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Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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# THE HUNTSVILLE HISTORICAL REVIEW

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## THE BUNGALOW AND OTHER 20TH CENTURY RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE IN HUNTSVILLE AN OVERVIEW

By Harvie Jones

The turn of the twentieth century found several styles of residential architecture being built in Huntsville, including late-Victorian versions of Eastlake and Queen Anne. As a result of the 1876 National Centennial celebrations, Colonial Revival was also an influence. These influences were sometimes freely intermingled in a "Free Classical" style as in the 1902 Van Valkenburg house at 501 Franklin St. and Williams Avenue. Within the first decade of the century a number of houses—frequently fine examples designed by architects—of the Bungalow style were built. By the 1920s the Bungalow style had become the predominant one for houses, and it even had an influence on larger buildings such as Rison School and the YMCA on Greene Street. By the 1920s, surviving Huntsville houses indicate that the major house styles were Bungalow, Tudor or English Cottage, and Colonial Revival, with a few examples of Spanish Colonial Revival and other styles.

The word "bungalow" is rooted in the Bengali (India) word "bangala" which denoted the typical seventeenth century native dwelling of that region of India. (1) Historical drawings indicate that a "bangala" had wide, low, spreading hipped roofs covering open verandahs surrounding the enclosed part of the dwelling. The English in India adopted both the word and the dwelling type as an actual and a symbolic retreat to the simple rural life. The type was eventually transplanted to England and then to America with its symbolism, if not its pure form, intact; a return to the simple, rural life (even when built in rows in streetcar subdivisions). The architectural historian Clay Lancaster found the first known American reference to the word "bungalow" in an 1880 issue of "American Architect and Building News" regarding a Cape Cod summer place. (2) Perhaps due to its symbolism the bungalow

found enormous popularity in newly-developed California. Hundreds of “bungalow books”—stock designs—were published and the style became popular nationwide. Regional types developed, such as the Prairie Style in the Chicago area (Huntsville has two examples of this house style).

The dominant expression of the bungalow is one of easy informality. Remarkably, this comes across whether the bungalow is large or small, expensive or cheap. The means of the expression is the use of irregular low spreading forms with wide, exposed-rafter roof eaves, usually half-timbered rough-cast stuccoed walls, large porches, bay windows, etc. The roof usually slopes down to the front to keep the form low. Sunlight picks out the dot-dot-dot rhythm of the rafter ends and highlights the texture of the rough stucco and the deep shadow of the wide porch.

The bungalow’s strongest period here was the 1920s, until the 1929 financial crash brought a halt to virtually all construction. The next significant period of residential construction in Huntsville was in the early 1940s when hundreds of small “Cape Cod Cottages” were built to house workers for the new Redstone and Huntsville Arsenals which were producing chemical warfare munitions in World War II. These houses were covered with cement-asbestos shingles or clapboards and had a simple rectangular gabled form without roof eaves. They were fast and economical to build, which was what was needed at the time.

This “Cape Cod Cottage” type persisted after World War II until the type the real-estate ads call “Ranch-Colonial” became strong in the 1960s. With occasional exceptions, the Ranch-Colonial is the type still most commonly built today. It combines the informality and low, rambling form found desirable in the bungalow, with the tradition, reserve and formality of classicism. Its classical ancestor is the architecture of Andrea Palladio, the sixteenth century Italian architect. Many of the Ranch-Colonial houses are, except for their low, spreading proportions, very similar to the porticoed, hip-roofed 16th century villa designs of Palladio. Palladio’s work was revived in England in the early 18th century and his 1570 book “The Four Books of Architecture” was republished and had a great influence in England and consequently in the American colonies. The Georgian and Federal period American architecture owes much to Palladio (as well as to the

Baroque period in the case of Georgian and to the work of the 18th century English architect Robert Adam in the case of Federal). Many of the Tuscan-porticoed 1960-1983 Huntsville houses could fairly be called "Ranch-Palladian."

Huntsville has a wide variety of 20th century houses which will become ever more interesting to us as we realize that the 20th century is now drawing to a close (only about sixteen years remain in the 20th century). It is time we study them more seriously. Perhaps this brief overview will help to whet our interest.





1. This 1899 house at 308 Eustis Avenue illustrates that the Victorian styles held sway right up to, and partly into the 20th century. This Eastlake-style house is of unusually fine detailing and workmanship. The pressed-brick walls have extremely tight, barely visible mortar joints, for the objective in brickwork of this period was for the wall to appear as monolithic. The architect is unknown.

A nearby church with similar brickwork has recently had its joints gouged out and wide, white mortar joints installed, a sad revision to the original beauty of the walls.



2. This 1901 house at 603 Franklin Street by the architect Herbert Cowell has a Dutch-Colonial Revival gambrel roof combined with late-Victorian massing (vertical, narrow, irregular). A small "Gothic" vent is in the gable. The windows are quite wide and squarish in proportion, unlike those in the Victorian styles. A balustrade once ran along its porch roof, as evidenced by the base for it, and there may have been a balustrade also at the porch floor level that ran between the masonry piers which support the porch columns.



