

BRAXTON BRAGG COMER WHILE SERVING IN THE UNITED STATES
SENATE THE UNEXPIRED TERM OF
JOHN H. BANKHEAD, SR.

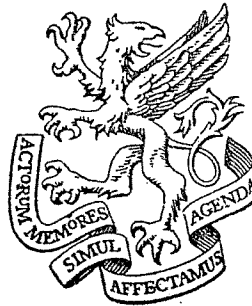
Braxton Bragg Comer

(1848-1927)

*An Alabamian Whose
Avondale Mills Opened New Paths
for Southern Progress*

DONALD COMER

MEMBER OF THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, AVONDALE MILLS
SYLACAUGA, ALABAMA



THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND
AMERICAN BRANCH: NEW YORK

1947

Copyright 1947
DONALD COMER

¶

*Permission to abstract is granted
provided proper credit is allowed.*

¶

*The Newcomen Society, as a body,
is not responsible for opinions
expressed in the following pages.*

¶

First Printing: October, 1947

*This Newcomen Address was delivered at the "1947
Alabama Dinner" of The Newcomen Society of
England, held at Mountain Brook Club, Birming-
ham, Ala., U. S. A., on October 29, 1947*

¶

SET UP, PRINTED AND BOUND IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AT
BIRMINGHAM PUBLISHING COMPANY

CHARACTERISTIC QUOTATIONS FROM SOME
OF GOVERNOR COMER'S ADDRESSES:



"The highest success is not physical, not tangible, but intangible; not a value carried out in muscle and sinew, but a value carried out in the soul and mind. Physical expansion has limitations, the expansion of soul and mind is without limit."

* * *

"The mind is the laziest part of us, the most difficult to keep on a steady job. With the summit in our eye, we love to walk along the plain. It is easier to see the great things that somebody else has done than to accomplish the success ourselves.

"Mark Twain in his travels abroad describes his ascent of Mont Blanc, one of the highest peaks in the Alps. He did this with a telescope.

"Sitting on the plain, he watched the ascent of the party step by step, climbing over almost impossible places. Twain, watching them, went into ecstasies over the difficulties accomplished and entered into the enthusiasm of the individuals making the ascent and threw up his hat in acclaim when the top was reached. How easy to applaud!"

* * *

"He that scatters his endeavors, taking a general crack at creation, is like a hunter with a shotgun—it is only the small game that he bags. The big accomplishments of life are done with intensive effort."

* * *

"True mastery is composed of supreme qualities. It is heroism, it is culture, it is enthusiasm, it is intelligence, it is endurance, it is faith, it is unconquerable will. Having these, the boundaries of your future cannot today be even conceived, and there will come to you as the days go by ever extending horizons. You will realize the true meaning of the statement that the greatest of all miracles is the man who does not turn back."

"All great leaders have been inspired with a great belief. In nine cases out of ten failure is wrought of unbelief. Faith in yourself must be the guiding star of your success. The very minute you entertain unbelief in yourself, that minute marks the fall."

* * *

"Many times have I cautioned the youth of our state that lazy minds, heads with nothing stirring above the ears, carry none of the world's burdens, and I now caution you that all knowledge is the legacy of men who did not primarily know, but only found out. Every new thing accomplished or that will be accomplished, every invention comes from new processes of thought or conduct. It is not the outgo, but the back pull that wears, and progress is geared to every man's gait. Being dragged along is the failure, keeping step is the success, and that much of efficiency is possible to everyone."

* * *

"Foundations sufficient to carry a mill are all made out of the smallest particles. Just so is the mind to be constructed. A determined resolution, a continuity of effort gets the better of every obstacle. There is nothing impossible to him who is resolved to be patient and untiring in his effort to succeed."

* * *

"It is written that to one man was given five talents, to another two and to another one, and that the five-talent man gained five others, or one hundred per cent; the two-talent man gained two others, or one hundred per cent. The one-talent man gained nothing. It is easy to deal with those who bulk large. These are few and spectacular. The difficulties are with those standing at the bottom. Yet it is these who constitute the majority of our people. It is these who are the greatest care to society. It is these who constitute the basis of society, and when all is well with them all is well with our government."

* * *

"Men are accused of not knowing their own weaknesses, and yet few men know their own strength. In man, as in soils, there may be a vein of gold without the owner's knowledge."

"A big job is made up of many little jobs."

* * *

"The University should be built, and built, and built, no limit now or ever, as far as the economy of the state will allow."

* * *

"First, find out what your business is, then mind it."

* * *

"We sleep, but the loom of life never stops and the pattern which was weaving when the sun went down is weaving when it comes up tomorrow."

* * *

"Advise the Legislature (turning to Governor Kilby) to be liberal in their appropriations to the University, Auburn, Montevallo, all the schools of Alabama, as much so as the finances of the state will admit, because this investment is the best."

* * *

"Just as we would separate cholera from hogs, ticks from cattle, and boll weevils from cotton, so we should separate from the youth of the state all that would tend to deteriorate and destroy."

* * *

"In the last analysis, where the interests of the corporation and the masses clash and are at hazard, if the one or the other must take the risk of loss, statecraft, with unerring judgment decrees that it is less dangerous first to secure the interest of the people."

* * *

"You must fit your pupils' minds not as a tailor would fit a suit of clothes, exact to every contour, but capable of expansion, capable of adapting itself naturally to expansion, enlarging as the mind should enlarge."

* * *

"The Galilean axiom that should appeal to men of property is that no rich man is safe who is not a benevolent man; that no man of property is safe but in the imitation of that benevolent God who is the possessor and dispenser of all the riches of the universe; and that no man is safe who does not realize that the angel that hovers over generous deeds and heroic virtues, flees away from the world of false gayety and fashionable excesses."



*"The roads you travel so briskly
lead out of dim antiquity,
and you study the past chiefly because
of its bearing on the living present
and its promise for the future."*

—LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES G. HARBORD,
K.C.M.G., D.S.M., LL.D., U.S. ARMY (RET.)

*American Member of Council at London,
The Newcomen Society of England*



ST. CLAIR COUNTY LIBR.
PELL CITY, ALABAMA

Braxton Bragg Comer

(1848-1927)

*An Alabamian Whose
Avondale Mills Opened New Paths
for Southern Progress*

DONALD COMER





"Were American Newcomen to do naught else, our work is well done if we succeed in sharing with America a strengthened inspiration to continue the struggle towards a nobler Civilization—through wider knowledge and understanding of the hopes, ambitions, and deeds of leaders in the past who have upheld Civilization's material progress. As we look backward, let us look forward."

—CHARLES PENROSE
*Senior Vice-President for North America
The Newcomen Society of England*



This statement, crystallizing a broad purpose of the Society, was first read at the Newcomen Meeting at New York World's Fair on August 5, 1939, when American Newcomen were guests of The British Government.

"Actorum Memores simul affectamus Agenda"

Biographical Sketch Of The Author



The Creek Indians had scarcely ceased to roam over East Alabama, cleared of that war-like tribe through the efforts of Federal Commissioner FRANCIS SCOTT KEY, author of THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER, sent to Alabama by President Jackson for that purpose, when the ancestors of the subject of this address came from Virginia to settle in Barbour County.

