

ST. CLAIR COURTHOUSE? WHICH ONE?

BY JACK HOPPER
News staff writer

ASHVILLE-PELL CITY, Aug. 7—Back in the horse and buggy days, St. Clair County was divided by a chain of mountains, impassable during bad weather.

Thus, the county has two county seats and two courthouses — the original county seat at Ashville and one at Pell City.

Since that time in the early 1900's a "friendly argument" has been going on over which is the county seat. The old-timers in Ashville say, "We are the county seat, and Pell City's courthouse is secondary." Pell City residents claim "There are two county seats, and everything is equal."

Take your pick. Anyway, the county has two courthouses with equal functions. Actually, this county is the

only place in the state where an elected official can choose where to work. If a person elected lives nearer Ashville he works primarily out of the courthouse there. If he lives nearer Pell City, his office is in Pell City. Of course, all officials spend part of the time in both courthouses.

SEVERAL OTHER Alabama counties have two courthouses, but the secondary courthouse is known as a "mailbox" one, with all officials working out of the main county seat.

St. Clair County is different. The county is divided into two districts for courthouse business.

The Northern District includes the Ashville Courthouse; the Southern Division is at Pell City.

If a law suit occurs in the Northern District, all records are maintained and the case

is tried at Ashville. The same applies for the Southern Division at Pell City.

TO FURTHER complicate matters, when striking a jury for all cases, jurors are drawn from the entire county.

"It sounds complicated," said Circuit Clerk B. C. Banks, "but after getting accustomed to it, it is very simple."

Officials work out of both courthouse at one time or another.

Circuit Court is held at both courthouses, Probate Judge Hoyt Hamilton holds Probate Court in Ashville on the first Monday of each month and in Pell City on the first Wednesday of each month. All the officials make frequent trips from one courthouse to the other.

Both do about the same amount of business.

THE ORIGINAL courthouse at Ashville was constructed in 1830, the present one being built in 1847. It was remodeled last year with an ultra-modern interior at a cost of \$270,000. The present courthouse at Pell City was built in 1955, the original one being built in 1902.

Ashville pride old records still the basement house. "We have records dating year 1818," said a miracle that a stroy the wo years past."

Hearing called on plumbing

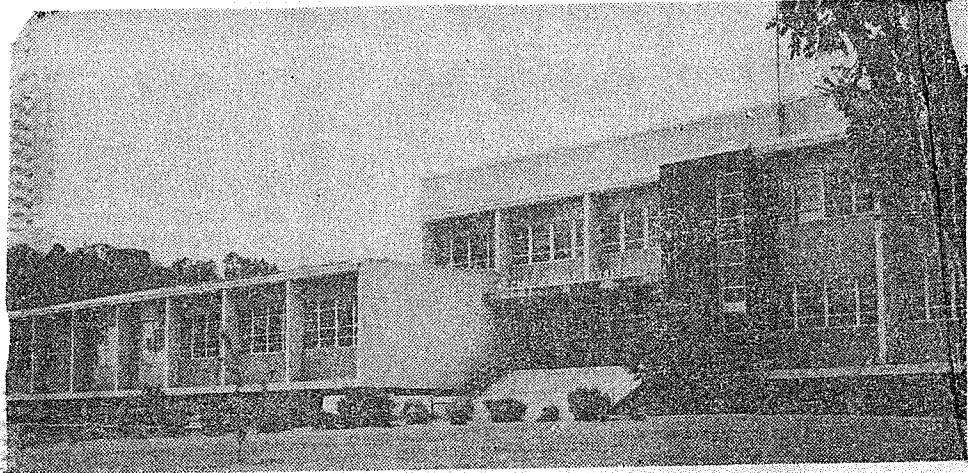
Sen. Larry Dumas of Jefferson has called a public hearing for 1 p.m. Monday in the Commission Chamber at the Jefferson County Courthouse on a Senate bill to set new regulations for the Plumbing Board of Inspection.

The bill, introduced by Sen. John Tyson of Mobile, would effect all counties with populations of more than 150,000.

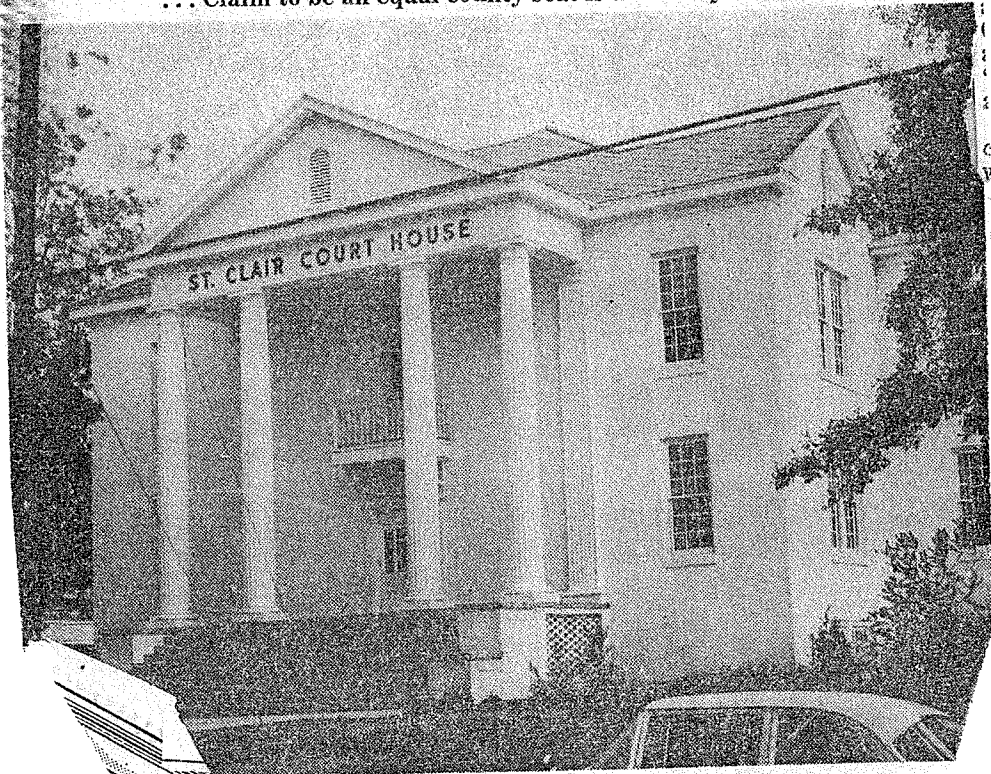
Dumas said he wanted to give persons who favored or opposed the bill an opportunity to discuss it before he

the Senate floor.

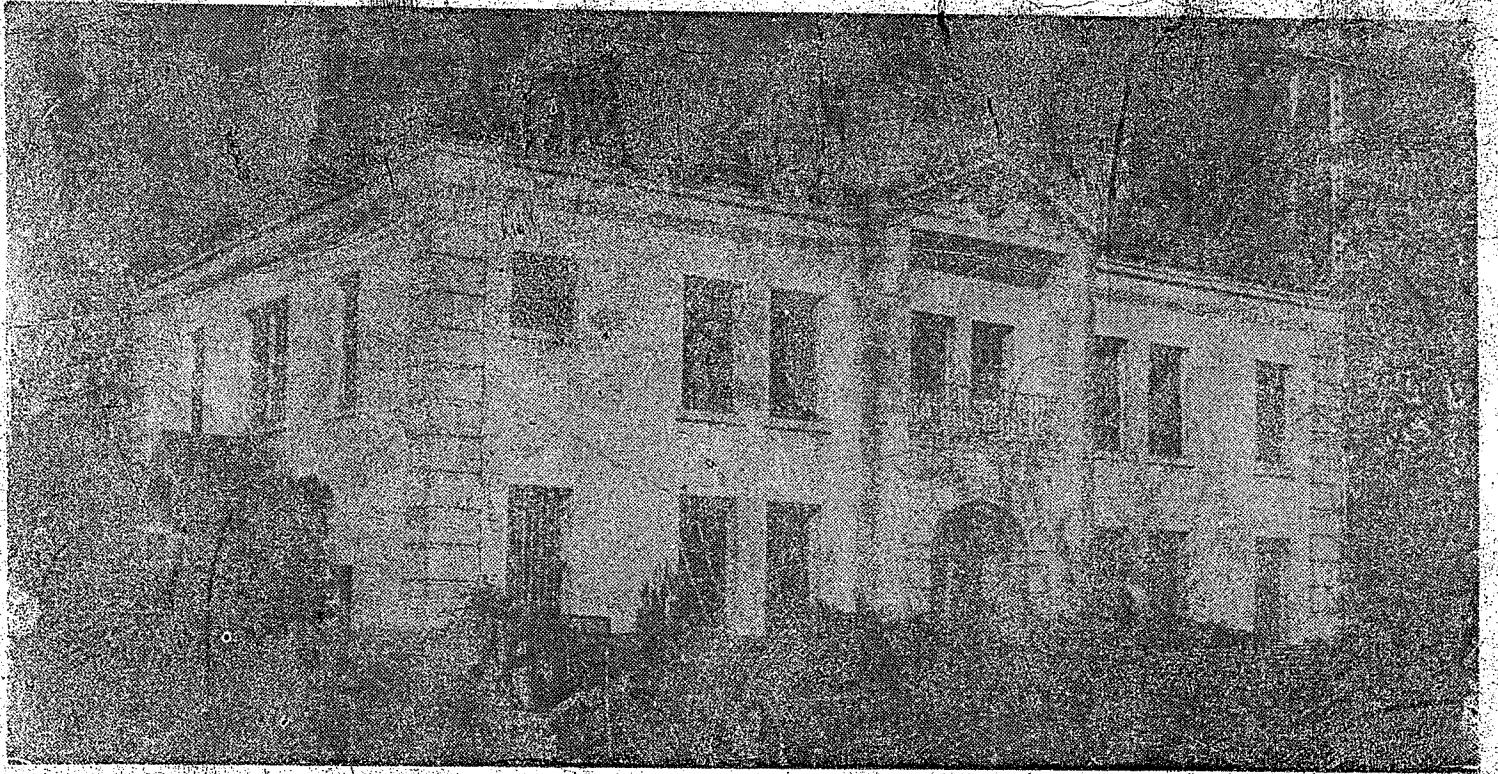
Major provisions would increase to of the plumbing : the present \$2,20 a maximum of \$4, board to hire leg to limit the master tificate holder to of \$20,000 of busin six months, \$100,0 six months and un



PELL CITY COURTHOUSE BUILT IN 1955, ON SITE OF ORIGINAL
... Claim to be an equal county seat is denied by Ashville



... BUILT AT ASHVILLE IN 1847, REMODELED LAST YEAR
... Records in basement date back to 1819



PC Courthouse

Courthouse Lawn To Be A Parking Lot?

