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**"TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY": THE SURVIVAL OF A TRUE NEW DEAL**

by Freeda B. Darnell ..... 1

Freeda Darnell is the immediate past President of the Historic Huntsville Foundation. The research for this article was done in an Alabama History class at UAH.

**Illustrations:**

1. "Tennessee Valley Authority", a mural painted by Xavier Gonzalez, hangs in the Courtroom of the U. S. Post Office, downtown Huntsville. This project was completed under the auspices of the WPA of the U. S. Treasury Department in 1937.
2. This print was made from an 8" x 10" negative of a photograph made by Xavier Gonzalez in 1937. In order to be paid, the artist had to furnish the Treasury Department a photograph of the mural hanging in the Courtroom of the Huntsville Post Office.

Photographs courtesy of Freeda B. Darnell.

**TREVANION BARLOW DALLAS: HIS HUNTSVILLE CONNECTIONS**

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Mike Kaylor is Showtime Editor of the Huntsville Times and author of THE BEST OF HUNTSVILLE.



"TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY:"

THE SURVIVAL OF A TRUE NEW DEAL

by Freeda B. Darnell

The mid-30s of the twentieth century was a time of struggle for survival. In 1937 Balcolm Greene, in his essay "Society and the Modern Artist," made the comment that "the problem of every citizen contributing to the national and the general human good is matched in importance, dramatically as never before by the individual's problem of subsistence."

Indeed, survival was on everyone's mind as the national economy faltered, farm prices dropped, the jobless rate doubled and war in Europe seemed imminent. The country was reeling under all these adverse conditions. The net worth per family in 1935 was only \$291.00, and just securing enough food, clothing and shelter seemed uncertain.

According to Chet La More, "To the artists, 1929 does not represent an abrupt change, but merely a point of intensification in the process which has slowly been forcing them downward on the economic scale". Both the art market and the stock market had collapsed. The art market collapsed because it had come to depend solely on the upper economic group. The artists were really at the bottom of the economic ladder and from that vantage point they at last realized that it was necessary to have support from the entire population. This realization led to the first Artists' Union, which demanded and received government support for art through

the Public Works of Art Project. All over the country artists were organizing themselves into unions, but no record could be found of such groups in Huntsville.

Economic conditions in Huntsville were the same as those in the rest of the country. There had been a bumper cotton crop, but the grade was bad. Huntsville was experiencing bread lines and strikes. Some banks had folded and<sup>4</sup> construction was almost at a standstill. The only building of importance was the construction of the Post Office in downtown Huntsville, which was completed in 1936 at a cost of \$180,000.<sup>5</sup> The architects were Miller, Martin and Love of Birmingham. Mr. Love lived in Huntsville and served as building superintendent.<sup>6</sup>

October 1937 saw Huntsville in the throes of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which he and Congress had implemented in an attempt to relieve the United States of its economic hardships and to renew its faith in the democratic systems. Several New Deal agencies were represented in Madison County. One of these, the Farm Security Administration, reported that the net worth per family in 1937 had risen to \$371.53. Another was the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Its policy of taxing the processors of farm products in order to pay farmers not to produce as much as before had been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.<sup>8</sup> Two Civilian Conservation Corps camps on Monte Sano were hard at work building cabins for the state park, while another CCC Camp at McClung Avenue built a rock wall around Maple Hill Cemetery. The public welfare office and the Works Progress Administration Officers were moved to the Elks Building in October. The

National Youth Administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority were two much-needed and highly appreciated agencies. All these agencies helped speed recovery from the economic ills, provided help for those in need due to the depression and promoted reforms in financial, agricultural, business and industrial practices. The TVA, in particular, developed north Alabama's resources and stabilized the area to a degree.

Franklin Roosevelt's prevailing sense of noblesse oblige, the rationale of political radicalism and the strong spirit of nationalism all influenced the federal government to subsidize artists through two of the New Deal agencies, the Public Works of Art Program (PWAP) of the Treasury Department and the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. The President's chief concern was helping others and bestowing a feeling of art appreciation, while political radicals wanted to create cultural awareness in the masses and establish an art form which reflected their radical ideology. Those Americans experiencing patriotic self-examination thought art could create a new concern for locale and the vernacular and promote a uniquely American art culture, by using as subject matter American scenes. Even though there were differences of opinions among these two agencies as to their aspirations regarding art, generally they both served to sustain the skills of artists during a time when there was no private support of art and not much public feeling that federal art patronage should be considered.<sup>10</sup>

