

Huntsville Historical Review

Volume 40 | Number 1

Article 1

4-1-2015

The Huntsville Historical Review, Vol. 40, No. 1, Spring-Summer 2015

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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Recommended Citation

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society (2015) "The Huntsville Historical Review, Vol. 40, No. 1, Spring-Summer 2015," *Huntsville Historical Review*. Vol. 40: No. 1, Article 1.
Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/huntsville-historical-review/vol40/iss1/1>

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: The Huntsville Historical Review, Vol. 40, No. 1, Spring-Summer 2

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“Huntsville Female College”

*Published By
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President's Page

As my two-year term as president comes to an end, I take my place among other past presidents who have served over the last 50-plus years. While my term will soon be forgotten by others who come after me, it is an honor to be trusted, even for a short time, with the direction of our organization.

I've learned that, while most people sit back quietly and appreciate our history, a threat to a beloved landmark will transform those people into activists eager to picket City Hall. I've received phone calls with questions that have no answers. I've been asked to help save property from the clutches of eminent domain by declaring that it contains historic trees. If the number of phone calls I receive are any indication, I've discovered that this organization offers an important service that no one else can provide.

Get involved in our fascinating history. You get out of it more than what you put in, and it will educate you, dazzle you, and inspire you to learn more. Even better, it puts you in contact with like-minded individuals who will further enrich your life.

Jacque Reeves
President

TABLE OF CONTENTS

From Mussels to Motorboats:
Dittos Landing Place in History,
by Drew Graham 1

The Culture Club,
by Brittney Carnell..... 28

From Mussels to Motorboats: Dittos Landing Place in History By Drew Graham

War, famine, drought, and any number of other circumstances can drive people away from a given location. Over a long period of time, the odds grow quite high that at least one of these circumstances might arise and drive off the resident population. However, sometimes a location maintains its importance through the years. At least one such place exists in Madison County, Alabama. The name of this place changed over the course of time, but today locals know this spot along the Tennessee River as Ditto's Landing. Few people know of its long history of use and its centrality to the area's early history. In fact, TVA archeological digs showed the use of the area reaches back thousands of years.¹ People have used this piece of land along the river as a place to live, a source of livelihood, or just a place to live it up. The area known as Ditto's Landing once existed as a place populated by piles of rocks and shells and soon people will transform it into a land of zip lines and rental cabins.

The earliest signs of life around Ditto's Landing lay along the modern-day Whitesburg Bridge, the mouth of the Flint River, and Hobbs Island. The Whitesburg Bridge site, consisted mostly of shell middens.² Shell middens are layers

¹ Francis Roberts Thesis, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Alabama at Huntsville), 7.

² W. Webb and D. DeJarnette, "The Whitesburg Bridge Site M_A^V 10," *Alabama Museum of Natural History*, Museum Paper 24 (1948), 14.

of shells in the ground left behind by people who ate mussels and tossed the shells into a pile long ago. Cultural material here pointed to a very early form of North American civilization.³ Some of these signs included fire pits, fired clay hearths, and burials.⁴ Archeologists also found tools like spatulas, arrowheads, hoes, fish hooks, and an assortment of other small pieces.⁵ The Whitesburg Bridge site and the Flint River site showed a lot of similarity.⁶ The Flint River site also featured a number of shell middens and many of the same landmarks and tools.⁷ The author of the archeological study found it easier to list what the Flint River site uncovered different from the Whitesburg Bridge site, and the most notable object was a set of pearl beads.⁸ One of the floods this site saw chased away one settlement and it took time before a new one established itself.⁹ This demonstrates that the location showed a great deal of value to the shell midden people. Though not very large, a number of sites existed on Hobbs Island. Many of the artifacts found on Hobbs Island lined up with those found in the Whitesburg Bridge and Flint River sites.¹⁰ Some of the sites revealed signs of a different, later culture but most of them

³ Ibid., 16.

⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵ Ibid., 22-25, 31, 37.

⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁷ W. Webb and D. DeJarnette, "The Flint River Site M_A⁰48," *Alabama Museum of Natural History*, Museum Paper 23 (1948), 29-30.

⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰ W. Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," *Bureau of American Ethnology*, Bulletin 122 (1939), 89-90.

demonstrated some cultural continuity.¹¹ All of these locations demonstrated that the people of this time period along the Tennessee River, and by extension Ditto's Landing, shared a similar culture.¹²

Through some of the artifacts they left behind, archeologists managed to piece together some of their culture. Some discoveries revealed their everyday lives. We know they cooked some of their food using very hot, smooth river pebbles and likely hunted with the assistance of an atlatl.¹³ Archeologists inferred a few cultural beliefs as well. They likely believed that their canine companions vital to their lifestyle, as they received a proper burial. However, they probably thought themselves above their animals because they buried them separately from people.¹⁴ The shell midden people likely believed in the importance of receiving a proper burial. They practiced a very specific burial pattern that utilized their bowls as a kind of death mask.¹⁵ Archeologists also discovered evidence connecting these people to a wider pre-Colombian, Southeastern North American culture. Some common symbolism helped make this link. For example, on Hobbs Island archeologists discovered a pyramid mound and a four-world-quarter cross

¹¹ Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," 187.

¹² Webb and DeJarnette, "The Flint River Site M_A^O48," 12.

¹³ Webb and DeJarnette, "The Whitesburg Bridge Site M_A^V10," 18, 27; Webb and DeJarnette, "The Flint River Site M_A^O48," 48-49.

¹⁴ Webb and DeJarnette, "The Whitesburg Bridge Site M_A^V10," 18; Webb and DeJarnette, "The Flint River Site M_A^O48," 35.

¹⁵ Webb and DeJarnette, "The Whitesburg Bridge Site M_A^V10," 20, 25-27; Flint site 35

symbol which can both be found at the Moundville site near Tuscaloosa.¹⁶ Fluted projectile points found on site pointed to a Clovis culture connection.¹⁷ The Tennessee River, and by extension Ditto's Landing, possibly started a couple cultural trends as well. The Woodland culture emerged around this area and proceeded to spread outward.¹⁸ At the Flint River site archeologists discovered a deer-antler headdress made from the top of a deer's skull with the antlers still attached. Archeologists have uncovered precious few artifacts of this sort and this old, if any. This headdress might represent the beginning of a religious ceremony or belief that provided the cultural background for Adens and Ohio Hopewell cultures. The Ohio Hopewell culture once made similar headdresses with copper and came into existence many years after these shell midden people at Ditto's Landing.¹⁹ These cultural trends demonstrated that Ditto's Landing represented both a long used tract of land and an important place in the cultural history of the region. However, they found something else at one of these sites, on Hobbs Island: evidence of the later Muskogean peoples.²⁰

The term "Muskogean" referred to a Southeastern language family that included Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw.²¹ These people lived in

¹⁶ Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," 85, 185-186.

¹⁷ Mark Cole, "Clovis." Email. 4/3/2015.

¹⁸ Webb and DeJarnette, "The Flint River Site M_A^O48," 21.

¹⁹ Ibid., 64-65.

²⁰ Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," 186-187.

²¹ J. Scancerelli and H. Hardy, "Native Languages of the Southeastern United States," *University of Nebraska Press*,

the areas surrounding Ditto's Landing as the seventeenth century rolled around. At first these tribes shared the land around Ditto's Landing for hunting and gathering purposes.²² However, during this time two important, unsettling events occurred: the arrival of the Shawnee and the arrival of the Europeans.²³ Prior to the arrival of the Shawnee, Ditto's Landing the general region around it went largely unoccupied as tribes shared it as a hunting ground. As the Shawnee arrived, they pushed South into and past Nashville.²⁴ These actions upset the balance of power in the area, and as such the Shawnee crossed both the Chickasaw and the Cherokee simultaneously. The combined might of the Chickasaw and Cherokee proved too much for the Shawnee and they abandoned the area. This left the Chickasaw and Cherokee with an interesting situation, as they each felt they owned the rights to the recently abandoned land.²⁵

The arrival of the Europeans also greatly unsettled the Native American power balance around Ditto's Landing. The arrival of the Spanish put the Chickasaw on edge, as the Chickasaw mistrusted them.²⁶ The English managed to place themselves on the bad side of the Cherokee. The Iroquois Confederacy placed a claim on the already contested Tennessee Valley, and Ditto's Landing by

<http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Native-Languages-of-the-Southeastern-United-States,671806.aspx>

²² Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 39.

