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## THE HERALD

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
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Barnes School Graduates of 1918

Only one of these boys is identified, Charles G. Parker, Sr., a founder of Bishop Parker Furniture Co., back row, second from left..

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The following boys are in this picture, can you help match the name with the face?

**Charles G. Abercrombie**  
**John Potts Barnes**  
**Melbourne F. Cody**  
**Fred T. Gies**  
**W. Bruce Shaw**  
**Joe D. Wilson**  
**Tom J. Rushing**



## Montgomery County Historical Society HERALD



VOLUME 21 NO. 1

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

MARCH 2013

## A Bit Of Power Company History

By Mr. B. S. Maultsby  
*The Montgomery Advertiser*  
June 17, 1929



Mr. Maultsby

It was in the fall of '93 the writer received a hurry up call from the late Mr. Char. G. Abercrombie to catch the first train out of Connellsville mines and come to Montgomery to take charge of the books and papers of the Mutual Light and Power Company. Upon arrival I found in operation the old Ball Light & Power Company down on North Court Street, located in the Abercrombie coal yard. This plant was owned by Mr. Abercrombie and a few of his friends and was hopelessly in debt with no assets save a broken down lot of junk, called Ball Light & Power Company. Through the foresight of Mr. Abercrombie, Mr. W. F. Vandiver and a few others who owned the stock in this obsolete Ball plant, they conceived the idea of the erection of a more modern and up-to-date establishment, if they could secure the contract from the City of Montgomery for lighting the streets and other public buildings for a term of years. With this purpose in view they organized the Mutual Light & Power Company, which was to absorb the old Ball Company and carry on the business under the new name. They finally secured this contract from the City, Mr. John G. Crommelin being Mayor at the time.

The old Montgomery Light Company, known more generally as the Gas Company, had the contract at that time, furnishing the City with a

few lights down town and the out lying residence district with gas. Some of the old gas lamp posts are still standing at the intersection of a few of the streets and are used for receptacles for street names. Mr. I. Pollak was President, Mr. Mack Billing, Treasurer and Mr. Robert Noble was Secretary of the Gas Company, while Mr. John Klinge and his son, John, Jr., were assistants in the office, and Mr. John Stewart and Mr. Dan Downes were the outside men attending to the gas service. There was quite a bit of rivalry between the two companies and the securing of this contract by Mr. Vandiver and associates was quite a triumph for the Mutual Company.

The City government at that time was under the old aldermanic system. It required a hard fight to land this business and it was only on its merits that the new company finally won out. Armed with this contract neatly folded and tucked in the inside breast pocket of his familiar black cutaway coat, Mr. Vandiver threw out his chest and said to his associates, "We are ready to get busy building our new plant." Right here, let me say, was a smooth piece of financing. They had no money in the treasury, on the other hand were deeply in debt. This contract was all they had. No sooner had the news spread abroad that this project was to be completed, than the Engineering Companies hurried their representatives to Montgomery to figure on the job. There was plenty of competi-



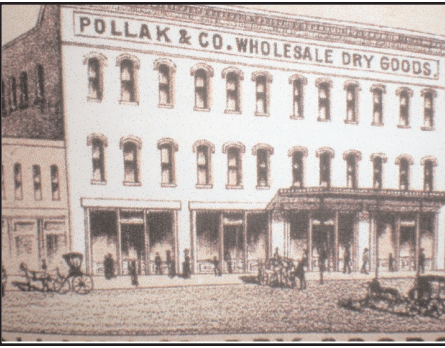
tion. In a few days the Brush Electric Company of Cleveland had signed the contract to equip the plant with all necessary machinery and to install one thousand 16 C.P. electric lights and numerous arc lights for \$100.000.00 and to accept in payment of this sum the bonds of the new company in amount sufficient to cover the bill. Thus without a dollar, this deal was put over, the plant built and turned over to the company. The building to house this equipment was not included in the contract but was put up by Mr. Worthington on a credit and soon paid for out of the receipts, as well as the final liquidation of all liabilities of the old Ball Company amounting to something like \$15,000.00. Within a few months this old plant had been junked and what business it had turned over to its successors.

Well I do recall the first night the current was turned on for the city. I had only been here a short time and all this electric machinery was new to me. The officers of the company and quite a number of aldermen and other interested persons were there. The two enormous engines with their big fly wheels were planted, one in each end of the building -- one named Fannie Virginia and the other Isabel after Mr. Charley Abercrombie's two daughters. They were quiet Corliss engines and when they began to move and the dynamos began to hum I could see a broad smile come over Mr. A. S. Laurie's face. He was in charge of the machinery and Mr. L. A. Doctuer was Assistant Engineer. There was no hitch, the city lights were on and all were happy. With this initial and important object accomplished fact, there was still much to be done to put enough business on the books

to make the undertaking a paying proposition and here is where the real rivalry between the old Gas Company and the Mutual Company began.

By this time the writer had been placed in charge of the office at 26 Commerce Street. There was a commodious vault and ample room for storage and repair shop in the rear. Mr. Vandiver was President, Mr. Abercrombie, Secretary and Treasurer, and Mr. Albert Worswick was Superintendent and it was everybody's business who was connected with the company to get new customers. The Board of Directors, besides the President and Secretary, were Jacob Greil, Henry Davidson, Sig Roman, J. E. Worswick, Simon Gassenheimer and C. L. Ruth. It was Mr. Roman's job to verify the statements submitted to the board. I never saw anyone who could add up a list of figures as fast as he could. He would take two or three columns at a time. His O.K. was never questioned.

In the installation of the new wires and lights over the city, the Brush Electric Company sent Mr. Ira Britton down to superintend the job. He was an artist in handling labor, very firm in his manner and would not stand for any foolishness. One day he had a gang of workmen engaged in setting up a big



POLLAK'S DOLLAR STORE  
2ND BLOCK OF DEXTER, SOUTH SIDE

pole in front of the Dollar Store (now Montgomery Fair). Mr. Pollak was not only proprietor of the store but President of the competitive light company and just naturally had no love for these fellows who were attempting to put an unsightly pole up in front of his store. He fussed and fumed as the worked [work] progressed, but Britton, in his stern manner, told him the City Electrician had consented to the location and that the pole was going up regardless of his objections. It is said that Mr. Pollak became so enraged that he jumped in the hole, but no sooner had he landed in it than Britton ordered all hands with their pikes to "up with the pole". Mr. Pollak came scrambling out, the pole slipped in and that was the end of the fracas. No one ever blamed Mr. Pollak for trying to keep that pole from going up because it did mar the front of his building, but the Light Company said it was required as a junction pole and a public necessity. The main lines all ran from the station to that point and from there branches distributed over the city. [I] am not sure but this pole is still in use at that point. Mr. Britton was transferred later to New Orleans and died from Yellow Fever the same year that we had it here. I do not recall what year that was, but I shall never forget that Yellow Fever epidemic. Mr. Abercrombie had gone with his family to some point outside of the state and asked me to get some of my young friends to take his home for sleeping quarters until he returned. My best recollections are that George Crist and Coke Smith took quarters with me. It was about a week or ten days after this Coke came in one evening (we always came in before sundown and did not leave the house until the sun was well up) and reported to

## Honors

### Mr. & Mrs. Shayler Alias

On the Occasion of Birth of Their Daughter, **Miss Hendee Hays Alias**  
Mr. James W. Fuller

### Mr. & Mrs. T. Wayne Davis

Mr. & Mrs. Jack Owen, Jr.

