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THE HUNTSVILLE HISTORICAL REVIEW

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THE HUNTSVILLE-MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THREE PERSPECTIVES OF THE FEDERAL OCCUPATION OF HUNTSVILLE

An Introduction

Everyday life in Huntsville had moved on at its usual pace for almost a year after the Confederates opened fire on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, thus prompting the beginning of the Civil War. However, many of Huntsville's citizens began to express concern about the safety of the Tennessee Valley when General Ulysses S. Grant began to execute his plan to drive into the very heart of the Confederacy along the river route formed by the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland rivers. After capturing Fort Henry on the Tennessee on February 6, 1862, and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland on February 16, 1862, Grant moved rapidly to Nashville and then headed southwest toward Corinth, Mississippi, a junction of two important railroads--the Mobile & Ohio and the Memphis & Charleston.

The Confederate commander, General Albert Sidney Johnston, had anticipated that the Union forces would attempt to capture all important rail centers and river ports to interrupt the flow of goods and manpower to the Confederate forces fighting on the Eastern Front in Virginia. For this reason he had gathered all available forces at his disposal to defend Corinth, thus leaving the rest of the Tennessee Valley vulnerable to attack.

Some citizens believed that Huntsville would be attacked since it was the site of the Eastern Division Headquarters of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad as well as its repair shops. Others thought that Huntsville would be bypassed since Corinth, Mississippi, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, were more important targets. After the Confederates were unsuccessful in their attempt

to defeat the Union forces at Shiloh Meeting House near Pittsburg Landing on April 6, 1862, and had to retreat to Corinth, most of Huntsville's citizens became very much concerned about their safety. The three accounts of the invasion of Huntsville on April 11, 1862, which are presented here will help to provide some insight on how invasion and continued occupation of the city affected the lives and fortunes of its citizens.

Although the first occupation lasted only until August 31, 1862, a year later on July 4, 1863, Union troops returned and continued their stay in Huntsville until the end of the war in 1865. Future issues of the Huntsville Historical Review will feature articles concerning the turbulent times through which Huntsvillians passed from 1861 to 1876.

The Editor.



Huntsville Depot and Headquarters for Eastern
Division, Memphis & Charleston Railroad,
now Huntsville Depot Museum

MILITARY PERSPECTIVES
ON THE INVASION OF HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA,
APRIL 11, 1862

Reports of Brigadier General Armsby M. Mitchel,
Commander of the Third Division of the Army of
the Ohio.

HEADQUARTERS THIRD DIVISION
Huntsville, Ala., April 11, 1862

SIR: After a forced march of incredible
difficulty, leaving Fayetteville yesterday at 12
m., my advanced guard, consisting of Turchin's
brigade, Kennett's cavalry, and Simonson's
battery, entered Huntsville this morning at 6
o'clock.

The city was taken completely by surprise,
no one having considered the march practicable in
the time. We have captured about 200 prisoners,
15 locomotives, a large amount of passenger, box,
and platform cars, the telegraphic apparatus and
offices, and two Southern mails. We have at
length succeeded in cutting the great artery of
railway intercommunication between the Southern
States.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

O. M. MITCHEL,
Brigadier-General, Commanding

Capt. J. B. FRY,
Assistant Adjutant-General

HEADQUARTERS THIRD DIVISION,
Huntsville, April 11, 1862.

The work so happily commenced on yesterday
has been completed to-day upon a train of cars

captured from the enemy at Huntsville. A heavy force of the Ninth Brigade, under command of Sill, was ordered to drive the enemy from Stevenson in the east, while an equal force from the Eighth Brigade, upon captured cars, was directed to seize Decatur upon the west. Both expeditions proved eminently successful. I accompanied the most difficult one to Stevenson in person, from which place 2,000 of the enemy fled as usual at our approach without firing a gun, leaving behind five locomotives and a large amount of rolling stock.

To prevent the enemy from penetrating toward Nashville, I ordered the destruction of a small bridge between Stevenson and Bridgeport, which we can replace, if necessary, in a single day. The expedition from the Eighth Brigade, under the immediate command of Colonel Turchin, proved eminently successful. To arrest his advance the enemy fired a bridge on the farther side of the Tennessee River, but our troops reached it in time to extinguish the flames. A small force of the enemy fled from the town, leaving their tents standing and their camp equipage behind them.

Thus in a single day we have taken and now hold a hundred miles of the great railway line of the rebel Confederacy. We have nothing more to do in this region, having fully accomplished all that was ordered. We have saved the great bridge across the Tennessee, and are ready to strike the enemy, if so directed, upon his right flank and rear at Corinth.

Respectfully,

O. M. MITCHEL,
Brigadier-General.

General BUELL.

Abstract from "Record of Events," Third Division, Army of the Ohio. (From division return for month of April, 1862.)

The Eighth Brigade left Murfreesborough, Tenn., on April 5, at 6 a.m., and marched to Huntsville, Ala., arriving there at 7:30 a.m., on the 11th.

At 6 p.m., April 11, the Twenty-fourth Illinois were moved on cars for Decatur, arriving opposite Decatur on the morning of the 12th, driving the enemy's troops from the fortifications at Decatur, and saving the bridge over the Tennessee River that the rebels had fired on their retreat, occupying the town on the 13th. The rest of the brigade were moved by cars to Decatur, arriving there the same day at 8 p.m.

April 15, the brigade, except guard for baggage train, was moved to Tuscumbia, Ala., arriving there April 16, at 11 p.m.

At 12 noon, April 24, the brigade fell back from Tuscumbia to Decatur, arriving there at 8 p.m. April 26.

April 26 and 27, the brigade, except the Eighteenth Ohio, fell back to Huntsville, Ala., the Eighteenth Ohio going to Athens.

