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Editor
Elbert L. Watson

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REV. GEORGE E. EAGLETON:
A SOUTHERN TEACHER
IN THE 1850'S

by Alden B. Pearson, Jr.

Diaries of famous people or of those who consorted with them possess obvious historical value; however, the personal record of an educated, thoughtful, sensitive, but less prominent person also gives valuable insight into the society in which he lived. George Ewing Eagleton's Day Book is such a record. It details the experiences and impressions of a Presbyterian preacher and teacher of Middle Tennessee before, during and after the Civil War. This essay examines only one of many subjects upon which he commented—education in the ante-bellum South. Holding firmly to the traditional Presbyterian concern for an educated citizenry and better educated than most of his contemporaries, Eagleton was sometimes forced by the low level and irregular payment of ministerial salaries to supplement his income by teaching school. In this way he became intimately acquainted with the problems and the joys of mid-nineteenth century Southern education.

Educational development in Tennessee, as in the South generally, lagged several decades behind that of the North. Early in the nineteenth century funds from the sale or lease of certain tracts of public land had been set aside for the support of colleges, academies, and the common schools. With some additions from

the state's profits on stock which it held in various banks, this common school fund became a part of the capital of the Banks of Tennessee in 1838. From its profits the Bank annually had to set aside the meager sums of \$100,000 for distribution to the counties for the common schools and \$18,000 for the county academies. Not until 1854, when Governor Andrew Johnson led the legislature to supplement this fund with poll and property taxes specifically for public schools, did the state establish an adequate tax base for public education. In the 1850's the state's first public graded schools were established in Nashville and Memphis; and although rapid development occurred in other parts of the state, there was no state system of public schools until 1873. By 1860 the state had 140,000 pupils in the common schools, but still almost twenty per cent of the white adult population was illiterate. Even though county systems of free schools were authorized by legislature several times between 1816 and the 1850's, lack of sufficient funds, local indifference and opposition, and a dearth of qualified teachers prevented the effective implementation of this legislation. Private schools and academies, which were the first educational institutions in the state, therefore, continued to provide the major portion of educational opportunities until the late 1850's and even afterwards in some areas. Just as Presbyterian ministers, in the tradition of that denomination's interest in education, had started the first schools in the territory which was to become Tennessee, so they continued to play a large role in providing leadership for these schools and academies. George E. Eagleton fit comfortably and naturally into this pattern.²

Eagleton was well educated by the standards of his day. Born on December 31, 1831, in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where his father, William, was beginning the third year of a long and productive pastorate in

the First Presbyterian Church,³ he studied in several local private schools and in 1851 was a member of the second class to graduate from the recently established Union University.⁴ Eagleton had earlier decided to enter the ministry, and for a year he studied theology and Hebrew under his father, a former professor in the theological seminary at Maryville, Tennessee.⁵ He then spent a year at that institution before finishing his formal education at Union Theological Seminary in New York City in 1853-54. Believing that education entailed more than just "book learning," he traveled widely whenever he had an opportunity. During his stay in the North, for example, he visited Buffalo and Niagara Falls, Boston and New Haven, Philadelphia and Washington. By virtue of his formal education and his observation of other parts of the country he therefore brought to his pulpit and his classroom a broader, better informed viewpoint than did most Southerners of that time.

Eagleton's early career as a minister and teacher included a number of contacts with Alabama and the Tennessee Valley. He received his first teaching experience near the Alabama state line in eastern Mississippi while serving churches in both states. Thereafter, until the Civil War broke out, he worked in rural areas of Tennessee directly north of Alabama's Madison and Limestone counties. In March, 1856, he brought his bride of two months, the former Ethlinda M. Foute, of Cade's Cove in East Tennessee, to Giles County, Tennessee. There he served the Presbyterian churches at Cornersville and Brick Church (Richland Creek) and also taught school in the latter community. He later resigned from the Cornersville Church because it failed to pay his salary and accepted the pulpit of the Swan Creek Church nearby in Lincoln County. Like many rural churches in this period, these congregations provided no living quarters for

their ministers; and for most of the next two and a half years the Eagletons boarded with Major John B. Gordon in the Richland Creek area. For four months in 1856 they resided with Dr. Robert G. McClure in Lewisburg, Marshall County, where Eagleton was principal of a local academy, Judson Female Institute.⁶ Toward the end of 1858 the family moved to the farm of Major Marion Childress near Swan Creek church and Boon's Hill, between Pulaski and Fayetteville in Lincoln County. They remained there until March, 1861, when they moved two miles west to Boon's Hill in order to start another school--Boon's Hill Institute--in response to the urgings of the local people. There they lived with Dr. John Wood until Eagleton closed the school and joined the Confederate Army in November of that year.⁷

Eagleton's early career is of additional interest to Huntsvillians because he made several visits to this city during the years just before the war. The state line did not demarcate sharp differences in this part of the Tennessee River Valley; for residents of the whole area shared many common geographical and climatic conditions, economic interests, outlooks and attitudes. In fact, the Presbyterian church disregarded the state boundary; and Eagleton for several years belonged to the Presbytery of North Alabama, which occasionally met in Huntsville.

He first visited Huntsville in 1857 for a meeting of the Presbyterian Synod of West Tennessee. Huntsville, he observed, was "a town of about 4,500 population. To the East the mountains rise rather suddenly, while to the sunsetting the country lies in a beautiful flat. There are some town lots here improved with exquisite taste and others in taste as extremely bad... Each of the three presbyteries of this synod sat on this occasion in different corners of the Huntsville Church."⁸ He was referring to the original building of the First Presbyterian Church, which was erected in

1822 and which the congregation was then on the verge of replacing. This was the town's first house of worship and stood on the church's present location at the corner of Lincoln and Gates streets.⁹

A few years later Eagleton returned to Huntsville to attend meetings of the presbytery and of the new United Synod of the Presbyterian Church, which was the predecessor of the present General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, known informally as the Southern Presbyterian Church. The meetings were held in "the new and beautiful" building of the First Presbyterian Church, which was formally dedicated by the Synod. After several renovations and additions, this sanctuary is still in use on the original site.¹⁰

In January, 1855, he began his career with a one year appointment to the churches at Cooksville and Macon in Noxubee County, Mississippi, and at Franconia and Pemphis in Pickens County, Alabama. In response to his own needs and those of the community he immediately became involved in educational work in addition to his ministerial labors. The impoverished Synod of Mississippi could promise the young preacher only five hundred dollars for a year's work; but this small salary would not enable him to support himself, pay off his debts for the expense of his final year of theological training, and make provision for his planned marriage the following January. He therefore undertook to teach the youth of the Cooksville, Mississippi, area in a one-room school house.¹¹ His contract called for two terms of school, beginning in February and ending in December with a few weeks between terms in mid-summer, for the grand sum of seven hundred dollars. The two jobs together should have enabled him to clear his debts by the end of the year; but the school authorities paid him only two-thirds of his salary, and the churches paid him nothing

at all. As he prepared to leave the Mississippi-Alabama border to return to Cade's Cove for his wedding, he expressed his disappointment and indignation:

These churches have not paid me the amount of my ferriage across the Tombigbee River, much less my hotel bills at Macon, etc. ! 'Tis true and they don't intend to pay me a copper--"narry red"--it may be that they think that I get enough from my schools--but that don't (sic) affect the honesty of this thing, for I have preached as arduously as if I had had no school, rode day and night--exposed myself to heat and cold, snow and rain, paid ferriage and hotel bills to attend my appointments--all this and more; and now they pay me no wages for twelve months' labors.¹²

This experience taught the young preacher a hard lesson. "Now," he asserted, "I've learned a thing. I began preaching with no definite understanding with my churches, but I'll never do so again!"¹³ Despite this forceful promise to himself, however, his ministerial career included several repetitions of this failure of rural churches to meet their financial obligations. For the next thirty years--in Tennessee, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas--he taught, served as principal, and sometimes organized schools to supplement his own income, to meet the educational needs of rural people, and to provide for the education of his own children.

