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Quaint Landmarks Pass As Progress Invades Huntsville

by MISS FLORENCE G. SHREVE

Progress always demands some sacrifices. For many years Huntsville was a city hidden from the world, a place of charm and quaintness. Those who came were entranced by its old world tranquility and the ready friendliness of its people. But progress takes little heed of relics of the past; ancient landmarks and old ideas are ruthlessly displaced. The inhabitants of a modern city can point to where this or that remembered landmark stood, but the tread of Progress has effaced all save the image in memory.

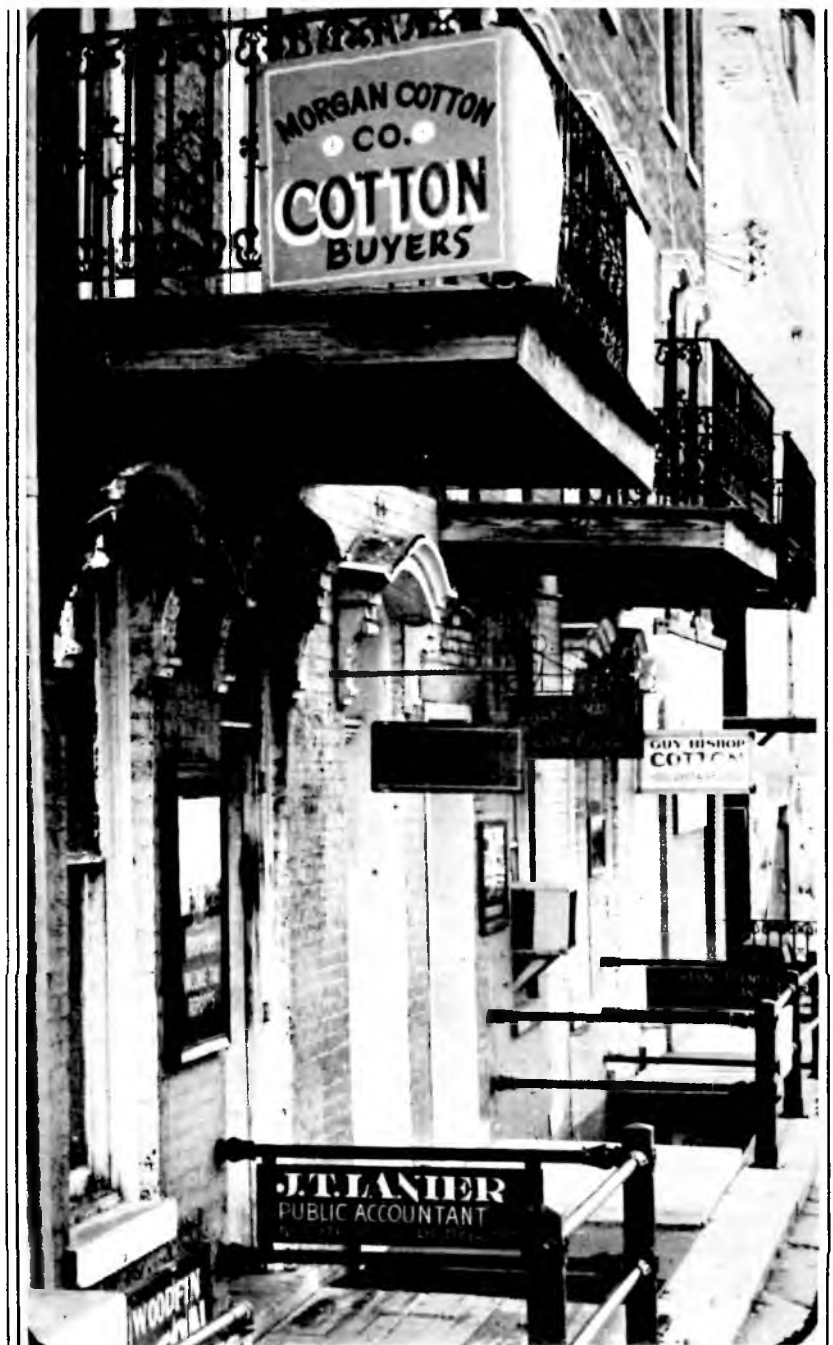
This edition of The Daily Times marks the progress of Huntsville; it is compiled to show the changes which modernization has wrought. So gradually do these things come about to the mind of the citizen, that often the amazement of the "old timer" returned, seems a bit overdone.

