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THE HUNTSVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Editor
Elbert L. Watson

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THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS OF THE HUNTSVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

By BESSIE RUSSELL

The Huntsville Historical Society held its organizational meeting on November 18, 1951, at the historic home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Chase on Adams Street.¹ In addition to the forty-three interested persons attending, there were also three members of the Alabama Historical Association: Rucker Agee, president, and Hugh W. Cardon and Allan Rushton, members of the executive committee. William H. Jenkins and Frank Chenault represented the North Alabama Historical Association.

But this was not the genesis of our society. The real beginning was when a young lady, Miss Frances Roberts, began teaching history at the Huntsville High School. She was vitally interested in all phases of history, but especially the history of Huntsville, Madison County, and Alabama. An active member of the Alabama Historical Association, she was placed on the executive committee of that group in 1951.

In the meantime I had started working at the Huntsville Public Library. With the help of Mrs. Elizabeth Beamguard, the director, I was cataloguing and expanding the historical collection started by Mrs. Mattie Darwin, one of Huntsville's first librarians. Miss Roberts and I talked about organizing a local historical society. It was through her close connection with the state group that the ground was laid for our organizational meeting.

The reaction to the new group from the out of town guests was quite favorable as evidenced by letters written the following week. Mr. Agee wrote: "The organization of the Madison County Historical Society went off splendidly yesterday afternoon. I congratulate you and your associates on this fine beginning."² Mr. Rushton commented:

"Mr. Agee, Mr. Cardon and myself had a pleasant experience in Huntsville yesterday and we all agreed on the trip back to Birmingham that Huntsville will soon have the outstanding society in the state. The combination of cultural individuals who were present and the wealth of historical subjects relating to Madison County almost make it certain that the Madison County Historical Unit will be a successful undertaking."³

At the organizational meeting Henry Chase was appointed as temporary chairman until permanent officers could be selected. The first regular meeting of the Society was held December 9, 1951, at the James Watts home. In the absence of Mr. Chase, Dr. Roberts presided and the following officers were elected for one year: President, Henry Chase; Vice President, Judge Thomas W. Jones; Secretary & Treasurer, Felix Newman; Board of Governors, Reese Amis and Harry Rhett, three years; Mrs. Sallie Gill and Mrs. R. J. Lowe, two years; and D. C. Monroe and Josh Kelly, one year. It was stipulated that each retiring president would become a member of the Board.

"Huntsville Historical Society" was selected as the official name of the organization and the annual dues were set at one dollar. New members were selected by invitation and voted on by the member-

ship. Quarterly meetings were to be held on the second Sunday of the month at three p.m. in the reading room of the Huntsville Public Library unless otherwise specified.

The purpose of the Society was set forth in Article II of the bylaws which stated: "the purpose of this society is to afford an agency for the expression around those having common interests in (1) collecting and preserving information about any past phase of community life in Huntsville, Alabama, and (2) in recording the history of the section of which Madison County is a part."

A special meeting was held in the city hall auditorium with representatives of the Alabama Historical Association on August 16, 1953, when our first two historical markers were erected. The invocation was given by the Reverend F. H. Heidelberg. Words of welcome were extended by Mr. Chase, the president.⁴ Mayor Robert Searcy of Huntsville spoke on behalf of the city and Commission Chairman Roy Stone on behalf of Madison County. The response by the Alabama Historical Association was given by William H. Brantley Jr., past president of the state group. Dr. Ralph Draughn, president of Alabama Polytechnic Institute, delivered the principle address.

The first marker honoring "Huntsville's Firsts" was erected in front of the public library on the corner of Madison Street and Gates. It was my pleasure to participate in the unveiling with Judge Thomas W. Jones. The second marker honoring the formation of Madison County was placed on the west side of the Madison County Courthouse. It was unveiled by Mrs. Joe Cooper Sr. and Patrick Richardson.

At the December, 1953, meeting the following officers were elected: President, Reverend F. H.

Heidelberg; Vice President, Judge Thomas W. Jones; Secretary & Treasurer, Felix Newman; Board of Governors, Reese Amis, Harry Rhett, D. C. Monroe, Josh Kelly, Ed Burwell, Joe Falt, and Henry Chase. Reverend Heidelberg resigned in March because he was moving out of the city. At this meeting the members voted to invite the Alabama Historical Association to hold its annual meeting in Huntsville in April, 1955.

In June, 1954, Judge Jones assumed the duties of the presidency and Harry Daniel was unanimously elected as vice president. This meeting was held in the historic John Hunt Morgan home with Mrs. B. A. Stockton as hostess. The following officers were elected at the December meeting: President, Judge Thomas W. Jones; Vice President, Harry Daniel; Recording Secretary, Mrs. C. H. Russell; Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. M. U. Griffin and Treasurer, Charles D. Lyle.

The Alabama Historical Association held its annual meeting in Huntsville on April 23-24, 1955, with the Huntsville Historical Society and the Huntsville Branch of the American Association of University Women serving as joint hosts. During the meeting Mr. Chase presented to the state association three markers erected by the local Society honoring the First National Bank, the Masonic Temple, and the birthplace of John Hunt Morgan. Every member of the Huntsville Historical Society was on a committee. Through the concerted efforts of all local participants the meeting was a high success for the 318 people who registered.

In 1955 Huntsville celebrated its Sesquicentennial. Members of the Society served on planning committees, did research work, and wrote articles for the newspaper and the album which was pub -

lished in book form. Much material in the form of books, manuscripts, and pictures from the public library's historical collection was used. At the December meeting Mrs. Burke Fisk presented each member present with an illustrated booklet prepared by the Huntsville Manufacturing Company entitled "Historical Edition of the Huntsville Parker." This booklet was edited by Mrs. Fisk.

The year 1956 was an eventful one for the Society. At the March meeting the following officers were elected: President, Miss Alice Thomas; Vice President, Joe Falt; Secretary, Mrs. Burke Fisk, and Treasurer, Charlie Lyle. In April a marker was unveiled at the site of Green Academy, one of the early schools of Alabama having been chartered in 1812. This marker, sponsored by the East Clinton Parent-Teacher Association, was unveiled by Miss Ella Ware, one of the teachers in the first public school built on the lot in 1882. Miss Ware was assisted by Miss Martha Askins. In June the Society met at the ancestral home of Miss Lucy McCrary near Three Forks of Flint. At this meeting it was voted to change the meetings from the second to the third Sunday of each quarter. Miss Thomas gave an interesting paper on Green Academy, and distributed booklets prepared by Mrs. Fisk showing handdrawn pictures of the public schools that have been on the lot where the Academy stood. In September, members heard a report from Judge Jones of the special committee on the city's proposal to rename the Huntsville streets.⁵ The committee's study and the resultant proposal filed with the city outlined a three part system whereby historical names could be retained. Along with this proposal the committee furnished a carefully prepared list of 100 names closely associated with the

city's development in the hope that names of new streets could be selected.

In September, 1957, a marker sponsored by W. P. Dilworth Sr. was unveiled at the site of the former Monte Sano Female Academy on Monte Sano. This school was founded in 1830 by the Reverend and Mrs. James Rowe. The program preceding the unveiling was held in the Monte Sano Methodist Church where people had worshipped for over fifty years. About forty descendants, including three granddaughters of the Rowes were present. The marker was unveiled by Jack and Susie Thiemonge and accepted by Mayor Searcy on behalf of the city.