JAMES McDONALD COMER, the author of this inspiring address, the eldest of a distinguished group of ten children of Braxton Bragg Comer, joined his father in Avondale Mills in 1907 and since has been continuously associated with the development and expansion of that institution of which he is now Chairman of the Board.

DR. COMER is identified with many of the social programs of the present time, and his social and business philosophies are leaving a profound impression in the Deep South. He now serves on many boards—among others, being a Director of Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta; the Ocean Steamship Company, of Savannah; Trustee of Southern Research Institute and of Emory University, and more recently, as Chairman of the Board, Coosa River Newsprint Company, which bids fair to become one of the significant industries of the region. He possesses Omicron Delta Kappa key and is a member of many other honorary societies. Was granted degree of Doctor of Laws by Birmingham-Southern College. He has served as Chairman of the Birmingham Community Chest, is a member of the Board and a Past President of the Y. M. C. A. He was following in his father's footsteps when he served as Superintendent of the First Methodist Sunday School in Birmingham and became a member of the Board of Stewards and Board of Trustees of that Institution. Historian, good citizen, editor,

DR. COMER is a member of the Alabama Committee, in The Newcomen Society of England.



BRAXTON BRAGG COMER
(1848-1927)



IT WAS Mr. Thomas Martin who suggested the subject for my paper—asking that I write something about my father and his association with the textile industry and with Avondale Mills in particular. But I find I cannot limit a story of my father to any single accomplishment of his. There were many of them and all so closely inter-related.

My father founded the mills and Mr. Martin felt as this is our Fiftieth Anniversary year, that it would be an appropriate honor to present him to you today.

In one way this has been a difficult assignment as ours was a particularly close personal, as well as business, relationship.

The Newcomen Society is, I think, performing a very useful service in having biographies written of leaders of another generation. They make history more vivid and give a more intimate acquaintance and knowledge of men who have contributed much to the progress of their time and their country. Mr. Martin's "Life of Alabama's William Gorgas" and Mr. Charles E. Wilson's "Story of Charles A. Coffin," founder and first President of General Electric Company, were two of these.

OTHER PAPERS ON LEADERS IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY

The Society has had papers on men in the textile industry before this one, notably "Power In The Textile Industry" by Mr. Vermilye. It was my good fortune to know Mr. Vermilye. His services were used in more ways than one to help to solve some of our textile problems.

Then there is another pamphlet "There Were Giants In The Earth" by Floyd Jefferson, which gives some of the old history of the textile industry, particularly that part of the business dealing with Worth Street and the merchandising of what we make.

I have been interested in the early history of cotton spinning by William Gregg as told by Broadus Mitchell. Gregg built a mill at Graniteville to prove to South Carolinians that along that particular route lay their most promising future. He urged against the bringing in of negroes from Africa and advised using white Northern Europeans for both farm and factory. He built his mill so well that it still stands although the machinery has been changed more than once.

In the time of William Gregg—in D. E. Bow's Review of 1852—it was estimated that

Georgia had 40 mills with 80,000 spindles
Tennessee had 30 mills with 36,000 spindles
Alabama had 12 mills with 12,580 spindles

These were in small units located on small streams where a small amount of water power was available.

My father's people came originally from Virginia. John Fletcher Comer and his wife Catherine Drewry, my father's parents, moved over to Barbour County, Alabama from Jones County, Georgia. The father of John Fletcher Comer, Hugh Moss Comer, had come from Virginia. He had been a soldier in the Revolutionary War and came to Georgia to take possession of land allotted to him for that service.

Hugh Moss Comer was the youngest son of Samuel Comer and Elizabeth Moss. It is of interest that two descendants of Samuel and Elizabeth Comer, my father and a cousin of his, Clement Comer Clay of Huntsville, represented Alabama within a seventy-five year interval, each serving both as Governor and United States Senator.

My father did not begin his life in a textile environment. He was nearly fifty years old when he founded Avondale. He was born November 7, 1848 at Spring Hill, Barbour County, Alabama, the fourth of the six sons of John Fletcher and Catherine Drewry Comer. John Fletcher Comer died at the early age of 47, leaving his widow to manage a large plantation and to care for six sons—the youngest a baby in arms.

The boys early in life, under the tutelage of a competent mother, developed an acute sense of responsibility. The plantation in Barbour County, Alabama and its management became a proving ground to show the stuff of which they were made.

Few boys in the South or anywhere else had a more colorful life as a youth than did my father. He loved hunting and fishing, then and all of his life. His native woods and streams were a never ending delight to him. "It was a joy to be a boy" in those days, he once said to a friend.

His early schooling was under Prof. E. N. Brown of Macon County, one of the state's eminent teachers of pre-Civil War days and father of E. N. Brown who became President of the National Railways of Mexico.



One of his most impressive and dramatic school experiences occurred after he entered the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa. He was a cadet there when General Croxton's union army made a raid through central Alabama and was a party to the encounter between the federal army raiders and the cadets, and an eye-witness of the tragedy of the burning of the University buildings on April 4, 1865 by these raiders.

He was one of the group of cadet students who were marched from the burned University to Marion, Alabama where their instructors sent the boys home on furlough, subject to call. They all had to walk to their homes because communication and transportation were

completely demoralized. My father walked the entire distance almost across the state from Marion to his home in Barbour County and as far as Union Springs—only twenty-five miles from his home—he followed behind the Federal troops and witnessed the army's widespread devastation through the beautiful Alabama Black Belt section.

Later he entered the University of Georgia for a short time. For reasons of health he then went to Emory and Henry College at Emory, Virginia, obtaining both Bachelor and Master's degrees from that institution. It was there that he was also awarded a medal for proficiency in natural science.

BEGAN BUSINESS LIFE IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

It was in 1869 he returned to the home plantation and took up the life of a Southern planter. But he returned to troublous times—times never better described than by James Truslow Adams in his "Epic of America."*

My father was one of the men who was able to surmount the conditions that prevailed at the end of the war. In 1872 he married Eva J. Harris of Cuthbert, Georgia and moved from his old plantation home at Spring Hill to Comer, a few miles away, where he established a mercantile business, built a grist mill and entered upon the farm and business career in which he was to become very successful.

Barbour County, one of the oldest and most highly developed of the pre-war counties of the State, had an especially unhappy experience with the carpetbag-negro rule which was supported by the Federal military oc-

*"Scenes in the legislative halls of all the states would have been laughable had they not been tragic. Crowds of Northern muckers and blacks who had been slaves a short time since, swaggered about, smoking and drinking at the State's expense, ruling the South. There is no parallel in the history of modern civilized nations, and it is almost incredible that it occurred within our own country. No civilized victor was ever more ungenerous. The war had left the South prostrate. Reconstruction left it maddened."



BRAXTON BRAGG COMER AT THE TIME OF GRADUATION
FROM EMORY AND HENRY COLLEGE, VIRGINIA

cupation of the region for several years. The leader of the disturbing element was one Judge E. M. Kiels who assumed control of the county by organizing negroes against the whites and by using their votes to keep himself in county office.



