



No. 194  
April 2009



# Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



## A Love Story

Forced to flee his native Germany, John Cullman wandered the world seeking a place where he and his wife could be together again.

Unable to find such a place he decided to build his own German city here in Alabama, complete with beer halls and a German newspaper.

Although he brought tens of thousands of immigrants to this country, his wife still refused to leave her beloved Bavaria.

Also in this issue: **A Yankee Soldier In Huntsville**

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*Domie Lewter*  
*Mac Lewter*

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# A Love Story

It was one of the most remarkable love stories to ever come out of North Alabama. Separated by thousands of miles, a husband sought to recreate a life he might once again share with his wife. It affected the lives of tens of thousands of people and changed Alabama's history forever.

Josephine Low was born in 1826, the only daughter of a very wealthy banking family in Bavaria, Germany. Her family was part of the aristocratic society that controlled Bavaria at the time and she grew up in a life of culture and refinement. As she grew into a beautiful young lady, she was undoubtedly courted by the sons and nephews of her family's affluent friends. Much to her family's consternation however, she rejected their advances and married instead, in 1846, John Cullman, the poor son of a school teacher.

John Cullman, also of Bavaria, though lacking the social pedigree and fortune of his wife, was still a remarkable man. He had left home for college at the age of thirteen where he obtained a degree in civil engineering. In his

early twenties he opened an export firm in Bavaria and became an agent for a company named Krupp, which specialized at the time in manufacturing ordinary tableware such as spoons and forks.

Krupp had developed a process where they could manufacture these items at a fraction the cost of their competitors and still deliver a superior product. Cullman was quick to see the potential and soon obtained the rights to sell and export the products into the United States. The fact that he knew nothing about the United States did not intimidate him.

Sitting in his office every day he wrote hundreds of letters to potential customers touting the new tableware and enclosing samples. Slowly he began getting orders and, as his business grew, he added other products such as watches and pistols. He quickly earned a reputation for being fair and prompt in his business dealings and within a few short years was on his way to becoming a very wealthy man.



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

Advertising - 534-0502

Sales & Mrktg. - Cathey Carney

Gen. Manager - Ron Eyestone

Copy Boy - Tom Carney

Features - Stefanie Troup

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*Seen in local church bulletin*

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For John and Josephine, it was the happiest time of their lives. They had the best of both worlds; the aristocracy of her parents and their friends, and the simple pleasure of sitting in a beer hall laughing with factory workers. Undoubtedly her parents were appalled at some of their son-in-law's friends and social habits.

Despite their happiness, the summer of 1848 brought changes that would affect their lives forever. Social revolutions were sweeping Europe and in Bavaria, a state where the aristocracy controlled everything, workers were demanding major changes. John sided with the workers and became thoroughly involved in their attempts to overthrow the monarchy.

The attempt failed and in the process John lost his fortune and was forced to go into hiding. It was probably only through the intervention of Josephine's family, and their extensive ties to the monarchy, that he was saved from lengthy imprisonment.

John, now penniless and a social pariah, was forced to start all over again. For Josephine, it must have been even harder. Raised in a culture of elegance where she counted the royalty and wealthy as dear friends, she

was constantly besieged to take sides - her heritage or her husband. Josephine refused to do either.

In the next few years John struggled to rebuild his wealth and probably would have succeeded if not for another abortive revolution. Once again he chose the side of the working class and when it failed he was penniless, once again. This time even his wife's family could not protect him and he was forced to flee.

John, Josephine and their three children settled in London where fortunately his wife's wealth enabled them to live in a comfortable manner. But it was a time of extreme homesickness for Josephine. She missed her family and the mountains of Bavaria. She missed the life style she had once known, but she was torn because she could not leave her husband.

A decision was made for her, however, when she received word of her father's death. Her mother, who had always been in bad

**"My wife has a slight speech impediment - every once in a while she stops talking to breathe."**

*Jimmy Durante*

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health, begged her to return home. Josephine was torn in her loyalties but finally, with John understanding her pain, she reluctantly agreed to return to Bavaria to take care of her mother. "It will only be for a short time," they told one another, "and we will be together again."

Days turned into weeks, and then months and years. Letters crossed the continent weekly keeping each other informed and pledging undying love. Every letter talked of "... when we are finally together again."

In 1866, with Josephine still taking care of her mother, John made the decision to come to America. He knew, with the political climate in Germany as it was, he would never be able to return there.

After settling in Cincinnati, where he studied law and was admitted to the bar, he began to visit various German communities looking for a place where he and Josephine could settle. Much to his dismay he found the communities fragmented and the German culture and language being quickly discarded for American ways. In his heart he knew Josephine would never be happy in a community that bore no resemblance to her beloved Bavaria.

Slowly, an idea began to form in his mind. If he could not find the perfect German community, he would create one. With this thought in mind he began visiting different parts of the country look-

ing for the ideal location. Some places were ruled out because of poor soil or flat terrain, others because of Indian problems or poor transportation.

During one of his travels, in 1871, he met former Alabama Governor Patton who urged him to visit Florence, Alabama. John was immediately captivated with the Tennessee Valley. There was good soil and, probably more important, the rolling hills reminded him of Germany. He decided to name his new colony St. Florian. Unfortunately, St. Florian never got off the drawing board. The people, possibly remembering the German troops who had fought for the north and occupied the Tennessee valley, refused to sell any land to "a foreigner."

Refusing to give up, John next turned his attention to the Louisville and Nashville Railroad which had just completed a line between Nashville and Montgomery and was interested in attracting settlements along the route. Together with Louis Fink, the land agent for the railroad, John began exploring the route. At about the halfway point between Huntsville and the present day city of Birmingham, along the western end of Brindley Mountain, he found the

**"Blessed are they who can laugh at themselves, for they shall never cease to be amused."**

*from 1914 cookbook*



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perfect location. He immediately agreed to purchase 350,000 acres on both sides of the railroad at one dollar per acre. The railroad, perhaps in an attempt to bolster John's image, also awarded him the honorary title of Colonel.

For the first time in years John was ecstatic. In his mind he could already envision a thriving German community such as the one he had fled years earlier, and more importantly, a place he and Josephine could call home. A constant stream of letters crossed the ocean, each one detailing the dreams and plans of a young couple in love determined to be together once again.

John returned to Cincinnati where he began to make plans for the new settlement. He traveled constantly, speaking before groups of German immigrants and pushing his vision of a new German city in Alabama. Perhaps in anticipation of the family's reunion, Josephine agreed to let their oldest son join John in America. Unfortunately the son tragically died within a short time after arriving.

The death seemed to make the distance between Bavaria

and Alabama even greater. Letters still traveled back and forth every week and they still contained the same endearments as before but there was something different now. For the first time there were hints from Josephine that she could never be happy in America.

John, refusing to give up on his dream, began working even harder. In April of 1873 he accompanied the first five families to settle in the new community. The new settlers got off the train and carried their belongings about seven miles to the present site of Cullman. The land chosen for the new community was wild and untamed with no roads or any signs of habitation.

The settlers, probably expecting something different, must have gazed at John Cullman with astonishment as he led them through thick groves of woods while explaining, "... This is where the main street will be ... all the streets will be a hundred feet wide ... and over there is where the church will be .... and of course we will have a beer hall."

John's dreams were infectious and by the end of the first year the fledgling community had



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grown to over fifty families. Slowly, word of the new German community of Cullman began to spread and within a few years there were tens of thousands of new immigrants. As the population continued to grow, John founded other cities in the vicinity such as Bangor, Berlin and Breman.

By the late 1870's the area had become well known throughout the country and in Europe as "Little Germany." A stranger visiting the city would have had a difficult time believing he was in Alabama. Almost everyone spoke German, there was a German newspaper, school lessons and even the church sermons were in German. There were beer halls where thirsty patrons met to gossip and drink the local beer while stuffing themselves on German sausages and sourkraut. The landscape was breathtaking with its rolling hills, thick forests and lush greenery.

Strangely, although John detested the aristocracy in his native Germany, he became the ultimate autocrat in America. He never ran for public office but handpicked everyone that did. He decided who should live where and even, in many cases, chose the businesses the new settlers engaged in.

John and Josephine continued to write one another continually. When John built a new 12 room home he had photos taken so that Josephine could see every detail of the mansion he had created for her. No segment was too trivial for the couple to write about. John wrote asking her opinion about street names

and Josephine wrote back suggesting the streets be temporarily numbered until such a time when they could be renamed after prominent local Germans.

As the city of Cullman began to prosper John talked his oldest son, Otto, into joining him, undoubtedly hoping that Josephine would follow. Otto threw himself into his father's work and was probably as responsible as anyone for the early success of the city. Sadly, he died of typhoid fever in 1884 at the age of twenty-nine.

John realized that Otto's death spelled the end of any hope that Josephine might join him in America. Nevertheless, John was determined to keep trying. Two years later, in 1886, John learned that the political climate in Germany had changed and he no longer had to fear prosecution if



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he returned. He immediately began making plans to visit Germany - and his beloved Josephine.

There are no records of the visit but we can imagine what must have happened. John would have traveled by train to New York where he boarded a ship for Germany, probably to Bremerhaven. From there he would take another train for the trip to Bavaria. Finally, after almost a month of traveling he would have met his wife for the first time in almost thirty years.

They had been young at heart when they last saw one another, but now the years had caught up with them. Shocks of gray hair adorned their heads. Their faces were creased with the worries of a life time, the grief of losing two sons, and they walked with the febleness that came with advancing years.

They must have laughed, and maybe cried, as they talked about the years they had been separated. Sometimes one of them would say something about the future and they would both grow

silent. Without ever really talking about it, they had made their decision.

