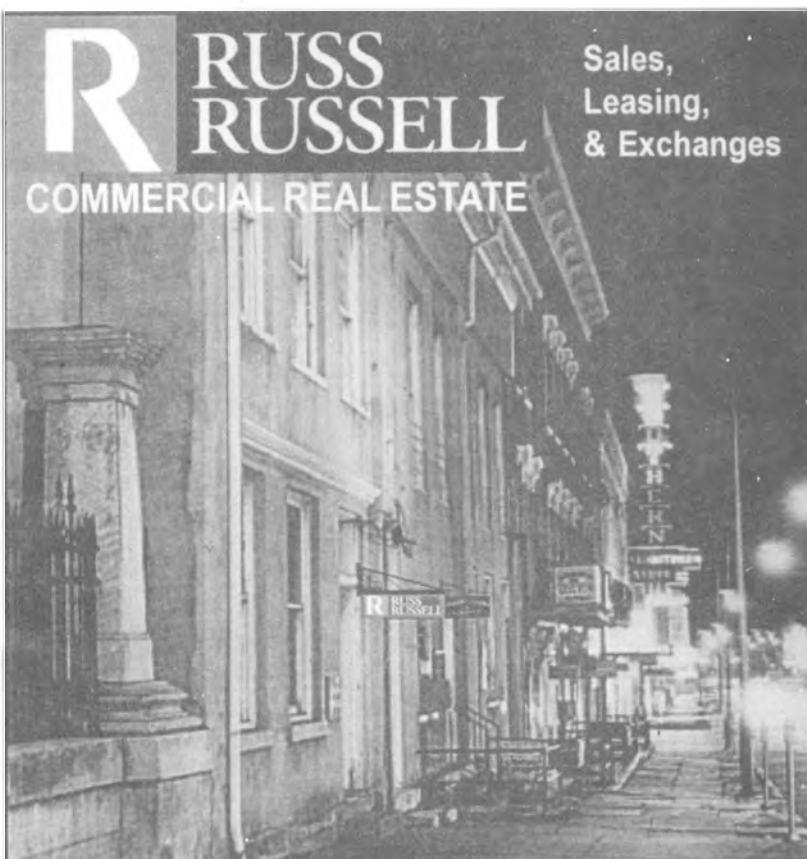
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# News from 1904

- Miss Pearl Morgan, an employee of a local cotton mill, 19 years old, committed suicide by morphine. She procured the drug Friday and was found unconscious Monday morning. She was despondent over working in a cotton factory, and assuring her step-mother her sweetheart had deserted her and was to marry another, she ended her trouble by her own hand.

- Dr. Benton Hall had an unusual and dangerous experience yesterday afternoon while walking along Holmes street during a heavy rain. A bolt of lightning struck the steel rod of his umbrella and badly shocked him. He attributes his escape to the wooden handle of his umbrella.

- After looking over the available sites of the city, the Butler-Kyser Oil Co. has chosen a location on Patton street and Dallas avenue across from the Dallas Avenue Baptist Church and the Wade Mattress Factory. The site is one of the best pieces of ground for the purpose in the city. It is flat and is near the Southern Railroad, which has already secured a right of way and permission from the city council to build a sidetrack from the main line along the short street running from Meridian street to Dallas Ave.

- A.A. McGreger met with a serious accident yesterday evening in winding the sparker on his automobile. The crank slipped, struck his right wrist, breaking the bones. Dr. Westmoreland dressed the wounds and McGreger is expected to recover.

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# The Tornado of 1974

by Berns Miller

Wednesday, April 3, 1974 was just another warm and blustery spring day for the people of Ryland. The tornado watches and the ominous brisk, warm south wind of that day put some Ryland residents on edge but most went about their business as usual. Tornado watches had become a way of life for Madison County. For the most part, people had become complacent since it had been years since a major tornado. The spring weather of 1973 should have put us on notice for things to come. That was the year of the historic flood. Flint River by a wide margin broke all recorded high water marks.

April 3 was a

normal work day for me with the exception of Momma being in the hospital. The home place had an unusual loneliness that day due to Momma being absent and our concern for her. After my work, Daddy, Gregory and I went to the hospital for a visit. The hospital is now called Huntsville East. We were on a high floor with a picture window on the west end. Late that afternoon just before darkness took the last light of the day, dark clouds with flickering lightening filled the western sky. The hospital TV was reporting a major tornado heading NE on the ground with severe damage. Also, there were reports of many injuries being transported to the Huntsville Hospital Emergency Room from multiple torna-

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dos.

Daddy, Gregory and I stayed with Momma until 10:00 o'clock. The tornado threat had ended. When we were leaving the hospital, the night was filled with the eerie sound of distant sirens from numerous emergency vehicles. My heart sank in sympathy for all the tornado victims and how unimaginable and fearful it must be. While riding home in my new Dodge Dart and listening to the radio, we heard an all clear from the National Weather Service.

Finally, we were home after a very long day. Daddy was getting ready for bed and Gregory and I were listening to the police scanner to get news about the tornado damage. Among the buzz of the routine scanner traffic, a policeman from the City of Triana reported a large tornado crossing Tennessee River. Tornadoes generally travel NE and Triana was SW of Ryland. Gregory and I immediately concluded that we should leave home and find a storm shelter. Daddy at first refused to go. After a brief argument, I won and Daddy suggested that we go to Finas Parton's storm

cellar. Again, riding in my new Dodge Dart, we headed for the storm shelter. On the way, Randy Brewer was standing on the side of the road next to Bill Burk's house. He was waving us in to join a large group gathered at the

Burk house. Bill Burk had a carport under his house that was scooped out of a dirt bank. From memory, most of the house was over the carport. The level of the floor in the carport in relation to the dirt bank would provide pro-

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tection from direct hits of flying debris.

The carport was full of my Ryland friends and neighbors. They were nervously chattering about the earlier tornados around Harvest and Hazel Green but unaware of one that just crossed the Tennessee River. As I plugged in my police scanner, the Huntsville Police were already talking about a tornado crossing the Parkway somewhere near the Parkway City Mall. The conclusion was immediate in our group that a major tornado was heading toward Ryland and all of the men and boys ran outside. The night was clear and calm. Visibility was good all the way to Monte Sano Mountain. We were fooled by the tornado at first glance because of the angle of Monte Sano Mountain in relation to our position. First, we saw a small secondary tornado that spun off the main funnel. It was not touching the ground. Seeing the small dangling funnel gave us a temporary hope for a miss. The hope didn't last long, the

main tornado was still in Huntsville and the loud roar didn't match the small dangling funnel cloud.

