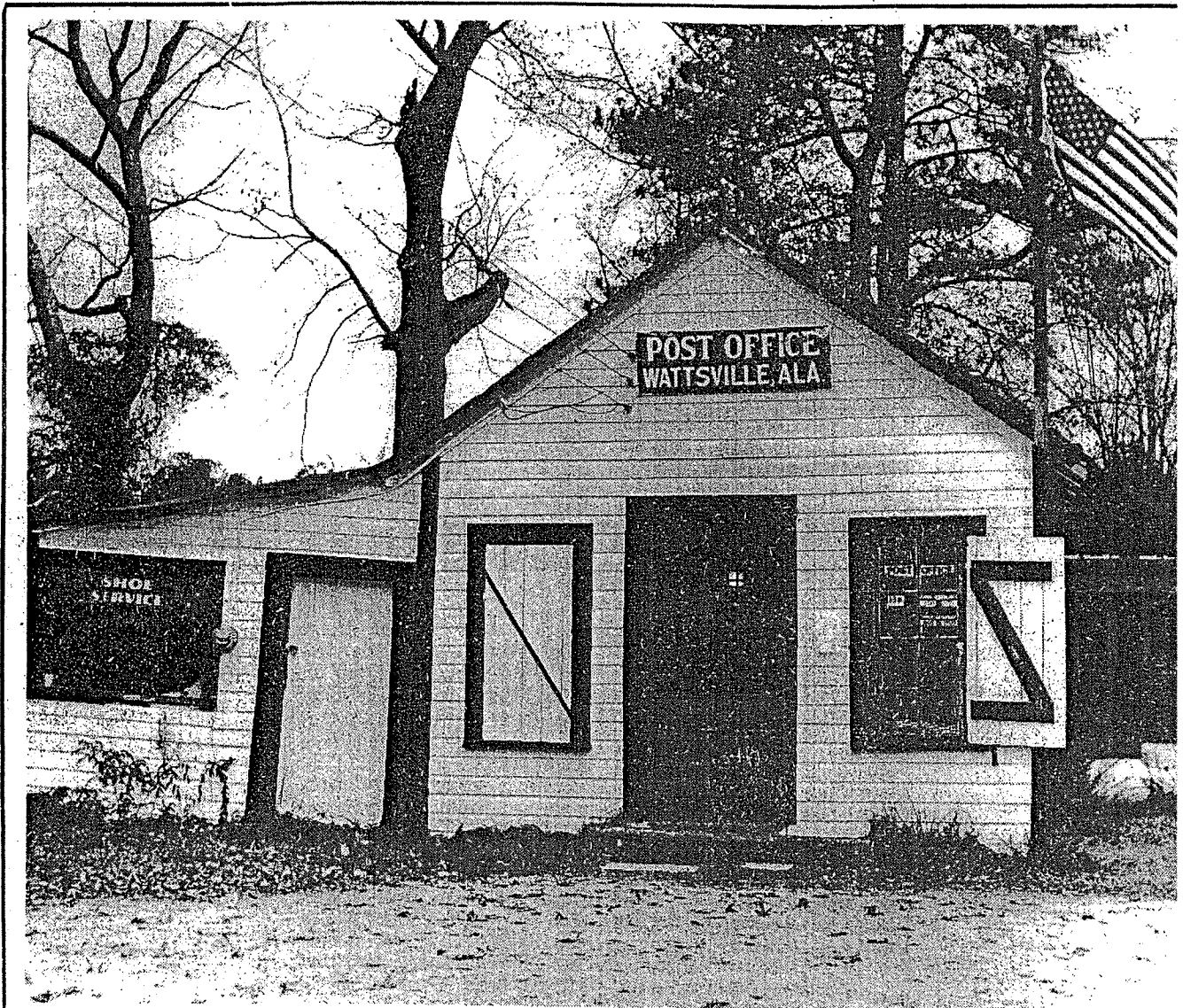


ST. CLAIR

A Newspaper Dedicated

VOLUME FOUR — NUMBER THIRTY-THREE

PELL CITY, ALABAMA



OLD COAL CITY POST OFFICE STILL IN BUSINESS TODAY
...But "Town Of Many Names" Called Wattsville

Coal City ... Town

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- THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1974

ONE SECTION — SI.

Coal City... Town

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surely had been many interlocking "romances" here in by gone days for it appeared that a goodly number of the inhabitants were either kissin' kin or had a family "connection." One of the boys asked,

"Why is this place called Coal City?"