### Mr. James W. Fuller

Mr. & Mrs. Jim Levy  
Mrs. Jo S. McGowin  
Mrs. Katherine Sheehan

### Mr. & Mrs. Wm. R. "Rusty" Gregory

On the Occasion of Birth of Their First Granddaughter,  
**Miss Hendee Hays Alias**  
Mr. James W. Fuller

### Mr. & Mrs. Richard P. Hodges

On the Occasion of Their Marriage  
Mr. & Mrs. E. Sam Butner  
Mr. & Mrs. John Ward Weiss

### Mr. & Mrs. Walker E. Morris, Jr.

Mr. & Mrs. Jack Owen, Jr.

### Mr. Frank A. Young

Mrs. Betty Carnathen Keyes

## Special Museum Donations

**Mr. & Mrs. Hugh G. Edmunds**  
**Mr. R. Sommerville Hill IV**

### Note:

When reproducing articles written in an earlier period, we do not make corrections of phrasing, capitalization or spelling when it represents the style of the time in which it was written.

## Spring Meeting of The Montgomery County Historical Society

April 21st  
2:30

Our Speaker will be  
**Lt. General  
Charles G. Cleveland**

who will be introduced by  
**Mr. Warren A. Trest,**  
Author of "Once a Fighter Pilot -  
The Story of Korean War Ace,  
Lt. Gen. Charles G. "Chick" Cleveland."

YELLOW FEVER  
continued from page 11

After I had stayed my prescribed 10 days in Tennessee I dropped down to Birmingham and remained with relatives until frost when I came home and soon got a job as cub reporter for *The Advertiser* where I worked for several years and resigned to enter the general insurance business over 45 years ago.

In conclusion let all of us pay tribute to Dr. Walter Reed and his brave soldier volunteers who risked their lives in proving the test that yellow fever was not a floating germ in the air, but could only be transmitted through the sting of a certain breed of mosquito known as the stegomyia and all honor to Gen. William C. Gorgas, an Alabamian, who was then surgeon general of the Army who proved these findings by cleaning up the pest holes in Panama and completely exterminated this breed of mosquitoes and made the building of the Panama Canal possible. I firmly believe that some time, some how, some where a most unthought of discovery will come to light and other scourges of the present day will, like the yellow fever, be banished from the face of the earth.





# In House News

## Memorials

**Mr. Harry Allen**  
Mr. & Mrs. E. Sam Butner

**Mrs. Mary Arrington**  
Mr. & Mrs. E. Sam Butner

**Mr. Walter T. Ashurst, Jr.**  
Dr. & Mrs. John M.Ashurst, Jr.  
Mr. James W. Fuller

**Prof. Elly Ruff Barnes and Barnes School**  
Mrs. Temple Bowling  
Mr. Mason M. Watkins

**Mr. Algernon Sidney Coleman, Jr.**  
Mr. James W. Fuller  
Mrs. Susan F. Haigler  
Mr. & Mrs. T. Bowen Hill III  
Dr. Harold L. Weatherby

**Mrs. Lauda Leak Corwin**  
Mrs. A. Sidney Coleman, Jr.  
Mr. James W. Fuller

**Mr. Sam I. Diamond**  
Mrs. Denise Anne Diamond Kagey

**Gen. James E. Drummond**  
Mr. & Mrs. E. Sam Butner

**Ms. Jan Elrod**  
Mrs. Bonnie Williams

**Mr. Lewis Hale Figh, Jr.**  
Mr. James W. Fuller

**Mrs. Frances Harris Garrett**  
Mr. & Mrs. Woodley Bagwell  
Mr. & Mrs. E. Sam Butner

**Mr. Norman W. Gayle, Jr.**  
Mr. & Mrs. T. Bowen Hill III  
Mrs. Jo S. McGowin

**Mr. David Hancock**  
Mrs. Susan F. Haigler  
Mr. & Mrs. T. Bowen Hill III

**Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Heilpern**  
Mr. & Mrs. E. Sam Butner

**Mr. Ira Clinton Howell (1874-1952)**  
Mr. George C. Howell, Jr.

**Col. H. Frederick Lippencott**  
Mr. James W. Fuller  
Dr. Harold L. Weatherby

## Memorials

Continued

**Mrs. Joy McGlynn McLemore**  
Mr. James W. Fuller  
Mr. & Mrs. T. Bowen Hill III

**Mr. William H. McLemore**  
Mr. & Mrs. E. Sam Butner

**Mrs. Margaret Kohn McCall**  
Dr. & Mrs. Sam Engelhardt, Jr.  
Mr. James W. Fuller  
Mrs. Susan F. Haigler  
Mr. & Mrs. T. Bowen Hill III  
Mrs. Burke K. Schloss  
Mr. & Mrs. John B. Scott

**Mr. Arthur B. “Bubber” Patton**  
Mr. John T. Dale  
Mr. James W. Fuller

**Mrs. Mary Roemer**  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Hodges

**Mrs. Frances “Dodgie” Shaffer**  
Mr. James W. Fuller

**Mrs. Robert Trotman**  
Mr. John M. Trotman

**Judge John C. Tyson III**  
Mr. & Mrs. T. Bowen Hill III

**The Rev. Dr. James I. Walter**  
Mr. James W. Fuller  
Mrs. Anne D. King

**Mr. Thomas Mabson West**  
Mr. James W. Fuller  
Mrs. Mary E. Furnald

## New Members

**Mr. & Mrs. J. Earl Garner, Jr.**  
**Ms. Cindi Scott**  
**Mrs. Elizabeth P. Thompson**  
**Mr. Joseph R. Thompson, Jr.**

Our apologies for a listing error for new member,  
**Dr. John B. Pugh**

George and myself that he had passed four funerals coming down Court and Perry Streets that day. That settled matters with us, for I know the very next morning found us on the train bound for Nashville, and with us were Will Teague, Macon Stevenson and Ernest Stay. I don't recall what I did with the key to Mr. Abercrombie's house. My job was still open at the Light Company office when frost came. That was then the signal that there would be no further danger of fever.