The Ninth Brigade left Murfreesborough, Tenn., April 4, and marched thence, via Shelbyville and Fayetteville, to Camp Taylor, Huntsville, Ala., arriving April 11; since which time the brigade has been divided and sent in different directions on the line of the railroad. The Eighteenth Wisconsin Regiment now being at Bellefonte, the Second Ohio on provost duty at Huntsville, the Twenty-first Ohio at Athens, and two companies of the Thirty-third Ohio now in camp, the balance guarding the water-tanks,

bridges, &c., on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad.

The Seventeenth Brigade left Murfreesborough April 3, arriving at Shelbyville April 4, and left for Fayetteville April 8, remained at that point until the 14th, and received orders to proceed to Huntsville, Ala. The brigade, with the exception of the Forty-second Indiana, which was left at Shelbyville, marched into camp on the 15th; remained there until the 18th; proceeded to Decatur with the Tenth and Third Ohio Regiments, and remained until Sunday, the 27th, and, after destroying the bridge over the Tennessee River by fire, proceeded by railroad to Stevenson, Ala., and marched from there to Bridgeport, at which place it remained up to May. The Fifteenth Kentucky Volunteers was left at Fayetteville, as provost-guard, from April 9 to May 1.

SOURCE: The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series 1, Volume X, part 1. Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1884, pp. 641-644.

[Editor's Note: Because of his successful operations in the Tennessee Valley, Mitchel was promoted to the rank of Major General. After complaints were lodged against him because of the conduct of his troops and his handling of the cotton trade within the occupied area under his command, he was transferred to the Command of the Department of South Carolina and the Tenth Army Corps with headquarters at Hilton Head, South Carolina. Before he could organize the work to be done there, he was stricken with yellow fever and died at Beaufort on October 30, 1862.]

Report by Confederate Major-General E. Kirby Smith, Commander of the Department of East Tennessee, Headquarters at Knoxville, Tennessee.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF EAST TENNESSEE,
Knoxville, Tenn., April 13, 1862.

MAJOR: On the 11th General Mitchel, with a Federal force, well ascertained to be about 8,000, with four batteries, entered Huntsville, capturing twenty-one engines and three trains of cars. They came from Murfreesborough via Shelbyville and Fayetteville, and were followed by two additional regiments, making a force between 8,000 and 10,000 strong. Pushing their trains on beyond Stevenson, they destroyed the bridge over Widden's Creek, 4 miles west of Bridgeport, and secured their flank against any movement by rail from Chattanooga. I have two regiments at Bridgeport and two at Chattanooga, under the command of General Leadbetter; one of the latter, the Forty-third Georgia is awaiting the arrival of arms from Richmond.

General Maxey, with three regiments and a battalion, passed through Huntsville the day previous to its occupation by the enemy. The three armed regiments between Bridgeport and Chattanooga were to have completed the re-enforcements intended for General Beauregard. My own command not being large enough for offensive movements, and feeling that on the fate of the army at Corinth hung the fate of East Tennessee, I felt justified in ordering this force to General Beauregard even before being called upon by him for re-enforcements.

General Beauregard telegraphs that six regiments from Pemberton's command are en route for Chattanooga. He suggests a movement from that point, taking the enemy in reverse at Huntsville. I could add four regiments, making a force of between 5,000 and 6,000 effective men,

but the destruction of the road west from Bridgeport renders the operation of artillery on that line now impracticable. A demonstration of 5,000 infantry toward Huntsville might alarm Mitchel, but no decisive results could be reasonably anticipated. The advance of a force from Kingston by Sparta on Nashville is the strategic move, offering the greatest results and the most practicable in operation. I so telegraphed General Beauregard, notifying him of the destruction of the bridges on the Memphis road, and giving him an opportunity to countermand the order to the South Carolina regiments and to direct them to re-enforce him by [the] Montgomery and the Mobile and Ohio road

The Eufaula Artillery, which was ordered here with its battery, is still without guns. The pieces, with ammunition, should be sent from Richmond as soon as practicable.

I am, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. KIRBY SMITH,

Major-General, Commanding.

Maj. T. A. WASHINGTON, A.A.G., Richmond, Va.

SOURCE: Same as above.

[Editor's Note: At the time he recorded this report, Major-General E. Kirby Smith was Commander of the Army of the Department of East Tennessee. He was later promoted to Lieutenant-General and succeeded General T. H. Holmes to the command of the Department of the Trans-Mississippi, which comprised all of the Confederate forces west of the Mississippi. In May of 1865, he surrendered his forces at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After the war, he returned to his chosen profession of teaching, and served as professor of mathematics at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, until his death in 1893.]

A HOUSEWIFE'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE INVASION OF HUNTSVILLE

Mary Ione Cook Chadick was the wife of the Reverend William Davison Chadick, minister of the local Cumberland Presbyterian Church and a colonel in the Confederate Army. She lived in the 400 block of Randolph Street and kept a diary throughout the four years of the Civil War. Her diary is considered one of the important records of how life was carried on in a city which was occupied.

(April 11, 1862.) On the morning of April 11, General Mitchell's division (Federalists) took possession of Huntsville. There was no opposition, there being only a few wounded and sick Confederate soldiers in the town.

They entered at daybreak, first taking possession of the railroad and some 15 engines. The southern train was just coming in, having on board 159 Confederate soldiers, some wounded, going to their homes, and others, who had been on furlough, rejoining their regiments.

The train endeavored to make its escape, but was fired into by two cannons. One of the firemen was seriously wounded. All aboard were taken prisoners. The well soldiers were confined in the depot house, and the wounded remained in the cars.

The telegraph office and postoffice were next seized. Many wounded soldiers quartered in town and many prominent citizens and refugees made their escape during the day. Among them was the secretary of war, Pope Walker, the Hon. John Bell and others. There was a great deal of excitement and consternation among the citizens, as it had not been generally believed that the enemy would come here.

About 7 o'clock, in company with Mrs. Bradford, Mrs. Mayhew, Mrs. Francis, Mrs. Powers, Mrs. Tony and other ladies from the college, we waited on Gen. Mitchell to ask permission to visit our wounded soldiers he had taken on the cars. We were ushered into his august presence in the parlor of the hotel at the depot. He received us politely, remarking that he was always glad to see the ladies, provided they "did not rail at him as they had done at Fayetteville."

