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History of the Fight for Better Highways in Madison County

by R. E. PETTUS

This article is intended to give some data of interest concerning road building in Madison county, and to show how it has progressed since Alabama became a sovereign state.

Good public roads in any country have been regarded both in ancient and modern times as among the highest evidences of civilization, and among the best promoters of free and ready commercial intercourse, on which depend the prosperity of all agricultural, commercial and other industrial interests.

[Five paragraphs deleted.]

Public road building in Madison County is as old as the state, and turnpikes were constructed in the early thirties. A charter was granted to the Whitesburg and Meridianville turnpike company January 14, 1834, and a little later the Big Cove Turnpike company obtained a charter. All of these lines of pikes were operated by their owners, charging toll for travel, until March 5, 1895, when they were sold and deeded to the county in all but twenty miles.

In 1884 the question of providing for the improvement of the public roads in Madison County was beginning to agitate the minds of the people. As the discussion advanced, the hottest campaign ever witnessed here was precipitated. The

question was: Would the people empower their commissioners court to build 125 miles of turnpikes for the benefit of the people and prosperity of the county, at a cost not to exceed \$200,000, for which the bonds were to be issued as the roads were completed.

Strong advocates were on the stump who favored the proposition, and strong advocates who opposed it.

In August 1884, Captain Milton Humes was elected a member of the house of representatives in the general assembly. During the canvass of that year, he vigorously advocated the building of a system of macadamized roads in Madison County to be paid for by the issuance of \$200,000 of county bonds. He also advocated a radical change in the method of working and keeping in repair the public roads of the county, and the levy of a tax of ten cents on the dollar for that purpose, and the reduction of the road duty, of those liable to work the public roads, from ten to four days each year with the privilege of commuting the road duty by the payment of two dollars.

Bills embodying these important measures of improvements and reform in the building of public roads were introduced in the general assembly by Captain Humes, and their passage approved

February 17, 1885. Out of consideration of the people, [before the] issuance of \$200,000 in county bonds, it was provided in the act that it should go into effect and become operative only in the event the county sanctioned it by an election held for the purpose.

The election was held and the measure defeated, some of the most enthusiastic in securing Captain Humes' election being chiefly instrumental in its defeat.

The opponents of the bonds declared that they favored the building of turnpikes, but advocated paying for them as they were built out of the revenue of the county derived from the taxes. "Pay as you go and no bond debt" was the slogan or war cry. They succeeded in alarming the ignorant about toll gates, and exciting the fears of some of the property holders to such an extent that the proposed turnpikes were defeated by a large majority. This election was held in November 1885, and when the people saw the utter futility and impracticability of the plan of building the pikes by a system of direct tax, and the apparent insincerity of those who advocated this method, a mass meeting was held at the county court house composed of many leading citizens and property holders of the county at which resolutions were adopted favoring the building of the pikes by the bond method, recommending and requesting the members of the general assembly from Madison County to introduce and have passed a bill authorizing the county to build and pay for them by the issuance of the \$200,000 of county bonds.

Captain Humes was made chairman of the meeting, and he prepared the resolutions, which were adopted and also the bill that was recommended for the passage by the general assembly, and, at the request of the meeting, went down to Montgomery and urged and aided in the passage of the bill. It was passed, became a law and, as a result, Madison County built 125 miles of free pikes.

The system of turnpikes contemplated in the Humes bill was built in 1890, fifty miles of macadam and seventy-five miles of gravel. They were all built by contract. The cost of the macadam turnpikes was from \$2,500 to \$3,000 per mile, and the cost of the gravel was from \$1,400 to \$2,000 per mile. This same class of work can now be built for something less with the latest road building machinery.

For a number of years our public roads were kept by sections of five miles each by those living near, by contract to keep these roads in good repair, keeping the ditches open and the drains open, and putting in 50 yards of stone per mile per year and 100 yards of gravel per mile per year, in such places as needed to keep the roads in uniform condition. Good hard flint gravel has proved to be more durable than the macadam. Of the 400 miles of free pikes they are mostly made of gravel. At this time the upkeep of our roads is \$50 per mile per annum, done by hired labor by the county.