At old Spring Hill, where the Comer family had lived for so many years, occurred a tragic incident. Kiels was supervisor of election at this polling place and many negroes had been voted during the day. Late in the evening when the time came to count the votes Kiels bolted the door of the voting place. The door was broken down from the outside, someone overturned the lamp inside and shots were fired. When another lamp was brought in it was found that Kiels' 17-year-old son had been fatally shot and Kiels was on his knees before my father's brother, Wallace Comer, begging him to save his life. It was said that Kiels gave Uncle Wallace a Masonic sign of distress and that three Comer brothers, Wallace, Fletcher and my father took him to their home. The Comers and some twenty others were put under arrest and their bonds fixed at \$11,000.00 each. People from all parts of the country hurried in to sign the bonds. Later a Congressional Committee came from Washington to investigate what had happened but there was no further trouble after Kiels took his permanent leave of Barbour County and went to Washington to live.



It was in such stirring times as these that my father made his start in farming and in business. His farm prospered and grew. His grist mill supplied the whole region about him. His store was one of the largest in East Alabama. He became the largest producer of cotton in the State and gradually accumulated land until he had more than 30,000 acres.

By this time my father and mother had seven children—two boys and five girls. My brother and sisters—who were old enough—have delightful recollections of our plantation life. One of my sisters has written a little volume about our daily lives there. My father built a school and engaged to teach in it a private teacher who lived in our home. All of the children of our little community shared our schooling with us.

On Sundays we continued to go to church at Spring Hill, to the church built there by my grandfather over a hundred years ago. We went to Sunday School at Comer in the school house in the afternoon. In Spring Hill, Comer, Anniston and Birmingham my father was always actively associated with the Methodist Church. He was a member of the Board of Stewards and Board of Trustees, and either Superintendent of the Sunday School or teacher of a class. In the vestibule of the B. B. Comer Memorial Church at Alexander City there is a bronze tablet inscribed with these words: "I was more honored, and rendered greater service as Superintendent of a Methodist Church Sunday School than as Governor or Senator of my state."

At Comer my father was Superintendent of the Sunday School and my mother played the piano and led the singing. Of course, Sunday was a restricted day. After Sunday School the time was spent by all the family walking down the railroad track as far up as the duck pond or the spring. We could not walk on the road, it was either mud or dust. Sometimes we did walk in the woods.

After we moved to Anniston this Sunday afternoon habit was changed and we all walked to the cemetery. I think it was this weekly familiarity with the cemetery and the graves of the people who had gone on that finally weaned us away from our fear of graveyard ghosts, hobgoblins, etc. caught from our negro nurses.

I have recently read "My Boyhood in a Parsonage" by Thomas W. Lamont and in his chapter "The Lord's Day" is this paragraph:

"Class meeting over we went home and had our cold Sunday dinner. And at 2:30 P. M., nodding with sleep on hot summer days, we trooped to Sunday School, which, compared to the misery of class meeting, wasn't bad fun on the whole. Then at 3:45 P. M. home again to sit 'in the yard' the rest of the afternoon and watch with envious eyes the Presbyterian children walking gaily off to the woods or the brook. That is where the difference came in. The Presbyterians simply shut their eyes to the fact that, from dawn till dark, it was the Lord's Day. During most of Sunday afternoon they simply forgot entirely Who was Who. We Methodists never forgot. We were not allowed to."

The fact that the Lamont children stayed in on Sunday afternoon while we walked out I guess can be accounted for because a preacher's family was not allowed the same liberties as the family of a layman but even so with us we could not go out on Sunday afternoon unless our father and mother went with us.

My father, although very busy, was never too busy to devote a great deal of his time to doing things with his children, particularly in the way of hunting and fishing. My brother and I each had a gun when we were nine and seven years old respectively and we soon learned to shoot quail on the wing and knew where the good fishing holes were. My father taught us.

As far back as I can remember my father had horses, carriage horses, buggy horses and riding horses. He even graded a half mile track and he and his friends with racing sulkies would drive their fast trotting horses around it.



There was a time in South Alabama when investment in orange groves in Florida was popular. My father

bought land both on Indian River and the Gulf-side. I remember that he transferred quite a large number of his negro farm hands by steamer down the Chattahoochee River to Appalachicola, Florida and by schooner to Punta Rasa, Florida. He had bought some six thousand acres of land between Ft. Myers and Naples. The land lay along what is now the Imperial River and our camp was established at the forks of this river and Oak Creek. For several winters the whole family went to Florida, including the governess, so we would not get behind in our school tasks. We lived in log cabins for three months. We got our water out of Bonita Springs. In fact we owned the land where the town of Bonita Springs now is.

No one at that time and place knew that mosquitos were the carriers of malaria. Everybody did know that quinine was the cure and quinine was carried in the country stores in bulk. People either took it in syrup or put it in capsules themselves. My mother was constantly filling capsules with quinine. She used to say she absorbed all she needed through her fingers.

Children know intimately the details of home life in just one family—their own—and so it was in ours. We have always been a closely knit family. There were ten children, one boy, John Harris, born in Anniston, died in infancy. All the rest of us are living today excepting our oldest brother, Fletcher, who died in 1935.



From my earliest recollection my Mother's first concern was for my father. His comings and his goings were the important part of each day. It was for him that she lived; it was for his happiness that she concerned herself most and surely he would want me to say that whatever success came to him in any of his different activities was very largely the result of her help and her sympathetic concern and interest.

No one could have been a more devoted mother than she was. My earliest recollection was the bathing that we got in a big tub in front of the fire, to be dried and warmed afterwards in her lap. She helped us away to school and was waiting for us when we returned. She put the last finishing touch on our attire as we started for Sunday School each Sunday morning—she would join us later. Her Bible was so worn that after her death one of the first things my father did was to re-bind it.

We moved to Anniston in 1885. My father still retained his plantation interests but he became convinced in spite of his background of generations on the soil and his own successful operations in the country that there were greater opportunities for himself—for his family—and for others, to be found in the city.

In Anniston my father became a wholesale merchant and miller and cotton factor and quickly became identified with the life of Anniston.

Soon, however, came the call from the young and rapidly growing city of Birmingham and we moved again. In Birmingham my father continued in the milling business and also bought the City National Bank and became its President. During the panic* of

*From Armes' "The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama," in writing of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company—The panic of '93 caught the company and all were asked to lend a hand then for its common interests. The price of iron went down to six dollars per ton at the furnace. Credit was refused the company, while some of the directors let it alone, to sink or swim as it might. Notwithstanding its tremendous properties it was forced to struggle for life.

Mr. Baxter directed the company through these days with skill and ability. At all times clear-headed and logical, and a pretty strong financier, he took care of the obligations and met them every one. The only man we could get credit from in Birmingham about the top of the panic was Braxton Bragg Comer. He seemed to be about the only person who thought the Tennessee Company would get out alive.

Mr. Comer, who in 1906 was elected Governor of Alabama, let the Tennessee Coal Company have some \$19,000.00 worth of grain and flour from his mills during the panic. Every morning he would drop in the office to see General Manager Aldrich.

