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Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People, Places, Things part 1

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People,

Early Views
SKETCHES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY
IN ANTEBELLUM DAYS:

PEOPLE,
PLACES
THINGS

Physician and

These short articles first appeared in the Huntsville Times during 1976 as a bi-weekly series under the heading of "The Tennessee Valley & Early America." They were meant to be a local contribution to our Bicentennial and are reprinted here in an endeavor to continue the publication of the Quarterly.

THE EDITOR



THE HUNTSVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AND THE HUNTSVILLE HISTORICAL REVIEW

JAMES
HUNTSVILLE
EDWARD



: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People,

David Moore:

Politician, Planter,

Physician and

Financier



In the years soon after David Moore's death in the 1840s, his widow purchased this substantial home on Franklin Street in Huntsville. —(Times Photo by Rod Whited.)

continued to serve in this capacity until 1819, when Alabama became a state.

Doctor, politician, planter and financier — that was David Moore, one of many Virginians to come to backwoods Alabama in the early 1800s to seek fortune and fame. He became one of Madison County's busiest and most prominent citizens of that time.

Born in Brunswick County, Va., in 1779, young Moore studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. He first moved south to Nashville, where he soon developed an extensive practice.

Dr. Moore entered the Tennessee Valley in 1809, when he was a major purchaser at the first land sales in Madison County. He was then selected as one of three trustees to whom LeRoy Pope deeded one-half of his purchase covering the site of Huntsville. The trustees had the authority to partition this land, sell lots and use the proceeds for the improvement of Huntsville. This began a long financial relationship between Moore and Pope.

Moore is said later to have owned nine choice plantations. He evidently produced good crops, for his farms reportedly yielded up to 1,000 bales of cotton annually. One of the reasons for this success was his habit of hiring the best overseers available and requiring them to report to him on a regular basis. He shipped his cotton to Liverpool, England, and was not forced to sell at any particular time, which usually afforded him a high rate of return.

Moore was a friend of Andrew Jackson. While still residing in Nashville he became the Jackson family physician, and during the Creek War of 1813-1814 he served as a surgeon on the general's staff. After the last battle he was appointed one of the Madison County "justices of the quorum," borrowed from the English and Virginian

method of administering justice. Moore continued to serve in this capacity until 1819, when Alabama became a state.

The good doctor became involved in banking, too. Under an act passed by the territorial legislature in 1815, Moore was one of nine men authorized to open books of subscription for the first bank established in the territory.

The Planters' and Merchants' Bank began operations in Huntsville in October, 1817. According to historian William Brantley, author of "Banking in Alabama 1816-1860," business was very good — initially, at least. The following February the bank acquired title to its home, buying a lot with a brick house on it "in front of the public square," for \$3,500. The rear of the building hung precariously above Big Spring, on the same site where the First Alabama Bank of Huntsville now operates. But the Merchants' and Planters' Bank was closed by Gov. Israel Pickens in 1825, for political as well as fiscal reasons.

Inevitably, Moore was drawn into the political arena. From 1820 to 1844, he spent a total of 15 years in the Alabama Legislature as a representative of Madison County. First elected to the House in 1820, he served in the Senate in 1822-24; then, by choice, he returned to the lower house where in 1841 he was unanimously elected its speaker.

Moore's political life was colorful and often of much benefit to Alabama. Among the bills he originated and sponsored, perhaps most important and progressive for its time was "the woman's law." This act created a statutory financial settlement for married women. If a husband went into bankruptcy the family could be kept together by allowing the wife to keep from liquidators the necessities of life for the children and herself.

Many politicians of the ante-bellum era were faced with threats of physical violence during their public careers, and Moore was no exception.

In 1826, Israel Pickens, who had been elected to succeed Henry Chambers as a U.S. senator from Alabama, discovered he was dying from tuberculosis. The election



for his successor was viciously waged in the Alabama **Huntsville Historical Review**, Vol. 8 [1978], No. 1, Art. 3 McKinley and Huntsville's Clement Comer Clay. Clay lost.

Dr. Moore had supported him, incurring the wrath of Andrew Wills, owner of the Huntsville Democrat newspaper who bitterly hated Clay. Wills insulted Moore and challenged him to a duel, stating that he was "willing to fight (Moore) in any way and may be killed, as I will take it with knives, pistols, or fistcuffs. . ."

Moore refused the offer to duel, it is said, because of his religious principles, adding to his reputation as a "Christian gentleman in the highest sense of the word," it was written at the time.

Moore in 1841 came tantalizingly close to being elected to the U.S. Senate. On the first ballot in the legislature, Moore received one more vote than did Arthur Bagby, his main opponent. But on the second ballot Bagby was elected by seven votes.

All this political activity did not keep Moore from his economic interests. For example, in 1833 he had joined with six others to charter the Madison Turnpike Co. The company macadamized roads south to the Tennessee River and westward, towards Athens.