The object of the visit then was stated to him by Mrs. Bradford, when, instead of a direct reply, he went on to speak of the very great surprise he had given us that morning, and expressing great surprise on his part that we had no reception prepared for him! I had it in my heart to let him know "that we had one grand reception prepared for him at Corinth," but considering that "discretion was the better part of valor," kept silent.

He went on to enumerate the towns he had taken in his route, saying that he did not know how much farther south he should go. He expressed surprise that we had so few provisions here (all our government stores had been removed), and said that we should be compelled to call on the North for help. He also said he blushed to speak of some Southern ladies who had taunted his soldiers with our late victory at Corinth, all of which was very magnanimous on the part of a great general going forth "conquering and to conquer," especially where he had no armed force to oppose him.

Visit Wounded on Cars

He, however, gave us permission to visit our wounded and do what we could for them. We found them still on the cars in a very uncomfortable

position, and many of them suffering dreadfully, and having no nourishment in two days!

Among them we found three Confederate officers--Major McDonald and Capts. Means and Byrd, who by their gentlemanly bearing, refinement and severe wounds, received in the Battle of Corinth, enlisted our deepest sympathies and interest. We also visited the well prisoners in the depot house and found them suffering for something to eat.

In the evening, we returned to them with milk, wine, soups and a great quantity of provisions--enough for all. Some of the Federal officers informed us that their wagon trains would not be in for two days (so forced had been their march), and that they would have to tax the citizens for food for their own men.

Through Dr. Thumesd [sic], we obtained permission to move our wounded to the hospitals. Mrs. Harris and myself, accompanied by Mr. Brown (Methodist minister), were deputized to set the house and beds in order, while Mrs. Bradford and some others remained behind to superintend their removal. Everything was soon arranged and, before night, they were all on comfortable beds, and their wounds dressed. They declared that they were the sweetest beds they ever lay down upon--poor fellows! One of them was wounded in nine places and was perfectly helpless. Miss Clapham and Miss Danils from the college went around and washed all their faces and hands which they declared was another luxury.



HUNTSVILLE FEMALE COLLEGE ALABAMA.

(Saturday, April 12.) Truly our town is full of the enemy. There is a sentinel at every corner. Everybody keeps the front door locked, and I make it a point to answer the bell myself, not permitting children or servants to open it.

They have been searching the houses today for arms. We have not been molested. Servants are giving information of all the arms and soldiers who have been concealed.

Visited the wounded prisoners. One poor fellow had his hand amputated today. His name is Gregory. Promised him a shirt tomorrow. Found three or four others suffering immensely from their wounds, the Federal surgeons having neglected to dress them. Went for Dr. Sheffey to attend to them. Gave the major a bouquet and promised him some butter.

(April 13.) Visited the well prisoners at the depot. Our visit seemed to delight and cheer them very much. Many of them asked us to write to their wives and friends, and gave some of their valuables into our keeping. As yet, they have no food, only what we carry them. The wounded officers were removed this evening to the college. One of the prisoners at the depot (Duncan of Louisiana) gave me a little tea bell as a keepsake.

Had a conversation with a Federal officer, Capt. Doughty, in the course of which he remarked that the "Western men who form Mitchell's division are fighting for the right of secession, and whenever we become convinced that the slavery question is involved, we shall lay down our arms and go home."

(April 14.) Some arrests have been made today of prominent Secessionists. Among those were Matt Steele, but they have been released.

Visited the hospital, and was mortified to find that many of our wounded men had taken the oath and were going home. Expressed our mortification and disappointment in the presence of the Federals, and exhorted the others never to do likewise. Those who had not taken the oath said they would die first. The prisoners at the depot refused nearly to a man thus to disgrace themselves, and the ladies openly commended them for it. Some of them have made their escape.

(April 21.) Messrs. Wilson, Bannister and Maghers have returned from Corinth. The latter brought me news from my dear husband. He is well. This is some consolation, yet a letter would have delighted me exceedingly. His absence has always been painful, yet I would not have him here now at the mercy of the enemy. It must be so humiliating to the men--reckon some of them wish they had gone to the war and saved their reputation.

Mr. Wilson has been arrested, not giving the information desired, and has been kept in confinement several days.

Two prisoners at the depot made their escape in this way: they put on Yankee uniforms and walked out of doors, stood awhile and then went back. Whereupon, the guard ordered them out, telling them that "they had no business in there," so they went quietly out and walked up town and made their escape! As soon as it was known, the remainder of the prioners were hurried off to Camp Chase, Ohio.

(April 28.) General Mitchell has been in a rage all the week on account of the cutting of the telegraph poles and lines, the tearing up of the railroad tracks, firing into trains, and holds the citizens responsible for the same, having had 12 of the most prominent arrested. It is probable that the work of our cavalry has

annoyed him excessively, as they are constantly picking off his men.

Great depredations have been committed by the Federal cavalry in the country surrounding Huntsville, and the citizens of Athens have suffered terribly. We are all "prisoners of hope," and are in daily expectancy that Gen. Kirby Smith or Gen. Morgan is coming to our relief. News of an exploit of the latter near Pulaski has reached us. He took a son of Gen. Mitchell prisoner, paroled him, gave him plenty of money, telling him "that his Union money would be of no use to him here," and sent him to his father, asking for the exchange of his brother, Charleston Morgan. Gen. Mitchell was quite surprised at such magnanimity from such a desperado as Morgan.

(May 10.) There has been a small fight at Bridgeport, which the Federals claim as a great victory. They brought down a great many wounded and 41 prisoners, who are in the West Huntsville Methodist church. Have been to see them, carrying them flowers and food. They are a fine looking set of men, and from the account of one of them, they fought bravely against fearful odds. Our Gen. Ledbetter acted cowardly, burning the bridge and running. We have also furnished them with a change of clothes and had their washing done. Rinehart and Clayton are the officers, and are Georgians.

