



Picture 144. The Rexall Drugstore in Pell City was built by Dr. R.A. Martin in 1908, his first Drugstore in Pell City was in operation in 1903 until he built the present structure in 1908.

THE ROUND TABLE—These gentlemen wouldn't miss a day at the Round Table. Seated (l-r) Neilson Litty, Emmett Graham, Al Cleveland

Soda Fountains Still in Style

By TISA MOORE
News-Aegle Reporter

PELL CITY—In many towns the soda fountain drugstore is a thing of the past, but not in Pell City. The Pell City Rexall is going as strong as it did the day it opened in 1903.

Just ask any of "The Problem Solvers" or the men that occupy the famed "Round Table". They are also known as the "Hotline to City Hall."

Many of the occupants of the Round Table have been there many years and say a day without going to the Round Table is like a day without sunshine.

Carolyn and Bob Hall, owners of the Pell City Rexall, believe that these men and their other loyal customers are why the drugstore is going strong. It is the oldest drugstore in the state that remains in the same family and one of two working soda fountains in the county.

Carolyn Hall said, "It's just a gathering place. The men solve the world's problems, the world just doesn't know it yet."

Hall said, "Many drugstores took their fountains out because they didn't make any money, but that's not why you keep them open, you keep them because it's a drawing card."

At the Round Table, you will find an ex-police chief and sheriff, a retired schoolteacher and principal, a man who was on the first All-State football team, a retired telephone worker, and a retired Stockham Valve worker. And, if you're asked to join them it makes you feel lucky.

They want to know what your views on politics are, where you came from, what you think about the weather, and if you voted for Bill Clinton. Unless you want to get into a serious political debate, it is best to keep quiet.

The Pell City Rexall was built in 1903 by Dr. R.A. Martin, a physician and surgeon. In the late 1920s Dr. Martin moved his practice to

the upstairs part of the building when Gertrude Comer Hospital closed. This is believed to be Pell City's first clinic. He stayed there until 1933.

Dr. Martin built the building behind the drugstore, presently the Department of Human Resources, in 1933. There was also an adjacent portion of the building he later built, but the DHR tore it down when they remodeled the building.

The original drugstore was not the length it is now. It was renovated in 1954.

Before the renovation, there was a small, separate building at the rear of the existing building where John Harris made all the ice cream and popsicles for the drugstore.

Most of the ice cream treats had a stick in it for easy eating, and most were chocolate covered. If you had a treat that had a strawberry in the middle of it, you would get a free treat on your next visit.

During the renovation in 1954, Dr. R.A. Martin died. The Kincaids, owners of the Ruth-Ben Drugstore, became the proprietors of the Pell City Rexall. Mary Ruth Kincaid was Dr. Martin's daughter.

Mary Ruth Kincaid combined the two drugstores into what is presently standing. Mrs. Kincaid operated the drugstore until her death in 1974. Then Carolyn Kincaid Hall and her husband, Bob, inherited it from Carolyn's parents.

The Halls have owned the drugstore since 1974. It has a very distinguished history. Besides the Round Table, the store is also famous for being the first soda fountain in the county with a "three-legged" milkshake machine, it was the only store in the county for schoolchildren to buy their textbooks, and it has played host to many famous people, such as Govs. Wallace, James, and Folsom; country music star and Pell City native Jeannie Pruitt, who used to be an employee there; and TV star, John Schneider, just to name a few.

In the 1940s the Rexall had drive-up service. This was when

only men were allowed to work behind the counter.

Carolyn Hall said, "If they saw a pretty girl drive up, they would race each other out there to get her order."

The drugstore was also a Greyhound bus stop until the 1970s.

The Halls said they are very proud of their business. They feel that their success has been because, "We know the customer, they are not just a number, they are our friends."

The Halls also said they are looking for anyone who has worked behind the soda fountain so they can make a list.

The county is blessed to have not one, but two soda fountain drugstores. The other one is Ashville Rexall Drugstore.

The soda fountain was put in in 1941, it was bought from the Albertville Drugstore for \$500. The building was originally divided in two, with Alabama Power occupying one half and the drugstore in the other.

In the late 1950s the whole building was renovated and taken in to what presently stands.

It was one of only two restaurants to serve lunches in Ashville. In 1974 other restaurants began opening and demand died down, so they stopped serving lunch. Now, they only do ice cream and sodas.

Pharmacist J. T. Newman said, "We will keep the fountain going until the demand dies out." Newman has been there since 1941, when he came to Ashville with his wife.

Before he came to Ashville Rexall Drugs, he worked at the Pell City Rexall from 1935-1938.

In the Ashville drugstore, they have the "Square Table". It is much like the Round Table in Pell City. The Square Table is the link to city hall. The same people come every day and discuss the problems that face the world.

If the men of the "Round Table" and the "Square Table" are successful at combating these problems, there might be hope after all.