The officers elected for 1958 were: President, Joe B. Falt Jr.; Vice President, Dr. Frances Roberts; Recording Secretary, Mrs. Burke Fisk; Corresponding Secretary, Miss Alice Thomas, and Treasurer, Philip Mason. The Society that year suggested to the city that the name Governor's Drive would be an appropriate title for the joining thoroughfares of Big Cove Road, Longwood Drive, and Fifth Avenue. This suggestion was accepted by the city.

A marker sponsored by the Virginia Clay Clopton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was dedicated on September 10 at "Weldwood", the home of Senator and Mrs. Clement C. Clay at Gurley. This marker honored Mrs. Clay Clopton author of the Belle of the Fifties. Patrick Richardson gave the dedicatory address.

Members began their third quarterly meeting by attending a memorial service in the circuit courtroom at the county courthouse honoring one of their charter members and past president, the late Judge Jones. It was through Judge Jones' efforts that many of the valuable historical records of Madison

County were preserved. At the March, 1959, meeting Dr. Roberts read a special tribute to Judge Jones.⁶

In May, 1959, a marker was erected at the site of the former Huntsville Female College, a famous college which was built in 1851 and destroyed by fire in 1895. Mrs. John Mastin, a descendent of Dr. W. G. Price, a long time president of the college, unveiled the marker. Later that year the Society arranged a tour of historical places in Huntsville for delegates attending the Convention of Alabama League of Municipalities which met in Huntsville.

The officers for 1960-61 were as follows: President, Dr. Frances Roberts; Vice President, Mrs. C. H. Russell; Secretary, Mrs. Burke Fisk and Treasurer, Mrs. Ward F. Sparkman.

In June, 1960, Dr. A. B. Moore, director of the Alabama Civil War Centennial Commission, spoke to the Society and urged that a local commission be speedily organized so that Madison County could actively participate in the Centennial. Mr. and Mrs. Jack Harbarger were duly appointed as joint chairmen of the local Civil War Centennial Committee. A steering committee was appointed consisting of Dr. Roberts, chairman; Miss Eugenia Smith, Mr. Thompson Kelly and the Reverend Emil Joffrion.

At the March meeting Mrs. Anna Rosborough was appointed to serve on a committee for the preservation of historic buildings still standing in the Heart of Huntsville area. Mrs. Harbarger announced that the Huntsville-Madison County Civil War Centennial Commission had been chosen. The committee included Eugene McLain, chairman; George Mahoney, co-chairman; and Miss Marie Moore, secretary. Dr. Roberts reported that the Society would join with the Virginia Clay-Clopton U.D.C.

Chapter in erecting a marker at Maple Hill Cemetery on Memorial Day, 1962 in connection with the Centennial program.

The September meeting was held at the Farley Junior High School for the dedication of the Ditto's Landing Whitesburg Marker. Rucker Agee, chairman of the Alabama Historical Association's marker committee, gave the dedicatory address. Several members of the White family for whom Whitesburg was named were special guests.

In 1961 the following officers were elected: President, Robert Smith; Vice President, Mrs. F. W. Sparkman; Recording Secretary, Edmund Duffey; Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Robert Head; Treasurer, Miss Kathleen Johnston; Directors, Mrs. M. U. Griffin, Glenn Grimwood, Mrs. C. H. Russell, Reavis O'Neal, Mrs. Philip Mason, and past presidents.

On March 18, 1962 the Society observed its tenth anniversary with a tea at the home of Dr. and Mrs. E. V. Caldwell on Adams Street. The lovely reception rooms were decorated with arrangements of jonquils, narcissus and carnations in yellow, white and St. Patrick's green. Mrs. Fisk gave a resume' of the first ten years of the Society.

On Memorial Day, May 6, 1962, the Society and the Virginia Clay-Clopton Chapter jointly dedicated the marker to the Confederate soldiers buried in Maple Hill Cemetery. Dr. Herbert Hughes gave the main address. After an impressive ceremony those present were taken on a historical tour of the cemetery by W. F. Sparkman.

At the September meeting, James Record, Chairman of the Madison County Board of Commissioners, presented a letter from the commissioners stating that their 1962-63 budget would include \$1,000



DR. W. M. McKISSACK,

Present president of the Huntsville Historical Society.

for eight historical markers. The Society would select the sites and handle all the details of erecting the markers. At a special meeting later that month recommendations were sent to the County Commissioners concerning the safe keeping of county records while the new courthouse was being built. The Society also recommended that the new courthouse be of timeless architecture to blend with present or future buildings located around the square. Recommendations were also sent to the City Council urging it to set up a historical commission to create and preserve a zone epitomizing "Historic Huntsville."

In 1964 the following officers were elected: President, Mrs. W. F. Sparkman; Vice President, Mrs. Burke Fisk; Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Glenn C. Talley; Recording Secretary, Mrs. D. H. Shenk; and Treasurer, Miss Kathleen Johnston.

That year the Society began to plan for Alabama's approaching Sesquicentennial in 1969. Since most of the historic events connected with establishment of the state took place in Huntsville, it seemed that the main commemorative activities should be centered here. As groundwork for the planning of events, the Research Committee began a project to find out what Huntsville was like in 1819 when the Constitutional Convention met here to draw up Alabama's first Constitution. This study involved research in property records, newspapers and all original records available. It was a tedious and difficult undertaking, but the committee composed of Mrs. Fisk, chairman; Mrs. W. F. Sparkman, Mrs. Wayne Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Shenk, and Mrs. J. T. Deaton, persevered with the work. In April, 1969, they produced a map of 1819 Huntsville, showing many of the buildings that existed at that

time. This map, which the committee had evolved from its research, was copyrighted by the Society and published in a brochure with explanatory notes, photographs of six of the 1819 houses which are still standing, and a brief history of Huntsville to 1819, written by Dr. Roberts. The brochure was titled "A New Map of Huntsville 1819".⁷

In December 1966, Mrs. Fisk was elected President; Dr. William McKissack, Vice President; Mrs. Donald Shenk, Recording Secretary; Mrs. W. F. Sparkman, Corresponding Secretary; and Miss. Kathleen Johnston, Treasurer.

The erection of Madison County's new courthouse required three years. When it neared completion in 1967, Commission Chairman Record requested that the Society assume the responsibility to select items to be placed in the cornerstone. After several meetings of the Board, a large collection of valuable statistical and historical information about the county was assembled.

The Society was in charge of the cornerstone ceremony at the dedication program for the courthouse on March 5, 1967. Mrs. Fisk spoke briefly describing a collection of documents and artifacts which were placed in a copper box. She expressed the hope that the generation which one day would view the contents would find there evidence of the efforts made by this generation and past generations toward the development and progress of our great county. Members of the Board of Governors assembled while the box was placed inside. Mrs. Fisk presented the first trowel of mortar. W. A. Glenn, superintendent of construction, and W. E. Mayben, inspector of building construction, sealed the box into the cornerstone at the northwest corner of the building.

