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The Huntsville Historical Review

Spring 2016 – Summer 2016

Volume 41

Number 1

In This Volume

*Alabama's Rocket City:
Cotton, Missiles, and Change in Huntsville and Madison County*

Madison County's Doughboys: Part II

*Huntsville's First Entrepreneur:
The "Salt King" of Abingdon, VA*

Of Myth and Moo: Huntsville's Lily Flagg

And More

Yesterday is history. We study yesterday to influence a better tomorrow!

President's Letter
Huntsville Historical REVIEW
Spring 2016

This *Historical Review*, like all of them since 1971 accomplishes two goals: 1) it contains good stories for members who love local history, and 2) it captures segments of local history for researchers anywhere in the world for all time (I hasten to thank our own Deane Dayton for scanning the *Reviews* into the world-wide web). You can access them now by going to HuntsvilleHistoryCollection.org. The *Reviews* are categorized by subject matter, author, and year.

Because the *Historical Reviews* are such a rich source of local history, the Historical Society has decided to pluck out related stories and bind them into several books. The primary focus will be on stories related to the upcoming Alabama Bicentennial (2017-2019); however, there will be other categories too. These books will be available to our members at regular meetings, or for sale to anyone on Amazon.com. Jacque Procter Reeves is heading this effort.

Meanwhile, Mary Daniel has agreed to update the HMCHS history from where John Rison Jones left off in 2001. It will be published in a future Review.

Since the last issue was published, the Historical Society has been busy with these outreach efforts:

- We are continuing to work with the Huntsville Housing Authority to identify materials of historic value in its old records
- We've met with the Historic Huntsville Foundation in an effort to forge a partnership on some areas of common interest
- We've proposed to the Huntsville City Schools that we make available to their local history teachers subject-appropriate internet information, to include a human resource to help facilitate its use

- The HMCP Library has agreed in principle to partner with us in our liaison efforts with the city schools
- We're continuing to explore the possibility of offering short, recorded history vignettes to radio stations for use during the Bicentennial
- The Marker Committee is getting quotes to refurbish certain non-Alabama Historical Association markers in our area. The "owners" of those markers will then be asked to help defray the costs of refurbishment
- We continue developing the I-phone App that will provide information about the 125 historical markers located in Madison County.
- The Society's Facebook presence has been significantly impacted with thousands of "hits" per post, with about two new local history posts per week.

The Historical Society's website now includes the criteria for obtaining historical markers. And we now provide contact information for persons with genealogy questions. Also new, you can now find our Society newsletters, 2013-to-present, on our website.

Others topics continue to be works-in-progress, including the annual Ranee Pruitt Award, a history photo contest, a general history museum, and etc... Meanwhile, consider immortalizing yourself by becoming a published author in the *Review*.



John Allen, president

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From the Editor:

We are rapidly approaching the bicentennial and celebrate Alabama becoming a Territory. As a prelude, the state of Georgia gave up western claims in 1802, the Federal Road opened the western territory to more migration by 1811, the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Cherokee ceded land by 1806, and the US annexed a large swath of land that would become Alabama from the Spanish in 1810. The Green Academy was established in 1812, and after the 1813-1814 Creek Indian War, the Alabama Republican newspaper began publishing in Huntsville in 1816.

In 1817, on March 3rd, the United States Congress passed the enabling act that allowed the division of the Mississippi Territory. Mississippi was quickly accepted into the union as a state and Alabama became a Territory. With the state wide bicentennial celebration I encourage our contributing authors to take advantage of the focus on Alabama history and bring it to life in our Review. The bicentennial offers a great opportunity for our members and readers to illustrate and catch up on the forgotten, notable and not so notable people, places, and events in the community we call home.

Key Dates in Alabama's History Preceding Statehood

1802 - Georgia formally cedes western claims for its southern boundary at the 31st parallel.

1803 - 1811 - Federal Road conceived and built connecting Milledgeville, Georgia to Fort Stoddert, American outpost north of Mobile.

1805 - 1806 - Indian cessions opened up to white settlement large portions of western (Choctaw) and northern (Chickasaw and Cherokee) Alabama.

1810 - West Florida, from Pearl River to the Mississippi, annexed by US from Spain.

1811 - 1812 - Schools established in Mobile (Washington Academy 1811) and Huntsville (Green Academy 1812).

1811 - 1816 - Newspapers established in Mobile to the south (Sentinel May 11, 1811; Gazette 1812) and Huntsville to the north (Alabama Republican 1816).

1813 -1814 - Creek Indian War

- July 27, 1813 - Battle of Burnt Corn Creek
- August 30, 1813 - Fort Mims Massacre
- December 1813 - Battle of Holy Ground
- March 1814 - Battle of Horseshoe Bend
- April, 1813 - US annexed West Florida, from the Pearl River to the Perdido River, from Spain; Spanish surrender Mobile to American forces.
- August 9, 1814 - The Treaty of Fort Jackson was finalized after warring Creeks, under the leadership of William Weatherford, aka Red Eagle, surrender to Gen. Andrew Jackson and ceded their lands to the federal government. This event opened up half of the present state of Alabama to white settlement.
- September, 1814 - British attack on Fort Bowyer on Mobile Point fails, prompting them to abandon plans to capture Mobile and turn towards New Orleans.

1815 - February- British forces take Fort Bowyer on return from defeat at New Orleans, then abandon upon learning that the war is over.

1817 - March 3 - The Alabama Territory is created when Congress passes the enabling act allowing the division of the Mississippi Territory and the admission of Mississippi into the union as a state. Alabama would remain a territory for over two years before becoming the 22nd state in December 1819.

1818 -

- January 19 - The first legislature of the Alabama Territory convenes at the Douglass Hotel in the territorial capital of St. Stephens. Attendance is sparse with twelve members of the House, representing seven counties, and only one member of the Senate conducting the business of the new territory.

The Alabama, the area's first steamboat, constructed in St. Stephens.

Cedar Creek Furnace, the state's first blast furnace and commercial pig-iron producer, established in present-day Franklin County.

- November 21 - Cahaba, located at the confluence of the Alabama and Cahaba Rivers, is designated by the territorial legislature as Alabama's state capital. Huntsville would serve for a short time as the temporary capital. The selection of Cahaba was a victory for the Coosa/Alabama River contingent, which won-out over a Tennessee/Tombigbee Rivers alliance group that wanted to place the capital at Tuscaloosa. The power struggle would continue between the two sections of the state; in 1826 the capital was moved to Tuscaloosa, but in 1847 it was moved to the Alabama River at Montgomery.

1819 -

- March 2 - President Monroe signs the Alabama enabling act.
- July - Constitutional Convention meets in Huntsville. Constitution adopted with Cahaba selected as temporary seat of government for the new State.
- September 20-21 - The first general election for governor, members of the US Congress, legislators, court clerks, and sheriffs is held as specified by the Constitution of 1819. Held on the third Monday and following Tuesday of September, the voters elected William Wyatt Bibb as the state's first governor.
- October 25 - December 17 - General Assembly meets in Huntsville until the Cahaba Capitol is constructed.
- December 14 - Alabama enters Union as 22nd state.

Alabama's *Rocket City* Cotton, Missiles, and Change in Huntsville and Madison County

By
Christopher M. Young

Milton K. Cummings encapsulates World War II's dramatic economic and social repercussions on North Alabama. A native of small-town Gadsden, Cummings launched his storied career while a high school student in Huntsville—Gadsden's more urban neighbor—with work as a part-time clerk and bookkeeper at his father's local cotton gin. At the time, cotton was the region's dominant industry, and North Alabama's Madison County—with Huntsville as its county seat—was Alabama's leading cotton producer.¹

Following his graduation from high school at the age of sixteen, Cummings turned down an all-expenses-paid scholarship to Harvard Medical School in Boston and opted instead to join North Alabama's local economic engine; the cotton industry's influential Shelby Fletcher—the same man who had offered the scholarship—brought Cummings under his tutelage. Fletcher was a large-scale merchant operating his own firm, Shelby Fletcher Brokerage, out of the center of the Madison County cotton trade: Huntsville's influential "Cotton Row."² The Row served as Cummings's training ground; cotton merchants, lawyers, and bankers—Cummings among them—sat in their offices directly across from the county courthouse, overseeing the comings and

¹ Phil Garner, "For Years Cotton Row Symbolized the South," *The Huntsville Times*, 22 May 1966.

² "Cotton Row" in downtown Huntsville became the financial center of North Alabama's formidable cotton industry. Elfriede Richter-Haaser, "Madison County History," <http://madisoncountyal.gov/government/about-your-county/history> (accessed January 3, 2016).

goings of the wagons and carts loaded with the crop that reigned supreme.³ The Row and its power brokers groomed Cummings's business acumen, and taught him to find success even against the backdrop of the severe economic depression, today known as the Great Depression, which was gripping the nation.

In 1937, one year after Fletcher's death, the 25-year-old Cummings opened his own brokerage operation with the aid of Fletcher's \$5,000 bequeathal to him.⁴ Cummings's role as a cotton merchant made him an intermediary between the farmer selling cotton and the miller purchasing it. As with any merchant, he aimed to buy low and sell high, and proved rather adept at it: he quickly became one of North Alabama's most successful merchants.⁵

Then came the advent of World War II. The region's young men left the farms and fields to fight alongside the Allies, creating severe labor shortages for the manpower-heaving cotton industry; six of the area's seven mills closed shop.⁶ Even the face of an adverse business landscape, Cummings persevered; he abstained from taking up arms and contributed to the war effort through increased economic output at home. His reward was lofty profits and a substantial fortune.

Yet notwithstanding the wartime prosperity of his cotton-centered empire, the post-war Cummings developed deep-seated doubts about the long-term viability of a strong cotton market given prevailing government policies in the area.⁷ Less than a

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Gadsden Native Builds Space Industry," *The Gadsden Times*, 13 February 1966, 28.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Huntsville Economy Rides On Rockets," *Tuscon Daily Citizen*, 30 June 1960, 36.

⁷ For more information on the impact of federal agriculture policy from the 1950s through the early 1970s, see Robert S. Firsch, "Adjustments in a Slowly Declining U. S. Cotton Production Industry," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 55:5 (December 1973), 892–902.

decade after the end of the war that made him one of North Alabama's wealthiest men, Cummings left the cotton industry in 1953, choosing instead to invest his money and management skills in stocks. Nevertheless, he maintained his office on Cotton Row until 1958, when he joined the executive ranks at Brown Engineering, an aeronautics venture, in the early days of Huntsville's space boom. Cummings delegated the Row to his past and left old Huntsville behind. "We live in a different age now," reflected Hugh Doak, himself a former cotton merchant and Row occupant. "We've got to go along with progress."⁸

The "progress" referenced by Doak first arrived in Huntsville on July 3, 1941, in the form of national defense. In a special issue printed that afternoon, *The Huntsville Times* published a breaking headline: "Huntsville Given \$41,293,000 Chemical War Service Plant."⁹ Although unknown at the time, the Second World War began a process that would permanently disassemble the traditional economic dynamics of North Alabama—it began a significant economic realignment that would wean the region off dependence on agriculture in general, and cotton in particular.

In North America, the defense industry would come to supersede Big Ag, with missiles replacing cotton as its chief unit of economic output. The late 1940s still saw cotton fields come up to within a few blocks of Huntsville's main street; by the late 1950s, "King cotton had retreated before long rows of housing projects and factories."¹⁰ By decade's end, the space industry would also join the Huntsville community with the dedication of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in 1960.¹¹

⁸ Garner, "For Years."

⁹ "Huntsville Given \$41,293,000 Chemical War Service Plant," *The Huntsville Times*, 3 July 1941, 1.

¹⁰ Drew Pearson, "'Rocket City' Booming," *The Anniston Star*, 13 December 1958, 4.

¹¹ Wayne Flynt, *Alabama in the Twentieth Century* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 155.