In comparison with the vagaries and uncertainties of ministerial compensation, it was the regularity rather than the high level of teachers' wages which attracted Eagleton to that profession. Indeed, even before he began to teach, he complained of the pernicious effects of low salaries in the schools and accurately described the effects of the manifest indifference toward a public school system which many Southerners displayed.¹⁴ He discerned

a class of teachers, all over the country, unqualified, with little or no education themselves, who are inflicting a twofold injury on the public. First, by teaching for wages which a qualified teacher would consider no inducement, they gain the patronage of the close and penurious and leave the more liberal unable to employ a good teacher. Second, in many cases, their teaching is worse than none, as many of their lessons must be unlearned, and their (students') habits unformed, or reformed, in order to make correct scholars. . . The "Public School Funds" as they are here and now managed, are doing a great and lasting injury to the cause of education. They call in incompetent teachers and make most superficial scholars.¹⁵

Yet, something was better than nothing, which is what he sometimes received from his churches.

Typically for Eagleton's time, his studies at the university and the seminary had not prepared him specifically for a teaching career; his curriculum included courses in mathematics, logic, grammar, rhetoric, classical literature, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, theology, and Bible study but none in education or practice teaching. However, he received a foretaste of the mixed blessings of a teacher's work in 1853 when he substituted for a sick friend as master of a one-room school near Murfreesboro. He found the week-long experience "pleasant in some respects, but rather trying on the patience and responsible to a degree that few seem to appreciate." His comment that he was then "half persuaded teaching hasn't a happy effect on the temper" undoubtedly reflected both his youthful impatience and the difficulties inherent in the one-room school--and also the experience of many other teachers before and since his time.¹⁶

Fortunately for his sanity and his continued effectiveness as a teacher, Eagleton's sense of humor tempered his reactions to the backwardness of some of his pupils. The following dialogue, for example, occurred in the second week of his first regular "ped-

agoguing," as he termed it, in Cooksville, Mississippi.

"Well, you say your name is "John. " John who?"
(No answer.)

"What is your father's name?"

"I don't know, sir!" I gave up that one.

But again--"Well, you! What's your given name?"

"I ain't got narry one."

"Is this other boy here your brother?"

"Yes, sir, Mama says so, but Papa says he ain't!"

"And that boy, too?"

"Ye-ye-yes, sir."

"How many of you are there here today?"

"Only five of us today; Papa says he'll send the rest tomorrow!"

That boy's a 'Pet' at home, I know, and as I turned to another new case, thought I to myself--"Indeed! That boy's pa has studied the multiplication table and has been practicing it, too!"

The enthusiastic response of isolated rural communities to an opportunity for education demonstrated the need for regular, systematic instruction. Under Eagleton's tutelage the Cooksville school, for example, not only studied the multiplication table but also "practiced it," growing within a few weeks from twenty-eight to sixty-six "young immortals." As a minister-teacher, Eagleton considered their spiritual welfare as vital as their intellectual development. "May Heaven," he prayed, "bless my labors, direct my steps, and graciously forbid that the least of all of them should be led astray by following my example."¹⁸

Eagleton's intense concern for his pupils and his inexperience occasionally led him to "overreact" to schoolboy pranks like those which teachers have always faced. Serious-minded himself, he found it difficult to understand frivolous behavior by his students. But his Christian conscience immediately produced remorse at his reactions. One such incident involved the decidedly unpleasant and provoking expe-

rience of being locked out of his school on a frosty December morning. In 1856 he had acceded to repeated requests to take over the school at Brick Church in Giles County for a twenty-one week term, for which he was to receive two hundred dollars.¹⁹ His diary entry for December 31 records an unusual and, to the earnest young teacher, disturbing confrontation:

This morning is damp and cold. I went down to the school room and discovered that some Devil-led specimens of young America had barred the doors against me. The young rebels were inside the house. Through the window I learned who they were. I then ordered them to open the doors, three times--the last time threatened to expel them in case they refused. They opened the door and I opened school--and administered unto them a plain pointed rebuke, intimating to them that hereafter their connection with the school is suspended on a slender thread, and that they might now very easily sever that thread.

Apparently the awareness that he himself might have contributed to the incident also tempered his judgment as well as added to his frustration. "My offence," he added, "was teaching school on the holidays, I presume. At this act I was surprised and enraged and my feelings were deeply wounded and then it was such a contemptible failure."²⁰

In regard to discipline in the school room Eagleton had decided while still a student himself that physical punishment was basically undesirable and unnecessary. The preface to his diary records from the perspective of a twenty-six year old how he reached this conclusion. He discussed the methods of two of his teachers--Rev. Benjamin D. Barlow and Rev. Joseph H. Eaton, the founder and president of Union Academy and University; of the latter he said:

I always loved him. Indeed I never heard one of his pupils say anything of importance to his prejudice. He governed by the law of love--never saw him strike a boy but once, and then only at the request of the

culprit's father. On the other hand Mr. Barlow, my former teacher, used the rod a great deal; he was severe, sometimes a tyrant. His "whipping" so much, however, added to his popularity among that class of parents who never governed their children at home. I compared the two men--their different modes of government, and the final consequences of each respectively. The result is this, i. e. I love the one man, but never did love the other--heartily approve the one mode of government, but now, less than ever, do I approve of the other mode. Yet I must say that Mr. Barlow never struck me with the "hickory" but once, then only on the leg of a new pair of heavy boots. It hurt not the flesh, but made a lasting impression on the "inner man" for another boy, not I had committed the slight offense; and the same Mr. B. is the only teacher who ever struck me.

Despite his aversion to physical punishment, Eagleton, like many other teachers before and since his time, soon found that drastic measures were sometimes necessary. In the fifth week of his initial school term he first applied the rod himself, without any evident qualms because the recipient of his attention apparently deserved it: "I whipped him well, for fighting, for running away from school and for general idleness! His mother whipped him, too. I lectured him before and after the chastisement. Three days since he stabbed one of his school mates! A wicked, trifling boy--he promises very badly!"²¹

The rural teacher often faced the problem of disciplining young men, not boys; in such a situation an attempt at physical punishment might prove more dangerous to the disciplinarian than to the offender. Then, as in the case of two young men who "got into quite a fight," Eagleton asserted his moral and legal authority: "I sat as cross examiner, prosecutor, judge and sheriff--I took the law into my own hands and without an 'if' or an 'and' from the Board of Trustees, I suspended both of them for the rest of the week."²²

If discipline in the rural school was swift and sure,

the institution was also a training ground for democracy in some matters. On one occasion the degree of mutual agreement in Eagleton's school seems at first sight remarkable, considering the broad range of ages and abilities of the students. In the Cooksville, Mississippi, school which had grown to eighty-four "scholars" and had added an assistant teacher, the vote of the students against a particular proposal was "unanimous, save that one voted for it. He did not bring in a 'Minority Report,' and so the thing was dropped." Although "the thing" in question was a traditional part of scholastic life of the time, virtually unanimous opposition should not have surprised even an inexperienced teacher; the question was "the propriety and demand for a public examination at close of the term."²³ At least this one time the students' wishes prevailed, and the closing ceremonies were brief. Eagleton "made a short address, gave some advice to the students, and dismissed them with prayer."²⁴

In the light of Eagleton's comments about the capabilities of his students and the disadvantages of their home backgrounds, their reluctance to display either their learning or their ignorance in a public performance is understandable. Toward the end of his first full term in his own school he observed that he enjoyed some aspects of teaching but that

in other respects it sorely tries both flesh and spirit, e.g. the lazy, sleepy, drawling enunciation of little Abcdarians (!), the slow advances of half grown, good natured, cabbage headed "favorites" (at home) and the ill humor and fretfulness, called forth more than semioccasionally by juvenile representatives from families that "know nothing" of that something called a good home education!²⁵