Ending an active, productive life, Moore died in 1844 or 1845, leaving a considerable fortune to his family. His widow, Martha L. Moore, was able to purchase in 1851 the substantial home at 621 Franklin St. (now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Claude Pipes). His daughter, Harriet Moore Barnard, married Col. Robert Barnwell Rhett Jr., and the Rhett family occupied the house until 1928.

Dr. David Moore's influence on Huntsville lasted far longer than his life.



: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People,

Strange Tale of the Illegal County Known as Decatur



During the next few years after Alabama became a state in 1819, several counties were hastily and sloppily created. But Old Decatur County was the only one illegally created by the legislature. Located between Madison and Jackson counties, it was established Dec. 13, 1821, and abolished Dec. 25, 1825.



The 1819 Constitution, our state's first, provided for the creation of new counties in the state. The last sentence in Article VI, Section 17 proved to be the key in regard to the Old Decatur County situation: "No county, hereafter to be formed, shall be of less extent than nine

hundred miles."

When Old Decatur finally was surveyed, after having existed for several years, it simply was not large enough to meet this constitutional requirement and the county had to be abolished by the legislature.

The fault lay with the legislature, for the establishment act set out the county's boundaries: "That all the tract of county lying west of Jackson County, south of the Tennessee State line, east of Madison County and north of the Tennessee River shall constitute a separate and distinct county." This created a pear-shaped county varying in width from three to 25 miles and about 40 miles long. The widest point lay on the Tennessee River and the narrowest bordered on the state of Tennessee.

But the establishment act was even more precise. The boundaries were specifically described:

"Beginning at the mouth of Sauta Creek; thence up said creek to where Winchester road crosses said Sauta Creek, thence to Jesse Thompson's; thence to Caswell Bibey's, thence from said Bibey's to the top of the mountains, thence to the leading point of the mountain between the

the mouth of Larkin's Fork of Paint Rock River; thence to the top of the mountain; thence a northwest course to the Tennessee state line."

Unfortunately, the creation of Old Decatur was more than just an Alabama historical quirk. All the steps in the process of creating a county government were provided for by the legislature and a number of people were adversely affected later when the county was abolished.

Eight men had been chosen by the legislature to select the site for the county seat, and to erect a courthouse and jail. Election of a sheriff and a clerk of the circuit court was to be held on the second Monday in February, 1822. For some reason, the election was held the preceding Monday, but the legislature later validated this election — all for nought, as later events were to prove.

Woodville, the oldest town in the Decatur and Jackson County area besides the Indian settlements, was chosen as the county seat. It is now referred to as Old Woodville, and was located about a mile east of today's Woodville.

Old Woodville prospered as the county seat. Besides the county structures erected there, several stores and an inn were built.

An inn certainly was needed, considering the official business conducted there. For one thing, the legislature had given the county criminal jurisdiction over "all that tract of county which lies west of Willstown Valley east of the road leading from Ditto's Landing to the town of Blountsville." This was a very large area, for today it includes all Marshall County, and parts of Blount, DeKalb, Etowah, Jackson and Madison counties.

All this far-flung prosperity of course was dashed when the county was surveyed and found not to meet constitutional requirements. The county had to be abolished, and it was divided between Jackson and Madison counties. Those involved did not find the situation amusing, financially or otherwise.

Legend Has It That He Named Monte Sano



The Fearn-Garth home at 517 Franklin Street, built in the early 1800s by Dr. Thomas Fearn.—(Times Photo by Dudley Campbell)

Thomas Fearn, according to his contemporaries, was by far the most celebrated of the physicians and surgeons of Madison County and the Tennessee Valley in ante-bellum days. But history remembers him perhaps better as a pioneer builder and developer — of a major canal, water works, and other projects — in the Huntsville area, and as the man who gave Monte Sano its name.



Born near Danville, Va., in 1789, Fearn obtained his early schooling there and then entered Washington College at Lexington, Va. Deciding upon a career in medicine, he enrolled at the Old Medical College in Philadelphia.

Immediately after his graduation in 1810 from medical school, he moved South, selecting Huntsville as a good place to live and practice his profession. He found the town in the midst of an economic boom. Besides developing his medical practice during the next few years, Fearn acquired considerable land in Huntsville and Madison County.

He also became involved in the Creek Wars. When Andrew Jackson moved through Huntsville in 1813 on his way to eventual victory at Horseshoe Bend, Fearn served as a battalion surgeon. The following year Jackson appointed him "surgeon's mate" in charge of hospital facilities in the Huntsville area.

After the Creek Wars, Fearn increasingly became involved in the development of Huntsville. In 1816, still in his 20s, his standing was such that he was named one of nine commissioners of the Planters' and Merchants' Bank of Huntsville.