Suddenly, the sky fell to the ground like dropping a black curtain on our side of Monte Sano. A wide area of dark boiling clouds was headed our way. Only one verbal reaction came from the group. Olin Vann said, "There it is". We all made a mad dash to the car port with the exception of Daddy. I had to turn and drag him into the house. He wanted to look.

Getting Daddy inside slowed me and Gregory down. Every-

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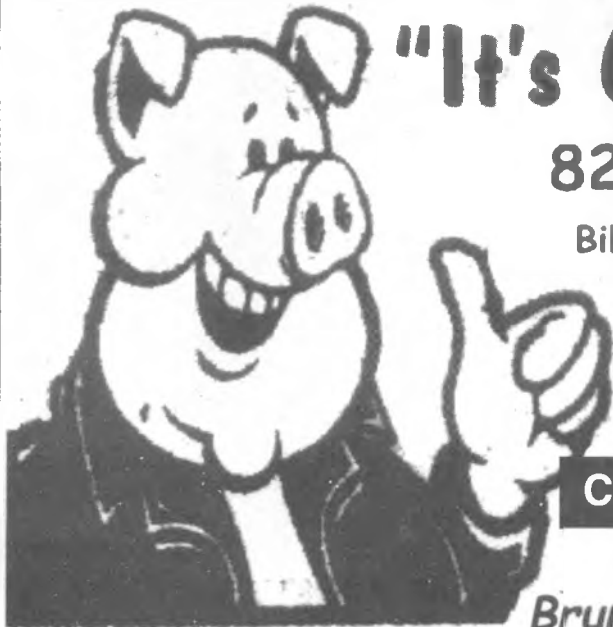
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one had taken position in cars and under tables. Olin and Ester Vann were hunkered under a metal table and invited us to join. That would later prove to be a good choice. By then debris was striking the house as if fired from a machine gun. The noise was tremendous and the sky had a vivid green glow. Ester Vann was crying for the safety of her two boys who were in the cars. Next, the windows blew out simultaneously as if explosives had been placed. Breathing became hard and the pressure pulled at the skin. Grit and small debris were flying and made it necessary to cover our eyes. The most spectacular was the sounds made by a dying house. The house screamed and squalled and left with the tornado: The most dangerous thing happened next. Concrete blocks, large pieces of wood and other tornado debris rained down from the sky. I saw concrete blocks bounce off the metal table.

When the tornado passed the sound stopped immediately and it began an icy rain. The rain was so cold it was almost unbearable on my back. I was miserable, wet and cold. I could hear screams from the cars but everyone seemed OK. We could not locate Bill Burk for awhile but he was soon found uninjured. The people in the cars had to be dug out. No one was injured but my new Dodge Dart was smashed to about waist high.

At one point after the tornado passed and before we had crawled from under the table, the lighting was flickering and I could see only stubby trees where our house and barns once stood. I told Daddy, we lost everything. His only reply,

"We did?" I don't think Daddy ever recovered emotionally from the tornado.

Daddy, Gregory and I left the Burk place on foot to check on his brother, Robert Miller and the Grady Everett Family. We could see that Grady Everett's house was on fire. During the walk, I noticed the air smelled like pine and



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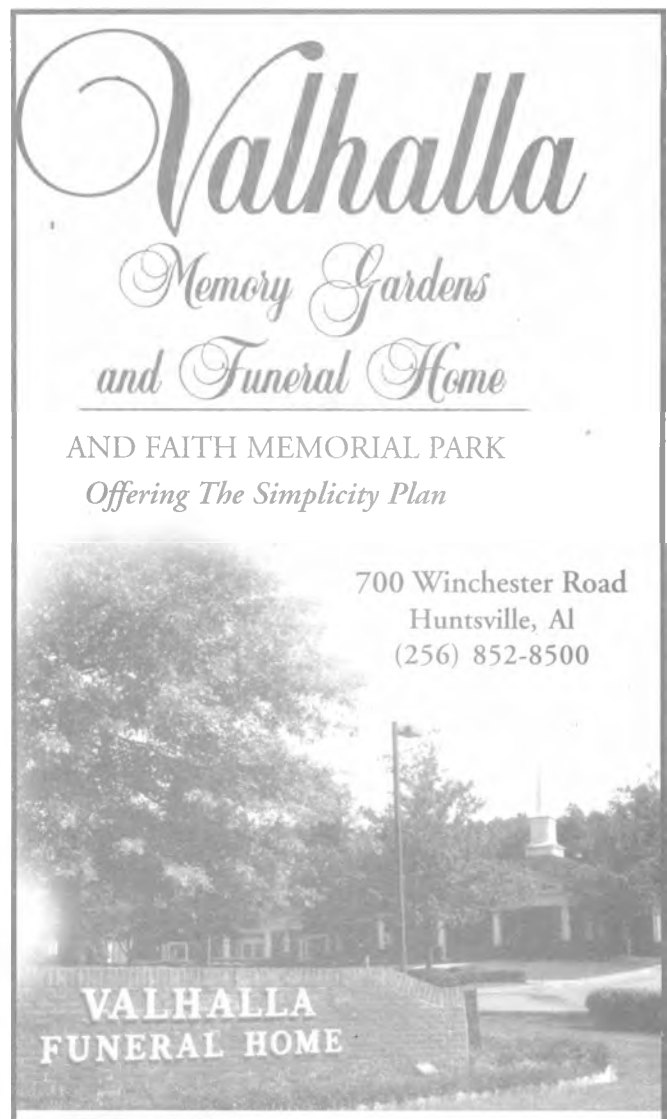
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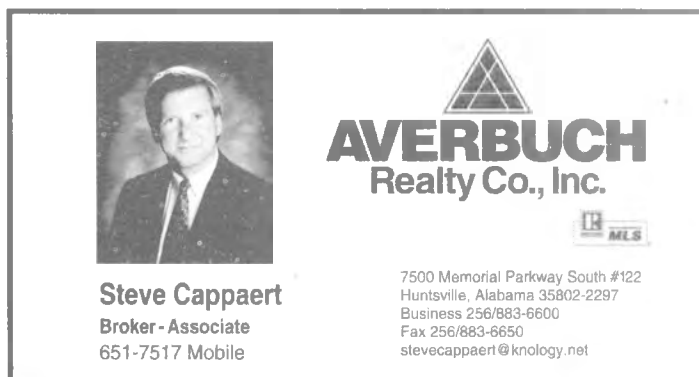



