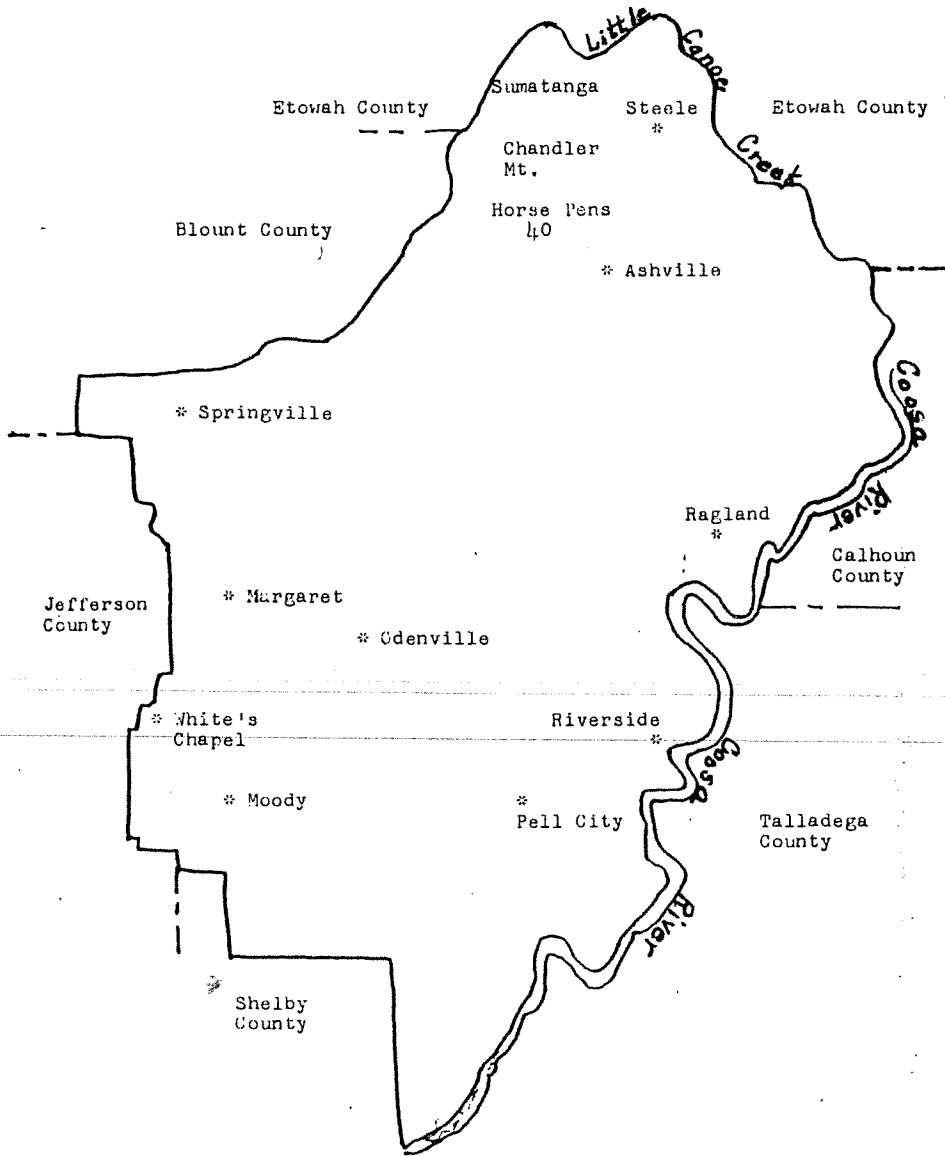


Map of St. Clair County



**PLACES IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY**

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***PLACES IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY***

With the exception of Mary E. Riddle's article about Odenville and Betty Hodges' research paper about Ashville, these histories seem to have been a 1953 project of the St. Clair County Schools.

Joe Whitten indexed the articles by surnames, places and organizations. Some activities such as candle making and syrup making were indexed as well.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ST. CLAIR COUNTY . . . . .	1
HISTORY OF STEEL . . . . .	11
THE HISTORY OF EASONVILLE . . . . .	29
THE HISTORY OF MOODY . . . . .	45
HISTORY OF LONDON . . . . .	48
MOODY'S CROSS ROADS . . . . .	50
MARGARET, ACMAR, WHITE'S CHAPEL . . . . .	51
HISTORY OF ODENVILLE . . . . .	52
THE HISTORY OF ASHVILLE . . . . .	61
ODENVILLE, ALABAMA . . . . .	83
HISTORY OF CROPWELL . . . . .	86
WINNATASKA . . . . .	90
INDEX . . . . .	91

## ST. CLAIR COUNTY

At the second session of the first General Assembly of the Alabama Territory held at St. Stephens in Washington County, and on the 20th day of November, 1818, and in the 43rd year of American Independence, the county of St. Clair was created. A portion of northern Shelby County was used for the purpose and the act was approved by Governor Bibb. Most of the attention of this assembly was given to preparation of the territory for statehood, but time was found to create this and one other county, namely Autauga.

## TOPOGRAPHY

The county is located toward the northeastern part of the state, the eastern boundary being some 40 miles from the Georgia line, the northern boundary 70 miles from the Tennessee line, and the center of the county about 40 miles from the city of Birmingham.

In 1820 by an act of the legislature a part of St. Clair was added to Jefferson and at intervals following this date the lines have been changed. As example: An act approved Dec. 17, 1868 reads, "Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Alabama that the boundary line between the counties of Etowah and St. Clair be changed so as to include Thomas M. Springfield as a citizen of St. Clair." (At present writing there is a proposal on foot to change the line between Jefferson and St. Clair to include all families living within three miles of Leeds High School as citizens of Jefferson County.) The boundary lines are at present very irregular, the east and southeast lines being formed by the course of the Coosa River while part of the northwest boundary is formed by the irregular summit of Blount Mountain, which separates St. Clair from Blount.

The shape of the county is roughly rectangular, the long dimension running northeast and southwest, and it is about 30 miles wide and 42 miles long.

It contains 648 square miles. The county has a very rugged surface, lying in the so-called hard rock division which is an extension of the Appalachian Mountains. There are a number of narrow ridges and intervening valleys throughout the county. Backbone Mountain is continuous, dividing the county into two divisions each with different characteristics of topography. Chandler Mountain in the northwest part of the county has several square miles of level top area which is developed into good farming region. The elevation of the entire county ranges from 450 to 1,600 feet. (Chandler Mt. is 1,600 ft.)

There are approximately 7 square miles of water in St. Clair. Drainage is excellent, being to the Coosa and Cahaba Rivers. There are many small streams, some of which flow swiftly, developing power in a small way by which grist mills, saw mills, etc. were once operated. There are a great many springs of unusual size throughout the county. Half-dozen of these are estimated to flow as much as 750,000 gallons per day. At St. Clair Springs and Cook Springs there is water containing potassium, sodium, magnesium, and many other properties.

There are 23 distinctive types of soil in the county and agriculture is the most important industry. Portions of two coal fields occur within its boundaries. They are the Cahaba and the Coosa fields. The Cahaba field in the extreme southwest corner, is no longer actively mined at Acmar and Margaret. These mines were operated by the Alabama Fuel and Iron Company, of which the late Charles F. DeBardleben is owner. In the Talladega Watchtower of September 1880 this news item is noted: "Mr. Henry F. DeBardleben has invested \$8,000 in the Cahaba Coal field of St. Clair County. Henry F. was the father of Charles F. DeBardleben. The Coosa Field is almost entirely abandoned, although Coal City was at one time a very active mining community. From the Ashville Regis of April 8, 1879 comes this item: "Capt. Jas. Elliott of Rome, Ga. was in Ashville on Monday attending sale of Daughdrill lands in this county. Mr. Elliott speaks hopefully of the ultimate opening of Coosa River and says that coal can be shipped from Broken Arrow (Coal City) mines of St. Clair cheaper than from Gadsden."

There are small deposits of iron, bauxite and other minerals in the county.

### ABORIGINAL HISTORY

The larger part of St. Clair is situated within what was once the domains of the Creek Indians. The Cherokee boundary line as recognized by the Cherokee treaty of September 14, 1816 passed northwesterly through the northern part of the county. Therefore the Indian population-when white men first inhabited the place-was largely Creek with some intermingled Cherokees.

On Big Canoe Creek there was a Creek village known as Cataula. This village was situated on the present site of the town of Ashville. Littifutchce was also a Creek village and was about 18 miles from Cataula on the Coosa River. On the morning of October 29, 1813, during the Creek War, Col. Dyer commanding a detachment of Tennessee troops, surprised and burned Liffifutchee. He returned to General Jackson's army with 29 prisoners, consisting of men, women and children and a large supply of corn and cattle. It was at this time that General Jackson built Fort Strother at Ten Islands near Greensport, as a base of operations against the Creeks. At the treaty of Fort Jackson, August 9, 1814, all remaining Creeks in the county were moved over and settled on the east side of the Coosa River, as all the county on the west side was embraced in the treaty.

Along the Coosa River from a point above Ten Islands the entire river boundary of the county is dotted with evidences of aboriginal occupancy. Along the northwest section of the county the indications are quite extensive. Old records show that many white settlers purchased lands from Indians. Such names as John Chattoga, Dragging Canoe, and others appear in these old deeds. (Crying Snake, Qualecuo) Minutes of County Court 1829 show that Moulder Ragsdale was appointed by the court to take census of the Indians in the part of the nation belonging to St. Clair County. Results of this census were not found.

NAMED

St. Clair County was named for General Arthur St. Clair. He was born in Thurso, Scotland in 1734. After coming to America he fought in the British Army at Louisburg and Quebec. On the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, he took the Colonial side. After the war he served on various legislative bodies. St. Clair died in 1818, the year St. Clair County was created.

ELECTION

The County's first voting places were at the homes of Joel Chandler and William Guthrey in 1819. John H. Garrett elected Judge of County Court, and Jesse C. Roberts, Clerk of Circuit Court.

COURT

The first court was held at Alexander Brown's home on the 7th day of December 1818. It is interesting to note that the first case to be docketed on the "Minutes of Circuit Court-St. Clair County 1818-1821" was the case of Joel Chandler vs. Alexander Brown. It was a damage suit, Chandler claiming that Brown had damaged his property while trespassing. The amount sued for was \$10,000. At the trial Chandler begged to withdraw the complaint and the court dismissed case on payment of court cost by the defendant. Brown readily payed cost, same being \$13.56. It is precisely in this manner that so many cases are cleared from the civil dockets of our courts today. The Hon. Henry Y. Webb was the presiding Judge at this court, Jesse C. Roberts was court clerk, and David Conner's name was signed as Sheriff. David Conner was St. Clair County's first Senator, serving an honor of which any man and his descendants may be proud. Whether or not the same man served as Sheriff of St. Clair County the writer was unable to determine.



The Sheriff could have been David Conner Jr.

The site of Alexander Brown's, where the above described court was held, is  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the present town of Ashville and is now a large pasture. It is on U. S. Highway No. 11 and is still spoken of as "Old Town," now the property of W. P. Cobb.

The earliest record to be found of a County Court is "Minutes of Orphans and Commissioners Court-St. Clair County 1827-1836." John H. Garrett was the Judge of this Court, Jesse C. Roberts, Clerk, and John Massey was Sheriff. The first business of the Court was the naming of road overseers and captains. Thirty-eight overseers and a captain for each beat were named. Throughout this book records of the following nature are found: "Ordered by the Court that Samuel Truss, George Shortwell and John Greenwood be appointed Commissioners to mark out and review a road from Ashville to Thomas C. Bradford's place, to pass up the creek by Old Town and John Hill's and make report at the next County Court. Order issued July 31, 1832." This route is the same followed by the U. S. Highway No. 11 today. Today there are good chert roads throughout the county, in addition to U. S. Highway No. 11 running from Birmingham to Gadsden and the Bankhead Highway running from Birmingham to Anniston. The Southern Railway and the Seaboard Airline have approximately 76 miles of mail line in the county.

#### SEAL

On the 23rd of February 1829 by an order of the Court the impression for a county seal was adopted, and \$10.00 was paid to William C. Clements for making the seal.

In 1821, John Ash, John Massey, John Cunningham, Joel Chandler, and George Shortwell were appointed by the court to superintend the erection of a court house and jail. Logbuildings were put up at Ashville. When these buildings were completed, the seat of Justice was incorporated by an act of the legislature at Ashville, the year 1822.

Ashville was at one time an Indian Village. John Ash was the first white man to settle there, establishing his plantation there in 1818. Mr. Ash was a Senator in Alabama's legislature in 1825-27 and again 1832-34, and 1844-45, and the town, Ashville, was named in his honor. He held many important town offices and was one of St. Clair County's leading citizens until his death in 1873.

In 1844 the log building was used for a court house was judged to be inadequate and it was ordered by the court that a new brick building be erected. Littleton Yarbrough was commissioned to erect this brick building. The following is copied from his ledger, now in the possession of his granddaughter, Miss Elizabeth Yarbrough.

"March 25th., 1845.

I built a court house in Ashville which has 155,640 brick which

I am to pay Cambell Jefferson two dollars & 50¢ per thousand.

Settled in full. June 4, 1845."

Also an entry which reads:

"We commenced laying brick on the court house the 23rd of

October 1844." Also a statement that they laid brick for 34 days.

Another entry, same ledger:

"Mr. Stanley worked for Jefferson March 17 - 18 - 21 - 22 - 1845

plastering court house for which he received \$19.00. Settled

in full.

L. Yarbrough."

This same building is in use today. It has been many times remodeled and renovated, with rooms added from time to time.

#### CHURCHES

At present there are five Protestant denominations represented by the churches of St. Clair County. They are the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal and Church of Christ. The Baptist lead in membership, having about one thousand more members than the Methodist.

The records of the beginning of these churches are very brief. The Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal seem to have been the first. One of the earlier Baptist ministers in the county was Jessie A. Collins. Mr. Collins was pastor of the Baptist Church at Ashville in 1830. While he was pastor about 1845 the first building, a very small structure situated on Cemetery Hill just east of Ashville, was torn away and the building which was used until 1930 was erected there. Just when this first church was built is unknown, but there are grave stones in the cemetery bearing the date 1822. The second church house was built by Littleton Yarbrough, who built the Courthouse. He cut the hand planed lumber, made the pegs and numbered each peg and peg hole with Roman Numerals at his shop on his own premises. He then hauled the material to Cemetery Hill and forthwith erected the church. It was in this church that Mr. Collins preached for about 40 years. When this church was torn down in 1930, the material was used to build a pastorium - now in use.

Mr. Collins did much toward fostering the Baptist faith in St. Clair County. In 1853 he established a church at Coosa Valley, now Cropwell, and was pastor for a number of years. In order to reach this church from his home in Ashville he traveled horseback, the Ashville-Broken-Arrow Road, across Backbone Mountain. At the summit of the mountain the road passed under a large overhanging rock and at that time there was a bright yellow half moon on this rock which had been painted there by the Indians. (During certain months the moon was worshipped by the Indians.) Those who traveled this lonely road noticed that at the foot of the large rock and directly underneath the golden half-moon there was a neat stack of flat slate rocks. To their astonishment this stack of rocks steadily grew. Someone spoke to Mr. Collins about it, asking if he had noticed the rocks as he passed that way on his trips to Coosa Valley. He smilingly answered: "Oh that is my Bethel, and those rocks are my altar. Each rock represents a half hour spent in prayer, for it is there that I stop to rest my horse and talk with God." The story has been often repeated, for Mr. Collins was a beloved character throughout the county, and although the golden half moon has long since faded and the road has been abandoned, the altar is still there and the place is spoken as Bethel.

In the early seventies there was an Episcopal Church located at Ashville, but its membership became so small that it finally became unable to maintain a rector. The members of St. John's Episcopal Church of Elyton, Alabama, purchased this building and it was moved to Elyton on log wheel drawn by mules. The exact date of this transaction can be secured from an account which was published some fifteen years ago in the Birmingham News. This little church building was used as a place of worship for the deaf mutes of Birmingham until 1950. The members of St. John's used it on certain occasions for the purpose of christenings and weddings. In 1950 it was discovered that the foundation of the old structure was badly damaged by termites, therefore it was torn away and a new building erected on the site, First Street and Tuscaloosa Avenue.

The Methodist Church was organized in the county about 1820. In 1854 Mr. Almoth Byers gave the Methodist the plot of ground and they, together with the Masonic Lodge, erected the first Methodist Church building. The upper story was used by the Masons. This building is still standing in Ashville and is used by the Masons. However, it has been moved from the original site, where the Methodist now stands.

#### SCHOOLS

When we review the history of the schools of St. Clair County, we realize that we have indeed made great progress. The majority of the first settlers in St. Clair County came from an older Southern state and naturally brought with them the school system of that particular state. There were private schools in most communities conducted independent of state funds. Many of the well-to-do planters erected small buildings on their premises which were used as schools. In most cases the teacher was a poor relative -- often times a maiden aunt or cousin -- whom the family was obliged to support. In many cases the pastor of the local church was also the teacher. Littleton Yarbrough's ledger gave an account of his children attending a school taught by Jesse A. Collins in 1844.

The younger children went 55 days in the summer and the older ones 3 months in the winter. Professor Wasson taught an academy at Ashville prior to the War Between the States. The poorer families had no schools.

In 1854, A. B. Meek submitted a bill to the legislature providing for the establishment and maintenance of public schools in Alabama. The office of State Superintendent of Schools was created and two school commissioners were appointed for each county. It was several years later that the office of County Superintendent of Education was created. Very little was accomplished toward establishing public schools in Alabama before the war. Members of the well-to-do class who might have done much toward promoting public education were not greatly interested because they were financially able to employ teachers for their children.

It was sometime following the dark days of reconstruction when St. Clair with the remaining counties of Alabama lay prone, stripped and apparently ruined, that Alabama's wise Dr. J. L. M. Curry declared, "We are now too poor not to educate our children." To Dr. Curry we owe the revival of interest in public education.

It was in 1871 that William P. Lovett was appointed Superintendent of Education for St. Clair County. Mr. Lovett came to St. Clair from Ohio before the war. He taught a private school at Springville for years. F. Dillon followed Mr. Lovett as Superintendent and his successor was a Mr. Newton. The duties of these early Superintendents were of a financial nature and the salary was \$75.00 per annum, plus one per cent of all public disbursements.

In 1877 Judge Leroy F. Box of Ashville became State Superintendent of Education. It was during his term that the law requiring all teachers drawing public money to hold a license to teach was first obeyed to the letter in St. Clair. To secure a license a teacher was required to attend three meetings of a Teachers Institute and to pass an oral examination conducted by the superintendent and board of examiners.

In August of 1879 there appeared the following notice in the Southern Aegis:

"Springville Academy--a high school for boys and girls--Jno. O. Turner, Sr; Principal. The fifth session of this school will begin September the first, 1879. During the past two sessions students have been in attendance from six counties in Alabama. As high as seventy-five pupils have been enrolled in one session. A full high school course is taught. Tuition--from \$1.50 to \$3.50 per month, board and lodging \$8.00 per month. School books furnished at publisher's prices. Locality healthful and desirable. Church facilities excellent. Destitute orphans taken at half price. No charges for lost time or for incidental expenses.

For full particulars apply for annual circular.

Jno. O. Turner, Sr., Principal

Springville Ninth Grade

Mrs. Mattie Lou Crow, Teacher

1953.

## HISTORY OF STEELE

The recent incorporation of Steele in north St. Clair County marks a milestone in the history of the little community, whose life story dates back for over a hundred years.

If the American way of life can be described in one word, that word is "change," and that word, "change," also describes the way of life in Steele community. The story of Steele is a story of progress - Progress - often slow, with many unexpected set backs but ever making slow advancement toward a better way of life.

Look back with me into the past and see the wilderness where the Indians roamed, the sturdy pioneers as they came - as they cleared land and built homes, the little community as it grew into a thriving little town with churches and schools and parents striving to give their children the best. Men and women working that they and their neighbors might have a more abundant life - look back with me to yesterday and see how it helped to bring about a more glorious today.

In the mountain-valley section of north east Alabama the forest grew. There was affluence of rainfall and sunshine. The winds whispered through the stately pines on the mountain sides - The broadleaf trees shaded the little valleys from the summer sun. Many springs bubbled up and offered sweet water to the thirsty Redskins who dwelt in the land. Game was plentiful in the woodland. Many streams offered fresh water fish to the hungry warriors, who were largely Creek, with some intermingled Cherokees.

Here our story begins:

At the end of the Creek War the Creek Indians gave up by the treaty of Fort Jackson, August 9, 1814, their lands south and west of a line drawn from Cherokee Crossing, near Greensport in St. Clair County, down the east side of the Coosa to Wetumpka, thence to the mouth of Summocho Creek, which empties into the Chattahoochee below Eufaula.<sup>1</sup>

1. A. B. Moore, "History of Alabama"

This gave the whites access to South St. Clair County. The Cherokees claimed North of this line and gave up their claim to such in 1816. Thus the whole of St. Clair County became open to white settlers.

Many of the Tennessee and Georgia volunteers who had come to Alabama with General Jackson to fight the Indians like the country. When the war was over they returned home, got their families and came back to the newly opened territory to make new homes. Among these early settlers were the Browns, Halls, Logans, Stephens, Jourdans, Tramel, Smiths, Beasons, and Deermans. These families settled in North St. Clair County on land that is now served by Steele Route One.

The Countryman, Sibert and Battles families settled in the flatwoods below Steele in what was known as the Camp Sibert area during World War II.