In medicine, however, Fearn soon decided he needed further education. He temporarily gave up his activities in Huntsville, including his bank commission, and journeyed to Europe. From 1818 to

1820 he remained there, studying in England and on the continent.

Some time after his return Fearn constructed at 517 Franklin Street one of the most beautiful ante-bellum homes in Huntsville, on land he had purchased before 1816. He was back in Huntsville to stay.

Family legend has it that he named Monte Sano. Evidently he had sent a child to the mountaintop overlooking Huntsville for treatment. When the child recovered a few weeks later, Fearn named the place Monte Sano, or Mountain of Health.

Dr. Fearn is also reputed to have been the first physician to use quinine, made from the bark of trees, to treat typhoid fever. His reputation grew, and honorary degrees began to be bestowed upon him from as far away as Rutgers College and Cincinnati University. He turned down several excellent medical teaching opportunities elsewhere to remain in Huntsville.

Fearn also devoted considerable time to business interests. With his brother Robert Lee, he successfully marketed cotton. This led him to attempt to construct a canal from Big Springs Creek to Ditto's Landing, on the Tennessee River 10 miles south of Huntsville.

For that purpose, the Indian Creek Navigation Co. was chartered by the state legislature in 1820, with Dr. Fearn as one of its five commissioners. The next year stock in the canal company was advertised for sale. It was only through the financial efforts of Dr. Fearn and his brother George, however, that the canal was ever completed. When it was finally opened in 1831, it could accommodate boats carrying 50 passengers and up to 80-100 bales of cotton.

The canal, Alabama's first, continued to operate until roads ended its usefulness by the late 1840s.

Along with his brother George, Dr. Fearn attempted to create a village on Monte Sano. Viduta was incorporated in 1833, intended to be developed as a health resort. It failed, one of the few ventures that did not prove successful for the

doctor.

Fearn was also the builder of the county's second city water works. In 1835 he and George Fearn purchased an existing water works for \$2,530. The brothers then made an agreement with the city to construct pumps to lead to the courthouse to extinguish fires. A cistern was erected at the rear of the bank overlooking the Big Spring to supply water. As a result, Huntsvillians had water for drinking and for putting out fires. Later the brothers sold the works to the city.

Like so many other leaders of his time, Dr. Fearn was drawn into politics. Twice he served in the state legislature, in 1822 and 1828-29. He was also once a presidential elector, and later a member of the first Confederate Congress. He served in the latter post for only about a month, resigning because of ill health.

Fearn also devoted much time to civic activities in Huntsville. He was a trustee of Green Academy throughout its existence and was president of the board of trustees of Huntsville Female Seminary and the North Alabama College for men.

He also traveled through the South in an effort to develop rail communications between Huntsville and other points in the region.

With all those activities, it is little wonder that the doctor had long ago given up his regular medical practice. When he died a wealthy man in 1863 at the age of 73, he had not practiced medicine for more than 25 years.





How Scottsboro Became Jackson County's Seat



ROBT. T. SCOTT

Robert T. Scott — planter, tavern operator, newspaper editor, state legislator and land developer — sought for years to have the Jackson County seat moved to his land and bear his name. He ultimately succeeded — five years after his death in 1863.



Scottsboro's founder, who lived for a time in Madison County before moving on to greener pastures a few miles eastward, was born in the late-1700s (probably in 1789 in Virginia, according to W. Jerry Gist in "The Story of Scottsboro, Alabama," although another historian says it was in about 1798

in North Carolina).

In any case, Scott is known to have moved as a child with his family to Raleigh, N.C., and lived there three years before the Scotts came in 1817 to Alabama, settling in Madison County. Along the way, young Scott studied law in Franklin, Tenn.

In Madison County, Scott farmed successfully for some years and was elected to the Alabama House of Representatives in 1830 and re-elected in 1832.

He moved two years later to Bellefonte, the newly chosen Jackson County seat, where he bought a large farm that included a hotel-tavern. Operated by Scott and called Belle Tavern, it became a popular place for prominent social and political gatherings.

The planter and innkeeper, who also was editor of the Bellefonte Courier newspaper, wasted little time in re-enter-

ing politics. In 1836 Scott was again elected to the Alabama House — this time as a Jackson County representative. He was re-elected in 1837, again in 1839, and was to serve the county four additional times, in the legislative sessions of 1842, 1844, 1847 and 1853.

Scott's election in 1839 was unique. In one year the people of Jackson County elected him to the legislature no fewer than four times.

The previous year he had been elected circuit clerk of the county, and when he appeared as a legislator in Tuscaloosa, then the state capital, the point was raised that he could not hold two offices at the same time. Scott was refused his seat in the House.

A new election was soon held in Jackson County, and again Scott was elected representative. Again he was refused at the legislature. A third election was held, with the same results. Scott was elected a fourth time, but by then the legislative session had ended.