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Below, this picture of the Pell
Rexall was taken in about 1926
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1903. Here, he housed his drug
downstairs and his medical pra
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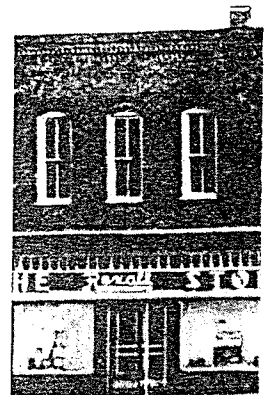


Photo by Tisa Moore

Emmett Graham, Al Cleveland, Charles Meehan, Bill Howell, Ruble Bowlin, Jim Barber, and Pat Humphreys.

ASHVILLE REXALL SODA FOUNTAIN—This soda fountain at the Ashville Rexall was bought for just \$500 in 1941. Since then it has served countless lunches, ice cream cones, and milk shakes. The fountain came from the Altberville drugstore. Pharmacist J. T. Bowman said it took them several days to get it down the mountain. Now, this picture of the Pell City soda fountain was taken in about 1926. Dr. A. Martin built this building in 1933. Here, he housed his drugstore upstairs and his medical practice downstairs. Martin moved his practice here after the Gertrude Comer Hospital closed. Dr. Martin's family still owns the drugstore today, making it the oldest drugstore still in the same family.



orange for Christmas! He also gave all of his grandchildren a nickname. As for me (Papoose) J.B. Martin, Sr. will always have a special place in my heart. *Submitted by: Teresa Allman Sanders.*
Sources: Amanda Newton Kleiser and James Benjamin Martin, Sr.

Robert Alfonzo Martin

Robert Alfonzo Martin was born at Plantersville, Dallas County, Alabama 22 July 1877. His parents were John H. Martin and Celia Walker Martin, John was a farmer born Dallas County and Celia was from South Carolina. John H. Martin was the son of Robert M. Martin of North Carolina. The paternal ancestors were Scotch-Irish, both great grandfathers were in the War of the Revolution, the paternal grandfather Martin being a Colonel and the maternal Grandfather Walker being a General. The grandfather, Robert and father, John, were both in the Confederate Army.

Dr. Robert Alfonzo (R.A.) Martin was educated in the public schools of Dallas County. He attended Auburn University for a term of two years and graduated from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee in 1901 with a degree of Doctor of Medicine.

Dr. R.A. Martin came to Pell City on January 8, 1903 to begin his lifelong practice of medicine. Dr. Martin began his practice in Pell City. There were no roads in those days and he had to travel by horse and buggy, sometimes even a saddle horse had to be used to visit patients.

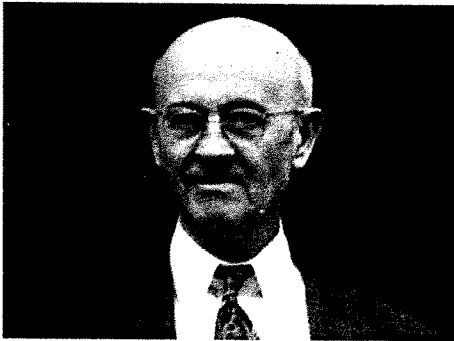
Dr. R.A. Martin was energetic and possessed a dream of someday being able to afford the community with better hospital facilities than existed in any comparable size community in Alabama.

In 1920, Dr. R.A. Martin headed a staff and opened for Avondale Mills the first hospital in Pell City, the Gertrude Comer Hospital. The new facility allowed Dr. Martin to give care to his patients in a properly equipped center. Before the opening of the hospital, Dr. Martin had to perform operations in his office or in the homes of his patients. Dr. Martin continued his medical practice from the Gertrude Comer Hospital until it closed in January of 1931. Dr. Martin with a determined spirit moved his staff into the upstairs area of the Pell City Drug Store which he owned. There, Dr. Martin set up a six bed facility and continued to give medical attention to those in need.

Dr. Martin purchased the G.W. Hardwick House behind the Pell City Drug Store and began construction on a new hospital facility. He dreamed of even better hospital facilities for his adopted home of Pell City. The Pell City Infirmary, later called the Martin Hospital, was opened by Dr. R.A. Martin in 1933. A unique aspect of the hospital was the fact that it was built without financial assistance from the medical field, health departments or government. Probably the only such hospital in Alabama and possibly the only one in the South financed by one man.

In 1941, a new wing was added to the Infirmary or Martin Hospital to give the area a 42 bed facility. From time to time he improved his hospital by adding new equipment and providing for the community, one of the best hospital units of its size in the State. During his early years of practice in summer months he attended the best medical and surgical centers of the nation. He received post graduate certificates from the following: New York Polyclinic Medical School and Hospital, Roosevelt Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Society of Lying-In-Hospital, John Hopkins, Mayo Clinic, and post graduate work in Chicago and Cleveland. He kept well astride of the momentous advances and gains made in the medical and scientific world during the first 50 years of this century. His search for knowledge in his chosen field was unceasing.