Going back to the time when Mr. Britton had left and the plant was in charge of Mr. Albert Worswick recalls the fact that his mode of transportation was an old mare named Belle and a buckboard. No autos in town then. She was a valuable mare and I am sure there are a number of people here now who can recall Mr. Worswick with his curly hair and nose glasses sitting up in that buckboard driving here and there all about the city. Old Belle soon learned that the three blasts of the light company whistle meant trouble and she would prick up her ears, back down off the sidewalk (she always put both front feet up on the curbing when she came to a stop down town) and appear eager to go. The sudden collapse of the parapet wall on the Goetter-Weil building, now occupied by Woolworth's, [later by Belks, mid 1st block, South side of Dexter] caused her death. She was standing there in her characteristic pose when the accident happened. Mr. Worswick was a big hearted fellow and the loss of old Belle grieved him very much. He was employed by a London firm after completion of his work here and sent to Johannesburg, South Africa, and from there he went to Mexico City to electrify the tramways and was there the last account I

had of him. I am reliably informed that he has been very successful and is now quite wealthy. Mr. Jules Dunham succeeded him in his work here and made the company a very valuable superintendent. It was, however, just before his term that the great struggle was on to put new business on the books. I recall that the price of 16 C.P. lights was \$1.25 per month flat rate. Our company was advocating meter rates but meeting all competition. The Gas Company would say to their customers, if you want electric lights in lieu of gas, we will put them in and if the electric lights go out, turn on the gas and it won't cost you a cent. Our company had to rewire all premises free to get any new business and give the customer the choice of flat or meter rates. The time came when the saloon-keepers were going to sign a contract with the company that gave them the best rate. There were a number of these saloons and their business was second only to the city contract, so it was naturally very much desired. When they held their meeting and opened the bids the Mutual Company beat the Gas ompany just 10 cents and was awarded the contract at 90 cents each per 16 C.P. light. Some of the members were a little slow about changing systems and a few never did change until the later consolidation of the companies.

At that time it was one of the duties of the writer to collect the monthly bills and very few of the business firms sent their checks to the office and the mail receipts were nil. I will attempt to give the location of some of these saloons, for I had to call on them always to collect their bill each month. Not that they were poor pay, but that

was the fashion when two companies stood ready to serve. Take Commerce Street and we find Abraham's "Silver Dollar" saloon, Chas. Brady, Sol Dryfus and M. Pal\_\_gries besides the Exchange and Windsor bars. On Montgomery Street, Robertson's bar and Harrison's on the corner of Lee, on Dexter south side were Jim Smith's Oak Hall and Brunswick saloons and Bill Duran. On the corner across from the old Post Office was Marc Vincentelli's place, just back of Knabe's Drug Store. There were a bunch of them on South Court, Coosa and Monroe Streets, but the most noted of the number was Dave Fleming's. Cook's on Monroe was a great place for beer and pretzels. [I] expect there were at least 25 in the down town district and they used from 10 to 25 lights each. The Gas Company had no electric residential business, so with the constant increase in residence lighting, the contract with the bar rooms and city business, the Mutual Company was fast getting on its feet. Mr. Vandiver and Mr. Abercrombie were, of course, instrumental in adding many valuable customers to the list in the wholesale and retail districts.

Mr. D. P. West was another competitor but his business was mainly on Commerce Street between the Exchange and Windsor Hotels. His plant was in bad shape and frequently he would call on the Mutual Company to supplement his service at the hotel. We were always glad to get this extra business. At that time nearly every store on the west side of Commerce Street had a shed over the sidewalk. The City had passed an ordinance requiring all poles to be set just inside the curb line and this, of course, made it necessary to cut holes



in these sheds when a new pole was put up. Mr. West had his line of poles down that side of the street with wires dropping down under many of these sheds. Mr. B. A. Blakely was City Electrician, succeeding either Mr. F. E. Meyer or Mr. Sam Miller. He was always in hot water about that mixup with the two companies' wires and poles until Mr. West abandoned his service. Nearly all these sheds have since been removed. Mr. West held a valuable franchise with the City of Montgomery. It was perpetual and took up only about five inches of one column of news print. It was one of my first jobs to search the city files and procure a copy of this document. My company would have gladly paid him a reasonable price for it, and I suppose there were others that would have given him even more but he steadfastly refused to close up his little plant. He finally moved it from the Exchange Hotel to the southeast corner of Bibb and Molton Streets. Here he met stubborn opposition from the citizens living in that immediate vicinity to the erection of his plant. After a long fight in the courts he won out and built it. This property was afterwards acquired by the Montgomery Light & Water Power Company and I presume the franchise went with it.

In a few years the office quarters at 26 Commerce Street became inadequate for the increasing business and the office was moved to the old Mabson Hotel, corner of Bibb and Coosa Streets. Up to that time the writer was the sole office employee, handling all the accounts, making out and collecting bills, acting as cashier, bookkeeper and collector, and earlier in the game read all the meters of the Company. The burden was much relieved when

the office was moved to Bibb Street. Mr. Robert Chambers was employed at this juncture and was a great help in every way. He opened up a coal yard called the Dixie Coal Company as a side issue with the Company and in the meantime Mr. Abercrombie had retired from the coal business and shifted Mr. Paul Rorder to the office of the Light Company. Mr. Jules Dunham, Superintendent, was soon called to Tampa and Mr. Chambers was then made Superintendent of the Light Company.

Things were not going very good for the Gas Company. The Mutual Company was making heavy inroads on their electric business. It was not long before Mr. T. Edward Hambleton of Baltimore began negotiations for the bondholders to take over the gas plant. All was moving smoothly for the Mutual Company. "The goose was hanging high" -- new business coming in every day and everybody happy. Pretty soon there were rumors that a new company was coming in the field. Mr. Henry C. Jones had sold his Tallassee water power site to Emerson McMillan & Company of New York, and he and Mr. J. S. Pinchard and associates organized a local company to buy from McMillan's company current for power and lights. They were making contracts every day and night in the Mutual Company's territory.

They erected a Receiving Station at the corner of Jefferson and North Lawrence Streets and were putting in necessary machinery to distribute power enough to run the entire city. Of course, the Mutual Company was bound to sit up and take notice of all this activity. Mr. Harry Abel was sent down by the McMillan Company from Quebec, Canada,



MONTGOMERY LIGHT AND WATER  
POWER COMPANY  
RECEIVING STATION  
COR. OF NO. LAWRENCE & JEFFERSON STS

to get behind the construction of primary lines, and believe me, he was not letting any grass grow under his feet. His wires were being strung here, there and everywhere, but mostly where the Mutual Company's wires were not. It looked like a real fight was in the offing and would soon be on in earnest when, lo and behold, it leaked out that the McMillan Company had acquired control of the whole "shebang" and a consolidation was effected under the name of Montgomery Light and Water Power Company. Mr. W. F. Vandiver was made President, Mr. C. G. Abercrombie, Vice President and B. S. Maultsby, Secretary and Treasurer. Mr. Abel ceased his rapid construction work, married Miss Fannie Martin, sister of the President of the present Power Company, and moved out of the picture. He was a fine fellow and an engineer of the first rank. There is a bit of inside history connected with the sale and consolidation of these various companies which reads like a fairy tale, but this is reserved for another story. It was a struggle between past masters of finance touched with both humor and pathos and thus far has never been recorded.