He served in other governmental capacities as well. In 1842 Gov. Benjamin Fitzpatrick appointed Scott as agent to help settle financial troubles stemming from the failure of the state bank. And during the administration of Gov. Henry Collier (1849-1853), he was appointed to a commission called to adjust the disputed boundary line between Georgia and Alabama.

Scott also spent much time in Washington, D.C., where he assisted in prosecuting financial claims of the state for outlays made because of the Indian and Mexican wars.

He retired from public life after the 1853 session of the legislature, except for serving as a delegate to the Democratic convention in Baltimore that nominated John C. Breckinridge for president.

Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People,

In the early 1850s Scott decided to move to what today is Scottsboro. He erected a handsome residence on Backbone Ridge. After 1853 he devoted full time to the development of his expanding property. By 1856 he was able to exert pressure on the directors of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad to construct the rail line beside his property. The depot erected nearby was known as Sage Town, but the name was soon changed to Scott's Station.

From then until his death on June 18, 1863, Scott worked constantly to bring the county seat to this location. His widow persisted in the effort, and five years after Scott's death his heirs reached an agreement with the county government to do just that.

The site for the courthouse and jail in what by then had been renamed Scottsboro was deeded to Jackson County on the condition that it become the county seat. The agreement also called for the proceeds from the sale of alternate lots around the courthouse square to go to Scottsboro, with the rest of the proceeds going to the Scott heirs.

Thus, Robert Thomas Scott was able, in death, to gain the county seat he had long sought and to ensure the growth of the city named for him.



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Green Academy

Was Vital to Development of the Area

Just a few years after Huntsville was founded, while Alabama was still part of the Mississippi Territory, leaders of the community and the surrounding area began to plan for the education of the children here.

The territorial legislature passed an act on Nov. 25, 1812, declaring that "there shall be established in Madison County, an academy, which shall bear the name of Green Academy." But no money was provided for the academy; the trustees were merely empowered to raise money for the institution by lottery. In December, 1816, the legislature granted \$500 to the academy, but this was not nearly enough.

Finally, in November, 1818, the legislature of the territory (by this time Mississippi had already achieved statehood and the remaining area had become the territory of Alabama) provided for the fiscal independence of the academy. An act was passed providing for the sale of a number of shares in the Planters' and Merchants' Bank of Huntsville, the profits from the sale to be divided among the old stockholders of the academy, and the rest granted to the academy. This raised almost \$2,000 for the school, and additional funds were sought from the community for the construction of a campus.

General John Brahan donated land for the campus, and buildings were erected by 1823. At the time the site was about a quarter of a mile east of Huntsville, located in a grove of trees. When the city limits were extended, it became the northeast corner at the intersection of East Clinton and Calhoun streets.

Green Academy was the second chartered academy in the Alabama Territory. It was considered by many as the most important educational institution in the

territory and later in the state, until the University of Alabama opened its doors to students in 1831. The Huntsville Democrat, in its Aug. 22, 1828, issue, stated of the academy that "there is not Seminary of its kind . . . west of the Alleghany mountains."

The academy was not considered at the time an institution of primary training. The Democrat stated in its Jan. 4, 1825, issue that it "was intended to occupy a station superior to that of the Elemental English school, to be a place of instruction for boys, who have passed the mere rudiments of English learning; and for young gentlemen."

In 1825 the tuition fee was \$25, payable quarterly in equal installments. This seems so little to us today, yet in ante-bellum days this was a large sum of money, and only the more affluent families could send their young men to the institution. This may explain why enrollment never was very high. The Southern Advocate proclaimed in August, 1828, that nearly 50 students were enrolled, "with every prospect of (enrollment) becoming much larger."

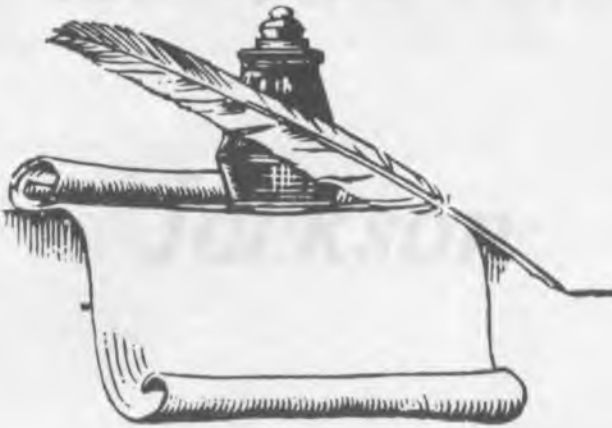
The academic success of the institution can be seen in the many graduates who went on to distinction in Alabama. For example, the student roster in 1828 included such well known ante-bellum family names in Huntsville as Birney, Chambers, Clay, Clemens, Mastin and Veitch. Clement Clairborne Clay, for instance, son of the eighth governor of Alabama, was a student at the academy in the late 1820s, and would later serve his state as a senator, in both the Federal and Confederate senates.