Despite all of John Cullman's efforts to reproduce Germany in Alabama, in his heart he had become an American. He could never be happy living any other place and Josephine could never leave Bavaria.

John Cullman returned to Cullman, Alabama where he died in 1895. In his will he directed that all his assets be sold and the money sent to his beloved wife in Bavaria.

**"If your car could travel at the speed of light, would your headlights work?"**

**Steven Wright**

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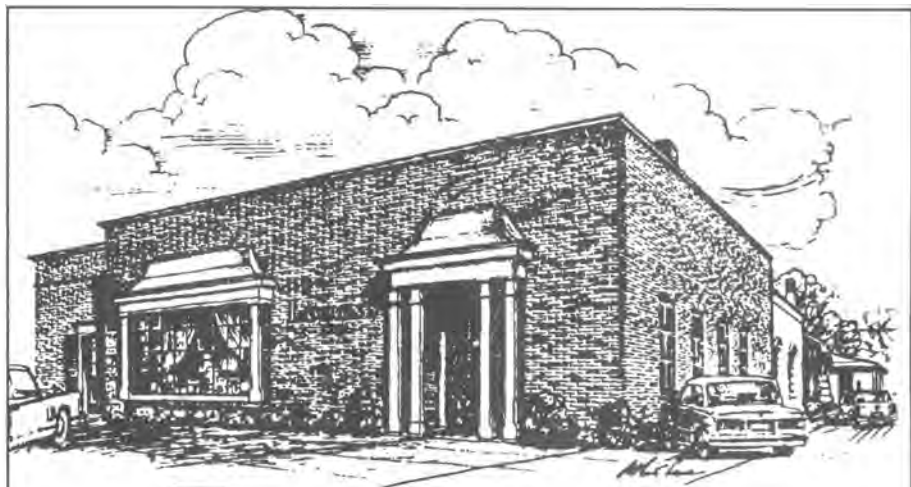
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# Huntsville News from 1911

- William Moore is being held here for charges of forgery and bigamy. He tried to commit suicide in his cell by eating the heads of a large number of matches. The jailer discovered his plight and administered medicine. Before eating the matches he wrote a letter to his mother, companion and chief detectives.

- P. Hay, proprietor of the Huntsville Hotel News Stand this afternoon moved in his new quarters in the building adjoining the north side of R. E. & W. E. Pettus' wholesale house on Jefferson Street in front of the McGee hotel. Mr. Hay is elaborately fitted up for business and invites all of his fiends and the public to call and see him.

- Tomorrow - the Real Live Buster Brown and his dog Tiger will be at our store giving his famous shows of fun and frolic for the children - free. We want every child in Huntsville to see him. Don't forget the time, tomorrow (Tuesday) all day. The Cash Store - Ezell Bros. & Terry Co. (saves you money)

- An argument for the good health of Huntsville speaks for it-

self in the little fact about the old negro who had lived here 106 years and during all that time he had not lost more than a year's time from actual labor.

- Will Jones, a negro bell boy at the Huntsville Hotel, made a murderous assault upon Lou Womble, second base man for the Huntsville team in the rotunda of the hotel last night. A bottle of ill smelling chemical was being thrown promiscuously around in the crowd and by accident some of it struck the negro. He thought Womble threw it and straightway drew a sharp knife and tried to stab him.

The negro was quickly surrounded by a crowd of irate ball players and trouble of a serious nature would have occurred but for the timely arrival of Night Chief Mitchell who landed the negro in the city prison.

- Farmers from Bell Factory district report a very heavy hail and rain storm day before yesterday. Hail fell in small chunks and cut the corn and other vegetation badly. Crops in some sections were badly washed out of the ground.

**"Why is it that people pay to go up tall buildings, and then put money in binoculars to look at things on the ground?"**

**Jerry Smitty, Athens**

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**Rodney Dangerfield**

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# News from 1900

- Dropped Dead - James Sanford, a brakeman on the Memphis and Charlestown railroad, dropped dead near the depot of this city Monday.

- Noted: I desire to find my mother and sister who used to belong to Mr. Angelo Steele. My mother's name was Sara. My sister is Harriet. I was sold by Steele to a farm near Canton, Mississippi during the war, and have never seen nor heard from them since my return to Huntsville, August 20, in search of them, where I learned that my mother was sold to a man in Bridgeport, Alabama, by the name of Jolly who has since died. Write me at 1297 Ferrett Street, New Orleans, Louisiana where I now live, or leave notice with the editors of this paper. Alvin Steele

- Wanted: an elderly woman with no children and good disposition to take charge of house about 4 miles north of town.

- New Restaurant: Charles Brickie has opened a restaurant and lunch counter on Washington Street where he will be pleased to serve his friends and the public. He states that no food more than three days old will be served.

# Danger to Huntsville

*from 1915 Huntsville paper*

That the authorities should take some steps to stop the reckless driving of automobiles from running by streetcars when standing at crossings is the talk of the town, especially so at Jefferson and Clinton street intersection where so many men and women transfer. No regard is paid to the crowd crossing the streets by the reckless drivers of the smoke belching machines.

At dusk this practice is indeed a most dangerous degree when numbers of jitneys and others who know better, run their cars without lights. The police, no doubt, will cause somebody a great deal of trouble when some hapless soul is run down.

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# The Avon Lady

by Lisa White

My mother, Emma "Jean" Avery Swafford, was born on October 1, 1926 in Tunica, Mississippi to James (Jim) and Myrtle Avery and big sister Annie Ruth. This small family moved to Maysville, Alabama around 1930 to start a new life after losing everything they owned in a house fire.

Jim worked for the County and Myrtle owned a store. Jean attended Central School and it's been said more than once that she was the prettiest girl there at the time. Jean fell in love at the age of 15 and married Norman Swafford on October 27, 1942 in Tupelo, Mississippi four days after he was inducted into the Army and 26 days after she turned 16. Norman left shortly after for Northern France.

Emma Jean stayed in Maysville waiting on Norman to come home on leave. It was told that their oldest son was conceived when Norman was given a pass that belonged to one of his best friends, Morland Tipton, so he could see his pretty young wife.


Nine months later Emma Jean suffered through a horrible breech delivery - her parents were even asked by the doctor if you could choose, which one would you want us to save? Emma Jean finally gave birth on April 3, 1944 to Chuck who weighed over 11 pounds and was referred to as "little soldier." He was relatively healthy except for broken bones in both arms.

You would have thought that giving birth to an 11 pound breech baby would mean Chuck was an only child but this was not the case. Two years later Emma Jean gave birth to Dennis. Five years after that he was followed by Janice and ten years after that Lisa was born. The following year Emma Jean

started selling Avon.

Avon was not only a job for Emma Jean - it was her life. She won many awards for her sales - usually ranking in the top three in her district.

During her Avon career she never missed sending in an order. Even in 1974 when she was in a terrible car accident (she was hit by a drunk driver) while out selling Avon. The accident was followed six weeks later by the devastating April 3 tornadoes, one of which destroyed the Swafford home. Most of the people Emma Jean sold



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Avon to were not only her customers, but her friends. To some of the older customers, Emma Jean was the only visitor they had. They looked forward to seeing her every two weeks.

She carried pictures in her wallet of many of her customers' children and grandchildren, right beside pictures of her own family. Some of her customers knew that she had been complaining with chest pains and pain in her left arm for a few weeks while family members had no idea.

Emma Jean sacked her last Avon order on January 22, 2006. She was found dead the following morning. She carried the title of "The Avon Lady" for 43 years and was married to the love of her life for 63 years. Norma was so devastated by Emma Jean's death that he died just 89 days later.

**"If you want the rainbow,  
you've got to put up with  
the rain."**

**Steven Wright**

## Whipping Cream Biscuits

1/2 cup soft butter                      2 cups self-rising flour  
3/4 to 1 cup whipping cream        1/4 cup melted butter

Cut 1/2 cup butter into flour with pastry cutter. Add whipping cream, stirring only until moistened.

Turn dough out on pastry board and knead lightly. Roll or pat dough to 3/4 inch thickness. Cut with 2-inch cutter and place on lightly greased sheet pan.

Bake for 13 to 15 minutes at 400 degrees. Brush tops with melted butter.

You may substitute 3/4 cup buttermilk and 1 tablespoon sugar as a substitute for cream.

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# Time-Tested Cures for Hiccups

\* Pant like a dog. Bite your thumbs and blow hard against them for 2 minutes.

\* Drink nine swallows of water from your grandfather's cup without taking a breath.

\* Drink water through a folded handkerchief.

\* Take a mouthful of water and swallow it in three gulps. Repeat this three times while standing perfectly still and breathing through your nose.

\* Stand on your head for five minutes.

\* Lie over a chair on your stomach and drink a full glass of water.

\* Put the head of a burnt match in your ear.

\* Lay a broom on the floor, bristles to the right, and jump over it seven times.

\* Hold your left elbow for seven minutes.

\* Wet a piece of red thread with your tongue, stick it to your forehead, and look at it.

\* Stand in the middle of the road and say, "Hiccup, stickup, not for me, hiccup, stickup." Repeat this 4 times (Editor's note - keep a sharp eye on the traffic while practicing this one, or the cure is likely to be a permanent one.)

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# Long Handles

by Malcolm Miller

When I was a little yellow haired boy, fact is as far back as I can remember, Papa used to load the whole family up in a two-horse wagon along about the last of October or first of November.

We usually had out a few bales of cotton by then, got the money for the seed on the spot right there at the gin.