3. This finely-detailed, well-constructed ca. 1902 house at 501 Franklin Street was designed by the architect Herbert Cowell. It is an amalgam of mostly classical elements such as Ionic fluted columns, Adamesque frieze, modillioned cornice, balustrades etc., with some holdover influence of the Victorian period as seen in the broken flowing massing and the chimneys with vertical inset ribs - a Queen Anne device, as is the pebble-finish tympanum and use of stained glass. This house is a very free, unacademic expression of predominantly Colonial Revival elements which might best be called "Free Classic" in style, a recognized term of the period.



4. This 1907 house at 418 McClung Avenue is a free adaptation of the Colonial Revival style. While the basic design is technically Colonial Revival (boxy shape, hipped roof, fanlighted & sidelighted entry, modillions, Palladian dormer, sash-blinds, etc.) the proportions are vastly different from the late-Georgian ancestors of this fine house. The roof eaves are about three feet wide-over three times as wide as those of an 18th century Georgian house. The modillions at the eaves are gangantuan in comparison to 18th century ones. On the other hand, the clapboards are extremely narrow, about one-third as wide as in the Georgian period. All this disregard for academic "correctness" comes off splendidly, and the result is an excellent early 20th century house instead of a pale copy of an 18th century one.



5. This fine early bungalow at 531 Franklin Street was designed in 1909 by the Huntsville architect Edgar Love. Notice the "kick" of the roof-ridge ends - a refinement found in at least one other Huntsville bungalow. The zig-zag roof and bay window give this bungalow an informal and welcoming air.



6. This 1914 house at 612 East Holmes Avenue could be termed a "Swiss style bungalow". It bears a strong family resemblance to many 17th and 18th century Swiss rural houses, with its use of fieldstone, natural wood shingles, and steep gabled roof. The wide, low shed-roofed dormer is also found on old Swiss houses.(3) These Swiss forms, including the use of rough-cast stucco and false half-timber, are found on many bungalows and it would be fair to say that old Swiss houses were a major influence on the bungalow style.



7. This 1919 house at 709 East Randolph Avenue is one of Huntsville's two examples of the Prairie style- a bungalow substyle developed in the Chicago area. Not only that, but it is closely patterned after a house designed by the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright, published in the April 1907 "Ladies' Home Journal" as "A Fireproof House for \$ 5,000". (4) There seems little doubt that this house was derived from Wrights' design, the only significant difference being the large entry porch rather than Wrights' trellis and terrace shown to be beside the entry. The contractor was J. Nathan Williams.



This pair of small identical bungalows at 430 & 432 Locust Ave. were built in 1923. They were probably built from stock plans on speculation, as many houses were in this boom period. The front porches were likely enclosed later, for screened front porches were not common in this period. The builder of these houses is unknown.





9. This 418 Locust Avenue 1922 bungalow exhibits the Swiss influence (long, low swooping roof, large dormer, stucco, false half-timber) but not in a literal manner.(3) Notice the "missing" porch columns - a deliberate design feature. It would be an error to "replace" them. This house was built by Fisk & Hopper, contractors. Its design probably came from a "bungalow book" of stock plans.



10. These mill-worker's rental houses on north Meridian street were probably built in the early 1920's by Lincoln Mills. While small and modest, they display the bungalow characteristics of wide, low eaves with exposed rafter-ends, wide front porch and rough-cast stuccoed walls. In its squarish hip-roofed form, these bungalows are actually closer to the original Bengali "bangala" than most of the more elaborate Swiss-influenced versions.



11. This pair of nearly-identical stuccoed houses at 136 & 138 Walker Avenue represent the Spanish Colonial Revival style, rare in Huntsville but very common in some other cities. They were built in 1929 by Harold Riggins. The ceramic pan-tile roofs are probably the 56 year-old originals. These small houses are unusually good examples of their style.



12. This house at 609 Randolph Avenue was built in circa 1930 and is of the English Cottage style. Note the particularly sculptural chimney which gives the house a large measure of its interest and character. This style is frequently referred to as "Tudor". The "Old House Journal" feels that this term should be restricted to half-timber versions of this English Renaissance Revival style.



13. A large subdivision of houses similar to this one on Sewanee Road were built in the early 1940's during World War II to house Redstone and Huntsville Arsenal workers. Its style is derived from old New England cottages, except with a front porch added, and thus could be called a "Cape Cod Cottage" revival style.



14. This 1960's house on Lucerne Drive is one of Huntsville's many latter 20th century "Ranch-Colonial" examples. This one unwittingly relates very closely to the designs of the 16th century architect Andrea Palladio (see text) and thus is a good candidate for the term "Ranch-Palladian". The design may be from a stock plan, or from a "house-plan service" (local drafting companies that work up plans for speculative builders, usually as modifications and variations on the builders' favorite plans). This neighborhood has several houses of nearly-identical plans, but with exterior variations and "reverses".

