

ST. CLAIR COUNTY

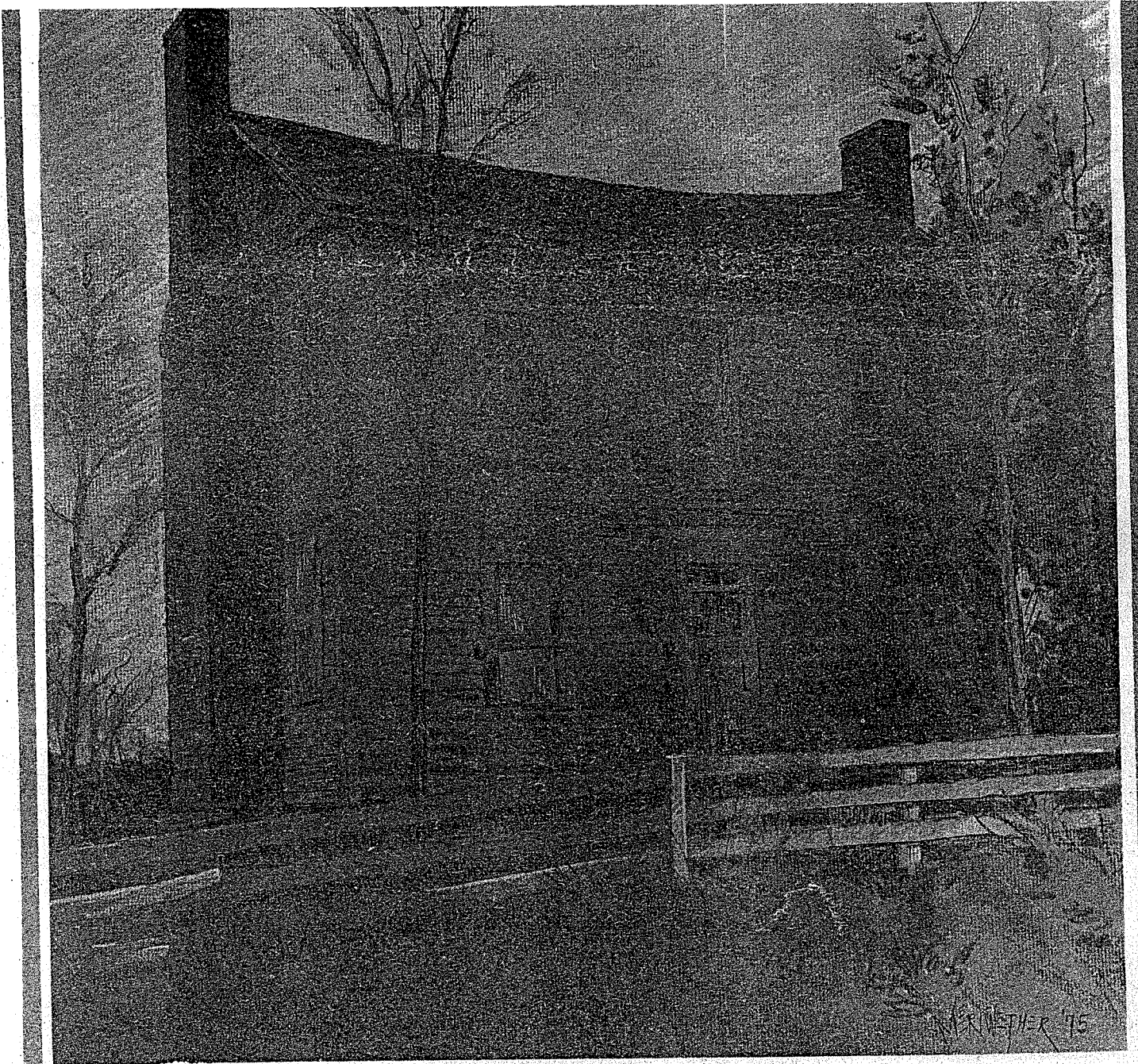
 ST. CLAIR OBSERVER

SECTION B

Thursday, April 17, 1975

HISTORICAL  
FOUR

A Guide to the Historical  
Sites of St. Clair County



OLD STAGECOACH INN — NEAR ASHVILLE

Drawing By J.D. Meriwether

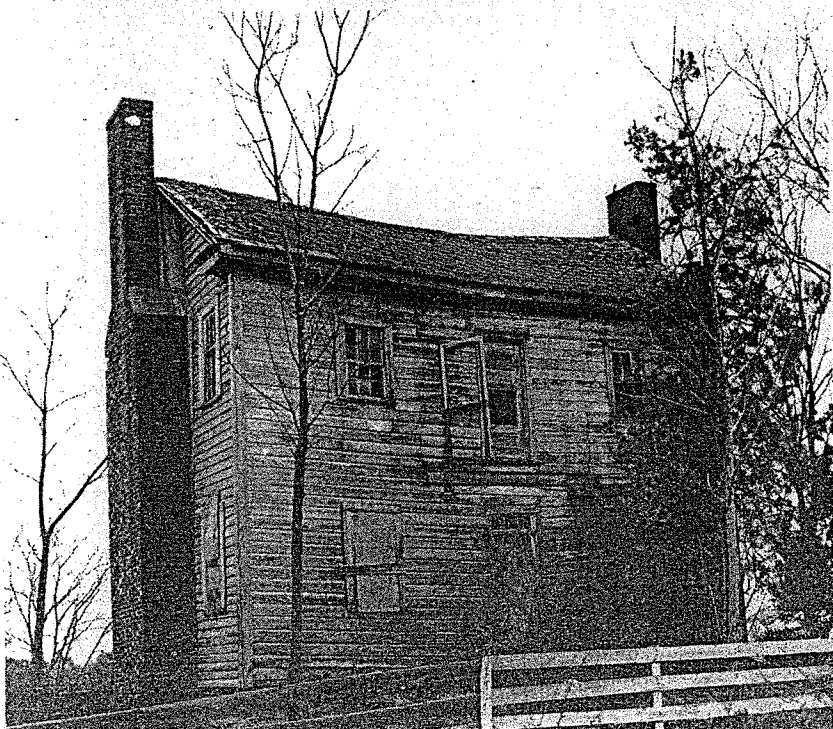
MERIWETHER '75

APRIL 17, 1975

ST. CLAIR HISTORICAL TOUR

Building Still Stands -

# Road To Stagecoach Inn Once Was Indian Trail



BY MATTIE LOU CROW

Just as there is romance in old houses, there's bound to be romance in old roads. When white men first came to make their homes in what is now St. Clair County, they traveled by rivers or over Indian trails.

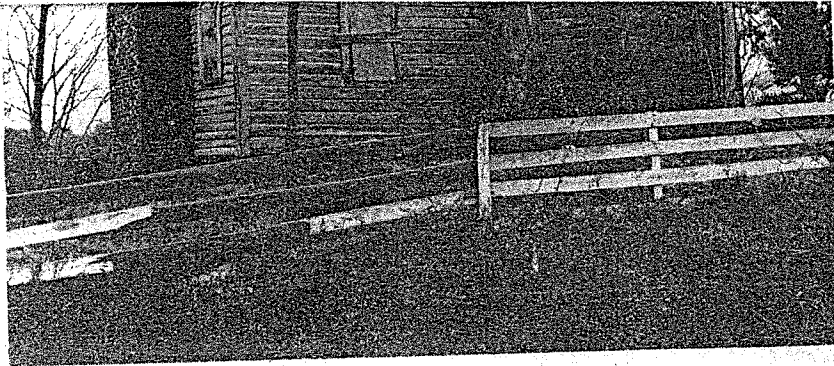
The Creek Indians had developed a network of paths which connected their many small settlements. These Indian trails usually followed the watershed between two streams and always pursued a course that encountered the fewest physical obstructions. The Red Man had a native engineering ability.

These numerous trails were widened into roads by the white men and the roads played a very important part in the settlement of the county. The road known as old number 11 leading out of Ashville into Etowah County follows almost precisely such an Indian trail. Over this road, first marked by the hoofs of wild animals and soft moccasined feet, there traveled men on horseback, moth-eaten mules between the mended shafts of rattletrap wagons, mud-spattered

An old Tract Book in the courthouse at Ashville shows that Jacob Green entered land in T13 and T14 in 1820. A two-story house was built on this property by Richard Crow for Jacob Green and his wife, Fanny Acre Green. Very near the house is a fine spring of freestone water which was an important reason for selecting house site. Another reason, of course, was the proximity of the road.