When completed, two of our prettiest roads to be constructed this year are the ones from the city limits on the east to Marshall county, fifteen miles, and on the west, Athens pike, thirteen miles to the Limestone county line. We congratulate ourselves for the fact that our county will receive more from the \$25,000,000 state bond issue than any county, but one.

After a lapse of these years, the most strenuous opposers at first are most enthusiastic supporters now of the free pike system. The most frightful bug-a-boo, they said, would be an overwhelming debt bequeathed to posterity, that our burdens of taxation would be overwhelming. They forgot that the increase of taxes from the enhancement of the value of real estate would more than offset the cost of the pikes. At the time our pikes were built, farm lands in the county sold at from two to ten dollars per acre, now not an acre of tillable land on any of these pikes can be bought for less than thirty to one hundred dollars per acre. Instead of untilled old-



Automobile travel presented a mixed blessing in the early days.

time plantations we have small farms on every hand on which cozy houses have been erected, beautiful churches established and attractive, up-to-date school houses located.

Because of our good roads, this county was among the first in the south to secure free rural mail delivery. In the remotest part of the county the honk, honk of the automobile is heard, while the farmers as well as the town folk own their motorcycles and bicycles.

Another strong argument in favor of the pikes is the reduction of freight rates, at least 50 percent to the towns contiguous to Huntsville. When these rates were so high, wagon lines were started to deliver freight. When the railroads realized that they were losing these short hauls, a remarkably low rate was put on. This item alone is a vast saving to the merchants and

consumers.

[Two paragraphs deleted.]

Since beginning to prepare this paper, a noted autoist who has traversed Tennessee and Alabama in his machine said it had been left to this county to furnish the finest and most beautiful road he had yet seen. We dwellers in Madison County think we live in the treasure house of God's creation and we owe it to ourselves and to Him to duly appreciate it and bring it to its highest state of usefulness. The question of better roads is all important. We should rally to the assistance of our street pavers and road builders until all of our roads are A-1. We are blessed with a superabundance of road building material, and if it were put to a purpose, the results would be simply amazing. Better facilities for transportation bring transformation. It has done it

in this county.

The four mile boulevard which was constructed a few years ago beginning at the head of Meridian Street is a "thing of beauty and a joy forever." The state, county, city, and Miss McCormick, the progressive millionaire by whose elegant and valuable estate this road passes, have joined in defraying the cost of construction. The road is fifty feet wide, with twenty-one feet of macadam, well graded, bed built of large stone, with top layer of fine crushed blue limestone, compressed with a heavy steam roller, leaving the surface as smooth as a concrete walk. The grading and drainage are perfect. Beautiful to fascination, there can be no more entrancing environments in any country, running as it does past several ante-bellum castles, the great Dallas and Lincoln mills, the Humes villa, the McCormick mansion and Normal College. This section of road

leads out northward from the city limits and is known as a part of the great Jackson Highway from Chicago to Florida, and is known also as the Florida Short Route.

The next in importance of our great highways is the Lee, going westward from our city to Athens, Muscle Shoals and Memphis, thirteen miles of which this county will build this year.

Since we were pioneer good road builders, we propose to lead all others in beautiful, comfortable, durable highway construction to bequeath to our children.

In road building we have not urged our claims as vigorously as we might. It is a government function and a governmental duty to provide highways: as much a duty as caring for the poor, educating our children or building our court houses.





Orchard Place Is Ideal Site of New Links

With the purchase of Orchard Place, the splendid estate of Maj. Milton Moss on the Pulaski pike, one and five-eighth miles from the city, Huntsville is assured of a golf and country club that will rival any of the state.

Possession of the Moss residence, a handsome home of commanding proportions containing some 18 rooms, will be obtained on July 1, under the terms of the sale of the property, and the remodeling of the building for its new purposes will begin at once.

The building, which cost at the time of its erection \$35,000, sits well back in a spacious lawn and can be easily converted into an ideal club house.

Present plans provide for a reception room, lounge room, ball room, large porch, large sun parlor, kitchen and cafe. The club house will be furnished attractively throughout, and lockers, showers, and other conveniences will be provided for both men and women.

