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No. 193

March 2009

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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



The Black- Smith

As the dust from the patrol disappeared in the distance, an angry mob began to gather around the blacksmith shop. They began to curse Ben, calling him a traitor for shoeing the horses of the hated Yankees. Ben tried to explain, but to no avail.

Someone yelled from the crowd, "He needs to be strung up." Shouts of "Hang him, Hang him" echoed throughout the mob.

Also in this issue: The Klan Rags

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**A Hardware Store....
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Mac Lewter

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The Blacksmith

By Tom Baker

It was Oct. 11, 1864. The civil war was still very evident in Madison county and the Tennessee valley. Ben Branum had enlisted on the Confederate side in the conflict, was wounded badly at Shiloh and paroled. He was working in his blacksmith shop at Paint Rock, Alabama on that cool fall day in October. His wife P.J. had brought him his lunch. Ben loved his wife Pherbia Jane whom he and family members lovingly called P.J.

Not long after P.J. left, a Yankee patrol out scrounging for whatever they could find reined up their horses and tied them to Ben's hitching post. Their blue uniforms were barely distinguishable under the heavy dust which covered them.

The captain of the patrol, after eyeing Ben for awhile, barked "Are you a Reb boy?" "I am," replied Ben. "Why aren't you out fighting with your Reb brothers?" the captain yelled back. "Leg shattered at Shiloh," Ben replied. "What's your name boy?" "Ben Branum," Ben replied as he moved toward his forge dragging

his left leg. "Well, Mr. Ben Branum," the captain replied, "Here's what I want you to do for your Union. I'm commanding you to shoe all twenty of our horses by sundown, or we will burn this town down to the ground."

Ben readily saw that it would be fruitless and dangerous to object under the circumstances. Under guard, he set about shoeing the first horse as the group of dusty Yanks strolled toward the saloon across the road.

After shoeing the last horse, it was almost sundown. The Yanks returned, mounted and rode off without giving Ben even a Thank You for his labor.

As the dust from the patrol disappeared into the distance, an angry mob began to gather around the blacksmith shop. They began to curse Ben, calling him a traitor for shoeing the horses of the hated Yankees. Ben tried to explain, but to no avail.

Someone yelled from the crowd, "He needs to be strung up." Shouts of "Hang him, Hang him" echoed throughout the mob. Ben was about to walk away

"If they think I'm going to pay fifty cents for a haircut, forget it!"

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when he heard the hammer of a gun click behind him. He felt the barrel press against the back of his head. "Get in the wagon," a voice ordered.

Ben sat in the wagon with his hands and feet tied as it slowly made it's way through town toward the countryside. This has got to be a joke, Ben thought. Surely they will not hang me. How could they? Ben's thoughts turned to P.J. and his five children. Who will watch after them if this drunken mob goes through with this? This can't be happening, it's has to be a nightmare. I'll awake soon and P.J will be by my side, and all will be well.

It was dusky dark when the wagon came to a stop a mile or so from town. Ben looked up and saw the large branch of an oak tree looming above him. He heard the swish of a rope being thrown over the branch. Someone placed a noose around his neck. Oh my God! Ben thought, they are really going to do this.

"Any last words?" came a voice near him. "Tell my wife P.J. and my kids I love them." Ben murmured. "Why are you people doing this?" No response from the mob. Somebody yelled "Get up, mule." The wagon lurched forward, leaving Ben swinging

from the branch. The mob stood silently for a moment staring at the body, and as if by an inner signal, all turned and began walking back toward town.

P.J., after being told by her neighbors what had happened, mounted the old plow mule and set out to find her husband. Coming upon the site, she could see from a distance in the pale moonlight an outline of a body hanging from a tree limb. Tears flowed down her cheeks as she cursed the people who had done this horrible act.

For a moment she thought to herself, maybe this isn't Ben. Maybe her neighbors got it wrong. But, as she drew closer, all her doubts were erased as the moonlight reflected off her beloved Ben's face. She started crying uncontrollably and at the same time shaking with anger.

Then she sudd nly stopped crying, as a awful thought entered her head. What if they came back, she thought. Other killings in the valley over the years had resulted in the mutilation of the body. This was not going to happen to her Ben.

She fumbled in her apron pocket for her paring knife she kept there. Pulling it out, she reached up grabbed the branch and pulled herself to a standing

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position on the mule's back, grabbed the taut rope and cut it with one pass of the knife.

Ben's body fell to the ground with a sickening thud. Dismounting she tried to lift Ben across the mule's back, but he was just too heavy. Still fearing the return of the mob, she began to drag him into the wooded area behind the tree. In the faint light she dug out a shallow grave with a large stick. After rolling her husband into the shallow pit, she kissed him on the forehead, said a small prayer, then covered the body with dirt and leaves, making sure not to leave any evidence of a grave there. Ben would be given a proper burial after all this had passed.

On her trek back home, she thought, what will she tell the children when they ask where is daddy? So many deaths, so many heartaches. When will this awful war end?

P.J. never remarried. She raised her five children with help from family and friends. Her children became fine citizens in the county. P.J. died on the Fourth of July in 1906 at the age of 76. She was buried beside her Ben in the Moon cemetery at Owens Cross Roads, Alabama.

A broken tombstone marks her gravesite, somewhat symbolic of that October day in 1864 when local ignorance and hatred broke apart her life.

A simple inscription reads; "P.J., Wife of Benjamin Branum".

Letter to the Editor

This past weekend I picked up the latest copy of Old Huntsville and, as usual, read it cover to cover. After reading it I spoke with my father, Jerry Damson, who is a Huntsville native and asked him if he remembered the "Man on the Street Broadcast".

He said that he not only remembered it, but that he was the big winner sometime between 1948 and 1950 when Grady Reeves (the man on the street broadcast at the time) asked him who was the Secretary of Defense.

Daddy was able to give the correct answer, John Foster Dulles.

His prizes for answering the question correctly were an 8X10 black and white photograph of his mother, Ruth Damson, which he still has, a one week supply of Meadow Gold milk and a 1 week supply of Ideal bread. He said there was one other thing but he could not remember exactly what it was.

Anyway, I just wanted to pass this fun little bit of Huntsville history on to those of you at Old Huntsville, Inc.. I hope you enjoyed hearing about it as much as I did.

Thanks so much!

Susan Damson Park



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Huntsville Gossip

from 1889 newspaper

* One of the best known men about town, who is reported ill with La Grippe, is really laid up from the effects of injuries received in a fight at a gambling house. The melee occurred several nights ago, and the gentleman in question was badly beaten over the head with a chair. It was thought at first that his skull was fractured, but this did not prove to be the case. The other men, as far as I can ascertain, were mere card sharks.

* I referred not long ago to the open liaison of a beautiful young society woman, who is encumbered with a hubby somewhat her senior, and a young clerk in a downtown business house. About two days ago somebody notified a male relative of the frisky matron, and he came to Huntsville at once to see the lay of the land. He called on the clerk

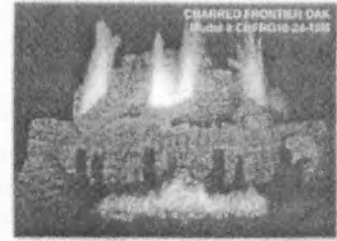
and notified him that he would fill him full of holes if he continued his compromising attentions and is supposed to have read the riot act to the madame. As to this, of course, nobody knows, but his visit has certainly had a restraining influence upon the couple, and they have refrained from scandalizing the public since. I obtained this bit of gossip direct from a friend to whom it was confided by the gay lothario, and it is undoubtedly authentic.

* I understand that a very warm reception is awaiting a certain drummer when he next turns up at New Market. As the story goes, he engaged in a flirtation with a well known married lady, and wrote a very tender little note on the back of a business card. The lady's husband was out of town at the time, but when he returned she gave him the missive. Meantime the drummer had left town. The husband swears that he will thrash him within an inch of his life when he reappears.

Moral: don't write notes.



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The First Hanging

by Fred Simpson

An angry crowd gathered rapidly on the square as news spread that a murder had been committed and that the culprit was going to be tried in Huntsville!

For the young town, in 1812, this was startling news. The settlers, who were still building the town, took pride in living in a peaceful community. The few crimes that had been committed had been dealt with in timely fashion by "Captain Slick," a loosely organized group of vigilantes. Never had a murder taken place here.

As the facts of the murder emerged, the townspeople learned that a transient by the name of Eli Newman was charged with the crime. He had been employed as a deckhand on a flatboat taking goods to market in New Orleans.

After the goods were sold, Newman, along with the other deckhands, began the long walk home, as was the practice then. All the men had been paid and were anxious to get home to their families.

After several weeks of walking, the men camped one night near Huntsville, in the Chickasaw Indian Nation lands. Early the next morning as they prepared to break camp, Newman made an excuse to remain behind with a man by the name of Fetrick.

On June 6, Newman, according to court testimony: "Not having the fear of God before his eyes, but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the Devil, took his razor and cut Fetrick's throat."

It isn't known whether Newman had deliberately in-

tended to kill Fetrick or if the murder was the result of an altercation during the robbery. Regardless, when he caught up with the group several hours later, he was alone.

The men questioned Newman about Fetrick's whereabouts. Something about his demeanor caused suspicion among the others. He appeared nervous and evasive. Finally, the men insisted on backtracking to where Fetrick was last seen.

Within hours, they discovered the grim reality of Newman's treachery. Fetrick's lifeless body lay before them with his throat slit from ear to ear and pockets empty of his recent pay.

Although Newman professed his innocence, the men, after searching him and finding the dead man's money, quickly



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bound him and made him their prisoner. Newman was brought to Huntsville and turned over to the newly elected sheriff, Stephen Neal. Although there was no official jail, the prisoner was placed in a room with an armed guard.

The grand jury met on the second Monday in November. A murder indictment was returned and attorney John W. Walker, the son-in-law of LeRoy Pope, agreed to represent the prisoner.

