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Madison County*

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Back Matter

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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News and Notes

Examples of Episodes from the Real People, Real History Project and Huntsville High School's Tenth Grade Class

As part of the History Channel's *Saving Our History* grant, the tenth grade classes of Diane Blocker and Amber Hall at Huntsville High School recently contributed to the newly developed website for the *Real People, Real History: Madison County and the Civil War* project. High school students in conjunction with UAHuntsville undergraduate and graduate students worked to write 500-word episodes that described a person, place, event, or idea that existed in Madison County during the Civil War. This project will serve as the foundation for the larger sesquicentennial commemorations of the Civil War in 2011 and beyond. These students used historical research and writing skills to build episodes, that once linked together on the project's website, will create a narrative history of the Civil War five hundred words at a time. No professional historians involved, minus me, to alter or change the direction of a history written by people like you. Although we are still working on the website you can visit it and see what has been done so far at www.uah.edu/realhistory. This site has been "seeded" with over fifty episodes written by high school students and will be opened for those interested in history to contribute their research and writing as part of a collective history. This is your website so please use it and contribute your knowledge in preparation for remembering the Civil War. The following episodes are examples of what the high school students have created so far. Hope you enjoy the hard work and the interest the next generation is showing in history.

Occupation of Huntsville

Huntsville was a lively city before its Occupation. Some of the important buildings in Huntsville during 1860 were the bank, the courthouse, and the Masonic Lodge. The bank helped fund farms to flourish their plantations and farms. The courthouse was the center of all the county and city governmental affairs. The Masonic Lodge was formed by the intellectuals of the city; many people went to its meetings. When the war began most people in Huntsville were supporters of the Union. Huntsville did not want to secede, but Madison County wanted to, so Huntsville was forced to.

The Battle of Shiloh was one of the turning points in the beginning of the Civil War. Although Shiloh could have been a major victory for the Confederacy, it was a devastating defeat. With the great number of lives taken, it proved to both the Confederacy and the Union it was going to be a long fought war. 23,746 men were killed in this battle, 10,694 Confederate soldiers and 13,047 Union soldiers. The battle took place on April 6-7, 1862 at Pittsburg Landing where Grant had established his army of west Tennessee. There, they waited for Johnston. Early the next morning on April 6, Johnston launched a surprise attack on the Union army. Then reacting to the attack, Sherman's division bombarded the Confederates leaving them with heavy casualties. In response, Johnston attacked Sherman's left flank by sending five brigades. Sherman then fell back on McClellan's division.

After fighting a two day battle, The Confederacy retired from the field surrendering to the Union. The Union army reclaimed possession of the field and the bivouac. Then, Mitchell headed to Chattanooga, Tennessee and to Huntsville, Alabama. The battle of Shiloh made it easier for the Union army to occupy Huntsville. On April 11th 1862 Ormsby Macknight Mitchell, better known as O. M. Mitchell, took over Huntsville, Alabama. Mitchell was born in Kentucky in 1809. He went to the United States Military Academy. There he excelled in mathematics and graduated 15th out of 56 students in his class. After he graduated he became an astronomer. He was married to Louisa Mitchell. This was the end of the Occupation of Huntsville. In July of 2

1862 he was named Commander of The Department of The South. In April, after the victory in Southwest Tennessee and occupying Chattanooga, he decided to invade Huntsville. He led his troops from Shelbyville in a surprising manner. He took Huntsville without a shot being fired or a man dying. He also captured 200 soldiers without incident. On 320 Church Street, there is the Memphis and Charleston Depot home to a very important train during the Civil War. This was the train taken by General Mitchell and his Union soldiers. They used the train for capturing the Confederate soldiers. The train was transferring some wounded soldiers, some going to their home, and others, who had been on furlough, rejoining their regiments. The Union entered at daybreak, first taking possession of the railroad and some 15 engines. The train endeavored to make its escape, but the Union responded by firing cannons into it. One fireman was severely wounded and all passengers were taken as prisoners. The healthy soldiers were confined in the depot house and wounded soldiers remained on the cars of the train.

During the invasion the Union captured many things such as, 200 prisoners, 15 locomotives, and large amounts of box platforms. Since then, the train has been refurbished. Next, the telegraph office and post office were captured. Wounded soldiers quartered in town and the prominent citizens and refugees escaped during the day. After the attack General Mitchell allowed some women from the college to nourish and treat their soldiers.

The Huntsville *Democrat*

“Unawed by the influence of the rich or the great, the people must be heard and their rights vindicated”

-Democrat motto

The Huntsville Democrat was one of many Confederate newspapers in antebellum Alabama. On October 18, 1823, Phillip Woodson founded the newspaper in Huntsville, Alabama. There he edited, owned, and wrote for it for thirty-three years until October 28, 1856. The Huntsville Democrat was an emancipation newspaper that was published weekly and
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geographically covered Madison County, Alabama. Some other authors of the newspaper were William B. Long, John Withers Clay, and Thomas J. Sumner.

The newspaper came into the possession of John Withers Clay in the year of 1859. In 1862, Huntsville was occupied by Union troops and the name of the paper changed to The Huntsville Confederate due to hostilities from the Unionists. The first publication of this paper was October 8, 1862. Under J. Withers Clay, the paper was warped from an emancipation newspaper to a southern sympathizer. It was one of many southern advocate papers.