The Jourdan family, settled at what is now the Sam Swindall home place on Steele Route One, between 1830 and 1840. The Indians were still here. It is said the Indians would sneak around the house and if the whites had their backs turned, they would take a dish of cooked food or a corn pone and make a hasty retreat with it. Calvin Jourdan, baby in the Jourdan family, was much loved by the Indians. Every chance they had they would kidnap the baby and have much fun dancing with and entertaining him. The parents on learning of his absence would go in search of him and upon finding him would rescue the baby only to have the same thing happen again in a few days. When Calvin grew to manhood, he became a Methodist preacher in Florida.

The Beason family was among the first settlers in this part of St. Clair County. Captain Edward Beason, born in North Carolina in 1757 was a captain of Foot Soldiers in Militia in the Revolutionary War.<sup>1</sup> He came from North Carolina and arrived in St. Clair County in 1814. He brought his wife and slaves. He built a cabin in the woods near the site of Ashville, Alabama. This cabin was on the Double Bridge Road between Steele and Ashville.

1. Revolutionary Soldiers of Ala. Dept. of Archives, Bulletin 5, pp. 10.



They lived among the Indians until they were removed. His son Curtis Grubb Beason was twelve years old at the time. Curtis experienced the hardships and deprivations of pioneer life but became a wealthy influential man in this part of the state. He attended school thirteen days in his life. He owned thousands of acres of land. During the Civil War Federal Soldiers burned the deeds to this so since the deeds were not recorded the land was lost to him after the war and he was comparatively a poor man.<sup>1</sup> He married Martha Clark. His wife and the wife of David Sibert were half-sisters. His home place was where the dairyman McClain now lives, Steele Route One.

Curtis G. Beason, Sr. was Tax Collector of St. Clair and Blount Counties 1844-1845. He was a State Senator and a delegate of Alabama Constitutional Convention 1865. He is buried at Union Methodist Church Cemetery, Steele.

The Hall family settled at the home place of Miss Tera Tramel, Steele Route One about 1850.

The Logan family place was near the Old Fidelity Church on Steele Route One. They came from North Carolina and settled there while the Indians were still here. (Most of the Indians had been removed by 1834.)<sup>2</sup> Tisdell Logan was a well-known Baptist preacher among the early settlers. Tisdell S. Logan was elected Probate Judge of St. Clair County but due to the fact that he had not resigned his job as Tax Collector soon enough he was not allowed to serve. J. W. Inzer was appointed in his place. This was during the years just following the War Between the States.

The family of J. Hugh Stephens, a local Methodist preacher, lived in the Gulf of Chandler Mountain. They were among the first white settlers. His son, Tom Stephens, had been postmaster at Gadsden for a number of years at the time of his death, in the 1940's.

1. Beason Genealogy pp. 55-56

2. History of Alabama, A. B. Moore

The Deerman family settled on land located on highway 11 south of Steele in the 1830's. It is from this family that the Deerman's Chapel Methodist Church was named.

Julia Ann Deerman married William S. Beason (son of Curtis G. Sr., previously mentioned.) They were the grandparents of Dr. W. D. Partlow, past Superintendent of Brice Hospital at Tuscaloosa, and the great-grandparents of the writer of this brief history.

The Smith Family was grandparents of Herbert Smith and Milton Johns. They settled first on Chandler Mountain in 1858. Later they moved to Steele.

It is thought that a Whisenant family (unrelated to the Whisenants who now live in Steele) built the first cabin in Steele city limits on the site where Mrs. Cluvia Morrow's house now stands. They were the first settlers in the community, but they stayed here only a short time. The Steele family, bought the Whisenant land and moved into the log cabin, so it is from this family that our settlement got its name. This was about 1845 and 1850.

Toliver Steele, grandfather of the Rev. Dozier Steele brought his wife and ten children, some of whom were grown but none married, from North Georgia in covered wagons. The children were Nancy, Mattie, Mary, Sarah, Abe, King, Joe, Quillian, Jeffie and Sylvester. Though the country was sparsely settled at that time the Steele children lost little time in finding other young people. Soon Abe Steele married one of Joel Chandler's daughters who lived with her parents near what is now called Cobbs Mill on Little Canoe Creek in Etowah County but then St. Clair County.

Joel Chandler was one of three men chosen to select a site for the Court House when St. Clair became a county. John Ash, John Masscy, John Cunningham, Joel Chandler and George Shortwell were appointed to superintend the erection of the court house. Joel Chandler was a Justice of the Peace. His home was one of the first voting places in St. Clair County. Chandler Mountain was named for his family.

Pink Shahan married a Chandler, a sister to Mrs. Steele. It was he who had the mill built that has been known as the Shahan Mill, Cobbs Mill and the Killian Mill.

Ruff Owens and David Partlow built the mill. In the late 80's a thriving business was carried on there. It included, a flour mill, a grist mill, a saw mill, a cotton gin and a general merchandise store. Mrs. Dora Buffington and Susie Smith made the white silk bags which were used as bolting cloth for the flour mill.

The Battles family and the Countrymans were living in the flatwoods. Other families who lived in this vicinity before the War Between the States were: the Johns, whose cabin stood near John's Spring near the place where B. W. Pope's home now stands; the Hunsuckers, whose home was in Camp Sibert where Johnny Bowlin now lives; the Blairs and Turners whose home places were across the road from Wilson's Place in Etowah County now, but then was St. Clair County. The Currys owned the tract of land, (Moore Spring and branch) between the Steele claim and that of the Blairs. Dr. J. L. M. Curry who represents Alabama in Statuary Hall, Washington, D. C., was a member of or closely related to this pioneer family of Steele. The Baggetts' home place was across the ridge on land still owned by Luther Baggett. A Pope family lived on the Georgia Road where the old Free place was.

Milton John's paternal grandfather received the track of land including the John's Spring from the United States government as compensation for services in the Indian Wars.

The Baggett family came to this country about 1850. Luther Baggett's father, J. D. was three years old. During the Civil War J. D. Baggett, L. A. Deerman, Polk Smith and Frank Battles, who were with the Union Army, were taken prisoners by the Confederates and were being transported on the "Sultana" on the Mississippi River near Memphis to a prison camp. Due to an explosion the ship sank. Baggett, Deerman, and Battles swam to shore, Polk Smith, uncle of Milton Johns was drowned.

W. H. Baggett uncle of Luther was Tax Collector of St. Clair County after the War Between the States.

John Turner, father of Elijah Turner, married Jane Blair. During the War she stayed with her parents near Shiloh Church while her husband was away. One day in 1865, Elijah a child four years of age was playing in the road between Shiloh Church and the Blair home when a tired wayworn traveler stopped to talk to him. After being asked where his pa was, the child said, "He's fighting the Yankees." The returning soldier took his son in his arms and said, "Your Pa's come home." The John Turner home place was this side of Little Canoe Creek on the north side of the road. The Turners were among the first members of Shiloh Church which was established about 1830.

Mac Pope, grandfather of W. E. Pope built the grist mill near his home on the Free branch. This mill was later known as the Cook Mill also the Free Mill.

Most of these early settlers followed the Georgia Road from North or South Carolina or Georgia to Alabama. These settlers lived in rough log cabins, carried their water from springs, cooked on fireplaces, endured many hardships, but were a brave courageous people.

The pioneer families were mostly Baptist in belief. They built a log church in the flatwoods between 1840 and 1850. It was not until after the War Between the States that there were enough families in this community to build a church within its bounds. The Baptist moved their church from the flatwoods and built a log church near the location of the present Methodist church.

About this time there was a stage line running through Steele twice weekly. A. B. Moore in his "History of Alabama" states that "a stage line operated twice weekly between Tuscaloosa and Huntsville." More than likely this line went through Steele. It carried mail and passengers.

The Billy Jones old house built about 1827 was used as an over-night stopping place or Inn. This Inn was across Gulf Creek from Steele. Blairville (Wilson's Place in Etowah County) and Ashville were the nearest post offices. It is said that

the old road that runs between Pierce Russell's home and the Bert Pope home was called the Huntsville Road. It ran by the John's and Baggetts' old places and Cobb's Mill in Etowah County.

The planters with cotton to sell had to haul it to Huntsville, Montevallo or Rome to be sold.

In the years just following the War Between the States other families came to this section. Among these were the Lutes, Shaws, Gaddys, Trotters, Wilcoxes, Smiths (parents of John Smith), Edmonsons, Moores and Pritchards.

Up until 1876 all settlers worshipped together in the Baptist church which was constructed of logs. Now the Baptists (Owens, Moores and Steeles) became progressive and built a new church near the location of their present church. The few Methodist families which included the Gaddys, Crumps, Pritchards, Shanks, and Edmonsons bought the deserted Baptist church and the church lot from the Ben F. Owens family. In the year 1880 a new Methodist church (a frame building) was erected on this lot. It was used by the Methodists until 1938 when the brick building was constructed that is in use today.

The first Baptist church on their present lot was destroyed by a cyclone soon after it was built in 1877. Uncle Billy Moore did most of the work in putting up the frame building. The people must have been slow paying him for when the cyclone came he said it was because the people wouldn't pay him. Another church was built the next year. In 1939 the third church on this lot was torn down to make way for the present brick building.

About the year 1870 or 1871 the A. G. S. Railroad was built through Steele. This greatly changed the life of the community. Toliver Steele who gave four acres of land for the depot and section houses was the first railway station agent. The Railroad Company named the station "Steele" in his honor.

It seems that Steele was very proud of his position for when the trains stopped he walked out and introduced himself to the conductor as "Toliver Steele the Station Agent" and offered any assistance that might be needed. On one occasion it is said that he flagged a train to stop and when it did so the conductor said "Well, where is the passenger?" Mr. Steele said, "Well, there weren't any to get on, I just thought somebody might want to get off."

Soon after the coming of the railroad a post office was opened in the Trotter store. Mr. Bill Trotter, a one-armed confederate veteran was the first postmaster. Mr. Trotter not only handed out mail he was supposed to meet the trains and deliver the mail to them. One train passed through Steele near midnight-Mrs. Trotter, carrying a lantern always met this train with Mr. Trotter. On one occasion after delivering the mail to the train they saw a dark cloud gathering so they ran back to their home to escape the on coming storm. As they closed the front door behind them a cyclone struck Steele and destroyed the Baptist.

Other post masters have been: Fred Smith, Fanny Cobb, Jane Wheeler, J. J. Edmondson, R. T. Moore and Bert Brock.

In 1903 the first rural route was started from the Steele post office. Luke Buffington was the first postman. He rode horseback. During the twenties three rural routes ran from Steele post office. N. J. Turner and W. J. Ellis were other carriers.

Uncle Abie Steele ran a tanyard before, during and after the War Between the States. Uncle Abie's work was so important to the Confederate cause that he was exempt from service in the army. His tannery was located in and near the branch from the Steele Spring just across the railroad near the present home of Cecil Mullinax. In the late 1870 or early 80's this tannery included a shoe and harness shop run by J. M. Gaddy, Buck Griffin and a Mr. Cates. Mr. Gaddy was a cobbler, a carpenter and helped to build the first Methodist church in Steele. He was the great grandfather of the writer.

The first school house in Steele was on the hill near the Willingham home. It was a one room, log building with a large fireplace to heat it. This school was supported by tuition from each child. At one time Miss "Pet" Cox taught in one room of her home located where the C. E. Bertram house now stands. A Mr. Beck taught a school of eighteen continuous months in the log Baptist Church near the present Methodist Church. The building was heated by a large fireplace, while the children sat on puncheon benches which had peg legs and no backs. Due to Mr. Beck's name as an able professor several scholars boarded here to attend his school. Della Trotter, Lola Shanks, and some of the Moore boys attended.

About 1880 a new two-story frame school building was erected on the lot where C. G. Qualls's house now stands. The upper story was used by the Masons, the lower for the school. About 1900 this school was known as the Valley Grove College. It is said to have rated with the best schools in the county.\* Students came from different sections of the county and boarded in Steele. Professor J. A. B. Stovall was an able and well-loved teacher of the College. The faculty usually included two or three members. Other teachers of this time were Mrs. Lizzie Nunnally Gramling, Mrs. Lucy Edmonson Wheeler, Miss Della Cox, E. B. Moore, H. T. Moore, W. A. Whitmire (1885-1887), L. W. Buffington and Susy Ausburn (aunt of Ward Forman). E. B. Moore studied at Walnut Grove College. He was a successful teacher at home as well as aboard. It is remembered that when uniform state examinations for teachers became required there was a teacher shortage, since many were not able to pass the examination. The above named teachers were certified however.

While Valley Grove College was at its best, a movement got underway to change the name of Steele to Valley Grove. This idea did not get much support and when the Railroad Company "turned thumbs down" on it, the movement soon died out.

\*Supt. N. B. Spradley in his report in 1900 names seven schools as deserving special mention for good work. Valley Grove was one of these schools.

In 1901 the school building was destroyed by fire and another two-story building was erected. The deed to this building and lot was made jointly to the Odd-Fellows, Masons and Steele School. This building was used until 1928 when the present rock building was constructed. In 1950 a modern concrete block lunchroom was built for the school.

Teachers other than those previously mentioned who have served as principals of the Steele School are Bill Griffin, Miss Ethel Gilchrist, Miss Beatrice Knight, C. E. Berttram, J. Franklin Brown, L. D. Byrd, J. M. Rich, Hugh Toland, Dodd Cox, Ormond Buffington and C. G. Qualls. The following have been listed as teachers in the school: Lila Blair Gaines, Bertie Turner Qualls, Julia Harrison Shaw, Euell Gilchrist, Anna Baggett, Belle Turner Countryman, Annie Lou Gaines Venable, Ruby Russell Lois Beason Russell, Golah Beason Stovall, Emma John Miller, Wilma Mullinax Nabors, Eudelle Hallmark Harris, Mrs. Dodd Cox, Abbie P. Moore, Lou Turner, Lois Lawrence, Lillie Mae Beason, Annie Whitfield, Vivian Qualls, Weavers Moore, and Grace Langston. Mrs. Anna Baggett an excellent primary teacher taught at Steele School for 34 years. She retired in 1953. C. G. Qualls has been principal at Steele for fifteen years.

About 1900 Steele was incorporated with Bob Little as Mayor. Alderman were J. W. Moore, Luke Buffington, G. G. Wright. Al Smith and E. B. Malton were policemen. The incorporation was later declared illegal.

Sloat and Bush, two northerners built a peach packing house across the railroad from the station about 1900. They had many young peach orchards started on the hills around Steele and on Chandler Mountain. During packing season several people were employed to prepare the fruit for shipment.

Sloat and Bush constructed a basket factory where Willis Owen's house is. Logs were soaked in hot water and steamed, then run through the vaneer machine. They made small baskets for packing fruit. The business was established on borrowed money and for some reason did not pay off so the basket factory was short lived.



Sloat lived in the Steele home which he bought from Sylvester Steele.

For several years there were three operators working in shifts at the railroad station, which shows that the railroads were doing a thriving business.

Dr. Crump was the first doctor in Steele. He chose the place where the Wilcox home is for his residence. He was a Christian gentleman and a great addition to the community. His wife, Mrs. Crump, was a social leader, gifted in directing social events. She always helped the teachers coach their pupils in "elocution," preparing them for the "exhibition". The pupils were permitted to leave school and go to her home for coaching. In warm weather they stood on a stump in her yard and rehearsed their speeches.

More should be said about the doctors who have ministered so faithfully to the inhabitants of Steele. Among them are Dr. Childs,\* Dr. Crump, Dr. A. B. Granling, Dr. Clayton, Dr. Ross Tramel, Dr. R. F. McConnell, Dr. M. P. Stevens and Dr. T. T. Wheeler. These doctors were true to the "Country Doctor Type" of a few years back. They rode thousands of miles on horseback or in buggies answering calls both day and night, often visiting families where they knew there was little probability of receiving pay for their services.

Typhoid fever took its toll from the citizens for many years. Sometimes three or four members of a family would be attacked by the dreaded disease and would live for weeks at the point of death. Often death struck twice within a few weeks within the same family.

Life of the settlers in Steele community was hard since there was always work to do and no modern conveniences to make the work easier, but the church offered the settlers a means of social contact as well as a spiritual up-lift. Weddings were always great social events as will be noted from the following account as given by some of the older citizens.

\*Dr. Childs, surgeon in Confederate Army. A "southern gentlemen" type. He never practiced medicine in Steele, as he was retired due to his age when he came here.

It is remember that Dr. McConnell came here from Blount County. He boarded with the Trotter family, a leading family of Steele. Their home was above the average of that day (about 1900). They had beautiful china lamps hanging from the ceiling in their living and dining room, also wool rugs with huge roses and red velvet chairs. A piano, the first in Steele, graced their parlor. It was here that the Trotters entertained with an "infair" dinner honoring Dr. McConnell and his bride, the daughter of a local Methodist preacher, by the name of Nickolson, who lived at the Nora Crump home. Aunt Sally Ralls (colored), mother of Susie Ralls who spent her last days near Ashville helped with the dinner and added pomp to the occasion by her elaborate serving at the table. Dr. John Bass and Dr. Cason, of Ashville, Luke and Will Buffington (mere boys at the time) were among the guests at the dinner. Mrs. Trotter used her best china which included individual pudding dishes and individual salt cellars. The dining hall was darkened, the hanging lamps were lighted. The menu included boiled ham, boiled pudding and old fashioned pound cake, that was beat one hour by hand, before it was cooked. Aunt Martha Smith and other neighbors assisted in preparing the food and laying the table. The Nelse Moore house that stood where where the school house now stands was the home that Dr. McConnell built for his bride.

Another wedding of that period that commanded much attention in this area was that of Miss Ollie Crump, adopted daughter of Dr. Crump, to J. W. Gilliland of Attalla. Nothing was spared by Mrs. Crump, gifted in entertaining and doing things in grand style, to make the occasion to be long remembered in Steele.

The marriage vows were read before the alter in the Steele Methodist Church. The church was elaborately decorated with home grown flowers. Among out-of-town guests for this wedding were Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Lee of Attalla. Mr. and Mrs. Gilliland now live near Anniston.

In 1920 there was a School Improvement Society organized at Steele School. It was made up of the parents and teachers. They met at night and both parents attended. Mrs. S. J. Qualls was first president. Mr. J. F. Browne was principal and Mrs. John Russell and Anna Baggett were teachers. Dr. J. I. Riddle, who is now president of Judson College, was a visiting speaker at one of these meetings. He was then principal of Etowah County High School.

The members of the society engaged in debates sometimes for recreation and entertainment. It is remembered that this question was once debated on "be it resolved that the dishrag is more useful to the housewife than the broom." Uncle Nelse Moore with his southern drawl and his many comical expressions was the star comedian of the group.

~~In 1930 or 1931 Hugh Toland was principal of Steele School. The first P. T. A.~~ was organized with Mrs. L. W. Buffington as first president. Some charter members were Mrs. Eula Burttram, Mrs. Bill Ellis, Mrs. Hugh Toland, Mrs. Essie Free, Mrs. Judy Smith, Mrs. N. J. Turner, Miss Jimmie Lou Turner, Mrs. Abbie Moore and Mrs. Anna Baggett. Prizes were given to the pupils for perfect attendance. Shrubbery was put out around the school building. Mrs. Judy Smith was later president.

In 1937 C. G. Qualls was serving as principal. Mrs. Mae Renfroe was elected president of the P. T. A. The P. T. A. bought a piano and made costumes for the operetta.

Mrs. Henry Jones served as next P. T. A. president. She was succeeded by Mrs. Vivian Beason. Venetian blinds were put in the school building at the cost of \$14.50 each.

Mrs. Leroy Partlow was the next P. T. A. president. During her administration an electric pump was put in the well and drinking fountains and lavatories were put in all the classrooms.

Mrs. Ila Hutchins was the P. T. A. president in 1941 and 1942. From time to time library books were bought and added to the school library. More blinds were also bought for the school.

Mrs. Essie Free became president in 1942 or 1943. The women were felling the need of a lunchroom and worked toward this objective. In 1944, Jewel Wilson was elected president, Mrs. Essie Free, vice-president, Mrs. E. R. Shaw, secretary and treasurer. The lunchroom project was planned and soon put into operation. Mrs. Jewel Wilson and Mrs. Essie Free served the first lunch to forty-five pupils on October 26, 1944 at a cost of fifteen cents per pupil. The first menu consisted of potato chips, hot dogs, apples and milk. Due to the war it was hard to obtain dishes and cooking utensils. Mrs. Will Garden bought the forks in Birmingham. Mrs. Eldon Shaw and Mrs. Jewel Wilson bought the stove and cooking utensils. For six weeks the women donated their work, coming two each day, cooking and serving the meals which were planned by Vivian Qualls. Lunches were served from the vacant classroom which was made into a kitchen.

Mrs. Howard Owens served two terms as president in 1949 and 1950. During this time the concrete block lunch room was constructed. It cost the P. T. A. \$1000. The remaining building costs were paid by the county board of education. Mr. L. D. Byrd and the Rev. J. L. McHugh did the work with other helpers.

Mrs. Jack Hudgins was elected president in 1950. Immediate aims of the P. T. A. were to improve the school grounds and driveways. By February 1951 some of these aims had been accomplished. The organization began working toward the installation of indoor rest rooms.

By the spring of 1952 rest rooms had been installed in the school. Our thanks go to Superintendent Roy Gibson and the County Board of Education. The P. T. A. furnished \$450 for drilling the well.

A spirit of cooperation and understanding between parents and teachers has existed throughout the years. The result of which cannot be estimated in a material way.

