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The Huntsville Historical Review

Spring 2018 – Summer 2018

Volume 43 Number 1

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Crimes in the Pacific, Vietnam, and Afghanistan, *By Arley McCormick*

From the President:

Venture to Huntsville's downtown, and the one constant is change. Buildings come down. Buildings go up. Buildings are refurbished – given new looks and new life. The continuous march of change is impossible to miss.

If you were to visit Huntsville's courthouse square today, though, there is one change that, if you're not careful, you might miss. And unlike these other changes, it's not about the new, but about the old.

Near the corner of Eastside and Northside Square sits preserved a section of brick sidewalk from the 19th century. Over time, the structure preserving the sunken sidewalk section has become increasingly difficult to see through. Now, the Society, fueled by the passion and vision of board member Carol Codori, is leading its refurbishment, providing a window to Huntsville's past.

It's a fitting task for the Society, and a representative one – the sidewalk section long predates this Society, and this effort is a step toward ensuring that it long outlasts our current membership. In the meantime, this effort will help provide the residents of Huntsville with a new view of our history.

And that, ultimately, is what we should strive to do, both corporately as a Society and individually as its members – to serve as stewards of our history during the moment we pass through it and to provide a

window allowing others to gaze into our past. It's why we put up, preserve and restore historical markers. It's why we support those working to preserve our historic buildings. It's why we share resources with local teachers and students.

They may not be quite as concrete as that sidewalk structure, but the articles in the Review you hold in your hands, ably assembled by Arley McCormick, serve that same purpose as well. Their authors have undertaken with their writing to preserve the stories of our history, and to give their readers a window into our past.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the Review. I encourage you to go downtown and look at the sidewalk project. And I commission you to be mindful of the ways you can help create your own windows.

David Hitt
President, HMCHS

From the Editor:

Our community began before the birth of the Alabama Territory and a short history lesson may be useful. At the turn of the 19th Century the Mississippi Territory was growing and Alabama was becoming a destination for squatters, investors, and landed property owners expanding the cotton industry. They were seeking recognition for an independent Territory in preparation for statehood. The communities in the state will recognize their achievement during the remaining Bicentennial period; 2018, and 2019.

Madison County was represented by seven prominent citizens when the Constitution Convention was held here in 1819 and the entire state will focus on Huntsville again in 2019. But, this year we celebrate the 100th anniversary of WWI.

One hundred years ago the Alabama Brigade guarded the Mexican border to prevent a revolution from migrating into the United States. The United States invaded Haiti to squelch European intervention, and Americans watched nations bleed on the battlefields of Europe for the first four years 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 debating the merits of diplomacy or war,

Americans were aroused and began taking sides. We joined the fight and before an armistice was signed, North Alabama lost over 100 of her young men to the war while their families were struggling through a depression and the Spanish flu.

Our home is here and we live with the history our forefathers forged under the circumstances that could not always be controlled or justified. Our Review reflects the circumstances and understanding, and frequently the opinion of authors that study characters and events that affect our view of our community today. Thanks to them the Historical Society's Review always captures the soul of the community we call home. The 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. We find, as in life, characters whose names do not appear on statues or buildings but, none the less, are beacons of honest citizenship and responsible community representatives defining who we are.

How did our community respond to 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.

I want you to write, follow your passion for our community and describe a character for the Review. I will never exclude an article with other historical references. I encourage authors to consider illustrating the contributions of our special citizens during our two hundred years of existence. See the editorial policy on page 80.

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 arleymccormick@comcast.net or send 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, and 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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Our Doughboy's
Part III
Death at the Caesar Position

By
Arley McCormick

In the fall of 1917 the German high command analysis was grim. All the belligerents were war weary, like boxers in the final round of a draw; they were swinging, but lacked the strength to end the fight. But the Germans saw an advantage if they could get to the ports on the North Sea. The British would be defeated and the French would pursue peace. The manpower America was bringing to the Continent altered their outlook and the attrition of supplies and manpower were affecting unit strength and sustainability. Their encouragement came from the collapse of the Russian front. Now they could allocate their combat power to the Western front and leave old men and walking wounded to watch the Russian border. The conclusion: launch a decisive punch, a "Peace Offensive." The launch of the offensive was repeatedly delayed but the strategic objective remained consistent - defeat the British and reach the sea ports. On March 21, 1918, the offensive began.

In January, 1918, the American Expeditionary Forces were still training under the supervision of the British and the French Army. But the operational situation was such that General Pershing allowed American units to operate under the command of

British and French forces. Americans were not individual replacements but neither did they operate in their own sector.

In February when the 167th Alabama Infantry Regiment entered the fray, the German Army was entrenched casually observing and accommodating the silence and serenity of the Luneville sector. The terrain was rough, and until the time the Americans arrived, the harsh reality of war had been replaced by a universally accepted silence. Both the Entante and the Germans were respecting the silence and had settled into a diligent watch. They used the sector as a rest and recuperation area, i.e., pulling units out of the trenches to refit, rest, and relax before returning.

The Americans were rested and wanted to fight, win, and get home. A British officer on the flank of an American Battalion observed a cigar chomping captain marching his unit in parade formation down a dirt road. As the Yanks approached, the captain inquired regarding the location of the "little shooting gallery they had going on here." The British officer advised him to disperse his troops because the front line wasonly a few hundred yards ahead and where they were marching was bracketed by German artillery.

The Americans were on the ground in Europe with 250,000 troops and more on the way. The American success on the battlefield bolstered the Entante decision to respond with a counter offensive in June. It would become the final thrust of the war. History records it as the Hundred Day's campaign, the war of

maneuver that General Pershing perceived would guarantee victory.

The Luneville sector was a rehearsal for future action and as the 167th entered the foxholes, they began improving defensive positions and conducting reconnaissance. On the evening of March 4, 1918, Corporal Edgar H. Freeman of Company D was participating in a small patrol when they encountered a German patrol. Corporal Freeman's patrol was outnumbered more than two to one, but when attacked, they defeated the German patrol and captured two of them. The French Commander responsible for the sector happened to be present when the patrol returned with the prisoners. On the spot, he awarded Corporal Freeman, of Huntsville Alabama, the Distinguished Service Cross. It was the first award for the Alabama Regiment.

It was not all recreation, patrols, and rehearsals. On March 11, Private Herman D. Gentry was caught in the open and died on the field, the first soldier from Huntsville to leave his life in France.

On March 21, 1918 the German "Peace Offensive" began with the expected success. The Kaisers' army broke through the trench lines of the British Expeditionary Force and the French Army until they were on the outskirts of Amiens, a rail center on the Somme River. It was a rich prize but it had taken over 30 days, 230,000 German lives, and their supply line could not keep up. Their Army had to kill their horses and loot to survive. The German high command decision to capture Amiens rather than hold and

reconstitute their forces to exploit their success may have decided the war.

The "Peace Offensive" was foiled officially on July 15, 1918, and the Rainbow Division took part in the defense that stopped the Germans. The Boch ran out of momentum, but was yet to retreat to their supply lines. When they began to withdraw, they executed a defense in depth and repeated it often during the next five months.

A defense in depth included three major elements: a lightly manned but well-armed infantry force, a second but stronger line of infantry well-armed and each lined supported by artillery. The first line would hold until the entire Allied force was deployed in the attack and the artillery, with previously bracketed distance and elevation mapped, would engage the attacking forces second or third wave. The first German positions would give way and withdraw to the second position and by that time, and during the third phase, the machine guns and artillery the attack would halt the Allies and the Germans could commence a counter attack.

On March 31, the 167th was pulled out of the Luneville sector to reposition in the Baccaret area. As they were conducting a passage of lines, a tactical maneuver ensuring the front was covered as they departed, a German aircraft buzzed the formation and dropped a note bidding the 167th goodbye and welcoming the replacing regiment. German intelligence was very good.

On July 23, after 135 days on or near the front, the 167th Regiment took a swim in the Marne River. In this sector the German line seemed to fade away and the Doughboys from Huntsville, Corporal Dock Hill, Private First Class Kirk Satterfield, Privates Percy Crunk, Hope and Roberts knew the campaign was not over. They anticipated another maneuver soon but now they washed the remains of their clothes, and lay in the grass for a much needed rest.

There were two events the soldiers of the regiment understood without a word being spoken. When the brass woke them up with a hot breakfast and coffee, they would be attacking somewhere by 10:00 a.m. In addition, an order to load onto trucks meant a long ride and an attack immediately after dismounting. July 24th was no exception to the rule. The brass ordered them to load onto trucks.

The companies were formed, equipped, and ready to move at 4:00 p.m. No trucks were present. Their sergeants took the extra time for an equipment check, directed them to clean their weapons, and as they cleaned they were free to smoke cigarettes and reminisce about their girlfriends and home. At 1200 a.m., 225 trucks arrived, enough for the remnants of three battalions. A French officer translated for the Annamite drivers. The Annamites were from Indochina, a location later named South Vietnam. Each Vietnamese driver guided a group of 16 soldiers to their truck.

It was approximately 14 miles as the crow flies to their destination, but to avoid the Boch air and

artillery, they took the long way and the rest of the night was spent in the trucks. The battalions arrived at Epieds before noon on July 25th, and without delay, they formed their companies and departed at 2:30 p.m. It was approximately six miles to their objective and they made the trek the old fashioned way - on foot.

They were not the first Americans to pass this way. The 26th Division was there for two weeks and now they were withdrawing at less than half strength. It cost them 400 casualties for every mile of terrain they took and they didn't make it to the objective. The Alabamians soon learned why. As the regiment marched off, Colonel Screws was reportedly asked where they were going and his response was, "I don't know but we are on our way."

The retiring division was mauled and their reports were incoherent. The 167th had to learn the hard way. Just ahead, the Croix Rouge (Red Cross) Farm was centered in a huge clearing and a classic illustration of a killing zone. Well in front of the German defense lines of the farm but within range of the Bosh 77's artillery. Digging shallow foxholes or taking advantage of pits created by artillery, the Americans surveyed their situation.

Snipers camouflaged and placed in fortified positions to cover the tree lines and trails began producing casualties and random artillery explosions splintered the remaining trees naked. American scouts studied the large farmhouse that dominated a slight rise from which fire could be delivered in all directions. A large

number of German soldiers were in trenches on its west and north and trenches running east-west 100 yards in front of the farmhouse was lightly manned, but well-armed with water-cooled 7.92mm machine guns serviced by a five-man crew. Machine guns were the heart of the German defense. The automatic weapons on each flank had interlocking fields of fire with red paint marked on the remaining trees at chest level and the distance was calculated. The scouting reports indicated the Germans could project 10,000 rounds a minute with killing accuracy up to 1,000 yards. It was certain death for soldiers of the previous infantry division that had retired after repeatedly failing to breach the zone.

German snipers began engaging targets as soon as the 167th passed through the lines of the retiring division. They targeted leaders and produced casualties.

The Caesar Position

The Alabamians were facing the Caesar Position, it was named by the German Army high command and portions of the 23rd Infantry, and 10th Landwehr Divisions were holding it. The defending divisions were reduced in strength by the Spanish Flu and the casualties of previous combat but they were confident, after all, they had defeated an American Division and only a brigade was at their front.

The German machine gunners were expected to engage the American troops committed to the attack

when they were seen in or near the tree line, or in the open ground, and the artillery could eliminate the second echelon of the attack effectively ending any assault in the killing zone. Their implementation always worked.