To which the store-keeper replied,

"Son, back in the early 1900's this place sure enough looked like a Coal City."

Ant then to my delight and to the fascination of two curious little boys, the history of Coal City unfolded. Facts which I jotted down as he talked were later verified from records at the court house at Ashville. Mona Black Scott also added interesting information which she had learned from her parents. These facts she assembled and worked into a five-scene tableau which was presented by the students of Coal City School on Thursday night, February 8, 1973. Mona dedicated this historical drama to her parents, Joseph E. and Orene Thornburg Black. Joseph Black was born and reared in Coal City. Orene Thornburg's home was Ragland until she married Mr. Black.

The store-keepers story went back to the 1820's. One John Bolton brought his family here where he entered four "Forties" and built a log house. Mr. Bolton found his wooded rolling acres by following a Creek Indian trail which began in Ashville (Cataula) and ended at Cropwell on the Coosa River. Another Indian path crossed this trail at Bolton's cabin, giving the place the name: Bolton's Cross Roads.

This second trail went from Bolton's southeast six miles to the river and westward over the mountain to the Friendship community. The later portion of the old road has long been abandoned but the one going to the river is a well-traveled black-top. The Indians were natural engineers and many of our present-day roads follow rather closely the paths they made in early days.

Commissioner's Court Records at the court house at Ashville show that the road from Ashville to Bolton's Cross-Roads was widened and improved and authorized as a public thoroughfare in 1839.

The same year the Federal Government established a post office for the community with Francis Barnes Walker as the postmaster. Prior to this a member of the neighborhood walked over the mountain to Ashville to get the mail.

There are many legends about St. Clair County place names. After the Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1814, the Indians were ordered across to the east side of the Coosa. The belligerent ones were forcefully removed but many Creeks who fought with Jackson were allowed to remain and they became friendly helpful neighbors to the settlers.

One legend relates that a number of young men of both races were hunting on John Bolton's land when they spotted a big deer drinking at the creek. An Indian boy raised his bow and let an arrow fly, bringing the deer down. The animal fell into the creek. As the boys ran to retrieve the kill, the young brave shouted, "Thle Teka," as he pointed to the arrow which had broken when it entered the deer. Thus the white boys learned that "thle teka" was Creek language for "broken arrow." Thereafter the stream was known as "Broken Arrow Creek." When the post office was established in the home of Mr. Walker whose cabin was near the creek, it became Broken Arrow Post Office.

More people moved into the area surrounding John Bolton's acres. Soon there were, in addition to homes, schools and churches. The oldest church in the community was founded in 1829 or 30 by David Harkey and is today the active Harkey's Chapel Methodist Church. Located on Broken Arrow Creek, five or six miles above its junction

College and one-time president of the Alabama Association of Secondary Principals, was a student at Coal City High.

The school also produced some outstanding athletes. Eddie Martin began his baseball playing career here. He went on to the big leagues and played for the New York Yanks. Darrell Pratt played ball for the school, helped to organize Coal City Mining Ball Club, and later played with the major leagues. After finishing school at Coal City, Clyde Warren made All American with Auburn's 1925 football team.

"But why was the name of this town changed from Broken Arrow to Coal City?"

Years before the Civil War an Englishman by the name of William Gould entered land in the Broken Arrow community. Having come from the coal mining area of Newcastle in England, he was aware that there were veins of coal on his land. He managed to mine a small amount which he hauled by ox wagon six miles to the river and from there it was floated to Selma or Wetumpka by flat boat. Thus he was busily occupied throughout the war.

Soon after the war, George Washington Daugdrill purchased land at Broken Arrow and moved his family there from Demopolis, Alabama. Mr. Daugdrill, a graduate of old Howard College in Marion, served in the Confederate Congress until near the end of the war when he entered military service and fought under J.E.B. Stewart. With the war went the Daugdrill fortune. The small amount of money he had and all that he could borrow he put into the coal mining business at Broken Arrow. The family brought their French furniture to their newly built log home and Mrs. Daugdrill, who was a musician of note, entertained her neighbors by playing for them on her rosewood piano. One of the Daugdrill daughters was married to Alonzo Embry of Talladega; another to John W. Moore of Pell City.

In 1883, the Daugdrills sold their mining interests to John Postell. Mr. Postell was a promoter for sure. He soon had a railroad — the East and West — a narrow affair called the "Hoodlum" — running from Cedartown, Georgia, to Broken Arrow. It was he who changed the name of the town to Coal City as he thought that a more appropriate name for an up and coming mining town. Later, the East and West was sold to the Seaboard Airline, it was converted to a standard gauge, and extended to Pell City.