The Treasury Department's Division of Procurement, Section of Painting and

Sculpture, was always interested in securing the best quality of art for the embellishment of public buildings. They rejected the more didactic art of the modernists and Social Realists, who advocated freedom from the past and chose instead to use their art to depict the misery of the day. The Section of Painting and Sculpture, which had evolved from the PWAP, wanted to use art work that would reflect the progress made by the New Deal programs.<sup>11</sup> On July 21, 1936, the Sections' Superintendent, Edward B. Rowan, approached Mr. Xavier Gonzalez regarding a commission to paint a mural to be placed over the judge's bench in the Federal Courtroom in the Huntsville Post Office, providing he would submit a 2" scale color drawing of a suitable subject.<sup>12</sup>

One wonders at this approach to Mr. Gonzalez. One of the avowed goals of government subsidy was to relieve a numb and desperate artistic community, indeed, to protect skills that might otherwise dissipate through disuse. Mr. Gonzalez was gainfully employed in a field wherein his talents were put to use, for he was professor of art at Sophie Newcomb College, Tulane University. He also was teaching at State Teachers College, Alpine, Texas, during the summer.<sup>13</sup>

The Treasury Department had previously announced that it would select and supervise artists and foster local initiative through competition. Mr. Gonzalez, definitely not a local artist, was an immigrant from Spain, naturalized as a citizen in 1930. There was no competition for this art work. Mr. Gonzalez had won honorable mention in the competition for decorating the Courthouse and Post Office at Jackson, Mississippi. Indeed, Superintendent Rowan considered Mr. Gonzalez

an artist of recognized talent and entitled to receive this commission for a mural without competition.<sup>14</sup>

Certainly his willingness to use the uplifting aspects of art to portray the uplifting aspects of the New Deal did not lessen Mr. Gonzalez' chances of receiving this commission. This was a time when other artists' paintings were showing the ugly incidents in American life, such as police brutality and evictions, in an attempt to dramatize the injustices to the working class.<sup>15</sup> The first prospectus offered by Mr. Gonzalez showed symbolic characters surrounded by the four visual elements of air, earth, fire and water, done in semi-abstract, stylized design and form.<sup>16</sup> The Treasury Department's response to this idea was to say that the water and other elements tended to cheapen the value of the work and to suggest that it was too much like the decoration of a hotel lobby. Mr. Rowan wrote back asking if Mr. Gonzalez could not put in<sup>17</sup> more emphasis on the realities of life.

Mr. Gonzalez was clever enough to use information secured through the local Chamber of Commerce in his next scale drawing.<sup>18</sup> Bit by bit the Treasury Department office in Washington deleted and added to the subject of the painting. After the fifth proposal submitted by Mr. Gonzalez, the Treasury Department granted the commission for "Tennessee Valley Authority" on February 2, 1937.<sup>19</sup> Its subject matter reflects the agency's conservative, academic point of view--a viewpoint that abhorred any contemporary art and embraced art that possessed universality, beauty, classical ideals and the newer idea of promoting

American patriotism.<sup>20</sup> The mural-painting was intended to further a sense of local history and show the progress made in the area due to government programs.

"Tennessee Valley Authority" met the governmental ideal of the American scene. More precisely, it portrayed the ideal North Alabama scene. The final product is a large painting rather than an actual mural 14 feet by 15 feet, and weighing 135 pounds. Weighty in subject matter and large in scope, it captivated the viewer with its symbolism and statement.

Total understanding of the statement the artist wished to make and his ability to involve the viewer were readily evident. He used strong frontal placement of the central figures and sharp perspective to place locations in the background. These arrangements were both visually and symbolically important. The inclusion of locations was easy to understand. The presence of TVA was indicated by the two dams, Wilson and Norris, and this made the viewer aware of the important government work and progress in this area. Beautiful mountains, plenteous valleys and the Tennessee River reminded one of the area's natural resources. The land, shown plowed and planted in furrows and surrounded by rock walls, was also used to call attention to government work in the areas of soil conservation, erosion prevention and reforestation. Important government work in the area of business services and banking were symbolized by buildings such as The Times, First National Bank (First Alabama) and the Federal Post Office.