Colonel Screws

The 167th command group headquarters was situated nearly 1500 meters behind the lead companies southwest of the farm and all the reports filtering in were pessimistic. The exact objective was yet to be identified.

It was not uncommon for soldiers in France to be wet, muddy, and miserable and July and August were supposed to be the driest and warmest months of the year. This year it was unseasonably cold with a steady drizzle and chill that penetrated every item of clothing and did not seem to stop at the skin. The rain and drizzle would not stop. The ground was muddy and slick and everything stuck to their boots, hands and body. Walking was impossible with snipers effectively playing the part of the grim reaper. Crawling may be safer but a man could collect 40lbs of mud on his body slowing any intent to charge. Gray skies and cold rain waited above them while death was at their front.

Under the cover of night, Colonel Screws arrayed the 1st Battalion on the left of the line, adjacent to the French Brigade, the 3rd Battalion at the center. The 168th Infantry Brigade (the Iowans) was on the right of the 3rd Battalion and south of the farm. On July 26,

the sunrise was only a light spot in a gray sky and the rain and drizzle never stopped.

Orders arrived at 3:40 pm and deciphering it took a few minutes. Their orders were to attack at 4:50 pm. Colonel Screws's deputy delivered the order to the battalion commanders and was delayed getting to the 1st Battalion by the carnage created by the German artillery and weather. They received the order at 4:45 p.m.

General Pershing' Order Policy

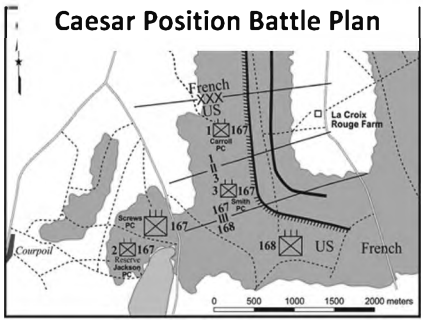
- Keep it Simple
- Limited Objectives
- Provide Overwhelming Fire Power
  - Aviation
  - Artillery
- Support Maneuver with Machineguns

The 1st Battalion objective was the tree line northeast of the farm house with an implied task of securing the tree line farther north and that was complicated by a Bosh counter attack on the French Brigade, center right, affecting casualties in the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion orders were to secure the forest between it and the farm, take the farm house then turn northward and occupy the woods.

While they waited, the troops cleaned their boots and equipment again as best they could in an attempt to leverage speed against the horde of machine guns that awaited them. This was open warfare, the type of combat General Pershing had promoted: fire, maneuver and eliminating targets with accurate and suppressive fire. But accompanying and normally

preceding the maneuver element was artillery support. The Alabamians had no artillery. The French were designated to provide the artillery support and there was none. The Alabamians' machine gun battalion did support the flanks.

At the time designated to attack, the 1st Battalion was late. The 3rd Battalion, with platoons leading from Company D and C charged. The Hun snipers did their job and eliminated two leaders at almost the same instant. But there was no hesitation on the part of the Alabamians, they knew their orders. (Much later the Iowans would swear they heard the Rebel Yell above all the noise of combat.) The German machine guns took their toll. The first charge fizzled short of the German trenches and Private Ben Hope was hit in the head during the charge. In that frantic charge, Ben probably did not notice that Opal Roberts died, but Ben recovered his composure quickly and rallied the troops around him to continue the attack. When the objective was nearly assured, he was hit again and again and he never knew the satisfaction of victory. Percy Crunk, it was learned later, was killed very early in the fight. There were others.



The farm house and the German killing zone, after two hours of fighting, were full of dying German and American soldiers and the Alabamians could not take

the time either to rejoice in victory or mourn the loss of their comrades. They dug foxholes and prepared to defend against an expected German counter attack and wait for their next order.

Epilogue

The 167th succeeded where other American formations had failed and at considerable cost, particularly to Huntsville. In a single fight Huntsville and Madison County lost Percy Crunk, Doc Hill, Ben Hope, Opal Roberts, and Kirk Satterfield. Corporal Edgar H. Freeman survived the fight and the ones that followed. He returned home safe and sound.

It is customary that after nearly every action, leaders talk to the soldiers about the fight if they have the time. They ask questions that could lead them to identify distinguished soldiers, understand tactical errors, or some overlooked oddity that could have changed the outcome or simplify the next mission. From those discussions, Ben Hope was recommended for and awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for his leadership and sacrifice on the Croix Rouge Farm battlefield. Previously he was mentioned in dispatches and recognized for his bravery in a fight and along with Edgar H. Freeman, they would be the two soldiers from Huntsville that were awarded the medal.

Private Ben Hope Citation

The Distinguished Service Cross is awarded to Private Ben Hope (Army Serial Number 96503), Company D, 167th Infantry, 42nd Division, American Expeditionary Force:

For extraordinary heroism in action with the enemy north-east of Chateau-Thierry, France, July 26, 1918. After he had been wounded in the head, Private Hope continued to advance against the enemy until he had been wounded three more times. He later died as a result of these wounds. His conduct was at all times of a highly inspiring character. Alabama Archives

Kirk Sutterfield French WWI Military Cemetery

Private Opal Roberts Maple Hill Cemetery Huntsville Alabama

Private Ben Hope Maple Hill Cemetery Huntsville, Alabama

The battle of Croix Rouge Farm (the Cesar Position) merits little attention by historians of WWI. July 26, 1918 is seldom referenced and never mentioned as a

significant event, not even a casual footnote. But it was a significant event to the men who fought and died there. Yet, even as the survivors reflect on their war it may not merit anything more than a casual comment. After all, it was what they were trained for and they did something similar again and again until the war was finally over. Even to their families the event is shadowed as Ben Hope's mother wrote "*Then on July 26th 1918 he was in battle at Chateau Thirey.*" It is a familiar saga that every soldier understands and keeps somewhere in his soul.

July 26, 1918

...the 167th Alabama assisted by the left flank of the 168th Iowa had stormed and captured the Croix Rouge Farm in a manner which for its gallantry I do not believe has been surpassed in military history. It was one of the few occasions on which the bayonet was decisively used.

Douglas MacArthur

The war did not end at Croix Rouge Farm. In the few months that remained in the war, Turner Mayes of Huntsville was killed on October 16, 1918 and Milas A. Payne also of Huntsville was killed on November 10, 1918, the day before the cease-fire. Each soldier paid the dues for their Gold Star Mother's entry into a club no one would choose to join.

> ... *"The Great War could no more have been avoided than an earthquake or any other cataclysm of nature's unknown forces. On the one side loomed the German character of strength and patience, of selfish caution in adversity, and vain and reckless arrogance of power. On the other glowed the sunlight of democratic civilization, which encouraged all peoples to aspire toward equality, and to prefer death to slavery. Given these opposing forces, and their clash was inevitable. The marvel now is only that we were all to slow to see the ominous approach of the disaster."* Charles F. Horne 1923

All of President Wilson's political objectives were not fulfilled by entering and ending the war, but it is certain that for ever more all Americans, regardless of the state of their origin or the color of their skin, would be referred to by Europeans as "Yanks."

167th Alabama Infantry WWI Battle 1918 Timeline

- Feb 21 to March 23: Luneville sector, Lorraine
- March 31 to June 21: Baccaret
- July 4 to the 14: Esperance-Souain sector, Champaigne

Complements of the Foundation du Memorial de la Ferme de la Croix Rouge

- July 15 to the 17: Champagne-Marne defense
- July 25 to Aug 3: Aisne-Marne offensive,
- September 12 to the 16: St. Mihiel offensive
- September 17 to the 30: Essey and Pannes sector Woevre
- October 12 to the 31: Meuse-Argonne offensive
- Nov 5 to the 10: Meuse-Argonne offensive

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About the Author: Arley McCormick is a former soldier and active with organizations that contribute to the history of Alabama.

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I. Schiffman & Company: A Depression-Era Success Story

By Dawn Suiter

The decade of the Great Depression commonly brings to mind widespread, crushing poverty, with images of gaunt, hollow-eyed people lined up at soup kitchens, destitute families picking at scraps to survive, and businesses and farms struggling to stay afloat. However, the Depression was *not* uniformly cruel; some individuals and businesses prospered, even going so far as to spread their good fortune to the surrounding community. The Goldsmith-Schiffman family and its business interests in I. Schiffman and Company provide an example of this. I. Schiffman & Company and its officers, through their highly diversified, yet interconnected, business interests and investments in the city of Huntsville, not only successfully weathered the storm of the Great Depression, but also made significant contributions to Huntsville's survival, recovery, and growth over time.

While the stock market crash of October 24, 1929 caused the national income to drop from 88 billion in 1929 to its low point of 41 billion in 1933,[1] a closer look into the past reveals that not everyone suffered equally during this period. The impact of the

[1] James Record, *A Dream Come True: The Story of Madison County and Incidentally of Alabama and the United States*, Vol. II (Huntsville: John Hicklin Printing Company, 1978), 207.

Depression, as Carol E. Heim of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst observes, was highly uneven. At its low point in 1933, a quarter of the American labor force was unemployed, but those individuals who kept their jobs experienced increasing purchasing power as prices fell.[2] This applied also to businesses that had invested wisely prior to the Depression and therefore had cash on reserve that could be used to purchase goods and property at a discount. Government policies, especially after 1933, also helped some businesses to thrive. In the United States, the South benefited in some ways from the Depression thanks to the positive, if unintended, long-term effects of government policies linking the formerly isolated Southern labor market with the greater national market and stimulating economic development. [3] Southern states received less New Deal spending than the rest of the nation because the region was perceived to be "safely in the Democratic camp," but even so, the Southern U.S. received a larger share of wartime manufacturing facilities in the 1940s,[4] which would certainly work in Huntsville's favor. According to Heim, the South was not only less severely impacted in the

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[2] Carol E. Heim, "Uneven Impacts of the Great Depression: Industries, Regions, and Nations," in *The Economics of the Great Depression*, edited by Mark Wheeler (Kalamazoo: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1998), 29.

[3] Heim, 29.

[4] Heim, 40-41.

short term, but it rebounded more quickly than the rest of the nation.[5]

Huntsville was no exception; the city does not appear to have suffered nearly as painful a blow from the Depression in the early 1930s as did larger cities across the nation. While The Hub and Sam Thompson's Department Store went out of business on July 31, 1930, city planners recommended a new half million dollar post office for the city and a new bus service replaced streetcar service on December 11 of that year. [6] On January 30, 1932, Erwin Manufacturing Company announced that despite the Depression, its profits for 1931 were greater than in 1930. [7] July 1933 brought a 25% wage hike for Woolworth, Grant, Kress, and McClellan employee wages, and 1937-1938 brought a bumper crop of cotton, breaking county production records. On December 18, 1938, Christmas shopping was reported to be the best since 1929.[8] An additional boost to the Huntsville economy, and for that matter its reputation as an up-and-coming Southern town, came with the opening of the the grand Russel Erskine Hotel in January 1930, to be discussed in more depth later. This hotel, the brainchild of Lawrence B. Goldsmith

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[5] Heim, 49.

[6] Bob Adams, "1930-1939: The Great Depression," *Eden of the South: A Chronology of Huntsville, Alabama 1805-2005*," ed. by Ranee' G. Pruitt (Huntsville: Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, 2005), 147.

[7] Adams, 148.

[8] Adams, 150, 154.

