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The ravages of The American Civil War and its aftermath was not limited to the Southern American States. The impact was felt in Great Britain too. After all, the most celebrated Confederate raider, CSS Alabama, was built at Merseyside, England. In 1862 the Alabama slipped into international waters before the British government could restrict it to port and it managed to capture and destroy 64 ships containing Union material during its life as a marauder.

After the war, the American Federal government demanded reparations from Britain; \$15.5 million. The story you are about to read is not about reparations but a celebrated US Navy pilot of WWII, the grandson (formally a resident of Huntsville) of Captain Rafael Semmes, the CSS Alabama's notorious

Raphael Semmes' Long Flight Home

By Captain John A. Rodgaard, U.S. Navy Reserve

After dodging Japanese Zero floatplanes, a Navy aviator with a famous name turned his SOC Seagull eastward and set out on a daring two-day flight over the cold North Pacific and rocky Aleutian Islands.

According to Rear Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, the Aleutians in World War II could easily be termed "the Theatre of Military Frustration. . . . Sailors, soldiers and aviators alike regarded an assignment to this region of almost perpetual mist and snow as little better than penal servitude. But for a Navy aviator named for a famous ancestor, the remote northern island chain would be the setting for an exciting "Aleutian Adventure" that included eluding Japanese planes and flying 600 nautical miles to base.

Raphael "Rafe" Semmes Jr., the great-grandson and namesake of the commander of the Civil War raider CSS *Alabama*, grew up in Huntsville, Alabama, the son of a banker. After graduating from high school, he attended the Marion Military Institute for a year before entering the U.S.

Naval Academy in 1934. Although not known for his academic prowess at Annapolis (his lowest grade was in navigation), Semmes graduated in 1938 and was commissioned an ensign in the Navy. His first assignments were in the USS *Louisville* (CA-28) and *Somers* (DD-381), but in 1940 he reported to Pensacola, Florida, for flight training.

By late 1941, nearly 80 years after his famous Confederate ancestor had sailed the oceans in search of Yankee merchantmen, Lieutenant (junior grade) Semmes was soaring over the Pacific as a scout-plane pilot assigned to the USS *St. Louis* (CL-49). "My aviation unit (the *St. Louis* 'Air Force') . . . was not exactly a grave threat to the Japanese," he later wrote in an unpublished memoir about his Aleutian service, "but then it was all we had and was not completely without merit in its own way. We had four scout seaplanes, in which we daily trusted our lives without a great deal of thought on the subject."

The aircraft were Seagulls—three Curtiss SOC-3s and an SON-1, the equivalent plane built by the Naval Aircraft Factory. Although they were credible for their scouting and observation roles, Semmes knew all too well that the planes were woefully obsolete compared to Japanese aircraft. He recalled that "they seemed comically antique; biplanes of another era held together with struts and wires trying to live in the same air with the sleeker new fighters of a later day."

Catapulted off the *St. Louis*, an SOC would fly its scout or observation mission and land in the calm-water slick created by the turning cruiser. The plane would then taxi onto a cargo-net mat attached to a sled towed by the ship. A hook on the bottom of the Seagull's large centerline float would catch on the mat, allowing the cruiser to pull the seaplane toward her. The ship's stern-mounted crane would then lift the SOC back onto the vessel.

Early Wartime Action

On 7 December, the *St. Louis* was one of the few ships to make it out of Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack. Semmes, however, was not on board at the time. Earlier, the cruiser's four seaplanes had been sent to Ford Island, and before the ship got under way on the 7th, her captain ordered the *St. Louis* aviators to report there. "The way turned out to be hitching a ride from a passing motor whaleboat," Semmes later recounted. "[We] witnessed the capsizing of the *Oklahoma*, then made our way past battleship row, then aflame and sinking." The next day he had to dodge U.S. machine-gun fire on his return to base after participating in an unsuccessful 10-seaplane search for the Japanese fleet.

The *St. Louis* mainly escorted convoys during the subsequent months. That routine, however, was broken when she participated in the first U.S. offensive action of the war—the 1 February 1942 raids on the Marshall and Gilbert islands. While planes from the USS *Yorktown* (CV-5) hit targets in the Gilberts, the cruiser's Seagulls flew low-level patrols, defending against torpedo-plane attacks that never materialized.

On 17 May the *St. Louis'* convoy duties finally ended when she pulled into Pearl Harbor. Companies C and D of the 2d Marine Raider Battalion (Carlson's Raiders) embarked, along with a 37-mm antiaircraft battery. Accompanied by the USS *Case* (DD-370), the *St. Louis* steamed at high speed for Midway Atoll. On the 25th, the cruiser delivered the battery and Marine reinforcements to Midway and then immediately headed northward. The opening countermoves against the anticipated Japanese assaults on Midway and the Aleutians were under way.

Dispatched to the Far North

On the 27th, while the *St. Louis* was enroute to Kodiak, Alaska, Semmes had an experience that took his

mind completely off what he might face in battle. It happened during a scouting mission in which he was also

qualifying another pilot in navigation. Semmes planned to let the junior aviator take the lead during the outbound and return legs of the flight. Radio silence was to be strictly enforced, and the SOCs had no homing aids to help the aviators find their way back to the cruiser.

When the pair of aircraft were 110 miles from the *St. Louis*, they began their turn for a cross leg. Semmes added a slight amount of throttle to his *Seagull's* engine to hold his trailing position during the turn. However, he was surprised to discover that "there was no change in engine



The Seagull, Semmes aircraft (an artist concept)

response. I pushed the throttle wide open—the engine purred on at something less than cruising speed. I looked at the air speed indicator—70 knots was showing. All instruments readings were normal."

The pilot slowly reduced throttle, and again nothing happened. By then the other plane was pulling away. Semmes' Seagull was also losing altitude and soon flying only about 100 feet above the gray ocean. The lieutenant directed his crewman, Radioman Second Class Hal Norman, to use the Aldis signaling lamp to attract the attention of the lead plane's crew. After what seemed forever, the SOC dropped back, and Semmes' plane took the lead for the return trip, during which the malfunctioning Seagull needed 50 miles to gain 500 feet of altitude. With the *St. Louis* finally in sight, Norman signaled for an immediate pick up.

The next challenge was for Semmes, who still could not control his SOC's throttle, to land the plane. His only option would be to cut the engine. After positioning his Seagull for a run to the *St. Louis*, he flipped off the ignition switch. With the Pratt & Whitney engine backfiring mightily, the plane glided down to the water. After it landed in the cruiser's slick, Semmes turned the switch back on, and the wind milling propeller restarted the engine, giving the Seagull enough taxi speed to catch the ship's tow sled. "As soon as I hit the rope sled I cut the switch once more and prayed for the hook to catch," Semmes recalled. "She caught and I relaxed for the first time since discovering the trouble."

Back on board, mechanics discovered that a cotter pin had broken or never been inserted in the throttle control rod, and a nut had backed off the shaft, disconnecting it. "Beginning that day there commenced a rechecking of all planes for control linkages and general structural integrity. I was in no mood for unsatisfactory maintenance to dump me into a cold sea."

The *St. Louis* had been assigned to the main body of Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobald's Task Force 8 (Tare), which was assigned to defend the Aleutians. On 1 June she joined Theobald's flagship, the USS *Nashville* (CL-43), and early on the 3rd, the main body's five cruisers and four destroyers finally all rendezvoused. By that time, however, Japanese carrier aircraft had attacked the naval air station at Dutch

Harbor, more than 500 miles away near the eastern end of the Aleutians. Over the next several days, Japanese forces occupied Kiska and Attu islands, at the chain's western tip.

The remainder of June and all of July was a frustrating time for the U.S. forces in the far north. As Semmes later wrote, "Results of the bombing of Kiska by Army and Navy planes proved so inconclusive that it was early decided to try the effect of gunfire by surface forces of Task Force Tare." The bombardment was set for 22 July, but bad weather forced its postponement to 27 July and then to 7 August.

On 2 August the cruiser-destroyer force's aviators were briefed on the overall plan of action and their part in the operation. Semmes recalled that the plan called for "three coordinated bombardments of the shipping in Kiska Harbor and adjacent shore establishments. The four destroyers . . . were to approach to ranges of 14,800 to 14,500 yards. The light cruisers . . . were to engage at a range approximately 16,800 yards, while the heavy cruisers . . . were to commence firing at 19,500 to 18,900 yards."

Because the gunfire would be indirect, each of the five cruisers was ordered to launch two SOCs to act as spotters. At the end of the action the ships would recover the aircraft if the tactical and/or the weather conditions permitted. Otherwise, the planes were to proceed to Dutch Harbor, more than 600 miles away. The distance was beyond the range of the Seagulls, so they would rendezvous with a small seaplane tender near Atka Island, halfway to Dutch Harbor. After refueling, they would continue eastward. On board the *St. Louis*, Semmes, who had been promoted to lieutenant, and Lieutenant (junior grade) Ray Moore were selected to fly the mission, along with their crewmen, Hal Norman and Radioman Third Class W. Gibbs, respectively.

