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Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



The Sad Saga of Kinch Britt

Like so many of the “home-made” Yankees, Kinch Britt was a Confederate deserter. Unlike most of the others, however, Britt’s reign of terror would be blessedly brief.

Returning to Huntsville, Kinch Britt found the Union Army once more in control. He quickly abandoned any thought of returning to his regiment and joined the Yankee invaders as a scout. Britt’s knowledge of Huntsville and the surrounding area was invaluable to them.

Also in this issue: Huntsville Laws in 1860

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The Sad Saga of Kinch Britt

By Charles Rice

"Recalling those four years of horror meted out to us by the enemy who were devastating our fair land," wrote Mrs. Lillie Bibb Greet more than half a century later, "I wonder we did not succumb to fear and despair. Meager details of the battles reached us through the Yankees only, and were invariably misrepresented. Often we were given statements of the numbers slain without the names, and were left in horrible suspense for months."

Like most Southern women who lived through the war, Huntsville's Mrs. Greet had her tales to tell. One of them featured a notorious North Alabama turncoat.

"The terrors of our situation were added to by the 'home-made' Yankees, and other camp followers who donned the blue

coats, and searched and robbed houses," wrote Mrs. Greet. "One chief of these marauders was a man named Kinch Britt, a native of this county. He was the terror of the community. He made his appearance one night demanding admittance at the front door of the Scruggs home near town where I was visiting."

"Not realizing my danger, I threw open the door and defied him to enter, telling him I knew he was nobody but old 'Kitchen Bricks,' and I would have him arrested. After storming and threatening, he left, saying we would see him again, but that was the last of 'Kitchen Bricks,' for in an attempt to invade the Robinson home a few nights later he was killed by Doctor Mac Robinson. Every citizen breathed a sigh of relief when they heard of this demon's demise."

Like so many of the "home-made" Yankees, Kinch Britt was a Confederate deserter. Unlike most of the others, however, Britt's reign of terror would be blessedly brief.

A native of Madison County, Kincheon G. Britt was a poor 32 year-old farmer when the war began. His home was on the Athens road a short distance west of the Huntsville depot. Britt had married Susan C. Williams in 1858 and was the father of a young son, James S., born in December 1859.

Britt had gone to war in 1861 as a Private in the Kelly Rangers, the famous "Yellowhammer"



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company of Forrest's Battalion. However, one doubts he made much of a soldier.

Britt apparently was captured in Tennessee during Forrest's raid, since he was paroled by the Union Army on July 16, 1863. His parole stated he was "Allowed to go home until ordered to report for exchange."

Returning to Huntsville, Kinch Britt found the Union Army once more in control. He quickly abandoned any thought of returning to his regiment and joined the Yankee invaders as a scout. Britt's knowledge of Huntsville and the surrounding area was invaluable to them.

Not much is known of Britt's activities around Huntsville, since they were the sort of thing people preferred to forget rather than remember. However, he did enough damage for him to be recalled with hatred. In fact, Kinch Britt even figures in a little known turn-of-the-century novel by a Huntsville resident named Robert Thomson Bentley.

Bentley's 1903 novel, called "Forestfield-A Story of the South", is loosely based on Huntsville's history. Bentley slightly fictionalized the setting; but many of the people,

places, and events are easily recognizable, with Huntsville becoming "Hunterstown" and Meridianville renamed "Middleville." Wiley Thompson, the man who died of shock after seeing Mitchel's invading army, is mentioned, though not by name. So is Sidney Darwin, the man who carried word to Huntsville of Mitchel's approach, only slightly disguised as "Sidney Dartmuth." Bentley obviously knew people who had lived in Huntsville during the war, and drew freely upon their recollections for his story.

The incident that cost Kinch Britt his life is told both by Mrs. Chadick in her diary and by Robert Bentley in his novel. It took place in November 1864 and involved James Madison Robinson, whose father owned the plantation home known as Forestfield.

Forestfield was a beautiful dwelling located a few miles north of Huntsville on the road

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to Meridianville. The home belonged to James B. Robinson, whose brother John built the famous Oak Lawn, which still stands on Meridian Street just above Max Luther Drive. Supposedly, the two houses were almost exact duplicates.

When the Union Army invaded North Alabama, both James and John Robinson retired to Marengo County, Alabama, where they had extensive land holdings. However, James' son, James Madison Robinson – better known as Mac or Mat, was an active member of the Confederate Army.

Young Mac Robinson had first gone to war with the Madison Rifles as their 3rd Corporal. Discharged in October 1861, he had joined the Kelly Rangers, becoming a Lieutenant. Mac had been appointed Captain of a sharpshooter company in Mississippi, but resigned to assist in organizing the 4th Alabama Cavalry Regiment. He next served for six months as conscript officer for Madison County, finally forming a scout company when the Union troops returned to North Alabama in the summer of 1863.

During the course of his varied military career, Robinson was shot in the hand, struck in

the head by a shell fragment, and received saber cuts in both the arm and leg. Nevertheless, he survived to become a doctor after the war.

Robinson's service to the South had already made his family a target of reprisal. Eph Latham's men had come looking for him in 1863. Unable to find Mac, they burned the outbuildings on his father's plantation.

Mac Robinson's scout company operated from the Tennessee River as far north as Nashville. Naturally, the Union Army was anxious to put him out of business.

In November 1864, while General Hood's army was moving westward on the south side of the Tennessee River, Mac Robinson scouted out the situation in Huntsville. On November 10, he was actually bold enough to visit his home.

Somehow, Kinch Britt learned that his old lieutenant was back in town. The next morning he informed the Federals.

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Colonel John Horner, the Union Provost Marshall, quickly gathered a detachment of cavalry and rode out to capture Robinson.

"Surrounding the house," said Mrs. Chadick, "they demanded a surrender, telling them it was useless to resist as they had 50 men. The reply was, 'If you want us, come and take us.'" Kinch Britt was standing at a window, apparently trying to get a shot at Mac Robinson. Robinson saw him first and put a bullet in him.

"Thus has the enemy lost a most valuable scout and the citizens of the countryside a most dangerous foe," wrote Mrs. Chadick. "Col. Horner narrowly escaped. He had one of his shoulder straps shot off." Robinson and his men slipped away in the confusion.

The Union soldiers were determined to shoot somebody, however, so they killed the caretaker, a man named Nugent, who was totally innocent of any wrong-doing. "The next day," added Mrs. Chadick, "Col. Horner sent up a squad of men to lay the house in ashes, an inglorious revenge, we should

say, for a Methodist preacher, for such is said to have been his vocation before the war."

Robert Bentley naturally told the incident much more dramatically in Forestfield, though he was actually fairly true to the facts. Bentley has Robinson (renamed "Le Gare") hear a suspicious noise, slip out of the door and creep down to the end of the veranda. He discovers Kinch Britt ("Clem Bates") "crouching behind the honeysuckle vine." When Le Gare challenges Bates, Bates fires a shot and runs. Le Gare then shoots him dead.

"I rushed to the veranda in time to see the Confederates mount their horses and ride rapidly toward that side of the lawn next to the mountains, which was about a half-mile distant," says the heroine. "At the same time I heard the sound of horses' feet and the clanking of sabres from the direction of the lawn gate as if a hundred horsemen rode posthaste toward the house. But when they arrived upon the spot where they hoped to capture the Confederates (for they were Federal cavalry), our boys were fleeing rapidly across the plantation toward the

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mountain."

"Captain," says a Union Lieutenant in the novel, "do you not know that the dead man was a deserter from the Confederates to us, and that he was born and reared in this country?"

Yes, the captain agrees, "He is the notorious Clem Bates, who has been wreaking vengeance upon his former friends and neighbors as a spy ever since he joined us. I do not like to criticize a dead man in his presence, but I have heard that he was a bad man and unreliable on both sides."

The heroine begs the Union Captain to intercede for them, knowing it was Union policy to burn all the houses where they had been fired on. The Captain chivalrously agrees to help, but Colonel Horner, "the meanest Yankee that was ever in North Alabama," orders Forestfield burned anyway.

"A Corporal and a Private were then sent into the mansion with a can of oil and matches with which to saturate the floors and set them afire, beginning at the top and then coming down." And this is probably just the way the deed was done.

Once dead, Kinch Britt vanished back into the obscurity he

had so briefly risen from. All that remains of Forestfield today is a long double row of cedar trees that apparently mark the home site on the west side of U. S. Highway 231-431 north of Huntsville. They stand just opposite Bentley Auto Sales.

As a footnote, Kinch Britt's young son, James Britt, grew to manhood as a ward of the county. Kinch Britt's first wife had died early in the war and young Britt had been raised by a stepmother.

"Crippled in both mind and body," Jim Britt was placed by his stepmother in the county poor house when he was only six. He spent the next 66 years there, dying at the age of 72 in 1932.



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HUNTSVILLE FASHION NOTES FROM 1877

Trailing skirts are made longer than ever.

Necklaces made of rich lace are worn over dark dresses.

Neckties and bonnet scarfs of white or black tulle are embroidered with chenille.

It is now the height of style to carry beaded purses such as our grandmothers used.

A new piece of tableware is a silver napkin ring, made to serve as salt-cellar and pepper-box.

Fancy braids in gold, silver or cardinal on a dark background are but little used here, but are all the rage in Paris.

However striking and out of all taste may seem a cardinal red dress to think about, it is wonderfully pretty to look upon.

The fancy at present is for chenille trimmings. Ornaments and collars, besides fringes,


are used on the most elegant dresses.

A prominent feature of new homes is the inlaid wood floor, which does away with carpets - handsome Turkish rugs are taking their places.

Almost all evening dresses, whether made decollete or with heart or square shaped necks, are accompanied with a pretty little fichu of muslin.

An evening dress made of four different materials has an underskirt of plain silk, an overskirt and basque of velvet brocade, satin revere and cuffs, and knife plaitings of tulle.

Elizabethan belt buckles are of black Russian leather, mounted with gold or silver. They are of ordinary size at present, although several months ago extremely wide ones were fashionable.



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The Human Cucumber

From 1880 Newspaper

It is well known that when cucumbers are first cut from the vine there is a piece which exudes or bleeds from the stem. One of our prominent Northern truck-growers, Jared Benson, cut his hand a year or two ago and this juice got into the cut and his hand commenced to inflame, and an eruption similar to erysipelas made its appearance on his hand and extended up his arm, and finally spread over his whole body. Strange to say, there was no pain attending these eruptions of erysipelas, and he continued to gather and pack his cucumbers and prepare them for shipment.

To the great surprise of everybody, these little erysipelas pimples assumed the appearance and form of small cucumbers and continued to grow. Although Benson kept well and hearty, he was compelled to strip himself and take to his bed.

Of course the news of this strange phenomenon spread far and wide, and the doctors and scientific minds visited him from various sections of the country. One doctor prescribed one solution, another doctor would suggest another. One wished to bleed him; one wished to cut the cucumbers off; another said not to let him have any water and they would dry up; another said stick a hole in each cucumber and they would die and a new skin form; another wished to wrap him up in a mammoth poultice of barnyard manure and draw them all to one head; another said they ought to be scattered.

Each had a different remedy, but all disagreed. So there was some hope that the patient would get well. But the small cucumbers grew into big ones and his whole body was completely covered with them from head to foot, and they commenced to ripen and turn yellow and hang down, and the man assumed the appearance of a huge bunch of bananas. When they got ripe they began to shrivel and dry up, and so did the man. His sap

was all gone and he died.

