

CHARLES BURNS

Charles Burns once wrote that he was four years old when World War I started. The researcher did not interview him. However, he will tell the reader about himself through a “jewel” that was found.

Finding a Jewel

When a researcher constantly digs, sometimes a jewel is found. The jewel found during the course of this research was an account Charles Burns had handwritten on notebook paper. Actually, two jewels were found—one led to the other. The first was Raneë’ Pruitt in the Heritage Room at the Huntsville Public Library. Raneë’ seems to remember every book and paper in the Heritage Room and how to find it; in addition, the researcher observed that she assists, with patience and interest, each person who approaches her desk for help in searching books, records, or web sites.

Charles Burns was interested in his ancestors. As discussed in the section of this manuscript on the Horton family, Charles sought to document his family line that came down from Jack Horton and Amanda Jacobs (his great grandparents). Charles became acquainted with Raneë’ because she assisted him in his research.

In the letter written from Chicago where he resided with his family in 1993, Charles Burns thanked Raneë’ Pruitt for the assistance she had given him in the past and asked if she would assist him in finding information about William Horton (the father of Andrew Jackson [Jack] Horton). He also inquired about a copy of the will of William Horton. He was piecing together the dates and records to establish the facts about Amanda Jacobs, who was said to have been purchased for \$900 by a Horton. (Felix Lanier commented to the researcher that Charles’ maternal grandfather Everett Horton looked “just like a white man.”) Raneë’ had in a file photocopied pages of the will she had sent to Charles.

In an article written by Ed Peters, reporting an interview with Charles Burns, published in the July 8, 1987 issue of the *Redstone Rocket*, Burns said he was writing a book “on the life of Huntsville and my folks.” At some point in time, Charles Burns told Raneë’ Pruitt he wanted to write a book about his family history. He gave Raneë’ a photocopy of 32 handwritten pages. Raneë’ kept them in the file with her correspondence with him.

In the spring of 2005, Raneë’ Pruitt showed the pages written by Burns to the researcher and allowed her to photocopy them. As far as Raneë’ knew, Charles Burns had not published the book he wanted to write. It is reasonable to assume that had he published a book, he would have sent a copy to Raneë’ at the Heritage Room of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

The researcher endeavored to contact Charles Burns—she asked some of the elders of the former Pond Beat community if they knew who might have his telephone number. One