### The First School Bus In St. Clair County

In 1922 Steele District had voted in the three mill tax, but not all the county had done so. In that fall, 1922, Steele Trustees, Luke Buffington, Jesse Shaw and Will Moore, working with Mr. Carl Q. Baxter, County Superintendent of Education and the County Board who issued a warrant for \$500 bought a truck with the excess tax money from the district and started transporting pupils from Steele to Etowah County High School in Attalla, nine miles away. (Odenville, twenty-five miles away was the nearest high school in St. Clair Co.) Each pupil was supposed to pay one dollar per week to keep the bus operating.

A few Steele residents opposed the idea so strongly that Supt. Baxter asked for a ruling on its legality. Dr. Harwell Davis, now president of Howard College, at that time Attorney General, ruled in favor of the bus - it continued to run for six years. Then St. Clair County School people appealed to Steele patrons to allow their children to ride the St. Clair County Bus, that would be provided and would transport pupils free of charge to the newly organized High School at Ashville. Then the promoters of the first bus used their influence to support their own county school and sent their children to Ashville. Though some few went on to Etowah, providing their own transportation.

This first school truck in St. Clair County was a far cry from the modern buses that transport the children today. It was an open Model T. truck with oil cloth curtains that hung down at the sides and back in rainy weather. In sunny weather the curtains were rolled up and strapped at the top and the pupils enjoyed an open air ride. Two benches ran parallel with the truck bed. The pupils sat facing each other with their knees touching in the aisle. Usually two pupils rode in the front seat with the driver. If he were a single man or boy this was a choice seat. Two or three or sometimes as many as five boys stood on the wooden step at the back of the truck and rode in safety. The bus was wrecked once. No one was seriously hurt.

Often the roads were so muddy that the passengers got off and let the bus pull through the mud by itself or with the big boys pushing. Then after wading through the mud to the bus the pupils got on again and the girls tried to repair damages to their good looks before they reached school.

This was before the days of the Beauty Parlor, if one pupil needed a haircut (the shingled bob was in style) or had shopping to do in town the whole bus load went to town. So it happened that almost every afternoon of the week the Stecle bus was parked on the streets of Attalla for about an hour.

If it rained very much the creeks were up, so often the bus was turned back at the deep water or drowned out in mid-stream and had to wait several hours to be pulled out by mules after help had been summonsed. If the riders were ready when the bus came by each morning -- Good ! If not the driver waited until they got there.

When the driver put a little hand mirror in the front of the "truck" in order to see the back step, the riders declared that he was spying on them, suspecting them of disorderly conduct. The driver was patient and always on the job. Part of the time he was paid ten dollars a month. At other times he was allowed to keep what remained of the collected fares after operating expenses were paid.

The riders quarreled among themselves, sang, played games and courted and in spite of all most of them never stopped until they got that High School Diploma. The bus drivers serving during this time were: The Rev. J. L. Garnett, then pastor of the Crawford's Cave Methodist Church Circuit, Dick Clayton, Edmond Crump and Birge Smith.

Among the first pupils riding the bus were Eudell Hallmark, Pearl Autrey, Wilma Mullinax, Vivian Buffington, Ruth Turner, Robbie McWaters, Weavers Freeman, Wilma Johns, Montez Little, Bertie Whisnant, Grace Shaw, Modene Jones, Ethel Brown, Dick Clayton, Jesse Johns, Charlie Russell, Gordon Wilcox, Cecil and James Qualls, Edmond Crump, Willard Trammel and Fred Bell.

It might be interesting to note that Dr. John Ingle Riddle, now president of Judson College, was principal of the Etowah County High School at that time.

Of the number who rode the bus during the six years it was operated sixteen became teachers. Seven are still teaching. Seven hold college degrees. One is a lawyer, one Supervisor of School Transportation, five hold responsible office positions in different industries of the state, one is in Railway Postal service, one a Railroad Signal Maintainer, one heads an automobile company. Others hold reliable positions and are good citizens wherever they are. As their parents were sold on the idea of education, their success proves that education pays off.

Today Steele with a population of 641 claims to rank third in size in St. Clair County. In December 1952 Steele was incorporated into a municipality. W. E. Pope is mayor. Aldermen are Alfred O'Donnell, Paul Pope, Clyde Morrow, Hoyt Hammonds and Tom Wood. Rex Buffington is city clerk.

As the forest in early days furnished homes for the settlers, fuel for heat, tannic acid for the tanyards and ties for the railroad, so today the forest is supporting a large lumber industry in Steele. The Pope and Free Lumber Company employs about thirty men with an average weekly pay roll from \$2500 to \$3000.

There are seven stores in Steele. They are owned and operated by B. W. Pope, Paul Pope, Roy Beason, Horace Sharpton, T. A. Lassetter, A. B. and Clyde Morrow. Two cafe's are operated by Lena Gaskey and Eva Blackman.

Jack Hudgins manages the Steele Garage. John Russell runs a grist mill and Willis Owens, a barber shop. Myrtle Owens operates a beauty parlor in her home.

Burt Brock is post master. N. J. Turner delivers mail daily on a 66 mile route.

About 60 Steele citizens are employed in industries of Attalla, Gadsden or Alabama City. They commute daily. Eleven men and women follow the teaching profession. James and Carl Smith are in the photography business. Seven of our men are employed by the railroad company, while eight are carpenters by trade.

Several older citizens are retired from the Railroad, Government Service, the Ministry, and teaching but are still active in community activities.

Within the city limits one hundred ninety five (195) homes have electricity. Steele has eighty-one telephones listed in the directory. The city is selling bonds to finance a water system for the town.

Steele has three full time churches. The Baptist with P. W. Mitchell as pastor; the Methodist, Ellis Johnson, pastor; and the Nazarene Church, of which J. A. Emerson is pastor. The Nazarene Church in Steele was organized in 1945. The churches work together in a commendable way toward the betterment of community life.

Other evidence that our citizens are aspiring toward a higher plain of living is the organization and work of the Steele Lions Club, the Garden Club and a Boy Scout Troop.

The Steele Lions Club was chartered in January 1952 with 34 members. Ben Burt-tram was elected president of the Club.

The Steele Garden Club was organized in March 1953. It has 25 members. Mrs. Bivian Free is president.

The Reverend Ellis Johnson is Scoutmaster of the Scout Troop which is sponsored by the Methodist Church.

The Steele P. T. A. is doing a worthwhile work with Mrs. Deward Hollingsworth as president.

The contract has been let and work has begun on a \$70,000 addition to the school plant. An auditorium, classroom, principal's office and a heating plant will be included in the new building. Steele Community would like to express its appreciation to Superintendent Roy Gibson and the St. Clair County Board of Education for their efforts in promoting this project.

Steele has not grown as the "Magic City" in Alabama grew, neither has it made the rapid strides that some of its neighboring towns have. But there is a spirit of friendliness and cooperation among its inhabitants that has caused it to be said, "If you once live in Steele you always want to live there."



## THE HISTORY OF EASONVILLE

## Only Woods and Indian People

Easonville was once an Indian Village. Until about the year 1820 it was a beautifully forested area inhabited by Indians and the game which they hunted. It was an ideal site for an Indian village because of its nearness to the Coosa River, the number of springs and streams located there, and because the deep forests abounded in wildlife. The Indians there surely had an abundant water and food supply. Nearly all traces of the Indian village have disappeared now. There is an Indian burial ground on some land that Mr. Grover Waite owned until he sold it to Avondale Mills a few years ago. From time to time a farmer's plow has unearthed arrowheads and other Indian relics. At least one peace-pipe has been plowed up.

There are many stories that have been handed down about how the Indians put such faith in dreams that the first white settlers capitalized on it and relieved them of tracts of fine land. One story was about an Indian who told a white man that he dreamed that a white man gave him a gun. The white man gave him a gun because he knew that the Indian expected the dream to come true. A few days later the same white man told the same Indian that he dreamed that an Indian gave him some land. The Indian took him up the river and gave him what is now Collins Bend. According to an abstract deed, Mr. Jeremiah Collins did get possession of the land in 1821 but it is not known for certain that he got it so easily. There are other stories similar to that one but they might be purely fiction.

The older people living in the community now remember hearing Mr. Ira Harmon (1826-1903) tell of how the Indians and white settlers lived together harmoniously in Coosa Valley. Mr. Harmon had lived on both sides of the river--in both Talladega and St. Clair Counties before all the Indians left for the reservation and, according to Mr. Harmon's accounts, most of the settlers treated the Indians fairly and all was well between the two races. He told of only one incident where a white man tried to be dishonest with an Indian but the Indian would not let him. When the Indians were being sent away to the reservations the Chiefs and other important tribesmen were last to go, it seems. They remained on their land as long as possible and bargained for more money for their land. One old Chief, who lived near Mr. Harmon, before leaving for the reservation, sold his land to a white man who made a down-payment and promised to send the remainder of the money to the Indian the following fall. When he broke his promise and failed to send the money the Indian came back with a gun and collected it. Mr. Harmon was down near the trail splitting rails when the Chief came galloping around the bend into the clearing, on his way to his creditor's home. When he saw Mr. Harmon he pulled on his reins and stopped to greet him. Mr. Harmon expressed surprise at seeing him back there. The Indian said, "He come back to get me money. He get him, too." Then he nodded toward a gun he had with him. He rode on to his white creditor's place and collected what was due him. He then galloped back to Talladega, checked the rented horse in at the livery stable, and returned to the reservation.

## THE WHITE SETTLERS

Around the year 1820 Mr. Bolivar Eason and his wife, Sarah Shelly Eason and their children, settled at Easonville. They were the first white people to settle there. The Easons were followed by other white families. Most of them arrived after 1840. Some of the other early families were as follows: Waite, Cosper, Willingham, Maddox, Abbott, Collins, Adams, Lee, Hayes, Stone, Davis, Smith, Wadsworth, Drake, Harmon, Hardwick, LeFils, LaTaste, Fountaine and McLellan. Most of the early settlers came from the Carolinas and Virginia.

Some of the people who settled at Easonville were people of education, refinement, and means. They brought with them slaves to help build homes and clear land. They brought books, music, and furniture. They built good homes. They lived more leisurely than did the settlers of some of the other parts of the county. They had more time for social activities and life there was pleasant. There were many parties, and many kinds of hunting. One form of recreation, however, was not tolerated for a long time. It was dancing. When some of the young people, as late as the 1890's, took a liking to a dance which they called "twistification" they were promptly called to an accounting by the churchmen. When Mr. George Stone, Sr., who was slightly deaf, got up in church to protest the dancing he said, "Some of our young people are doing a dance which they call buck-up-to-the-nation." Mr. Stone had misunderstood the word "twistification."

For a long time after the white settlers came, the community was not called Easonville but was known as Eat-and-Camp. It was a Methodist camp ground. Because of the springs on what is now Joe Ingram's farm and the stream (Easonville Branch), the location was an ideal campsite. Every year people from miles around came there and attended a camp meeting. They came in buggies and wagons and brought with them food and bedding for their families, and feed for their stock. The last year that a meeting was held the people had become so wicked that some of the stock were badly cut one night. Many of the people there, upon hearing of it, feared for the safety of their own stock and fled in the night from the camp. That put an end to Eat-and-Camp.

#### THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

The Civil War and Reconstruction period was a sad time for the people of Easonville. Most of the young men went away to fight for the Confederacy. They were Philip Waite, Jim Johnson, Jim Trussell, John and Jim Drake, William Walker Wadsworth, Donnan Turner and Mack Collins. Philip Waite was the only one who lost his life. He was killed by a draft-dodger at Vandiver. During the Civil War many Southern families were pro-union, and did not want to fight against the Federal government. Some of these families hid their boys out in the hills to keep them from going to the army. It was Philip Waite's assignment to ferret them out and get them into the Confederate Army. He learned that a number of boys were hiding near Vandiver. He found that their hiding place had a very narrow passage-way leading to it, and only one person at the time could enter it. No officer could have entered it to apprehend the boys without being killed first so he stood watch near their homes waiting for them to go home for a visit. When one of them ventured home, Philip tried to capture him and was killed in the effort.

Many of such boys did have to go to the Confederate Army and some of them purposely let themselves be captured by the Union forces. Mr. Donnan Turner was one of them. He was a conscientious person and his people were good people. They didn't think that the South should have seceded from the Union and they didn't want their sons to fight against the Union. After he was forced to go against his will, he watched for an opportunity to surrender himself to the Union forces. It came one day when he and a group of Confederate soldiers were facing a bank of Union men. Both groups were lying behind logs, bushes, and banks which separated them. The strip that separated them was narrow. Mr. Turner was on the end of the Confederate group and he started working himself further away from his group and forward into some bushes toward the Federal soldiers. Finally, just ahead of him he saw two men in blue lying behind a log. He ducked lower and put a white handkerchief on the end of his gun-barrel. Then he crawled forward and eased it over the log. Immediately the Union men looked over the log and beckoned to him to come on. One of them said, in a low voice, "Come on over, Johnny (Rob). Come on."

The other one said, "Lay your gun down, Johnny."

The first one said, "He's all right. Let him bring his gun."

So Mr. Turner surrendered himself with his gun in his hand which was against army regulations. He spent the remainder of the war years cooking for the Federal Army. He was treated well and had plenty to eat. As long as he lived he told his surrender story without shame. He had merely gone over to the side that he thought was right in the beginning and he had no regrets.

The people back home did their bit by striving toward increased production on the land and by making sacrifices in every way possible in order to help win the war. Two men, Mr. Ira Harmon and Mr. Frank Lee, served the Confederacy by boating coal down the river from a loading point near Ragland to Montgomery where it was used in ammunition plants which manufactured gun-powder for the Confederate Army. A mine near Ragland supplied the coal. Mr. Lee was head steerman of one boat and Mr. Harmon was head steerman of another boat. It was not easy work to get the heavy flatboats of coal over the shoals and through the rapids. The Confederate government had had some of the dangerous rocks cleared out of the shoals to make openings, called "boat shoots" a little wider than the boat and the boat had to be maneuvered just right or it might become jammed. According to Mr. Harmon's account of it, they always managed to get the coal down on time but they were glad when it was over. The trip down took about five days on an average. The swift water carried them about as fast as a train would have carried them but the slow waters slowed them down. They made the return trip as far as Talladega by train. Upon reaching the loading point near Ragland they always found new flatboats, made by a crew of workmen whose job it was to see that the boats were ready when they were needed. There was never a delay.

At the close of the war the people had a hard time just as they did throughout the South. The older people living in the community now remember hearing their parents or grandparents tell of the poverty that they endured in that postwar period. They did without many things that they needed and they used such makeshift substitutes as parched corn for coffee, persimmon seed for buttons, and pokeberry juice mixed with water for ink. They took up the soil under their smokehouses and boiled it to get the salt to use again.

The Confederate soldiers came home telling stories of the hunger that they endured during the war. The older people who remember hearing them talk say that they never had enough food and were hungry nearly all during the war. All of them settled on farms in the valley and farmed. Walker Wadsworth, who returned from the war with an injured hand, combined teaching and farming. In the late 1860's he started teaching and taught a short term of school every year until his death in 1877.

The slaves went free and some of them settled on land about three miles west of Easonville. Their descendants live there still. They live in reasonably liveable homes on their farms. They have a church and they did have a school in the community until consolidation of schools came about. These descendants of the Easonville slaves are rather idealistic negroes. They have good principles to live by and are respected and trusted by the white citizens. They are industrious and intelligent. Too, they strive to educate their children. A number of boys and girls from that community have gone a way to college.

## THE EARLY HOMES

Some of the first dwellings of Easonville were frame buildings and some were logs. The rooms were very large. The large kitchen was set apart from the main part of the house. Sometimes a bridge-like walk was built from the main part of the house to the kitchen door. The kitchen was a workroom where much work besides cooking was carried on. It was really a part-time factory where much was made which is bought at the store today. There the women of the house did the spinning, weaving, candle making, and part of the sewing. Sometimes dying of cloth, rendering of lard, soap making, and sausage making was done in the kitchen. If the weather permitted, these chores were done outdoors in the back yard.

The home was lighted by candles which were made in the kitchen. There were two ways to make candles--by dipping and molding. To dip candles several pieces of string, preferably wool string, were tied to a stick. The stick was held over a pot of hot melted tallow and lowered until the strings were submerged. Then it was lifted up to allow the tallow that clung to the strings to stiffen. That took only a moment. Then it was lowered to dip the strings in over and over until the candles were the desired size. Each time they were dipped they became larger. That was a simple method of making candles but it required more time, patience, and back-bending than molding them. Also, more tallow was required with which to work than was needed in molding. For dipping, the tallow had to be as deep in the pot as the strings were long but a small amount of tallow could be molded into candles. It was melted and poured into wool-threaded molds, allowed to set two or three minutes, and removed from the mold. The molds were rethreaded and refilled with tallow until the desired number of candles were made or until the tallow was used up. Most of the candle molds used by the women of Easonville held three candles. Candle-making was an easy little chore that no one minded doing. When the women made candles for their homes they usually made some extra ones for the church.

Lamps appeared in the Easonville homes in 1878. They were small and shaped like a teacup and had a handle on one side. They were made of brass. They had no chimney so they sent up a black smoke. They also reeked of kerosene. As time went on, better and better lamps appeared. Finally, pretty lamps hung like chandeliers from the ceilings of the Easonville parlors. Later came Delco and carbide light plants. Then, in 1926, the Alabama Power line was extended to Easonville.

Soap was made from fat and lye which was taken from wood ashes. Clean oak and hickory wood ashes were saved and put in ash hopper which stood near the smokehouse. One kind of hopper was a barrel with holes bored near the bottom. It sat on a slanting shelf built against the smokehouse. The other kind of hopper was a wedge-shaped wooden box built within a frame. The pointed end was at the bottom. It sat on a slanting shelf built against the smokehouse. The pointed end was at the bottom. Both hoppers were kept covered to protect the ashes from the rain. The lye was taken out of the ashes by pouring water into the hopper. As it ran through the ashes it was caught in pails which were set under the hopper. This process was called "running the lye down." The lye was tasted to see if it was strong enough. If it wasn't the damp ashes were allowed to set a few days and the lye was "run down" again. Then the reddish-brown lye water was added to the boiling fat. About one part fat and nine parts lye water were used. A gallon of good fat was required to make ten gallons of lye soap. It was cooked in a large pot and stored in a barrel or in churns and kept in the smokehouse.

Usually hominy was made a day or two after soap was made. A little lye was saved for hominy-making. Corn was put into a pot of boiling water. Then enough lye was added to redden the water. It boiled until the husk loosened. Then the corn was taken out and rubbed and washed until the husk was out of it. Then the hominy was cooked in clean water until it was tender. No one used a recipe. They just "guessed" about how much lye to use. Approximately three pints of lye were used on one gallon of corn. The corn swelled up and made about three gallons of hominy. That was enough to share with two or three neighbors who repaid it when they made hominy.

Cooking was done on a huge fireplace in the kitchen. The utensils were not at all like those that are used today. They included iron kettles, pots, and frying pans. There was a Dutch oven for baking. Around 1800 small iron cook stoves, which burned wood, came into use in the valley.

Matches did not come into use until around 1888. Before that time fire was kept in a fireplace all the time and never allowed to go out. When the fire was not needed the coals were banked in ashes to keep the fire. If a family "lost its fire" someone had to go to the nearest neighbor to "borrow a coal of fire." Even after matches came into use, before they became plentiful, coals were banked and the matches were saved for use at times when the fire was lost. The first matches came in a little long round wooden box with a push-on wooden lid. There were twenty-five matches in a box and the price was ten cents per box. One of the early families got its first box of matches and kept them three months before having to use one. Finally, when they lost their fire and had to strike a match, all the children gathered around the hearth to see the sight. The father bent over to strike the match, then straightened up and said, "Where's John? Go get John. He would like to see this as same as the rest of you!" So the fireworks were held up until big son John could be fetched from the back field where he was cutting bushes.

The homes were harder to keep clean than the homes of today. Floors were scrubbed with a heavy shuck mop. Sand and lye soap were the detergents used.

There were no refrigerators in the early homes. The people who lived near springs put their milk and butter in containers which they set in the cold water. Some of the others let their milk and butter down a few feet into the well or cistern. It hung there on a rope and was drawn up a mealtime. A few other families dug a hole four feet square and about four feet deep in a shady place near the kitchen. They put milk and cream in it and every day during the summer they watered the ground around the hole to make it cooler.

A paling fence was built around the yards to keep out livestock. Old-fashioned briery rosebushes, crepe myrtle, butterfly bushes, and other flowering shrubs grew in the yards. Also, there were rock-bordered flower-beds in which pinks, marigolds, hollyhocks, zinnias, prince's feathers, and cosmos grew.

#### AN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY

Most of the early settlers of Easonville farmed for a living. Farming continued to be the principal occupation of the people there until World War II. The early farmers of Easonville had to clear away forest to make fields to cultivate. They raised cotton, corn, wheat, peas, hay, oats, fruits, vegetables, and sorghum.