(May 12.) There has been some fighting at Athens. The enemy has brought up some wounded men and taken a few of our men prisoners. One of the Federalists at the hospital told me that our cavalry took an entire company of their men prisoners, including the officers.

Gen. Mitchell has sent Lts. Rhinehart and Clayton and Capts. Byrd and Clare to Gen. Beauregard to effect an exchange of prisoners. I

have sent by Capt. Byrd a letter to my husband to assure him of our health and safety, and trust that I shall have the happiness of receiving one in return.

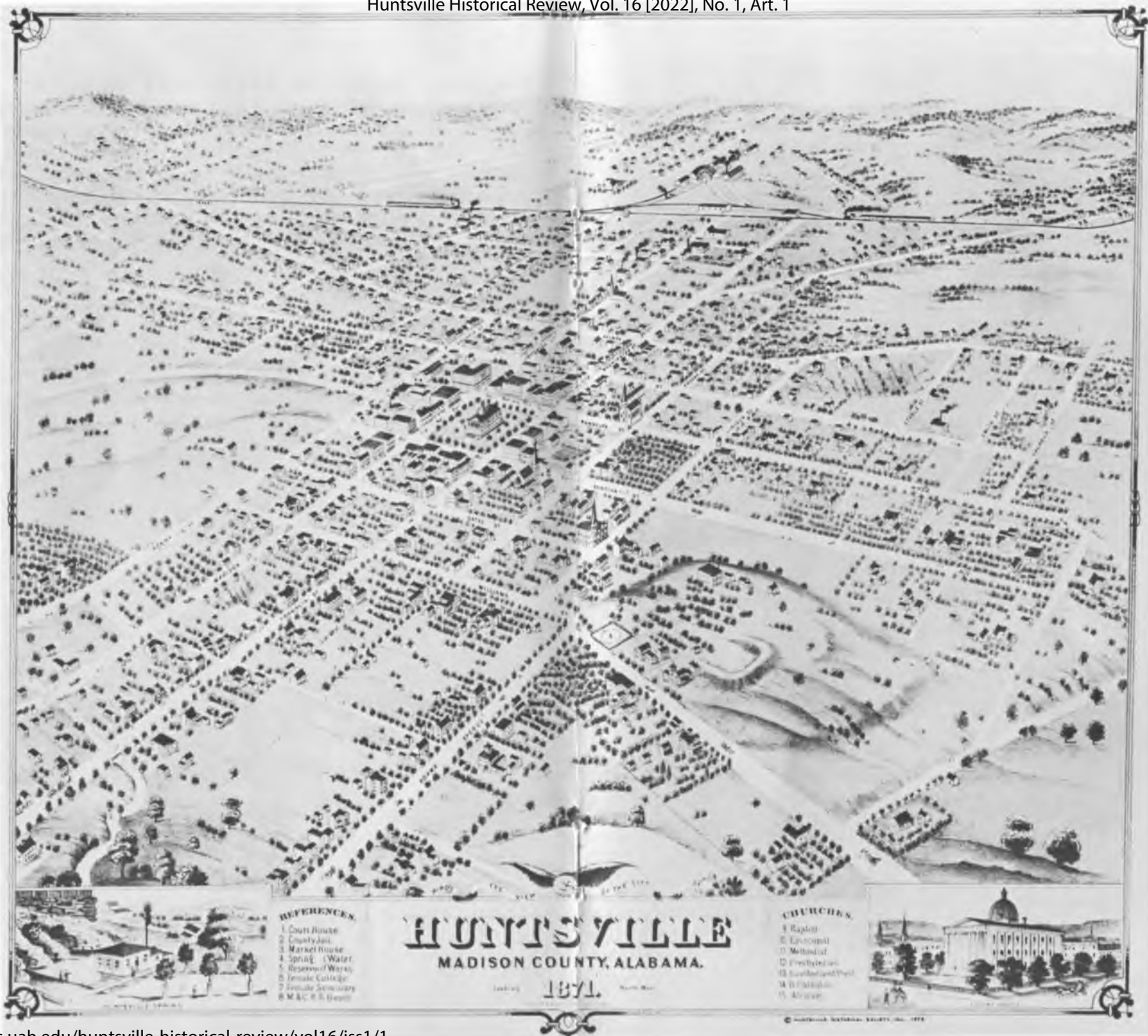
Our officers in the college are now nearly recovered from their wounds and able to walk about, but are not allowed to go beyond the boundaries of its walls. They have received great attention from the ladies, and we are proud that we have such men in our army.

General Mitchell complained that the ladies of Huntsville have given his officers the "cold shoulder" by not having received them into the social circle! Some of the Unionists gave a picnic and invited two of his officers, who accepted and went. The next day, he had them arrested. Some folks were malicious enough to attribute it to jealousy, because he was not invited himself.

SOURCE: This diary was first published by The Huntsville Times in 1937 and again in the Sesqui-Centennial Edition in 1955. Its publication was made possible through the courtesy of Mrs. Chadick's grandson, Colonel John R. Fordyce of Little Rock, Arkansas. The excerpts quoted here are taken from the version published in the Alabama Historical Quarterly, Summer Issue, 1947, volume 9, number 2. Montgomery, Alabama: State Department of Archives and History, pp. 199-204.

[Editor's note: Although not a native-born southerner, Mrs. Chadick nevertheless was an ardent supporter of the Confederacy throughout the war. As a diplomat, she was able to help many citizens of Huntsville resolve their difficulties with the Federal troops by being brave enough to present their causes to the commanding generals. She was criticized for accepting Union soldiers as boarders in her home in order to provide for her family's necessities.

She also permitted her eldest daughter, Susan, to be courted by Captain Samuel W. Fordyce of the Union army. After the war, he returned to make her his bride and established himself in the banking business before moving to St. Louis, Missouri, and Hot Springs, Arkansas. The Chadick family later moved to McMinnville, Tennessee, where they spent the rest of their lives.]