Not all of the teacher's problems were rooted in the laziness or lack of ability of his students. In tragic circumstances later the same year he learned another lesson: that parents can be as unreasonable as

their children are indifferent but with more serious consequences. One afternoon in October, 1855, two young daughters of one of the Cooksville school's trustees joined their girl friends swimming in Woodard's Creek about halfway between their home and the school. The younger one, "a beautiful girl," became ill and died; and the distraught father blamed Eagleton. "Why?" Eagleton remonstrated in his diary. "As an honest man I must answer that I never could see why, for I never engaged to go home with each and every one of seven dozen children every day, and act the nurse for them, and be a sort of chief cook and bottle-washer at everybody's home! No Sir!" Eagleton was able to forgive the father for his unjust accusations on the grounds that he was "at least half deranged," but he grieved deeply over the estrangement because the man was also an elder in his church. Added to the spiritual and personal problem was a more mundane one. Eagleton feared that the father, as a trustee of the school and an elder in the church, would resist the payment of his wages by both employers. Since he was planning to marry within a few months, the financial threat was particularly depressing. But he was even more deeply disturbed by the disruption of the pastor-elder relationship. Indeed, this difficulty arising out of his school duties almost led him to resign from the Cooksville church; but at the urging of the other elders he consented to finish his promised year there.²⁶ Although the extent of the grieving father's influence remains unknown, Eagleton's fears for his income were partially realized. As noted earlier in this essay, the school still owed him more than two hundred dollars, and the churches had paid him nothing when his appointment there expired at the end of December.

Eagleton's diary reveals not only problems and situations which teachers still face but, more import-

antly, the haphazard nature of education in the pre-Civil War Mid-South. Lacking an effective state-supported system of public education, people who wanted training for their children relied on personal tutors or locally financed and locally directed private schools or academies. In relatively large, well settled communities like Murfreesboro, Eagleton indicates, there was regular instruction and even some choice available to citizens who could afford it. But in rural areas the availability of formal education frequently depended upon the presence in the region of someone, frequently a minister like Eagleton, who was both willing and able to undertake the difficulties and frustrations of the one-room school (in which he functioned as teacher, administrator, and janitor), poorly prepared students, unreliable income, disinterested and ignorant parents, and irregular terms.

¹This essay represents part of an address which the author delivered to the Huntsville Historical Society on May 16, 1971.

²Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell, Tennessee: A Short History (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), pp. 268-74, 412-16; (The Goodspeed Publishing Co.), History of Tennessee (Nashville: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1886), pp. 413-42; Philip M. Hamer, Tennessee: A History, 1673-1932 (N. Y.: American Historical Society, 1933), pp. 353-60; Thomas P. Abernethy, From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study in Frontier Democracy (Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina Press, 1932; repr., University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1967), pp. 262-76. H. G. Good, A History of American Education (N. Y.: The Macmillan Company, 1956), pp. 262-70. The study by Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell will be cited hereafter as Folmsbee, Tennessee.

³ A tablet which is still in that church was inccribed: "In Memoriam. /Rev. William Eagleton, D.D., /Born in Blount County, Tennessee, March 25, 1796;/Died at Murfreesboro, March 28, 1866. /He came to us December, 1829, and for thirty-seven years broke to us the bread of life. /How good and true, how guileless and faithful, how sympathizing and affectionate this shepherd was, we his flock only know!"

⁴This institution was organized in 1845 by Rev. Joseph H. Eaton, a Missionary Baptist minister, and closed soon after the Civil War. Preface to Eagleton's diary, written February 5, 1858; Folmsbee, Tennessee, p. 277 n.1.

⁵Maryville College had its beginning as Union Academy, established in 1801 by Rev. Isaac Anderson, and the college itself was founded in 1819 as Southern and Western Theological Seminary for the training of Presbyterian ministers. For seven years Anderson was both president and faculty; then in 1826 in response to increased enrollment he hired his first teacher, one of his former students, William Eagleton, who taught for three years before moving to Murfreesboro. The institution received its charter as Maryville College in 1842, Folmsbee, Tennessee, pp. 123-25, 277; Hamer, Tennessee, pp. 371-72; The Maryville Times, October 28, 1937, p. 1.

⁶Eagleton's Day Book, entries for March 1, 2, 3, 21, and July 31, 1856. The original Day Book is in the possession of Eagleton's Granddaughter, Elvie Eagleton (Mrs. O. C.) Skipper, who now resides in Huntsville. Her daughter, Anna Lee, is married to the author of this essay. Subsequent citations to the Day Book will consist only of the date of entry.

⁷March 1, November 26, 1861.

⁸October 13, 1857.

⁹For a drawing of this building and a description of the interior see Charlotte Forgey Shenk and Donald Hugh Shenk, History of the First Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, Alabama, Sesquicentennial Observance, 1818-1968 (Huntsville: Paragon Press, 1968), n. p.

¹⁰May 15-17, 1860. Shenk and Shenk, History of the First Presbyterian Church.

¹¹ June 29, 1853, September 28, 1854, February 7, 1855.

¹² December 22, 1855, January 12, September 11, 1856. Eagleton was not alone in this situation. Rev. James H. Otey, founder of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Tennessee and the first P. E. bishop of the state, threatened to resign in 1853, after twenty years as bishop, if the diocese did not pay his salary more promptly. Folmsbee, Tennessee, p. 287.

¹³ January 12, 1856. Eagleton's emphasis.

¹⁴ History of Tennessee, pp. 420-29; Folmsbee, Tennessee, pp. 268-80.

¹⁵ March 19, 31, 1853.

¹⁶ May 17, 20, 1853.

¹⁷ February 20, 1855.

¹⁸ March 12, 1855.

¹⁹ August 25, 1856.

²⁰ This entry also contains a humorous note: "Today the 'Old Family Bible' reports me to be 'twenty-five years of age' and although I hardly believe that this part of the 'Good Book' is inspired, yet, I guess, it must be all 'o.k.'--a true version of the tale." Eagleton's emphasis.

²¹ March 19, 1855.

²² June 27, 1855

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ July 25, 1855.

²⁵ June 27, 1855. The reference is to the American, or "Know-Nothing" Party, which enjoyed some success in Tennessee in the mid-1850's as the Whig Party declined. Folmsbee, Tennessee, pp. 234-39. In 1857 Eagleton himself voted for Robert Hatton, the party's candidate for governor, against Democrat Isham G. Harris, although he split his ticket regarding the other offices on the ballot. August 6, 1857.

²⁶ October 7, 1855.

GENERAL JOSEPH WHEELER IN HUNTSVILLE

By Herbert L. Hughes

Famous old-new and lovely Huntsville has been the birthplace and home of not a few famous persons, and it has been visited by many notables and celebrities. But no visitor or native has been more loved and honored by Huntsville than General Joseph Wheeler, the notable Confederate cavalry commander.

General Wheeler was a graduate of West Point, but when the Civil War broke out, he at once resigned his position with the United States and entered the war on the side of his native South. He quickly rose to the rank of colonel and on to the rank of lieutenant-general, and was in command of the Nineteenth Alabama Infantry. He proved himself to be one of the South's ablest generals and at all times a gallant soldier.

After the Civil War closed, he became a lawyer and planter in the Tennessee Valley. In 1880 he was elected to Congress from the Eighth Congressional District of Alabama and served almost continuously in Congress until 1899.

The Spanish-American War broke out April 25, 1898, and he volunteered and entered it with the rank of major-general. He was in command of the cavalry division of the Santiago Army, and was senior officer in the crucial battle of San Juan Hill. The battle was

one of the most prominent of the war, and of the stories concerning the general at this time was that he climbed a tree, exposing himself to imminent danger, in order to have a good view of the battle, other top brass not being agile enough to climb likewise.