NOTES

- (1) Winter, Robert, "The California Bungalow" - Los Angeles, Hennessy & Ingalls, Inc., 1980, pg. 19
- (2) Ibid., pg. 21
- (3) Smith, G.E. Kidder, "Switzerland Builds", Stockholm, Ahlen & Akerlunds, 1950, pg. 43,52,53
- (4) Brooks, H. Allen, "The Prairie School", University of Toronto Press, 1972, pg. 123

CREDITS:

1. Historical data on individual structures (dates, architect, contractor) - City of Huntsville Planning Commission, Linda Bayer, Historical Planner.
- (2) Photographs - Harvie P. Jones, F.A.I.A.

## NORAH DAVIS 1861-1936

By Eleanor Newman Hutchens

Norah Davis was born in Huntsville in the first year of the Civil War and died here in the middle of the Great Depression, her life span reaching from the first year of Abraham Lincoln's presidency to the summer when Franklin Roosevelt was running for his second term. Her family was one of the most prominent in both Madison and Limestone counties. Nicholas Davis, her grandfather, had been a delegate to the first Alabama constitutional convention in 1819 and a Whig leader in the state until the mid-century. Three of his sons held public office. Nicholas Davis, Jr. was a delegate to the secession convention in 1861 and worked hard to keep the state from seceding. Zebulon Pike Davis, Norah Davis's father, served five terms as a Whig mayor of Huntsville before the war and three terms as a Republican mayor after Reconstruction. The Davises, with their roots in Virginia, were loyal Southerners and served the Confederacy, but they were strong and intelligent Americans, and if their counsels had been followed the South might not have been ruined nor the Union blighted by the greatest blunder America has ever made, with the exception of permitting slavery in the first place.

In the years around the turn of the century before her first novel was published, Norah Davis led an unusually varied and enterprising life for a woman of her time and her social station. She was a woman-suffragist and declared herself a Progressive Republican. As a schoolteacher in five different states she must have learned the feelings of the outsider, the newcomer to town, who at home has been among the well-established and important insiders. Leading characters in three of her four novels are newcomers groping for the keys and codes of a Southern community. As an old Huntsvillian she knew the keys and codes, but her years of working elsewhere, though always in Southern places, must have taught her the chill sensations of the outsider. She also wrote for newspapers. Although I have not seen any examples of her journalism, I im-



agine that her politically active family must have given her a grasp of public affairs that was useful here as it was in her fiction. She knew shorthand and worked for several years as deputy clerk of a Federal district court. Her acquaintance with the law, and her interest in it, are evident in her books.

In 1905, when she was forty-four years old, her novel *The Northerner* was published by The Century Company, an important firm whose acceptance of the book was an achievement in itself for a new author. It is a bold and competently-written work, but I do not understand how Norah Davis was able to go on living in Huntsville after her fellow townsmen read it. It is set in an Alabama town that any Huntsvillian would recognize as Huntsville. Adairville, as she calls it, is in the Tennessee Valley; it is near a mountain where the old families keep summer places; and its social leader is easily identified, even at this distance in time, as Virginia Clay-Clopton, widow of Senator Clement Claiborne Clay and still eminent in Huntsville life when the book was published. The town is presented as bigoted, snobbish, greedy, dishonest, and actually murderous. Its only innocent native repudiates it and leaves it to marry a Yankee and live in England. Its only salvation lies in the capture of its business affairs by a British investment company. It is a place of great natural and architectural beauty inhabited by rotten people. Had Huntsville really been such a town, Norah Davis could not have lived out her later life in safety, as she did, on the eastern slope of McClung Hill, unmolested except on Hallowe'en, when her front fence was routinely torn down by masked children. This vandalism had nothing to do with the book; but I now wonder if each Hallowe'en she reflected that we were confirming the view of the town she had set down a quarter of a century before.

Wounding though it must have been to Huntsville people in 1905, *The Northerner* was not written to spite the town, with the exception of Virginia Clay-Clopton and perhaps some other victims I don't recognize. I take it to be an honest effort to portray the New South, which Norah Davis was in a good position to observe, with survivors of the Old South either hanging raggedly on the New like Spanish moss or flapping darkly over it like buzzards. The author was writing for a wider audience while using her particular experience, as many an author has done before and since, to the indignation and often the chagrin of persons who are locally identifiable.

The main story of *The Northerner* is simple. An honorable, successful Northern man of business is lured to Adairville by another Northerner who has lived in it for some years; is persuaded to invest all his capital in its failing electric power and streetcar company; and then, when he has put the company on its feet, is tricked out of it through a conspiracy between the dishonest Northerner and a concealed network of equally dishonest local businessmen and politicians.