Cotton was the main crop. The first cotton growers had to pick the seed out of their cotton by hand. The lint was put in a cloth bag and packed with a round stick until the bag could hold no more. Then it was tied at the top and marketed like that. Each bag weighed approximately a hundred pounds. It was taken in wagons to Wetumpka, the nearest cotton market. Wetumpka was a cotton market because the river was navigable up to that point and from there cotton could be transported by boat. Cotton was a precious commodity in those days and it brought a good price. Later horsedrawn cotton gins were used in the valley. The gin had two lever-like projections to which horses were hitched. Two horses were hitched to each of the two levers. One man ran the gin inside and a man or a couple of boys drove the teams outside. It took a long day to gin two bales of cotton. As the lint came out of the gin it went into a lint-room. The next day it was carried by basketfuls to the horse-drawn press and pressed into bales. It took a day to press two bales of cotton. One person ran the press and one person drove the horse that pulled it. The mule was hitched to a lever which projected from the press and he pulled it around and around just as mules pulled the cane mills. (The presses used in Coosa Valley were like the one that stands in front of Continental Gin in Birmingham.) The bales were much like the bales of cotton that one sees today. They were covered with brown bagging and bound with metal ties. They weighed about the same as the bales of today. There were three such gin and press outfits in this vicinity. They were on the Jones Willingham place, the Joe Harmon place and the old Laney place.

The farmers continued to market their cotton in Wetumpka. A group of them went along together, forming a wagon train. They could take only two bales on each wagon because the roads were bad and a heavier load would have bogged down. The party traveled by day and camped by night. It took a week or eight days to make the round trip. While in Wetumpka they bought supplies for the year. Not much had to be bought because most of the food and clothing needed by the family was raised and made at home. Some of the items that a settler's wagon brought back were a two-hundred pound bag of green coffee which had to be parched in a pan on the fire and ground in a coffee mill on the wall as it was needed, a barrel of New Orleans syrup, and a barrel of sugar. The New Orleans syrup was a treat for the settlers. They raised sorghum cane and made syrup in the valley but it was cooked in a deep sugar kettle (wash-pot) and it was dark and strongtasting.

Later, just prior to the Civil War, the farmers found a better way to take their cotton to Wetumpka to market it. They built flatboats and floated it down the river. They were able to take more cotton per trip and it did not take as long to make the trip. They made the return trip to Talladega by train since a railroad had been built by that time. Wetumpka continued to be a cotton market until after the Civil War. Then Talladega became a cotton market. From there cotton could be shipped by rail. The railroad was a boon to the cotton farmers of this section.

Some of the early cotton gins were run by water power. There was one at Drake's Mill on the Coosa River. Next came gins run by a steam engine which could gin around twenty bales of cotton per day. Wood was cut by the cord to fire the boiler. Last came the gins run by electricity.

The cotton growers began to sell their cotton to local buyers around the year 1895 and no longer had to market it in Talladega. These buyers were usually merchants and ginnerers, and after 1902, Avondale Mill bought local cotton.

When the land was cleared the topsoil was deep and not much, if any, commercial fertilizer was used. No records of yields during the early years have been found but in the 1880's the yield was one-half to one bale of cotton per acre, 25 bushels of corn, 30 to 50 bushels of oats, and 15 to 25 bushels of wheat per acre. Wheat was not raised on a commercial scale but every farm family raised enough for bread.

Wheat and oats were cut with a hand-cradle and tied into bundles by hand. As early as 1882 these grains were threshed by a machine run by a steam engine. Wood was used to fire the boiler. Two of the first steam-driven threshing machines were owned by Mr. Bob Ewen and Mr. Bill Dunlap. They traveled from farm to farm and threshed for one-tenth toll. Before then horse-drawn threshing machines were used. Peas and corn were shelled by hand until 1885. That year hand-turned corn shellers and pea threshers were used in the vicinity of Easonville. One of the first pea threshers was owned by Mr. Milton Clinkscales. He rented it to farmers who turned it themselves and paid one-fifteenth toll. Not until around 1916 did a steam-driven pea thresher come to the community. It was owned by Mr. Dutch Cosper. He went from farm to farm with it and threshed peas for one-eighth toll.

In addition to the field crops every farm family raised hogs, sheep, cows, geese and chickens. They raised geese for meat, eggs and feathers. In those days people slept on feather beds. The sheep that were grown supplied wool for clothing, blankets and coverlets, and candlewicks and mutton for food. Both milk and beef cattle were raised. The beef cattle were slaughtered for both meat and tallow.

The families arranged their slaughtering and swapped out beef in such a way that they had fresh beef all along through the year. They made candles from the tallow and they had the hides tanned at the local tan yards.

There have been at least two tan yards in the vicinity of Easonville. The oldest one was located near a pond on the old Wadsworth place below Easonville. It was in operation many years before the Civil War but was not used long after the war ended. The old troughs in which bark was soaked were still there in 1885 but were falling apart. The other tan yard was located on the low place about fifty yards back of Harmon Fraim's store. Water was run from the springs upon the hill down a long trough to the tan yard. The trough was made of 1 by 6 inch lumber. Much water was needed because the oak bark was soaked in water to take out the tannic acid. This tan yard was in operation in the 1880's. There was a two-story building connected with it. The first floor was used for the tannery and the upstairs part was used for a cobbler shop. Mr. Tipton was the cobbler. He was also a preacher and he liked to talk scripture to his customers as he tapped and sewed on the shoes.

Farming in those days consisted of many chores besides planting, cultivating and harvesting. Wood had to be cut for fuel, new ground cleared, bushes cut from last year's new ground, stumps pulled and cut up into kindling, cornstalks and cottonstalks cut or knocked down by hand, rails for fences split, and fences built and mended.

The land was cleared slowly. As late as 1885 over half of the land in Coosa Valley was in timber. The roadsides were beautifully wooded. One could not sit on a veranda and see very far down the road because the woods cut out the view. There was a wealth of long-leaf pine and also such trees as hickory, chestnut, persimmon, oak, and sweetgum.

The fields that were in cultivation were fenced in to keep out the stock because there was no stock law in those days. The fences were made of rails. The very early settlers made rails from chestnut wood which was durable, plentiful and easy to split. Huge chestnut trees two feet in diameter were found growing in abundance in the forest when the very first settlers came, but by 1860 the supply of chestnut was so nearly depleted that oak, pine and other easy-to-split woods were used for rails.

The family's food supply was grown at home or secured from the woods and streams. Besides beef, mutton, poultry, eggs, milk and butter which the farm animals supplied, river fish and wild game were plentiful. As late as 1875 wild turkeys were in abundance. In 1874 one man got nine turkeys on one hunt. After 1880 there were not many wild turkeys left except in the hills and mountains.

Every family had a garden and an orchard. Too, they grew cane and made syrup. The first cane mills had wooden rollers. The syrup was stored in barrels and in earthenware jugs and sealed with black and terri-cotta colored sealing wax. It was more difficult in those days to preserve foods for winter use. Fruit jars did not come into use in the valley until around 1887. Most of the families bought only one or two at first to experiment with. They paid twenty-five cents for each jar. In a year or two they were in common use for preserving easy-to-keep fruits and vegetables but it took the homemakers many years to realize the full possibilities of the fruit jar.

Before the coming of the fruit jar apples and peaches were dried for winter use and apples were sulphured. To sulphur apples one prepared them as for canning and placed them in a wooden tub. A hole was scooped out in the center in which to set a saucer of burning sulphur. Then the tub was covered with sheets for several hours to hold the sulphur fumes. Next the apples were put in earthenware containers, covered with water, and put in the smokehouse. Vinegar was made from dried peelings of apples and water sweetened with syrup. Cabbage and collards were made into kraut and stored in earthenware crocks and in kegs. Peas and beans were dried and put in bags. Sausage was fried, placed in earthenware crocks, and covered with hot lard. These preserved foods were stored in the smokehouse with the cured hickory-smoked pork and the herbs. Bunches of onions and herbs and strings of red pepper hung from the rafters. There were bunches of pennyroyal and fennel to make tea with which to treat colds. There were roots of mountain fern with which to make tea to treat certain kidney ailments. Near the smokehouse grew a clump of mullen for the treatment of colds and a bunch of catnip from which to make tea for the baby's hives. Persimmon bark was boiled and the tea was used for a mouthwash in case of sore mouth. A clump of sage was grown for seasoning dressing and sausage.

Broom sedge was gathered by the armloads, tied into bundles, and stored in the smokehouse to be made into brooms as they were needed. The smokehouse was a storage place for food and other necessary commodities and was a place where the pork was cured and smoked. It had an earthen floor in the center of which was a fire-hole. After the pork had been salted down for about a month it was then washed and hung to the smokehouse rafters and a hickory wood fire was burned in the fire-hole for four days and nights to smoke the meat.

Sweet potatoes and turnips were stored in a hill near the smokehouse. The hill was made by scooping out a saucer-shaped place about eight feet in diameter. Some timbers were stood up in the center to form a ventilator. A bed of pine straw or oat straw was laid on the scooped-out place. The potatoes were put on the straw and hilled around the ventilator. Then they were covered with a layer of cornstalks, a layer of straw and a layer of dirt. An opening was left on one side through which to get the potatoes out when needed. The turnips were not put in until time for freezing weather.



Corn and wheat were ground at water mills. There were small mills on streams before Drake's mill was built. Drake's Mill was constructed on the Coosa at the exact location where the proposed Howell Mill Shoals Dam is to be built. (The older people who remember going to both mills to have grinding done say that the Howell Mill was three miles further down the river on the old Marion Howell place which was later sold to the Willinghams who ran a fish-trap at the old Howell Mill location). Drake's Mill was built before the Civil War and continued to operate at its original location until 1883 or 1884. It was a huge mill made of heavy timbers. It was three stories high and it was the most powerful mill that was ever built in that vicinity. It was certain in times of drought when the mills on small streams had to close. In dry seasons Drake's Mill served people as far away as Cook Springs. At one dry time just after the Civil War Bob Ritch (1852-1940) came all the way from what is now Camp Winnataska and had milling done for his family and also for some of his neighbors at Drake's Mill because his father's mill at the present Camp Winnataska site on Kelly's Creek was stopped by the drought.

At Drake's Mill there was also a sawmill and gin, after the Civil War ended it was operated by Captain John Drake and his brother, Jim. Later it was taken over by Dan Waite who had married one of the Drake girls. Mr. John Shields was the miller during the years that Mr. Waite owned the mill. Sometime after 1883 it was moved to a location up the Easonville Branch above the old ford which, as most people living there remember, was in the center of the community. It was not called Drake's Mill after it was moved but was called Stone's Mill or The Mill. It was owned by a group of men including Mr. George Stone, after it was moved. From this time on, it was run by steam instead of water-power. It still ground grain, sawed lumber, and ginned cotton. Mr. Harris Hord was the miller.

#### THE SCHOOLS

Easonville has had a school of some kind ever since enough white people settled there. The people who settled at Easonville were not illiterate and they didn't want their children to be. The very earliest schools were the subscription type taught in dwellings and churches. The parents paid the teacher's salary. The very oldest people now living can remember their parents tell of going to such schools, but they do not recall much about them. Mr. Lee Wadsworth, who was born in 1872, remembers hearing his parents tell of going to school in the valley. His mother, Sarah Lee Wadsworth, and his Lee uncles went to a school taught by Miss Eliza Hardwick. His father and also his Uncle Jim Owen Lee later taught. His father, William Walker Wadsworth (1842-1877) began teaching in the late 1860's and taught at first in homes and churches, but later in school houses at New London and Mt. Pisgah. He was teaching at Mt. Pisgah, when he died in 1877. The schoolhouse in which he was teaching was a crude building which had been constructed in 1870. It was located on the ridge where the cemetery is now. Probably, Easonville had a school building long before Mt. Pisgah did, but there is no one living now who knows when the first school building was constructed at Easonville. The first one was located between the church and Harmon Fraim's store. Miss Rena Roberson, who was born in 1873, started to school there in 1879. It was not a new building then but it was a good building with a large stage. Miss Roberson said that the people of Easonville always liked to see their children "show off." Mr. Moore was her first teacher. The parents paid his salary and he spent night in the homes of his pupils. Emma Maddox and Loula LeFils were two of her school mates in that little school. Emma Maddox led them into mischief and the teacher a merry chase.

They slipped off and went to the tan yard and on up the creek to the mill. The first schoolhouse was not used long after 1880. A new school called Coosa Valley High School was built where Preston Wadsworth's home now stands. It was a one-story building made partly of hand-hewn timber. Part of the lumber was used in the Wadsworth home. This Coosa Valley High School stood there several years and served both Easonville and Cropwell communities. Then a movement was made to have it moved to Cropwell. This did not materialize, however, because Easonville and Cropwell were always about as friendly and helpful to each other as two Greek city-states. Besides, Easonville already had the school with Mr. I. W. Hill as its principal.

This new building was a large two-story frame building, part of which is still standing. The big auditorium which is still being used was the first story. The second story which has been torn down had two classrooms in it. Trees were set out in rows on the campus. Mr. Hill was principal of the school during its most successful years. He had one assistant. One of his assistants was Mr. Jesse Willingham, a cousin of Henry J. Willingham. Another was Wallace Houston. Later, 1890, Miss Rena Roberson was the assistant teacher. She had attended both the Coosa Valley High School and this new school, which has been called by two names--Easonville Academy and Easonville High School. She owed \$50.00 back tuition. In the spring of 1890 when she was seventeen years old she taught two and a half months to finish out the term when the regular assistant resigned. She was paid \$20.00 per month and she applied it on her debt. She still has the receipt that Mr. Hill gave her. During the following summer Miss Rena attended a female college in East Lake and got her diploma at the end of the summer. The following term she taught with Mr. Hill and was paid \$40.00 per month for 9 months. Some years later she was principal of the school.

Besides the principal and assistant, there was a music teacher who taught on the stage.

Young men and women came from all parts of the county and from other counties and boarded in the Easonville homes and attended the school. Some of the students who attended Mr. Hill's schools were as follows: Minnie and Grover Waite, John, Emma, and W. N. Maddox, Kirk Spradley, Dutch, Edgar, Rob and Nannie Cosper, Ida Davis, Margaret, John and Sue Stone, Tom Roberts, Dan Funderburg, R. E. Abbott, Joe, Captain, and Dollie Willingham, Lee Abrams, John W. Abercrombie, R. L. McLellan, Loula LeFils and Jimm Walker. Mr. Hill remained at Easonville many years. He built a good home across the road from the school. It is now owned by Mrs. Stella Harmon. After Mr. Hill left Easonville he became State Superintendent of Education and later he was National 4-H Club Leader.

This institution remained a high school until 1929. The last year that it had a graduating class was 1928. The members of this class were: Lois and Lester Hoyle, Kyser Leonard, Vera Wadsworth, Wilbur Payne, Lonnie Harrison and W. R. Castleberry. The stone building was constructed in 1928. The school became an accredited junior high school in 1937.

## THE CHURCHES

Three churches have served the people of Easonville. They are the Mt. Pisgah Baptist, the Easonville Methodist, and the Coosa Valley Baptist Churches. All these churches were organized before the Civil War.

The first Mt. Pisgah Church building was constructed of logs located on the ridge where the present cemetery is. It was replaced by a large frame building made partly of hand-hewn timber. Around 1904 the present church building was erected and the old building was sold two or three years later for \$20.00 to Nennan Gunter, Lee Wadsworth and John Tucker. Some of the early families who attended Mt. Pisgah Church were the Smith's, Lee's, Turner's, Castleberry's, and Beaver's. Most of the church-going people who live at Easonville now belong to Mt. Pisgah Church.

The Easonville Methodist Church has always stood where it is now. The cemetery was started before the Civil War. At first the building had no steeple but in 1912 it was remodeled and a steeple was added. Some of the early members were: L. F. Waite (1809-1869), Monima Waite (1814-1881), Joel L. Stone (1809-1877), Susan Stone (1819-1896), George W. Stone (1844-1904), Samuel Patton McLellan (1827-1896), Margaret Morrison McLellan (1827-1897), William F. LeFils (1832-1913), John Shade Maddox (1835-1915), Daniel Waite (1848-1904), Sterling Beavers (1839-1876), Susan Hayes (1816-1885), Ira Harmon (1826-1903) and Samira Harmon, Francis H. Grisson (1830-1900), Charlotte Grisson (1836-?), Dr. William C. Neal (1830-1857).

At first the Easonville Methodist Church was on the circuit with Vincent and Harpersville and was served by a circuit rider who lived at one of the charges, usually at Vincent. In 1883, the local church bought the home of Dr. J. B. Robinson to be used for a parsonage. It is still the parsonage. About that time Easonville was made a station and Eden was put on the circuit with it. Later Nepsey was added. Narkey's Chapel, at Coal City, was put on the Easonville Circuit in 1935, and remained on it a few years. Lawley's Chapel was added in 1951.

It is possible that Easonville Methodist had another name at first because the community was not known as Easonville until the post office was established in 1872.

The first members of the Easonville Methodist Church encouraged their slaves to attend church services. A section of the church was designated for the negroes. Some of the slaves who died were buried in the back part of the cemetery.

Possibly, Coosa Valley Baptist Church was the oldest of the three churches. One of its early pastors was Rev. Jesse Collins, who had received a fine education in Virginia before coming to St. Clair County around 1815. Some of the early members of the church were: Willinghams, Collinses, Joneses, Wadsworths, Funderburgs, Bells, Abbotts, Hardwicks, Castleberrys, and Williamsons.

During the Civil War the Coosa Valley Church building served as a schoolhouse. School was in session when the Wilson's raiders came through. Mr. Brickhouse was the teacher at that time and, upon hearing that the raiders were on the way, he hurried the children off home. Among the children were John, Jim, and Charlie Roberson, older brothers of Miss Rena Roberson. Some of the Yankee raiders overtook the boys and raided their lunch pails.

## The Easonville Post Office

According to records of the Post Office Department, now in the custody of the Archives and Record Service, a post office was established at Easonville in 1872. Mail was brought down to it tri-weekly. Names of postmasters and the dates of their appointments are:

Bolivar Eason -- April 2, 1872  
 Joel L. Stone -- January 5, 1875  
 Holland M. Laney -- November 26, 1877  
 William A. Tipton -- April 10, 1883  
 George R. Hardwick -- October 2, 1886  
 William H. Miller -- September 15, 1898  
 John H. Jones -- February 15, 1902  
 Eugene G. LaTaste -- October 2, 1905  
 Pearl F. Coker -- February 28, 1910  
 Mrs. Annie Etheridge -- February 8, 1912  
 John C. Gamble -- March 14, 1924  
 Preston R. Wadsworth -- August 30, 1930  
 Rusie L. Johnson -- October 1, 1935  
 Mrs. Carrie Cospers -- April 25, 1938

## Justice Courts

In the 1880's and 1890's a Justice Court was held at Easonville. Squire John Davis, who lived in what is now the Roper home, was the Justice of Peace who presided over the last Courts held at Easonville. He meted out punishment for Civil offenses, but in criminal cases, the offender was bound over to the Grand Jury or to a higher court. The Justice Court was held in the schoolhouse about once a month or more often, if necessary. Samuel Patton McLellan, a local lawyer, was always on hand during the Justice Court to defend or to prosecute.

## Country Doctors

Dr. William C. Neal was the first doctor to practice medicine at Easonville. He was a young doctor who came from Georgia before the Civil War and remained at Easonville until his death in 1857. He boarded in the old Abbott home where Harvey Davis lives now. His body was buried in the Easonville cemetery by a tiny cedar seedling which has grown to be a large tree since he was buried there.

Next came Dr. P. D. Cospers who practiced until his death in 1877. He was followed by Dr. J. B. Robinson who remained until 1883. He owned what is now the parsonage and sold it to the church the year he left.

Dr. Chandler was the fourth doctor to practice at Easonville. He had a home across the road from the old Jerry Lee place, now the Gamble home. Dr. Chandler was followed by Dr. Oliver Steadham from Clay County. He died a year or two after coming there and his practice was taken over by his brother, Dr. Robert P. Steadham, also from Clay County. The latter remained there a few years then moved on to Auburn. He married Miss Loula LeFils, daughter of William F. LeFils and granddaughter of L. F. Waite. Dr. Ware, a brother-in-law of Dr. Steadham, came next. He did not remain at Easonville long but moved on to New London then to Vincent.

About the time Dr. Ware moved Dr. R. L. McLellan, a native of Easonville, returned home from medical college and began practicing there. That was around 1890. He remained until around 1919. He was succeeded by Dr. B. R. Bradford from Linden. He remained until 1923 and then moved to Ragland. By that time country doctors were on their way out. However, during the depression, two young doctors, Dr. Henderson and Dr. Eversole, practiced for a brief period each at Easonville.

These country doctors had their offices in their homes. In those offices they kept a stock of medicines, some of which came in five-gallon jugs. When they made calls they took pills and medicines with them. If they had to prescribe something that wasn't in their little black bags a member of the family rode home with them and got the necessary medicine. There were no drugstores near-by in the early days of Easonville.

Sometimes they had to do surgery on a kitchen table. Dr. McLellan, in the 1890's, sent patients to specialists in Birmingham. He sent one of his patients who had cataracts to Dr. L. S. Ledbetter, an eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist who cut the cataracts off without benefit of anaesthetic, charged five dollars per cataract, and let the patient return home alone immediately after the operation.

#### The Stores And Other Enterprises of Easonville

Mr. Jerry Lee and Mr. Daniel Waite had the first stores in the vicinity of Easonville. Mr. Lee's place of business was located near Stemley Bridge and was a combination liquor and grocery store. Mr. Waite's store was a small building about 12 by 14 feet and was located at Drake's Mill on the river. Both stores sold salt, pepper, spice, brown sugar and buckshot. Mr. Lee sold liquor, in addition to the other items, and Mr. Waite sold calico and red-striped stick candy. Both of these stores were in operation during the 1870's. When liquor stores were voted out Mr. Lee moved his business to the heart of Easonville. He constructed a large building across the road and to the left of the G. W. Ingram home around 1880. The old building stood until a few years ago. There he handled many wares, some of which were as follows: buggies, wagons, horse collars, bridles, horseshoes, saddles, including ladies' side-saddles, dishes, spoonholders, gingham, calico, alpaca, brass lamps, kerosene, bulk crackers that came in a barrel, shoes that came in 100 pair lots in a large wooden box, buckshot and gunpowder that were sold by the pound, and New Orleans syrup which came in huge barrels.