Sr. of I. Schiffman & Company and a notable Huntsville landmark, not only contributed to Huntsville's economy during the Depression, but also served as a pull factor to attract individuals responsible for Huntsville's future military and aerospace industries.

The company's diversification began just after the turn of the twentieth century. It opened in 1860 as a simple dry goods store on Huntsville's Courthouse Square, owned and operated by brothers Solomon and Daniel Schiffman, who immigrated to the United States from Hoppstaedten, Germany in 1857. Their nephew Isaac Schiffman came from Germany later, joining the company in 1875.[9] Isaac eventually took over the brothers' business, and in 1905 he began to diversify the company by entering the investment and cotton businesses. [10] Margaret Anne Goldsmith remarked that Solomon's will stated that the dry goods business had to stay open for a certain period of time after his death. Isaac, however, had a lot more in mind for the company than his uncle and chose to expand the business.[11] He needed a storage building and a main office, so Isaac purchased the former Southern

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[9] "Solomon Schiffman." Huntsville History Collection. http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/index.php?title=Person:Solomon_Schiffman.

[10] "Isaac Schiffman," Huntsville History Collection http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/index.php?title=Person:Isaac_Schiffman.

[11] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, interview with author, July 23, 2017.

Savings and Loan building at 231 Eastside Square the same year, transforming it into the base of operations for the family's business holdings.[12] In 1908, Isaac's son, Robert, and his son-in-law Lawrence Goldsmith, Sr. joined the business, forming a partnership. Isaac died in 1910, but his wife, Bettie, who inherited the business, stayed on with Robert and Lawrence until her death in 1932. The following year, the business was incorporated as I. Schiffman & Co., Inc.[13] Robert Schiffman died in 1936, at which point Lawrence became president of the company.

By the time I. Schiffman & Company incorporated, the company was involved in much more than investments, dry goods, and cotton: for instance, Lawrence and Robert operated one of Huntsville's first automobile dealerships, bought, sold, and leased commercial properties, and oversaw numerous farm properties throughout Madison County as part of their duties with I. Schiffman & Company.[14] The automotive business existed from 1910 to 1962, while the farming business operated from 1896 to 1976. The

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[12] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "The I. Schiffman Building," Huntsville History Collection. http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/index.php?title=The_I._Schiffman_Building.

[13] "Isaac Schiffman," Huntsville History Collection http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/index.php?title=Person:Isaac_Schiffman.

[14] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Lawrence Bernstein Goldsmith, Sr.," *The Bernstein Herstein Schiffman and Goldsmith Collection: A Catalogue*. Personal files provided by Margaret Anne Goldsmith.

property management business is still in operation today.[15] The company also provided banking services and managed the business affairs and estates of the extended Bernstein, Herstein, Schiffman, and Goldsmith families, all of which fell under Lawrence's oversight. [16] As for the latter, Margaret Anne Goldsmith stated in an interview that this is a traditional practice for many Jewish families--the company managed individual assets, taking care of family members even if it did not benefit the company.[17] In addition to these ventures, I. Schiffman & Company had business operations in agriculture and textile manufacturing and invested in a diversified portfolio of stocks and bonds, both local and national. According to the archival documents uncovered by Paul Hays, this portfolio included several mining companies, transportation companies, Chrysler Corporation, power and communications companies, as well as government bonds. The 1934 portfolio was valued at $130,300.00, worth the equivalent of $2,381,913.17 in 2017. [18] [19] The company's

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[15] Paul Hays, *I. Schiffman & Company: Huntsville's Most Diversified Entrepreneurial Business* (West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing, 2013), preface.

[16] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Lawrence Bernstein Goldsmith, Sr.," *The Bernstein Herstein Schiffman and Goldsmith Collection: A Catalogue*. Personal files provided by Margaret Anne Goldsmith.

[17] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, interview by author, July 23, 2017.

[18] Paul Hays, *I. Schiffman & Company*, 103-104.

[19] http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/

diversification served the business, and the Goldsmith-Schiffman family members, well throughout the depression. Not only did its business interests keep the company solvent, but they also put the company's officers in a position that allowed them to contribute to the development of the city through the lean years of the Depression.

Despite its successes, the company did not escape the Depression unscathed. For instance, the partnership's 1930 tax return showed a net loss of $23,943.68: the Investment Department lost $6,401.34, while the Automotive Department lost $4,097.64 and the 433 bales of Call cotton in their inventory lost $17,956.98 in value.[20] Salaries took a hit as well, with Leo Schiffman, manager of the Auto and Auto Accessories Department, taking a drop in salary from $4,000 to $2,689.42 in 1930. Lawrence Goldsmith's income dropped by a whopping $10,768, which Hays notes is "consistent with the economic slowdown of the era."[21] Hays reports that in 1931, Leo Schiffman earned a salary of only $2,427.98, paying no taxes for the year, Robert Schiffman suffered a net loss of $1,938.12, and Lawrence Goldsmith had a net

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[20] "Call cotton" is defined by the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission as "physical cotton bought or sold, or contracted for purchase or sale at a price to be fixed later based on a specified delivery month future's price" (http://www.cftc.gov/MarketReports/CottonOnCall/HistoricalCottonOnCall/deaoncall040210)

[21] Hays, *I. Schiffman & Company*, 38.

loss of $3,571.82. Irma Schiffman, on the other hand, earned a net gain of $2,889.43, paying $9.36 in taxes.[22] The partnership's net loss totaled $2,184.41. The company filed two tax returns in 1932, with one showing a collective loss of $10,111.13 and the other a gain of $24,177.50. The second return also noted that as of July 31, 1933, the company dissolved the partnership and reestablished itself as a corporation.[23][24]

One of the most visible Depression-era legacies of I. Schiffman & Company and the Goldsmith-Schiffman family is the aforementioned Russel Erskine hotel, located at the downtown corner of what is now Clinton Avenue and Spragins Street. The hotel celebrated its opening on January 3. 1930 with public tours and a grand ball. The *Huntsville Daily Times* article covering its opening notes that "More Than Four Thousand Visitors Pass Through," "Compliments Pour In City," and "Day Is Successfully Closed With Grand Ball

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[22] According to Margaret Anne Goldsmith, Irma was a single woman who inherited a third of her mother Betty's estate and had money to invest, so the family helped her financially by putting a stable stream of income in her name. She added that the company did the same for Ella Davis, a black employee of the company who had funds of her own. Interview by author, July 23,2017.

[23] Hays, *I. Schiffman & Company*, 38.

[24] According to Margaret Anne Goldsmith, this gain was the result of the business's revaluation when it incorporated. Interview with author, July 23, 2017.

Which Delights Visitors."[25] Local historian Diane Ellis describes the hotel as "symbolic of our own modest splendor during the Depression years," symbolizing the possibilities of a better future for Huntsville residents and their nation and allowing those who could afford its comforts the opportunity to briefly forget the troubles of the larger world.[26]

At the time of the hotel's debut, it was becoming evident that the national economy faced serious problems. The hotel's estimated worth totaled $614,932.96, a massive investment for a town of only about 11,500 people. It involved major financial risk for investors and loan providers, especially given the national economic circumstances. The Commonwealth Life Insurance Company of Louisville, Kentucky was one of these investors, and while many banks closed, this one chose to weather the storm in the hopes that its $175,000 loan to the Huntsville Hotel Company would not go into default.[27] About fifty Huntsville investors shared the risk, committing themselves to put up $200,000 for stock in the new company. One of the biggest contributors, according to the minutes of the "first meeting of the Stockholders of the Huntsville

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[25] "Erskine Hotel Successfully Opened Third," *The Huntsville Daily Times*, Sunday morning January 5, 1930, 1. Microform.
[26] Diane Ellis, "An Artifact of Time and Place," *Huntsville Historic Quarterly of Local Architecture and Preservation* 30 (Fall/Winter 2004), 7.
[27] David Bowman, "The Russel Erskine Hotel," *Huntsville Historic Quarterly of Local Architecture and Preservation* 30 (Fall/Winter 2004),14.

Hotel Company," held on April 19, 1928, included Oscar Goldsmith, Executor of the Bernstein Estate, who invested $20,000 in the company. L.B. Goldsmith and R.L. Schiffman also invested $7,500 each. The meeting minutes were prepared by the hotel company's secretary-treasurer, Lawrence B. Goldsmith, who "worked tirelessly on its behalf for about thirty-eight years."[28]

The task of financing the Huntsville Hotel Company fell on the shoulders of a group of men referred to by David Bowman as "The Seven Financial Samurai." This group consisted of brothers-in-law Lawrence B. Goldsmith and Robert Schiffman, partners in I. Schiffman Co., Morton M. Hutchens, partner in the Hutchens company, attorney Robert E. Smith, Alabama Power Company executive Wells M. Stanley, downtown dry goods merchant T. T. Terry, and *Huntsville Daily Times* editor and general manager J. Emory Pierce, who together filed a deed pledging "to underwrite and guarantee the repayment" of a $275,000 loan for the building.[29]

The hotel posed a financial struggle for its backers from the start as a result of the shrinking economy of the early 1930s. Margaret Anne Goldsmith recalled in an interview that the upper floors did not open initially because the hotel lacked the business to justify the opening of the entire building at the time. Lawrence

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[28] Bowman, 14.
[29] Bowman, 14.

Goldsmith was not one to let something fail, however. This, according to Margaret Anne, was the only time her grandfather ever borrowed money.[30] During the hotel's first seven years of operation in the lean years of the Depression, Stanley, Terry, Goldsmith, Schiffman, and Hutchens contributed their own money to the hotel, donating $2,150 each in 1930, then $5,300 each in 1931, $5,500 in 1932, followed by differing amounts totaling $2,550 in 1933. In 1935 each donated $800, followed by $600 in 1936. The grand total during these seven years was $83,981.35, with $84,850 coming from the five hotel officers.[31] The group's devotion to the hotel's success is evident in L.B. Goldsmith's letter to Judge Homer Batson, in which he states that the Directors of the hotel invested approximately $160,000 in the project, with another $85,000 put in following the original loans, "and since the Depression it is impossible for the hotel itself to carry the burden. The matter has been constantly before us," he adds," and we have in every instance consulted with your Company in advance and have by mutual agreement kept the matter current; and never for a moment have the loans been in default."[32] This sort of group venture was not unusual for the period, according to historian C. Wright Mills, who describes local societies as having "cliques" of powerful upper-

[30] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, interview with author, July 23, 2017.
[31] Bowman, 30-31.
[32] Bowman, 31-32.

class people from different business sectors that worked together to achieve economic goals for their local area.[33] It proved an effective strategy in the case of the Huntsville Hotel Company.

The Russel Erskine Hotel was equipped with the latest modern luxuries, described in the hotel's letterhead stationery as featuring "running ice water/electric fan/and radio in every room." The latter feature involved an expensive ($3,103.40, or the equivalent of $45,395.91 in 2016) rooftop radio antenna that brought broadcasts to each room, much like the "community antenna" (cable) television systems that arrived decades later.[34] The hotel also featured a coffee shop, "Huntsville's most elegant restaurant," and a grand ballroom, as well as a barber shop and a "fireproof garage." Margaret Anne recalls that the coffee shop was THE place in Huntsville. It was the only upscale restaurant in town, with waiters in coats, cloth napkins, and tablecloths.[35] Originally slated to carry the name Joe Wheeler, the hotel's owners instead named it after Huntsville native Albert Russel Erskine. According to the grand opening announcement in the Thursday afternoon edition of the January 2, 1930 *Huntsville Daily Times*, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce James M. Gill suggested the name "because of its significance in Huntsville's

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[33] C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 37-38.
[34] Bowman, 37.
[35] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, interview with author, July 23, 2017.

history, the present bearer of the name, Russel Erskine, being president of the Studebaker Corporation, third captain of Industry in America and one of the sons of whom Huntsville is most proud."[36] According to Kadie Pangburn, They hoped that, as a member of one of Huntsville's oldest families, he would invest substantial funds into it.