The people, their poses, their

placement, their pursuits, were indicative of the state of affairs in the Tennessee Valley. Male/female, child/adult, black/white, standing/sitting, front view/side view/back view--every variation was useful to the artist. The grouping was also interesting in that the people were huddled or related in space and perhaps symbolized a need for closeness, yet at the same time each was looking outward in a different direction, to indicate a seeking quality. The frontal view of one male figure, immediately behind the apical placement of the corn stalk, served to thrust agriculture, and scientific agriculture at that, in the very face of the viewer. This male figure held the blade of the corn as if it were a book, thus symbolizing the progress made in agriculture through new scientific methods. The other male figure showed the viewer his broad, muscled back in order to remind one of the hard and back-breaking labor entailed in various industries, represented by the iron anvil and shop hammer.

The standing young girl with a basket of fruit represented rising youth and fertility. Even in 1984 one could think of the National Youth Administration and good farm produce just by looking at her. Work in the arts was implied by the inclusion of one woman decorating pottery. A patchwork quilt represented home crafts and served to draw the viewer's eye back to the frontal plane. There one could dwell on the other central female figure holding a baby, which illustrated those most-American ideals of motherhood and happy home life.

Any critique of the mural painting would be incomplete if the somber colors used by the artist were not mentioned. Somber colors

for somber times, perhaps? And the inclusion of cotton as an agricultural product could only reflect the government's plea to the farmers to diversify, diversify! By his use of people and local lore Gonzalez considered man's place in the social order and commented on the area's development due to government influence.

Mr. Gonzalez shipped the large painting to Huntsville and came to install it himself. He usually used a mixture of white lead and varnish to glue a mural to a wall. He stated in his correspondence to Mr. Rowan that he would use the new method suggested in Government Bulletin #13. The new method was a formula of Dextrine and asbestos.<sup>21</sup> However, when he arrived he discovered the wall was made of cork and plaster and he decided to use his own formula of lead and varnish. Ten days later Mr. Gonzalez' final payment was held up because it was reported to the Treasury Department that the mural was becoming detached, and he made<sup>22</sup> a second trip to Huntsville to re-hang it.

The government subsidy of artists and artwork in truth did aid the artist in question. This commission helped Mr. Gonzalez develop his talent, both as an artist and as an art teacher. During the 300 days it took to complete the work, he informed Mr. Rowan he had used the experience to set up a workshop atmosphere for his students. He set up problems for them whereby they were to compete for projects for the Treasury Department. They had to research the subject and prepare scale drawings and color charts. Five of his students actually entered competitions in El Paso, Texas and Miami, Florida, some of them sucessfully.<sup>23</sup>

During that time Mr. Gonzalez won First Prize in an exhibition of paintings by Southern Artists, and was invited to exhibit at the International Watercolor Show in Chicago. Indeed, his career took an upward turn from that time forward. In 1946 he received the Audubon Artist Gold Medal of Honor, and was awarded the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1947. He was granted an Amercian Academy of Arts and Letters Grant, and a Ford Foundation Grant in 1965.<sup>24</sup> In 1963 he was awarded the prestigious commission to complete a 10-panel mural, The History of Technology, for the school of Engineering and Architecture at the City College, University of New York.<sup>25</sup> By 1978 his work was in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York City, the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Boston Museum, plus others. In 1978 he was the recipient of the National Arts Club's 79th Annual Award. At that time he was a member of the faculty at the Art Students League. In the summer of 1984 the 86-year-old artist was honored at a three-day celebration of the reopening of the Lakefront Airport in New Orleans, where his three-panel mural entitled The History of Flight was the principal decoration.<sup>26</sup>

Madison County benefited from many of the New Deal's programs, such as the National Labor Relations Act, TVA, and Social Security. Bridges, beautiful rock walls and cabins built by the Works Progress Administration remain to this day for all to enjoy. Public awareness of their origins could help to see that they remain for future generations.

Throughout the years not much notice was taken of the painting "Tennessee Valley Authority". When the architect of the building, Mr. Hugh Martin, was consulted about the placement of a work of art he said, "The space behind the Judge's bench will not be seen very often by the general "run" of citizen as the Court<sup>2</sup> is only in session two weeks of each year". Mr. Martin was right. Some of Mr. Gonzalez's other WPA works and the works of other WPA artists were painted over or otherwise destroyed by unappreciative people. Interested citizens should devise a way for an important work of art such as Xavier Gonzalez' "Tennessee Valley Authority" to be seen and appreciated. Only interested citizens could ensure its survival.