Soon after the merging of these plants all the employees of the Gas Company moved into the

## Year End 2012 Additional Donations

- Mr. Walter T. Ashurst, Sr. \*
- Mr. & Mrs. Woodley Bagwell
- Mr. M. Borum Bishop, Jr.
- Mrs. Temple Bowling
- Mrs. Betty Brislin
- Mr. Steve Burnett
- Rev. & Mrs. Gary Burton
- Mr. & Mrs. E. Sam Butner
- Mrs. Marion O. Charles
- Mr. & Mrs. Thomas O. Coleman
- Mr. & Mrs. S. Lon Conner
- Drs. William and Gertrude Crum
- Mr. & Mrs. Hugh G. Edmunds
- Dr. & Mrs. Sam Engelhardt II
- Mr. Michael A. Falzone, Jr.
- Mr. & Mrs. Robert Gamble
- Mr. & Mrs. Wm. R. Rusty Gregory
- Mr. Robert L. Gunter
- Mr. & Mrs. Robert F. Henry, Jr.
- Mr. R. Sommerville Hill IV
- Mr. & Mrs. William I. Hill II
- Mr. George C. Howell, Jr.
- Dr. & Mrs. William D. Hughes
- Mr. & Mrs. Frank Johnston
- Mr. & Mrs. Watkins C. Johnston
- Mrs. Denise Anne D. Kagey
- Mrs. Betty Carnathen Keyes
- Mr. & Mrs. Andrew D. Krantz
- Mr. & Mrs. Herbert F. Levy
- Mr. & Mrs. William K. Martin
- Mr. Robert J. McCreary
- Mrs. Jo S. McGowin
- Mrs. William H. McLemore
- Mrs. Eugene T. Millsap, Jr.
- Brig. Gen. & Mrs. John H. Napier
- Mr. & Mrs. Jack Owen, Jr.
- Mr. John B. Pugh
- Mrs. Myrtle P. Ridolphi
- Mr. & Mrs. Charles Roughton
- Mrs. John E. Scott, Jr.
- Mr. & Mrs. William B. Sellers
- Mr. & Mrs. Houghton Smith
- Mr. & Mrs. Mrs. Kevin Sullivan

- Mr. John M. Trotman
- Mrs. Rena Alice Pope Underwood
- The Rev. & Mrs. Mark E. Waldo
- Mr. Mac Walker, Sr.
- Mr. Mason M. Watkins
- Mr. & Mrs. Adolph Weil III
- Mr. & Mrs. John Ward Weiss
- Dr. & Mrs. Benjamin B. Williams
- Mrs. Bonnie B. Williams
- Mr. & Mrs. John D. Yelverton

Anonymous 2  
Deceased \*

## Year End Appreciation

Sincere appreciation is extended to all those who thought enough of our efforts in collecting, perserving and publishing what still exists of records of our early history, to send us additional funding for the year, funding without which we would be sorely pressed to meet our modest costs.

**Thank you friends.**



# Montgomery Museum of History

A few of the Documents, Photographs, Books and Artifacts donated by members and friends to the future Montgomery Museum of History. Should you see an item below that reminds you of something you might like to donate, please give us a call. Thank you.

**Mr. Tom West \*** donated a collection of billheads and letter heads from early Montgomery businesses.

**Mr. & Mrs. S. Lon Conner** donated a collection of early photographs compiled by Mr. Algernon Blair.

A new book, *Once a Fighter Pilot, The Story of Korean War Ace Lt. General Charles Cleveland*, written by **Warren A. Trest**, has been donated to our library. Also we have received a copy of *Alabama Governrnors, A Political History of The State by Webb and Armbrester*.

**Mr. & Mrs. Seabie Kennamer** have donated an ice pick advertising piece for Asher's Delicatessen at #4 South Court St. Efforts to determine when they were at that address have not been sucessful.

**Mrs. Dae H. Miller** has donated a 1930 Lanier Oracle; post card of Green Motor Lodges; photograph of old Cloverdale Grocery; Newspaper clippings from *Johnny Reb* and stationery of the Heilpern Agency.

**Anonymous** donation of the following books:  
A. J. Pickett , *The History of Alabama -1900*;  
*C. F. Napier, The Struggle to Preserve the First White House of the Confederacy - 1983*  
*Nelson F. Smith, History of Pickens County, Ala.1980 reprint*  
*L. J. N. Comings & M. M. Albers, A Brief History of Baldwin County - 1928, two copies*  
*Beale & Phelan, M. P. Blue, City Directory and History of Montgomery, Alabama 1878, 1959 reprint.*  
*Kay Nuzum, A History of Baldwin County -1971 inscribed.*  
*Montgomery, An Illustrated History by Wayne Flynt - 1980*  
*Society of Pioneers, A History of Montgomery In Pictures, ca 1960.*  
*Edna P. Dismukes, Albert James Pickett, The Historian and The Man - date undetermined. Three copies.*

*Virginia Noble Golden, A History of Tallassee for Tallasseeans - 1949.*  
*Edward C. Coreyale, Historical Study Report of Alabama - 1940.*  
*The Organization of The Confederate Post Office Department in Montgomery, Peter Brannon.*

A copy of **May Lamar Donnell's book**, *Brother Sid* , *A Novel of Sidney Lanier* has been donated to our library.

**Mr. Cecil Spear** donated a copy of Memories of Dr. St. John and Nina King Naftel's 1994 book, *Memories of LaPine*.

**Richard Hodges and James Fuller** have contributed to the purchase of new electronic scanning equipment to be used in the scanning of over one hundred thousand burial records at Oakwood Cemetery. When work is complete, the records will be searchable by name of deceased, date of burial, cause of death, etc. **Ms. Jessica Butler** and **Mrs. Martha Allen** are volunteers working on this project.

**Col. Jeffery Benton** has donated copies of *Alabama Architect Handbook 1980* which contains an article, *The Capitols of the State of Alabama* by Nicholas H. Holmes, Jr. and also a copy of *The Alabama Review - January 1989*, with articles relating to the expansion of the Alabama State Capitol Building.

**Mrs. Kitty Chamberlain** has donated a collection of correspondence related to the late Scottie Smith.

**Mr. Wirt McCreary** has donated a copy of *Memoirs of Henry Stanley McCreary, our Father III*. It tells the story of his genealogy from his great grandfather, Joseph Harley McCreary, who was living in Conecuh, Alabama before 1830.

\* Deceased

new quarters. Mr. Mack Billing was put on the Board of Directors, but Mr. Pollak refused to identify himself with the fellows who so enraged him by planting a light pole in front of his place of business.

During the old aldermanic days the Light Company was naturally interested in the personnel of the City Council because they had large and frequent business matters coming before them for consideration. I suppose everybody remembers Major Snodgrass. He was city clerk for a long time. It was my duty to call on him for a voucher covering the City lighting bill each month. In those days every night [a] policeman was expected to report any arc light found not burning on his beat and to give the length of time it remained out. Of course, the Company had a man employed just to ride the different circuits at night and fix all lights that went out from any cause. The Major received these police reports and at the close of the month would sit down and figure out how many hours had to be deduced for failure to burn. His dockage was never questioned but it frequently happened that the inspector would start a light going within a few minutes after it was noted as out but if the officer did not return to that section it would probably be docked for half the night. It seemed to please him whenever he could get a good little rake off and would kid me about the poor lamps the Company had. This deduction rarely ever ran over twenty-five dollars, more frequently around ten dollars. This was considered remarkable for the number of lights installed and the fact it was a new system. The arc lights used were the Brush type. The inventor of this lamp, Mr. Charles F. Brush, lived to be 80 years old and his death is

recorded in *The Advertiser* the same date this account is being written, June 17, 1929.