With the advent of the railroad Coal City became a rip-roaring boom town. In the early 1900's it had the largest population of any town in the county — 1200. There were four coal seams going full blast. They were called the Coal City, the Dirty Dozen, the Broken Arrow, and the Marion. From six to seven hundred miners were kept busy — time and over time.

The town, comprising a mile radius from the old Broken Arrow Bridge, was incorporated in 1910. About one-half mile from Kiker's Camp on the mountain two iron ore mines were opened. This brought more people to the already overcrowded community. Thomas Berry, a brother to Miss Martha Berry who founded the famous Berry School at Rome, Georgia, was superintendent of the iron mines. Sixteen year old Cliff Barber was one of the more than one hundred miners there. The iron mines were in operation for about eight years.

Now the community had a big warehouse, barber shops, a commissary, a livery stable, a number of stores, and a pool hall. Soon a new jail had to be built and two policemen, Joseph Egbert Black and Lee Sheffield, worked around the clock to keep law and order. Archie Savage and Bob Bonds were busy Justices of the Peace and Jake Thomas was the constable.

Early members were Charles D. Alverson, R.M. Alverson and his wife Elzie, Charles Alverson and his wife Characy and Louvenia Alverson. Perhaps the first minister to visit here was Brother Patton, a Methodist Circuit Rider. The cemetery and adjoining this church is crowded and legend says that the first grave there was that of a gypsy child. The gypsies were camped nearby when the child died and Chesley Alverson gave permission for its burial.

Around 1860 Refuge Baptist Church was established. The Barber family gave the land for this church. During the early days it served as a school as well as a meeting house.

Broken Arrow Baptist Church was instituted in 1890 by Madison Hendrix. Other churches within the boundary of the community are: Pope's Chapel Congregational Methodist, established 1904 by John Pope, Shiloh Baptist Church (negro) founded 1913 by the Reverend Tom Oden, Mount Moriah Baptist (1925), Wattsville Church of God (1945) Wattsville Freewill Baptsit (1947), and the newest the Guiding Light Baptist Church.

All this talk about churches let to a question from one of the boys. "Wher did the kids go to school?" And we learned that, during the long life of this community, there have been seven schools. First, in the old Refuge Baptist building, then the Old Town School just below Broken Arrow Church, third the Red Men's School in the Red Men Hall Across from Mutt Oliver's homesite, Robinson School in the Pope's Chapel area came next, Rowe School near Mt. Moriah was fifth, and the Coal City School on the hill which burned in 1951 was the one that brought them all together. Today the Coal City School is on Highway 231.

The Coal City School built in 1919, taught all twelve grades. M.A. Vickers was the first principal. Joe Black and Inell Savage were the last two to graduate in 1929. After that year it became a feeder school for Pell City High. Coal City High School sent out some young people who have held responsible positions in Alabama. Herbert F. Singleton, recently retired as president of Blue-Cross — Blue Sheild Insurance Company of Alabama, was a graduate. James A. Baswell, Superintendent of Education for St. Clair County 1934-1938, received his early training here. Dr. Ray Black, Professor at Birmingham-Southern

Mrs. Louia Alverson's commodious home had turned into a boarding house for the miners.

One of the two Carroll Alversons ("long" Carroll) was proprietor off he livery stable which rented buggies and two-horse rigs, called "hacks." This was an early version of today's You-Drive-It. "Long Carroll was an enterprising young man who brought the first chain driven auto buggies to this country. The two which he kept for hire in Coal City were the pride of the town.