At 1630 on 7 August, the task force was steaming 30 miles south of Kiska when it ran smack into a thick fog bank. Continuing toward the island, the warships alternately passed through clear patches and fog banks. "Periodically, the planes would be warmed up so they would be kept ready to go on short notice . . . we were beginning

to get a little nervous with anticipation," Semmes later wrote. "Would we go, or wouldn't we? Well, we were all beginning to sweat. We had on heavy winter flight suits and boots over our aviator greens. That and the excitement made it hard not to sweat though the outside temperature was in the forties."

The Adventure Begins

At about 1800, Semmes' and Moore's planes, as well as the other cruisers' SOCs, were finally launched. The two *St. Louis* Seagulls climbed together into the low-hanging, thick cloud layer and soon broke through into the sunshine. They were joined by two SOCs from the *Honolulu* (CL-48), and together the planes circled above the task force, waiting for it to steam into an area clear of cloud cover. But when the clouds finally opened up, the four Seagulls were over southern Kiska Island. Semmes broke radio silence and passed Kiska Harbor's bearing to his ship. With his plane leading the four-plane formation, Semmes then flew to the position where he thought the task force would be and circled until the ships cleared the fog bank, approximately ten miles off Kiska's southern coast.

Shortly thereafter, at 1955, the bombardment began when the destroyers opened fire, and by 2000 the light and heavy cruisers' guns were also firing salvos. While Semmes could hear the ships' guns over the roar of his Seagull's radial engine, cloud cover obscured his view of the targets. He and Moore flew their planes over Little Kiska Island, just east of the harbor, hoping for a better view of the falling shot. Instead, the pair of Seagulls were spotted by two Japanese Zero floatplanes, which promptly dove toward them.

"Norman, my rear seat gunner, was doing a fast swivel with the rear gun trying to keep one of the planes in his sights," Semmes later wrote. "I now commenced a flight maneuver which the instrument instructors at Pensacola had told me to be sure never to do. I made a steep wrapped up power spiral through the overcast and leveled off at 200 feet to find that the fighters had not followed." Semmes

found his plane in the clear and flying toward the formation of U.S. destroyers. The *St. Louis* aviators were fortunate. The other SOCs were badly handled by the Japanese floatplanes; one was lost and three others had more than 100 bullet holes.

After the brief bombardment ended at 2021, Semmes and Moore flew back to the *St. Louis*, whose anti-aircraft batteries and machine guns were intermittently firing at Japanese planes. Because of their presence and the appearance of fog ahead, the ship signaled her planes to "proceed as previously directed." About ten minutes later, however, the cruisers were ordered to recover aircraft independently. The *St. Louis* hoisted recall flags and attempted to locate her *Seagulls*, but they were nowhere in sight.

The Seagulls Head Eastward

Semmes, Moore, and their radiomen were on their way up the Aleutian chain to Dutch Harbor; however, they did not have enough time to reach Atka Island during daylight for refueling, and landing on water in the dark was extremely dangerous. "There was nothing to do but get as far along our course as we could before nightfall so we continued to climb until we broke out of the overcast," Semmes wrote. "Thus Ray and I were alone now on our Aleutian Adventure and Dutch Harbor was 600 nautical miles away."

After 170 miles and with darkness fast approaching, Semmes led a descent through the clouds. Seeing a break in the overcast, he spotted the rocky shoreline of Tanaga Island. Landing there to float out the night, however, was too dangerous, and the *Seagulls* continued their eastward journey to the next island, Kanaga.

Fortunately, the two pilots found a hole in the cloud cover. After spiraling their planes down, they landed on the water at around 2230. Semmes arranged with Moore via radio to try for a 0700 takeoff the next morning, and then, with the two *Seagulls* floating about 100 feet apart on the cold North Pacific waters, the aviators slept as best they could.

Setting out on time the next day, the fliers continued toward Atka Island and their rendezvous. After some searching, they spotted the seaplane tender USS *Hulbert* (AVD-6). Semmes recalled that "a more beautiful sight than her I have never seen. . . . She refueled us (we were now down to 5 gallons-enough for about 12 more minutes flying). Also welcome was hot coffee and sandwiches which the captain sent aboard." The pilots also received the weather forecast: "fog all the way to Dutch Harbor, now about 300 miles away."

The *Hulbert's* captain offered to take the aviators aboard and, after sinking the SOCs, return them to the task force's base at Kodiak. It was a tempting proposition, but Semmes and the others thought that after 21 hours in their Seagulls eluding Zeros, flying through the Aleutian fog, and spending the night adrift, that was not the way to end their flight.

At around 1515 they were ready to take off. But before they set out, Semmes recalled, "Ray and I made what was for us the most momentous decision-to split up and take different routes back to Dutch Harbor." Semmes, Moore, and their crewmen wished each other good luck and said they would see one another again at the naval air station.

Once airborne, the Seagulls flew their separate ways. Semmes' plane was soon at 6,000 feet heading eastward between two layers of dark gray clouds. Before long, the view became "very dreary and depressing. . . . No sign of the earth below or the blue heavens which must be above somewhere," he later wrote. At 1810, the pilot spotted a funnel-shaped hole in the clouds through which he could see the ground, specifically Umnak Island, where an Army Air Forces base was located. Not wasting a moment, Semmes dove his Seagull as fast as he dared before the shrinking hole closed. He pulled out at 500 feet and for the rest of the flight was able to stay under the clouds and hug Umnak and Unalaska islands' coastlines. According to his logbook, Semmes landed at Dutch Harbor at exactly 2000.

After the Seagull was tied up at a buoy, its pilot and radioman made their way ashore and were finally able to

feel solid ground beneath their feet. Waiting dockside for them was Ray Moore, who greeted Semmes by asking, "Who do you think you are, Lindbergh?"

Semmes, Moore, and their crewmen remained at Dutch Harbor for a few days before receiving orders to rejoin the *St. Louis* at Kodiak. The two planes flew there together without incident. To Semmes and the others, their arrival seemed anticlimactic after their earlier 600-mile journey.

"As we sighted Kodiak ahead, I felt my Aleutian Adventure drawing to a close," Semmes wrote. "It had been a great experience, frightening at times, but rewarding. There flashed through my mind the hide and seek with the Jap Zeros at Kiska followed by the long night on the open sea; then a search through shrouded deserted bays for a ship which must be hiding there somewhere; a life-giving replenishment of fuel and food from her when found; long unmarked miles of flying between cold gray layers, then a God-sent funnel leading down 6,000 feet to safety."

As the pair of floatplanes neared the entrance to Kodiak Harbor, their crews were surprised to see the *St. Louis* steaming into it. With Semmes' SOC in the lead, both Seagulls flew toward her, and as the aircraft passed by the cruiser, the lieutenant saw his ship blink a simple message: "Welcome Home."



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- Captain Rodgaard is coauthor of *A Call to the Sea: Captain Charles Stewart of the USS Constitution* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2005).

History of the Probate Court in Alabama

By Frank Barger Madison County Probate Judge

Madison County was formed in 1808 by the governor of the Mississippi territory who named it after President James Madison (1751-1836). The governing body of the county, an elected board, was developed from an administrative court, established by laws in 1821, shortly after Alabama's admission into the Union (1819). The act of 1821 provided for the election of four commissioners of roads and revenue, to serve one-year terms. Any two of the commissioners, together along with the judge of the county court, constituted a "court" to levy the county tax, establish, maintain and discontinue county roads, bridges, ferries and the management of public buildings. Terms of office were later expanded to four years and the county governing body designated as the "county commission". No other significant changes were made to the county court until mid-century.

The Probate Court was established in each county of Alabama by Act No. 3 of the 1849-1850 Session of the Alabama Legislature which passed on February 11, 1850. The positions of clerk and judge of the county court were consolidated into the office of the judge of probate. Unlike the county

judge who was appointed for a six-year term, the judge of probate was to be popularly elected for a term of six years. Jurisdiction of the old county court was for the most part simply transferred to the new probate court. The judge of probate was given the authority formerly exercised by the county judge and the clerk of the county court, with authority to appoint his own clerk.



Like his predecessor, the Judge of Probate was made a member of the Court of County Commissioners. Currently, only thirteen of Alabama's sixty-seven probate court judges are the acting head of the county commission.