It was in the 90s when a Mr. Brown and Capt. Dimmick owned the street railways system in Montgomery. Mr. Edward Coolehan was Superintendent and Mr. J. T. Darling was Secretary, cashier, time-keeper and everything else where there was anything to be done connected with the street railway office. The cars were then operated by mules but as time passed on, the system was changed to electricity. There [That] is when the writer came in contact with Captain J. W. Dimmick and Mr. John Darling. The Mutual Light Company made a deal to supply electricity for propelling the cars and also for lighting the cars. The lighting rate was different from the power rate but I do not now recall how the current was separated since it all fed through the trolley. I do know, however, that the rate for the lights was figured on a flat basis. John Darling soon trained himself in the art of making deductions and every pay day he and I would have a friendly squabble as to who was correct. Captain Dimmick, then Clerk of the U. S. Court, was nearly always on hand to back John up if we got too rough. I recall that Captain had an interest in a coal mine somewhere in North Alabama and when John would get through with me he would call me over to talk coal. I enjoyed talking coal with him because coal was my long suit. I came to Montgomery from the desk of a coal mining company and was soon to select it as my private business. I always thought that since these conversations wound up generally by his figuring how much it took to make electricity that he had an idea that the price of electric juice ought to

come a little bit cheaper. When Mr. Dick Tillis got control of the Street Railway he made a new contract with our Company for power. One of the stipulations was that the power should all be metered, and to avoid any contention as to the accuracy of the amount used, two meters were to be installed, one furnished by the Company and one by Mr. Tillis all on the same switchboard. He was to designate the one by which settlements were to be made. They evidently kept pretty close to each other because I do not recall any disputes about the monthly bills. There was, however, a clause in the contract that turned out to be the stumbling block when I called for our check. It said a penalty should apply in every case when a car was held up for lack of power if such case was the fault of the Power Company. There is where John Darling's unfailing records always found some line out of juice on a certain night and it was such and such a period before the engineer noticed that the circuit breaker was out. Mr. Tillis was strong on John Darling - he got him from Capt. Dimmick when he bought the street car line. I thought I had him fixed when the new contract was signed, no more rebates and deductions for lights out, just plain meter rate, all as easy as pie, but "nay, nay Pauline" John had got the habit and Mr. Dick Tillis loved him for it. Our bill was subject to the three R's - Return for Revision and Rebate. My Company, I'm sure, never suffered unjustly because there was never a straighter boy than John T. Darling.

After twelve and a half years of the most exciting period of my life, rich with experiences that equipped me for almost any business undertaking, the curtain was down and left me

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standing upon uncertain ground. I felt that I must strike for myself now, or perhaps never, and plunged into the business of selling coal on my own hook.

The consolidation of all the gas and electric interests in the city brought about many changes in the personnel of employees, and after the Alabama Power company began operating, I lost my identity with its large office forces.

B. S. Maultsby



Footnote:

*This article was lent to us by **Mr. Earl Garner**. His father was the adopted son of the author, Mr. Maultsby. We appreciate his donation of the article and the opportunity to present this interesting bit of Montgomery history.*

*The writer of this article, B. S. Maultsby, was the grandfather of **Mr. Bogue Maultsby Waller** and his brother, the late **Luther H. Waller, Jr.** Mr. Maultsby was the owner of Excelsior Brick Company in North Montgomery.*

*Mr. Maultsby's sister, Helen, married Mr. Frank Rhodes, father of **Spears and Billy Rhodes** and through that family connection the brickyard passed to the ownership and operation by the Rhodes brothers.*

*In recent years they sold the business to **Mr. Mike Jenkins**, owner of Jenkins Brick Co., another company with Montgomery longevity. The Jenkins firm was later sold to Acme Brick Co. an old firm in Fort Worth. The combined business was then bought by **Mr. Warren Buffett**, a major owner of brick manufacturing companies in the U. S. under his firm name Berkshire Hathaway, Inc.*

Editor

## Cuban Missile Crisis

We received an interesting note from Menelle Weiss regarding a directive from Mr. Price McLemore, Sr. who was the Director of Montgomery City-County Civil Defense during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. She was a student at Bear Elementary School and they were instructed to get under their desks and practice "Duck and Cover."

The directive stated, that in the event of a nuclear attack upon the United States, the Superintendent of Education's office occupies first priority on the Montgomery City-County Defense warning network, and will be immediately advised of the attack, its location and the expected time of arrival of radioactive fallout. The present attack pattern expected for the Montgomery area indicated that under the worst possible conditions we would never have less than one hour's time after the attack and 80% of the time we would have four to eight hours before the arrival of the radioactive fallout. Under these conditions it is recommended that schools be dismissed immediately upon receipt of this warning and children sent home by the most expeditious method, which in many instances will mean walking by the children. The Montgomery Police Department will receive simultaneous warning of the attack and the posting of officers to assist the returning children will be the first priority with the Police Department.

It is further recommended that Parents be encouraged to formulate their own family plans, including the route the child would take in walking home from school.



## UNDER THE CAPITOL DOME

date unknown

**Old St. Stephens**, first territorial capital of Alabama, on the Tombigbee river in the eastern part of Washington county, will soon be connected with the outside world by a modern paved highway, thus enabling tourists to visit that historic place. Assurance has been received from the Works Progress Administration that construction work will be started soon.

St. Stephens was settled by the Spaniards in 1790, and American colonists poured in about 1802. Five years later the town of St. Stephens was laid out in lots and a road opened to Natchez, Miss.

In 1815 the first Alabama territorial legislature convened there. According to Owen's history, James Titus was the only member of the senate; Gabriel Moore, of Madison county, later to become governor, was speaker of the house.

During the same year St. Stephens Academy was incorporated and its trustees authorized "to raise \$4,000 by a lottery."

Yellow fever almost wiped out the entire population and there is little left of the town site.



*Note: The only evidence left of this historic early settlement in Alabama is the cemetery. the town was situated on a high bluff on the Tombigbee River at a point where rocky shoals prevented further travels up river.*

*There is now a state park nearby and it is known as Old St. Stephens Historical Park.*

Editor



## WHO IS HE?

This military student's photograph was taken in Montgomery by Chambers Studio and he appears to be wearing a Kappa Alpha fraternity pin. We are attempting to identify him from this information. The picture probably dates to the late 1800s. A penciled name on the back is McAlister.

It could be from API (Auburn) if they had military there in that period. A recent purchaser of the photograph on Ebay would like to know also. CAN YOU HELP ?

FERRY ACROSS, PROBABLY THE TALLAPOOSA RIVER, considering the narrowness.

Note the Montgomery Fair sign pointing to the left in background.

Do you recognize the passengers?

Or, do you know the location of the ferry (obviously up river from Montgomery), possibly Hughes Ferry or Judkins Ferry?

Photo is courtesy of Mr. Sam Chambless who has operated Sam's Bar-B-Que on the Atlanta Highway close to Three Mile Branch for a number of years. He has mighty good bar-b-que too.

The photograph was given to him by Mr. Hollis M. Price, Jr. (a number of years ago) who commented that his father was one of the men on the ferry; unfortunately we do not know which one.

The sign to the left of the man in shirt sleeves reads:

Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey Circus.