The trial was held in a small log house situated on a large rock formation east of the Big Spring. This is the present-day location of the Regions Bank. On Friday, Nov. 13, the case was brought before Judge Obadiah Jones.

Although Newman was quickly found guilty, Judge Jones ordered a new trial because of a technicality.

Newman next appeared in court on Nov. 21, but the case was continued because not enough prospective jurors were in town on that cold day. Traditionally, jurors were selected from among businessmen and others who happened to be in the vicinity of the courthouse at the moment.

To prevent Newman's case from being delayed until the spring session of court, Judge Jones called a special session for Dec. 1.

The trial continued all day and those involved consented to allow the jury to retire for the night to the house of William and Louis Winston in the custody of a sworn officer.

The next morning at 9:00, the trial continued with lawyers Walker and Winston presenting

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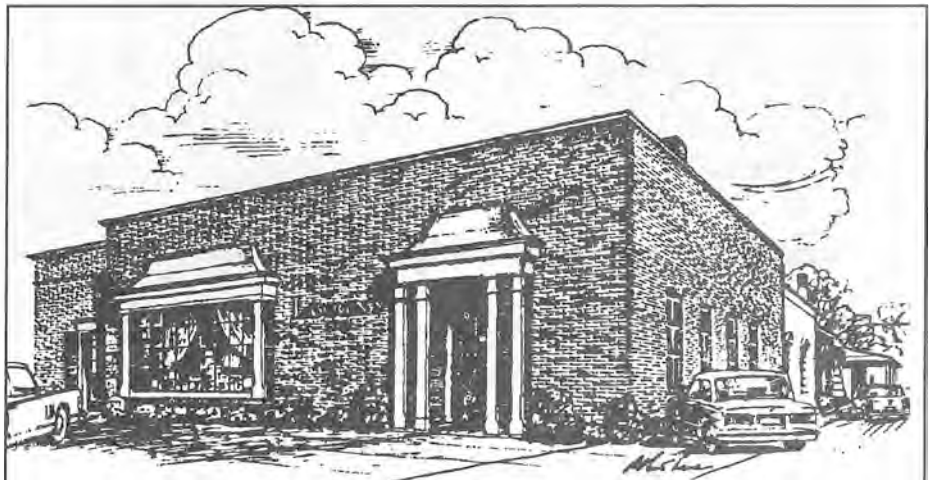
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their arguments. Then, as the jury deliberated, a large crowd milled around the log house anxiously awaiting the verdict. A hush fell over the townspeople when James Ishma, foreman of the jury, appeared at the door to read the verdict:

"Guilty in manner and form as charged in the Bill of Indictment!"

At 10 o'clock the following morning, Newman stood before Jones for sentencing. The defense counsel rendered 13 technical reasons why the verdict should be overturned, but the judge denied the motions, proclaiming:

"You, Eli Newman, will be carried from hence to the place from whence you came, and on Saturday next the fifth day of this instant between the hours of ten in the forenoon and two in the afternoon you will be carried by the proper officer, to the place of public execution to be executed in or near the town of Huntsville, and there be hanged by the neck until your body be dead, and the Lord have Mercy on your soul."

On Dec. 5, 1812, at about noon, Newman entered history as the first man to be executed for murder in Madison County.

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The Wrong War

General Joe Wheeler, a Confederate cavalry general for whom Wheeler Wildlife Refuge was named, also served admirably in the Spanish-American War, but had a hard time remembering who the enemy was.

At the battle of Santiago, in Cuba, he insisted on being in the midst of the battle though he was very sick and had to be transported in an ambulance. When the battle seemed to be going badly, he bravely left the ambulance, dramatically leaped on a horse, and led a charge.

The charge was succeeding when Wheeler, slipping back into his youth, shouted exultantly to his men, "The Yankees are running! They're leaving their guns!"

Later, when reminded of his slip of the tongue, he testily replied, "What's the difference? Anyone that shoots at me is a damn Yankee in my book!"

Although he became a loyal citizen after the Civil War he always remained proud of his service to the Confederacy.

He later served in Congress and once, while debating a bill concerning Civil War cemeteries, actually gave a speech while wearing his old Confederate uniform.

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News from 1878

Deadly Family Feud


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

Poison Brandy

The supposed poisoning of a young man named Childers has caused some excitement. The fact that he was at a grog-shop and, after taking a drink, complained of feeling badly, went home and suddenly died, seems to have caused the belief that he was poisoned.

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A Military Funeral

During the Civil War, in 1862, Union Army Captain Robert Elicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land. During the night, Captain Elicombe heard the moans of a soldier who lay severely wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the Captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back for medical attention,

Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, the Captain reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him toward his encampment. When the Captain finally reached his own lines he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead. The Captain lit a lantern, and suddenly caught his breath and went

numb with shock. In the dim light he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son, The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out, Without telling his father, the boy had enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, heart-broken, the father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial despite his enemy status, His request was only partially granted, The Captain had asked if he could have a group of Army band members play a funeral dirge for his

son at the funeral, The request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate. But, out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him only one musician. The Captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform. This wish was granted

The haunting melody we now know as "Taps", used at military funerals, was born,



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Only One Remains

By Tony Miller

Another one of my heroes died yesterday, January twenty ninth, my uncle Paul B. Miller passed away at the Tut Fann Veterans home. He was eighty nine years old. He was one of seven Miller boys; my dad was one, from my grand parents Mose and Anna Miller. I know it's not special to you but when you consider the generation it very well should be to all of us. Of the seven Miller boys from Ryland, five were in World War II.

My uncle Gib died last year in January. He was a Chief Warrant Officer in the army and actually won a bronze star before he was critically wounded at St. Lowe France. He was in the wave of soldiers that stormed

the beaches at Normandy along with Uncle Louis who also won the bronze star and was inducted into the Hall of Heroes in the Madison County Court House. Uncle Gib was an expert in every weapon a man could carry, even the bayonet.

Uncle Paul was taken prisoner by the Chinese Communists in Korea and spent almost three years in a prison camp on the Manchurian border. My Dad, Frank, while in the war, barely escaped being killed by German tanks while he and his men took refuge in a German woman's basement. Later, after the war, he was a guard at the Nuremburg trials. He died in nineteen ninety one.

Three other uncles have passed on, Louis, Joe and Robert, and each one was a hero in his own way. Robert, the oldest of the seven, was the only brother that did not go to war. He stayed home and helped my grand

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parents farm. Uncle Joe was the biggest of the Miller brothers and had a nick name for every one he liked, if he didn't give you a nick name well....At his funeral the preacher of the church where Joe faithfully attended and cared deeply for said "If Joe Miller doesn't go to heaven, I don't stand a chance".

The brothers grew up in Madison County during the depression as poor share croppers, lots of times having only beans and potatoes, maybe on occasion they would kill a squirrel, a rabbit or yes (gulp)even a possum.

Most Christmases they would get apples, oranges, nuts or if lucky a pair of work shoes. The seven brothers grew to be legends around the Ryland community for their prowess at basket ball, for they were all well over six feet tall and played" country style" [hips and elbows] basket ball.

My dad's nineteen thirty seven Central School team won the county championship that year with my Daddy being the star center for them.

So now "only one remains", the youngest of the Miller seven, my Uncle Malcolm Miller who is a hero in his own right. He is known as Malcolm "High Pockets" Miller. He is an accomplished musician and song writer who has had several songs recorded. I saw him actually play four musical instruments at one time on stage, [guitar harmonica, cymbals [knees] and bass guitar [feet!]. He also spent his share of military time in the Navy. I believe Uncle Malcolm is eighty one and I sure hope he lives to be a hundred or more. This generation needs heroes like these seven men.

A Merciful Judge

A judge in Tennessee decided a jury went a little too far in recommending a sentence of 5,005 years for a man they convicted of five robberies and a kidnapping. The judge reduced the sentence to 1,001 years.

"Families are like fudge - pretty sweet mostly, with a few nuts."

Sam Keith, Huntsville

"I was taking my canary to the vet, it got loose in the car and flew out the window. The next thing I saw was his rear end, and I crashed."

Seen in recent accident report

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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Congratulations to **Pat Martinson** for being the first correct caller to identify the Photo of the Month for February. The handsome young man is **Don Jennings**, of Economy Floor Supports. Pat and his sweet wife **Jane** are owners of A/C Heating & Cooling, Jane is also an artist and Pat is a retired firefighter (he worked at the fire station from 1971-2002). You are the winner, Pat!

Michael Sylvester, owner of MS Masonry, is sure one proud uncle. His beautiful neice, **Jennie Brooke Stender**, has a 9th birthday on March 26. She's a 2nd grader at Westminister Christian Academy, and takes ballet at the North Alabama Dance Center. Her parents are **John & Tammy Stender**, Michael is Tammy's brother. Happy Birthday to Jennie!

Marcheta Goodson Worley, of Altavista, died recently at 84. She was the daughter of **Roland H. Goodson & Leona Belle Bain Goodson**. Marcheta took up folk art painting as a young woman, and her motto was, "If it stands still, paint it!" We send our deepest condolences to her son,

daughter, grandchildren and other friends and family.

They say that your life is a successful one if you touch people along the way, if you impact or change the lives of others. One man who did that was **Charles "Chuck" Owens**. The people who were lucky to know him will never forget him. He was my Dad, and he died Feb. 14 at the age of 92. He leaves **Annelie Owens**, his wife of 62 years and my mom, a son **Ken Owens**, my brother, and **Steph Troup**, granddaughter, as well as grandson **Brandon Owens**, of Tucson, Az. We'll always love you, Dad.

Paul Miller was 89 when he died at the Floyd E. "Tut" Fann Veterans home in Huntsville. **Malcolm Miller** ws his beloved brother and has written quite a bit about Paul. We send our deepest condolences to Paul's family and many friends.