The war ended July 16, 1898, in a crushing defeat of Spain, and the peace treaty was signed December 10, 1898. The United States began gradually to remove the soldiers from the fever lands of Cuba to the States, and some 30,000 of the infantry and cavalry, including the noted Sixty-Ninth New York, were sent to Huntsville for the late fall of 1898.

On October 7, General Wheeler was placed in command of these troops, the Fourth Army corps, and continued in command until December 3. The Huntsville camp was first known as Camp Wheeler, but when he became commander, he changed the name to Camp Forse in honor of Captain Albert G. Forse, who was under General Wheeler's command at San Juan Hill and was killed in action in that battle.

While in Huntsville, General Wheeler resided on Huntsville's Monte Sano mountain, and was the center of much attention. He was called on to speak on numerous occasions, such as on Miner's Day at the University of Alabama, and was the honored guest at many social events. One enterprising citizen placed on sale a General Wheeler hat with the Generals' picture on it. Of course, Camp Forse occupied much of his time and attention, for the soldiers seemed to have been not too well behaved, judging from the fights the papers reported; and one soldier was so bold or foolhardy as to forge the General's name to a large check in Huntsville.

The most notable event during General Wheeler's stay in Huntsville was the occasion at which he was presented a \$700 black Kentucky saddle horse in the courthouse yard. The horse was a spirited charger, sleek and restless with his hoofs gilded for the occasion, and harnessed with a major-general's trappings.

The Huntsville newspapers, some two or three of these weeklies, carried full accounts of this notable occasion, and it was from the files of these that virtually all the material for this paper was obtained. The flavor of old-time Huntsville journalism and oratory, is found in the following article from the Huntsville Democrat of December 1, 1898:

"Huntsville's streets were crowded with enthusiastic citizens from all areas of the Eighth Congressional District of Alabama.

"Though the presentation was announced for one-thirty o'clock, by twelve a tremendous crowd began to assemble on the Public Square, in the courthouse yard, and to fill every available window and the portico to see the little hero--little in stature only. Men and boys even climbed to the very topmost branches of the trees of the courtyard to get a better view of the panorama below. The banks and schools of the city were closed, and the children were out in full force.

"The commodious bandstand on the north side of the Square was beautifully draped in the colors, and the stars and stripes waved at intervals around the railing.

"At the appointed hour a series of cheers rent the balmy air, and General Wheeler was escorted to the stand by a committee of prominent citizens, among whom were Captain Humes, Mayor Murphy, W. R. Rison, S. H. Moore, L. Matthews, R. E. Murphy, R. E. Pettus, H. Weil, William Holden, Judge Richardson, Colonel Rhett, and others.

"The caparisoned steed to be presented was led in the front of the stand. When Captain Humes arose to make the presentation, a rousing cheer was heard; then a hush pervaded the vast assembly, while he spoke feeling as follows:

Speech of Captain Milton Humes:

"Ladies, Soldiers, and Fellow Citizens: Some of General Wheeler's friends have given me the pleasing commission in their behalf to present him on this occasion this handsome horse and its equipment as an expression of their friendship for him and as a testimonial of their admiration for his many manly qualities and virtues. The simple narration of this fact and the presence of this concourse of people, fair women and brave men, give sufficient emphasis to this occasion and its purpose, and are a more eloquent and thrilling tribute to the man we honor than human language is capable of. (sic) To extol in public the virtues of a modest living man in his presence is embarrassing to him and of questionable taste. Eulogies of the dead are always appropriate, but the presence of the living hero on an occasion such as this is all that is necessary to arouse the people, and it is about all that is desired. I wish to say to General Wheeler that this horse and its military caparison has no significance further than being one expression of our commendation of his conduct in the past as a citizen, statesman, and especially of our admiration for the dauntless courage and skillful generalship he displayed under most trying circumstances in the recent battle around Santiago. Whether he continues in the military service of his country or returns to the Halls of Congress as our representative, I know I voice the sentiment of his constituents and the people of the whole country when I say we leave this matter solely to him for the exercise of his better judgment, feeling assured that in his determination he will be prompted by considerations of public good and the wishes of the President whose hands it is the duty of every patriotic citizen to uphold when our country is menaced by war. This occasion teaches all of us, men, women, and children, a useful and valuable lesson which we should not for-

get, and that is this: that by self-sacrifice and persistent devotion to the laudable ambitions of life we may secure success, achieve distinction, and receive the plaudits of our fellow man. Our distinguished fellow citizen whom we honor by this occasion and who honors us by his presence is a living and noble example and illustration of the teachings of this lesson of life. And now, General, please accept this token of our regard, and with it our heart-felt wish that the future may have in store for you many years of useful activity in the service of your country. I feel sure this is your desire, and I know it is none-the-less ours." (End of Captain Humes' speech)

General Wheeler's Response:

"This mark of affection from the people of Huntsville touches me very deeply, and I wish it were in my power to convey to you the great appreciation which is in my heart.

"To be the recipient of honors and to win the approval of strangers and newly-made friends would be gratifying to anyone, but to receive such assurance as I have today from those with whom I have lived during my entire manhood is the highest and most valued honor which could by any possibility be bestowed upon me.

"I came among you thirty-seven years ago. I was very little more than a youth and utterly unknown. I was received with that generous welcome which is so characteristic of the people of North Alabama. Every honor which has been given me with generous hand, and all the honors which I have received, have been in some way due to your kindness and generosity.

"I see about me, now gray with years, those who in early youth stood by my side during a great and sanguinary conflict. Their courage on many a hard-fought field where legions of our comrades fell has



*Truly Your friend
Jos Wheeler*

GENERAL JOSEPH WHEELER

bound us together by ties too strong to be severed by less than death.

"I am surrounded by those who during two score years have by their suffrage for ten successive terms made me a member of the highest elective legislative body on earth, thus according me the highest civil preferment within the gift of a quarter of a million people; and now you come to again do me honor. To acknowledge and fittingly express the appreciation I feel for these evidences of affection and good will requires more than words. It requires deeds. It requires more than simple deeds; a life of effort and devotion would not suffice.

"I accept this generous present, not for its beauty, not for its perfection--though it is the most beautiful and perfect of its kind--but I value it higher because of the spirit which actuated my friends from whom it comes and the honor to myself of which this gift is the expression.

"To your beautiful city and her people I am bound by ties peculiarly strong and dear. Of the sweetest and most sacred of them I can scarcely command words to speak. Here at your old seminary were spent the happy school-girl days of one who loved your people before it became my good fortune to dwell among you. It was she who for thirty years blessed my life and home, bravely bearing and sharing struggle so well known to all who cherish the brightest and yet the saddest memories of our beloved Southland.

"While life lasts, you will have the warmest place in my heart, and when I shall be no more, this affection which comes to them by inheritance and association will continue to live in the hearts of my children." (End of General Wheeler's response)

"After the impressive ceremony, General Wheeler was escorted to his beautifully caparisoned horse, which he mounted with the agility of a boy. General

Wheeler sat (sic) his horse like a brave and noble warrior and noble gentleman, and those who saw him on Thursday little wondered that he exercised such influence and inspired with such confidence the men he commanded on the battlefield." (End of quotation from the newspaper.)

The newspapers estimated the crowd on this occasion at 10,000, the largest crowd ever in Huntsville up to that time, for the people came in all sorts of ways: by trains, which gave reduced rates, by horse and buggy, by wagon, on horseback, etc. Four cavalry regiments were reviewed by General Wheeler, including the brigade he commanded in the Santiago campaign. The column of soldiers was two miles long, and it took it thirty-four minutes to pass the reviewing stand. The soldiers were spectacular with their overcoat capes buttoned back to display their yellow lining.

Such were the newspaper reports of this great occasion, an occasion which old-timers have never forgotten. The Huntsville papers, in almost every issue, carried news of General Wheeler and the camp as well as, now and then, some verse about them. The following was an anonymous poem which the Democrat of October 12, 1898, printed from the Pittsburg Post.