THE END

ENDNOTES

1 Balcomb Greene, "Society and the Modern Artist" WPA Art for the Millions (New York Graphic Society, 1975) p. 263.

2 The Huntsville Times, October 8, 1937.

3 Chet La More, "The Artists' Union of America": WPA Art for the Millions (New York Graphic Society, 1975) p. 237.

4 The Huntsville Times, October 5, 1937.

5 Commemorative Album: Huntsville 1805-1955, (Huntsville, Alabama, 1955) p. 8.

6 Edward B. Rowan, letter to Xavier Gonzalez, August 18, 1936, (Record Group 121, Records of the Public Building Service,

Records of the Section of Fine Arts and its Predecessors, Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934-43, the National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C.) Case File No. T1p 1657. Hereafter referred to as Case File No. 1657.

<sup>7</sup> The Huntsville Times, October 8, 1937.

<sup>8</sup> David A. Shannon, "The New Deal": The World Book Encyclopedia, (Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1972), p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> The Huntsville Times, October 5, 8, 18, 1937.

<sup>10</sup> Richard D. McKinzie, The New Deal for Artists (Princeton University Press, 1973, p. x-xi.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Rowan, letter to Xavier Gonzalez, July 21, 1936 (Case File No. 1657).

<sup>13</sup> Paul Cummings, A Dictionary of Contemporary American Artists (St. Martins Press, New York, 1973) p. 129. Mr. Gonzalez studied at the Art Institute of Chicago 1921-23.

<sup>14</sup> Edward B. Rowan, letter to Maltby Sykes of Rockville, NY, November 4, 1936 (Case File No. 1657). Mr. Sykes had asked to be considered for this job and was refused.

<sup>15</sup> David Shapiro, Social Realism: Art as a Weapon (Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1973) p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Xavier Gonzalez, letter to Edward B.

Rowan, November 4, 1936 (Case File No. 1657).

17 Edward B. Rowan, letter to Xavier Gonzalez, January 14, 1937 (Case File No. 1657).

18 Xavier Gonzalez, letter to Freeda B. Darnell, January 18, 1978.

19 Treasury Department Contract, signed by Xavier Gonzalez, February 15, 1937 (Case File No. 1657).

20 Richard D. McKenzie, The New Deal for Artists, p. 22.

21 Xavier Gonzalez, letter to Edward B. Rowan, September 28, 1937 (Case File No. 1657).

22 Xavier Gonzalez, telegram to Edward B. Rowan (Case File No. 1657).

23 Xavier Gonzalez, letter to Edward B. Rowan (Case File No. 1657).

24 Who's Who in American Art, (R. R. Booker Co., New York, 1976) p. 208.

25 Xavier Gonzalez, telephone interview with Freeda B. Darnell, November 26, 1978, New York

26 Xavier Gonzalez, telephone interview with Freeda B. Darnell, October 8, 1984.

27 Hugh Martin, letter to Edward B. Rowan, October 19, 1936 (Case File No. 1657).

TREVANION BARLOW DALLAS:  
HIS HUNTSVILLE CONNECTIONS

by Mike Kaylor

"...In short, he was a highly educated, honorable, unfailingly courteous gentleman -- a man of the world the like of whom are seldom met."<sup>1</sup>

Those words eulogized Trevanion Barlow Dallas on the pages of the evening newspaper in Nashville, Tennessee, on June 20, 1902. The story was not front-page news; it appeared on page 7. It was the city's final tribute, though, to a man who had promoted its industrial causes for more than 30 years. The words marked the end of a life that began as a last farewell to a Naval commodore and spanned 58 years through two wars, two marriages and many business endeavors. As his finances dwindled during the final days, Dallas remained unshaken. He continued to coordinate industrial activities with utmost efficiency. The greatest memorial to this man standing today is a 300,000 square foot structure on the northeast side of Huntsville, Alabama, that originally housed the Dallas Manufacturing Company. Its present tenant is Genesco, a Nashville-based shoe company that employs 75 men and women on the site, warehousing and distributing shoes for such brands as Wrangler, Laredo, J.C. Penney and Sears & Roebuck.<sup>2</sup>

Dallas was the grandson of Alexander James Dallas, a Philadelphia lawyer who served as United States Secretary of the Treasury under President James Madison in

1814. Trevanion's father was Alexander James Dallas, a naval hero who fired the first shot in the War of 1812 with England.<sup>3</sup> During the administration of James K. Polk, Trevanion's uncle, George Mifflin Dallas, was Vice President of the United States. As presiding officer of the Senate, he pressed for the hasty admission of Texas to the Union, and for his efforts,<sup>4</sup> Texans named Dallas County after him. Other noble relatives of Trevanion Barlow Dallas included his aunt, Princess Murat, wife of Prince Achille Murat, who was the son of France's King of Naples and Caroline Bonapart.