During their study the Research Committee obtained additional information about the site on which the Constitutional Convention met in 1819. It was found that the building that housed the Convention was built by Walker Allen, a cabinet maker, for use as a shop and warehouse. Following his death, it was offered for rent. Located one-half block south of the public square, it served as a convenient meeting place for the forty-four delegates elected from the twenty-two counties of Alabama Territory, who assembled in Huntsville in 1819 to draft a Constitution for Alabama to enter the Union.⁸

The committee also found a number of other important historical sites adjacent to Constitution Hall. Slightly to the north, on Franklin Street, stood the office of Clement Comer Clay, who chaired the committee that drafted the Constitution. This building also housed the United States Surveyor's Office and Huntsville Post Office in 1819. On the same half block facing Madison Street was located the office and printing press of the Alabama Republican, the newspaper that printed the Constitution. Next door, to the south, in the law office of John N. S. Jones, the books of the Huntsville Library, Alabama's first library, were made available to subscribers in October, 1819. The home of Stephen Neal, Madison County's first sheriff, occupied the northeast corner of Gates and Madison.

In 1968, at a time when the Constitution Hall site was vacant and earmarked by its owner, the Huntsville Housing Authority, for a multi-story parking garage, the Society initiated a movement to preserve the site and reconstruct on it the historic buildings of 1819. Dr. Roberts, Mrs. Fisk, Dr. McKissack, and Mrs. Rosborough were able to gain the support of the Huntsville Housing Authority, City Council,

Board of Madison County Commissions, Alabama Historical Association, Alabama Historical Commission, Alabama Sesquicentennial Committee, and numerous local organizations and individuals.

Early in 1969, the Alabama Sesquicentennial Committee asked the Society to handle the sale of official Sesquicentennial souvenirs in Madison County. On April 16, the Society gave an autograph party and reception to introduce the Alabama's First Lady's Cookbook, which was edited by Mrs. Albert P. Brewer, wife of then Alabama governor Brewer. Mrs. Brewer was honored at this affair which was held in Dunnivant's Mall with Burkett's Book Store handling the sale of books. The long lines of people who attended the party kept Mrs. Brewer busy autographing during the entire time. She was assisted by wives of the local legislative delegation who were special guests for the occasion.

On May 2-3, 1969, the Society was honored again to entertain the annual meeting of the Alabama Historical Association. Months of research, planning, and preparation were necessary to carry through the chosen theme "Huntsville in 1819" in program, decorations and food. The meeting, which was held at the imposing Carriage Inn, was one of the most elaborate and memorable ever held by the state association. Mrs. Richard Gilliam and Mrs. John R. Thomas, Jr., co-chairmen of registration, reported 476 members and guests, by far the largest attendance in the history of the organization. Each person attending was presented with a specially prepared packet of historical souvenirs relating to the Sesquicentennial.

The feature of the meeting was a bus tour of 1819 houses. The Pope-Watts, Bassett-Young, Erskine-McMains, and Fearn-Richardson homes were opened

for the occasion. A reception, held at the home of Mrs. Holliman Richardson, tour chairman, concluded the tour. A gala "Alabama 1819" banquet was held in the main ballroom of the Carriage Inn. Mrs. Jack F. Harbarger and her committee decorated the scores of round serving tables with fruit arrangements and lighted candles in brass candelabra. Large letters, suspended over the stage proclaimed "Alabama 1819". A towering fruit arrangement in a three-tiered epergne centered the front of the stage. In this setting, the choir from the University of Alabama in Huntsville rendered musical selections from the 1819 period. Typical foods of the period, served at the banquet, were selected by Mrs. Oscar Mason and her committee after many months of research on the subject. Each person received a souvenir program-menu and a drinking glass, which had been inscribed as a memento of the occasion.

The Saturday morning session was held at the Madison County Courthouse where an exhibit of historic documents, papers, and articles had been arranged by Miss Alice Thomas and her committee. Alabama's 1819 Constitution, the main feature of the exhibit, was on display in a specially constructed case. Brought to Huntsville the day before by Milo Howard, Director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, the historic document remained in Huntsville where it was displayed most of the year for thousands of people to see it for the first time. The final event of the meeting was a luncheon at which Dr. Roberts, as outgoing president, gave the principle address.

An important event during the year was commemorated with a ceremony cosponsored by the Society and Tennessee Valley Genealogical Society, in cooperation with the Madison County courthouse

on August 2, 1969, to honor descendants of the forty-four delegates who had signed the Constitution in Huntsville exactly 150 years before. Mrs. Fisk served as general chairman and Mrs. Gilliam, as recognitions chairman. Mrs. V. W. Hamner, Jr., who undertook the task of locating descendants of the signers, succeeded in finding the addresses of 623 descendants, to whom specially printed invitations were mailed. Although they lived in many parts of Alabama and in other states, 224 descendants attended the program. Each honor guest was given a badge inscribed with his name and that of the ancestor who signed the Constitution. In the main lobby they viewed the Constitution and located the names of their ancestors.

The program, held on the second stair landing with the historical mural as a meaningful backdrop, began with a colorful flag ceremony. Dr. McKissack presided and introduced United States Senator John Sparkman, who in turn presented the guest speaker, Richard Walker Bolling, U.S. Representative from the Fifth Congressional District of Missouri, and a Great-great grandson of John Williams Walker, president of the Constitutional Convention. The names of the forty-four signers were read by Senator Sparkman from a scroll prepared by Mrs. Gilliam. As each signer's name was called his descendants were asked to stand.⁹

"Alabama Day," December 14, 1969, the 150th anniversary of the day Alabama entered the Union, was the last important historical event to be celebrated during the year. The Society and the Madison County Sesquicentennial Committee co-sponsored an observance of the day at the courthouse at 2:30 p. m. Philip M. Mason, chairman of the Sesquicentennial Committee, served as chairman for the Alabama

Day Program. Others on the program committee were Elbert L. Watson, Mrs. Wayne L. Smith, Dr. McKissack and Mrs. Gilliam. Commissioner Record was master of ceremonies.

The program began with the presentation by Explorer Post 303 of a large twenty-one star United States flag specially hand-made for the occasion by Mrs. Smith. Following the flag ceremony, a program of patriotic songs was presented by the Madrigal Singers of Butler High School. United States Senator James B. Allen, who was elected to the Senate exactly 150 years after the state's first congressional representative, gave the commemorative address. Speaking of some of the highlights of Alabama's dramatic past, he said that the introduction of the resolution of statehood for the Territory of Alabama was among the first business to be conducted in the new Senate chambers on December 6, 1819.

Other features of the program included a stirring rendition by the Drum and Bugle Corps of Sparkman High School. The story of the twenty-two star flag was told by Ramona Sharpe of Buckhorn High School. Dawn Alberg of Randolph School gave the Alabama Resolution of Admission. Explorer Post 303, then retired the twenty-one star flag and presented the twenty-two star flag, which included the star for Alabama.¹⁰ Dr. McKissack awarded to Mrs. Fisk, out-going president of the Society, a plaque in honor of her services to the group and her work with the Sesquicentennial. To close the program, Thomasena Morris, of Buckhorn High School, led the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner."

Following the program a brief business meeting was held and officers for 1970-71 were elected: President, Dr. William McKissack; Vice-President,

James Record; Recording Secretary, Mrs. Roy E. Blair; Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Wayne L. Smith and Treasurer, Miss Kathleen Johnston. Elbert Watson was elected to a three year term as Director and Dr. Herbert L. Hughes was re-elected Director.