²³ Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," 167-181.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

extension, and the British recognized this claim.²⁷ On top of all this, Europeans settling in the Southeast began to push the Cherokee and Chickasaw into closer quarters.²⁸ All of these conditions combined to create a violent situation. The Cherokee fought wars with the Iroquois Confederation and the Chickasaw. The Cherokee war with the Iroquois Confederation rose over the British acknowledgement of the Iroquois land claim in the Tennessee Valley. The Cherokee tended to doggedly protect land they saw as theirs and the Tennessee Valley was no different.²⁹ The Cherokee fought the Iroquois long enough to where the Iroquois no longer thought the land was worth it.³⁰ The Cherokee and Chickasaw war resulted more from European land pressure. The Chickasaw constantly found themselves bogged down in some kind of hostilities and as such tended to live tightly packed together for safety purposes.³¹ However, some moved away from this, likely because they hoped to find some peace. Those Chickasaw settled around the mouth of the Flint River and on Hobbs Island. However, back then and for a long time thereafter those areas were named Old Chickasaw Fields and Chickasaw Island respectively.³² This settlement lasted from four to seven years, but their

²⁷ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 40.

²⁸ Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," 171.

²⁹ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 40-44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

³¹ Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," 171.

³² Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 46.

very presence in that land irritated the Cherokee since they claimed the land. The Cherokee and Chickasaw fought a war that went poorly for both sides. Ultimately the Chickasaw won the war, but such a pyrrhic victory led the Chickasaw outpost to abandon Ditto's Landing.³³ Thus the land went back to a shared hunting arrangement. This left both sides uneasy about the deal and paved the way for general conflict in the area during much of the eighteenth century.³⁴ Both the Chickasaw and the Cherokee maintained their claims to the land. This eventually caused headaches for the British and United States governments, because in order to force land concessions they had to strike a deal with both tribes.³⁵ Both governments preferred to expand peacefully, but the incessant stream of settlers to this very fertile land made avoiding conflict with the natives rather unlikely.³⁶

The incredible fertility of the land in North Alabama attracted numerous settlers to the area, even before doing so became technically legal. Ditto's Landing fell into that category, and the use of this land would soon change permanently. Following the American Revolution a man and his family slowly made their way South. They moved from Pennsylvania, to Maryland, and then to North Carolina.³⁷ In North Carolina, his Tory past caught up to him somewhat and he applied for a pardon in

³³ Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," 172-173.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁵ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 49.

³⁶ Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," 174.

³⁷ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box 2, File 8, 3-5.

1782.³⁸ Afterward, he moved down to South Carolina, where he found legal trouble.³⁹ He eventually moved his family out to the promising lands to the West and in 1802 James “John” Ditto, his wife, and six of his seven children became the first white settlers in what eventually became Madison County, Alabama. Ditto and his family first settled at Big Spring, which would eventually become the centerpiece of Huntsville. A couple of years later Ditto moved his family from Big Spring out to the place on the Tennessee River that came to bear his name.⁴⁰

After setting up his family’s new home, Ditto started trading with the local Native American tribes. He settled along an old Native American trail and set up his trading post on Chickasaw (Hobbs) Island. Next Ditto established a ferry, a dock, and a dockyard finishing in approximately 1807. Ditto’s Landing became the only stop on the Tennessee River between the perilous Muscle Shoals and Chattanooga. Ditto used this to his advantage and built flat-bottomed boats designed to make it across Muscle Shoals.⁴¹ Soon others joined the Ditto family in moving to North Alabama. The Madison County census taken prior to the 1809 land sales revealed 2,545 people now lived in Madison

³⁸ “Ditto’s Landing Research.” Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box 2, File 1.

³⁹ “Ditto’s Landing Research.” Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box 2, File 6.

⁴⁰ “Ditto’s Landing Research.” Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 7.

⁴¹ “Ditto.” Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Vertical Files.

County.⁴² Much of this growth occurred in nearby Huntsville, and Huntsville came to see Ditto's Landing as essential to its livelihood.

Unfortunately for James "John" Ditto and his family, he failed to find much success in the business world and possessed very little. Even the land he called home fell outside of his ownership. The Ditto family settled the land of their own volition and without the consent, or payment to, the federal government. This made them squatters. So Leroy Pope stayed well within his right when he purchased the land in 1812.⁴³ Still, Pope allowed the Ditto family to continue living on and working the land they settled. Unknowingly, this set Ditto, and his landing, up for a role in a major national event.

In 1812 war broke out between the United States and the British and Native American tribes played key roles in the conflict. The Creeks claimed and lived in lands that compose part of Alabama for a long time. In fact, the Muskogean people who settled Hobbs Island were likely Creek ancestors.⁴⁴ The Creeks, long pressured for their lands by white settlers, split into two factions: Lower Creeks and Upper Creeks. Lower Creeks accommodated the growing white presence in the area and began assimilating into that culture. Upper Creeks, called Red Sticks because of their bright red war clubs, wanted to remain separate from white people, resented their encroachment, and believed

⁴² N. Shapiro, "Ditto's Landing," Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, *A History of Early Settlement: Madison County Before Statehood 1808-1819* (2008), 77.

⁴³ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 6, 5-6.

⁴⁴ Shapiro, "Ditto's Landing," 80.

their people should stick to the traditional ways. This division birthed the Creek Civil War, which happened to embed itself into the War of 1812. The Upper Creek sided with England while the Lower Creek joined the United States. The United States sent General Andrew Jackson, the eventual President, to squash the Upper Creek uprising and equipped him with a mixed force of Tennessee troops and Native American tribes. Jackson would eventually win, but he first needed to move his forces across the Tennessee River to get to the Upper Creeks.⁴⁵ Jackson identified Ditto's Landing as the ideal place to cross the Tennessee River. Ditto wrote a letter to Jackson and attempted to work out terms of both pay and labor. In the letter Ditto demonstrated the capability to read and write, but showed he lacked much formal education.⁴⁶ Before the entire force crossed Jackson sent ahead a scouting unit, some picked from the famed Tennessee Volunteers made famous today by the University of Tennessee football team. Davy Crockett went on this scouting trip as one of those selected from the Tennessee Volunteers. This scouting unit took the path the larger force eventually took: using the ferry at Ditto's Landing.⁴⁷ Not long after followed Jackson's main force, and one of his subordinates, Coffee, set up

⁴⁵ "Using Primary Sources in the Classroom: Creek Indian War, 1813-1814 Introduction," *Alabama Department of Archives and History*, 3/3/2010, <http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/creekwar/creek.htm>

⁴⁶ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 4.

⁴⁷ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 12.

camp on the bank opposite of Ditto's Landing.⁴⁸ By crossing at Ditto's Landing, Jackson's forces avoided an added seventy miles through dense woods to the next crossing, something the soldiers certainly appreciated!⁴⁹

Hosting Andrew Jackson and Davy Crockett thrust Ditto's Landing into national importance. While this was the last time Ditto's Landing commanded national attention, regionally Ditto's Landing maintained its importance and continued to develop. For the people who lived in the area, life went on. In 1815 Joseph and Susannah Anderson divorced. This divorce showed two aspects worth noting. First, Susannah Anderson's maiden name was Ditto. Second, and more interestingly, the divorce required an act of the Territorial Government to go through.⁵⁰ This shows the Territorial Government possessed a wide range of powers and certainly could influence someone's daily life. As Huntsville grew, Ditto's Landing grew in importance. A great deal of the goods and supplies from the North came through Ditto's Landing, as well as the cotton headed south.⁵¹ So much of the goods for Huntsville came through Ditto's Landing that the Territorial Government

⁴⁸ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 256.

⁴⁹ S. Doyle, "During War of 1812, Ditto Landing namesake ferried Andrew Jackson, Davy Crockett across Tennessee River," *AL.com*, 3/9/2015, http://www.al.com/news/huntsville/index.ssf/2015/03/who_knew_during_war_of_1812_di.html#incart_river

⁵⁰ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box 1, letters.

⁵¹ Shapiro, "Ditto's Landing," 76; Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 438.

passed a law in 1816 that provided a flour inspector. The inspector marked the barrels of flour based on their quality and charged six and one-fourth cents for the inspection, all of which the law specified.⁵² Realistically though, this Flour inspector checked most goods that came through and not just flour.⁵³ Leroy Pope, who owned the land, decided he wanted to cash out on this particular investment. Pope sold the land to John Brahan, of Brahan Springs Park in Huntsville, who finished paying for the land and received the deed in 1817.⁵⁴

Brahan likely saw this as a fantastic investment based on how much Huntsville grew and how much business Ditto's Landing received. Then 1819 rolled around and spoiled the plans of many people. In Madison County this year made itself synonymous with an economic crash. Cotton prices plummeted and banks instituted deflationary policies. People tied their money up with land and everyone owed everyone else within the community. People started to call in their debts so they could pay off other debts. The economy fell apart around these people and many lost their land holdings, selling off land to pay off debtors.⁵⁵ Brahan possibly found himself caught up in this unfortunate situation. While nothing seemed to explicitly state this, some signs presented themselves. For months Brahan placed ads in the *Alabama Republican*, a local paper, calling for

⁵² "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box 1, Trade and Commerce.