Mr. Green sent two ox-wagons to Georgia for brick used in the foundation and the two chimneys. Some years after the house was built he secured from Huntsville the weather boarding which today covers the old structure.

In 1832 Jacob Green sold this house and moved down the valley to the Coosa River where he built a beautiful house and where he operated Green's Ferry. This was the beginning of Greensport which has a history of exciting incidents about early steamboats and the infamous "steamboat men," who did much toward opening new homes for the pioneers. This part of the county is now under water as a result of Henry



Old Stagecoach Inn (1852)



Jacob Green House At Greensport (1832)  
 ... Site Now Under Lake  
 H. Neely Henry

Etowah County follows almost precisely such an Indian trail. Over this road, first marked by the hoofs of wild animals and soft moccasined feet, there traveled men on horseback, moth-eaten mules between the mended shafts of rattletrap wagons, mud-spattered buggies, ox-carts, and—prince of them all—the mighty stagecoach drawn by fur sleek spanking horses.

In the early days of statehood many postal roads were established by acts of Congress. Some of these had their starting point or destination: "St. Clair Courthouse at Ashville." Such an act, passed May 13, 1820, established a road from Ashville to Huntsville, by way of Bennett's store."

Ashville had a post office and so did Bennettville (Vincent Bennett's store). The only stop between Bennettville and Ashville was Jacob Green's place. Here the stage stopped to allow the passengers to refresh themselves and often to exchange horses for the drive on into Ashville, twelve miles to the south.

where he operated Green's Ferry. This was the beginning of Greensport which has a history of exciting incidents about early steamboats and the infamous "steamboat men," who did much toward opening new homes for the pioneers. This part of the county is now under water as a result of Henry Neely Dam.

