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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



The Lady Was A Gambler

With almost thirteen thousand dollars on the table, it was the biggest pot most of these people had ever seen. "Again?" Katie asked.

There was silence until one person spoke up. "Miss, you have all the money. There ain't no way we can match that pot."

"How much do you have?"

After a period of brief whispering among the onlookers, they placed another six hundred on the table. Katie carefully picked up her winnings, leaving just enough to cover the new bet.

Also in this issue: Ben Harris, Terror of the Tennessee Valley

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The Lady was a Gambler

The Maple Grove Nightclub was a success almost from the day it opened its doors in 1937. Located about a mile outside of town on Meridian Street in the old Chase home, the club was the brainchild of Bushy Bolton and Brown Hambrick who saw the need for elegant entertaining in a town just beginning to recover from the Depression.

And elegant it was. A tuxedoed doorman met you at the door and led you inside to rooms decorated with heavy gilt mirrors on the walls and red velvet chairs and settees arranged for the guests' comfort. Waiters circulated through the rooms with trays of drinks while a band, usually imported from out of town, played the latest dance tunes in the main room.

Oftentimes, during periods of good weather, the crowds would be so overflowing that the band would move outside where they played on a makeshift bandstand under trees

decorated with festive lanterns.

The proprietors missed no details. There were even several one-room cottages on the premises where tipsy patrons could spend the night and sleep it off.

It was the room in back of the nightclub, however, that attracted the most people, and brought in the most money. The room had, probably at one time, been two bedrooms, but with the center wall torn out it provided ample space for the dice and card tables that provided one of the club's biggest attractions.

Although Brown Hambrick ran the club itself, Bushy Bolton was the undisputed boss of the gaming room. Almost six feet tall and heavily muscled, Bolton had once worked as a prize fighter and had earned a reputation as a tough, but fair, opponent. He was a shrewd gambler who knew the odds and, more importantly, what it took to stay in business.

He had a sentry posted at the end of the driveway and if anyone suspicious appeared, the sentry would press a buzzer that would ring inside the club. In just minutes the money would disappear and the gambling tables would be taken apart and boxed up. It was



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against the law to run a gaming house but there was nothing illegal about owning equipment that was not being used.

As the club's reputation grew it began to attract professional gamblers, and cheats, from across the region. Bolton would usually sit on a tall stool in the corner watching the games through half-closed eyelids. A slight move of his head might give the dealer permission to take a personal check from a customer. Another move would signal the dealer to call for a new deck.

Nothing escaped Bolton's attention. Sometimes it might be a card that was bent just a little too much or a customer who spent a lot of time with his hands in his pockets. When this happened he would move his stool a little closer, and if his suspicions were confirmed, motion for the player to follow him outside. Cheats rarely visited the Maple Grove more than once.

One day in late May of 1938 Bushy was standing on the front porch smoking a cigarette and thinking about that night's game when a strange car pulled into the drive. It was an older car with luggage and

household furnishings tied to its top and clothes piled in the back seat. Bolton had seen thousands of cars like this in the past several years - couples fleeing poverty and traveling in search of a dream and a job.

He watched as the couple got out of the car and walked over to where he stood. Their looks confirmed his first suspicions. The man's hair was just a bit too long, as if he had skipped the last couple of haircuts, and the suit he wore was maybe a size too small and shiny at the knees and elbows. The woman, attractive in a plain way, was dressed in a thin cotton dress with a man's sweater thrown about her shoulders.

They were having car trouble and wanted to know if they could use the phone to call a wrecker. Bushy pointed to the phone, and while the man was making the call, struck up a conversation with the young woman who had introduced herself as Katie Roberts.

"I'm not a complete idiot - I just have a few parts that are missing."

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They were on their way to Florida, the woman explained, so her husband, Bob, could get a job at the shipyards. They had lived in Gary, Indiana but there were no jobs there so they decided to leave. Her cousin was already in Florida and had promised to get her husband a job. In a way Bolton felt sorry for the young woman because she was so naive and trusting.

"Bad news," Roberts said as he returned from the phone call. "They're going to send a wrecker out for the car but he said it's going to be two or three days before they can fix it. They have to send off for a part. Maybe we can hitch a ride with the wrecker driver to where we can rent a room."

Katie turned to Bolton who was listening to the conversation. "Maybe you could rent us one of those cabins. We'll only be here for a few days and we have the money to pay."

Bolton thought about it for a moment. He wasn't in the room-renting business but he wasn't going to need the room until that weekend and the couple did need help. "All right," he said "but you have to be gone by Saturday morning. And pay in advance." He felt sorry for them, especially the woman, but it wasn't his problem.

About a mile away at the County jail, on Washington

Street, Sheriff Blakemore was having his own problems. Ever since the Russel Erskine Hotel had opened downtown the previous year, Mayor McAllister had been on his back about closing up the Maple Grove. Business leaders were complaining that the nightclub was drawing money away from the businesses downtown. The hotel had recently opened the Blue Room in a bid for the night-life business but customers were ignoring it in favor of the popular Maple Grove Nightclub.

He had already raided the place several times with no success. The club had lookouts posted and as soon as a lawman would appear the gambling paraphernalia would vanish.

Reluctantly, Blakemore summoned one of his deputies. "Get a couple of the men together. We're going to raid the Maple Grove on Friday night." He knew that Friday night was one of the club's biggest nights and the place would be loaded with high-rolling gamblers.

The sheriff liked Bushy Bolton, personally, although many of Huntsville's business

"My husband and I divorced over religious differences - he thought he was God and I didn't."

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leaders considered Bolton a bad influence in the community. The sheriff had followed the young man's career as a professional boxer and had never heard of any trouble at the nightclub. As far as he knew, the games were honest and if a man wanted to gamble, it was his own business.

But the law was the law. ...

Back at the Maple Grove that evening, business was slow, a typical Wednesday night. There were perhaps a dozen regulars and occasionally someone else would wander in, have a couple drinks and maybe shoot dice for a few minutes before leaving. Several times Bolton thought of the young couple whom he had rented the room to. He had seen them walk to a nearby store earlier in the day and return with a bag of groceries. The woman would be pretty, he thought, if she would fix herself up a little. But her husband was a different story. Bolton had seen thousands like him. Earlier that day he had smelled alcohol on the man's breath and knew it

would just be a matter of time before he showed up looking for another drink. He could tell it in the eyes.

Minutes later, almost as if fulfilling a prophesy, Roberts entered the club and after finding a seat in the corner of the room, ordered a drink. He appeared to be already drunk, but he was well behaved and not causing any trouble so Bolton motioned for the waiter to serve him.

After having several drinks, the man wandered into the back room where a dice game was in progress. The bets were small, a dollar or two at the most, so no one objected when he joined the game. Within minutes it was apparent to everyone in the room that the stranger knew nothing about shooting dice. He made every wrong bet possible and kept throwing

dollar bills on the table trying to win back what he had lost. After about an hour he ran out of money and went back to his room to sleep it off.

Bolton was sympathetic,



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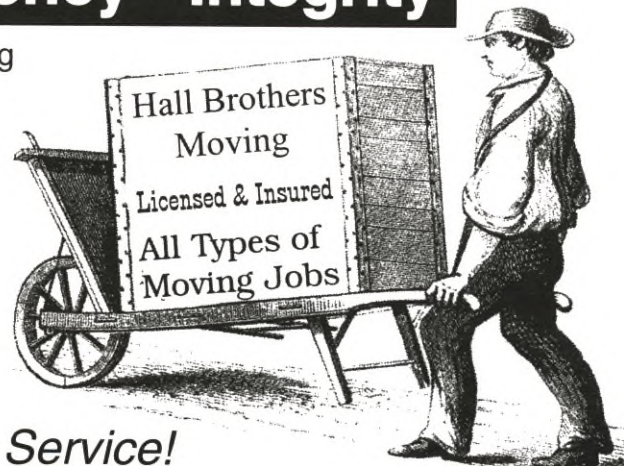
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Roberts had lost fifty or sixty bucks that he could probably not afford, but business was business. He thought this was probably the last thing in the world this young couple needed.

The next day was almost a repetition of the first. The couple walked down to the store and returned with a small bag of groceries and late that afternoon Roberts once again appeared at the club, obviously drunk. After having a couple drinks he began shooting dice with the same bad luck he had the day before. By nine o'clock he had lost almost two hundred dollars and was getting even drunker.

Bolton had just about decided to get someone to carry Roberts back to his cabin to sleep it off when Katie, his wife, entered the club. Without saying a word she went to the table where her husband had passed out, and talking to him softly while gently stroking his cheek, got him to leave with her.

There was silence for a few moments after the couple left. Finally one of the patrons broke the spell by saying, "That's a real good woman."

Everyone agreed with the sentiment, wondering silently if their own wives would be so accommodating.

The following day, Friday, Bolton saw Katie outside her cabin and stopped to talk with her. She told him the car would be ready that afternoon and that they planned to leave early

the next morning.

Finally Bolton brought up the subject he had stopped to talk to her about. For some strange reason he felt protective of her. "Katie, your husband doesn't have any business gambling. He doesn't know what he's doing and you would be better off saving the money. If you want me to, if he comes in the club tonight I'll tell him he can't play."

"No! Don't do that!" She replied anxiously. "He's good at gambling and he's told me all about how to win and everything. And besides, since he got laid off there aren't too many things that he really enjoys. He loves to gamble."

Bolton shook his head and walked off. It was her life.

That evening the club was



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Evan, age 6

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packed with Huntsville's finest when Roberts arrived once again. In a repeat performance, after having a few drinks, he started shooting dice, and again, he was a consistent loser. Everybody in the place had noticed how inept he was and several patrons had even tried to advise him on how to bet, but he totally ignored them. By about ten o'clock he had lost almost four hundred dollars and could barely stand on his feet when his wife once again showed up to take him home.

When he tried to protest, she talked to him in a soothing voice, saying how much she loved him while coaxing him to the front door.