⁵³ Shapiro, "Ditto's Landing," 76.

⁵⁴ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 3.

⁵⁵ D. Dupre, *Transforming the Cotton Frontier, Madison County, Alabama, 1800-1840* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 50-55.

anyone who owed him money to come by and settle the account. He placed at least two separate ads dated January 30th and April 24th in 1819.⁵⁶ This sets well with one of the running themes of Madison County during the Panic of calling in debts. Brahan also sold off at least one piece of land in 1819: Ditto's Landing.⁵⁷ In the midst of this panic Brahan sold Ditto's Landing to Colonel James White.⁵⁸

White's ability to purchase Ditto's Landing demonstrates that, while the Panic of 1819 was rough, many still maintained the ability to profit and thrive. In the ruins of the Panic of 1819, White managed to profit through the entire country. People knew him as the "salt king," as he ran the salt works at Saltville, Virginia.⁵⁹ The wealth he earned here allowed him to venture into markets all over the nation.⁶⁰ One of White's associates, John Hardie, handled the salt business in Ditto's Landing for White. Hardie arrived in Huntsville as a Scottish immigrant and his first job was just a clerk for White. Despite his occasionally pessimistic attitude toward the economy, Hardie made a good living off of Ditto's Landing and advanced quickly. Hardie earned enough to where he could buy a plantation out in Talladega County and become a

⁵⁶ Brahan and Atwood, "Brahan & Atwood," *Alabama Republican* (Huntsville, AL), 4/17/1819; Brahan and Atwood, "Again We Give This Notice," *Alabama Republican* (Huntsville, AL), 4/24/1819.

⁵⁷ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 436.

⁵⁸ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 3.

⁵⁹ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 436.

⁶⁰ Shapiro, "Ditto's Landing," 82.

planter.⁶¹ Alexander Gilbreath represents another merchant who managed to do well during this time by partnering with White.⁶² While White's presence certainly added some economic power to Ditto's Landing, Ditto's Landing held value through other ventures as well. The people of Madison County considered Ditto's Landing so important that a road to Ditto's Landing made a great selling point when selling land.⁶³ Most, if not all, of the cotton in Madison County ran through Ditto's Landing on its way to the market in New Orleans.⁶⁴ People built warehouses nearby to house the cotton until the Tennessee River's waters reached the correct depth to manage a boat on it. Some residents made a living guiding cotton down the river through the shoals downriver and walking back once they got past the "danger zone."⁶⁵ Groceries often came through Ditto's Landing on their way to Huntsville, including but not limited to sugar, bread, alcohol, and coffee.⁶⁶ Ditto's Landing transformed under the pressures of "modern" life and the market to become a major commercial hub in Madison County.

The 1820's brought four important changes to Ditto's Landing. The arrival of John Hobbs represents one of these changes. John Hobbs, son of a Revolutionary War veteran, purchased

⁶¹ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 439-441.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶³ "Hardware & Cutlery...Also," *Alabama Republican* (Huntsville, AL), 6/12/1819.

⁶⁴ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 439.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁶⁶ Perry, Moore, Brown, "Groceries," *Alabama Republican* (Huntsville, AL), 7/3/1819.

Chickasaw Island in 1821, and received the ownership papers in 1822. Before long the island came to bear his name.⁶⁷ Second among these changes, in 1823 residents decided that Huntsville and Ditto's Landing needed a proper road running between the two. A road already existed running from Meridianville to Ditto's Landing through Huntsville, but some residents felt they needed a proper paved road. This need developed from the economic growth of both Huntsville and Ditto's Landing.⁶⁸ Like everything else at this time, the plan needed to go through the government first, but now it is the Alabama state government. An act passed that gave Rodah Horton and associates the job of building a paved road. The act presented a very clear set of rules about how the road was to be built and funded. It stated that they would build the road in thirds, and could start charging tolls as soon as they finished the first third. However, they could only charge tolls proportional to how much of the road they finished up to that point. If the road sustained damage the toll was removed. When the toll returned the act required them to put in ad in the paper notifying the residents of this. The act set rates for all possible travelers, providing different rates for different modes of travel. The builders could collect tolls for thirty five years. The act required Horton and associates to start the road within six months of the bills passing and finish within five years, or else the act voided. The act required them to keep the road in good repair and to post the rates on a sign so none of the residents got sticker shock as they tried to use the road. The Alabama state government limited the project's profits to twenty five percent of the total cost of the

⁶⁷ Shapiro, "Ditto's Landing," 80.

⁶⁸ Shapiro, "Ditto's Landing," 76.

road. Anything else went to improve this or other roads. An independent referee determined the value of any buildings in the way of the road's path, and if the owner disagreed they could take the case to court. The builders paid damages to anyone whose property they went through for fences, crops, or even rocks or gravel used to help build the road. The act required the toll be proportional to the amount travelled and that they charge no toll for those travelling on stints of road that ran through their property. Finally, if the builders neglected to fix damages to the road for ten days, courts could force the gates of the road open for all to travel.⁶⁹ This act demonstrated the Alabama government's distrust of big money speculators, likely fuelled by the Panic of 1819. The act boiled over with protections for the average resident against these speculators just in case they decided to abuse the situation somehow. Any neglect on their part meant a loss of revenue. The act set the rates, not the investors. Perhaps most telling, the act limited the profit that the builders earned from the project. The job originally went to the Madison Turnpike Company, founded by Horton and his associates. However, ten years later it came under new direction. The new leadership included John Hardie who made his money at Ditto's Landing. The road took a long time to finish; they dubbed it Whitesburg Pike, and remained a toll road for a while to come.⁷⁰ The Indian Creek Canal, built from Big Spring in Huntsville down to the river, challenged the usefulness of Whitesburg Pike, but the builders managed to convince the populace to

⁶⁹ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box 1, Turnpike Act 1823.

⁷⁰ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 437-438.

use the road instead of the canal to transport products to Ditto's Landing.⁷¹

The name of the toll road, Whitesburg Pike, demonstrates the third important change: the incorporation of Whitesburg. Whitesburg became the official name of the Ditto's Landing area, honoring the very wealthy Colonel James White. In 1824 an act passed in Alabama that made Whitesburg a town officially. The act set the official borders. Only free, white males twenty one years old and up possessed the right to vote. Whitesburg retained the right to levy property taxes, but the act required that tax to be lower than the state property tax. The local government, a board of trustees, appointed police officers as they saw fit. The act even designated a day for elections. The election occurred on the second Monday of January, at White's Tavern, with James Wall, John Ballow, John Turner, and John Hardie presiding over the election.⁷² Naturally, and unfortunately, black people and women lacked the right to vote. The act also showed how far John Hardie came, and just how much influence he accumulated over the years working at Ditto's Landing. As Whitesburg grew, Alabama passed a new act changing the town. The act increased the size of Whitesburg, removed the power to appoint police, added an elected official of Town Constable, and allowed the trustees to elect a Board President and Justice of the Peace.⁷³ All signs pointed to a town growing and thriving by the river. Unsurprisingly Ditto's Landing remained central to the town. One way they derived value

⁷¹ Ibid., 444.

⁷² "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box 1, Act incorporating Whitesburg.

⁷³ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box 1, Act growing Whitesburg.

from Ditto's Landing, a one dollar charge to dock, really sparked some controversy. The argument for largely consisted of boosting the city. The argument against revealed a little about the thought patterns of some residents. One said, "The rivers appear to have been intended by nature for the purpose of carrying on trade between the inhabitants..."⁷⁴ At least some residents believed the Earth existed just to serve mankind, which represented an interesting belief for someone living in North Alabama with all of its tornadoes. Another argument tied freely moving products up and down the river to the principles of the American Revolution and 1812, claiming all of these focused on freedom.⁷⁵ Apparently Alabamians already appealed to Founding Fathers' authority. Regardless of Whitesburg's growth and development, locals continued to call the area Ditto's Landing.⁷⁶

Mostly symbolic, the fourth major change directly changed rather little. In 1828 James "John" Ditto died. Ditto failed to accumulate any real wealth. He never owned the land he settled, though he made many payments. Eventually his son, Michael, made the last payment and owned the land, meaning Ditto's children made it better than he ever managed. When he died he left behind very little: a bed, two books, two trunks, one oven, and a tin can worth \$5.75 altogether.⁷⁷ With so little

⁷⁴ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 3.

⁷⁵ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 3.

⁷⁶ Roberts, "Background and Formative Period in the Great Bend and Madison County," 437.