But the first Jacob Green home still stands, its veranda sagging, its doors and windows boarded up, but the main part of the house still sturdy and staunch. The bricks of the two chimneys have an exciting quality, a soft purplish tone. It is said, that, when the wagons brought them in from Georgia, master builder Richard Crow had them soaked under water for days and then allowed them weeks to dry. This gave them lasting wear and durability.

What a heritage in old houses St. Clair County has! And how wonderful it would be to see them restored to usefulness!

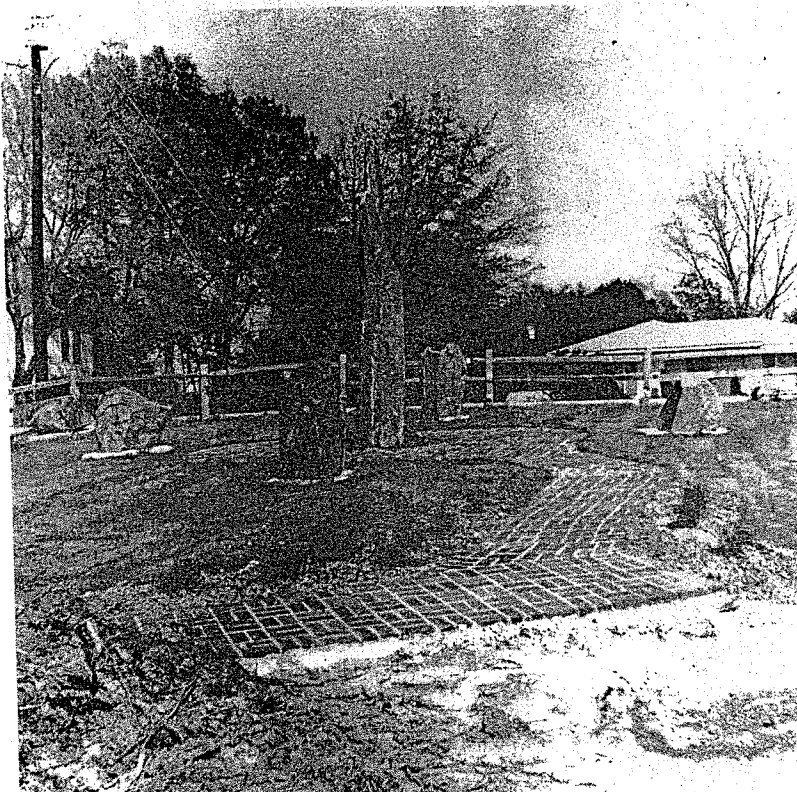
Stonewall Brown, caretaker at the Jacob Green House, will be narrator during the St. Clair Historical Society tour on Saturday, April 19.

Much of the Materials  
 For This Section And  
 Some Of The Pictures  
 Courtesy Of Mrs.  
 Mattie Lor Teague  
 Crow's Book -  
 "History of St. Clair County"

(OTHER PHOTOS BY AUGUST LEHE)

To Civil War Soldiers -

## Cropwell Marker Pays Tribute



BY AUGUST LEHE

Soon after Alabama formally seceded from the Union on January 7, 1861, the call for volunteers went out across St. Clair County. Those men who chose, many with broken hearts, to take the field against almost certain Unionist aggression came from every corner of the county as the trumpets sounded the opening chapters of the American Civil War.

When completed, the Cropwell Memorial Marker will immortalize an important page in the history of St. Clair County during the Civil War period. The monument, which is nearing completion, will eventually list the names of all members of Company F of the 10th Alabama Infantry Regiment and all ancestors of St. Clair County Citizens who fought in the War Between the States, according to Mary Mays of Pell City.

The committee, which has been charged with the task of making the monument a reality is composed of W.D. Jackson,

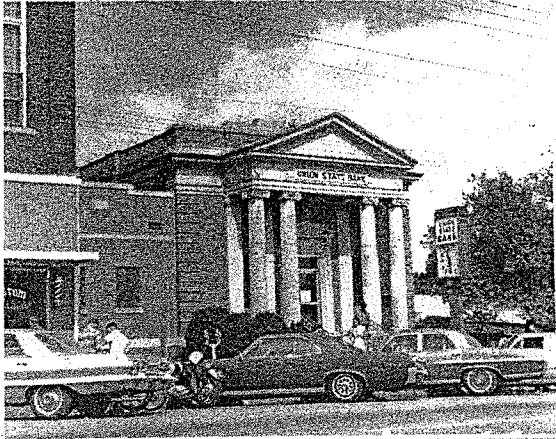
James E. Ingram, Georg-Williams, Charles Abbot, Bob Cornett and Mary Mays.

At present, all five St. Clair-quarried monoliths have been erected, curbing and lighting have been installed and landscaping is virtually complete. But without additional funding for the erection of the all important plaques, the project may be slowed to a standstill.