Under the present leadership of Dr. W. M. McKissack, the Society has continued to make substantial progress. The number of meetings has increased from four to six each year. One of the most important projects is the publication of our historical quaterly "Huntsville Historical Review" with Mr. Watson as editor.

When the National Park Service, under the auspices of the National Register of Historic Places, designated Huntsville's old Memphis and Charleston Railroad Company passenger depot as a national historic landmark on September 10, 1971, it gave further credit to the Society in that two of its members, Mrs. Gilliam and John Martz, prepared the papers for the nomination.

At this time the Society has grown to 265 active members. Much research has been done, many interesting papers given, and our historical collection has grown. We have cooperated with the city and state in historical events. We have enlarged our knowledge of the rich heritage of this area, and aided in its preservation for future generations. May we continue to grow and expand during the coming years.

Names of people who attended the first meeting of Madison County Historical Association, November 18, 1951.

Mrs. D. C. Adams	Mrs. James T. Watts
Mrs. C. H. Russell	Mrs. Vassar L. Allen
Mr. & Mrs. Clarence Watts	Miss Helen Petty
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Falt	Miss Dorothy Sandlin
Mr. & Mrs. Henry B. Chase	Mr. James Wade
Mr. & Mrs. T. P. Gates	Harry M. Rhett, Jr.
Mrs. R. J. Lowe	Miss Frances Roberts
Mr. Charlie Lyle	Miss Frances Jones
Mrs. Elizabeth Beamguard	Mr. Robert K. Bell
Mrs. Joe E. Cooper	Judge Thomas W. Jones
Mrs. Eugene Gill	Mr. James Record
Miss Mary Irby Mastin	Mr. C. C. Monroe
Mr. & Mrs. Josh Kelly	Mr. Alvin Dreger
Mr. & Mrs. Reese Amis	Mr. Joseph L. Askins
Mrs. Raphael Semmens	Mr. Roy L. Stone
Mr. & Mrs. Frederic Heidelberg	

¹The Chase home was erected in 1848 and was at various times occupied by the William McDowells, Mary C. Levert, and Mrs. Daniel Coleman families. The home is presently owned by Mr. & Mrs. Joe Falt.

²Rucker Agee to Frances Roberts, November, 1951.

³Allan Rushton to Roberts, November, 1951.

⁴All of the officers had been reelected at the December, 1962, meeting.

⁵Members of this committee were Judge Jones, Mr. Chase, Dr. Roberts, Mrs. Rosborough and Edwin Burwell.

⁶This tribute was printed, framed, and hung in the probate office and the library. A copy of this memorial was later given to Mrs. Jones.

⁷In 1970, the American Association for State and Local History honored the Society with a national award for the production of the map. This commendation has been framed and placed in the Huntsville Heritage Room of the Huntsville Public Library.

⁸This building, also used as a theater, was removed in 1821 and replaced with a new theater, which burned before it opened.

⁹This program coincided with the issuance in Huntsville of the U. S. six cent postage stamp honoring 150 years of Alabama Statehood. Many honor guests who attended the stamp ceremony in the morning and the luncheon, honoring Postmaster General Winton Blount, were escorted by Commissioner Record in a motorcade to the courthouse for the afternoon's historical observance.

¹⁰The Twenty-Two Star Flag was handmade for the occasion by Mrs. Gilliam.

HENRY B. CHASE: A MAN FOR ALL AGES

By FRANCES ROBERTS

As I sat in my bedroom this morning overlooking the beautiful glittering, orange maple trees, I remembered what Mr. Henry had said one time - "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." It had been my intention to construct this paper and give it to Dr. McKissack who insisted that in two weeks we could put it in the "Review" and hand it to you today. But, mixed and mingled with other things that have to be done I constantly thought about Mr. Henry Chase. I collected my notes and yesterday on the way back from an Executive Board meeting in Birmingham of the Alabama Academy of Science I wrote this paper. This is not a historical document. As such I will convert it to the life of Mr. Henry Chase and give it to Mr. Watson in due time. But, as I looked through and saw the blue sky this morning and the beautiful maple leaves, my mind went back to many interesting associations with Mr. Henry Chase.

Henry B. Chase, 1870-1961, was a man for all ages. The life of Mr. Henry B. Chase exemplifies the best traits to be found in universal man. He was a man for all ages in all seasons of his life. Had he lived in ancient times, he would have appreciated the ethical ideas of Socrates, the empirical approach to learning of Aristotle, the stoicism of Cicero, and the human and divine love of Jesus Christ. If he had lived in the Middle Ages, he would have understood the blending of faith and reason in the writings of

Thomas Aquinas, the selfless service of Saint Francis of Assisi, the scientific views of Roger Baker, and the just price theory of the Roman Catholic Church as a guide to all economic endeavors.

Had he lived at the dawn of the modern world, he might have been at home on one of the ships which brought his ancestors to the rocky shores of Maine in 1639. Had he lived during the years when the Colonies won their independence from the mother country, he might well have knelt in prayer with Washington at Valley Forge, or conversed with Thomas Jefferson on the meaning of the Declaration of Independence, as well as pursuing the latest scientific knowledge in the field of horticulture. Or, he might have been on an expedition with the early botanists to identify the native plant life of the western frontier. Had he lived in the early part of the nineteenth century, he might have followed Parkman on the Oregon Trail to the beautiful Wyoming Valley. Or, he might have passed the south pass and gone into the great Sacramento Valley of California.

Since Henry Chase was born in the last half of the nineteenth century, he chose to bring his pioneering spirit to the New South in 1889. After spending two years in the grocery business with his brothers in Hickory, North Carolina, he came to Huntsville at the age of nineteen. Even at this early age he was mature in his judgement, sound in his business practices, far sighted in his view of the future development of the nursery business in the Tennessee Valley.

At the beginning of his career as a nurseryman, Henry Chase was a member of a four man team of brothers, Herbert and Charles, and his younger

brother Robert. From 1889 to 1906 these young men developed a flourishing nursery under the tutelage of their cousins Louis and Ethan Allen Chase of Rochester, New York, who had operated the nationally known firm the New England Nurseries since 1869. Initially these two men provided the necessary capital investment to establish the Alabama Nursery Company, which was located just north of Gladstone near the site of the first Madison County nursery company. The title of that company was the Huntsville Nurseries.

After a period of years this company was reorganized in 1906 as Chase Nursery, and moved to its original location because of its accessibility to railroad lines and the beautiful, rich loam soil.¹ The brothers purchased in the neighborhood of 1,000 acres in this vicinity. Old records show that part of this property is the sixteenth section of land in that particular township and was originally designated for public schools. In a study of the initial request for land purchased in this area made by the pioneers who were here in 1808, more than ten petitions went forward to secure that particular piece of land. This indicates, I think, how very much the early pioneers appreciated the worth of the land on which Chase Nursery is located.

At this time - that is in 1906 - the business was incorporated and Henry Chase was made president of the company. All his brothers were still involved but he took the most active part in it along with his younger brother Robert. He held the position of president for almost fifty years until he retired. I remember the year he retired. He told me he bought a new car. This was age eighty-five, I think, or there about, and he said he was going to Maine to visit his relatives and friends, and then he was go-

ng to Washington and visit his kinfolks and then to California. He loved to travel and he felt that now that he was going to retire he could really become active in some of those aspects of life that he enjoyed. He had been pinned down to a desk a bit long and now he was on the road to travel again.