Old Joe Wheeler,
Solid at his post,
Not a thing to kick about,
Nobody to roast;
Never writes a letter
Full of gall and spite,
Old Joe Wheeler,
He's all right.

Old Joe Wheeler,
Flat upon his back,
Got the boys to carry him,
Marshaled the attack;
Doctors couldn't handle him,
Off he went to fight,
Old Joe Wheeler,
He's all right.

Weary was the army,
Spaniards hard to beat,
Someone passed the word along!
"Boys, we must retreat."
"Hang it, no," says ancient Joe,
"Never take to flight."
Old Joe Wheeler,
He's all right.

After Santiago fell,
Fighting men got sick,
Generals and colonels--
All began to kick.
"Hang it all," thought General Joe,
"This disgusts me quite."
Old Wheeler,
He's all right.

Teddy wrote an angry note
Stirring Alger's bile,
Ribbed the powers up the back
In a roughshod style.
Not a word old Joe let drop
At this woeful sight,
Old Joe Wheeler,
He's all right.

Never mad, never bluffed,
Never riled and sore,
Steady and reliable
Fights and nothing more.
Don't forget him, Uncle Sam,
(Some folks think you might)
Old Joe Wheeler,
He's all right.

ALABAMA'S RAILROAD NETWORK: 1830-1870

by John Patterson

In 1830, a charter to build a railroad connecting Decatur and Tuscumbia was requested of the Alabama legislature, in order to "overcome the obstruction to trade caused by the Muscle Shoals of the Tennessee River."¹ Two years later, a charter was granted to Tuscumbia, Courtland and Decatur Railroad; by the latter part of 1834 the line had been completed. Operations on this first railroad were hardly what many of us today would think. The great "iron horse," with its puffing smokestack did not appear on the line until 1835 or 1836; during the first few months the cars were pulled by mule rather than steam power.²

Despite the fact that this first Alabama venture in railroading had cost an estimated \$5,000 per mile to complete, a cost which "proved very burdensome to an agricultural population,"³ the race was on. In 1832 the Montgomery Railroad Company became the second line to receive a charter to connect Montgomery with West Point, Georgia.⁴ Nothing more was done on this line until October, 1835, when subscription for the capital stock was begun and "within a few days . . . a total subscription of \$849,000" toward an estimated cost of \$900,000 was subscribed."⁵

A third line to connect Montgomery and Mobile had many of the subscribers to stock from the port

city. The Board of Directors in February, 1836, requested an installment of five dollars for every share of capital stock in order to let contracts for the first forty-mile section of the road. When stockholders did not deliver the money, the company declared that unless this money was received by April 20, 1836, all those not complying would forfeit their stock; by December 21, 1836, however, the money had not yet been received.⁶ By March, 1837, "12 or 14 miles of track had been graded," and only sixty additional miles had been placed "under contract."⁷ During 1839, it "became evident to the authorities that to complete the road state aid must be obtained." On April 8, 1840, aid was granted, and by November 10, 1840, the road was completed to Franklin.⁸

Alabama's first decade in railroad development (1830-1839) can be characterized as one of increasing interest in railroads, with relatively few actual miles of road built. Over twenty-five charters were issued but most remained mere ideas.⁹ It should be noted, however, that the Panic of 1837 was a hindrance in the late 1830's and early 1840's. Progress was made, but it was very slow.

The decade of the 1840's was a lean period for Alabama's railroads. Only seven new charters were issued and little construction was done,¹⁰ largely because of the depression. Only one thing of much importance occurred during these years: the beginning of state aid to railroads. The aid given to the Montgomery and West Point line was a precedent in Alabama; one which, with the passage of time and greater use by other states and the federal government, Alabama would use again. It was from this time that "there developed a strong feeling among the people that the state should render some positive aid to improvements of this character."¹¹ And it was this desire for state aid which eventually played a major

role, not only in establishing Alabama's railroad network, but in determining when it would be established.

The third decade of Alabama railroad building from 1850-1859 was one of the most important. This period saw state internal improvements, intense political attempts to unite the state through railroads and legislative concern to develop the state's resources. When the decade opened Alabama had a total of 132.5 miles of railroads; the Tusculumbia and Decatur had forty-four miles and the Montgomery and West Point had eighty-eight and one half.¹² This situation, however, changed quite rapidly.

Earlier a clamor had arisen for state intervention and aid to railroads. There was a growing desire to unite the northern and southern parts of the state with a railroad. At Talladega, in 1849, a railroad convention considered this possibility in its deliberations.¹³ Leroy P. Walker of Huntsville told the legislature about some of the benefits to be achieved by state aid to railroads: ". . . I blush to say that in many parts of the State of Alabama it is still as slow and onerous as it was in Great Britain before that triumph of modern genius, the locomotive, was first seen . . . !" "Sir," he continued, "I stand here today to contend for the patronage by the State of Alabama of a system in which I believe the best interests of the Commonwealth and the prosperity of her people are alike profoundly involved."¹⁴ He dramatically concluded:

If Alabama . . . does not take measures to urge forward, I will not say a liberal and comprehensive, but a necessary system of public improvements, developing the rich and varied resources of her soil, and connecting herself by links of iron with the railroads of other States, she must not only decline in strength and prosperity, but eventually recede to a state of worse than colonial (sic.) vassalage; whilst all around her, on every side, will roll those vivifying

waters of energy and enterprise which, denied all access (sic.) here, have gone to gladden other regions, and to make the distant wilderness blossom like the rose.¹⁵

These early attempts at internal improvements were, for the most part, unsuccessful. In 1848, the Alabama Congressional delegation had "unanimously opposed" a railroad bill granting federal and state aid to railroads. Two years later United States Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois went to Mobile and conferred with the directors of a Mobile railroad company whose road had failed for lack of financial support. A coalition of Alabamians and Mississippians secured the passage of a law in 1850 making the Mobile and Ohio part of the Illinois Central system. Thus the southern states were connected by rail with the Great Lakes, with part of the road passing through Alabama.¹⁶

However strong the precedent of the Mobile and Ohio, and the desire of men like Walker for a state railroad network, it was not strong enough at this time to create aid to railroads in general. In 1851, the Internal Improvements Convention, speaking of railroads and state aid, noted that ". . . save for the application of a portion of the Internal Improvements fund appropriated by Congress for the purpose, this state has given no encouragement to the construction of railways within her borders. . ." Other states, however, had ". . . recognized the wisdom of the policy of contributing to assist the completion of their railroad improvements, and the results have (sic., have) fully vindicated the propriety of their decision."¹⁷ But 1851 saw absolutely no new railroad construction in Alabama.

Continuing development and renewed interest after 1851 saw an increase in mileage each year. Between the time the first road was completed in 1834 until 1851, only 132 1/2 miles of track had been laid. But in 1852, Alabama built 28.5 miles, raising the total to 161 miles.

Through 1860 the increase in railroad mileage continued. This vast expansion produced 610.66 miles of railroad in Alabama in a single decade, and gave the state a total mileage of 743.16: an increase of 461 per cent. Between 1850 and 1859 seventy-three charters were issued by the state. The 1860 census also noticed this increase in southern railroad building, although it did not refer specifically to Alabama. "The southern states have been behind the northern in their public enterprises," it reported, "though, at the date of the census, they were prosecuting them with great energy and vigor."¹⁸

ALABAMA'S RAILROAD MILEAGE, 1851-1860*

Year

1851	None	132.5
1852	28.5	161
1853	53.72.	214.72
1854	89.28.	304
1855	30.54.	334.54
1856	119.46.	454
1857	77.80.	531.80
1858	None	531.80
1859	96.60.	628.40
1860	114.76.	743.16

* Source: See Footnote 20.