Since 1850 there have been several important changes in the legal framework of the office of the judge of probate. Most of the early changes that were made added new duties to those already assigned or expanded existing areas of responsibility. Additional responsibilities in election administration, licensing and records are good examples of the expansion. The most important addition was made in 1866 when the judge of probate was designated as ex officio judge of the county court. Exceptions to this law were made in several counties between 1866 and 1915. In 1915 the judge of probate was re-established as ex officio judge of the county court in all counties with a population less than 50,000. At one time, the Judge of Probate had jurisdiction over juvenile, welfare, desertion and non-support cases and matters. As time progressed, these duties and responsibilities were transferred to other courts and governmental entities.

As Madison County grew, the duties and responsibilities of the court changed. The Judge of Probate ceased serving as a member of the county commission and the jurisdiction of the Judge of Probate was expanded to enable the Court to hear and rule upon some of the more administrative judicial matters being heard by the judges of the Circuit Court.

Along with the judicial duties of the Probate Court, one of the responsibilities of the Judge of Probate is to protect the written history of the Madison County Court System (1809-present) and provide public access of this rich history to the citizens of Madison

County. The court strictly adheres to the guidelines outlined in the 1975 Code of Alabama, § 36-12-5 and follows the archiving guidelines developed by the Alabama Department of History and Archives.

The Roster of Madison County Probate Judges

| | |
|---|---|
| Hon. John W. Otey 1850 - 1853 | Hon. Morgan S. Stewart 1896 - 1904 |
| Hon. William Echols 1853 | Hon. W.T. Lawler 1904 - 1916 |
| Hon. Ferdinand Hammond 1853 - 1859 | Hon. Archibald McDonnell 1916 - 1917 |
| Hon. James H. Scruggs 1859 - 1863 | Hon. Thomas W. Jones 1917 - 1935 |
| Hon. Robert D. Wilson 1863 - 1866 | Hon. W.E. Butler 1935 - 1941 |
| Hon. James H. Scruggs 1866 - 1868 | Hon. Thomas W. Jones 1941 - 1953 |
| Hon. Lewis M. Douglass 1868 - 1874 | Hon. Ashford Todd 1953 - 1971 |
| Hon. Robert Stith Spragins 1874 - 1875 | Hon. Myrtle Green 1971 - 1983 |
| Hon. William Richardson 1875 - 1886 | Hon. Frank H. Riddick 1983 - 2001 |
| Hon. Thomas Jones Taylor 1886 - 1894 | Hon. Tommy Ragland 2001 - 2019 |
| Hon. Dr. Francisco Rice 1894 - 1896 | Hon. Frank Barger 2019 - Present |

Other Judicial responsibilities include: adoptions, involuntary commitment of the mentally ill, issues of Eminent Domain, guardianship (protection of seniors and children) and conservatorship proceedings, wills and administrations, and name changes.

The Office of the Probate Judge records and archives records, notary, marriage and passports. The Office is also responsible to ensure elections are conducted efficiently, safely, and fair. The Office oversees court operations and communicates to the public and administrators the changes necessary based upon law or administrative process.

Historians are particularly interested in the records archived by the Office to support their research on various people, events, and topics of interest. There are always discoveries in the archives that stimulate imagination and awe i.e., for many years there was a gap in the written history of the probate court records. As early as the 1950's thousands of pages of Huntsville's history mysteriously vanished from within the walls of our library; many of the documents from Huntsville's early territorial days, including Civil War era records appeared to be lost to time.

In June of 2011, the descendants of James William Bragg, Sr. delivered 20 boxes of missing documents to the Madison County Records Center. According to family members, Mr. Bragg checked out 38 record books, some dating back to 1813, with permission from the sitting probate judge, to begin work on his master's thesis. The collection itself was very valuable, because they represent the earliest days of Alabama, when Madison County was the first area open to settlement. Mr. Bragg's master's thesis, *"Frontier Entrepreneurs of Madison County, Alabama: The Bell Factory Enterprise, 1819 - 1842"*, can now be found among the very historical probate court records that he relied upon to write his thesis. Mr. Bragg's work details the

first cotton mill chartered in Alabama in 1832 on the Flint River. Mr. Bragg Sr. worked on his thesis from 1952 to 1958. The family traced back the time the materials were borrowed to 1953, when Hon. Thomas Jones was probate judge then replaced by Hon. Ashford Todd in 1954.

Mr. Bragg, an avid historian himself, had, thankfully, stored these documents in an air-controlled storage area at his Adams Street home until the death of Nell Bragg after which Ben and Steve Bragg, grandsons of Jim Bragg, along with their cousin, David Frost, decided the collection should be returned to the Courthouse.

Another interesting story is the murder of Judge W. T. Lawler and haunted Ditto Landing. During his twelve years as Probate Judge W. T. Lawler's work in court had become incidental as he accrued a bulging patronage portfolio. He oversaw disposition of estates and wills and he also handled deeds and mortgages. His position gave him the chairmanship of the local board of commissioners, and he had authority over county road maintenance, including the awarding of contracts. Each month, a fortune in fees and payments passed through Judge Lawler's hands. It was assumed that a percentage stuck there. The judge was occasionally accused of losing track of a thousand or two, but in those instances the missing cash magically reappeared.

In 1916, Lawler, 52, faced formidable opposition in the Democratic primary. His opponents were Mr. Zack Drake, a prosecutor with a square reputation, and Mr. David Overton, a former court clerk and police chief regarded as the second-most powerful Democrat in town, after Lawler. Alabama had gone dry in 1915, before the rest of the country, so the state got a head start on the financial windfall Prohibition brought to corrupt officials. Huntsville police, for example, were the chief importers of illegal liquor, using taxicabs to ferry hooch into town, with cops

riding shotgun. The city was well-positioned for interstate rum-running being 20 miles from the Tennessee border and less than 100 miles from both Georgia and Mississippi.

Citizens of Madison County whispered that Overton was a booze importer. It became an election issue when wholesale-sized stashes of alcohol were found first in Overton's barn and then in Judge Lawler's, each claiming to have been framed by the other.

On May 9, after a dirty campaign with extravagant spending, the incumbent prevailed over Overton by 300 votes, with Drake a distant third. On June 14, five weeks after the election, Judge Lawler was summoned to an evening rendezvous with unknown parties. His car was found abandoned near the county courthouse, and his spectacles lay in the street nearby. Curiously, David Overton vanished that same night.

A few days later, Sheriff Robert Philips announced that an informant had suggested that the judge had grappled at the Tennessee River outside of Huntsville with an unknown individual. The search turned up Lawler's badly beaten, cut and shot body at the Hambric Slough Bridge on Aldridge Creek by a ferryman identified as Percy Brooks. Lawler's body had been weighted by heavy pieces of iron, later identified as coming from the Madison County Jail. Mr. Brooks accused C.N. Nails, the Madison County Clerk, and David Overton, a former police chief that was running for Probate Judge. A week after the body was found, Mr. Shelby Pleasants, a prominent Huntsville attorney and friend of Overton, committed suicide, leaving a vague note in which he said he feared that he would be implicated in Lawler's murder. Two days later, Sheriff Philips shot himself. His note, equally vague, implied that Overton had "fooled him." The sitting Chief of Police and a patrolman also resigned their positions.

After two months on the rum, Overton was arrested in Tennessee and returned to Huntsville. He gave a far-fetched story of the slaying, explaining that he met Lawler at the river to negotiate a truce and fend off indictments over election fraud. The judge attacked him, Overton said,

and he cut and shot him in self-defense. At trial, a jury rejected Overton's version and condemned him to hang. Overton was jailed in Birmingham while his attorneys appealed.

But the story doesn't end on that note. On March 20, 1917, four months after trial, Overton and six other convicts escaped the Birmingham jail and fled in a car conveniently waiting outside the jail. A few hours later, a posse pinned them down outside the city. One of the convicts hiding in the thicket is said to have fired a shot towards the lawmen, and at least six deputies emptied their revolvers in that direction. A newspaperman who witnessed the assault called it "general firing." Two of the escapees were killed. One of them being Mr. David Overton. To this day, visitors to Ditto Landing have reported seeing the figure of a man hanging over the bridge then falling into the Aldridge Creek below.

There are also many significant documents in the Archives such as the original deed – dated 1797 – from Joseph Fenwick to William Fenwick in Franklin County, Kentucky left in Madison County as Joseph Fenwick was a land speculator and had dealings not only in Kentucky but also in Madison County/North Alabama and Louisiana in the late 1790s and 1800s.

Another historical artifact is the will of Major John Hutchings, friend and business partner of Andrew Jackson. Jackson was named as one of the executors and Rachel Jackson's signature is affixed as one of the witnesses. And the Free Papers of Thomas Harris, 'a man of color' born in Sussex County, Virginia and recorded in Madison County in March of 1860 by Probate Judge James H. Scruggs.