Then after the landlord got his share, and some how or other that didn't seem fair, we'd head out for our yearly trip into town, man just thinking about it made my insides pound.

We'd get a barrel of flour; a stand of lard and some store bought can goods if times weren't too hard. We'd get two pairs of overalls and some shoes or boots and brother you better believe a pair of union suits. We'd have to put them things on that very day and wear them come hell or high water till the first day of May. Now you can call them union suits, BVDs or red flannels but if there's anything I hate it's them dad burn long handles.

They'd start showing at the neck and I'd button up my collar, then they'd choke me so bad I couldn't hardly swallow.

The legs would stretch and I'd pull them up to my knees, then they would fall right back down just as pretty as you please.

And friends you've never lived till you have to go out like I did one night, to a cold country outhouse without a sign of a light. My mind was just a little fuzzy, I'd been taking a nap, and I guess that's why I forgot to unbutton that rear flap.

Friends, I wouldn't mind going back to the old days so bad, eating possum and taters or whatever we had, I think I could even learn to read again by a coal oil lamp or candles.

But brother, deliver me from ever again wearing them dad burn long handles.

**"Wednesday at 7 pm there will be an ice cream social. All ladies giving milk please arrive early."**

**Seen in Scottboro church bulletin**

**"If conditions are not favorable, bacteria go into a period of adolescence."**

*Seen on 4th grader's exam paper*

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# Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*

Congratulations to **Scott Hulgan**, of Owens Cross Roads, for being the first correct caller to identify the Photo of the Month for March. That sweet boy was **Bobby DeNeefe** of Madison, and we had several more correct calls after Scott's. Scott works as VP and Branch manager of Renasant Bank, and his pretty wife **Valerie** is a labor and delivery nurse at Huntsville Hospital. They are proud parents of 2 babies - 18 month old daughter **Megan**, and 4 month old boy **Ryan**.

Many people have eaten at Dallas Mill Deli on Pratt Avenue, and really like the owner, **Curtis Parcus**, who remembers everyone's name! Anyway, Curtis and his gorgeous wife **Becky** are expecting their first child in late April, and we are so happy for them. With those two as parents, this baby will be a knockout!

It's hard to believe that **Gibson's BBQ** on South Parkway (and Whitesburg Drive) is celebrating it's 53rd anniversary in business! That's not an easy accomplishment in these days and times. Anyway, during the entire month of April, if you go to eat there and order a plate lunch



or dinner on Monday or Tuesday, you get one of their awesome pieces of pie for free, as their way of saying thanks!

We were very happy to hear that **Glenn Watson** is running for State Representative. Glenn is one of the most honest men we know, and if he gives you his word, you can count on it. Glenn has a record of long hours and hard work as Huntsville City Councilman for many years. He is (and was) passionate about his concern for his city and just wants to give it his all.

We were very sorry to hear of the death of **Jim Yeager**, of Huntsville. He was a very active member of the Golden K Kiwanis, and we send our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

It's still a couple of months away, but be sure and mark your calendars for the **Hidden Gardens Tour of Old Town** historic district, to be held on Sunday, June 7.

**Milton Keith**, of St. Petersburg, Fl. died in early March. He leaves Huntsville brothers **Sam Keith** and **Neil Keith**, as well as wife **Katherine** and two daughters. We send our condolences to Milton's family and friends.

Did you know that **Monte Sano** was the site of a very rare and old growth of a tree called chittumwood? It is thought to be one of the hardest woods in the world, and possibly was used in the building of the Ark. Keep your eye out for an upcoming story!

**Robert "Bob" Brooks** was a native of West Virginia and lived in Huntsville for the past 60 years. He was retired from Thiokol Corp., and died recently at 83. He leaves many friends who remember him from the Thiokol days. We send our deepest sympathy to his son, **Robert J. II** and wife **Debbie Brooks**, brother **Everett Brooks** and sister, **Gaye Shields**.

Many folks know **Leroy Cunningham** and his pretty wife **Betty Jo** from their many years of business selling wicker and rattan, but he is now in the bar-

## 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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**Ruth Ellenburg** was a resident at Redstone Village, and was born near Boaz. She died in early March, at the age of 82. She and her husband **Lewis** had lived in Huntsville since 1953, and loved going to church at Farley Church of Christ. Ruth was a beloved wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. We send our deepest sympathy to her family and many friends.

**Bruce Walker** has been conducting walking tours of Old Town, one of Huntsville's historic districts, for many years. He is doing it again on May 9, and if you haven't been on one of Bruce's tours, you are in for a treat. He is a great speaker, and has some really interesting (sometimes amazing) information about the homes & area in Old Town. Mark your calendar to meet in front of 122 Walker Avenue on May 9th.

Happy Birthday **Lois Miller**!! Her sweet husband **Malcolm Miller** told us she is celebrating the 6th anniversary of her 39th birthday! Speaking of Malcolm, he is going on the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. scheduled for Apr. 25. He told me he's not riding in any wheelchair, but if he has to use one, he'll put his guide in it and wheel him around!

We were sorry to hear that **Dan Turner** had died last month, at the young age of 76. Dan played a key role in obtaining funding for I565 in the '70's under Governor George Wallace. He had quite a career in road projects, and was even dispatched to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina to use his EMA background in the rebuilding effort. He leaves wife **Dallas Turner**, family and many friends who will miss him terribly.

We wanted to wish a happy, happy birthday to our dear friend **Cheryl Tribble**, who lives in Woodstock, GA. They generally

have the same kind of weather we have here and folks in that part of Georgia are thrilled with the warm weather! Cheryl's so proud of granddaughter **Faith Sutherlin**, a high schooler who ranks tops in her class.

**Brandon Owens** is a handsome guy who recently had a March birthday. He is from Huntsville with parents **Ken and Diane Owens**, but currently lives in Tucson, Az. with wife **Susan Trentham-Owens**. Happy birthday to you Brandon!

You know, when you think about it, we still have to buy groceries, medicines, clothing, home furnishings, etc. I know many of us have cut back on the larger, higher-priced items. But when you get ready to go out shopping, please remember that **our local small businesses** are really struggling now, and they could sure use your support!

Instead of spending your hard-earned money at the large, national companies - why not make an effort to go to the smaller, home-owned ones like **Big Brother grocery, Chef's Table, Star Market, Propst, Rebecca's, Lewters, H. C. Blake, LeeAnn's Bar & Restaurant, Dallas Mill Deli, Tenders, Furniture Factory, etc.?** You still get great value for your money, and you are helping our local folks stay succesful!

Have a wonderful Easter and get out and walk! These days are beautiful, before the humidity sinks in. Take a stroll around some of the old neighborhoods. Walk your dog - if you don't have one, get one!

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# Slow Cooker Creations

## Corned Beef and Cabbage

- 1 head cabbage, cut into 6 wedges
- 4 oz. baby carrots
- 1 corned beef (3 lbs.) with seasoning packet
- 4 c. water
- 1/3 c. prepared mustard
- 1/3 c. honey

Place cabbage in your slow cooker, top with carrots. Place packet seasoning on top of veges. Place the corned beef with the fat side up over the seasoned veges and add remaining. Cook on LOW, covered, for 10 hours.

- 1 8-oz. can tomato sauce
- 2 lrg. carrots, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 t. dried Italian seasoning
- 1 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 bay leaves
- Hot cooked rice

Mix flour, salt and pepper in small bowl. Dredge each piece of beef in the flour mixture, place in slow cooker. Combine all remaining ingredients except the rice and pour over beef. Cover and cook on LOW 8-10 hours or on HIGH for 4-5 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaves before serving. Serve sauce and steaks over the hot rice with some good bread.

- 2 T. cider vinegar
- 2 T. soy sauce
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 t. each salt & black pepper
- 1/4 t. red pepper flakes
- 2 T. cornstarch
- 1/4 c. water

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place the ribs in foil-lined shallow roasting pan and bake for 30 minutes, turning after 15 minutes. Remove from oven and cut meat into 2-rib portions. Place ribs in your slow cooker and add all remaining ingredients except for the cornstarch and water. Cover and cook on LOW for 6 hours.

Transfer ribs to a platter and keep warm. Let the liquid in your slow cooker stand for 5 minutes to allow the fat to rise and skim it off. Blend cornstarch and water til smooth, stir the mixture into the liquid in the slow cooker, mix well. Cook uncovered on HIGH for 15 minutes and slightly thickened.

All you need is a salad and good bread.

## Steak San Marino

- 1/4 c. plain flour
- 1 t. each salt and black pepper
- 1 1/2 lbs. beef round steak, cut into 4 pieces

## Sweet & Sour Spareribs

- 4 lbs. pork spareribs
- 1 1/3 c. chicken broth
- 1 c. sherry wine
- 1/2 c. pineapple juice
- 2 T. packed brown sugar

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## Rustic Cheesy Potatoes

- 1/2 c. milk
- 1 can condensed Cheddar cheese soup, undiluted
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 t. ground nutmeg
- 1/4 t. black pepper
- 2 lbs. baking potatoes, cut into 1/4 inch slices
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- Paprika

Heat your milk in a small pan over medium heat til small bubbles form around the edge. Remove from heat and add soup, cream cheese, garlic, nutmeg and pepper. Stir til smooth.

Layer 1/4 of the potatoes and 1/4 onion in your slow cooker and top with 1/4 soup mixture. Repeat layers 3 times, using all ingredients. Cover and cook on LOW 6 to 7 hours and potatoes are tender, and most of the liquid is absorbed. Sprinkle with paprika and serve.