#### THE DALLAS FAMILY

Trevanion Barlow Dallas was born on September 11, 1843. His father, Commodore Alexander James Dallas, had requested a three- to four-year assignment as leader of the Pacific Squadron in the U.S. Navy during the spring before Trevanion was born. The commodore left for Peru without ever seeing his child. The following summer, on June 3, 1844, Commodore Alexander James Dallas died in Callao, Peru, of<sup>5</sup> what was called "paralysis." He was 53. The senior Dallas had been a sailor since the age of 14. He had joined as a midshipman in 1850 and advanced through the ranks to the highest level allowed at that time. He was described as "arrogant, independent and solitary -- a graceful dancer and an excellent conversationalist who spoke several languages." He had a fiery temper and was often callous toward his family.<sup>6</sup>

In 1811, he fired on the English man-of-war "Little Belt," the first hostile

blast of the not-yet-declared War of 1812. The next year, he was cleared of any wrongdoing by a court of <sup>7</sup>enquiry and commissioned a full lieutenant. During the late 1820s, he was sent to Pensacola to establish a naval station there, which he commanded off and on during the remainder of his career. Commodore Dallas was married in 1821 to Henrietta Meade, daughter of Richard Worsam Meade and sister of the famed Union General George Gordon Meade. The couple had two children, Richard Worsam Dallas, who died in 1827 at the age of 3, and Alexander James Dallas, who fought in the 23rd infantry during the Civil War and died childless in the 1890s. The first Mrs. Dallas died in Florida in 1831.<sup>8</sup> Commodore Dallas was married a second time, in 1836, to Mary Byrd Willis, daughter of Col. Byrd C. Willis of Fredricksburg, Virginia. The second Mrs. Dallas bore three children, Bayard Charles Dallas, in 1837, Mary Willis Dallas, born about 1840, and Trevanion Dallas, in 1843.

Trevanion was named for his uncle, the youngest and probably favorite brother of his father. He had been a lawyer and later an associate judge of the district court in Pittsburgh before dying of scarlet fever in 1841. Dallas' father Alexander was the oldest son of Alexander James Dallas, a lawyer of Philadelphia. The elder Dallas' second son was George Mifflin Dallas, who became vice president of the United States under James K. Polk in 1844. He also served as a minister to Russia and was sent to England at the start of the Civil War to lobby against Britain's <sup>10</sup>recognition of the Confederacy, in 1861.

Alexander James Dallas, father of Commodore Dallas and George Mifflin Dallas, was born in Jamaica in 1759 and died in Trenton, New Jersey in 1817. He served three terms as Secretary of State of Pennsylvania, and in the early 1800s, President Thomas Jefferson appointed him U.S. attorney for the Eastern Department of Pennsylvania. In 1814, he became Secretary to the Treasury under President James Madison and saved the nation from bankruptcy by reorganizing the federal bank. He then became Secretary of War from March 1815 to November 1816, charged with reducing the military to a peacetime force.<sup>11</sup>

The Dallas family has been traced to William Dallas I of Budgate in 1458. Trevanion Barlow Dallas is said to be a great-great-great grandson of Sir Nicholas Travanion of Cornwall, England, and a great-great grandson of Dr. Barlow, a clergyman of the Church<sup>12</sup> of England and an astronomer of his time.

Through his background, Dallas had the advantages of a good education and wide range of experiences. His travels, however, took him away from those comforts, into challenges in both the social and business world. When war broke out in America during 1861, Dallas split from the fold of his aristocratic kin and headed to Florida to join the Confederacy. After the war ended, he traveled in Europe and joined yet another conflict. He finally settled in Nashville, where he put his abilities as an organizer to work in industry.

## THE YOUNG TREVANION

Little information is available about the childhood of Trevanion Barlow Dallas. Accounts of his death say he was born in Washington, D.C. After his father's death, Dallas and his mother remained in Florida, where they were listed in the 1850 and 1860 U.S. Census as residents of Pensacola. He apparently was greatly influenced through the years by his mother's family, the Willises, who lived in the areas around Richmond and Fredricksburg, Virginia. He is said to have graduated from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.<sup>13</sup> When the Civil War broke out, Dallas was forced to choose sides. His father's relatives and his half-brother in Pennsylvania were all staunch supporters of the Union, and he was offered a commission in the United States Army. His sentiments lay, however, with his mother's family in Virginia, and at the first call to arms, he left the university, returned to Florida and joined the forces of Gen. H. H. Chase as a private.<sup>14</sup> Dallas fought with the Confederate forces at Forts McRee and Barrancas in Florida, as well as the bloody attacks at Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island in November of 1861. He also fought in the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862, and after that followed the Army of Tennessee through the remainder of the war.