Given that Huntsville became occupied by Union troops during Clay's edition, the newspaper caused uproar and Clay packed up the printing press and its supplies and moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee. There it ran by the name of Daily Huntsville Confederate from July 21 to August 18, 1863. Volume one, number one of this paper was published on May 18, 1863. It used the M&C Railroad, which was highly significant to the Confederacy at the time. The railroad was used to send the printed papers back to Madison County, AL. From September 1 to December 24, 1863, Daily Huntsville Confederate was published in Marietta, Georgia, and from January 23 to February 16, 1864, it was located in Dalton, GA. From 1884 to 1911, J. Withers Clay's daughter, Virginia Clementine Clay was the newspaper editor. J. Withers Clay died in 1911 and the paper stopped being published in 1919.

Cotton

Northern Alabama is composed of the Tennessee Valley Counties: Lauderdale County, Limestone County, Madison County, Jackson County, Colbert County, Lawrence County, Morgan County and Marshall County. Most of these counties have large amounts of limestone. Limestone is made of fossilized rock and is full of calcite. It has minerals that fertilize the soil so that the crops, such as cotton, flourish there. In order for cotton to be grown in an area it needs a long hot season and plenty of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium in the soil. The Tennessee Valley Counties were the largest producers of cotton in the mid 1800's. In the South, "cotton was king". The search for land to grow cotton attracted the first settlers into Alabama's river valleys. Cotton attracted many pioneers, families, traders, and merchants.

In 1815 there were five cotton gins running in the city of Huntsville. Eli Whitney, the third best know inventor in America, invented the cotton gin in 1794. Two of the most prominent mills in the area were the Dallas Mills Manufacturing Company, which had a capital stock of \$500,000, and the Huntsville Cotton mill Company, which had a capital stock of \$140,000. Even though the production of cotton was getting better, slavery was getting worse. Field owners used slaves to pick cotton and tent to the cotton fields.

The early cotton economy that started in North Alabama centered around Huntsville. Cotton also created the two dominate labor systems: Slavery and Sharecropping. Here are some factory prices in 1862:

Pounds	Price
400lb.	\$0.50
500lb.	\$0.62 ½
600lb.	\$0.75
700lb.	\$0.87 ½
800lb.	\$1.00
900lb.	\$1.12 ½
1000lb.	\$1.25

(A bale of cotton weighs 500lb.)

Once the Civil War started, it immediately affected the south in the form of high taxes on cotton. For example, the federal government put a tax of \$5 per bale of cotton, and later raised prices again, adding an outrageous \$15 per bale. The tax was repealed by the United States Congress in 1867. The South could not buy manufactured goods without growing cotton at a profit. The Boll weevil (*Anthonomus Grandis*) is an insect that is notorious for destroying cotton crops. It caused the production of cotton to go down in the South. Because of this, the South was forced to surrender to the North in the Civil War. The travesty helped the Southern farmers realized that they could not depend on cotton crops as their sole source of income, which lead to the production of soy bean, corn, and peanut crops. The Bollweevil was so important to the South that a monument was dedicated in its honor in Enterprise, Alabama. This monument was built in Italy and shipped over seas. The unveiling of this great

The Huntsville Historical Review Editorial Policy

The Huntsville Historical Review, a biyearly journal sponsored by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, is the primary voice of the local history movement in northern Alabama. This journal reflects the richness and diversity of Madison County and North Alabama. Although this publication focuses on local history, it should be remembered that our past has connections with state, regional, national, and international histories. In an effort to build on past traditions and continue to improve the *Review*, an editorial policy will be implemented to guide contributors who wish to submit manuscripts, book reviews, or notes.

Manuscript Preparation and Submission

- Please submit an electronic copy of your article or book review to john.kvach@uah.edu or send it to:
Dr. John Kvach
407 Roberts Hall
University of Alabama in Huntsville
Huntsville, AL 35899

Review Content and Style

- In matters of form and style, the *Review* follows the fourteenth or fifteenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*
- Please use footnotes, not endnotes, as the preferred citation method in full articles.
- Manuscripts should be in 12-point font and in Times New Roman.

Book Review

Please limit your book review to topics relevant to local, state, or southern history. A good review should clearly and concisely describe the nature, scope, and thesis of a book that would be relevant to Madison County history. Emphasis on local and regional history will be given in order to help readers expand and

contextualize their knowledge. Your review should be helpful to the general reader interested in Madison County or North Alabama. Here are some good rules to follow when writing a book review:

- Your first obligation in a book review is to explain the subject of the book and the author's central thesis or main points.
- Your second obligation is to evaluate how successfully the author has made his/her point. Is the author's argument reasonable, logical, and consistent?
- Your third obligation is to set the book into a broader context. If you can, place the book into a wider context by looking at broader issues.
- Your fourth obligation is to render a judgment on the value of the book as a contribution to historical scholarship.

News and Notes Submissions

Please keep your submissions limited to 250 words and please include contact information if you are making an inquiry or asking a question. The editor has the right to change or delete wording or information.

Little Reminders . . . Good Writing Rules

- Write in the active voice.
- Write in the past tense.
- Cast your sentences in the positive
- Topic sentences should be clear and straightforward statements of what the paragraph is about. Every sentence in a paragraph should work to explain the topic sentence.
- Write in the third person.

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