REFERENCES

- 1 Court House
- 2 County Jail
- 3 Market House
- 4 Spring Water
- 5 Reservoir Water
- 6 Female College
- 7 Female Seminary
- 8 M. & C. R. S. Depot

HUNTSVILLE
MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA.

Looking South West
1871.

CHURCHES

- 1 Baptist
- 2 Episcopal
- 3 Methodist
- 4 Presbyterian
- 5 Lutheran and Prot.
- 6 Catholic
- 7 African



Huntsville Female Seminary, closed as a school when Huntsville was occupied, was later used as a hospital.

A JOURNALIST'S PERSPECTIVE
ON THE INVASION OF HUNTSVILLE

John Withers Clay, editor of The Huntsville Democrat, gave the following account of the invasion of Huntsville in a letter to his brother, Clement Claiborne Clay, who was serving at the time as a senator in the Confederate Congress in Richmond, Virginia. After he fled from Huntsville, he joined another brother, Hugh Lawson Clay, at Knoxville, Tennessee, where he secured a position as agent to make contracts for saltpeter for the Confederate government. Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Lawson Clay was serving as assistant adjutant general to Major General E. Kirby Smith.

Knoxville, Tnn., May 15, 1862

Hon. C. C. Clay, Jr.,
At Large.

My dear brother: I should have written to you, ere this, to relieve your mind as to my status & locus, but did not know how to direct my letter & brother Lawson was unable to inform me. I was, probably, the first man who left Huntsville after the Federals came in. You may be astonished that I should not have been fully apprised of their advance & did not leave sooner, but you would not have been, probably, if you had been there. For weeks, we had had rumors of the approach of the enemy--that they were in such & such numbers at Pulaski, at Elkton, at Madison X Roads, at Fayetteville, at Winchester &c.--would be in Huntsville on a certain day, at a certain hour--& facts had as often contradicted rumors. So, we only illustrated the old fable of the shepherd's boy & the wolf, when the enemy did come. On the 10th of April, the reported arrival of the enemy at Fayetteville en route to Huntsville assumed more plausibility than previous reports. At dark, several citizens from

the neighborhood of Fayetteville reached Huntsville & reported that they saw several regiments of them marching on the Shelbyville Road, within a few miles of Fayetteville, in the afternoon of the 9th. We took for granted that the bridge across Elk would be burnt & the necessity of rebuilding it & the bad condition of the roads would retard their progress, if they really intended coming to Huntsville & were not merely making a diversion in our direction, with a view of going by a different route to Savannah, Tenn., from that pursued by the rest of Buell's Army, for greater convenience of supplies. About 11 o'clock the night of the 10th a courier arrived from Meridianville, stating that the enemy had encamped two miles North of that place. I was at home, having just returned from a visit to Bishop & Mrs. Lay, who had arrived at Mrs. Rice's, the day before; & was summoned to the door by one of the hands in my Office knocking at it, having come to report to me the news. I went up town & found a number of persons--among them John Bell & Sam Morgan, of Nashville, Joe Bradley & Zeb Davis, who were desiring to get away before the enemy arrived--all consulting as to the probable truth of the courier's report. It was, finally, concluded that Bob. Brickell, Joe Bradley, Jr. & Blanton [page torn] should ride toward Meridianville & ascertain the truth of the report. Bell & the others went home to their beds. I went to my Office & before day, with the aid of my Office hands, Guilford, Charles & Campbell, stowed about 3/4th of my type & material in the cuddy in the Attic of your Office building, put my job press (the one with a wheel) in Dr. Wilkinson's basement, carried my two desks to my residence & packed my Office books & accts in my trunk, with my clothes, intending to take my trunk with me to Guntersville; where, also, I proposed moving my newspaper press & enough type to continue the publication of my paper. I had obtained from Dr. Burritt the loan of Guilford & his buggy & horse, to take me to Whitesburg, & had hired John

Robinson's wagon, to be ready at a moments notice, to carry down my press, type, paper, ink &c. About 4 A.M., April 11, I went down home to make arrangements there for leaving & ordered breakfast, intending to leave directly after it. About 5 I returned to my Office, expecting to find the newspaper press taken down & type put up ready for shipment, but, on the contrary, found my foreman, Cauthers, had dismissed my hands without taking down the press &c. He excused himself on the ground that it could all be done in an hour, & our scouts would certainly give us that much notice of the enemy's approach--& if the enemy did not come, the setting-up of the press would be a very hard job, which he wished to avoid, if possible. Every one seemed so incredulous of the enemy's approach & so unconcerned that I yielded to the general fatuity--but concluded I would go over to Mr. Fackler's, where Sam Morgan & his two nephews (brothers of Capt. John, wounded at Shiloh) were staying & learn what news a courier from Winchester had brought him. Arriving there, I found all apparently wrapt in sleep & so quiet that I concluded not to arouse them, & returned homeward & just as I turned Pope Walker's corner, I saw great commotion among a number of negroes on the Street as far down as Mr. Erskine's corner--& several running toward me. I accosted the first & he exclaimed--"Dey done come, sir! deys done come!" "Who?" "De Yankees, sir!" "How do you know?" "I seed 'em myself. Dey at the telegraph Office & all over de Square." "Did they have on blue coats?" "Yes, sir." "Well, then, I reckon they are the Yankees"--and I walked quietly back to Fackler's & rang the doorbell violently. Sally Pynchon (nee Fackler) thrust her head & nearly half her body out of an upper window & asked excitedly, "Who's that?" "Mr. Clay--the Yankees are on the Square & have the telegraph office." "Lord have mercy upon us!"--& back she dropped.



Fackler House, 518 Adams Street, now home of the
Dudley Powell family.



William McDowell Home, 517 Adams Street, chosen as
headquarters for General Mitchel, now home
of Randy Schrimsher.