The doctors procured the consent of the family to permit an autopsy to be made for the benefit of science, and they cut into him with their knives, and to their utter amazement found no flesh, no blood, no bones, no muscles, no sinews, no veins, no arteries - but only found one solid mass of cucumber seeds. It was so remarkable that it would be useless to have the remains interred and foolish to have them cremated and so the widow concluded that she would keep them in the house. She had the corpse hung up by the hair in the barn. The next spring some of the children picked up some of the seed which had dropped in the barn and planted them.

These seeds grew rapidly and matured, and instead of being like the parent stock of cucumbers, they were pure pickles, and needed no vinegar, no pepper, no salt, nothing but simply packing into barrels and shipping to market to sell.

Of course, news of this discovery spread rapidly and multitudes of applications for seed flowed in like the incoming tide, and thus enabled the disconsolate widow and children to turn the cause of

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Submitted by Emily Davenport, Harvest, Alabama



Fixing Up the Old Home

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- Keep some of the waxed milk cartons (not plastic) in your trunk for emergencies. They will make great flares at night. Each one burns brightly for about 10 minutes.

- Use that old rotary egg beater for mixing your paint

perfectly.

- If you see a small hole developing in your door or window screen, just dab on some clear nail polish.

- If you have an old electric clock that has stopped working, try popping it in the oven (warm) for a few hours. Sometimes that old grease and grime will just melt away.

- No need to buy putty to plug up small nail holes in your walls. Just use plain toothpaste.

- If your roof is less than 15 years old and has a leak, don't pay for a whole roof job. Just get the leak located and fix it.

- When in the market for a new fridge, look for one with a humid-dry (power saver) switch. This is used to turn off "anti-sweat" heaters in the doors to save electricity when the heaters are not needed.

- If you get lumps in your plaster it's because you added water to the plaster. Add plaster to the water and there'll be no lumps.

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The Powell Family

by Charlie Lyle

As I have said before in other articles, I like to write about interesting people or characters as I like to call them. I am now in my eighties and at this age, I can recall certain people and events that took place a few years back and I hope that it will spark a bit of interest.

I really don't know much about the Powells in the earlier years. All I know about the Powells is that they lived on Adams Avenue and that Mr. Powell owned a tire store and was quite successful. However, some people believe that the Powells could go through an estate or fortune faster than any one could. There was Mr. and Mrs. Powell and sons Dudley and Edwin.

Dudley could sell an Eskimo ice but had the tendency to overdo advertising and entertainment. Dudley liked to play the bongos and would sit in with any band he could.

Dudley and Edwin lost their aunt who lived in Memphis and owned a giant department store called Gerber's. It turned out that Edwin was the one who was sent to Memphis to run things. There were two important things that took place with Edwin while he was in Memphis. One was that Gerber's went out of business due to excessive inventory. This is said to be true. The second thing that happened to Edwin was that he managed to get into the inner circle of Elvis Presley and his friends. Unfortunately, it was determined that both Elvis and Edwin were not good for each

other because of the addiction circumstances. However, they still kept in touch with each other even though Edwin was squeezed out of the circle, more on this later.

As mentioned before, Dudley had a tendency to over-advertise. While all of this was going on in Memphis, other entirely different circumstances were occurring back home. Home, of course, being Huntsville.

The Powells decided to go into a business that seemed to be profitable at the time. At this particular time, beef was at an all time high. They decided to raise bulls for mating and other reasons. They bought a fairly large tract of land out in the northeast part of Madison County and named it the Big

M Farms. They wanted to raise prize bulls and this they did.

Dudley and his father decided to have a sort of convention for prospective buyers from all over the country. It was to be a lavish affair and to pull out all the stops. Money was not an issue. Dudley was in charge of the program and the entertainment. Dudley wanted to meet with me in regard to the entertainment. He told me without stammering, "Charlie, I want three strolling violin players to mix

"The mind is a wonderful thing. It starts working the minute you're born, and doesn't stop until you get up to speak in public."

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and mingle with the crowd." I told Dudley "You have got to be kidding." He replied, "I'm not kidding, I want you to find them." I ended up finding such an aggregation in Atlanta.

The players wanted to be paid a great amount of money per player, airline tickets and taxi service with food and all the trimmings, plus hotel accommodations. It ended up costing a very large sum of money as one could imagine.

One day I saw Dudley coming down Andrew Jackson Way in a great big truck. It had enormous wheels and giant tires. Dudley was wearing a large cowboy hat. He told someone he needed it to check out his property from time to time out at the farm.

The Powells invited guests out to the farm, which had a very large barn that they had built. The barn was not an ordinary barn; about half of it was living quarters sort of like a ranch but with all the comforts of home. All seemed to be quite well but as luck would have it,

the bottom of the beef market fell to an all time low. At this point, the Powells decided to sell parcels of land for building lots, etc.

One night at the jetport while playing for a party, at intermission I met up face to face with Edwin and on seeing me he said, "Charlie, come over here and let me show you something". I went over and what he showed me was a very large diamond ring with an expensive looking setting. He exclaimed, "I have just come back from Memphis and before I left, Elvis gave this to me". I assumed that this was before he made the split with Elvis and his entourage.

A few years later it seems that Elvis wanted to buy a farm to raise horses. The Powells talked Elvis into looking at the Big M Farms. So one day they picked

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Cheryl Tribble, Woodstock

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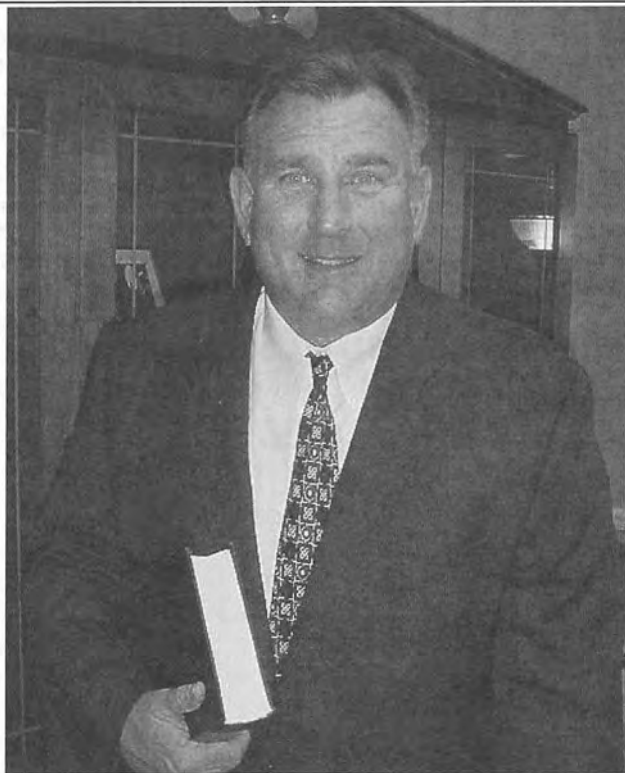
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up Elvis at the jetport and were heading out to the farm. On the way there, they drove into a small town called Maysville. At this point, Elvis said "Stop the car a minute, I'll be right back." They pulled up in front of a small grocery store and Elvis went inside and bought, I've been told, a Big Orange and a Moon Pie.

Coming out of the store he saw a small boy sitting on the porch. Elvis said, "Son, if there is something you would like to have right now, what would it be?" The boy said, "Gee mister, I would like to have a new bike." Elvis reached in his pocket and pulled out a wad of bills and is quoted as saying, "Go and get that bike, son." On the way back Elvis said, "I like it here, nobody knew who I was."

Elvis would have bought land and raised horses here because he liked Huntsville. After all, his father remarried a lady from here but he still had ties to his former home in Mississippi.

It is kinda ironic that when he gave his only concert in Huntsville, where he stayed at the Hilton, he had a whole floor and security guards for his safety and yet was rambling around the county with probably none at all.

I personally was not real close to the Powells, but I liked it when Dudley played pranks on people. Such as wanting me to play bugle calls in somebody's window at eleven or twelve at night. I guess we all need a little spending money. The Powells were quite a unique bunch of people, real characters.

The last time I saw Dudley, he was in a wheelchair. I believe he had Parkinson's. The last time I saw Edwin was at the Huntsville Hospital Wellness Center. Edwin

looked well at that time; however, he died a few weeks later.

For all of their endeavors, I understand they were very generous and gave more than a million dollars to the Huntsville Hospital Foundation.



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1 - 1/2 c. each of the following beans:

- Kidney beans,
- Green beans
- Yellow Wax beans
- Garbanzo beans,
- Pinto or white beans

- 1/4 c. chopped celery
- 1/2 c. finely chopped onion
- 1/4 c. chopped carrot
- 1/4 c. olive oil
- 1/4 c. vinegar - apple cider or red wine
- 2 T. honey
- 1/2 t. black pepper
- 1 t. garlic salt

Mix the drained beans together in a large bowl, add all chopped vegetables. Heat remaining ingredients together til hot, stir well to dissolve honey. Pour over the beans and chill in fridge for several hours. Serve cold.

This dish will keep well in the icebox, if not eaten right away. People kept this dish on hand to add to the menu when the meal seemed bland and there were no fresh vegetables.



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Our Readers Saving Money

Dear Penny, I recommend saving the wax paper liners from empty cereal boxes. It has many uses, such as placing pieces between meat for freezing (buy the family pack and save \$\$, freeze the correct portion sizes for your needs.) You can roll out pie dough on the wax paper or let children finger paint on it. It is an excellent quality wax paper.

Flossie Leigh, Harvest, Ala.

Dear Penny,

Full freezers are much more economical to operate than partially full ones. If you don't stock extra food you can fill the extra space with grains (macaroni products, rice, oats, etc. - and cut down on bug infestation), flour, crackers, etc. If the electricity goes out for a long period, full freezers take a much longer time to thaw out. Don't open the door unless absolutely necessary! **Editor**

Dear Penny,

When your bar of soap is down to the last sliver, don't throw it away! One way to use it is to let it stick to your new bar of soap - they kind of melt together when wet. **Editor**

Dear Penny,

Make your own free scrubbers from nylon net bags that onions come in. Fold the bag to the size and thickness you like and stitch it by machine or hand along the edges. These make great dishrag scrubbers. **Editor**

Dear Penny,

I use a simple filing system that keeps me current as well as organized. Purchase 4 cheap, square plastic dish-pans. Label the first one "Must Do Today", the second one "Tomorrow", the third "Junk for Filing," and the fourth "Someday." Put them away, pulling out only one tub at a time to work with. After working

with one tub for 20 minutes I give myself a party break (reward). I never empty all the tubs in one day. If I empty 2 tubs in one day, I declare it a holiday! When my car dealership office flooded, all the tubs floated! All my paperwork was nice and dry.

Bill Penney, Jr., Huntsville, Ala.

Dear Penny,

Instead of spending enormous amounts of money on birthday, wedding and get-well cards, buy boxes of fancy little note cards when they are on sale and write your own message.

Joan Peters, Moulton, Ala.

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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Congratulations to **Julia Herford** of Huntsville who was the first correct caller to identify the picture of that adorable little girl in last month's issue. The picture was (as over 200 of you correctly guessed) **Jackie Reed**, who does indeed keep the City Council on their toes! Julia loves working at Dallas Mill Deli and I know many of you have seen her smiling face!