## Apple Brown Betty

- 6 c. apples, peeled, cored and cut into eighths
- 1 c. bread crumbs
- 1 t. ground cinnamon
- 1 t. ground nutmeg
- 1/4 t. salt
- 3/4 c. packed brown sugar
- 1 stick butter, melted

1/4 c. finely chopped walnuts  
Lightly grease slow cooker, place apples on bottom. Combine remaining ingredients and spread over the apples. Cover and cook on LOW 3-4 hours or HIGH 2 hours. (for a 3-quart cooker)

## Coconut Rice Pudding

- 2 c. water
- 1 c. uncooked long grain rice
- 1 T. unsalted butter
- Pinch salt
- 2 1/4 c. evaporated milk
- 1 14-oz. can cream of coconut

1/2 c. golden raisins  
3 egg yolks, beaten  
Grated peel of 2 limes  
1 t. vanilla  
Toasted shredded coconut  
Spray your slow cooker with nonstick butter spray. Place water, rice, butter and salt in medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook 10 minutes.

Remove from heat and let stand covered 5 minutes.

Add evaporated milk, cream of coconut, raisins, egg yolks, lime peel and vanilla, mix well. Add rice, stir well. Pour into prepared slow cooker. Cover and cook on LOW 4 hours or HIGH 2 hours. Stir occasionally. Pudding will thicken as it cooks. Garnish with toasted shredded coconut.



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# A Personal War

David Howard was a peaceful man. In a time when the Tennessee Valley was torn apart with the ravages of the Civil War he stood apart as a man who did not believe in violence or the taking of lives, regardless of the reasons. This made him unpopular with many of his neighbors as the tides of war swept back and forth across his small homestead near the Marshall County line.

No one is sure exactly where Howard came from. Most accounts have him moving to Madison County in the late 1840s from South Carolina.

One account says his parents were devout Quakers, which would explain his life-long aversion to violence.

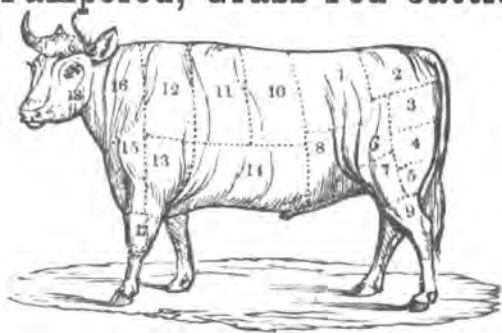
David Howard settled on a small homestead in the foothills near the Madison/Marshall county line where he quickly became a respected and compassionate member of the community. Rarely did a neighbor suffer a misfortune without Howard stopping by to offer his condolences and help. The area was secluded, well off the traveled path, with only an occasional preacher stopping by to minister to the religious needs of the small community. Although non-denominational in his religious beliefs he soon became the community's spiritual leader, often presiding at funerals and weddings and offering words of comfort to the bereaved.

His wife, Elizabeth, was the epitome of gentleness. She was an extremely attractive woman with long dark hair and manners that hinted at a cultured background. Her single goal in life was the welfare of her family.



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As the winds of war swept across North Alabama, the small community was torn asunder with almost everyone taking sides. Brothers fought brothers and sons turned against fathers. In the midst of this turmoil Howard continued working on his farm, hoping against hope that the war would pass him by.

For the first couple of years the only contact the family had with the war was an occasional stray Confederate soldier who would appear at the door asking for something to eat, or maybe a place to spend the night. Howard remained adamant in his refusal to take sides but never-the-less offered help to everyone who stopped at his farm. A crippled leg kept Howard out of the war but he was undoubtedly worried that if the conflict continued it would some day involve his sons, who were 10 and 13 years old.

As the war dragged on, and Federal troops occupied the Tennessee Valley, the conflict spread to every remote homestead. The Union troops disrupted the Rebel supply lines and the Confederates were forced to confiscate provisions from local farmers.


The Union troops in turn began a policy of burning any farm suspected of aiding the Confederates. Adding to the hardship was the fact that many soldiers, blue and gray, used the conflict to plunder the helpless families.

Soldiers from both sides visited the Howard farm searching for deserters, enemy patrols and plunder. The chickens were the first to disappear, followed by the meat hanging in the smokehouse. The horse and wagon went next, along with the shotgun and family silverware. Within a few months the family had lost almost all of their possessions.

Howard had managed to keep a mule and several cows by hiding them in the foothills. With soldiers constantly going back and forth across the farm,

**"Most boys are brainless, so you have to try more than once to find a good one."**

*Marie, age 9, on love*



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Howard was often forced to tend the stock and plow his fields at night time in order for the mule not be seen, and stolen.

In the spring of 1864 a small detachment of Confederate soldiers stopped at the farm. After the customary search, the soldiers had begun to prepare their lunch when a sentry gave the alarm - Union soldiers approaching! Quickly the Confederates mounted their horses and fled to the nearby foothills.

The Federal forces chased the Confederates a short distance, firing their guns at the fleeing enemy, before finally giving up and returning to the Howard homestead. After lining the Howard family up in front of their home, the officer in charge ordered the grounds searched. When the search revealed no hidden guns or hiding Confederate soldiers, the officer began to question Howard.

Howard, in his quiet manner, tried to explain that he was neutral, taking no side in the conflict. All he wanted, he explained, was to be let alone to tend his farm and raise his family.

Suddenly the officer's attention was diverted when a sentry

raised an alarm. On a nearby hill, out of gun shot range, was a small group of Confederates, sitting on their horses, watching the proceedings at the farm.

The Union officer, apparently frustrated at his inability to capture the Confederates, began to question Howard again. This time the questioning took a harsher tone, accusing him of being a Rebel sympathizer for allowing the soldiers to camp in his yard. When Howard tried to explain that he had no choice, the armies did what they wanted, the officer angrily walked away. Motioning to the squad of soldiers standing nearby, he gave the orders, "Burn it!"

Within minutes the home was a blazing inferno. Years of hard work was being wiped out in a few short minutes. Howard and his wife rushed to try to stop the soldiers, begging them to spare what little was left. When Howard grabbed a soldier's arm he was brutally beaten with the butt of a gun,

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leaving a long bloody gash on the side of his head.

Moments later the soldiers mounted their horses and rode away, leaving a lifetime of hopes and dreams lying in the smoldering ruins.

With no other choice available, the Howard family began to rebuild their lives. Pots and pans were salvaged from the smoldering ashes and several old horse blankets provided bedding. Fortunately the barn had been spared and it became the family's new home. As cruel as fate had been, the family still held hope that the war would pass them by.

Weeks later a small detachment of Confederates arrived at the farm. After watering their horses and resting, the soldiers inquired about a trail they had heard about. The trail was little more than a path cutting across the mountain toward New Hope but it would save hours of riding. Howard tried to give the men directions, even drawing them a map, but the directions were still vague and confusing.

Finally one of the soldiers suggested that Howard let one of his sons accompany them to show the way. Howard protested vehemently, saying he did not want his family involved in the war. An argument ensued with the soldiers accusing the family of being Northern sympathizers. The more Howard tried to protest, the angrier the soldiers became.

The confrontation ended abruptly when several soldiers grabbed a torch and began setting fire to what was left of the homestead. At the same time they accosted the oldest son, demanding to know how old he was. Howard pleaded with the soldiers, explaining that his son was only 13 years old and too young to know anything about the war.



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Finally, the soldiers left, with the admonition that the Howards had better choose sides. "If you aren't with us," they warned, "then you are against us!"

Once again the family set about trying to rebuild. The fires had only partially burned the smokehouse and it became their new home. Fortunately, Howard had taken the precaution of hiding some of their belongings in the woods during the daylight hours and now they were the only possessions the family owned.

Like so many other families caught up in the war, the Howards realized they could no longer ignore the conflict. If they remained on their farm, the best they could expect was more visits by marauding soldiers. The worst, however, was the knowledge that if the war lasted much longer one, or possibly both, sons would be forced to serve in the military. In the end, Howard realized the family had no choice but to flee, hopefully to a place where the war would pass them by.

After much discussion within the family it was decided that Texas was their best hope. Elizabeth, however, had seen too many families dispossessed by the war and wandering aimlessly with their few possessions in the back of a wagon. She insisted this was not going to be her family's fate; if they had to

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leave, she wanted a home to go to. Reluctantly Howard agreed to make the journey by himself, find a homestead and then return for the family. So, in the late fall of 1864, David Howard mounted his mule and began the long trek to Texas. He estimated the trip there and back would take three, maybe four, months.

Howard had left the family as well provided for as possible under the circumstances. There was no reason for anyone to venture off the homestead and if an emergency arose there were neighbors only four or five miles distant. There was an abundance of vegetables in the root cellar and several bags of flour and corn meal carefully hidden in the woods. The oldest son was a fairly good shot and could pro-

vide occasional squirrels and rabbits for the table, although Howard cautioned his sons to keep the guns well hidden.

The next few months passed uneventfully. Several times soldiers stopped to water their horses and rest but always left without unduly disturbing the family. It was almost as if a peaceful calm had settled on the little cove. Elizabeth even began having doubts as to whether moving to Texas was the right decision.

Late one afternoon the calm was shattered when a small group of neighbors rode into the yard. The remains of a body had been found near the river. The body was unrecognizable, it had been lying there for months and wild animals had scattered the

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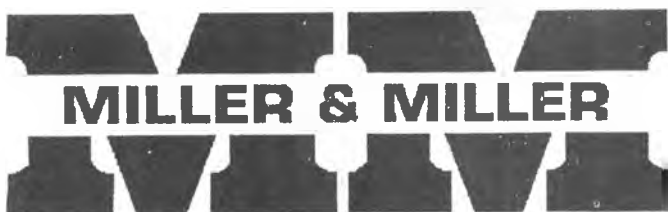
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bones.