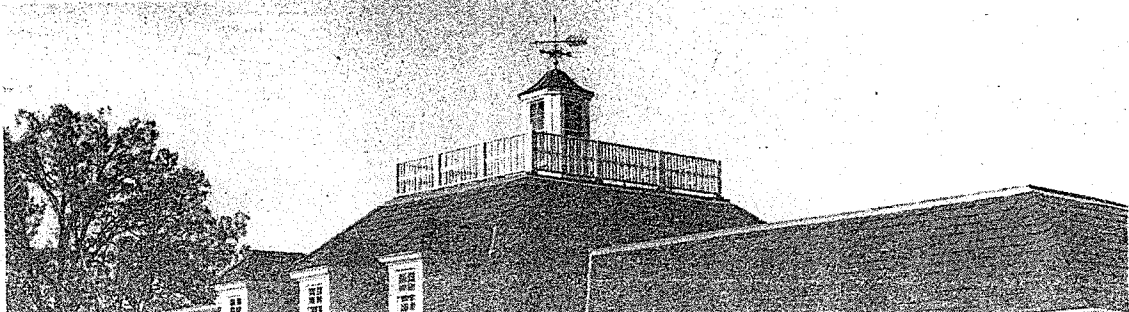
The monument's site was donated two years ago by the county. This particular location was selected because it is believed the original volunteers of Company F mustered beneath an ancient apple tree which grew near the present monument area.

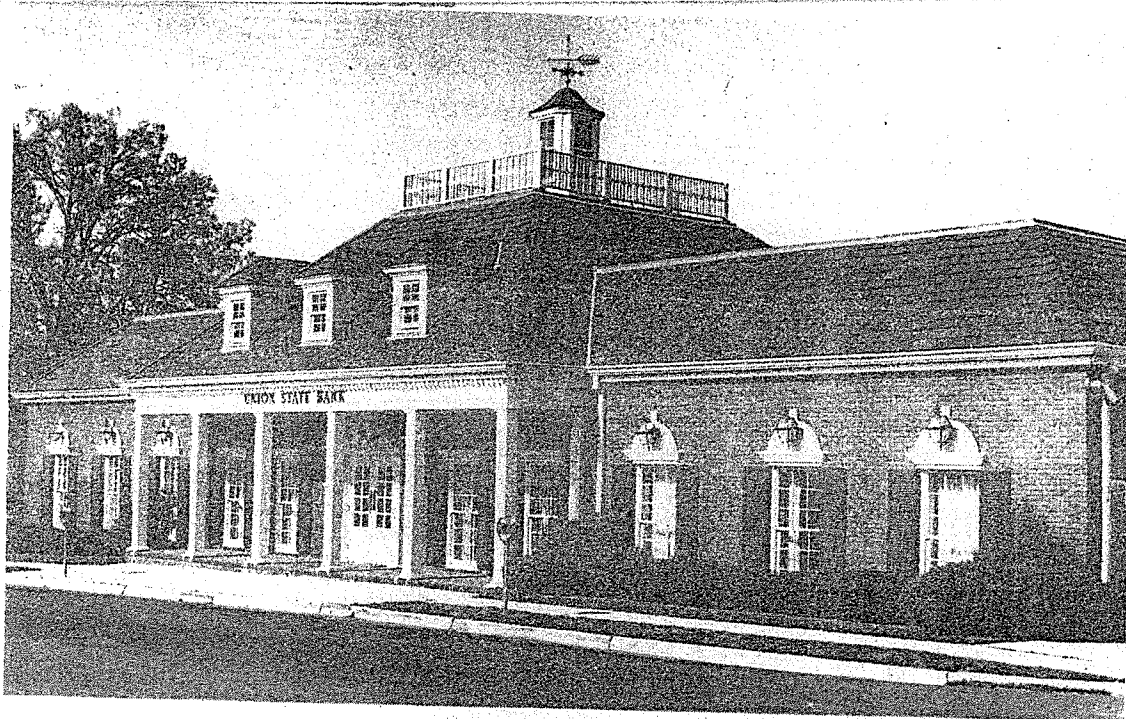
In any event, the Cropwell markers may someday pay fitting tribute to the more than two hundred men who left their homes and families to march off to waiting trains at Montvello. Men who fought, fell and died in the snowy battlefields of Northern Virginia alongside the troops of Gen. Robert E. Lee.