In the course of telling this story, the author works out her real purpose: to dramatize the forces at work in the South at the end of the 19th century. The best of the old Southern aristocracy is personified in Judge Adair, whose Federal bench holds him aloof from the machinations of the town. His daughter Joan, the heroine of the book, is more natural and more clearheaded than the typical Southern girl because she has grown up listening to the lawyer-talk of her father and her cousin-by-marriage Hugh Watson. Hugh, who becomes the Northerner's attorney and good friend, has a dread secret: in his youth he had an affair with a mulatto woman, and their daughter has recently reappeared in the town as the maid of his fiancée, an Adairville girl who would never marry him if she knew. But Hallett, the dishonest Northerner, finds out, and with a corrupt old Confederate general tries to blackmail Hugh into joining the conspiracy against his friend and client Gregory Falls, the Northerner of the title. In the meantime Falls has unintentionally offended the town by replacing a drunken white streetcar motor-man with a black one, who becomes consequently the target of white spite and is very nearly lynched along with a black murderer who is burned at the stake on the Courthouse Square. He has outraged also those politicians and civic clubs who before his coming had received their electricity and their streetcar passage free; he as a matter of course sends them bills. The dread Mrs. Eldridge-Jones goes to his office to order him to mark the club bills paid in full; he casually redirects her to the office where the bills are to be paid; she drives away enraged, and plans a campaign for his ostracism as a believer in negro equality—which, by the way, he is not.

Now, Mrs. Eldridge-Jones is the Virginia Clay-Clopton character, hyphen and all. In actuality the Confederate Veterans' organization here was named for a soldier named Egbert Jones, and Virginia Clay-Clopton was local president of the United

Daughters of the Confederacy. Her memoirs, *A Belle of the Fifties*, had been published the year before *The Northerner* came out. A month after the novel came out, if the date printed on the back of its title page is correct, Mrs. Clay-Clopton was chosen Queen of Love and Beauty for the festivities surrounding the dedication of the Confederate monument in the Courthouse yard. She unveiled the monument on November 21, 1905, and made one of the principal speeches. One of the relics placed in its cornerstone was an 1863 copy of the Richmond *Enquirer* in which was a glowing account of Mrs. Clay of Alabama as she had appeared in the Confederate capital during the war. She was undoubtedly a woman of great charm and presence, full of high spirits and a gay wit that sometimes hit a sensitive target. She had been a leader in the social life of Washington before the war, when her husband was a United States senator, and after the war she had successfully laid siege to the White House for his release from prison, personally calling on President Andrew Johnson and haranguing him day after day until Senator Clay was freed. Father Ryan, a famous public figure of the time, is quoted as saying that he had heard all the greatest orators of the century, and that Mrs. Clay of Alabama was the greatest of them all. Of her charm there can be no doubt; and there can be small doubt of her general benevolence and good humor. I myself grew up among older people who had known her well, and they had found her radiantly attractive to the end of her long life. It was this luminous personage whom Norah Davis chose to represent the malign, cunning, arrogant Old South that would never change. Here is one of her accounts of Mrs. Eldridge-Jones:

Mrs. Eldridge-Jones stood first in the line of ladies, well forward, a distinguished figure clad in heavy, cream-colored satin, her white hair turned back in a full roll from her bold, angular face. The cold gleam of diamonds was everywhere about her, and the colder gleam of a satisfied malice shone in her insolent old eyes as she perceived Watson and his companion advancing upon the line of ladies. She turned to make a quick gesture of warning to the other women in the line; she was too clever a tactician to show in a position of individual responsibility. Her pose was the impregnable one of an exponent of public opinion; in the insult which she meant to level at Falls by a public refusal to recognize him socially, she was firmly resolved to have the support of every other woman in the line.

But Hugh's shrewd diagnosis of human mind and motive was a

generic one, including women as well as men; he read the woman's tactics at a glance, and bent his keen, compelling glance upon her. She met it with as bold a one.

"Mrs. Jones," he said, with formal courtesy, as different as possible from Watson's usual genial ease, his menacing glance riveting his meaning upon her mind, "you have met my friend, Mr. Falls?"

Watson's tone was the assured tone of the man whose world recognizes him as a power; his glance, as arrogant as her own, was full of the freemasonry of caste which assumes as impossible the slightest divergence from its recognized laws.

The traditions of a lifetime, reinforced by the instincts of fifty years of social diplomacy, the ritual of conventionality,—to women of her class more binding than Holy Writ,—warned her to avert the scene which would follow her refusal to recognize Watson's friend, presented by himself, in a house where he was practically host; that, and a chastening vision of Henderson Jones's plebeian wrath when the inevitable explanation should ensue.

With consummate cleverness, she changed her course. She allowed herself to seem to waver—to be convinced, to generously yield the point, and handed her sword to Watson with the grace and dignity of one who, yielding only when she must, yet yields so tactfully as to convert defeat into a semblance of victory. She swept Falls a courtesy [sic], gracious, if cold, murmuring a sentence of greeting.

Here again she is shown in defeat. I harbor a doubt that a Gregory Falls or a Hugh Watson would have been too much for Virginia Clay-Clopton, but in this novel the Southern traditionalist is the chief villain, and Norah Davis had had a chance to study a supreme example in her of those Southerners who would forever romanticize and mourn the Lost Cause; she must be shown as conquerable by those the novel exalts—the vigorous men who can build a new and stronger South.