Also, congratulations to that handsome **Buddy Esslinger** who was first to call and identify the mystery landmark from last month's magazine. It was taken from the west side of the **Times Building**. Buddy is a life-long Madison County resident and says he'll never move from here. He retired from NASA after working there for 38-1/2 years. Buddy's father owned the NuWay hamburger restaurant that was the original Krystal Hamburgers here in Huntsville.

Don Broome is a local artist and framer who knows that this area has so many amazing artists. On Feb. 19 the **Huntsville Art League** will be holding their annual fund-raiser at the VBCC starting at 4pm, called

Collector's Draw, where you buy a ticket for \$125 and receive a piece of artwork worth \$200+. Don is doing his part by offering a signed original piece of his own art to the event, and anyone who buys a ticket is eligible to win his art, which is worth over \$300. If you're interested in attending this event please email **Renee** at smartartsr@aol.com.

We were so proud of **Huntsville Hospital** when we heard that the hospital rating company HealthGrades had awarded them its top score to the cardiac surgery program. The program's five-star rating for 2012 is based on clinical outcome data from Medicare patents treated at Huntsville Hospital from 2008-10. And this is the fifth year that the hospital's open heart surgery program has won the top honor.

Mary Alice Cannon was a very well known business-woman here in Huntsville, opening and running her business

"Home Buddies" to provide child and eldercare services to those in need. Mary Alice had been sick for quite a while and passed away in early January at the age of 81. We send our sympathy to her family and many friends.

Many of our readers called after we had mailed out the last issue (January) because what normally took a day to get local mail delivered is now taking 4-5. This is all part of the **U.S. Postal Service** trying to cut back to just survive. As we understand it, the bulk mail that used to be handled right away locally is now being shipped first to Atlanta, and then back to Huntsville. So this tacks on about 4 extra days. We apologize for this delay, which will be ongoing, and wish we could do something about it. So from now on your issues that used to arrive the first week of the month will arrive the 2nd week.

We were so sorry to hear that **Bob Boerner, Sr.** had passed away, at the age of 81. Among many other accomplishments,

Photo of The Month

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

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Hint: This little girl loves pets and everyone watches her.



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he was awarded top honors as the first post graduate at Georgia Tech to earn a 4.0 GPA from the School of Engineering, after working for many years with the Werhner Von Braun team. We send our deepest condolences to his wife **Dorothy Bowling**, children **Beverly Farrington**, **Bob Boerner, Jr.** and wife **Jenni**, **Susan Johnson** and husband **Nathan**, and **Cindy Moore Yates** and husband **Glen**.

Beverly Farrington was married to **Col. Jack Farrington** for many years prior to his death several years ago. We loved Jack and miss him so much - he loved tinkering with old cars and owned Jack's Toy Shop in which he fixed MGBs, Fiats, old Jaguars, etc. and did a fabulous job. We send our love to Beverly and all her family.

Our friend **Henry Turner** contacted us in regards to the ongoing discussion regarding what happened to the weather vane & 4-sided clock that used to be on the beautiful old courthouse in the early 60s. He said the clock faces are not the ones that you see on the present courthouse, that the original ones would have been way too old to use. Also that the weather vane is the same one that is on top of the old bank building across the street.

For Huntsville middle school basketball fans, if you're up early on Friday mornings at 6am, tune into the **Chapman Middle School Basketball Review** on

Channel 15, WHDF, The Valley's CW, with host **John Troup** who is the voice of the Chapman Indians, and Indians head coach **Chris Blanding**. You'll find out why they are Huntsville's premier middle school basketball program. **Dr. James Waters**, Principal at Chapman, is a big fan of the show. Go Indians! Check out www.chapmanbasketball.com.

During the holidays, when I was driving around downtown Huntsville and the square was lit up so beautifully, I thought that it would be absolutely perfect with **that old courthouse (or one like it)** back on the square. That current building looks so out of place and in my humble opinion detracts from the beautiful old buildings you see around the square. Maybe that will change one day soon.

Bonefish was the setting for a really fun party of old friends who are all into remodeling and driving beautiful old cars. Attending the annual party which usually takes place around the holidays was **Clay Johnson**, **Gwynn Lewis**, **Bob Smith**, **Vicky Vest**, **Larry Holmes**, **Georgie and Phil Bailey**, **Ann and Tom Schuman**, **Cathey Carney**, **Sam Keith**, **Robert Garrison**, **Judy Posey**, and **Mike and Linda Robinson**. The food and company were great.

The annual **Dog Ball** is going to be held this year on Feb. 10 and the theme is "Prancing

with the Stars." The Greater Huntsville Humane Society puts this on every year and it is quite an event, featuring the "Celebri-dogs" of 2012 for adoption. The event includes silent auction, social hour with the dogs, dinner and dancing. A very memorable and worthwhile event. Make your reservations soon if you want to go - it is always sold out. Go to www.thedogball.org or call 256-881-8081.

Have a warm and wonderful **Valentine's Day** with your loved ones, and be sure and get out there and walk - it's a great way to stay healthy.

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Sweetheart Treats

Shoofly Cake

Mix:

- 1 c. Molasses
- 2 c. hot water
- 2 t. baking soda

Sift:

- 4 c. flour
- 2 c. light brown sugar
- 2 t. baking soda
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 t. cinnamon
- 1/4 t. nutmeg
- 1/4 t. ginger
- 1 c. butter

Mix the water, molasses & soda in a bowl, set aside. Sift dry ingredients into another bowl, cut in butter til crumbly. Spoon out 1-1/2 cup crumb mixture for topping. Stir molasses mixture into remaining mixture just til blended. Batter will be thin.

Pour into a 13 x 9 inch pan. Sprinkle reserved crumbs on top. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes.

Funeral Pie

- 2 c. golden raisins
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 2 T. flour
- 1/2 c. pecans, chopped
- 3 T. lemon juice
- 2 t. grated lemon peel

Soak raisins in 2 cups hot water til they are plump and have absorbed all or most of the water.

When cooled, stir in remaining ingredients - make sure there are no lumps from the flour - and pour into a prepared, unbaked pie shell. Bake at 400 degrees for about 45 minutes.

This is called Funeral Pie because it was taken to the families any time someone died. People always came to the home to "pay their respects" and no one ever came empty handed.

This was easy to prepare and tasted good, too.

Wedding Cookies

- 1 c. powdered sugar
- 1 stick butter, softened
- 1 t. vanilla
- 1 c. flour
- 1 c. finely chopped pecans

Combine all ingredients in a bowl. Mix well. Shape into small one-inch balls. Place on ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 375 degrees for 20-25 minutes. Remove from pan and roll hot cookies in powdered sugar, allow to cool on waxed paper, then roll in the sugar again. Store in a cool, dry place.

Ice Box Tea Cakes

- 2 sticks butter
- 2 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 T. vinegar
- 2 t. vanilla
- Pinch salt
- 1/4 t. nutmeg

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- 4 - 1/2 c. flour
- 2 t. baking powder
- 1 t. baking soda

Cream butter and sugar well. Add beaten eggs, vinegar, vanilla, salt and nutmeg. Stir till well blended. Sift the flour, baking powder and soda. Add to the creamed mixture and mix well. Chill at least one hour.

When chilled, shape into two rolls about 2 inches in diameter and about 12 inches long. Wrap each roll in waxed paper and chill. When ready to bake, slice thin and bake on greased baking sheet at 350 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes, til golden brown. Store in a dry, cool place.

Peanut Butter Cookies

- 1 c. flour
- 1 t. baking powder
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1/3 c. sugar
- 1/3 c. butter
- 1/3 c. brown sugar
- 1/3 c. peanut butter
- 1 egg

Sift dry ingredients. Cream butter and beat in all the other ingredients, add to the flour mixture - dough will be thick. Drop by rounded teaspoons onto an ungreased baking sheet, flatten tops with a fork. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-15 minutes, don't overcook.

Spiced Pecans

- 1 egg white
- 1 t. cinnamon

- 1/2 t. allspice
- 1/2 t. nutmeg
- 1 c. sugar
- 2 T. water
- 1/2 t. salt
- 2 lb. pecan halves

Mix all ingredients, except for nuts, in a large mixing bowl. Stir in nuts til well coated. Pour in a single layer onto a buttered baking pan and bake at 275 degrees for 50 minutes, stirring often to break up. When cool, store in an airtight container.

Lemon Squares

Crust:

- 1/2 c. butter
- 1/4 c. powdered sugar
- 1 c. plain flour

Mix all and pat into a nine-inch square cake pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes and let cool.

Filling:

- 1 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 t. baking powder
- 2 T. lemon juice
- 1 t. grated lemon peel
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1 T. plain flour

Cream the sugar and eggs together well. Add remaining ingredients and pour onto the cooled crust. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Be sure to not overbake!

Let cool and cut into small squares. Sprinkle with powdered sugar, and serve. These will disappear quickly!



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Huntsville Soldier Survives a Year in Iraq with the Help of her Local "Battle Buddies"

by Joanne Randolph


Huntsvillian Neva L. Rogers left for Iraq a year ago equipped with one footlocker of items like bedding, clothing, etc., and twenty-two "Battle Buddies". At her farewell dinner on February 5, 2011, the following was proclaimed:

"Let it be known that beginning today, the fifth day of February in the year of our Lord, 2011, Operation Aven (Neva spelled backwards) is officially begun. As we say farewell to the Fair-of-face and Strong-of-heart Maid Neva, we do promise to be her "Battle Buddies" and loyally support her as she goes on crusade to far away Iraq by sending her surprises each month in lovingly prepared "Battle Boxes." We vow to daily keep her and her troop's well-being in our thoughts and in our prayers and to be responsive to whatever requests she should make of us while she is away. We promise to celebrate mightily on her eagerly awaited return. We, the honored "Battle Buddies" do so solemnly swear to uphold the terms of this proclamation."

Her "Battle Buddies" are Joanne and Norm Randolph, Carole and Jerry Arszman, Brenda and Mike Fahey, Beverly and Martin Smith, Judy and Jim Myers, Rusty and Bill Burns, Brenda and Jack Wingate, Vicki and Jay Loomis, Karen and Rusty Knight, Vicky Johnson and Jim Knaur, and Sandra & Tom Denney. We sent care packages every month with items like chocolates, local papers, magazines, books, Chap Stick, make-up, snacks, etc. I even sent her Pillow Mist in her favorite scent and I bet she was the only soldier in Iraq who had pillow mist!

Colonel Rogers was the LOGCAP senior person at COB Speicher in Northern Iraq. LOGCAP provides services for the soldiers via contractors. She was responsible for de-scoping these services as the US military prepared to turn over bases to Iraq. Her job was to turn off contractor services like power, dining facilities, ice plants, fuel, postal, NTV maintenance, etc. She dealt with the property that is government-owned but contractor acquired/used, such as vehicles, generators, light sets, gyms, buildings, dining facilities, shower & bath units... and the list went on & on.....

During a two-week R&R in June, her "Battle Buddies" had a picnic for her at the home of Carole and Jerry Arszman, complete with a spe-



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cial cake made just for her.

Neva was promoted to Colonel while in Iraq and learned in December that she was selected as the new Commander of the 332nd Medical Brigade in Nashville, Tennessee, when she returns to the U.S. Few colonels get the opportunity to command a brigade, so we are very proud of her. The Colonel's "Battle Buddies" have planned a "Welcome Home Cruise" for late February 2012. We will be cruising to Jamaica and Grand Cayman to celebrate her safe return to the U.S. and honor her for her service to our country.