It's difficult to explain now, but the whole room was captivated by her gentleness and the obvious love she had for her husband. One patron summed it up in a nutshell when he ex-

claimed, "Damn, what a good woman to be married to such a louse!"

Twenty minutes later the club had returned to normal and most of the customers had forgotten all about the incident when suddenly, Katie returned. This time there was something a little different about her; her face was flushed and there was a look in her eyes that had not been there before.

Approaching Bolton where he was sitting on his stool, Katie loudly exclaimed that she wanted to gamble. "You have taken all of our money except for forty-seven dollars and I'm going to gamble the rest of it. You have to give me a chance to get even!"

Bolton tried to coax her into leaving, telling her to save the money, but Katie was determined and refused to listen to reason. Several of the custom-

ers spoke up, telling Bolton it was only fair to give her a chance.

Irritated, Bolton finally agreed, more because of the customers than for her. "Put your money on the table," he said in a commanding voice.

"Don't know nothing about dice," she retorted.

"OK, how about a hand of poker."

"Don't know nothing about poker neither."

Bolton was about to lose his patience. "How are you going to play if you don't know how?"

Suddenly Katie seemed to brighten up. "I know how to

"If a word is misspelled in the dictionary, how would we ever know?"

Hannah Troup, age 9

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draw high card. My husband showed me how."

By this time the customers had stopped what they were doing and were watching the mini-drama unfold. Bolton impatiently waved to his dealer to bring a deck of cards.

"I'm not playing with your cards! My husband told me how people can cheat with them." Katie looked at the gathered crowd to see if they agreed with her.

Bolton was in a jam. He didn't want people to think he was running crooked games but if the woman didn't want to play with his cards he didn't know what else to do.

By this time the crowd was thoroughly enjoying the confrontation. A customer broke the deadlock when he threw a couple dollars down and told Bolton to send someone to the store for some new decks.

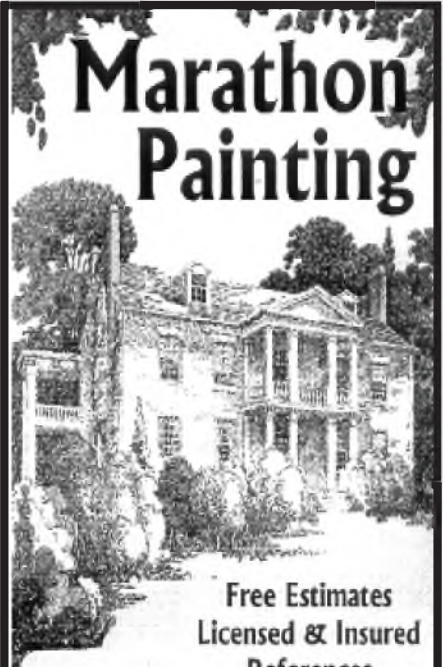
A few minutes later the employee returned with two decks

of cards. Bolton tossed them on the table and told her to choose one. After she chose, he told her to go ahead and shuffle. He was beginning to get a little impatient.

"Don't know how to shuffle." Seeing Bolton getting angrier by the moment she told Bolton to shuffle the cards. "But do it real slow because I'm going to watch you," she said while laying her forty-seven dollars in the middle of the table.

All Bolton wanted to do at this point was to get rid of the woman. After giving the cards a few shuffles, he spread them on the table and reached down and flipped one over. A Queen of Spades.

All eyes were watching Katie as she leaned over the table,



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selected a card and slowly turned it over. A King of Clubs. Now she had ninety four dollars.

"All right, lady," Bolton said, "You've gambled and you've won. Now take your money and go!"

"No, I want to keep on. You didn't tell my husband to leave when he was losing. I'm going to bet it all."

Bolton, realizing the crowd's sentiment was with the woman, shrugged his shoulders and drew another card. It was a Nine of Diamonds.

Katie drew. Jack of Diamonds. Now there was one hundred and eighty-eight dollars on the table.

"Again," Katie demanded.

Bolton flipped a card. A six.

Katie drew a nine, and won again. Three hundred and seventy-six dollars was laying in front of her.

Bolton didn't wait to be asked to draw again, and picked a ten.

Once again Katie won, drawing a king and winning seven hundred and fifty-two dollars.

By this time the room was quiet. Although many of the patrons wanted to see Katie win, they realized she had to

lose at some point if she kept betting it all.

"How long do you want to keep doing this?" Bolton asked.

"Until I have all of your money or you have mine." There was a steeliness in her eyes that had not been there before.

Bolton reshuffled, spread the cards and drew another. A three.

Katie drew a six, giving her over fifteen hundred dollars in winnings.

This was serious money. Bolton was no longer interested in placating the woman, he just wanted his money back.

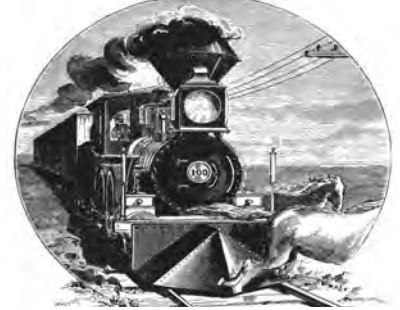
Another card. Another loss and over three thousand dollars on the table.

Bolton drew another. A King of Clubs. A sigh went through the room as people realized it would be almost impossible for her to draw a higher card.

Katie reached over and flipped a card over. Ace of Hearts. She won over six thousand dollars.

Bolton looked at the cards as if not believing what happened. This had never happened before. Reluctantly he announced the game was over, the house was broke.

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Katie left the money laying on the table and looked at the crowd. "Anyone else?"

There was a frantic scurrying about as the people began to pool their money. This was a sucker bet. They knew that it was impossible for someone to win every time cutting high card.

Once the money was on the table Katie told the designated player to shuffle and draw. The man asked for another deck. Katie shrugged her shoulders as if to say, "Whatever."

With everyone watching, he turned a four.

Katie drew a seven.

With almost thirteen thousand dollars on the table, it was the biggest pot most of these people had ever seen. "Again?" Katie asked.

There was silence until one person spoke up. "Miss, you have all the money. There ain't no way we can match that pot."

"How much do you have?"

After a period of brief whispering among the onlookers, they placed another six hundred on the table. Katie carefully picked up her winnings,

leaving just enough to cover the new bet.

The man drew a ten. Katie drew a Jack. The game was over with the house and all of its customers dead broke. Asking for a paper bag to carry her winnings in, Katie announced to the awe-struck crowd, "You boys can go on home now because I'm going to Florida."

Within a few minutes the Maple Grove Nightclub was completely empty. No one had any desire, or money, to drink or gamble anymore that night. They had watched the impossible become reality.

Meanwhile, Sheriff Blake-more was preparing to raid the place. Earlier that day he had one of his deputies slip onto the grounds and cut the wire that led to the alarm. At about ten o'clock, when he knew the place would be going full blast, he barged through the front door while loudly announcing

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that this was a raid in progress.

Unfortunately, the place was empty except for Bushy Bolton who was sitting quietly in a chair drinking a Double Cola. After making sure the place was really empty Blake-more returned to where Bolton was sitting.

"Bushy," he said, "You have to be one of the luckiest people alive."

"If you only knew," Bolton replied while shaking his head. "If you only knew."

Appropriately, the story would end here if it were not for certain aftermaths that make the story even more intriguing.

Several days later Bolton was having breakfast at a local restaurant with a number of his friends. Everyone had heard about the high-card game and they were commiserating with Bolton about his bad luck. At one point someone asked the mechanic, who had fixed the couple's car, what was wrong with it.

"Strangest thing," the mechanic replied. "There wasn't nothing the matter with it. He just told me to do a tune up and change the tires. I don't think he was very bright but he's probably in Florida working at a shipyard now so it doesn't matter."

"Well, I hope he's better at a shipyard than he was as a salesman," said another man. "He owned the store down the road from the Maple Grove."

"What do you mean?" Asked Bolton, only half curious.

"This guy came in the store last week, said he was a salesman for a playing card company. Said if I would stock his cards he would sell them to me for half of what I was paying

before. And then, just to show you how dumb he was, he took every deck of cards I had and replaced them with his own. Gave me two for one."

Bolton was almost hesitant to ask the next question. "Do you still have any of those cards left?"

The man left to go to his car and returned in a few minutes with several new, unopened decks.

It took only a few minutes for Bolton to confirm what he suspected. The cards were marked and the whole charade had been an elaborate scam.

Although the game quickly became a part of Huntsville's folklore, Bolton never acted upset about being conned. "The lesson was worth the money," he later told a friend.

The Maple Grove Night-club closed the following year, mainly because of pressure from Huntsville's business leaders. In 1939, the property was sold to W.O. Fox who turned it into the Maple Grove Motel.

Sheriff Blakemore earned a reputation for his persistence in closing gambling rooms around Madison County. He became the first sheriff in Huntsville's history to serve two consecutive terms.

Bushy Bolton, whom

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Huntsville's finest claimed was a bad community influence, worked at several other nightclubs in the area before being drafted during WW II.

In 1944, during a battle at the Mark River, in Holland, Bolton charged a machine gun nest that had his company pinned down. Although he was severely wounded, he then attacked a second machine gun, followed by a single-handed assault on a 88-mm artillery emplacement.

For his bravery he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

He died in 1965 and is buried at the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery at San Antonio, Texas.

Editor's Note: Although some conversations have been re-created, the above story remains factual.



A Bluecoat Hangover

An early landmark in upper Paint Rock Valley was Cox's Still House, on Clear Creek. Oddly enough, some innocent jollification turned sour for a group of Union soldiers at the Still House one day in 1864. About 40 of the boys in blue had retired to the secluded spot, meaning to take time out from the brutal War Between the States. The Yankees quickly confiscated all the whisky they could find, intending to make some eggnog with the milk and eggs they had stolen from local farmers.