Next Mr. Holland Laney built a store a few yards from Mr. Lee's store. Neither Mr. Lee nor Mr. Laney stayed there long. Mr. Laney moved on to Eden and operated a business there and Mr. Randel Willingham went into business in the Laney building but did not remain long. Mr. Lee's sister-in-law, Mrs. Morgan, had a store in the Lee building. In the early 1880's Mr. Waite moved his business to a location just above the old ford on the Easonville Branch (across the branch from Harmon Fraim's store) but later erected the building that is now occupied by Harmon's Grocery. Later he took his brother-in-law, W. F. LeFils, into the business and it became Waite and LeFils. They remained together for a number of years then Mr. LeFils and his son, Armand, constructed a big yellow frame building across the road from Grant Watson's home and went into their own business, LeFils and Son. Mr. Waite then took his son-in-law into his store and it became Waite and Maddox. Next he took in another son-in-law, Mr. T. W. Elliot, and the name was changed to Waite, Maddox and Company. After Mr. Waite's death in 1904 it became Maddox and Elliott. Around 1920 they sold the store to Mr. J. K. Spradley who changed the name of it to Easonville Cash Store, although it never did a cash business. Mr. Spradley sold the business to Mr. T. J. Harmon in 1934. Mr. Harmon had build a store a few yards from Mr. Spradley's store around 1925. When he bought the Spradley business he had his other store building torn down. In the meantime, the old Lee store had changed hands and Abbott Brothers had put in a stock of goods but they later moved to the old LeFil's store. In 1926 they moved their business to Pell City and the old LeFils building was torn away to make room for the highway. In 1935 another little store was built near the site of the LeFils store. It was run by Tom Watson a year or two, then Claude Wadsworth bought it and remained in business until 1944. He sold it to Roper and Davis who ran the store until it burned down in 1949. Harvey Davis built a store by his home near Waite's Lake in 1949. Easonville Merchantile Store was built by Harmon Fraim and Mr. Claude Gholston in 1945.

Besides the stores and the enterprises already mentioned, namely: farming, Drake's Mill, and the tan yard and cobbler shop, Easonville has had some dairies, a bean mill, and a brick yard. Two of the first dairies were Minot's dairy and Waite's dairy. The brick yard was operated by Mr. Welly Spradley. It was a small brick yard located in the low pasture near Barney Ingram's home. The bean mill was located near the crossroads where Mr. T. J. Harmon's store was built. The mill crushed velvet and occola beans into feed.

#### Politics

Easonville beat has always had about an equal number of Democrat and Republican voters and a good number of independent voters. Possibly, Easonville has a greater percentage of independent voters than most of the other beats of the county. In most general elections, until 1932, the Republicans carried the beat. From 1932 to 1952 the Democrats carried it but, in the last presidential election the Republicans carried the beat nearly two to one -- 68 to 38.

## The Most Outstanding People

1. Dr. Henry J. Willingham -- Superintendent of Education (1911-1914)  
Later President of Florence State Teachers College
2. Dr. John W. Abercrombie -- Lived at New London but attended school at  
Easonville. State Superintendent of Education  
(1898-1902, 1920-1924), member of Congress  
and President of University of Alabama.
3. Dr. Issac W. Hill ----- State Superintendent of Education (1903-1907)  
National L-H Club Leader. (Not a native but  
a teacher and resident for several years).
4. Dr. Thomas Neal ----- President, Howard College  
(Came from Shelby county and lived in vicinity  
of Easonville until he went away to college).

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5. John Shade Maddox ----- Member, House of Representatives, (State)  
Member, County Board of Education.
6. Joseph Willingham ----- Member, County Board of Education
7. Miss Josephine Still ----- Missionary
8. Miss Sue Stone (Mrs. Tom Roberts) -- Teacher, Athens College
9. Mrs. Gladys Dycus Holcomb -Teacher, Laboratory School, Montevallo
10. Rev. Dan Funderburg ----- Baptist Minister
11. Rev. Tom Roberts ----- Methodist Minister
12. Rev. Harold Spradley ----- Methodist Minister
13. James Cospers ----- County Tax Assessor (Populist Ticket)
14. Jim Box ----- County Tax Collector (Populist Ticket)
15. Dr. R. L. McLellan ----- Physician
16. Capt. John Drake ----- Captain in Confederate Army
17. Kyser Leonard ----- (Member of the 1928 graduating class of  
Easonville High School), Representative from  
Talladega County State Legislature.

### THE BIRMINGHAM AND ATLANTIC (B & A) RAILROAD

The B & A Railroad ran from Pell City to Talladega via Renfro. It was built in 1886 by the Rogers Brothers Lumbering Company. They were engaged in cutting millions of feet of fine long-leaf timber and sawing it into lumber. They operated a mill at Renfro and needed a railroad to transport their lumber to both Pell City and Talladega. From those points it could be shipped on other railroads. They had difficulty in getting a right-of-way through the property of Liz Walker. After much wrangling and bargaining with her, they finally made a deal with her and built their railroad. One of the things that they promised her was a free ride on the train any time she wanted to travel on it. They assumed that she would go to the depot to board the train, but she didn't see any need of going to that much trouble since the train went near her home. When she wanted to take a little trip she stepped out to the railroad track, fired her pistol to signal the engineer to stop the train and he stopped it.

Although the train was built primarily to carry lumber it had a passenger car and it carried mail. The passenger train was usually hooked on to the freight train and went slowly. There was a depot at Cropwell and Mr. Ben Haselett was the depot agent.

The B & A crossed the Coosa River on a bridge near Cropwell. The bridge was later sold to Mr. Grover Waite who had it floored and turned it into a toll-bridge. The State bought it from Mr. Waite.

The B & A Railroad was discontinued in 1918. Building it had been an expensive undertaking which did not pay off. The Rogers Brothers Lumbering Company was forced into bankruptcy because of it.

Vera Wadsworth

### LATHRIP'S RAILROAD

Possibly Lathrip's Railroad was the shortest lived railroad to span St. Clair County territory. It was built in 1907 and discontinued in 1911. It was built by Lathrip and Hatton Lumber Company for the purpose of moving logs from Kendrick's mill on Kelley's Creek in Shelby County to Pell City and it connected those two points. Lathrip and Hatton had a lumber mill at Riverside. They bought a lot of timber at Kendrick's mill which had to be cut down and hauled to their Riverside mill to be sawed into lumber. The Lathrip's Railroad ran southward from Pell City, crossed the old Trussville road two miles west of Easonville, continued southward and crossed what is now highway 25 at the Pierce Lee home two miles east of New London, and ran on southward five miles to Kendrick's mill.

After the timber was cut the railroad was discontinued. The rails were ripped up and sold for scrap and the ties were sold to farmers who used them in making fence posts. A Mr. Whittle, who was the foreman, built a home out of boxcars near the tracks about two miles east of Easonville and lived there for fifteen years.

Vera Wadsworth



## THE HISTORY OF MOODY

In the early 1820's, during the administration of James Monroe, a section of land in township seventeen was granted to Epps Moody. Mr. Moody moved with his family from North Carolina and settled on the land. He built a log cabin to live in. The cabin had a chimney made of hand made bricks. They were moulded by hand from clay dug from a nearby field. They were baked by an open fire. Later, in 1846, the long house was torn down from around the chimney and the present home of the J. W. Moody family was built. The old brick chimney is still standing and is still in use.

Soon after the Epps Moody family settled on their land other people came. Some of the other early settlers were the Moores, Kirks, Kerrs, Lamberts, Hawkineses, Spruiells, Fulmers, Taylors and Adkineses. Wagon trails were soon beaten out in four directions across the settlement. They crossed at a point a quarter of a mile from the Moody home and the community soon became known as Moody's Cross Roads.

The people who settled Moody were hard-working people who did their own work. There were no slave-owners at Moody. When the South seceded from the Union and the Civil War was fought, it is said, Moody community, like Winston County, was pro-Union in sympathy. Most of the men who went from Moody to the Confederate Army did so sorely against their will because they felt that it was a "rich man's war." At least one of them deserted and went over to the Union forces. However, one Moody man, Captain Riley Moody, son of Epps Moody, served the Confederate Army valiently, although the Moody family never owned a slave and was staunchly Republican.

The first church to be organized at Moody was the Rock Springs Baptist church. It was organized in 1882 and it was located at Rock Springs, about a mile west of the site of the present Baptist church. John Harris was the first pastor. There were approximately fifty members.

In 1886 the Methodist Church was organized. It was called the Hopewell Methodist Church and the building was located a mile north of the present church site.

Because the Moody Methodists were not of a slave-owning class and had felt no sympathy for the secessionist from the Union nor the Methodist secessionists from the main Methodist Episcopal Church, they preferred to be a part of the main Methodist Episcopal Church instead of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Other churches on the Hopewell charge were as follows: Lawley's Chapel, Pope's Chapel, Poplar Grove and Antioch. The first year, 1886, the pastor was paid no salary. He traveled 365 miles, visited 53 homes, preached 14 sermons, and turned one member out of the church. His traveling expenses amounted to \$3.80. The members of the churches on the charge contributed \$2.75 toward the traveling expenses.

The second year, 1887, the pastor was paid \$10.70. The third year, 1888, the pastor was paid \$35.75 and the Presiding Elder was paid \$5.05.

In 1889 the pastor's salary was \$62.80. That year his annual report was as follows:

"Number of Sunday Schools — 3, Average attendance — 65, preached 15 times, received 40 new members, turned out two, christened two infants and chastised the members a number of times."

Signed, W. M. Green, Pastor

In 1890 the pastor's salary, for the first time was pledged. Two hundred dollars was promised to the pastor and twenty dollars to the presiding Elder. T. J. McCain was the pastor that year.

In 1909 the pastor's salary was raised to \$210. The Moody church paid \$150 of that amount. In 1916 the pastor's salary was raised to \$300 a year.

In the meantime the church building had been moved to the site of the Moody cemetery. A few years later it was moved to its present location. A large frame building was constructed there and was used until 1947 when the present brick church was erected. A stone parsonage was built in 1935. The present Moody charge is made up of Moody, Odenville, and Ebenezzar Churches. The yearly salary for the pastor is \$1200.

In 1879 Moody had its first school. It was taught in a log house which stood where the Methodist parsonage now stands. The school building was heated by an open fire which burned in a huge fireplace. The pupils sat on long benches made by splitting a log in halves and driving four pegs in each half for legs. The Blueback Speller was the only textbook used in the first school. The first teacher was George Sherbitt. There were about fifty "scholars." The second year, 1880, William Bynum was the teacher.

After a time the school was moved to a site near the G. W. Hannon home. In 1920 it was moved to its present location. At that time the main stone building, a home-ec building and a manual training shop were built. Mr. M. M. Woodham was the first principal. In 1924, when the 6-3-3 plan was adopted Moody School became Moody Junior High School. In 1928 it was one of the two model Junior High Schools in the state. In 1936 the auditorium was built. The lunchroom was added in 1948.

Politically, Moody was once a Republican stronghold but, as the years passed, more Democrats moved into the community and now the beat is carried by the Democratic Party.

Moody community has produced some successful men and women. Possibly, Mr. Ellis Moody, great-grandson of Epps Moody, and Mr. Curtis Adkins are the most outstanding men who have gone out from Moody community. Mr. Moody was Superintendent of Education in St. Clair County from 1930 to 1934. Mr. Adkins served one term as Tax Collector and one term as Probate Judge of St. Clair County.

Vera Wadsworth,  
Second Grade Teacher,  
Moody School

## THE CHURCHES

At first the people of Moody had no church to go to. Sometimes visiting preachers came to Moody and preached in someone's home. In 1882 the Rock Springs Baptist Church was built. Four years later the Methodist church was organized. It was called the Hopewell Methodist.

The pastor preached for nothing the first year. He was paid \$10.70 the second year.

Brenda Drake

## MOODY'S HONOR ROLL

Many good and useful men and women have grown up in Moody. We are proud of them all. Some of them were outstanding. Moody is proud of Captain Riley Moody who served in the Civil War. Mr. Ellis Moody was superintendent of Education of St. Clair County. Mr. Curtis Adkins was Probate Judge of St. Clair County.

Juanita Hayes

## HISTORY OF LONDON

London was settled in the early part of the eighteenth century by a group of people looking for a place to settle. This seemed a good place because of two streams of water and grazing for their stock and cattle. For a while the place did not have a name. Later a very wealthy Indian Chief came by and stopped a while. His name was Toe Kelly. The people liked him very much and to honor him they named the two streams for him, one Kelly's Creek and the other Toe River. Today they are still known by these names. Toe River, a small creek, runs through London and Kelly's Creek is about three miles South of London. London's real name was Kelly's Creek, later was nicknamed London.

One of the first settlers was Mr. Howard Castleberry who owned all the land from Bell Mountain to Sholby County Line. The Blankenship home, now owned by Wilmer Hoyle, is the oldest house in London now standing. It is a hundred years old. It was originally a one room building. The kitchen is the original Kelly's Creek post office.

The first store was owned by Mr. Corbett, an Irishman. At one time there were two stores and a saloon. The grocery was called a saloon and was owned by Mr. Abercrombie whose son later became our state superintendent of education. The Abercrombie home still stands today. It is owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Sims. For a number of years there was only one store, now there are two stores. One is owned and operated by Mr. J. C. Justice and son. The other is operated by Mr. Charles Williams and father.

There was never a church in the community as there was Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church two miles North, and Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church about three miles South. In 1948 a small group of people of the "Assembly of God Church" purchased land and built a little church across the highway from the stores. Several times Sunday school and revivals have been held in the school house. Mr. Hendricks, the oldest preacher in St. Clair County, once lived in London.

The first post office at London was called Kelly's Creek Post Office and the first postmistress was Mrs. Rena Inzer. Mail was received daily. Mr. Poe carried the mail from Pell City to Harpersville on a "Sulky", a two-wheel cart drawn by a horse. He went to Harpersville one day and back the next day. About 1905 a rural route from Vincent was begun and this cut out Kelly's Creek Post Office. Mr. Robert Fulenwider was the first postman serving two years. Mr. Tom Lackey was the second postman serving eighteen years. Now Mr. Walter Raily is the third serving since 1925.

The first school was on the Wolf Creek Road about one mile Northwest of where the present building now stands. The school was moved seven times before it came to rest where it now is, just off Highway 25, near the foot of Bell Mountain. At first the school was a one-room building with one teacher. But the children kept coming in and a room was added until there were three rooms, three teachers, and nine grades.

The present building is an attractive rock building. It was constructed in the early 1920's. Mr. Carl Q. Baxter was county superintendent. After a few years, the children grew up, married and moved away, leaving only the older people here. No more people moved in, so in 1943 the school again became a one-teacher school with four grades. In 1949 the few remaining pupils and teacher were moved to Easonville Junior High School. The county still owns the rock building. It has been said that the best school at London was taught by Mr. Carl Q. Baxter who later became an outstanding superintendent of education in St. Clair County.

At one time there was a gin and sawmill in London, owned and operated by Mr. Will and Sam Smith. Mr. Sam Smith still lives in London and the sawmill is operated by his son, Martin Smith. The gin ceased to operate in the early 1940's.

There was also a blacksmith shop and grist mill here. Near the blacksmith shop stood a big mulberry tree which was known as the "gossip tree." It was the favorite hang out for the men of the community. The blacksmith shop has not been in operation for approximately ten years.

In 1924 there was great excitement in the little community. Some men came through trying to buy all the mineral rights telling the people that oil had been discovered near London. The people thought they would get rich quick. They soon found out it was all a trick and settled down to their quiet farm life again.

For several years surveyors have been doing some work in connection with the proposed dam to be built on the Coosa River, about three miles East of London.

In 1938 Highway 25 was built through London. Later this road was paved.

About 1940 or 1941 the R.E.A. brought electric lights to London. Now the people of London have the modern conveniences such as refrigeration, water pumps, radios, and television.

Mrs. Amelia Warren is the oldest person still living in London. She is approximately ninety years of age. She has been an invalid about three years. She is still a very interesting person to talk to.

Mrs. Mac L. Blankenship

## MOODY'S CROSS ROADS

Mr. Epps Moody

Our government at Washington wanted people to come here to live. It wanted them to build homes and make farms. Our government gave the land to people who came and lived on it.

Mr. Epps Moody was the first white man to bring his family here. He came from North Carolina and settled on his land about 130 years ago. He built a log cabin for his family. He made the bricks for the chimney by hand. He made them out of clay which he dug from his field. He baked them in an open fire to make them hard. That chimney is still being used. It is one of the chimneys at Fred Moody's home.

Judy Sims

## THE CROSSROADS

Soon after the Moody family came, other families came. They were the Hawkines, Moores, Kerrs, Lamberts, Fulmers and Adkines. They built homes and started farms.

Soon two wagon trails were beaten out across the settlement. They crossed at a point near Mr. Moody's home. Soon the people began to call the community Moody's Crossroads.

Flossie Dawson

## THE EARLY MOODY HOMES

The early settlers of Moody lived in log cabins. Some of them had two large rooms and a lean-to. Some of them had two large rooms with an open hall between them. Some of them had a kitchen built separate from the main part of the home. Much of the furniture was made by hand. Few homes had glass windows. Most of them had wooden shutters.

Margie Bradford

## THE FIRST SCHOOL

IN 1879 the people had their first school. It was taught in a log house. It was heated by an open fire which burned in a big fireplace. There were about fifty scholars. They sat on log benches. There was only one teacher. Mr. George Sherbitt was the first teacher. The parents paid the teacher's salary. The first school lasted two months.

Evelyn Ash

## MARGARET, ACMAR, WHITE'S CHAPEL

The history of the development of Margaret, Acmar, and White's Chapel is simply the history of the development of Alabama Fuel and Iron Company in St. Clair County.

Alabama Fuel and Iron Company was organized in 1905 by Col. Henry F. DeBardleben and was then known as Alabama Fuel and Steel Company. Colonel DeBardleben, was the grandson of Daniel Pratt, a pioneer developer of Iron furnaces in Alabama. The city of Prattville was named for Daniel Pratt.

In 1908 Alabama Fuel and Steel Company was reorganized by Colonel DeBardleben, with capital from the Colgate, Macy and other New York interests, and was thereafter known as Alabama Fuel and Iron Company.

It was in 1908 that Margaret was built to provide homes for those men who were to manage and operate the mines and who were to dig the coal. The village was named for Mrs. Charles F. DeBardleben, whose husband, the son of Colonel Henry DeBardleben, was vice-president of the new company.

Acmar was built for similar reasons to those given for the building of Margaret and just a short time later. It derived its name from the first syllable of Acton, a mining village the company owned and operated in Shelby County, and the first syllable of Margaret, Ac-mar.

It was at Acmar that the company built its central power and washer plants.

White's Chapel developed along with Margaret and Acmar as employees of Alabama Fuel and Iron Company built private homes in that community. Employees of the Central of Georgia Railroad, who operated the branch line of that company to serve the mines at Margaret and Acmar, also built private homes in this area.

For a number of years the mines in these areas produced an annual output of one million tons of coal. There was never any work stoppage caused by labor difficulties.

The development of Diesel locomotives and the increased use of natural gas so curtailed the use of steam coal that in November 1950, Alabama Fuel and Iron Company closed its mines and set out to liquidate all its assets.

By C. C. Garrison

## The History of Odenville

Indians were the first people to live where the present village of Odenville is located. Game was plentiful, good springs were numerous, and the land was fertile. All these things attracted the people of the northeast as they migrated westward, so many of them stopped along the way. They formed our present village.

The earliest settlers in the order in which they settled were: Peter Hardin, the father of W. C. Hardin, and grandfather of Mrs. Nell Hardin Hodges, present resident of Odenville. He came in 1821 and settled in the old field southeast of the present site of Odenville, near the Shockley home at the foot of the mountain. In 1824 he moved to a new home where W. J. Hodges now lives. A Mr. Lowell settled where the Ben Vandergrift home is. A Mr. Lovet came to dwell about where the Moore home is today. A Mr. Mize built a beautiful large brick home near what is called now Liberty, northeast of Odenville on the Ashville-Odenville Road. It still stands today, and is supposed to be the oldest in the entire county. A Mr. Harman then settled about where the Coursens now live. Johnnie Vandergrift settled on a farm at the foot of the mountain where Hill's farm is today. Billy Foreman settled on the Branchville-Odenville Road near where the Spark's home now stands. Johnny Mize settled where Garfield Steed now lives.

Odenville was first known as Hardin's Shope, named for Peter Hardin, but later it was changed to the present name at the suggestion of Mr. Brown, a mail carrier of that day.

### Historical Facts

The Cross Roads in Odenville were developed along old Indian and game trails. The first form of industry was the lower mill on Canoc Creek, over a hundred years ago.



The old brick Mize home in this community is approximately one hundred thirty-eight years old.

Odenville's first Post Office was located in Mr. Bob Newton's home.

He still has the table used for sorting the mail.

Mary Simpson named the new Post Office.

The first freight train come through Odenville in 1905. The rails were laid along in front of the train as it moved slowly along the new track.

The St. Clair County News was edited in Odenville for two years by J. L. Maddox.

The first edition is reported to have been on white silk.

The first public school was taught in a little log building at Walnut Grove.

St. Clair County High located in Odenville, is one of the five oldest in the state of Alabama.