Even in war, Dallas put the business sense he had inherited from his grandfather to good use. He became a lieutenant in the ordnance division under Gen. T. C. Hindman. His reports to Lt. Col. H. Oladsowki, chief of ordnance for the Army of Tennessee, show how he conducted his inventories of

ammunition in a businesslike manner. "The expenditure of ammunition can only be arrived at by approximation, as the brigade supplied themselves once from the ordnance wagons of the enemy." The 20-year-old lieutenant added that "before closing this report, I would like to call your attention to the fact ..." that several cases of .69 caliber shells seemed to have been mislabeled.<sup>15</sup> The report was written following an attack at Missionary Ridge, October 24, 1863. Eighteen months later, on April 30, 1865, Dallas made his last inventory of the Civil War as part of S. D. Lee's corps. At that time, he surrendered more than 1,000 weapons and nearly 40,000 rounds of ammunition to the Union forces.<sup>16</sup>

Following the surrender, Dallas served six months as a naval engineer in the yard at Pensacola that his father had established.<sup>17</sup> He then went to Paris to visit his aunt, Princess Murat. While there, he enjoyed a rich social life among the aristocracy. But in 1867, when Austria and Prussia went to war, Dallas joined the staff of a Prussian general as an aide-de-camp and followed the combat troops.<sup>18</sup> When a brief period of peace returned to Prussia, Dallas headed back to America, where he found employment in the banking business in New York City. After a brief stay there and in Virginia, Dallas moved to Nashville in 1869 and went to work for Hugh Douglas & Company, a dry-goods firm. The same year, he married the daughter of Hugh Douglas, Ella A. Douglas.<sup>19</sup> They had one child, Hugh Douglas Dallas, before the first Mrs. Dallas died on March 10, 1873, in Pensacola, Florida.<sup>20</sup> Dallas continued to work for Hugh Douglas & Company through 1879, even after he married Ida Bonner, daughter of

Dr. Moses H. Bonner of <sup>21</sup>Fayetteville, Tennessee, on January 6, 1876.

Through his early years in Nashville, Dallas owned various pieces of property, but usually lived in a boarding house. He settled his first wife in a home near the intersection of Capital Avenue and Park Street, but after she died he lived there only a few years before moving into the Nicholson House. Nashville city directories of the period show that he and his second wife changed residences several times during the next 12 years, before finally buying a lot in 1892 at the intersection of West End Avenue and Vanderbilt Street.<sup>22</sup> There they built a fine brownstone house.<sup>22</sup> Dallas and his second wife had two sons and three daughters. The oldest daughter, Anne Willis Dallas, married Guilford Dudley of Nashville. The second daughter, Trevania, married Hugh Blair-Smith of Nashville. The oldest son, Alexander James, became a public accountant in Nashville, and the second son, George Mifflin Dallas, was a lawyer in Nashville. The third daughter, Elizabeth, married Kenneth Ward-Smith<sup>23</sup> of Nashville, a brother to Hugh Blair-Smith.

In 1880, Dallas had left Hugh Douglas & Co., and the following year was listed as treasurer of the Tennessee and <sup>24</sup>Los Cerillos Gold and Silver Mining Company. By 1882, he had started the Nashville Cotton Mill, with a man named William<sup>25</sup> Hinchliffe as the plant's superintendent.<sup>25</sup> Hinchliffe would later oversee day-to-day operations of a similar mill Dallas organized in Huntsville, Alabama.

During the latter years of the 19th century, the T. B. Dallas family frequently entertained at their brownstone house at 1800 West End Avenue. Trevania, the second daughter, was a debutante during 1900, and her younger sister became one five years later.<sup>26</sup> Theirs were the lives of true socialites. Meanwhile, the finances of their father appeared to falter. In 1892, even as he was undertaking a massive venture in the Huntsville cotton mill, Dallas secured a trust deed and borrowed \$5,000 against their house on Capital Avenue. In 1896, he secured a second loan for \$8,000 on a trust deed to the West End home. Both loans were unpaid when he died in 1902.