Unfortunately, they made so much racket that some of Bushwhacker Johnston's Confederates heard them. The Johnny Rebs set an ambush along the road. Without warning, the Confeds opened fire into the carousing Yankees. Panic stricken, the blue coats dropped their booze and fled straight into the ambush.

When the Yankees sobered up, they were faced with the double humiliation of having a hangover and being taken prisoners.



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Mrs. Gilbert and Helen

By Malcolm Miller

In nineteen fifty I put an ad in the local paper to sell my nineteen thirty seven Ford car. Early on Sunday morning after the ad came out on Saturday I received a phone call from a sweet sounding old lady telling me that she and her daughter would very much like to see the car and take a test drive. Little did I know what I was getting into.

She told me to come to her cute little bungalow on Whitesburg Drive and to be there at one o'clock in the afternoon. I did as I was instructed and there waiting for me in the front yard ready to ride were Mrs. Gilbert and her daughter Helen, and ride we did,

all the way down to the Tennessee River. I wanted to turn back because there had been a drowning there and the police were trying to divert the traffic, however Mrs. Gilbert would have none of that so onto the bridge we went with the police yelling at me and Mrs. Gilbert yelling back.

Finally we got off the bridge and headed back up Whitesburg Drive and that is when Mrs. Gilbert told me that she was not interested in buying the car because it was thirteen years old, incidentally I put the age of the car in the ad. Finally I got Mrs. Gilbert and her daughter back home and I realized I had been had.

When I went to work the following morning I found out that I was one of the few people there that hadn't had some type of run in with Mrs. Gilbert and her daughter Helen. It seems that they would check the pa-

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per when they wanted an afternoon joy ride, call up some unsuspecting person and another afternoon ride was arranged.

A few weeks after my encounter with the couple I was walking to my car on the South side of the square and I heard someone yelling my name, I looked back and here they came - Mrs. Gilbert dragging Helen who was slightly crippled. I jumped in my car and drove away as fast as I could, not wanting to be victimized again.

Back in the late forty's and fifties downtown Huntsville was a bee hive of activity with cars parked every where and most of them unlocked. Mrs. Gilbert would pick out a nice looking car parked and left unlocked and she and Helen would simply get in the car and wait for the unsuspecting owner to return, then tell the owner that they must drive them home to the cute little bungalow on Whitesburg Drive. I believe this particular practice came to a halt when they got in a car one day and demanded that the owner drive them home. The driver got in the car and took off like a maniac while they were pleading for him to stop. Mrs. Gilbert said "Who are you any way" and his reply was "I'm Soup Goodson, the biggest bootlegger in Huntsville". He was incidentally telling the truth.

I don't recall hearing anything more from this Mother and daughter after that. Maybe they started riding the city busses but as far as I know they never again crawled into another stranger's car.

Old Huntsville Trivia

1843 - In one of the first attempts at zoning, the city fathers force Preston Yeatman to remove his horse stable from the corner of Greene between Eustis and Gates streets.

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

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

1851 - The town is scandal-

ized by a young man, age 19, who checked into a local hotel accompanied by his wife, who was 62.

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



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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Congratulations to **Eleanor Smithey** for being the first correct caller to identify that adorable little boy in last month's issue as **Blake Dorning**. Eleanor is a homemaker who loves gardening, and when I asked how she knew it was Blake, she said it was his eyes and his expression - which hasn't changed after all these years!

Recently I took my grandkids to **Big Spring park** with a bunch of bread to feed the ducks and was really surprised - no one was hungry! Not even the fish! The city had recently relocated many of the geese, ducks, etc., resulting in much less poop - which is good. So my advice - unless you go visit Big Spring at the crack of dawn, don't bring too much food, because there are a lot less creatures that need it now!

Congratulations to **Buck Watson** and the team who worked so hard on the 100th anniversary celebration at our **YMCA building** downtown.

There is so much history connected with that building, and Buck wanted to make sure that it continued to be part of Huntsville's great history.

Suzie Nolen's sister **Shannon Gifford** meant so much to many people. She lived in Cartersville, GA. with her husband **Mike**, and in addition to being a church missionary and music teacher, she taught people how to sew and had a very popular website to instruct new seamstresses. Shannon died during April of a very rare uterine cancer, and we want to send our deepest sympathy to **Suzie**, her husband **John**, Shannon's dear husband **Mike**, and their many friends & family.

Recently, the stained glass window depicting a large green dragon at the **Kaffeeklatsch**

bar downtown was destroyed by the January tornado that went through downtown & Five Points. That window had been created 30 years ago by artist **Steve Ware**. When **Kaffeeklatsch** owners **Grant & Kathy Heath** discovered the damage, they called glass artist **Ron Hogan** to see what he could do. Ron and his team made up of **Katherine Purves** and **Terry Alexander** worked tirelessly to match the broken pieces, texture and thickness as well as color, and recreated the entire dragon. It is now back in place, and looks great!

If you have any interest in classic autos you won't want to miss the event at the **Historic Huntsville Depot** on Church Street on May 22, a Saturday. It's also a flea market & motorcycle show. There will be old cars of every kind starting at 8 am, continuing on til mid-afternoon. There will be lots of stuff for kids to do, including getting on some of the trains, and

Photo of The Month

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

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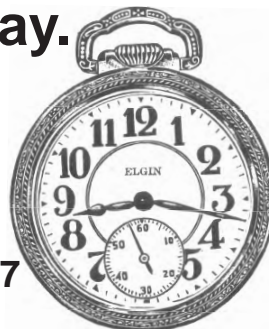
Hint: This little girl made her voice heard, but now she is leaving.



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there will be concessions and soft drinks. Also bands will be playing! But be sure and bring your lawn chairs, because seating there will be limited and hundreds are expected! For more information, call **Dan Moore** at 851-6257.

Liz Waggett had just turned 63 years old when she died after a courageous year's struggle with pancreatic cancer. Liz worked for Beason & Nalley for 18 years and was much loved by her coworkers, sorority sisters at Beta Sigma Phi and friends & family. We send our deepest sympathy to **Joe**, Liz's husband, as well as her sons **Stephen (wife Tammy)**, **David Waggett** and **Christopher (wife Stephanie)**. Liz was the best and we'll never forget her.

We enjoyed meeting **Nikki Kromis** recently when we went to Thirsty Turtle to meet some folks. She was a really sweet girl and has been working there for almost 9 years!

The **Huntsville Times** recently celebrated its 100th anniversary, and the old articles and pictures that the Times ran for several months were very interesting - congratulations to a great, long-lasting paper!

A special hello to our friend **Rosa Whitt**, who is now 82, and grew up on Whitesburg - she remembers lots of changes that Huntsville has gone through!

Merrimack Hall hosted **Will Stutts** last month, as **Mark Twain**. The house was sold out, and Will was so believable the audience was convinced he was **Mark Twain!** It was funny, moving and memorable. Well done, Will!

The sweet lady behind the counter at BB&T bank on Church street just celebrated her 2nd wedding anniversary! **Kristyn Towers** says it still

feels like they're on their honeymoon - her lucky husband is **Heath Towers** and their day to celebrate was Apr. 15.

We wanted to wish **Lois Miller** a very happy birthday that she celebrated in April - she and sweet husband & writer **Malcolm** are some of the best people you'll ever meet.

Glenda and **Sam Huffstetler** just welcomed their new great-great granddaughter, **Madison Reese Scott**, born Apr. 13. Very happy parents are **Morgan** and **Chris Scott**. Congratulations to you all!

We were so sorry to hear that **Ruth Craft** had passed away at the age of 87. Ruth was a native of Madison County, and just loved reading stories of the history of our area. We send our condolences to her family and many friends and will really miss her sweet smile.

I am so proud of our **City Workers** who pick up the trash, construction debris, grass & tree trimmings, etc. They are some of the hardest working folks I've ever seen. We are lucky to have them working for our city and keeping it so clean.

A very happy Mother's Day to all you special Moms out there - we love you!

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Shirley Largen Bakes

Shirley is an expert cook who is well-known for her exquisite dishes in the Owens Cross Roads and Grant areas. She has shared some of her favorite desserts with us and we can't wait to try these!

Aunt Mary's Banana Bread

- 1 box yellow cake mix
- 1/2 c. water
- 3-4 mashed RIPE bananas
- 1 stick margarine
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 c. chopped nuts

Beat all ingredients together for 4 minutes. Do not preheat oven but set it to 350 degrees when you put the bread in to cook. Bake for about an hour, and the top springs back when lightly touched.

It's absolutely the tastiest and moist banana nut bread you will ever eat.

The secret to banana nut bread is to use very, very ripe bananas. The peel should be almost black.

Shirley's Spanish Peanut Clusters

I came up with this recipe years ago and it has been a favorite of my friends & family ever since. The ingredients are few and very simple but you won't believe how the flavors all go together!

Microwave 1 package dark chocolate almond bark according to directions til melted.

Mix in one can Spanish peanuts, 1/2 cup chopped pecans and 1 cup miniature marshmallows. Stir all together and place by teaspoonful onto waxed paper.

When firm, the clusters can be placed in a covered tin or dish, but they won't be there for long!

German Chocolate Upside Down Cake

- 1 c. coconut, shredded
- 1 c. chopped pecans
- 1 box German Chocolate Cake mix
- 1 stick melted margarine
- 8 oz. cream cheese
- 1 box confectioners sugar

Grease a 9x13x2" pan. Sprinkle coconut and pecans on the bottom of the pan. Mix the cake mix according to directions. Pour cake batter over the pecans & coconut.

Blend the margarine, sugar and cream cheese in a medium bowl. Gentle smooth this mixture over the cake batter. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 40 minutes.

This is always a big hit!

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LBJ Cake

1 stick margarine, softened
 1 c. self-rising flour
 1/2 c. pecans, chopped fine
 Cream all this together and press into the bottom of a 9x13x2" pan. Bake 20 minutes at 350 degrees and allow to cool.

Layer 2

1 c. Cool Whip
 8 oz. cream cheese
 1 1/2 c. confectioners sugar

Mix this together and spread over the cooled crust.