BY CAROL PAPPAS

The City Council of Pell City heard a proposal Monday night that a portion of the courthouse lawn fronting on Cogswell Avenue be converted into a parking lot, but took no action on the matter.

Lamar Williamson, general manager of radio station WFHK, said he was making the proposal on behalf of a number of local merchants who had suggested the idea to him.

"It could be done while this renovation work is going on

and would provide some much-needed parking space," he said.

Councilman Bam Cox said he would hate to "mess up the lawn," but Mayor Hugh Williamson said he liked the idea.

"Speaking for myself, I think it could be made attractive and could serve a good purpose," the Mayor said.

Councilman Cox retorted, "I don't think I've ever seen a pretty parking lot."

Continued on Page 2

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Courthouse—

Continued from Page 1

The council made no further comment and took no action on the proposal.

In other business, the council adopted an ordinance concerning non discrimination in the area of housing to comply with Housing and Urban Development requirements.

Ken Groves of Cobb, Adams and Benton, the city planners, said the ordinance's purpose is to show "good-faith" in the city's non discrimination policy.

The council agreed unanimously to adopt the ordinance.

Charlie Goodwin, captain of the Emergency Rescue Squad based in Pell City, appeared before the council to thank the city for its past support of the organization and to ask approval for its annual roadblock, May 6 and 7.

The roadblock is to help pay for bills the rescue squad owes, Goodwin said, "and we owe quite a few."

Mayor Hugh Williamson said he was against having it that particular weekend because it is the date for the Winston 500 in Talladega, and there would be a lot of traffic.

He suggested that the weekend of May 13 and 14 would be a better time and the council approved the date unanimously.

Councilman "Bam" Cox added that the limit for roadblocks is one per year and the rescue squad's would be that one.

Goodwin also asked for two loads of chert to fill the ditch where land is washing out in front of the squad's headquarters building, and Mayor Williamson said the council would see to it that Goodwin gets the chert.

Councilman Forrest Walls suggested that the council look into renting lights for the tennis courts, a plan similarly discussed by Ashville City Council last week.

The cost of renting lights was quoted at \$85 per month, and Councilman Walls added that the cheapest lighting

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Ed Ash of the Ash Agency presented a resolution accepting the dedication of streets in the Huntingridge Subdivision. Councilman Cox said the council could not accept the dedication before the project had been completed.

The council did agree to install street lights at each corner and on the circle.

The pictures on this page will doubtless stir the memory of many an old timer and not-so-old-timer in Pell City. Made in 1933, the pictures were loaned to the Observer by Mrs. Jewel Hammett. Those who have been around for awhile will quickly recognize the stately old courthouse which gave way to progress in 1955 when the present new courthouse was dedicated by then-Gov. "Big Jim" Folsom...

...The Martin Hospital, photographed even before the wing which now houses the S. Clair Observer offices was built on...

...Mitnick's store, located in the middle of the block on Cogswell Avenue, which later became Cohen's store...

...Jake Garry's Mule Barn. Want a hazard a guess as to where that one was located anyone? If you said on the corner of what is now 17th St. and 1st Ave, So., where the



Pell City Courthouse

EARLY COURTHOUSES OF ALABAMA PRIOR TO 1869

Edited by The National Society of the
Colonial Dames of America in the State
of Alabama

St. Clair County

St. Clair County was one of fifteen counties created at the first Alabama Territorial session November 1818, at St. Stephens. The new county was named in honor of General Arthur St. Clair, an American Revolutionary War officer from Pennsylvania.

In the one hundred forty-six year history of the county, eight changes have been made in the courthouse. Prior to 1822 the first courts were held at Old Town, four miles south of Ashville, present county seat. It was a sturdy, well built log house.

Philip Coleman laid off a town in 1822 and named it St. Clairsville. He sold it to five county commissioners in 1823 (or 1822) when the name was changed to honor John Ashe, one of the first settlers, and second senator to the State Legislature.

John Ashe, his father-in-law, Thomas Newton, a Presbyterian minister, and their families were in a caravan going westward into the new territory when one of John Ashe's young daughters died and had to be buried at this point. They decided to go no further. John Ashe is buried at Liberty Presbyterian Church within sight of the house he built soon after he entered the land in 1819.

The second courthouse, first to be built in Ashville, was a temporary log building on the southeast corner of the present courthouse square, when a drug store now stands. The next, third, set of justice was also a log building, apparently the permanent structure planned by the five commissioners who bought the site, the present town square, from Philip Coleman.

The ledger of Littleton Yarbrough leaves an excellent, detailed account of the fourth courthouse, built in 1844-1845, on the town square in the center of the Town of Ashville. Mr. John Yarbrough who loaned the account book for this description lives in the ancestral home built by Littleton Yarbrough, his great grandfather in 1825, southeast of Ashville on the Greensport Road.

Mr. Yarbrough included other interesting records in his ledger such as a coroner's jury decision on the death of a male resident, found dead on the road side on a very cold January night, and a good "receipt" for a hot Tom and Jerry.

First entry on building of the courthouse states, "We commenced laying brick on the court house 23 Oct. 1844." He lists names of ten men, the amount, and for what each was paid, i.e.: "Paid Willis Cox for lumber, cash \$110."

Also, "Paid Campbell Jefferson, 1844-1845, \$350.75 for laying of the brick." Mr. John Yarbrough says the bricks were handmade right on the courthouse square. To build courthouse in Ashville, which has 155,640 bricks, I am to pay Campbell Jefferson two dollars and 50 cents per thousand. Mr. Stanly, A. C., plasters the court house for \$19. Settled in full June 4, 1845, L. Yarbrough."

The portion constructed with the 155,640 bricks in the two-story center square (see picture) with a bell tower and two large chimneys and a facade with a roof over a simple stoop. New additions made in 1886 was the occasion for the picture shown. At this time additions were a two-story wing at each end, depth of one room, which added four new rooms. The tall gentleman at the far right of the picture standing on the steps was James Alden Embry, circuit solicitor, at the time the picture was made.

Extensive changes have been made during the years of 1911, 1934, and 1964. As a result, the courthouse now has a handsome facade facing south with sixteen windows and two doors and an impressive portico. Across the wide veranda are four fluted, two-story, Doric columns, supporting a pediment in which there is a town clock. A second-story door opens onto a governor's balcony directly over the first floor double door in the center of the portico.

In "Marriage Book - 1818," the first license granted was to Joseph Hill and Sarah Davidson, December 30, 1818, the Security signed by John McColum.

The first deed and will are recorded in the same book, Book A-1/2-Misc., begins with Deed of Conveyance, Solomon Brigman to John Looney, on 10th day October, 1829. Testators, Oliver Looney and John Brigman. The will is the last will and testament of Solomon Dearman. An abstract follows: State of S. C., Darlington District "I Solomon Dearman I lend unto my beloved wife Mary 450 acres; freely give to them my 13 children," dated August 13, 1805. Witnessed by William Mayhan, William Johnson, Solomon Dearman. The will was presented in 1823 for probate by Richard Dearman, executor.

The last will and testament of Peggy Pathkiller, wife of Cherokee Chief Pathkiller, is recorded in Estate Record B, page 65, dated: Pathkiller Ferry on the Coosa River, Cherokee Nation, the 13th day of January, 1829: "I, Peggy Pathkiller of Turkey Town by the blessing of Providence being sound in health but now far advanced as it is ordained by the great will and Testament and dispose of my property in the following manner to my discendents, to wit. " To her five daughters, two grandsons, and one niece she bequeathed a total of thirteen negro slaves; her house, furniture and plantation to her youngest daughter, Janny Mariah, and her two children who lived in the same house with her. To this she made her mark, x, which was witnessed by John Ridge, sworn to before John H. Garrett, JCC, the 13th day of March, 1833. The will was recorded March 14, 1833. Chief Pathkiller is buried in the Garrett Cemetery, Centre, Alabama, but the burial place of Peggy is not recorded.

Men first to serve the county were Archibald Sloan, postmaster; the Reverend James L. Lewis, pastor of the Baptist church in 1831; James Hardwick, state representative 1819; David Conner, senator and representative of his county at the first Alabama Convention and a signer of the Alabama Constitution August 2 1819. Five state superintendents of education came from St. Clair, one of whom was Leroy Franklin Box, and one governor, Rufus W. Cobb, both born in the county.

St. Clair has two courthouses, one in Ashville and one in Pell City. The latter is the southern county seat which was divided effectively in early days by Beaver Creek Mountains. The town was incorporated in 1890 by Pell City Iron & Land Company and named for the president, George H. Pell, of New York. Sumter Cogswell of Charleston, South Carolina, sold the land to the company in 1890 for \$50,000 and bought it back ten years later for \$5,000. He donated lands for churches, schools and public buildings; served his community for a number of terms as mayor.

Sumter Cogswell	1926 - 1944
W.T. Starnes	1944 - 1952
Joe Kilgroe	1952 - 1960

In 1903, Dr. R.A. Martin, a young physician came to Pell City to make his home and began the general practice of medicine. Dr. Martin was instrumental in the promotion of several sub-divisions, and was one of its most public spirited and leading citizens, contributing much to the welfare and the upbuilding of the city.

*In 1901 an election was held to locate a courthouse on the South side of Backbone Mountain, which is the geographical division of St. Clair County. Pell City, Eden Coal City, and Riverside entered into competition to have the courthouse located in their respective towns. Pre-election activities were hot. A heated campaign was waged by each fraction. In the election, held November 6, 1901, Pell city won by about 600 majority over all. Sumter Cogswell then donated block 26 for the erection of the courthouse and jail. County court is held here each month, Judge M.W. Forman of Ashville being the presiding officer of the county at the present time. The home of Probate Judge Abner Lacey was located on this present court house site. Home of Col. Spears was a log house. A term of Circuit Court is held here twice each year. Judge Rayburn of Gadsden and Judge Disque of Gadsden being the present Judges of this Curcuit. The peace officers of the county at the present time are: Ira Davis, Sheriff, R.F. Alverson, Pell City Chief Deputy. Since the location of the courthouse here, naturally several attorneys made Pell City their home. The leading members of the local bar at the present are Frank B. Embry, W.T. Starnes and W.A. Weaver and Edwin Holladay.