#### Schools In Odenville

The first public school in the Odenville community was Walnut Grove, located at Hardwick, four miles east of Odenville. It had only one teacher, but was considered a very prosperous school for that time.

As the population increased and shifted it was decided that a better location for the school would be at Liberty, one mile east of Odenville, on the Ashville-Leeds road. The little village of Odenville, grew until it had a small school of its own. That was something like 68 years ago, we are told by the old settlers. The school was a small one-room log structure, heated by an open fire place at one end of the room. It stood somewhere about where the home of Mr. Honor Byers now is. So far as we know, only four of its pupils are still living. They are Louis Mize, Erna Mize, Janie Philips, and Isabella Scoggins. Mr. Jim Hardin was one of the first teachers.

As the population of Odenville grew it was decided to unite the school at Liberty and the one at Odenville.

A new building was built on the same piece of ground on which the present school stands, but at a different site. This was built with state aid and became a modern state public school of that day. It was a two story wood structure with several rooms.

Misfortune came upon this building and it was burned to the ground about fifteen years ago. The patrons were not to be outdone in their desire to educate their children. With the aid of the state they soon began the new building to replace the former. It was of field stone and built according to the newest state plan, a one story building with three regular class rooms, two of which could be thrown together to use as an auditorium, and other needed storage and cloak rooms. This one is still in use.

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#### High School

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In 1907 the state legislature passed a bill providing for the establishment of a county high school in each of the counties of the state. St. Clair County was one of the first five counties to take advantage of this offer. In July 1908 the ground was cleaned off for the erection of the present high school building. Mr. John Inzer was head of the erecting committee, which consisted of:

W. T. Brown

J. L. Maddox

H. H. Letaw

W. T. Hodges

P. A. Glenn

S. M. Mize

W. C. Hardin

S. M. Cummings

The school opened in the fall of 1908 with L. K. Benson as principal and Miss Minnie Woodall assistant. It had an enrollment of twenty-six. Since it was a new school, only one year of high school work was done that year.

In the second year the enrollment had increased to sixty-two, forty in the first year and twenty-two in the second year. These corresponded to the eighth and ninth grades of today, for the state then used what was called the 7--4 plan--seven years in elementary school and four in high school.

Every pupil was required to take either Latin or German in the first year. In addition he took English, mathematics, English history, physical geography, manual training, and geometrical drawing, a total of seven subjects.

In the second year the pupil took Latin, German or Commercial Geography and English, Algebra and Plane Geometry, ancient history, Biology and manual training.

In the third year he took English, mathematics, medieval and modern history, and two electives chosen from the following subjects: physics, Home Economics, Cicero and Latin prose composition, French, German or Bookkeeping and Commercial Geography.

In the fourth year he took English, Mathematics, U. S. History and Civics, Alabama History and two electives from Chemistry, Practical Agriculture, Virgil and Latin grammar, French, German, Bookkeeping and Commercial Law.

There is quite a difference in this course of study of many subjects taught a few minutes a day on certain days a week and the fewer subjects of today which are taught from forty-five to ninety minutes a day in our present system.

The school had the distinction of being the only high school in the state requiring its students to wear uniforms.

By the third year of the school it was able to publish an announcement of its session beginning September 12, 1910. Several of these may be found among the patrons of the school today.

The Vocational school was built in 1925 providing instructions for boys in vocational agriculture and for girls in vocational home economics. This work has been carried on by Mr. Hughes and Mr. Ellis, Vocational Agriculture teachers, and Misses Willians, Martin, Trannell and Wooley, Home Economics teachers.

In the spring of 1946 some land was purchased from Mrs. Augusta Taylor. The school paid \$100.00 on it and the remainder was paid by the County Board of Education. On this land a lunch room was erected that summer. The patrons of the school, with the aid of the County Board of Education, erected the building. One class room was added to the lunchroom. Before the new building was erected, the lunchroom was

housed in the rooms under the auditorium. When the lunchroom was moved, the 5th and 6th grades were moved into the rooms vacated by the lunchroom. The 4th grade moved into the new room adjoining the lunchroom. At this time the pupils from Branchville were transported to Odenville. The school at Branchville burned the latter part of December, 1944. Until enough room was made for them at Odenville, part of the pupils attended school at Moody.

The Low Gap Elementary School burned February 13, 1946. The teachers finished that year's work in the Low Gap Church. During the summer three additional class rooms were built at Odenville on the high school campus. That fall the 3rd grade at Odenville and all the pupils from Low Gap were transferred to the high school campus. Only the first and second grades remain in the Odenville Elementary Building.

The Friendship School closed at the end of the 1948-49 term. That fall those pupils were transferred to Odenville. All grades from the 3rd through the 12th are now on the high school campus.

The Hare property which adjoins the school campus was purchased by the County Board of Education in 1946 as part of the Odenville school campus.

The History of Odenville

By The Commercial Art Class 1932

Miss Mary Edith Spiegel, Teacher

Information for period since 1932

by Miss Nancy Wilson, Principal

8336 Third Avenue South  
 Birmingham, Alabama  
 October 15, 1932

Miss Elvie Lou Alverson  
 Odenville, Alabama

Dear Miss Alverson:

Your letter, asking for historical information regarding the Odenville Presbyterian Church, received. In replying, I wish to state that I am not sure when the church was organized. But I think it was organized about 1885 or 1889 as a Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Liberty. Rev. Thornie Taylor was one of the first, if not the first minister of the church; I rather think he organized the church.

Among the early members of the congregation were members by the names of Stovall, Mize, Hurst, Simpson, Steed, and Ash.

In the Consummation of the Union of the Cumberland Presbyterian and Presbyterian U. S. A. in 1906, a part of the Liberty Congregation declined to go into the United Presbyterian Church and retained the name of Cumberland Presbyterian. But the pastor and session of the church, with a large part of the membership of the Liberty Congregation, abiding the decision of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian (or majority of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church) later became the congregation of the Odenville Presbyterian Church.

In July of 1912 the Session of the Odenville Presbyterian Church appointed a committee consisting of the Pastor, Rev. J. M. Alexander, and elders - J. A. Mize, and S. M. Cummings - to select a lot for the church building. This committee selected and purchased the lot on which the church stands. The lot was purchased from M. Wat Brown, of the Odenville Land Company, for the consideration of \$125.00; contract for the new church building was let the next year and money raised and the church building erected.

The deed to the property was made to the trustees of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Messrs L. M. Mize, S. G. Hurst, and J. A. Stovall are the trustees of the local congregation and custodians of the property. They are also the present elders of the local church.

The present membership of the Odenville Church is 42. The church has, during the last fifteen years, lost quite a few members through deaths and removals from this community.

Ministers who have served this congregation during the past thirty-five years are: Revs. J. B. Stovall, S. L. Robinson, S. G. McCluney, H. S. Helment, Rl Pl Taylor, and J. M. Alexander, and among the elders of this congregation who served faithfully and worthily, now deceased, were S. M. Cummings, J. A. Mize, Dr. C. A. Gason, J. W. Jones, and J. W. Stovall.

J. M. Alexander, Pastor  
 Odenville Presbyterian Church

October 29, 1932

Miss Frances Marcrun  
Route 2  
Odenville, Alabama

My dear Miss Marcrun:

The only record I can find giving data on St. Clair County High School is a copy of the "Announcement" for the "Third Annual Session, Beginning September 12, 1910, and ending May 26, 1911."

This announcement is in the Department of Archives and History and contains among other things the following:

"Board of Control  
High School Commission

His Excellency, Braxton Bragg Comer, Governor,  
Harry C. Gunnels, Superintendent of Education  
William W. Brandon, State Auditor

County Board of Education

B. F. Hammond, Superintendent of Education  
Napoleon P. Spradley, John W. Moore,  
Elijah T. Turner, William F. Maynor  
Algie H. Smith, Treasurer."

"Faculty"

James Olin Sturdivant, A. M., Principal  
Miss Ada Barnes, First Assistant  
Mrs. Alma Yerarkey Robertson, Second Assistant  
Mrs. C. C. Brown, Music, Expression, Art."

"This school has the distinction of being the only county school in the State wearing uniforms--One society, The W. T. Brown Literary Society, with prospects of others."

"Board"

Board may be obtained at from \$10.00 to \$12.00 per month. Students may rent rooms and do their own cooking, thereby reducing the cost. Some report that board in this way cost from \$2.00 to \$5.00 per month."

Miss Frances Marcrun  
 October 29, 1932  
 Page 2

"Roster of Pupils

1908-1909 - First Year

Buscy, John T.	Hurst, Virgil L.
Buscy, Thomas J. Jr.	Jones, Howard V.
Cumming, Sada B.	Jones, Chester A.
Davis, Clarence L.	Mize, Arthur Clarence
Forman, Mae E.	Mize, Bert
Forman, Cary .	Newton, Dovie E.
Fowler, Henry A.	Robertson, George W.
George, Alta	Scoggins, Mary E.
George, Ross	Shockley, Nannie E.
Hagin, James A.	Tucker, Jas. T.
Hodges, Hicks	Wood, Addie L
Hardin, Russell Jr.	Vandergrift, Benj. F.
Hardin, Nellie H.	Jones, Lottie M.

Apparently there was only one year of high school work the first year.

There is a roster for 1909-1910 containing 40 names, "First Year," and 12 names in "Second Year."

The courses of study is set down as four years beginning with the 8th grade. At that time the state had what was called the 7-4 plan; that is, seven years of elementary school and four years of high school.

The course of study is given by years. Every pupil was required to take either Latin or German in the first year and in the second year, English, algebra and plane geometry, ancient history, biology, and manual training.

In the third year the pupil took English, mathematics, medieval and modern history. He might elect two subjects from the composition, Greek, French, German, or bookkeeping and commercial geography.

In the fourth year the pupil took English, mathematics, United States History and civics and Alabama History and two electives from the following: Chemistry, practical agriculture, Virgil 6 books, (Latin) grammar, Xenophon's Ana basis, French, German, bookkeeping and commercial law.

Miss Frances Marcum  
 October 29, 1932  
 Page 3.

This "announcement" contains a number of interesting pictures, one showing the building and students line up—boys along the front in military costumes and the girls along the right side (as the building faces) in somewhat military-looking uniforms with caps resembling the caps used with graduating ("caps and gowns") costumes. Another picture shows the students body and faculty on and in front of the front steps of the building. In another picture entitled "Raglands Representatives at St. Clair High School" are shown six young ladies and seven young men, all in the inevitable "uniforms."

Five pages of advertisements are carried on the pages following the announcements about the school. Appealing for patronage for through this medium were: Judson College; Edw. Kerah Agency, Ragland; Birmingham Trust and Saving Company; Hirshberg Art Company, Baltimore; Dr. A. W. Dupey; St. Clair County News; Steed and George; W. C. Watson; J. L. Mize and Son; C. P. Ward; Alabama Polytechnic Institute; St. Clair Motor Car Company; Cook Springs, (Studebaker, Flanders and E. M. F. cars) J. M. Williamson and Son; B. E. Wing; Bank of Odenville; W. L. Steed.

Mr. H. A. Fowler, who was a pupil in the early days, is now principal of Choctaw County High School at Butler, Alabama. Mr. W. F. Mayor, who was on the County Board of Education, is now principal of the Elount County High School at Ononta. No doubt these gentlemen could give you some facts that would be helpful.

There is here in the Department of Archives and History a copy each of two commencement programs for May, 1916. One is for the Oratorical Contest on May 9th. Some of the titles of the orations and the names of the orators were as follows:

"The American Flag", Tom Riddle; "Beheld a Republic," Coy Amberson; "Lincoln, A Man Called of God," Reuben Self; "The Confederate Flag." Vernon Vandergrift; "The Daughter of the Regiment," Gussie Cox.

On Wednesday May 10th a play, "The Mistress of St. Ives" in three acts was presented.

No doubt other materials could be found in the Department of Archives and History if some one could take time to investigate all of the available sources.

You are working on an interesting topic, and I trust you will be able to do a fine job of it. If we can help you in any way, please write to us again.

This is in answer to your request under date of October 16th. I regret that I was unable to give it earlier attention.

Very truly yours,

T. W. Smith  
 Supervisor of Secondary Education  
 Montgomery, Alabama



## THE HISTORY OF ASHVILLE

Old towns never die, they just fade away. This popular phrase coined by a famous general suits well the town of Ashville. It has slowly faded, but will probably never die. People who love life in a small town will always keep Ashville alive as a peaceful southern town. More than likely they will never try to turn Ashville into a big, booming, industrial center. They will probably be content with Ashville as it is--peaceful, truly Southern and very much the old hometown, where nothing changes as the years go by. I feel that the reason for Ashville being still a small town today is seen as we study the history of the town.

The settlers of the territory surrounding Ashville were peaceful people. They came seeking land on which to establish their homes. They came to settle on small plots of land and to become permanent fixtures in the community. Apparently none of the first early white settlers had any great plans for owning a vast amount of property. Every man seemed to be on equal standing with the rest.

These first settlers found many things of interest in this new territory--Spanish coins, Indians and their civilization, fruitful land, etc.--all helping to tell them something of the history of the land they were making their home.

The Spanish coins and other Spanish articles sometimes found on our soil are the remainders of De Soto's trip through

the territory. His famous march took him nearby and he sent out from his main body, during stops over and camp periods, small foraging bands and scouting parties, and these are the ones who first found their way into St. Clair County. Some ill-treated by the Indians, others took sick in the county and were given the best medical treatment then practiced among the Indians, a decoction of herbs prepared by their "Medicine Men." It was these Spanish and Portuguese who left the Spanish coins here. It was the descendants of these white men who left the traces of Spanish blood here for years. It is possible that the man, Bidy, of Portuguese extraction, who was hanged with five others at "Gallows Hill" above Ashville in 1829 (300 years after De Soto's visit) for a number of murders, was descendant of the ill-fated adventurous followers of De Soto.<sup>1</sup>

Indians who lived in villages out of Ashville were found by De Soto's men to be a large and powerful tribe known as the Creeks in later days. There was quite a number of Cherokees, also. Although this area was claimed by the English from 1764 and for several years after, it was really in complete possession of the Indians.

In 1794-5 the county of St. Clair was sold as a part of the "Georgia Company" of the Great Yazoo Land Sales by the Georgia

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1. William H. Cather, History of St. Clair County, Clipping File, Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

legislature. Though these sales were later declared null and void, the tendency was to cause an influx of settlers into the settlers to the section. These settlers came to occupy the lands granted them by the Georgia Company and remained here. With this rush of settlers to the territory, naturally the Indians began to lose ground, and to become rebellious toward the white settler.

Planters had no worry about the beautiful and bountiful land. Wild fruit was plentiful in those days, and here and there around Ashville were several peach orchards, planted by the Indians. One of these orchards was on the hill just south of Cobb's Spring. Another was in the field some distance northwest of Hon. James G. Greene's residence.<sup>1</sup>

The Indians exhibited signs of intelligence, in his own way--understanding others and at times when he desired, making himself understood. Both of the tribes that were so well known had a simple language easily understood. An example of the cleverness of the Indian was related in Cather's History of St. Clair County. "Years ago--just after Ashville had been founded, probably in the twenties, three Indian men were brought to Ashville for trial on a charge of stealing horses. This was after the states of Alabama and Georgia had extended their jurisdiction over both these tribes or nations so as to induce them earlier to remove to the west. A great many Indians were ."

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1. Mrs. Ab Crow, personal interview, April 7, 1951.

tried at Ashville in those days. These three Indians were "ironed" or handcuffed at the Ashville blacksmith shop, probably at Bill Alman's. While the irons were being made and put on these Indians, one of them, a young brave, made motions or signs, indicating that he wanted to write a letter to send back home in North Alabama by the officers who had arrested and brought him here. Thereupon someone brought him paper, a pen and ink, and he wrote a letter in the Cherokee written language, which had been invented by an Indian several years before."<sup>1</sup>

The Indians had intelligent leaders, two of whom visited Ashville frequently. They were Cherokee chiefs Ross and John Ridge. Ridge came to Ashville often to attend court in behalf of those of his people who fell into the hands of the laws. Ridge was a large, stalwart, full-blooded Indian, of proud bearing. He was educated in the North. He married a white woman. It was not a strange sight in Ashville's streets in early days to see an Indian; but to see one like Ridge, educated, and dressed in the finest of broadcloth, which he always wore when visiting Ashville, was a sight to behold. Ridge was killed by the Ross party after their removal to the West.<sup>2</sup>

As stated before, the settlers came into Ashville as peaceful souls who did not like to fight. However, they found themselves faced with a war situation when the Indians finally became aroused.

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1. Cather, op. cit.

2. Crow, Interview, op. cit.

They held a big council at Littafuchee, Creek Town outside of Ashville that was destroyed by Colonel Dyer in November, 1813.<sup>1</sup> Tecumseh, who already was waging his war with the Whites in the South, heard of the trouble in this section, and helped to incite the Creeks and Cherokees both to commence a fierce war of extermination against the white man.<sup>2</sup>

It was then the Indian War whoop was heard in all its direful reality in the forests about Ashville and throughout Saint Clair. The Indians would have a war dance at which they would put on red war paint, thus attaining for themselves the name of "Red-Sticks."

As his base of operations against the Creeks, General Jackson built Fort Strother at Ten Islands, on the Coosa River about eight miles from Ashville.<sup>3</sup> Jackson detailed a company of soldiers to remove the Indians from Upper Cataula and Lower Cataula, the old villages outside of Ashville. Those from Lower Cataula were settled at and around a place known as the "Fife-town" of Creek Indians, which was on the road from Talladega to Jacksonville.<sup>4</sup>

The last report concerning the Indian was about 1825, after Ashville had become a flourishing town. One of the high chiefs of the Creeks, McIntosh, was about to negotiate a treaty for the removal of the Indians to the West, when he was killed by a company of "red-sticks." Great numbers of these men became hostile

1. John Inzer Freeman, St. Clair County News, August 7, 1914.
2. Cather, op. cit.
3. Clipping File, Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.
4. Cather, op. cit.

and the Talladega tribe fled to Ashville for protection and remained for quite a while. They accomplished the feat of persuading Colonel John Massey to let them encamp at the big spring on his property. Massey, then sheriff of the county, under public authority of some kind, had these Indians fed and cared for until the trouble quieted down.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps you wonder where the people came from who stirred up all the trouble with the Indians. The people settling around Ashville apparently came from varied places.

Some of the first settlers came from East Tennessee in 1815.<sup>2</sup> Settlers came from Madison County in 1816 and traveled down an old Indian trail that led from Ditto's Landing to Mud Town on the Cahabe, while East Tennesseans came down in flat boats, landed at Gunter's Landing, both groups having Settlers who came to Ashville. Georgians and Carolinians reached the Creek Cession on the Coosa by crossing the Chattahoochie at the upper Shallow Ford, crossing Will's Creek and skirting the east side of the mountains.<sup>3</sup> The general opinion in Ashville is that the majority of settlers came from the Carolinas and Georgia.

Though settlers came to this section as early as 1815, it was not until 1818 that any real permanent settlement was made. A family was on its way West with a group of people to find a new home and there were several children in the group. It was by accident that this family stayed in Ashville as one of the children fell from a wagon and fractured his skull. The child's father,

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1. Cather, op. cit.

2. W. J. Beles, "This Date in Alabama History," Birmingham News-Age Herald, April 27, 1941.

3. Clipping File, op. cit.

John Ashe, found that the Indians were friendly and he approved of the good water supply of several springs and made his home there. Therefore, he decided to stay on by the big spring. This he did, establishing a plantation after he had homesteaded some land. His plantation was just outside of Ashville (the Rowan farm today). This settler who did so much to fix the permanency of the community served Ashville and his district very well. He was a state senator and took a big part in both local and state affairs.<sup>1</sup> The town bears his name, although in recent years it has been shortened to Ashville, leaving out the e in Ashe.

At the second session of the General Assembly of Alabama Territory was approved the forming of St. Clair County. Section 4 of the act was for the purpose of establishing courts to be held at the house of Alexander Brown.<sup>2</sup> Upper Cataula was to be the temporary county seat, a spot known as the Capeheart place, four miles from Ashville. The first court was designated to be held in a log trading post, home of Brown, built out of timbers hewn from the forest, and only the distance of a street's width away from the present courthouse.

The first provisions in the acts respecting public buildings is found when December 6, 1818, the county court is authorized to levy a tax for the purpose of erecting a temporary jail in said county. In 1821 a legislative act appointed a committee to superintend the building of a courthouse and a jail, at the county seat to be elected.<sup>3</sup> John Ashe, John Massey, John

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1. Miriam B. Richardson, St. Clair's Personalities, Clipping File.

2. Acts of Alabama Territory, 1818, Second Session, p. 22-3.

3. Acts of Alabama, 1821, pp. 38-42.

Cunningham, Joel Chandler and George Shortwell were appointed to the committee. Log buildings were erected and used for several years. All of the buildings from the very beginning must have been well preserved. Certainly the records were. The marriage license book shows the first marriage license as issued to "Thomas Stone to Joanna Smith: June 6, 1819."<sup>1</sup> There must have been some certificates issued prior but the above is the first recorded.