"Going to bust today?" he would inquire.

"Not today, Mr. Comer," Mr. Aldrich invariably replied, "but I can't tell about tomorrow."

'93 his was the only bank in Birmingham that did not issue clearing house certificates. As a matter of fact, such certificates as came into the bank through deposits were held to maturity. They drew 8% interest. Later he sold both the bank and the grist mill in order to devote more of his time to Avondale Mills.

AVONDALE MILLS FOUNDED IN 1897

It was not until 1897 that he entered the textile field with which his name was to be identified during the next thirty years. Avondale Mills was first started as a civic enterprise at the request of the Chamber of Commerce to help give employment to those badly in need of it in the young and struggling city of Birmingham.

It was about as hard a time to start a new enterprise as you could imagine. Money was not only very scarce but available only at high rates of interest. Many local citizens were unable to make good on their promised subscriptions and funds needed to complete the building had to be borrowed.

J. P. Morgan has often been quoted as saying that character is the best basis of credit. My father had character and integrity and knew Mr. DuMont Clark, a Wall Street banker, who agreed with Mr. Morgan, and loaned him the money. My father also had a friend, the late Mr. J. M. Lewis of Talladega, who took \$100,000.00 worth of bonds (long since retired) on the property before it was even finished, and our local banks then as always, did more than their share.

Several thousand years ago Solomon said: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." I could never see this quotation without thinking of my father. In all of his activities he was working with all of his might.

If ever a company was started, nurtured and brought to a final success by the dogged determination, courage and faith of one man, it was Avondale Mills. This was a time when communities all over the Southeast were organizing and building cotton mills. Failure rather than success was so often the result of these enterprises that many of them quickly passed into other hands.

Wages were low, in those days, and hours long compared with those of today. Earlier records either in New England or old England, or in still earlier days in the South, show work days of twelve and fourteen hours, six days a week, and the pay about twenty-five to fifty cents per day. But in 1897, as today, cotton mill wages were higher than incomes earned on neighboring farms, and it has been farmers and their families who have run the mills here in the South.

If mill workers are going back to the farms today in some instances it is more for the purpose of investing in a home—as a place for retirement—or for a country-farm environment for their children, preferably one on a paved road, served by electricity where the children can attend consolidated schools and close enough to the mills for employment for one or more members of the family.

The first unit of Avondale Mills employed about 400 people and went through hard struggles to make ends meet. It would not have succeeded in doing so if my father had not backed it with his own personal resources and thus shown his own confidence in its future.



I have heard it said of the founder of one of the big packing companies in Chicago that after the business had grown to very large proportions and after younger men had assumed more and more of the details of management, that the Senior member of the firm would take his seat out where drains from the packing plant flowed into the Chicago River and he would watch

there for any evidence of waste, oils, greases, etc. Waste was part of his business to which my father never ceased to give his personal attention. Up to the last, in visiting the plants, he would go to the waste house and see what was there that was of value—good cotton swept up with the trash, clean threads mixed in with soiled threads, etc. I have seen him, in walking through the mill, follow a sweeper to see that she picked up and saved good stock instead of sweeping it along with the dirt and trash. In visiting the waste house, if he found something that did not belong there I would find it on my desk. I think we have learned that lesson well here in Avondale. My father had a very positive philosophy and he practiced it—which was that the easiest dollar made was the dollar saved and to save it from the waste house was right at the top of his program.



As the years went on Avondale expanded, its capital increased, its profits were re-invested. The modest beginning in the Birmingham plant was the nucleus of the Avondale Mills of today, employing more than 7000 people and with ten mill units from one end of the State to the other, consuming annually nearly 20% of the entire cotton production of the State of Alabama, with a work week of forty hours, and a minimum wage of 80c. Avondale has a varied product, our largest single one being tickings, in which field we have the highest production in America. Avondale's first product was a plain print cloth that sold for less than 2c a yard. Today we make styled fabrics. Some are blended with wool, rayon, acetate or aralac. They are combed, bleached, mercerized, vat dyed and sanforized and sell for as much as 75c a yard. Under the pattern set by my father at Avondale, as we grew we learned.

When my father moved from the country he was one of the largest producers of cotton in the state and he

2

I have selected for reprinting here two of a series of pictures painted by Douglass Crockwell for our SATURDAY EVENING POST national advertising program. I am sure my father would approve of this selection because, to him, you were never too young or too old to fish.

2



Member of Avondale Painted from Life—Number 5 of a Series

A Peaceful Old Age... can it be woven of fabric?

SOMEDAY I shall finish my last yard of Avondale pattern.

Then I shall find myself in a picture like this... of peaceful old age.

And this thought comes to me...

Today we 7,000 Avondale people earn incomes as high as any in the whole cotton industry. And our production rates are as high as any in America! And we do this—with constantly decreasing unit labor costs!

But what do you get—who use our yarns and fabrics?

A pledge: To preserve what we enjoy, this

"partnership with people" will let no one anywhere surpass us in efficiency, in economy, in making good fabrics at costs to fit family budgets all over America.

Yes, someday I will retire.

I look forward to my monthly old age retirement checks beginning at 65 and for the rest of my years. These checks come from a trust fund in a bank. This fund comes solely from our company. Before taxes, and even before profits.

The fund now totals nearly four million dollars. Under our plan, it is still growing.

All without any deduction from my pay!

That pattern of Avondale?

Let's call it Peace of Mind!

Next month we would like to tell you about our Schools.



AVONDALE SPINS THE YARN AND WEAVES THE FABRICS THAT GO INTO THE HOME FOR EVERY MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY



Avondale boys painted from life by Douglass Crockwell—Number 6 of a Series

A Boy's Future... can it be woven of fabric?

Fishing is fun. But going back to school can be fun too.

These boys started school in a bright, cheery Avondale kindergarten.

Opportunities for high school and college lie ahead.

Today in our schools boys and girls can learn more than the 3 R's—swimming, singing, sewing . . . home economics, dramatics, dancing, scouting . . . learning to play a musical instrument, boxing, basketball and

all games . . . religious instruction, Daily Vacation Bible Schools.

We Avondale parents are interested in education. Some of us have gone to our part-time classes at night and have learned many things that we missed when we were younger.

We know that education means better jobs, better wages, better living in a better country, better products and better prices for you, our customers.

We are sure that our children will be ready for their places when their time comes.

Next month we would like to tell about our Health Program.



AVONDALE SPINS THE YARN AND WEAVES THE FABRICS THAT GO INTO THE HOME FOR EVERY MEMBER OF YOUR F

lived to become one of the largest cotton spinners. "He still served agriculture but he served it in a different role."



David E. Lilienthal, while Chairman of the T. V. A., in a commencement address at the University of Alabama in 1936, drew a dramatic picture of the part cotton has played in the nation's economy and of the change brought about by the activities of such men as my father. He said: "For more than a century the South has produced cotton as its chief crop, unquestionably the world's greatest raw product. And during that century cotton has been a cornerstone in the building of the prosperity of the whole country, and notably the manufacturing area of the Northeast. Your major product, cotton, was the basis of our export trade which gave this country a drawing account, a national surplus, so that we could build transcontinental railroads, new factories and great industrial cities. Cotton gave this nation its standing in world markets and made possible the rapid expansion of our country."