"Is this your husband's?" they asked while handing her an old weather-beaten felt hat. They already knew the answer. David Howard had worn the hat for years, in fact he had worn it for so long that no one could remember him without it.

As reality began to sink in, Elizabeth seemed to age before their eyes. Her shoulders sagged, wrinkles showed around her eyes and her gleaming black hair now hung dry and listless. One of the men spoke up to say he would build the coffin. Another asked if there was anything else they could do.

Elizabeth hesitantly called for a pencil and paper and after writing her husband's name, year of birth and year of death, asked if one of the men would see about getting a marker. She didn't want to bury her husband, she explained, until he could have a proper burial with a headstone.

A few days later Elizabeth, her sons, and a few neighbors gathered to bury David Howard. There was no preacher so the few words said were kept short. The grave was filled and a sprig of flowers rested next to the head-

stone, the only marker to a man who just wanted to be left in peace.

Several neighbors were worried about Elizabeth's state of mind and offered to share their homes with the family but she refused the offers. She had her two sons, she said, and they would be all right.

Supper that evening, in the partially burned smokehouse, was a dismal affair. Elizabeth sat in a dark corner of the room rejecting all attempts by her sons to get her to eat. Regardless of how hard the young lads begged, their mother seemed to be sinking deeper into her own terrifying subconscious world of de-

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That evening, shortly before dark, the boys left to tend the stock. Almost at the same time a straggler, no one is sure from which army, appeared at the burned out homestead. After the customary drink of water the soldier asked where Elizabeth's "men folks" were. Receiving no reply, the stranger became bolder, demanding to know if any money was hidden on the farm. Still, Elizabeth remained mute, staring at the stranger with empty eyes.

Elizabeth's silence infuriated the straggler. Grabbing her arm, he tried to push her toward the door. When she didn't respond, he began slapping her about the face until finally she fell to the ground in a crumpled heap. Disgusted, the stranger began prowling through the family's few possessions, searching for money or possibly something to drink.

Perhaps the sight of the stranger ransacking her home triggered something in Elizabeth's mind. Perhaps she was past caring. For whatever reason, Elizabeth seemed to draw on an inner strength, fueled by a raging fury, as she grabbed a piece of fire wood and began beating the stranger. Her hopes, her desires, the loss of her

home and her husband was driven home every time she raised the piece of wood to hit him again. Consumed by an indescribable rage, she kept hitting, hitting, hitting....

Minutes later her sons returned to a scene of horror. The walls and floor were splattered with blood and gore and their mother was crouched in the floor

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next to the lifeless body of a stranger whom she kept hitting, and hitting with a stick of wood.

The next morning several neighbors appeared at the home to check on Elizabeth. The door was standing open, revealing the bloody terror of the night before. Immediately a search was begun and a few minutes later the terrified family was found hiding in some nearby bushes. The sight of the trembling woman was enough to make the strongest man recoil.

Elizabeth's gleaming black hair had turned white overnight! Her face was wrinkled and appeared to be that of an old woman. She had aged 30 or 40 years in the span of a few hours.

Without a word being spoken, the neighbors gathered the family together and placed them in the wagon. Until something else could be decided, the neighbors reasoned, Elizabeth and her sons would stay with them.

Elizabeth didn't protest. She didn't say anything. Her mind, as well as her spirit, was completely broken leaving her in a dark world of horror from which she would never recover.

Talk of the brutal attack circulated throughout the community. Before long, everyone knew of the terrible tragedies that had struck the Howard family. No one was prepared for what happened next.

Several weeks later a farmer and his wife, who lived near the Howard farm, were interrupted at their evening meal by a loud pounding on the door. Cautiously the farmer opened the door and stared at their visitor as if seeing a ghost. Finally the wife asked her husband who it was.

"It's David Howard," replied the shaken farmer.

In a jumble of words, with everyone talking at the same time, the story came out.

After Howard had left home early that morning to go to Texas, his mule had been spooked. In the ensuing confusion he had lost his hat, and although he searched, he never found it. He had no idea who was buried in the cemetery under his headstone.

David Howard reclaimed his family and moved to a small farm near Abilene, Texas. Both of his sons

grew up to become outstanding citizens of the community. Elizabeth lived until 1891, her mind trapped in the nightmares of a night long ago. David Howard's grave is marked with a headstone he had brought from a grave in Alabama, with the date of death crudely chiseled out.

Another senseless tragedy of a cruel war.

*A special thanks to Thelma Contraris, of Paris, Texas, for sharing her family history with us.*



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# A Huntsville Hero

He was a Confederate Hero. Born in Huntsville, Henry Bolden served in many theaters of the war and saw action in the Battle of Nashville. When the Union troops began to over run his position in bloody hand to hand fighting, Bolden, who did not have a gun, picked up a stick and began swinging it furiously. When the battle was over, a number of yankee soldiers lay sprawled about his feet.

Later when asked how he did it, his only reply was, "I knocked them in the head."

Though few people realize it, there were a number of black Confederate veterans in Madison County. These men, all of whom were valued and respected citizens, earned a unique place in Huntsville's history.

Essex Lewis, one of the best known and highly respected, went to war with his master, Colonel Nick Lewis, and saw action in Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia. After the war he returned to Huntsville where he worked as a farmer and as a janitor at the post office.

Lewis was a loyal member of the Egbert Jones Camp of Confederate veterans here in Huntsville. In 1910 the Camp selected him to attend the Confederate reunion in Richmond, Virginia to attend a Confederate reunion as their representative. When Lewis died at the age of 106 his funeral was attended by an honor guard consisting of ex-Confederate soldiers.



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# The Ryland Baseball Team

by Austin Miller

In the thirties, Ryland had an outstanding black baseball team. This was before my time, but people still talked about it during my growing up years. I once knew the names of all the players but the only ones I remember now are John Sledge, Shine Douglas, Ruben Parker and Sammy Lee Ford. I knew John because he was the janitor at Central School and always willing to talk to us at recess about the team's exploits. John played first base, Shine played second, Ruben was the pitcher and Sammy Lee was the catcher. My favorite stories were about Sammy Lee, our neighbor and friend.

Their games were on Sunday afternoons in a field across from where Jordan Road and Homer Nance Road connect. A large crowd of men, women and children, black as well as white, always turned out to watch them play. The players were not only highly skilled at baseball; they were also great showmen. Their antics, continual chatter and dialogue was enjoyed by the fans as much as the game itself. They played for love of the game and no doubt enjoyed putting on a show for the spectators. I never met anyone who could remember the Ryland team losing a game. But in fairness, due to the times, they didn't get to play any

of the first rate Mill Village and YMCA teams in Huntsville. If they had it would have been very interesting indeed.

By all accounts, Ruben Parker pitched with blistering speed. Daddy said that every time Sammy Lee caught the ball his mitt popped like a rifle. Throughout the game he continually chanted speed Ruben speed and

Ruben obliged. Legend has it that Sammy Lee could throw the ball like a bullet from home plate to second without getting off his knees; no balls got past him and nobody stole bases. He was without dispute the star player and the glue that held the team together. Everybody said that he was as good as James Tabor, a well known baseball and basketball

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player from New Hope. It was a highly complimentary comparison because Mr. Tabor played for a time with the Boston Red Sox. Common wisdom was that Sammy Lee didn't go to the majors because he was black and didn't get exposure beyond Ryland.

I never met Ruben Parker or Shine Douglas but I must have seen them around Ryland without knowing who they were. John Sledge fell out of favor among most whites in the late fifties when the community learned that he belonged to the NAACP and was very active in the Civil rights movement. Sammy Lee was drafted during World War II and served in an all black army unit in the pacific. After that, he came back to Ryland and made his living farming and hiring out to do a variety of odd jobs from hauling hay to digging post holes.

Sammy Lee spent the last fall of his life picking cotton for Daddy. He was still a good worker but had slowed down considerably from the pace of his youth. He brought good cheer to the field and flirted with one of the married black women pickers to no avail. He reminisced about his life, playing ball, his army days and the only woman he ever loved who left him when he went to war. Every day that he was not working, he walked nearly a mile to visit friends on Moring Road. One morning they found him at daylight, sitting on their door stoop, dead. He was about fifty years old.

We were all saddened when we heard that he had died. He was a very likeable man who worked hard all his life at honest work and when called did what he was asked to do for his country. He never did any harm to anyone and was well respected in the community by both blacks and whites. In my opinion, that is not a bad epitaph. Still, it is a shame that he never had an

opportunity to play major league baseball.

Among Ryland people of his time there was no doubt that he was born to it. I doubt if Sammy Lee or any of the other team members ever realized the impact they had on their community.

I think the great legacy of the team was the free entertainment they provided at a time when entertainment was a rare commodity in Ryland.

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# The Youngest Soldier


*from 1904 Huntsville newspaper*

A few days ago, the Mercury contained an item to the effect that John W. Mayhall, formerly of this city, now of Guntersville, makes the claim that he is the youngest surviving soldier of the Confederate Army.

Mr. W.E. Clutts of Cluttsville has sent in a denial of Mr. Mayhall's claim and offers proof that he enlisted in the Confederate Army November 15, 1861, at the age of 13 years and four months. He was a member of Company K, Capt. John Gardinar, of the 49th Alabama regiment and served through the war. He was born July 16, 1848.


Mr. Clutts is anxious to have the matter settled as he believes that there is no younger veteran living. Mr. Mayhall, according to these dates, would be a few months older than Mr. Clutts.