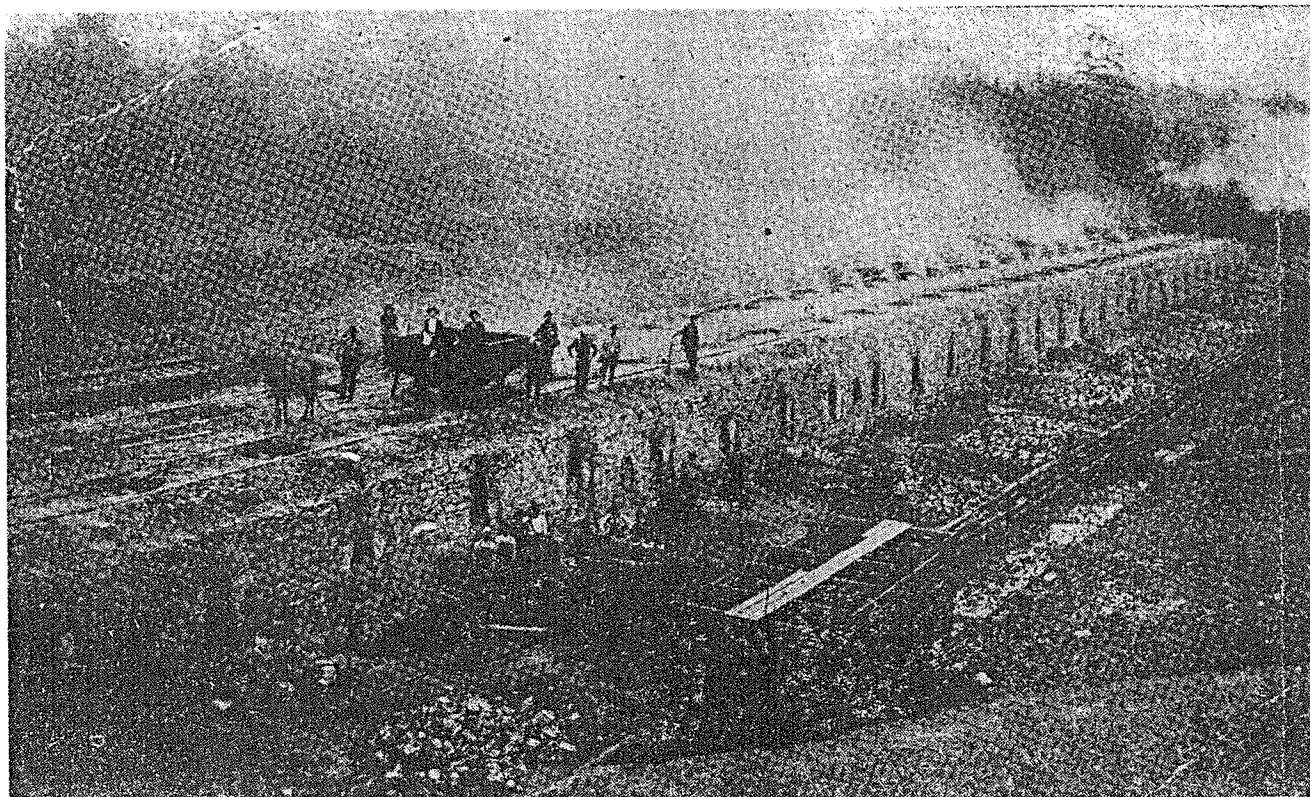
Somewhere near the Edward Layton homesite and the Siloh Baptist Church were located the famous coke ovens. They were in constant operation, belching forth evil smelling, lung choking black smoke.

The social life of those days consisted of concerts at the school, church socials, dinners at the hotel, and joy rides through the scenic hills and to the river. The town had three fraternal organizations: Order of the Red Men, Odd Fellows, and Woodmen of the World. Of the three of the Order of Red Men was the most active. They built Red Men Hall, where all three organizations held their meetings. There was a school on first floor of the Hall and community socials were often held there. This Order was very active in the State of Alabama and was the oldest patriotic and beneficial fraternity of purely American origin. It traced its lineage to the "Sons of Liberty" of 1763 whose members, disguised as Indians, participated in the famous "Tea Party" in Boston Harbor. The Broken Arrow chapter of Coal City was active from 1889 to 1921.

In 1920, Watt Brown, a pioneer in the coal industry and a well-known St. Clair County promoter, came to Coal City. He operated a coal mine located on Pope's Chapel Road. Mr. Brown was a member of the State Legislature in 1903. He served as Senator from St. Clair and Etowah Counties in 1911 and again in 1919. The town's name was legally changed to Wattsville to honor Mr. Brown.

As we left for home one of the boys asked, "Are you sure that you have taken the right road? I wouldn't want to get lost in Bolton's Cross Roads — Broken Arrow — Coal City — Wattsville." And the other one remarked, "I'm sure glad it didn't turn into a ghost town. I like it just like if is."

Without realizing it they had enjoyed a wonderful history lesson.