Layer 3

Sprinkle 1 cup sweetened coconut over the 2nd layer

Layer 4

2 pkg. (small) coconut cream pudding
 3 c. milk

Mix, let thicken and spread over layer 3

Layer 5

Top with Cool Whip. I use a 16 oz. carton, taking a cup out of it to use in the 2nd layer of cake and then use the rest to top the cake.

Layer 6

Sprinkle with toasted coconut. Make sure coconut has cooled before sprinkling over the top of cake.

Nora's Peanut Butter Balls

My precious Aunt Nora gave me this recipe in 1986. This will make the best peanut butter balls you will ever taste. My Aunt Nora was Cecil Ashburn's first cousin, their fathers were brothers.

1 box confectioners sugar
 1 c. chopped pecans
 1 small can coconut
 2 c. regular oats

1 t. vanilla extract
 1 1/2 c. peanut butter
 1 1/2 c. melted butter
 1 stick paraffin

1 12 oz. pkg. semi-sweet chocolate chips

Mix first six ingredients together in large bowl. Pour melted butter over this, mix well and roll into balls placed on waxed paper. Let set in refrigerator for 20 minutes.

Melt the paraffin and add the chocolate chips, mix well til all is melted. Dip each ball into the chocolate mixture and place them on waxed paper til firm.

You will have best results if you melt the chocolate and paraffin in a double boiler.



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Benjamin R. Harris

Terror of the Tennessee Valley

by Charles Rice

Benjamin R. Harris was born in Alabama about 1823, probably in Marshall County. He married in 1846 and raised a family on his farm in southeastern Madison County. However, Harris was never very successful, and he moved his family west in the mid-1850s. First to Arkansas and then to Louisiana. By 1860, he was working as an overseer on a plantation in Natchitoches—a vocation that tells much about his character. (Slave driving was hardly a job for one overflowing with the milk of human kindness.)

Harris evidently stayed out of the war until the fall of 1863, when he turned up again in Madison County, employed as a scout for the Union Army. Although he was simply a civilian hired by the day, Harris clothed his followers in Union cavalry uniforms. He appropriated to himself the rank of captain.

“Captain” Harris soon became a figure to be feared in North Alabama. One of his main functions seems to have been procuring horses for the Union Army, and it was this that led him one day to the north bank of the Tennessee River opposite Buck Island.

It was December of 1863 and only two days after Christmas. Harris had stopped for breakfast that morning at a riverside plantation. After eating, Harris announced that he was taking his band of about 30 men over to the island to see what they could find. What transpired there has gone down in history as the Buck Island Massacre.

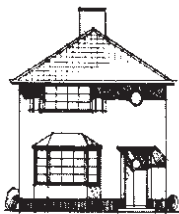
Buck Island today is well known to boaters on the Tennessee River. Back then, however, it was a fertile area of some 80 acres thickly covered with hardwood forest.

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According to tradition, a Union woman of Henryville named Charlotte Kennamer informed "Captain" Harris that her pro-Confederate in-laws had hidden their livestock on Buck Island. If the story is true, she had as good as signed her own relatives' death warrant.

What happened next was described years later by the sole survivor, Charles L. Hardcastle. "About ten days before the expiration of my leave of absence we were alarmed by the sudden appearance in the neighborhood of the notorious Ben Harris and his gang of marauders. Knowing that if we were caught we would in all probability share the fate of many others who had been killed by this murderer. I, together with James M. Kennamer, F. M. Kennamer, and Porter Kennamer, sought refuge in Buck Island, where Ben Kennamer had already driven his cattle, and constructed a rude cabin for shelter of himself and family in case of necessity, and in order to prevent his cattle being stolen by various parties of foragers." The four men were soon joined by old Mr. Kennamer himself.

Early on the morning of December 27, the refugees were rudely awakened from their sleep by a loud knocking on the door and a demand for their surrender. "To our dismay," said Hardcastle, "we found that we were in the hands of Ben Harris!" Harris promised to spare their lives if they would raise their concealed boat and help him ferry the stock across to the north bank of the river.

However, once they had done this, the prisoners were marched down to the river bank and informed they would be shot.

Ben Kennamer, 69 years old and the patriarch of the local Kennamers, had known Ben Harris for many years. The senior Kennamer pleaded for their lives, but all in vain. Harris insisted they must die.

"In looking back over this horrible experience," said Hardcastle, "it still seems to me that the prayer Porter Kennamer made for himself, and for all of us, as we stood there within minutes of eternity, was one of the most earnest appeals to the mercy of the Eternal Judge of Man that ever fell from the lips of the mortal." Kennamer handed Harris several small

items and asked him to give them to his wife and children. Bloody Ben agreed, but kept them for himself.

Harris then coldheartedly lined up his victims and began shooting them one after the other. When one revolver was empty, his men would hand him another. "I, being at the foot of the line, was the last one," said Hardcastle, "and at the flash of the first pistol-shot aimed at me at close range I fell to the ground as if dead. The ball, which wounded me, passed through my right arm, for I turned sideways to them as they shot me, and the bullet

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cut the artery in my arm. When they were dragging our bodies to throw them into the river, they stopped to feel my pulse, but, fortunately for me, they felt the side which had already been wounded."

Not finding any pulse, Harris' men tossed Hardcastle into the river with the others. "As I plunged into the water, unfortunately, I became slightly strangled and coughed. Someone said, 'Stick your sabre into his d - d body,' but I had floated out from the bank, beyond the reach of this weapon, when they shot at me again but missed. As they fled I held my breath and sank under water, and they turned and left me for dead."

Hardcastle floated some distance downstream before he managed to pull himself ashore. The icy water of the Tennessee River slowed his pulse and probable kept him from bleeding to death. He managed to reach the home of his brother-in-law and had his wound treated. Hardcastle recovered and eventually returned to his regiment, one of the few men ever to survive an encounter with the horrible Ben Harris.

Following the Kennamer massacre, Harris led his gang to Paint Rock. There they, "took Mat V. Rich from his house,





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carried him to a creek about a mile distant, where they murdered him and threw his body into the creek," reported the Rome, Georgia, Courier. They also "killed David Lemly, William McCay and Mr. Hodge, the last named aged about eighty years." Such was the Union "war service" of Ben Harris and his band.

Harris continued scouting for the Union and terrorizing Southern civilians until near the end of the war. He died on March 5, 1865, but just how he met his end is unclear. As a trooper in the 15th Pennsylvania heard it, relatives of Harris' victims finally caught up with him and settled the score. A member of the 3rd Tennessee Union Cavalry recorded a rumor that Harris and his entire family had been poisoned. This last tale seems most unlikely, since Harris' family outlived him. (Mrs. Caroline Harris took her own life in New Hope on January 5, 1876. Her children then moved to Texas.)

Perhaps Ben Harris died of natural causes, possibly pneumonia. But a story once told in Marshall County provides another possibility. It concerns an itinerant carpenter named William Hart. It seems Hart, whenever angered, had an unfortunate habit of taking a knife to anyone, whether friend or foe.

Back in the 1920s an elderly resident of Guntersville related

an incident that apparently took place in the winter of 1865. It seems that Will Hart was waiting for a ferry on the Tennessee River when a dozen or so Union cavalymen approached. The horse soldiers began insulting Hart, who had little choice but to bear it in silence. Accompanying the Yankees was someone referred to simply as "Harris."

When the ferry was ready to cross the river, only Hart and Harris went on board.

Once away from the shore, Hart attacked Harris with his knife, cutting him unmercifully. Hart fled on the opposite bank and was never seen again. Could this have been the fate of brutal Ben, or was it just a coincidence of names? We will probably never know.

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A Yankee Soldier

Excerpts from the diary of Col. John Beatty

April 4, 1862 As we approach the Alabama line we find fewer, but handsomer houses; larger plantations, and negroes more numerous.

April 9 Moved at six O'clock this morning. Roads sloppy, and in many places overflowed. Marched sixteen miles.

April 15 Resumed march at six this morning. Passed the plantation of Leonidas Polk Walker. He is said to be the wealthiest man in North Alabama. His domain extends for

fifteen miles along the road. Reached Huntsville at 5 in the afternoon.

April 20 At Decatur. The town is as ugly as Huntsville is handsome. There is a cane brake near the camp, and every soldier in the regiment has provided himself with a fishing rod.

April 24 Our forces are on the alert. Before leaving this place, the rebels built a cotton fort, using in its construction probably five hundred bales of cotton. Today we filled the

bridge over the Tennessee with combustible material, in case we find it necessary to retire to the north side.

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April 27 The Tenth and Third crossed to the north side of the river and Colonel Burke, of the Tenth applied the torch to the bridge. In a few minutes the fire extended along its whole length, and as we marched away, the flames were hissing among its timbers, and the smoke hung like a cloud above it.

April 28 Ordered to move to Stevenson.

May 2 Took the cars for Huntsville. At Paint Rock the cars were fired upon, and six or eight men wounded. 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 streets.

Calling the citizens together, I said to them that this bushwhacking must cease. Hereafter every time the telegraph wire was cut we would burn a house; every time a train was fired upon we would hang a man; and we would continue to do this until every house was burned and every man hung between Decatur and Bridgeport.

I then set fire to the town, took three citizens with me, returned to the train and proceeded to Huntsville.

May 10 Have been appointed President of a Board of Administration for the post of Huntsville. After an ineffectual effort to get the members together, I concluded to spend a day out of camp, so I strolled over to the hotel, took a bath, ate dinner, smoked, read, and slept until supper time.

May 11 Attended divine service with Captain McDougal at the Presbyterian church. The edifice is very fine. The audience was small, the sermon tolerable.

May 16 Appointed Provost Marshal of the city. Have been busy hearing all sorts of complaints, signing passes, sending guards to this and that place in the city.

May 23 The women are outspoken

in their hostility. A flag of truce came in last night from Chattanooga, and the bearers were overwhelmed by favors and visits from the ladies.