⁷⁷ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 6.

wealth, Ditto's death made little direct impact. 1828 also saw the first steamboat to stop at Ditto's Landing, the *Atlas*.⁷⁸ These two things are technically unrelated. However, symbolically they seemed to convey a meaning. Ditto's death seemed to usher out a time when most people living around Ditto's Landing lived off of the land, and the arrival of the Steamboat seemed to usher in a time where most residents used the land for commercial purposes. The arrival and life of James "John" Ditto acted almost as a transition between the two. As the steamboat brought modernity with it the residents likely welcomed the technological wonder. Steam power ultimately spelled the end for this prosperous time in Whitesburg/Ditto's Landing history, because the railroads killed Whitesburg. Steam power gave rise to railroads, and railroads made river travel less important and therefore less common. Less river travel meant less commerce for Ditto's Landing and Whitesburg. People started to move out, and the Whitesburg post office closed its doors for good in 1905.⁷⁹

The Great Depression came to Ditto's Landing just like anywhere else, but without as many people there to feel the effects. Ditto's Landing saw effects of the Depression even without much of a population, because with the Great Depression came the New Deal. Two major New Deal agencies, the WPA and the TVA, targeted Ditto's Landing for improvements and use. The WPA recognized a pair of needs and created a project to serve both of them. Residents needed

⁷⁸ Shapiro, "Ditto's Landing," 75; "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box 2, File 17.

⁷⁹ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 1.

jobs and a way across the Tennessee River. Even with the death of Whitesburg the ferry at Ditto's Landing still carried people across the river. A bridge offered much quicker travel. So in 1929 the WPA started work on the C. C. Clay Bridge named after a prominent Hunstvillian. After two years of work and \$400,000 the toll bridge opened in 1931 and quickly developed into the state's third most profitable bridge. The WPA made the bridge of steel and concrete. The bridge travelled 1,566 feet and featured a very narrow two lanes. People remembered the bridge for how terrifying crossing the bridge could be because of its narrowness. While an important and needed improvement to the area, it essentially played the death knell for the ferry at Ditto's Landing, as residents now used the bridge to get across the river.⁸⁰

The TVA managed a couple of projects in the area as well. One such program leased farm land along the Tennessee River.⁸¹ Ditto's Landing, while less populated, certainly contained very fertile soil. The TVA also built hydroelectric dams, like the one in Guntersville. The TVA knew these dams would likely flood Ditto's Landing and saw the wisdom in conducting archeological digs prior to the completion of these dams. These TVA digs uncovered an undisclosed number of sites, only seven are public knowledge, and these sites revealed much about the shell midden people and their lives. The earlier dig, for the Wheeler Dam, on Hobbs Island collaborated with the CWA as well as major university like the

⁸⁰ Robert Reeves, "And Then There Was One – Demise of the C. C. Bridge," *The Huntsville Historical Review*, Summer-Fall (2006), 37-41.

⁸¹ "TVA to Lease Farms Again," *Huntsville Times* (Huntsville, AL), 10/2/1939.

University of Alabama, the University of Tennessee, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Michigan.⁸² The TVA targeted the Flint River and Whitesburg Bridge sites prior to the construction of the Guntersville Dam.⁸³ The author of the Whitesburg Bridge site felt it important to note the interesting labor situation for the dig. The author noted the use of both black and female labor for the dig. About the use of black labor, the author noted that the mixed crew worked very well. He treated this as if it were another of the discoveries made as part of the dig. As for the use of women, the author noted the WPA enforced a separate set of rules for female laborers and required the digs to change their excavation techniques.⁸⁴ The author provided a reminder that even those considered liberal at the time might not measure up to modern standards. The author demonstrated how deeply racism rooted itself in Southern culture prior to the Civil Rights Movement, even in educated elite. WPA demonstrated some workplace sexism common prior to widespread feminism. After archeologists completed the digs at Ditto's Landing and finished the dams, the flood waters arrived. Ditto's Landing grew rather important for the TVA, as they designated the area for retaining flood waters as part of their program to tame the Tennessee River.⁸⁵ By funneling flood waters into

⁸² Webb, "An Archeological Survey of Wheeler Basin on the Tennessee River in Northern Alabama," 1.

⁸³ Webb and DeJarnette, "The Flint River Site M_A^O 48," 9; Webb and DeJarnette, "The Whitesburg Bridge Site M_A^V 10," 9.

⁸⁴ Webb and DeJarnette, "The Whitesburg Bridge Site M_A^V 10," 9-10.

⁸⁵ Nick Werner and Eddie Wallace (work at Ditto's Landing) in discussion with the author, April 2015.

Ditto's Landing, the TVA used the area to save some \$500 million of property damage by 1965.⁸⁶ Ditto's Landing still played a key role for people living along the Tennessee River.

Few things happened at Ditto's Landing during the 1940's through the 1960's. River flooding meant people largely abandoned living on Hobbs Island. A new bridge allowed the narrow C. C. Clay Bridge to become northbound only.⁸⁷ Land formerly in Whitesburg hosted Huntsville's first ever drive-in movie theatre, simply named the Whitesburg Drive-In Theatre. The theatre certainly drew in patrons, as they expanded in 1954. The times caught up to the theatre and it closed in 1979.⁸⁸ However, the 1970's seemed like an odd time to close down, because the 1970's revived Ditto's Landing.

Federal and State grants revived Ditto's Landing from its largely neglected state. In 1974 work began on the operation still there today. The construction team took a long time to build because the swampy land needed to be drained first. However, four years later Ditto's Landing opened as a marina, harbor, and dry docking. Since Ditto's Landing lost its status as incorporated it needed someone to run the operation. A board of directors ran, and still runs, Ditto's Landing, with two members from Huntsville, two representing

⁸⁶ "Upstream Reservoirs Save Millions in Flood Control," *Huntsville Times* (Huntsville, AL), 4/4/1965.

⁸⁷ Nick Werner and Eddie Wallace (work at Ditto's Landing) in discussion with the author, April 2015.

⁸⁸ B. Gathany, "Memories of Whitesburg Drive-In Theatre 1949-1980 – Photo Flashback," *AL.com*, 5/15/2014.
http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2014/05/memories_of_whitesburg_drive-i.html

Madison County as a whole, and one member elected by the other four members. The small business only handled two boats on the docks at any one time and went rarely used throughout the 1970's, but in the 1980's Ditto's Landing went through a boom period.⁸⁹

The rise of Whitesburg ushered out a time when Ditto's Landing represented a way to live and replaced it with a time when Ditto's Landing represented a way to make a living. The 1980's represented a similar shift: from making a living to living it up. The 1970's set the stage, and the 1980's completed the transformation. Ditto's Landing grew and started to offer a number of different attractions and amenities to visitors. Starting in 1980 and running through 1986 Ditto's Landing underwent a number of improvement projects. The grounds grew as Ditto's Landing purchased land and grew to its current size of roughly 660 acres. It added a campground and a pavilion for general use. The harbor and dry docks grew to accommodate more boats. The TVA added an artificial lake to drain flood waters with, but they left an island in the middle. The weeds and snakes flourished on this little island, so the people running Ditto's Landing schemed up a way to address the issue: goats. Goats found themselves on a little island, colloquially known as Goat Island, to take care of the grass and snake issue. The plan worked, but unintended consequences popped up. When the flood waters entered the lake the island sometimes disappeared. On those days someone went out to retrieve the goats until the water receded. These goat herders soon found out goats dislike water. One time the boat they used capsized and the goats

⁸⁹ Nick Werner and Eddie Wallace (work at Ditto's Landing) in discussion with the author, April 2015.

nearly drowned their rescuer. The goats flailed in the water and their hooves hit the man, Robert, every time he tried to come up for air. He survived the ordeal, but the goats made life harder, not easier.⁹⁰

The growth of Ditto's Landing dovetailed nicely with increased use. The increased use attracted events, like the BMX bike show. A group of BMX bikers from the area started performing every Memorial Day starting in 1988. Increased use also led to at least one unfortunate event.⁹¹ The local company SCI used to offer their employees a day out on the river on the company dime. The company used a little paddlewheel boat given the ill-fated name "SCItanic." The SCItanic crew knew a storm brewed, and started making their way back to Ditto's Landing. A microburst hit the ship and capsized it. Rescue efforts began immediately, but seven adults and four children died inside the boat. The NOAA noted the incident occupied a place as one of the worst inland boat accidents in Alabama history.⁹²

During all of the growth and activity around Ditto's Landing, a group decided Ditto's Landing needed a historical marker. In 1985 the marker went up and provided a short account of Ditto's Landing and its history. It covered James "John" Ditto's arrival, Whitesburg's incorporation, cotton shipping, the railroad, and the death of Whitesburg. A women's group took the initiative to get the

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² "The 'SCItanic' Microburst Event – July 7, 1984," NOAA, http://www.srh.noaa.gov/hun/?n=hunsuold_july1984microbursts.

historical marker put up.⁹³ Women often played an important role in how people remember the past. In Charleston, South Carolina, women dominated historical interpretation in the 1920's and 1930's and focused on preserving the domestic sphere.⁹⁴ In Louisiana "Evangeline girls" played a big role in the attempt to preserve an Acadian identity.⁹⁵ Perhaps most famously, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas run and interpret the Alamo.⁹⁶ Women often directed how people remember a place, and Ditto's Landing fit into this national pattern.