I went into the Street &, seeing Mr. McDowell's Alfred running home, almost breathless & eyes looking as though they wd pop out of the sockets, I told him to run back & tell Guilford to meet me at Coltart's with [page torn] & then go & tell my wife that I was off. "Lord, let me go & tell my master, first, sir!" "Well, go and tell him, first." I waited for him to return & started Bob Fearn's Elliott on the same errands, to ensure their delivery, & walked out toward Coltart's. After crossing Dry Creek, I saw four men riding rapidly down the parallel street toward Coltart's--& thinking they might be Yankees, I stepped into a deep ditch & walked in it till they disappeared & then took the open road for Coltart's. Getting there, I saw Mrs. C., told her the Yankees had the telegraph office & enquired who those men were, dismounted at her well. She reckoned they were the Yankees & I had better run. I ran about 100 yards, having Coltart's house between me & the enemy, & then quietly walked over to North Ala. College, & after waiting awhile there, went into the mountain & soon found myself at old Jimmy Hall's place, between old Andy Drake's place & town, & occupied by a Mr. Crenshaw. I ate breakfast there &, while sitting by the fire after breakfast, in popped A. R. Wiggs ("Hal")--each of us greatly surprised. He knew nothing of the enemy's arrival until after usual breakfast time at Mrs. Fleming's--& then had out his horse & was about leaving when a detachmt of the enemy appeared. He ordered his horse to be put up &, lighting his pipe, walked carelessly along up the Street to the Masonic Hall & down Adams St., dodging into Trotman's to avoid another detachmt of the enemy & made his way through the fields into the mountain. Sam Morgan & one nephew escaped--the other was captured & put on parole. Col. Jno. G. Coltart, slighted [sic] wounded in the heel at Shiloh, & Lieut. Col. Russell, with his left arm broken by a minie ball, were at Old Sammy Coltart's, but left the night before. Old

Sammy had ridden to town to see Robert about sending John's clothes &, on the appearance of the Yankees, rode hurriedly homeward. This caused him to be pursued & captured--&, 'tis said, he was made to take the oath of allegiance, but, it may be, he was only put on his parole. Joe Bradley was aroused from sleep by servants, & then wife & children, clamoring for him to run, for the Yankees were all over the Streets about his house. He succeeded in getting out of town about 12 o'clock M., by slipping from lot to lot. He got to George Beirne's--& the Feds. appearing in the lane between Beirne's & Bob Fearn's, the Beirne girls locked him in the cellar.



George P. Beirne's home, 300 Williams Street, now home of Dr. Eleanor Hutchens.

Getting to Fackler's, a horse was brought to him, & he attempted to get off--but his heart failed him & he returned. Again he started & Feds on horseback appeared about Pope Walker's corner.

He had no alternative but to assume a bold front & move toward them--they turned off--& he went by Lawrence Watkin's to California St. & thence through the fields to the mountain & over the Tenn. River to Buck's. As he passed Jim Ward's, Jim's children halloed--"Run, Mr. Bradley, run! the Yankees'll catch you." He implored them to keep quiet & got off. I met with no refugees but Wiggs in the mountain, but numbers, who were or had been soldiers, found their way out, that day & for several days after. Old Jno. Bell & Zeb Davis made their way on foot, through the Grove, & in a round about way through mud & water, to Whitesburg & over to Buck's--'Tis said, that Bob Brickell & his party sent out as scouts, met the enemy's advance on the brow of a hill unexpectedly, & Bob accosted them--"Gentlemen, you are riding rather late." "Yes--& so are you. Where are you going?" Blanton replied--"We're looking for a fellow that stole a buggy & horse in town & came out this way." "And we are looking for some fellows that stole some States out of the Union, & we think we've found some of them. Turn back with us." So, our scouts, were brought back as prisoners & were released on parole not to leave the town. -- It is most astonishing that 13 or 14 locomotives & a number of cars should have been kept at the Huntsville Depot, with the assurance that the enemy might be expected any day--& that the passenger train from the West, with wounded soldiers & others should have been allowed to come to the Depot without warning, as is said to be the fact. Coincident with these facts are the further facts that the R. R. Superintendent of Transportation at Huntsville, Hooper, is a Pennsylvanian, & the telegraph operators are Yankees. They may be all right, but the coincidences are unfortunate. 'Tis said that when the train was approaching Huntsville, efforts were made by persons, down towards Pinhook, to warn it to go back, the Federals having arrived two hours before, but the conductor & engineer did not heed--perhaps, did

not understand, the warning--& when the train reached the Depot, the engineer, seeing the Feds, attempted to back, but had only 8 lbs. of steam on, & besides, was threatened with sundry Federal guns in dangerous proximity, which, doubtless, exercised some control over his will. -- Four locomotives were fired up at the Machine Shop & started off Eastward, & the Feds rushed to arrest their progress. A negro was ordered to throw a rail on the track, to throw the locomotives off, but Pres. Yeatman, the conductor on the locomotive in front with the engineer, presented a five-shooter at the negro & he allowed them to pass, & 'tis said, they opened every valve & put on all steam & sped, with lightning rapidity almost, heedless of the cannon shot sent after them & striking the single box-car attached. The first locomotive got to Stevenson & prevented the Chattanooga train with a regiment of soldiers--23 Ala. Frank Beck, Colonel--or 20 Ala., J. W. Garrott, Col.--from going down. The other locomotives were captured. -- Wiggs & I remained at Crenshaw's till 1 or 2 o'clock Saturday, April 12--a day & a half--eating & sleeping there, but spending most of our time roaming about the mountain, watching the Feds--mostly Dutch--walking or riding about the fields between us & town. With long range guns, we might have picked some of them off. I got Crenshaw to go to town, on the morning of my arrival at his house, & carry a note to my wife, telling her my whereabouts, & encouraging her with words of advice & comfort, without, however, putting any names in the note--& bidding wife, children, mother, &c. farewell. She was thoughtful enough to send me a heavy pair of pants, which was all the extra clothing, except my great coat, that I had & all I could get, except by borrowing, until I reached Chattanooga, & then I could get nothing but a coarse domestic shirt, with coarse linen or Marseilles, bosom, such as formerly sold for \$1.25, for which I paid \$2.50--& I had to borrow an undershirt from bro. L. & he had to send