We found out something very interesting recently. **WLRH Public Radio** here in Huntsville

offers a Radio Reading Service to those who can no longer read the Huntsville Times, "Old Huntsville." and other periodicals. Volunteer readers spend each day from 9-10am in reading selected stories to listeners. Many who are unable to read now will find this of much interest, and it is a service that is much needed.

In order to take part in this, a listener needs only to go by the **Huntsville Public Library** and pick up a special FM receiver, that is free of charge. **Scott Passmore** is the Volunteer Coordinator for the reading service, and we very much appreciate what he and WLRH are doing for those who can no longer read.

We want to wish a very special birthday to **Lisa DeJarnatte**, pretty wife of **Dr. Ralph DeJarnatte**. The doctor always does something special for his wife's birthday, so we hope this year was no different!

Speaking of important birthdays, **Gale Nichols** is celebrating the 6th anniversary of her 39th birthday on March 13. We wish

Photo of The Month

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her the best birthday!

We talked with a really sweet guy recently. **Jim Garner** lives on Monte Sano and has some great memories of life on the mountain. We may be reading some stories from him soon!

It was sad to read that **Reid Ace Hardware** was closing its doors, after being in business on North Parkway since 1962. Many remember **Joe Reid** and his wife, **Mary Gene**, who ran the store for many years. Along with Terry's Pizza, Eunice's Kitchen and several other landmarks, this one says good-bye as well.

Kathy and **Frank Ogle** recently celebrated their 39th anniversary. It's hard to believe because Kathy looks not much older than 39! She works at the office of **Dr. Ralph DeJarnatte**.

Another March anniversary, of their first year of marriage, was celebrated by **Jen & Dave Willie**, who live in Nashville, Tn. but have friends here in Huntville. Happy anniversary to you two!

Jerri Smith recently celebrated a birthday. Jerri is the retired lunch room manager at Ed White Middle School.

Susie Bryant's brother **Steve Parton** just became a grandfather. **Connor Lee Parton** is the baby boy of parents **Jacob** and **Olivia Parton**. When Connor gets a bit older he will hear many stories of the family's history.

Mary Grimes, wife of **Vic Grimes** of the Golden K Kiwanis, passed away in February. We send our deepest sympathy to Vic and their family. Mary was one of those ladies who had a smile and a kind word for everyone.

We met a couple of really interesting guys lately, who have been friends ever since high school. Huntsville High is having an upcoming reunion and **Robert Staggs** is one of the graduates - he left Huntsville in 1970. Robert's son is **Wes Staggs**, here in Huntsville, who

owns Realty One.

Harris Sims (Mickey) Moore, Jr. graduated from Huntsville High the same year as Robert and lives in Satellite Beach, Fl. He is originally from Huntsville and his grandfather, **Robert A. Moore**, was the telephone manager in Huntsville for 46 years, retiring in 1926.

Ray Childers had been a resident at Skilled Nursing in Redstone Village and was born in 1914. He died at the age of 95 very recently, and leaves family and friends who will miss him so much.

Our friend **Kathy Cotney** emailed me to tell me that her daughter **Jessica** is a mom again! **Jessica** and husband **Brian Grotewiel** live in Missouri and have one daughter, **Payton**, who is 2 1/2. **Kathy** and **Steve Cotney** have another daughter, **Tamra** who is married to **John Holder** and they live in Covington, Ga. with daughter **Noelle**, who is 13.

Carla Stephens Sims wrote to us recently and, at 45, says she remembers many things in Huntsville that others of her age group may remember - like the Super Slide near Parkway City, Jones Farm being filled with cows, Joe Davis as mayor. We look forward to reading **Carla's** memories.

Ed Trentham and his sweet wife **Ann** celebrated Ed's birthday recently - it was made even more

fun because their daughter **Susan Trentham-Owens** was able to visit from Tucson, Arizona. Happy Birthday to you, Ed.

Have a good March, and remember to watch out for your older neighbors.

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Helena Crutcher's Kitchen

Cajun Corn Fritters

- 1 8-oz. pkg. hush puppy mix
- 2/3 c. buttermilk
- 1 large egg
- 1 t. Cajun seasoning
- 1 11-oz. can Green Giant Mexicorn, well drained
- 1 c. vegetable oil

In a medium mixing bowl, place hush puppy mix, buttermilk and egg, beat til well mixed. Add Mexicorn. In a 12" skillet, heat oil on medium high heat. Put one heaping tablespoon of fritter mix in at a time, leaving about an inch between each fritter. Turn over to brown other side, be careful not to burn. Drain on paper towels and serve hot.

Honey-Pecan Sugar Snap Peas

- 2 - 9 oz. boxes Frozen Green Giant Sugar Snap Peas

- 1/2 c. Honey Mustard dressing
- 1/4 c. pecan pieces

In a 2-quart saucepan heat the peas on medium heat for five minutes and thawed, drain well. Add the honey mustard dressing and pecans. Reduce heat to low and cover. Cook for 10 minutes and peas are heated through.

Mexicali Beef Casserole

- 1 - 16 oz. can refried beans
- 2 - 10 oz. cans Mexican style tomatoes, drained
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1/4 c. sliced green olives
- 4 oz. lean ground beef, broiled and drained
- 6 oz. 2% Monterey Jack Cheese or pepper jack cheese
- 4 T. chunky salsa
- 6 oz. Mission Tortilla strips

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray a 9" non-stick frying pan with Pam. Cook onion til clear. In a large casserole dish, layer the

beans, half of the tomatoes, onion, half of olives and salsa. Make next layer with ground beef, rest of tomatoes and olives. Top with cheese. Bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes til hot and bubbly. Serve with tortilla strips and salsa on the side.

Old Dutch Apple Strudel

- 2 c. apples, peeled & sliced
- 1/2 c. honey
- 2 t. cinnamon
- 1 t. lemon juice
- 1 T. butter
- 1 cup plain flour
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 t. baking powder
- 1/2 t. baking soda
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 egg, beaten

Arrange apple slices in buttered baking dish. Drizzle honey over the apples and sprinkle with cinnamon and lemon juice. In a large bowl combine the flower, sugar, baking powder, soda and

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salt. Stir in the beaten egg until mixture is crumbly. Spoon mixture over the apples and bake at 350 degrees for 30-40 minutes and crust is golden brown.

Mama's Alabama Cake

- 1/2 c. buttermilk
- 1 c. rolled oats, divided
- 2 sticks butter, room temp
- 1 c. dark brown sugar, packed
- 3 large eggs
- 1/2 c. molasses
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- 1/2 t. allspice
- 1 t. baking powder
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 1/4 c. whole wheat flour
- 1/2 c. unbleached, plain flour
- 1 large baking apple, peeled & cored, cut into small pieces
- 1 c. pecan pieces
- 1/4 c. light brown sugar
- 1/2 t. cinnamon
- Caramel Sauce:**
- 1/4 c. dark brown sugar
- 1 - 11 oz. pkg. butterscotch chips
- 2 T. butter
- 1 c. half n' half
- Vanilla ice cream

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9" spring form pan with Pam. In a small bowl combine the buttermilk and 3/4 cup of the rolled oats. Let soak while mixing other ingredients. In a 3 quart mixing bowl, cream butter and

dark brown sugar together. Add eggs, then molasses, vanilla and allspice.

Mix baking powder, salt and flours together. Add to the egg/butter mixture with oatmeal and buttermilk. Beat til well mixed and fluffy. Stir in the apple and pecans, pour into the prepared pan.

Smooth over the batter and top with remaining 1/4 cup rolled oats, light brown sugar, and cinnamon. Bake for 1 hour and an inserted toothpick comes out clean. While cake is baking, melt sugar, butterscotch chips and butter together in a 1 quart saucepan over medium heat. Stir til completely melted. Add the half n' half, don't let it boil. Cook til mixture coats a wooden spoon, keep warm. Poke holes in the baked cake and ladle two tablespoons of caramel sauce of the top of the cake, Remove spring form cake pan sides and let cool for 30 minutes, and cake can be cut with no crumbling.

Serve each piece of cake in serving bowls with a half cup of the caramel sauce poured over it, and a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Leftover sauce will keep in fridge for 2 days.

Helena Crutcher is the Activities Coordinator at Redstone Village/ Skilled Nursing . She loves to cook and often delights the residents with her flavorful dishes.



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The Klan Rags

by Larry Weiss

When Louis Miller, owner of the Tennessee Poultry and Hide Company, arrived at work one morning sometime in the 1920s his attention was riveted by a crude handwritten notice nailed to the front door. "GET OUT OF TOWN. [signed] KU KLUX KLAN."

Feelings of shock, anger and disappointment clouded his mind as he read and then reread the scrap of paper. He had thought America was going to be different.

Many years later Miller told his son Buddy, how he felt after he read the notice: "I was mad as hell. I had traveled half way around the world to find a place where I could live in freedom, and I'll be damned if I was going to let those sons of b.....s run me out of Huntsville!"

Miller had immigrated to the United States in 1913. "Ever since I could remember, I wanted to leave Russia and come to America," he would tell his children in later years. In the Czar's Russia, Jews were periodically attacked by anti-Semitic thugs who stole property, burned homes and businesses, and vented their hate by murdering Jews. Louis only had a seventh grade education by the time he arrived in New York because anti-Jewish quotas in Minsk schools prevented him during some years from attending class.