Neva is the wife of Mark Shuler, who is a Veteran, and the daughter of Tom and Ilene Rogers. Neva gets her bravery and her sense of country from her father. He is a Veteran of World War II, where he served in Germany and France, fought in the Battle of the Bulge, and was recognized for his valor with a Purple Heart and a Silver Star. We know that he must be very proud of his daughter.

One of the five large bases that Neva oversaw for LOGCAP in North Iraq was COS Warrior. The base is next to the city of Kirkuk. While there, she visited a hand-painted memorial on Warrior. The memorial was undertaken through a volunteer effort of soldiers and contractors on the base. They wanted to ensure that those military members who lost their lives in Iraq would not be forgotten. The Memorial is painted on a series of T-Walls, and all the names are of soldiers who were killed since 2003 and the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Neva found the memorial very moving and somber.







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MOONSHINE, THE LAW, AND MADISON COUNTY

BY BILLY JOE COOLEY

The courtroom was silent as the judge shuffled his papers. Finally, after taking a long look at the man standing in front of him, he asked: "Well, what do you have to say for yourself?"

The defendant, remembering that his lawyer had told him to be honest and tell the truth, replied: "Your Honor, my name is Jim Brasemore and I make moonshine. Matter of fact, I make the best white whiskey in Madison County!"

Jim Brasemore was a moonshiner and he talks freely about it, now that the statute of limitations have run out.

He learned the art of whiskey-making from his father, who had learned it from his father. Young Jim started feeding a firebox when he was only seven or eight years old.

"We had this 'groundhog still' out next to Flint River," he says.

A 'groundhog' was a still built into the side of a hill or cliff. Such distilleries were hard to detect.

"Every morning Mama would pack us a lunch of biscuits and fatback and we would set out walking. We had to walk about three or four miles to the still, but back then it didn't seem like a long way," he remembers.

The Brasemores had a repu-

tation for making some of the best liquor in the county and, of course, that made a lot of people jealous.

"There was this family, Ricketts I believe the name was, that used to live close to us. The old man was what you would call shiftless, never did a hard day's work in his life. He used to come around and buy liquor from us and then sell it to the field hands," he recalls.

"Of course before he sold it, he would cut it down 'til it didn't even taste like good whiskey. Everybody knew it was Brasemore whiskey so they didn't question it too much. When Daddy heard about what Ricketts was doing he wouldn't sell him anymore. We had a reputation to maintain, you understand."

Not long after that, the Brasemores got to noticing that someone was stealing from them. Some culprit would sneak into their "holding areas" in the woods, where they stashed their whiskey until it

could be picked up by the haulers. Whiskey started disappearing a couple gallons at a time.

They put together a plan to catch the thieves.

"One morning just after sun-up, Daddy comes and wakes me up. We were ready to put our plan into action. We headed for the stash place and took along this old shotgun, a rabbit-ears Parker. After we got to the stash we made us a hideout under some brush. On up in the morning, here comes ol' man Ricketts, just lumbering along like some ol' fat hog. We watched and sure enough, he goes straight to the whiskey and helps himself to a couple gallons."

"Ricketts was just about the fattest man I ever knew, and when he bent over his 'hind end' looked like the broad side of a barn. I reckon it was more than Daddy could resist, cause he cut loose with that old Parker and when he got done it looked like termites had gotten hold of the rear end of Ricketts' britches!"

Fortunately, the gun was loaded with saltpeter and the

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shot wasn't very dangerous, although Ricketts had to eat his meals standing up for a few weeks.

When the younger Brasmore was born in 1902, home-made whiskey was a respectable and thriving industry in Madison County. Although many people today would frown on the practice, at that time many families depended on it for a living. The alternative was to work in the mills (if they were lucky enough to find one that was hiring) or try to survive as a dirt farmer.

"Daddy got caught the first time in about 1916 or 1917. The law was paying informers to tell on people. They put his bail bond at fifty dollars. That was on a Friday, and we didn't have any money so the next morning Mama gets me to hitch up the mule and we loaded up the wagon with what whiskey we had left. Back then Saturdays was the big trade day downtown and the streets would be so busy you could hardly walk."

"We tied the wagon in front of the courthouse and just sat there all day, selling whiskey. Everybody knew what Mama was doing so a lot of people who didn't even drink would stop and buy some. For medicinal

"All angels are girls because they gotta wear dresses and boys don't go for that."

Tommy, age 8



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purposes, they would say."

"On up in the morning, a deputy came by and asked her what she thought she was doing."

"I'm gettin' my man out of jail," she replied. "Anything else you want to know?" she asked the deputy. Back then no one messed with Mama.

"No Mam," the deputy replied sheepishly, "but I reckon I'll take a gallon if you got any left, my croup has been acting up lately."

They got their dad out of jail that day, but he didn't stay free long. When his trial came up he was sentenced to twelve months at the county farm. "Pickin' peas", he called it.

"I was a pretty good size boy by then and with Daddy in jail it was up to me to run the business," the younger Brasemore recalls. "Before he got caught, Daddy had hid the worm (copper condensation coil) and I got a neighbor to build me a pot. It wasn't just a couple of weeks 'til I was back in business. When I ran off my first batch, they said the sheriff thought my father had escaped. "Nobody makes whiskey that good," the Sheriff said, "Except for old man Brasemore!"

"I hadn't forgotten about the

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cur dog that had informed on Daddy though. Giles was his name. He and the deputy that arrested Daddy were big drinking buddies. This deputy lived out next to Chase Nursery and every Sunday like clockwork, those two would pitch a big drunk."

"Some of my cousins helped me and we took this old worn-out still, it only had a ten-gallon pot, and we set it up out back of the house in a brush patch. First thing Sunday morning we loaded it with mash and started cooking. If you have ever been around a still you know you can't hide the smell, and sure enough, on up in the morning the deputy gets a strong whiff and decides to investigate."

"You gotta know one thing about a drunk; when he's drinking he ain't gonna turn down a free drink."

"Well here we are, me and my cousins are hiding in the brush, and the deputy and Giles are stretched out in front of the still sipping free whiskey and acting like they are in hog heaven."

"Next thing you know, there's this big ruckus and when the deputy opened his eyes, there was the Sheriff, pointing this big pistol at him," he relates.

"You and Giles are under arrest for making whiskey," the Sheriff said.

"Seems as if someone had sent the Sheriff a note."

"Like I said, while Daddy was in jail I was running the business. One of the first things I did, after I got a little ahead, was to buy me a truck. Daddy wouldn't have nothing to do with automobiles, he had worked with a mule all of his life."

"Well, I was bound and determined to impress him so the day he was to get out I took the truck and loaded it down with as much whiskey as I could put on it. It had not been picked up in a while and we had a sizable load. Things didn't work out the way I figured and the truck broke down a couple of miles from the house. I got the mule, hitched it to the truck and began to pull it on home.

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"Daddy was sitting on the front porch when I pulled up in front of the house. He took a long look at that truck I had bought and then took an even longer look at his mule that was pulling it. Finally, after spitting out a long stream of tobacco juice, he asked me, "Well, what else can it do?"

"He never did like that truck. Every time I got stuck in mud or whatever he was always there to tell me that with a mule it would not have happened."

Young Jim got married in the fall of 1925 to a city girl who wouldn't have anything to do with making whiskey. One of her uncles got her man a job in Merrimac Cotton Mill.

Jim tried to quit the whiskey business, but the effort was futile. He would come home at night spitting up lint and cotton dust. His wife, Laurie, could tell by his look that he wasn't happy.

"Finally, 'bout a year later I come home from work one day and she's packing our things in boxes. She told me we were moving back to the country."

"Kenneth Abbott and I set up a still down next to Byrd's Spring where there was this hunting club. We ran it most of one year and then we put another one down next to the bridge at Whitesburg."

"That was the biggest one I ever run, a 2500-gallon groundhog."

"By this time we had two stills running and plenty of whiskey to sell, so we figured we would expand our business. Normally we would sell the whiskey to a 'tripper' or 'hauler' who would distribute it to the bootleggers. We figured that instead of paying the middle man, we would take the money ourselves."

Many people have sought Jim's advice about the whiskey business. "I tell all of them the same thing. Have lots of kin folks. They are about the only

ones you can really trust."

"Anyway, we got Mickey, my second cousin who owned a Ford coupe, to start hauling for us. That went real good. Then George, another cousin, decided to come in the business. He was driving a milk truck and had a regular route at the time. Once a week we would load him up with whiskey and he would make home deliveries all over town."

It appeared that the Brasemore crowd was making all the money in the world and that's what caused the trouble.

At that time there was another family in Huntsville that was big in the whiskey business, too. They were connected to a bunch of moonshiners over in Cloud's Cove.

The Brasemore outfit was cutting into their profits.

"The first we knew about it was when they shot Abbott, my



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partner, at the Whitesburg still. He had been tending it along with some hired hands when someone shot him from behind with a shotgun. It didn't kill him, but he was crippled for the rest of his life."

"Next they started going after the boys who hauled the whiskey. They shot at them, ran them off the road and they even set Mickey's house on fire."

"The law knew something was going on and they started to really crack down on whiskey-making. This hurt us bad, as we couldn't keep a still running more than a month without it getting raided."

"I don't think it bothered that Cloud's Cove bunch though. There was only one way in there and one way out. If you weren't kin you didn't get in!"

"I was sitting in a 'shot house' in West Huntsville when they shot me. It was Oct. 23, 1934. I had delivered some whiskey and had stopped to watch a dice game. When I walked out they were waiting for me."

"I knew exactly what was fixing to happen when I saw that car window roll down and I started to reach for my pistol. I never had a chance."

"Claude Murphy had been shooting dice inside and when he heard the gun shots he ran outside. When he saw me laying there he said he thought

I was dead."

"After I got shot we pretty well shut the business down. We laid low and just decided to let bygones be bygones."

Three months later two of the assailants were ambushed near Meridianville and were severely wounded.

When questioned about this, Brasemore's only comment was, "I reckon that's what you



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call by-gones."

Things weren't the same after that. There had been too much trouble and the law was now watching every time a moonshiner turned around.

"I remember one time when Cousins, a boy we had driving for us, was stopped downtown. He was hauling a load of whiskey and was right in front of the movie theater when the law spotted him. Traffic was backed up for a red light and Cousins knew he couldn't get the car away, so he just jumped out and took off running."

"The police jumped out of their cars and started chasing him on foot. Mickey was standing on the sidewalk and when he saw what was going on, he jumped in Cousins' car and when the light changed, took off."

"It didn't take the police long to catch Cousins, but when they got back they discovered the evidence was gone! They roughed him up a bit, but finally had to let him go."

"Was the law honest back then? Let me ask you a question. How many policemen did you know that never took a drink? All of them knew what was going on, but you got to remember; back then most every one was kin to one another. We never worried too much about the city or county police unless there was an election coming up, and even then they tried not to bother us too much. They never came right out and asked you for money but you knew

you had to give."

"I remember one election back in the late 30's when I followed a judge all over the county while he was making speeches. He'd be up there talking about getting rid of the bootleggers and I would be outside passing out free drinks to everyone that would vote for him. One time the judge's car broke down up around New Market so he hitched a ride with us. All day long we drove him around while he was spitting hell and brimstone about whiskey and the whole time he was sipping the white whiskey that we were giving away. When we got him back to town that night he was so drunk his wife made him sleep on the front porch.