The price which Huntsville is paying for her new era is the quaintness and tranquility of other days. Time was when Bank Row boasted balconies which overhung the placid street, where the lawyers, when not entertaining clients, could relax from the arduous duties of the business, and "swap yarns" with neighboring attorneys on adjacent balconies. The balconies of Bank Row can still be seen, but

the lawyer who once found time to linger there now knows the heaviness of the hand of Progress.

The traveler wishing to view the beauty of the prosaically named Big Spring once wended his way down none too carefully kept wooden steps to the spot where a few cannas and elephant ears in circular beds proclaimed that this was the city park. Today he finds the entrance to the natural wonder secured by cement stairs. The circular beds are still to be found, but Progress has introduced a more definite attempt at landscape gardening, and the loveliness of the spring has made it a more generally used "parking place."

One of the quaintest structures in all Huntsville was the ancient court house which once defied hobble skirts with its amazingly high steps. It was one of the first relics to crumble before the march of Progress. In its place was erected a yellow brick structure with its four entrances flanked by a modernized version of a Greek colonade. Gone forever is the moss flecked, damp cellared building of grey stone, set in its circle of green lawn dotted with trees. Gone are the deer which roamed the picketed enclosure and rubbed noses against the peanut-filled pockets of the lawyers.



The picket fence itself, for many years the object of much agitation, has been supplanted by neat chains set in concrete blocks. With the passing of the twisted and tottering iron fence, went also the picturesque features of court square. Autumn still finds the buying and selling of cotton around the court house, but weary mules are less often hitched to the swinging chains, and the clutter of Saturdays, when every farmer tied his team to the long iron spikes of the fence is gone forever.

The hollow in the pavement at the northeast corner no longer echoes the voice of the caverns beneath to the sound of horses hoofs. Rubber tires can not conjure up visions to round eyed children of "whatta happen if—"

Corporate limits can be set and rigidly maintained in the records of a city, but Progress knows no boundaries. A road was built "over the mountain." When it was first laid, only one or two houses marked its way. Today the hillside is dotted with homes, and a new road already underway, above the old, will bring others, the beginning of Huntsville's highlands.

Whitesburg Pike was once the thoroughfare between the river and town. When steel succeeded water as the chief means of transportation, the road fell into disuse save by those who lived in the surrounding country. Then the nation began once more to link itself together with highways. Fleet motor cars brought the country roads once more into their own. Old highways, long abandoned, once more echoed to the rumble of heavy wheels. The city, stretching out, sent its tendrils into the countryside along the traveled roads. Today Whitesburg Pike beckons for several miles, a long level road of smooth cement, and on either side of this street are the attractive homes

which mark a city's progress.

Another thoroughfare which marks the rapidity with which cities grow stretches far out toward Merrimack. Time was when pasture lands and fields marked the distance between the mill towns which lie in this direction. Today one sees only a city, linked by a paved street, lined with pleasant homes, echoing to the steady rumble of the mills which have brought this change.

When Kildare was owned by the O'Shaughnessy family, it was out in the country, an estate to be pointed out to the visitor riding along the always popular Meridian Pike. The restfulness of the place attracted its present owner, who purchased it because it was removed from the town, yet close enough to be easily accessible. Today the rush of Progress has brought the city to her gates, and the noise of a hundred thousand spindles proclaims that solitude lies farther on.

Years ago a citizen with faith and foresight laid cement side walks for many blocks along the scantily settled street called Locust. Today the children who alone appreciated this as another roller skating rink have grown up to own pretty bungalows along its well paved length.

So progress has invaded Huntsville, sweeping before it old landmarks and old ideas. Those who have despaired of the town ever "waking up" can rub their eyes as must have Aladdin and stare at the changes so speedily wrought. But there is still much to be done. There are still old landmarks to be reclaimed, old memories to be revived. The vast possibilities of Monte Sano are still dormant, the natural wonders of the community are still uncommercialized, the people are still to be awakened to a realization of what Progress can mean and what wonders it can bring in place of the treasured relics it destroys.

COVER: The Public Square and the third Madison County Courthouse before the picket fence was replaced by iron chains strung between concrete posts.