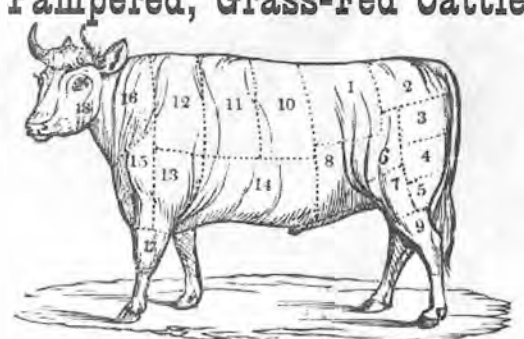
Miller later said that the most beautiful sight he had ever seen was the Statue of Liberty as the ship which brought him to the United States pulled into the harbor of New York. The statue represented a dream that he had ever since he was "old enough to think." He wanted to come to this country, and now he was here. Freedom from quotas and murdering gangs. Here



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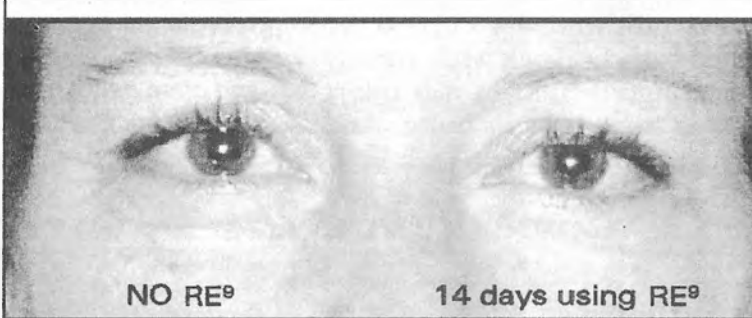
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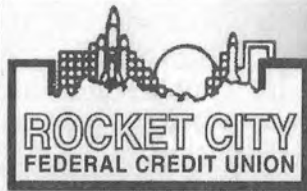
His father had been a Melamed in Minsk, Russia - a teacher who taught young boys Hebrew. It was an honorable profession, but very poorly paid. Just before Louis left Minsk to come to America, his father said to him: 'We have a lot of famous Rabbis and people well known in our family. If you change your name as most people do when they go to America, nobody will know who you are.'

Label Mishkind - Louis Miller's name at birth - promised his dad that he wouldn't change his name in America. It turned out, though, that Label couldn't keep his promise. He stayed with his older brother in Brooklyn who had already Americanized his own name to "Miller" when he first came to this country. Before Label could speak English people had already started calling him "Louis Miller" because of his brother. After some time, Label Mishkind legally changed his name to Louis Miller because everybody called him that anyway.

Miller thrived in the freedom of the new land. By day he worked for his brother who owned a small candy store, and by night he went to school to learn English and take citizenship classes. Patiently, he studied, worked and saved his money, determined to become an American citizen. He had already fulfilled the dream for which generations of his family had prayed - he was in a country where a person was judged by his own merit and free to practice his own religious beliefs.

After a few years in New York, Louis ventured out to Paris, Tennessee, to visit a sister who lived there. His first exposure to Southern culture came as somewhat of a shock. He later laughed as he told the story of how people he passed in the railroad station would smile and say, "Good morning, how are you." As he walked down the street complete strangers greeted him in a friendly manner. This was quite unusual, but certainly pleasant for the young emigrant.

Miller chuckled in later years as he remembered his feelings, "I thought I must have looked like somebody they know, otherwise they wouldn't be speaking to me. In New York people who lived next door to each another rarely spoke to one another, much less com-



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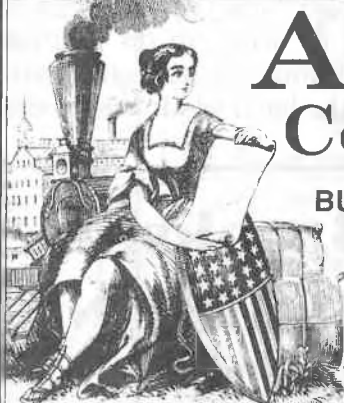
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plete strangers.”

After Miller realized it had not been a case of mistaken identity, but rather that the South was simply a friendlier place than New York, he decided to settle here. Traveling down to Decatur, Alabama, he quickly found a job, and sent his brother a telegram asking him to pack up his stuff and send it south.

Hard work and attention to details soon made Miller a prized employee, and when his boss purchased another company in Huntsville in 1918, he asked Miller to manage it for him. The company, named the Tennessee Poultry and Hide Company, dealt in items such as poultry, hides, eggs, furs, wild roots, scrap iron, and wiping rags. The store quickly became a boon to the community and began to prosper. For many of the rural farmers it proved to be a blessing in the off season when they were unable to farm. Whole families would gather ginseng and run trap lines for furs which Miller bought, often providing the only income they had during the winter months.

The community soon learned that Miller was a fair man, paying fair prices and keeping his word. In time, his reputation literally became the business, a fact that his employer probably realized when he agreed to sell the company to Miller.

Louis Miller was an asset to his adopted hometown. He joined the local Temple, became active in community affairs and

was an outspoken advocate of the individual right to freedom.

Unfortunately he was so outspoken he soon came to the attention of the local Ku Klux Klan.

Huntsville’s original Klan had been founded in 1867 as a means to combat the consequences of Reconstruction. In 1872, after a Congressional hearing held in Huntsville exposed many of its brutalities, the Klan disbanded only to rear its ugly head again in the early 1900s in response to the release of the film, “Birth of a Nation.”

By 1920 the Klan had become a powerful organization in Huntsville. They had their own laws and government and even conducted their own trials. They had become, as one historian put it so aptly, “the invisible government.”

Businessmen felt they had to belong in order to do business, and politicians felt they had to belong in order to do politics. Even if you did not agree with them, the local wisdom was that



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it was better to keep your mouth shut. In a perverse fairness it must be stated that the local Klan did not discriminate - they hated everyone equally - Blacks, Jews, foreigners, and Northerners.

Miller fitted most of the above criteria, a fact that the Klan quickly realized.

Louis Miller hated the Klan, and he publicly took issue with them. He simply could not understand how, in a land of the free, a group of bigoted night-riders could intimidate a whole community. In his anger at the Klan he said in public more than a few times that, one day, he was going to buy those Klan robes and tear them up into wiping rags.

He had no idea at the time of how prophetic his words would prove. Miller's threats infuriated the Klan who soon put out word that he was a marked man.

After finding the Klan eviction notice on his door, Miller sent word to the Klan leaders that if they came after him, he would be ready for them. At five-foot-four he was not physically a very imposing man, and he wasn't really a very good shot, either. However, at that time there was a shooting gallery next door to the Tennessee Poultry and Hide Company. Every day Louis visited the gallery, plunked down his money, and practiced shooting with rifles and pistols. After a while he became a superb marksman, a fact he made sure that everyone knew. He also

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made sure that the Klan realized that if they came after him, they might get him, but they were likely to lose some of their own in the process.

Still, despite his bravado, he realized the danger. He constantly kept a gun close by, at work and at home. His orders to his wife were: "If anybody knocks at night when I am not at home, don't open the door." Not knowing when the Klan might come after him, Miller would answer the door with a rifle or pistol in hand.

The citizens of Huntsville probably expected a bloody confrontation, most likely ending with someone lying dead in the streets, but suddenly, for no apparent reason, the Klan stopped its harassment of Miller. It would be years before he ever knew the reason why.

Miller had a few friends and business acquaintances who were also members of the Klan, and it was one of them who eventually told him the whole story.

The Huntsville Klan had put Louis Miller on trial in absentia at a special Klan meeting called for that purpose. Louis was charged with speaking in public against the Klan. Among other specific examples, he was charged with insulting the Klan by threatening repeatedly in public to tear its robes into wiping rags.

The trial was a major event in the local Klan community. Both a pros-

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cuting attorney and a defense attorney were designated. The man who eventually told Louis the story offered to serve as defense attorney. Klan members in the hall were the jury.

When it came time during the trial for the defense attorney to say his piece, he argued, "I've known Louis Miller for a number of years. In fact I've known him ever since he came to Huntsville. He left Russia to find a place of freedom - I know that because he told me. Yes, he is in disagreement with the Klan. Louis Miller has a right to speak against us just as any other American does. He even has the right to speak against his government, but he is speaking against the Klan. I don't find that to be anything he should be put on trial for. I don't think it is

wrong."

During his summation the defense attorney made his point as strongly as he could: "I joined the Klan because I thought it was a worthwhile organization but, I'm submitting my resignation from the Klan tonight, because I don't feel like it is the kind of organization I need to belong to."

He did resign, and eventually he told Louis about the trial. In part because one solitary person had dared to oppose the Klan, it quickly began losing public support. Members drifted away and in a few years the Huntsville Klan had almost disappeared.

The story might have ended there if it had not been for a phone call Miller received in the early 1930s.

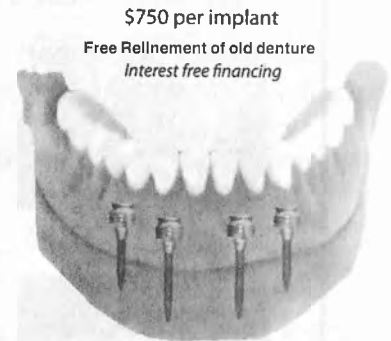
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in wiping rags?"

Miller, thinking it was just another business call in an already hectic day replied, "Yes, if the price is right."

The caller went on to explain the purpose of his call. "I've been renting a meeting hall to the Ku Klux Klan, but they haven't been active for a couple of years and they haven't been paying any rent. I'm going to have to rent it to somebody else, but I got a bunch of their old robes on the floor in a pile in the meeting hall, and I was just wondering if you would be interested in buying them."

Remembering his threats years earlier to sell the Klan's robes as wiping rags, he tried to control his excitement. "Where are you now?" asked Miller.

The caller replied, "I'm at the meeting hall," and gave Louis the address. The rag buyer was already grabbing for his hat and coat as he yelled into the phone, "Don't you leave! I'll be there in ten minutes. I'll buy them from you. I'll buy them all from you!"

On the short trip to the now defunct meeting hall he began having second thoughts about the price, "I want to buy them, but there's only so much I can pay for them to make them into

wiping rags." But then he thought about what was really important to him. "It doesn't make any difference," he thought to himself, "no matter what he wants for them, I'm going to pay that. I'm going to get them. I'm going to do what I said I was going to do."