By the time WWII came around it had become difficult for an independent whiskey operator to make any money. There were too many "big" family names in the business.

A hardware store owner downtown manufactured

various-size stills in the basement. For an extra twenty-five dollars a nearby furniture store would deliver the distillery to its intended site. When sugar became rationed during the war, a downtown grocery wholesale house sold sugar under the counter. Often when they would receive a large shipment, the wholesaler would sell it off to moonshiners at a private auction to the highest bidder. One prominent family in Huntsville

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even financed moonshine operations ... at a high interest rate, of course.

Many successful businesses in Huntsville today were founded with the profits of the whiskey business.

Brasemore named numerous present-day businesses that were established in that manner.

"They didn't have sense enough to come in out of the rain back when their granddaddies were making whiskey, now they got fine houses and put on airs like they are bluebloods or something!"

"Now look at this," pointing to a recent society page from the Huntsville Times. "That girl used to sleep on the back seat of a Ford coupe, while her daddy delivered whiskey for me."

Jim Brasemore "retired" from the whiskey business in the 1950s after an encounter with the law. "Pickin' peas," he called it.



Innocent Amusement Turns into Melee on the Square

from 1871 newspaper

About 3 o'clock yesterday an event happened near the Square which has led to much amusement for the local wags.

A very small colored woman, returning from a shopping tour, was carrying a large old stove, that must have weighed at least 200 pounds, on top of her head. It balanced there as nicely as if it had been on its legs.

A gang of astonished vagabonds loitering in front of the courthouse gazed upon the walking human freight car in bewildered simplicity, when a big burly man, carrying only

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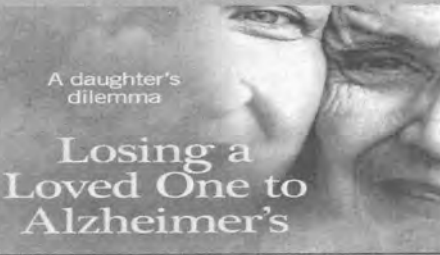
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the four stove legs and a section of pipe, came up behind her. The man was evidently the husband of the little woman carrying the big stove, and he saw the group of men staring at the woman.

When one of the vagabonds offered to help the lady with her burden the husband threw down his load, rushed into the crowd and began to beat on two of the men, thinking that they were "flirting" with his wife. The two men were shaken up a bit, but hastily beat a retreat, a little wiser for the experience.

A Young Alabama Lady Goes Insane from Bleaching Her Hair Blond and Lands in the Insane Asylum

from 1888 newspaper

In Birmingham, Gertrude Palmer, a good looking German girl, apparently about seventeen years of age, passed through this city, Sunday afternoon, en route to Tuscaloosa. She was under guard, being accompanied by her two brothers and Dr. J.D. Thompson, a prominent physician of the above named place.

The unfortunate girl was a raving maniac, and was on her way to the state insane asylum at Tuscaloosa. Her insanity was caused by the excessive use of blondine, a chemical preparation which she used to dye her hair. She had used such a

quantity of the stuff that it worked through her skull and affected the brain.

Her mind was completely deranged, and she became so violent that it was necessary to confine her in a room to keep her from attacking and injuring any members of her family. She had lived near Cullman, Alabama, and the news has caused shock and disbelief to many of the ladies who were considering changing to the blond color.

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COUNTRY DOCTOR OF BERKLEY

by Don Wynn

Less than thirty years after John Hunt settled the area around Big Spring, Malikah Johnson settled his family just across Monte Sano Mountain from Huntsville. The area had everything that the Johnson family wanted in a home site. It had an ample supply of water from many springs. It had plenty of trees for building and for fuel. There were lots of game animals in the woods and the floor of the valley was relatively flat. The soil was rich and was very suitable for agriculture. The mountains seemed to provide shelter from the wind and the terrain reminded Malikah of his former home in North Carolina. Malikah had heard that the Indians in the area were relatively friendly and they proved to be exactly that. This place just felt right and Malikah settled his small but growing family there.

His first priority was to construct a two-room log cabin in the dog trot style. Trees were plentiful at the site he selected but they had to be cut down. The branches had to be trimmed and the ends of the logs had to be notched so they would fit into the planned walls. Great limestone rocks were gathered for the foundation and for the chimneys which Malikah also built. The logs for the floors were split and were carefully fitted into place. Finally each log for the walls had to be lifted and locked with adjacent logs to form a sound structure. A shingle roof topped off the new Johnson family place.

Malikah, working with the help of his wife Salina, completed their new home in less than three months. Even though the


construction of their home had been very hard, back breaking work, the Johnson family could not rest when it was finished.

They immediately started to clear the area around the house for their crops. During the last few months before their first winter in Alabama, Malikah concentrated on clearing the smaller trees. He cut the trees down and cut them up for firewood. Then he pulled the stumps out of the ground with his team of horses. By that winter, an ample supply of firewood had been laid up and a hundred acre field was beginning to take shape. Large trees dotted the field and gave the place a park-like feel.


Their first winter in Alabama was mild and Malikah fed his family with venison and turkey that he killed in the woods near their home. They also had fish from the streams in the area.

Malikah worked hard in his fields and his family prospered and grew. By 1845, the family included ten people; Malikah, Salina, 5 boys and 3 girls. Twins born in 1839 died within a year. Malikah in his self-sufficient style was becoming the Patriarch of a southern family.

A few new settlers arrived



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every spring. They had heard of Malikah and of his prosperity. They formed a settlement that they began to call Berkley. Work was shared in the community and everyone prospered together.

Berkley was a place of log cabins, friendship and hard work. There were no southern plantations there and there weren't any slaves either. In his early years, Malikah couldn't afford any slaves and by the time that he could afford them, he had decided that simple human dignity didn't allow one man to own another.

As a frontier community, Berkeley lacked many conveniences but the most glaring problem was that they did not have a doctor. Neighbors died every year. Sometimes it was some strange sickness. Sometimes it was from some injury. Snake bites and spider bites were often deadly. Young children died from 'dropsy' or from 'malaise.' Whenever necessary, Malikah was summoned from his home to attend to the sick or injured. As a man who could read and write, wasn't he the most well educated man in Berkley? Hadn't he delivered every one of his own children without even so much as a midwife to help him? Hadn't he earned the respect and trust of his neighbors?

Malikah accepted this increasing responsibility reluctantly. He was educated well enough to realize that he was not a doctor. He also knew that none of his neighbors were doctors either. With no other choice, he served his neighbors as best he could.

Over a span of ten years, some of his most trusted friends died because he was not able to cure their illnesses. One man even died after Malikah pulled one of his teeth. Malikah struggled with the pain of dying as several children passed away. The responsibility was great but Malikah could not refuse to try to help when called on.

Medical treatment was not given for money. It was simply given because it was necessary. The recipient of treatment would normally repay Malikah's kindness with a bale of hay for his horses, with a dozen hen eggs for his trouble or with something else from their farm. There was never any bartering of any kind. The patient always gave what he thought the treatment was worth.

Malikah sought medical information from every source. He even consulted with the Cherokee Indians that occasion-

ally travelled by his home site. In fact many settlers preferred Cherokee Indian remedies to the advice of any white doctor. Malikah learned to use the things that nature provided in his treatments and spent many hours in the mountains around Berkley collecting natural medicines.

During the winter of 1850, Malikah decided to go to Nashville to learn more about medicine. He spent almost 6 weeks talking with

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the doctors there and learned some of the latest techniques that medicine had to offer. He learned to use bleeding, blistering and purging as the treatment for almost any illness. He returned from Nashville with a supply of medical leeches, with some new surgical instruments and with more confidence than ever before.

Malikah practiced medicine using his newly gained knowledge for several years before dropping those treatments in favor of natural treatments. Ironically, some of his neighbors lost faith in him because he refused to use these "modern" techniques. Some people preferred to travel across the mountain to Huntsville where they could get treated properly.

Through the end of his life, he diligently served the people of Berkley as their doctor. The sick and dying were always welcome in his cabin. In fact, Malikah even amputated the leg of a man on the table next to the fireplace in the biggest room in his house. This was the same table that they had Sunday dinner on. His experiences with the sick and dying caused him to gradually become more fatalistic when giving his original diagnosis. The fear

of a terrible diagnosis caused many sick people to delay visiting him until their cases really were hopeless. When someone recovered under his care, neighbors considered it a miracle and Malikah was held in the highest regard.

In 1860, Malikah's youngest son died of typhoid. His two older sons died side by side fighting for the Confederacy in 1863. Upon hearing the news of their deaths, Malikah had simply had more death than he could stand and he keeled over dead himself. His neighbors said that grief from all of the dying in his life had finally killed him.

The girls had married long before and were already gone. Salina followed Malikah across that lonely river in a few years and the dog trot cabin slowly fell to dust. Nothing remains of Malikah Johnson and his family, not even a chimney or stone from the fireplace. They are simply gone.

Note: Malikah Johnson is a compilation of several characters and did not really exist. The events and tone of this story are historically correct.



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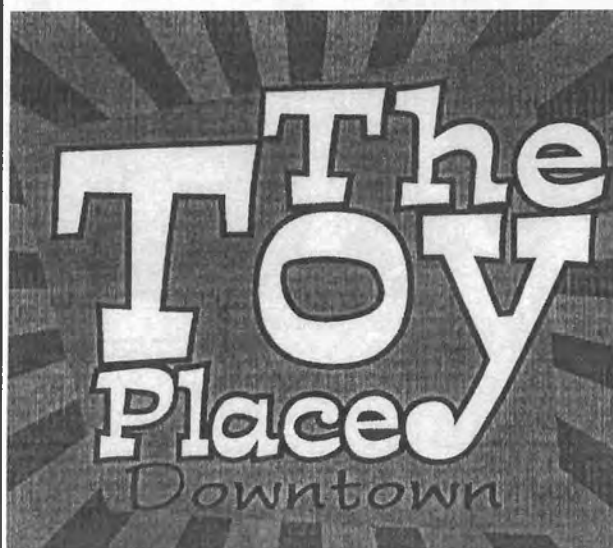
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1860 LAW AND ORDER IN HUNTSVILLE

- No fireworks were allowed in the city in 1860 without the consent of the Mayor, who specified when and where they were to be exhibited.

- A person was permitted to burn a stove pipe or chimney flue only when the roof was wet from rain or covered with snow.

- A fine of from \$5 to \$10 was assessed upon any individual who carried an unguarded candle or lamp into a stable, or who kept ashes in barrels, boxes or wooden vessel of any kind. The punishment to a slave in case of such violation was "any number of stripes, not exceeding 39, at the discretion of the Mayor."

- If an individual failed to obey an order of the Mayor, as head of the fire department, the fine was \$20.

- All persons attending a fire, and not a member of any company, were required to assist the firemen, if called upon, or pay a fine of \$10.

- Whenever a fire was discovered by a policeman, or he heard an alarm, it was his duty to cry fire, to ring the city bell, and to make known the place of the fire. He then proceeded to the blaze to help extinguish it, or to keep order.

- Officers and members of the fire companies were exempt from paying the city poll tax for work upon the streets.

- The community bell, a vital factor in the life of the community back in those days, was rung by the police every two hours. This was one of their standing duties, and could not be overlooked under penalty.

- Water rates were based

on the assessed valuation of property. The owner of a dwelling house valued at \$1,500 or under, \$5 per year; \$2,000 and over, \$10; more than \$8,000, \$15.