This increase in mileage, however, was not easily achieved. The development and acceptance of state aid to railroads in Alabama was a process of evolution, not an "over-night" development. The Internal Improvement Convention of 1851 had given a rhetorical but unconvincing argument, at least for most of the people in the state. Although the proposal and recommendations of the convention sounded good, the legislature did not comply. William Martin's study, pub-

lished in 1902, gives five reasons for this. (1) The state bank had recently failed, causing a collapse in the state's finances, which had not been reversed; yet "taxation was still high . . . and many (people were) . . . ready to oppose any measure which threatened a higher tax rate." (2) Also due to the bank failure, "confidence in the integrity or ability of the state as an undertaker" of enterprises was lacking. (3) Many residents of Alabama during this time were concerned with Alabama in an exploitive rather than a developmental sense, and actually had the Far West as their ultimate objective for a "home." "This element acted as a check to the spirit of internal improvements" (4) There were sectional disputes within the state. And (5) many Alabamians felt that this use of taxation was unconstitutional and should be left to private capital.¹⁹

In 1853 and 1855 the gubernatorial races were fought over the issue of state aid, with the Democratic candidate, John A. Winston, opposed to such assistance. The Democrats won both elections and although the legislators tried to aid railroad construction, their attempts were frustrated by the executive branch. Winston vetoed thirty-three such acts and has since been referred to in Alabama as the "Veto Governor."²⁰

Despite his determined stand on the issue of state aid, Winston's years as governor were not barren for railroad development. But the mileage increases were in spite of Winston rather than because of him. By the opening of his second term the demand for state aid was so strong that some railroad bills were passed over his vetoes. In 1855, E. D. Sanford in a report concerning a road connecting the northern and southern parts of the state, to wish that Alabama would give as much aid as Tennessee, which he felt was inadequate.²¹

The desire to bring unity between the northern and southern parts of Alabama has been mentioned

earlier, but needs reiteration. Ethel Armes declared that "The northern and southern portions of the State, without a railroad, were two separate and distinct countries. Political, social, industrial, and economic conditions had become gradually tangled into a Gordian knot."²² Added to this age-old problem of uniting the state was a growing desire in the 1850's to exploit the mineral wealth of Alabama. Horace Mann Bond, in an in-depth study of Alabama during Reconstruction days, stated:

Its (Alabama's) natural resources were unique in the South; and, in an age when Coal was power, and Iron the other necessity for industry, it was already known that the Northern hill-country of Alabama had both in unexampled proximity. The bankers in Philadelphia and New York, and even in London, and Paris, had known this for almost two decades. The only thing lacking was transportation.²³

But it was not until John T. Milner's report to the state legislature in 1859, that both the uniting of the northern and southern parts of the state, and the exploitation of Alabama's resources were put into a single statement, convincing enough to get necessary state aid to develop a railroad network. This state publication contains an almost irrefutable argument. After reading it, one understands much better Ethel Armes' statement that Milner's "statistics were used generally throughout Alabama by railroad promoters and speakers for the next twenty years."²⁴ Milner's desire for a north-south railroad was so acute that he prepared a highly detailed report on the advantages and disadvantages of six conceivable routes between the northern (Decatur) and southern (Montevallo) termini of the road.²⁵

Some of his statements show the importance he placed on Alabama's railroad development. It was his belief that the proposed railroad

occupies the most important position for the people of Alabama of any enterprise that ever came before them. They have thought and talked over the connection of South and North Alabama, and the development of their mineral wealth for forty years or more, but until the recent survey was made, it has always been considered impracticable to build a railroad through these mountains at a reasonable cost.

Milner was convinced that Alabama would supply the South, the Gulf States, Central and South America, in time the Pacific Coast, and perhaps the entire Pacific with coal. "Alabama is to the Gulf what Pennsylvania is to the Atlantic States," he declared. "Her coal must drive their ships, their mills, and their machines. The amount needed for ten years to come in all quarters from our mines, is only conjectural. It is not too much to say we will need three hundred thousand tons per annum." He predicted the rewards created for the state by its supply of iron ore, and added that such a network would benefit the development of the state's marble interests and would serve as a shipper of cotton and perishables.²⁶ All this, in turn, would bring and keep new people and investments in Alabama, raise property values, and generally benefit the entire state, he predicted.

In a reference to Alabamians Milner said: "I know the people of Alabama are opposed to state aid. They have suffered from banks and have not very judiciously managed all their trust funds." Later in the report he added that "it is hard for a man who has lived in Alabama seven years to account for the deep and widespread suspicion and want of confidence in such investments. There seems to be a holy horror, so to speak, of all railroad corporations." Advocating a needed change in attitudes of the citizens, he stated that

money in dribblets, to internal improvements, is like throwing sand in a river, or a handful of snow into a volcano. It affects no good, but is spirited away, and

not even a trace of it is left. Such, unfortunately, has been the condition of every work of internal improvement within our State, whether public or private, until very late years. In the beginning our Railroads were attempted to be built with promises, with hopes, with anything but money. Their sudden destruction, when the storm weather came, has given to people all over the State, a doubt upon the subject that is hard to remove.²⁷

Using a series of charts to support his argument showing a gain in state wealth, he convincingly said that "it is pretty generally conceded now that the incidental benefits of the Railway equal and often exceed its first cost, and it is therefore desirable to bring every honorable argument to bear to induce their construction."²⁸

In 1860, the state legislature "passed the law adopting Milner's recommendations as to the route and granting a loan of \$663,135, 'on condition that the entire line be graded and prepared for iron by the end of five years.'" In the fall of 1860 a company was organized, with Milner as chief engineer, to begin the monumental task. A worse time for beginning such a project could not have been chosen. With the secession issue receiving attention, many stockholders of the counties supporting the project "abandoned their interests in the road."²⁹

Thus, at the outbreak of the Civil War, Alabama was ready to embark on the project to obtain a railroad network. During this third decade the state issued seventy-three charters to railroad companies. The period from 1851 to 1860 had seen a total of 610.66 miles of railroad built, with 210.36, or almost twenty-nine percent of the state's total, having been built in the last two years. Increasingly, Alabamians were moving toward an intergrated railroad system.³⁰ Not only had the amount of mileage increased annually after 1851, but by the latter part of the decade it had

begun to increase almost astronomically. With growing interest and increasing public aid, had it not been for the war, Alabama probably would have completed its railroad network much earlier.

Shortly before the outbreak of the war, the Alabama and Florida Railroad was given an emergency loan of \$30,000 to hastily complete the Montgomery to Pensacola line by May 3, 1861.³¹ On March 28, 1861, a short line, connecting Tensas (just across the bay from Mobile) and Pollard (on the Alabama and Florida Railroad) was begun. Eight months later, on November 15, five months later than the estimated completion date, this line was completely opened to traffic. Summarizing the energy which went into Alabama's railroads immediately preceding the war, Robert C. Black, III said: "The Alabama Assembly of 1859-60 spewed railroad incorporation acts, while grading parties were making the dirt fly in many parts of the state."³²

While this may have been the case, state priorities had to take a back seat to those of the newly formed Confederate Government. Of greatest importance to the Confederacy were through lines, connecting southern states to facilitate transportation and communication. The South, however, only had two such routes, and only one was complete. One line involved a northerly passage through Corinth, Chattanooga, and Bristol; the second, and unfinished route, ran via Montgomery, Atlanta, Wilmington, and Petersburg. Both ran to Richmond and both ran through Alabama. Thus, Alabama's first priority was to complete the unfinished route, which ran through the central part of the state. The major gap "was between Selma, Alabama, and Meridian, Mississippi. The completion of this link would give an all-rail route from Richmond to Vicksburg, with the exceptions of the short Alabama River steamboat connection between Mont-

gomery and Selma and a four-and-a-half-mile passage on the Tombigbee River near Demopolis."³³

By December, 1861, only twenty-three miles of direct Meridian-Selma line were incomplete. "On December 5, the State of Alabama advanced \$40,000 to the . . . company to help push its rails westward." At about this same time, "the idea that the central Confederate authority should render assistance to uncompleted railroads of strategic importance was . . . gaining currency."³⁴ Not long after this the Confederate Congress appropriated \$150,000 for the Selma-Meridian link. The next month it permitted importation of duty free railroad iron for the project, making it possible to complete the road by the end of 1862.³⁵

One of the primary railroad problems of both the Confederate government and the state, was that of providing equipment, specifically iron. This could have been expected within a society which had as little manufacturing as the South, but the extreme to which it was carried is difficult to comprehend. One historian has noted that "iron and machinery were especially scarce. Before the war these necessities had been supplied from the North: now they must be manufactured or imported from Europe." Furthermore, he stated that "although the roads were now cut off from the Northern foundries . . . no general effort seems to have been made to get supplies elsewhere . . ." At first, the Confederacy tried to obtain supplies from Europe, but "the growing stringency of the blockade and the lack of well-established commercial or credit relations with European firms made this very difficult."³⁶

Given these equipment problems and the importance of the Selma-Meridian line, the government used what James F. Doster called "cannibalizing" to complete that line. Track and equipment were taken from one line, torn up, and then used where needed most.