# BIRTHDAY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON (1732-1799)

Fellow founding father **Thomas Jefferson** offered this mixed contemporary assessment of the "father of His Country" -- who accumulated a financial net worth estimated at nearly half a billion modern dollars before his death: "His mind was great and powerful, without being of the first order, his penetration strong, though not so acute ...[His judgement ] was slow in operation, being little aided by invention or imagination, but sure in conclusion ... His temper was naturally irritable and high-toned; but reflection and resolution had obtained a firm and habitual ascendancy over it. If ever, however, it broke its bounds, he was most tremendous in its wrath ... His heart was not warm in its affections, but he exactly calculated every man's value and gave him a solid esteem proportioned to it ... Although in the circle of his friends, where he might be unreserved with safety, he took a free share in conversation, his colloquial talents were not above mediocrity, possessing neither copiousness of ideas nor fluency of words. In public, when he was called on for a sudden opinion, he was unready, short, and embarrassed."

*The preceding quote by President Thomas Jefferson on President Washington is lent by Dr. Harold Weatherby and appeared in Jeff Kacirk's Forgotten English.*

## Junior Twentieth Century Club Meeting at Historical Society

The Junior Twentieth Century Club met at the Figh-Pickett-Barnes School House on Feb. 12th. Kitty Sheehan introduced their speaker, James Fuller, who spoke on movie making in Montgomery. He mentioned the more outstanding movies made here over the years and in particular the movie, "Big Fish." He had been fortunate enough to serve as an extra in a number of scenes that were shot by Columbia Pictures in Montgomery and Wetumpka.

The speaker asked for any other ladies who served as extras in the film to come sit in the front as special guests.

Dae Miller is a member of the Screen Actors Guild so could not be hired as an extra for "Big Fish." She is president of the Jr. 20th Century Club.

## New County Archivist, Mr. Kevin Hollis

We were very pleased to have a visit from the new Montgomery County Archivist, Kevin Hollis, who comes to us from Columbus, Georgia.

He was hired in December by the then Judge of Probate, Reese McKinney. We thought Kevin was very impressive and felt he was most conscientious and eager to do a good job. We wish him well in his new position.

Delicious homemade refreshments were served by the committee, Diane Henig, Lander Dean, Hester Gordon and Ginny Cumbus.

## Debate on Who Should be Armed in Schools Is Not New

With all of the talk of whom to arm and whom to disarm:

In the days of Barnes School, (pre-WWII) the students were armed, not the teachers. It was not uncommon for the older students to go hunting before day-break and then come on to school.

You were not allowed, I suppose, to keep your rifle or shot gun at your desk but they could be leaned against the wall at the rear of the Big Room until school was out.

Not one student was wounded, let alone killed. The teachers all survived as well.

Can you imagine that today?

# Abner McGehee of Hope Hull

By John Hawkins Napier III



Jno. H. Napier

Abner McGehee (1779-1855) was one of Montgomery's early settlers and one of its richest. He was one of those Broad River Georgians that his uncle General John Scott, one of Montgomery's cofounders, encouraged to migrate here. Many of them had come to North Georgia from Prince Edward County, Va. after our War of Independence, as had the McGehees.



Abner McGehee

The first known of them in America was William Mack Gehee in New Kent County, Va. in 1696. The family story holds that they were MacGregors in Scotland until King James VI outlawed their clan and name after their massacre of the Colquhouns (and Patrick Napier of Kilmahew) at Glen

Fruin in the Lennox in 1603. Members took pseudonyms such as Gregor, Grier, Magruder - and McGehee.

Abner was the sixth of 14 children born to Micajah Mc Gehee and his wife Ann Baytop (Nancy) Scott, General John Scott's sister (General Winfield Scott was Ann and John Scott's nephew.) Of the 14, three would settle in Alabama and four in Mississippi. Nearly all prospered. Micajah had served in the Revolutionary War and took up bounty land in Wilkes County, Ga. in 1783. By 1790 he owned 16 slaves and 1750 acres. He planted the first peach orchards there from which he made brandy, "a profitable enterprise of great personal enjoyment to him." He and Ann converted to Methodism in the Great Revival of 1809 and he died two years later.

Abner, at 48, moved in 1827 to Montgomery County, Alabama, in a long wagon train of furniture, farm implements, gold coin in kegs, children, Negroes, horses and dogs. Here he named his settlement Hope Hull after a friend who was a noted itinerant Methodist preacher. Later it also became known as McGehee's Switch.

In 1832 he became a cofounder of what became known as the Montgomery and West Point Railroad. He also began the first horse-drawn streetcar line here. In 1833 he built the Planter's Hotel which burned down in 1838 but which he rebuilt in 1840. In 1849 its charter passed to the new Exchange Hotel at the same site. In 1839 Montgomeries elected Abner their delegate to the Southern Commercial Convention at Charleston, S.C. He owned 10,000 acres and probably a couple hundred slaves. A benefactor of the Methodist Protestant Church, he founded the still extant Alabama Bible Society in 1852. He married three times, the first to his first cousin Charlotte Spencer, and had nine children who lived to maturity. His descendants here include besides McGehees, Goodwyns, McLemores, Olivers, and the late historian Dr. Clanton Ware Williams.



Mrs. Harriett McGehee Napier

I myself am a McGehee in-law. My late first wife Harriett Elizabeth McGehee (1929-1963) of Jackson, Miss. was a great-great-granddaughter of "Abner's" younger brother Judge Edward McGehee of Bowling Green, Woodville, Miss. In 1808 he left his father's plantation for the Natchez District. He prospered mightily with six plantations totaling nearly 30,000 acres with 850 slaves.



Judge Edward built Mississippi's first railroad (fifth in the U.S.), the West Feliciana, and the State's first textile mill in Woodville. A noted Methodist philathropist, he founded Louisiana's Centenary College and helped start the American Colonization Society to return freedmen to Africa. He declined President Zachary Taylor's offer to be Secretary of the Treasury but was executor of his estate. In 1864 Yankee troops wantonly burned Bowling Green and three of the pillars still stand. Mississippi novelist, Stark Young, fictionalized this atrocity in his 1934 novel *So Red The Rose*, which was filmed the next year.

Judge Edward's second wife, nee' Harriet Ann Goodrich of New Orleans, and her infant namesake daughter died here at Hope Hull in 1827 while they were visiting her brother-in-law Abner and are buried in the McGehee family cemetery there.

Ten years after Abner died in 1855, at Civil War's end in April 1865, Wilson's Federal raiders destroyed utterly the Montgomery and West Point Railroad from here to Georgia - locomotives, cars, shops, warehouses, depots, tracks and bridges. Chief Engineer D. H. Cram (John Kohn's ancestor) found an abandoned 27-year old locomotive, the Abner McGehee, at Loachapoka and managed to restore it to service. He reported that the ancient engine, like its namesake, went forward with alacrity but backwards only reluctantly. Abner McGehee of Hope Hull,

business entrepreneur and transportation pioneer: What would he make of today's Hyundai plant at Hope Hull?

*Endnotes: James E. Saunders, Early Settlers of Alabama (New Orleans, 1899), 448-53; Jane N. Grider, McGehee Descendants (Baltimore, 1991), III, 148-50. 216-20, 223-69, 275; Wayne Cline, Alabama Railroads (Tuscaloosa, 1997), 18-19, 22, 29, 68; Stella M. and James N. Pitts, The Burning of Bowling Green, Woodville, Miss., 1997), 26-page booklet.*

*We are pleased to publish another interesting article by John Napier, an outstanding historian who thoroughly researches his subject.*

*Much history would be lost were it not for his talent in presenting interesting and informative coverage of his topic. Thank you, John.*

Editor

## Alabama River Wading Depth in Montgomery Lowest in 53 Years

*The Montgomery Advertiser*  
1925-6

There was less water in the Alabama river at the foot of Commerce street Tuesday afternoon than ever before officially known, according to the weather bureau readings.