Unfortunately, Erskine had fallen on hard times and reportedly only invested $500, as well as loaning a portrait of himself to the Huntsville Hotel Company to be hung in the lobby.[37] Modern amenities helped the hotel to fulfill its purpose. Margaret Anne Goldsmith recalls that it was her grandfather, Lawrence B. Goldsmith Sr., who had the idea of building a first-class hotel "to put Huntsville on the map and provide a much-needed public facility for the town."[38] The land for the hotel property was originally acquired by Margaret Anne Goldsmith's great-great grandfather Morris Bernstein, who purchased a row of buildings prior to the Civil War on the property that later housed

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[36] "New Hotel Erected At Cost Of Over Half Million Dollars: Magnificent New Edifice Is Realization Of Plans Of Local Capitalists," *The Huntsville Daily Times*, Thursday Afternoon, January 2, 1930.

[37] Kadie Pangburn, "Historic Huntsville: The Russel Erskine Hotel," Crunkleton Commercial Real Estate Group, Huntsville, Alabama, January 3, 2017. https://crunkletonblog.wordpress.com/2017/01/03/historic-huntsville-the-russell-erskine-hotel/

[38] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Living at the Hotel: Childhood Memories," *Huntsville Historic Quarterly of Local Architecture and Preservation* 30 (Fall/Winter 2004), 50.

the hotel. Those buildings were demolished so the hotel could be constructed. Goldsmith notes that the hotel became the "social, business, and civic heart of Huntsville" for many Huntsville residents for four decades and provided significant contributions to Huntsville's growth. [39] This Depression-era facility ultimately lured the generals who chose Huntsville as the site for Redstone Arsenal, becoming their temporary home base when they visited to inspect the land on which it would be built. This eventually led to Huntsville's entrance into the Space Age, bringing new growth and prosperity to the former small town known mostly for cotton and watercress.

The company's property investment wing, combined with its farming operations and automobile business, played a significant role in its ability to survive the Depression. The business entered the 1930s with significant monetary assets on hand, providing a financial cushion that would help facilitate its survival. The 1932 estate of Bettie Schiffman, for instance, indicates an impressive array of real estate holdings totaling over 5,200 acres of farmland, valued between $7 and $15 per acre at the time. In addition to this, the business owned numerous rental homes, lots, warehouses, and business properties in and around Huntsville.[40] Bettie Schiffman's estate was valued at $333,652.29, or the 2016 equivalent of approximately

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[39] Goldsmith, "Living at the Hotel: Childhood Memories," 51-52.
[40] Paul A. Hays, *I. Schiffman & Company*, 6-10.

$5,966,034. The 1934 tax records also listed the partnership's ownership of 51 lots in 8 different blocks, as well as half ownership in four more lots in two blocks.[41] I. Schiffman & Company also had a number of business interests throughout the 1930s, including the aforementioned Dodge dealership, as well as inventories of cotton harvested from their farm holdings.

The shift to a corporate structure took place following Bettie Schiffman's death in 1932, at which point Robert, Annie, and Irma Schiffman acquired the partnership and assorted properties and securities in her estate. Robert Schiffman and Lawrence Goldsmith opted to incorporate the I. Schiffman & Company Partnership on the grounds that they believed a corporate

[41] Hays, *I. Schiffman & Company*, 40-41.

structure would simplify the process of passing the assets of I. Schiffman from generation to generation in the future.[42] The incorporation took place on August 1, 1933. Schiffman company assets at this time consisted of cash, loans, farm properties, stocks and bonds, the automotive department, city property and machinery, trucks, and equipment, valued at $694,000. [43] The 1933 tax returns indicate the resurgence of the newly incorporated company's fortunes, with net gains enjoyed by all primary members of the business. I. Schiffman & Company now declared a net income of $13,407 for the year, with capital assets of $305,715.24. Robert Schiffman's salary, as President, was now $8,000, and Secretary and Treasurer Lawrence Goldsmith earned a salary of $7,909.10.[44]

While the Depression provided only temporary setbacks to I. Schiffman & Company, it dealt a heavy blow to farmers: according to economic historian Peter

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[42] According to Business News Daily (http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/8163-choose-legal-business-structure.html), incorporation would have protected family members from personal responsibility were the company to have legal or financial problems. The corporate structure also prevents issues with distribution of company assets if a partner were to die or divorce. As a family-owned and operated business, this was a less risky way to do business than a partnership.

[43] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "The History of I. Schiffman & Company, Incorporated." *The Bernstein Herstein Schiffman and Goldsmith Collection: A Catalogue.* Personal files provided by Margaret Anne Goldsmith.

[44] Hays, *I. Schiffman & Company*, 40.

Fearon, the collapse of agricultural prices after 1929 impacted nearly all farmers. Cotton, which sold for around 17 cents per pound in 1929, dropped to below 6 cents per pound in 1931, while corn dropped from 60 cents per bushel in 1930 to a mere 32 cents per bushel in 1931.[45] The average net farm income fell from $945 in 1929 to only $304 by 1932.[46] Bumper crops of cotton and wheat paired with falling prices further exacerbated farmers' financial woes during the same period. While this led many farmers to face foreclosure, it provided opportunities for resourceful companies such as I. Schiffman & Company, who still had significant capital, to increase their property investment holdings. The company owned a large number of farm properties throughout the 1930s, contributing to the company's 1937 taxable income of $18,232.20, with capital totalling an impressive $519,267.29. I. Schiffman's depreciation schedule for the year shows nineteen farms, many of which contained buildings.[47]

When asked about the farm purchases, Ms. Goldsmith stated that the company was not trying to "just acquire more and more land" with the purchases of multiple farms but were rather in the business of farming. It is uncertain whether all of the owners of the farms I. Schiffman purchased became

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[45] Peter Fearon, *War, Prosperity, & Depression: The U.S. Economy 1917-45* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 101.
[46] Fearon, 102.
[47] Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 42-43.

sharecroppers or tenant farmers, but it seems likely, as the farms continued to need workers and the previous owners could continue to live in their homes while working the land with the objective of paying off their debts. In addition, the company remained in the finance business during the Depression. Ms. Goldsmith recalls a conversation with her grandfather, Lawrence Goldsmith Sr., about a Mr. Nunn, who owned much of the Big Cove Farm. Mr. Nunn, he told her, "kept coming to the Company to borrow money to purchase more and more farmland contiguous to his holding when they became available." Her grandfather, she said, shook his head, telling Margaret Anne that he had tried to get Nunn to stop going into greater and greater debt, but Nunn persisted. "When times were good and Nunn made money, there was no reason not to continue lending to him." However, she continued, her grandfather "knew that markets never move continuously upward without downturns. Eventually, the times turned during the depression and my grandfather said that there had been no choice but to foreclose." In response to a question regarding what became of the farmers whose properties I. Schiffman acquired, she responded that while she is aware of "a great deal of buying and selling farmland," she is uncertain about what other properties were acquired by foreclosure. Ms. Goldsmith assumes that following foreclosure, the former owners would have either been asked or allowed to remain on the land. She notes that it made sense for both the farmers and the company, as the land needed to be farmed, "and who but the

former owners knew the land the best?," adding that she would have chosen that course of action were she alive then and in her grandfather's position.[48]

Larry Long, whose grandfather was a tenant farmer on the I. Schiffman holding Green Grove Farm, and who was a childhood friend of Margaret Anne Goldsmith recalls that "it was pretty tough back then...cotton went to a nickel a pound overnight." Long said that the company was in the loan business and loaned a lot of money to farmers, and "when the bottom fell out, they could not pay their debts." He noted that because nobody in the Goldsmith-Schiffman family were farmers, the business had to rely on the farmers to stay on the land and become tenants, adding that they were well taken care of in that role. Long stated that they all received a good house, well water, a cow for milk, and a couple of hogs for meat. I. Schiffman and Company also provided each of the tenant farmers their own land on which to farm. Each family was allotted a certain amount of cotton to plant depending on the size of their families. If the farmers got behind, Long said, the company "sent people who'd already finished on their land over to help the farmers who needed help...the company made sure everyone was taken care of." Everyone, he continued, helped everyone else.[49] Eventually, Green

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[48] Margaret Anne Goldsmith, email correspondence, June 9, 2017.
[49] Larry Long, interview with author, July 26, 2017.

Grove would take on a new life as a key component of Huntsville's development.

Following the Depression, the corporation's land holdings ultimately contributed to the reinvention of Huntsville as a city with strong links to both military and space technology: On April 22, 1942, a special board meeting took place to approve the sale of land for $30,965.00 to the United States Army for the proposed Ordnance Plant. The former Green Grove Farm, bordered on three sides by the Tennessee River, became the bottom center of what was then known as the Siebert Arsenal, renamed Redstone Arsenal in February 1943.[50] In addition, the Goldsmith and Schiffman families deeded for $1.00 the property bounded by Beirne Avenue on the north, Schiffman Street on the east, and Ward Avenue on the south to the city of Huntsville for the future Goldsmith-Schiffman Field, the first athletic venue in Huntsville to host night games.[51] Oscar Goldsmith acquired the two-acre tract as early as the 1880s and he, Lawrence B. Goldsmith and Annie Schiffman Goldsmith, and Robert and Elsie Schiffman gave the property to the city in January 1934 in memory of Betty Bernstein Goldsmith and Betty Herstein Schiffman[52] with the stipulation that it would revert back to the family if it

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[50] Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 163-164.
[51] Hays, *I. Schiffman* 41.
[52] "Oscar Goldsmith," Huntsville History Collection, http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/index.php?title=Person:Oscar_Goldsmith.

was no longer used by the city schools. On the night of its dedication on October 4, 1934, Huntsville High defeated Gadsden High. Goldsmith-Schiffman Field hosted hundreds of high school games over a period of almost eighty years before Huntsville City Schools moved its games to Alabama A&M University's Louis Crews Stadium in 2012.[53]

Following the Huntsville City School move, Oscar's great-granddaughter Margaret Anne Goldsmith sought permission from relatives living as far away as Scotland to deed the field to the city without restrictions. "Nothing could make the ancestors happier," Goldsmith stated. "I think they're all clapping, wherever they are. I'm delighted that the people of Huntsville will continue to have wonderful memories of this park." Mayor Tommy Battle said that Huntsville will continue using Goldsmith-Schiffman Field for recreation league youth football, soccer, and lacrosse "for many, many years." The donation legally permits Huntsville to sell the property in the future, but in the event that occurs, the Goldsmith family requires that the net proceeds go to the Goldsmith-Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary near Hampton Cove.[54]

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[53] Steve Doyle, "Family's Donation Will Maintain Goldsmith-Schiffman Field's Treasured Place as Huntsville Sports Venue," *AL.com*, September 5, 2014. Steve Doyle, "Family's Donation Will Maintain Goldsmith-Schiffman Field's Treasured Place as Huntsville Sports Venue," *AL.com*, September 5, 2014.