This means of obtaining necessary equipment is related by Robert C. Black:

The Cahaba, Marion, & Greensborough, a bankrupt short line which intersected the Alabama & Mississippi Rivers Railroad a short distance west of Selma, was found to possess four hundred tons of new iron, plus four hundred kegs of spikes, while on the Montgomery & Eufaula, the building of which had scarcely begun, . . . a substantial hoard of track materials and a brand-new locomotive (was discovered). By the latter part of June . . . (there had been) secured from the Cahaba company 55,367 pounds of spikes, 3,810 pounds of bolts and nuts, 17,636 pounds of fish bars, and 1,276 sections of rail.³⁷

The only other work on Alabama railroads during the war, of consequence enough to note here, was a proposed extension in 1862 of the Alabama and Tennessee Rivers Railroad from Blue Mountain into northwest Georgia. Eventually a subsidy bill passed the Confederate Congress and specifications were set for the extension. The government requirements were strict but two companies expressed their willingness to accept them. These were the Georgia and Alabama line, and the Alabama and Tennessee Rivers road, the latter building east from Blue Mountain and joining the first line. The following statement is probable indicative of many Southern situations:

A railroad having thus been committed to paper, the contractors at once encountered the standard difficulty with rails and fastenings . . . as the weeks and months went by and the grading gangs pushed forward . . . absolutely no iron was forthcoming. After more than a year, not a bar had been spiked down. There were periodic military pronouncements as to the value of the road, and there occurred more than one discussion as to the suitable sources of rail. But to the end of the war the Rome-Blue Mountain connection never became more than a series of naked cuts and files.³⁸

Interestingly, little extensive damage seems to have been inflicted on Alabama's railroads during the war, probably because the railroads were far enough away from the major fighting to cut down on the number of destructive raids on them. Thus, the railroads were not constantly changing hands, being raided by one side then destroyed before the controlling army pulled back, and then raided again by the same army. During most of the war Alabama's railroads changed hands only once or not at all. Apparently, only one railroad, the Memphis and Charleston, changed hands often and by 1863 it was controlled by the Union forces.³⁹ Two north Alabama lines, the Tennessee and Alabama Railroad and part of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, were in better shape than many roads at the end of the war. This was partly because both had been operated and controlled by Federal forces who needed them for their own operations. The Memphis & Charleston, by November 6, 1865, was running trains over the entire main line, with only one break at the Decatur bridge across the Tennessee River. But by July 7, 1866, the entire line was open once again.

The western portion of this line running from Decatur to Memphis was not controlled by the Federal army and was damaged extensively; this was the primary area in which repairs were required. Upon return of the road to the directors on September 11, 1865, there was a gap of "one hundred and fourteen miles almost entirely destroyed, except for the road-bed and iron rails, and they were in very bad condition--every bridge and trestle destroyed, cross-ties rotten, buildings burned, watertanks gone, ditches filled up, and track grown up in weeds and bushes. . . About forty miles of track was burned, cross-ties entirely destroyed, and rails bent and twisted in such a manner as to require great labor to straighten, and a

large portion of them requiring renewal."⁴⁰ For all this destruction, however, it is well to remember that the entire line was repaired and operating, except for one bridge, as early as November, 1865.

The Tennessee and Alabama railroad was entirely controlled by Federal forces and reported much less destruction. On this line the amount of rolling stock owned by the company afforded a better supply of equipment for the road than it had previously.

Two railroads--the Alabama & Tennessee Rivers and the Montgomery & West Point--were heavily damaged when General James Wilson raided Alabama in March, 1865. But two months later the tracks were open, and trains running again. Wilson also hit the Montgomery & West Point line on this raid. The company, however, continued to operate until the capture of West Point and Columbus, and the destruction of its entire rolling stock. Here again, the destruction must have been repaired in a short time. For by June 16, 1865, two months after the raid, the road was again open to regular trains.

When raids such as Wilson's did occur, repairs were made with remarkable speed and nominal profits obtained. Furthermore, some of the policies adopted in Washington at the end of the war aided these railroads. The government, for example, sold supplies to the lines cheaply and permitted directors to take any equipment they could prove had belonged to their road. Many lines were also given government mail contracts to aid their recovery.⁴¹

The state's postwar policy became more liberal toward railroads than it was before the war. Citizens, once again, gave the railroads their support, because of the contributions to the future development of the state. Specifically, it was thought that railroads "would encourage agriculture and enable business to take advantage of water power and timber," as well

as "open up the rich mineral resources of the state for development."⁴²

In 1865-66, the Alabama legislature began amending old charters and granting new ones. During the 1866-67 session, "further study was devoted to the status of the state's railroads", and in February, 1867, after increasing "agitation for state aid, the General Assembly passed an 'act to establish a system of internal improvements . . .'" Besides this state aid and the existing Federal aid, "additional money for the railroads came from cities and from private subscriptions. Cities that would be served by the lines and private citizens along the route were urged to invest."⁴³

The 1967 legislative act provided for the issuance of state bonds by the railroad, but endorsed by the Governor in set amounts for predetermined mileage. The conclusion generally made is that this situation, added to the "incompetency" of the Governor, created the issuance by the state of bonds worth more than the actual lines. This overcapitalization resulted in necessary adjustments, devaluing certain bond issues, and flat rejection of some claims against the state, so that by 1875 it was forbidden by the new constitution for any "subdivision of the state" to engage in or encourage internal improvements. And, according to William Martin, "thus ended the last chapter in the history of public aid to internal improvements in Alabama."⁴⁴

Almost every work in print blames this situation on one line, the Northeast and Southwest Alabama Railroad Company. This line was chartered "on December 12, 1853, to construct a railroad from some point on the Southern Railroad, near Marion, Mississippi, through Eutaw, Tuscaloosa, and Elyton, and from there to one of the railroads leading to Knoxville, Tennessee."⁴⁵ In December, 1868, the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad Company was formed by uniting the Northeast and Southwest and the Wills

Valley lines. The primary figures in this new company were the Stanton brothers, who had come to Alabama in 1868 from Boston

This particular line was completed on May 14, 1871. It appears as if all were pleased with the road's progress until "the winter of 1870-71, (when) John Stanton became the object of much Democratic criticism because during the fall, he had contributed to Republican campaign funds." An interesting sidelight to the controversy is that ". . . the Democratic opposition to Stanton was coming mainly from areas of the state which would not benefit from the completion of his road." These attacks increased after January 1, 1871, ". . . on which date he failed to pay the interest due the Alabama and Chattanooga bondholders. A subsequent investigation showed that Stanton had been guilty of fraud in financing his road. This evidence was used by many of the state's Democratic papers to ruin the reputation of both Stanton and the Republican Party."⁴⁶