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cedar trees. The roads were full of debris and power lines. It was very difficult to walk especially without a flashlight. The trip to Robert Miller's and the Everett's took a bit of maneuvering but we finally found Robert. His house was damaged but not enough to wet all his clothes. Robert gave us a change of clothes. His shirt and pants didn't fit me very well but they sure did feel good. Bobby Rosenblum, a Huntsville Policeman, couldn't get his car to Ryland so he walked. Bobby, Gregory and I checked on the Everett's. The tornado had taken the top half of the house and the remainder was burning. After counting cars, it appeared the family may have been at home. Donny Dean, a relative, was in the front yard visibly upset. Donny was convinced the family was in the house burning. David Rosenblum and I checked the

house and the Everett's were not there. They had gone to a nearby storm cellar at the Tobey Hudson home. Gregory and I took a swing by Pete Smart's house and it was gone. The ground was bare where house once stood. His car was on the railroad track. Good thing he wasn't home.

Gregory and I lost contact with Daddy. Uncle Robert said he went to look at the damage at our home place. We were terrified at the prospects of Daddy stumbling around in the dark among the debris. All three of us made it home at about the same time; we walked upon Wayne Sharp and Jerry Brewer looking at the devastation of our house and barns. Wayne and Jerry thought we were dead and almost lost it emotionally when they saw us. I appreciated their reaction.

The night lasted forever. At one point that night, I walked out



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of the tornado damage area and found a State Trooper. The Trooper used his radio to contact the hospital to make sure Momma knew we were safe. The disaster was wide spread and affected many people in several areas and, as a result, we didn't see many people that night. The lack of official support lasted several days but Ryland cared for itself the old timey way, neighbor helping neighbor.

The sun rose on a clear and cool day on the morning of April 4. The morning found me alone on our hilltop waiting for that sunrise. The light revealed tornado wreckage as far as the eye could see.

The experience was like a movie scene without the music. The wreckage was indescribable and my emotions were focused on what I was seeing along with my thoughts of surviving a once-in-a-lifetime event.

I later found the remains of our clock and the time was stuck at 11:05 P.M. A time and date that changed Ryland forever.

# Court News from 1904

- Jas. B. Mitchell will be tried on Habeas Corpus Writ: Harvey Russell, a white man, was arrested late Monday night for shooting at his wife in their home on Walker Street. Russell is said to have fired three times at her. He claims that all three times were accidents.

- Wm. and Walter Tilkin who were arrested at the August term of circuit court for larceny of merchandise from J. M. Oldfield's store at Hazle Green were pardoned yesterday by acting Governor Cunningham. They are young boys aged 14 and 17 years old and had developed symptoms of tuberculosis in the mines and affidavits in the petition for pardon showed that their mother had died of consumption.

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# Growing Up in the Country

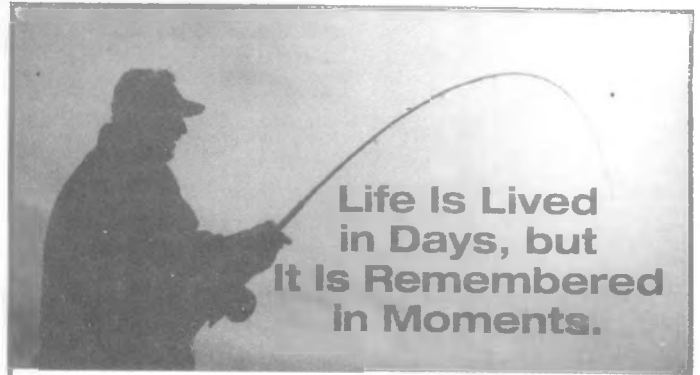
by Helen Medlin

Everyone that has lived during the time of the Depression has many stories they can tell about how they had to make do with their money, transportation, and food during that time.

For my Grandparents, Charlie Wand, Hattie O. Tidwell and their family, it was no different than any other families that worked and farmed and had big families.

Even though the times were hard, they did have food on the table but that did not come easy because if the garden did not produce and there was a drought, you just did not have as much food as you expected.

There was hog killing day in the fall, and from all the fat of the hog, there was homemade soap, made with Red Devil Lye and hog fat, cooked in a big wash pot in the yard, which took most of a day and then put in a long wooden tray to get cold. (All of us know when grease gets cold it is hard, but put Red Devil Lye in it and it becomes another product of "hog killing day") and



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this process was called "Lye soap", you have never had a bath until you have had a "lye" soap bath. You surely were clean after one of those baths. We had ham stored in a smoke house hung up in cloth sacks and also sausage, that puts the "store bought" sausage of today to shame. There was bacon, or some folks call it "streak-o-lean", salted down in a salt barrel.

They raised their chickens and had eggs, owned a couple of cows and had milk and butter. My granddad bought a car so he could sell vegetables he raised for the Farmers Market, but before that he would go door to door in Huntsville and sell much of his vegetables. The car was a 1919 Dodge. This car he lost during the Depression.

From my mother's recollection---"One year it was a bad year for crops, just after the Depression set in and Dad only made

\$75 for the whole year which he had to buy fertilizer and seed for the next year's crops. For Christmas money that year he made corn shuck brooms and sold them, this was after Howard had married and there were nine children for Christmas who were at home for presents. We all had a piece of fruit, some nuts, candy cane, and one toy, which I don't recall the kind. We were thankful

to have that much from our parents."