So Louis Miller, Jewish dealer in wiping rags, soon showed up at the former Klan meeting hall to buy a pile of Klan robes. With little dickering, the deal was struck. They shook hands with Louis telling the seller, "I'll send two or three men to the hall in about an hour to pick up the robes and I'll send you a check today."

Actually, if it had not been for the hate the robes represented they would have been quite attractive. Made out of white linen, the robes were decorated with large colorful embroidered

dragons and Celtic crosses.

If people were wondering what a Jewish dealer wanted with Klan robes they soon found the answer. Every morning Miller would have an employee push a pallet loaded with Klan robes out to the space between the sidewalk and the street. They would remain there all day, every day as a reminder



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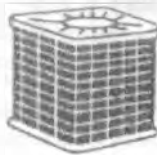
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to people of what the robes really were - simply a pile of discarded rags.

Miller often sat in his office watching the reactions of people as they walked by. The robes were in a pile, but you could tell what they were because all of the embroidered Klan emblems. Some people would stare. Some would do a double-take. Some people simply hung their heads and pretended not to see the pile.

After a couple of months of displaying the robes, a friend of Miller's called. "Louie," the friend said, "I know that you said you were going to buy these robes and make them into wiping rags, and I know you've had a lot of fun displaying them. But, you know, I was a member of the Klan. Don't you think you've had enough fun with those robes now?"

Miller responded to his friend's question with a question of his own:

"Let me ask you this; are you asking me, or are you telling me?" His friend gently, and probably sheepishly, replied, "I'm asking you."

Louis said, "Well, OK, but if you were "telling" me, those damn things would stay on display for years! But we'll take them in and I'll do what I said I'd do with them."

One day, shortly after he agreed to stop displaying the robes, Louis received a call from a widow woman who was a friend of his and who had heard about the robes.

"Louie," she asked, "what are you going to do with the embroidered emblems?"

"Well, I guess I'll have to take those off before we make them into wiping rags." The robes were

made out of first class white cotton, and they would make a premium grade of wiping rag.

The widow woman then explained her proposition. "If you send those uniforms out to my house, I'll take the emblems off them, and all you'll have to do is wash them and tear them up into wiping rags. I won't charge you anything, but I want the em-

blems."

Miller quickly agreed to the deal and had an employee take the robes out to her house.

One day, long after Louis got the robes back without the emblems, and long after all the Klan robes had been torn into wiping rags, Louis got a call from his friend, the widow woman. "Come by the house sometime and I'll

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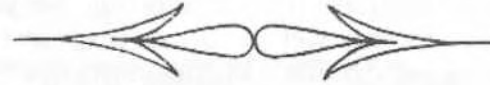
There were never as many log cabins in this country as politicians claiming to have been born in one.

show you what I did with the emblems.”

A few hours later Miller was standing in the lady's house, in awe of her creation. Transforming the symbols of hate into a thing of beauty, she had sewn a gorgeous patchwork quilt out of the emblems. The biggest emblem was in the middle, surrounded by the next biggest emblems, and those surrounded by the next biggest in swirling, colorful profusion to the very edges of the quilt. As he stared at the women's extraordinary creation he said, half to himself, "you know, I would have never thought that something so

bad could be turned into something so beautiful.”

The daughter of the woman who made the quilt now has it, and she still lives in Huntsville. Louis Miller, the young man who emigrated from Russia in search of freedom, died in 1966. The Tennessee Poultry and Hide Company is now known as L. Miller & Son, Inc., and is operated by Louis' son, Buddy, and Buddy's son, Sol.



Old Time Remedies

* To cure a fever, climb a tree with your hands (not using your feet). Then jump out to leave your fever in the tree.

* If you suffer from cold feet, put red pepper pods in your shoes, at night put the pepper in your socks.

* If your dog is startled by a sudden noise, calm him by gently stroking his ear between your thumb and forefinger.

* For a case of yellow jaundice, catch nine lice from someone's head and eat them.

* For lethargy and low grade fever, boil apple, cherry and dogwood tree bark together and drink the tea.

* If you get chiggers, put salt and butter on the bites and it will kill the chiggers.

* If someone in the family has chicken pox, one of the family should drive the chickens in the front door and out the back door. This will cure the person who is sick.

* If your dog is feeling especially nervous, put on some relaxing music for him like Bach's "Brandenburg Concertos."

(These remedies are meant for your entertainment only - certainly don't be jumping out of trees!)

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The Mystery of Laidie Lee

by Durwood White

The cool evening breeze rustled the branches of the trees, as my wife and I strolled along Row 9 in Section 4 of Maple Hill Cemetery. Suddenly with great surprise and excitement we spotted a tombstone on the corner of a blacktop intersection.

The statue stood about 4 feet, or it would have if the figure atop the base had not been missing. We were struck by the intricate carvings of flowers and vine that entwined the missing baby's feet; yet, more confused by the name chiseled in the marble plaque affixed in the base: Laidie Lee. We wondered why there were no birth or death dates, as the monument was a lovely, expensive one.

Now let me clarify this story of how we found ourselves in Maple Hill Cemetery looking for this precise grave. My wife remembers walking through the cemetery with her mother and being told the story. They would stop at the little grave and look at the pretty angel. My wife told me a fascinating story of how this little Laidie Lee is intertwined in the roots of her family ancestry. I will relate that story to you, thereby hoping to solve the mystery of Laidie Lee.

Where shall we begin? Two distant families had merged in Triana, Alabama in the early years of 1800. The following history has been verified and some details are written in a historical search narrative written by Nancy Mitchell Nilsson, entitled "From These Roots." In that dissertation Ms. Nilsson describes a word-of-mouth history



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from Anna Lou Toney, an elder aunt whom she calls 'Big Sis'. Much of the Toney Family history - one wing of the Laidie Lee mystery - and the Rogers Family that follows are summarized from Ms. Nilsson's narrative.

Edmund Toney was born April 11, 1805, in Virginia. Around 1818-1820 he and his two brothers moved to the Triana community in North Alabama. Edmund had a phenomenal business mind and acquired a great amount of land in the Tennessee Valley. There are surviving deeds and land records that Edmund acquired by buying up unpaid loans, while amassing a large cotton dynasty.

At the peak of Triana's early history, the city population bustled at 1,000, a thriving, prosperous city on the banks of the Tennessee River. Among Triana's most prosperous citizens were the three Toney brothers, Harris, Caleb, and Edmund, the oldest.

Now we shift to the entry of the Rogers family branch and little Laidie Lee. Back in Virginia, Edmund's mother had died leaving young children without a caretaker. Edmund rushed back to Virginia to settle the family's affairs. In the process, he acquired the services of a lady named Adelaide Lee Rogers of Philadelphia to be his governess and housekeeper.

Mrs. Rogers, a widow, came bag and baggage to the Toney home with her three children, John, James and Mary. A romance or mutual arrangement produced a marriage between Edmund Toney and Mary Rogers on No-

vember 26, 1839. Mary was born in Pennsylvania October 18, 1824 and was only 15. Edmund was 34.

Mary Rogers was suddenly and gloriously rich, the wife of a wealthy planter and mogul of cotton, and a much older husband. She took several trips abroad and came home with a painter who painted some of the

portraits now retained in current descendent homes. Edmund had let her have her way, his mind clouded with business details of land, loans, and slaves. Mary, a well educated city girl, wanted to live in the city, so Edmund purchased a home on Randolph Street, known today as the President's home. The Toney's were one of

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Where does Laidie Lee enter the maze of relatives? According to family stories, Laidie Lee was a 5-year old cousin possibly named for her grandmother (or relative), Adelaide Lee Rogers. Instead of being called Adelaide, she was called Laidie (pronounced Lady). On a visit to the Toney home with the Rogers family she became sick and died.

Laidie Lee is still a mystery - who were her parents, when did she die, what was the sickness that took her youthful life?

Her only known family is buried in Maple Hill Cemetery: John Lee Rogers, born in Philadelphia May 4, 1826, died in Huntsville April 27, 1869; Adelaide Rogers, born in New York June 20, 1802, died in Huntsville December 31, 1867; and, James N. B. Rogers, born in Philadelphia October 4, 1828, died at Camp Chase January 28, 1865.

If you are ever in Maple Hill Cemetery, let me ask you to take a journey past the corner of Row 9, Section 4, and take a moment to remember little Laidie Lee.

Perhaps the soft breeze rustling the maple trees will mesmerize you, and cause you to think of the many lost histories hidden in the Tennessee Valley.

Recipe For Polk Salat

1 good-sized garbage bag of young poke salat leaves (no stems)

1/2 cup bacon drippings (or more to taste) water

1 chopped onion

4-5 eggs

Cook your greens in boiling water til done. Drain water and put back on stove. Cook

some more on low, then remove greens from pot. Add chopped onion to small amount of water in pan, add greens. Cook till onions are done. Squeeze out the water with your hands, tenderly. Heat up some bacon drippings in pail.

When hot, put greens and chopped onion in pan with grease. Add salt and pepper to taste, serve with pepper sauce.

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* Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intentions, integrity and honesty.

* Make your pens carefully; you may whittle nibs to the individual tastes of the pupils.