Huntsville had become Rocket City, USA.¹² The introduction of the national defense enterprise into Madison County during the early years of the Second World War permanently shifted the regional economy away from cotton's domination as increasing federal military expenditures in the region heralded the establishment of substantial wartime activities at the newly minted Huntsville and Redstone arsenals. These military installations—established to augment the country's national security apparatus amid global conflict—would create a fundamentally different city. Before July 1941, no industry possessed the stamina to compete with King Cotton in North Alabama. However, with the precipitous decline in cotton production in the decades during and after the war, coupled with substantial investments by the federal government and private contractors in defense-related enterprises, Huntsville overcame cotton's formidable monopoly on its economy and began the immense economic diversification that would eventually see it become one of America's most technological cities.

This paradigm shift was not exclusively economic in scope: the two arsenals and their related industries also diversified the psychology of Huntsville's citizenry. World War II saw Huntsville's people begin to associate themselves and their contributions to the nation with defense and aerospace industries, not with their more entrenched agricultural base. These changing associations and identifications carried over and developed into the post-war years, and guided Huntsville's citizens as they developed their city anew.

Huntsville traces its roots to the squatter John Hunt, who arrived in North Alabama in 1805. In 1809, the governor of the Mississippi territory designated the area around John Hunt's home as Madison County, named to honor then-President James Madison. Huntsville became the territory's first incorporated town

¹² Pearson, "'Rocket City' Booming," 4.

in 1811; when the Alabama territory — later created and separated from the Mississippi territory when the latter received its statehood in 1817 — entered the Union as a sovereign state in 1819, Huntsville became its first capital.

Even prior to statehood, Huntsville was a “frontier metropolis”—and cotton was its economic lifeblood. Madison County historian Elfriede Richter-Haaser described early Huntsville as “a flourishing cultural, commercial, and social center of 'King Cotton's' realm.”¹³ In the early 1800s, Madison County farmers were consistently harvesting 1,000 pounds of cotton per acre per annum.¹⁴ Small businesses lined Huntsville's streets, occupied by cotton merchants, bankers, and lawyers. The merchants favored offices on the west side of the city square, adjacent to the courthouse; this would become the Cotton Row of Cummings' time.¹⁵ Opened for business in Huntsville in 1809, Huntsville Bell Factory was the state's oldest textile mill. From an early point in its history, cotton was the regional cash crop, and the regional culture and society were intertwined with its production.

Despite the consistent economic strength that cotton provided the region, Huntsville was no exception to the economic hardship experienced throughout the South during the Civil War and later Reconstruction. From after the war until even as late as 1883, no cotton dealers held shop in the North Alabama's principal cotton market, although two cotton manufacturers operated out of Madison County at this time.¹⁶

The region's financials began to look up near end of the nineteenth century. Emphasis moved toward industry, and the scars of the Civil War began to heal. By 1897, three cotton dealers

¹³ Richter-Haaser, “Madison County History.”

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Textile Manufacturers' Directory of the United States (New York: 1883), 250, 450-52.

inhabited the Huntsville metropolitan area alone, and three cotton manufacturers could be counted in the city-county market.¹⁷

Cotton industry writer Josephine Perry marked 1894 as “the beginning of the modern age of weaving.”¹⁸ Cotton Belt mills began to install the most modern machinery of the day. In the South's cotton commerce, Alabama, Georgia, and North and South Carolina led the pack.¹⁹ As for Huntsville, its cotton market continued to expand, with World War I serving as a significant catalyst. By the 1920s, ten textile mills called Madison County home.²⁰

However, economic growth would hit a wall in 1929; the cotton-facilitated boom collapsed with the onset of the Great Depression. In 1947, the Eighth Cotton Research Congress reflected on the dire health of their industry during the previous decade. In a speech to the Congress delegation, E.D. White—at the time the Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture—recalled that the American cotton industry had faced “mounting surpluses of raw cotton and cotton textiles both here and abroad; by increasing foreign production cutting in on our markets; by increasing competition from synthetic textiles; by a depressed world economy and ruinous prices in many segments of the cotton industry.”²¹ At the following Congress in 1948, Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan also chose to recount cotton's shift from vibrancy to depression: “In 1920 American cotton production was about twice as large as total foreign production. In the middle 1930's, foreign production became larger than American production, and the

¹⁷ Textile Manufacturers' Directory of the United States and Canada (New York: 1896-97), 195, 396.

¹⁸ Josephine Perry, *America at Work: The Cotton Industry* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1943), 76.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “A Brief History of Huntsville,” http://history.msfc.nasa.gov/huntsville/hsv_history.html (accessed January 11, 2016).

²¹ E.D. White, “The Road Ahead for Cotton,” *Proceedings of the Eighth Cotton Research Congress* (1947), 10.

volume of cotton we sold abroad fell to about half the 1920 level.”²²

In the worldwide financial chaos, U.S. cotton was hit especially hard. The number of Alabama farms harvesting cotton fell from 231,824 in 1929 to 200,649 by 1939. Alabama acreage devoted to cotton plummeted from 3,566,498 to 1,930,560 acres during the same decade, a 45.9% decrease ending with the lowest number of acres allocated to cotton since the mid-1800s; the state's total value of lint cotton and cottonseed plummeted from \$129,186,873 to \$43,933,746. Accounting for 62.2% of the total value of all crops produced in the state in 1929, cotton could claim only 39.6% in 1939. The average price for a bale of cotton—\$84.15 in 1929—was \$47.31 by 1939.²³ By the time the curtain closed on the 1930s, cotton was simply no longer of financial value.

Despite these economic tribulations, agriculture—and principally cotton—remained an entrenched economic necessity in the largely rural Madison County. The 1930 U.S. Census listed 53,069 of the county's 64,623 residents as living in rural areas, an 82% share.²⁴ Embracing the realities of their region's greatest resource, a majority of the county's population age ten and up worked in agriculture, 51% for white males and 77% for black males. Moreover, over 48% of employed white women worked in cotton mills and related textile industries, with an additional 21% of white men doing the same.²⁵ The 1940 Census continues to develop this familiar story pattern: of Madison County's 13,735 employed men—both white and black—7,337, or 53%, worked in agriculture. That same year, textile mills became the county's

²² Charles Brannan, “Cotton Makes a Comeback,” *Proceedings of the Ninth Cotton Research Congress* (1948), 22–23.

²³ “Agriculture: Special Cotton Report,” *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940*, XIV–XV.

²⁴ For comparison, the Alabama statewide rural population percentage was 72% in the same census cycle. “Population,” *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*, 83, 102.

²⁵ Alabama State Chamber of Commerce, *Huntsville, Madison County and Trade Territory: A General Survey* (1940), 16.

second highest employer of men, staffing 1,859 within their ranks.²⁶

The size, scope, and share of the cotton economy reflected these lopsided employment statistics. In a 1935 survey by the Alabama State Chamber of Commerce, 78% of Madison County's income from agricultural production—including land rental and benefit payments, and totaling a staggering \$2,855,672—came from cotton and cottonseed. Crops other than cotton brought in \$324,845 total, or about 9% of the county's income. Madison County was Alabama's highest cotton-producing county in 1935, leading all other counties by more than \$200,000. "The cotton mills are, of course, [Huntsville's] major industries," wrote the Chamber, accepting the dominance of the mills as obvious and matter-of-fact.²⁷ Of course, this state of affairs was obvious at the time: the cotton mills were prominently situated as the city's dominate industry. No other economic base could compete against it, at least not yet.

Quite unexpectedly, cotton was soon to be replaced as Huntsville and Madison County's economic lifeline. Alabama historian Allen Cronenberg has insisted that "no town in Alabama experienced more dramatic, permanent change from the construction of military plants than Huntsville."²⁸ On the advent of World War II, Huntsville was a serene town of 13,000, the seat of rural Madison County and agricultural hub of the Tennessee Valley. In 1939, Huntsville contained 17 manufacturing firms, which total employed 133 workers; yet only 5 years later, in 1944, Huntsville had 17,000 manufacturing jobs, 11,000 of which were

²⁶ "Population," *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940*, 259.

²⁷ Chamber of Commerce, *Huntsville, Madison County and Trade Territory*, 37, 59.

²⁸ "Total Expenditure Due to Exceed \$47,000,000 for Vast Establishment," *The Huntsville Times*, 3 July 1941, 1.

civilian positions at one of Huntsville's two arsenals and its ordnance depot.²⁹

Seismic shifts in Madison County's economic structure and industrial production capacity were heralded in the July 3, 1941, issue of *The Huntsville Times*: the United States War Department announced that it had chosen Huntsville as the site for a new \$41,293,000 chemical warfare plant. This arsenal would function as its own base and community, and would include chemical manufacturing plants, plants for loading chemical shells, a storage depot, numerous warehouses, and a laboratory, as well as shops, offices, and hospitals. Total operations would require more than 1,000,000 square feet of floor space; more than 30,000 acres would be allocated to host the building sites and a base for railroad yards. The Department estimated that the facilities would employ several thousand people when construction was completed and operations were kicked into full gear.³⁰

Major General William Porter, chief of the Chemical Warfare Service, was quick to compliment the soon-to-be plant—and the region, by extension—declaring that “these new facilities of the Chemical Warfare Service, to be located at Huntsville, Ala., will greatly strengthen and improve the national defense of the country.”³¹ His rhetoric was emblematic of the continued praise that would accompany the area's fast-rising national profile and importance to the nation writ large. Huntsville and Madison County would soon be contributing much more substantially to the Allies than its famed cotton.

The initial facility to be constructed—aptly named Huntsville Arsenal—consisted of three plants, two of them identical twins (in the event of a bombing, the Department hoped one would survive the attack). The plants produced numerous toxic agents and gases—including mustard gas and phosgene—and inflammables

²⁹ Allen Cronenberg, *Forth to the Mighty Conflict: Alabama and World War II* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), 48–49.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

such as smoke grenades, bombs, and canisters. Despite the dangers that came with working with the hazardous materials on site, thousands flocked to Huntsville to vie for one of these newly-created, high-paying defense jobs.³²

Prior to its decision to build in North Alabama, the U.S. government had investigated a number of sites across several states as possible locations for the new plant. Of the multitude of factors taken into account during the evaluation process, the most significant included transportation; availability of materials for construction and raw materials for operation; accessibility of electric power and fuel; and relative immunity from attack in wartime (this final factor would be key to the site that would house vital missile defense systems).

At the end of the process, Huntsville won the site. In justifying its decision, the War Department cited Huntsville's transit systems—both rails and rivers—as well as power supplies, natural resources, and appropriately good weather all as positive aspects that helped to set the city a cut above the rest. In addition to sitting along key Southern Railway and Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway routes, Huntsville also had easy access to the Tennessee River, a central artery through the American South. In terms of power, the combined output of the Tennessee Valley Authority's hydroelectric dams, soft coal from nearby mines, and fuel oil sent up the Tennessee River could easily supply the strenuous power demands of the wartime facility. Moreover, raw materials for construction and manufacturing were readily at hand in the surrounding region. All this, plus Huntsville's yearlong moderate temperatures, made the area an attractive site for government development.³³

Five days after announcing construction of Huntsville Arsenal, the War Department awarded Huntsville a second defense project: a \$6,000,000 assembly plant employing about 370 people per

³² Ibid., 50–51.

³³ “Total Expenditure,” *The Huntsville Times*, 1.

shift.³⁴ In addition to the hundreds of full-time jobs, a great deal of temporary work was also available in the construction of the new facilities. The building of Huntsville Arsenal alone would require the labor of over 12,000 men.³⁵

Anticipating a population influx from the War Department projects, Huntsville public officials asked the federal Public Works Administration for a grant totaling \$2,664,500 to expand existing public facilities, including paving the runways at the municipal airport and the access roads catering to the new military operations; expanding the local public school system; and building a modern sewage disposal plant.³⁶

Throughout Alabama, military activity was changing business-as-usual. Agriculture was losing its monopoly on the state economy as wartime production pushed industrialization forward. Alabama Governor Chauncey Sparks reflected that “[f]or half a century industry has made itself felt more and more in this once entirely agricultural domain, until now Alabama is the outstanding industrial State of the Southeast. Her industries have entered the conflict with a will which is nothing short of remarkable.”³⁷ Sparks named Huntsville as the standard bearer of the rapid changes occurring across his state, precipitated by the needs of World War II combat. In the 14 months between July 1, 1940, and August 31, 1941, the War Department spent more than one-and-a-half billion dollars on defense industries in the South, with more than \$424,000,000—about 27%—going into Alabama.³⁸

³⁴ “\$6,000,000 Ordnance Plant Authorized Here,” *The Huntsville Times*, 8 July 1941, 1.