The success of the Chase Nursery, reflects the philosophy of Henry Chase, his brothers, and the key men such as Charles O. Roth, whom he chose to work with him in developing a nursery to serve world wide customers as well as his own employees. The fact that Henry Chase specialized in ornamental shrubs and was particularly partial to dogwood was not a happenstance. Henry Chase loved the beauty of God's world and he wanted mankind not only to be aware of it but to love and appreciate it as he did. To him the nursery business was an institution - an institution that helped to deepen man's sense of the divine spirit that was all around him. And yet, Henry Chase was a practical man. Let his words speak for a moment. For instance on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of Chase Nursery, he wrote, and I quote from his president's message to his faithful customers and employees. I think from his own words we can see Henry Chase in a way that we would like to remember him, as a successful business man in this community:

"We just didn't realize fifty years had passed since we the Chases, four brothers of us, came to Alabama to enter the nursery business. Half a century! They have not all been rosy and easy years but on a whole they have been progressive and happy years. We can't forget hard years, though viewed from this distance they do not seem so hard as they did at the time. We remember for instance the year when we lost, by fire in the night, our barn and all

the mules, wagons, feed and so forth. A mighty jolt to our lean bank account and that year when the late spring frost in one night caused a loss far in excess of our invested capital. There were of course, dry years, wet years and years of depression but all have been more than offset by the good years. And though we have been often down and with the count perhaps of six to eight, it never reached ten and for this we are very grateful.

"Through the good and bad years the loyalty of our employees will ever be remembered. There was just one pay day in the entire time when we could not get cash enough for the payroll and that was August 11, 1893, at the start of that financial panic. That lapsed payroll was met two weeks later and the only question raised by any of the force when the lack of cash was announced was 'boss can we eat out of commissary?' Luckily there was ample stock on hand and none went hungry.

"Looking back over fifty years we note so many changes in methods and equipment. During our first five or six years we thought a telephone an excessive luxury at the plant and would not consider it. Didn't need it because we had a yellow mustang to ride down to town and to do the errands. It was long after that we finally decided that a telephone might help and took one on a month's trial. Then the automobile, trucks and tractors came along.

"In those old days we used a shingle which had been planned for the purpose on which to write up digging orders for the field foreman and regarded the shingle system as the last word in nursery practice. What a revolution when the multi-order-system, digging list, seller list, packing order list, acknowledgement and office record all typewritten at one time came into use with us. And when the



HENRY B. CHASE (1870-1961)

First president of the Huntsville Historical Society.

improved implements that we had seen came on such as the openers, the planters, the diggers, the deep tillers, the culti-packers, the tractor cultivators and so forth. It was within the past fifty years that those astounding discoveries have been perfected and adapted to man's use. The automobile, the wireless, the radio and the airplane, television just around the corner, and what an age in which to live and now the word of appreciation for those brothers who did so much to lay the right foundation for this business.

"First to Herbert the oldest who pioneered in selling the nursery stock by sample. For a sample case he used a whip case. Black, pointed top, heavy leather case, used as a whip drummer in those horse and buggy days packed with samples of Chase, Alabama, grown fruit trees, none better. He made the rounds of the nursery trade of the United States. Particularly around the middle west by train, of course checking the whip case from town to town and to this day he is referred to by many of the old customers as 'Herbert the man with the whip case.' Herbert always insisted the sample had to be a little above the average. That a doubtful tree was decor and told gardeners 'when in doubt, put it in the lower grades.' He designed the round tree gauge now used by so many growers of fruit trees and seedlings.

"And then came Charles, five years younger than Herbert; by instinct a merchant rather than a nurseryman. After a year at Chase brothers office in Rochester he opened our first office in Huntsville in December of 1889 and started to build up a force of house to house canvasses. He worked day and night organizing a force numbered at times of 150 men. Sold a big retail delivery for the fall of 1890.

Struck a low price cotton year with poor collections and just about went broke. It was a discouraging start. He hung on, continued to master the agency and dealers department until such a time as we began producing nursery stock at a wholesale market.

"And then, five years younger than I came Rob our beloved secretary and treasurer. He passed away just a few weeks ago. June, the 8th, in fact, 1939, age 63. It is difficult to write of him - he was so recently one of us, aiding, directing, counciling, maybe cussing on occasion, but always helping. He was so keenly alive to the activities throughout the nursery business, his vision was broad and his judgement was sound. As a boy counting trees on the nursery row by the five tally plan, one grade at a time, he always attached some bicycle speedometers to his handlebar and evolved the tree counter, recording accurately all grades in one trip down the row, around the bend, a system which is now in general use. He used his own thinking, stood on his own two feet, was a man of strong conviction. He extracted a lot of fun from life as he went along, giving liberally of himself and of his means. Truly we shall forever miss him.

"And to you our appreciated customers, many of whom we have served for almost fifty years, we are truly grateful. It is your continued faith and interest that makes possible the Fiftieth Anniversary. It is our sincere desire that the hopes may carry this company forward to serve you for another fifty years. Sincerely yours, Henry B. Chase, President."

As he characterized his younger brother, I caught the feeling of comparison there. "He did his own thinking, he stood on his own two feet, he

was a man of strong conviction. He extracted a lot of fun out of life as he went along, gave liberally of his means and himself" - and so did Henry Chase.

And as we look on we find that Henry Chase was not just a good business man. He was an appreciated member of a family in this home and other homes. In 1900, and you will note as soon as he was financially able to manage it, he returned to Hickory, North Carolina, to marry his first love, Annie Stewart, his life long partner, friend and loving wife. This long and devoted life together has contributed members to the civic life of Huntsville who are well known to most of us here present, today. He was also a devoted father and friend, not to his own children since he had no surviving heirs, but to his nieces and nephews as well as all of the young people here in Huntsville. I remember Mr. Henry telling me one day how pleased he was that he retired. He was glad to know that Robert's son, Henry Homer, and Charlie Roth's son, Charlie Jr. would continue to operate the nursery in the family tradition.

Henry Chase was a Christian gentleman. Throughout his life he extended his love of family and friends to all mankind. Yet he was willing to judge the frailties of men and to take stands within the framework of his own concept of Christian ethical standards. When he felt that he could serve his community in the realm of political affairs he did so with the same zest, enthusiasm, and fortitude that he had exhibited in the conduct of his own business life. When Huntsville went through a rather trying period of changing city governments from the commission plan, which lasted for about six years, back to the Huntsville Town Council plan, Henry Chase ran for and was elected chairman or president of the City Council and served in this capacity

for two years. He translated his leadership among his brothers and his associates to city government and the meticulousness of adequate business operations to the realm of city government. And in 1918 he was elected mayor of Huntsville for two years and he set a remarkable precedent in that he would not receive his pay. And in his own words he said: "I make a living, why should I take the taxes to pay my way in life when it's already provided for? We should give this back to the city to provide services which individual people can not provide for themselves."

In 1920 after his term of office was finished he continued to serve on many appointed boards in the city of Huntsville. For a long period of years he served on the City Board of Education. He served on a number of state commissions including the Board of Agriculture and Industries. He was a professional nurseryman and served from time to time in all the various nursery organizations both state, regional, and national. It was on the occasion of the Southern Nursery Association's meeting here in Huntsville that they prepared the bulletin on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Chase Nursery, which he conveniently gave out to all of his friends and attendants.