[54] Steve Doyle, "Family's Donation Will Maintain Goldsmith-Schiffman Field's Treasured Place as Huntsville Sports Venue," *AL.com*,

In addition to this contribution, the family helped to grow Huntsville in another significant way. Robert Schiffman, along with County Agent J.B. Mitchell and Congressman John J. Sparkman, were instrumental in the establishment of Huntsville's Monte Sano State Park. These three men worked together to obtain the cooperation of the Tennessee Valley Authority's parks and recreation department and the Alabama Forestry Commission. The group persuaded the Madison County Commissioners to approve an appropriation of $18,000 for the purchase of 1,992 acres of land on Monte Sano on April 15, 1935. Madison County then deeded the property to the State of Alabama for the purpose of constructing a park, which was then built by young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps later that year.[55]

Related to the company's farming business was its textile business. According to Peter Fearon, the textile industry normally experienced ups and downs, reaching an employment peak of 472,000 in 1923, followed by a fall to 425,000 in 1929 and a more drastic drop to 330,000 in 1931. The 1933 returns indicated a rebound to 379,000. Fearon argues that "the South emerged from the Depression with some

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September 5, 2014.
http://www.al.com/news/huntsville/index.ssf/2014/09/familys_donation_will_maintain.html.

[55] Jimmy Hill, "The Great Depression and the Civilian Conservation Corps," Monte Sano Civic Association.
http://www.montesano.org/msca/history2/

hope," while New England was not so fortunate. The southern mills had a larger share of employment during this period and remained competitive due in part to lower wages. In addition, the textile industry did not suffer as much as other industries because of the continued demand for clothing.[56] One could argue that I. Schiffman and Company's continued success through the Depression can be attributed in part to the business's holdings in cotton, cottonseed, farms, and related equipment, which provided a measure of vertical integration when combined with its textile business. According to Whitney Snow, Huntsville was one of the top two textile cities in Alabama in 1922, hosting seven different manufacturing companies and mills.[57] This number began declining during the early depression years, with West Huntsville Cotton Mills Company closing by 1932,[58] but the textile industry remained active. Snow argues that the Depression-era Huntsville textile industry paralleled national trends, with the 1934 national textile strike bringing a walkout to Huntsville and leading to the closures of the Fletcher, Erwin, Rowe, and Helen mills. In 1937, Lowe Mill closed due to financial problems and strikes.[59] Despite these troubles, the I. Schiffman company continued to supply the mills with local raw

[56] Fearon, 98-99.
[57] Whitney Adrienne Snow, "Cotton Mill City: The Huntsville Textile Industry, 1880-1989," *Alabama Review* 63 (4), 272.
[58] Snow, 273.
[59] Snow, 275-276.

materials, further contributing to company income. I. Schiffman's 1934 tax folder, for instance, indicated that Lawrence Goldsmith gained $2,579.43 by cotton contracts for the year.[60] The mill strikes of 1934 did not entirely decimate the industry in Huntsville, but they did hasten its decline and ended Huntsville's domination of Alabama's textile industry.[61]

In addition to its other exploits, I. Schiffman and Company owned one of the first automobile dealerships in Huntsville. The automobile industry, too, suffered setbacks during the Depression: While 4.5 million passenger vehicles were produced in 1929, there were only 2.8 million manufactured in 1930, with a further drop in 1931, and an even worse decline in 1932, with only 1.1 million passenger cars produced.[62] This, of course, impacted the family's automobile dealership, with both supply and demand diminished by the shrinking economy. However, the business chose wisely with Dodge: its parent company, Chrysler, was one of only two car manufacturers to see profit during the Great Depression (the other company was General Motors). This was due to the company's ability to adjust to customer demands and its adoption of more efficient manufacturing techniques in 1929. Dodge appealed to customers with new innovations,

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[60] Hays, *I. Schiffman*, 40.

[61] Andrew J. Dunar and Stephen P. Waring, *Power to Explore: A History of Marshall Space Flight Center 1960-1990* (Washington: NASA History Office, 1999), 3.

[62] Fearon, 95-96.

including the first overdrive transmission, draft-free interior ventilation, and independent front suspension. According to the Chrysler blog, the 1930s proved extremely important to Dodge, firmly positioning its brand in the market and cementing its reputation for providing durable, comfortable vehicles at reasonable prices.[63] While this did not solve the problem of customer loan defaults at the dealership, the Automotive Department continued to attract new buyers and to provide parts and service for current customers who opted for repair over replacement.

Perhaps the greatest asset that I. Schiffman & Company had during the Depression was Lawrence B. Goldsmith himself. On top of his many duties at I. Schiffman and elsewhere, Lawrence worked with the Huntsville Chamber of Commerce. In a July 26, 1971 letter to local historian James Record, he recalled that in 1938, the United States Government considered Huntsville along with other sites in the Tennessee Valley region in which to locate a large munitions and storage complex. The Chamber of Commerce appointed Goldsmith and an unnamed businessman "to escort several government officials through the lower district of Madison County to the Tennessee River for inspection of possible sites...Soon afterward Huntsville was chosen as the site for the Munitions

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[63] "100 Years of Dodge History: 1930s," *The Country Chrysler Blog*, July 4, 2007. **http://countrychrysler.blogspot.com/2014/07/100-years-of-dodge-history-1930s.html**.

Complex.[64] The Chemical Weapons Service announced plans for a chemical weapons plant in Huntsville on the weekend of July 4th in 1941, and three months later, Redstone Ordnance Plant began operating on adjacent property.[65] This momentous event set the stage for the growth of Huntsville and Madison County into the dynamic region that it has become.

Goldsmith worked for the betterment of Huntsville in other ways too: he also served as treasurer of the Huntsville Industrial Expansion Center and was on both the Board of Education and the first Board of Huntsville Utilities. He was a Mason and a member of the Elks and Kiwanis clubs and was an active participant and supporter of the Boy Scouts, serving as treasurer on the local council from 1927-1937 and earning the "Silver Beaver" award from the Scouts for his service.[66] He also served on the Huntsville Board of Education from 1933-1936, and in late 1935, he served on Huntsville's newly-established welfare board along with Mrs. Humphrey Kelly, Eva Quick, Mrs. C.T. Butler, Aaron Fleming, Thompson Kelly, Phil Peeler, and Harry Williamson.[67] These extensive connections helped him to establish a large number of strong personal and professional relationships, enabling him

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[64] Goldsmith, "Lawrence Bernstein Goldsmith, Sr.," 93.
[65] Dunar and Waring, 3-4.
[66] Goldsmith, "Lawrence Bernstein Goldsmith, Sr.," 94.
[67] Record, 223, 379.

to take advantage of these connections to further strengthen his business ties.

In addition, Goldsmith formed a private businessmen's camp, Hollytree, in Jackson County, Alabama, dedicated to fishing, drinking, hunting, and gambling. Hollytree opened in 1920 and held camp meetings until its sale in 1961. This organization, which began with only seven members, charged an annual membership fee of $50, even though the Depression years. The club distributed 61 hand-lettered invitation cards in 1930, 55 of which cost $.16 each, four $.20 each, and two more $.25 each. Hays hypothesizes that the higher-priced invitations went to "the more important personages."[68] It is difficult to tell the nation was embroiled in a depression at the time, given the expenditures of those involved with the camp on poker and dice, camp cooks and attendants, food, beer, and liquor. One can find evidence of Lawrence B. Goldsmith's business acumen in the Hollytree records--on July 28, 1932, for example, he wrote a check from Hollytree to I. Schiffman & Company for $33.77 as an advance for a planned barbecue to entertain the game wardens. Hays notes that this is an indication not only of his conscious efforts to "grease the right skids as far of outside officials who might have influence on camp activities," as well as his scrupulousness in keeping

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[68] Paul A. Hays, *Hollytree: A Gentleman's Camp* (West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing, 2014), 79.

the financial records straight between the Hollytree and I. Schiffman business entities.[69]

Hollytree provides a view into Lawrence B. Goldsmith's networking skills and personal influence, which helped him to maintain key contacts with influential people in both business and government. Hays finds examples in a letter addressed to the Attorney General of Alabama, Thomas Knight, as "Dear Tom" and a friendly letter of appreciation from the state game and fisheries commissioner, I. T. Quinn, thanking him and the other members of Hollytree for the "very pleasant sojourn at Huntsville last week."[70] This combination of personal influence, careful accounting, and attention to client needs helped Goldsmith to cement a positive reputation and to build a network of powerful contacts. Although there was no camp meeting held in 1933, it resumed the following year, issuing even more invitations addressed to a variety of elite men. While it is unknown whether the future senator John J. Sparkman attended the camp, a letter to Lawrence from one Thomas Bragg of Birmingham notes Bragg's enjoyment at seeing Goldsmith, "Mort H., Mr. Lanier and Mr. Sparkman on the train to Washington." John Sparkman, Hays notes, was the one who brought the U.S. Army's German scientists to Huntsville, launching the beginning of the

[69] Hays, *Hollytree*, 85.
[70] Hays, *Hollytree*, 88-89.

space program and the growth of Huntsville into what it is now.[71]

Schiffman and Company is a living piece of Huntsville's history that continues to serve as a tangible reminder of the city's rich heritage and as a lesson in civic and economic responsibility, fiscal strategy, and stewardship. The Great Depression did not leave the company, or for that matter, the city, unscathed. However, the company leaders' cohesive ties of kinship combined with their wise use of financial resources, promoted in large part by the continuing efforts of Lawrence Goldsmith, Sr. to serve both the company and the community, helped I. Schiffman and Company, as well as the Greater Huntsville area, to survive the Depression and to set the stage for future growth and prosperity.

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[71] Hays, *Hollytree*, 100.

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- "Solomon Schiffman." Huntsville History Collection. http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hh/index.php?title=Person:Solomon_Schiffman.
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- According to Margaret Anne Goldsmith, Irma was a single woman who inherited a third of her mother Betty's estate and had money to invest, so the family helped her financially by putting a stable

stream of income in her name. She added that the company did the same for Ella Davis, a black employee of the company who had funds of her own. Interview by author, July 23,2017.

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Venable's Hotel, Huntsville, Alabama, 1862
Alabama Civil War Scrip

By
David Hollander

Because the Confederacy minted no coins for public use and because all "hard money", that is, United States coins, disappeared very rapidly because of hoarding, private fractional currency or scrip entered circulation to fill the need for change. Starting in 1862 scrip change was issued by some towns, counties, railroads, companies, merchants, and others. Even though the paper was illegal, it freely circulated. On April 1, 1863, private scrip was prohibited and made unlawful to issue or circulate "change bills or paper, or an instrument called a shinplaster, to answer the purposes of money."[72]

Paper was expensive and in short supply during the war and scrip is often printed on poor grade paper, the back of maps, or the back of other uniface money or bonds. Most Alabama scrip is scarce, even rare.

Scrip is ardently collected throughout the country and prices may vary from a hundred to several thousand dollars or more, based on interest, rarity, condition, and emotional factors.