#### THE DALLAS MANUFACTURING COMPANY

During the late 1880s, the leaders of Huntsville began an all-out effort to bring industry into the small cotton-farming community. The earliest major move was by the North Alabama Improvement Company, which was formed on March 17, 1886, to promote the area. Among its members were such businessmen as Charles H. Halsey, Milton Humes, John L.<sup>27</sup> Rison and Michael J. O'Shaughnessey. They began a concerted effort to interest Eastern capitalists in investing in Huntsville, and one of their greatest successes came in 1890.

Trevanion Barlow Dallas was vice president and general manager of the Nashville Cotton Mills in the Tennessee capital, which he had organized and established in 1881 with the help of Nashville lawyer Godfrey M. Fogg. One member of the North Alabama Improvement Company,

O'Shaughnessey, had been in the cottonseed oil business in Nashville at the turn of 1880 and probably was<sup>28</sup> familiar with Dallas' earlier ventures. In addition, the Weekly Mercury praised Charles H. Halsey "for his untiring zeal and indefatigable labor" in bringing the Dallas Manufacturing Company to Huntsville.<sup>29</sup> As a result of their activities, when the call went out from the North Alabama Improvement Company, Dallas was listening. The first public meeting in Huntsville pertaining to the new mill was in November 1890 and was chaired by Captain Milton Humes. He called for stock subscriptions from the citizens present, and those who responded included some of the most prominent names in the city<sup>30</sup> -- Rison, Jones, White, Lowenthal and Rand. That same week, the directors of the Dallas Manufacturing Company met for the first time, and among them were W. R. Rison, J. R. Stevens, M. J. O'Shaughnessey and Oscar Goldsmith. Commissioners listed for the corporation were Godfrey M. Fogg, Augustus H. Robinson and Dallas, all of Nashville; William W. Flannagan of New York; and Humes of Huntsville.<sup>31</sup>

To raise the \$500,000 capital needed to construct the mill, the company issued 5,000 shares of stock at \$100 per share. In the initial stock subscriptions, the North Alabama Improvement Company held 250 shares, Dallas and Fogg owned 200 shares, while M. J. O'Shaughnessey, J. F. O'Shaughnessey, A. H. Robinson and W. W. Flannagan owned 100 shares apiece. The remainder belonged to several other Northern capitalists and dozens of loyal Huntsvillians. When Dallas offered the last remaining shares of stock in March 1891,

the Weekly Mercury proclaimed that "the successful completion of the Dallas mills will inaugurate a new and prosperous era in the life of our city."<sup>32</sup>

The Nashville Cotton Mill consisted of two different mills, which combined had 18,000 spindles and 500 looms. It was one of the largest in the South. When Dallas Manufacturing began operation in 1892, it had 25,000 spindles and 750 looms.<sup>33</sup>

As the Dallas mill was nearing completion, a group of Northern industrialists arrived in Huntsville to form the Northwestern Land Association, which took up the cause of promoting Huntsville from the North Alabama Improvement Company. Among the leaders of this group were William S. Wells, president; Tracy W. Pratt, vice president; W. I. Wellman, secretary; and J. A. Ward, treasurer. These names appear prominently even today on street signs in the old mill village. Their activities also later brought another large textile mill, the Merrimack Mill, to Huntsville. Early activities of the Northwestern Land Association are detailed in an account of the death of Wells in early 1900.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, another group of businessmen organized the Huntsville Land Company in 1892 to build houses necessary for the Dallas mill workers. The Weekly Mercury called it a "syndicate of Philadelphia" and identified the major stockholders as Oscar Goldsmith of Huntsville and "his partner in the mercantile business, M. M. Newman of Philadelphia." The newspaper said stock in the company was \$100,000 and had been paid in full upon

incorporation. Goldsmith was elected president; W. R. Rison, treasurer; and Newman, S. Blumenthal of Philadelphia and David D. Shelby<sup>35</sup> of Huntsville were executive board members.

Dallas had, in fact, ushered in a new era in Huntsville. This mammoth mill was followed by not one, but two additional textile factories during the next decade. By 1899, Dallas Manufacturing Company had outgrown its 750 feet-by-106 feet, five-story building. The company's board of directors voted an additional stock issue to double the company's capital to \$1.2 million. By that time, the largest stockholders included S. M. Millikin and Albert W. Green, both of New York, with 708 1/2 and 700 shares, respectively. Dallas still owned 150 shares in the company and was<sup>36</sup> secretary of the board and general manager. However, by this time, Dallas' family in Nashville was outliving its means, and the respected businessman was \$13,000 in debt. Records show that the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company held two liens against his present and former homes, which remained<sup>37</sup> unpaid until after the businessman's death. Both loans remained outstanding until several years later, and one was finally paid off by the<sup>38</sup> new owner of the Dallas' brownstone home.