Grandma was a hard working woman, as many of the women were that lived on farms, she could take a sack of flour and make it do many things for her family. There were ten hungry mouths to feed three times a day and that can put a strain on a person, be it woman or man,

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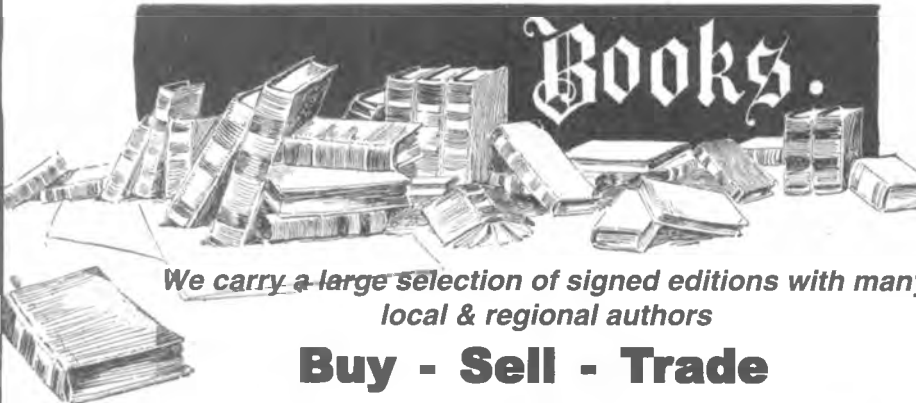
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as I remember and the stove was a wood burning stove that got real hot in the summer when she cooked those three meals a day.

My granddad and those of his children who were old enough, maybe 10 years and up, would work in the fields, either chopping cotton, corn or bean rows.

When cotton picking time came, usually in September, the school would already be in session and they would let out for six weeks so the families could get their cotton crops in before it began to rain. This provided the money for cloth and thread to make the clothes for the school year. Also there were flour sacks with floral prints that were also used as the flour sacks were emptied.

One thing I thought was funny was what my mother told me. The girls had long stockings and of course they were very heavy stockings, they wore to school in the winter. Well, when they got old enough to realize how they looked in these stockings, they would wait until they got out of sight of the

house to catch the school bus and the girls would roll the stockings down to below the knees.

In those days when the children would marry, some of them would live with the parents and help out on the farm. When the couple felt they could afford to buy a piece of land, they would build a house and move from the family home to their own place.

This is what happened in our family; the oldest child, who was my uncle Howard, married but did not live at home and he found a job in Decatur, Alabama in a grocery store, Piggly Wiggly. He made this his profession as he later bought his own grocery store with the help of an uncle and retired from that store.

The next child to marry was my mother, and my granddad needed help on the farm so she

**"I know I'm not sexy. When I put on my underwear I can hear the Fruit of the Loom guys laughing."**

**Rodney Dangerfield**

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and my Dad lived with them until I was born in 1931, after my birth they lived just up the road from my grandparents, as time began to get some better as far as jobs, my Dad went to work on a Dairy farm and that began another life for us.

My grandparents were raised on Hurricane Creek Valley. They moved to Madison County about 1912, at the same time my Great grandparents moved to Arlington, Texas, which for some reason unknown to any of us, my grandparents moved afterwards. My uncle Howard Tidwell was three years old, born in 1909, and my mother and her twin brother was six months old, born in 1912. They rode the train and shipped their furniture to Texas. Then in 1914 they moved back to Hurricane Creek Valley and lived with my Great granddad Wilson Allen Tidwell. They moved off Hurricane Creek some time around 1919 to what was then Oakwood Road, later changed to Tidwell Lane and today is Grizzard Road. The name change came about as the oldest family that lived there moved away from the Road. Neighbors were Mr. & Mrs. Roper and Mr. & Mrs. Brosemer. Later when they moved from the big house, which is the Grizzard home, to the Parker place down the road, our neighbors were Mr. & Mrs.

McCay.

In 1929, Granddad Tidwell bought a new Chevrolet, my great grandparents moved off Hurricane Creek Valley and from there they all became grocerymen. Great grandparents, and grandparents, they all retired from the grocery business as well as the four sons: Howard, the oldest; Clarence Tidwell (mother's twin); Otis Tidwell; and Joe Tidwell.

The family is still very close and we all appreciate what we have seen out of a hard working, never losing faith family.

## Hospital Opens

*from 1904 newspaper*

The Huntsville City Hospital was formally opened yesterday with a public reception and about 200 people attended and were shown through the establishment. Sherbet and lemonade was served to the guests by Mrs. Bolling and Mrs. White.

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The hospital has been receiving patients for the past several days and a new one was taken in yesterday.

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# Memories of Church Street

by Calvin L. Holder

I have lived on Church street over the years, from one end to the other, from Holmes Street to Oakwood Avenue. One place I lived in was up over the Auction House when it was on Holmes St., where Channel 19 TV is now.

I remember the service station at the end of Church Street on Holmes and the Princess Theatre, the cab company called Deluxe & United, and Welch & Harris Funeral Home. There was a cleaners and a barber shop, and at the corner of Monroe Street and Church Street there were 2 grocery stores. There was a nursery beside the Depot, and the Pullman and Southern cafes. I lived behind the Southern Cafe when Oscar Hickham ran it and Douch Lee ran the Pullman. My grandpa got killed at the corner of Monroe Street and Cleveland Street from a tree accident.

One place I lived was behind the Southern Cafe and I could step out of the back door of the cafe onto our front porch. This was back in 1955. I remember Dilworth Lumber on Church street, and Clarence Tidwell's grocery store. Nearby was the Southern Cotton Oil Mill. I remember when all the kids used to go to a place called the "Grace Center."

One Christmas, Fat Kimbrough was Santa Claus and the Grace Center sent him down to the house when I was just a kid. I was in bed asleep when my grandmother let him in and he picked me up out of bed, asleep, and carried me into the living room where he gave me some toys and apples, oranges, grapes & bananas. Fats' family lived up on Church Street across from where the Driver's license place is

now. I went to school at East Clinton, then Huntsville Junior High on Randolph Street and would walk there everyday. My grandparents would walk with me, back and forth, to keep me out of trouble. Some of the guys I went to school with were Leroy Cunningham, Billy Joe Cooley, Jimmy Toland and Hall Bryant. I had lots of jobs back then. I worked at 7-Up Bottling Com-

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pany behind Jack Canterbury's grocery store at the corner of Wheeler Ave. and Church Street, when Standard Oil Co. was there and G.S. Martin Grocery Store and Joe Van Valkenburgh's Huntsville Building Material. My friend Mike Miller worked at Madison County Farmer's Market as a security guard at night for a while before Mr. McLaughlin started. I used to work there for Tooter Taylor, I recall he was a really nice guy.