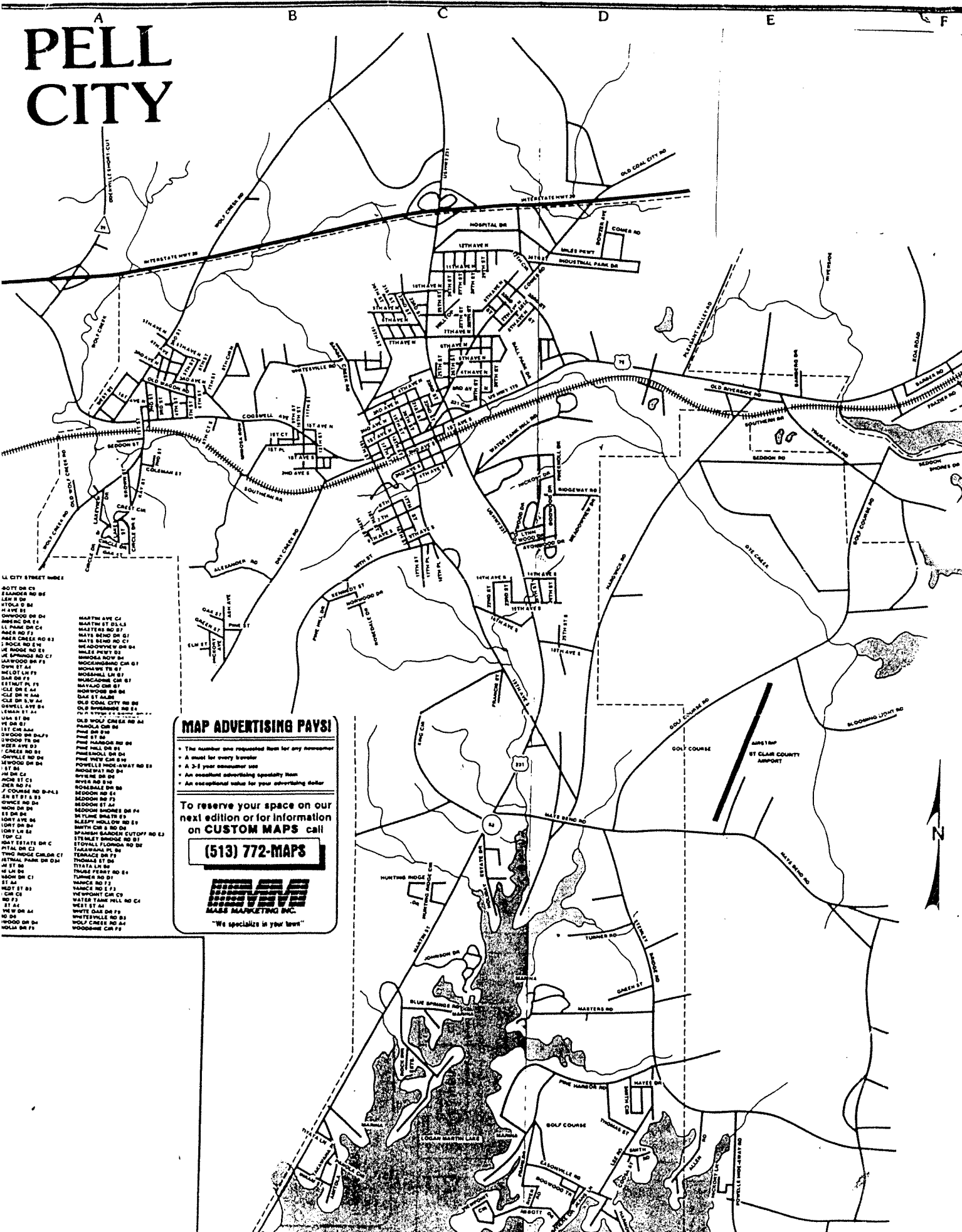
As the town thrived more stores continued to locate in Pell City. Mr. H.B. Guy, who for years previously had done business in a large department store, located at Eden, removed his business to Pell City. At that time Mr. Guy's store was the largest and most modern store between Birmingham and Anniston. During the year 1902 several county roads were opened up. Among them being one going northwest from Pell City, connecting with the Old Vandergrift Road. During the next year road building continued, one going from Pell City due north to Coal City and one from Pell City to the Coosa Valley section.

As the town grew the need was felt keenly for modern and up to date church and school buildings. Mr. and Mrs. Cogswell donated land for church sites to the Methodist, Baptist and Episcopal denominations. Also land for church sites to the colored denominations. Now other churches, The Church Of The Advent and The Church Of Christ have been organized. Mr. Bays D. Cather, Sr. gave the following information to Mrs. Ella Miller who wrote to him asking for this information for the First Methodist Church here. "When I moved to Pell City in January 1902 there was no church or Sunday School.

If you remember correctly, my printing establishment was at first located in a building that stood back of the present Pell City Drug Co., building.

The first Sunday School was a Union Sunday School and was organized by Mrs. Carol Alverson, and myself, and we had help from Mr. W.H. Miller, Mr. Fred Miller and from many

PELL CITY



1. CITY STREET INDEX
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 18TH DR E5
 17TH DR F6
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 14TH DR I9
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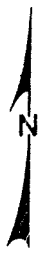
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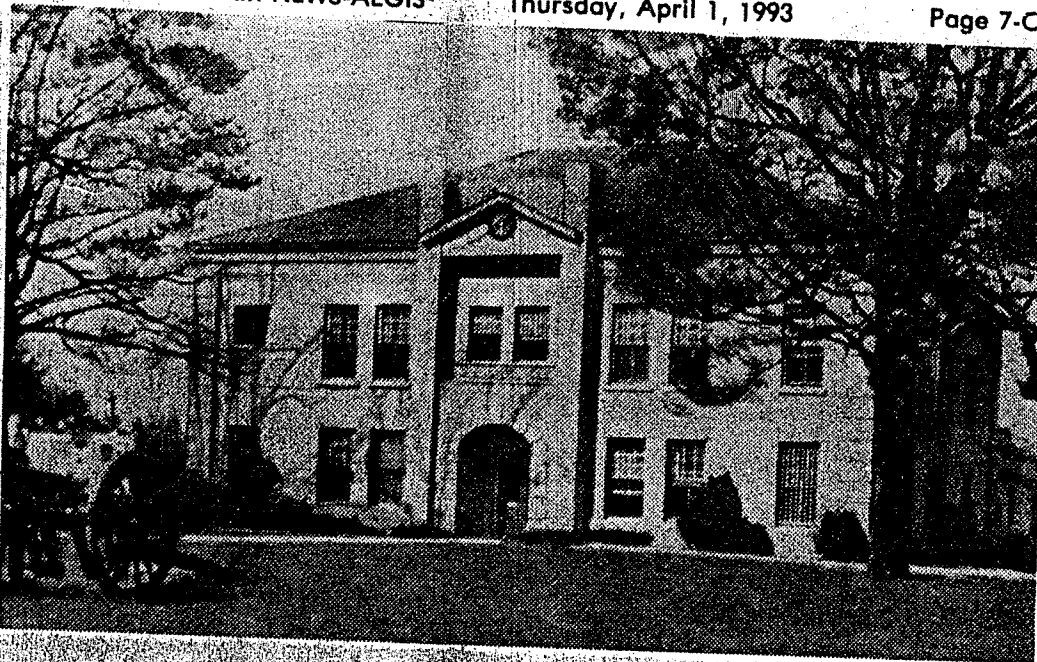
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ORIGINAL PELL CITY COURTHOUSE—An election was held on Nov. 6, 1901 to vote on a site for a new courthouse for the Southern District of St. Clair County. The four towns being voted on as possible sites were Pell City, Coal City, Eden and Riverside. Pell City won by a 600 majority vote and the new courthouse was built. The original building was torn down in 1956 when the new building that is still in use was built.



dents within fields they serve.
All parents of Pell City High School students are invited to attend the Career Day program.

SET FOR DEDICATION

New County Courthouse Occupied

County employees and employees of various state and federal agencies who are to be housed in the new St. Clair County courthouse at Pell City were happy indeed this week.

They started moving in yesterday. Most of them are ship-shape and ready for business today.

In addition to probate offices, sheriff's office, office of tax col-

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First Section

was ascribed to a heart attack.

He was first elected Tax Collector of St. Clair, then Probate Judge. At the time of his death he was Director of U. S. Savings Bond sales for Alabama, and President of the Ashville Savings Bank.

Judge Adkins has been a guiding influence and a political leader in the Republican party for many years. He was for many years Chairman of the St. Clair County Republican Executive Committee, was a member of the Republican National Committee, a place he resigned to take his present job. He was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1952, first cast his vote for the late Senator Taft, later switched to General Eisenhower.

After the election of President Eisenhower, Judge Adkins became one of the most influential Republicans in the South, was instrumental in setting up GOP patron-

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FIRST SECTION

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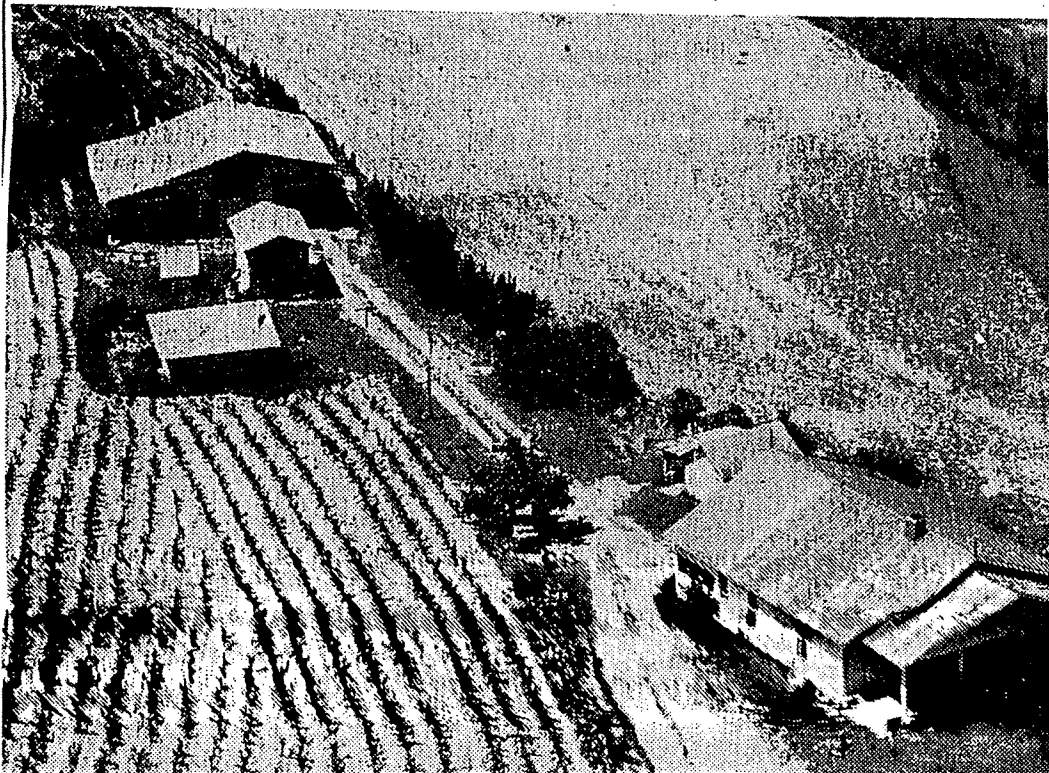
Springville PT Will Meet Ne Monday Nigh