The county court held regular sessions until it was abolished in 1849-50. At a session of the superior court, September term, 1819, the courthouse of St. Clair County, H. Y. Webb, judge of the superior court of law and equity for the Alabama Territory, presided and the following jurors were sworn: John Ash, John Crump, Henry Bose, William Hill, James Martin, David Brown, John Dill, Benjamin Low, John Greenwood, Thomas Thrasher, John McCollum, and William Watson. Jesse Roberts was clerk, David Conner, sheriff and John Bush, deputy. In the first case tried Thomas A. Rogers was plaintiff's attorney and the suit was for false swearing. Polydon Naylor's name shows about this time as practicing in the court.<sup>2</sup>

A legislative act of 1819 established three election precincts in Saint Clair, Joel Chandler's, William Guthrey's and Peter Ragsdale's. It was probably in the election of 1819 that the county seat was moved to Lower Cataula, the present site of Ashville.<sup>3</sup>

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1. John Inzer Freeman, op. cit.
  2. Frank Willis Barnett, "St. Clair County Seat Has Striking History" Birmingham News, May 6, 1928.
  3. Ibid.



In 1822 brick structures were built and used until the present courthouse was erected in 1844. Littleton Yarbrough was the builder and Campbell Jefferson the bricklayer. Manoah Yarbrough, father of the builder, came to Ashville in 1822 from Roan County, North Carolina. Yarbrough kept a ledger while building the courthouse which is in the possession of his descendants in Ashville. It contains the number of slaves, bricks, etc., that were used. The building was completed in 1828.<sup>1</sup>

On December 12, 1822, the following act was passed incorporating the town of Ashville.

ASHVILLE

Pages 120-121 Acts of Alabama, 1822

AN ACT

To incorporate the Town of Ashville, in the county of Saint Clair.

Sec. 1. That the Town of Ashville in the county of St. Clair, Be, and the same is hereby established and incorporated, including thirty acres, agreeable with the plan of said town.

Sec. 2. Provides for the election of Councillors, on the first Monday in February of each year; said election to be managed by the Justice of Peace and two Householders; also provides for the election of a Town Intendent. The said Councillors shall be, and they are hereby, constituted a body corporate, by the name and style of the Intendent and Council of the town of Ashville, and full corporate powers granted to such body.

Sec. 3. That the said Intendent and Council shall possess the same powers, and be subject to the same restrictions as are provided by law for the government of the Intendent and Councilor of the town of Montgomery, passed at Huntsville, the third day of December 12, 1819.

Approved December 12, 1822.<sup>2</sup>

1. Crow, Interview, op. cit.

2. Acts of Alabama, 1822. Pp. 120-121

In the years immediately following the incorporation of Asheville, things really began to boom. The town was fairly successful until the war between the states. There are many old settlers who played their role in the drama of this small town and it would be hard to pay tribute to all.

Among those living in the town before the Civil War, I shall list only a few. The first merchants were William Slean, James Rogan, Alemeth Byers, Moses Dean, Tilman Dean, John I. Thomason, Alfred Goode, Goodwin & Mitchell, etc. The physicians were Drs. Bothwell, Farrer, C. A. Crow, A. W. Nixon, Levi Lloyd, William H. Beason and others. Attorneys: Polydon Naylor, James Lewis, Oran M. Roberts, Rufus W. Cobb, Girard Hewitt, J. W. Inzer, and Andrew Pickens Earle. James Rogan had the first gin, Armstrong & Cox had a water mill, as did A. B. Vandegrift.<sup>1</sup>

Of the men listed above several became outstanding leaders in their field. Oran M. Roberts got his first education in the common schools of Asheville, and studied law there, where for a time he was admitted to the bar. He graduated from the University of Alabama in 1836, one of the first graduates. Shortly after 1840 he moved to Texas where he began to make his home known. He became chief justice and in 1878, governor of the Lone Star State.

Asheville had another outstanding governor, this one twice a governor of Alabama, Rufus W. Cobb. He was educated at Asheville under Professors Wasson and Drury, and was graduated from

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1. Barnett. op. cit.

the University of Tennessee in 1850. He then read law in the office of John C. Thomasin, was admitted to the bar in 1845, and practiced until 1867. In addition to serving the state as governor, he also held many other official positions.

Polydon Naylor apparently never became very famous on the state level but he must have been one of Ashville's better lawyers. His signature rests on many papers in the county records as early as September, 1819, when Alabama was still a territory of the United States. One of these, as an example, is an order to the sheriff concerning a man taking corn out of a field. Naylor, as plaintiff's attorney, wrote a note of explanation on the back of his order, telling the cause of arrest of the defendant, to be brought before the Superior Court of Law and Equity on the second Monday in September.

If there is any reason for John Washington Inzer's receiving such a long and loud evation, I have yet to find it. Yet, every source of material on Ashville always lists Inzer as Ashville's outstanding product, as Ashville's "Grand Old Man." He moved to Ashville and opened a law office in 1856. He was several times probate judge. He represented Ashville in the constitutional convention in 1861. A Lieutenant-colonel in the Confederate Army, Inzer made a very good record. After the war he was elected to the constitutional conventions of 1875 and 1890. Later he served in the legislature of the state.

The home of Inzer still stands today, strong and firm, as the history of the people of Ashville stands. It was built for Major Moses Dean in 1851, and the bricks were burnt and laid by

Jefferson Campbell, the master brickmaker and layer mentioned earlier. The walls extend from ground to roof and even the dividing walls between the rooms are brick.<sup>1</sup>

Barnett states that "It was during the hell of reconstruction that Inzer stood like a lion against lawlessness and disorder and by his moral and physical courage brought bad men to their senses and rallied good men to help."<sup>2</sup> Even before the Civil War Inzer fought for his and his county's beliefs. He was one of thirty-nine at the secession convention to oppose secession.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of the secession convention the town's first newspaper, The St. Clair Diamond, was established. Thomas J. Mangham was editor. It was printed only until 1861, when the paper was suspended and everybody on it entered the Confederate service. In 1863 The Ashville Vidette started up, but in 1864 it fell into the hands of General Rousseau, of the French army, who used the printing outfit for printing orders and blanks, and got out at least one number of a paper.<sup>4</sup> The Democratic Farmer was probably established during these turbulent times but there is no definite information. Also there is no information concerning The Southern Alliance, a populist paper at Ashville mentioned in a letter to The Southern Aegis from Bays D. Cather around 1902.

A paper which has been in the hands of the Cather family until recently is The Southern Aegis, established in 1873. It has been

1. General statements concerning Inzer
2. Barnett. op. cit.
3. David Heldt, "John Washington Inzer," Birmingham News. No date.
4. Barnett. op. cit.

bought by The Pell City News' owner and is printed today in Pell City. The building it used to be printed in is the same in which the Vidette was published. The paper is a typical Southern weekly.

In the issue of January 6, 1875, the Aegis carried a local advertisement of A. B. Vandergrift and quite a few Gadsden, Birmingham, and Chattanooga advertisers used its space. I should think the reason for the out-of-town advertisers is the fact that the circulation of Gadsden and Birmingham papers had not reached a good part of the people in places such as Ashville. Today there are literally no ads except for a few local advertisers. An issue of September 16, 1903, carried 19 ads. July 1, 1949 issue had only one ad, that of the Ashville Savings Bank.

Church notices in the January 6, 1875 Aegis showed the following ministers--Baptist, Jesse A. Celling; Methodist, P. E. Nicholson; Cumberland Presbyterian, Thomas McCluney. Ministers came to Ashville as early as 1820 and the denominations above got pretty good foothold at that time.

Perhaps the oldest church house in Ashville today was built around 1880. It was once the home of the Presbyterians but was purchased from them in 1918 by the Congregation of the Church of Christ. The congregation of the Church of Christ was established in 1913.

The First Methodist Church in Ashville was organized in the late 1820's. The Ashville Baptist building was at first used as a place of worship. In 1854 Alemeth Byers gave property for a church. It is on this same site that the present church stands.

The Baptists built a little log church in 1853. For many years it was the only church; all denominations used it. It stood on Cemetery Hill just outside of Ashville until 1845, when a new building was erected. This served the congregation until 1930 when the present building was erected.<sup>1</sup>

Just as the churches have played their part in Ashville through the years, so have the schools. However, in this field, there has been a scarcity of material. The schools existed, but as to dates of establishment, enrollment, etc., little is known. The schools for many years have been built on the same site as the present one. \*Mrs. Eugene Embry recalls that the Ashville Academy, which she attended, burned about 1909. It is probable that this is the same academy which Rufus W. Cobb attended, when the instructors were Wasson and Drury. The schools were set up soon after settlers arrived and William C. Griffin and John H. Caldwell were among the early teachers. The old school house which sat on the site of the present Baptist Church for years, finally passed from school to religious purposes and the school moved to the other side of the village. Ashville then had a large wooden building around the side of the hill where today stands the present schoolhouse, built in 1922.<sup>2</sup>

A phase of the educational development which is not known to the general public is the growth of St. Clair College.<sup>3</sup> The

1. Mrs. Ab Crow, Ashville Church History, Southern Aegis July 1, 1949.

2. Barnett, op. cit.

3. An act of the legislature in 1896 incorporated the College.

\* Inaccurate reference to location and being destroyed by fire.

September 16, 1903 issue of the Southern Aegis announced the opening of St. Clair College, on Wednesday, September 16, with the Rev. L. M. Stone D D, President, and his daughter, Edna, instructor of music and elocution. The expenses were moderate in regard to present prices of that day--good board at eight dollars and a half, tuition from one dollar and a half. To the announcement James A. Embry, Secretary of the Board of Trustees, added: "The best of religious and moral influences prevail here. Ashville is noted for intelligence, social refinement, moral habits and hospitable homes. These are important for pupils away from home." It is unfortunate that nothing is known of the enrollment and the length of the life of St. Clair College.

Since there has been no industrial development it is hard to draw conclusions concerning the decline of the population, as possibly being affected by this lack of industrial development. The activities engaged in by many of Ashville's settlers have been related in regard to the first settlers.

In 1910 there were three doctors, two livery stables, one dentist, a heading and stave mill. The Ashville Savings Bank had acquired a capital of \$25,000.<sup>1</sup> Freeman in his article showed the need for a railroad. That need still exists today.

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1. Freeman, op. cit.

Barnett listed the following industries in Ashville in 1922: "The Ashville Cooperage Company, of which Sam High is the president, is a large concern doing a big business and employing a lot of labor. Mr. Anelia Cox, Mr. R. Abernathy and John Yarbrough have water mills. The following have sawmills: Henry Cash, George West, R. R. Hodges, J. H. Frazier, Alvin McEntyre, and L. R. Lonigan. Sam High operates a gin.

"There are a number of progressive merchants and the new brick block makes a fine showing among the old-timers which have come down from before the Civil War, one attractive thing about the square being the old-time law offices.

There are two banks and each one housed in an up-to-date brick building. The Ashville Savings Bank is the older, it having been established in 1906, while the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank was organized in 1920. The Ashville Savings Bank has a capital of \$12,500 and the Farmers' and Merchants' a capital of \$15,000. Each bank has a deposit of about \$10,000."<sup>1</sup>

While the population of St. Clair has doubled since 1870, the town of Ashville has about one-third of the population today that it had in 1870. The following population figures show the growth of the county and the decline of Ashville:<sup>2</sup>

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1. Barnett, op. cit.

2. Clipping File, op. cit.



St. Clair		Ashville	
1820	4,166	1870	922
1870	9,369	1888	200
1900	19,425	1905	362
		1910	278
		1916	650
		1920	349
		1930	369
		1940	385
		1950	494

Following the Civil War Ashville was getting to be a nice size, at least growing with the times. However, following the years of reconstruction the population dropped to practically nothing. In 1916 people had again settled in Ashville but by World War I's end they had again vanished. An increase of about 20 persons every ten years seems to be the recent trend in her population.

At the turn of the century Ashville had its first bit of national recognition, and one of the few really stirring moments in its history. This came through the bravery of St. Clair's sheriff in defying a mob, when people had really begun to respect law order. The sheriff, James L. North, had to risk his own life to save that of his prisoner's. A Negro, Jim Brown, had assaulted a young woman near Springville in May, 1901, and had fled to South Carolina. Sheriff North went to Spartanburg, identified the Negro, and returned with his prisoner to Alabama, where he placed the Negro in Jefferson County Jail for safe

keeping. On August, 1901, he was tried and sentenced to be hanged on September 20.

The feeling against Brown was intense and a great many people were in Ashville on the day of the trial. After sentence had been passed the crowd became aroused and riot occurred, the mob attempting to take the prisoner from the sheriff. Shooting followed and two men were shot, Walter and Arthur Blankenship. Walter died that night. After the shooting the Negro was quickly taken to Birmingham to remain until the day of execution.<sup>1</sup>

Among the papers of James L. North are letters from Governor Jelks assuring him that he is going to be protected and upheld in the stand he took in protecting his prisoner. He gave North full authority to carry out any plans for the execution which he felt necessary. One hundred men from the Birmingham Battery went to Ashville the morning of execution. A special train carried the prisoner and all the military guards to Ashville.

The execution of Jim Brown was the first in St. Clair County since 1878 when John Jackson, a Negro, was executed by Deputy Sheriff Abner Crow. Crow was in charge of the execution of Jim Brown as North stayed in Birmingham that day, not wanting to excite any ill feelings.

A warrant was issued for Sheriff North on account of the killing of Walter Blankenship on the day of the Brown trial. This remarkable criminal trial was over by October 16, 1901. The Dallas News on that day stated, "It was remarkable that Sheriff North is one of the first officers in all the South

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1. Mrs. J. L. North, personal interview, April 10, 1951.

who braved a mob's vengeance and went to the extent of firing upon men who were attempting to commit murder."<sup>1</sup> The trial ended with the verdict of not guilty.

The New York Times on August 24, 1901, paid tribute to North: "Sheriff North of St. Clair, has done more for the good repute of his state than any other Alabamian we have heard of for some time."<sup>2</sup> This typical praise given to the Sheriff of St. Clair County and thus putting Ashville in the news for a period of time.

Ashville again took the spotlight in 1923--but for a more grand and glorious occasion. On April 26, 1923, the socialites of Ashville combined three occasions into one--home-coming, memorial day, and their centennial. People came back to Alabama from all over the United States to take part in these festivities.

On this day a monument was unveiled in honor of the Confederate soldier. The inscription at the base of the life-like statue of a Confederate soldier reads:

C. S. A.  
1861-1865

To the honor of St. Clair County

Confederate Soldiers

Erected by their Descendants,

Through Ashville Chapter

U. D. C.

1923

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1. Papers of James L. North

2. Ibid

Ashville is one of the few Alabama towns more than one hundred years old and able to have a Centennial celebration. Of this fact, they were very proud. They were also proud to show the progress of the town in one hundred years. Most of this I believe was natural development and not a town's pushing to go forward. People in Ashville are still proud of the town, yet none of them attempt to help the town set any astounding record of progress. They just go along at a very average rate of progress. They are content with the typical small Southern town that Ashville is and always will be.

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This paper was written by Betty Hodges at Alabama College, Montevallo, Alabama, in an Alabama History Course--May, 1951.

## ODENVILLE, ALABAMA

Odenville is a small rural town situated in Bever Valley in St. Clair County. Bever Valley is a fertile valley in the foot hill country. The main crops are corn and cotton. There are also quite a number of dairy farms in the area. Most of the large timber in the surrounding hills has been cut. Only young timber remains. There are several small lakes, and numerous springs which, together with wells, furnish the water supply of the valley.

Odenville is located in the center of the county, and the courthouse towns, Ashville and Pell City, lie over the mountains on each side. The distance to Pell City is about thirteen miles, to Ashville, about fourteen miles. Birmingham, the nearest city, is twenty eight miles away. The area of Odenville is about one and three fourths square miles, and the population is five hundred (1950 census). This, however, does not include the many surrounding farms which are considered a part of the community.

There is no industry of any kind in Odenville. The people who live here work in neighboring towns and cities.

People from surrounding mining towns buy goods at Odenville stores. The people of Odenville buy groceries and small items at home, but must go to one of the small neighboring towns or to Birmingham to buy clothing and so forth.

Odenville's history is a rather interesting one. The first settlers came to Odenville about 1800. Among these early settlers was the Oden family, for whom the town was named. About 1900 it began to grow rapidly, and in 1908 the county high school was built at Odenville. In 1909 the town was incorporated, and was, for about thirty years, a flourishing town. Its industries included a heading mill, an oil mill, a cotton mill, and a lumber mill.

Its decline began with a feud between two influential men, which caused the town to split into two opposing factions. Shortly afterwards two of the mills burned, the bank became insolvent, and several large businesses became bankrupt. Later, when the remaining timber supply had been exhausted, the last industry collapsed and the town became what it is today, virtually a ghost town.

The people are almost all native-born, Protestant, and of Northern European ancestry. There are no foreign-born families, only two Catholic families, and one Negro family. The Catholic families have lived here for only a few years.

There are no "good" residential sections or slum areas such as are found in larger towns. Incomes vary, of course, but the variation is not so great as in large cities. Most of the men are skilled laborers, farmers, or semi-professional workers. The average annual income is probably between \$3,000 and \$3,500.

Relatively few women work outside the home, and children do not work except that they may do small jobs such as mowing lawns at home or for neighbors.

Much of the social life of the town is centered around the churches and the school. There are four churches, a Baptist church, a Methodist church, and two Presbyterian churches. Of these, the Baptist church has the largest number of members. There are few people who are not members of one of these churches, and social grouping is based to some extent on church membership. I do not mean to imply, however, that one group is considered higher socially than another.

Although the young people also have their church groups, more of their activities are centered around the school. They have, of course, school ball teams and clubs of various types. These, along with occasional dances, plays, etc., make up most of their social activities.

As a rule, both men and women take an interest in politics and civic affairs in general. The Civic Club and Parent-Teacher Association are active in the community and have completed several projects, one of which was the building of a school lunch room.

In other than church and civic affairs, the men and women tend to separate into different groups for their social activities. The men have their Masons, Oddfellows, Woodmen, and American Legion organizations, and many of them hunt or fish in their leisure time. The women have their various club meetings at which they exchange ideas about gardening, sewing, interior decoration, and the like.



Only part of the families have television sets, and one family often goes to a neighbor's house to watch television programs. At social gatherings where there are both men and women, they usually separate into different groups-- the men to discuss their work, the women to talk about their children and homes.

It is suprising that Odenville has not made more progress in recent years. It has a very good location-- the center of St. Clair County. (Two important highways run through it and it is surrounded by comparatively productive farms. (It's lack of industry may be attributed in part to the reluctance of land owners to sell property to industrial concerns. However, the fact remains that the town has not only failed to grow with the passing years, it has actually decreased considerably in size and importance.

The social life, and even the attitudes of a people are determined by the place in which they live. Since Odenville is such a small town the social activities of the people are, of course, more limited than those of people living in cities. But, if Odenville has the limitations of a small country town, it also has its advantages. Like most small towns, it is a very friendly place. People are interested in their neighbors, and are eager to help them during illness or other misfortunes.

The environmental and social characteristics of Odenville, as of any town or city, are very closely related. The location of a town plays the most important role in making it what it is socially and industrially.

HISTORY OF CROPWELL  
By Charles E. Keel  
April 28, 1953

Cropwell dates back to 1834, probably founded in the early thirties. According to the old deeds and records, Cropwell postoffice was established in 1837. I don't know the exact date, but Mr. Pat Roberson has a letter that came through the post office in 1837. The date is stamped on the envelope.

The early white settlers moved in the Cropwell area as the Indians moved out. The early white settlers came from Georgia and South Carolina. Most of the early white settlers were Scotch-Irish and Welsh.

The first post master of Cropwell was J. D. Bennett.

Cropwell was first located at Roberson's Ferry on the Coosa River, which was later known as Truss's Ferry. Cropwell was also called Coosa and then later called Diana. On the old deeds and records, Cropwell was listed as "Crosswell," which was a misprint; the double "s" being a script for a "p."

The first Masonic Lodge in St. Clair County was organized in Cropwell.

Before the Civil War, one of the first and best trading posts was established at Cropwell. William T. Smith founded this trading post in Cropwell, having a good line of goods such as hardware, groceries, and medicines.

In 1861 Company F of the Tenth Alabama Infantry Regiment, the Wilcox Brigade was organized in Cropwell. Company F was engaged in the following battles during the Civil War: Dansville, York Town, Williamsburg, Sandy Pines, Harper's Ferry, Sharpberg, Fredericksberg, Chancellorsville, Salem Church, Gettysburg. Those are the major battles that Company F was engaged in. The Cropwell boys were in the battle of Harpers Ferry. General (Stone Wall) Jackson taken 5,000 men and left General Lee's forces in Maryland and captured Harper's Ferry and a garrison of 10,000 Yankees.

One of the outstanding men of Cropwell that was in the Confederate Army was William T. Smith. He was born June 4, 1844, at Petersburg, Virginia. When he was five years of age, he came to st. Clair County along with his parents. He received a common education at Cropwell School.

When the War between the States broke out, he had just established a mercantile business at Cropwell, having bought most of his goods on the credit. Smith, believing it was his duty to serve his country in such a conflict, left his business with his clerk and enlisted in Company F, Tenth Alabama Infantry Regiment. (Another outstanding citizen of Cropwell was J. D. Truss. He also enlisted in Company F, 10th Ala. Inf. Reg., accepting the rank of Captain of Company F.) At the end of the war, Smith received many promotions, his rank was Col. of the 10th Ala.

When Smith returned from the Army, his business had dwindled to nothing, but with fortitude and determination of the men who had served the Confederate States of America (C. S. of A.) through the War, he reopened his business, and in a short time added farming and a sawmill to his operations. In all these he was successful.

In 1871, Smith moved to Wilsonville where he established a lumber business.

William T. Smith was elected to the State Legislature from Shelby County in the sessions of 1886-88. He was a Baptist, Mason and a Democrat.