Meet the Author: Probate Judge Frank Barger is a proud son of North Alabama. The maternal side of his family goes back eight generations in Madison County. He was elected to serve as Probate

Judge of the County beginning in January 2019. Previously he served on the staff of the previous Probate Judge and as Madison County's Elections Administrator. He has served on more than a dozen boards of directors focused on health and human services, leadership development, education, and the arts.

His principle focus is on the mental health crisis, implementing procedures to protect our seniors and children, and safeguarding secure and transparent elections.

Alabama's Favorite Southern Belle

By Marjorie Ann Reeves

Alabama has produced many leaders during its two hundred years. A lady of her times, Virginia Carolina Tunstall was groomed with politics being a substantial part her life. She was born during 1825 in Nash County, North Carolina, being the only child of Anne Arrington and Dr. Peyton Randolph Tunstall. Her name came from the two states of her parents' birth. At the age of three, she lost her mother then at six years old, her father sent her to stay with her mother's sister in Tuscaloosa, which was the capital of Alabama at that time. Her Aunt's husband was Henry Collier who was a young lawyer at the time and later became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama.

She lived with them until her aunt became ill then she was sent to her mother's brother, Alfred Battle's plantation to live for several years. Turning twelve the family moved to Tuscaloosa where her primary education began. Her father's brother, Thomas B. Tunstall who became Secretary of State of Alabama also took part in her education, teaching her poetry, music, letters, philosophy, and politics. He instilled in her pride of family by teaching her the heritage of her family name by reading Scotts tribute to

Brian Tunstall, a knight, and told stories of Sir Cuthbert Tunstall, Knight of the Tarter. Her father and his brother Thomas took her to plays and balls. When she completed her studies in Tuscaloosa, she was sent to the Female Academy in Nashville.



Alabama
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Virginia met her future husband, Clement Claiborne Clay Jr, before she left Tuscaloosa and when she returned. Clay Jr worked for his father the Governor of Alabama, Clement Clay Sr.

Due to her family being so involved in politics, she and Clay Jr. ran into each other often becoming romantically

involved over time. She and Clay Jr. were married at her Uncle Henry Collier's home with many members of the legislature attending on February 1, 1843. Afterwards they moved to Huntsville to live in the "Clay Castle" with the Clay family. During the 1853 election, Virginia campaigned with her husband when he ran for Senator and won. Soon they were living in Washington where Virginia became the belle of the ball in demand at social events. She spent her life with men in charge of the affairs of this country being close to President Pierce and President Buchanan. During this time, she and her husband became close friends with Jefferson Davis and his wife Varina.

Sadly, the states' politicians escalated their disputes splitting the country. When the states began seceding, the Southern politicians left Washington to go back to their home state. Clay Jr. resigned giving a beautiful speech to the senate and left for Alabama. When the Confederacy organized, Clay Jr. ran for senate in the Confederacy and they moved to Montgomery then Richmond where Virginia continued to be the belle of the balls. She knew and understood the language of politics and was able to communicate with all the leaders and their wives. She supported her husband's work and the South. After service in the senate for one term, he was sent to Canada by President Davis and Virginia when back to Huntsville visiting family and friends in other parts of the South as well. When Huntsville, Alabama, was captured by the Yankees in 1862 she was a refuge for the rest of the war.

After General Lee surrendered to General Grant, Clay Jr. along with Virginia surrendered to the Federal soldiers in Georgia where from there they were sent to Fort Monroe along with the Davis family. Virginia and Varina were released but their husbands were held prisoners without trial. Being so well known in Washington, she did not hesitate to call on politicians to get her husband released. She would call on anyone whom she thought could help with the release. She kept asking President Johnson not to allow Clay Jr. or Davis to be tried in a military court for she was very afraid they would not receive a fair trial and be

hung as others had experienced. After a year of campaigning Clay Jr. was release but Davis continued to be held. Having nothing left after the war, Virginia borrowed money for material to have a new dress made to receive her husband from Fort Monroe. Clay Jr came back in grave health and while nursing him she continued to work on getting Mr. Davis released. Clay Jr. was able to petition the government to get some property back and they moved out to their home in Gurley, Alabama, called Wildwood. Mr. Davis was so gratefully for the Clays work in getting his release that he arrived at their home late at night in a storm to thank them. "I'll never forget the rejoicing that went on when the Clays saw Davis," stated a Confederate Veteran that lead Mr. Davis to Wildwood.

Her husband Clay Jr. died January 3, 1882. As a widow, she took two nieces on a trip around Europe. On November 29, 1887, she wed Judge David Clopton. The announcement in a newspaper Huntsville Independent stated "Marriage of a Distinguished Gentleman to a Brilliant and Gifted Lady," tells of the wedding at the Church of the Nativity of the Hon. David Clopton of Montgomery to Mrs. Clement C. Clay of Wildwood, Madison County. Judge Clopton's family and the Clays were friends in Washington in earlier days. They were married five years before David Clopton passed away in 1892.

Over the years, Virginia attended Confederate Veterans gathering being acknowledge with standing ovations, often the veterans would stand in line to shake her hand. She was much loved by everyone she met because she was always a gracious lady and extremely entertaining. She served as a Huntsville and Gurley community leader. In her seventies, she began working on her book, *Belle of the Fifties* with Ms. Ada Sterling. Virginia was a suffragist long before it was



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organized into a national move. She was president of the Alabama Equal Rights Association for four years from 1896. At 91-year-old, delivered the welcoming speech as past President to the Equal Suffrage Association of Alabama meeting in Huntsville in 1914. Virginia was an organizer of “Ladies Memorial Society” which joined with the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1898. At a May meeting of 1905, there was a motion made to change the name of the chapter to Virginia Clay-Clopton which was chartered in 1907. The chapter contributed to students, Confederate Veterans, knitted sweaters for Madison County soldiers and served their community in any way the ladies could. In Oct Of 2020, the Virginia Clay-Clopton chapter will celebrate its 113 years anniversary of serving the community.

Katherine Glover, Atlanta Journal reporter, wrote “She had a remarkable vividness in her choice of words, picturesqueness that brings an event before one and her quick expressive gestures that greatly heighten the effect.” Virginia was described as: she never, ever gave into defeat. She responded with intelligence, good judgement, faith, flexibility, creativity and a powerful will to live a good life while helping others less fortunate than herself. She was known as an unusual conversationalist endowed with natural wit. According to Edward Betts she was the most brilliant and distinguished woman in the whole South during her time. Ada Sterling said, “I have come upon no record of any other woman of her time who has filled so prominent a place politically or whose belleship has been so long sustained,” Everywhere she went she was well-honored, she was a leader in society to help others. She passed away at her closest friend Mrs. Milton Humes’ home in Huntsville on January 23, 1915.



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Letter from Thomas Jefferson To Thomas Freeman

A Transcribed by David Byers

President Thomas Jefferson wanted to know what the Louisiana Purchase really was and could be. In August 1803, he sent Lewis and Clark on a mission from St. Louis. For a second trip the president chose Thomas Freeman, a proven surveyor/naturalist, as the leader. This group left from Natchez in April 1806, before the first returned. Successful scientifically, the trip was interrupted by Spanish Military 615 miles upriver, just west of Texarkana, after the Spaniards were tipped about the trip. The Spaniards had not settled on what land they still owned.

Thomas Freeman, an Irishman, was a major player in that period. He worked for George Washington as a manager, helped survey Washington, DC, made the Red River Expedition, was sent by the governor of the Mississippi Territory to take a census and survey Madison County so land sales could begin and Huntsville formed, and later died in Huntsville while visiting a friend.

After visiting Jefferson for dinner, he was selected to lead the expedition. This is my transcription of Jefferson's letter of plans and instructions; first page is attached. Some corrections of spellings to modernize were done. Thomas Freeman is to me, the most exciting man in early Huntsville.

David Byers 31 Aug 2020

The Library of Congress

To Thomas Freeman, Esquire

The government of the US. being desirous of informing itself of the extent of the country lately ceded to them under the name of Louisiana, to have the same with its principal rivers, geographically delineated, to learn the character of its soil, climate, productions, & inhabitants, you are

appointed to explore, for these purposes, the interesting portion of it which lies on the Arkansa and Red rivers, from their confluence with the Mississippi to the remotest source of the main stream of each, and the high lands connection the same & forming a part of the boundary of the province.

You will receive from the Secretary of War information & instructions as to the provision to be made of men, arms, ammunition, medicine, subsistence, clothing, covering, camp utensils, instruments of observation & of measuring boats, light articles for barter & presents among the Indians, & other necessaries, all of which are to be collected at Natchez, which is to be considered as the point of departure.