³⁵ “12,000 Will Be Required in Constructing Arsenal,” *The Huntsville Times*, 8 July 1941, 1.

³⁶ “Millions Asked for Expansion in Huntsville,” *The Huntsville Times*, 18 July 1941, 1.

³⁷ Chauncey Sparks, “The Impact of the War on Alabama,” *War Comes to Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1943), 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

However, this enervation had its accompanying problems. This uptick in war activity required a great deal of manpower, more than the available supply. In Governor Sparks' words, the result was a "grave labor shortage," not only in factories, but also on farms.³⁹ Another problem was skill, or rather lack thereof. Available workers came from predominantly agricultural backgrounds and did not possess the training necessary for work in intensive manufacturing. In conversation with Governor Sparks, Colonel Carroll Hudson—the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Army Ordnance Department—initially expressed his concerns at the Army difficulties in recruiting and training Alabama workers for the available Madison County-based defense jobs. However, Hudson later praised Alabama laborers for their eagerness to adjust to manufacturing and their efficiency after the transition period.⁴⁰

In sum, Huntsville, Madison County, and the rest of Alabama flourished during the war years of the 1940s. As during World War I, global conflict brought wealth and capital to the state, but this time missiles, rather than cotton, were the local cash crop.

Although Huntsville's newly inaugurated defense industries immediately began to shift the local economy away from agriculture, cotton remained a major player in the regional and state economy throughout the course of World War II. Speaking on behalf of the state agricultural sector's eagerness to devote its efforts full-throttle to the Allies' cause—and speaking for what he viewed as the fundamental importance of agriculture to the war effort—Governor Sparks wrote that:

Notwithstanding the rapid rise of industry in recent decades, this is still primarily an agricultural State, and agriculture has gone all-out in the war effort [C]otton, for example, is used in such a variety of ways as to make it second only to steel in important as a war material. The farmers of Alabama,

³⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁰ *Huntsville Has What It Takes* (Keller-Crescent Co.), 16.

therefore, are making a direct contribution to the war effort, both in raising food for the armed forces and for civilian workers and in producing many of the essential raw materials of war.⁴¹

Likewise, State Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries Joe N. Poole observed that cotton—in addition to being the primary income source for Alabama farmers—was a “war crop,” and Alabama's cotton farmers were contributing in huge ways to the strength of the war program.⁴² The Quartermaster Corps of the Army praised cotton as a vital war material second only to steel; more than 11,000 cotton items appeared on the Army's procurement list—clothing, tents, and other pieces of equipment were all produced from cotton fiber. In addition, cotton was vital to the proper functioning of other essential military goods, such as rubber tires and wires in mechanical equipment. It was used in the manufacture of conveyor belts, hoses, abrasives, polishing clothes, and even played a part in the proper construction and function of planes, jeep cars, and rubber boats. According to Poole, “[n]o tank runs, no ship sails, and no plane flies without cotton as a part of its equipment and structure.”⁴³

The cotton industry adopted similar reasoning to that of Poole in its branding and marketing efforts, and used cotton's role in the war as means to promote itself and its products as quintessentially American, naturally patriotic and benevolent. Published in 1943, Josephine Perry's *America at Work: The Cotton Industry* begins with a nationalistic ode to the sector. She writes that her book is “presented to the boys and girls of America to tell them a brief story of a great industry which has been developed by the ingenuity, resourcefulness, skill and hard work of farmers, craftsmen, business men, engineers, chemists and scientists,

⁴¹ Sparks, “The Impact,” *War Comes to Alabama*, 1.

⁴² Joe N. Poole, “Agriculture,” *War Comes to Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1943), 67.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 67–68.

working together for the good of the nation.”⁴⁴ In her opinion, the US cotton textile industry was the world’s foremost of its field and “exemplified the greatness of a nation that believes in the value of work.”⁴⁵

In this vein, the president of the Cotton-Textile Institute, Dr. Claudius Murchison, unveiled “A Charter for Cotton” at the Third Cotton Research Congress in 1942. Drafted by the Texas State-Wide Cotton Committee, this declaration was a self-described “reflection” on the tenets of the Atlantic Charter and their relation to the nation’s cotton business.⁴⁶ The Charter asserted that cotton was the world’s single most important textile fiber and that the US produced well more than half of the world’s best cotton. The Charter claimed itself to be the “expression of men who feel that their unique position in relation to the whole matter of setting up a better-ordered world, as some compensation for the fearful sufferings and sacrifices of mankind in the present war, places upon them a special responsibility.”⁴⁷ Cotton producers and manufacturers viewed themselves as sitting atop a unique pedestal within the greater world economy, controlling an industry that they viewed as a guiding light to the world’s salvation.

This campaign to promote cotton during the early years of the war would serve Huntsville well. As one may recall, by the late 1930s Madison County had established itself as the seat of Alabama’s cotton production. In 1940, Madison County ginned 40,122 of Alabama’s 710,175 running bales of cotton. Second-place Marshall County, bordering Madison on the southeast, ginned 27,061, about 32% less than Madison.⁴⁸ Alabama’s cotton

⁴⁴ Josephine Perry, *America at Work: The Cotton Industry* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1943), 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁶ Claudius Murchison, “Position of Cotton Textiles in the War,” *Proceedings of the Third Cotton Research Congress* (1942), 55.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁸ “Agriculture: Statistics For Counties,” *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940*, 528.

output continued to increase, hitting a statewide net-total of 796,405 bales in 1941. Again, Madison County held its lead with 49,569 of the total, and again Marshall County followed; at 38,533 bales, it fell short of Madison by over 10,000.⁴⁹ The region's lead continued throughout the war, with Poole observing in 1943 that the Sand Mountain and Tennessee Valley regions in North Alabama were the largest producers of cotton.⁵⁰

Wartime advertisements in the region's newspapers also point to the area's reliance on cotton and the crop's significance to its ordered society, as well as the patriotism underlying cotton production. A 1941 *Huntsville Times* ad encouraged its readers to "Buy Cotton! For America! For the South! For Defense!"⁵¹ A cotton purchase was simultaneously an investment in the nation and the region, and in safety as well as economic well being. "Cotton's the Fabric of America," declared the ad, which went on to advance a view of cotton's significance in American life: "Cotton is an American product, raised in America, processed in America, and finished in America. It is the duty of every American to use more cotton in preference to imported materials."⁵² The word 'America' is repeated several times, each time emphasizing further creating an image of cotton as a quintessentially American crop. Cotton—and the South by association—was equated with the America. The crop was promoted as a means by which Huntsville residents could significantly contribute to America's war effort, as well as touted as a necessity that only the American South could provide to a world starving for it.

Another 1941 *Huntsville Times* ad continued this trend of marketing cotton as a global economic necessity that America was uniquely situated to supply. The ad featured a "Cotton Quiz: Who

⁴⁹ "Madison Ginnings Top State By Far," *The Huntsville Times*, 11 December 1941.

⁵⁰ Poole, "Agriculture," *War Comes to Alabama*, 69.

⁵¹ Advertisement, "Buy Cotton!" *The Huntsville Times*, 2 November 1941.

⁵² Ibid.

is the biggest bedding maker in the world?"⁵³ Answer: the U.S. government, which the ad identified as having used American cotton to produce 3,990,000 mattresses for needy American families.⁵⁴ Cotton was seen as helping America in fights both overseas and at home, both political and economic.

Despite the cotton industry's efforts to protect its regional interests via associations with patriotism, World War II quickly changed industry and society in Huntsville and Madison County. These changes to the region's economic base would be profound and permanent. In 1943, Acting Director James B. McMillan of Bureau of Business Research at University of Alabama predicted that the war would inject balance into the state's economy, with industrial development killing off agriculture's gripping monopoly. "World War II should leave the State [of Alabama] with a better balance between agriculture and industry," McMillan predicted, "no small part of which will result from the shift of surplus manpower from sub-marginal agriculture to augmented industrial capacity."⁵⁵ Alabama's economy was in transition, and Huntsville was leading the trend. Major General Porter insisted that "Huntsville's arsenal will be no fly-by-night war defense industry. It will be a permanent industry, and adequate provision has been made for the erection of a sufficient number of new residences to house the expanded population."⁵⁶

In 1943, Professor Hallie Farmer of the Alabama State College for Women outlined what he considered Alabama's most likely postwar prospects. Farmer understood that the Alabama that would emerge from the war would be a fundamentally different

⁵³ Advertisement, "Cotton Quiz," *The Huntsville Times*, 3 November 1941.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ James B. McMillan, "Business and Industry," *War Comes to Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1943), 81.

⁵⁶ "12,000 Will Be Required In Constructing Arsenal," *The Huntsville Times*, 8 July 1941, 1.

state than the one that entered it; the significant defense investments in the northern part of the state would leave a deep impression, he reasoned. The state's supply of skilled and semi-skilled labor would become larger than at any other point in its history. Wartime production would convert to its peacetime equivalent. Echoing the cotton industry's earlier rhetoric, Farmer noted that "Alabama has a responsibility in the postwar world, as well as in a world at war, which she dare not evade."⁵⁷ However, unlike earlier rhetoric, Huntsville's residents began to connect this newer sense of responsibility not with cotton or agriculture more generally, but instead with a new financial matron: defense.

Over the course of the war, ads promoting cotton gradually disappeared from *The Huntsville Times* and other regional publications. Even before the ceasing of hostilities, cotton's stronghold on Huntsville and Madison County began to waver. A consequence of the two arsenals now operating within its boundaries, the focus of Madison County's contributions toward the national war effort had shifted from indirect to a direct connection to defense, from cotton to chemical warfare and missile defense. While cotton remained a necessary wartime good, its contributions were implicit and behind the scenes. Missiles were very much the opposite; they were on the front lines, topping headlines on international news wires. In comparison, cotton brought up the rear.

Post-war, Huntsville's shift toward adopting defense as core to its identity continued unabated, its wartime contributions touted in the October 1946 issue of *The Merchant Journal* as being three-fold: "men, munitions and money."⁵⁸ The media's focus on the two arsenals, Huntsville and Redstone, further propagated the notion that "[t]hese Arsenals contributed abundantly to the drive for Victory," the message being that U.S. military success would

⁵⁷ Hallie Farmer, "Postwar Prospects," *War Comes to Alabama*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1943), 134, 139.

⁵⁸ *The Merchants' Journal* (October 1946), 7.

not have been feasible without Huntsville and its missile production capacity.⁵⁹

These arsenals were not only viewed as integral to the war effort, but also to Huntsville's greater industrial development. In 1945 alone, "16 new industries came into the picture helping absorb the unemployment caused by the reduced activities of the two Government Arsenals,"⁶⁰ and capitalizing on the skilled labor first trained in the arsenals and now emerging from their downsized activity. The late 1940s saw much praise for the region's defense industry, but little for cotton; *The Merchant Journal* mentioned the industry in a single line near the end of the article: "The largest cotton warehouse facilities in Alabama are located in Huntsville."⁶¹ Five years earlier, cotton had been praised and revered with little competition. Now, it was becoming merely acknowledged.

Huntsville and Redstone Arsenals brought a new vitality to Madison County, and Huntsville's business leaders sought to ward off any economic slump from hitting their community post-war time. "Huntsville has not been content to put all its eggs in the arsenal basket," *Alabama Magazine* duly noted in December 1947.⁶² City leaders were proactive in diversifying the local economy and not depending too heavily on any one industry.