The grading system used by the institution shortly before the Civil War was basically the same used in our public schools now: 100 was excellent, "The Highest Degree of Merit 90 was very good; 80 good; 70 "Tolerable 60 unsatisfactory and 50 "Deficient."

Green Academy continued to operate until its buildings were burned by Federal troops during the Civil War. Later the institution became a part of the public



school system of Huntsville today the
: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People,
East Clinton Grammar School is located
on the site. In all, Green Academy
operated for half a century and was vital
to the development of Huntsville and the
Tennessee Valley during the ante bellum-
period.



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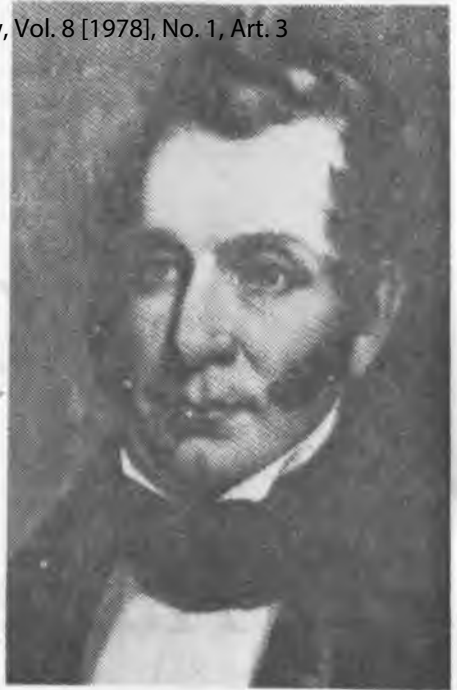
: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People,

Samuel Moore—

Early Governor

Hailed From

Jackson



Gabriel Moore, left, and John Gayle, right, served as Alabama governors immediately before and after Samuel Moore held office briefly in 1831. No known portrait of Samuel Moore exists.



: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People, within its limits, and set up for itself. But before it takes this step, it ought carefully to weight the advantages of secession, against those of the Union, and see that the former clearly preponderate."

Samuel B. Moore has the distinction of being the only governor of Alabama from Jackson County — and of having served one of the briefest periods in that office.

Born in Franklin County, Tennessee, in 1789, Moore moved to Alabama with his family while still a child. His family settled in Jackson County, two miles northeast of Woodville at Spout Springs.

In 1824 Moore began a distinguished political career by representing Jackson County in the state legislature. After serving several terms in the lower house, he was elected to the Alabama Senate in 1829. He was re-elected the following year and chosen as president of the Senate.

It was from that position in the Senate that he succeeded to the governor's chair in March, 1831, after Gov. Gabriel Moore of Madison County (and of no known relation to Samuel) resigned his office to assume a U.S. Senate seat.

Samuel Moore served as acting governor for almost nine months, ending his tenure as the state's sixth chief executive in late November.

In his bid for election that month to a full term as governor, Moore was pitted against John Gayle of Greene County and Nicholas Davis, a Whig planter from Limestone County. Gayle, an eloquent orator, emerged the victor and Moore returned to his new residence in Pickens County.

Throughout his political career Moore enjoyed the reputation of being a man of character and action, a politician who elicited confidence or chagrin from his constituents.

He was deeply involved as governor in a dispute concerning the United States Bank and the State Bank.

He also opposed the nullification concept of John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. On this issue Moore stated that "...the State may nullify the acts of Congress by declaring them inoperative and void

This stance by Moore was a contributing factor in his defeat in 1831 by Gayle, who campaigned in favor of nullification, citing James Madison as authority for his point of view.

After serving as acting governor, Moore represented Pickens County in the state Senate from 1834 to 1838 and he served again as president of that chamber in 1835. He ended his political career as judge of the Pickens County Court from 1835 until 1841.

Moore died on Nov. 7, 1846, at Carrollton, the county seat of Pickens. So ended the career of a man whom William H. Brantley, in his "Banking In Alabama 1816-1860," called "probably the most opinionated chief executive ever to serve the State." Brantley also wrote that, had some exciting event occurred during his tenure, "he would have been ever remembered with honor or regret."

A man of action, Moore had little opportunity as governor to show what he could do under difficult or exciting circumstances.



: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People,

Early

Huntsville

Female

College

Was

Community-Backed

Project



Portrait of Madame J. Hamilton Childs

The modern notion that women did not receive much formal education in the antebellum South is contradicted by the history of the Huntsville Female College.