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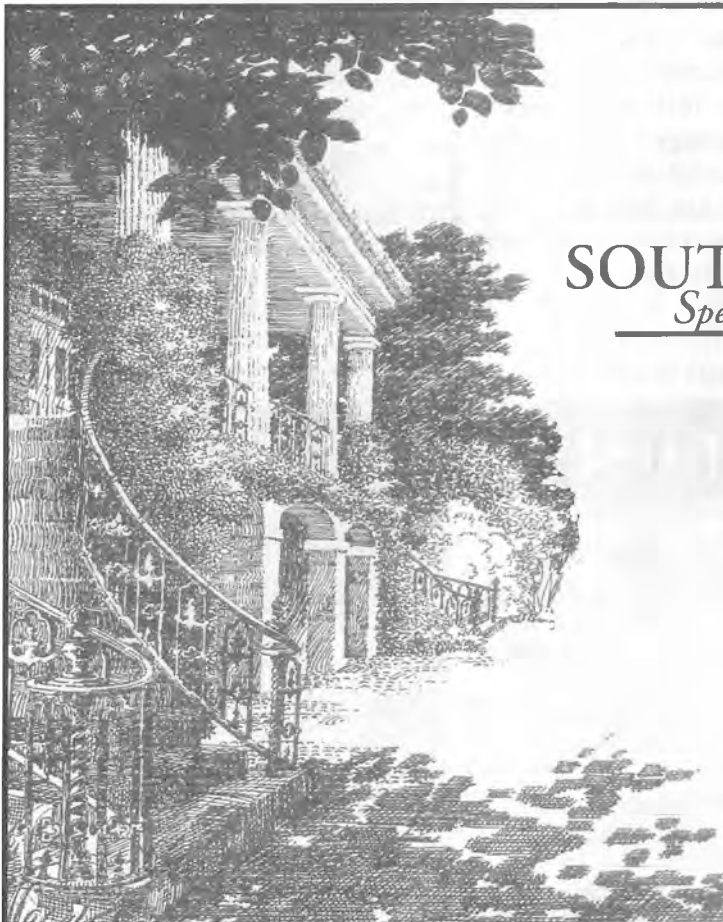
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Working at Sterchi's Furniture Store

Betty Miller Lewis

The year was 1956 when I went to Sterchi's furniture store to buy a bedroom suite. The proper name was Sterchi Brothers Stores, Inc; the home office was located in Knoxville, TN. The store was located at the corner of Clinton and Jefferson streets. This is the present site of Downtown Storage. Almost everyone back then would buy their merchandise on credit and pay it weekly or monthly and so I charged my purchase. In order to do this, I had to talk to Mr. Ed Allen, the office manager, to get my credit approved. During this process, Mr. Allen asked me if I would be interested in coming to work for Sterchi's. I was working at a small sheet metal firm located on what was then Marion Street and making about \$20.00 per week. Working at Sterchi's was a big step for me because I would be making twice the sal-

ary.

The credit department was supervised by Mr. Ed Allen, credit manager, and Mr. Harold Bragg, assistant credit manager. Jack Kiper, Ted Goosby, James Lamb, and Tommy Lee, were also assistant credit managers during the years that I was there. Those that I remember working in the credit department were Alta "Sissie" Trotman, Lucy Gray, Joyce Worley, Mary Childress, Alice Whitt, Ruby Luna Mooney, Barbara Ross, Melba Lindsey Puryear, Brenda Elmore, Florence Longmuir, Judy Copeland, Frances Cagle, and Betty Jo Watson.

I began as cashier and on Saturdays we would really be busy. Most people came in on that day to pay on their bill which would be anywhere from \$1.25 to \$2.50. This was a lot of money back then. One day, this lady came to the cashier's window and said that she wanted to pay on "Odell's baby buggy." Now, who was Odell? I had no idea, but after getting her last name, I took her payment. One Saturday afternoon, Elvis Presley's father, Vernon, came in to get change for the parking meter. He had married a lady from Huntsville and was here visiting family. We were really excited to see him as though he was a movie star.

The store manager at that time was Mr. Carl Woodall. After

he retired, Mr. W.E. Petty replaced him. Mr. John Robinson was assistant store manager. One day, Mr. Robinson was showing some of us a new chair that had come in and when he sat in it, it turned over backwards and he went over

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with it; he was so embarrassed. The furniture salesmen that I remember were Elmer Quick, Harvey Parks, James Reed, John Gingrich, Clifton Jones, Joe Allen, H.E. VanHooser, Gordon Gilbreath, and Cloyd Steelman. I remember that Mr. Steelman could really sell the furniture, maybe more than all the others put together. Those in the shipping and appliance repair departments, supervised by Mr. Thomas McKay, were J.C. Lawrence, Bud Young, Wendell Putman, Eddis Brown, Billy Haga, Red Worley, and George Fields. Mr. Bill Woodall had a small TV repair shop located back near the shipping department.

Mr. William T. "Solly" Solman and Mr. Pierce Walker were over the jewelry department. Also working in jewelry was Ms. Hilda Ward and two or three other ladies whose names I don't remember.

Sometimes the store would stay open at night for special sales. A small gift would be given to the customer who bought furniture. We in the office would be given whatever gift was given to the customer. I still have a glass bowl shaped like an army helmet and a little plastic box with various sizes of tacks and nails. On one of these nights the gift was a salt and pepper shaker. It was shaped like an egg, with one half for pepper and the other half for salt. Mr.

Robinson, the assistant manager, had only one half of an egg left and rather than not give anything, he gave the half egg.

During the early 50's, Sterchi's sponsored a 30-minute radio program every afternoon at 4:30 on WBHP, called "Sterchi's Jamboree." I don't remember just when the program ended, but one day this irate lady called the store and wanted to know why there was no longer a jamboree; she was really upset.

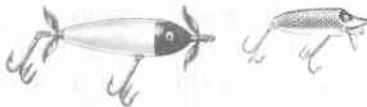
We would have a coffee break in the morning and another one in the afternoon. Some of the places that we went on break were the Ritz cafe, Central cafe, Post Office cafe, Humphrey's drug store, Crystal drug store, and Grant's lunch counter, all of which were in the vicinity of the store.

Back then, all stores downtown closed on Wednesday afternoons and stayed open on Thursday nights until 8:00 p.m. Mr. Carl Woodall had a house on the lake near

Guntersville where Sterchi employees held their annual picnic on Wednesday afternoons after the store closed. This was always a lot of fun, with good food and swimming. I don't remember anyone having a boat.

Sterchi's opened two other branch stores; one in Scottsboro and one in Fayetteville, TN. Some of us who worked in the office helped in the grand opening of


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those stores. I remember that Ms. Helen Ventress was credit manager at the store in Fayetteville and I recently saw her obituary in the newspaper.

Every Christmas we would get a large "laying mash" sack of goodies (apples, oranges, bananas, nuts, and candy). Back then, the Christmas parade was held at night around 5:00 p.m. We would go up on the second floor of the building and watch the parade. We had a very good view of the parade below.

In those days, a lot of the barns across the country would have signs painted on them such as "See Rock City." Sterchi's had one that read "It cost less for the best at Sterchi's," painted in orange, black, and white letters.

I got married in 1957 and moved to Winchester, TN where my husband worked at AERO in Tullahoma. About 10 months later, Mr. Allen called me about coming back to work at Sterchi's. In the meantime, my husband got a job at Marshall Space Flight Center and we moved back to Huntsville and I went back to work at Sterchi's.

Most of the people who worked there when I did have passed away; the most recent being Mr. W.T. Solmon. Mr. Cloyd Steelman is the only salesman; Mr. J.C. Lawrence, the only one in the shipping department, and all of those in the credit department are still living with the exception of Alta Troutman and Florence Longmuir. I left there in 1963 for a job on Redstone Arsenal. Sterchi's eventually sold out to Heileg-Myers furniture that later went out of business. I have a lot of fond memories working with the Sterchi family and an era long gone.

"Time may be a great healer, but it's a lousy beautician."
Pam Smith, Huntsville

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I would buy them, if they are still available.

Please call 534-0502 and Cathey will get in touch with me.

Regards,
Newman Ward, California

An Honest Mayor

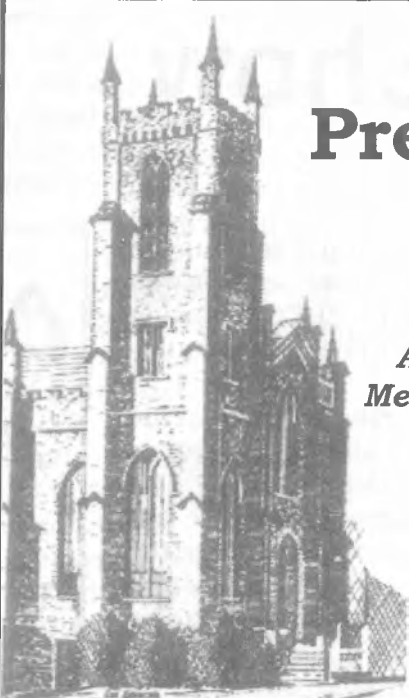
Huntsville Mayor, R.E. Smith, and J. Emory Pierce, editor of the local newspaper, were involved in an altercation yesterday after meeting on the streets and exchanging insults.

The Mayor had taken exception to certain articles recently printed in the newspaper, and after meeting Emory on the sidewalks in front of the courthouse, took the opportunity to voice his displeasure.

One witness claimed the mayor made certain remarks about Emory's ancestry, whereas the editor promptly began thrashing him with a walking cane. The pugilists were separated by onlookers before either could inflict serious injury.

The mayor fined himself ten dollars in city court the next morning for losing his temper and Emory has publicly announced he will support another candidate in the next election.

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A Real Show

by Johnny Johnston

A month or so ago Barbara and I saw maybe the best concert either of us had ever seen. It was the Ronnie McDowell show at the VBCC featuring Elvis Presley music and included The Stamps quartet.

I left home that Sunday morning for work at the old Huntsville Municipal Airport like so many times before and listening to Radio Station WBHP. The date was sometime in September 1962. The announcer explained that Louvin was badly injured the night before in Kansas City, Mo. He added that it was a gunshot wound and probably was not going to be fatal.

I felt bad about the incident and was wondering how serious he might be when the announcer continued. "An impromptu benefit will be held for his medical bills this afternoon in Huntsville..." He went on to tell who the performers were and encouraged listeners to attend. At that time, early in the morning, only a few performers as Loretta Lynn and The Smokey Mountain Boys were expected to be there.

