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DRAKE, ROBERTSON, AND BROOKS BURIAL PLOT

FRONT ROW: THOMAS P. ROBERTSON, ANNIE BUELL DRAKE ROBERTSON, W. P. ROBERTSON
BACK ROW: P. HOLMES DRAKE & JAMES PERRY DRAKE
GENERAL W. T. H. BROOKS, AND JAMES DRAKE BROOKS
A Huntsville Family: Drake, Robertson, and Brooks

PHYLISS O'CONNELL

A repaired white cross in Section 9, Row 10, of Maple Hill Cemetery begins the fascinating story of a Huntsville family:

DRAKE: P. Holmes Drake, born June 18, 1812 – died Feb. 11, 1892 James Perry Drake, born in Robinson Co., NC Sept 15, 1797 – died in Huntsville, AL, Aug 12, 1876


Annie Buell Drake Robertson, the last member of her family to be buried in this plot, begins the history of this family. Mrs. Robertson was a “beloved and a distinguished lady (of Huntsville).” In 1904 she gave the Confederate memorial shaft located in the CSA Unknown Soldiers enclosure of Maple Hill Cemetery. She was an Honorary Life President of the Virginia Clay Clopton UDC Chapter. She knitted for our WWI soldiers with the same needles used for knitting for soldiers in the War Between the States. Mrs. Robertson donated silver and table linen to help furnish the dining room in the Madison County Courthouse used by CSA veterans. Mrs. Robertson was a member of the League of Women Voters and an ardent supporter of women’s suffrage. In 1895 Mrs. Robertson and other prominent Huntsville ladies sponsored and entertained Susan B. Anthony and Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt. Mrs. Robertson’s obituary states “having no surviving children of her own, her
tender heart prompted the adoption of a son and daughter" and lists only two “surviving nieces, Mrs. Leva McClung of El Paso, TX and Mrs. Madge McClung Russell of Louisville.”

Beside Annie Drake Robertson lies her husband Thomas Paul Robertson. The Huntsville Democrat published his obituary which read “…died January 17, 1886…son of the late Parson Robertson…he leaves a bereaved wife.”

Thomas was the son of John Murray Robertson, an Episcopal minister who moved to Huntsville from Cambridge, Maryland. He was the rector of the Church of the Nativity during the Civil War while Union forces occupied Huntsville. The Federals (Union) ordered him to stop praying for the President of the Confederacy and to pray, as formerly, for the President of the United States while conducting services. He refused and was made prisoner; but still continued to pray for the President of the Confederacy.

He enlisted in the Confederate Army and served under Generals Wheeler and Ewell, and was taken prisoner in 1864 and condemned to death for being a spy but escaped and returned to his unit.

The Madison County, Alabama, 1880 census, confirms a natural son, W. P. Robertson, who died in 1889, age 15 years, and rests in the family plot.

An obelisk marks the graves of P. (Priscilla) Holmes Drake and James Perry Drake, the parents of Annie Buell Drake Robertson. James Perry Drake was born in Robeson (Robinson) County, North Carolina, to Albrittain Drake and Ruth Collins of Edgecombe and Nash Counties, North Carolina and Muhlenburg County, Kentucky.

Albrittain Drake had served in the American Revolution from Nash County, North Carolina, as a Private and Lieutenant and was one of the Nash County Company of Light Horse which escorted the Governor of North Carolina to Fayetteville, frequently encountering Tories.

Both Albrittain and his father were taken prisoner in a skirmish but later released.

Ruth Collins Drake received her husband’s Revolution War Pension from 1843 until her death in Muhlenburg County, Kentucky in 1847.

When Silas Drake, a son, applied on May 9, 1851 for his father’s pension on behalf of himself and his seven brothers and sisters—the pension was allowed.

James Perry Drake and George L. Kinnard, a surveyor, were early land developers and speculators and co-founders of the city of Lebanon, Indiana.
in Boone County, Indiana. Upon learning of the planned organization of Boone County, they purchased 3 tracts of land near the geographic center of the “new” county, knowing that this location would be the most likely site for the county seat. With the land acquired they set about platting a town of over 19 blocks surrounding a town square.