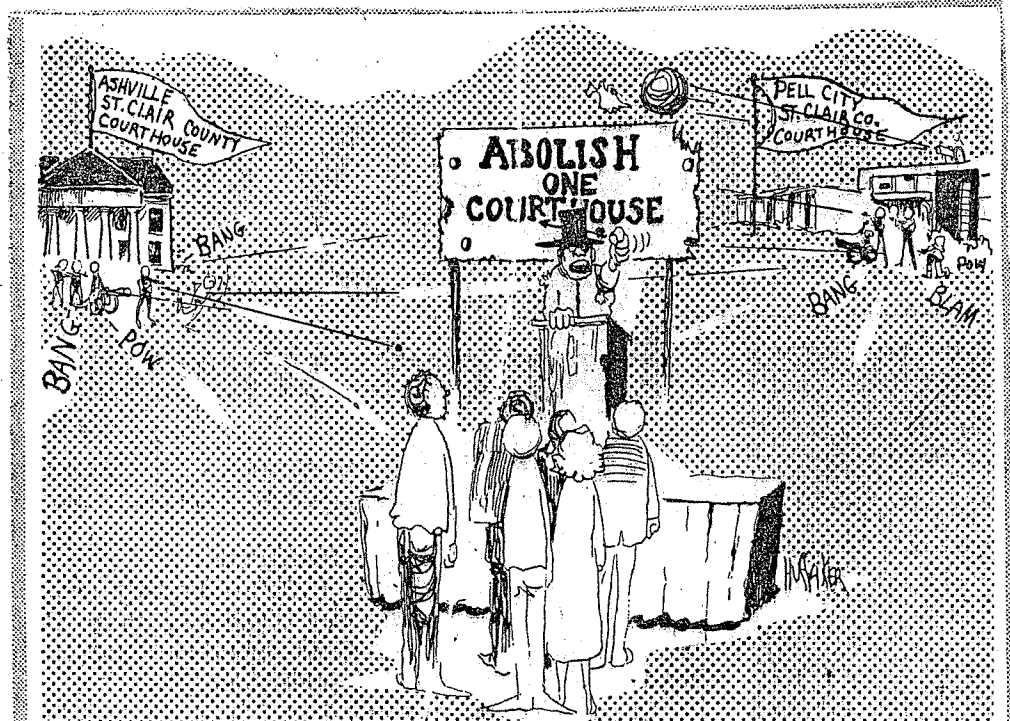
The Springville P have their regular day night February time 'Fathers Night' ved.

The program, unde tion of W. F. Windh duced to begin at 7:30 luncheon at Sprin School.

Mrs. John Hall Jone chologist, of Birming the guest speaker. A F tet will be featured on program and special e is also scheduled for ren.

This meeting was pi for February 14 but w until next Monday nig





ROADS TAKE A BEATING

Politicians blooming in St. Clair County

BY BOB HAWKINS
News staff writer

PELL CITY, March 8—Every four years when the sap starts rising, politicians burn up the roads, jamming candidate cards with their pictures on them into every screen door in the countryside.

St. Clair County roads are taking an awful beating by a whole passel running for a job in the courthouse. Inferior Court Judge Buck Rowe already has one, but he wants to move down the hall into the sheriff's office. Sheriff Red Wood is determined to keep Rowe just where he is, and a couple of others wait to send both back to the farm.

THAT'S THE WAY it is in 67 counties in the Camellia State, but here in St. Clair where the state's flower won't grow, the politicians are blooming out all over.

Tax Collector Alse Scott breathed a sigh of relief on qualifying deadline day when nary a soul came out against him. This lack of opposition didn't shock anyone, because Scott, a humble gentleman, is a virtual tiger at the polls. Even the Republicans have no stomach for tangling

dresser, and kept his hands in Montgomery's hip pocket to build up county farm-to-market roads. Judge Forman had an uncanny knack for getting things done. Not that he didn't have enemies. He did. But he hung in there till his projects were finished.

Though a familiar sight on a big city country club golf course, Judge Forman could spit and whittle with the country store set, too.

Last November droves of voters pulled the elephant's snout and the Republicans made a clean sweep of everything available in the courthouse. French Whitten, not long removed from Cumberland Law School, was elected circuit judge on the GOP ticket in a landslide which left even him speechless. However, lawyers in the district seem satisfied with his conduct on the bench, if not with his distaff politics.

When the lawmaking intelligencia split up the state at the Supreme Court's direction, St. Clair was put in a district with Blount and Marshall Counties. Blount and St. Clair have comparable voting populations, but Marshall could put both down in a showdown. Two from Marshall and one each from St. Clair and Blount are in the running for Senate. Since Marshall

News - March 8, 1966

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St. Clair is divided in the middle by a mountain ridge that begins in Pennsylvania and plays out at Birmingham. But to the majority on the south side the other half might as well be in Pennsylvania. Ashville and Pell City seldom make eyes at each other, although some shrewd politician in a past generation saw to it that both towns got a courthouse.

Some years ago a candidate with one eye on economics and the other in the clouds ran on the premise that if elected, he'd do away with one of the courthouses. He didn't get elected and was lucky to get out of the campaign with his life. There hasn't been anyone in the past two decades to mention such a thing, even in the confines of his own home.

THE POTENTATE of St. Clair politics hung up the gloves awhile back. Venerable Ward Forman of Springville, a buffer zone to the oblique of Pell City and Ashville, retired as probate judge after a quarter century. He was and still is a dapper

dresser, and kept his hands in Montgomery's hip pocket to build up county farm-to-market roads. Judge Forman had an uncanny knack for getting things done. Not that he didn't have enemies. He did. But he hung in there till his projects were finished.

Though a familiar sight on a big city country club golf course, Judge Forman could spit and whittle with the country store set, too.

Last November droves of voters pulled the elephant's snout and the Republicans made a clean sweep of everything available in the courthouse. French Whitten, not long removed from Cumberland Law School, was elected circuit judge on the GOP ticket in a landslide which left even him speechless. However, lawyers in the district seem satisfied with his conduct on the bench, if not with his distaff politics.

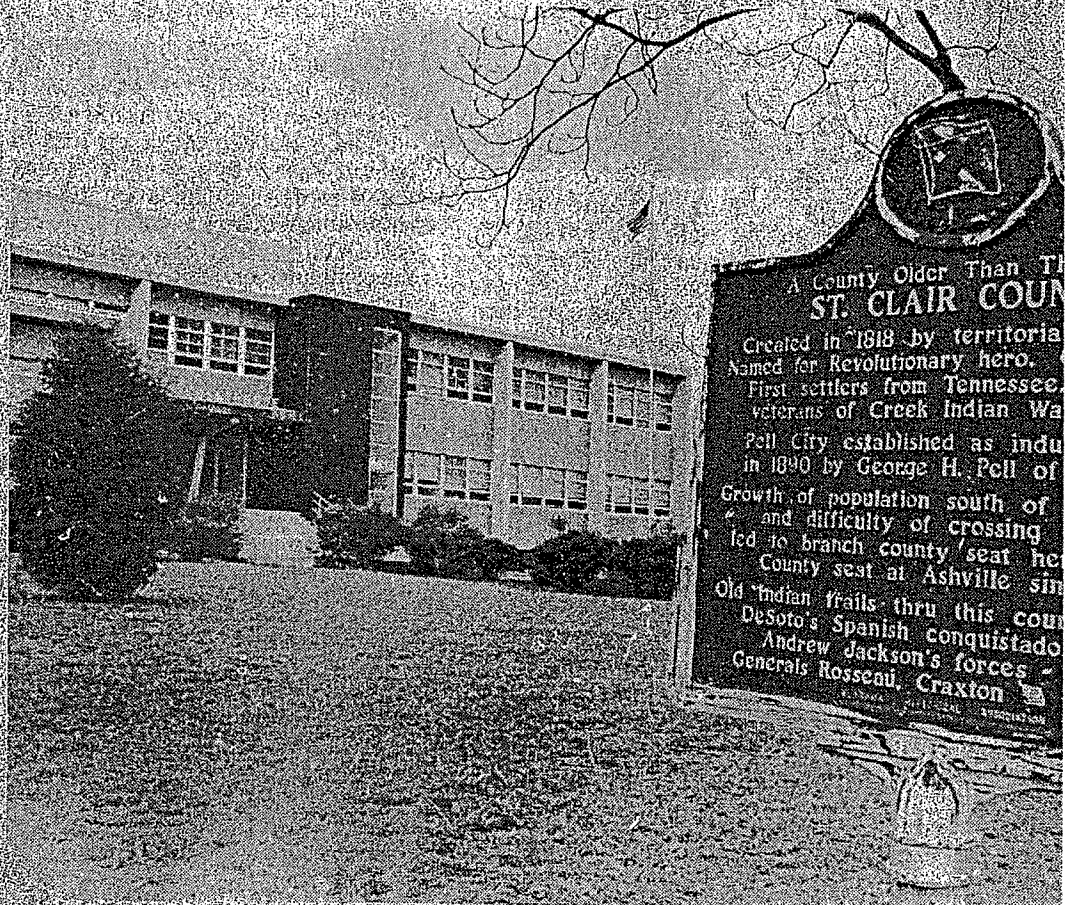
When the lawmaking intelligencia split up the state at the Supreme Court's direction, St. Clair was put in a district with Blount and Marshall Counties. Blount and St. Clair have comparable voting populations, but Marshall could put both down in a showdown. Two from Marshall and one each from St. Clair and Blount are in the running for Senate. Since Marshall and St. Clair have tremendous backwater tourist attractions and industry-hawking possibilities, candidates from these two are going all out in a stand against water pollution.

AUBREY CARR of Marshall co-authored the anti-pollution bill, but St. Clair's entry, Roy Coshatt, says he'll go up to Marshall and "out-anti-pollution" Carr. Carr is an undertaker, Coshatt an optometrist.

The job as coroner of St. Clair is hogging the sideshow this trip. Both candidates are considered affluent individuals, but both are running like they didn't have a grain of salt in the house.

Incumbent Jimmy Davis, a cobbler by trade, is a rotund, good-natured individual who said he was surprised that druggist Bob Hall would come out against him. Hall says Davis is needed full-time in the shoe shop.