From Natchez you are to proceed to ascend the Red river, taking observations of longitude & latitude at its mouth, at all remarkable points in its course & especially at the mouths of rivers, at rapids, islands, & other places & objects distinguished by such natural marks & characters of a durable kind, as that they may with certainty be recognized hereafter. The courses of the rivers between these points of observation may be supplied by the compass, the log line & by time, corrected by the observations themselves. The variations of the compass too, in different places, are to be noted.

In this way you will proceed to the remotest source of the main stream of the Red river, and thence to that of the Arkansa, along the highlands which divide their waters from those running into the Rio Norte, or the Pacific ocean, ascertaining by the chain & compass for the due corrections for variation, the courses & extent of the said high lands and, by careful & multiplied observations, the longitude of the said remotest sources of the main stream of each river. You are then to descend the Arkansa from its source to its mouth, ascertaining, by like observations, all remarkable points in the said river, supplying its courses between these points by the compass, the logline, & by time, as directed for the Red river, and using peculiar care

to fix with accuracy the latitude & longitude of the mouth of the river.

Although we have before said you are to ascend the Red river, & descend the Arkansa, on a presumption that the former is the least rapid, yet if the fact be known to be otherwise, or any other circumstances over weigh this, you are at liberty to reverse this order, and to ascend the Arkansa & descend the Red river, observing in all other points the instructions before given.

Your observations are to be taken with great pains and accuracy, to be entered distinctly, & intelligibly for others as well as yourself, to comprehend all the elements necessary, with the aid of the usual tables, to fix the latitude & longitude of the places at which they were taken, & are to be rendered to the war office for the purpose of having the calculations made concurrently, by proper persons within the US. Several copies of these, as well as of your other notes, should be made at leisure times, & put into the care of the most trustworthy of your attendants, to guard, by multiplying them, against the accidental losses to which they will be exposed. A further guard perhaps would be that one of these copies should be on the paper of the birch, as supposed less liable to injury from damp than common paper.

The following objects in the country adjacent to the rivers along which you will pass will be worthy of notice.

The soil & face of the country, its growth & vegetable productions, especially those not of the maritime states.

The animals of the country generally, & especially those not known in the maritime states.

The remains & accounts of any which may be deemed extinct.

The mineral production most worth notice, but more particularly metals, limestone, gypsum, pitcoal, salt petre, rock salt & salt springs and mineral waters, noting the temperature of the last, & such circumstances as may increase their character.

Volcanic appearances.

Climate, as characterized by the thermometer, by the proportion of rainy, cloudy & clear days, by lightening, hail, snow, ice, by the access & recess of frost, by the winds prevailing at different seasons, the dates at which particular plants put forth, or lose their flower, or leaf, times of appearance of particular birds, reptiles, or insects. Most of these articles may be entered in a Calendar or Table so as to take little room, or time in entering.

Court an intercourse with the natives as extensively as you can. Treat them on all occasions in the most friendly & conciliatory manner, which their conduct will admit. Allay all jealousies as to the object of your journey, make them acquainted with the position, extent, character, peaceable & commercial dispositions of the US. Inform them that their late fathers, the Spaniards, have agreed to withdraw all their troops from the Mississippi & Missouri, & from all the countries watered by any rivers running into them, that they have delivered to us all their subjects, Spanish & French, settled in those countries, together with their ports & territories in the same that henceforward we become their fathers and friends, that our first wish will be to be neighborly, friendly & useful to them, and especially to carry on commerce with them on terms more reasonable and advantageous for them than any other nation ever did. Confer with them on the points most convenient, as mutual emporiums, for them and us. Say that we have sent you to enquire in to the nature of the country & the nations inhabiting it, to know their wants, & the supplies they will wish to dispose of, and that after you shall have returned with the necessary information we shall take measures, with their consent, for settling trading houses among them, at suitable places. That in the meantime, the same traders who reside among, or visit, them and who are now become our citizens, will continue to supply them as usual, & that they will find us in all thing just & faithful friends & patrons.

You will endeavor, as far as a diligent pursuit of your journey will admit

to learn the names & numbers of the nation's through which your route lies;

- the extent & limits of their possessions;
- their relations with other tribes and nations;
- their language, traditions, monuments;
- their ordinary occupations in agriculture, fishing, hunting, war, arts & the implements for these;
- their food, clothing, & domestic accommodations;
- the diseases prevalent among them & the remedies they use;
- moral & physical circumstances which distinguish them from the tribes we know;
- peculiarities in their laws, customs, & dispositions;
- and articles of Commerce they may need or furnish, & to what extent.

And considering the interest which every nation has in extending and strengthening the authority of reason and justice among the people around them, it will be useful to acquire what knowledge you can of the state of morality, religion, & information among them; as it may better enable those who may endeavor to civilize & instruct them, to adapt their measures to the existing notions & practices of those on whom they are to operate.

As it is impossible for us to foresee in what manner you will be received by those people, whether with hospitality or hostility, so is it impossible to prescribe the exact degree of perseverance with which you are to pursue your journey. We value too much the lives of citizens to offer them to probable destruction. Your numbers will be sufficient to secure you against the unauthorized opposition of individuals or small parties. But if, at any time, a superior force, authorized or not authorized by a nation, should be arrayed against your further passage, & inflexibly determined to arrest it, you must decline its farther pursuit, and return. In the loss of yourselves, we should lose also the information you will have acquired. By returning safely with that, you may enable us to renew the essay with better calculated means. To your own discretion therefore must be

left the degree of danger you may risk, and the point at which you should decline; only saying we wish you to err on the side of your safety, and to bring back your party safe, even if it be with less information.

As far up the rivers as the white settlements extend, an intercourse probably exists with Natchez or New Orleans: and as far as traders go, they may furnish a conveyance for your letters to either of those places; beyond that you may perhaps be able to engage Indians to bring letters for the government, on promising that they shall receive, at either of those places, such special compensation as you shall have stipulated with them; and measures will be taken there to ensure a fulfilment of your stipulations. Avail yourself of all these means to communicate to us, at reasonable intervals, copies of your journal, notes & observations of every kind.

Doctor George Hunter of Philadelphia will accompany you as a fellow-laborer & counsellor in the same service, while the ultimate direction of the expedition is left to yourself. He is to make observations, to note courses, & to enquire into the same subjects recommended to you, but separately, as it is supposed that the two different accounts may serve to corroborate or correct each other. He is to participate with you in the conveniences & comforts provided, and to receive from you whatever aid and facility you can yield for his pursuits consistently with due diligence in the prosecution of your journey. Should the accident of death happen to you, he is to succeed to the direction of the expedition, and to all the powers which you possess. Should he also die, the officer attending you, & subject to your orders, will immediately return with his party in the way he shall deem best, bringing the papers & other effects belonging to the mission.

As the great distance between this & the point of your departure leaves it impracticable for these instructions, or those of the Secretary at war to go into all the details which may be necessary to prepare & expedite your departure, I have requested William Dunbar esquire of the Natchez, to take on himself the direction of everything supplemental

and additional to our instructions, to superintend & take order in whatsoever they may be further necessary in the course of your preparations, departure, going, and returning. You will therefore consider his further instructions, & proceedings as emanating from myself, and conform to them accordingly: and you will make him, during your journey, the center of communication between yourself and the government and on your return and arrival at the Natchez, you will report yourself to him and receive from him the formation and instructions proper for the occasion and which shall have been furnished by the government. These shall particularly provide for the immediate payment to yourselves of what shall be due to you, and of all arrearages to the officer & men which shall have incurred since their departure and such as shall have faithfully and obediently performed their duty during the tour shall be recommended to the liberality of the legislature for the grant of a portion of land, to each in proportion to his grade or condition.

Given under my hand and seal at Monticello this 14th day of April 1804, and of the independence of the United States, the twenty eighth.

Th Jefferson

Mr. Freeman, will do himself the honor of dining
with the President of the United States on Tuesday, next
agreeably to invitation.

Sunday 10th.

To Thomas Pownall Esquire

933



The government of these States being desirous of informing itself of the extent of the country lately ceded to them under the name of Louisiana, to have the same, with it's principal rivers, geographically delineated, to learn the character of it's soil, climate, productions, & inhabitants, you are appointed to explore, for these purposes, the interesting portion of it which lies on the Arkansas and Red rivers, from their confluence with the Mississippi to the remotest source of the main stream of each, and the high lands connecting the same & forming a part of ^{the} boundary of the province.

You will receive from the Secretary at war information & instructions as to the provision to be made of men, arms, ammunition, medicine, subsistence, clothing, covering, camp utensils, instruments of observation & of measuring, boats, light articles for barter & presents among the Indians, & other necessaries, all of which are to be collected at Natchez, which is to be considered as the point of departure.