Aside from his medical practice, Dr. Martin was very much interested in the future of his beloved Pell City. He took a leading and active part in all civic enterprises, was instrumental in the industrial development of this community and gave freely of his time and money in every project designed for the up building and betterment of his home town. Among his fraternal and professional affiliations were: Ben M. Jacobs Masonic Lodge, Shriner Zamora



Dr. R.A. Martin

Temple, Woodmen of the World, American Medical Association, World Medical Association, St. Clair Medical Society and Civitans. He was a member of the First Christian Church.

In 1953, the Pell City Chamber of Commerce sponsored Dr. Martin Day to honor him for fifty years of service to the medical field and the community. A number of distinguished physicians and surgeons from around the State of Alabama attended the ceremony along with hundreds of friends and patients from the area. As a highlight of the day, Dr. Martin was presented with a silver trophy with the inscription, "In honor of Dr. R.A. Martin, a distinguished and progressive citizen, an able physician and surgeon, a benefactor of the unfortunate and underprivileged, commemorating fifty years of service."

Dr. Martin was known for never turning a sufferer away and never refusing to go to see anyone he believed needed his service. He operated in homes when the only light was from a flickering oil lamp and was present at the birth of many babies where the only sterilization came from water heated on a crude stove or over logs of a hot fire. For many years he was the family doctor to thousands of families. Utterly tireless, he was "on call" any hour, day or night. Even in his advanced years when his feet and legs began to give him trouble he went to the sick. During the fifty years in which Dr. Martin gave medical attention to the people of Pell City and surrounding areas he is credited with delivering over 10,000 babies. Hospital records showed that from 1940 until 1953, Dr. Martin treated almost 25,000 medical cases. In the other years here this number could easily reach 100,000 cases he treated in his more than 51 years of practice.

Dr. R.A. Martin a first citizen, successful and efficient physician, and beloved by all people died of coronary thrombosis at Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, Louisiana on 10 July 1954. He would have been 75 years old had lived until July 22. Business was at a standstill Monday afternoon during the hour of the funeral. Close to 1500 people came to pay a last tribute to him as his body lay in state at the funeral home. Hundreds came to the Methodist Church for the funeral. They followed him to his grave in a spontaneous and impulsive outbursts of love and affection for this tall, handsome man who had served them not only as doctor but as a friend and adviser for man than half a century. His survivors were: his devoted wife Mrs. Mary Martin, one son John H. Martin, and one daughter Mrs. Mary Ruth Kincaid, Also by three grandchildren John H. Martin, Jr., Carolyn Kincaid, and Nancy Kincaid, two great grandchildren Mary Martin and John H. Martin, and two brothers Dr. T.M. Martin and Dr. Claude Martin and one sister Mrs. Melvin Carroll. *Submitted by: Nancy Kincaid Jordan 2422 11th Ave North, Pell City, AL.*

Sources: Notable Men of Alabama, St. Clair News Aegis and Pell City Journal.

John W. Mashburn Family

John W. Mashburn and Clifford E. Mashburn moved from Adairsville, Georgia to St. Clair County, Alabama on December 28, 1919. They bought the Mashburn farm in Beaver Valley and lived there until 1934 when John died and Clifford bought his father's part of the farm.

John, his wife Mary and children Mae, Clay and Clifford, along with Clifford's wife and their seven week old baby Rachel made the trip to Alabama in a Model T. Ford. The farm equipment, hay, corn and oats were moved on three wagons. This was a three day trip. The furniture was shipped by train to Odenville, Alabama.

Clifford Earnest Mashburn was born November 29, 1900, and died November 11, 1982. His wife, Stella Irene Thomas was born April 18, 1901, and died April 4, 1971. They were the parents of Rachel Irene, born November 8, 1919; Geneva Beatrice, born July 1922; Clifford Leonard, born October 30, 1924; Mary Alice born May 28, 1929; Billy Harold born July 21, 1932; and Kenneth Wayne, born October 22, 1938.

Rachel Irene Mashburn married James Hugh Thompson, son of Hugh and Lela Thompson, on December 25, 1937. Children of James Hugh and Rachel are Julia Ann, Marvin Stanley, James Stevie, Sandra Marie and Carey Michael Dewitt.

Julia Ann married William J. Harwell, Children are Douglas Keith, Sharon Ann Harwell Terry and Tracy Leigh Harwell Langner.

Marvin Stanley married Sharon Vest. Their children are Stanley Kirk, John Wayne, Phillip Hugh and Ashley Kay. Marvin Stanley's second marriage was to Doris Nolin.

James Stevie married Linda Rose Trousdale. Their children are James Robert and Christina Rose Michelle. Stevie's second marriage was to Debbie Giles. They have a son Benjamin.