*The World's Warrant*, Norah Davis's second novel, was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1907. That she is identified on the title page as author of *The Northerner* suggests that her first had won some recognition. *The World's Warrant* is again set in the Tennessee Valley of Alabama, but in a very different town—a new one, a colony of Easterners who have come to exploit the natural resources of the region for profit. In this book it is they who are the wrongdoers, not in the gross way of the Southerners in Adairville but because of the insensitivity that alloys their Eastern polish. "Tis an awkward thing to play with souls," the epigraph of

Chapter One announces, and the book proceeds to show that it is indeed. The chief victim is a Southern girl, descendant of plantation owners but poor and illiterate, living in a corner of the ruins to which the Yankee army long ago reduced her grandfather's mansion. She has an illegitimate child, fathered, though the Easterners do not know it, but one of their own group who has gone away. With callous kindness, they undertake to arrange a marriage for her with a well-to-do Westerner who has advertised for a wife. One of them, a cultivated young woman, writes letters to him for her under a fictitious name. The Westerner, who replies also under an alias, feels attracted to the author of the letters, comes to the town under his own name to find her, and falls in love with her in person before he discovers that she wrote the letters but is not the girl who is offering herself in marriage. The resulting complications would make conventional farce, but they are worked out seriously so as to test the integrity of everyone involved. The Westerner stands up best under the author's scrutiny, but the illiterate Southern girl, who is almost a tragic figure like Hardy's Tess, is more than his equal in sensitivity and, except for one or two sneaky stratagems in her own defense, and one act of vengeance, she comes out well on the score of integrity. While this novel might be taken as a tract against Easterners who try to play God in the helpless South, it seems to me that the regional issues are secondary and that the primary interest is psychological and moral, as it undoubtedly is in the novels to follow. It partakes of the tradition not only of Hardy but of Henry James—though "tradition" may be the wrong word, since their novels appeared in Norah Davis's lifetime and most of them in her maturity.

*Wallace Rhodes*, which Harper and Brothers published in 1909, presents another freakish situation: a widower who dotes on his only son marries the son's fiancée to save him from her. The setting is the Mississippi Delta, the characters rich plantation-owning men and poverty-stricken women of the same social class. Again the victim is a young Southern woman, but her tormentors are also Southerners. She is subtly developed and is in some ways a foreshadowing of Tennessee Williams's Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*—a woman who sees what is being done to her but cannot stand up for herself. Veronica Bowdre, the Norah Davis creation, is more fully explored and more complex than

Blanche. It is entertaining to note that there is a family named Faulkner in this novel written when William Faulkner was a child. The similarities between the materials of *The Northerner* and William Faulkner's materials are strong, stronger than I have been able to show in this short survey. *Wallace Rhodes*, a very different book, makes me think of George Meredith, especially of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*; but it also reaches back to Jane Austen in its study of social torture, and there is an Edith Whartonish touch in its impoverished women scheming to keep up appearances and to capture financial security by hook or crook.

*The Other Woman*, published by The Century Company, in 1920, was, as far as I can discover, Norah Davis's fourth and last novel. It was probably her greatest money-maker, not for the reason suggested by the title but because a film was based on it. The title is misleading; I suspect that the author originally called it *The Other Man* and was persuaded to adopt the more titillating title by her publishers. Its topic is not a love triangle but a dual personality. This modern subject is treated in a modern way: not with the laboratory hocus-pocus of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, but with daylight realism. A New Englander on a train journey slips from a respectable into a rascally personality with no recollection of his former life. After seven years he is recognized in a distant city by an old friend who soon thinks himself mistaken because of the radical difference in personality. The friend employs the new man, however, sending him to a South Carolina town where Eastern capitalists are forming a mining company. The amnesiac succeeds in the old Southern town and courts the friend's cousin there, but after the friend discovers his criminal record and orders him away, the shock revives his old personality, with no memory of the new, and he rushes back to his wife in New England whom the friend is courting. After a period of happy reunion with her and the noble friend, the rascal in him resurfaces, this time with a contemptuous awareness of his respectable self. Eventually the two sets of memory become continuous so that a unified personality is established under the control of the better self. Norah Davis was quoted as saying she had known the person on whose life this novel was based. Whatever her source, we see the same pattern in contemporary cases like the one documented in *Three Faces of Eve*. The abnormal psychology of it is too familiar now to interest us

much, but Norah Davis may have been the first fiction writer to present it realistically. As in her other books, she gives the tale distinct characters, some skillful dialogue (with some not so skillful), and a solid matrix of Southern scene and custom, authentic business detail, and structural moral implication.

Norah Davis the writer perhaps came into her own in Huntsville with the film of *The Other Woman*. It may have proved her success to townsmen who had not paid much attention to her books. She invited fifty friends to an Author's Premiere on the afternoon of May 3, 1921, at the Grand Theatre, and later in the month the general public could view the silent film with the unusual accompaniment of a five-piece orchestra playing music especially fitted to it. Tom Mix was also on the schedule that week, presumably accompanied just by the standard galloping piano notes.