An eighteen hole golf course will be laid out and the first nine holes hurried to completion. They will be ready for use during November or by December. The [plans] provide for [illegible] greens and a standard course suitable for professional

tournaments.

The site of the club house and golf course is one that has long been famous in the annals of the county for its beauty. Maj. Moss, a nurseryman, had beautified the lawn at a cost of \$7,000.

Officers of the Golf and Country Club are: Tracy W. Pratt, president; C. G. Dillard, first vice president; C. G. S. Fletcher, second vice president; Quincy B. Love, secretary and treasurer.

The club will have a limited membership and will become both a social and recreational center.

The grounds and building will be leased to the Golf and Country Club by Country Club Heights, Inc., a holding company which acquired the entire property, consisting of the building and 228 acres of ground. The holding company will lease such acreage as is necessary and will develop the remainder into a restricted residential section.

Officers of the Country Club Heights Inc., are: W. P. Dilworth, president; F. H. Ford, vice president; W. T. Hutchens, secretary-treasurer. The corporation has an authorized capital of \$50,000 and a paid-in capital of \$18,000.



Huntsville's Magnificent New Hospital

Shown above is a picture of Huntsville's new hospital, to be erected during the present summer. [A photograph of the hospital as completed in 1926 has been substituted.] Plans have been accepted, and the contract for construction was awarded on June 23. Active work will begin immediately.

This hospital will contain 72 beds and will be modern in every detail. New wings can be added as needed without disturbing the architectural beauty of the edifice.

At present, only the administration building and the negro wing will be erected. As soon as funds can be raised for its construction, a wing on the north end, balancing the negro wing will be built as a nurse's home.

As will be seen from the picture, the negro wing will be entirely separate from the white building and yet connected by a corridor, which will permit an adequate and economical supervision by the white nurses and doctors.

The hospital is to be erected on a beautiful site at the end of Madison Street, which has been donated for that purpose. Next to the grounds will be an attractive park which has also been donated for that purpose.

The hospital is being built from funds raised by public subscription with generous outside help, and will be an enterprise in which every individual who has contributed will take a pride.

Should Huntsville grow to be many times its present size, this hospital will still be adequate by the erection of additions.

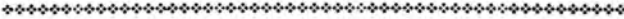
The architect planning the hospital was Frank Lockwood, of Montgomery, Ala., who makes a specialty of hospital construction.



The campaign for funds was conducted by the Huntsville Chamber of Commerce.

The committee in charge is composed of the following: Dr. Carl A. Grote, chairman, W. P. Dilworth, Quincy B. Love, P. S. Dunnivant, Mrs. Eliza Cooper, Mrs. M. M. May, Mrs. R. B. Chase, Mrs. M. M. Moorman.

It is the hope of the promoters of this splendid institution that it will be endowed, as many larger hospitals of the country are, by generous citizens, so that its scope of usefulness may be increased.



Judd Studio

LOCAL EXPONENT OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ART

For nearly a quarter of a century the S. W. Judd Studio has been the local exponent of the fine art of photography.

The business was launched in 1903 by its present owner, S. W. Judd, who had come here from his birthplace of Chattanooga, Tenn. It flourished for 17 years

in quarters above the Farmer's State Bank, but in 1920 Mr. Judd purchased the building at present occupied on Eustis Street which he remodeled and converted into a place of artistic elegance.

And as he progressed as a photographer, Mr. Judd likewise gained prom-

inence as an X-ray operator. For eighteen years, or ever since the science was in its infancy, he had devoted much of his time and attention to the reproduction of human "interiors," and from the records of the sensitive lens local physicians have been aided in the diagnosis that has helped to defeat disease.

It is doubtful if there is any other X-ray operator in the South of equal experience. This knowledge of the craft, this long period of success, has helped to establish the Judd Studio in the confidence of the medicos of Huntsville, and the natural result is that Mr. Judd enjoys practically a monopoly of the X-ray work here.

Only recently, in accordance with his policy of progress, he has installed in his laboratory a Meyer transformer, manufactured by the Meyer Manufacturing Co., that is the last word in machinery of this kind. It is an interruptless transformer, and plates which it produces are marked by an unusual fidelity in the reproduction of outline. They often reveal secrets at which the doctors had not guessed.