But it was costly to the South to ship out such vast quantities of cotton every year. "You have not only exported cotton," continued Mr. Lilienthal, "you have exported the cottonseed, the wealth of your soil fertility. You have had to meet the deficit out of your capital—the soil—the very basis of your life."

This it was which forced the integration of industry with agriculture and which turned men's thought from farm to city. Mr. Lilienthal turned to a specific example of how the changes were brought about and cited my father as an outstanding example of what a man steeped in the traditions of a purely agricultural economy may do when he turns his talents into industrial effort.

When my father moved from the Barbour County plantation with his family, he not only served his best

interest by doing so but he actually made a contribution to the rural area which he was leaving. His going to the city helped thousands of others on farms and gave new direction to their lives.



The following is a quotation from Mr. C. M. Stanley:

“From the beginning of his cotton mill industry Governor Comer depended largely for his help upon men brought in from the rural regions of Alabama. Those who had had a hard struggle on many a little farm welcomed the opportunity presented by a textile mill to have regular employment, with regular cash paydays and better food and living comforts than they had ever had before. One of the Governor’s constant ambitions for his employes was to help them buy a home and preferably a farm home. To that end the textile plants which he built were located in rural regions where it was possible for men to work at the mill and at the same time live on the farm all or part of the time.

“It was profitable to the employer to have made the change—it was enormously profitable to the small rural residents who were given work in the mill and at the same time encouraged to remain on the farm, cultivating their gardens, raising their livestock and poultry, producing their own garden products and living upon the fruits of their own land. It was a happy arrangement for all concerned and no one can estimate the additional value that has been given Alabama lands, and the added comfort and happiness that were spread through the farm regions contiguous to the mills through this practical integration of agriculture with industry. New interest was taken in the land by a tenant who found himself with an opportunity to buy and own his own little farm and at the same time was able to share in the cash payrolls and participate in the profit sharing dividends which the Avondale Mills distributed.

“The movement went even further for no one in Alabama has given more thought to the improvement of the quality of cotton grown than Governor Comer. He knew that better grades of cotton would increase the income of those who raised it, just as he knew that the mills would prosper by being able to spin better grades of the staple.”



Through Auburn and other agencies, Avondale has helped in programs dealing with soil improvement and increase of farm income, and has made funds available for such purposes.

Of the 8500 employes of Avondale and affiliated mills in Alabama, one-twelfth of the total are negroes. They are on exactly the same basis industrially as the white employes. They have the same opportunities to share in profits, to own homes and farms, to enjoy recreational and school facilities and to save their money.

Hundreds of men and women have responded to opportunities presented. Many have learned the business from the ground up. They have been promoted to responsible and skilled positions. They have become acquainted with fine and intricate machinery and have learned how to handle it.

These men, through the fifty years of Avondale's life, have seen vast changes in technical methods and processes. They have watched and helped to install new machinery. They have studied how to make improvements and many valuable suggestions have come from them. Any ideas they originate and advance are welcomed and rewarded.

The relationship which has developed in the textile field between agriculture and industry and the unity of purpose to improve both is one of the most noteworthy aspects of the textile industry in the South.

INTEREST IN FREIGHT RATES LED TO POLITICAL CAREER

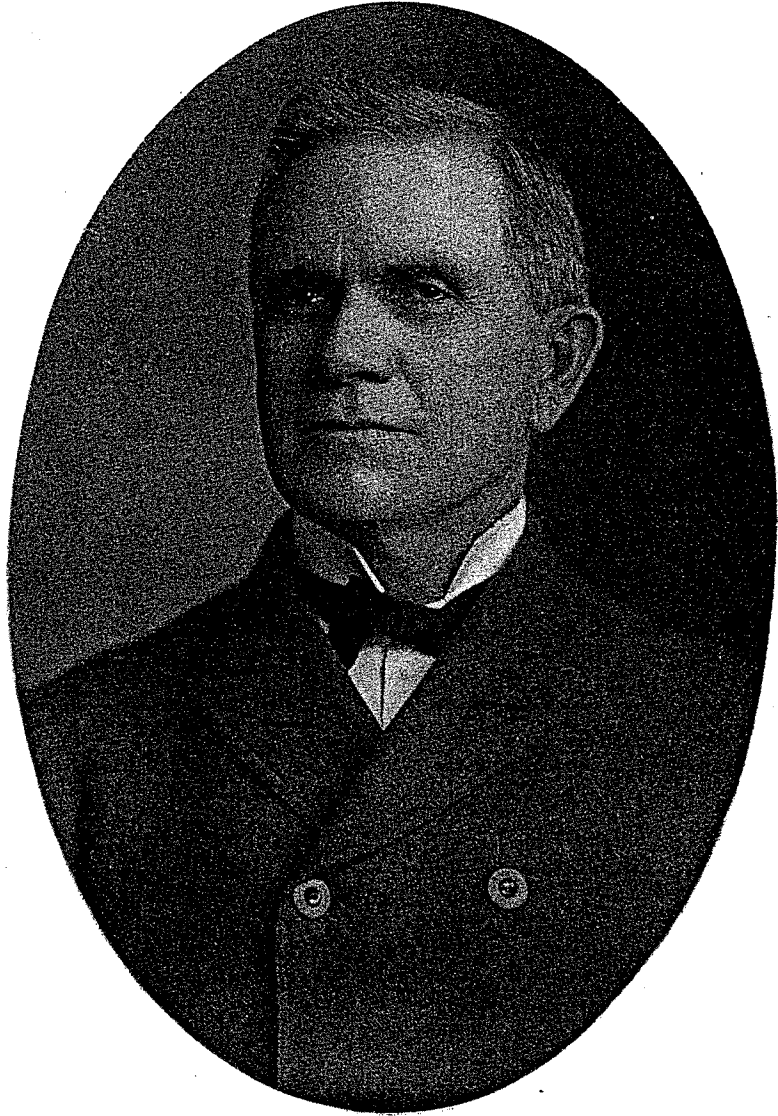
As a merchant, manufacturer and shipper my father at the turn of the century felt that the people of Alabama were not being treated justly and fairly in the matter of freight rates, as rates in Alabama were higher than those in neighboring states like Georgia. To help relieve Alabama shippers of this discrimination my father in 1904 became a candidate for the Alabama State Railroad Commission, which handled such subjects, and was elected. He soon found that his two associates were defenders of the status quo and not in sympathy with what he hoped to do.

After struggling against the tide for many months he decided that the best way to get action was to run for the Governorship and to try to carry with him into office a Legislature which would be sympathetic with the efforts to bring about freight rate equity and more effective railroad legislation by state governmental agencies. He was elected, took office in 1907 and the Legislature in both houses followed his recommendations by enacting what became known as the 110 Commodities Act. The controversy over establishing these rates by law raged for months and was carried into the federal courts for long and historic litigation.