July 3 It is exceedingly dull; we are resting as quietly and leisurely as we would at home. There are no drills. Tomorrow is the Fourth.

July 4 Thirty four guns were fired at noon.



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Clinton Avenue in the late 1930s



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July 7 Am detailed to serve on court martial. The first case to be tried is that of Colonel J.B. Turchin.

July 14 Turchin's brigade has stolen a hundred thousand dollars worth of watches, plate, and jewelry in Northern Alabama.

August 3 The gentlemen of the South have a great fondness for jewelry, canes, cigars, and dogs. White men rarely work here. Judging from the number of stores and present stocks, Huntsville, in better times, does a heavier retail jewelry business than Cleveland or Columbus. 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.

August 7 General McCook was murdered near Winchester, yesterday by a small band of guerrillas. When the Dutchmen of his old regiment learned of the unfortunate occurrence, they became uncontrollable, and destroyed the building and property on five plantations near the scene of the murder.

August 8 The night is exceedingly beautiful; our camp lies at the foot of a long range of mountains called the Montesano.

August 9 Ordered to move and are now at Dechard, Tennessee. I am weak & worn out.

An Honest Mayor

Huntsville Mayor R. E. Smith, who engaged in a fight with J. E. Pierce, editor of The Huntsville Times, sat on his own case in the police court this morning. The case of Pierce was called first, and the defendant was discharged although he entered a plea of guilty. The mayor next called his own case and entered a fine of \$10 against himself because of the fact that he was the aggressor in the affray.

from 1912 newspaper



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Love Proves Dangerous for Yankee Soldiers

from March 16, 1864
Nashville newspaper

On March 2, three young men named Benj. Arthur, Leonidas Bouris, and John K. Morris, of Company A, 5th Ohio cavalry, went outside of the Federal pickets near Huntsville, Alabama, to visit several lady acquaintances. During the evening they were pounced upon by a detachment of the enemy, who summarily threw them all into a well, and covered them

with about twelve feet of earth.

After two days absence, a force went out in search of them, and found the well partially filled with dirt.

After digging down, they found the bodies of the three young men, and from a neighbor they learned the facts connected with the deaths as above stated.

One hundred and thirty-five dollars was taken from one of the young men. All three men were residents of Clermont County, Ohio.

"You know you're getting older when a fun night out is dinner on the patio."

Ron Eyestone

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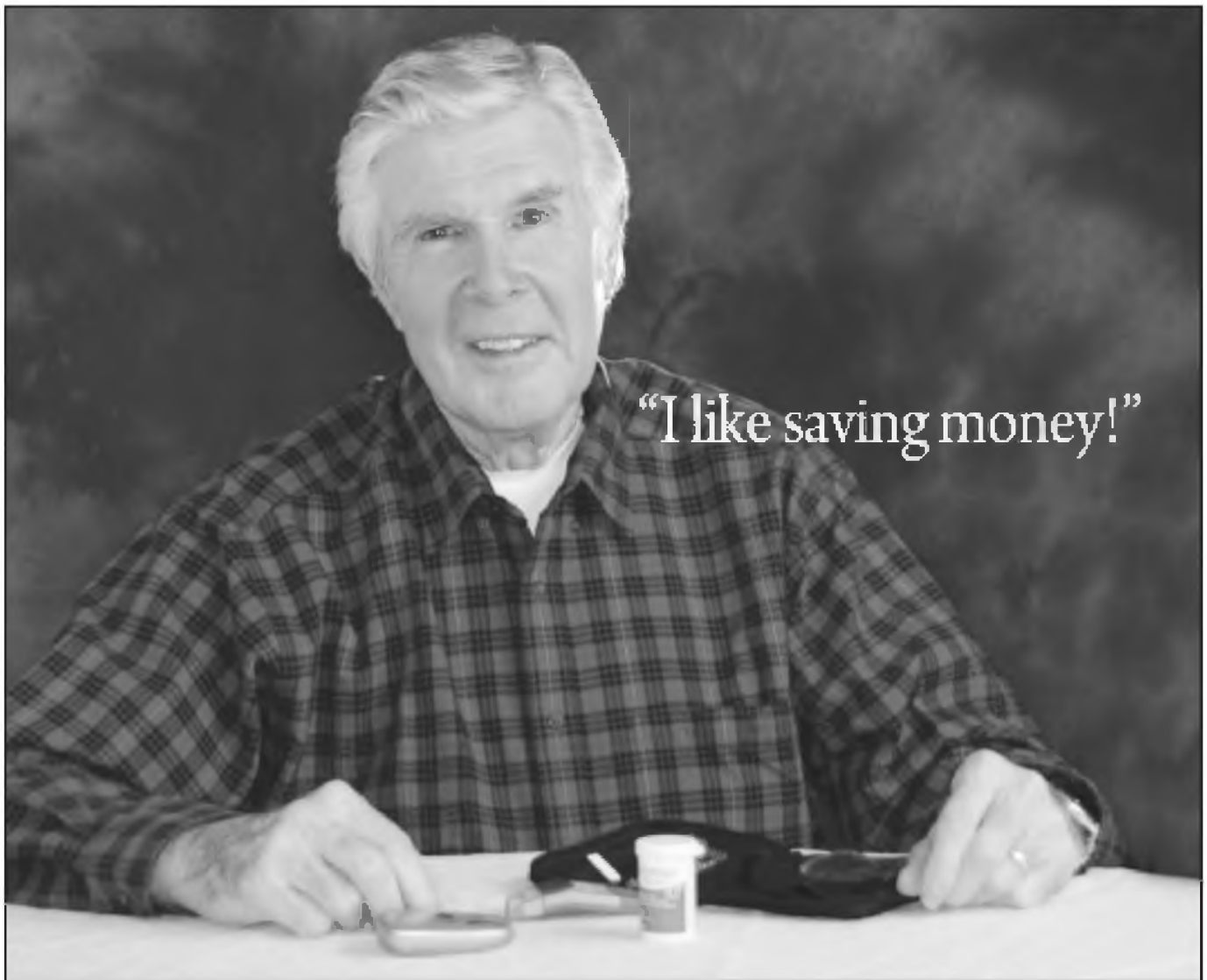
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Huntsville Streets

by Jack Harwell

Two of southeast Huntsville's busiest streets, Weatherly Road and Bailey Cove Road, are also two of the oldest. Both appear on some turn-of-the-century county maps, and were probably there long before then. Their names come from two otherwise unremarkable men who lived nearby in the last century.

When engineer Thomas Freeman first surveyed northern Alabama lands in 1809, his work took him all over the territory. He noted which areas were the most desirable, and then came back and bought land in all of them. Among the places which struck his fancy was the little valley southeast of the city of Huntsville which we call Jones Valley. Freeman may have been the first person to take notice of the scenic beauty of the valley. More than 20 years after Freeman's survey, a Scottish immigrant named Peter Weatherly came to the valley. Old land records show there were several Weatherlys who came to Madison County in the early 1800s, but most of them settled the northern and western parts of the county. Only Peter is known to have bought land in the southeast. The land records show that on December 20, 1833, Peter Weatherly bought 40 acres in section 5 of township 5 south, range 1 east.


The Weatherly land was located on the eastern slope of a small mountain about midway down the

valley, and directly across from a small cove. It was where Torino Drive is located today. Over the years, Peter Weatherly added to his landholdings until he owned 640 acres - a full section. The Weatherly Heights subdivision, the Camelot subdivision, and Mountain Gap school are all located on this land.

Little information about Weatherly exists today. Items from early newspapers reveal he was born in County Berwickshire, Scotland, about 1795. He lived for a while in Loudon County, Virginia before coming

to Alabama. He never married; according to the 1850 census, he lived with his nephew, James Weatherly, and owned several slaves.

Peter Weatherly died on May 13, 1872. According to his obituary in the Huntsville Advocate, he was 70 years old. The Advocate further reported, "He was an old, honest, and respected citizen of the county who attended to his own affairs and never meddled with those of his neighbors." Having no direct heirs, he willed his land to his nephew, James. Weatherly's



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will also mentioned one Ann Weatherly, described only as a mulatto, "in consideration of her care and attention." She may have been a former slave, but that is only speculation.

It may have been around the time of Peter Weatherly's death that one Lewis W. Bailey bought a half section of land (320 acres) about two miles north of the Weatherly home. Bailey was the son of a Huntsville policeman who hailed originally from Mississippi. He was born in 1844, and married in 1868. Bailey's land was located in what is now the Huntsville Hills subdivision. It started at Bailey Cove Road and extended a mile to the east, into a small cove on the side of Huntsville Mountain.

Whether Peter Weatherly and Lewis Bailey ever met is unknown. But both are recalled today by the streets which bear their names. The streets appear on a 1911 county map, and follow the same routes today that they did then. The map also shows a church, called Bailey's Chapel, near the intersection of Bailey Cove road and Old Carriage Lane. Just to the south of the church, and just a quarter-mile north of where Grissom High School is stands today, was a school called Cedar Point.

But the streets are not the only monuments to Weatherly and Bailey. The hill where Weatherly's original 40 acres were located is now known as Weatherly Mountain, and the cove on the far side of the mountain is Weatherly Cove. Box Canyon Road runs through the middle of it. The area where Bailey's land was located is shown on topographical maps as Bailey Cove.

The valley where Weatherly and Bailey lived remained rural in nature well into this

century.

As late as 1948, none of the roads in the valley were paved. As the city grew in the 1950s and '60s, more and more people moved into what by then was known as Jones Valley. Eventually the entire valley was taken into the city limits. Today it is one of the most desirable residential areas in Huntsville.

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Secrets of the Ku Klux Klan

Huntsville, like much of the rest of the nation in the 1920s, was caught up in the fervor of the Ku Klux Klan resurgence.

Like any other secret organization, the Klan had its rituals, and most important of all, an official handbook. This handbook was considered to be one of the best kept secrets of the Klan.