In its fixtures and arrangements, the Judd Studio is a tribute both to the taste and skill of its owner. It is elegant in its furnishings, with many little touches that distinguish the hand of the master. Although paying tribute to the aesthetic, it also does credit to the utilitarian, and is arranged for convenience and constructed only of permanent materials.

An outdoor Italian garden, to the rear of the building, has only been recently fitted. It is intended for use in taking photographs of children and for background work, and is adorned with a vari-

ety of flowers in jardinières, which are suspended from the walls or find lodging place in some little niche. The place is unusually attractive, and there is no other like it in this section of the state.

Another of the special settings that make the Studio distinctive is the Japanese dressing room, fitted after the fashion of the Nipponese. Every article in it is of Japanese design.

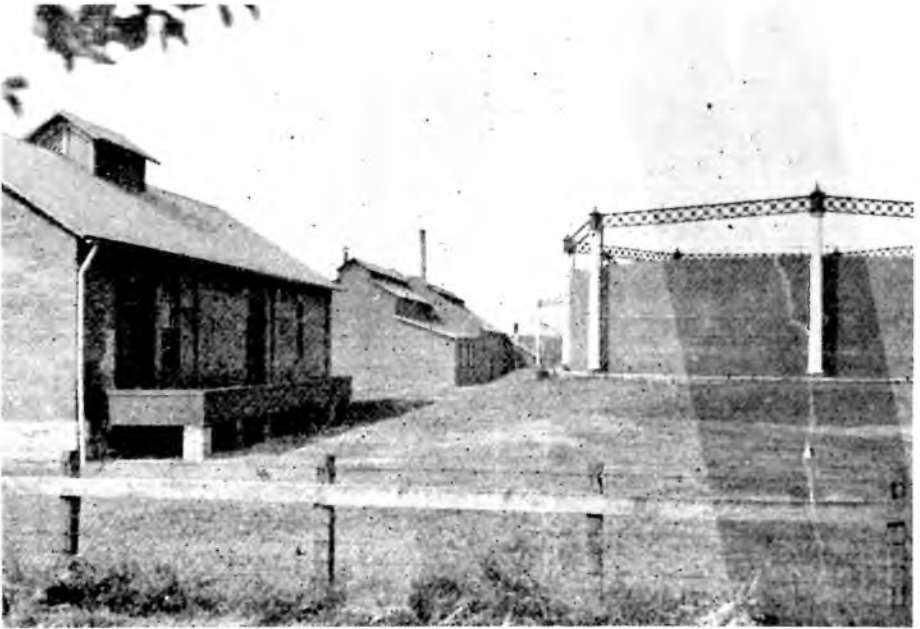
S. W. Judd, owner of this modern establishment, is an artist by birth. His father, A. W. Judd, has been a leading photographer of Chattanooga for nearly half a century, and still is. It was there, under the tutelage of this artist of ripened experience, that the son grew up to be a photographer. Later he went to Nashville, where he was connected both with A. J. Thuss and Calvert Brothers, widely recognized leaders in their line and of national reputation.

The heredity trait of photography has made S. M. Judd, a brother, president of the Northwestern Photographers Association, winner of many prizes in international contests and a favored photographer of some of the wealthiest of American citizens.

Ever since he has been a resident of Huntsville, to which he is deeply attached and in the future of which he has confidence, Mr. Judd has devoted himself assiduously to work. His business has grown to its present proportions because of this fact, for his only thought has been to make a better picture, whether the camera or the X-ray was used. And in perfecting his technique, he has been mindful of the value of capable mechanical aids and has installed these as needed, regardless of expense.

Photographs Courtesy Of
The Huntsville Public Library

The Huntsville Gas Company plant located on Spragins Street.



Huntsville Gas Company

CAPITAL RAISED FROM \$4000 TO HALF MILLION

Organized nearly three-quarters of a century ago, and antedating many of the essentials of present day civilization, the Huntsville Gas Company is the oldest manufacturing concern in Huntsville, Madison County and perhaps Alabama.