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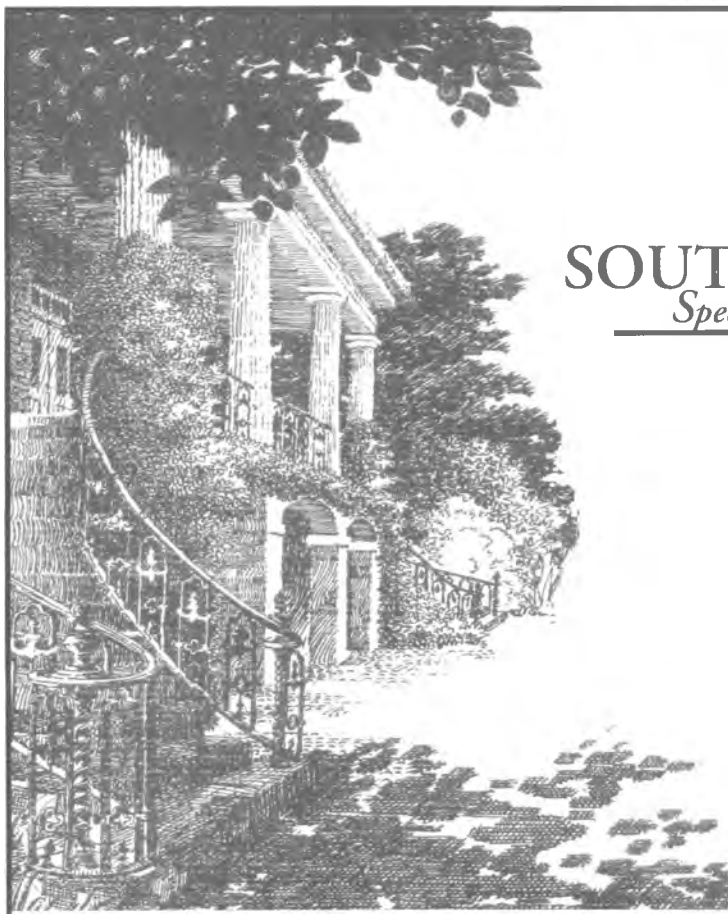
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# News from Huntsville

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

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

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

The officers in charge have

determined not to make any more exiles, by sending the recusants of the oath South; they will, henceforth, be ordered North, and buried in Northern bastiles. Already they have immured one heroic old soul, William McDowell, in the penitentiary in Nashville.

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

Whilst speaking of the heroism of the old Governor, I will mention an incident that occurred in an interview between

him and the Yankee colonel commanding the post. The Governor, knowing he would be compelled to leave in a day or so, to secure some of the commonest claims of humanity towards his family during his absence, ap-

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proached the Colonel, who replied: "Governor Chapman - I believe that is your name.' Yes, sir.' Did you not, in a public speech, in Huntsville, say, that to secure secession, you would sacrifice your property and your life?' After a moment's hesitation, the venerable man replied, with emphasis, 'No sir. To the best of my recollection, Colonel, I have made no public speech since the revolution commenced. I was in Europe at the time. You know my principles, Colonel, from the conversations I have had with you - and though I do not recollect any such "speech," I will say it now, and more- not only will I sacrifice myself and property, but, sir, wife and children, to the preservation of our holy cause.'

Greenbacks are two and a half for one in gold in Huntsville and Nashville. The Yankee troops in Huntsville, whose term of service has expired, are converting their 'greenbacks' into Confederate currency to take home. I state this for an incontrovertible fact. Not in one instance only, but I witnessed several of the same.


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

signed as headquarters for General Sherman & Co.

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

"Signed" Exiled





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# The Road to Whitesburg

by Jack Harwell

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

Like many cities in the early 19th century, Huntsville was dependent on water transportation, for both passenger and freight traffic. Railroads were not yet common, and overland

transport was limited to what a good team of horses could carry. Only boats could carry goods in the amounts needed to support a growing community. So providing an efficient and reliable route between Huntsville and the Tennessee River was a priority for the city's founders.

One attempt at a city-to-river route was the Indian Creek Canal. This project was part of the "canal craze" that swept the country in the 1820s. The idea was to take boats from the head of the canal, at Big Spring, to the river port of Triana, where cargo would be transferred to riverboats for the trip to New Orleans and other markets. A few small boats did make the trip, but the canal soon proved impracticable. In time, it would be abandoned completely in fa-

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vor of the overland route to the river at Whitesburg.

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

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

The opening of public lands in North Alabama attracted many adventurous souls from the eastern states. Many came to farm; the area's suitability for farming was already well known. Others, though, saw profits to be made in the new western lands. One of the latter was a wealthy Virginian named James White. White came to town not long after the land sales began, and went into business with one Alexander Gilbreath. They set up shop in a building at what is now the corner of Gates Avenue and Foun-

tain Row. This is believed to have been the first business in Huntsville.

White and Gilbreath did so well with their business they decided to expand. In 1820, they be-

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

Whitesburg was a busy place in the 1820s. In addition to his business with Alexander Gilbreath, James White also owned an ironworks and a salt firm in east Tennessee. He shipped his products to Hardie's store by way of the river. But cotton was the main business in Whitesburg. Cotton from all over the county was brought there and loaded on flatboats for the trip to market.

Sometimes shoal pilots would board the boats also, to guide them past the treacherous Muscle Shoals. In a letter written in 1820, Hardie noted that each riverboat carried 250 to 350 bales, each weighing about 300 pounds.

Before long, the Whitesburg road itself attracted the attention of private enterprise. Back then, highways were not the exclusive domain of the government which they have become today. Private firms would construct and operate roads, or pikes, and collect tolls for their upkeep. One such firm created the Whitesburg Turnpike in 1834. (The Meridianville Turnpike was opened that same year.)

The term "turnpike" probably came from the turnstiles used at the toll gates to control traffic onto

the pike. The toll gate on the Whitesburg Turnpike, according to an 1850 map, was located just north of what is today the Airport Road intersection. The road to Whitesburg remained a toll road until 1895, when all turnpikes were sold to the county.



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

In the 20th century, Whitesburg Pike changed along with the city. In 1919, two plaques were placed at the end of the street near Huntsville Hospital. These plaques contained the names of the 48 Madison Countians who had died in the recent Great War.

Forty-eight sugar maples were planted along the side of the street as part of the memorial. The maples were soon destroyed by traffic, and were replaced by American elms. The elms met the same fate as the maples, and were finally replaced by Chinese elms. These not only survived, but were supplemented by other trees planted along the street by local landowners.

The line of trees eventually stretched for more than five miles. Another sign of change came in 1924, when the first rural electric line in Alabama was strung along

Whitesburg Pike from Huntsville to Lily Flagg.

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

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

Today, the road that once carried cotton to the river is no longer a major intercity route, except for that portion south of Weatherly Road that was incorporated into the Parkway.

The original concrete pavement, laid before World War 11, still carries northbound traffic into the city from Morgan County. At present, the city is considering plans to finally replace the old pavement with asphalt, which is easier to maintain.

It will be just one more change for the old Whitesburg Road, which has seen plenty of change since the days of James White.



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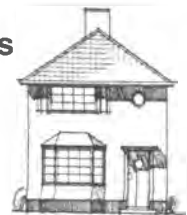
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# A Letter Home

Camp Taylor  
Apr. 13, 1862  
Huntsville, Ala.

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

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

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

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

We are in a dangerous position but I don't think they will dare attack us. The day before we came to this place 5 rebel regiments passed through here for Corinth and three more trains left here the day be-

fore to bring troops. We were prepared and waiting for them but they must have heard that we were here and postponed their visit to Huntsville until the Yankees had retired.

You can judge by the manner this letter is written that I was in a

hurry. Forrest's Rebel Cavalry is said to be in our rear and will no doubt interfere with some of our mails. I am well and so are all the folks.

(signed) Jim



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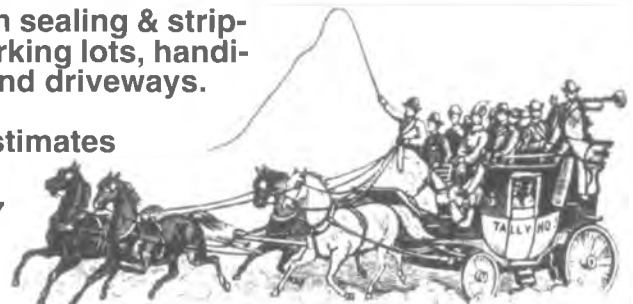
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# News From 1885

- The case of J. R. Stegall against the city for impounding his hogs was tried before Justice Figg yesterday but the justice withheld his decision until today. This case involves a nice point in law. The defendant's counsel, Oscar R. Hundley, Esq., holds that the city has no right to take possession of the hogs without due process of law, it being in contravention with the constitution of the state. And if the city had such a right it could not prevail in this case as the hogs escaped from the owner's premises or were let out, without the owner's knowledge, according to Stegall.