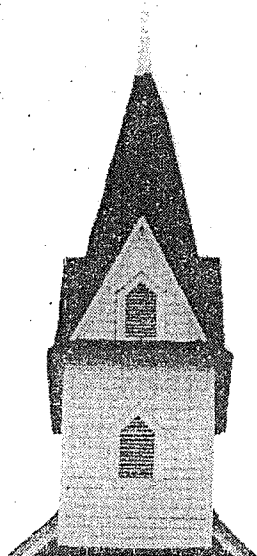
The Old Coke Ovens In Coal City

inating History-

Of Many Names

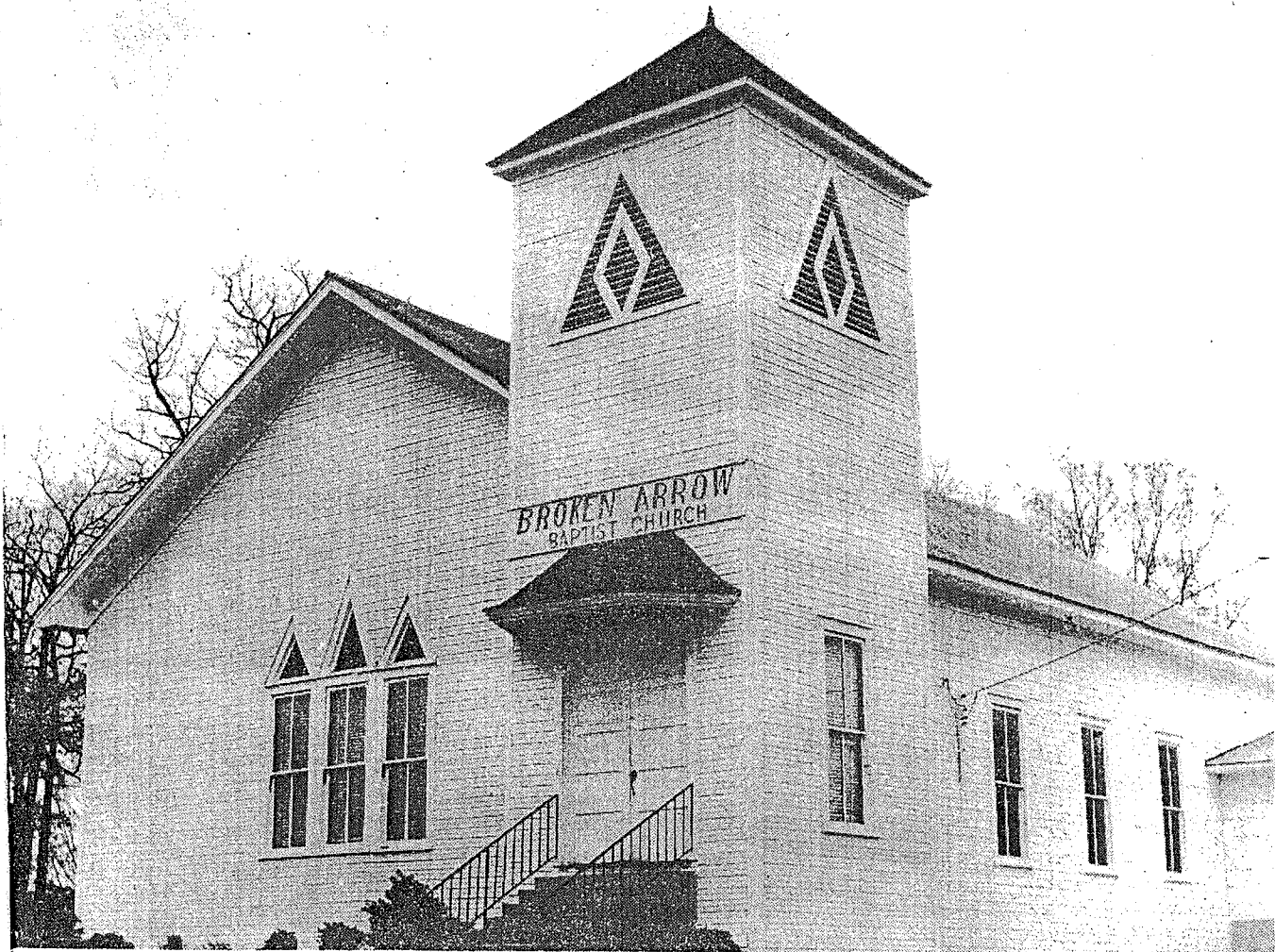


The Yarbrough House





Harkey's Chapel Church



Broken Arrow Baptist

The History of Wattsville, Alabama

I. Area:

1. St. Clair County *----- 644 Square miles
2. Wattsville, Alabama ----- 8 Square miles

Wattsville, Alabama, took its name from Watt T. Brown, a pioneer in the coal industry well known in local, state and national circles. Near the center of St. Clair County, in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains, the little town was formerly called Coal City because of the rich deposits of Bituminous coal in the area.