Although Norah Davis's work suffered from some of the out-moded stylistic conventions of its time, no honest critic can regard it patronizingly. It is fearless in its choice of subject; for instance, miscegenation is not a topic one expects to find faced head-on in the fiction of 1905. It portrays the South with a mixture of passionate love and hatred that anticipates Faulkner. It is vigorously written and on the whole unsentimental except so far as contemporary demands forced it to be. While she was not a great artist, she was a gifted story-teller and a clear-sighted observer who could construct sound plots that still hold the reader to the end. Any Huntsvillian today who succeeded in having four novels published by the famous houses that accepted hers would be more than a local celebrity. She has not received the recognition she deserves from us.

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to Dr. Frances Roberts for supplying historical material on the Davis family and their politics, much of which I do not understand and therefore have not used

to Miss Sophye Lowe Young, whose great-grandfather Nicholas Davis was Norah Davis's grandfather, and who has been very kind in answering my questions

to Mrs. James L. Jordan, who with her husband Dr. Jordan now owns and lives in what was Norah Davis's house on McClung Hill; who was born and grew up in Hill Crest, the present house of Dr. and Mrs. Parker Griffith, which I believe to have been the beautiful mansion Hillcrest that Norah Davis placed between Adairville and the mountain in *The Northerner* and in which, with an irony that the reading of that book underlines for us, Virginia Clay-Clopton spent her last days. Mrs. Jordan and I have pooled our childhood memories of Miss Norah, and she managed to find for me the one of the novels I have reviewed which I had been until then unable to lay hands on

to Pat Ryan, who generously sent me the clues to newspaper coverage of the motion picture based on Norah Davis's last novel

to my sister Margaret Henson, who has steadily supported me with the resources of the Heritage Room of the Huntsville Public Library

to Mr. William Sanford, who helped me in my research into old Huntsville newspapers in the Law Library

to the staff of the Madison County Probate Office, one of whom made a special and successful effort to find the voter registration card that showed Norah Davis's true birthdate.



## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS RUNNING THE BLOCKADE

Edited By Marsha Marks

In 1863, after the fall of Vicksburg, Heyman Herzberg, a Georgia merchant, realized that the Confederacy was doomed and made up his mind to move his business and his family to Philadelphia. Against almost insurmountable odds, he succeeded in doing so.

Herzberg kept a diary of the journey, a typescript copy of which is located in the American Jewish Archives, on the campus of Hebrew Union University in Cincinnati, Ohio. The portion of the journey through the Tennessee Valley is reprinted here verbatim.

After a few hours' travelling, we came to the foot of the mountains which run along the Tennessee River and belong to the Sand and Lookout Mountain range. One time we had an immense mountain on our right, while at the left was a sudden declivity of hundreds of feet, and the top of the highest tree reached to the level of the road. At this point we all left the carriage, except the children, and it took the greatest care to keep the horses in the narrow road. One moment we had a terrible anxiety at a point where there was a sudden turn in the road, and if I had not jumped in time to the head of the horses and turned them quick to the right, the carriage with Mr. Heyman (who was driving) and the children would have been thrown down the deep valley below and no doubt been shattered to pieces.

But all went well afterwards. We had noticed a good many sign posts pointing to Van Buren, but they never seemed to agree to the distance. We intended to stop there for midday lunch. At last we came to a blacksmith shop with a few wooden shanties. I inquired of the blacksmith: "How far is it to Van Buren?" and imagine my surprise when he said: "You are right on the public square of it." We thought it would at least be a village. After distributing of our provender we had taken along, and which all had turned into crumbs from the jolting of the carriage, and taking a drink of fresh water, we started again, this time up as difficult a road as it was possible for a carriage like ours to get. The blacksmith told us we could never get up the road with our team, but we were not to be frightened so easily.

We were anxious to reach Warrentown [Alabama] on the Tennessee River on our way to Huntsville, Alabama. At first it was not so hard, but gradually the road got full of boulders of all kinds of sizes, and sometimes our carriage was nearly capsizing when one of the wheels was high and the other low, and hardly a sign of the road to be seen for boulders. We all had to walk and unload the baggage and carry the children, and I carried a stone to lock the wheel of the carriage after the horses had pulled a short distance. Then we would return for the children and the baggage. By that time the horses were rested again, and we repeated the performance.

After untold hardships we reached the plateau of the Sand Mountain, where the road was again plain and level for miles. We thanked God when we saw a house, as it was already dark and we thought we would stay all night. In this we were, however, disappointed, as we found all available space in possession of a Southern guerrilla company. They were, however, very polite to us, as we were in the company of ladies, and suggested that we drive on a couple of miles to the home of a preacher named Williamson who, no doubt, could accommodate our party. Although our horses were nearly exhausted, we continued, and arrived at said Mr. Williamson's. He said he would be glad to keep us but had no provisions to spare. We told his wife we had coffee with us, if she would give us hot water, and she said she would, as she had not seen coffee for some time. So with our bag of provisions we were all satisfied. Our horses we turned loose in the meadow, as grass was all we could get for them. We had, however, a good night's rest and felt alright next morning. Our horses seemed fresh, and we started once more on our journey northward.