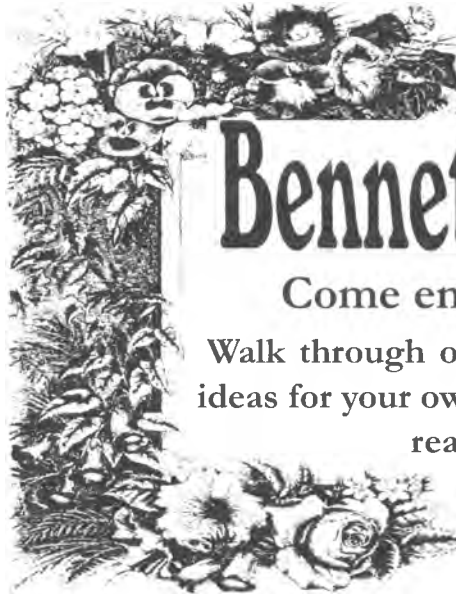
- Decatur, Al - The quiet of the Sabbath was somewhat disturbed at the report being circulated on the streets Sabbath morning of an assault made by Rev. L. Hensley Grubbs, editor of the Decatur News, upon one Mr. Bennett, his printer. The

particulars of the matter are somewhat concealed and as a result, quite a number of reports are in circulation. The best we can gather are these: The printer was on his usual Saturday night drunk, and made some demands on Mr. Grubbs for money which he could or would not comply with. Words passed, and finally the printer was collared and shaken up a bit. Being too drunk to resist, he submitted as best he could.

- Will Weaver entered the offices of the Mercury this morn-

ing with a huge rattlesnake which measured four feet three inches in circumference. The snake had been killed a few hours previously by Squire Cornelius on A. J. Esslinger's place. It was adorned with thirteen rattles and a button. This is reported to be one of the largest snakes ever found in Madison County.

- Mr. J. C. Dilworth, a highly estimated and generous citizen of Huntsville, died at his residence on Meridianville Pike,



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# News From the Year 1901

## News From Huntsville and Around The World

### Oklahoma Territory Open

**Aug 9.** Oklahoma Territory has grown by 2,080,000 acres overnight, and a lucky 6,500 homesteaders have staked their claims. Federal agents acquired the fertile land south of the Cimarron River from the Commanche, Kiowa and Apache for \$2 million.

Ranchers and railway barons lobbied for the purchase, seeking grazing grounds and increased traffic, respectively. Miners know the area offers coal reserves, and farmers believe the soil is good for corn, wheat and cotton.

Previous expansion in Oklahoma had been a chaotic affair; in the 1889 land rush the mad scramble resulted in at least one death.

This time, authorities submitted nearly 170,000 would-be claimants to an orderly lottery. The winners are required to remain on their allotments for five years before obtaining titles.

The land would have been available to the public sooner if

the Indians living on the eastern half of the territory had not known their rights and exercised them so well. The tribes there have written constitutions and well-established systems of self-government. They demanded, in addition to the cash payment, a 160-acre allotment for each member of their tribes.

### Oldsmobile Horseless Buggies to be Built In Quantity

Ransom E. Olds predicts he will produce and sell over 400 of his curved-dash Oldsmobiles before the year is out. The \$650 vehicle, which resembles a horseless buggy, is affordable by many middle-class families. Still, Olds cannot assume the public will prefer his experimental internal-combustion engine to a steam-driven one. With gasoline selling at 12 cents per gallon, the car could be very expensive to operate.


### Stock Market Takes a Dive

**May 9.** In the largest single-day break on Wall Street since 1803, mayhem ruled today as previously rational men punched and kicked each other in the scramble to unload their plunging stocks.


Quotations started falling at about 1 p.m. By closing, some prices had crashed a full 20 points. The situation was so critical that bankers conferred late into the night to find a means to prevent total financial catastrophe.

All eyes had been on the phenomenal rise in Northern Pacific stock, which gained 70 points in three days. It remained unscathed, with a net gain of 16.5 at the end of an otherwise disastrous day.

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## Auto Club Gets Speeding Ticket

May 11. Members of the Automobile Club of America were arrested today in Morristown, New Jersey, for breaking the speed limit.

The drivers violated the posted eight-mile-an-hour ordinance during a cross-state race. Witnesses said the auto enthusiasts had reached speeds up to 30 miles per hour.

When the gentlemen stopped for lunch at a local hostelry, the Morristown justice of the peace presented them with a lump fine of \$10.

The police chief of Morristown has vowed to put an end to speeders, saying that eight miles an hour is fast enough for anyone.

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## Jacksonville Fire Leaves 10,000 Homeless

May 3. A defective wire at a factory in Jacksonville, Florida, is thought to have sparked the worst fire in the city's history. The fire caused about \$15 million damage and left 10,000 to 15,000 residents without homes.

An area two miles long by a half mile wide was razed and about 130 blocks were scorched, many in the heart of the business and residential sections of town. An estimated 1,300 houses were destroyed, along with hotels, theaters, shops and churches. Casualties could not be immediately determined. Fed by strong winds, the blaze spread so quickly that firefighters were unable to get it under control. After about ten hours, it finally burned itself out.

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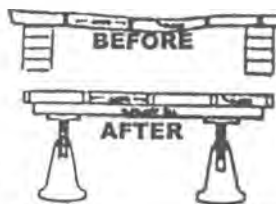
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# A Yankee Soldier in Huntsville

by Jim Coleman

When Colonel John Beatty arrived in Huntsville in April 1862 at the head of his 3rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment, he felt his organization would never see combat.

"After all," he wrote in his diary, "nineteen years earlier the 3rd went all the way to Mexico and saw no fighting at all."

What Beatty had no way of knowing was that he would spend only four months with General Ormsby Mitchel's occupation forces in Huntsville.

In August he would receive orders for his regiment to move northward where he would take part in all the major battles in the west, with the exception of Shiloh.

Before coming to Huntsville, Beatty found camp life boring in Kentucky and Tennessee, but


he attempted to overcome it with a wry sense of humor. "The water is bad," he said, "whiskey is scarce, dust is abundant, and the air loaded with the scent and melody of a thousand mules."

His uniform had become so tattered in the battle zone by 1862, he wrote home to his wife, "My pantaloons are in a revolutionary condition, the seat having seceded." The most exciting action he saw during his tenure in Huntsville was when he ordered the burning of Paint Rock.

Yet, Beatty made the best of his light duties in Huntsville. He served two months as Provost Marshal of the town before coming down with jaundice, a bile disorder probably caused by hepatitis. One of his close friends and fellow officers, General James A. Garfield, also contracted jaundice.

But Beatty, who said when writing his memoirs later, he'd rather write about everyday happenings, rumors and observations than describe the tactical operations of armies. True to his word while in Huntsville, he

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expressed his interest and fascination with the ways of the Southern people, white and colored.

"The busiest time in the Provost Marshal's office," he said, "is between eight in the morning and noon. Then many persons apply for passes to go outside the line and for guards to protect property. Others come to make complaints that houses have been broken open, or that horses, dogs, and negroes have strayed away or been stolen."

"In June," he said, "the men of Huntsville have settled down to a patient endurance of military rule. They say but little, and treat us with all politeness. The women, however, are outspoken in their hostility, and marvelously bitter. A flag of truce of rebels came in last night from Chattanooga, and the bearers were overwhelmed

with visits and favors from the ladies. When they took supper at the Huntsville Hotel, the large dining room was crowded with fair faces and bright eyes, but the men prudently held aloof."

"A day or two ago one of our Confederate prisoners died. The ladies filled the hearse to overflowing with flowers, and a large number of them accompanied the soldier to his last resting place.

"The foolish yet absolute devotion of the women to the Southern cause does much to keep it alive. It encourages, nay forces, the young to enter the army, and compels them to continue what the more sensible Southerners know to be a hopeless struggle.

"But we must not judge these Huntsville women too harshly. Here are the families of many of the leading men of Alabama; of

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generals, colonels, majors, captains and lieutenants in the Confederate army; of men, even who hold cabinet positions at Richmond, and of many young men who are clerks in the departments of the rebel Government. Their wives, daughters, sisters, and sweethearts feel, doubtless, that the honor of these gentleman, and possibly their lives, depend upon the success of the Confederacy."

On April 14, 1862, as various regiments converged on Huntsville from the north, progress was slowed because of bad roads. Beatty said, "We bivouacked for the night near a distillery. Many of the men drunk; the 10th Ohio particularly wild."

The next day Beatty's men resumed the march at six in the morning. He remarked, "Passed the plantation of Leonidas Polk Walker. He is said to be the wealthiest man in North Ala-

bama. His domain extends for fifteen miles along the road. The overseer's house and the negro huts near it make quite a village.

"Met a good many young men (Confederates) returning from Corinth and Pittsburg Landing. Quite a number of them had been in the Sunday's battle (Shiloh), and being wounded, had been sent back to Huntsville. General Mitchel had captured and re-

leased them on parole. Some had their heads bandaged, others their arms, while others, unable to walk, were conveyed in wagons.

As they passed, our men made many good-natured remarks, as, "Well, boys, you're tired of soldiering, aren't you?" "Goin' home on furlough, eh?" "Played out." "Another bold soger boy!" "See the soger!"

"As the 10th Ohio approached

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Huntsville, at one point a hundred or more colored people, consisting of men, women, and children, flocked to the roadside. The band struck up, and they accompanied the regiment for a mile or more, crowding and jostling each other in their endeavors to keep abreast of the music. "They boys were wonderfully amused."

"As we approach the Alabama line we find fewer, but handsomer, houses; larger plantations, and negroes more numerous. We saw droves of women working in the fields. When their ears caught the first notes of the music, they would drop the hoe and come running to the road, their faces all aglow with pleasure. May we not hope that their darkened minds caught glimpses of the sun of a better life, now rising for them."

Beatty entered the following in his diary, "Reached Huntsville at five in the afternoon. Just after

sunset Colonel Keifer and I strolled into the town, stopped at the hotel for a moment, where we saw a rebel officer in his gray uniform running about on parole. Visited the railroad depot, where some two hundred rebels are confined. The prisoners were variously engaged; some chatting, others playing



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cards, while a few of a more devotional turn were singing."