Its articles of incorporation were issued on April 3, 1851, and its capital stock of \$4,000 was subscribed jointly by the mayor and board of aldermen and leading citizens of the times. Forty of its 160 shares of a par value of \$25 each, were issued to the municipality. The remaining stockholders were 46 in number.

From this humble beginning, this utility has grown into a capitalization of \$500,000 by successive stages. Its progression has been timed by the expansion of the community it served, and its present proportions tell the story of a city-building that has gone forward without let-up and of a public utility that was always ready to serve.

During its existence, the company has several times slightly altered its name, and as occasion warranted has at periods increased its capital stock. Its purpose of fulfilling its original mission and supply-

ing a city need has never been altered.

Originally called the Huntsville Gas Company, the name was changed to the Huntsville Gas Light Company some years later, at which time the late Robert E. Cox, who passed away about 1890, was named as president.

In 1902 the company was reincorporated, at which time its capitalization was jumped to \$100,000. The incorporators were William R. Rison, Robt. E. Spragins, C. F. Sugg and David Cox. The name was changed back to the original form—the Huntsville Gas Company. The records show that the subscription books were opened at the offices of the Rison Bank on Sept. 8 of that year and that the 1000 shares of \$100 each were fully subscribed. A. L. Rison was elected president.

When the capital stock was increased a few years later to \$300,000, the name was again changed to the Huntsville Gas, Light & Fuel Company.

In 1918 the capitalization was raised to \$500,000 and the name changed to the Huntsville Gas Company, which it has since remained. At the organization of the present company, Tracy W. Pratt, one of the leading businessmen of the city and long prominent as a manufacturer of cotton goods and twine, was chosen president and Emanuel Barrick, secretary.

E. C. Dillon, who had been manager of the company since 1910, resigned the position in 1920 and was succeeded as manager by C. J. DeMers, who at the time he was engaged was manager of the plant at Freehold, N.J. Mr. DeMers had previously been in charge of the operation of gas plants at Atlantic City, N. J., and

Wilmington, Del., and brought with him an ample experience that has been a contributing factor to the success of the company in recent years.

The plant, located on Spragins Street, is one of the most modern in the state. The original plant had been torn down in 1902 when the demand compelled the erection of a new building. During the past five years every piece of machinery in the plant required for gas manufacture has been duplicated, which reduces the hazard of a shut-down to a minimum. As a further precaution, the company now has on hand raw gas-making material sufficient to operate the plant for eight months without recourse to outside shipments.

A new carburetted water gas machine is in course of erection. It is intended to augment the supply of gas and is expected to amply fill requirements for the next ten years.

Public appreciation of this utility has been shown by an increase since 1918 of more than 200 percent in the consumption of gas for fuel and lighting, and a larger number of customers on its books each year and also a larger number of sales of gas appliances.

Illustrating the bigger demand for gas ranges, the company during the present year, for the first time, received a shipment of an entire carload of Detroit Jewel Ranges, of which it has already disposed.

The company has shipped its by-products, coke and tar, to outside points at the rate of 20 carloads a year, the main markets being Birmingham, Chicago and Memphis.

The magnificent skyscraper being erected by Earl Cline was the Terry Hutchens building.



Earl Cline Opens Office Here CONTRACTOR FOR SKYSCRAPER

Earl Cline, Birmingham contractor and successful bidder for the construction of Huntsville's new sky-scraper office building, has opened offices in Huntsville. Announcement to this effect was made by A. F. Hill, superintendent of construction and authorized spokesman for Mr. Cline. Other Cline offices will be at Birmingham and Tuscaloosa.

Mr. Cline, while coming here at intervals to inspect the progress of the work he has undertaken, will leave the conduct of his Huntsville office largely to Mr. Hill, who has been in his employ for the past eight years. Mr. Hill will make estimates of local contracts upon request.

With the advent of a building boom that has already reached a total of \$3,000,000 within the past two years, Huntsville has begun a period of expansion that is expected to continue for years to come. Being on the ground, Mr. Cline will have a local advantage in securing a share of future building awards.