In looking over the records of community life, I find his name associated with practically every organization that has as its goal community development, expansion and fulfillment. He was a Rotarian who lived by the Rotarian's honor code. He was one of its charter members and served as an active member most of his life. His attendance record would probably rival any other Rotarian in the history of the organization. You will find the names of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Chase associated with practi-

cally every aspect of community life, particularly in the realm of the library as Mrs. Russell has mentioned. They also appear in the realm of the garden clubs, the beautification of Huntsville.

We are in his home this afternoon, a home which he purchased in 1925 and restored, developed and opened his beautiful gardens to all those who wished to come and share their beauty with him. I remember on a stroll in here one afternoon he paraphrased a little poem familiar to both of us and he said: "A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot, fringed pool, fern grot. A varied school of peace, and yet the fool contends that God is not. Not God in an evening in a garden when the eve is cool? Nay, but I have a sign 'tis very sure God walks in mine." And as I visit that garden from time to time his words always come back to me.

He worked to help beautify the parks of Huntsville that were more or less public and open such as the sidewalks, or the triangles, or the mid section in the four lane highways. He helped work with the garden clubs and the City Council and all the various aspects of the city government to help make Huntsville the dogwood city it has become. And he loved every one of those dogwood trees. Some years ago I was driving down Adams Avenue and I saw this crew propping up a very beautiful dogwood tree. It is now in the Sparkman yard. That was the home of Mrs. Jimmy Lou Cooper as you remember. That was one of Mr. Chase's prize dogwoods and Henry Homer and his crew were busily getting the tree back on its roots properly. It had blown over in a wind storm. It is still there and as you go out this afternoon you might appreciate one of Mr. Henry's lovely dogwood trees.

Mr. Henry was the logical choice of any group

of citizens and may I as a historian qualify the founding of the Society. It was by a group of people as are most organizations that continue. But to Mr. Henry it was a very important group and he willingly consented to serve as its first president and to lend his enthusiasm to its continuance, its growth and development.

He was especially interested in the preservation of the symbols which remind us of who we are and what we represent, of where we are in time and where we are going. Mrs. Russell has informed you of many markers which the Historical Society has placed. I would like to tell you the story of one of them that Mr. Henry Chase encouraged the young men of this community to erect. He went down and spread his enthusiasm among all of the Acme members and he said: "You all have enough money boys, let's buy this marker and on this marker it should record in time that Old Hickory came to protect the city of Huntsville in October of 1813". As you pass by Mims Court today, the triangle is a little smaller but the marker is there. Mr. Henry was a great admirer of tenacity, fortitude and drive as exhibited in Andrew Jackson, so he insisted that we have a marker. Perhaps you are familiar with the story of how during the Creek Wars a rumor came to Huntsville that the Creek Indians were on the war path and that they would be here to eradicate the town of Huntsville within twenty-four hours. At this point Jackson was at Fayetteville, Tennessee, on his march southward to Ten Islands on the Coosa where he was going to front the Creek Indians in the eastern portion of what is now Alabama. General John Coffee had already proceeded him and had recruited forces here in the valley and moved on down to establish Camp Coffee just south of the

Tennessee River near Whitesburg Bridge. Jackson got the message and marched his men without stopping the whole thirty-two miles from Fayetteville down to Huntsville, and camped near Mims Court for the night. It is recorded that all the people from the county and the town came in and lined up their wagons, carriages, and buggies near him so that they could be protected. The next morning they found out that this was just a rumor so Jackson moved on down through northeast Alabama to Ten Islands, and from there to his glory at Horseshoe Bend and later to New Orleans. But he always remembered Huntsville and came back to visit his friends here. Henry Chase thought the symbolism of Old Hickory should be a hickory tree because Jackson is quoted as saying "if I have to eat acorns, I'll stay down here all winter and we'll whip the Creek Indians." So the hickory tree was planted and about a year ago when the triangle was moved, those of us who remembered Mr. Henry kept watching that hickory tree and sure enough one day it was down. The mayor informed us that he got many calls that day because they remembered Mr. Henry Chase's hickory tree that was in memory of Old Hickory. He quickly assured the callers that the tree would be replanted and it is there today. The next time you pass Mims Court read the sign on Andrew Jackson, perhaps you will remember, as I do, Mr. Henry and his multitude of contributions in the field of historic preservation.

As Mrs. Russell mentioned, one of his last projects was the committee on renaming of streets. He, Judge [Thomas W.] Jones, Mrs. [Anna] Rosborough, and I sat for hours, days, and weeks and came up with 287 street names to be supplied to the duplicated names that we found when Huntsville was consol-

idated into a metropolitan area in 1956. He did this with a great deal of enthusiasm and I remember how long he pondered the street from the head of Monte Sano down to where the Space Science Museum today is located because it involved about seven street names. It involved a residential area, a commercial area, an industrial area, and part of the wilderness, since that part of Huntsville had not yet been developed. Finally we came up with the composite title Governors Drive. That would please everybody since it is a plural term named for the nine Alabama governors associated with Madison County history.

Mr. Chase was indeed a man for all ages. He was mature when he was young and he remained young when his body grew old and his spirit was challenged to join that of his wife. I received a very interesting letter from Mr. Chase. In fact, it was written after my last visit to his house when I attended her funeral. It was the most amazing letter I had ever received of its kind and so I cherish it. This was the vein of it: "I do appreciate your coming to rejoice with me on this day when Annie went on. I am looking forward to joining her in the near future." How beautiful a way to look at the ending of life as well as the beginning. May I say his spirit is alive among us today and I am sure he is with us in spirit here as we celebrate the Twentieth Anniversary of the Huntsville Historical Society.

VIRGINIA CLAY-CLOPTON

By PAT W. RICHARDSON

The Virginia Clay-Clopton Chapter of United Daughters of the Confederacy voted in October, 1915 to erect this marker at Mrs. Clopton's home, "Wildwood", and also a marker at the spot where Union forces determined to hang Captain Frank B. Gurley.¹

To make a dedicatory address concerning so prominent a personage is ordinarily difficult. When before an audience, many of whom qualify eminently as local historians and with special interests about the personage concerned, it is extraordinarily difficult. Because it would hardly be possible to delve out facts of the remarkable life of Virginia Clay-Clopton which would not already be known to many of you, I have not attempted that. Rather, I shall only note some of the more outstanding events of her ninety full years. Those of you who are relative strangers to her memory may gain therefrom some insight of the genius of this great lady. Those who know better than I of the events I relate may feel again inspiration in the re-telling.

Born in Nash County, North Carolina, January 17, 1825, Virginia Tunstall was the daughter of a physician, Dr. Peyton Randolph Tunstall. Dr. Tunstall moved his family to Mount Vernon, Alabama, shortly after her birth; and, on being left a widower, soon sent his small daughter to Tuscaloosa where she was reared in the home of her mother's half-sister, Mrs. Henry W. Collier. Miss Tunstall was educated in Tuscaloosa and Nashville, Tennessee, and enjoyed in both charming cities the delights of growing up in

the South of the late 1830's, truly a Golden Age! Hunt breakfasts, family luncheon parties, and elaborate balls filled her carefully chaperoned days and nights. Miss Tunstall was a Southern Belle when the term came into use, and it might well have been created especially for her.