By his timely arrival, General Mitchel cut a division of rebel troops in two. Four thousand got by, and were thus enabled to join the rebel army at Corinth, while about the same number were obliged to return to Chattanooga.

"We're now at Decatur," Beatty wrote. "The Memphis and Charleston Railroad crosses the Tennessee River at this point. The town is a dilapidated old concern, as ugly as Huntsville is handsome.

"Colonel Keifer and I have

been on horseback most of the afternoon, examining all the roads leading from Decatur.

On our way back we called at Mr. Rather's. He was a member of the Alabama Senate, favored the secession movement, but claims now to be heartily sorry for it. He received us cordially; introduced

us to Mrs. Rather, brought in wine of his own manufacture, and urged us to drink heartily.

"Before leaving this place, the rebels built a cotton fort, using in its construction probably 500 bales.

"Today we filled the bridge over the Tennessee with combus-

"Old age is like flying through a storm. Once you're aboard, all you can do is hang on!"

Joyce Russell, Huntsville

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tible material, and put it in condition to burn readily, in case we find it necessary to retire to the north side.

"A man with his son and two daughters arrived tonight from Chattanooga, having come all the way - 150 miles probably - in a small skiff.

"Started at nine o'clock p.m. for Stevenson; marched all night. Whenever we stopped on the way to rest, the boys would fall asleep on the roadside, and we found much difficulty in getting them through."

On May 1, Beatty wrote, "Moved to Bellefonte. Took the cars for Huntsville. At Paint Rock the train was fired upon, and six or eight men wounded. As soon as it could be done, I had the train stopped and, taking a file of soldiers, returned to the village. The telegraph line had been cut and the wire was lying in the street.

Calling the citizens together, I said to them that this bushwhacking must cease. The Federal troops had tolerated it already too long. Hereafter every time the telegraph wire was cut we would burn a house; every time a train was fired upon we should hang a man. We would continue to do this until every house was burned and every man hanged between Decatur and Bridgeport. If they wanted to fight they should enter the army, muster against us like honorable men, and not, assassin-like, fire at us from the woods and run. We proposed to hold the citizens responsible for these cowardly assaults, and if they did not drive these bushwhackers from amongst them, we should make them more uncomfortable that they would be in hell. I then set fire to the town, took three citizens with me, returned to the train, and proceeded to Huntsville."

"Paint Rock has long been a rendezvous for bushwhackers and bridge burners. One of the men taken is a notorious guerrilla, and was of the party that made a dash on our wagon train at Nashville.

"The week has been an active one. On last Saturday night I slept a few hours on the bridge at Decatur. The next night I bivouacked in a cotton field; the next I lay from midnight until four in the morning on the railroad track; the next I slept at Bridge-

port on the soft side of a board."

On May 1, Beatty said, "Captain Cunard was sent yesterday to Paint Rock to arrest certain parties suspected of burning bridges, tearing up the railroad track, and bushwhacking soldiers. Today he returned with twenty-six prisoners.

"General Mitchel is well pleased with my action in the Paint Rock matter. The burning of the town has created a sensation, and is spoken of approvingly by the officers and enthusiastically by the men. It is the inauguration of the true policy, and the only

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one that will preserve us from constant annoyance.

On May 10, Beatty was appointed president of a board of administration for the post of Huntsville. After an ineffectual effort to get the members of the Board together, he concluded to spend a day out of camp, the first for more than six months. "I strolled over to the hotel," he said, "took a bath, ate dinner, smoked, read, and slept until supper time, dispatched that meal, and returned to my quarters in the cool of the evening.

"The gentleman of the South have a great fondness for jewelry, canes, cigars and dogs. Out of forty white men thirty-nine, at least, will have canes, and on Sunday the fortieth will have one also. White men rarely work here. There are, it is true, tailors, merchants, saddlers, and jewelers, but the whites never drive teams, work in the fields, or engage in what may be termed rough work.

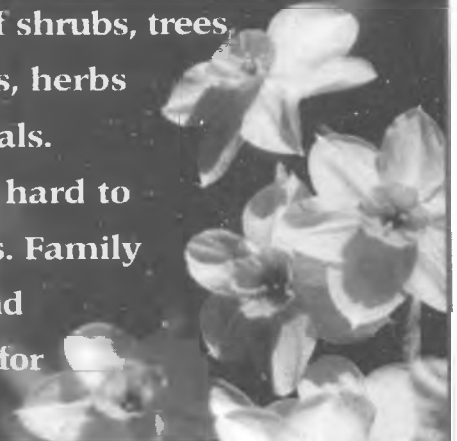
"Judging from the number of stores and present stocks, Huntsville, in the better times, does a heavier retail jewelry business than Cleveland or Columbus. Every planter, and every wealthy or even well-to-do man, has plate. Diamonds, rings, gold watches, chains, and bracelets are to be found in every family. The negroes buy large amounts of cheap jewelry, and the trade in this branch is enormous. One may walk a whole day in a Northern city without seeing a ruffled shirt. Here they are very common."

Beatty states that he and Captain Mitchell were invited to a strawberry supper at Judge Lane's. "Found General Mitchel and staff, Colonel Kennett, Lieutenant Colonel Birdsall and Captain Loomis, of the army, there," he said. "Mr. and Mrs. Lane,

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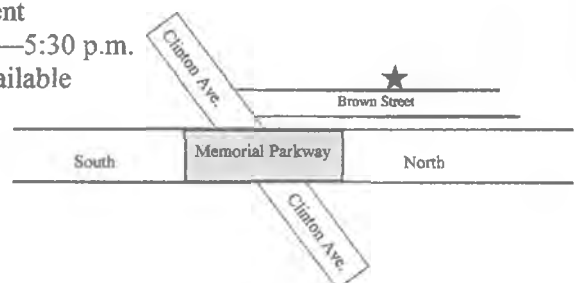
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Colonel and Major Davis, and a general, whose name I cannot recall, were the only citizens present. General Mitchel monopolized the conversation. He was determined to make all understand that he was the greatest of living soldiers. Had his counsel prevailed, the Confederacy would have been knocked to pieces long ago."

Rumor's began to float into camp at Huntsville. On July 2, Beatty said, "We know or think we know that a great battle has been fought near Richmond, but the result for some reason is withheld. We speculate, talk and compare notes, but this makes us only more eager for definite information. An Atlanta paper of the 1st

instant says the Confederates have won a decisive victory at Richmond. No northern papers have been allowed to come into camp.

"It is exceedingly dull; we are resting as quietly and leisurely as we could at home. There are no drills, and no expeditions. The army is holding its breath in anxiety to hear from Richmond. If McClellan has been whipped, the country must in time know it; if successful, it would be rejoiced to hear it. Why, therefore, should the particulars, and even the result of the fighting, be suppressed?"

"General Mitchel departed for Washington yesterday. The rebels at Chattanooga claim that McClellan has been terribly

whipped, and fired guns along their whole line, within hearing of our troops, in honor of the victory.

"A lieutenant of the 19th Illinois, who fell into the enemy's hands, has just returned on parole, and claims to have seen a dispatch from the Adjutant General of the southern Confederacy, stating that McClellan had been defeated and his army cut to pieces. He believes it.

"Toward the end of July, the Ohio 10th went on a foraging expedition, under Colonel Keifer, and was some fifteen miles from Huntsville, in the direction of the Tennessee River.

"At one o'clock last night our picket was confronted by about



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one hundred and fifty of the enemy's cavalry; but no shots were exchanged.

"The rebel cavalry were riding in the mountains south of us last night. A heavy mounted patrol of our troops was making the rounds at midnight. There was some picket firing along toward morning; but nothing occurred of importance."

On August 25, 1862, General Mitchel ordered Beatty's regiment to move. Four days later the 10th Ohio was at Decherd, Tennessee, and on October 8 arrived at Perryville, Kentucky, where they engaged the Confederate forces of General Bragg.

"The next day," Beatty said, "we went to the field where the fight occurred. We found a hundred men of the 10th and 15th (Ohio) lying stiff and cold. Besides these, there were many wounded whom we picked up tenderly, carried off and provided for.

"Men are already digging trenches, and in a little while the dead are gathered together for interment. We hear convulsive sobs, see eyes swollen and streaming with tears as our fallen comrades are deposited in their narrow grave."

Beatty had promised his brother that he would return and allow William to get a taste of army life. William entered the army in 1864 and rose to the rank of major before the end of the war.

In 1868 Beatty was elected to fill an unexpired term in the U.S. Congress. He was re-elected to two full terms before returning to Columbus to establish another bank where he served as president for 30 years.

In 1884 he ran unsuccessfully for governor on the Republican ticket. He died in Columbus in 1914, five days after his 86th birthday.



# Old Huntsville Trivia

**1810** - First Courts of Law established in Huntsville.

**1813** - Andrew Jackson and Davy Crockett camped at the intersection of Lincoln and Holmes on the way to fight the battle of Horse Shoe Bend.

**1862** - Huntsville occupied by Yankee troops.

**1865** - Remaining Confederate Troops surrender at Cold Springs atop Monte Sano. This marks the end of the Civil War for Huntsville.

**1868** - A judge from Athens is shot when 1500 members of the Ku Klux Klan break up a meet-

ing of former slaves and radical Republicans.

**1883** - Frank James, the brother of Jesse James, is acquitted of robbing a federal payroll (no, the James brothers did not commit any robberies in Huntsville).

**1892** - The first long distance phone call is made from Huntsville. The telephone directory had 32 names listed.

**1893** - A circus elephant dies while performing here. Its remains were buried on an empty lot in the 500 block of East Clinton Avenue.

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