Entrusted with the task of attracting business to the city, the Huntsville Industrial Expansion Committee was formed in 1945, and promptly initiated a vigorous campaign to market the city and region—with its post-war economy no longer dominated by cotton and brimming with a newly skilled labor force—to the national business community. "Huntsville today is where the gears of commerce and industry mesh to form a smoothly functioning

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² "Huntsville Takes Steps To Make Her 'Boom' Permanent," *Alabama* 12, No. 52 (26 December 1947): 12.

industrial machine,” wrote the Committee in their advertisements and promotional materials.⁶³ They sought to shape Huntsville’s image as a fundamentally altered city than what it had been pre-World War II, when agriculture, and especially cotton, dominated the local economy.

In a letter to the president of the Committee, the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Army Chemical Warfare Service, Colonel E. C. Wallington, complimented Huntsville and Madison County’s flexible and fast-learning labor supply, and applauds the rapid conversion of the area’s labor from its peacetime agricultural industries to wartime production of military supplies. He wrote that “I am glad to say, because of the ease with which workers responded to training and on-the-line instruction, we were able to go into production months ahead of schedule It is my opinion based on performance that this section has much to offer in the way of adaptable labor.”⁶⁴ Colonel Hudson also praised the area’s labor and its ability to adapt to new industry. Writing to Governor Sparks, Hudson bolstered that:

it is my opinion that Alabama labor readily adapts itself to the manufacturing industry...A large percentage of the Explosive Operators, our production people, were farmers or housewives before coming to work at Redstone. . . . Alabama labor is outstandingly responsive to leadership, very cooperative, and if given good training, will make productive and efficient industrial workers.⁶⁵

Significant alterations in the labor supply were a significant difference between pre- and post-war Huntsville: “The saga of one of Huntsville’s contributions to the war effort [namely the development of the arsenals] illustrates the high quality of manpower available.”⁶⁶ The city’s labor supply suddenly shifted

⁶³ *Huntsville Has What It Takes* (Keller-Crescent Co.), 5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

away from unskilled agricultural labor and toward skilled manufactures. Out of a total 3,968 men employed in Huntsville in 1950, 2.8% worked in agriculture.⁶⁷ Total men jumped to 17,603 by 1960, with the agriculture sector declining to only 1.7% of the whole.⁶⁸ While the raw number of men employed in agriculture did increase from 112 to 302 men, agriculture's growth was simply not keeping pace with growth in other economic sectors.

Huntsville's cotton industry was well established and certainly did not disappear overnight. In 1946, the city still retained Alabama's largest cotton warehousing facilities.⁶⁹ However, economic change was swift and seismic. Out of the 13,735 males employed in Madison County in 1940, 7,337 (53%) worked in agriculture.⁷⁰ By 1950, the number had risen to 16,959 while the number working in agriculture had shrunk to 6,510 (38%).⁷¹ Agriculture—or more specifically, cotton—was dying out as the area's financial matron.

Shortly after the war, Alabamians recognized cotton's perilous situation. In August 1945, the *Alabama Courier* described the imminent demise of cotton production coming to most Alabama counties: "Mule-power cotton is becoming a thing of the past. . . . The mechanical age for cotton production is just around the corner in America."⁷² Mechanical cotton pickers were gaining ground, especially in light of the renewed foreign competition in the wake of the war. However, Alabama geography was simply not suited

⁶⁷ "Characteristics of the Population: Alabama," *Census of Population: 1950*, 57.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁶⁹ *The Merchants' Journal*, (October 1946), 7.

⁷⁰ "Population," *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940*, 259.

⁷¹ "Characteristics of the Population: Alabama," *Census of Population: 1950*, 94.

⁷² "Exit Cotton," *The Alabama Courier*, 30 August 1945.

to the machines, which required large acreages of level land.⁷³ Cotton production was moving west, and Alabama would find itself left behind to mend the wounds of its departure.

This transition did not come out of the blue. The dean of the School of Agriculture at Mississippi State College, Dr. Frank Welch, commented in 1947 that the diversification of the Southern economy was breaking the region's economic dependence on cotton—simply put, new industries were moving in and pushing cotton offstage. Decrying the South's transition away from agriculture with the rapid rate of industrial development, Welch staunchly criticized the region's inability to keep pace with the technological advancements made in agriculture elsewhere, further risking what remained of the South's cotton industry: "Per capita production on southern farms is low, physical resources are uneconomically and often unwisely used, and capital equipment is deficient."⁷⁴ Southern residents no longer had a compelling desire to keep pace with their cotton competitors. New public and private operations had revitalized the South during the war, and those industries had superseded now-expendable cotton.

For the South's economy, cotton had lost its weight. At the International Cotton Conference in Italy in 1957, the situation of the U.S. cotton and textile industries in the world market was direly reported to conference attendees by W. J. Erwin, Chairman of the Foreign Trade Committee of the American Cotton Manufacturers' Institute. Erwin declared that although total U.S. cotton consumption increased in the years from 1939 through 1948, the situation has changed since then. For example, between 1948 and 1956, U.S. consumer spending increased by about 32%, but textile mill consumption increased only 2%, and cotton consumption decreased. Textile mill profits began to decline in

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Frank Welch, "Cotton in the Agricultural Economy of the South," *Proceedings of the Eighth Cotton Research Congress* (1947), 110, 112.

1948, hitting a new industry low of an average 1% after-tax profit by 1954.⁷⁵

The 1940 U.S. Census listed “textile-mill products (manufacturing)” as an Industry Group.⁷⁶ The reason was simple: at the time, textile mills comprised Madison County’s sole manufacturing. However, come 1950, “Manufacturing” and “Textile mill products” are listed separately. Moreover, “Manufacturing” was beating out “Textile mill products” in terms of Huntsville’s labor, 3,094 men employed in the former compared to 1,519 in the latter.⁷⁷ By 1960, textile mills were no longer distinguished from the manufacturing sector at large.⁷⁸ Cotton was no longer a clearly dominant and discernible industry for the region.

While Huntsville’s cotton industry crumbled, its growing defense sector sparked tremendous population growth. Between 1950 and 1960, Huntsville’s population skyrocketed from 16,437 to 72,365, a 340% increase. By the late 1960s, the population topped 160,000.⁷⁹ No other municipality in Alabama came close to Huntsville’s explosive growth; going one step farther, R. B. Searcy—Huntsville’s mayor from 1952 until 1964—nicknamed Huntsville the “‘growingest’ city in the world.”⁸⁰

Also of considerable note, by 1960, 1.5% of Huntsville’s citizens were foreign-born, the largest percentage of any other metropolitan area in the state. (Mobile and Montgomery tied for

⁷⁵ W. J. Erwin, “The Position of the Cotton and Allied Textile Industries of the United States in World Trade,” *The Cotton Industry in a World Economy* (Manchester: International Federation of Cotton and Allied Textile Industries, 1958), 53, 55.

⁷⁶ “Population,” *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940*, 259.

⁷⁷ “Characteristics of the Population: Alabama,” *Census of Population: 1950*, 57.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁷⁹ Bruce Biossat, “Space Paces Huntsville’s Economy,” *Anderson Daily Bulletin*, 7 July 1969, 14.

⁸⁰ Pearson, “‘Rocket City’ Booming,” 4.

second at 0.8%).⁸¹ The war had transformed Huntsville into a flourishing metropolis and center of urban development. Attractive to individuals as well as business, Huntsville's population boomed in the face of massive emigration on the heels of its industrial expansion. Moreover, these new residents were unlikely to have any connection to the pre-war cotton tradition; cotton had no special significance for them. With their influx, Huntsville's population increasingly lost its ties to historic Huntsville and its tradition, and they did not fight to maintain it.

World War II had a profound impact on Huntsville and Madison County. With the establishment of the region's defense sector in July 1941, this cotton-dominated economy began a colossal realignment toward manufacturing and technological industry. Huntsville and Redstone Arsenal modernized the area's labor supply, training farmers and merchants for work in the area's new military-industrial complex. New industries—including Chrysler, Thickol, Warrior Tool and Engineering, Brown Engineering, Redstone Machine and Tool, Diversey Consultants, General Electric, Rohm and Ilaas Chemical, Rocketdyne Division of North American Aviation—also commenced operations in the region, drawn by this new supply of skilled labor.⁸² As more businesses set up and the economy diversified, cotton as the economic staple became no longer necessary. In fact, cotton and textile mill production in the South entered into a deep slump after World War II. Unable to compete with the rising global market, the once-dominant cotton market in Madison County began to wane.

Concurrently, the local citizenry began to psychologically devalue cotton and—following the lead of men like Milton Cummings—move on. Even during the course of the war, county residents began to disassociate their regional identities from cotton

⁸¹ "Characteristics of the Population: Alabama," *Census of Population: 1950*, 9, 115.

⁸² Pearson, "'Rocket City' Booming," 4.

as defense industries began to dominate the scene. They could now point to a tangible contribution to the war effort, that of missiles and chemical defense. They had found a new significance to their role in the nation. Cotton simply could not provide them with an equivalent sense of patriotic pride.

Contributing to this profound regional shift was nothing short of a population boom. Emigrants with no prior connection to the area's cotton-centered culture quickly came to exert their influence on the rapidly shifting local society. A new folk, people who had a national sense of themselves rather than one dependent on the region, came to dominate Huntsville and overcome its cotton roots.

In 1949, the newly organized Department of Defense centralized U.S. military rocket research in Huntsville. This decision concluded with the foundation of the Ordnance Rocket Center at Redstone Arsenal and launched Huntsville into an exhilarating future.⁸³ This future would be divorced from the past; cotton's strength would be gone, and the region would integrate into a larger national network, rather than exist as a place apart from it.

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⁸³ Cronenberg, *Forth to the Mighty Conflict*, 51.

Madison County's Doughboys The Enemies: Germany and La Grippa

By
Jacquelyn Procter Reeves

In the previous issue of the Review Ms. Reeves oriented readers on the beginning of the Great War in 1914 and followed Madison County conscripts to their training base at Camp Mills, New Jersey where the 4th Alabama Infantry Regiment was reflagged as the 167th Alabama Infantry Regiment and joined the formation of the Rainbow Division. The Editor

Part II

On May 7, 1915, the luxury ocean liner, *Lusitania*, was fired upon by a German submarine while sailing near the coast of Ireland. Eighteen minutes after a torpedo ripped through the side, the *Lusitania* sank. Of the 1,119 people who died from the total 1,924 passengers, 128 were Americans. Among those who died were Alfred Vanderbilt and playwright Carol Frohman. While America had no intention of getting involved in a European war, Americans were outraged. In April, 1917, the United States finally issued a declaration of war against Germany. Few were surprised.

On Tuesday, August 7, 1917, recruits began to file in to the auditorium of the Madison County Courthouse, the grand jury room, and the circuit clerk's office. Dr. T. E. Dryer, along with six other local doctors, were tasked with examining 820 local men to determine their eligibility to serve in the U.S. Army.⁸⁴ The average exam, even though it was described as "rigid," took only four minutes, perhaps due to the large number of recruits. On Tuesday,

⁸⁴ Huntsville Mercury, Tuesday, August 7, 1917, "Examination for new Army Brings About 30% Rejection on Physical Defects," p. 1.

273 men were summoned, an additional 273 were summoned for Wednesday, and the final 274 were expected on Thursday. Because it was expected that about 30% of the recruits would be rejected for physical reasons, and more would be excused for exemptions, there was a possibility that more men would be called in for service to meet the local quota.

With great pride, the newspaper article stated, “to the credit of Madison County boys, every man answered as his name was called.”⁸⁵

A few days later, the newspaper reported that a total of 297 men failed the initial exam due to physical disabilities. Of the 523 that passed, it was expected that as many as three-fourths would claim exemption based on dependents.⁸⁶ Still, of that number that was rejected, as many as 90% of them could be called to fight in spite of their disabilities. Perhaps it wasn’t all bad news. The headline that day screamed “U.S. Army’s Full 300,000 Strength Secured.”