In 1842 at Tuscaloosa, Virginia Tunstall became the bride of Clement Claiborne Clay, son of Governor Clement Comer Clay, and came to Huntsville with her husband to live and to begin their political career. It was indeed "their political career" as this anecdote will illustrate: Clay determined to win a seat in the State Legislature; and, following local custom, he set out to shake the hand of every voter in Madison County. He was a brilliant man and proved it when he forsook the saddle horse for his traveling, packed his beautiful bride into a buggy behind a thoroughbred mare and started on "their political campaign." On one occasion during the campaign when the Clays dined in a rural home, Mrs. Clay wore a pink satin bonnet, a favorite of her husband. The bonnet was duly removed on their arrival and at departure Mr. Clay noticed that it had been replaced on his bride's head by a faded gingham sunbonnet. As soon as they were out of earshot, Mrs. Clay explained what had happened. The pretty teen-age daughter of the farmer had admired the bonnet, and had been surprised by its owner as the barefooted young girl was trying it on her own head. The embarrassed child was "swapped" the pink satin bonnet for her sunbonnet. Whereupon, the anecdote continues, the farmer switched sides in the campaign and helped win the election for Clay.

In 1853 Virginia Tunstall Clay accompanied her husband to Washington, D. C. after his election to the United States Senate. Presidents Franklin

Pierce and James Buchanan headed the list of distinguished guests who enjoyed her brilliant entertainments. In her memoirs, published in 1904 under the title A Belle of the Fifties, Mrs. Clay tells of those times--fascinating and dangerous. It was Senator Clay who in January, 1861, read to the United States Senate Alabama's Ordinance of Secession. He resigned his seat to take one later in the Senate of the noble, new Confederate States of America. The Clays spent the early war years in Richmond. Mrs. Clay was fond of relating tales of those days and of the men who made their stirring history--President Jefferson Davis and his wife were old friends of their Washington days. The dashing Confederate general, J. E. B. Stuart, returned from a cavalry raid to dance with Mrs. Clay at one great ball. Times and the tides of war changed quickly, however, and Mrs. Clay soon fled from Richmond to the plantation of Senator J. H. Hammond in South Carolina.

When news of the Confederate surrender reached Senator Clay he immediately set forth on horseback for a new life in Texas. While enroute he learned that he was charged with conspiracy in the plot on President Lincoln's life and returned immediately to Macon, Georgia, where he surrendered to the Federal Government and was imprisoned at Fort Monroe with Jefferson Davis and other distinguished Confederate patriots. Mrs. Clay was determined that her husband should be released and that the groundless charges against him should be dropped. Her efforts to secure the release of the man she loved, whose health was at best precarious, culminated in a trip to Washington and an audience with President Andrew Johnson. The charm, wit and audacity of Virginia Tunstall Clay are illustrated by the following incident of the interview. President Johnson asked his

caller, "How is it that I have been in Washington so long and failed to meet such a beautiful and charming lady?" Whereupon Mrs. Clay answered, "Mr. President, you just do not move in the right circles!" On April 17, 1866, President Davis and Senator Clay were ordered released from their imprisonment.

During the War the Clay family home on Clinton Street in Huntsville was burned. Thus, the Clays, on their return to Madison County, came to reside at "Wildwood." Here they were visited by Jefferson Davis and on one occasion he met and personally thanked Captain Frank B. Gurley for his services as a Confederate cavalry leader during the War. Senator Clay's always fragile health had been further broken during his imprisonment and on January 3, 1882, he died at "Wildwood."

After three years of widowhood, Mrs. Clay chaperoned two young ladies on a tour of Europe, adding international renown to her reputation for intelligence and charm. Her personal assets un fading, Virginia Tunstall Clay in 1887 married Judge David Clopton of the Alabama Supreme Court. He was 67; she was 62. Her second husband was a distinguished man, having served in the United States Congress before secession and in the Confederate Congress and having had an active part in bringing about an end to Reconstruction. He was elected to the Legislature in 1878, appointed to the judgeship in 1884 and he held the latter until his death in 1892.

Returning to Huntsville from Montgomery, twice-widowed at 67 years of age, Mrs. Clay began one of the most active and remarkable periods of her life. Ever proud of her husband of 40 years, to whom she dedicated the memoirs then begun, referring to him as "the husband of my youth." Mrs. Clopton re-adopted his name, using for herself a hyphenated

surname, "Clay-Clopton." Virginia Tunstall Clay-Clopton was instrumental in the formation of the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the group which now carries her name and is dedicating to her this memorial. She helped organize the Village Improvement Society, which saw to the paving of the Court House Square. She was active in various groups which worked for women's suffrage. Mrs. Milton Humes, who lived with her sister in the present Boswell home on McClung Street, was one of her dearest friends. Mrs. Humes and her sister set aside a room in their home for her frequent visits. There, in 1915, Mrs. Clay-Clopton ended her ninety years. She had possessed the best traits of Southern womanhood--courage, constancy and charm.

Her beloved home, "Wildwood," where we are gathered here today, is still owned by members of the family of Virginia Clay-Clopton. A niece she reared here returned after being widowed to live with her foster mother. Mrs. Forest Bell is the only granddaughter of the niece, and is named for Virginia Clay-Clopton.

In Madison County, Alabama, blood runs thick and we love our own. In the particular case of Virginia Tunstall Clay-Clopton we stand united in the reverence of her memory--not only as a distinguished daughter, but also as a symbol of all that has been and always will be fine and worthy in Southern womanhood.

¹This paper was read on September 10, 1958, upon the dedication of a historical marker by the Virginia Clay-Clopton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy at "Wildwood," the home of Mrs. Clay-Clopton.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INFORMATION FROM THE CONSTITUTION HALL STATE PARK SITE

By WILLIAM H. WESLEY

Four months of small scale archaeological testing on the Constitution Hall State Park site in the block bounded by Franklin and Madison Streets and Gates Avenue in the Spring of 1971 brought to light over 3,000 bits and pieces of material that, for the most part are the remains of buildings and accouterments from nineteenth century Huntsville.

There are numerous ways in which past events are preserved for the members of current societies. The items that become buried in the soil at some locations where human activity has been especially intensive can serve as one form of stored information. The Constitution Hall site is such a storehouse.

History is usually considered to be factual information, yet, we are familiar with the various phrases indicating that history is often rewritten. This is simply the admission that human frailty allows the recording of inaccuracies and mistakes, and often one person's opinion of what happened at a given point in time just isn't a fair interpretation of what actually happened. In scientific writing one sees often, "In the light of new information, we now find that ---." History is no different. The events themselves are not changeable, but what is known about events and how they are viewed, do change.

The many artifacts now buried on the Constitution Hall State Park site may not have the potential capability of changing history, but on the basis of items removed in the archaeological test project, much interesting information about what daily life was like in the last century could be available, and specific information relating to activities on the site could be a worthwhile contribution to the long term informative value of the State Park. Certainly, displays of artifacts from the site would make the events of the past more realistic to future visitors to this site where Alabama became a state.

Based on the artifacts and other evidence unearthed, it seems that some of the citizens in the vicinity of this half block area of Huntsville, near Big Springs, were people who smoked clay pipes, dipped or sniffed snuff and drank wine. Some of the men carried pocket knives and firearms, and the women did a lot of sewing. Some of the meals eaten included duck, squirrel, fish, eggs, pork, beef, squash and fruit. Gourds and jimsonweed grew in the immediate vicinity or somewhere nearby, and someone played a harmonica.