From Natchez you are to proceed to ascend the Red river, taking observations of longitude & latitude at it's mouth, at all remarkable points in it's course, & especially at the mouths of rivers, at rapids, islands, & other places & objects distinguished by such natural marks & characters, of a durable kind, as that they may with certainty be recognised hereafter. The courses of the rivers between these points of observation may be supplied by the compass, the log line, & by time, corrected by the observations themselves, the variations of the compass too, in different places, are to be noted.

In this way you will proceed to the remotest source of the main stream of the Red river, and thence to that of the Arkansas, along the high lands which divide their waters from those running into the Rio Norte, or the Pacific ocean, ascertaining by the chain & compass (with due corrections for variation) the courses & extent of the said high lands.

What Happened to the Huntsville Jaycees?

By John H. Allen and John H. Ofenloch

This essay is in three parts. Part 1 is an overview of the Jaycees and how they got started in the U.S., in Alabama, and in Huntsville. Part 1 also covers the Huntsville Jaycees from 1950 to 1960. Part 2 continues to chronicle the Huntsville Jaycees activities and accomplishments from 1961 to 1981. Part 3 spans the years from 1982 to its demise in the 2000s and explains how that demise came about.

Part 1



Top Row: (L-R) Bill Kling, Nickie Purser, Charles Button, Charles Thomas, Don Stanley, Rowdy Owens, Joe Fitzgerald, Tom Butler, Richard Elmes, Ron Creel, Ernest Kaufman, Dave Nagy, John Ofenloch. Bottom Row: Henry Oldham, Jeff Hymer, Bo Bohannan, John Parsons, Randy Morris, Walt Hennessee, James Overbeek, Dick Kitchens, Mike Maples, Fletcher Davis, Frank Childs, Rick Lighthall.

Once upon a time, there was nothing more American in every city and town than a service club.

For more than a century, the influence of religious, fraternal and civic organizations, and secret societies made communities stronger, more interesting, and more engaged. They included Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Altrusa, Civitans, Shriners, SAR, DAR, UDC, ACME, Pythians, Optimists, Masons, Jaycees, and many more.

Today, they are all in decline. Some have even vanished.

This essay is limited to the Huntsville Jaycees, once one of the most powerful and useful community service organizations in Alabama. Originally the Junior Chamber of Commerce, the Jaycees was very important for young men interested in upward mobility. But as with many nonprofit organizations, the Jaycees no longer exist in Huntsville, and have all but disappeared in America. Here is a partial list of accomplishments of the Huntsville Jaycees during their heyday:

1. Established the North Alabama Kidney Dialysis Foundation
2. Established the Research Institute at UAH
3. Built a Mississipp Park (morphed into the Space & Rocket Center)
4. Developed the east side of Brahan Spring Park
5. Established the NE Alabama State Fair
6. Spearheaded diversification of area industries
7. Developed a program to alleviate the doctor shortage in Huntsville
8. Conducted a program that resulted in the giant Automatic Electric Corp. coming here
9. Sponsored Boy Scout troops that built the Space Walk Hiking Trail
10. Produced a white paper on water pollution in Alabama
11. Established the Pathfinder House for recovering alcoholics
12. Sponsored an annual Christmas party for underprivileged children.

How the Jaycees began in the United States

On October 13, 1915, the Young Men's Progressive Civic Association (YMPCA) was formed by a group of 32 men at the Mission Inn in St. Louis, Missouri, the birthplace of the Jaycee movement.

The YMPCA was the outgrowth of the Herculaneum Club that had been active since 1910. The Herculaneum Club was a social club that soon decided that its membership should turn to bigger things in the community. So, in 1915 the YMPCA was born.

In 1916 the YMPCA changed its name to Junior Citizens, from which evolved the nickname of "JC," later to be spelled out as "Jaycee." However, the name is also reputed to be derived from Junior Chamber, i.e., the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

The Junior Citizens became the St. Louis Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1918, and the fame of its civic work was beginning to spread. Following World War I, the St. Louis group was swamped with requests from young men from other towns for information on how to start Chambers of their own.

Soon, the Jaycees were in nearly every city in America. The purpose of the organization was to capture the fullness of the energy these men, applied through clearly defined constructive channels toward a common goal for a greater America.

By 1980 the U.S. Jaycees had grown to include Jaycee chapters in more than 6,000 communities with a combined membership in excess of 300,000 members. It was the fastest growing young men's organization in the world.

How the Alabama Jaycees began

The Alabama Jaycees were first organized in October 1920 in Birmingham through the efforts of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. This first chapter

began with a membership of 220; the first president was Joseph P. Mudd.

Through the efforts of the Birmingham chapter, Gadsden and Anniston were also organized. A state organization soon followed in 1921, with Irvin Engle of Birmingham elected first State president. Two Huntsville Jaycees served as State president: W.H. Pierce in 1932, and Earl Cloud in 1953.

In 1963 the Alabama Jaycees dedicated their new headquarters in Anniston.

Alabama has furnished nine national vice presidents: Albert Boutwell, Wilburn Nolan, Milton Taft, Wayne Gentry, Bill Buffalow, Jimmy Grant, Frank Parsons, Johnnie Aycock, and Jim Scott.

The growth of the Jaycees in Alabama was indicated by the rapid increase in the number of chapters and total membership since 1951. In that year there were 34 chapters with a total dues collected amounting to \$4,433 and a state budget of \$6,000. In 1959, there were 60 chapters with the total dues collected amounting to \$7,000 and a state budget of \$18,000.

The Alabama Jaycees experienced tremendous growth in the 1969-70 years when membership reached an all-time high of 7,200 members, consisting of 135 chapters and a state budget of \$143,700. In June, 1970, the Alabama Jaycees marched No. 1 in the Parade of States in St. Louis celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the U. S. Jaycees.

How the Huntsville Jaycees began

Much of the following information was gleaned from notes written by a Jaycee committee organized by Jim Duncan.

There was already an ACME club in Huntsville which was a very active and lively organization. Also, there was a conflict in getting the "Downtown" prospects and the "Arsenal" prospects together. There was not much association between these two groups, nor with the

ACME club. With these three groups not interested in getting together, it was difficult to find members to organize a Jaycees chapter. But Huntsville attorney Earl E. Cloud Jr. sought help from Birmingham's William Irby, vice president of Dist. No. 3. Then Cloud called eleven of his friends, and together they organized the Huntsville Jaycees. The club was chartered on March 16, 1951, with twelve signatures and received Jaycee Charter No. 3002. Local physician Dr. William A. Kates Jr. served as first president.

Earl Cloud wrote the policies and bylaws for the organization, and Dr. Kates was elected to serve as the first president of the newly re-organized chapter. Earl Cloud served as 1st vice president, James A. Lane as 2nd vice president, Ted Penhall served as secretary, and Lewis Cicero as treasurer.

Dr. Kates also served as state director, Wilbur B. Nolen Jr., Montgomery, served as president of the Alabama Jaycees, and Richard 'Dick' Kemler served as U.S. Jaycee president.

In 1951 there were 34 clubs in the state and two assigned national directors, each having 17 clubs. Our assigned national director was Charles Parker from Decatur.

There were four District vice presidents. We were in District I, and our District vice president was Hayden T. Ford from Gadsden. The other clubs in District I were:

| | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|
| Athens | Decatur | Guntersville |
| Albertville | Florence | Huntsville |
| Boaz | Gadsden | Scottsboro |

The terms of office locally were six months, so we did not get much accomplished the first term other than getting organized.

We found that the six-month term of office was just too short to get anything done. Earl Cloud was re-elected to serve another six-month term.

Bill Grant of Jasper served that year as state president, and Richard W. Kemler served as president of the U.S. Jaycees. The National Convention was held in Dallas, Texas.

The number of clubs in the state organization had increased from last year's 31 to 52 chapters throughout the Alabama. The U.S. Jaycees had more than 200,000 members. The Huntsville club membership had increased from 12 members to 80.

There were two state meetings: a mid-winter conference and the state convention. We were present at both these meetings.

And we had our first project for the Huntsville Jaycees. George Seibels Jr., owner of Jemison-Seibels Insurance Agency in Birmingham, and later Mayor of Birmingham, enlisted the Alabama Jaycees to help promote traffic safety. We were off and running. We decided on a Scotch reflector-tape project. We ordered red tape that reflected light, and set up places, such as gas stations and schools on certain dates and times, for children to bring their bicycles in and have about six inches of tape placed on their fenders.

We were very proud when we won a state award for this project, but amazed when we won a national award later that year at the national convention in Dallas. This project led to the construction of Huntsville's Safety City at Brahan Spring Park, which taught elementary school students about traffic, bicycle, pedestrian, bus and fire safety.

After our Scotch reflector-tape project, we held a turkey shoot, and hosted an air show at the old airport (now John Hunt Park), which was the new airport back then. We took the profits from these projects and bought blue jeans and shirts for the first Christmas party for underprivileged children, which was held at the V.F.W.