AN EPOCHAL STRUGGLE

The final outcome was the establishment of the State as victor for the principle of regulation. It was an epochal struggle. The railroads had hundreds of speakers covering the state. They fought with all the might they could summon. It was a bitter fight and made wounds that took years to heal. It was especially painful to the families of the principals. We knew that the campaign of 1906 took much of the happiness out of my mother's life.

My father was a "veritable tornado in his speeches. He didn't know how to pull punches or soften blows.



BRAXTON BRAGG COMER AT THE TIME HE WAS
GOVERNOR OF ALABAMA

He gritted his teeth, shook his fist, shouted and pounded the table. He was a large man with a handsome, rugged face, piercing dark eyes and a vigorous commanding air about him. He was a naturally vociferous, impulsive, imperious man—used to giving orders and used to having them obeyed.” He always spoke with intense earnestness, and frequently coined words if he thought them more expressive. Once in a joint debate at Opelika he shouted at his opponent: “You say you’ve got issues *but the trouble is they don’t ish.*”

EDUCATION HIS FIRST CONCERN

This struggle, however, was but a part of my father’s administration program. He built county high schools in every county of Alabama. He was responsible for new and enlarged buildings at the University of Alabama, at Auburn, at Montevallo and at the various State Teachers Colleges. He had promised more and better schools and he gave them. He had told corporations that they would be protected in their legitimate operations and they were. He had said that a cheap government was not necessarily the best government and he spent money freely for better health laws, for cleaning up saloon dives and resorts, for laws protecting the lives and health of men in mines and factories. He called for the enactment of the State’s earliest child labor laws. His energy, resourcefulness and aggressiveness gave new impetus to all forms of public endeavor and the results of his work as Governor have become permanently imbedded in the life of the state. I am adding in an appendix extracts from authorities on this period of his life.

In 1920 Governor Kilby honored his old friend with an appointment to the U. S. Senate to fill the vacancy caused by the death of the elder Senator John H. Bankhead. The event was saddened by the death of my mother on the following day. During the months that

he served as Senator my father gave to the subjects before him the same careful and earnest attention that he gave to all his problems.

He became an intimate friend of his Alabama colleague, Senator Oscar W. Underwood, although in previous years they had sometimes been on opposite sides of political issues in their home state.

In the Senate my father immediately gave particular attention to farm subjects, especially to the improvement of grades allowable for delivery on the Cotton Exchange.

After his retirement he again returned to the mills and to his plantation in Barbour County and at intervals, to his hunting and fishing trips.

Seven years later he died, on August 15, 1927.

AVONDALE MILLS HAVE FOLLOWED PATTERN SET BY THEIR FOUNDER

During Avondale's half century we have continued steadily along the pattern set by our father when the mills were established, a pattern which has led to our present home owning, farm owning and profit-sharing program.

Successful profit sharing by more than 7000 employes is now in its 6th year. More than 1100 Avondale employes have bought their own homes, most of which are completely paid for. There have been no losses or foreclosures. During the war Avondale Mills employes bought \$4,427,104.50 in "E" bonds at cost price, and of this sum \$499,406.50 has been invested in payroll savings since V. J. Day.

The company's Old Age Retirement Plan will have at the close of this fiscal year approximately \$4,000,000.00 deposited in trust for employe retirement.

The company Credit Unions (savings associations) organized under Federal government auspices have approximately \$1,000,000.00 in deposits which represent

amounts saved by employes, helped, of course, from accumulation of the bonus profit sharing.

This is the way our profit sharing system works. First, we pay the going wage. That is the wages current in the area where our mills are located. From earnings the management deducts 5% on the investment. Profits beyond that are split between company and employe on a 50/50 basis. During the nine months period ending April 30, 1947, over \$3,000,000.00 went to the employes as their part of the profit sharing, over 29.70% of each employe's wage for the period. The system is on a four-week basis with thirteen payments a year. The amount paid is based on the profits figured on the previous twelve weeks. We think there is an advantage in paying the bonus monthly instead of yearly. Each month when the employe gets his bonus check he has an immediate reminder of how the business is going. The incentive is thus ever recurring.

The computation of the bonus and all items of consequence thereto are reviewed from time to time by outside auditors. I don't think that shared profits come out of the stockholders' pockets. I think as the years go along and as the people who work in this company grow in understanding and appreciation of all the opportunities that are inherent in this plan, that stockholders' money will be safer and a fair return on the money will be surer. In other words, it means good business as well as good ethics.

☞ ☞

It was one of my father's original ideas that Avondale children, as well as their fathers and mothers, could have the opportunity, within a modest cost, of an annual outing. Camp Helen was one of the results. Practically all of the Avondale Mills plants are located in communities in Alabama which are in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. People who are accustomed to

seeing mountains and hills every day get the most pleasure in a vacation spent at the seashore.

Avondale has recreation camps on the Coosa River, as well as in the wooded hills of North Alabama, but the largest and most popular vacation playground is Camp Helen, located in Florida on the Gulf of Mexico. It consists of large acreage and extensive frontage on the Gulf with wide beautiful white sandy beaches. A large central building and a number of guest cottages are thirty feet or more higher than the surf on a bluff which rises sharply from the sand of the beach. Southward is the Gulf and to the East is Phillips Inlet, a smooth placid body of water where children and young people can sail their boats, row their canoes, fish, dive and swim to their hearts' content.

There are various planned programs—scout parties, beach parties, music, dancing, singing, trips in the cabin cruiser or sailing schooner. The greatest pleasure is in doing things that can't be done at home. They want to stay in the surf. They want to fish in the salt water. They want to sail in the boats.

I can't think of anyone who would enjoy Camp Helen as much as my father.

APPENDIX

The Birmingham News made the following editorial comment on August 16, 1927, the day following my father's death:

"Behind the militant and at times acrid exterior of this remarkable man was screened a spirit of singular gentleness and sweetness. He was at once one of the most affectionate as well as one of the most daring of men. One of the tenderest as well as one of the most valiant of gentlemen. Physical courage was his in unquestioned degree. Intellectual courage was his in undisputed measure. His also in unflinching ardor was moral courage. He had knowledge, he knew men, he knew things. He had wisdom, a passion for fact and a will to power. He had understanding and made use of it to his friends' delight and his foes' dismay.

"Upon his public life rests not a spot—nor on his private life—subjected as it was to close and sometimes not wholly generous scrutiny. He had a noble, aspiring youth. Into his maturer years he conserved those high instincts that made him the power for good that he was.

"Those who knew him best loved him most. Those who liked him least had little reason to like him at all. Out of the asperities bred by his life of strife, asperities now tempered by time, Alabama's people honor the memory of this true man, and honor it not with lip service, but rather with reverence and insofar as it is in their power to do so, with emulation."

* * *

The Montgomery Advertiser, which for more than twenty years had opposed him politically, said:

"Braxton Bragg Comer, who died yesterday, was entirely different from any other man who has been Governor of Alabama. He was a maker of precedents rather than a devotee of precedents. What had been done before did not interest him so much as what could be done now to affect the situation immediately at hand. He was an iron-handed, resolute man who could not yield. This quality in a public man makes him a dramatic and colorful figure, but it requires a capacity for rapid and original thought, the faculty for prompt decision and energetic action to carry him through successfully. It greatly magnifies one's responsibilities and if it simplifies the problem of achieving notable ends it also involves no slight hazards to one's fortune.