#### IN SUMMARY

During his last years, Trevanion Barlow Dallas remained active in the affairs of the Dallas Manufacturing Company and the Phoenix Mills in Nashville, with which Nashville Cotton Mills had merged. Just before his

death in 1902, he sold to William R. and Archie L. Rison the summer home in Viduta where his family had vacationed on Monte Sano during the later years of the 1890s. The home had previously been in the Rison family for many years, when it was the summer residence of John R. Rison and his wife Tennie.<sup>39</sup>

Trevanion Barlow Dallas was a tireless organizer among Northern and Southern capitalists. His work gained him the respect of industrialists all across the nation. An 1892 article reprinted in the Huntsville Mercury from the Boston Financial and Commercial News praised him, saying "the mention of the name of Mr. T. B. Dallas in the cotton market and throughout the country carries with it a prestige and confidence enjoyed in great degree by none in the South...."<sup>40</sup> His own connections in the East had been a great benefit to the Southern towns of Nashville and Huntsville. Among the larger stock owners in Dallas Manufacturing at the turn of the century was a James D. Willis of New York, possibly one of Dallas' maternal relatives. The last days of Trevanion B. Dallas brought a sad end to a glamorous life. His first-born child by his first wife, a son named Hugh Douglas Dallas, died in 1900, and friends said<sup>41</sup> the elder Dallas was broken by the sorrow. He fell ill in late 1901 and never recovered. Dallas' son Alexander represented his father at meetings of the Dallas directors in December of 1901, and before the mid-year summer meeting in 1902, Dallas was dead.<sup>42</sup> After having been one of the biggest stockholders when the mill opened in 1892, his family was forced to sell his entire

holdings shortly after his death. Dallas' obituary appeared 10 hard years after the Dallas mill began operations, but it reflected the same respect for the man that he had commanded before: "While he was not a man to thrust himself before the public gaze, he was one who was quick to identify himself with every worthy cause and undertaking."<sup>43</sup>

## THE END

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Peaceful Death of Mr. T. B. Dallas," The Nashville Banner, June 20, 1902, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished interview with Mr. Floyd Drake, General Manager of Genesco in Huntsville, Alabama, April 23, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Waller, William, editor, Nashville in the 1990s, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970, p. 248.

<sup>4</sup> Belohlavek, John M., George Mifflin Dallas: Jacksonian Patrician, University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977, p. 201n.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> Hamer, Phillip M., Tennessee--A History: 1673-1932, Volume 4, New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1933, p. 747.

<sup>8</sup> Belohlavek, p.66.

9 Dallas, James, The History of the Family of Dallas, Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable Ltd., 1921, p. 507.

10 Belohlavek, p. 180.

11 Hamer, p. 746.

12 Ibid., pp. 745-747.

13 Ibid., p. 747.

14 Waller, p. 248.

15 War of Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895, Series I, Volume 30, Part 2, p. 332.

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- 26 Waller, 1972, p. 313.
- 27 Madison County Corporative Record, Volume 1, p. 17.
- 28 Tennessee Census, 1880.
- 29 "The Dallas Mill," The Weekly Mercury, November 12, 1890, p. 8.
- 30 Ibid., p. 5.
- 31 Dallas Manufacturing Minutes Book, No. 1, p. 1 and p. 8.
- 32 The Weekly Mercury, February 18, 1891, p. 8.
- 33 The Weekly Arqus, September 29, 1892, p. 2.
- 34 The Weekly Mercury, March 7, 1901, p. 3.
- 35 The Weekly Mercury, June 22, 1892, p. 2.
- 36 Madison County Corporative Record, Volume 1, p. 455.
- 37 Trust Deed Book, Davidson County, Tennessee, 1900-1906.
- 38 Ibid.

- 39 Madison County Deed Book, Volume 90,  
p. 169.
- 40 The Weekly Argus, September 29, 1892,  
p. 2.
- 41 The Nashville Banner, June 20, 1902,  
p. 7.
- 42 Dallas Mill Minutes Book No. 1, p.  
230.
- 43 The Nashville Banner, June 20, 1902,  
p. 7.





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