When the gauge showed 3.8 feet below zero, this was a drop of .4 feet from the level on Monday, which equaled the previous low water record made in November, 1924.

Meteorologist P. H. Smyth said Tuesday he saw nothing to indicate a rise in the river but that its stage at Montgomery could fluctuate rapidly due to the dams at Lock 12 and Mitchell on the Coosa river.

fame of the American Patriot. "Alas" exclaimed the warlike Corsican, "the name of Washington will be remembered as the founder of a happy empire; it will be canonized by posterity when mine shall be lost in the vortex of revolutions."

You have heard this evening, fellow citizens, the valedictory address of Washington announcing the close of his political career. It is now near forty years ago since it was delivered to the National Assembly of our country. The voice that gave it utterance is now silent in death. That thrilling voice that was heard in the morning of the revolution cheering on the sons of freedom to the contest, is heard no more. And that noble and commanding form that towered our Fathers in the van of battle is mouldered into dust and incorporated with the elements. Aught now remains to benedictions and counsels. Let then these solemn adus of the "Father of his Country" but his paternal monitions sink deep into the bosoms of Americans. They will prove to them a legacy of inestimable worth -- a talisman more conservative than the Palladium of Minerva --

Death, fellow citizen, has disbanded the noble army of the revolution. Most of the patriots of that day have followed their great Captain to the land of silence and perpetual night. But the fruits of their toils and sufferings we trust will long survive them; they will be as lasting as time and co-extensive with the earth. The sacred flame of liberty kindled on our shores has cast its radiance far and wide. It has shot athwart the Atlantic into the night of despotism that has shrouded the old world for ages. Europe's hereditary bondsmen now feel its kindly glow. Long since has South America unfurled the republican standard. The roar of her canon announcing the triumph of Democracy has echoed and re-echoed her Andes and every gale that waftes from that genial clime bears on its wings the shouts of a people disenthraled.

-- No intelligent mind can look abroad and not discern the gathering elements of a moral revolution. A spirit of bond and manly inquiry is now pervading Europe which the "Holy Alliance" of Kings will not be able to suppress.

The democratic voice long treated with contempt has now a formidable influence over all the states of Europe, it clamours loudly around the thrones of Kings. And let them listen to its call; let them relax their iron grasp; let them restore to their fellow man his birthright long usurped, or a tragic end will

shortly be their doom. The plains of Europe will be converted into an arena of sanguinary warfare and that continent a slaughter house for Monarchs. Too long already have Kings and venal Priests united in unholy league, combined to plunder and oppress mankind. The earth has groaned beneath their weight. It is time that man should assert his native dignity and shake off this mental thralldom. When the monstrous doctrine that intelligent man is incapable of self government, with all other heresies and superstitions that disgrace the age, shall be exploded, then and not till then, may we expect that grand Millennium that prophetic inspiration had promised to make glad the earth. But a more cheering prospect than the present has never yet dawned upon our race. The whole world almost is now reposing in the bowers of peace.

Integrity and international faith is beginning to characterize the most barbarous people of the globe. Wars waged formerly for conquest and prosecuted as the great highway to glory are becoming now an object of abhorrence. The present century is rolling away in its course the corruptions and abominations of past ages and the era of a moral and political regeneration seems fast approaching. May it not prove a delusive daydream of the philanthropist, but the glad harbinger of better days to man. May we of the present generation yet live to behold our principles triumphant and the whole world one vast republic. Then shall that primeval happiness sung of by the poets of Antiquity revive, and the long lost "Golden Age" return once more to bless mankind.

*The preceeding address was lent to us for publication by Mrs. Peggy Hall Joseph. The author was an ancestor in her family. Peggy's mother was Florence Charles Hall and the ancestral home, Chantilly ca1832, is probably the only home built in the early years of the settlement by white pioneers in Montgomery County to be continually occupied by the same family for 181 years.*

*We appreciate the lending of this article on the 277th anniversary of the President George Washington's birth.*

Editor

### MONTGOMERY YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMIC HISTORY

1853	Epidemics in Mobile, Montgomery, and 10 other communities.
1854	Epidemics at Montgomery with 45 deaths from Sept. to Nov.
1855	Epidemic at Montgomery with 30 deaths from Sept. to Nov.
1873	Severe epidemics throughout entire Gulf States, Montgomery infected from Pensacola, first case reported Aug. 27th. The whole population except 1,800 fled. 500 cases, 108 deaths. Last case appeared Nov. 10th.
1897	In Montgomery 120 cases, 11 deaths, lasted from Oct. 18 to Nov. 10th.
1905	One case in Montgomery was a refugee.



# George Washington

(1736 - 1799)

An Address Written By Robert Fraser Charles  
in 1836

Published previously in the *Daughters of The American Revolution Magazine*  
February 1968

Fellow Citizens:

One hundred years have now elapsed since the patriot hero whom we delight to honor first entered on his grand career. Time in it's course has swept away the generation of that day: another and another has succeeded and yet is the memory of Vernon's Chief still green in the bosoms of Americans. It is identified with the origin of their national greatness: It will descent [decend] to posterity and survive when the marble monument that entombs him shall have crumbled into dust.

The close of the eighteenth century was a gloomy era in the history of our country. The spirit of despotism that had so long brooded over the whole eastern world then crossed the Atlantic. Danger and death following in its wake encompassed our land: darkness dwelt in the political firmament and "clouds obscured Columbia's day." It was at this period of our national existence, when our hero was blending the vibour [vigour] of youth with the maturity of age, that the storm which had been gathering in the horizon of the east burst in fury over our devoted land. Great Britain indignant at her revolted Colonist[s] and determined to crush the germ of liberty in the bud, precipitated upon the young America her vast colossal power to cripple the energies of the Nation in it's youth.

She vested our cities with her conquering armies and blockaded our harbours with her ships of war. Against this fearful armament our brave forefathers assembled an untrained band and called upon Washington to lead them on, to conquer or to die. How awful was the responsibility here imposed. How perilous the distinction here conferred -- But Washington ascended with firm step the dangerous eminence and braved the wrath of England's King. With a wisdom almost superhu-

man did he direct the martial energies of his countrymen and against the Myrmidons of Britain most miraculously prevailed. Like the Roman Fabius he pursued towards the enemy a temporizing policy, and in a seven year war he exhausted the resources of England and drove her armies in discomfiture, from our shores.

The era of the revolution was indeed "the time that tries men's souls." Shadows clouds and darkness rested on our prospects and many a patriot here despaired; but the undaunted spirit of their leader never for a moment quailed. "If," said this great man, "I am destined to be defeated in fighting the battles of freedom and our armies should be cloven down in the field, I retire from the Atlantic States and beyond the Western Mountains will I erect again the standard of Liberty." There behind the native bulwarks of his country would he have entrenched remanent of his patriot band; and like the Ancient Caledonians he would have harassed with a perpetual and eccentric warfare the invaders of his soil, till worn down and despairing they would have abandoned a land whose inhabitants emerged like the Phoenix from defeat and who encompassed them around with battle and danger and death. By the achievement of American independence Washington laid the foundation of a mighty empire and filled the earth with his glory. His name has an electrical influence in the regions of despotism; it is uttered with reverence in the Palace of Kings.