My grandpa used to take up the trees there by the roots so they could put driveways in. I also lived beside the Fairground for a while, close to the old Stove Foundry building. My grandpa used to change lightbulbs for the fair, and I remember he and I and my grandma would always get into the Fair for free.

Talking about the Stove Foundry, I remember when my brother-in-law Dick Branch got killed in 1949 when a stove got caught in a belt and got thrown out, hitting him in the head and killing him instantly. My dad used to drive the Huntsville Park bus and worked for Crescent Cab.

Mrs. Bingham had a grocery store where Lewis & Sons Plumbing is now, and across the street was City Coal Company owned by the Bakers.

There have been many changes to the businesses and homes on Church Street, but I guess that's just progress. There sure were a lot of grocery stores & cafes back then!

I'll always remember how it was and hope this is interesting for your readers.



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## Ku Klux Klan Bans Boxing

In other actions, the Ku Klux Klan successfully convinced the city to adopt an ordinance prohibiting boxing matches from being held within the city limits. This action came about as a result of a recent match held at the Big Spring which pitted a colored man against a white opponent. The Klan argued that allowing such spectacles would encourage the races to mix. Huntsville church leaders supported the ordinance. *from 1901 newspaper*

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# Remembering the Cotton Mill Strike

by Ruby Crabbe

When I was a youngster growing up in Dallas Village, so many things happened it would be hard for me to remember them all. But the things I do remember I'll never forget, like the "Famous Strike" at Dallas Textile Mills.

The picket line in front of the mill was long and the strikers were tired. Some of them carried large banners proclaiming the strike and warning people not to cross the picket line. I can't remember who all took part in cooking food for the strikers but I do know that my mother, Josie Allen, did. My stepdad, Mr. Lonnie Allen, took part in the cooking also.

Every day at noon he and Mama would fix hamburgers and coffee for the strikers. Now

when I say hamburgers - I mean it would be such a large sack full it would be hard for us kids to even carry. Plus, we carried a pot that held three or four gallons of hot steaming coffee.

I remember one night several of the union members had a meeting at this certain house. During the meeting someone spoke up and said, "Boy, what would I give right now if I had all the good fried chicken I could eat!" At that remark the lady of the house got up and excused herself from the meeting.

It wasn't long before the odor of good fried chicken just filled the house. It appeared that three good sized fryers had been roosting on a water pipe right outside the back door. Don't know whose chickens they were but they were never seen again on the roost.

I remember the union members and the nonunion members having a little get-to-together on 5th Street, now known as Andrew Jackson Way. The union members were on one side of the street, the nonunion members on the other. On the union side a large platform had

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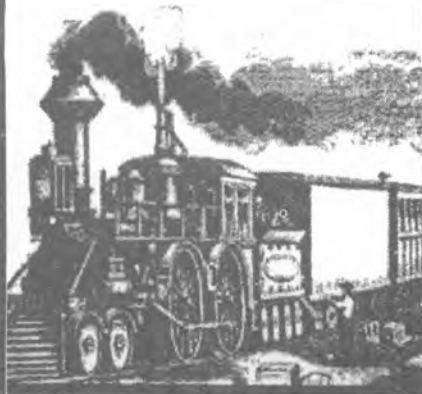
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been erected, and on top of it was what appeared to be a machine gun. Don't know if it was the real thing or not but a lot of the people didn't hang around long enough to find out. And on top of that platform stood Bill Jaco. He was singing loud and clear "We shall not be moved."

That song generated a lot of angry offensive yells, but did that bother Brother Bill? No, it only made him sing louder and louder, "We Shall Not Be Moved!"

## Moonshine Still Found on Keel Mountain

*from 1915 newspaper*

Revenue Officer Bennett found a wild cat still on Keel's mountain last week and caught two persons, a man named Atchley and a woman, Mrs. Pearl Conley at work making the sparkling dew. Conley, husband of the woman, made his escape.

After destroying the still and emptying beer, singlings, etc. on the ground, the officer brought the prisoners to Scottsboro and placed them in jail. In a trial Saturday before Judge of Probate James B. Hackworth, each were given a fine of fifty dollars and costs amounting to \$96.66.

The place where the still was found was an ideal spot near a large basin surrounded by huge frowning cliffs, a narrow passage way leading directly under a large bluff quite a distance and emerging into a room thirty feet in circumference. The operator of the

still then made an excavation in the wall and placed the still back in this receptacle and unmolested for some time was monarch of all he surveyed until in an evil hour the dreaded Revenue arrived and destroyed his play-house.

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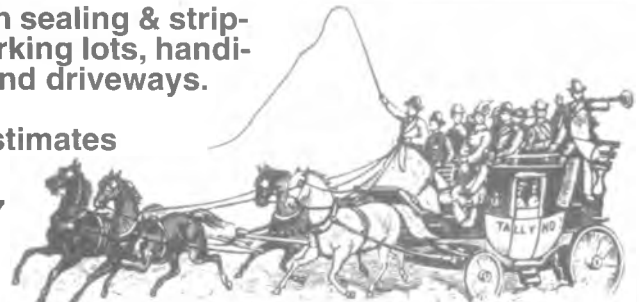
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# News From the Year 1925

## News From Huntsville and Around The World

### Traffic Lights Installed Downtown

In a highly controversial move, the city of Huntsville has installed traffic lights at the corners of Jefferson and Clinton, Holmes and Washington, Washington and Clinton and Randolph, Greene and Holmes.

Merchants are outraged at the novel experiment and have vowed to form a coalition to remove them. Their anger comes from the fear that drivers will spend less time looking at the window displays of the various stores.

"The streets will be filled with Zombies." Mr. L.D. Carruthers said, "waiting in lines and staring at the lights."

A citizens group has joined in the merchants protest claiming that red and green lights will be confusing to everyone.

Among the various proposals the city considered before

deciding on the lights were whistles, electric gates and crossing police.

The majority of people seemed to be in favor of crossing police but the cost seemed to be prohibitive for Huntsville, a city already deeply in debt.

The first accident was reported yesterday while the lights were still being installed. Mr. Orville Roberts of New Hope lost control of his car and ran into the ladder of a workman installing the light on Clinton and Jefferson.