Each is sympathetic toward the other, and most voters may play "eenie, meenie, minnie, mo" before pulling the lever.



The modern courthouse at Pell City was built in 1965. The courthouse was damaged and many of the stately old trees destroyed during the tornado of 1974. Federal disaster funds were used by the city to substantially renovate and beautify Shropshire photo

Why Two St. Clair Courts

By MARK BOLTON

Eighty years ago it was attributed to rough terrain, but today no one seems sure why St. Clair County maintains two courthouses.

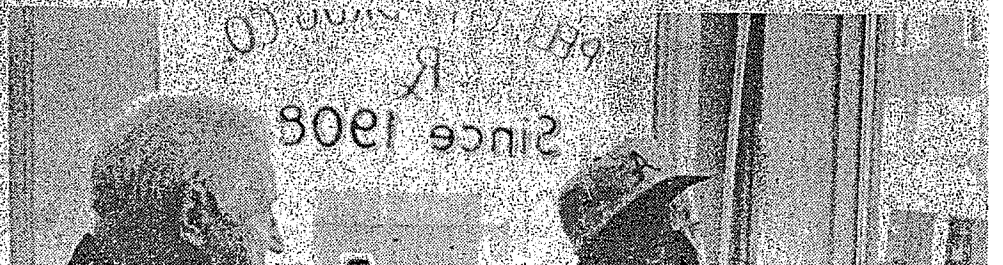
A constitutional amendment by the Alabama Legislature in 1901 called for a branch courthouse to be established

in the county. Pell City won the election, but the amendment later was struck down. The constitution was amended again two years later and the courthouse reopened.

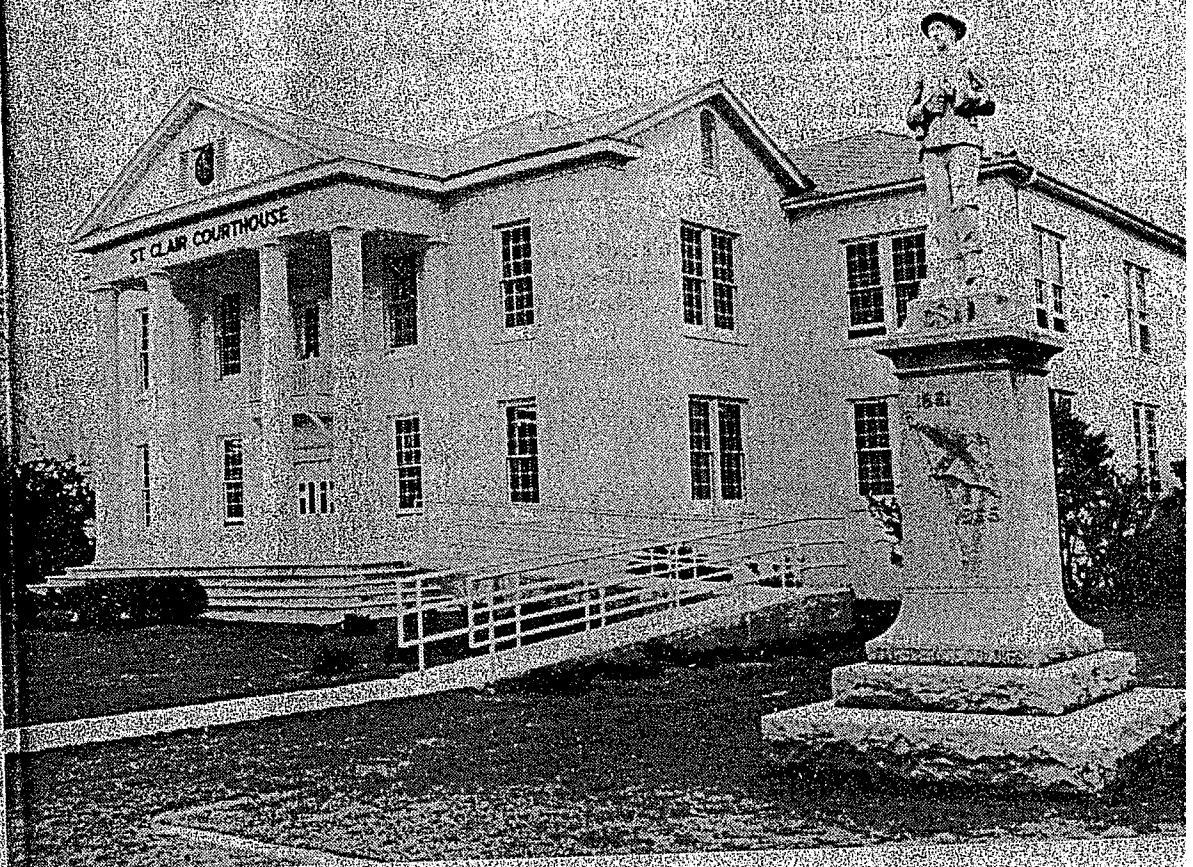
Backbone Mountain, a geological oddity that effectively cuts the county in half, caused hardships to those

having to do house. Court many people during the winter to traverse the

Seaboard Railroad Backbone Mountain bridges and th



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...beautify the area. (Butch
 ...shire photo)

The heart of the Ashville courthouse was built in 1844 and still stands today, although it has undergone many renovations and additions. The

monument was erected to honor soldiers from the county who served in the Civil War. During the early years

the courthouse square se
 'village green' for resider
 Shropshire photo)

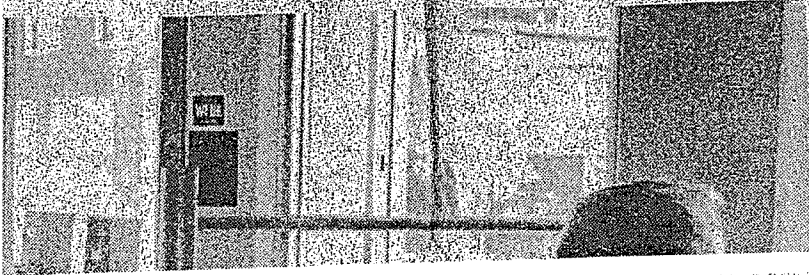
Courthouses? No One Really Knows

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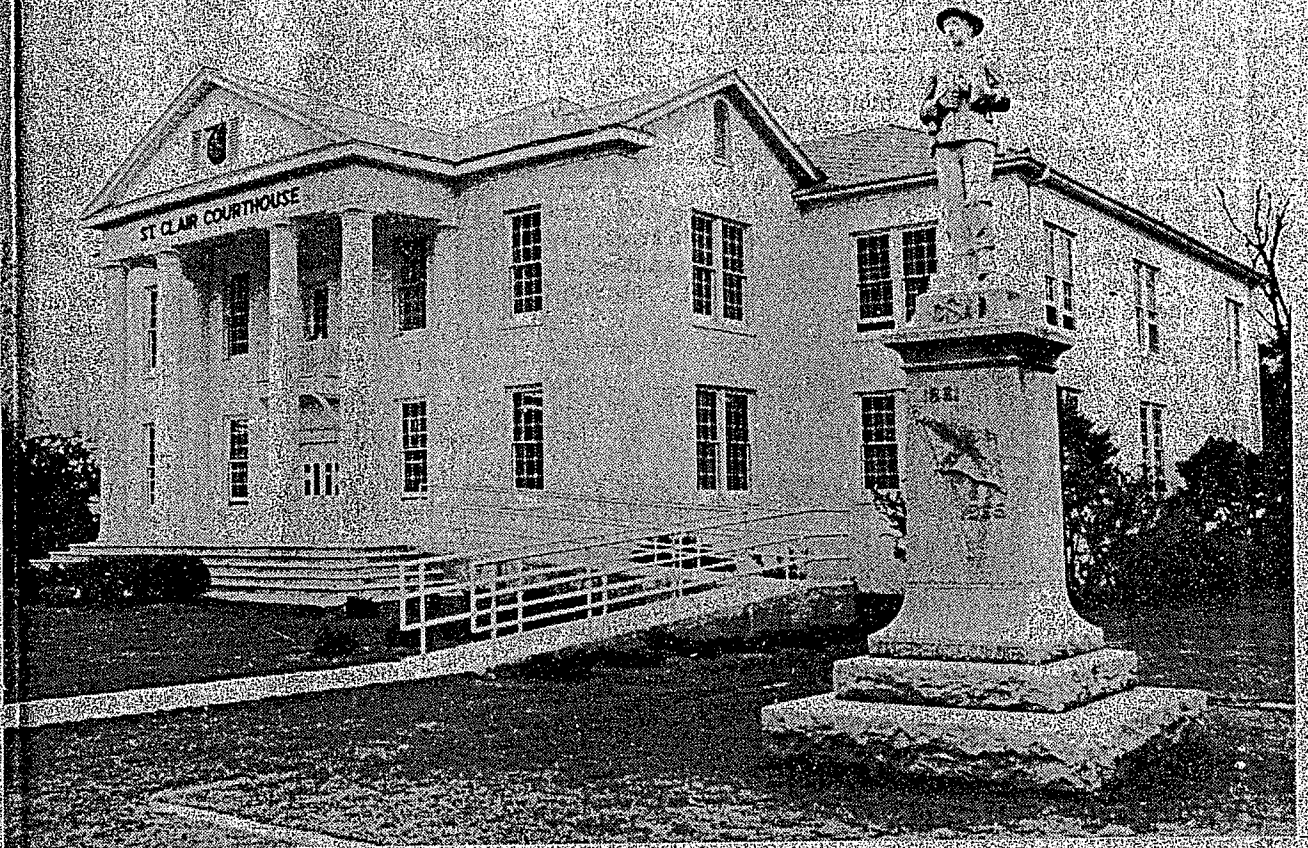
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 make six 90 degree turns in two miles,
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 "It's convenient, and I don't think