*Union State Bank*  
Oldest Bank In St. Clair County



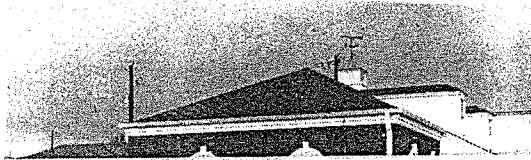
Established  
1903

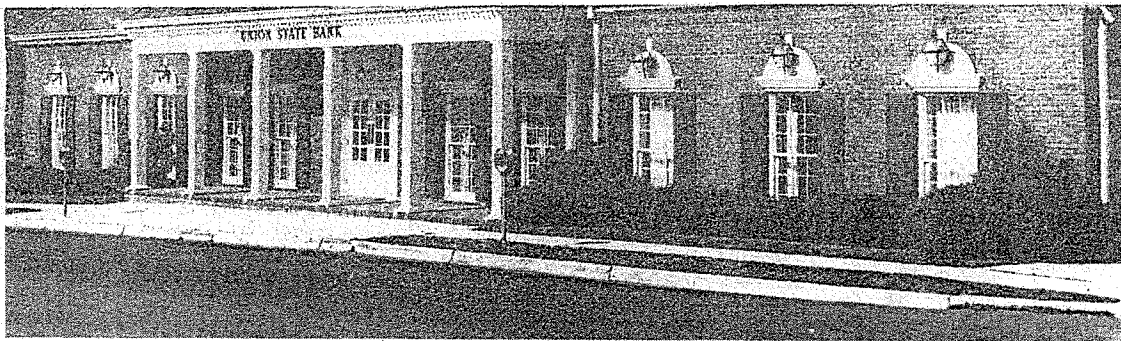




BUILT 1968

The Oldest Bank





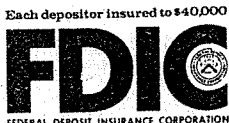
BUILT 1968



BUILT 1975

The Oldest Bank . . .  
Newest Ideas  
Join The New Outlooks Club

Two Convenient Locations To Serve You



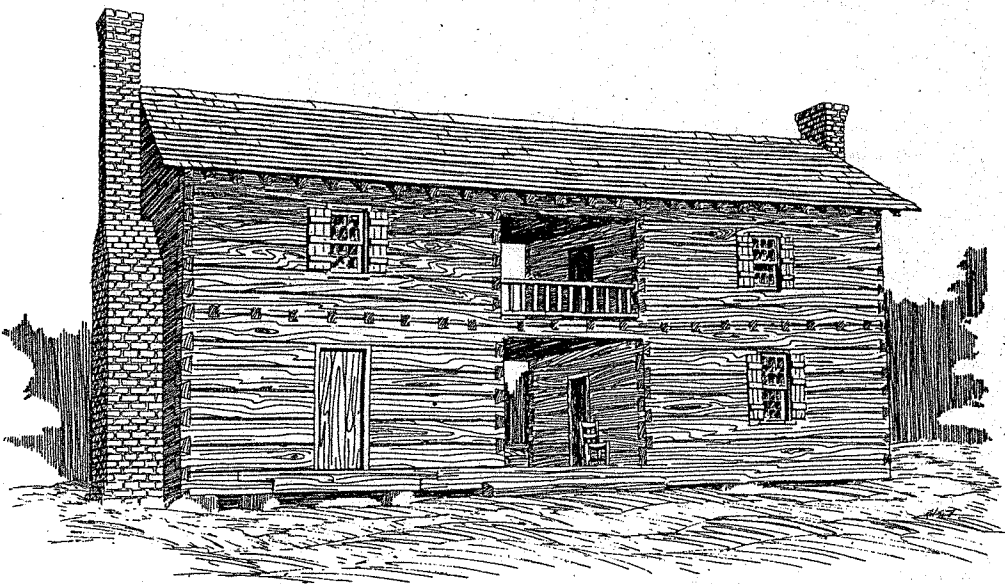
DOWNTOWN  
MEMBER F.D.I.C.

PLAZA BRANCH  
A FULL SERVICE BANK





# *The Ash Agency*



HENRY LOONEY HOUSE  
CIRCA 1820

... Insuror  
Of The  
Historical  
Looney  
House ...

... And Lots



# Inzer Home Listed In National Register

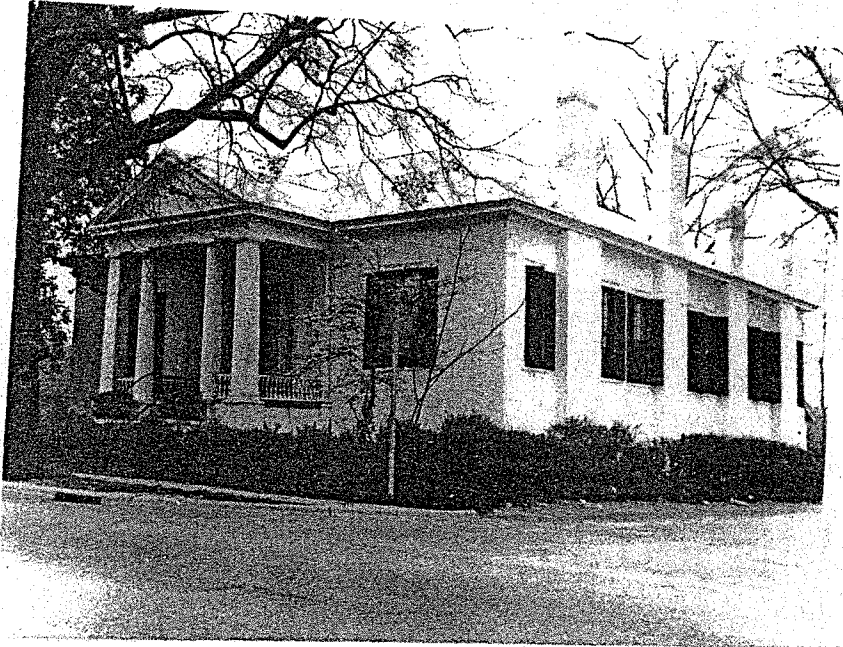
BY MATTIE LOU  
CROW

This house is known as the Judge John W. Inzer home. It was built in 1852 by Moses Dean, who had come to Ashville and entered land here in 1825. On the land he entered was the big spring which today supplies Ashville with water and which is still spoken of as Dean's Spring. Mr. Dean built his house near the spring when he married Miss Eliza B. Hoke, daughter of Daniel Hoke, and here he lived until 1852 when he built what is today known as the Inzer house.