That year, since the clubs had increased throughout the state, we had three national directors with club assignments throughout the state. Huntsville's national director was Dwight McInish from Dothan.

The clubs were divided into different districts this year. Huntsville was changed from District I to District IV. Other clubs in our district were:

| | | |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Albertville | Florence | Jasper |
| Athens | Fort Payne | Russellville |
| Boaz | Guntersville | Scottsboro |
| Cullman | Decatur | Sheffield |

September-to-March 1953, Walt Wiesman, President

The population of Huntsville was 16,500 and our membership had increased to 112 by this year.

Dwight McInish, of Dothan, served as president of the Alabama Jaycees from 1952-53. Horace E. Henderson, of Virginia, served as president of the U.S. Jaycees.

The Huntsville Jaycees met the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, 7:00 p.m. at Clark Steadman's Restaurant. Harry L. Pennington served as 1st vice president, and Clarence E. Cobbs served as 2nd vice president. Macon Weaver served as state director.

The *Huntsville Jayceer* was the newsletter published by the club for members.

We held Bosses Night in November 1952, followed by a Christmas dance, and in January 1953, the Outstanding Young Man of the Year was selected from 17 nominees.

A quote from Walt Wiesman: "I burned Roberts Rules of Order, and gave everyone so much rope, that I let them hang themselves. Our meetings lasted until 11:00 p.m. We conducted such business as a request to take on a project to investigate a local coach for losing too many football games," Wiesman said.

Walt also has the distinction of being the only Huntsville Jaycee (and probably the only U.S. Jaycee) to have served as president before he was a citizen of the United States (he was a member of the von Braun rocket team). Walt got his citizenship in 1954.

March 1953 to September 1953, Clarence Cobbs, President

The population of Huntsville was 16,900. We had 78 members on roll. There were 56 clubs in the state organization.

Roland C. Thorneberry served the club as 1st vice president and Tony Guzzo as 2nd vice president. Harry Pennington served as state director.

The national convention was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Alabama Jaycees were represented there, driving 1953 red-and-white BelAire Chevrolets. Foster Haley and Earl Cloud represented Huntsville and drove cars donated for the trip by Archie Hill Chevrolet. Other dealers throughout the state loaned red-and-white cars to other clubs.

Earl Cloud, Huntsville past president, was elected vice president of the Alabama Jaycees at the state convention in Huntsville.

M.M. (Buster) Miles was elected president of the Alabama Jaycees. However, he became ill during his term, so Earl Cloud finished the term of office as Alabama Jaycee president.

We began this administration with the biggest and best state convention in Alabama. It was held in the garage at Russell Erskine Hotel in Huntsville. Four hundred and fifty Jaycees and wives heard Alabama U.S. Senator John Sparkman address the convention at the banquet to inaugurate new officers.

We also sponsored a Miss Huntsville contest and sent two talented young ladies to Birmingham with all expenses paid. One of our young ladies won a scholarship with a speech.

We also sponsored a "TVA Day Rally" and sponsored a Boy Scout Troop.

There were some 40 civic organizations in Huntsville hard at work in the interest of the Huntsville community.

**September 1953 to March 1954, Alvin Blackwell,
President**

The state convention was held in Montgomery, and a mid-winter conference was held in Birmingham. Huntsville Jaycees were in attendance at both meetings.

At the state convention in Montgomery, we won 1st place in agriculture and conservation and our float won Best Float in the parade.

We had a V.O.D. contest, yearbook, and sale of rockets. We also joined with the Madison County V.F.W. to sponsor the annual Christmas party for underprivileged children, at which more than 200 youngsters received gifts of fruits, candy, shoes, and blue jeans.

We also sponsored Boy Scout Troop #4 under the leadership of the Scout Committee of the club, and the club also sponsored the Court of Honor for the troop, at which the scouts gave demonstrations of their abilities in various fields of activities. We also had the teenage Road-E-O and two turkey shoots. The Jaycees also sponsored Shooter Education, which featured events in rifle, shotgun, and trap shooting.

A delegation of five local Jaycees went to Mobile in October for the 1953 Southeastern Jaycee Institute. More than 500 leaders from all over the Southeastern United States were on hand. The annual meeting was held for the purpose of exchanging ideas and information on projects conducted by Jaycees in their communities. It also served as an informal training school for new officers throughout the states. Those attending from Huntsville were Jim Cleary, 1st V.P.; state Americanism chairman, Paul McClung; 2nd V.P., Earl Cloud; state V.P., Walter Wiesman; state J.C.I. chairman and past president; and Dr. William Kates, past president of the Huntsville club.

March 1954 to September 1954, Paul W. McClung, President

Frank Gardiner served as 1st vice president and Houston Adams served as 2nd vice president.

Two important changes took place during this administration. The **Huntsville Jayceettes**, for women, was chartered, and our club's term of office, beginning the following year, would be for one year instead of six months. This would allow a team more time to accomplish projects.

A quote from Paul McClung as to how the organizing of the Jayceettes came about: "We got them organized on a formal basis by hosting a dinner for the Jaycee wives and telling them: "We want you to organize. Frank Gardner and I were the only Jaycees there and we mostly just kept our mouths shut."

The July 10, 1954, state board meeting was held in Sylacauga. Huntsville reported a membership of 104.

Miss Mary Esslinger, sponsored by the Huntsville Jaycees, was crowned Madison County Maid of Cotton.

The 1954 state convention was held in Montgomery, April 10-12. Our float was a rocket with Jaycee spacemen, and we won Best Float. We also won 1st place in the State for agriculture and conservation.

The Jaycee national convention was held in Colorado Springs, June 14-15, 1954, and Paul McClung represented Huntsville.

1954-55, Frank Gardiner, President

Buddy Bomar, Carl Moring, and Jim Cleary served as vice presidents.

During 1955, the permanent home for the National Jaycee president, called the Jaycee White House, was completed in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The materials for this home were donated by Jaycees throughout the nation.

Walt Wiesman, who served two years as JCI state chairman and one year as JC international chairman, was

presented the first JCI Senatorship for the state of Alabama.

The 1955 State convention was in Mobile. James Fail was the State convention chairman. Mobile had won the bid at a state board meeting in Decatur the year before. At this meeting,

Birmingham and Mobile presented bids to host the 1955 State convention. Mobile won by a very close vote of 31 to 28. A registration fee of \$13.50 for men and \$6.50 for ladies included a stag party on Dauphin Island, and for \$2.00 extra on Sunday morning, a deep-sea fishing cruise.

Walt Wiesman was appointed state nominating chairman for 1955.

At the January 15, 1955, state board meeting, president Gardiner reported a membership of 84.

The national convention was held in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1955.

A joint installation ceremony and banquet for the Jaycees and Jaycettes was held this year for the first time at Cambron's Aero Club, at which our state president, Charles S. Trimmier, was the principal speaker. The Huntsville Jaycettes were now well on their way, were a thriving organization, and stood ready to assist in the activities of the Huntsville Jaycees.

The latter part of 1954-55 the administration spent most of its time programming, organizing, and conducting the Alabama semi-pro baseball tournament, held July 1955, in Huntsville under the sponsorship of the Huntsville Jaycees.

In this setting the Huntsville Jaycee Club celebrated its fifth anniversary. The club had developed from a relatively small organization to an average membership of 100, with average attendance at regular meetings in excess of 60 percent.

The primary money-making projects of the club were the three turkey shoots over the course of the year, one in the spring and two on and around Thanksgiving (actual turkeys were not shot).

1955-56 - James R. Cleary, President

Population of the city of Huntsville had grown to 19,640 and the club membership had grown to 132 members.

Our biggest project of the year was the semi-pro baseball state tournament. We sent out letters to other Alabama Jaycee chapters asking for promotion of teams for this tournament.

National Baseball Week was proclaimed by Mayor R.B. Searcy for the week of March 19-26, 1955. Eight teams from throughout the state were entered. The winner of the Alabama tournament played the Georgia champion for the right to represent the region at Wichita, Kansas. The Huntsville Parkers defeated the Mobile team. Arab lost to Attalla. Huntsville then beat Attalla and went on to be the Alabama state champions.

The team then went to Georgia to play the Georgia Lumberjacks and won 6 to 4. Don Mincher was a member of the Huntsville team, and later went on to play pro-ball.

An appeal for donations was made to send the Huntsville Parkers to the Nationals after having defeated Ashland, Kentucky, 12-3 and Midland, Pennsylvania 4-1. The appeal resulted in donations of \$500. The Huntsville Parkers were eliminated by the North Platt Plainsmen of Nebraska 19-1, but came home as the 5th best team in the Nation.