John W. Jones started a mercantile business at Cropwell in 1841. Jones Fall Roberson and Pat Roberson Grandfather, and the business is still operated under the name of J. Fall Roberson & Sons.

Jones Fall Roberson is a descendant of one of the earliest Southern families. J. Fall Roberson has devoted his entire business career to activities in a most successful merchandise business, and has served in the Alabama House of

Representatives. While J. Fall Roberson was serving the State Legislature, he was a delegate to nominate Underwood for President of the United States in 1924. He was born December 21, 1876, at Cropwell, son of James Russel Roberson and Addie Jones Roberson. Pat Roberson is president of the Union State Bank, located at Pell City, Alabama.

Some of the pioneer families of Cropwell were Coleman, Collins, Roberson, Truss, Buchanan, Walker, Alexander, Turner, Hardwick, Braden, Murchison, Willingham, and Roland.

Cropwell citizens were the first to vote for the three mill tax used in the public schools. Out of this tax revenue, the people of Cropwell built the School we are now using. At that time Mr. Roy Gibson was the principal of Cropwell School. He remained principal for many years after the new school building at the present site, and under his successful leadership, Cropwell probably had the best organized and well-disciplined school. He later became Superintendent of St. Clair County Schools. Mr. Gibson served the schools well and has worked toward having better schools and has provided the schools with good teachers and equipment.

Cropwell now has three general merchandise stores in which the Roberson's store is the most successful. Fall Roberson also owns a cotton gin and a cotton warehouse and is a dealer in fertilizer.

Cropwell is a small village having three stores, a grist mill and a cotton gin. Cropwell has a Baptist church. In 1901 Cropwell had a drug store, but now the building is being used for the post office. For the past few years and at the present time, Amanda Funderburg is the post master.

There are natural resources in Cropwell. Limestone, sandstone and shale can be found in the area. Cropwell itself is located in dolomite and boulders of

chert can be found also. Iron ore is also found in the area.

#### CROPWELL NOTES

(These notes were on the reverse of the title page.)

1. The first Masonic Lodge in St. Clair County was a Cropwell.
2. The first trading post in St. Clair County was at Cropwell before 1865.
3. William T. Smith came to St. Clair County in 1849 with his parents. Smith was a successful businessman at Cropwell when the war came on. He enlisted in Co. F. 5th [sic] Ala. Infantry Regiment. Smith was promoted to Colonel by the end of the war. He served in Ala. Legislature 1886-88.
4. Natural resources

limestone

shale

sand

iron ore

5. Pioneer families

Coleman	Turner
Collins	Hardwick
Roberson	Willingham
Truss	Braden
Buchanan	Murchison
Walker	Roland

(This was typed from a handwritten manuscript by Charles E. Keel. The copy was among the papers of Mrs. D. J. Bartlett, a teacher for many years at Odenville.)

## WINNATASKA

In 1918, the Birmingham Sunday School Association purchased 120 acres of land on Kelley's Creek in St. Clair County, for conducting a summer camp for Sunday School boys and girls of the Birmingham area. Mrs. Elwyn Ballard gave the land an old Indian name, Winnataska.

Camp Winnataska was opened, the same year it was acquired, by Miss Myra Batchelder with the assistance of Harry Denman, a Methodist Young Peoples' worker.

The first campers used tents. In 1920, four campers' huts, a director's hut, a mess hall and a recreational building were constructed. In 1924, all buildings with the exception of the recreational hall were rebuilt. From time to time, more land has been acquired until now Camp Winnataska embraces 1220 acres. During the last decade and a half, the camp has trained and used over thirty-five hundred leaders and has served over thirty thousand campers.

Kelley's Creek, a beautiful mountain stream, meanders its way through the property and is open to boats for two and one-half miles. A survey of the creek by the State Department of Health shows the stream to be free of any sewage contamination.

Thirty-four buildings house the campers. These include shower houses, commodious huts, dining hall and two large recreational halls.

Camp Winnataska has been a pioneer in the field of camping. Memorial gifts and good management has brought the camp into prominence as an outstanding recreational retreat comparable to the finest in the South.

(This was a typescript also among Mrs. D. J. Bartlett's papers. There is no author listed on the paper.)

## INDEX

- Abbott 29, 38, 39  
 Abbott Brothers 42  
 Abercrombie 48  
 Abercrombie 38, 43  
 Abernathy 76  
 Abrams 38  
 Acmar 2, 51  
 Adams 29  
 Adkins 45, 47, 50  
 Agriculture 33  
 Alabama City 27  
 Alabama Fuel and Iron 51  
 Alexander 57, 88  
 Alman 64  
 Alverson 57  
 Amberson 60  
 American Legion 84  
 Antioch 46  
 Armstrong & Cox 70  
 Ash 5, 6, 14, 50, 57, 68  
 Ashe 67  
 Ashville 3, 6, 12, 61, 62, 83  
 Ashville Academy 74  
 Ashville--Churches 73, 74  
 Ashville Vidette 72  
 Ashville--banks 76  
 Ashville--Incorporation 69  
 Ashville--industries 76  
 Assembly of God 48  
 Attalla 27  
 Ausburn 19  
 Autrey 26  
 Avondale Mill 34  
 Avondale Mills 29  
  
 Baggett 15, 20, 23  
 Ballard 90  
 Bank of Odenville 60  
 Barnes 58  
 Barnett 72, 74, 76, 81  
 Bartlett 89, 90  
 Bass 22  
 Batchelder 90  
 Battles 12, 15  
 Baxter 25, 49  
 Beason 12-14, 20, 23, 27, 70  
 Beavers 39  
 Beck 19  
 Beles 66  
  
 Bell 26, 39  
 Bennett 86  
 Benson 54  
 Berttram 19, 20  
 Bibb 1  
 Biddy 62  
 Blackman 27  
 Blair 15, 16  
 Blairville 16  
 Blankenship 48, 49, 78  
 Bogers Brothers Lumber Co. 44  
 Boles 81  
 Bose 68  
 Bothwell 70  
 Bowlin 15  
 Box 9, 43  
 Boy Scouts 28  
 Braden 88  
 Bradford 5, 41, 50  
 Branchville 52  
 Branchville School 56  
 Brandon 58  
 Brickhouse 39  
 Brock 18, 27  
 Broken Arrow 2, 7  
 Brown 4, 5, 12, 20, 26, 52, 54, 57,  
     58, 67, 68, 77, 78  
 Browne 23  
 Buchanan 88  
 Buffington 15, 18-20, 22, 23,  
     25-27  
 Burttram 23, 28  
 Busey 59  
 Bush 20, 68  
 Byers 8, 53, 70, 73  
 Bynum 47  
 Byrd 20, 24  
  
 Caldwell 74  
 Camp Sibert 12, 15  
 Camp Winnataska 37, 90  
 Campbell 72  
 Candle making 32  
 Capeheart 67  
 Carden 24  
 Cash 76  
 Cason 22, 57  
 Castleberry 38, 39, 48  
 Cataula 3, 65, 67, 68

- Cates 18  
 Cather 62, 64-66, 81  
 Catholic 84  
 Celling 73  
 Central of Georgia Railroad 51  
 Chandler 4, 5, 14, 15, 41, 68  
 Chandler Mountain 13, 14, 20  
 Chattooga 3  
 Cherokee Indians 3, 11, 12, 62  
 Cherokee language 64  
 Childs 21  
 Church of Christ 73  
 Civil War 9, 13, 15-17, 30, 45, 48  
     70, 72, 86  
 Civil War-Hardships 31  
 Clark 13  
 Clayton 21, 26  
 Clements 5  
 Clinkscales 35  
 Cloth making 32  
 Coal 39  
 Coal City 2  
 Cobb 5, 18, 70, 74  
 Cobb's Mill 14, 15, 17  
 Coker 40  
 Coleman 88  
 Collins 7, 8, 29, 30, 39, 88  
 Collins Bend 29  
 Commer 58  
 Company F 86  
 Confederate Monument 79  
 Conner 4, 68  
 Continental Gin 34  
 Contryman 20  
 Cook Springs 2, 37, 60  
 Cooking 33  
 Coosa Valley 7  
 Coosa Valley Baptist 39  
 Coosa Valley High School 38  
 Corbett 48  
 Cospers 29, 35, 38, 40, 41, 43  
 Cotton 34  
 Countryman 12, 15  
 Coursen 52  
 Cox 19, 20, 60, 70, 76  
 Crawford's Cove Methodist 26  
 Creek Indians 3, 11, 62  
 Cropwell 7, 38, 44, 88  
 Cropwell Post Office 86  
 Cropwell School 87, 88  
 Crow 10, 63, 64, 69, 70, 74, 78, 82  
 Crump 17, 21, 22, 26, 68  
 Crying Snake 3  
 Cumberland Presbyterian 57, 73  
 Cumming 59  
 Cummings 54, 57  
 Cunningham 5, 14, 68  
 Curry 9, 15  
 Davis 25, 29, 38, 40, 42, 59  
 De Soto 61, 62  
 Dean 70, 71  
 DeBardeleben 2, 51  
 Deerman 12, 14, 15  
 Deerman's Chapel 14  
 Democrat Farmer 72  
 Denman 90  
 Dill 68  
 Dillon 9  
 Ditto's Landing 66  
 Dragging Canoe 3  
 Drake 29, 30, 37, 43, 48  
 Drake's Mill 34, 37, 41, 42  
 Drury 70  
 Dunlap 35  
 Dupey 60  
 Dyer 3, 65  
 Earle 70  
 Eason 29, 40  
 Easonville 30  
 Easonville Academy 38  
 Easonville--Churches 39  
 Easonville Cash Store 42  
 Easonville High School 38  
 Easonville Homes 32  
 Easonville Junior High School 49  
 Easonville Merchantile 42  
 Easonville Methodist 39  
 Easonville Post Office 40  
 Easonville--Schools 37  
 Eat-And-Camp 30  
 Ebenezer 46  
 Eden 39  
 Edmonson 17  
 Elliot 42  
 Elliott 2  
 Ellis 18, 23, 55  
 Elyton 8  
 Embry 74, 75, 82  
 Emerson 28  
 Episcopal Church 8  
 Etheridge 40  
 Eufaula 11



- Eversole 41  
 Ewen 35  
  
 Farrer 70  
 Fidelity Church 13  
 Fife-town 65  
 Flatboats 31  
 Food preservation 36  
 Foods 33, 35, 36  
 Foreman 52  
 Forman 19, 59  
 Fort Jackson 3, 11  
 Fort Strother 65  
 Fountaine 29  
 Fowler 59, 60  
 Fraim 35, 37, 42  
 Frazier 76  
 Free 15, 23, 24, 28  
 Free Mill 16  
 Freeman 26, 65, 68, 75, 81, 82  
 Friendship School 56  
 Fulenwider 49  
 Fulmer 45, 50  
 Funderburg 38, 39, 43, 88  
  
 Gaddy 17  
 Gadsden 13, 27  
 Gains 20  
 Gallows Hill 62  
 Gamble 40, 41  
 Garden Club 28  
 Garnett 26  
 Garrett 4, 5  
 Garrison 51  
 Gaskey 27  
 George 59, 60  
 Gholston 42  
 Gibson 24, 28, 88  
 Gilchrist 20  
 Gilliland 22  
 Glenn 54  
 Goode 70  
 Goodwin & Mitchell 70  
 Gramling 19, 21  
 Green 46  
 Greene 63  
 Greensport 3, 11  
 Greenwood 5, 68  
 Griffin 18, 20, 74  
 Grisson 39  
 Gunnels 58  
 Gunter 39  
  
 Gunter's Landing 66  
 Guthrey 4, 68  
  
 Hagin 59  
 Hall 12, 13  
 Hallmark 26  
 Hammond 58  
 Hammonds 27  
 Hannon 47  
 Hardin 52-54, 59  
 Hardin's Shop 52  
 Hardwick 29, 37, 40, 88  
 Hardwicks 39  
 Hare 56  
 Harman 52  
 Harmon 29, 31, 34, 38, 39, 42  
 Harpersville 39, 49  
 Harris 20, 45  
 Harrison 38  
 Hatton 44  
 Hawkins 45, 50  
 Hayes 29, 39, 48  
 Heldt 72  
 Helment 57  
 Henderson 41  
 Hendricks 48  
 Hewitt 70  
 High 76  
 Hill 5, 38, 43, 68  
 Hodges 52, 54, 59, 76, 82  
 Holcomb 43  
 Hollingsworth 28  
 Holt 82  
 Hopewell Methodist 45, 48  
 Hord 37  
 Houston 38  
 Howell 37  
 Howell Mill 37  
 Hoyle 38, 48  
 Hudgins 24, 27  
 Hughes 55  
 Hunsuckers 15  
 Hurst 57, 59  
 Hutchins 24  
  
 Indian Wars 15  
 Indians 7, 29, 48, 52, 61-66  
 Ingram 30, 42  
 Inzer 13, 49, 70-72, 81  
  
 Jackson 3, 12, 65  
 Jefferson 69

- Jelks 78  
 Johns 14, 15, 26  
 Johnson 28, 30, 40  
 Jones 16, 23, 26, 39, 40, 57, 59,  
 87  
 Jourdan 12  
 Justice 48  
 Justice Court 40  
  
 Keel 86, 89  
 Kelly 48  
 Kelly's Creek 48, 90  
 Kendrick's Mill 44  
 Kerr 45, 50  
 Killian Mill 15  
 Kirk 45  
 Knight 20  
  
 Lackey 49  
 Lambert 45, 50  
 Laney 34, 40, 42  
 Langston 20  
 Lassetter 27  
 LaTaste 29, 40  
 Lathrip 44  
 Lathrip & Hatton Lumber Co. 44  
 Lathrip's Railroad 44  
 Lawley's Chapel 39, 46  
 Lawrence 20  
 Ledbetter 41  
 Lee 22, 29, 31, 37, 41, 42, 44  
 LeFils 29, 37-39, 41, 42  
 LeFils & Son 42  
 Leonard 38, 43  
 Letaw 54  
 Lewis 70  
 Liberty 53  
 Lighting 32  
 Lions Club 28  
 Littafuchee 65  
 Littifutchee 3  
 Little 20, 26  
 Lloyd 70  
 Logan 12, 13  
 Lonnigan 76  
 Lovet 52  
 Lovett 9  
 Low 68  
 Low Gap Elementary 56  
 Lowell 52  
 Lute 17  
  
 Macedonia Missionary Baptist 48  
 Maddox 29, 37-39, 42, 43, 53, 54  
 Mangham 72  
 Marcum 58-60  
 Margaret 2, 51  
 Martin 55, 68  
 Masonic Lodge 8, 86, 89  
 Masons 19, 20, 84  
 Massey 5, 14, 66, 67  
 Maynor 58  
 Mayor 60  
 McCain 46  
 McClain 13  
 McCluney 57, 73  
 McCollum 68  
 McConnell 21, 22  
 McEntyre 76  
 McHugh 24  
 McIntosh 65  
 McLellan 29, 38-41, 43  
 McWaters 26  
 Medicines 41  
 Meek 9  
 Melton 20  
 Methodist Episcopal 46  
 Miller 20, 40  
 Mitchell 28, 70  
 Mize 52-54, 57, 59, 60  
 Monroe 45  
 Moody 45, 47, 48, 50  
 Moody--Churches 48  
 Moody Junior High School 47  
 Moody Methodist 46  
 Moody School 47  
 Moody's Cross Rds. 45  
 Moody's Crossroads 50  
 Moody--Homes 50  
 Moody--Schools 50  
 Moore 11, 16, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25,  
 37, 45, 50, 52, 58  
 Morgan 42  
 Morrow 14, 27  
 Mt. Pisgah 37  
 Mt. Pisgah Baptist 39  
 Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist 48  
 Mud Town 66  
 Mullinax 18, 20, 26  
 Murchison 88  
  
 Nabors 20  
 Narkey's Chapel 39  
 Naylor 68, 70, 71

- Nazerene Church 28  
 Neal 39, 40, 43  
 Nipseby 39  
 New London 37, 41, 44  
 Newton 9, 53, 59  
 Nichelson 73  
 Nickelson 22  
 Nixon 70  
 North 77-79, 82  
  
 O'Donnell 27  
 Odd Fellows 20, 84  
 Odenville 25, 46, 83  
 Odenville Presbyterian Church 57  
 Odenville--Churches 84  
 Odenville--Schools 53  
 Owens 15, 17, 20, 24, 27  
  
 Partlow 14, 15, 23  
 Payne 38  
 Pell City 42, 44, 49, 83, 88  
 Pell City News 73  
 Philips 53  
 Poe 49  
 Politics 42, 47  
 Pope 15-17, 27  
 Pope & Free Lumber Co. 27  
 Pope's Chapel 46  
 Poplar Grove 46  
 Portuguese 62  
 Pratt 51  
 Pritchard 17  
  
 Qualecuo 3  
 Qualls 19, 20, 23, 24, 26  
  
 Ragland 41, 60  
 Ragsdale 3, 68  
 Railroads 44  
 Raily 49  
 Ralls 22  
 Reconstruction 9, 30, 72  
 Rena 38  
 Renfroe 23, 44  
 Revolutionary War 12  
 Rich 20  
 Richardson 67, 82  
 Riddle 23, 27, 60, 83  
 Ridge 64  
 Ritch 37  
 Riverside 44  
 Roberson 37-39, 86-88  
  
 Roberson's Ferry 86  
 Roberts 4, 5, 38, 43, 68, 70  
 Robertson 58, 59  
 Robinson 39, 41, 57  
 Rock Springs Baptist 45, 48  
 Rogan 70  
 Rogers 68  
 Roland 88  
 Roper 40, 42  
 Ross 64  
 Rousseau 72  
 Rowan 67  
 Russell 17, 20, 23, 26, 27  
  
 School Truck 25  
 Schools 8, 9  
 Scoggins 53, 59  
 Self 60  
 Shahan 15  
 Shahan Mill 15  
 Shank 17  
 Shanks 19  
 Sharpton 27  
 Shaw 17, 20, 24-26  
 Sherbitt 50  
 Shields 37  
 Shiloh Church 16  
 Shockley 59  
 Shortwell 5, 14, 68  
 Sibert 12, 13  
 Simpson 53, 57  
 Sims 48, 50  
 Slean 70  
 Sloat 20, 21  
 Smith 12, 14, 15, 17, 20, 22, 23,  
 26, 27, 29, 39, 58, 60, 68, 86, 87  
 Soap making 32  
 Southern Aegis 72  
 Southern Alliance 72  
 Spanish 61  
 Sparks 52  
 Spiegel 56  
 Spradley 19, 38, 42, 43, 58  
 Springville 9, 77  
 Spruiell 45  
 St. Clair 4  
 St. Clair Co.--Churches 6  
 St. Clair College 74, 75  
 St. Clair County High School 53  
 St. Clair County News 53, 60  
 St. Clair Diamond 72  
 Stanley 6

- Steadham 41  
 Steed 52, 57, 60  
 Steed ~~George Watson~~ 60  
 Steele 14, 17, 20, 21  
 Steele Baptist 28  
 Steele Garage 27  
 Steele Methodist 22, 28  
 Steele P.T.A. 23  
 Stemley Bridge 41  
 Stephens 12, 13  
 Stevens 21  
 Still 43  
 Stone 29, 30, 37-40, 43, 68, 75  
 Stone's Mill 37  
 Stores 41  
 Stovall 19, 20, 57  
 Sturdivant 58  
 Swindall 12  
 Syrup 34
- 
- Tan Yards 35  
 Taylor 45, 55, 57  
 Tecumseh 65  
 Ten Islands 3, 65  
 Tenth Alabama Infantry 86  
 Thomasin 71  
 Thomason 70  
 Thrasher 68  
 Timber 36  
 Tipton 35, 40  
 Toland 20, 23  
 Trading post 86, 89  
 Tramel 12, 13, 21  
 Trammel 26  
 Trammell 55  
 Trotter 17-19, 22  
 Truss 5, 87, 88  
 Truss's Ferry 86  
 Trussell 30  
 Trussville 44  
 Tucker 39, 59  
 Turner 10, 15, 16, 18, 23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 58, 88
- 
- U.D.C 79  
 Underwood 88  
 Union Army 15  
 Union State Bank 88  
 Union sympathies 30, 45
- 
- Valley Grove College 19  
 Vandegrift 73
- 
- Vandergrift 52, 59, 60, 70  
 Vandiver 30  
 Venable 20  
 Vincent 39, 41
- 
- Wadsworth 29, 30, 35, 37-40, 42, 44, 47  
 Waite 29, 30, 37-39, 41, 42, 44  
 Waite, Maddox & Co. 42  
 Walker 38, 88  
 Walnut Grove 53  
 Walnut Grove College 19  
 Ward 60  
 Ware 41  
 Warren 49  
 Wasson 70  
 Watson 42, 68, 60  
 Webb 4, 68  
 West 76  
 Wetumpka 11, 34  
 Wheeler 18, 19, 21  
 Whisenant 14  
 Whisnant 26  
 White's Chapel 51  
 Whitfield 20  
 Whitmire 19  
 Whittle 44  
 Wilcox 17, 26  
 Wilcox Brigade 86  
 Williams 48, 55  
 Williamson 39, 60  
 Willingham 19, 29, 34, 37-39, 42, 43, 88  
 Wilson 24, 56  
 Wilson's Raiders 39  
 Wing 60  
 Winnataska 90  
 Wood 27, 59  
 Woodall 54  
 Woodham 47  
 Woodmen 84  
 Wooley 55  
 Wright 20
- 
- Yarbrough 6-8, 69, 76