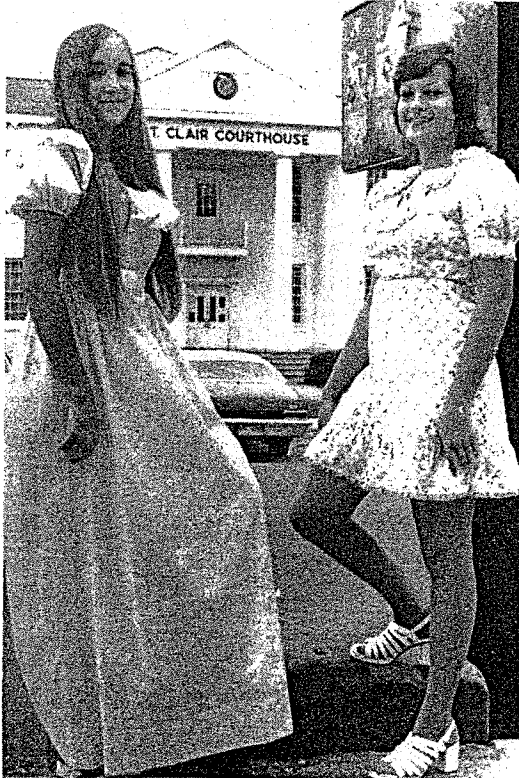
Moses Dean was one of Ashville's first merchants. His store stood just across the street from the court house where the little cobblestone building on the corner now stands. At first this firm was known as BYERS AND DEAN, as Alemeth Byers was the senior partner. Later when Mr. Byers sold his interest to William Augustine Edwards, the store became DEAN AND EDWARDS and, sometime before the Civil War, Peyton Rowan became a partner and the firm name was changed to DEAN AND BROWN.

All that remains to remind us of this emporium of yesteryear where everything from candles to coffins could be purchased is "The Rock." To most citizens of the United States the term "The Rock" brings to mind the grim walls of Alcatraz. For Ashville citizens it has a happier association. In the early Fifties, Mr. Dean sent one of his clerks, Jackie Partlow, in an ox wagon to Red Mountain Rock Quarry, east of Ashville, to secure a stone which might be used as a mounting block for his lady customers, most whom rode horse-back. Mr. Partlow returned after weeks of labor with "The Rock."

"The Rock" must weigh nearly a ton, as its dimensions are 26" by 26" x 42." There was originally a companion rock of much smaller proportion which made it convenient for the matrons and young ladies of the Sixties to step from the street to their side saddles. The need for an "The Rock" was so great that it was



## John W. Inzer Home (1852)



### The Upping Block

whom rode horse-back. Mr. Partlow returned after weeks of labor with "The Rock."

"The Rock" must weigh nearly a ton, as its dimensions are 26" by 26" x 42." There was originally a companion rock of much smaller proportion which made it convenient for the matrons and young ladies of the Sixties to step from the street to their side saddles. The need for an "Upping Block" has long since disappeared as today's girls wear jeans and ride astride. But "The Rock" is still there. Through the years it has served many purposes. Many times as the proverbial STUMP OR SOAP BOX, when an ambitious politician wished to convince the voters of his ability. There is a legend that says "A person who sits on the rock to talk to his friends will never leave Ashville. He may go away for a while, but he will surely come back."

Moses Dean died in 1855 and soon afterwards Eliza began to dispose of her Ashville property. When the war was over she moved her family to Jacksonville to be near the Hoke family. It was shortly after the war that Judge Inzer came into possession of the Dean house. He brought his bride, Sallie Elizabeth Pope, to live in this house in 1866.

John Washington Inzer, who was born in Georgia, came first to Talladega in 1854. There he read law in the office of Messrs. A. J. Walker and John T. Morgan. He opened a law office in Ashville in 1856, and was St. Clair County's representative at the Secession Convention at Montgomery in January, 1861. He was twenty-six years of age and the youngest delegate to sign the Ordinance of Secession. Judge Inzer served with distinction in the Confederate Army, attaining the rank of Lt. Colonel. He was a delegate to the Constitutional Conventions of 1861 and 1875, respectively, and was sent to Montgomery as Senator in 1873 and again in 1900. He served St. Clair County as Probate Judge and for many years was Circuit Judge. His father was a Baptist minister and Judge Inzer was a Deacon in the Ashville Baptist Church and its first Sunday School Superintendent.