telegraph to Lynchburg for it to be sent by Express, there being no such shirts here. My wife sent me word by Crenshaw that two Feds. had called at my house for breakfast, that morning--she gave it to them & they left, thanking her for it & their conduct was unexceptionable. -- Bob Coltart, as mayor was called on by Gen. Mitchell to provide breakfast, in two hours, for 5,000 soldiers (as we were told by several)--otherwise, it would be taken from private houses--& Bob, accordingly (& properly, I think--to prevent private pillage) bought at City expense \$500's worth of bacon, beef, flour, meal &c., for the Vandals--& had them cooked by distribution, I understood. -- Mrs. Pope Walker, who was staying at Gov. Chapman's, was riding on the turnpike to town, on the 11th, (probably fearing to remain in the country) & soldiers jumped upon the box with the driver & behind the carriage, & so frightened her, that she asked them to let her get out. They permitted her to do so & then jumped in the carriage & rode off to town, leaving her on the pike. -- They went to Jos. B. Robinson's, pressed his horses & wagons & carried off all his provender, & killed all his poultry. Some of them rode into town with dead turkies swinging to their saddle bows. -- They went to Mr. Fackler's & asked Mrs. F. where her son, Willie, was. "Thank God, he's in the Southern Army at Corinth." "And where's your son, Calvin," "Thank God, he's there too." -- They arrested Fackler for aiding "rebel soldiers" to escape, & asked him if he had not done so. He said he had & wd. do so again. -- They called for breakfast at Tom White's. It was furnished. Some remark was made about the rye coffee. Mrs. W. told them she gave them what she had for herself. They told her she wd soon be able to get coffee at 15c--& went away, returning with 5 lbs. for her. They asked her if she was not Mrs. Thos. W. White. She said--"Yes, but how did you learn my husband's name?" "Oh, we have a little bird



Thomas White Home, 315 White Street, now home of
Mrs. Jane Scott, descendent of Mrs. White.

about our camp that tells us these things. Where are your sons, Willie & Sandy?" "They are in the Confederate Army in Virginia, & I wish I had 36 more there." -- As some of the Federal cavalry rode by Tom Burton's (living where Lawrie lived) his wife (nee Bel Brandon) ran out, waived a Confederate flag & shouted -- "Hurra for Jeff. Davis & the Southern Confederacy!" They merely tipped her the military salute & passed on. It was very hazardous conduct, however brave, for, besides subjecting herself to danger of insult, her brother--who distinguished himself for bravery in Tracy's Co. at Manassas & was wounded at Shiloh--was then confined with his wound, in the arm or shoulder, I believe, at her house. -- Her Uncle, Jere Clemens, &, also, Nick Davis, I am informed, remain in Huntsville, & drink & get drunk with the "flop-eared Dutch"--&, I'm told, Nick got badly bruised in a drunken brawl with

one of them. -- To drop the relation of--perhaps, tedious--details, on the day after our flight, Wiggs & I sent Crenshaw into town--he sending a note to Mrs. Fleming for his horse, accoutred & saddle-bags with his clothes--& I sending a note to my wife for clothes. Crenshaw went afoot, but took his little son on a mule with a bag of peas--& getting Wigg's saddle bags, placed them in the pea-bag, on the mule, & mounting Wigg's horse, he & his son rode across the Square, where, meeting with Billy McCoy, Billy, in his oracular way, told him the enemy were going to extend their pickets 4 miles into the country & he had better hasten out of town, or he might not be able to get out at all. That very circumstance wd. have placed Crenshaw's house within the Federal lines & then have facilitated his ingress & egress to & from town, but he did not understand it so, & hastened out, & sent my note to my wife by McCoy, & I failed to get my clothes & an answer. I have heard nothing directly from my family or any of our kin since, although I have seen several persons who left Huntsville within 8 or 10 days after; & I have been unable to find any one going to Huntsville, who could bear a letter from me. Wiggs & I left Crenshaw's about 1 or 2 o'clock, Apl. 12--he riding half way, I, the other half, to Jack Esslinger's in the Little Cove. There I borrowed a mule, saddle & bridle, & we rode over to Mr. Bill Robinson's plantation, stayed there that night & went, next day, to Col. Fleming's, where we found the Col., the two Christians, John Young, & a Judge Everett, a Kentuckian, but a refugee from Cincinnati. In the evening late, Erskine Russell & Ned Mastin arrived & told us, the enemy's cavalry were to be over at Vienna, the next day--& then Wiggs, Harry Christian, & I mounted our steeds & crossed Paint Rock, that night, put up at farm-houses at 1 o'clock &, in the morning, crossed the Tennessee to Gunter'sville, where we (Wiggs & I) stayed till the 19th, cut off from mail communications & hearing nothing except from rumor. I, then, left on the