Mining activities flourished early in the 20th Century and have continued in a somewhat lesser degree to the present time. The potential yield of the area is by no means exhausted. Coal supplies, together with other mineral deposits, abundant forestation and water supply, offer inducement to industries seeking plant sites with both natural resources and manpower.

II. Geographical Location:

Wattsville is located in the Eastern part of St. Clair County, accessible to Ashville, 13 miles Northward, by paved Highway Number 25, and to Pell City, 6 miles Southward, also by Highway 25. This highway connects with Highway Number 78 at Pell City, which runs east and west between Birmingham and Atlanta, Georgia.

Wattsville is also served by the Seaboard Air Line Railway, Birmingham-Atlanta Division. Both the towns of Ashville and Pell City are County seats of St. Clair County.

III. Location and Description of Minerals;

Barytes; Limited deposits of this mineral can be found near Greensport on the Coosa River in St. Clair County.

Brown Ore; Has been mined for years in the area south of Wattsville, in small quantities, and deposits worthy of further prospecting are found in the Wattsville-Pell City area.

Clays: Clays from 5½ to 15 feet in thickness are found under the Fairview basin of the Wattsville area. Also there are beds of clay 9 and 11 feet in thickness, underlying the upper and lower Chapman coal seams in the same area. To date, these vast clay reserves have not been tested. However, it is believed that some of these clays will be found to be very valuable.

Coal: The estimated undeveloped reserves of recoverable coal in the Fairview Coal Basin at Wattsville are 11, 600,000 tons. In addition there are vast reserves in the Coal City, Broken Arrow and Marion beds.

Limestone: About one-half mile from Greensport, at Lock II, there begins an area which runs through Ragland, Wattsville, Pell City, AND southward to Calera in Shelby County. It contains a vast amount of high grade limestone, known as the Chickamauga Limestone Outcrops.

Shales: Vast reserves of plastic clays or shales, fire clays and flint clays of the type found in Pennsylvania are found in and near the Bibby and Brown seams of coal, in the Wattsville area. Samples of the fire clays in this area can be found in the railroad cut, one-fourth of a mile southwest of Pope's Chapel Church on the Seaboard Air Line Railway.

Since August, 1950, tests have been made of the plastic clays and fire clays in this immediate area. Of 14 samples sent to the testing laboratory of Clemson College, South Carolina, 9 were beautiful in color and texture, and met all standard test, being burned at 2250 degrees and higher. Further test of commercial samples, burned at Ragland Brick Plant, Ragland, Alabama, were highly satisfactory.

IV. Industries;

Timber; At one time there was plenty of timber in Coal City, but it was consumed too rapidly, by the mining, heading mill, and saw milling industries. A large portion of the timber has been cut and burned for charcoal.

Water: The Coosa River, one of the South's largest streams, flows within 3 miles of Wattsville. It affords an unlimited supply of water for processing purposes and, because of its volume, any reasonable amount of plant waste can be deposited in it without approaching the point of pollution.

In Addition to the above, there are several smaller streams, two of which are Broken Arrow and No Business Creeks. These streams carry large volumes of water and if dammed would provide good water reserves. Both of these streams flow through the Wattsville area.

Soil: Thirty-two different soils are found in this area.

Housing: The area in and around Wattsville is thickly settled. Within a radius of 35 miles, paved highways with good chert feeder roads, lead to Wattsville. A housing project is planned should the situation warrant it. Because of accessible highways, lack of houses will not be a problem.

Railroad: The Seaboard Air Line Railway enters St. Clair County on the west from Birmingham, in or about Alton traversing the Coosa Coal Fields through Margaret, Acmar, Odenville, Wattsville and Ragland.

Climate: Mild pleasant weather, free from extremes of heat or cold, is to be found in this area. It is possible to work in the open the year around, and no time will be lost on account of adverse weather conditions.

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Soil Map- St. Clair County, Alabama.

Forest Ranger, Bob Young,
Pell City, Alabama

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Introduction to the History of Coal City, was first-hand information from citizens of Coal City.

- (1) Mr. Sam Crump
- (2) Mr. Wm. Vaughn
- (3) Mrs. Mattie Ogletree
- (4) Mr. Ted Hammonet