"I never saw a green light before," Mr. Roberts said later.

**"Don't let worry kill you off - let the church help."**

*Seen in local church bulletin*

### Testimony Denied in Scopes Trial

**Dayton, Tenn.:** In a sensational effort to end the conflict between science and religion, presiding Judge John T. Raulston, on Tuesday expunged the testimony of William Jennings Bryan from the record of the Scopes trial.

The court said this action was taken because Bryan's defence of his faith in the Bible has no bearing on the issues of the anti-evolution trial.

The court made the unexpected ruling as a result of a personal appeal from Attorney General A. Thomas Stewart, head of the prosecution, who told newspaper men he would move to expunge the Bryan testimony if the judge did not act.

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## Hogs Found in Rose Garden

Nine of Mr. Stegall's fine lot of hogs were impounded this week under the vagrant hog law after being found in the rose garden of Judge Betts.

Mr. Stegall states that on Saturday night his hogs were secure in their lot and had escaped on Sunday morning after someone removed a board from the fence. He claims the ordinance does not apply when the owner of the hogs does not intentionally let them run at large and has promised to fight his case in court. Judge Betts is expected to preside.

## No Gasoline Sales on Sunday

At yesterday's meeting of the city fathers, a resolution forbidding the sale of gasoline on Sundays was overwhelmingly adopted.

Speaking in support of the ordinance were local pastors who decried the Sunday sale of gasoline by stating it permitted joyriding and encouraged people to engage in frivolous pursuits

rather than attending church.

The pastors supported their arguments by presenting figures showing how most people lived within walking distance of a church. The measure is also expected to put a dent in the speak-easy business.

## Sheriff Evicts 9 Mill Families

Officials at Lincoln Mills called the sheriff yesterday to have 9 families evicted from mill homes. Mill authorities said the families had violated their rent agreement by allowing people not employed by Lincoln Mill to stay with them. Other evictions are expected to follow.

## Dilworth Announces Purchase for Country Club

W. P. Dilworth, President of the Greater Huntsville Country Club, announced today the purchase of the Moss home on Pulaski Pike, along with 225 acres, as the site of the Huntsville Country Club. The company was recently incorporated with \$40,000 capital stock. The club is expected to have the only golf course in North Alabama.

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# Ranger

by Austin Miller

Ranger was a big red, shorthaired dog with a long tail. He was half boxer and half red bone hound. Ranger belonged to Dwight Everett, the oldest child of Grady and Avon Everett. The Everetts moved to Ryland from Maysville when Dwight was in the first grade. That's when he met my brother Berns. They soon developed a friendship that has lasted to this day. The house they moved into was referred to as the house behind the gin. It was only about 75 feet behind the Ryland cotton gin, about 300 feet south of the store, post office and Ryland Pike. Part of the road to their house is now named Ryland Gin Road. Grady and Avon had four children besides Dwight; they are Carolyn, Pete, Joyce and Roger. All still live in or around Ryland with the exception of Dwight who lives at Leighton, Alabama. He is pastor of the First Baptist Church in Leighton. Grady died about ten years ago; Avon still lives at the home place. Avon has been heard saying that when she saw the land at Ryland she told Grady that she had found her home and it was where she wanted to live until she died. That was almost sixty years ago.

The Everetts lived in the house behind the gin for several years. It was a plain frame house with a front porch, brick siding and a tin roof. Many Ryland families lived in the house before the Everetts to include Jim Barnett, Robert Miller and my Grandparents, Hugh and Hettie Mefford. I still have a scar on my chin from a cut I got playing on a wagon tongue in the back yard when Uncle Robert lived there. Grady was a hard worker who worked two jobs. He worked at the Stove Plant in Huntsville and farmed. In the early sixties; they built a nice new brick house out on the

road from the old house.

Always of great interest to me was the fact that Mr. Everett was a decorated Navy veteran of World War II. He was in the Navy when Pearl Harbor was attacked and still in when they signed the surrender in Tokyo Bay. His first job in the war was to ferry Marines ashore in the invasion of several Pacific Islands; one of those was Guadalcanal. After his transport ship was sunk, he served on a destroyer and saw more action. Grady Everett was not only a good neighbor; he was also a real war hero. My heroes were never ball players, movie stars or anybody I didn't know personally; they are all people like Grady Everett.

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Ranger roamed the roads, fields and yards of Ryland for nearly twenty years. In his prime, and he had a long prime, he was the undisputed king of the dogs. He was the Bull of the woods feared by all other dogs. He was not vicious or aggressive toward people but when it came to other dogs, he was a holy terror. Dogs that challenged him did so at the risk of their lives. Joyce tells the story of how Ranger saved her life when she was ten years old. She was walking home from the store one day when a known vicious bulldog ran up from behind and started growling and snarling. She knew

she was in great danger until she saw Ranger coming. Without slowing down he ran past her and attacked full force. When she looked back the bulldog was running for his life with Ranger in hot pursuit.

In their growing up years, Berns and Dwight spent untold hours hunting, fishing, boating, exploring and swimming. One of their favorite things to do was spend the night with each other. Berns loved to go to the Everett house and hear Mr. Everett tell about his war experiences. Dwight told me recently that one of his favorite memories of coming to our

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house was Daddy popping popcorn. He said Daddy would cook up a big batch in a big skillet on our old coal heater, put a newspaper on the floor and dump it all out on the newspaper and they would eat pop corn and drink Double Colas until they were full enough to pop. When Dwight came to spend the night Ranger came too. He slept on the front porch under the window next to the bed where Berns and Dwight slept.

When Dwight went to the Air Force in 1966, Ranger couldn't figure out what happened to him. For weeks, he came at night and slept under the window on our front porch. Berns still talks about waking up to find Old Ranger peering through the window looking for Dwight. Daddy would run him home every morning but as soon as the sun went down he was back. I am told that this really got next to Daddy and he would try to explain to Ranger that Dwight was gone but to no avail. He thought a lot of Dwight and made the statement that he knew there was at least one good boy in the Air Force.

By this time Ranger was getting on in years. He was not as quick as he once was and didn't have a tooth in his head. He was getting by on his reputation. Other dogs feared him so that they left him alone for a long time after he was no longer able to fight. Finally, as was bound to happen, another dog took him on. With no teeth, slow reflexes and stiff joints, Ranger didn't stand a chance and was killed.