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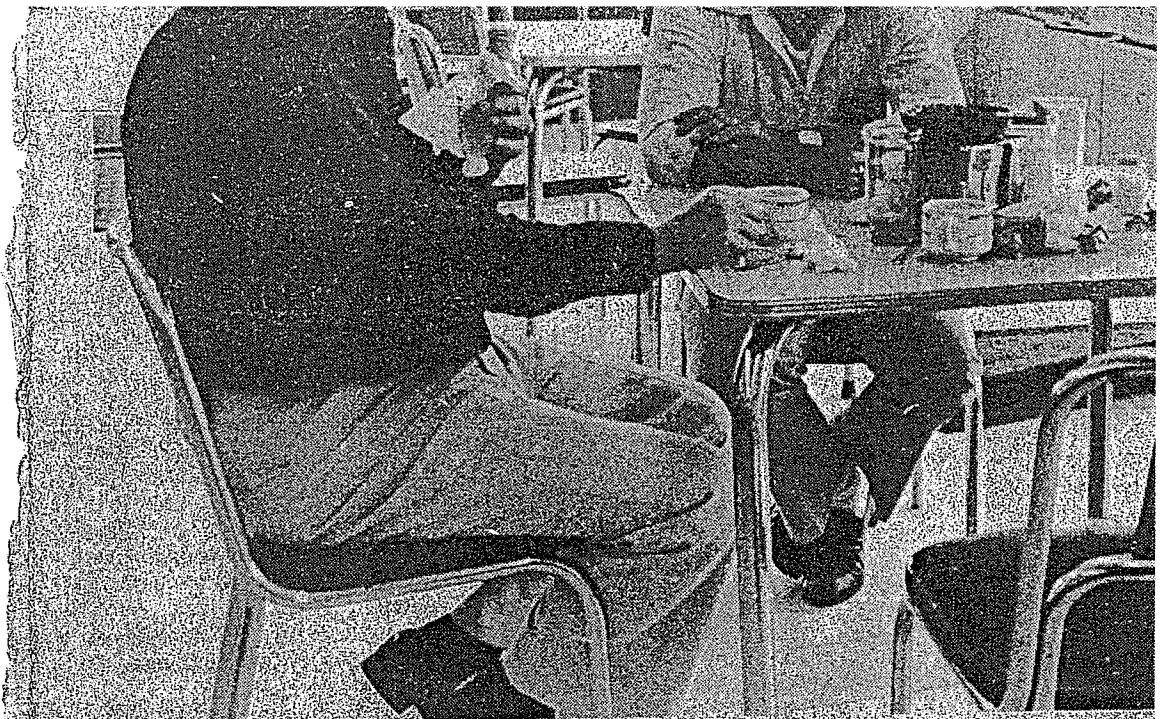
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Residents obtain business licenses, drivers licenses, car tags, and marriage certificates in the division in which they reside. In addition, each segment of county government maintains two offices, with the exception of the county commissioners.
The commissioners do rotate their bi-monthly meetings between Ashville

the county to grant raises to the heads of both offices, as well as the county coroner. Probate Judge Wallace Wyatt recently expressed hope that the raise would be granted because of the extreme workload on the tax assessor and collector.
Of the five additional employees working for the county, most have an income of \$511 a month. The county pays 12 percent retirement, six percent Social Security and a maximum of \$120 a month for health insurance.
A population and industrial boom in Pell City has boosted local economy, but generates problems for the county. Many fund allocations are allotted on the basis of population, but it has been 10 years since the last census in Pell City. County Engineer Blake





Area residents gather at the Pell City corner drug store daily. The drugstore has weathered tornadoes and local feuds since its founding in 1908 to remain a favorite spot for city and county officials, businessman and retirees in the local residence day in town, the

Ashville, Pell City S

By MARK BOLTON

Pell City and Ashville share not only the distinction of both being county seats, but an odd history as well.

Mattie Lou Teague Crow has recorded that history with her book, "The History of St. Clair County," a peek into the county's past.

The county was named after Gen. Arthur St. Clair, one of the most unpopular fighting figures in the history of America. St. Clair, former governor of the Northwest Territory, was chosen by George Washington to flush hostile Indians from the Wabash Valley.

With 1800 men, St. Clair bumbled into an Indian ambush and half of his men were killed or wounded.

Belson's "History of the United States" recounted the incident. "This was one of the most disastrous and crushing defeats recorded in Indian warfare. The people of the country were shocked at the news. St. Clair was severely censured, and he never rose again in the public estimation."

Historians aren't sure why the county was named after St. Clair. The best guess seems that St. Clair was best remembered in this area for his valiant fighting in the American Revolution.

Pell City, listed as the only town in the county able to keep up with the growth of the rest of the state, has suffered many setbacks in its history.

In 1887 the East and West, the Talladega and Coosa, and the Georgia Pacific railroads built a joint depot in Pell City. The depot was considered to be of great importance in the development of the city, but also was to provide two heartbreaks for the residents.

In 1894 a train left Talladega for Pell City and tumbled off the 600-foot long bridge at Stemley. Two persons were killed, but quick action by railroad workers saved others from death. Vernon Dalhart recorded a ballad about the wreck, and residents remember it being sold in Talladega stores for 25 cents each.

Sumter Cogswell purchased Pell City for \$3,000 several years after the Panic of 1883. When Cogswell arrived in Pell City, residents were amazed at his buggy with fringe on it.

A constitutional convention in 1901 called for the establishment of a branch seat of county government. An election was held and Pell City won the courthouse by a majority of 600 votes over Eden, Riverside and Coal City.

One year brought another city. Owners decided to do Backbone Mountain. A freak that'd half.

Explosives depot in the fire broke out summer. Unaware of the scene, the explosive killed in the Cornett Hotel were injured caught fire where the'd been large courthouse.

Three years legislature a courthouse. Supreme decision. Re and elected and Ed Har legislature support. The state consti house was later.

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he Pell and local feuds since its founding in 1908 to remain a favorite spot for city and county officials, buissnessman and retirees in the city. In Ashville, when the local residents have to spend the day in town, they enjoy visiting with their neighbors in the Rexall drugstore there. (Butch Shropshire photo)

Ashville, Pell City Share County Seat, C

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One year later the railroad brought another to disaster to the city. Owners of the Southern Line decided to drill a tunnel through Backbone Mountain, a geological freak that divides the county in half.

Explosives were stored at the depot in the heart of town, and a fire broke out at the depot in the summer. Volunteer firemen, unaware of the explosives, rushed to the scene. When the fire reached the explosives, three persons were killed in the resulting blast, the Cornett Hotel was wrecked, scores were injured and several houses caught fire. Witnesses said the hole where the depot was would have been large enough to put the courthouse in.

Three years later, the state legislature abolished the Pell City courthouse and the Alabama Supreme Court upheld the decision. Residents were enraged and elected John Moore of Pell City and Ed Hamner of Attala to the legislature with a strong show of support. The pair reamended the state constitution and the courthouse was reopened two years later.

Ashville has recorded an equally interesting history of their town. Ashville Academy, built in the

1800s, boasts Oran Roberts, later elected to the governorship of Texas, as a graduate. Rufus Cobb also graduated there, and later went on to become governor of Alabama. Dr. William Dempsey Partlow, former superintendent of Bryce Hospital, also attended the Academy.

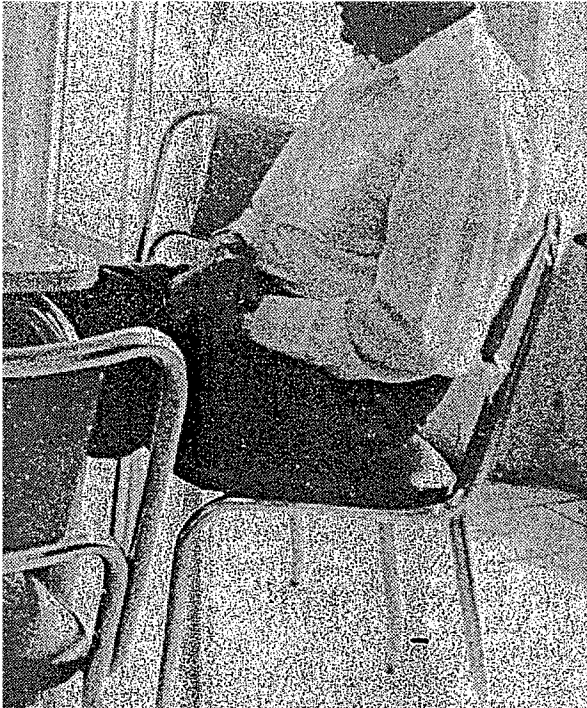
In 1845 steamboats began traveling from Rome, Ga., to Greensport in St. Clair County, providing many jobs in the area. At the same time a Dr. Farrar opened the first drugstore in Ashville, selling "drugs and sundries and good corn whiskey."

Ashville Savings Bank was chartered in 1906 and is one of only a few banks in the U.S. that never has closed its doors to the public.

In 1889, a dynamo was constructed and electric lights came to Ashville, although many people refused the service because they were scared of the gadget. The lights were turned off for three minutes at 8 p.m. each day during WWI.

Ashville drew national attention during 1901 when a riot broke out during court proceedings against a black man accused of assaulting a white woman. Jim Brown was found guilty and sentenced to be

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Ashville, when their neighbors in the Rexall drugstore to spend the there. (Butch Shropshire photo) visiting with

two courthouses at \$33,000, which includes repairs, utilities, janitorial maintenance and miscellaneous expenses. County Clerk Sue Wilson said repairs at the aging Ashville courthouse, as well as the one at Pell City, have been cheaper than usual.

The Ashville courthouse was built in 1844, although many additions and renovations have taken place.

Mrs. Wilson said utility bills generally are higher at the larger Pell City courthouse.

St. Clair County is one of only two counties in Alabama that maintain two jails. There are only two jailers for the county, one of whom lives full time at the Pell City jail. Both jails remain on the brink of overcrowding constantly, according to jail studies conducted by the county.

Pell City lists 22 employees in that courthouse and 20 in the Ashville courthouse. Of these 42 employees only five, theoretically, could be released under the current workload, according to county officials.

The tax assessor and the tax collector have five employees in each office. There is a bill-generating support in

throughout the county, but no increase in funds to maintain the roads.

Many people questioned at the courthouses agreed it would be cheaper to close one of the courthouses, so long as the one in their district isn't closed.

Regardless of whatever future decisions are made regarding the two courthouses, residents can still visit at the Rexall Drug Store.

There are drugstores across the street from both courthouses, and both are meeting places for persons from all walks of life.

Richard Eagleton of Ragland talked about the subject while waiting in line to renew his driver's license at the Ashville courthouse.

"With all the complaining people are doing about the government wasting money, well, this is just a good example."

But would he mind driving 28 miles to Pell City when he had business at the courthouse?

"Yeah," Eagleton said with a laugh. "What I meant was it would be OK with me for them to close the other courthouse."

are County Seat, Odd History

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hanged. When the sentence was read, chaos broke out and Sheriff James North fired several shots.

Deputy Walter Crow jumped out of the rear window of the courtroom with the prisoner and ran to a line of horse-drawn buggies parked on the street. Crow flagged a freight train and took the prisoner to the Jefferson County Jail in Birmingham.

When Brown was returned to Ashville to be hanged, he was brought on a special train, attended by two special deputies and 100 members of the Birmingham Military Battery. Brown was the last person to be hung in Ashville.