The pride of Madison County, Edward Chambers Betts, was sworn in as a captain at Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia, where he was in training. He was described as the “handsome young son of Judge and Mrs. Tancred C. Betts.”⁸⁷

While U. S. soldiers were gearing up to fight in Europe, the death toll in Europe continued to rise. Casualties were reported among students at German universities: of the 643 students from Heidelberg University, 250 had been killed. Of the 5,255 students called from Munich University, 10% were casualties, and of the 3,700 called from Leipzig University, 664 had been killed. It was estimated that of the 42,000 students from German universities, 6,000 had already been killed, and yet the end of the war was nowhere in sight.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Huntsville Mercury, Friday, August 10, 1917, “Madison County Exemption Board Begins Monday Passing on Affidavits,” p. 1.

⁸⁷ Ibid, “Hon. Ed C. Betts Sworn in as Captain in New National Army.”

⁸⁸ Huntsville Mercury, Sunday, August 12, 1917, “6,000 University Students Killed During the War,” p. 11.

As American men were called up for training, it was important for all Americans to make sure there were no distractions or unnecessary temptations. President Wilson ordered that no alcohol could be sold within a half mile of military camps.⁸⁹

For the civilians of occupied France, the war continued to be especially brutal. They learned to adapt either by working with the German soldiers or quietly and carefully working against them. Private Ralph M. Brown, whose diary was recently discovered in an antique shop in Oklahoma by retired Brigadier General Edward Wheeler, wrote on April 9, 1918 that about two dozen German Stormtroopers had been captured and surrounded by French soldiers. The French wanted to kill them on the spot, but were stopped by an officer. "The French can hardly be blamed," Brown wrote. "The Boche have ravaged France, destroyed its economy, looted every building and wine cellar and violated its women. A hundred years from now the French will still hate the Germans for what they have done to this country."⁹⁰

Captured French soldiers were forced to undergo special "training" designed to teach them the proper Prussian way to greet superior officers in the German Army.⁹¹ Considered to be disrespectful, the French were to spend two hours at a stretch passing a stuffed German officer's uniform, salute properly, and greet it with "Bon jour monsieur l'officier." Their attitude was reinforced with the help of a sentinel who stood by with a fixed bayonet.

⁸⁹ Huntsville Mercury, Monday, August 13, 1917, "Saloons Ordered to Stop Selling Liquor," p. 1.

⁹⁰ Wheeler, BG Edward, USA (RET), "A Doughboy's Diary," Officer Review, The Military Order of the World Wars," December 2015, Volume 55, Number 5, p. 4. U.S. Army Private Ralph M. Brown was from Washington, D.C, and he was assigned to the 4th French Army to drive an ambulance. His diary covered February 9 through November 11, 1918.

⁹¹ Huntsville Mercury, Monday, August 13, 1917, "Frenchmen Taught How to Greet Superior Officers" by Associated Press, p. 6.

By mid-August, 1917, American troops were beginning to arrive in Europe. King George, Premier Lloyd George, and other high officials from France and Belgium observed as American troops paraded through London for an official review.⁹²

The Entente Alliance hoped that the arrival of Americans would hasten the end of war. But one of the most dreaded consequences of this war was neither bullet nor bayonet. It was poisonous gas. The long-term effects were still unknown, but what was known was pure hell for the victims.

The first use of gas in warfare (in this case, tear gas) can be traced back to the French in August, 1914.⁹³ Germans began to use gas on a large scale, first a chemical that caused violent sneezing, then tear gas delivered in howitzer shells. Shells were first fired against the Russians on the Eastern Front, but because of the extreme cold air, the liquid gas did not vaporize, rendering it useless.

They were not deterred.

In April, 1915, poisonous chlorine gas was released along the Ypres Salient.⁹⁴ Within seconds of inhaling it, the victim's respiratory organs were instantly burned and the men began to cough and choke. Few recovered, and of those who died, they were assured long and painful suffering.

The British planned retaliation and in September, 1915, along the British front line near Loos, chlorine gas from 400 emplacements was released. Unfortunately, the wind was not cooperative, and a shift brought all of that back into the trenches of the British. Back to the drawing board.

Soon, a more deadly gas was developed and the delivery was even more sophisticated. The effects of the new phosgene gas didn't manifest until as much as 48 hours after it was inhaled, causing the soldiers to inhale more of it, and the consequences were more ghastly. The gas was loaded into artillery shells, which

⁹² Huntsville Mercury, Tuesday, August 14, 1917, p. 1.

⁹³ Firstworldwar.com a multimedia history of world war one, firstworldwar.com/weaponry/gas.htm

⁹⁴ Ibid

meant they could be sent farther into enemy lines and the destination was more precisely controlled.⁹⁵

Mustard gas was introduced by the Germans and the effects were horrendous. Large blisters formed internally and externally within hours. Even though gas masks were distributed and continually evolved to improve their efficiency, the poison remained treacherous within the soil for weeks after it was released.⁹⁶

Locally, the newspaper printed mostly positive reports of the war. They ranged from short snippets regarding the defeat of German troops and the strength of the French and American troops.

Men from the First Alabama Infantry, the Second Alabama Infantry, officers of the old Fourth Alabama Infantry and First Alabama Cavalry and 167th Infantry were gathering items in preparation to become the newest members of the “Rainbow Division.” Those men left behind, who had not yet received their orders to leave, sent them off with cheers and good wishes. After a stop in Mineola, Long Island, they would begin their voyage to France.⁹⁷

as “Tommies” and American soldiers were sometimes referred to as “Sammies,” short for “Uncle Sam’s boys.” Today, we are more familiar with the term “Doughboys.” While several explanations for this term have been offered, no one really seems to know where and why the name originated.

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Huntsville Daily Times, Sunday, August 20, 1917, “Mighty Cheers Greets Soldiers,” p. 1.

The official, and formal, send-off was scheduled in Huntsville for Saturday, September 1, 1917, complete with a speech from the governor. "There will be music and marching, speeches and specialities," the newspaper reported.⁹⁸

It was important, for the morale of America's fighting men, that as many as possible plan to attend the festivities and watch the parade. All who owned cars were encouraged to assemble at 9:30 a.m. on Meridianville Pike, north of Walker Street and drive in the parade.⁹⁹

On the national front, President Woodrow Wilson addressed the "New Army" with a powerful message. He prayed for God to keep and guide the soldiers. He reminded the soldiers that their every action would be watched with "deep solicitude by the whole country" as well as the entire world because they represented hope and a chance for freedom from tyranny. President Wilson asked them to conduct themselves with "a standard so high that living up to it will add a new laurel to the crown of America."¹⁰⁰

While hot air balloons were used with somewhat moderate success in the Civil War, airships began to appear in the sky. The German company that made most of them was Zeppelin, and even though other companies soon began to construct airships, they were all known as Zeppelins. They were used to drop bombs, and to a lesser extent, they were useful for surveillance.

In early October, 1917, a German Zeppelin was shot down by the French, and crash landed near an American camp. After an air raid over England, the Zeppelin's pilot had lost his way. The darkened skies were overcast and those on board assumed they were flying over Holland. The Germans were quickly arrested and taken as prisoners.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, August 29, 1917, "Great Send Off Will be Given Our Army Boys," p. 1.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, September 5, 1917 "Eyes of World on New Army Says President," p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, October 24, 1917, "Great Zeppelin Fell Near Camp of the Sammies," p. 1.

Newspapers reported increasing numbers of “aeroplane” raids, especially by Germany. On October 1, a raid over London was made by more than 20 airplanes “of the Gotha type.”¹⁰² Not only were bombs dropped, shrapnel from high angle guns rained upon the city and caused considerable damage. A week later, German planes made another air raid over London. In the meantime, 300 more recruits were called in to report for physicals in Madison.

Secretary of War Newton Baker stated that he wanted enough men ready to fight to make a substantial showing against the enemy. By October, his goal had been met. By November 5, the Red Cross was already tending to wounded American soldiers in France.¹⁰³

Sadly, as expected, the first casualties were announced as well. One man from Alabama was wounded and another Alabamian was captured. The newspaper did not reveal where this battle took place, only that they were cut off from reinforcements and could not retreat to safety.¹⁰⁴

In the meantime, another article described an unusual event that took place in Huntsville on Sunday, November 3, 1917. Sixteen Buicks, eighty Oaklands, and twenty-one Dodge automobiles were driven through Huntsville. They were driven from factories in Michigan en route to dealers in Atlanta and South Georgia. “The head mechanic in charge stated that very little machine or tire trouble had been encountered, the extent of the trouble so far having been a few punctures.” In addition, more than fifty carloads of tourists were headed south and got caught up in the same caravan. The newspaper reported traffic congestion at the Tennessee River ferry, which was overcome with the back-up of vehicles that needed to cross. Some cars returned to Huntsville and

¹⁰² Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, October 3, 1917, “Germany’s Air Frightfulness at Flood Tide,” p. 4.

¹⁰³ Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, November 7, 1917, “First Mention of Wounded Soldiers in France,” p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, November 7, 1917, “Germany’s First Victims Among Americans in Front Trenches” p. 1.

some remained in New Hope “and were entertained by the people of that thriving town.”¹⁰⁵

Even though we were far from the battlefields of Europe, there was constant worry of attacks by dissidents. In Bridgeport, a man was picked up for being a slacker. After some questioning, Joe Parks, who said he was a Russian Jew, was suspected by being a German spy. In his pockets were a number of railroad switch keys. At the time this was reported, authorities were waiting for someone who could be brought in to communicate with him.¹⁰⁶

By January, 1918, the people of Europe had suffered through three and a half years of war. While peace talks were going on, no one could find a middle ground on which to come to an agreement. Russia announced that 3,000,000 more men would be sent to fight.¹⁰⁷ In the meantime, world-wide shortages of goods affected everyone.

A letter sent to the W.L. Halsey Grocery Company in Huntsville, signed by the Food Administrator for Alabama, ordered that sugar would be sold only in two or five pound bags and no one could buy more than one sack of flour at a time. Mr. R. M. Hobble stated that flour would be sold in 24 pound bags or 48 pound bags only.¹⁰⁸

In mid-January, a critical shortage of coal was exacerbated by a historic snow storm. Due to the “fuel famine,” a five-day shutdown of all manufacturing companies in states east of the Mississippi River was to begin Friday, January 18, 1918. The shutdown included munitions factories.¹⁰⁹

An interesting story reported that emergency food rations were given to each soldier to sustain them for several days, in the event

¹⁰⁵ Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, November 21, “Sunday Proved to be Tourist Day in City,” p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, January 2, 1918, “Alleged Slacker May be a Spy,” p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Huntsville Daily Times, Thursday, January 3, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Huntsville Daily Times, Friday, January 4, 1918, “Food Administration Limits Purchase Sugar and Flour on Huntsville Market,” p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Huntsville Daily Times, Thursday, January 17, 1918, “Complete Shutdown for Five Days Beginning Friday,” p. 1.

they could not get to regular food while in the midst of battle. Americans were given three different kinds of parched maize plus three pieces of chocolate. The story said that American Indians could live for days on this diet while “hunting on the war path.” French, Belgian, and Teutonic soldiers carried compressed meat; Russians carried compressed teas, and “Oriental forces” carried corn pressed rice and macaroni. North British soldiers carried oat bread and Swiss soldiers carried white chocolate. Still others ate smoked dried pears and drank coffee made from compressed figs.¹¹⁰

The newspaper reported the good with the bad. Millionaire John D. Rockefeller donated \$500,000 to America’s war effort.¹¹¹ In the meantime, the number of Army deserters was beginning to multiply. Charles B. Brown, an Army deserter, was captured in Huntsville by Patrolman Hardin.¹¹² The January 16 issue of the *Huntsville Daily Times* published the names of 26 Madison County deserters. Subsequent issues of the paper listed others so that the police and the public would be aware.¹¹³

It was at about this time that newspaper articles began to report widespread illnesses in various camps.¹¹⁴ The number of deaths reported to be caused by pneumonia increased weekly. Officials were sent to various camps to investigate conditions where the death rate was higher than average. While the reports did not indicate any reason for alarm, we now know that information about the seriousness of these illnesses was censored to keep up morale of soldiers and civilians alike. It is believed that the Spanish flu pandemic, which killed three to five percent of the world’s population, began in January, 1918. This was especially critical at

¹¹⁰Huntsville Daily Times, Friday, January 11, 1918, “Many Articles Used in Emergency Rations for Fighting Men,” p. 1.