In Huntsville, a Klan member was actually forced to pay a large fine and sentenced to six months banishment for allowing his wife to glance at the handbook.

In an effort to keep "infidels" from learning the contents of the book, Joseph Simmons, Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, issued the following "Imperial Decree" from his, "Aulic in the Imperial Palace in the Imperial City of Atlanta:

Invisible Empire and is therefore a sacred book with our citizens, and its contents must be rigidly safeguarded. The book or any part of it must not be kept or carried where any person of the 'alien' world may chance to become acquainted with its sacred contents as such.

Warning: A penalty sufficient to be a secret will speedily be enforced for disregarding the decree in the profanation of the Kloran."

Six months later Simmons decided that a book as important as the Kloran should be officially recognized, so he applied to Washington for a copyright. Like any author, he forwarded one dollar and two copies of the book to the Register of Copyrights. And from that time forth The Book of the Invisible Empire was available to anyone who asked for it at the Library of Congress.

Ironically, even today, the book is still considered by the Klan to be secret.



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The Lady was a Prisoner

by Dick Turpin

It was January 1865, and the bloody War Between the States seemed to be finally to be drawing to a close. In Virginia, Lee's outnumbered army was dug in at Petersburg, in a last ditch defense of Richmond.

Meanwhile, Sherman's vanguard army was pillaging its way through the Carolina's, with little the South could do to stop him. Here in Huntsville, the real fighting seemed far away. However, the bold partisan cavalry

of Colonel Lemuel Mead continued to inform the Yankees they still weren't welcome in North Alabama.

The last day of 1864, Mead's partisans had captured the entire Company G of the 18th Wisconsin Infantry and burned the railroad bridge at Paint Rock. Now, only weeks later, Yankee tempers were boiling hot again. Why, those damned Rebels had captured and burned two Union wagon trains in two days!

But vengeance was now at hand, thought Union Lieutenant Colonel Bedan B. McDanald. Commander of the veteran 101st Ohio Infantry, McDanald had learned his lessons under the ruthless Sherman. Recently arrived in Huntsville, the 101st had promptly suffered the in-

dignity of having their own forage wagons captured by Mead. McDanald felt he was just the man to teach these Alabamians a



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lesson they would never forget.

On the evening of January 17, 1865, McDanald led a detachment of his foot soldiers down Big Cove Road. Many of the Ohio soldiers grumbled, but their colonel told them to keep quiet. "You'll have plenty of time to sleep after you've caught those thieving Rebels," he said. Scouting for the 101st were 25 men from the 15th Pennsylvania Cavalry. Their local guide was the hated turncoat Ben Harris, a cold blooded killer. Harris and McDanald must have gotten along well together.

The 101st Ohio spent the night in Big Cove. The next morning they crossed swollen Flint River on rafts and set off after their prey.

McDanald did succeed in capturing three or four of Mead's men. Mostly, however, he merely burned houses and turned women and children out into the bitter cold. "They can go North if they wish," he said with a shrug. "If not, let them go South and the Confeds can take care of them."

Most of these victims were

left to fend for themselves, but one woman was carried back to Huntsville by Colonel McDanald. Her name was Mrs. Mary E. Johnston, a young mother with an infant daughter only three months old! The woman's crime? Well, her husband was Major Milus "Bushwhacker" Johnston, Mead's second in command. "The colonel proceeded to arrest Mrs. Johnston," her husband later wrote, "tearing her infant from her breast and forcing her to leave it at home, which was then nothing more than the woods. He then placed her in the saddle and made her ride horseback twenty-three miles through the roughest weather of that winter."

McDanald had a precedent for making war on women, since his old commander Sherman had arrested all the female employees at the cloth factory in

Roswell, Georgia. Sherman sent the women all the way to Ohio and abandoned them there, reportedly after his men had had their fun with them. But people in Huntsville were outraged. Even many of McDanald's men were disgusted by his action.

Mary Johnston was impris-

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oned in the old Huntsville Hotel, with Colonel McDanald paying the expenses. The heart-broken woman sat alone in her room, pining for her infant and praying for deliverance. Her husband was furious when he heard of her fate.

Still, there was little he could do. McDanald was heard to remark, "If anything can bring her husband to his senses, this should."

"Bushwhacker" Johnston's reaction was the opposite of what McDanald expected. Johnston gathered his men and made plans to raid Huntsville and free his wife. "We were determined to go in by night and slip those pickets, enter the prisoner's room and take her out, or die in the attempt." Another of Mead's officers, Captain Robert Welch, even sent a chilling note to the Yankees.

"I have 35 prisoners," he

said, "and I will hang every one of them unless Mrs. Johnston is released!"

Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed and bloodshed did not come to Huntsville. Lieutenant Colonel John W. Horner was the provost marshal, and he was appalled by McDanald's conduct. More than anything,

he was offended by McDanald's usurping of his own authority. Horner was the one entrusted with making arrests, not McDanald.

Dr. Thomas Wright of Paint Rock happened to be in the provost marshal's office, when he heard Horner say, "If I knew how to get Mrs. Johnston home I

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would release her." Wright was an old friend of Mrs. Johnston, and he immediately offered to help.

Horner wrote out a pass and Mrs. Johnston was soon on her way home.

Yet Colonel McDanald was still not out of the picture. When he saw Mrs. Johnston on the street, he stopped her. With unbelievable arrogance, he proceeded to tear up Colonel Homer's pass and throw the pieces in Doctor Wright's face! "Mrs. Johnston is not the Army's prisoner," he said with a sneer. "She is my prisoner." The frightened young mother was marched right back to the hotel and locked up.

Dr. Wright hurried to the provost marshal's office and told Colonel Horner what happened. Now it was Horner's turn to become furious. His face turned red and the veins stood out in his neck.

Horner quickly wrote out

another pass and handed it to the doctor. "Here," he said through clenched teeth. "Take this pass and if that fellow bothers you again, I'll teach him a lesson he'll never forget."

This time McDanald realized he had met his match. He pretended not to notice Mrs. Johnston as she walked by, though bystanders noticed his fists were clenched.

"This was a happier ending of the matter than at one time could have been expected," wrote "Bushwhacker" Johnston.

Simply as a footnote, perhaps Justice does work in its cruel way. For Colonel McDanald returned to Ohio after the war and married his own sweetheart. Just three years later, his own

young wife was taken from him by death. He never remarried.

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A Civil War Letter from Huntsville

Submitted by Raymond W. Nelson

Huntsville, Ala
March 14th/62

My dear Mother,

As time and opportunity present themselves now better than they have in a month, I will write. One month today I left Bowling Green, and am as you see in Huntsville. We were encamped near Shelbyville Tenn, and on the Twelfth our company was ordered on with the wagons and led horses (sick men's horses). Two or three days before starting I was taken sick with chills and fever and Capt. Gaines gave me and Malone who was also sick, permission to come by rail.

This is the reason why I am here so soon. Our Company will reach here in a day or two more. The reg't comes on behind them. A great many sick are at this place from our Company and from the reg't generally.

The way sick soldiers are treated in this department (I can't speak for others) is a shame and will always be remembered by those who know, as a libel and stigma upon the Chief Of-

icers of this Division. They are sent here in the cars, and very often box cars with no accommodations or seats of any kind are placed.

They come with the intentions of entering the Hospital -but such a one as I have seen here I would sooner remain in my tent and risk all chances than enter one of our Company.

George Riley, brother to Frank, now lies in one of those houses, dignified by the name Hospital. It consists of three small rooms, with about twenty or thirty sick, in chairs - no beds except their blankets on the floor and in fact no conveniences of any kind.

They are not even allowed to have medicine. Riley is lying at the point of death with

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pneumonia and has no one even to nurse him or attend to his wants except it is his sick comrades around him. Charley Malone is acquainted with Gen. Hardee and he says he intends to lay the matter before him. I hope he will.

Malone and myself succeeded in getting a private house and we are fixed as well as we could wish. I am staying with Mr. Leftwich of this place, a hardware merchant. He kindly invited us to his house and promises to cure me. The citizens are doing their best for the sick.

They have been going to the hospital every day and are carrying them to their homes. I did not intend entering one (hospital) when I came if there was any possible chance of doing otherwise.

Having some business to transact for the Company, we slept in the gentlemen's store and in the course of conversation he found out our circumstances and offered room and cheer at his house. So you see I am well attended to, even if I am on the sick list. I don't know where to tell you to write; for I think we will be migrating for some time yet.

The rest of Hardee's forces are at Decatur, we may go there but how long we will stay I can't say. Your letter by Sergeant Allen is the only letter I have received in some time.

I am anxious to receive another. I have heard no new news lately that would be news to you. I hope the state of Alabama will furnish the number of men Gen. Shorter calls for. If my bad health continues, and if the Government pays me off, I will apply for a furlough. Give love to all and don't be uneasy about me. I will write again in a few days.

Your affectionate son,
Burton

Editor's Note: This letter is one of approximately 40 written by Isaac Barton Dinner. Ulmer was from Mt. Sterling, Alabama. He enlisted in 1861, held the rank of private and sergeant in Company A Third Alabama Cavalry and served throughout the Civil War. The letter is transcribed from the

original. Spelling and punctuation are as written.

The above material is from the Isaac B. Ulmer Papers, #1834 in the Southern Historical Collection, Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"Ever get the feeling your stuff strutted off without you?"
Maxine

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Uncle Bill, the Bootlegger

by Charles Martin

The first memories I have of my uncle Bill was when I was about nine or ten years old back in the 1920s. I remember spending the night with my cousins and being woke up at all times of the night when people would knock on the door. After a few minutes whispered conversation, my uncle would give them a bottle in a brown paper bag.

At the time I supposed I just assumed my uncle had a lot of friends. It was several years before I realized he was a bootlegger.

Uncle Bill sold moonshine. He would buy several gallons at a time and dispense it in half

pint and pint fruit jars. Friday nights were always his busiest time and us kids were warned to stay out of the kitchen.