We had now a much easier road which took us through a very shady forest and then down gradually, until we reached a village about noon, where we halted and had the good fortune to get a square meal at a farmhouse with plenty of milk and also feed for our horses. Then we continued to the Tennessee River, which we reached towards evening, intending to cross at once. Imagine our surprise, however, when we found the ferry picketed by a squad of Confederate soldiers, who would not allow us to cross over. They told us they had been stationed there by Col. Smith, who had a regiment of cavalry with him and had proceeded to Memphis and would leave pickets at every ferry on the river. In vain I showed my pass from the Secretary of War. They would not let us cross except we would get the permission of Col. Smith. I then made up my mind to overtake the regiment, which had left that morning. I took the best one of our carriage horses, and the soldiers lent me a sad-

dle and I started that same evening.

On inquiry I found that if I went up the mountain through the woods bordering on the Tennessee River, I could make a short cut and overtake the regiment before they started from their quarter the next morning. After bidding my folks good-bye, I commenced this difficult and desperate trip. The horse climbed up the mountain by a footpath so steep that I could not keep my seat on the saddle. Then I dismounted and took hold of his tail, and he pulled me up to the top of the mountain, when I resumed my seat in the saddle. About midnight I met a darkey who, for a silver dollar, guided me to a place where I could rest for a few hours. I told the man owning the cabin that I wished to overtake the regiment on the Summerville Pike, and he was confident that I could do so if I continued my trip at two or three o'clock A.M. I asked him to show me his bed, and he agreed to awake me in time and feed my horse and have it ready at half past two.

At this time I continued my trip, and my landlord went with me until daylight to prevent my getting lost in the woods. Then, after explaining everything satisfactory, I kept on my way and about 6:00 A.M. emerged from the wood and saw Summerville Pike before me. About a half an hour later I came to the place where the regiment had camped but had left already. On inquiring, however, I found that Col. Smith was at a farmhouse at breakfast, and I was very glad of this. The col.[onel] was very kind, and especially so as I showed him a letter from Col. Gartrell in Atlanta, who was a cousin of his; but, to my greatest regret, he would not give me the desired permission to cross the Tennessee River. He said my pass from Richmond was all right but had to be countersigned by Gen. Bragg in Chattanooga.

This was a severe sentence, and the distance from Chattanooga and the risk of being pressed in the service and [in] going there was more than I would undertake. The col.[onel] politely invited me to breakfast and I, being nearly starved, gladly accepted. After trying very hard, I had to give up the attempt to change his mind. Nothing would tempt him to disregard his instructions, and the only advice he would give me [was] that I would [should] overtake him with my team and cross the river before he would station all his pickets, or continue on to Memphis, Tenn. The latter I considered the best, as the roads were good, and it would be impossible to get ahead of his regiment with our team. I tried to get some feed for my horse but could not beg or buy anything, as the regiment had cleaned up everything in that line. So I told Col. Smith good-bye and went on my return journey.

Now I came to a most interesting event which gave me renewed hope. I approached a cabin and asked the old lady if she had anything to eat for my horse and I would pay her well. She said she had a basin full of bran. I mixed this with water, and the horse was enjoying the feast; and in the meantime I talked with the old lady and told her the trouble I was in. Then a couple of boys about ten to twelve years of age came in and said: "Good-bye, grandmother," and I asked where they were going. She said they were going home and lived across the Tennessee River. I asked the boys how they would cross now, as pickets were stationed all along, but they said they knew the ferryman, who could take them across anyhow. I then told them if they would wait a day longer so I could bring my folks, I would give each \$5 to show us the ferry. They thought that would be nice, but they doubted if I could get the carriage across. I then said we would leave the carriage if we could not do any better.

This being satisfactory settled, I left them to return to my folks left at the Tennessee River near Warrentown. I hardly could get my horse forward and had to dismount to make it easier and when, late in the afternoon, I got in sight of the carriage, my cousin David, seeing me pulling the horse by the bridle and looking so miserable, said: "Oh," and expected to hear of my fruitless trip. I told the folks all and also of my appointment with the two boys and, although fearful of it being a disappointment, all agreed it was the best we could do. David had been out that morning foraging for our party, and also for the horses, and had succeeded so well that my horse felt all right the next morning when we took an early start for the Summerville Pike.

As we had to take the road it was about twenty to twenty-five miles, and late in the afternoon, before we got in the neighborhood where the two boys were. They met us, and we all concluded to start the next morning, as it was too late that night. The next morning our two boys came with us and, once more bidding their grandmother good-bye, we continued on the Summerville Pike for a couple of miles and then had to take a road right through the woods which, the boys said, would bring us to the Tennessee River.