"Mr. Comer was pugnacious and courageous. He always fought to the end—fought hard and savagely and in turn was himself fought hard and savagely. But he could take punishment as well as give it. He gave no quarter and asked none. He found his joy in battle and conquest, and was never weak.

"We think that his name will long be remembered, but mainly because of his service to education rather than because of his fight on the railroads and his relation to the history of prohibition in the State. He greatly advanced the cause of common school education and threw the weight of his influence behind the university and the colleges. He was not afraid to stand for the higher learning and never responded agreeably to the overtures of politicians who then, as well as now, were only too eager to capitalize on the prejudices of thoughtless people against the university and the colleges."

* * *

From The Mobile Register of May 10, 1914 reviewing his administration editorially:

"Governor Comer's administration established the fact that lobbyists should not have control of affairs in Alabama. He himself became a real Governor. His administration was clean, free from scandals of all kinds. His efforts were directed always towards the betterment of conditions of living and for the general uplift of the State."

* * *

The following tribute was issued by Alabama's Governor Bibb Graves:

"He was true, true to himself, to his own, to his people and unto God. He was a strong character, upright in his personal life, sterling in his business relations, virile and courageous in his political opinions.

"He was a great Governor, a strong Senator—an upstanding and fearless citizen."

* * *

The Alabama Legislature's Resolution upon his death spoke of him as "A virile and conspicuous figure in the public life of Alabama. An outstanding, courageous and forward looking Governor, Christian citizen and progressive leader."

* * *

FROM HISTORY OF ALABAMA AND DICTIONARY OF
ALABAMA BIOGRAPHIES
(Copyright 1921 by Marie Bankhead Owen)

Large sums were appropriated for the improvement of old buildings or the erection of new ones at the University, at Auburn, Montevallo, the nine agricultural schools, the normal schools, and the State supported institutions of an eleemosynary character. Appropriations were made to aid in the building of rural school houses. Necessary increases were made to the maintenance funds of all State institutions. County high schools were established. Possibly not one of the many important things accomplished in his adminis-

tration had more far reaching results than the founding of the county high schools. The Alabama Boys Industrial School passed from benevolent to State control and responsibility. The curriculum of the entire educational system was raised and the State placed in the forefront of its sisters. Beginning with the common schools the establishment of the county high schools, the recreation and reindividualizing of the nine agricultural schools, the State normal schools the Girls' Technical Institute at Montevallo, the Polytechnic Institute at Auburn, the University, all bear splendid evidence of the new impulse given to the educational system of the state in Governor Comer's administration. In recognition of his services to education, both the University and the Alabama Polytechnic Institute named their handsome new buildings in his honor. When the "watch-dogs" of the treasury protested against the amazing increase in appropriations for education, the "educational governor" remained undisturbed and declared that he was considering future citizenship as well as contemporary taxpayers; that with more training in how to think and how to work, posterity would have a proportionately greater earning capacity and he would rest his case with posterity who would help pay the debt.

* * *

FROM DUBOSE'S HISTORY OF ALABAMA, PAGE 305.

Jan. 14, 1907 Governor Comer; a legislature in sympathy with Mr. Comer was elected. In accepting the office of governor, he made an address which was direct, strong, and full of patriotic fervor for the advancement of Alabama interests. Among other things he urged the regulation of railroad rates, liberal support of schools, generous care of the old Confederate soldiers, the creation of a tax commission board to equalize taxes, the passage of a law to regulate child labor. All of these matters received favorable consideration from the legislature.

The large sums given to the schools of the State have aroused the people as never before to the importance of giving their children the best educational training. A bill to establish a system of county high schools was passed by the legislature. Although Governor Comer made his race for office on the issues of railroad regulation, he has so far done his greatest work in forwarding the interests of education.

* * *

FROM MOORE'S HISTORY OF ALABAMA, PAGE 666.

As The Montgomery Journal remarked, Alabama had entered a new era of politics under the leadership of a powerful figure. What manner of man was this new leader who could not be downed and whose leadership was to Alabama what Roosevelt's was to the nation? Braxton Bragg Comer was a college bred man with a

business career rich in achievement in various fields. Highly endowed, well trained, wealthy and progressive he was the highest type of "the modern bourgeoisie." Comer was a hard fighter, a man of incorrigible independence and individuality and possessed a personality that bristled with colorfulness. He threw on contest, though his contest grew out of devotion to principle. Like a true crusader he strove for the fine things of life, for which he had a passion. His leadership was high toned. "He was no dub-dub agitator," the editor of The Birmingham News remarked upon the occasion of his death "thinking with his larynx, inciting, open mouthed, the prejudice of an ignorant or credulous electorate." This remarkable character who "was easily the most audacious executive who ever ruled over Alabama" reminds one in many respects of Theodore Roosevelt. Dramatic and colorful in highest degree, independent, aggressive, fearless, self pure, energetic, intolerant of opposition, none too respectful of precedents, iron-handed and resolute, these two men were born to rule. Roosevelt was less austere but under Comer's hard exterior was a spirit of singular warmth and tenderness. Comer is one of those rare characters in history that tempts the historical writer to write biography when he comes upon the stage of their activities. The people felt that they had an advocate in Comer and they came to Montgomery for his inauguration as they had not done since the day that Jefferson Davis was inaugurated President of the Confederacy.

* * *

At a Testimonial Dinner for Dr. George Hutcheson Denny, Chancellor of the University of Alabama, given by WAPI, at the Tutwiler Hotel, Friday, Nov. 29, 1946—a great many of Dr. Denny's friends were present on this occasion as he reviewed the history of the University of Alabama, and said:

"And that brings us to the third period which I shall characterize as a period of resurrection and revival. The University was now ready to burst its bonds. Hill Ferguson and Bob Jemison, here in Birmingham, were already negotiating blueprints for its physical expansion. Abercrombie and Doster were calling for a modern public school system, with the University as the Capstone. B. B. Comer was the immediate financial captain of our salvation. James H. Fitts was treasurer, and Senator Morgan, yonder in Washington, was the underwriter of our second Federal land grant. The University was on the go."

* * *

At the Exercises of Dedication April 25, 1940, Alabama College, Montevallo, Dr. Arthur Fort Harmon, President of the College, said:

"As a perpetual memorial to Braxton Bragg Comer, Governor of Alabama, 1907-11; United States Senator *ad interim*; youthful

soldier of the Confederate States of America; student of government; capitalist; agriculturist; builder; churchman; great and wise leader of the people of the State; staunch friend of Alabama College; we dedicate Comer Hall to the education of our women, to culture, to such happiness as comes only of learning and wisdom."

* * *

On May 26, 1942, a bronze bust of Governor B. B. Comer was unveiled in the Hall of Flags of the Alabama State Department of Archives and History at Montgomery. The presentation address was made by Chief Justice Lucien D. Gardner of the Supreme Court of Alabama, and acceptance was by Governor Frank Dixon. On that date The Alabama Journal of Montgomery published the following editorial captioned "Comer Memorial."