¹¹¹ Huntsville Daily Times, Monday, January 7, 1918, p. 1.

¹¹² Huntsville Daily Times, Tuesday, January 8, 1918, p. 1.

¹¹³ Huntsville Daily Times, Wednesday, January 16, 1918, “26 Alleged Deserters from Madison County,” p. 1.

¹¹⁴ Huntsville Daily Times, Wednesday, January 30, 1918, “More Sick at Army Camps,” p. 1.

this time because while flu outbreaks traditionally kill the most vulnerable (very young, old and weak), this virus produced a strong overreaction of the victim's immune system, or an auto-immune situation that was most apparent in those who were young and healthy to begin with. In extreme cases, one could have a cough and be dead four hours later.

On March 6, 1918, an article appeared in the paper announcing that W. L. Dodd, a bacteriologist, on the staff of *The Delineator*, a women's monthly magazine, was going to make "an exhaustive analysis of the local milk and water supplies in connection with the health inventory now being put on with the assistance of Health Officer Dr. Carl A. Grote."¹¹⁵ Dodd was one of many representatives traveling throughout the country to conduct studies based on hygiene and preventative medicine. There was no mention that it could be connected to the large number of deaths due to sickness worldwide. On the same page, the death of Mrs. O. Patton was announced. The prominent Huntsville woman died from pneumonia.

Conservation was encouraged on every front. Americans were encouraged to use less gasoline; women and girls were asked to wear fewer white kid gloves and dye last year's straw hat to make it look new.¹¹⁶ Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania residents were angry that the usual five-inch hot cakes had been reduced to two and a half inches to conserve wheat, but the price had not been lowered accordingly.¹¹⁷ Paper hangers, in the meantime, were asked to refrain from using wheat flour paste to hang wall paper.¹¹⁸ Bread was of utmost importance to the soldiers overseas and Americans were strongly encouraged to show their patriotism by lowering their consumption of wheat as much as possible.

¹¹⁵ Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, March 6, 1918, "Bacteriologist for Delineator," p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, "Dress Conservation Tough on the Girls," p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, March 27, 1918, "Cake Eaters are Very Indignant," p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, "No More Flour-Paste," p. 4.

On May 8, 1918, news of the death of James B. Manning, a 19-year-old Huntsville Marine was reported. He had been in France only six months with the 6th Regiment before his death on April 27. His father, William B. Manning, said that he had another son fighting in the war as well. In an interview, Mr. Manning said that his son James was well known among his friends in the Green Grove neighborhood.¹¹⁹

The reality of war had come to Madison County.

Next Issue Part III

About the Author; Jacquelyn Procter Reeves has written 12 books on local history and true crime. She has been editor of the Huntsville-Madison County Review, Valley Leaves, and associate editor of Old Tennessee Valley Magazine. Jacque is past-president of the Huntsville Madison County Historical Society, Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll, and has been a contributing writer to many other publications. Jacque is founder of Avalon Tours and co-founder of Huntsville Ghost Walk and Mischief and Mayhem Tours. She served as curator of the historic Donnell House in Athens for 11 years.

¹¹⁹ Huntsville Weekly Democrat, Wednesday, May 8, 1918, "Jas. B. Manning Dies in France," p. 1.

Huntsville's First Entrepreneur The "Salt King" of Abingdon, VA

By
Gilbert Greenway White III

Huntsville is known today as the technology capital of Alabama, the Rocket City, and one of the premier innovation cities of America. Countless successful companies make their homes in Huntsville. Many remarkable products that changed the world were born in Huntsville. Industry giants like Olin King and James Medlock founded great companies in Huntsville. Many successful entrepreneurs have made their fortunes in Huntsville and thousands of jobs have been created. But, there is one Huntsville entrepreneur that preceded all the others.

Long before Huntsville was known as the Rocket City, a young enterprising entrepreneur ventured far from his Virginia home, and walked the dusty streets of this small remote Alabama frontier town. Before Alabama was a state, when the Tennessee River ran wild and free, frontier industrialist James White pushed into the Tennessee Valley and established a successful chain of mercantile stores in river towns that may have been the first large retail store chain in America.



James White

As a young 17 year old James White left his home in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and worked in Baltimore, America's leading seaport. There he learned the business of mercantile, shipping, commerce and trade. America was moving west and White relocated to Abingdon, VA, the most western town in Virginia on the edge of the frontier, located on the

“Great Road”. He married and started his family and business in Abington where his home stands today next to the Washington County Courthouse. He built and operated a gristmill and sold necessities to pioneer families traveling west. White looked to the Tennessee Valley and saw tremendous business potential.

Salt was a commodity in great demand in the American frontier. Salt was required for the preservation of meat and leather tanning and therefore was a vital and indispensable to all frontier families. Circa 1802 James White began producing salt near the present town of Saltville, VA. White’s salt production operations were in proximity to the Holston River in Virginia. At that time America’s rivers were the main route for commerce. The Holston River provided White a gateway to the Tennessee River which was the natural highway for commerce into the Tennessee Valley. Not only did White master the transportation, distribution and retail sale of salt, he also controlled salt production, thereby giving him a total monopoly on salt across a large geographic area. In 1812 White opened one of his first of many mercantile retail stores in Huntsville adjacent to today’s Madison County Courthouse.

Huntsville became White’s second home. His business success in Huntsville and the Tennessee Valley made him one of the wealthiest men in America. At that time, circa 1810, Alabama frontier towns were located almost exclusively along the rivers and included the Alabama towns of Bellefonte, Gunter’s Landing (now Guntersville), Whitesburg at present day Dittos landing, Triana, Decatur, Florence and many others, along the 652 miles of the Tennessee River. James White personally owned and operated 55 mercantile retail stores mostly along the Tennessee River in these and other river towns. His business enterprise was the “Walmart” of the early 1800s.

White’s domination of the salt market lead to him being called the “Salt King of Abingdon, VA”. To survive in frontier Alabama families had to buy large quantities of salt each year. If you bought salt in North Alabama in the early 1800s you bought it from James White. He accumulated great wealth and acquired vast land holdings along the Tennessee River in both Tennessee and North Alabama that later became profitable family plantations in

Jackson, Madison and Limestone counties. White founded the town of Whitesburg in 1824, just south of Huntsville. Whitesburg was on burned July 28, 1862 by Union forces leaving many families homeless.

Over his life James White made many extended visits to Huntsville from his home in Abington, VA. With his employees and sons he traveled into the Tennessee Valley by flat barge river boat transporting salt and other goods to his chain of retail stores. His return trips back to Abington were on horseback. His land holding were so extensive that during the 337 mile trip from Huntsville to Abington he could always overnight on property he owned. It was said he lived in the saddle and was a driven enterprising entrepreneur with boundless energy. He spent much time in Huntsville away from his Abingdon home. James White and his wife Eliza had 7 sons and 3 daughters. Three of his sons, Addison, Thomas and Francis graduated with law degrees from Princeton University and other Ivy League colleges. They later managed his retail businesses and plantations in the Tennessee Valley and beyond as far as Marvell Arkansas.

In October 1813 General Andrew Jackson traveled to Huntsville on his way to the battle of Horseshoe Bend. Jackson's army camped near downtown Huntsville only short distance from James White's business. James White was in Huntsville then and was in Huntsville during the summer of 1819 when the Alabama State Constitution was adopted and signed. The 44 delegates from 22 Alabama counties ratified Alabama's first state constitution only a short distance from James White's Huntsville business.

James White was a Colonel in the War of 1812. His ancestors and decedents fought in all major American wars and they were officers in the Continental Army - brave men and women who shaped our nation and state. James White's descendants include many notable people who are accomplished in their own right.

- Nephew Hugh Lawson White who succeeded Andrew Jackson in the U.S. Senate
- Nephew John White, Kentucky, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

- Nephew John Daugherty White, Kentucky, U.S. House of Representatives
- Son Addison White, Kentucky Congressman and Huntsville attorney
- Daughter-in-law Susan White who wrote a diary of Huntsville after the Civil War
- Great great grandson Addison White, Madison County District Attorney and Rhodes Scholar
- Grandson David I. White, prominent Huntsville attorney
- Son Thomas White, Mayor of Huntsville who brought the textile industry to Huntsville in the 1880s
- Grandson John Campbell Greenway who at the right side of Teddy Roosevelt lead the famous charge up San Juan Hill in Cuba during the Spanish American War. Mr. Greenway's statue is in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, DC.
- Over a dozen men who served in the Confederate Army and officers in both World Wars I and II as well as the Vietnam War.



When James White died in 1838 at age 68 his estate was valued at over \$700,000. He was born into a modest

Pennsylvania farming family and departed this world as one of the wealthiest men in America. His life's

accumulated business and personal activities are well documented in his family papers that are maintained for historical research in the Special Collections Department at the University of Virginia library in Charlottesville, VA.

Today it has been 206 years since James White arrived in Huntsville on his first visit to the Tennessee Valley aboard a flat bottom riverboat. He and other family members are buried in the small private White Family Cemetery atop a beautiful hill in the heart of Abingdon, VA. Many of his descendants are interred at Maple Hill Cemetery in Huntsville, the oldest continuously operated municipal cemetery in the southeast United States. Maple Hill Cemetery (left) connects all generations and brings focus to Huntsville's rich heritage and our people who are gone but not forgotten. James White is one of many notable Huntsville citizens that are characterized and portrayed at the annual Huntsville Maple Hill Cemetery Stroll in October of each year.

From their Scottish ancestral roots, and their beginning as forced indentured servants who were sold to work on plantations in colonial America, James White's family produced many remarkable and successful Alabama citizens. Huntsville carries James White's footprint today with Whitesburg Drive, White Street and the community of Whitesburg, all named after him - Huntsville's first entrepreneur, an Alabama frontier industrialist and the Salt King of Abingdon, VA.

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About the Author: Gilbert is the Great Great Great Grandson of the Frontier Industrialist Col. James White. He resides in Madison and his hobbies include writing, genealogy, Southern history and antiques. He is active in the Huntsville Madison County Historical Society, The Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Greenbrier Baptist Church.

Of Myth and Moo: Huntsville's Lily Flagg

By
Whitney Snow

When Lily Flagg departed Huntsville, Alabama, for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, locals wished her well, and most expected her to return home victorious. Known as the country's best butter producer, the bovine beauty had a legion of admirers, and while folklore says different, she did not win a prize at the fair and never saw Huntsville again. Dubbed "Queen of the Tennessee Valley," "Queen of the Jerseys," and "Wondercow," Lily Flagg became legend not merely in cattle records, but more importantly in Huntsville. Over time her name donned a community, roads, signs, businesses, and even beer. She became as much a part of Huntsville's history as its cotton mills, Redstone Arsenal, and the Space and Rocket Center. That she left a mark is obvious, but why Huntsville so embraced her is far less clear. Much of the Lily Flagg story is shrouded with myth, but facts show that such embellishments were unnecessary. Even without the folderol and pomp, Lily Flagg was truly one of a kind.

While sources differ as to the year of her birth, Lily Flagg, whose real name was Signal's Lily Flagg, was born in Frankfort, Kentucky, to parents Georgian, 6073 and Little Nan, 15895.¹²⁰ When still a calf, her owner W.J. Clunn sold her to W.E. Matthews, Milton Humes, and General Samuel Moore, affiliates of the Monte Sano Dairy in Huntsville, Alabama.¹²¹ Moore, who

¹²⁰ *The News* [Frederick, Maryland], September 4, 1892; and Mike Kaylor, "Belle of the Ball: Lily Flagg Festival keeps Jersey Queen Legend Alive," *Huntsville Times*, October 13, 1994.