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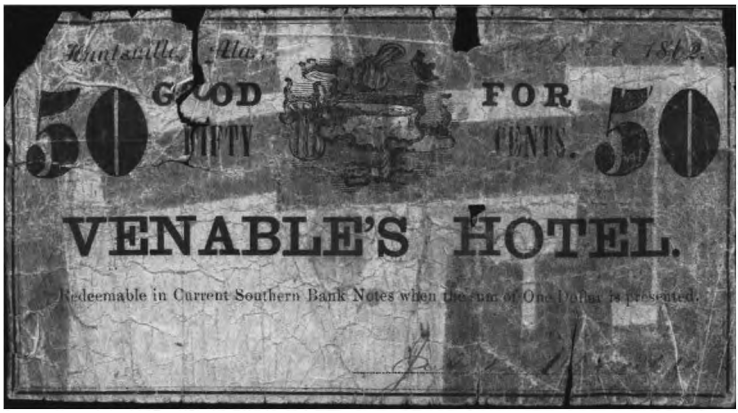
[72] Rosene, Walter, Jr., *ALABAMA Obsolete Notes and Scrip*, published and copyright by the Society of Paper Money Collectors, Inc., 1984, page 6.

ONLY TWO "ISSUED" EXAMPLES OF VENABLE'S HOTEL SCRIP ARE KNOWN.

Each of the two known issued and verified Huntsville, Alabama, Venable's Hotel 50 cent notes, Rosene 136-1[73], is in terrible condition. The first is from the Walter B. Jones sale[74]; the second found in a mixed lot in September 2003. They are owned by a Huntsville collector.



The front of the Walter B. Venable's Hotel note is fairly complete.

Both notes are dated July 22, 1862, with the "July 22" being hand-written and the "1862" printed. Rosene

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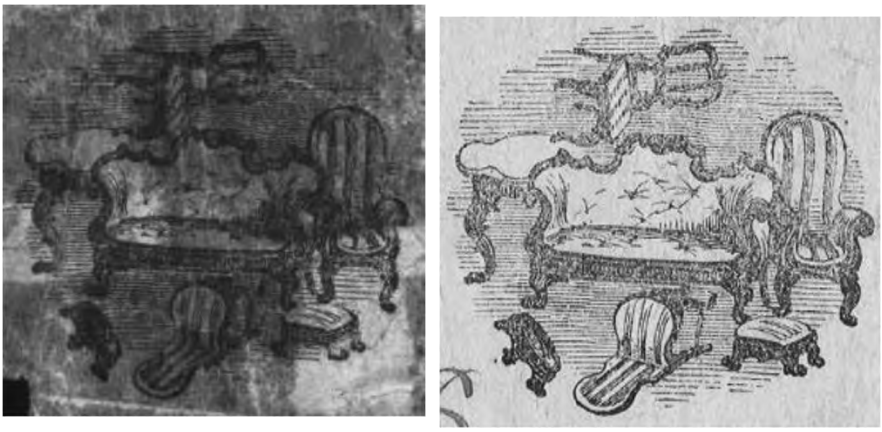
[73] Rosene, Walter, Jr., ALABAMA OBSOLETE NOTES AND SCRIP, Society of Paper Money Collectors, Inc., c. 1984, Page 56.
[74] Heritage Auctions, Walter B. Jones Collection, September 21, 2001, Auction Number 269, Lot 5683. Price realized, including Buyer's Premium, was $165.00.

indicates that the date on the issue is "18, part ink."[75] It is possible that he had seen neither of the issued pieces and only had a printer's proof to study.



The left vignette shows a settee and accessories when rotated by 180 degrees. (For clarity, the vignette on the right is from a Princeton, Alabama note.)

The signature on both notes is that of "J. M. Venable."

The note's vignette is unusual: it depicts a settee and chairs, but two of the chairs and one foot-stool are turned over and the entire vignette is printed upside-down! Probably the upside-down picture was merely an error on the part of the printer. When the note is rotated by 180 degrees, the scene becomes clear, but

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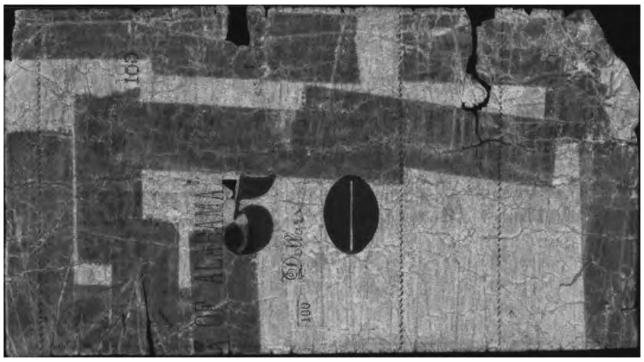
[75] Ibid, Page 56.

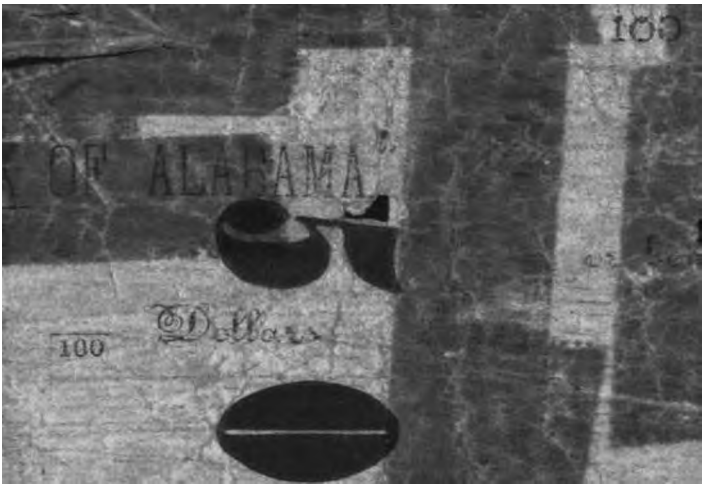
there still appears to be a perspective problem with one of the chairs. The vignette is not unique to the Venable's Hotel scrip. Rather, at least several other Alabama notes (by what appears to be the same printer, who remains unknown[76]) have this unusual scene. These include the Huntsville Johnson House 5 cent, Rosene 130-2[77], and Princeton, Alabama[78], Rosene 282-4 through 282-7[79]. It is plausible that the printer inadvertently produced a large amount of paper having only this error and, rather than destroy the paper that was quite valuable because of wartime shortages, continued to use it until his stocks were exhausted.



The back of the Venable's Hotel script is revealing.

[76] There are other Alabama obsolete notes that are clearly the work of the same printer. These include The Easley Hotel 50 cent note of 1862 (Huntsville, Alabama, unlisted in Rosene), the Huntsville James Hickman issue of 1862 (Rosene 127-1 and others), and the Huntsville J. M & T. I Humphrey issue of 1862 (Rosene 128-1 and others). However, the furniture vignette is not known on any of the surviving specimen.
[77] Op. Cit., Rosene, Page 52.
[78] Princeton, Alabama, is circa 25 miles east-north-east of Huntsville in Jackson County, Alabama.
[79] Op. Cit., Rosene, Page 109.

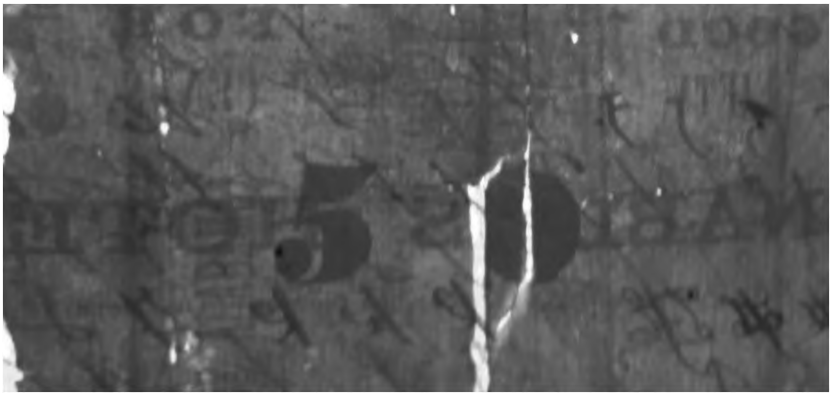
The back of the note is quite interesting: of course, the printed "50" value is very obvious and clear. But, less discernable is the fact that the scrip was printed on paper used for Bank of Alabama $100 bonds. The bond paper has a printed serration guide for separation. The 20 Princeton, Alabama, and the 5 Huntsville Johnson House notes that were examined had no value, no Alabama bond printing, nor any printed serrations on the back. As a cost saving measure, it is entirely possible that Mr. Venable had agreed to use the printer's cheapest stock, which was the paper printed on the State Bank of Alabama blank $100 bonds.



The Venable's Hotel scrip are printed on unissued Bank of Alabama $100 bonds.

The other Venable's Hotel note has a date identical to the first note, July 22,1862

The second known Venable's Hotel note has been backed with paper to preclude further deterioration. When held to light, it has the same reverse as the first note's, including the Bank of Alabama bond printing.



Held to light, both notes show the same back, including the Alabama bond indications.

WE KNOW SOME FACTS ABOUT MR. VENABLE AND THE HOTEL.

Mr. James Monroe Venable was born in Farmville, Prince Edward County, Virginia, on April 10, 1810. His father was Abraham (August 26, 1780-?); his mother Elizabeth Taylor (1782-July 25, 1855).

On December 20, 1831, Mr. Venable married Matilda W. Hoffman in Rockbridge County, Virginia.[80]

During the years 1834 -1837 the James Monroe Venable family probably lived in Tennessee since his two oldest girls were born there. Sometime before 1840 the Venable's moved south since the younger James was born in Alabama, and the family is recorded in the 1840 United States Census for Madison County[81] It lists the Venable home as 11 persons, including 5 Free White Males, 3 Free White Females, 1 Male Slave, and 2 Female Slaves.

The 1850 United States Census, enumerated on December 14, 1850, [82] indicates that the Venable

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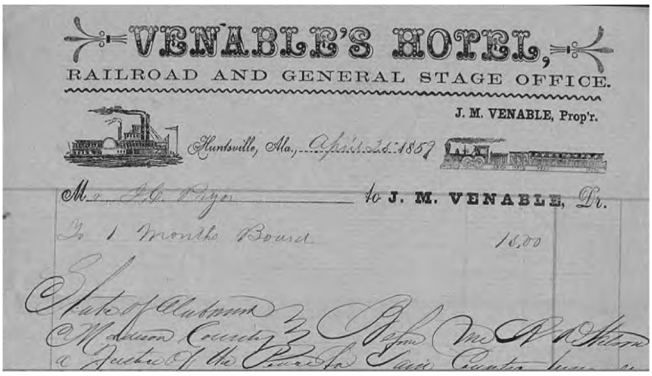
[80] Ancestry.com. *Virginia, Marriages, 1740-1850* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999. Original Data: Dodd, Jordan R., et. al., *Early American Marriages: Virginia to 1850.* Bountiful, UT, USA: Precision Indexing Publishers.

[81] "United States Census, 1840, Madison County, Microfilm: #M704-13, AL, http://ftp.us-census.org/pub/usgenweb/census/al/madison/1840/ (File 5 of 5), Copyright 2006 by Linda Doty, <Transcriber@us-Census.org>

[82] "United States Census, 1850," database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MH53-

household, probably a boarding house, consisted of James and Matilda, their four children (Sarah Elizabeth, May 9, 1834-July 23, 1922; Esteline H., August 10, 1837-February 24, 1915; James Joseph, June 21, 1841-August 1897; and Victor A., 1842-June 19, 1861[83]), Matilda's mother (Elizabeth Hoffman) and two sisters (Esteline and Chartten), and ten others. He owned one slave in Virginia. [84] Mr. Venable's occupation was noted to be a "Tinner." Two of the other occupants were also Tinners.