Although acquitted of the charge, North later was arrested and charged with murder because he shot and killed Walter Blakenship during the riot.

Both The New York Times and The Dallas News reported on the trial.

The marker on Blakenship's grave read, "Walter Blakenship, killed by Jim North on Aug. 22, 1901, while protecting the womanhood of St. Clair County."

An Indian known only as Tawasse was hanged on the Ashville Square in 1829, without benefit of a trial. Tawasse had stayed after

many other Indians fled the area, and was said to be pilfering from farmers. A Mr. Jones caught the Indian in the act and bullwhipped him.

The Indian later crept up on Mrs. Jones and knocked her unconscious as she washed clothes. Tawasse was captured, made to stand in the back of a wagon and fitted with a noose. The horses were shoed and Tawasse hung there until he died.

The first recorded instance of widespread religious fervor in Ashville came soon after the stars fell on Alabama.

During those years a fancy resort was maintained at St. Clair Springs, complete with casino and dance pavillion. Late one evening, as the band was playing "Good Night, Ladies" for the third time, hoping the revelers would leave, the sky lit up and thousands of shooting stars zigzagged across it. Many of the dancers fell to the ground and began to pray. One man was heard to say, "The end is here!"

The result of the nocturnal fireworks show? No more dances at the pavillion and a rising attendance at churches throughout the area.

Courthouse Dedic Dedication Program To St

MORE THAN 16,000 PEOPLE
WILL READ THE NEWS
AEGIS THIS WEEK.

ST. CLAIR

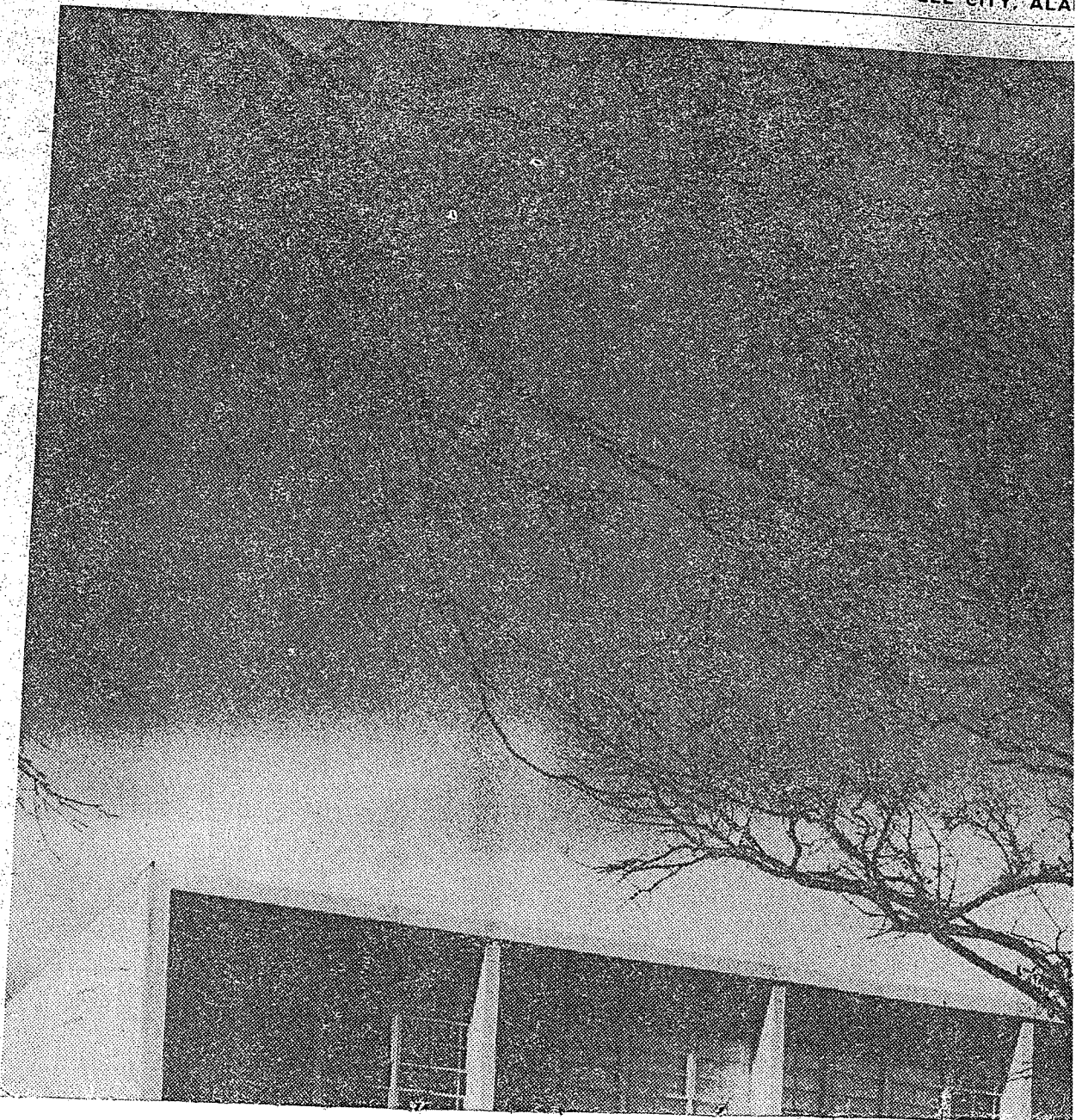
ALABAMA'S

Successor To The Pell City News

PELL CITY, ALA

83rd YEAR

NUMBER 6



tion Souvenir Edition

At 10 O'Clock Saturday Morning

NEWS—AEGIS

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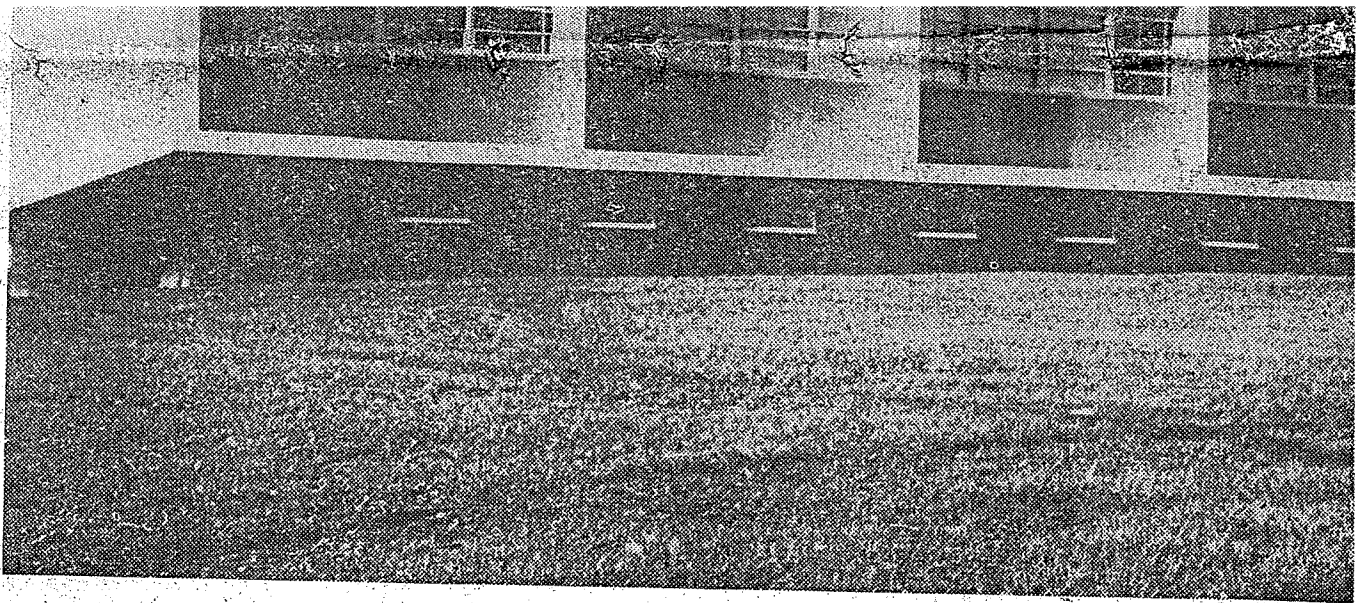
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Successor To The Southern Aegis, Est. 1873

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 1956

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JUDGE M. W. FORMAN
Host



GOV. JAS. E. FOLSOM
Dedication Speaker



SEN. LISTER HILL
Guest



REP. KENNETH ROBERTS
Guest

Governor Folsom Will Dedicate C

St. Clair County's beautiful and modern new courthouse as hundreds of visitors from out of the county and additional hundreds of St. Clair residents will see it Saturday when the building is formally dedicated to public service. Probate Judge M. W. Forman, and County Commissioners W. A. Cole-

man, W. D. "Boss" Wilkins, W. H. "Bill" Hess and Ed N. Peace, and the people of St. Clair County will be hosts at the dedication program. (A photo of Ed N. Peace, fourth County Commissioner, was not available.)

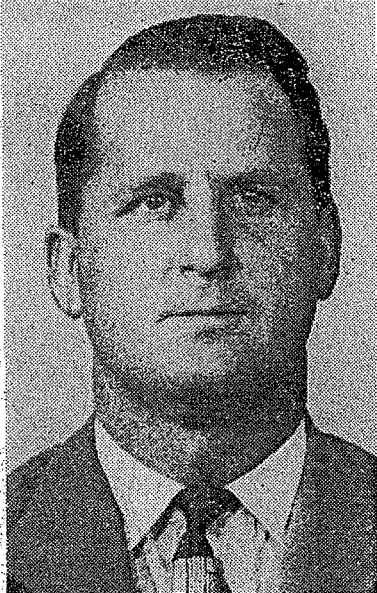
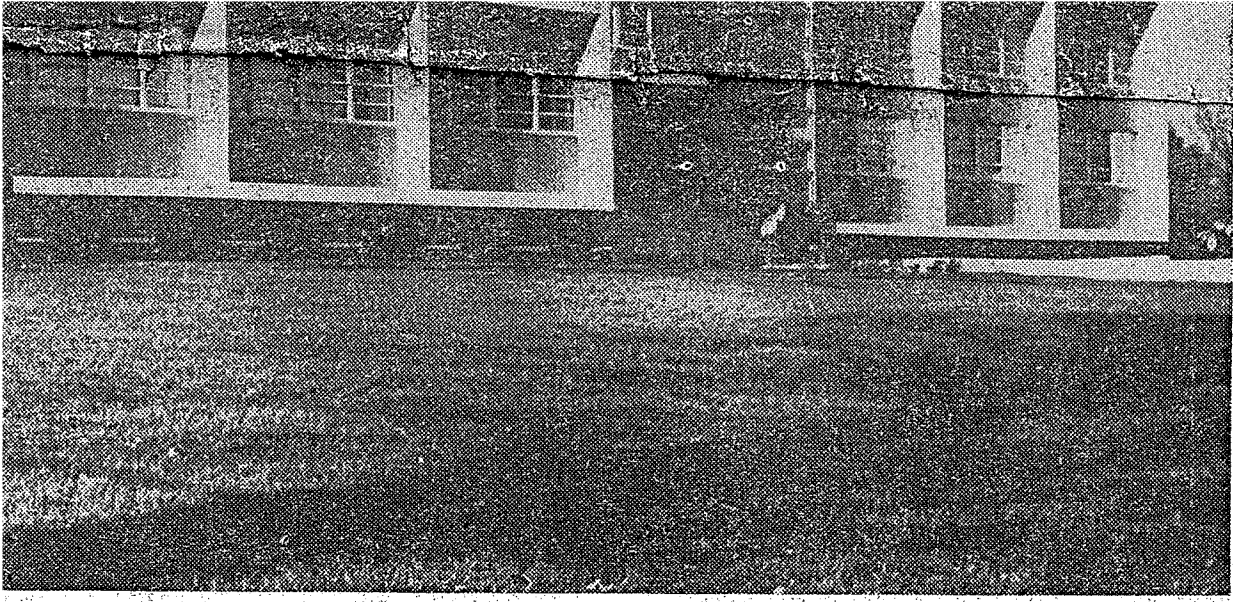
Governor James E. Folsom will deliver the dedication address. Uni-