- The charge of each private bath or bath house was \$3 per year; on dry goods or grocery stores, \$10; private boarding house, \$20; hotel or tavern, \$50 and two per cent of the value of the rent; eating house, \$10; doctor, dentist or lawyer's office, \$5; each steam engine of not more than three horsepower, \$15, and \$3 for each additional horsepower.

- Sunday was the "day of rest" in Huntsville of 1860. To insure this, an ordinance was inserted in the code to no-

tify residents that "no person shall in this city do or exercise any worldly labor on that day under a penalty of \$5 for each offense."

- All businesses except hotels, boarding houses and apothecaries were required to close on Sundays. Barbers could keep their shop open until noon.

- A fine of \$1 was assessed upon any person who bought goods or commodities of any sort on Sunday. An exception was made in the case of sickness or necessity.

- No sports, public exercises, exhibition or game was allowed on Sunday. Violators were subject to a \$5 fine. A similar penalty was required of any person who loaded or unloaded a wagon, or drove horses, cattle, sheep or swine through the streets, except in case of necessity, on that day.

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- "Bawdy houses" or "houses of ill-fame" were banned. The ordinance further read that "all public prostitutes, or such persons as lead a notoriously lewd and lascivious course of life, and all persons not being lawfully married, who shall cohabit, or live together as man and wife, shall pay a fine of not less than \$25."

- Billiard saloons, Jenny Linds, bagatelles and other table devices were required to be closed at midnight under \$20 penalty. So were saloons and ten pin alleys.

- If a person erected a frame building on the public square, or within 300 feet of its boundaries, he was fined \$50 for each day the structure was allowed to stand, either in process or after completed.

- Quantities of more than 25 pounds of gunpowder had to be stored in the powder magazine, under the lock and key of the constable. The charge for this service was 20 cents for a 25 pound keg; 15 cents for 12-1/2 pounds, any smaller package, 10 cents.

- A tax of \$1 per head was levied for each hog more than six months old and for each hog more than six months old and for each litter of pigs found at large in the city limits.

- Whoever galloped or ran a horse or any other animal used for the saddle or gear within the city limits, except in case of emergency judged by the Mayor, had to forfeit \$1 for each offense.

- A tax of 50 cents per head was levied annually on dogs.

- Kite-flying was banned as a misdemeanor.

- It was specified also that

a \$5 fine would be assessed upon any person who hitched an animal to a shade tree, the box of a shade tree, a fence or railing, except the iron fence around the courthouse. This rule also applied inside the cemetery.

- Bathing in the Big Spring branch within less than 300

yards below the dam, between the hours of 4 a.m. and 10 p.m., constituted another misdemeanor.

- No interment was permitted in the cemetery between sundown and daylight without the consent of the mayor. Graves had to be at least four feet deep.

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LARRY "BUCK" HUGHES

BY JOHN PRUETT

Former athletes usually cite a moment of high triumph - a last-second basket, a winning touchdown in the fourth quarter, a homer in the ninth - as the signal moment of their sports career.

Larry "Buck" Hughes is a notable exception.

His personal highlight came on a day of defeat - but a storied, honorable defeat.

"I'll never forget that day at the Polo Grounds," said Hughes, a longtime Huntsville resident and one of eight new inductees next month into the Huntsville-Madison County Athletic Hall of Fame. "We got beat, but for a lot of us on the field that day, it was our most memorable game."

The dateline was New York City: Oct. 28, 1933. A crowd of 60,000 packed the Polo Grounds to see Fordham, the best team in the East, play "Dixie's Football

pride," the Crimson Tide of Alabama.

It turned out to be an epic defensive struggle. Fordham finished with five first days to Alabama's three. Fordham rushed for 92 yards to Alabama's 67. Fordham completed 2-of-5 passes for 50 yards; Alabama was 1-of-8 for 10 yards.

Fordham blocked a punt by Alabama's Dixie Howell for a safety in the first quarter, and that's how the game ended - 2 to 0.

Buck Hughes, who was the head football coach at Huntsville High School from 1948-53,

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A S S I S T E D L I V I N G

was a senior fullback-linebacker for coach Frank Thomas' Alabama team that crisp Saturday afternoon at the Polo Grounds nearly 60 years ago.

Hughes still vividly remembers the whole scene - the chewed-up field, the vicious blocking and tackling, Alabama's two goal-line stands. But mostly he remembers never coming off the field, the cheering throng, the blocked punt, and a play that set up the blocked punt.

"I played 60 minutes that day," Hughes said. "We had been used to playing before crowds of 20,000. They had 60,000 that day. The papers said it was the biggest crowd they'd ever had for a football game."

Late in the first quarter, Hughes stopped an early Fordham threat by intercepting a pass on the Alabama 5-yard line. But moments later, Fordham tackle Amerino Sarno crashed through and blocked Dixie Howell's punt in the end zone. Howell managed to recover the ball, but the Rams had a safety. It was all they'd need.

"We were coming off the field at the half and I told Coach Hank (Alabama assistant coach

Hank Crisp) that I shouldn't have intercepted that ball," Hughes recalled. "He said, 'No, no. You did the right thing.'"

"But right after that is when Howell got his kick blocked."

The play led to the only untoward incident of the day: Alabama end Ralph Gandy thought a Fordham player had piled on Howell unnecessarily and rushed to his teammate's aid, fists flying. Thomas took him out of the game to cool off.

"We still had our chances," Hughes said. Even Don Hutson, who later became one of the great receivers of all time, dropped two long passes on the "corkscrew," a staple pass play in the old Notre Dame Box offense. "Either one," Hughes said, "would have

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been a touchdown."

Despite the loss, more than 2,000 cheering fans greeted the train in Tuscaloosa on the return trip from New York.

The '33 Tide finished 7-1-1 and won the Southeastern Conference championship. "It was a good year," Buck Hughes said. "But my biggest thrill was that day at the Polo Grounds."

Editor's note: This column was originally published in The Huntsville Times on Feb. 13, 1992 By John Pruett

NEWS FROM 1923

Captured Man Escapes

A man who gives his name only as "Branch" and who had been sent to the street gang 3 months ago and escaped shortly thereafter was re-captured yesterday at his home about 4 miles from Huntsville. The officers, who had long suspected his whereabouts but until yesterday had been unable to get their eyes on him, finally managed to finish the job. Several of the officers yesterday went out to the man's home and learning that he was on the premises, surrounded the place and finally effected a capture. He was brought to the city and locked up, to be again returned to the street gang. Branch lived alone, and seemed to have no friends to speak of.

Muzzle your Dogs

Owners of dogs must not permit them to roam the streets without muzzles. If they do they may be brought up before the Mayor and fined for their neglect.

Bound to Bed in his Cell

Theopias Brown, also known by the name of Scruggs, and who was arrested on a charge of drunkenness, yesterday was placed in a cell in the city jail. He became so violent

shortly after being locked up that he had to be bound to his bed. Before this, however, he had broken up considerable of the meager furniture in his cell. It is supposed the stuff he drank was of the "mean" variety and made him temporarily crazy.

Injured when Car Turns Over

When the car in which Jim Nash and his daughter Stella were driving Sunday afternoon turned over on the Whitesburg Pike, near Lily Flagg, the young lady suffered a broken arm and the father sustained severe body bruises. The accident occurred when Mr. Nash turned to the side of the road to permit the passage of another car and went too near the edge.

1924 Buick is on Display

The new 1924 Buicks are here in Huntsville. Announcement was made late yesterday by Mr. Edwards, of the Edwards Buick Company, that the new models have arrived and were on display at the showroom. The new series of Buicks have many changes and improvements, the most striking being the four wheel brakes. Every wheel on the car has brakes. The front wheels have a brake drum and when turning a curve, the outside front wheel brake automatically releases, while the mechanism of this improvement is striking in the extreme. The hood of the new car is also changed. The surface is more

of the square type with square corners and is very beautiful. Much interest has been aroused in this new series and the car is attracting much attention in this city.

Company Men Leave for Anniston

Company "D" 133 Engineers, comprising 54 men besides Captain Jones, left early Monday morning over the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis railroad for Anniston, Ala. where they will go into camp and remain for 15 days. Camp McClellan is being used for this purpose.

The khaki-clad boys were called to the Armory Sunday afternoon and remained there all night, except for exercising drills during the early evening, being called at 5 o'clock to make ready for training. Breakfast was had at Guntersville, where the Guntersville company joined the Huntsville company and proceeded to Anniston. The company was

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due to arrive there during the afternoon and was to go at once to Camp McClellan. Today they will be assigned their various duties and enter in earnest upon military life in camp.

Hit by Car

While attempting to cross Washington Street near the Yarbrough Hotel corner Sunday afternoon, during a congestion of traffic at the point, Ed Frame, fearing the he was about to be hit by a car driven by Mrs. John Bullard, grasped the auto and was thrown several feet against the curbing. He was somewhat stunned but not seriously hurt.

Broke up Two Stills

Federal dry agents report breaking up two stills in Limestone County on Saturday. Berry Horton and Willis Stanley, both Negroes, were placed under arrest.

Crowd sees Big Still Destroyed

Quite a crowd gathered on the Green Street side of the county jail yesterday afternoon to witness the destruction of the big still captured Tuesday. This resulted in three arrests, as related in the News yesterday morning. The still was of 150 gallon capacity and appeared to be of modern construction. It took hard blows to break it up, the job being accomplished only after half an hour or more of work with a sledge hammer.

Must be sixteen to drive

Mayor Adams desires it to be known that hereafter children under the age of 16 will not be permitted to drive automobiles on Huntsville streets unless accompanied by a parent and are clearly capable of handling a car themselves.

Gin Explosion in Tuscumbia - 1885

This morning, about 7:15, the boiler in Mr. John A. McWilliams' steam gin exploded, shocking, mangling and of course, instantly killing the engineer, John Starr, a young man about 16 years of age. The explosion wrecked everything in the immediate vicinity, cutting off young Starr's right leg,

his left arm and so lacerating and mutilating his breast and face as to make his identification impossible. The shock was felt all over the city, although the gin is located half a mile from the business center. Pieces of the boiler were picked up three hundred yards distant from the gin.



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- 1/2 t. salt
- Peel of an orange or lemon
- 3 c. low-fat milk
- 1 large cinnamon stick
- 3/4 c. sugar
- 1/4 c. seedless raisins
- 2 T. dark rum

Mix the rice with 2 cups of water and 1/2 teaspoon salt in a 3-quart saucepan. Bring to a boil, stir once. Place orange or lemon peel on top of the rice, reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes and liquid is absorbed.

Remember to discard the peel. Heat the milk and cinnamon in a small saucepan til milk is infused with the flavor of cinnamon. Strain milk and stir into cooked rice. Add the sugar and simmer for 20 minutes, or until thick, stirring often. Add the raisins and rum, simmer for 10 minutes. Serve hot.

When you reheat your rice, add just a little milk to restore its creamy consistency.

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SATURDAY, MARCH 10th, 2012 @ 4:00pm: Over 600 lots in this sale as well. Local & Out-of-State Haulers and Consignors. The QUALITY and QUANTITY we are known for will be up for bidding including Lots of Furniture--Sideboards, Chests, Dressers, Tables & Chairs, Beds & BR Suites, Sofas, Dining Room Suites, China Cabinets, etc. Also included will be Lamps, Frames, Glassware, Tray Deals, Lots of Smalls, and many other Miscellaneous Items.