For many years, leaders in the area wanted to establish a college for females. Finally in 1845, Madame J. Hamilton Childs established the Bascom Female Institution in Huntsville. Madame Childs, later to be very identified with Athens State College, began operating in the Masonic Temple. However, her school was not regarded by many of the concerned people of Huntsville as an institution of higher learning, or, as was known then, one "of high grade for the education of girls and young ladies."

Around 1850, a group of citizens met with the Rev. Edward Slater of the Methodist Church and his successor Robert Young. A committee, composed of "men of wealth," was formed and supported by the church. Final plans were made in February, 1851, for the establishment of the college. The Methodist Church was then the largest denomination in the city and claimed the largest membership in North Alabama. With such a large and influential organization backing them, members of the committee decided to raise \$10,000 to create the college. So confident were they of reaching their goal, they passed a resolution declaring the institution would begin classes on the first Monday of the following September, which was only seven months away. By May, subscriptions had reached \$9,000. Next, was the problem of finding quarters until a permanent structure could be erected. The committee turned to Madame Childs, who was operating her school in the Masonic Temple. She was hired as assistant principal, and her students became the nucleus of the new school. In August, permission was granted to the Methodist Church to occupy the same rooms in the temple.

A charter for "The Bascom Female Institute" was obtained from the Alabama Legislature in January, 1852. The name of the school was changed to the "Huntsville Female College" in December, 1855, when the legislature amended the charter.

By this time the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Church had accepted responsibility of the guidance and operation of the institution and permanent quarters had been erected on Randolph Avenue, three blocks east of the courthouse square.

The cornerstone of the new building was laid in June, 1853. The structure was three stories high and of Greek Revival style. Constructed of brick, it featured four large Ionic columns on the front and measured 164 feet wide and 52 feet in depth. A very large building, it contained rooms for 100 boarding students and had servants' quarters, classrooms, a dining room, drawing room and a chapel. Later, a fourth story was added on for more dormitory space.

The school was well accepted by the people of Huntsville and the Tennessee Valley. Very quickly it earned a regional reputation, and by 1859 the enrollment totaled 184, with 70 boarders from six southern states.

Student life was spartan compared to the present. The school's motto "Good Success" was to be achieved through hard work and proper respect for elders. A demerit system was used in grading, and at one time each demerit cost a half point in grades. If a student received twenty, she was dismissed from the college.

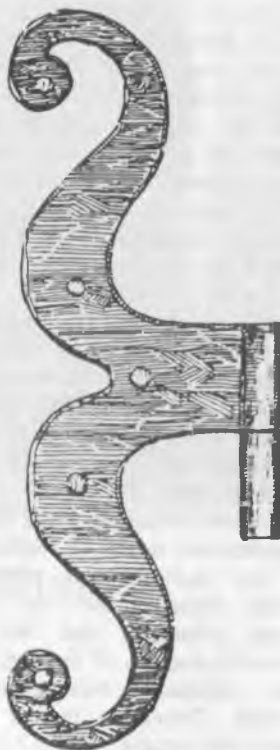
Attire was strictly regulated. Uniform dress was required in both summer and winter, and no ostentatious use of jewelry or other ornamentation was allowed.

Instructors at the college were just as strictly regulated. Many of the college catalogs carried a list of "Duties of Teachers." A typical list prohibited instructors from leaving Huntsville without the permission of the highest authority. Faculty members were prohibited from

giving instruction of any kind beyond the college, whether paid or not Teachers were to be impartial, yet fair. They could not receive calls during school hours and had to make sure their pupils tended to their studies, obeyed the rules and regulations and were in their dormitories when they were supposed to be

Following the list of dos and don'ts prospective teachers were informed that if they could not abide by the rules, they should not seek employment.

Huntsville Female College continued to operate until the Civil War. During the conflict, classes were suspended. They were resumed by the early 1870s. In 1888, the college was sold at public auction, because the church could no longer support its operation. Finally, the main building caught fire on the night of Jan. 8, 1895. The Huntsville Mercury announced in its next edition that "the once proud alma mater of thousands of Southern matrons and maidens (was) a pile of smouldering ruins." The college was moved to Gadsden. Half a century of service was ended in Huntsville.



: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People,

McVay's Importance

to Alabama

Is Overlooked by

Historians



: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People

Many important people get "lost" in history over the years. Take for example Hugh McVay, who once served as acting governor of Alabama.

McVay was born in South Carolina in 1788, the son of a farmer. Evidently he received very little formal education in his native state, and decided to move to an area more conducive to the development of a man of moderate means. He chose Alabama, moving to Madison County in 1807.

McVay was able to purchase land here and was able through the years to amass considerable real estate. By

the end of his life he was regarded as a "planter of large means," according to one account.

Alabama was still part of the Mississippi Territory when McVay moved to Madison County. The territory had been created by act of Congress in 1798. In 1817, the territory was divided; Mississippi was admitted to the Union and the area to the east became the Alabama Territory (which was to achieve statehood two years later).