At our underprivileged children's Christmas party that year, more than 210 pairs of overalls were given to area children.

The Sesquicentennial Celebration, commemorating the 150th anniversary of Huntsville, was held, and six safety programs were demonstrated to promote better driving.

1956-57 - John Higdon, President

In 1956 Huntsville had grown to estimated 52,333 citizens. Membership in the Huntsville Jaycees was 107.

Wally Fowler's All-Night Gospel Sing was sponsored by the Jaycees and was one of our money-making projects for the year.

We also sponsored an Art Festival of Movies, with proceeds going to buy blue jeans for the annual Christmas party for underprivileged children.

Thomas Fowler, a student at Huntsville High School, was the winner of the Voice of Democracy contest, sponsored by the Huntsville Jaycees.

The Jaycees also sponsored an Easter passion play, which was held on February 7-9, 1957.

Another of the Ways and Means Committee projects was the sale of picture post cards—to publicize Huntsville, the Rocket City. We purchased the cards, which were sold to drug stores, restaurants, and other businesses from Florida to California for resale to the public. Our expenses were \$600, with an income of \$1,684. Co-chairmen of this project were James Sandlin and William Harrell.

1957-58 - Robert T. Lakebrink, President

The 1958 State convention was held in Huntsville, April 20-26.

The population of Huntsville was now 58,300. The Jaycee meetings were held at La Patee Restaurant with nominations night held at Dales Restaurant in the Towne House Motel. Meals were \$1.65, and members were billed in advance.

One of our projects was a Christmas lighting contest. The idea was to make the city more attractive during Christmas, and to make the people more aware of the

true meaning of Christmas. Prizes were given to residential and business winners.

The Clyde Beatty Circus was a Jaycee Ways and Means Committee project. We also had our annual turkey shoot, and a Halloween window painting project to provide a useful outlet for local youngsters.

A junior tennis tournament, a teenage rodeo, and a voice of democracy were held, the latter to inculcate in the youth of Madison County an understanding of the basic tenants of a democratic system.

The Jaycee members sponsored an "Atoms for Peace" exhibit downtown. The exhibit conveyed the theory of fission, explained the basic principles of atomic structure, and also demonstrated actual materials and instruments used in the field of atomic energy.

1958-59 - Arnold Hornbuckle, President

Ed Sorrels and Tom Younger served as vice presidents. The other elected officers included six directors and a state vice president. The president was responsible for a 15-man board. The roster we had to work with had 48 names, of which six were associate members at the beginning of the year. We ended the year with a membership of 103 Jaycees.

The Fall Conference held in Cullman set an all-time high for attendance at a meeting. And the Alabama Jaycee Convention in Mobile set a record high of more than 600 registered participants.

During Hornbuckle's tenure, the Alabama Junior Chamber of Commerce made some bold resolutions condemning anti-Semitic bombings of temples and synagogues in the U.S., and crafted a resolution calling for more financial aid for education.

We had a budget of \$3,640 this year, with an income from the state convention of \$1,021, being our largest money maker (revenue over expenses).

Our Halloween Candy Sale (selling Kraft caramels door-to-door), with a budgeted income of \$840, was the second biggest money maker. The budget for this administration

was the smallest in the history of the club, and we overspent by \$650. To say that we overspent our budget did not mean we were in the red, but rather, that we spent some reserve money due to the following contributions: \$300 for the proposed coliseum, \$100 for the YMCA, \$150 for the Hornbuckle campaign, and \$100 for the Milton Taft campaign.

At the end of this year, we had two candidates running for Jaycee President: Tom Younger and Harold Bee. This was the first time any money was spent on campaigning. Banners were used and refreshments served in the Victory Room at Russell Erskine Hotel.

Our meetings changed from Tuesday to Wednesday nights that year. We left the Russell Erskine Hotel and went to a local high school cafeteria, then to Michael's Restaurant. However, Michael's decided it did not want us there, so the only way we could get back in Russell Erskine was to meet on Wednesdays.

The Henry Giessenbier Award was given to the best chapters in their division, which were based on population in each state. Huntsville won its first Giessenbier Award.

A bit of humor happened toward the end of this administration: Tom Younger and Harold Bee were both running for president, and there was quite a bit of campaigning going on. Tom Younger and Harold Bee's boss (who was also a Jaycee) had been to Birmingham for a seminar, and on the way home a discussion of politics came up. Tom Younger asked Harold Bee's boss who he was going to vote for. "Harold Bee," was his reply. One story has it that the boss was then shoved from the automobile, but Tom Younger says that he asked to be let out of the car. At any rate his boss ended up a pedestrian on the other side of Cullman about 50 miles from home. He walked for almost two hours, and at 3:00 a.m., very cold and very tired, called Harold Bee, who came in the wee hours of the morning and picked him up near Cullman. Tom Younger had gone on home to bed.

A quote from Arnold Hornbuckle, in the 1958-59 President's Annual Report (which was by-the-way the first annual report ever made by a Huntsville Jaycee president), says "If I could leave only one recommendation with you, It would be to advise you always to take time to think before you speak, vote or act. I feel that too often in the past, we have been influenced by outside high-pressure promoters to go into projects that were not beneficial to the community or to this organization, and we would not have adopted them had we taken the time to consider the disadvantages as well as the advantages. Be ever willing to compromise. The organization of which we are a member is much larger than you or I. Regardless of differences of opinion, I would recommend that each of you always be willing to follow the expressed will of the majority. It is only through unity that we can build a stronger organization."

1959-60, Tom Younger, President

This was the first year we started our "missile juice" and hospitality room at state conventions. We got a large crock pot and had crossbones painted on it, bought some dry-ice and mixed up the juices. We carried this to the state convention in Mobile. The mid-winter conference was in Sylacauga in February.

In 1956, a letter to John Higdon from Walt Wiesman had stated that it was time for Huntsville Jaycees to have one big money-making project in lieu of several small projects. This letter proposed an annual fair. A committee was appointed to check out the possibilities of a fair, and there was a great deal of discussion on this new project possibility that year. There had been some earlier discussions on it.

A quote from Tom Younger: "This year we sponsored the first (and last) Tennessee Valley Sportsman Show on the Parkway City Mall parking lot. We had a big tent, and boats were displayed for one week. This was to be a money-

making project, but it rained every day of the week and attendance was poor, therefore, we made no money on the project. This was a good start for me in leadership training. After the project was over, we had a problem. It seems we had bought some asphalt and built a mound around the tent to keep the rain from coming in and Parkway City wanted this mound of asphalt moved. I called Jaycee members to help each afternoon, and even though I had promises to help, no one showed up. I would arrive with a shovel and a wheelbarrow and remove a little asphalt and haul it to the dump. One afternoon a Jaycee did show up — with a tractor and a blade. He proceeded to break up the asphalt and scatter it all over the parking lot. He left, and I spent the next few days sweeping the parking lot and then hauling the remains to the dump. We did not sponsor this project again!"

We had approximately 75 members on roll during the year; Mike Henry and Ray Lawrence served as vice presidents.

1960-61, Eugene McLain, President

We had approximately 150 Jaycees and were still meeting at the Russell Erskine Hotel twice per month, the first and third Wednesdays.

Ray Lawrence served as one of the vice presidents. The state convention was held in Montgomery.

We sponsored our Halloween candy sale, which was our biggest Ways and Means project, but it required a lot of man hours.

We also had our annual underprivileged children's Christmas party this year.

The fallout shelter, across the Parkway from Airport Road, was built by the Jaycees in conjunction with Civil Defense. We spent a lot of time promoting this project, and after its completion, we had a Jaycee, Bruce Grant, and his family, move into the shelter for one week without coming out. They carried enough food and supplies to last the week. We

received national publicity on this project and finished off our first decade in Huntsville.

This ends part 1 of 3 parts. Part 2, in the next issue, covers the Jaycees activities from 1961 to 1981 and includes the establishment of the Research Institute at UAH, the missile park (which evolved into the U.S. Space & Rocket Center), the Northeast Alabama State Fair, and the Jobs '70 Program.

About the authors:

John H. Allen is a long-time resident of Huntsville and is a former president of both the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society and the Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table. He once chaired the committee that created the Tree Commission, the Tree Ordinance, the Urban Forester position, and the Landscape Ordinance for commercial parking lots. He is the retired training manager of the Amana facility in Fayetteville, Tenn.

John Ofenloch, is a retired engineer and held executive management positions at both Brown Engineering and Intergraph Corporation. He was once president of the Huntsville Jaycees. He is a past president of the Kiwanis Club of Huntsville, was chairman of the board of the American Red Cross here, and was on the board of Huntsville Utilities. Most recently, he was president of LearningQuest.

Edited by Donna Pratt

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- In matters of form and style, a good guide is the fourteenth or fifteenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
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