The show was to begin about five o'clock at the old Armory on Dallas Street where most schools in the area held Basketball Games. My

fondest memories there had been watching our team consisting of Glen Nunley, Paul John Childress and others from our 1955 class win Butler High Games.. I remembered one game when a dry fellow sat on the back bench. He yelled over and over "shoot", "shoot" until he began to fall down



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and the entire room was laughing at him.

As soon as I got away from work at Eastern Air Lines, I went over to the Armory on the East side of Huntsville to see what to make of the entertainment. The price was cheap, \$4 as I recall and I was a big fan of Country Music and was interested in who might show up. You could never tell. It depended on who was busy, how well they liked the victim, how much in demand they were at the time. Often they turned out to be good shows!

Boy was I surprised!

The first group couldn't even get on the small stage at the same time. The Smokey Mountain Boys with Roy Acuff and his band. Oswald (Beecher Kirby) was the world's favorite Dobro player and there was Cousin Josh with his instrument and his jokes.

After Acuff did a lot of songs, the Florida Boys sang some great Southern Gospel Music which I loved then and still love now.

The number one song in the country at that time was Ubangi Stomp by a fellow from Mississippi by the name of Smith. He was there and sang that song plus many more.

Then Loretta Lynn, on her thirtieth birthday, The Coal Min-

ers Daughter performed some of her few songs (she was fairly new then) followed by Carl Perkins and one of the top hits, "Blue Suede Shoes", which Mr. Perkins wrote, sold a million copies before Elvis got it and sold several million more. Carl Perkins was so hot at the time that His Coat was torn off for keep sakes by the few people in the audience. The number of performers out numbered the audience!

But that was not the big surprise!

Grandpa Jones, before he grew his own mustache, sang "8 more miles to Louisville", "Coming around the Mountain" and several others. His fake mustache kept coming off so he finally threw it to the floor and made a statement about not needing it anyhow. I understand he made a statement once about benefits. He said "The best thing about doing benefits (shows) is you don't have to wait around on the check."

Minnie Pearl did her show with Rod Brassfield, Stringbean and several guitar pickers entertained including Chet Atkins and Pete Drake. But that was not the big surprise. I remember Bill Monroe, Bill Anderson and others and have forgotten a few. The show went on for hours.

This fellow came in late, only the entertainers knew him, he set



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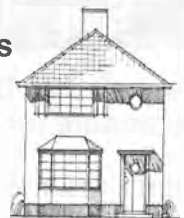
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down his guitar case, took out his instrument while talking to Oz from The Smokey Mountain Boys. Did I tell you that all the entertainers sat in the audience with the rest of us when off stage?

I asked the fellow next to me who that guy was. He said "he didn't know". So I sat and waited until Lonzo and Oscar finished their act and this stranger walked up to the stage. He was thin, handsome, had a smirk about him but no one in the audience knew him.

That is no one knew him until he strummed the strings and started singing "Trailer for Sale or Rent, Rooms for fifteen cents".

Roger Miller, the one and only who was fairly new to Nashville. He had come to sing to us for free. He later became one of the best known entertainers and had more hits than most anyone.

That, my friend, was the big surprise!



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Sammy, age 7, on kissing

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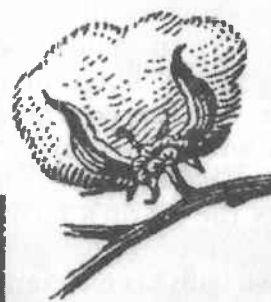
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I am trying to find any information about Pvt. James Forrest of the Confederate Army. He left home, from Athens, Ala., at the age of 14 to enlist in the army. His last letter was posted from Shelbyville, Tenn., in July of 1864. His mother is suffering infirmaries of age and desires her son be laid to rest before she meets her maker.

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* To improve and preserve your eyesight, get your left earlobe pierced. Buy a gold earring and wear it. It seems that the area of the lobe where it would be pierced is the same acupuncture point that affects eyesight.

* If you're in a very warm room and feel faint, run cold tap water over the inside of your wrists. Ice rubbing will do the trick as well.

* To keep from falling asleep on the highway, chew ice while driving. It works every time. But if you're really tired, stop & rest.

* Feel sluggish in the morning? Try this. Upon arising place your hands a little above your waist, just below the ribs. Gently squeeze the right hand, then the left - do this about a dozen times each

side. This is a liver massage and in a few weeks you should notice a big difference in your energy. Also, try to limit heavy starches and sweets.

* To improve your memory, eat 6 raw almonds each day.

* Tapping your fingernails on tabletops will make them grow faster.

* Give your windows an alcohol rub in the cold weather. This will prevent the window from steaming up.

* Put a denture cleaning tablet in a cup that has been stained by tea. Fill with water and leave for a day - you have a clean cup!

* To get the cloud out of heavily waxed furniture, wipe it with a cloth wrung tightly out of warm water with a tablespoon of vinegar, Polish with a clean cloth.

* Remove rust stains on your sink by rubbing the surface with a cut lemon. If it is a stubborn stain, keep rubbing it til it disappears.

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News From the Year 1865

News From Huntsville and Around The World

The War is Over

Washington - News has been received here that General Lee has met with General Grant and has agreed to surrender the forces under his command and to work toward a complete surrender of all Confederate forces still in the field.

As news of the surrender began to spread across this city joyful celebrations have begun. A crowd of about seven thousand gathered in front of the White House while tens of thousands more have taken to streets.

The terms offered by Grant are generous. He will take no prisoners, but simply secure the paroles of officers and men not to take up arms until properly exchanged, for while the principal Confederate army has been vanquished, the war is not over yet. Officers are permitted to keep their side-arms and officers and men can keep their horses and personal effects. Everyone

will be permitted to return to their homes unhindered by Union authorities as long as they observe their paroles.

Richmond in Turmoil as War Ends

Richmond - President Jefferson Davis has fled the capitol of the Confederacy along with many of his principal advisors. Reports are that he was attend-

ing church when word was received from General Lee that the situation appeared hopeless. He immediately left the church and convened a special meeting with his military and political advisors. At the same time workers at the War Department and Treasury were seen hastily packing crates of government papers.

As news of General Lee's surrender spread throughout the city mobs have begun looting commissary supply depots. Mass desertions from the ranks are taking place in all military units as soldiers lay down their arms and prepare to return to their homes.



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General Lee Issues Message to Vanquished Soldiers

General Order No. 9

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By the terms of this agreement, officers and men can return to their homes and remain there until exchanged. You will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed; and I earnestly pray

that a Merciful God will extend you his blessing and protection.

With an unceasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your Country, and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration of myself, I bid you all an affectionate farewell.

R.E. Lee
Genl.

General Watie Surrenders

General Stand Watie, commanding the last Confederate fighting unit, has surrendered. This event comes over two months after General Lee surrendered at Appomatox.

Watie is a Cherokee Indian who has raised a large number of Indians to fight under the Confederate banner.

This news comes several weeks after Gen. E. Kirby Smith, in Texas, ordered his troops to stack arms for the last time. It was widely rumored that Smith would order his troops into Mexico where he would continue the fight. In the end calmer heads prevailed.

With this news the horrible war is finally at an end.

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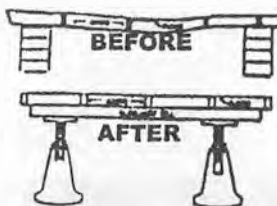
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Gunboats On the Tennessee River

(Taken from 1906 Huntsville newspaper)

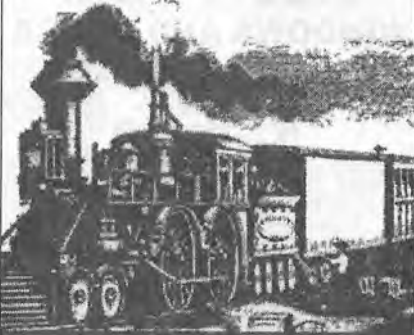
The writer of these incidents has of late often wondered how many of Huntsville's citizens now living can recollect the fact of the early incident of the war that is my subject at this writing, and whether there can now be found any citizen of Huntsville, save about two others and the writer, that partook of the excitement of that occasion.

It will be sufficient to say that it took place at so early a part of the war that the condition of the minds of both observers and participants were very different then from what they would have been two or three years afterwards.

At that time there had been

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little experience, and war events had left no impression upon which to found probabilities for the future. Then the excited minds of citizens were filled with apprehension because the events of the future were unknown, and their minds were not in a condition to reasonably expect the probable, but with nervous dread they shrank from the possible.

At this time Huntsville had sent two companies to the war, and others were following. A strong desire filled the minds of young and old to do what they could to lend a helping hand. Huntsville had at this time among her treasures one implement of war, of which her citizens were very proud that fate had left in her possession. This was a bright brass six-pounder cannon. Many a salute had it boomed forth on occasions of rejoicing and peace time celebrations. Now it was the will of the people that it should be made useful in the defense of

Huntsville homes.

A small artillery company had been formed to make use of this possession. It was the proud desire of each member of this little band that he should become proficient in this arm of service. Books on military tactics were bought and read assiduously.

Fortune favored their aspirations in sending a West Point cadet who was familiar with the artillery manual and was ready

and willing to render assistance by drilling that artillery squad.

It became quite an event each evening for the citizens to gather at the old market house, occupying the same spot as the present city hall, when the brass

"It will be years - not in my time - before a woman will become Prime Minister."

Margaret Thatcher, 1974

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cannon with its shiny brass wheels was rolled out, and watch the drill. A little coincidence lies here in my narrative.

That ex-West Pointer and captain of the artillery company is now well known as the honored president of a Huntsville bank; and another, the present president of a Huntsville bank, was at that time a high private in the squad.


It was sometime after these rehearsals that the events of the Tuscumbia campaign took place. By this time our captain had been called away to other duties and, many of the members had formed other military connections.