*For pictures and directions, log onto www.auctionzip.com - Auctioneer I.D. #5484

Wilson Hilliard, ASL #97

Bill Oruburn, ASL #683

Charles Thorpe, ASL #392

Tweetie's Pet Tips



* Tweetie says that some kitties are really bad about biting their owners. He notes that most parakeets are much too polite to do that. However to keep your kitten/cat from biting, when he takes the next bite, just say "NO" and walk away from him. Just totally ignore him! Some people say a spray bottle of water helps too - just give him a good spray when he bites.

* If doggy breath is a problem for your pup, just mix in some chopped parsley with his food once a day. Also, if you can, brush his teeth on occasion.

* If your cat has ear mites, a simple yet effective solution sent in by a reader is to use an eye dropper, drop two drops of vegetable oil into the cat's ears. Massage the ear well, gently, then clean the ear with a cotton ball. This will suffocate the mites. Do this for 3 days and see if there's not an improvement.

* Tweetie is just amazed that cats have hair balls. He says that if you add 1/2 teaspoon of Extra Virgin Olive Oil to your cat's food daily, you should see fewer hair balls as they will pass thru the other way.

* In the summer if you give your dog her bath in the bath-

tub, be sure and place a rubber mat under her so she won't slip, then put a small piece of screen over the drain so that her hair won't clog up your drain. Be sure and brush her coat really well before inviting her into the water (with a treat). Add a bit of oil to work out the tangles. A little cream rinse is nice too, but not for the kitties. Then dry her with a large, soft towel. A clean dog!

* Start giving your dog Brewer's Yeast supplements in March, to repel fleas. Or just sprinkle it into his food.

* To catch fleas, fill a pie pan with water & tablespoon of dish detergent. Place pan under a night light overnight, they will jump in and fleas can't swim!




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From the Desk of Tom Carney

A Man Named Sam

by Tom Carney

His name was Sam. No middle name. No last name. Just plain Sam. For any traveler passing by the cotton fields on the outskirts of Huntsville, there was nothing to distinguish him from countless other slaves.

Simply another faceless slave, bent over in the hot sun picking cotton. A human chattel worth about five hundred dollars on the open market.

But if the traveler had paused in his saddle long enough to take a good look at this particular slave, he would have seen the face of a man destined to become one of the most controversial people in our country's history.

Although historians cannot agree on Sam's exact year of birth, most agree that it was probably around 1795. He was born in Southampton County, Virginia, on a plantation near Edom, owned by a planter named Peter Blow.

Peter Blow actually owned two plantations, one near town, and the other, a large spread of 860 acres, about twenty miles away, near a community called Sweet Gum.

As was common in the days of slavery, Sam was raised on the same plantation where his master lived. This was not an act of kindness; it was pure economics. Young slaves grew up to become adult slaves, and adult slaves were worth a lot of money. Infant mortality among slave children was high, so Blow, like most other planters of that day, kept the infants near the "big house" so he could constantly monitor

their health.

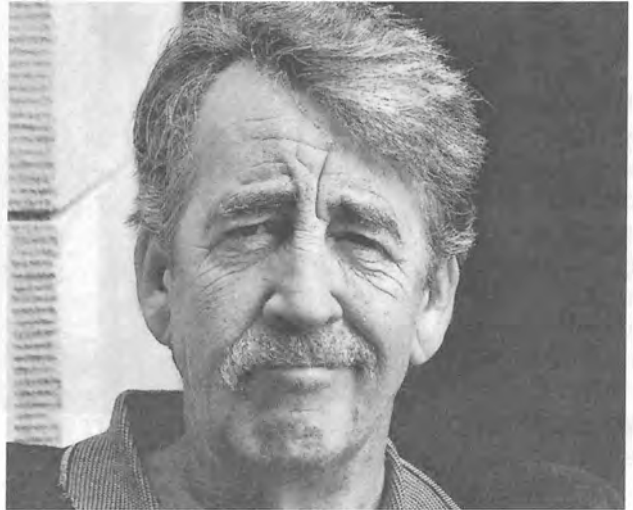
At the age of eight or nine, Sam was sent to Blow's other plantation. This farm was a typical cotton plantation, which

meant that everyone had to work in the fields. Although children of that age were too young for much physical labor, they were nonetheless valuable at many chores.

Southampton County had been the site of several small slave uprisings, and Sam undoubtedly heard stories of them as he labored in the fields. Many of Sam's fellow workers were from Africa and it was their stories of a long-lost freedom that inspired many of the young blacks. Ironically, on a nearby plantation just seven miles from where Sam labored, another slave also grew up listening to the same stories. This slave, named Nat Turner, would also end up in the history books.

Peter Blow's father had been moderately successful as a cotton grower and plantation owner. Unfortunately, by the time Peter inherited the land, the already-poor soil had been depleted by years of continuous cotton growing. In 1814, 1815, and 1816, young Peter had to borrow money to keep the plantations going. Not only was the soil practically useless by now, the price of Virginia cotton had plummeted to an all-time low.

To compound his problems, Peter had acquired a habit of excessive drinking. Normally a well-spoken, quiet man, he



became abusive when drinking. Unable to see his own faults as a poor businessman, he blamed his financial reversals on those around him, including his slaves.

By early 1818, Blow's creditors were demanding payment. He reasoned that the best thing to do was to go somewhere and start over again. He had been hearing reports of new land down in a territory called Alabama. This land was supposed to be reasonably cheap and fertile for growing cotton.

With a decision made, Blow began to sell off his Virginia holdings. Along with the land, he sold many of his slaves. Most of the money went to pay off creditors. He had no feelings for Sam the slave and therefore made arrangements to sell him also.

When Sam's mother, Hannah, heard of the impending sale she implored Blow not to go through with it. Hannah was Blow's house servant and had been given to him by his father. Blow reversed his resolution to sell Sam, most likely because he realized he would need field hands when he got to Alabama.

Books of Huntsville's early history are full of descriptions of new settlers migrating to Madison County. In one instance, probably typical of the Blows, a

writer tells of a family moving from Virginia with "the husband walking in front of an ox-pulled cart heavily laden with all sorts of household goods. Following the cart came the slaves, herding all types of fowl, milk cows, goats and other farmyard beasts."

On Oct. 5, 1819, Peter Blow purchased a quarter section of land from the United States Land Office for his new plantation in Alabama. Immediately, to be ready for the next planting season, he started Sam and the other slaves to clearing the land and erecting crude shelters against the oncoming winter.

Ironically, this quarter-section of land is now the home of Oakwood College, one of the most prestigious black colleges in the United States. When Oakwood College was founded, some of the students were housed in old log cabins that were originally slave quarters. Tradition has it that these cabins were some of the earliest buildings built on the grounds. If so, it is quite likely that some of the college students were housed in buildings that Sam helped build.

Though now in a new land, Peter Blow's fortunes and disposition had not improved. He had not calculated how much time and money it would take to start a new plantation. His disposition was probably not helped any by Sam. The slightly built slave had become "careless in dress, had a swaggering walk and a tendency to gamble," none of which endeared a black slave to a white master.

Whether it was the alcohol that Blow was consuming in prodigious amounts or Sam's troublesome behavior that caused Blow to begin to whip him, no one knows. Taylor Blow, Peter's son, in an interview with the St. Louis Dispatch, stated that one of his earliest memories was of being forced to watch while his father whipped Sam.

During this time, Sam met and began courting a young woman

who was a slave on a nearby plantation. They were soon married. Whether they were legally married or merely "jumped over the broomstick" is not known. All records and memories of this marriage are lost in the mist of time. Nothing indicates what her name was or whether their union produced children.

Most slave families were close and there is no reason to believe that Sam's was any different. When one of his younger brothers died, Sam, for some unexplained reason, perhaps affection, began using his name. Now, instead of Sam, he insisted on being called Dred.

By 1821, Peter Blow finally realized he was not cut out for the life of a cotton grower. A few miles west of Huntsville, in Florence, fortunes were being made. The new town had attracted investors such as Andrew Jackson, James Madison, John Brahan, and LeRoy Pope. The more Blow heard about the new settlement, the more he became determined to move there.

Short of cash, as usual, Blow borrowed \$2,000 from John Jones of Huntsville until he could sell his property. As security, he put up his land and slaves. Fortunately for Blow, a buyer by the name of James Camp soon came along and purchased the land for \$5,000, enabling him to repay

the loan.

While Blow was preparing to move, Sam, now known as Dred, was caught in a moral dilemma that had faced his people since the beginning of slavery: Obey the law of the land, move with his master, and leave his wife, or ...? There was no other choice. Some historians have claimed that Dred tried to run away during his sojourn in Huntsville, but no proof was ever offered.

In the end, Dred moved to Florence with his master, Peter Blow, and his wife remained in Huntsville. They would never see one another again.

At first, prosperity smiled on Blow. He gave up the idea of being a cotton planter and opened a hotel bearing his name in Florence. The Peter Blow Inn was evidently a leased building, since there is no record of purchase.

In his 1876 memoirs, Judge William Basil Wood identified the inn as one of Florence's early hotels and wrote that Dred served in this establishment as the hosteler, or keeper of the horses, for the guests.

Taylor Blow, Peter's son, held a deep affection for the slave now known as Dred. Though much of this affection probably stemmed from the natural relationship that occurs when two people grow up together, one must wonder how much of it was caused by a mu-



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tual disliking of the elder Blow's drinking and abusive nature.

For the first time, it appeared that Peter Blow was going to be a success. His inn had become a popular gathering place for travelers and by 1827 he had grown prosperous enough to buy two town lots in downtown Florence. The first was purchased Feb. 28, 1827, from the trustees of the Cypress Land Co. Less than a month later, he bought the adjoining lot from Patrick Andrews. Today, a parking garage and a church occupy the lots.

Florence, like other boom towns, began to temporarily decline after its first spurt of prosperity. By 1829 Blow had decided to again seek his fortunes elsewhere. This time his sights were set on St. Louis, Mo., the great gateway to the west.

At 53, he no longer had the grandiose visions he had as a young man. Now he was satisfied to become the proprietor of a men's boarding house. He owned five slaves, including Dred, and employed them in his new business.

Within two years Blow had run up large debts and was forced to close the hotel. Though the town was full of single men looking for a place to sleep, he just was not a business person. Suddenly, on June 23, 1832, Peter Blow took sick and died.

When his creditors heard of his death, they all demanded payment from the estate. The slave named Dred, being probably the most valuable property that Blow had owned, was seized and sold to satisfy the creditors' claims.

He was purchased for five hundred dollars by Dr. John Emerson, who was about to enter the military. Over the next decade, Dred traveled with Emerson, as his body servant, to numerous outposts throughout the West. At one such post, soldiers after observing Dred's small build (he was only 4 feet 11 inches) began to jokingly compare him with

General Winfield Scott, a veritable giant of a man who stood well over six feet. The nickname stuck and Sam, the slave who had changed his name to Dred while living in Huntsville, became known in our history books as Dred Scott.

In 1846, Dred Scott filed a petition in the Missouri court at St. Louis. In his suit, Dred maintained that as he had lived in states and territories where slavery was illegal, he was therefore no longer a slave. His case would drag on in court for almost 10 years, capturing the imagination of every man, woman and child in the country.

The decision handed down by the Supreme Court, called the Dred Scott Decision, ruled against Dred and served to inflame the already hostile tension between

the North and the South.

Most historians agree that the Dred Scott Decision helped to put the country on the collision course that led to the Civil War.