The 1990's changed little at Ditto's Landing. One major event occurred though, the capture of Jeffrey Franklin. Jeffrey Franklin, as a teenager, chopped up his family using an axe and fled the scene. High as a kite, he stumbled into Ditto's Landing where a man who worked there, Eddie Wallace, found him. Eddie called the police who came and arrested him. Ditto's Landing maintained an informal atmosphere and it showed by what happened after the arrest. Nick Werner, who also worked at Ditto's Landing, knew some people who worked where the state imprisoned Jeffrey. They occasionally called collect from the prison to Eddie, who always refused the calls out of fear.⁹⁷

⁹³ "Ditto's Landing Research." Huntsville-Madison County Public Library Archives, Box2, File 1.

⁹⁴ F. Brundage, *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 231-232.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 278-279.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 299-300.

⁹⁷ Nick Werner and Eddie Wallace (work at Ditto's Landing) in discussion with the author, April 2015.

Around 1999 Ditto's Landing started to focus on improvements again. The TVA launched a program to prevent erosion along the river and started placing rocks on the river's banks. This project continued on into the 2000's. Ditto's Landing launched a number of projects to improve facilities. The BMX shows stopped, because the riders started to feel a bit too old to continue performing, but Ditto's Landing started offering free concerts by local artists and a Christmas event called "Deck the Docks."⁹⁸ A new bridge went up to replace the C. C. Clay Bridge, residents made nervous by its narrowness got a new much wider bridge. The old bridge literally blew up to make way for the new bridge.⁹⁹ The new bridge almost ended up worse than the old one though. The original contractor went bankrupt during the job, and someone else took over. The original contractor showed some ineptitude. When they started the project they built an entire concrete support pillar before they realized it sat six feet off center. Later, to blow up some rock, they set charges the day before they needed to use them. The next day they came back and the water level receded overnight. Their work barge sat beached partially on top of the charges. They figured the barge could handle the explosion, and detonated anyway. The barge failed to handle the explosion. Shrapnel from the barge flew everywhere and some hit the other bridge. So much force hit the other bridge that police shut it down while it stopped shaking and swaying. Once the new, professional, contractors took over the bridge finished without a problem, but the road still kept the crook from the

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Reeves, "And Then There Was One – Demise of the C. C. Bridge," 41.

off-center start.¹⁰⁰ These changes represented only the tip of the iceberg for the changes to come.

Ditto's Landing came a long way from shell middens to marina, with more changes coming. Upcoming changes for Ditto's Landing include boat rentals, expanded campgrounds, greenways, expanded marina, rental cabins, biking trails, zip lines, a general store, expanded pavilion, a riverside restaurant, and a four-lane access road.¹⁰¹ Ditto's Landing went from a source of survival to a source of income, and from there it developed into a source of entertainment. Regardless of the role played, Ditto's Landing remained important to the people living in the area. Ditto's Landing will change over the coming years, but its past suggests it will remain important to local residents.

¹⁰⁰ Nick Werner and Eddie Wallace (work at Ditto's Landing) in discussion with the author, April 2015.

¹⁰¹ S. Doyle, "Ambitious master plan could turn Ditto Landing into Huntsville recreation hotspot," *AL.com*, 4/15/2015, http://www.al.com/news/huntsville/index.ssf/2015/04/ambitious_master_plan_could_tu.html#incart_river

The Culture Club

By Brittney Carnell

The Culture Club was a small, social women's club located in Huntsville, Alabama. The primary function of this women's organization was to bring together influential or well-connected women in a social atmosphere to discuss issues pertinent to American society at specific points in time, as well as issues that directly impacted their lives and experiences within the greater Huntsville area. Mrs. Lucie Deloney Dillard, a longtime resident of Huntsville whose family was one of the first pioneer families in the area, founded the Culture Club 1911.¹ Twelve local women attended the inaugural meeting at the East Randolph Street home of Mrs. Dillard.² The Huntsville women's Culture Club has existed for over 100 years and celebrated its centennial in 2011. Throughout the years, including around the time of the Huntsville Culture Club's establishment, other similar women's club existed across Alabama, as well as the nation. The Official Register and Directory of Women's Clubs in America for the year 1913 shows that across the state of Alabama alone, there were 1,900 women with standing membership in

¹History of the Huntsville Culture Club, talk given by Mrs. Doris O'Neal, president, on Radio Station WFIX, December 31, 1968, Scrapbook 3, 81-1, box 1, scrapbooks 1911-1970, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

²History of the Culture Club of Huntsville, Alabama, 1911-1931, written by Ruth Sykes Ford, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., scrapbooks 1911-1970, Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

seventy eight different women's clubs.³ This directory also shows that the Culture Club was the only women's organization in existence in Huntsville at the time, with only one other listed "Culture Club" existing in Birmingham, therefore making the Huntsville women's Culture Club unique in the city of Huntsville. The purpose of this research is to critically examine the documents, programs, yearbooks, and letters pertaining to the Huntsville women's Culture Club to identify specific factors that contributed to the club's longevity, examine how the club changed over time, and propose possible explanations for this change.

The annual yearbooks and scrapbooks of the Culture Club extensively documented the women's activities and the majority of the information used for this research was derived from these primary sources. Annual yearbooks which list club members, officers, program committee members, meeting dates, and discussion topics were first created for the 1912-1913 year, one year after the club's establishment. These yearbooks, along with associated scrapbooks, letters, photographs, written club histories, and newspaper articles provide deep insight into the club's ideals and the activities of its members. The yearbooks examined demonstrate a consecutive timeline between the years 1912-1985 with few gaps.⁴ Scrapbooks were also made for the Culture Club by later members in an apparent effort

³Helen Winslow, ed., *Official Register of Women's Clubs in America*, (Massachusetts: 1913), accessed April 15, 2015,

<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=uUKMAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA34>, page 33.

⁴Yearbooks 1912-Present, 81-1, box 4, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al, Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

to preserve their unique club history. These scrapbooks contain Culture Club yearbooks as well as photographs, letters, newspaper articles, and club histories. There are no dates of creation or names listed on the scrapbooks, however, on November 17, 1947, President J. B. Clopton “suggested the compiling of a scrap book for the club, the matter to be decided at a later meeting.”⁵ The matter was in fact decided at a later meeting, and a news article dated December 4, 1947 states that “Mrs. Clopton appointed Mrs. E. T. Terry and Mrs. J. Byrne a committee, to compile the club scrap book.”⁶ These six scrapbooks do not list the dates that they were created but changes in the club over time are evident. The first three scrapbooks were very simplistic, with only Yearbooks and newspaper articles included. The final three scrapbooks, which documented the years 1970-1980, differ significantly. These later scrapbooks included a more decorative element of photographs, stickers, and magazine cutouts.⁷ Therefore, change over time can be seen both through examination of Culture Club yearbook programs for each year, but also by

⁵Newspaper article from November 17, 1947, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, Scrapbooks 1911-1970, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

⁶Newspaper article from December 4, 1947, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, Scrapbooks 1911-1970, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

⁷Scrapbooks 1-3, 81-1, box 1, scrapbooks 1911-1970, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

Also included scrapbooks 4-6, 81-1, box 2, scrapbooks 1970-1977, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

how later members chose to document the past in scrapbook form.