It says in the Bible that if you live by the sword you will die by the sword. It is my guess that Old Ranger wouldn't have wanted it any other way.



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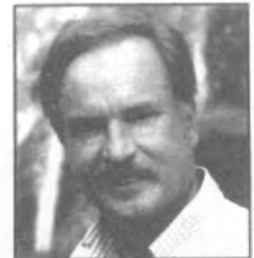
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# Heard On the Street in 1904

- Lost - a 38 calibre Army Colt pistol, wooden handle. Return to Huntsville Hotel bar. \$9 reward

- An unfortunate incident occurred this past week when a prominent local businessman returned home intoxicated after spending the evening in a saloon. Not wishing to awaken his wife, he proceeded to enter through an open window. The wife, hearing the noise, shot him twice in an embarrassing part of his body.

- Jim Blizzard, a well-known citizen of Jackson county, was arrested by Deputy Marshal Arnold on a charge of retailing whiskey and was brought to the city. Blizzard was tried before Commissioner Greenleaf and bound over in the sum of \$300.

- Remember - Wednesday June 8th is the day for the Elk's annual river excursion. \$1 round trip, good boat and barge, good music and a jolly good time.

- Mr. R. W. St. Clair, of Hurricane, was among the visitors to the city Monday.

- A marriage license was issued to Jerry C. Jones and Emma Street.

- Cantrell & Young, the reliable druggists of Huntsville, are having calls for "Hindipo", the new kidney cure and nerve tonic that they are selling under a good guarantee. Its merits are becoming the talk of the town and everybody wants to try it and if it doesn't work, no money will be paid for it. Try it today.

- John McLane was shot through the leg yesterday by Oakley Harris. The shooting occurred in front of the McGee

Hotel and it was so quick that very few persons saw it. McLane and Harris had a few words in dispute and it is understood that the former struck the latter, who staggered back and drew his pistol, a 41 calibre Colt. Mr. McLane grabbed at the pistol and in the scuffle that ensued, the weapon was discharged, the bullet striking McLane's right leg below the

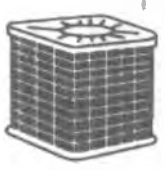
knee. The bone was splintered and it is feared that the limb will have to be amputated. Harris was arrested on a warrant charging assault with intent to kill and was immediately released on a \$300 bond.

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# Memories

by Herman Hunt

I remember getting up at 4 o'clock, feeding the mules, eating breakfast, then taking off for the cotton gin at New Hope. The Butler Brothers gin was about 5 miles from where we lived. It was the second largest gin in the United States. They could give 2 bales of cotton at the same time.

Sometimes there would be 15 or 20 wagons ahead of us when we arrived. When that happened, Papa didn't want to wait in line all day so we'd unhitch the mules, leave the wagon and go back home. We would come back the next day to get the wagon with our cotton bales. We would then drive the wagon to another building, and pull a cord that dropped our cottonseeds in our wagon. I still don't know how the gin kept up with which wagon belonged to whom.

I picked 107 pounds of cotton once when I was seven years old. The most I ever picked was 303 pounds. My father was written up in the paper two years in a row for having the first cotton blooms appear in a crop of cotton in Madison County.

One time my father gave me a knife and I swapped it off for a pencil you didn't have to sharpen. When Papa found out he ran me about a mile through the cotton patch. When he caught me he gave me two licks. I said: "Papa, if I knew you weren't going to give me more than two licks, I could have saved us both the run."

Our landlord was holding his cotton hoping it would go from 45 cents a pound to 50 cents a pound. This was in 1929, and the next day the depression hit and the price went down to 5 cents a

pound. Life was tough.

My father was a Spanish American War Veteran. During the depression President Roosevelt cut off Papa's veterans pension. He went to work for the WPA for a dollar a day. We had gravy, molasses and cornbread for breakfast. Gasoline was 19 cents a gallon. There was a record out with words that went "5 cent cotton and 40 cent meat, how can a poor man eat".

In 1930 we moved to Huntsville and rented a house from Shelby Drake's father at the foot of


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Russell Hill. We moved our furniture by truck from Elon, which is just a few miles past Ditto Landing. My brother-in-law, Roy Craig, and I moved our cottonseed, which was stored in fruit jars, by wagon. I was 11 years old.

On the way to our new home, we stopped in front of Montgomery Wards and I went in to buy candy. The police made Roy move the wagon. When I came back out I couldn't find the wagon. I was lost and didn't know which way to go. I went down toward the depot but I knew that was wrong. Then I started down Athens Pike and my father found me and picked me up.

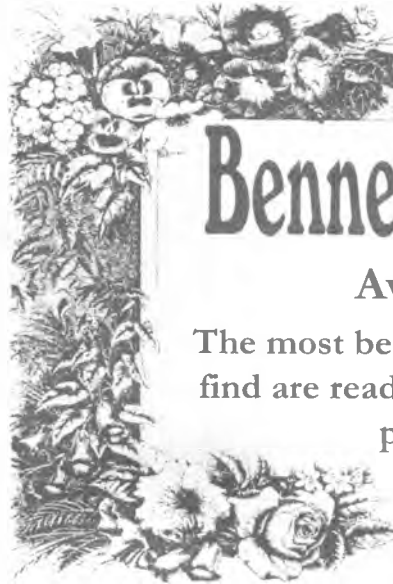
I was in the fifth grade at West Huntsville. The first seven months of school at West Huntsville was free and last two months of school cost \$4.00 per month. Papa wouldn't pay the \$8.00 dollars for me. So I had to go back into the fifth grade the next year.

Mr. A. S. Hodges was the principal at West Huntsville. My teachers were Mrs. Paul Lawler and Mrs. Heinz. Mr. Arnold was also a teacher and he had only one arm. Then when I was in the ninth grade we moved to Pulaski Pike. There were only one other boy, Alvin Matthews and seven girls in my grade. A. S. Chambers was the principal, Mrs. Charles was the teacher and Mrs. Darnell had home hall.