After a short while we saw the river and also a farmhouse, and some horses with military saddles on them were tied to the fences, and we also saw a picket guard stationed on the river bank. This was a great disappointment also to the boys, who had not anticipated it. One of them pointed to a man in shirt sleeves sitting on the fence, [and] said: "There is the ferryman." I approached him and found what I expected, that he was forbidden to use the ferry any more. He told me he lived across the river and would go home directly to

stay there. Then I told him we were very anxious to avoid the trip to Memphis and I offered him \$50 to take us across. On hearing this he jumped up and, slapping me on the back [so] that it hurt me, he said: "By God, you shall cross!" I asked him how about the soldiers, and he said I should pay no attention to them; he knew them and would make [it] all right. I gave him the money, and he went to the river and straightened out a large ferryboat big enough for our horses and carriage and told the soldiers to carry the children on the ferry. We all went on and never looked at the soldiers. After pulling the ferryboat across with the rope, the soldiers again put down their guns and carried the children on the bank, and we continued our trip, thankfully taking leave of the two boys, who took another road.

Now we were about five miles away from the pike leading to Huntsville. The road was nearly impassable, and soon our carriage was up to the axles in the soft mud, and the horses were unable to get it out and getting in always deeper. I told Cousin David: "Now it is your turn to get us out of the scrape, as I did the hard riding day before yesterday." He growled a little but took one of our horses to look for help. Sooner than we expected he came back, accompanied by about twenty-five negroes to whom he had promised \$1 each. They soon got hold of the carriage and lifted it bodily out of the mud and carried it safely to solid ground, to a higher point in the road. We resumed our seats in the carriage and were directed to an abandoned plantation where Cousin David had hired our help.

We were put in possession of the best cabin and an old aunt [Negress] fried chickens for us and gave us a splendid supper, and we all stayed in one room and slept well that night. After a good breakfast we started again and soon reached the pike shaded with beautiful trees, enjoying a fine ride to Huntsville. Then we put our horses and carriage in a livery stable, and we all went to the Huntsville Hotel, intending to rest ourselves three days before resuming our journey. Our horses also needed rest, as they "were sore from bad usage and bad harness."

The next day David took his oldest boy, Ben, for a walk and also to look at our horses. I stayed upstairs with the ladies to enjoy the needed rest. After being away an hour, Cousin David came into our room looking as though he had seen a ghost and white as a sheet. He asked me what was the name of the col.[onel] I went to see on the Summerville Pike. I told him Col. Smith of Macon, Ga. He said he saw a good many soldiers downstairs and, looking at the hotel register, he saw Col. Smith and staff registered. I told him that must be some other Col. Smith, as the one I saw was on his way to Mem-

phis. In order to satisfy myself, I went downstairs to take a look at him. They were sitting around in the lobby and, sure enough, my col.[onel] was among them. Of course, as he saw me, it would not do to show fear, so I walked straight up to him and offered my hand. He had been very friendly before and had asked me for my company at breakfast, which I accepted before returning to my folks at the Tennessee River. He now refused to shake hands and asked when we crossed the river. I told him the truth and said it was at Lyman's Ferry. When he heard this he cursed the ferryman for disobedience to orders and then told his orderly to bring the horses around. I could not succeed to get him in a pleasant mood, offered him cigars, which he refused.

The orderly arrived with the horses, the command to mount was given, and they galloped away in the direction of the pike we had come from. I went upstairs and reported to the folks; and when they heard, they wanted to leave Huntsville at once, for fear of being brought back when the col. heard we had bribed the ferryman. It was late in the afternoon, and I said we had better wait until early next morning, as we would not be able to travel at night in a strange country. The distance to Lyman's Ferry was sixteen miles and the col. could not possibly reach us by next day. So we made everything ready for an early start between four and five o'clock next morning. This we accomplished as our horses were fresh again. We trotted them towards Fayetteville, Tenn. As luck would have it, we got for a while on the wrong road, having made a mistake, and thereby escaped the soldiers, which, we afterwards learned from a Huntsville merchant, had been sent out to arrest us. Toward evening we got in another bad place in the road and, although not really muddy, was half full of water in a place where the steep bank prevented the horses from getting a firm foothold. As luck would have it, a farmer with an ox team helped us out of the scrape.

I got David to take hold of the front wheel while I went on the back wheel, up to our waists in the muddy water, and as the oxen pulled and the coach started I splashed all the water I could on David to punish him for driving so bad. He did not know I did it but thought the wheels splashed him full. Then, following the road, we got late in the evening to a U. S. post and were out of the Confederacy at last.

Huntsville and the surrounding territory was neutral ground, sometimes occupied by one party and sometimes by the other. We had given our names and were given passes to Nashville, but it being too late, we found a place to rest not far from Shelbyville, where we dried our clothes and slept all night. Our carriage needed repairs

and, a blacksmith being handy, we got it repaired next morning before starting again. We continued our trip safely, with the exception of some bad roads. When I was assisting to start the horses, I had the misfortune to run the carriage wheel over my foot, in consequence of which my leg was very much swollen by the time we arrived at Shelbyville. I spent the night on a couch with my left foot in a washtub full of water, which took all the inflammation out by the next morning. Passing through Murfreesboro, we noticed the effects of the battle which destroyed the place, and spent the next night near La Vergne, and the next day arrived early at Nashville.

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