"A bronze memorial bust of Braxton Bragg Comer is being unveiled with appropriate ceremonies in the Hall of Flags of the Department of Archives and History today. It is fitting to have the rugged features of this strong and purposeful man among the other great figures of the state in order that visitors and students may be made acquainted with the personal appearance of one who made such a deep and lasting impression upon Alabama during his eventful life.

"When Governor Comer entered public life as president of the Railroad Commission in 1905 and as Governor in 1907, an old epoch in state history ended and a new epoch began. He saw his state being exploited, plundered and spoiled worse than at any time during reconstruction. Legislators were bought and sold. Powerful interests maintained their offices in the State Capitol. One lobbyist had his desk in the Capitol corridors. Taxes were shirked; schools suffered; men feared the powerful privileged interests fattening at the public expense; they were so entrenched that they could elect or defeat at will.

"It was in such a situation that B. B. Comer came on the scene. He was independently wealthy. He was a fighter such as has rarely been seen before or since. He knew his subject. He feared no man and no private interest. His energy and indignation swept over the state with the force of a tornado.

"His enemies, the interests which had been exploiting the state and its people, said he was a corporation baiter, a destructive force, a demagogue—in fact called him all the names in the English language. But Governor Comer, far from being a destructive force, was one of the most constructive and upbuilding forces in the state's history. He had a passion for justice and hatred of injustice. In his first message to the legislature he declared: 'I pledge the faith of this administration to the full protection of our corporations in the proper exercise of their lawful functions.'

"To right the old wrongs meant a hard fight. It tore the state wide open. It required vast readjustments in state economics. It initiated court proceedings and controversies which lasted for years. It was bitter fighting and left wounds that were long in healing. But when it was over the record of the Comer administration stood out as probably the greatest in achievement in Alabama's history. He was a great 'educational governor.' He built a county high school in every county of the state. He erected new buildings and increased the appropriations of the higher institutions. He told his legislature that 'a good government is not necessarily a cheap government.' He insisted that money lying in the treasury be put to work, and he built school houses with it. He brought the tax-dodgers to taw, and equalized assessments to make the privileged pull their share of the load. He attacked and subdued the liquor dragon which has become a bad influence in state and local politics.

"Governor Comer, who was the owner of thousands of acres of land in his native Barbour County, who was named by Governor Kilby to fill a vacancy in the United States senate in 1920, was in every way an exceptional man. Born in 1848 he was a boy student at the University of Alabama when the buildings were burned by the Union forces in 1865. Marching with his classmates to Marion, Alabama, he walked all the way from the Perry county seat to his home at Old Spring Hill in Barbour County. He became a banker, merchant, plantation owner, grain mill operator, textile manufacturer and a leader in everything with which he came in contact. He was a big game hunter who roamed the Rocky Mountains and the wilds of Alaska. He was as hard as nails both literally and figuratively. And he reared a family of nine children who have had vast influence upon the economic, cultural, moral and political life of the state since the death of the distinguished father in 1927.

"The memorial bust of such a man will serve a worthy purpose in recalling the life and deeds of this powerful and dynamic leader."

* * *

From the Tri-Cities Daily:

"Braxton Bragg Comer was typical of that new type of business leader which has placed this nation in the forefront of those which are known as industrial countries.

* * *

"In his service in the Senate of the United States Mr. Comer was equally as valuable as a servant of the state of Alabama as he was when president of the commission and when Governor. Then, too, his talents were consecrated to the best interest of the state and of the nation as well.

"It is a pity that this state and this nation can not more frequently and more generally have the benefit of the invaluable abilities of such men as B. B. Comer."

❧ ❧

This Newcomen Address was delivered during "1947 Alabama Dinner" of the Newcomen Society of England, held at Mountain Brook Club, Birmingham, Alabama, U. S. A., on October 29, 1947. DONALD COMER, guest of honor, was introduced by THOMAS W. MARTIN, chairman of the Alabama Committee. The SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT FOR NORTH AMERICA presided at the dinner.

A Roster of the Office Bearers of the Alabama Committee in the Newcomen Society of England is given on the following pages.

❧ ❧



THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND
ALABAMA COMMITTEE

Chairman

DR. THOMAS W. MARTIN
*President, Alabama Power Company
Birmingham*

Vice-Chairmen

DR. STEWART J. LLOYD
*Dean, School of Chemistry, University of Alabama
University*

THE RT. REV. CHARLES C. J. CARPENTER, D. D., LL.D.
*The Bishop of Alabama
Birmingham*

DR. HARRY M. AYERS
*Editor and Publisher, The Anniston Star
Anniston*

J. L. BEDSOLE, *Esqre.*
Mobile

HENRY B. CHASE, *Esqre.*
*President, Chase Nursery Company
Chase*

DR. ROBERT GREGG
*President, Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad Company
Birmingham*

DR. ROBERT I. INGALLS
*Chairman of the Board, Ingalls Iron Works Company
Birmingham*

Treasurer

JOHN S. COLEMAN, *Esqre.*
President, Birmingham Trust National Bank
Birmingham

Treasurer

G. ARTHUR COOK, *Esqre.*
Treasurer, West Boyleston Mfg. Co. of Alabama
Montgomery

Honorary Secretary

ALGERNON BLAIR, *Esqre.*
Construction Engineer, Montgomery

Secretary

LEWIS M. SMITH, *Esqre.*
Vice President, Alabama Power Co., Birmingham

¶

F. N. JEAN GINDORFF, *Esqre., ex-officio*
Harriman, Ripley & Company, Inc., New York

FRANCIS B. WHITLOCK, *Esqre., ex-officio*
Vice President, Central Hanover Bank & Trust Company of New York

ELLIOTT H. LEE, *Esqre., ex-officio*
Vice President, Guaranty Trust Company of New York

DR. JOSEPH W. ROE, *ex-officio*
Yale University
Chairman, Historical Advisory Committee
American Branch, The Newcomen Society





THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND
IN NORTH AMERICA

BROADLY, *this British Society has as its purposes: to increase an appreciation of American-British traditions and ideals in the Arts and Sciences, especially in that bond of sympathy for the cultural and spiritual forces which are common to the two countries; and, secondly, to serve as another link in the intimately friendly relations existing between Great Britain and the United States of America.*

The Newcomen Society centers its work in the history of Material Civilization, the history of: Industry, Invention, Engineering, Transportation, the Utilities, Communication, Mining, Agriculture, Finance, Banking, Economics, Education, and the Law—these and correlated historical fields. In short, the background of those factors which have contributed or are contributing to the progress of Mankind.

The best of British traditions, British scholarship, and British ideals stand back of this honorary society, whose headquarters are at London. Its name perpetuates the life and work of Thomas Newcomen (1663-1729), the British pioneer, whose valuable contributions in improvements to the newly invented Steam Engine brought him lasting fame in the field of the Mechanic Arts. The Newcomen Engines, whose period of use was from 1712 to 1775, paved a way for the Industrial Revolution. Newcomen's inventive genius preceded by more than 50 years the brilliant work in Steam by the world-famous James Watt.