¹²¹ *The Country Gentleman*, vol 57, Lily Flagg, Vertical File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

managed the dairy and lived on site, knew this heifer was different from the start because when she reached milking age, she produced an unprecedented amount of rich milk, so much so that he and his cohorts decided to run an experiment.



Sketch of Lily Flagg. Courtesy of *The Huntsville Times*, October 23, 1992.

This test, which lasted from June 1, 1891, to June 1, 1892, was primarily conducted by herdsman L.C. Goodell who analyzed Lily Flagg's milk, cream, and butter. Her production of over 1,047 pounds of butter bested Bisson's Belle which had made 1,028 pounds and 15.6 ounces.¹²² Ironically, this announcement was made at the Monte Sano Dairy by Bisson's Belle's owner Valancey E. Fuller, an expert Jersey breeder, along with Hunter Nicholson of the *Jersey Bulletin*. Fuller had been hand selected by the American Jersey Cattle Club to oversee the last week of testing:

Day 1: 3 lbs., 1 oz.

¹²² *Alabama Jersey News* (Auburn, AL: Alabama Jersey Cattle Club, nd.), Lily Flagg, Vertical File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library; and "Lilly Flagg's Butter Test," *Mercury*, May 11, 1892.

Day 2: 3 lbs., 8 oz.
Day 3: 4 lbs., 0 oz.
Day 4: 3 lbs., 9.5 oz.
Day 5: 4 lbs., 10.75 oz.
Day 6: 3 lbs., 11 oz.
Day 7: 4 lbs., 9.75 oz.¹²³

When the results were proclaimed, a crowd of some 300 erupted in applause, and the *Jersey Bulletin* soon dubbed Lily Flagg “Queen of the Jerseys.”¹²⁴

Given the press results garnered, it is safe to say that most believed the remarkable totals. Take, for instance, the *Waterloo Daily Courier*: “It is a little curious that the South, where an idea obtained that Jerseys would not thrive, has produced the most remarkable Jersey butter cow in America, if not the world.”¹²⁵ Many, however, thought Lily Flagg too good to be true. Charles A. Morton, a skeptic in Fargo, North Dakota, wrote a letter to his local newspaper editor: “My Dear Sir—We never had much of a reputation for Jersey cows, but we supposed that when it came to a showdown, that we had the champion liar of the United States, but since reading the foregoing, we lie down, we yield the palm, we acknowledge ourselves not in it. We weep, yea, our tears are of the brine, briny, and are numerous enough to preserve the butter produced by Sam Moore’s cow.” The *Huntsville Mercury* reprinted it and retaliated as follows: “What Col. Chas. A. Morton needs is to leave that barren blizzard chilled waste and come to the Tennessee Valley, whose responsive soil under a genial Southern sun, with a mean temperature of sixty, not only produces the fleecy staple, the golden grain, waving grasses, and verdant clover, but is

¹²³ “Signal’s Lilly Flagg,” *Mercury*, July 13, 1892.

¹²⁴ “Some General Dairy Tests,” *Lincoln Semi Weekly Nebraska State Journal*, June 17, 1892.

¹²⁵ “A Great Cow,” *Waterloo Daily Courier*, September 20, 1892.

the home of the finest cattle on earth, and Lilly Flag is queen of them all”¹²⁶

To celebrate Lily Flagg’s achievement, Moore decided to throw a party in her honor. He bragged about winning the American Jersey Cattle Club silver cup and said that those in attendance would be able drink “Alabama mountain dew” out of it.¹²⁷ Over 1,500 engraved invitations were sent: “Mr. Samuel H. Moore requests the pleasure of your company, Thursday evening, July the twenty-first, eighteen-hundred and ninety-two, from nine to three o’clock. Huntsville, Alabama, complimentary to Signal’s Lily Flagg, the Jersey cow of the world. One year’s Moore Home.



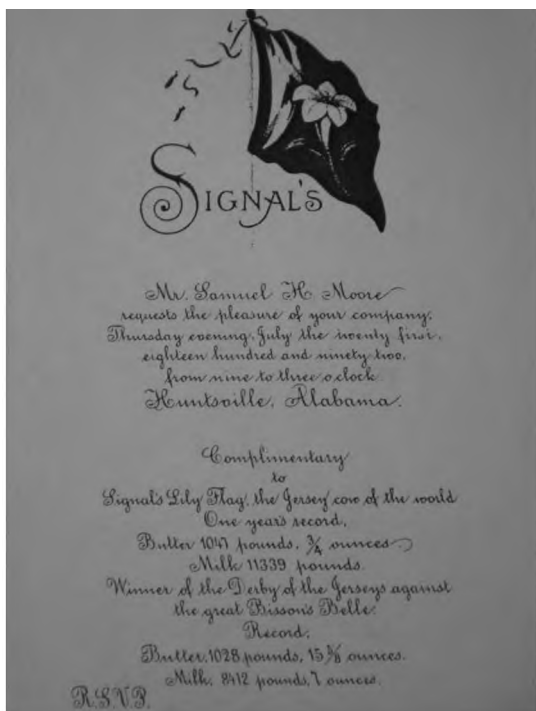
603 Adams Street, The Moore Home; Courtesy of the Huntsville Times, October 13, 1994

record, butter 1047 pounds, $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces, milk 11339 pounds. Winner of the Derby of the Jerseys against the great Bisson’s Belle.”¹²⁸ The venue for the event could not have been better.

¹²⁶ “Doubts Lily Flag’s Achievement,” *Mercury*, July 20, 1892.

¹²⁷ “The Jersey Queen,” *Mercury* June 15, 1892.

¹²⁸ Doris Benefield Gilbreath, “Lily Flagg: The Belle of Huntsville,” *Alabama Life* (Winter 1980): 30-31.



Invitation Courtesy of the Huntsville, Madison County Public Library

Moore lived in an elegant mansion at 603 Adams Street. The house had been built by Robert Watkins in the 1850s. During the Civil War, it had been used as a base of operations by Union General John A. Logan. After the war, it was sold to Moore who immediately began making improvements like the installation of porcelain bathtubs. To prepare for Lily Flagg's party, Moore installed electric lights, painted

the house Jersey yellow, and arranged

for a slew of flower arrangements.

One of the largest gala events Huntsville had ever boasted, called "the doggonest, dad blamedest party that this part of the country has ever seen" by one in attendance, the gala took place on July 21, 1892.¹²⁹ Many bragged on the décor of brightly colored bouquets, the dance floor, and the food courtesy of Moore's cook Zenie Pruitt. One account read:

¹²⁹ Mary Coral Murphree, "Huntsville's Lily Flagg party Set," June 14, 1981; and Alvis Howard, Jr., "The Cow that was Queen of the Valley," in *The Huntsville Trial of Frank James, plus other colorful stories from Huntsville's Historic Past*, Lily Flagg, Vertical File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

*A lover of beautiful things, Gen. Moore's home was one of the showplaces of the South. The guests were struck with awe. As they filed past to see the prized little Jersey who stood silently among the splendor and pomp and in whose honor it had been given, the orchestra struck up, and the festivities began. Laughter and gaiety rang across the lonely countryside as courtly Southern gentlemen guided their fair ladies across the dance floor, colored servants rushed back and forth among the guests passing champagne and wine, which from all indications was the most consumed of all the refreshments. Gen. Moore, who was a bachelor, was to have imbibed quite a bit that night himself, and promenaded more than one Southern belle across the dance floor, to the delight of all. All that is, except Lily Flagg, who according to most reports, stood silently munching hay which had been amply provided, and who didn't even moo once during the whole party which lasted until dawn.*¹³⁰

Indeed, the guest of honor was displayed in a stall in the yard and had a garland of roses around her neck. The *Mercury* reported that 500 had attended and that "Lily Flagg, the greatest of Jersey Queens," had "made Huntsville and herself famous."¹³¹

An overnight celebrity, Huntsville could not get enough of Lily Flagg. The American Dairy Association threw a party for Lily Flagg on Monte Sano Mountain. According to one source, Lily Flagg's milk was used to make the ice cream served with a special

¹³⁰ Untitled, Lily Flagg, Vertical File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

¹³¹ "Lily Flagg Reception," *Mercury*, July 23, 1892.

dinner at the Huntsville Presbyterian Church.¹³² Someone with the initials W.D.S. even wrote a song about the bovine belle:

*Well may the people of Huntsville feel proud, of
this beautiful city, so richly endowed, proud of these
valleys, and green fertile hills, railroads, hotels,
and the 'new cotton mills'*

*Proud of the boundless, pure water supply and of
yon mountains whose tops kiss the sky, where sits
'Monte Sano' an emblem of wealth, resort of
renown, joy, comfort, and health.*

*Down from this steep, winds the quaint dummy
line over trestles through gorges in regular decline.
Scene wildly majestic, it rocks to and fro, till
reaching the broad level valley below.*

*The fame of this region, long known far and wide,
but never the country so published 'till now she
comes to the front with the champion milk cow.*

*Lily Flag! Not as a royal banner unfurled, whose
record is known, throughout the wide world.*

*Though strange it may seem, by the break of the
scale brings matchless renown through a simple
milk pail.¹³³*

The songwriter hints that Huntsville may have longed to be known for its natural beauty, but that in a bizarre twist of fate, a cow had become its claim to fame. Huntsville citizens expected this recognition to continue after Lily Flagg competed at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

The fair proved largely anticlimactic for Lily Flagg supporters. Granted, her fame had preceded her, and many flocked to see the

¹³² D.S. Loyd to T.C. Reid, December 5, 1950, Lily Flagg, Vertical File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

¹³³ "Lily Flag," *Mercury*, July 8, 1892.

world class cow. One story has it that this notoriety worked against her for partly due to her renown, she was not allowed to compete.¹³⁴ Another has it that her caretaker, naively hoping she would produce more, failed to milk her for several days. This resulted in her developing “milk fever.” The *Book of the Fair, World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893* stated, “Thus it was that Jersey milch cow, Signal’s Lily Flag, valued at \$15,000, and considered the queen of her race, was not permitted to enter the lists, for though with a record of more than 1,000 pounds of butter a year, at her preliminary trial she failed to meet the expectations of her admirers.”¹³⁵ Even so, Lily Flagg was still rated a prize Jersey and made national headlines. In reference to her, the *Ohio Democrat* exclaimed, “We’ll all rally around that Flagg—long may she wave.”¹³⁶ As predicted, Lily Flagg continued to wow but not in Huntsville.

Lily Flagg never returned to Alabama. She was bought by C.I. Hood, owner of Hood’s Sarsaparilla and Hood Farm in Lowell, Massachusetts, for about \$10,000.¹³⁷ Eager to add to his herd, he had set about buying several World’s Fair winners like Brown Bessie and Merry Maiden. Even though she won no prize, Lily Flagg likely appealed to him because of her renown as the world’s top butter producer. In fact, the *Boston Daily Globe* noted that among his collection, his two favorites were Merry Maiden and

¹³⁴ “A Famous Farm,” n.d., Lily Flagg, Vertical File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

¹³⁵ *Book of the Fair, World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893*, p. 396, Lily Flagg, Vertical File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

¹³⁶ Untitled, *Ohio Democrat*, June 8, 1893.

¹³⁷ A Famous Farm, n.d., Lily Flagg, Vertical File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library; “Signal’s Lily Flagg,” *Daily Kennebec Journal*, August 20, 1896; and J.E. Dodge, A Barn Full of Jersey History, *The Jersey Bulletin and Dairy World* 36, no. 2.

Lily Flagg.¹³⁸ After her purchase by Hood, Huntsville lost track of Lily Flagg.