McVay entered state politics during the territorial period, representing Madison County in the territorial legislature from 1811 to 1817. With the formation of the Alabama Territory, McVay moved to Lauderdale County, where he was to remain for the rest of his life. He was the sole representative for Lauderdale at the 1819 constitutional convention which framed the first Alabama constitution.

In 1820 he began his long tenure in the Alabama Legislature. With the exception of 1825 and 1837, McVay was to serve in the legislature for 24 years, from 1820 to 1844. In 1820 he served in the House; then, from 1822 on, most of his legislative service was in the Senate.

For most historians the highlight of McVay's political career actually came in 1836, when he was elected president of the Senate, defeating Samuel Moore by one vote.

In June of the next year, Gov. Clement Q. Battle assigned him to become a U.S. senator. As president of the state Senate, McVay replaced him as governor in July. He discharged the duties of the governorship until the inauguration of Gov. Arthur Bagby in December.

To this writer the highlight of McVay's political career came in 1840-41 when he again was a member of the Senate. Before 1840, elections for the U.S. House of Representatives were by districts. In that year the Democratic Party in Alabama passed through the legislature what is known as the "general ticket." Since there were large Democratic majorities in North Alabama, Democratic leaders went to a plurality method of election — with voting statewide, not by district — in the hope of overwhelming Whig opposition. The top five vote-getters would all be elected to the Congress.

McVay was a Democrat, yet he opposed the measure — the only Democrat to do so. In 1841 the general ticket was repealed by the legislature, the district method of election was reinstated, and McVay vindicated.

This was the real highlight of the man's political life: To stand for his principles, alone if need be, and to be supported by his constituents at election-time, as McVay was.

He was held in high esteem by his contemporaries. William Garrett, who was Alabama secretary of state from 1840 to 1852, stated that McVay never made a formal speech on the floor of the legislature, yet "no blemish rested upon his name." Garrett wrote in his "Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama" that McVay "was more like a venerable father, with his sons around him, communicating wholesome advice — to be fair and just to all men, and to walk uprightly."

How many men would wish for such a eulogy?



Gabriel Moore —

Congressman,

Governor,

Senator

State's Fifth Governor Led Flamboyant Life



Gabriel Moore, Alabama's fifth governor, ranks as a man of true distinction among Huntsville's earliest pioneers. A politician whose career encompassed both the governorship and a federal senatorship from Alabama, his private life was as colorful as his public one, and often one aspect added to the laurels and flamboyance of the other.

Born in Stokes County, N.C., about 1785, he received an academic education, studied law and began his practice when he moved to Huntsville in 1810, when Alabama was still part of the Mississippi Territory. Moore quickly entered politics, and began to make a name for himself, both in and out of politics.

His personal life was eventful, to say the least. He was once married, and almost immediately he sued for divorce, for reasons now unknown. After the divorce he fought a pistol duel with his ex-brother-in-law and wounded him. It is also said that he imbibed, perhaps too much and too frequently, and with his constituents, although this was not unusual for that day, given the frontier atmosphere of early Alabama.

Moore successfully entered politics as a representative of Madison County in the legislature of the Mississippi Territory. (Madison County had been created on Dec. 13, 1808, two years before Moore's arrival on the scene.) In 1817 he was elected speaker of the first Alabama territorial legislature. When Alabama became a state in 1819, he was a member of the first constitutional convention and was Madison County's first state senator. The following year he was chosen president of the state Senate.

The next political step for Moore was to the U.S. Congress. In 1822 he was elected to the House of Representatives to fill an expired term. Moore continued serving as a representative until 1829, being re-elected in 1823, 1825 and 1827. In 1827 he defeated Clement Comer Clay, one of Huntsville's most illustrious men of the antebellum period.

The year 1829 marked his election to the highest office in the state. Moore was elected Alabama's fifth governor without opposition, aided by the fact he was a supporter of Andrew Jackson.

Moore never forgot the Tennessee Valley. When he became governor he attempted to improve transportation within the valley, at state expense. Construction of the first Muscle Shoals Canal and the railroad from Tusculumbia to Decatur were begun during his administration.

Muscle Shoals was, and is, the name applied to the section of the Tennessee in the "great bend" of the river east of Florence and Sheffield. Rocks and rapids prevented through transportation on the river from Knoxville to its mouth. The rapids were created by the fall of the river, about 130 feet in a span of 37 miles.

The canal begun in Moore's administration was completed in 1836 but never was a success. It was inoperable at all levels of the river and was abandoned the next year.

(From 1875 to 1890 an elevated canal was constructed over the rapids, but with little success. In 1916 construction was begun on Wilson Dam in an attempt to provide hydro-electric power for the area as well as a lake behind the dam which would cover the rapids with sufficient water to remove them as a navigational hazard. Wilson Dam was completed in 1925 and two years later a second dam was constructed two and one-half miles below Wilson, to further improve navigation. Finally, the problem of Muscle Shoals had been overcome.)

