

# The Historic Huntsville Quarterly

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Volume 18 | Number 3

Article 2

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9-1-1992

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### Recommended Citation

Jones, Virgil Carrington (1992) "In The Beginning - Danger!," *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*: Vol. 18: No. 3, Article 2.

Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly/vol18/iss3/2>

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# In The Beginning - DANGER !

Rattlesnakes, rather than Indians, caused John Hunt his greatest alarm when he first came to the Big Spring to build his cabin, Anne Royall, early American woman journalist, wrote after a visit to Huntsville in 1818.

Her letter is perhaps the earliest personal record on the settlement of the community. Included in it are many details on this first English settled town in the state.

Hunt's water supply came solely from the immense spring near his cabin. This pool lay amid a mass of rock at the foot of a wooded cliff.

When the pioneer went near the spring, however, his presence was proclaimed from the rocks by rattlers in uncertain numbers. They seemed to be everywhere and he was forced to step with care to avoid their fangs.

These neighbors bothered John. He could outfight or outsmart an Indian, but here was need for some other type of warfare. He scratched his head and pondered deeply until he finally hit upon a plan.

Long canes were hollowed and filled with powder. These were shoved back among the fissures of the rocks and the charge ignited. Weeks of this went by before the settler was able to fill his gourd without the usual greeting from the reptiles.

Only two or three years before the snake-killing experience John Hunt and Andrew Bean, on their way to Alabama from Tennessee, sat quietly on their horses amid a dense thicket and watched a party of Indians pass along a vale below. Andrew had saved them from possible trouble for it had been his eye which had detected the band as it topped a rise nearly two miles distant.

When the Redskins finally disappeared in the distance, Hunt drew from the pocket of his buckskin shirt several bits

of leaf tobacco, crushed them in the palm of his hand and packed a stubby black pipe.

"Tis' here we should have our next vittles, Andrew," he said, producing from his saddlebag a small flint and steel. "The foire we make will loight me poipe."

Together they dismounted. Hunt hung his beaver skin cap upon a nearby limb and started a small fire from wood he had selected with care. The fire burned with an intense heat but gave off only the slightest wisp of smoke.

Equally well acquainted with his fair share of the duties connected with their means among the forest, Bean cut several strips of jerked venison with the large knife he carried in his belt. Scarcely twice during their repast did they speak.

What picturesque pioneers - these two bearded Irishmen! Simple but determined in their actions, honest as the manner in which they lived, their very existence depended upon fearlessness - a characteristic they recognized as a natural attribute.

Hunt, the older of the two, had come from Ireland only a few years before. Standing five feet, ten inches in height, his 180 pounds were a mass of flexible steel. His courage and endurance were immeasurable. He was fond of hardships, adventure and daring, but he was valued most among those early frontiersmen for his caution.

His companion, a single man, was no less an outstanding pioneer, and was noted for his courage. His friendly Irish eyes, set in a sandy head above a tall and lithe frame, reminded one of a smile, and did little to indicate that he was as active and stealthy as an Indian.