Some Huntsville locals imagined that Lily Flagg died shortly after being purchased by Hood.¹³⁹ In reality, she lived a good many years, long enough to drop several calves like Signella M. and Jennie Fordyce, both of which achieved impressive butter records.¹⁴⁰ One man who happened to see her at Hood Farm described Lily Flagg as follows:

*This cow has proved herself to be one of the
greatest dairy
Cows living, and at the same time she captivates the
eye by
Her wonderful beauty of form. She has the general
wedge
Shape of body, the round barrel, the loose, soft skin
and
Golden color, the clean-cut head and waxy horns,
and,
Above all, perhaps a wonderful development of
udder—
Not so remarkable in size as it is in splendid shape,
Particularly in the forepart of the udder, in
distinction
To the pinched appearance so often seen in that
part.*

¹³⁸ Mr. C.I. Hood's Jersey Herd," *Boston Daily Globe*, September 17, 1894.

¹³⁹ D.S. Loyd to T.C. Reid, December 5, 1950.

¹⁴⁰ C.I. Hood, Catalogue of Hood Farm, Lowell, Massachusetts, 1896,
https://archive.org/stream/catalogueofhoodf00hood/catalogueofhoodf00hood_djvu.txt

*Her teats are large and finely placed, and in general
There is the look of the almost perfect cow about her.*¹⁴¹



Mrs. Hinds Porter and Harry Moore Rhett, Jr., with replica of Lily Flagg.
Courtesy of The Huntsville Times,
July 22, 1981.

Much as she had been admired in Huntsville, it seems Lily Flagg continued to turn heads. Although it is not known how long she lived, myriad sources mention her children and grandchildren. Inevitably, Lily Flagg died. However, in Huntsville, her memory remained vibrant.

Numerous erroneous claims have been made about Lily Flagg, but three stand out more than the others. One myth revolves around Moore's gala being a welcome home party for Lily Flagg who returned to Huntsville from Chicago as a first prize winner.

Matthews' daughter Lucile tried to rebut it with her recollection: "Lily Flagg . . . went to Chicago, but never returned."¹⁴² Another myth holds that at Moore's party, Lily Flagg's stall was in the house. For example, in one article, an author wrote, "Lily Flagg, who stood contentedly on a silver platform under a flowered mantel in one of the twin parlors. Not a guest was shocked as the choice of location for the honored guest."¹⁴³ One of Moore's

¹⁴¹ "Model Dairy Cow," *Stevens Point Journal*, January 7, 1899.

¹⁴² Doris Benefield Gilbreath, "Lily Flagg: The Belle of Huntsville," *Alabama Life* (Winter 1980): 30-31.

¹⁴³ Mary Coral Murphree, "Huntsville's Lily Flagg party Set," *Huntsville Times*, June 14, 1981.

great-nephews later said, “My great uncle was real proud of that cow, but he didn’t think enough of her to keep her in the house.”¹⁴⁴ The most common myth that she won first place at the Chicago World’s Fair has appeared in an array of newspapers, including *The Washington Post*.¹⁴⁵ Why are these myths still embraced? When it comes to the first and third, likely because locals remember her as without peer and hate to think she was sold. As to the second, it is just plain fun to imagine a farm animal in the house. Perhaps the novelty of Lily Flagg is why she left such an impression, one that continues to this day.

On July 21, 1981, the 89th anniversary of the Moore party, the Twickenham Historic Preservation District Association threw another celebration for Lily Flagg. Held at the old Moore house, then owned by his great-nephew Harry Moore Rhett, Jr., 400 people attended and marveled at a replica of Lily Flagg.¹⁴⁶ Years later, on October 24, 1992, a Lily Flagg Centennial Celebration took place at the Courthouse Square. In addition to music, dancing, craft stands, and food vendors, the party also had a Borden cow named Elsie in memory of Lily Flagg. As an added attraction, those in attendance bid on how much then Huntsville Mayor Steve Hettinger could milk. Because the event was intended to commemorate Huntsville’s history, Constitution Hall Village and the Huntsville Depot Railroad Museum charged no admission that day.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Mike Kaylor, “Belle of the Ball: Lily Flagg festival keeps Jersey queen legend alive,” *Huntsville Times*, October 13, 1994.

¹⁴⁵ Louise Hubbard, “Lily the Cow received at Cummings,” *The Washington Post Times Herald*, February 6, 1960.

¹⁴⁶ Mary Sylvia Armstrong, “Lily Flagg’s Anniversary Party draws crowd of 400,” *Huntsville Times*, July 22, 1981.

¹⁴⁷ Kari Smith, “Lily Flagg Celebration Planned for all ages,” *Huntsville Times*, October 23, 1992.



Courtesy of Straight to Ale



Lily Flagg Road

Aside from soirees, Lily Flagg is remembered in a variety of other ways in Huntsville. Even though the Monte Sano Dairy was in northern Huntsville, a community south of town took the name Lily Flagg sometime before 1906. To this day, this part of city has businesses, an apartment complex, and even a street named after the cow. Even a Huntsville-produced beer is called Lily Flagg.¹⁴⁸ Huntsville native Doris B. Gilbreath wrote a children's book titled *Lily Flagg*. Lily Flagg was also featured in the novel *The Hotel Monte Sano* by Charles Farley. A journalist for the *Mobile Register* even claimed that Alabama novelist Fannie Flagg had joked about being kin to Lily.¹⁴⁹ In the words of *Huntsville Times* journalist Mike Kaylor, "When she [Lily Flagg] departed Huntsville in 1893, she left a legend that would etch her name in the city's honor roll—along with those like Wernher von Braun, pioneering space traveler monkey Miss Baker, and New York Yankees pitcher Jimmy Key."¹⁵⁰ Once declared "Pride of the South and Champion of the World," Lily Flagg's time in the

¹⁴⁸ "Lily Flagg, superstar cow," <https://dertgerl.wordpress.com/2013/05/06/lily-flagg-superstar-cow/>

¹⁴⁹ Ruth Warren, "Titles and Tales," *Mobile Register*, June 17, 1973.

¹⁵⁰ Mike Kaylor, "Belle of the Ball: Lily Flagg festival Keeps Jersey queen legend alive," *Huntsville Times*, October 13, 1994.

national limelight may have been brief, but her fame lives eternal in Huntsville.¹⁵¹

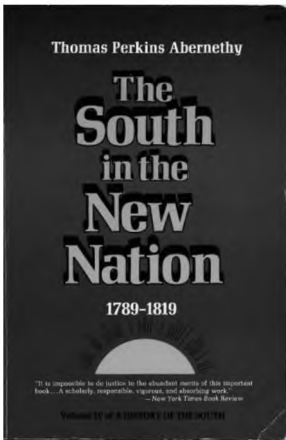
About the Author: Whitney Snow was born in Huntsville, Alabama, and grew up in Guntersville. She received her B.A. and M.A. in history at The University of Alabama in Huntsville. While at UAH, she wrote her thesis on the cotton mills of Huntsville. Upon earning her PhD at Mississippi State University, she became a tenure-track Assistant Professor at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas. A specialist in the Twentieth-Century South, she studies agricultural, environmental and labor history. The author of myriad journal and magazine articles, her work has appeared in *The Alabama Review*, *Alabama Heritage*, *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, and *Forests, Trees and Livelihoods* among others. She is currently working on a book on *Cathedral Caverns*. True to her Lake Guntersville roots, her favorite pastime is fishing, but she also enjoys classic movies and historical fiction. Whitney resides in Wichita Falls, but spends summers and holidays in Guntersville.

¹⁵¹ "The Queen of the Jerseys," n/a, June 8, 1892, Lily Flagg, Vertical File, Huntsville-Madison County Public Library.

Book Review:

Louisiana State University in cooperation with University of Texas The History of the South Series Volume IV (1961) The South in a New Nation 1789-1819

By Thomas Perkins Abernethy



The question may be why I'm I introducing a document that was published in 1961 in the Historical Review? There are ten books in the History of the South Series and each was published as manuscripts become available. Consequently, they are not sequential according to historical occurrence and a hard bound copy today may cost as much as seventy-five dollars. The South in a New Nation 1789-1819 was initially published in 1961 and is regarded as one of the classic texts illustrating the history of the South during those years.

Understanding the economic and social construct of Alabama is my focus for reading and using this text. As we approach the Bicentennial of Alabama that will be heralded through 2017 to 2019, understanding the beginning; the international intrigue, commercial strategies, and the sometime blocking roll of the fledgling federal government in the growth and development of the Southwest Territory of the era adds a depth of understanding to the logic that went into writing the State's first constitution.

The influence of prominent historical figures such as President Jefferson, Arron Burr, and names familiar to Huntsville like Walker, Hunt, Jackson, and President Madison, all play an historical roll in the name of liberty and economic prosperity. It also addresses the Native American dilemma, planned invasions of Spanish Florida and the French possessions along the Mississippi and the great Yazoo land companies of which North Alabama was

a part. Each trial, each action, and each historical figure contributed to the growth of the territory, the state of Alabama and the culture that became uniquely Southern.

It is a great reference for understanding the South.

I will introduce other books of this series as we address the Bicentennial Era.

Arley McCormick; Editor

From the Editor:

Our Review is indeed intended to reflect the understanding, perceptions, and frequently the opinion of authors that study characters and events affecting our community and thanks to our contributing authors the Historical Society's Review always captures the soul of the community we call home. Our authors illustrate noteworthy characters that form the foundation of our society and provide insight into the political and social fabric common to our community and state, and occasionally, the nation and the world.

Over two hundred years ago the war of 1812 had ended and Louisiana became a state ushering new energy from the federal government and capital investment in the Southwest Territory. Alabama pioneers, land speculators, and statesmen, were seeking recognition for an independent Territory in preparation toward becoming a state. And, the entire state will recognize their achievement during the Bicentennial being planned for 2017, 2018, and 2019. Madison County was represented by seven prominent citizens and Huntsville's Constitution Village became the center of attention when the Constitutional Convention was held here in 1819.

One hundred years ago our military guarded the Mexican border to prevent a revolution from migrating into the United States, invaded Haiti to squelch European intervention, and Americans watched nations bleed on the battlefields of Europe for the first full year of WWI. On May 7, 1915 a German U-boat sank the Lusitania and 1,924 souls were lost including 114 Americans. With oceans isolating us from Europe and politicians encouraging diplomacy, Americans were aroused and began taking sides. Eventually, an armistice was signed but North Alabama lost over 100 of her own young men to the war while their families were struggling through a depression.

How did our community respond to these key events? Who were the characters that played a role and those that struggled just to live? Our challenge is to tell the story of our community, the individual trials and triumphs, using the milestones of yesterday as

a backdrop to illustrate the lives that influenced our social environment today.

I will never exclude an article with other historical references. I only encourage authors to consider illustrating the contributions of our community to these Bicentennial and Centennial events over the next few years. See the editorial policy on page **52**.

The Editor

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 and this editor will endeavor to maintain the policy established by his predecessor with regard to the primary focus of the Review as well as material to be included in it. A casual examination of every community in the world reveals the character of its citizens and, if you listen and look closely, voices from the past and expectations for the future. Today is based upon our collective experience and the socialization of our ancestor's existence.

Although this publication focuses on local history, we cannot forget that what happens here has roots often connected by state, regional, national, and international events. In an effort to build on past traditions and continue the quality of our *Review*, an editorial policy will be implemented to guide contributors who wish to submit manuscripts, book reviews, or notes of historical significance to our community. The Historical Society wants you to submit articles for publication. Every effort will be made to assist you toward that goal.

You can contribute to our history through the *Huntsville Historical Review*.

Manuscript Preparation and Submission

Please submit an electronic copy of your article or book review to arley mccormick@comcast.net or send a disk to:

Huntsville-Madison County
Historical Society
Box 666
Huntsville, Alabama 35804

Review Content and Style

- In matters of form and style, a good guide is the fourteenth or fifteenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- If you choose to include footnotes the preferred citation method for full articles would be best.
- Manuscripts should be in 12-point font and in Times New Roman. Microsoft Word
- This is a guide and not intended to discourage the creative process nor constrain authors from contributing to the Review.

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 and 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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