The citizens were startled one evening by the ominous news by telegraph that Federal gunboats were ascending the Tennessee River with the evident intention of devastating the town of the valley. Calls for help were

sent out from Florence and Tuscumbia for all the neighboring towns in the valley to send all available help to stay the progress of the ruthless invaders. The alarm sounded in Huntsville. There was a hurried call to arms, for everyone who could bear them. While not understanding what could be done to effectively prevent the advance of gunboats, I was un-

gracious not to respond when the call was made by our brethren down the valley.

In the early morning hours there pulled out from the depot a train of flat cars with a goodly number of citizens bearing a motley assortment of guns, the men standing outside on the floor. Then last, but far from least, was the bright brass six-pounder with its glittering bar-

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rel and caisson mounted on bright red wheels attracting the admiration and attention of the gathering crowds at the towns as we passed. At each of these we picked up additional numbers, all armed and ready for the fray. Boxcars were not available and engineers were scarce. The writer had a position in the engine cab, and Capt. Harry Ryan was at the throttle driving the engine.

It is barely possible that a singular incident about that time is mixed in the writer's memory with this event. Yet after the long interval of time, it seems clear in his memory of that prince of good fellows that everybody who has traveled the M.&C. R.R. in the last forty or more years knows, was this day driving the engine. He was then superintendent of this division of the road. I wondered then at his ability as an engineer. He has ever showed great qualities as conductor and superintendent. His qualifications, great then, have since improved, and the wonder has ever been in my mind why his position has not been advanced as his services and qualifications have merited.

That train of flat cars was well loaded as it pulled into Tuscumbia. It was a load of wondering and expectant men from every town in the valley from Huntsville to Tuscumbia. The train was received with

cheers from another crowd as it drew up in front of the hotel. This latter crowd was individually equipped very much as was the one on the cars, with this difference, that quite a number were on horseback. These seemed, if possible, more excited than the rest. They would dash off, one or two at a time, and ride somewhere and after a while return.

It soon developed that there was no head. No one felt capable of assuming authority over their countrymen when they were in utter ignorance of what was to be done or how to do it. Another thing soon became plain - that there was no one that had any knowledge of where were the much feared and formidable gunboats.

After the most diligent inquiry, no one could be found that had seen them or had seen anyone that had seen them. The riders that had come in from the river were in as much ignorance as

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those from the hills. All were filled with ardor and excitement, but without any idea of what ought to be done. The crowd was large that filled the streets and hotel. It swayed and congregated at different points as persons would arrive from whom it was hoped news could be obtained.

An engine was cut out and sent down the road, to go cautiously to a break in the road near the state line. They were to return with some information that was definite.

Time wore on heavily. When past the noon hour, the hotel did what it could to supply a semblance of a dinner to the hungry individuals applying for it. The proprietor made herculean efforts, and made a successful paying business of it financially, but as to meeting the demands made upon his hotel, his efforts were ineffective.

Many of the citizens did what they could to afford relief by taking as many as possible to their homes for dinner. Tuscumbia was renowned, then as now, for her hospitality. But the combined efforts of hotels, boarding houses and the hospitality of citizens, was insufficient to sat-

isfy the warlike hunger of this accumulation of patriots. There might be a partial success in this, had there been any thing for the crowd to do.

The hours of the afternoon began climbing upward. The crowd was impatiently waiting, looking down the shining track of

the railroad to catch the first sight of the returning engine. Huntsville had helped the passage of the monotonous hours in furnishing its brass field piece for inspection.

As it stood firmly chocked upon its flat car, it was a strong attraction. At all times there was an advancing crowd around it,

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and the Huntsville contingent was happy in showing it off.

Jerry Clemens began a speech, but this was not the only big gun that Huntsville had brought down this day to oppose a bold front to the enemy. What is it that a congregated assemblage of men filled with enthusiasm and wanting mostly want for their qualification: It is a timely speech from an able speaker. This the crowd wanted.

Huntsville had ready and did supply that want in the person of the silver-tongued orator, Hon. Jerry Clemens. He was then as ever ready to respond to their call.

He had been a member of the Secession Convention that had taken Alabama from the list of Federal states and made it one of the number of the Confederacy. Here things had not gone his way. He strenuously opposed the disruption of the Union, but having seen that his opposition was useless, he finally gave in his adhesion and voted for the ordinance of secession.

He was listened to with close attention, but right in the midst of a brilliant presentation, the whistle of the returning engine dissolved the assemblage. The news brought by the engine was no news, for its tenor had for some time been anticipated. It had gone down to the break and had there met a hand car that had come from much farther down the road, and the fact was clearly established that there were no gun boats in these upper reaches of the river.

Again was the Huntsville contingent with those from the other towns loaded on the cars and soon were steaming away up the valley. It was pretty late in the night when Huntsville was reached, and still later when the members of that dejected band, wearied and hungry, hardly able to move their limbs along the streets, reached their homes.

It was an experience added to each one of their lives, and while there was nothing in the incident of which to be proud, they had the satisfaction to feel that it was a duty well attempted if not well done.

Off Limits

An unruly incident took place this week past at the Spring Saloon when soldiers of the 7th Indiana Regiment began casting disparaging remarks about the late war. The patrons promptly left the establishment, went home, donned their old gray uniforms, whereas they returned and made short work of the northern visitors. The bar has been placed off limits.

from 1872 newspaper



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Roads and Mud Holes in the 1900s

by Evelyn Hayden Hodge

Back in the early teens and twenties the rural roads of this country were indescribably bad. Madison County and surrounding areas were no exception.

The county roads were made of dirt and large rocks and had two deep ruts down each one. These ruts were bad enough in dry weather but, during the rainy season they were almost impassable: everybody carried mud-fighting equipment, including chains, rope, and a shovel in their cars.

All males aged twenty-one and over were required to work on the roads three days each year or pay \$3.00 for another to work in his place. Once or twice a year they

worked on the roads but it didn't help much.

First, three men loaded each wagon with large pieces of limestone rock. One man drove the wagon and the other two rode in the back, one on each side. As the wagons moved slowly along in the ruts, the two men in the back pushed the large pieces of rock into their respective ruts.

This may have helped to prevent cars from getting stuck for awhile, but it just made it rougher as the car wheels bounced from one big rock to another.

The road from above Nashville to Huntsville, through New Hope, Guntersville, and on south to Florida, as bad as it was, was called the Florida Short Route. Many tourists



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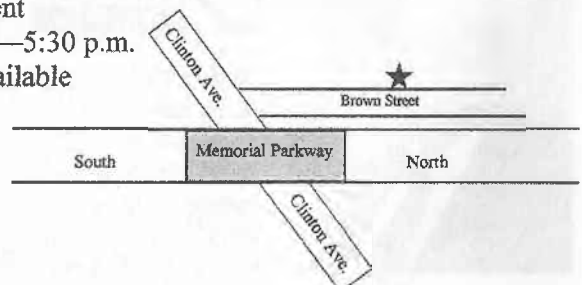
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drove this route to Florida in the fall and back to their homes in the north in the spring.

Across the Paint Rock River into Marshall County, there were some really bad places and cars had to be pulled out of them. Some farmers in the area would hitch a pair of mules in the morning, go to the worst mud holes, and stay there all day pulling out the cars as they got stuck. They charged from .50 cents to \$5.00 for their service.

There was one mud hole that looked worse than the rest, but it only appeared worse. People, familiar with the road, would drive through it without any problem. There was a short stretch of halfway good road on

either side of this mud hole and it gave motorists a chance to pick up a little speed.

A farmer in the neighborhood had a cow that died. He and a neighbor decided to have some fun. So they cut off the cow's head and tail and carried them to the bad looking mud hole. They waded in and set the head in the mud. Then back about the right distance they stuck the tail. Now it looked as if the cow had mired in the mud and couldn't get out.

Then the men hid in a little woodland beside the road to await the first car. They didn't have to wait long before a car of tourists came along.

They had gotten up a little speed but when they saw the cow

in the mud hole they stopped for a better look. They pitied the poor cow and, seeing nobody making an effort to get her out of such a predicament, asked, "why doesn't somebody do something?"

About this time the men would come out of hiding and tell them it was just a joke. After a good laugh, the motorists pulled around the cow and were on their way again.

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Western Union internal memo, 1876

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My Mother, the Artist

By Barbara Wilkinson Corazzi

It was a steamy, hot August day in Huntsville in 1944. It was an effort just to breathe. Of course, there was no air conditioning in those days, so you tried to do as little as possible. My mother and I were sitting on the front porch and she was drawing a picture of our next door neighbor's house. Her name was Lucy Currier but we always called her "Miss Lucy." Since our house sat up on a hill from Miss Lucy's house we looked down into her yard.

I was very surprised to see what my mother was doing. I had no idea that she could draw or was even interested in it, and she had no art supplies as you would know them today. What she used were things she found around the house such as old pieces of crayons, white shoe polish and red lipstick. She also had a piece of old leftover wall-paper, and she used the reverse side to do her painting on. Miss Lucy's house was a green shingle bungalow with white trim. There was a purple plum tree and a red rose bush. There was also an Adirondack chair with a matching bench.

The results were amazing. Some artists might scoff at her efforts but I thought it was just beautiful. When we showed Miss Lucy, she liked it so much that she had it hanging on her living room wall until the day she passed away. Then it went to my

brother Bob ("Pete") Wilkinson, and it disappeared for several years.

I had moved away when I married and forgot all about the painting until the early eighties when my mother and sister moved to Birmingham and I found it packed away. It was in remarkably good condition but needed to be re-framed to preserve it, since it was so fragile and could deteriorate.

When I asked if I could have it, I was told I would have to ask my brother. He was OK with this and I brought it back to New Mexico with me and had it pro-

fessionally framed and sealed. It has been hanging on my den wall since then and I enjoy it every day. My mother passed away a few years ago and my brother passed away last month. I thought it only fitting to write this in their honor. I've been away from Huntsville for many years now, but it will always be my home.

"The trouble with owning a home is no matter where you sit, you're looking at something you should be doing."

Chuck Saunders

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