Mr. Venable was the proprietor of the Venable's Hotel that was also a boarding house. [85]

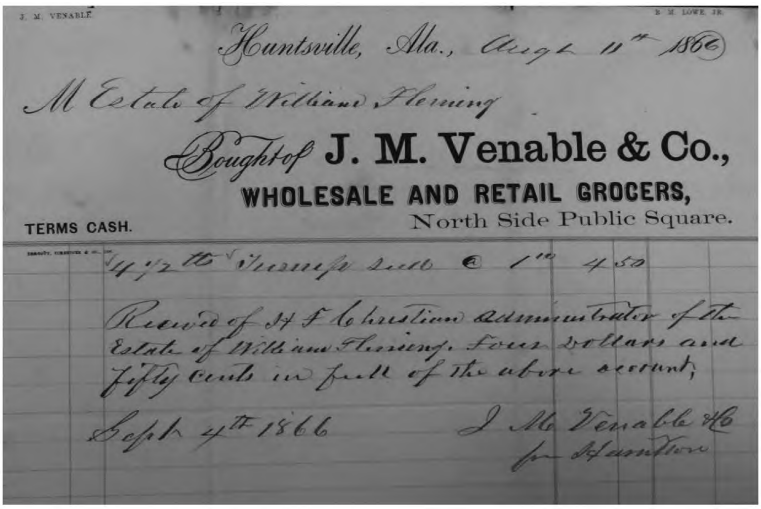
YXZ : accessed 26 March 2016), James M Venable, Huntsville, Madison, Alabama, United States; citing family 546, NARA microfilm publication M432 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

[83] Rice, Charles, Hard Times, *The Civil War in Huntsville and North Alabama, 1861-1865*, Boaz, Alabama: Boaz Printing Company, Copyright 1994, Page 28.

[84] 1850 Slave Schedule, Prince Edward County, Virginia.

[85] From the James C. Pryor Estate of Huntsville, Alabama.

In 1856 the Railroad Hotel was built for $2,376 by the Memphis & Charleston Railroad Company. It was located on the north end of Church Street across from the railroad passenger depot. Additions were made to enlarge the facility in 1857[86]. Most likely the railroad



After Venable's Hotel closed, Mr. Venable became a grocer.

leased the building to Mr. Venable. He was the proprietor and his business became known as Venable's Hotel. Not only was the establishment a hotel, but also it served as a boarding house with a

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[86] *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly of Local Architecture & Preservation*, Spring 1981, Page 16.

number of local citizens living there on a semi-permanent basis.[87]

The 1860 Census[88] shows a much smaller household: James and Matilda, three of the children (Esteline H, who later married a minister, Joseph Pitts; Victor A., who died of typhoid fever when he was 21 while training with the Madison Rifles in Pensacola[89] on June 19, 1861[90]; and James Joseph, who worked with his father), and Henry and Mattie Thornburg. (His elder daughter, Sarah Elizabeth[91], had married John Hunn Swift in Huntsville on June 13, 1855.) Mr. Venable's occupation was recorded as "Landlord." He still owned a slave, this one in Huntsville.[92]

On April 11, 1862, the Union Forces occupied Huntsville. Sometime during the occupation, after September 1864, Venable's Hotel closed.

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[87] The Huntsville City Directory, 1859-1860.

[88] "United States Census, 1860", database with images, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHD2-778 : accessed 26 March 2016), James M Venable, 1860.

[89] Chadick, Mary Jane Cook and Nancy M. Rohr, *Incidents of the War: The Civil War Journal of Mary Jane Chadick*, SilverThreads Publishing, Copyright November 1, 2005, Page 196.

[90] Record, James, *A Dream Come True, The Story of Madison County and Incidentally of Alabama and the United States*, Huntsville, Alabama, 1970, Page 128.

[91] www.findagrave.com, Sarah Elizabeth Venable Swift, May 9, 1834-July 23, 1922. Her tombstone indicates she is buried in Madura, South India. Her husband, John is buried in Maple Hill Cemetery. He died on June 30, 1873, sometime after which, apparently, Sarah Elizabeth became a missionary in India.

[92] 1860 Slave Schedule, Huntsville, Alabama.

Prior to 1866 Mr. Venable went into the grocery business.

The hotel was renovated and reopened in 1866 as the Donegan[93] Hotel. In July of the same year the Internal Revenue Service assessed Mr. Venable a tax of $20.92 on his income of $418.54 and $1.00 on his gold watch valued at $100.00.[94] The 1870 United States Census lists both Mr. Venable and his son, James, as "Hotel Lawyer, Druggist, Coal Dealer, and

[93] This was James J. Donegan, the president of the Northern Bank of Alabama until it was closed during the Federal occupation in 1862. He was also president of D. Patton & Company and one of the owners of Bell Factory, a textile mill. The 1860 United States Census indicated that his real estate was valued at $138,000 and his personal property at $275,000.

[94] 1866 IRS Schedule for Division Number Two, Collection District Number Three of the State of Alabama, Page 22.

other professionals **Merchant, James and Matilda Venable are buried in Maple Hill Cemetery in Huntsville, Alabama.**[1]
boarding at the hotel.[95]

In 1873 the Memphis & Charleston Railroad Keeper." The family seems to have been living in the hotel (presumably the Donegan Hotel) because, along with the family, at least 40 names are included in the census listing. The names include a Corn

Company sold all of its property along the railroad tracks, including "...that valuable property in Huntsville known as the Donegan Hotel..."[96]

Mr. James Monroe Venable died June 22, 1873; his wife, Matilda, had died of "Consumption"[97] March 1, 1872. Both are buried in Huntsville's Maple Hill Cemetery.

The hotel was razed in the late 1890's and made way for the Dilworth Lumber Company, a lumber yard.[98]

About the Author

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[95] United States Census, 1870", database with images, *FamilySearch*

[96] *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly of Local Architecture & Preservation*, Winter 1998, Page 31.

[97] U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedules, 1850-1885.

[98] Op. Cit., *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*, Spring 1981, Page 16.

David Hollander came to Huntsville in 1990 with the aerospace industry. In 2010 he retired and now spends his time enjoying hobbies: travel, sports, collecting, and researching all aspects of the Alabama National Banks. Although he does not collect Alabama scrip, he likes to write about them.

Huntsville's Freedman's Savings and Trust

By
Marjorie Ann Reeves

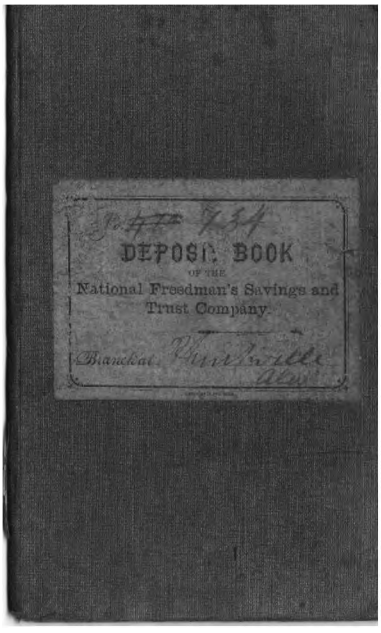
Congress chartered the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company on March 3, 1865 in their efforts to help the freed slaves to build a new life. It was very successful during most its nine years of operation with over 70,000 depositors and $57 million deposited in 37 branches in 17 states. It was the first multi-state bank institution in the nation. Huntsville Freedman's Savings and Trust was opened in December of 1865 with branches in Montgomery and Mobile.

The Freedman's Savings and Trust Company was housed and operated in the Huntsville Hotel. The bank encouraged Negroes to deposit as little as ten cents. The Huntsville branch was one of the most successful of the Alabama branches with mostly city depositors. Lafayette Robinson was hired as the first cashier and was with the bank until the end being paid fifty dollars a month. His father, John Robinson, was the first depositor with the money he received as compensation from the Federal Government for the Union destruction of his property during the Yankee invasion into Huntsville. John Robinson also served on the bank's Board. Upon Lafayette Robinson's death, the

local newspaper reported "he was an honest upright man in all his dealings."

The bank took not only individual deposits but organizations, societies, churches, and businesses clients. In the Remarks section of the application, depositors requested the money be passed on to their spouse, children, or relatives on their demise. The bank provides 480,000 names in its records. The questionnaire that the depositor had to fill out is a gem of information for genealogists.

The application included a record for; Name of Master, Name of Mistress, Planation, Height and Complexion, Father or Mother, Name of Children, Regiment and Company, Place of birth, Residence, Occupation, and Remarks



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The bank headquarters first opened in New York City then in Washington, D.C., which may have been the problem. The bank system eventually went into debt due to poor management, bad speculative investments, and risky loans. The timing of the 1873 panic also contributed to the bank's inability to pay its debt. Fredrick Douglass took over as president of the bank in 1873 investing his own money to try to save the system but it was too late and he lost a great deal. Mr. Douglass described the bank on its closing as, "the black man's cow but the white man's milk." When the Huntsville branch closed in 1874, the loss to its depositors was $35,963.00

An article ran in the *Huntsville Gazette, Leading Colored Journal in the South*, on January 3, 1880:

The Freedman's Bank

> *It has now been over five years since the suspension of the Freedman's Savings and trust Company. Two dividends of twenty percent each have been paid. All the privation and suffering caused by the failure of this bank will never be told. It was a robbery, whatever the means by which it was accomplished – whether incapacity or dishonesty on the part of the managers. We have expressed the wish that the report of Senator Bruce's*

committee would settle this question, and still await that paper. The question now is "Shall the Government pay the depositors the balance due them on their deposits in the Bank?" The bank was organized with the best intentions by good and noble men and it was from the removal of the original safeguard that it came to so unfortunate and disastrous an end. That safeguard was the provision of the charter that the deposits be invested solely in Government bonds.

When the Government saw fit to so alter the charter at the solicitation of the officers of the company as to allow other investments, it broke faith with the depositors and opened the door for what followed. The Institution was looked upon as the foster-child of the Government. And under all the circumstances, we think by its action the Government rendered itself morally responsible for the consequences. The result has been the loss by the most needy class of citizens, of hundreds of thousands of dollars. As a simple act of justice, let the Government refund the loss. It will be a graceful deed for the American Government to do and will reflect credit upon the whole country.

Representative O'Conner has introduced in the House a bill for this

purpose. The bill provides that the Government shall take charge of the affairs of the bank, assume the debt and pay the depositors the balance due them. Petitions to Congress for the passage of this measure would now be timely. Let them be sent in from every direction by our people.

We hope that our Representative in Congress, Hon. Wm. M. Lowe, will give the bill his earnest support and thus secure the gratitude of a large class of his constituents. The justice and timeliness of the measure must commend it to all fair-minded men.

Congress developed a program to pay the depositors 62% of their savings back but many did not receive anything. This caused a lack of trust among the Negros and banking institutions for many years. The Treasury Annex Building in Washington, D.C. was renamed the Freedman Bank Building in January 7, 2016. The Annex stands on the lot where the Freedman Bank was first built in Washington.