Sometimes we would sneak and watch what was going on. I remember a bunch of men drinking and playing cards. I don't remember there ever being any trouble.

Uncle Bill had a small room built on the house, next to the kitchen, for a bathroom, only it wasn't a bathroom. There was a commode that fed into a wash

tub under the house. When he got raided he would pour the liquor down the commode and after the law left he would retrieve it and bottle it again.

One time he got raided and he just barely had time to pour the booze down the commode. After the deputies had searched in vain and were about to leave, one of them excused himself, saying he had to go to the bathroom. I hope Uncle Bill didn't bottle that whiskey again.

Another time he was walk-

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ing into the house carrying a glass gallon jar of moonshine when deputies sneaked up on him. Thinking fast, my uncle threw the jar with all of his might against a large rock. Instead of breaking it simply bounced off the rock like a rubber ball and rolled to where one of the deputies was standing.

As the deputy picked up the evidence, it slipped out of his hand and fell to the ground, shattering into a million pieces.

With no evidence they could not arrest Uncle Bill.

We all knew what he did for a living but, somehow, it just didn't seem that bad back then. I don't remember him ever say-

ing a curse word or raising his voice.

Aunt Jemma never talked about her husband bootlegging. She always referred to it as "Bill's business." The only argument I ever recall them having was when Uncle Bill confiscated two boxes of canning jars that she had purchased.

Family legend has it that when he died Aunt Jemma put a half pint in his coffin.

"My idea of a Super Bowl is a toilet that cleans itself."

Jane Smith, Huntsville

Sidewalks for the Courthouse

from 1888 newspaper

Last evening at a meeting of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, a petition was presented asking that a sidewalk be built around the courtyard fence by the city of Huntsville.

One conception of the rights of the city in this case is, that the city of Huntsville owns the property outside of the courtyard, as they do all the sidewalks and streets in the city.

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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 Comanche, 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.

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. Although this plunge has been predicted by some, it caught many by surprise.

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. Experts are doubtful, saying they don't believe there are that many people who would buy an auto.



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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.

"My love life isn't dead, but the buzzards are circling."

Maxine

Man steals from Sister-in-Law on Wedding Day

Huntsville - George Hardy, aged 31, has been committed for trial on \$2,500 bond on a charge of grand larceny preferred by his sister-in-law, Dora Rane, who alleges that he stole \$50 from her pocket on the day of marriage to her sister. The accused denied the charge. When arrested he had over \$1,200 in his possession. It was said Hardy made a practice of marrying women for money and leaving them on their wedding day. The detectives say he is wanted for a similar charge in Birmingham where he reportedly married three women before escaping with their savings. In one case he is said to have stolen a child's piggy bank, containing almost two dollars, from the nine-year old sister of one of his wives.

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 homeless.

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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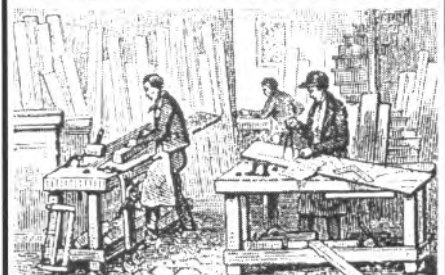
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Jack Stiles, Decatur

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The Old A&P Store

by Austin Miller

From 1961 to 1963, I worked part time at the old down town A&P located at the corner of Green and Eustis Streets. It is now a parking lot. There is a historical marker where the store stood that says the location was once the site of the "Calhoun House" that served as a U.S. District Courthouse. The marker also states that the courthouse was where Frank James was tried for a robbery he committed in the Florence area. My grandfather told me that when he was a young man, he saw Frank walking under escort on the streets of downtown Huntsville on his way to trial. This was in 1884.

The store opened sometime in the late thirties and closed in the early seventies. It was one of the first, if not the first, chain grocery stores in Huntsville. Until the fifties there was also a Kroger store down town that went way back. It was located in a small yellow brick building at the corner of Lincoln and Clinton Streets. The building is now vacant but still stands. The A&P primarily served people of East Huntsville to include what are now the historical districts of Twickenham, Old Town and Five Points as well as rural areas outside the city north to Tennessee and east to Jackson County.

I can't say that I took to grocery work or had any interest in or aptitude for the job. I had trouble with the attention to detail required to be a good checker and even more trouble finding where items were stocked in the shelves. My favorite job was sacking but I got a lot of complaints about the way I filled the bags and didn't always respond with politeness to rude customers. I believe the reason I wasn't fired is because I was always on time, never missed a day that I was scheduled to work and the manager liked me. He did in fact fire two of my more capable friends.

One of the regular customers in the store was my cousin Alton Miller, the Madi-

"You only have the rights you are willing to fight for."

Thomas Jefferson

son County License Director. This is the job now held by Mark Craig. His office was located across Green Street in the old Elks building that had not yet been torn down.



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Alton graduated from the University of Alabama and was the first person in the Miller family to get a college degree. We were all proud of him. In World War II, he was part of a bomber crew that flew combat missions over Germany. He was also widely known as one of the best basketball players in the county. Alton was a very handsome man and women in the store took notice when he came in. To me he was a big shot and I was quick to let everybody know that he was my cousin.

Two other regular customers were the Harrison brothers. We closed at six and they closed the hardware store at five thirty. After closing and settling the books for the day they were able to make it to the A & P about two minutes before we locked the door. They evidently bought just enough food each

evening for that night's supper. They were very nice men with impeccable manners but they were of few words and not very friendly. We were always aggravated with them because they made us stay about fifteen minutes past closing time.

Late one afternoon I noticed a middle aged gentleman having trouble finding the items on his list. I asked him if I could

help and he handed me the list. We chatted as we gathered up the items and when we finished I checked him out. He paid with a check and since I didn't know him I asked the manager for approval without looking at the name. After the manager initialed the check, I asked the man if he needed help carrying his two bags. He said no, and thanked me for my help,

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scooped up a bag under each arm and walked out the door. As soon as he left the manager came back and asked me if I knew who that was? I told him no, to which he responded, that was Werhner Von Braun!

A pleasant memory of the store is my friend Jodie Rogers. Jodie was a black man in his eighties who lived near me at Ryland. Often, when I was working, he would sit on the ledge below the front store window under the awning that ran across the front of the store. He would often sit there all Saturday afternoon. Sometimes he would appear and sit two or three hours before disappearing. Other times he would show up just before quitting time for a ride home with me back to Ryland. More times than one he came in the store and bragged about me to the manager, my fellow employees and any customer that would listen. Jodie spent a lot of time in town and mostly hung out in the then black section of downtown located on Church Street not far off the Square. I never knew where he stayed when he spent the night.

In the early sixties Huntsville had already experienced great change but most things downtown had not changed. The old courthouse was still standing but its days were numbered. The only store that had moved to the Parkway was Montgomery Ward.

On Saturday the streets were full of people walking up

and down the streets. A huge crowd always collected at the intersections waiting for the light to change to walk. Cotton Row had not been torn down and T.T. Terry's was going strong and selling school books on the south side of the square. Harrison's was not a museum, it was a fully operational hardware store. J.C. Penny, Tom Dark's City Drug, where you could get a big bowl of ice cream in a crystal desert dish for less than a quarter were on the East Side of the square.

Also on the east side were Wimpy's and Little Gem. Both were popular cafes that served delicious but greasy hot dogs and hamburgers. Quite a treat when washed down with a big Double Cola. The Little Gem had a pool hall in the back and when you walked by you could hear the distinctive sound of

billiard balls clacking together. There was also a hamburger place at both ends of the north side of the square. In 1962, Dunnivant's was still open just north of the square on Jefferson Street and Belk Hudsons

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was at the corner of Holmes and Washington.

Lewter Hardware was another two blocks down; it of course is still at the same location and going strong. Often after work on Saturday night I would catch a movie at the Grand or Lyric Theater. They were located on Washington Street across the street from each other. One block to the west on Jefferson Street the Snuff Dippers Ball was in full swing. Sometimes when the blinds were open I would see Lawrence B. Goldsmith working inside the Shiffman building. That building, located on the South East corner of the Square was the birth place in 1902 of actress Tallulah Bankhead.

Much has changed downtown since the sixties but when I go into some of the aged buildings that are still standing it takes me back in time. One building in particular is the old J.C. Penny's store on the east

side of the square; except for all the missing clothing it looks very much like it did the last time I shopped there when Mr. Charles McBrayer was manager.

Recently, I worked for a time at the court house for Fran Hamilton. I loved going outside at lunch; I would sit on one of the benches on the west side of the square and envisage members of my family that had come in and out of that courthouse site over the last 150 years or so. These days when I drive past the corner of Green and Eustis, I don't think about working there, the long gone district court house or the trial of Frank James. But I can almost see Jodie Rogers sitting on that old store window ledge waiting for me to give him a ride home to Ryland.

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The Miracle Worker

In the late fall of 1958, a strange caravan pulled into Huntsville. After erecting a large tent on an empty lot near Washington and Pratt Avenue, they immediately began passing out handbills throughout town.

"Religious Revival," the handbill proclaimed. "Come see the sick healed and miracles performed before your eyes."

Traveling revivals were nothing new to Huntsville. Almost yearly, miracle workers or religious healers would appear in town to stage week-long revivals promising to heal the bodies and save the souls.

Of course, the faithful were always expected to make generous donations.

This revival troupe, however, was different. Just how different soon became apparent when Huntsville got a good look at the newest miracle worker.

A tall man, slim with dark hair, Preacher Ramone was clad in a stylish suit, crafted from light burgundy satin, heavily inlaid with gold brocade.

He was just different enough to stir the curiosity of Huntsville's natives. The first night there were maybe 15 or 20 people scattered throughout the large tent, waiting to be healed, saved, or amused.

The show opened with Preacher Ramone giving a passionate plea to the faithful. After working himself to a feverish pitch, he motioned to his helpers waiting in the wings. Slowly, with a chorus of singers singing softly in the background, the helpers rolled a coffin onto the stage.