ted States Senator Lister Hill has accepted an invitation as has Kenneth Roberts, Fourth District Congressman. Senator John Sparkman had to decline an invitation because of business in Washington.

The program will start at 10 o'clock Saturday morning with an hour-long inspection of the new

building. The guest in the circuit court o'clock for the dedication by Governor Folsom. Pat Roberson will be in charge of the program and ceremonies. Members of the Alabama Supreme Court, County Com-

Just About Everybody Will



W. A. COLEMAN
Host



W. D. "BOSS" WILKINS
Host



W. W. "BILL" HESS
Host

House In Pell City Saturday

members of Boards of Revenue from every county in Alabama have been mailed invitations. Judge Foreman will introduce a number of guests and Judge Frank Embry will introduce members of The Supreme Court and other members of the Alabama Bar who attend the

program. Arrangements have been made to set up a public address system inside the courtroom so those unable to get in the courtroom will be able to hear the speeches and introduction of the guests. A large number of business hou-

ses and individuals have expressed a desire to send flowers. Courthouse workers have asked that as many flowers as possible be sent Friday so they may be placed throughout the building before the program starts.

e In Pell City Saturday

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BY EDMUND BLAIR

ST. CLAIR

ALABAMA

Successor To The Pell City News

83rd YEAR

NUMBER 6

PELL

THE WHITE FOLKS ... GOT CHEATED

Following a trip to New York and with plenty of time to recant, recount, analyze and take stock, I am very positive the white folks got cheated.

Most of you who have studied your history books, even a little, if not carefully, have knowledge that old Papa Peter Stuyvesant traded the Indians \$24 and a few gallons of hooch for Manhattan Island.

Now in those days it might have seemed a very fair and square deal to Old Pete and his advisers. In fact we feel sure that in giving the small sum of 24 bucks plus a quantity of moonshine, Peter Stuyvesant felt as all traders like to feel on completion of a 'deal', that they had got the long end of the trade and had taken advantage of the ignorance of their Redskin brothers who were not supposed to know anything of real estate values.

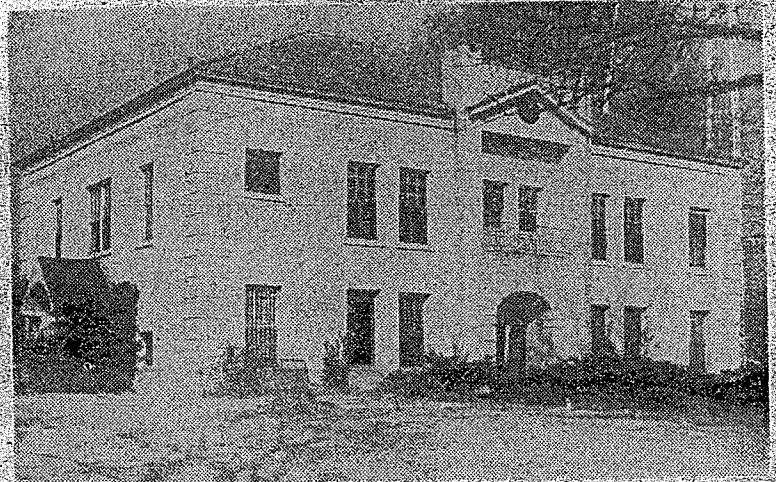
But not now. Old Pete would know better if he could see the mess his descendants have made of the island. You take the simple matter of drinking water, and lots of folks do drink water or even enough for a bath, if anyone should want a bath, by the simple expedient of finding a branch or creek. Now you must pay and pay for water piped into your house and pay for water in the pipes.

Eating! Why eating was a simple thing in those days. About the time Old Pete traded the Indians firewater and cash for Manhattan, buffaloes roamed like you have heard it said in song and story. All you needed to get a supply of meat was a rifle, shotgun or a bow and arrow. Now if a feller on that island is caught with either he is hauled up before a judge, charged with homicide or suicide and locked up in a hoose-gow to meditate on his sins. In those days there were no jails and a fellow had no fear of being locked up.

Now unless you have some relatives you can bum for a few meals



1ST FLOOR CORRIDOR



THAT OLD COURTHOUSE

Citizens Council Organized

NEWS—AEGIS

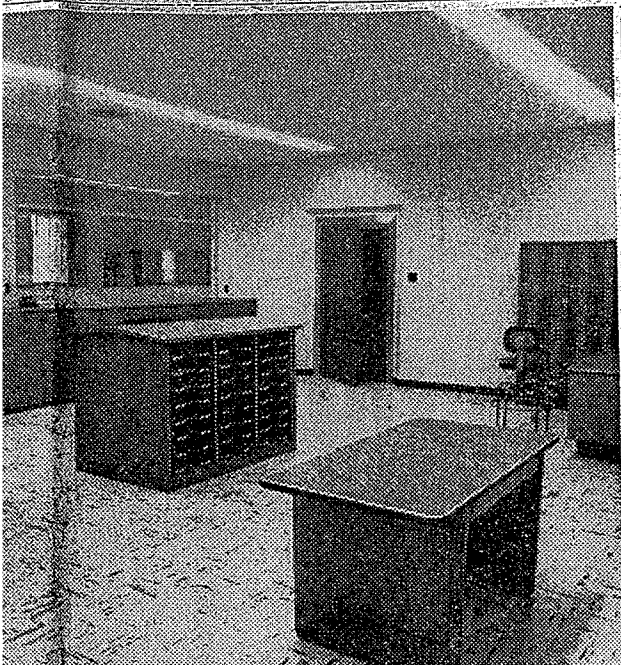
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CIRCUIT CLERK'S OFFICE

ST. CLAIR COUNTY COURTHOUSE COMMISSIONERS COURT

M. W. FORMAN	JUDGE OF PROBATE
F. N. PLACE	W. A. COLEMAN
J. B. HESS	W. D. WILKINS
W. E. GREEN	1951—1955
M. E. VEE (INDEPENDENT)	TREASURER & CLERK
MARTIN LIDE	ARCHITECT
R. P. HENDERSON & SON	CONTRACTOR

AD 1955

OFFICIALS AND BUILDERS

St. Clair's New Courthouse To Be Dedicated Saturday

Saturday is the day when St. Clair County's fine, modern courthouse in Pell City will be formally dedicated to public service.

Weather permitting a huge crowd is expected. Judge M. W. Forman, county commissioners and the people of St. Clair will be hosts on Dedication Day.

Built and equipped at a cost of \$600,000 the new public building has been inspected by architects and builders from various parts of Alabama and other states. All say it is the most modern and finest building of its kind in the entire South.

Governor James E. Folsom will head the list of celebrities expected for the dedication. Governor Folsom has accepted an invitation to deliver the dedication speech. Others who have accepted invitations are Senator Lister Hill, Congressman Kenneth Roberts, members of the Alabama Supreme Court, a large number of Alabama probate judges and lawyers from

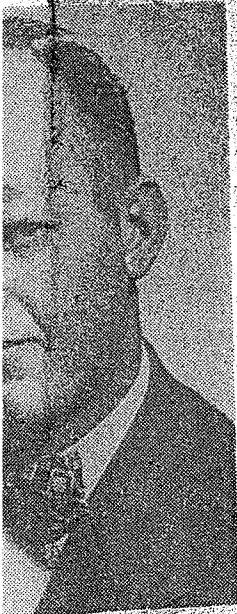
conditioned for both summer and winter weather, has indirect lighting and an inter-communication system to all principal offices.

The program will start at 10 o'clock Saturday morning. Guests will inspect the courthouse and assemble in the third floor courtroom for the formal program.

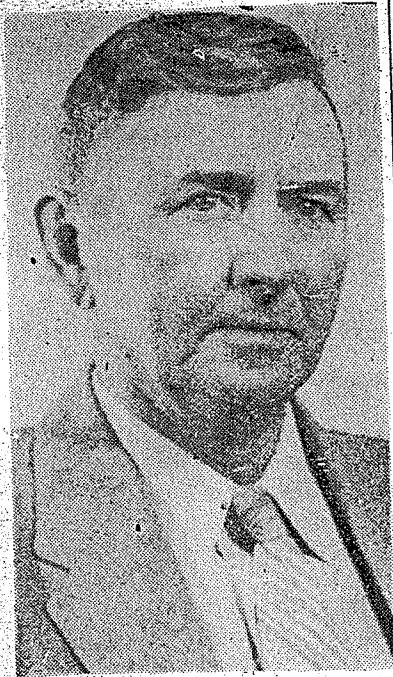
A public address system will be installed so those unable to get inside will be able to hear the program from the outside and other parts of the building.

The flag you will see atop the flagpole Saturday once flew over the National capital in Washington. It was procured to fly over the St. Clair County courthouse by Congressman Kenneth Roberts.

Martin Lide of Birmingham designed the building. R. P. Henderson and Son, Pell City contractors and builders, were general contractors.



MARTIN LIDE



R. P. HENDERSON

ARCHITECT, BUILDERS — Martin Lide, top left, young Birmingham architect, who designed the new courthouse. He specializes in public buildings, has been employed by the city of Pell City to design the proposed new City Hall. Top right, R. P. Henderson, and