The Dean-Inzer house is a one-story Greek Revival. The portico has two graceful Doric pillars, flanked by two square ones and the pilasters are square. The discrepancy is explained in this manner: the two fluted Doric pillars were carved by slaves of Moses Dean before the war but, due to Dean's illness and the advent of the war, the two other pillars and the pilasters were never carved. During Reconstruction Days it was impossible to find laborers who were capable of making pillars, so when Judge Inzer became owner he had the square variety made and they are there today. The double doors with blown glass for transom and for side lights add the perfect touch to the small portico. There are four interior chimneys on either side of the house. The walls are sixteen inches thick from the ground up, including the room dividers.

The house was built of red brick made in the old Ashville brick yard which lay adjacent to the property. Sometime during its long history it has been painted and thus the beauty of the hand-pressed brick is hidden.

Inside, the rooms are spacious and many of the antique furnishings are intact. It is a house built for comfort; easy to heat in winter and cool during the summer months. The original floors and woodwork retain their beauty.

The lawn and garden are picturesque. Old fashioned flowering shrubs, colorful spring bulbs, and stately magnolias speak of the love and care of by-gone days.

Five grandchildren of Judge Inzer are joint owners of this splendid anti-bellum home.

The Inzer House was added to the National Register of Historic Places on January 3, 1974.

A S H V I L L E

S A V I N G S

B A N K

Established 1906

CROWING WITH

each community had its own grist mill.

grandparents made from that wonderful water-ground meal.

# A Story of People, Houses

BY MATTIE LOU  
TEAGUE CROW

This is a story of people and houses. The town of Ashville was incorporated in 1822. It had become the county seat and the leading town of St. Clair County.

A great many of the first settlers entered the land in the beautiful Beaver Valley area, and today there are interesting houses still standing in the valley which were there long before the Civil War.

The people who built these homes and cleared these acres were families from Tennessee, Georgia and the Carolinas. They soon became staunch friends and their children intermarried. Ashville was their trading center; they attended the early churches there, and sent their sons to Ashville Academy. Many of these land owners filled important county offices.

One family coming from South Carolina to Ashville in

1819 was that of Reuben and Rebecca Watkins Phillips. They first lived on Canoe Creek near Rebecca's father Jack Watkins. Later they moved to lower Beaver Valley and established their home on the River Road, eight miles from Ashville and three miles from Greensport. Reuben Phillips built a two-story hewed-log house with a roof of split shingles made with a drawing knife. There they reared a large family, and they prospered, accumulating

property and numerous slaves.

Rebecca died in 1850, followed by Reuben in 1856. Their graves are in the Hopewell cemetery. The old log house was home for the Phillips family for many years. It was standing and in good repair as late as 1918.

One son, Ross Phillips, was four years old when he came with his parents to Beaver Valley. When he married Marzee Aubrey in 1843, he brought his bride to the old homestead, and they lived there until long after the Civil War. Ross Phillips was one of the early schoolteachers at Ashville Academy. Records in the courthouse show that he served the county as probate judge from 1852 until 1859. During Reconstruction, he was a successful merchant. Later he moved his family to Sherman, Mississippi, where he and his wife are buried. One of his daughters, Katherine Phillips, married Abraham Green and reared an interesting family at Greensport. Mrs. Dave Evans Sr. is a descendant.

The house pictured here was built by James Madison Phillips, another son of Reuben and Rebecca Phillips, for his wife, Elizabeth Yarbrough, a few years after they were married in 1847.

This house is now the property of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene A. Davis. It is in excellent repair and is furnished in the traditional manner. When one climbs the front steps and lifts the heavy iron knocker on the old front door, he half ex-

pects to be met by a hostess in hoop skirts. Time seems to have stood still, and the house rests serene in its own past. The people who have lived in this house must have loved it, for today it reflects the hospitality of ante-bellum times.

James Madison and Elizabeth Yarbrough Phillips reared five sons and eight daughters in this stately old home. One daughter, Sallie, was married to James A. Hodges, an Ashville merchant. They were the parents of Elizabeth Hodges Hill, who traveled the world over with her famous husband, the late Howard Hill. She helped him edit books and films of his exploits while hunting with the bow and arrow.

Another daughter, Lilly Phillips, who was the wife of Dr. W. A. Beason, was the first woman to hold an elective office in St. Clair County. For a number of years she was a member of the board of education.

When we study the history of old homes, we are actually learning about the people who built them and lived in them. The lives of these people are so closely interwoven with the story of the houses that it would be difficult to separate the two.

The descendants of Reuben and Rebecca Phillips are found not only in St. Clair County, but also throughout Alabama and in many other states of our nation. They have made and are making worthwhile contributions to the welfare of our country in many walks of life.



*Eugene Davis Home (1847)*

## Old O'Donnell Mill Provided 'Daily Bread'

BY MATTIE LOU  
TEAGUE CROW

"Give us this day our daily—bread."

Bread. A magic word. A word as old as language. A word that means many different things to as many different people. In the prayer it means subsistence, food, shelter, raiment—all that is necessary for physical life. The One who gave us the prayer also said, "Man does not live by bread alone. And at the Last Supper, "He took bread and gave thanks and brake it, and gave to them saying, "This is my body...take, eat..." Bread is a magic word.