Just as the choir finished, and with everyone in the audience waiting to see what would happen next, Preacher Ramone raised the lid of the coffin to reveal a body.

"Folks," he cried out. "I promised you a miracle and I am going to show you one! We're gonna pray over this body for 7 days and 7 nights and on the 7th night the body will rise from the dead!"

Needless to say, the next night the tent was almost full of expectant and curious people staring at the body lying on stage.

Of course, Preacher Ramone did not neglect to take contributions. Every few minutes a plate would be passed, with the preacher exhorting the people to help him continue in his important work.

The tent was full on the third night, and overflowing by the fifth. On the sixth night, police had to be called to help with traffic control. The plates that had been passed around the first nights were now replaced with dishpans, and even they were not large enough to hold the money donated by the thousands of people who were now showing up each night.

Photographs of the coffin were sold for \$2 apiece, and for an extra donation, one could actually go up on stage and place their hands on the coffin. For

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another \$1 the people could have their picture taken with Preacher Ramone, in all of his burgundy glory.

Early on the morning of the seventh day people began flocking to town from points all over North Alabama. Eagerly they gathered in the field around the tent, waiting and talking about the miracle scheduled to occur that night.

By 5 o'clock in the evening the crowd waiting was estimated to be over 4,000 people.

And they waited.

Finally, around 8:00 pm, a small delegation took it upon themselves to enter the tent to see what was holding up the show. The chairs were still in place, the coffin still sitting in the stage position ... but there was no body.

Also missing was the choir, Preacher Ramone, and thousands of dollars that had once belonged to Huntsville's citizens.

The following week a creditor from Louisville, Kentucky, showed up with a court order to repossess the tent.

For Hog Stealing

In court yesterday M.D. Hammer was placed under a \$500 bond for grand larceny. He was accused of stealing a hog last week from a colored man, named Felix Hawkins, and the evidence against him was strong enough to warrant binding him over to await trial. In his defense, Hammer stated the hog had followed him home from a saloon and he had no idea it belonged to someone else.
from 1900 newspaper



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East Clinton School

by Carol Allen Young

I am very sorry to hear East Clinton Elementary School will be closing.

I have some great memories of my five years there.

I was driving down Clinton Avenue last year and saw the second grade performing the May Pole Dance.

I pulled over to watch and listen.

The music was different from my participation in 1949, and the girls' dresses were much fancier.

Our dresses were crepe paper ruffles the mothers sewed on to a damask cloth under the dress (mine was purple). I have a picture of me and my partner, Don Appier, taken that day.

The scene in my mind was as clear as if it were yesterday — "All around the May Pole tall the colored circle goes, colors blue as any sky and as pink as any rose...". We felt very special and practiced hard for our performance.

Another memory from East Clinton is my first kiss by a boy when we were in the first grade. The problem was he kissed five other girls during recess that day and we all came down with the mumps.

There were big Halloween Festivals every Fall and when we were teenagers there were dances in the Cafeteria on Saturday nights.

The years have passed and I have a large family - chil-

dren, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We often go to the East Clinton play ground to swing and play on the monkey

bars.

I do hope they don't tear down the building and take away the play ground.



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Tips from Liz

* If you buy clothes while you're feeling fat, and they look good on you, chances are they'll still look good when you lose a little weight.

* If you get out of a chair and it tips over, legend has it that you will NOT be getting married in the coming year.

* Should a man and woman pour tea together, they will be having a baby together within the year.

* Place jars of sticky food (honey, molasses) on plastic lids on your pantry to avoid sticky messes.

* Check your cup of coffee tomorrow morning. If bubbles on the surface are floating in your direction, you will soon come into a sizable amount of money you weren't expecting.

* If your nose is stuffy, rubbing your ears as hard as you can for a minute will often clear up the stuffiness.

* A small bag of sulfur kept in a drawer or cupboard will drive away red ants.

* It's very bad luck to carry out your trash after dark.

* If you spill a jar of face powder, a violent quarrel with a lady friend will ensue.

* A woman seeking a husband should stick seven needles into a lighted candle while praying to the Virgin Mary. By doing this she can find the man of her dreams, while rendering him impotent with other women.

* For a man - always plant

peppers while you're good and mad at your wife, for a bountiful crop.

* Get yourself out of a mild depression by gardening - this really works.

* Before you throw away those nearly empty mustard containers, just add a tablespoon or two of olive oil, white or red vinegar, salt and pepper and shake. You'll have a good vinaigrette salad dressing!

* Never invite 13 guests to your dinner party - or one of them will suffer very bad luck.

* When there is to be a full moon, be extra careful and conscientious with your diet and medication during this time.

* Eating fresh cherries daily, when they're in season, will do wonders for relieving arthritis and gout.

* A paint scraper works really well in removing baked on or cemented food from counter tops, stove tops, floors, etc.

* Want some whipped cream and don't have a mixer? Just put your whipping cream in a bowl with a tight-fitting lid and shake vigorously.

* A serrated knife works well in cutting through plant roots that are root-bound in pots or window boxes.

* When you're feeling sorry for yourself, go help someone who's in worse shape than you.

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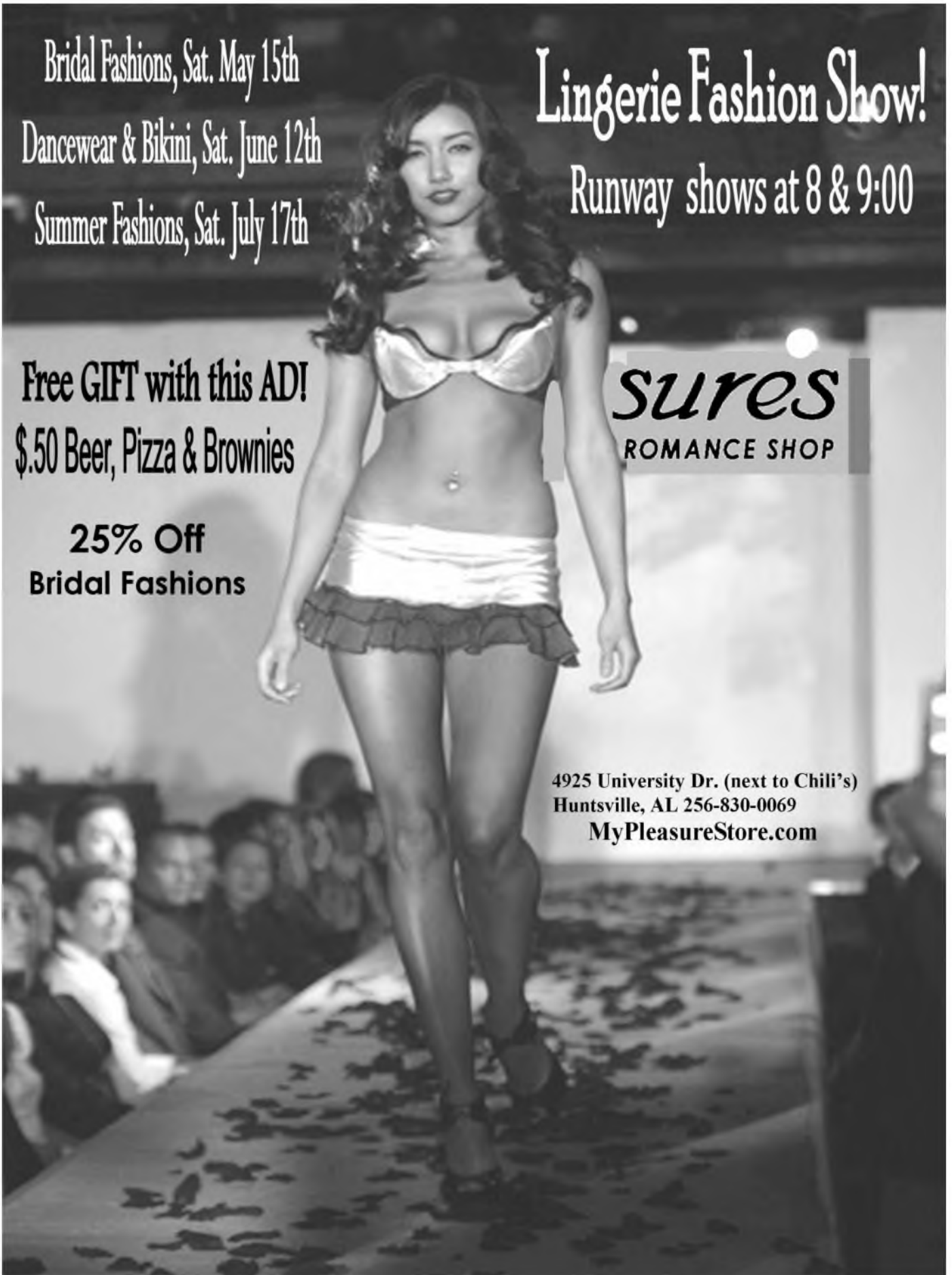
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Top 10 Books of Local & Regional Interest

1. *The Farm in Jones Valley* by Ray Jones \$18.95
2. *Glimpses of Huntsville in the 1950s* by "Riverboat John" Ferguson \$18.95
3. *Huntsville Air and Space: A History in Photographs* by Gary Wicks \$21.99
4. *Huntsville Then And Now* by Fred Simpson (limited supply) Special price \$20.00
5. *When Spirits Walk: Madison County Ghost Stories* \$16.95
6. *Murder in the Heart of Dixie* by Fred Simpson (limited supply) Special price \$18.00
7. *Historic Photos of Huntsville* by Jacque Gray Reeves \$39.95
8. *52 Weekends in the Tennessee Valley.* (\$24.95) Special Price \$15
9. *Fall Flight in Alabama: Waterfowling the Tennessee River Valley* \$39.95
10. *Southern Turkey Hunting: A Family Affair* by Ray Jones \$15.00

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