On March 3, 1831, Moore resigned the governorship, accepting his election by the state legislature to the U.S. Senate. The legislature had chosen him over John McKinley of Lauderdale County by a vote of 49 to 40.

Now Moore met his political Waterloo. Senators are elected for six-year terms. Moore early in his term opposed the appointment of Martin Van Buren as minister to Great Britain. This turned the Jacksonians against Moore and ruined his political career. Jacksonian forces marshalled opposition to Moore in Alabama

: Sketches of the Tennessee Valley in the Antebellum Days: People,
and the legislature tried to force him to
resign from the Senate. Moore refused,
though, and retained his seat until the
expiration of his term.

The first defeat of his political life came
in 1837 when he lost to Reuben Chapman
in a race for a seat in the 25th Congress.
Realizing the end of his political career in
Alabama, Moore moved in 1843 to Caddo,
Texas. He died there two years later.

One of the most colorful political
careers of any Alabamian ever was over.



J. and S. Weekly —

Pioneer Developers

of The Valley

**Weakley Brothers
Were Shapers, Doers**

Two brothers, long ago virtually forgotten in Alabama history, were instrumental in the early development of the Tennessee Valley.

James Harvey Weakley, elder of the two, became surveyor-general of Alabama. His brother, Samuel Davies Weakley, was one of Lauderdale County's first entrepreneurs.

Both were born out of state: James in Halifax County, Va., in 1798, and Samuel near Nashville, in Davidson County, Tenn., in 1812.

Their father was a surveyor who laid out Nashville and became one of its very early settlers. Both sons became surveyors, trained by their father.

In 1817 James was appointed a surveyor of public lands in the Alabama Territory by General John Coffee. James moved to Huntsville and served under Coffee until the general died in 1833. Then President Andrew Jackson appointed him as surveyor-general of the state, a position he held until it was abolished in 1851.

During most of this period James made his residence in Florence, Ala., where his brother joined him sometime in early 1830s. James left Alabama after 1851 to become a cotton factor in New Orleans. He died there five years later.

Samuel Weakley never left Alabama. After joining his brother in Florence as assistant surveyor of public lands, he was to acquire great wealth in the antebellum period and until his death in 1897.

Samuel was primarily involved in the growing and processing of cotton. This led him to manufacturing, to his involvement with the Cypress Creek cotton mills, his main source of revenue before the Civil War.

Cotton had been the mainstay of the social and economic system of Lauderdale County since its creation. Although its growth in the Black Belt in Alabama decreased the statewide importance of Tennessee Valley cotton production, cotton remained by far the most important cash crop of North Alabama. The cotton industry of Lauderdale developed along Cypress Creek. Cotton mills or factories used water power to operate; dams would be constructed on the rivers and streams

By the early 1840s at least two mills were in operation along Cypress Creek. However, in 1843 or 1844 the Globe Factory, the most important one there, was destroyed by fire. Samuel joined with two associates to rebuild, and the new enterprise was called the Cypress Factory. But it, too, was destroyed by fire, and in 1849 the Martin and Weakley Co. was formed to rebuild once again.

The Cypress Factory is said to have handled about 3,000 bales a year shortly before the Civil War. By the outbreak of the war the company had constructed two additional mills. Both were destroyed during the war. All that was left were the dams built for water power.

Weakley's cotton enterprises led him to attempt, with others, to develop a railroad network westward to the Mississippi River and eastward to the Atlantic Ocean. The reasons were obvious: Railroad transportation would be cheaper and more efficient, and the "muscle shoals" obstruction of the Tennessee River at Florence would be by-passed.

Those endeavors resulted in the development of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad Co., originally incorporated in Tennessee in 1846. The Alabama Legislature in 1850 granted a charter to the company.

Weakley was instrumental in getting direct benefits for Lauderdale County and Florence included in the charter. The company was granted right-of-way over the Muscle Shoals Canal and was required



to construct a branch between Tuscumbia and Florence.

In the same year the charter was amended to allow subscribers in the state to form the "Mississippi & Atlantic Rail Road Co.," which was to develop the Memphis and Charleston within Alabama. Weakley was chosen one of the eight commissioners to direct the operation of the new organization. It was successful in developing the road in Alabama, but the branch from Tuscumbia to Florence was delayed. The charter was amended in 1852, again authorizing the construction of the branch, and work was then started. In 1858 the first railroad bridge over the Tennessee River was completed. The entire line, from Chattanooga to Memphis, was opened to through traffic in July, of that year.

Thus, Samuel Weakley, and other men like him in North Alabama, were of major significance, not only to their own particular towns or counties, but to all the Tennessee Valley.