Engaged in the contracting business for the past 22 years, Earl Cline has become one of the leading contractors of

the state. He now is engaged in the erection of buildings at a cost exceeding a quarter million dollars, in addition to the office building here, for which his bid of \$133,000, the lowest made, was accepted.

Many imposing structures at the Magic City were built by Cline, including Birmingham Southern College and the new and handsome Sixth Avenue Presbyterian Church, now nearing completion. He also built the state agricultural college at Albertville in 1912, erected two large public school buildings at Selma, Ala., three buildings at the University of Alabama and the \$150,000 grammar school building in the east end section of Tuscaloosa. The Echols building at Gadsden is another Cline job.

Eight months will be required for the completion of the new office building here, according to estimates of Mr. Hill, who expects to have the roof on by November 1. The building is to be seven stories in height with basement, and the excavation has already been done. A large force of workmen will be employed.

Day and Night Shift to Work

In order to rush work on the seven-story skyscraper to be built by Contractor Ernest Cline of Birmingham for the Huntsville Realty Company on the McGee lot, a large force of workmen are busy in various ways getting ready for the laying of the concrete foundation. In addition to the day force, a night shift will be put on beginning Monday night. An electric lamp of 500 watts each has been placed at the four corners of the lot so that work can be continued day and night, weather permitting.

It was estimated that it would require eight months to put up the building, but by putting on a night shift it is planned to have the building up and ready for the plumbing and other inside work within six months. It has been no trouble to get

workmen so far, Foreman Hill remarked to a reporter. Full ten hours constitute a day's work, including Saturday, which is pay day.

Much more excavation has been necessary and the ground on the edges is being planked to avoid falling.

The Williams Lumber Company of this city is furnishing a great deal of the lumber used. Night work is planned to continue during the pouring of concrete and other work.

In fact, this work will be rushed in real city style of building and lots of people will visit the scene of activity and see the white building rise higher up in the air than many people thought would ever be seen in Huntsville. We are coming.

A. M. Booth Is Home Builder

A. M. Booth, president of the Rotary Club, president of the Central Y.M.C.A., officer of the Huntsville Bank & Trust Company, despite the dignity of these titles, is in reality a first aid to Cupid.

For his real mission in life is that of the home builder and in this capacity he has done a larger part perhaps than any other resident of the city in providing habitats for those who are lacking lucre.

Although he owns one of the largest lumber yards and supply houses in the city carrying a stock that will supply all the essentials of construction "from garret to cellar," Mr. Booth's real business is home construction, and he will admit it himself. He takes greatest pride in the fact that through his activities homes are provided for those who need them. Huntsville is expanded and made a better place to live in.

The Booth plan of home building is very similar to that of the building and loan association. He will put up a house for anybody who has a lot, a small amount of surplus cash, and a reputation for common honesty. The lot and cash must represent one-fourth of the value of the completed house, so that in the event it is destroyed by fire the insurance will be sufficient to take care of the loss.

Payment for the home is made to extend over a given period, sufficiently long to allow the occupant to accumulate the needed sum [in a savings account, and when the balance] is paid, the deed in fee simple is in effect.

During the past 12 months, Mr. Booth has erected some 15 residences here, ranging in cost from \$500 to \$7,000. He does not cater especially to any one class, but is the greatest benefactor to those of humble means.

A long-time contractor, Mr. Booth has put up hundreds of buildings here, the largest of which is the City Grammar School. He has never sought especially large contracts, although well equipped to take care of them. On the other hand he has sought to make two homes stand where only one stood before with the same zeal that others have attempted to double the blades of grass.

Born within seven miles of Gary, Indiana, the present great steel center, Mr. Booth moved from there with his parents to Wisconsin, and in 1899 came to Huntsville to make it his permanent home. He entered business that year, opening a lumber yard on Rhea Street. The business prospered and expanded, and in 1903 Mr. Booth moved to his present location on Meridian Street where he has a large plant and lumber shed. He handles building materials of all kinds in large quantities in addition to doing a general contracting business.

Recognized for his sterling worth and unyielding honesty, Mr. Booth long since came to occupy a place in the confidence of the residents of this city. He has often been honored with positions of trust and only recently was made the chief executive of the Huntsville Rotary Club of which he had been a member since March 4, 1919.