Each Culture Club yearbook outlines the program for each individual meeting during the course of one year from October until May. The physical characteristics of the yearbooks are all fairly similar, regardless of the year in which they were created. Included yearbook information tends to be similar from year to year as well, with membership rosters, lists of officers and various committee members, the Constitution, Bylaws, meeting dates, and program topics. A motto also appears at the beginning of each yearbook, though the actual motto itself differs from year to year. It appears as though one individual or a small group of individuals was responsible for typing the yearbooks for the first years of the club's existence, and examination of multiple yearbooks for the same year often shows slight errors in typing, misspellings of member names, variances in abbreviations, etc. Additionally, the inclusion of "America the Beautiful" was a tradition that began in 1926, and was included in each yearbook until 1956. Each yearbook cover from 1912-1955 featured primarily text and, rarely, simplistic images, and hand-drawn cover images first appeared on the 1955-1956 Yearbook. The format for the Yearbooks from the years 1912-1950 appears to be relatively similar, with the printed meeting date, a specified hostess, a Roll Call, a listed program topic or general category of discussion, as well as previously assigned subjects that different members presented for that particular meeting. Mrs. J. S. Andrade introduced a Club Collect in 1931, which was included in each yearbook thereafter. This Club Collect lends insight to the values of the club that many of the women deemed important, and reads:

“Keep us, O God, from pettiness, Let us be large in thought, in word and deed. Let us be done with faultfinding, and leave off self-seeking, May we put away all pretense and meet each other face to face. Without self pity and without prejudice, and always generous. Let us take time for all things, Make us grow calm, serene, gentle. Teach us to put into action our better impulses, Straightforward and unafraid. Grant that we may realize that it is the little things That create differences, that in the big things of life we are one. And may we strive to touch and know the great woman’s heart of us all. And, O, Lord God, let us forget not to be kind.”⁸

Interestingly, it is sometimes possible to make an informed decision about whom a yearbook once belonged to. For example, in the 1942-1943 yearbook, there are handwritten notes stating “dues paid” next names on the membership list in the back of the yearbook for this year. This makes it highly possible that this particular yearbook once belonged to Mrs. E. T. Terry, the Treasurer for that year who would have been responsible for collecting dues.⁹ The first Culture Club yearbook was for the year

⁸Club Collect, Yearbook for 1931-1932, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-Present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives. Background information regarding Club Collect from handwritten notes in Scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, scrapbooks 1911-1970, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

⁹1942-1943 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

1912-1913. Meetings during this year each included a discussion of current events, with program themes consisting of topic such as poetry, women, and literature, and assisting members presenting book reviews for discussion along with other related topics.¹⁰ The first appearance of the long-lasting “Roll Call” began the following year, in 1913. Each Roll Call at the first meeting of the year always appears to involve discussion any summer vacations, which was appropriate considering how well-traveled these women appeared to be, as demonstrated by various program topics over the years in which certain women were assigned to speak specifically about their international travel experiences.¹¹

The purpose of the Culture Club, in the words of 1980s member Ruth Sykes Ford, “has always been purely for the enrichment of the mind and the pleasure of its members.”¹² The first appearance of the club’s written Constitution and Bylaws can be seen in the 1915-1916 yearbook, where Article II states that “the object of the Club is a broader culture in order to render a larger service.”¹³ The members of the club were expected

¹⁰1912-1913 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

¹¹Range of yearbooks, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

¹²History of the Culture Club of Huntsville, Alabama, 1911-1931, written by Ruth Sykes Ford, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., scrapbooks 1911-1970, Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

¹³1915-1916 Yearbook, 81-1, box 1, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

to adhere to strict rules regarding membership, dues, and programming. For example, annual dues of \$2.00 were due on or before the first club meeting, with this rate decreasing to the \$1.00 rate that existed until 1968.¹⁴ These dues were initially used to defray the cost of the yearbooks, with additional money being put toward gifts for sick or “shut-in” club members, memorial books for members who had passed away, and annual charity projects such as providing food and gifts for a needy family each Christmas.¹⁵ Members were also responsible for providing monetary assistance to any representative member that would travel to the Alabama Federation of Women’s Clubs annual conferences around the state. Additional monetary mentions in the Bylaws involved fines of twenty-five cents for unexplained absences from club meetings, and fifty-cent fines for failure to fulfill any assigned duties on the program.¹⁶ Members were expected to be at every club meeting, and four consecutive absences resulted in losing their membership.¹⁷

¹⁴History of the Culture Club of Huntsville, Alabama, 1911-1931, written by Ruth Sykes Ford, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., scrapbooks 1911-1970, Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

¹⁵History of the Culture Club of Huntsville, Alabama, 1911-1931, written by Ruth Sykes Ford, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., scrapbooks 1911-1970, Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

¹⁶1915-1916 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

¹⁷1915-1916 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

Membership in the Culture Club of Huntsville, Alabama was relatively difficult to attain. This was most likely due to the limited membership positions and the long periods the women retained their membership. Membership was limited to only twenty-five women at any given time, and gaining acceptance into this prestigious women's club was a lengthy process. Any potential member that gained a vote of membership from three current members was then presented to the five-person Membership Committee for approval. Each of the five members of the Membership Committee had to grant their approval, at which point the potential member was presented to the whole club once again. Three negative votes was considered "sufficient to reject the name of any applicant," as stated in the Constitution.¹⁸ In other words, gaining membership into this tight-knit club was a very involved process, and members often held their positions for many years at a time, which made vacancies rather uncommon. Of the twenty members, six held additional positions on the Officer Committee. This Committee consisted of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Critic, and Director, with the positions of Critic and Director fluctuating in their existence over the years. A Program Committee was also established according to the Bylaws of the 1915-1916 year, and consisted of three members to be appointed by the club President, with one member being from the previous year's Program Committee, most likely to help with continuity and effectiveness from year to

¹⁸1915-1916 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

year.¹⁹ Examination of approximately forty years of Culture Club yearbooks shows that Officers were typically elected at the last meeting of the year by popular vote, as evidenced by statements in the majority of program descriptions for the last meeting of each year.

Individuals tended to hold membership for many years at a time. Because gaining a position in this club was a lengthy process, many women most likely chose to continue their membership once it was granted. This also shows that the women more than likely approved of the club's activities and their continued interest resulted in membership stability over time. One individual in particular, Mrs. I. B. Wyatt, maintained active membership with the club for over fifty years from its establishment until 1964 when she was converted to an Honorary Member. Numerous members converted their active membership to such titles over the years, most likely due to old age or failing health. Therefore, it is apparent that the women valued their membership and tried to uphold their duties until old age or failing health rendered them incapable of attending the regularly scheduled club meetings. There also appears to be a trend in Officer positions, with many members working their way up the ranks from year to year until attaining the presidency. The founder of the Culture Club, Mrs. Lucie D. Dillard, served as the first president and was documented as such in the 1912-1913 yearbook.²⁰ Her reign as president did not last long, however. It appears that no woman served as club

¹⁹1915-1916 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

²⁰1912-1913 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

president for more than two consecutive terms from 1912 until at least 1950, though many women did serve multiple non-consecutive terms. Mrs. Thomas Dark served as the club's President during both the 1934-1935 and 1935-1936 years, and would later go on to serve another two consecutive terms in the 1945-1946 and 1946-1947 years. She would even go on to serve yet again in the year 1949-1950. Though there is no mention in the Culture Club's yearbooks of a specific rule regarding officer term lengths, research on president terms from 1912-1950 demonstrates that no women served more than two consecutive terms as president at a time.²¹

The Culture Club met according to a very strict schedule, which appears to stay the same throughout the club's existence and likely contributed to the longevity of membership and the club's overall existence through time. Between October and May, the women met "every second and fourth Thursday afternoon at 3 o'clock at the homes of its members."²² The hostess of each meeting, according to the yearbook program descriptions for each date, was always the member in whose home the meeting was held. The hostess was responsible for providing refreshments and overseeing the program for that day, with two to four other members presenting previously assigned programming topics. It appears as though the meetings adhered to a strict cycle as well, as demonstrated by the trend that one of the members that had been responsible for presenting part of the program for a meeting would become the next

²¹Range of yearbooks, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

²²1915-1916 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

meeting's hostess, and oversee that next meeting at her own home. Meetings were reserved for active club members only, and the club only "opens its doors to guests twice a year, on Health Day and Education Day," during which time local doctors and educators served as guest speakers to the Club on topics pertinent to the greater Huntsville area.²³

The Culture Club yearbooks each contain information regarding meeting dates, meeting locations, and discussion topics; other research reveals the community activities these women took part in outside of these meetings that directly impacted Huntsville. The women were actively involved in "taking papers and magazines to rest rooms, helping...in welfare work at Boogertown, helping with an 'opportunity school' on Church Street, which was set up for adult education by the mills in that area."²⁴ Later, a newspaper article from December 18, 1947 stated that some of the activities these women took part in also included collecting magazines for hospitalized veterans at the Huntsville Arsenal hospital.²⁵ Perhaps the most notable activity that these women involved themselves in was a community-wide art exhibit, as

²³History of the Culture Club of Huntsville, Alabama, 1911-1931, written by Ruth Sykes Ford, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., scrapbooks 1911-1970, Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

²⁴History of the Culture Club of Huntsville, Alabama, 1911-1931, written by Ruth Sykes Ford, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., scrapbooks 1911-1970, Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

²⁵Newspaper article from December 18, 1947, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, scrapbooks 1911-1970, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

evidenced in a newspaper article from May 20, 1948. This article shows that many Culture Club members organized a local art exhibit, with “hopes to have a permanent place for the display of works of art, for both white and colored...”²⁶ This event was a huge success for the club, and over 1,000 people attended. The Culture Club hosted this event, which was sponsored by the Madison County Arts Association. Interestingly, the Madison County Arts Association was the forerunner to the Arts Council, Inc., and many Culture Club members and officers served as charter members to this organization, with Mrs. J. B. Clopton serving as the first Arts Council, Inc. president.²⁷ Further, the Culture Club also appeared to work with other notable women’s organizations at times. For example, a newspaper article from November 1, 1947 stated that the members were invited to attend an event hosted by the Whitesburg Drive Garden Club, another well-known and long-lasting women’s organization in Huntsville.²⁸ Whether these women also held membership in other community organizations is not determined through the scope of the present research. The members were aware of the work of other local clubs, however, and the Huntsville Culture Club regularly sent a representative to a conference of the Alabama