Dred Scott died on May 4, 1858, in St. Louis. On the preceding day, in a town 120 miles away, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas resumed their arguments of the Dred Scott Decision in the fourth of their historic debates. Lincoln's arguments in this debate were a major factor in his winning the Presidency of the United States.



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Ringling Brothers Circus Goes Up in Flames -1916

Merriment Turns To Tragedy

Huntsville: What started as a day of merriment for people attending the Ringling Brothers Circus here quickly turned into tragedy as flames swept the compound.

Over 600 people were on the circus grounds when a fire, apparently caused by a carelessly discarded cigarette, and fueled by high winds, swept through the grounds.

The main damage was concentrated near the stock pens where immense quantities of fodder had been stowed for the livestock.

The stock handlers, who had been prepared for such an emergency, immediately began blindfolding the horses and leading them to safety.

Though there is no report of human casualties, 37 horses burned to death in the conflagration. Scores more were

severely injured.

Several of Huntsville's doctors were pressed into service in an attempt to save the injured animals but in many cases it was too late. Shots rang out through the day as more of the animals were put out of their misery.

A spokesman from Ringling Brothers Circus stated the show will continue its run here in

Huntsville with no interruption of scheduled shows. Agents for the circus are already in negotiations with local livestock dealers to replace the horses.

The fiery blaze, along with the heavy smoke, was seen all across the county.

Citizens in New Hope, upon seeing the smoke, immediately raised a contingent of volunteers and dispatched them to Huntsville.





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We appreciate you all so much. Best wishes from us to all of our readers for a warm and safe 2012!

"Old Huntsville" magazine staff



The Story of Dr. Constantine Blackmon Sanders

by William Sibley

In 1876, Rev. G. W. Mitchell wrote the book "X + Y = Z or the Sleeping Preacher". That book was published by W. C. Smith of New York. In 1981, the late William Pickens Drake of Big Cove, a friend of the writer of this article, wrote the Centennial Edition of that book. This writer accompanied Mr. Drake to Decatur, Alabama where Mr. Drake interviewed Mr. Maynard Laymon, assistant to the editor of the Decatur Daily. The story that is presented in the following pages is taken from Mr. Drake's book, which was copyrighted by William P. Drake and published by Drake Publications of Owens Cross Roads, Alabama in 1981.

Rev. G. W. Mitchell speaks of Dr. Sanders' life as "the most wonderful, mysterious, mental phenomenon, fully authenticated by living witnesses." The directory contains the names of sixty-nine witnesses — "Gentlemen and ladies of intelligence."

Constantine Blackmon Sanders was born on July 2, 1831 about sixteen miles north of Huntsville, Alabama. That was in the Hazel Green area. He had eight sisters and one brother. Their parents were James and Rebecca Sanders.

When Constantine was only six years old, his father died, which naturally caused a hardship for Mrs. Sanders and the children. The mother reared the children well and trained them "...in the way of industry, honesty, truth, and piety."

Young Constantine was de-

scribed as a cheerful child who had a gift for music. In his early childhood, he became interested in preaching the gospel and had a habit of preaching juvenile funerals over dead pigs, chickens, etc. and baptizing young boys. He became known as "The Preacher."

On Sept. 5, 1851, at the age of twenty, Constantine attended a revival at a "country church, some twelve miles north of Huntsville," Alabama. During those revival meetings, the young man "presented himself at the altar for prayer and instructions." He made a profession of faith and joined the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of "the Concord Congregation." In 1876, J. W. Pruitt wrote that he witnessed Constantine being converted about twenty years earlier at the now (2012) defunct Union Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church which was located on Grimwood Road in the Hazel Green community. (That church was later moved

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Jeff Walker, Proprietor

Deja Moo: The feeling that you've heard this bull before.

to the campus of the University of Alabama in Huntsville). It is possible that Mr. Pruitt's memory of the years that had elapsed was incorrect or that Constantine had already made his profession of faith at the Concord Church and was praying with others at the altar. On Oct. 8, 1852, after being active in the church and the cause of religion, Constantine was taken under the care of the Presbytery of Tennessee "as a candidate for the gospel ministry." He was licensed to preach on Oct. 5, 1855 and was ordained March 22, 1862.

In his preparation for the ministry, Constantine enrolled in a school at Elkton, Tennessee where Captain F. M. Barbour was a teacher. Constantine boarded with the A. M. Harlow family who lived nearby and Constantine's studies showed "flattering prospects" for the future. He was described as a young man with a "well developed, vigorous, robust body and constitution."

After being in school for only a few months Constantine, suffered a severe attack of illness and Mrs. Harlow reported that he was "taken quite sick of a flux." He also developed typhoid fever and was confined to his bed, where he experienced severe convulsions that affected his whole system. Often he would exclaim, "It will surely kill me", and "My head feels like it has opened!"

Those statements caused great concern for Mrs. Harlow who examined Constantine's head and discovered what appeared to be "a separation of the bone, nearly wide enough to bury my little finger." Incidents

such as this would occur quite frequently and each time, the "opening would almost close up."

Immediately after experiencing one such convulsion, Constantine said to Mrs. Harlow, "There will be a burying here before tomorrow evening (it being in the afternoon), but it will not be any of your family." To Mrs. Harlow's astonishment, a Mr. McNeely rode up on his horse and requested the "privilege of burying a corpse in our private cemetery," which was granted. Mrs. Harlow reported that there was no way that Constantine could have known about the death. That was the first of many instances where Constantine made accurate predictions, told stories about happenings that were taking place at the time and locating valuable lost items.

On Oct. 29, 1856, Constantine married Miss Duanna White, and they became the parents of six healthy children. Mrs. Sanders reported that she spent many sleepless nights attending her husband when it appeared each time that he would surely

die, but miraculously he would recuperate.

In 1859, Constantine was in a camp meeting at the Concord Cumberland Presbyterian Church near Hazel Green, Alabama, and while in the altar, praying "among the penitents," he was suddenly seized with convulsions, falling to the ground and "passing into a peculiar sleep."



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a good tackle - you can
hear it."**

Knute Rickne/Notre Dame

The incidents in which Dr. Sanders' unusual powers were revealed are too numerous to mention but they include his hearing conversations that were occurring miles away, locating lost items, including a gold watch and chain, keys, and silver pencil, among others. He also told of a person being struck by lightning, found money dropped from a train, and located many other lost items. Nobody could understand how Constantine could help in these matters and nobody could explain it.

Dr. Sanders' ministry included churches at Mooresville, Meridianville, Concord, New Market, Ewing Chapel at Maysville, and churches in Tennessee and Mississippi and in Jackson County, Alabama.

In 1869, the session at the now (2012) defunct Ewing Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Maysville called Dr. Sanders to pastor their church. He pastored that church until 1880 and the session was made up of very learned men. Among those deacons and elders were two medical doctors. The session during the period of 1869-1880 was composed of D. L. Acuff, L. F. Lamberson, John Giles, John S. Blair, J. F. Morrow, B. F. Lawler, H. P. Bone, Jehu Lawler, and A. F. Blair.

These men lived in the town of Maysville, which was once a progressive town with a Mayor and Aldermen form of government. After Dr. Sanders had been serving the Ewing Chapel congregation for six years, the session of that church wrote, "We have entire confidence in his integrity, veracity, and piety. He is highly respected in our community and tenderly loved by our congregation."

In 1880 the session at Ewing Chapel accepted the resignation of Dr. Sanders. Dr. Sanders sold his house "Rural Hill" and seventeen acres to Dr. J. M. Laymon and moved to Jackson County,

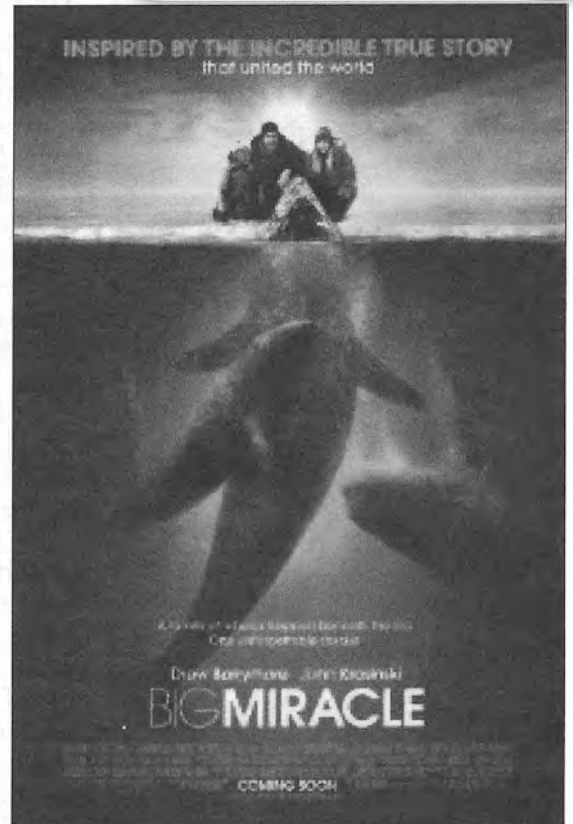
Alabama and did preaching at Scottsboro and Stevenson. In 1906, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church officially merged with the U. S. A. Presbyterian Church. Both churches continued with their ministries but Dr. Sanders joined the U. S. A. Church. In 1907, Dr. Sanders was listed as "dismissed and seceding to other denominations."

During his lifetime, Dr. Sanders practiced dentistry, including surgical dentistry, but he is best remembered for the 10,000 sermons he preached and the accurate predictions he made, and his ability to find lost objects while in his unexplained trances. Many stories have been written about this unusual man of God, but none of those writers could explain Dr. Sanders' unusual powers. He died April 14, 1911 at the age of "79 years, 9 months, 12 days," and he and his wife are buried in the Stevenson, Alabama City Cemetery.



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Around Town in 1911

Madison County Needs a Jail

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J. E. Pierce, Editor and General Manager, the Huntsville Daily Times, 118 and 120 East Holmes Street - Telephone the business office - 38

Mrs. R. C. Williams Kills Herself at Farley

Mrs. R. C. Williams, of Mobile, committed suicide yesterday by drinking carbolic acid at the home of her husband, Dr. Williams, who has been practicing medicine at Farley, Ala. for the past three months, having arrived here from Scale, Ala.

Dr. Williams is a young man about 23 years old and is well liked by the medical profession here, but none of them knew he was married. He had never mentioned anything about a

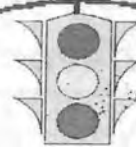
wife. Yesterday morning Mrs. Williams mysteriously reached the city over the Southern Railway and remained at the local depot from 2 o'clock in the morning until daylight when she secured a double rig and proceeded to the home of her husband at Farley.

Dr. Williams was away calling on some patients when the young wife arrived. She sat and waited for him with the evident intention of killing him, and shortly the doctor arrived. He was much surprised to see his wife and gave her a welcome and conversed for a few minutes, when she suggest suggested that she had some things

out in the buggy that she needed to be brought in. Dr. Williams courageously arose and started for the buggy.

In the meantime Mrs. Williams saw a bottle of carbolic acid on the mantle, took it down and swallowed the contents. When the doctor returned he found his wife unconscious and immediately telephoned for Dr. Dryer, who stayed with the unfortunate woman until death relieved her. The remains will be interred in Mobile. Dr. Williams does not make any statement about any former trouble between the two, but claims he knows of no cause for her tragic act.

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