At least some mitigating evidence can be found to argue for the Stanton interests. One source noted that the "inexperience and corruption of the radical Republicans" was the primary, but not the only reason for these frauds. The Democrats supported "the acts which made these frauds possible" and "the Democratic owners of railroads appear to have bribed legislators as freely as Stanton bribed them." This same writer also observed that "much of the Democratic opposition to the Alabama and Chattanooga Company resulted from commercial rivalry rather than opposition to the corruption connected with the financing of its construction and (this opposition) was destructive rather than constructive."⁴⁷ Other light is thrown on the political situation by Horace Mann Bond, who maintained that the state debt to the North and South Railroad, also built in this time, was upheld because it was controlled by Democrats; the Alabama and Chat-

tanooga's claims were rejected because they were Republican controlled.⁴⁸

The general tendency has been to blame the majority of the state's public debt upon post-Civil War railroad building. As Dan Berry indicated "by 1870 the state was in debt for \$11,850,000, which was the total par value of bonds loaned and endorsed by the state for railroads." The fraud was pointed out when Berry referred to "a speech given by Governor Smith in 1870," in which it was ascertained that the state had purchased 642 miles of track through its endorsement of bonds, and that "the state endorsements and loans amounted to over \$18,400 per mile." This was some \$2,400 per mile over the maximum expenditure permitted by the amended state act of 1867.⁴⁹

Regardless of the degree of corruption, one thing is certain: Alabama's railroads continued to grow in the period from 1865 to 1870. On December 3, 1865, Alabama had two percent of the total railroad mileage in the nation. During the next ten years this mileage increased 927 miles, or 115 per cent, a greater proportionate amount than any other Southern state, and was behind only Kentucky and Georgia in the greatest absolute increase. This building spurt maintained Alabama's rank at having two per cent of the total mileage of the United States at the end of 1875, while the proportionate railroad mileage in most Southern states was declining. From 1867 to 1872, 777 new miles of railroad were laid, most of it prior to 1870.⁵⁰

Thus, by 1870, Alabama had its railroad network. It may not have been obtained through sound financing or the best methods, but it was there. Before one criticizes Stanton and others like him, it would be wise to keep the entire situation in proper perspective. The period in which Alabama's "network" was completed was part of the most corrupt era in the nation's history. If the Democrats had controlled Alabama during Reconstruction it is likely that corruption still would

have existed. With Alabama's railroad development came faster and better connections with other states and regions. New cities were founded and new industry and greater economic diversity were aided by these railroads, which were an important part of the development of the "New South."

¹N. P. Renfro, Jr., The Beginning of Railroads in Alabama, Alabama Polytechnic Institute Historical Studies (Fourth Series; Auburn, Alabama 1910), 1.

²Ibid., 1-3

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 5-6 T. D. Clark, "The Montgomery and West Point Railroad Company," The Georgia Historical Quarterly, XVII, No. 4 (December, 1933), 293.

⁵Renfro, Beginning of Railroads, 6.

⁶Ibid., 7-9.

⁷Ibid., 10-11.

⁸Ibid., 11-14. Giving a picture of the slowness of some roads, Renfro stated that "the road was completed to West Point on April 28, 1851, about seventeen and a half years after it was chartered," Ibid., 17

⁹Marie Futer Eiland, "A History of Transportation in Alabama 1540-1869" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1945), 44.

¹⁰Ibid., 45.

¹¹William Elejcius Martin, Internal Improvements in Alabama, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science (Series XX, No. 4; Baltimore, 1902), 72.

¹²"Railroads in the United States," U. S. Census Office. 8th Census, 1860. Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census. 1860 (Washington, 1862), Table No. 38, 223.

¹³Phillip Phillips, Substance of Remarks Delivered by P. Phillips, Esq., President of the Rail Road Convention, Held at Talladega, Ala., September, 1849 (Mobile, Alabama; 1849).

¹⁴Leroy P. Walker, Speech of Hon. Leroy P. Walker, On Internal Improvements. Delivered in the House of Representatives on the 30th of November, 1853 (Montgomery, 1854), 3-4.

¹⁵Ibid., 5.

¹⁶Martin, Internal Improvements in Alabama, 66-67; Horace Mann Bond, Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel (Washington, 1939), 38; id., "Social and Economic Forces in Alabama Reconstruction," The Journal of Negro History. XXIII, No. 3 (July, 1938), 313-15.

¹⁷Address of the Internal Improvement Convention, of the State of Alabama. Held in Mobile, May 28th, 1851 (Mobile; 1851), 6, 9.

¹⁸Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census. 105.

¹⁹Martin, Internal Improvements in Alabama. 74.

²⁰A. B. Moore, "Railroad Building in Alabama During the Reconstruction Period," The Journal of Southern History, I, No. 4 (November, 1935), 422; Martin, Internal Improvements in Alabama. 75.

²¹E. D. Sanford, Report of the Chief Engineer upon . . . the Northeast & Southwest Alabama Railroad. . . (Tuscaloosa, 1855), 31.

²²Ethel Armes, The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama. (Birmingham, 1910), 104.

²³Bond, Negro Education, 35; id., "Social and Economic Forces in Alabama Reconstruction," 310.

²⁴Armes, Coal and Iron in Alabama, 120.

25 John T. Milner, Milner's Report to the Governor of Alabama, on the Alabama Central Railroad (Montgomery, 1859), 9-18. What is perhaps the only extant copy of this report can be found in the Southern Collection of the Birmingham Public Library.

26 Ibid., 27, 36, 39.

27 Ibid., 74, 71, 75.

28 Ibid., 81.

29 Armes, Coal and Iron in Alabama, 121, 124.

30 James F. Doster, Alabama's First Railroad Commission 1881-1885 (Tuscaloosa, 1949), 4.

31 Robert C. Black, III, The Railroads of the Confederacy (Chapel Hill 1952), 51.

32 Ibid., 8.

33 E. Merton Coulter, The Confederate States of America. Vol. VII of A History of the South. ed. by E. Merton Coulter (10 vols. : Baton Rouge, 1950), 271.

34 Black, Railroads of the Confederacy, 74-75; Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Confederate Government and the Railroads," The American Historical Review, XXII, No. 4 (July, 1917), 802.

35 Coulter, Confederate States of America, 271; Ramsdell, "Confederate Government and the Railroads," 802.

36 Ramsdell, "Confederate Government and the Railroads," 795, 798-799, 803-804.

37 Black, Railroads of the Confederacy, 155-156.

38 Ibid., 158-159.

39 Report of the Select Committee Appointed To Investigate the Affairs of Southern Railroads. Report No. 34, 39th Congress 2nd session (4 vols., Washington, 1867), 712-713; Walter L. Fleming, Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1949), 62-68.

⁴⁰Affairs of Southern Railroads. 714-15.

⁴¹Majorie Howell Cook, "Restoration and Innovation: Alabamians Adjust to Defeat, 1865-1867" (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1968), 118.

⁴²Cook, "Alabamians Adjust to Defeat," 127.

⁴³Ibid., 122-124; Martin, Internal Improvements in Alabama. 79.

⁴⁴Martin, Internal Improvements in Alabama, 87.

⁴⁵John Ralph Scudder, Jr., "The Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad Company, 1868-1871" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alabama, 1951), 1; James Howard Clark, "History of the North East and South West Alabama Railroad to 1872" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alabama, 1949), 106.

⁴⁶Scudder, "Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad Company," 42-43.

⁴⁷Ibid., 76-77.

⁴⁸Bond, Negro Education, 56-58; id., "Social and Economic Forces in Alabama Reconstruction," 338-341.

⁴⁹Dan M. Berry, Jr., "The State Debt of Alabama, 1865-1876," (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alabama, 1951), 17-18.

⁵⁰John F. Stover, The Railroads of the South 1865-1900: A Study in Finance and Control (Chapel Hill, 1955), 61, 88, 88n.