²⁶Newspaper article from May 20, 1948, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, scrapbooks 1911-1970, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

²⁷Scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, scrapbooks 1911-1970, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

²⁸Newspaper article from November 1, 1947, scrapbook 1, 81-1, box 1, scrapbooks 1911-1970, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

Federation of Women's Clubs.²⁹ This Federation was first established in 1895, with annual meetings held in various locations across the state. The first meeting held in Huntsville was the Twenty-fourth Annual and First Biennial Meeting in 1919.³⁰ The first woman from the Huntsville Culture Club to hold a leadership position within the Federation was Culture Club founder, Mrs. Charles Dillard (Lucie), who served as a District Chairman of the First District in 1921.³¹ During this same year, Mrs. Charles Dillard was also the Club Extension Committee representative for the First District, as well as a Board Member of the Home Economics Committee.³² The First District encompassed women's clubs in Colbert, Cullman, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, Morgan, and Tuscumbia counties. More specifically, it included the cities of Albany-Decatur, Athens, Bridgeport, Florence, Guntersville, Hartselle, Huntsville, Russellville,

²⁹Culture Club Constitution and Bylaws, various yearbooks, 81-1, box 1, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

³⁰*Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs: Yearbook 1921*, page 3, accessed April 10, 2015, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=MzowAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA3>.

³¹*Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs: Yearbook 1921*, page 4, accessed April 10, 2015, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=MzowAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA4>.

³²*Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs: Yearbook 1921*, pages 5-6, accessed April 10, 2015, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=MzowAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA5>.

Scottsboro, and Tuscumbia.³³ As part of her duties as District Chairman that year, Mrs. Charles D. Dillard compiled a financial report for her district, which stated that for the 1920 year, the women's clubs in the First District contributed \$5,532 for civics, philanthropy, health, and education.³⁴ This does not mean that the Huntsville Culture Club collected the entire amount, but they contributed to this amount along with the other nineteen women's clubs in the First District for that year.

In addition to regularly scheduled meetings and involvement in local civic activities and projects, the women of the Culture Club also hosted an Annual Banquet that served as a celebratory event for their work the past year and as the final social event the women would partake in until the next year's meetings began in October. This banquet occurred at the end of the meeting year for most years between 1930 and 1942. The abrupt stop of the lavish Annual Banquet, which was typically held in a private room at the Russel Erskine hotel, could be a result of the war that was engulfing society at that time. The banquets resumed in 1956, and appeared to continue most years until 1963. Each Annual Banquet was worthy of its own news article each year, and each article began with a description of the lavish floral arrangements and decorations, and also listed the members in attendance as well as any information regarding the

³³ *Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs: Yearbook 1921*, page 57, accessed April 10, 2015, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=MzowAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA57>.

³⁴ *Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs: Yearbook 1921*, page 60, accessed April 10, 2015, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=MzowAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA60>.

program or activities for the night. It is interesting to note that research shows that these banquets appeared to be closed to the general public and were limited in attendance to members only, though each Annual Banquet was granted a small news article in the local paper. Prior to the Annual Banquet, there was a mention of an Annual Picnic in the yearbook for the year 1918-1919, though this event did not appear to continue thereafter.

The women of the Culture Club formed a very tight-knit society that was most likely representative of the upper social class in Huntsville and allowed the women to have a social outlet to discuss important national and local events with women similar to themselves. The Culture Club yearbooks from the years 1912-1918 listed the exact streets where the members lived, though no house numbers were listed. Their street names ceased to be listed in yearbooks after 1918, and telephone numbers first appeared alongside the members' names in 1948. By examining the list of street names of these early members' homes, it is evident that these women were most likely of a high status, with homes on the now-historic Twickenham and Old Town streets of Randolph, Holmes, McClung, Clinton, Eustis, Ward, and White.³⁵ Additionally, while there is no evidence to support this claim, it can be reasonably assumed that these women were involved in each others' lives outside of the confines of the Culture Club; the closeness of their homes within Twickenham, their social status, and their careers demonstrate that this could be a reality. While many of the members' occupations are unknown without further research, it is known that a

³⁵1915-1916 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

few of them taught at local schools. These included Miss Jessie Hopper (member from 1939-1951, 1955-1956, and 1957-1960), Mrs. J. E. Roberts (member from 1955-1956, 1961-1965, and 1970-1976), Miss Lottie Lamberson (member from 1939-1951, 1955-1956, 1957-1960, and 1961-1964), Mrs. J. B. Woodall (member from 1939-1951, 1955-1956, 1957-1960, 1961-1965, and 1970-1976, and Mrs. T. L. Woods (member from 1955-1956, 1957-1958, 1959-1960, 1961-1965 and 1970-1976). These women all taught over the years at the East Clinton Street schools that were located on the site of the original Greene Academy.³⁶

Trends in how the women's names were listed in membership rosters also varied significantly over the decades, which could be representative of greater societal trends that relate to women's' rights. Research demonstrates that the vast majority of these women were married during their membership, with only seven unmarried women ever appearing in the membership roster from the years 1912-1976 (Miss Myrtle Love, member from 1913-1924; Miss Jessie Hopper, member from 1939-1951 and 1955-1960; Miss Lottie Lamberson, member from 1939-1951 and 1955-1964; Miss Dorothy Webb, member from 1955-1962; Miss Margaret Neil, member from 1955-1965; Miss Bettie Clay Lawler, member from 1957-1965; and Miss Dorothy Adair, member from 1975-1976). After examining membership rosters in the Yearbooks from the years 1912-1976, it appeared that a majority of the members were listed by their husband's name instead of their own first

³⁶"Schools on the Site of Greene Academy, 1823-1956," Sketched for the Huntsville Culture Club by Sarah Huff Fisk, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

name until the mid 1950s, at which time more women appeared to be listed in membership by their first name. Interestingly, because of the vast number of women that chose to be listed by their husband's first name, the idea that these women were of a high social status can be further explored by researching their spouses. Research shows that a number of Culture Club members were married to very influential or well-known community members. For example, one prominent member was Mrs. A. M. Booth, married to Mr. A. M. Booth. He was known as "a civic leader and owner of one of the largest lumberyards in the City," and their home still stands at 512 Randolph Street Southeast, where it was built with salvaged materials from the Huntsville Female Seminary that once stood on the property.³⁷ Other notable members also include Mrs. John Fraser and Mrs. John Fraser, Jr., of the influential Fraser family who founded the Huntsville Wholesale Nursery company, which may have been one of the first businesses in Huntsville.³⁸ Perhaps the most influential and well-known Culture Club member, however, was Mrs. J. B. Clopton. Her husband, Mr.

³⁷"Huntsville, Alabama: Historic Huntsville Tour, Travel through the past in our downtown historic districts," Huntsville History Collection, accessed April 18, 2015, http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/hhpics/pdf/book/Walking_Tour.pdf.

Information regarding A. M. Booth's home: "Place: 512 Randolph Avenue Southeast," Huntsville History Collection, accessed April 20, 2015, http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/index.php?title=Place:512_Randolph_Avenue_SE.

³⁸"The Huntsville Historical Review, Winter-Spring 2006," The Huntsville History Collection, accessed April 18, 2015, http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/hhpics/pdf/hhr/Volume_31_1_Winter-Spring-06.pdf.

James Blunt Clopton, was very influential within the Merrimack Village, and when the area was sold, one of the streets was renamed "Clopton Street" in their honor.³⁹ Not only was Mr. J. B. Clopton an influential and well-known community member, but so was his wife, Anne Bradshaw Clopton. She was a well-known artist and received national recognition for her artwork, so it was no surprise that she went on to become the first president of the Arts Council, Inc.⁴⁰ Her other accomplishments included founding the first Girl Scout troop in Alabama, and in 1950 she was the first female candidate for the Huntsville Board of Education.⁴¹ She was easily one of the most involved community members that held membership in the Culture Club, and her leadership skills were evident by the many officer positions she held over the years within the club, as well as within other local organizations.

The purpose of each Culture Club meeting as documented in the club's yearbooks was to gather at a member's home and discuss topics the women thought pertinent to the time. It appears that the programming topics varied significantly over the years with two possible explanations for these trends. First, in many instances, it appears as though

³⁹"James Blunt Clopton of Alabama," via the Clopton Family website, accessed April 19, 2015, http://cloptonfamily.org/d_hist/jamblunt.html.