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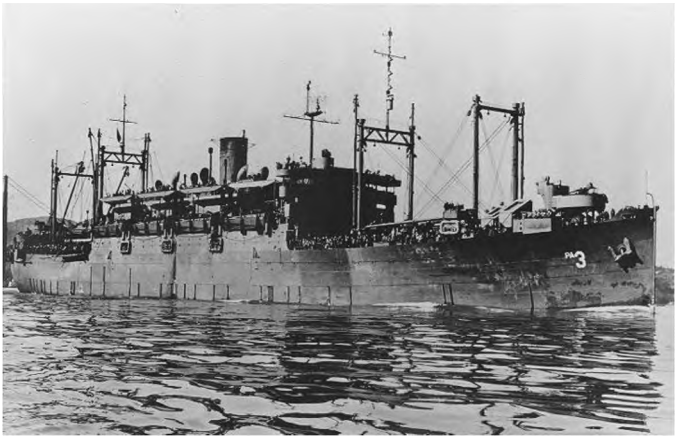
Crimes' in the Pacific, Vietnam, and Afghanistan

By
Arley McCormick

The history books are full of red blooded American patriots that responded when the nation needed them, served with distinction and returned to friends and family with little more than what they possessed when the left. Their contribution is often described simply; Military Service.

Steward's Mate 1st Class George H. Crimes was such a patriot. At 18 years of age, he had hardly mastered proper military protocol when he joined the USS



USS Zeilin

Zeilin's crew early in 1944. After several months in the Philippine Islands, on January 12, 1945, the Zeilin was underway in a convoy when a single Japanese kamikaze crashed into the starboard side of the ship destroying the cargo loading equipment. The incendiary weapons carried by the aircraft exploded starting several fires and the damage was extensive. The deck superstructure and framing as well as several staterooms were destroyed. Seven crew members were killed, three were missing, and thirty were injured.

One of the injured crew members was Steward's Mate 1st Class George H. Crimes. Seamen Crimes was burned extensively over a large portion of his body.

The war ended on September 2, 1945 and just over a month later his service in the US Navy ended; October 26, 1945 but he would spend two years recuperating in hospitals in Hawaii, New Orleans, and Pensacola. His recovery took another year before he returned home visibly scared with a Purple Heart.

Mr. George H. Crimes settled into the routine most returning GI's experienced; finding a job, housing, and a lifelong companion. There were many struggles but he and his wife managed and on August 12, 1949 they were rewarded with a son; Richard.

The Vietnam war was twelve years old when the young student, Richard Crimes learned his country wanted him. He had attended William Cooper Council school in Huntsville, graduated from Huntsville High School in 1967, and enjoyed two years at Alabama A&M when, this ideal candidate; smart, enjoyed

education, work, and church, hit the lottery that few wanted to win; thanks to a revised system that allegedly, was fare.

For the first time since 1942 the Selective Service System initiated a lottery system to select men between the ages of 18 and 26 to provide manpower for the Armed Forces. Three hundred sixty-six blue plastic capsules containing, a number correlated to a date in the year that represented draft eligibility for those watching. The capsules were placed in a large glass container and drawn by hand to assign order-of-call numbers to all men within the age group. Previously, candidates registered with the Selective Service System were selected by a local board composed of upstanding members of the community and the critics argued that the boards tended to select minority, blue collar, uneducated, and poor men rather than wealthy educated men.

On June 13, 1969 Richard and Ms. Ethelene Watkins were married and 6 months later on December 1, along with every young man in America, they sat with their family and waited to learned if their number would be called. The blue capsule number 95, the lottery number that covered his 12 August birthdate, marked the day that would change Richards' life; everything except his attitude.

Like the rest of the nation he could not avoid the Vietnam war news reports and the news was always grim. His family was reflective, trusted in god, and felt no relief when his lottery number was called but accepted it as a duty to the country.

Students and others were always protesting somewhere and the elected representatives often provided sound bites of their support for the protesters as an acceptable democratic process, and yet were supporting the president and the military through the national budget votes and backroom encouragement.

The history of the Vietnam war is ugly. In 1969 the "Vietnamization" of the war was announced by Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and in April the U.S. military personnel in the country peaked to 543,400. In June President Nixon announced the withdrawal of 25,000 troops and followed up by announcing the "Nixon Doctrine" in July. President Nixon announced his doctrine during a press conference in Guam and in November elaborated that it meant the USA would provide a nuclear umbrella for its allies but each would be responsible for its own security. To Richard it meant the war was winding down as over 68,000 troops had departed the country when he hit the lottery. He didn't know at least 4,000 military personnel would die in Vietnam during his tour.

Most fathers would say that Richard was the perfect son, he learned to operate a lathe while working part time with Parker Hannifin, was attending Alabama A&M, and was an active member of the Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church. And, now the family would watch him leave for the uncertainty of war.

The war and Civil Rights activists made protesting a national pastime in the 60's. The Civil Rights demonstrations provided inspiration and an example for the Students for Democratic Society and in April of

1965 as they protested and war demonstrations gathered momentum. In October, 1967, the antiwar protestors "March on the Pentagon" was attended by approximately 50,000 demonstrators and in April 1970 the largest pro-war demonstration was held in Washington. The country was clearly divided. The social situation could not be ignored as protesters marched and others made their way to Canada to avoid the draft. Richard Crimes chose to accept his responsibility as an American citizen even if it meant going to Vietnam.

On May 21, 1970, the 1967 graduate of Huntsville High School reported to the induction station at Montgomery, Alabama, after having passed the physical in Nashville, Tennessee. He took the oath of enlistment and was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina for Basic Training. It was a new world of constant supervision, roll calls, barracks living and sleeping in small bunks with his worldly possessions locked in a footlocker or a metal wall closet. Sergeants barked orders, he was constantly marching, climbing in and out of trucks, and his new friends and acquaintances learned to help each other, and depend upon each other, with emphasis on how to stay alive on a battlefield. Before his company marched in a graduation ceremony he learned his next challenge would be Advanced Individual training at Fort Polk, Louisiana and the training would help his career as a civilian.

Private Richard Crimes did not view his future role in the U.S. Army as very significant even when he

learned he had passed the scrutiny qualifying for a secret clearance and trained as clerk typist. Yet, European history illustrates otherwise. In the spring of 1814, Napoleon was defeated, abdicated his throne and was exiled to the island of Elbe. In February of 1815 he escaped from Elba and returned to Paris to reclaim the throne. During his months of isolation on the Italian Isle his most efficient Chief of Staff retired and the platoon of scribes that had transcribed his orders and instructions to his generals were whisked up in the aftermath of his 1814 abdication and flung to the four winds. He rebuilt the Army but his new Chief of Staff and new cadre of scribes found it difficult, if not impossible, to transcribe Napoleon's thoughts into action and the result was confusion in the field and defeat at Waterloo. Now Private Crimes would become the U.S. Army's newest generation of scribes. He had no idea that his effort would help form United States Army Policy and actions in Vietnam.

After a week in Oakland, California waiting for a flight to Vietnam he arrived at Tan Son Nhut Airbase in Saigon, (now Ho Chi Min City), on October 20, 1970. In processing took awhile but shortly he learned his assignment would be with the Military Assistance Command Vietnam Inspector General's Office. In 1962 MACV headquarters was formed in Saigon. The Headquarters orchestrated the buildup of American Advisors and support personnel and was reorganized in May 1964 to provide command and control of combat units being deployed to Vietnam. General Creighton Abrams had replaced General William C.

Westmorland in 1968 and was commanding when Private Crimes joined the Inspector General's cadre. His reports would occasionally get to General Abrams desk.

The Inspector General is the Commanding Generals independent eyes into the operations of all the organizations under the MACV headquarters and it requires teams or individuals to travel throughout Vietnam verifying the General's instructions, policy, and orders are being implemented appropriately. What Specialist Crimes did not know was that an Inspector General review or inspection brought many officers to tears. A finding by the Inspector General could be a career ending report and for a careerist it was life threatening. Official orders have the weight of law, consequently, failure to follow orders can be prosecuted as a violation of law. For the average soldier on the ground, knowing the Inspector General is coming gives them more courage and provides an opportunity to register a complaint. The unit leaders upon learning an Inspector General inspection is pending initiate a bevy of checks to insure there are no findings recorded against the organization.

Private Crimes labored alongside a squad of scribes bent over their electric magnetic tape typewriters all day and occasionally consulting with the officers that scratched out there reports in pencil and pen with all the accompanying spelling and grammar errors. There was no end to the reports.

The annoying constant screech of planes taking off and landing at Tan Son Nhut never quite seemed so

normal that they could be ignored. The pressure to finish a report would always mount and the smells of the city, constant screeching of aircraft could make for an exhausting anxiety filled day but there was time after a day's labor to relax. Richard found music the ideal release from the tedium of a hot work day. He was invited to join a band and played in different venues in both Army and Air Force recreation areas. They even played venues in the clubs of Saigon and the monotony of their effort was broken up by the official training schedule that included excursions to the firing range to remain competent with an M16 weapon, briefings on the dangers of fraternization with the local population, knowing your enemy, and from the roof top of their building they could watch the smoke rise and tracers light up the sky as the Air Force ground police protected the base from enemy intruders. Occasionally he would be required to accompany officers on a short trip to Long Bien where logistics operations were controlled. It was a plus that the comrades working for the IG were also friends. They were easy to work with and they enjoyed the association, one of the benefits that Richard would miss from that year. Breaks from the constant administrative roll and music kept him fresh and ready for each day. Finding humor in the oddities of life in and around Saigon was always a release. No one could understand why the hooch maids stole their underwear.

Saigon was a busy city. Pedestrians, motor cycles and mopeds, dominated the roads and trying to cross

a street meant placing your life in their hands. Military trucks, commercial vehicles and men young and old pulling carts as taxis were everywhere. The Saigon River was not too far away and combining the various smells of city with gas fumes, smoke, and fish, depending on the wind was not particularly enjoyable. The Vietnamese cuisine was not like mama used to make either. Pigeon's whole with their heads dominating the center of the plate, shark fin soup, and limiting patrons to chop sticks just didn't feel like home. But it was his duties, acquaintances, and music that eased the frustration of being away from his wife and family.

Richard Crimes

Upon honorably completing his military commitment in 1972 he returned home with a Bronze Star for service and continued his education at Alabama A&M with the aid of the GI Bill, earning a degree in business, continued working for Parker Hannifin Corporation and eventually earned a certificate from the University of Alabama, Huntsville for graphic design and multimedia production. In his retirement he uses the skills acquired while serving as the historian of the Vietnam Vetrans of America Huntsville Chapter 1067, supporting the William Hooper Council Alumni Association, the Jazz society, and he belongs to the Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church.

After 9/11, the world changed and another opportunity for a Crimes arose to serve the country. With Terrance, their son, Richard and Ethelene, kissed, hugged, and waved goodbye praying for their daughter, Francien's, safe return. She joined the U.S. Army and deployed to Afghanistan, thereby extending the family commitment of service to the country.

Richards' commitment to serving is recognized. The Vietnam Vetrans of America has awarded the TSgt E. A. Phillips Humanitarian Award to Specialist Richard Crimes for his commitment and dedication serving chapter members as well as their families. He served as an administrative assistant in the 931st Engineer Group, is the Chapter's photographer but most noteworthy is his support for all the chapter commitments with pictures and videos that last a lifetime. In addition, the William Hooper Council Alumni Association recognized Richard it an Annual Confederation of Historian's luncheon in 2017 for his long service and contribution to the Association.

Richard Crimes is representative of a family of patriots that continue to serve the community.

About the Author; Arley McCormick is a former soldier and active in the history organizations of the community.

References; Interviews with the subject of the article.

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