The many ceramic fragments from the pits show that meals were served on dinnerware typical of the period and included blue and green "shell edge" or "feather edge" ware, and "willoware." A typical mid nineteenth century newspaper advertisement is this one from the Huntsville Advocate: "A splendid assortment of queensware, glassware, hardware, wooden and willoware can always be found at S. W. Thompson's, Power's old stand N.E. corner public square. Having bought, painted, repaired, and refitted the building known as Power's old stand, the highest prices are now always paid in cash for butter, eggs, chickens, potatoes, etc."

Rather than changing history, historic archaeology most often serves to support or verify written history, and it is amazing that so much information concerning man's activities accumulates in the soil. In the case of the Constitution Hall site, the four small (5' x 5') test pits excavated have tended to support the existing facts and impressions relating to the site's history. Pieces of foundry type, many with the letters and digits still readily discernable, bring vivid reality to the former existence of the Alabama Republican newspaper office at this location. Fragments of brick with heavy gray glaze give an idea of how trim work on some of the brick buildings may have looked, and numerous bits of thick plaster reveal something of the interior appearance of the buildings. Flat window glass fragments with patches of green, yellow, black, and white paint suggest lettering on the windows of some of the buildings. A brass "A" two inches high, with a slant and a slight old English appearance may have been part of words over a doorway, or on a sign hanging near a boardwalk - such words as "Alabama Republican, Constitution Hall, Cabinet Shop, or Library" - all establishments that once existed on the site.

A wedge-shaped brick removed from the rubble in one pit may have been part of a well or cistern, since such bricks were used to build round structures by laying them with the narrow end pointing inward and the wide end to the outside. If such is the case, such a well or cistern would have been in use before c. a. 1830 when Huntsville's cedar pipe water system was constructed. If a well or wells did exist, they were sure to have been filled with trash and rubbish when they were no longer needed and are storehouses of archaeological information. The lower portion of any such well would very likely have the brick walls still

in place.

Bullets of the "minnie ball" variety and several percussion caps that had been fired, were found. Such ammunition was in use for a number of years prior to the Civil War, but could well have been a part of military activity that took place in Huntsville during that period.

Very small brass screws and a small brass lock plate from the area of the cabinet shop provide visible evidence of this activity from the now distant past.

A large glass bowl or possibly a chandelier is represented by seventy-two pieces of clear, thick glass. In either case, large punch bowl or chandelier, such an item would lend a touch of elegance to past events.

The archaeological literature is filled with references to the fact that every archaeological project is unique, and there are indeed some unique circumstances that tend to enhance the archaeological potential at this particular site. The first test pit excavated chanced to reveal the foundation of a building judged to be the remains of a cotton warehouse built in the 1890s. This foundation consists of the brick wall base and a thin layer of mortar on the inside area, which serves as a perfect temporal dividing point. Everything above the mortar is almost entirely from the early twentieth century and all below it is from the nineteenth century. Other such building remains probably exist here.

Another plus factor is that the lime in the mortar and plaster from the old buildings has contributed to the alkalinity of the soil on the site, which means that organic material has been better preserved than it might otherwise have been. This accounts for the presence of such perishable material as leather and

fabric.

The four 5' x5' pits excavated as a test project on this important site represent less than 1/2 of 1 percent of the surface area contained in the 1/2 block area, and excludes that portion presently covered by concrete. The very small sample of archaeological information produced so far from this small fraction of the Constitution Hall site has not proved to be exceptionally surprising, but somehow it seems very much worth having, and to allow the vast amount of remaining information to be destroyed by the construction that will be necessary for making the state park a reality, seems to be something like setting fire to a library filled with rare books. After all, this is the only spot in the world where Alabama became a state. What will become of this storehouse of buried history? If it develops that more archaeology can be arranged on a large enough scale to salvage this important part of Alabama's past it will be a definite asset to the future of the site as a state park.

MADISON COUNTY 150 YEARS AGO

SARAH FISK, Contributor

EDUCATION

The Subscriber respectfully informs his friends and the patrons of science in general, that he has now settled himself in Huntsville, where he intends to keep a permanent School. In this seminary will be carefully and critically taught the English, Latin and Greek languages, with the usual course of academical sciences. His school being his principal interest, he flatters himself that nothing will be wanting on his part to render it respectable and extensively useful. Eight or ten students can get boarding with the teacher on accommodating terms. Young gentlemen who may think proper to avail themselves of this opportunity can have access to an excellent library

MITCHELL COOK

November 16, 1821

NOTICE

TO INTRUDING SETTLERS AND OTHERS,
WHO COMMIT WASTE ON THE PUBLIC LANDS

Those lawless persons who are guilty of intruding on lands of the United States, and of committing waste on public timber, are hereby notified, that measure, having been taken for a rigid enforcement of the laws of the United States in such cases made and provided, they are hereby ordered to desist from such offences forthwith, otherwise they will be prosecuted to the utmost rigor of the law.

Given under my hand, at the city of Washington,
this 11th day of July, 1821

By Order: JOSIAH MEIGS,
Commissioner of the General Land Office

August 10, 1821

BATTALION ORDER.

There will be an Election held at the Court House, in Huntsville, on Saturday the 29th inst. for the purpose of electing a Captain, Lieutenant and Ensign, in the company formerly commanded by Captain John Biddle.

W. SANDERS
Major 2d Bat. 3d Reg. A.M.

Sept. 21, 1821

DOCTOR PUTNAM,

Surgeon Dentist

Having returned to Huntsville, offers his professional services to the public. He occupies a room on McKinley's Row, one door above Minor & Taylor's office - where he will attend to the duties of his profession.

He will leave Huntsville by the 25th of September.

August 31, 1821

REGIMENTAL ORDER.

The Commissioned officers of the 3d Reg. Alabama Militia, are hereby ordered to convene at the Huntsville Inn, on Monday the 10th day of September next, on business of importance to the Regiment.

D. M. BRADFORD

Col. 3d Reg.

August 31, 1921

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

By ELBERT L. WATSON

We commend the accomplishments of the Huntsville Historical Society which is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this month. In this short span of time the Society has actively promoted the preservation of local history through collecting documents, erecting markers, participating in programs, and promoting historic preservation. From its embryonic membership of forty-three, the Society today numbers over 250 members of representative citizens of Huntsville, Madison County, and other places in North Alabama.

The importance of a local historical society to a community should not be underestimated. Though we do not live in the past, the record of yesterday has a great bearing on the kind of mark we will set for ourselves in the future. The ancient prophet Isaiah recognized this fact when he admonished his countrymen: "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn." He was simply saying that the quality of a people may often be evaluated by their attitude toward their heritage.

Another sage once said that a man who knows nothing of the past is still a child. In the history of all nations that have accomplished anything there are leaders, events, principles, and traditions worthy of remembrance. To become acquainted with them should be a source of pride, inspiration, and guidance to the people concerned. Citizens who maintain an inventory of the past may profit from its lessons and the achievements of great leaders.

The Huntsville Historical Society during the past twenty years has done a monumental job of preserving the goodly heritage of our community. But the past is only prologue to greater accomplishments in the future for the Society.

Good luck and thanks for a job well done.