Kinnard surveyed a road from Indianapolis to Lafayette with an “expedient eight block jog” to Lebanon’s Main Street before continuing to Lafayette. In 1832 the Indiana General Assembly agreed to the county seat being within 2 miles of the county’s geographic center. Drake and Kinnard, to insure their property’s selection, donated every third lot, the town square, an additional 40 acres and furnished, at NO cost, the bricks and shingles for the original courthouse.11

James Perry Drake was a prominent Indiana lawyer and served as the Indiana State Treasurer from 1850-1853.12 Drake’s war record consisted of service in the Marion County, Indiana, militia to include the Black Hawk War (1832) and the Mexican War where he mustered in June 20, 1846, 1st Regiment, Co H, Indiana Volunteer Infantry. He mustered out 1847 in New Orleans with the rank of Colonel.13

He married Priscilla Holmes Buell in Dearborn County, Indiana, January 23, 1831.14 Priscilla’s family roots were in New York, Ohio and Connecticut.

Upon the death of Priscilla’s brother and sister-in-law, she and James reared and educated their nephew, Don Carlos Buell, later to become a U.S. General in the War Between the States and noted as the Commander of the Army of Ohio at the battle of Shiloh.15

The Drake’s only son, James P. Drake, Jr., died in Tennessee from a lingering illness in 1862. Family tradition says Priscilla and her daughters were pro-North and James and son James, Jr. were pro-South. Priscilla filed for a pension February 8, 1887, residing in Tennessee, as the widow of James P. Drake for his service as a Colonel in the 1st Indiana Volunteers (Mexican War).16

The two remaining graves in this family plot belong to Priscilla and James Drake’s daughter and Annie’s sister, Almyrce/Alme Drake.17 She married bachelor U.S. General William Thomas Harbaugh Brooks who came to Union-occupied Huntsville, after resigning his commission in 1864, to restore his health. Brooks also served in the Seminole War (1842-43), the Mexican War, various Indian battles on the frontier and is noted as the
commander of the First Division, VI Corps, at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville in 1863. In Maple Hill Cemetery Phase One, he is listed as "one of two of 587 Union (U.S.) generals buried in a former Confederate state." Their only child, James Drake Brooks, age 13 months, rests with his family. This article gives a brief family history of a small plot in Maple Hill filled with romance, heartache, war, shrewd business acumen, public service and devotion to ideals and country.

ENDNOTES

2 *The Huntsville Times*, February 13, 1930, Obituary for Mrs. Annie Buell Drake Robertson.
4 Elizabeth Humes Chapman, *Changing Huntsville 1890-1899*, 27-29. Susan B. Anthony is noted for helping organize the women’s suffrage movement in the U.S. and was instrumental in the passage of legislation leading to the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. Carrie (Lane) Chapman Catt noted as an organizer and lecturer in the women’s suffrage movement in the United States, Canada and Europe. She founded the (National) League of Women Voters in 1919, one year before the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified.
5 *The Huntsville Times*, February 13, 1930 Ibid.
6 *The Huntsville Democrat*, January 27, 1886, Obituary for Thomas P. Robertson
8 1870 Madison County, AL Census for Thomas (Paul) Robertson; 1880 Madison County, AL Census for Thomas (Paul) Robertson.
10 American Revolution War Record of Albrittain Drake (Pensioned and widow’s pension); also *Daughters of the American Revolution Patriot In-
11 Internet site: http://Bccn.boone.in.us/lebanon/history.html, History, City of Lebanon (Boone County) Indiana

12 1850 Marion County, Indiana, Census in ibid; Otto A. Rothert, ibid.


14 Mexican War Index to Pension Files 1886-1926, Vol. 3, Ibid.


16 Mexican War Index to Pension Files 1886-1926, Vol. 3, Ibid.

17 1850 Marion County, Indiana, Census; 1860 Marion County, Indiana, Census for James P. Drake.

18 Internet site: http/Aztecclub.com/toc; American Council of Learned Societies: Diane Robey, et. al.