⁴⁰"Obituary Notice of Mrs. James Blunt Clopton," Anne Bradshaw Clopton: 1878-1956, Visionary Artist and Pioneering Woman, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://dreammakershop.com/annebradshawclopton/article6.html>.

⁴¹"Obituary Notice of Mrs. James Blunt Clopton," Anne Bradshaw Clopton: 1878-1956, Visionary Artist and Pioneering Woman, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://dreammakershop.com/annebradshawclopton/article6.html>.

the Huntsville Culture Club was culturally responsive, and their programming and discussion topics represented greater societal trends over time, including women's suffrage, WWI, the Great Depression, and so forth. The other possible explanation could be that in addition to these shifts in discussion topic trends over the years, Culture Club presidents also appeared to shift along with the most significant transformations. By considering these two distinct possibilities to explain why these women chose to talk about specific subjects at certain points in time, it becomes evident that the Huntsville Culture Club was at times much more than a typical book club or a garden club, and significant information can be gained from examining the change over time in their programming topics.

The first Culture Club yearbook for the year 1912-1913 demonstrated that the primary focus in programming topics was to keep up with current events, which encompassed discussion of new bureaus and organizations, new scientific advancements, and new educational methods.⁴² The club's founder Lucie D. Dillard was president that year, and therefore that year's programming could be representative of what she most likely originally envisioned for the club: keeping influential community women educated and up-to-date about current events and changes in society. This supposed goal of encouraging a small group of women to continue educating themselves on the world around them appeared to continue throughout the club's existence, and significant themes and trends can be seen through the examination of

⁴²1912-1913 Yearbook. 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

program topics as depicted in Culture Club yearbooks from the years 1912-1950.

In 1913 the club transitioned away from previously listed program topics, and began to seriously debate deeper questions regarding women's rights and women's roles within the home. Examples of such discussion questions listed in the 1913-1914 yearbook include "Just how far does the State consider a wife equal partner with her husband in property, in home management, in his children?," "If our laws regarding women are not as they should be, what shall we do about it?," "What benefit would woman derive from the ballot in our state?," and most interestingly, "On what grounds can a wife obtain a divorce in Alabama? On what grounds can a husband? How is the question of alimony decided?"⁴³ These discussion questions could be representative of greater outside forces taking shape in the community at this time regarding women's suffrage. The programming for that year could be a reflection of the women's apparent admiration for Virginia Clay Clopton and interest in her work; Virginia Clay Clopton was one of the founders of the Huntsville League for Woman Suffrage and later became president of the Alabama Woman Suffrage Association.⁴⁴ This sudden change in discussion topics could also be a result of a new club President that year, Mrs. R. O.

⁴³1913-1914 Yearbook. 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

⁴⁴"They Are Too Sweet and Angelic to Reason, or How Women Got the Vote in Alabama," Huntsville History Collection, accessed April 25, 2015, http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/index.php?title=%22They_Are_Too_Sweet_and_Angelic_to_Reason,%22_Or,_How_Women_Got_the_Vote_in_Alabama.

Shreve, with different Presidents serving before and after these specific discussions took place.⁴⁵

The years 1915-1916 and 1916-1917 showed another interesting shift in programming, and during this time Roll Call consisted of philosophical quotations and topics consisted of government or the Bible.⁴⁶ This period was also marked by a new presidency of Mrs. Archie McDonald, and these changes in presidency could account for some of the observable programming changes. Again in the 1917-1918 year, and under another new presidency, the discussion topics shifted again to cover topics representative of American culture and history, such as famous cities, landmarks, and past events such as colonization.⁴⁷ These topics could also be explained in relation to America's involvement in WWI, and some program topics hint at bigger issues plaguing the state of Alabama at this time. For example, one of the statistics that WWI brought to the fore was Alabama's high illiteracy rates, and "The work of the Illiteracy Commission of our State" was the topic of discussion at a meeting on February 22, 1917.⁴⁸ Therefore, the women appeared to be aware of what was occurring outside of the relatively small town of Huntsville at the time.

⁴⁵Range of yearbooks, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, AL., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

⁴⁶1915-1916 and 1916-1917 Yearbooks, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, AL., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

⁴⁷1917-1918 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, AL., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

⁴⁸"World War I and Alabama," Martin T. Olliff, Troy University, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1545>.

Another significant trend begins with the presidency of Mrs. C. E. Baxter in the years 1923-1924 and 1924-1925. During this time, literature was the women's primary focus during meetings. Literature continued to be a theme the following year, but while under the leadership of a different president. It appears as though during these three years, the club operated primarily as a book club, and examined such works as *The Witching Hour* and *The Great Gatsby*.⁴⁹ Similarly, a long lasting trend in programming topics can be seen between the years 1929-1939. During this ten year period, the vast majority of the program topics and specific subjects listed in the Culture Club Yearbooks appear to be representative of a women's book club. Programming was kept simple, and most meetings involved readings from a popular play, such as *Macbeth*, or novels such as *Gone With the Wind*.⁵⁰ In addition to plays, books, articles, and other literary reviews, the program topics included subjects relative to one's home. This included programs such as "The Garden: Round-table discussion of preparing the garden for the winter months," and "Round-table discussion of home conveniences."⁵¹ This approximate ten year period with comparatively simplistic programming could be linked to the Great Depression that was overtaking society at that time, and which

⁴⁹1924-1925 and 1925-1926 Yearbooks, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

⁵⁰1929-1930 and 1936-1937 Yearbooks, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

⁵¹1934-1935 Yearbook, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, Al., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

significantly impacted industry in Huntsville.⁵² However, if this is the case, it is interesting that the women continued to host their lavish Annual Banquet in 1930, 1932, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, and 1939, all of which are encompassed within the timeline of the Great Depression.

Perhaps the most noticeable trend, however, is the emphasis on WWII during the years 1943-1944 and 1944-1945. During these two years, under the leadership of Mrs. Walter Byrne, all discussion topics and presentations focused *very* heavily on issues related to WWII. The women began that year by revisiting issues surrounding WWI before they transitioned to topics such as the rise of the Nazis, eugenics, and Russia.⁵³ While who held the office of Culture Club president appears to have played a role in programming topics from year to year, evidence also shows that the club was culturally responsive and discussed many issues aligned with society at specific points in time. The vast majority of topics the women met to discuss demonstrated what was important at the time, such as women's rights, WWI, and WWII. The topics they *did not* discuss can provide important insight as well, however. This is evidenced by the simplistic programming and lack of topic variety that is seen during the years of the Great Depression.

These two explanations for discernible trends in programming topics can explain how the Huntsville Women's Culture Club demonstrated change over time. Other noticeable changes over time also included how women's names were listed,

⁵²"Great Depression in Alabama," Matthew L. Downs, University of Mobile, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3608>.

⁵³1943-1944 and 1944-1945 Yearbooks, 81-1, box 4, yearbooks 1912-present, Culture Club-Huntsville, AL., Huntsville Madison County Public Library Archives.

changes in representation of how the club's past was documented through scrapbook form, and physical changes in the Culture Club yearbooks themselves. Additionally, tracking membership and officer and committee member terms shows that the club potentially had a hierarchy of positions to be attained. The more interesting question, then, is how a club that was founded over one hundred years ago and limits membership to only twenty-five members at a time managed to continue its existence through the multitude of societal and community changes the women experienced. I believe that this longevity could be representative of two factors. First, the limited membership availability could have contributed to the club's social desirability. Considering the many influential women and the well-known men in the community many were married to, it is possible that these women valued their close-knit society and felt that being a member of such a small and selective women's club reinforced their social standing and ensured that the club would remain an upper-class organization over the years. Additionally, at the time of the club's founding, there were no other similar organizations within the city of Huntsville, though other women's Culture Clubs existed throughout the South. Other women's organizations were formed in the greater Huntsville area over the years of the Culture Club's existence, but more research is needed to verify if these women held membership in more than one local organization. Second, the club's ability to be culturally responsive ensured that the club was always relevant to the women's lives at specific moments in time. The trends examined demonstrate that the club was flexible in its discussion topics and that the women were most likely interested in staying informed on issues related to their community, as well as the nation as a whole. The activities the women took part in *outside* of their

regularly scheduled club meetings also demonstrate that these women had an interest in issues affecting their local community, and were actively involved in charitable activities and other events to enrich the lives of other community members outside of their own social class. It is for these two reasons that the Huntsville women's Culture Club most likely found itself able to persist continuously for over one hundred years, despite societal challenges that the women witnessed firsthand along with the rest of Huntsville's citizens. More research, especially for the years 1950-1985, is needed to reinforce these ideas, or potentially offer new insights into these questions.

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