steamer Paint Rock for Chattanooga--or rather Bridgeport--a detachmt. of soldiers having been sent down to take the boat up. I heard there were 3,000 Confederate troops at Bridgeport & the 5 to 7,000 Feds. extended from Stevenson to Tusculumbia, the most of them having crossed the River at Decatur, leaving only 5 or 600 at Huntsville & I wanted the Confederates to re-occupy Huntsville. But Frank Beck had parts of two regiments, about 700 effective men only besides a Company of artillery. -- So I went to Chattanooga, to see Leadbetter, & found that he had only part of another regimt. He & Reynolds, both, requested me to come to Knoxville to represent the state of affairs & seek the sending of 2 or 3 regimts to them, with orders to proceed to Huntsville; but Genl. Smith couldn't spare the forces from E. Tenn. & the Cumberland Gap--& so my mission was fruitless, unless it resulted in Genl. Lee ordering the 30th Ala., Col. Shelby--Lieut Col., Saul Bradford & 31st Ala. Col. Hundley--Lieut. Col. Tom Arrington--to this place. These regmts have arrived. They bring rumors of depredations of the enemy about Huntsville--among others that they have taken 100 of Pope Walker's negroes, 30 of Chapman's mules & some of your negroes, besides committing other depredations on other personal property of yours--what not stated--& some on Father's property, what not stated--& that they had gone to Ben. Patteson's, broken his doors & windows, piano, furniture &c. &c. (eased themselves in his house) & taken horses, provender & everything they could make use of. Brother L. thinks they have mistaken your name for his--& it was not your property but his, because of its proximity to Patteson's. I think accounts are exaggerated if there be any truth in them--for I saw Sam. Moore (Judge) here, week before last, from Jackson Co. & he had seen Dr. Jordan, who told him of the depredations--in part--at Patteson's, but nothing of the seizing of Walker's negroes or Chapman's mules, or interruption of your or Father's

property, whilst he did tell that Chapman was held in custody as a hostage for the good behaviour of the people of Jackson. [page torn] ...Sam Moore came up to get ammunition for troops organizing in Jackson--250 were already armed & ready--to operate against the Federal incursions. He expected to be able to get 1000 men there & in Madison, Marshall &c. he said. Lieut. Col. Pettus told Moore that he had married a niece of Gov. Chapman & liked the old fellow very well, but hoped he wd.n't let Chapman's arrest interfere with the killing of a single Yankee. Pettus says, he wants to be Provost Marshal of Huntsville, when recovered, just to have the pleasure of hanging George Lane.



Judge George W. Lane's home, 511 Adams Street, a strong Union supporter throughout the war, now owned by John M. Shaver.

By the way--I had liked to have forgotten to tell you that Lane sits in the Provost Marshal's

office--& approves or disapproves applications for passports--giving them as to proper persons to be trusted--&, 'tis said, he said that he had been requested (by Mitchell, I suppose) to accept the office of Provost Marshal, & I am told that Sam Browne (acting as State Agent for distributing clothes to Sheffield's Regt. at Gadsden) says Bob. Smith (Jack Fariss's son-in-law) told him a petition (or recommendation) for Judge Lane's appointmt. had been circulated & recd. a number of signatures--among others, Smiths. -- Before leaving Guntersville I learned that two of B. S. Clapp's (of Marshall Co) sons got passports from Huntsville on the recommendation of D. B. Turner, Ben. Jolly & W. B. Figures. I asked Wiggs how far he tho't my recommendation wd. have carried them. He promptly replied -- "To jail." He said he'd bet Figures wd. make money out of the Federal's visit to Huntsville--& I think it likely. I have not heard whether he publishes the Advocate or not, but, if I mistake not, the passports I saw given by the Pro. Mars. at H'v'lle, were printed at his Office. I took Celeste, Comer & Amelia to Atlanta on the 1st May, bro. L. having started, that day, to Cumberland Gap with Genl Smith, the enemy having approached the Gap several thousand in number [page torn] ...Smith & Staff, with Genl Barton's command, some 2 or 3000 strong crossed at Woodson's Gap--between the other two--intending to attack those at Big Creek in the rear, by surprise--while Genl. Stevenson, at Cumberland Gap advanced toward Cumberland Fort with some 2 or 3000 more. Gen. Smith's project failed on acct. of the heavy rain & darkness--so dark they could only follow one another over the mountain by the front men giving a low whistle, which was imitated by all the rest successively to the rear. After passing over the mountain, they lay on the ground without tents (except a fly)--each officer holding his own horse &, after day, returned. Gen. Stevenson succeeded in driving the enemy's pickets over the river,

capturing one & some wagons loaded with telegraph wire & poles, intended to be put up as far as the Cumberland Gap. He destroyed what he captured, except the teams--& returned. The expedition has caused the enemy to retire to London, Ky., spies report. -- Celeste has had ulcerated sore throat, Jno. Comer telegraphs--& night before last, she telegraphed to bro. L. "Comer exceedingly ill, -- come and comfort me." She had previously written that Comer had the scarlet fever. Of course, bro. L. was greatly distressed & left, yesterday morning, for Macon. For want of something better to do, I am engaged as Agent to make contracts for saltpetre for the Confederate Govmt. at \$100 per month, with the understanding that I am to be released as soon as the way is open for my return to Huntsville. I was appointed by Lieut. R. H. Temple, Supt. of 7th Nitre District, which embraces most of the counties of E. Tenn. For the present & probably all the time, Knoxville will be my place of business--& my occupation filling up contracts, writing letters & explaining matters to those desirous of engaging in the manufacture. I have much more to say, but have probably wearied you & must close. Best love to Sister, Cousin Tom & other kin. May God bless us all, rid our country ... [page torn] ...

SOURCE: The original of this letter is housed in the Clay Collection, Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

[Editor's note: J. Withers Clay, whose Huntsville residence was at the corner of Gates and Henry Streets, pursued an adventurous career as a journalist despite the trials and tribulations of wartimes. In order to support a rather large family, he struggled to continue the publication of his newspaper. In October of 1862 he returned to Huntsville and began publication of The Huntsville Confederate. In May 1863 he decided

to publish The Daily Confederate, but with the second occupation of Huntsville in July 1863, he was forced to suspend this operation. After sending his presses to Chattanooga, he published there until August when, under pressure of Union forces, he had to move to Marietta and thence to Dalton, Georgia (often only one step ahead of General Sherman's march) until he finally had to suspend publication for the remainder of the war. As an ardent democrat, he continued the weekly publication of his paper until his death in 1896. After suffering a stroke in 1884, his two daughters, Susanne and Virginia, assumed major responsibility for The Huntsville Democrat and conducted its affairs until its demise in 1919.]

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