We had to go to Riverton for 10th, 11th and 12th grades. The bus, which took us to Riverton, was in bad shape and sometimes we had to get out and push the bus up a hill on Winchester Road. Mr. Thompson was the principal at Riverton. Mr. Mont-

gomery was the agriculture teacher and Mr. Orr was our basketball coach. Then we moved again to Dallas Village and I finished school at Rison in 1938. Mr. Cecil Fain was the principal at Rison. Mrs. Fain, Miss Womack, Miss Monroe, Mrs. Smithy were the teachers. Houston Goodson was our basketball coach and Mr. Richardson was our football coach.

My English teacher, Miss Monroe was always bragging on Mary Polk for being such a good speller. Several of us entered the spelling contest at Rison. The last two standing were Earl Walker (who became a dentist) and myself.



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Mrs. Nicholson was giving the words and she gave "Bizarre" first to Earl. Earl started off with "BA" and Mrs. Nicholson stopped him and gave him the definition. He spelled it "BAZAAR". Then I spelled it correctly and won the spelling bee and the prize. Dallas Mills donated the prize of \$3.00.

The Kiwanis Club sponsored a supper and a spelling contest at the Russell Erskine Hotel, which I also entered. There were so many knives and folks at the dinner table that I had no idea what to use. I was use to having only one folk, one spoon and my hand to eat with at home. I looked at the person next to me and I don't think he knew any more than I did.

I was the first one to spell at this contest. The word was "SWIMMING". I spelled it "SWIMING". That happened 70 years ago and it still ticks me off that I missed that easy word. I had studied real hard using the dictionary and the "Old Blue Back" that Mama had used to study in 1900. I spelled all the other words after that (to myself) correctly. Katie Louise Chambers of Riverton won the contest.

Here are a couple of other memories that might interest folks. Our mailman was Joe Ben Tabor in New Hope. He used a horse and buggy to deliver the mail. Joe Ben delivered the mail one day a year for no pay because Madison County required all men to give one day's free work each year to be able to vote.

Most of the roads in the county were gravel and would get ruts really bad. We used a scoop pulled by two mules to scoop out a creek to get gravel. Then we'd put the gravel on a wagon that had eight round logs in the bottom. When you turned the logs, the gravel would fall onto the roads and fill in the ruts.

**"Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time."**

*Speech to a high school by Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft*

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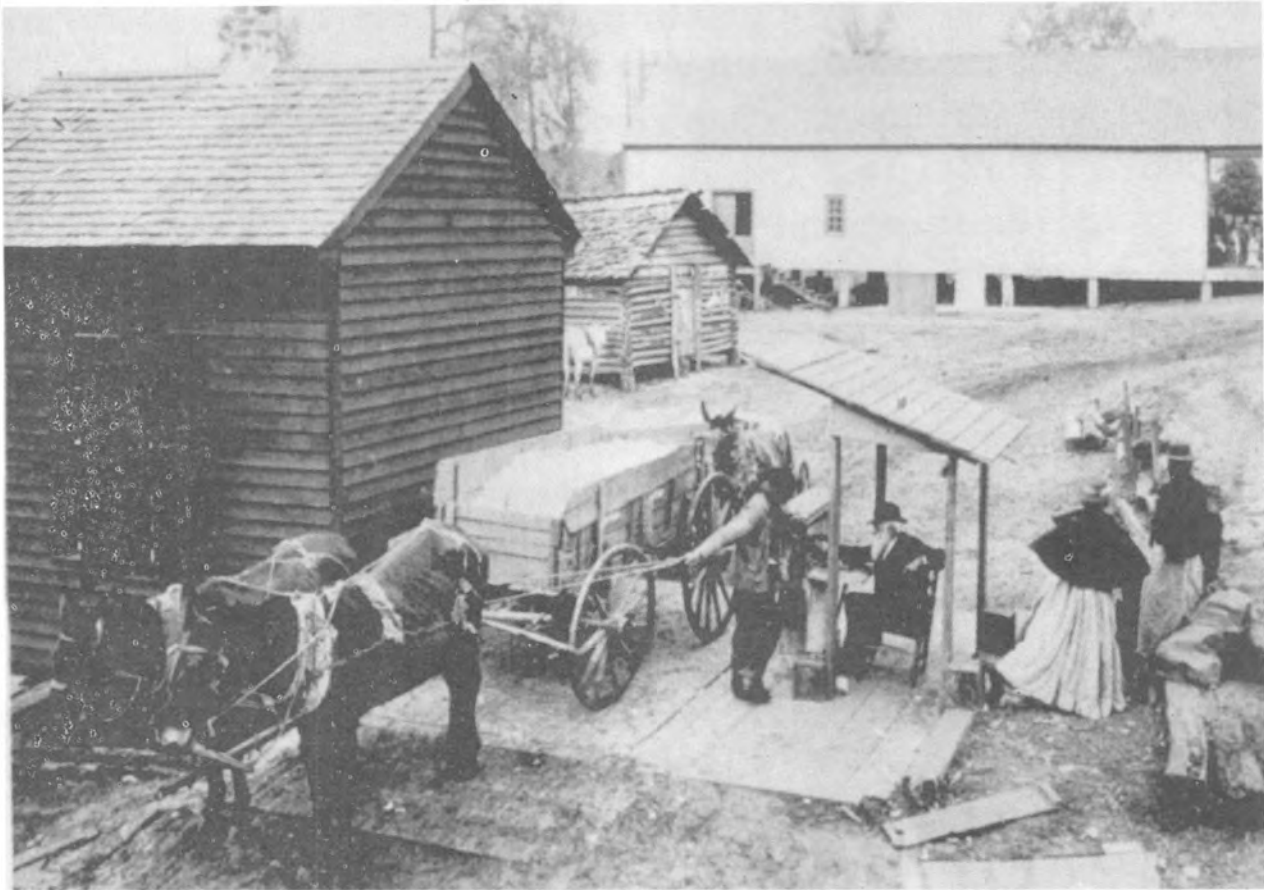
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# When life was simple...



In 1903, this cotton gin near Madison was a popular place as people eagerly waited to see how much their cotton would sell for. That same year Dallas Mills employed nearly two thousand people and it was announced that a wagon factory was moving to Huntsville. Grant Younger caught a 116 pound catfish below Ditto Landing, while nearly 10,000,000 pounds of cedar used to make pencils were shipped from Paint Rock.

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