It is the staff of life. We are told to cast our bread upon the water. And never to eat the bread of idleness. Also we are admonished to know which side our bread is buttered on.

When Marie Antoinette asked why the people were rioting in the streets of Paris, she was told, "Because they have no bread." This self-centered luxury-loving queen facetiously answered, "Then let them eat cake." Two weeks later the French Revolution was in full swing and the queen was on her way to the guillotine.

Bread is a magic word.

When our pioneer ancestors first came into this wilderness to establish new homes, they were careful to bring with them enough corn to feed the animals and furnish bread for their families until a new crop could be harvested.

Until mills were built, the man of the family often travelled all the way back to Georgia or Tennessee to have corn ground into meal. In time, each community had its own grist mill.

What a laborious task it was to build a dam across a stream in order to have water power to operate the mill. And how far they traveled and how many long hours of work were necessary to secure and shape the two huge mill stones—the bed rock and the runner—that ground the corn into meal. It was no easy task to build a turbine, or water wheel, to catch the force of the water and transfer that force into power which rotated the big stone runner, thus grinding the meal.

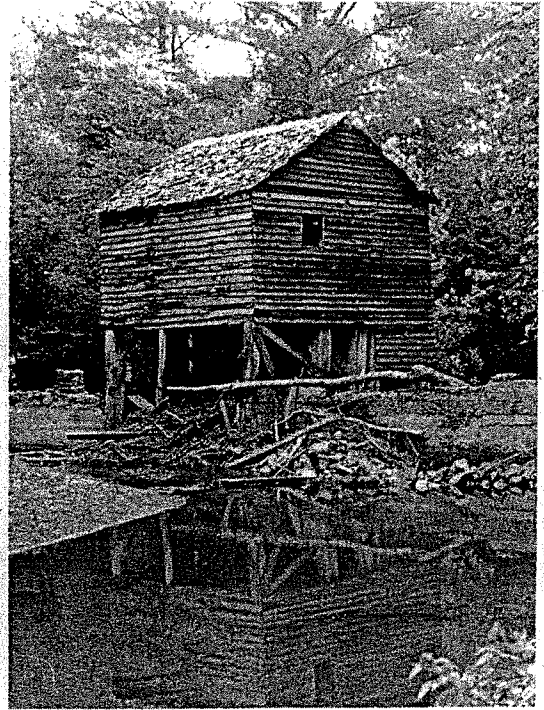
The men who could accomplish this were creative artisans, equal to any the world has today. They took what was available and, by careful planning and hard labor, were able to furnish bread for their people.

Early St. Clair County has many water-powered grist mills. Today, O'Donnell's Mill is still intact, but is rapidly disintegrating.

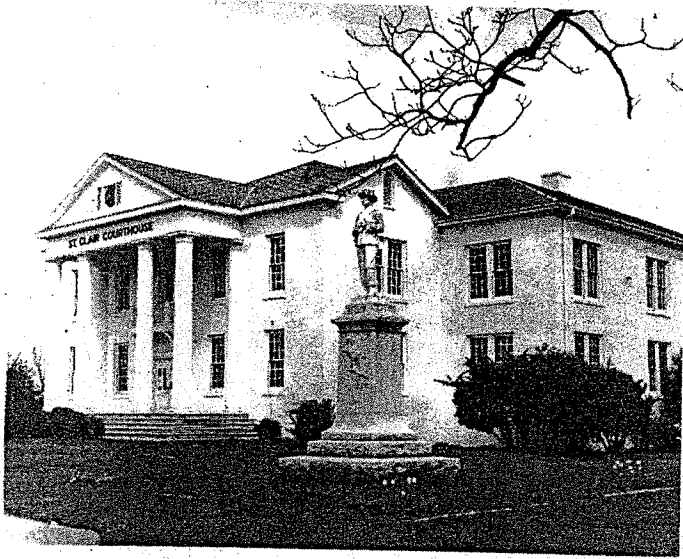
O'Donnell's Mill has not been in operation for a number of years. Originally built by the Gibson family, it is now owned by the O'Donnell family of Ashville and is located about 10 miles southeast of Ashville.

Today we buy a loaf of bread for 50 cents or so, or buy a box of corn muffin mix which Tennessee Ford assures us is "pea-pickin' good." But it is a sad thing that today's generation will never know what real corn bread was like.

Corn pone. Egg bread. Spoon bread. Johnny (journey) cake, Cracklin' bread. Corn dodgers, Hush puppies. Today's variety is a pale imitation of the bread our grandparents made from that wonderful water-ground meal.



*O'Donnell Mill  
On Shoal Creek*



*Ashville Courthouse One  
Of County's Historic  
Landmarks*

OLD-FASHIONED  
At  
DeGARIS  
REXALL  
PRICES

Best Wishes To The  
St. Clair County  
Historical Society

THE MOST  
COMPLETE  
COSMETICS  
Selection  
In  
Pell City!

DeGaris Rexall Drug

JOHNNIE & KATE DeGARIS