The Proud Napoleon in the zenith of his power contemplated with humility the moral grandeur of his character. He who sported with the destinies of Nations and dragged Kings bound to the wheels of his chariot; who "shrouded the sun with a cloud of battle and unveiled the night with it's fires," who lived and moved and had his being in the element of war; -- Even this terrible being who was himself the admiration of mankind, sighed after the pure



## Yellow Fever in Montgomery

*The Montgomery Advertiser*  
date unknowncertain, possibly Sept. 3, 1950

There was plenty of excitement in Montgomery during the last yellow fever epidemic, according to J. P. Carroll of 124 West Jeff Davis [Ave.], who was a resident here then and remembers most of the details. He writes an interesting letter to the column about what happened. In his letter he says:

Dear Mr. Mullin:

"I would like to add a few lines to the story of "When Montgomery Became a Ghost City Overnight." Panic seized us -- many fled the city and trains were over crowded and the roads leading from Montgomery were jammed with humanity in all types of vehicles, loaded with tents and beds and other household goods. The cities south of us were having a siege of yellow fever, but the people of Montgomery didn't seem to apprehend the danger -- card parties and theaters were well attended.

"Then the little city of Flomaton had several cases. Our eyes were then opened to the immediate danger -- armed guards were placed on the roads and railroads leading into Montgomery from the south. About this time someone, whom I cannot

recall, came into Montgomery feeling fine, went to his room up in the Five Points neighborhood, but that night he was seized with a blinding headache and rapidly rising temperature. Doctors were called in and gave him the usual sedatives, etc., but he grew worse, and then we all realized that yellow fever was amongst us. Three or more cases developed with the focal point around Clayton and Mobile streets - and thereafter the dread disease spread rapidly.

"The writer at the time was living on Mobile Street and worked as bookkeeper for a milling concern at what is now Washington Park (Hendrix Mill). One day Dr. J. L. Gaston called me over the phone and told me 'not to be alarmed, but to get my wife and baby to Atlanta on a train that would leave the following morning at 5 o'clock,' and he suggested that I stay out to the mill at night. When we arrived at Union Station the following morning, more than 500 people were there to get away on that same train. Out on Mobile Road were camped at least 500 more.

"In the city, stores were closed and places of amusement were

shut down completely. No mail was being delivered, but the post office and the *Advertiser* were still doing business. I just had to hear from my wife and baby, so I would mount my bicycle and go to the post office each day. Don't get the idea that the city was completely deserted. The doctors were here, as well as the undertakers, and looking down Montgomery Street from Five Points, one could see a woman in white, with a pail and mop in her hand, and wherever there was a yellow flag, she would enter and clean up, and aid the doctors in every way possible. I have forgotten her name, but she was a real heroine -- a woman of the underworld, who deserted her companions and did her part as an angel of mercy.

"When the epidemic died down, after frost, she opened a newsstand in a little place on Dexter Avenue, now occupied by a fruit store. She afterwards sold out to Mr. W. A. May. I have no knowledge of her whereabouts since that time.

"Vital statistics were published in the *Advertiser* each day at the time. I clipped them and saved them for a while, but they were misplaced. I lost several friends, but after 53 years it is hard to enumerate them. Understand, the writer does not pose as one of the heroes, for at times his nerves were at the breaking point, but he was an eye witness to the heroism of others, and may God's blessings be on them wherever they are.

"P. S. \_\_ Possibly Massey Anderson or Dr. Kirkpatrick could give some interesting details of these times, also Leon Jackson."





Quiet At  
Lowndesboro

B. B. Tyson of Lowndesboro writes about the time of the last yellow fever epidemic in Montgomery as follows:

Dear Mr. Mullin:

"I remember the death from yellow fever of the young man from Cobbs, spoken of by Dr. F. C. Stevenson in his letter to you. He was one of the earliest victims and some doctors said it was caused by black grapes and not yellow fever.

"My brother-in-law sent his family out of town. He himself remained until towards the last. The only means of transportation at that stage was a one-horse wagon belonging to a Negro and drawn by a one-eyed horse. In the confusion, one of the trunks was switched and one containing clothing evidently belonging to someone with few means was substituted. My small daughter soon developed German measles, which I always thought she caught from the old clothing.

"Rochelle Gressham, connected with one of the warehouses in Montgomery, stayed in my brother-in-law's home. He died during the epidemic. There was no panic here, although we were only 20 miles away.



AREA QUARANTINED

Adjoining counties quarantined against Montgomery County. At

Montgomery Guarded in  
1897 As Yellow Fever Toll  
Climbed

By Maxie D. Pepperman

Montgomery Advertiser  
December 10, 1950

(Montg. Adv.) Editor's Note: This is the last in a series of articles by Maxie D. Pepperman, Montgomery insurance man who had contributed several articles to the *Advertiser-Journal*. The series which this article completes is about the yellow fever epidemic in 1897.

The belief was that the germ floated around more at night than in the day. Every night citizens in different sections of the city would light huge wooden bon fires in the middle of the streets to run the germs away. I recall passing these bon fires with smoldering wood making clouds of smoke. The gloom of that smoke in conjunction with the gloom in one's heart made it most depressing.

All mail from New Orleans and Mobile was fumigated. That is, each letter was perforated with many holes and the vapor blown into the envelope to kill the germs. I remember that a man named Stebbins, who was employed at the local post office and who handled mail, died of the yellow fever. After that very few people would touch a letter which came from an infected area even if it had been fumigated.

About that time my mother decided to come home, to leave the younger children with the relatives while she stayed at home with my father.

each county line were stationed armed guards to prevent any one from leaving the county. An arrangement was made for my mother to be brought by horse and buggy to the Pintlala Creek bridge on the Selma Highway as that was the boundary line between Montgomery and Lowndes County. My father met her there. Under an escort of armed guards my father was allowed to go to the center of the bridge and my mother, coming from an opposite direction, met him. She came home with him but she could not go back to Lowndes until frost came.

WORK OF MINISTERS

As I recall every minister in Montgomery except one remained in the city and visited the sick and buried the dead. The most common statement made on meeting some friend on the street, was: "Well, I am surprised to see you. I thought you had fled with the rest of the people." You did not meet many friends, however.

But one day I met The Rev. Dr. George B. Edgar who was pastor of the First Baptist Church. Walking up to him I very foolishly asked him that stereotyped question and he promptly

replied, "Why Maxie, sure I am here and have been through it all visiting the sick and burying the dead. I place sulphur in my shoes and fumigate my clothing and am getting on very well."

Never was I so embarrassed. I loved Dr. Eager, he baptized me in the old First Baptist Church which was then where the Goodyear Tire Co. is on Bibb Street. I grew up in that church and was the church clerk for 14 years. I spent many happy hours in Dr. Edgar's home and then to pull such a bone. I will never get over it.

Now as a prelude as to what is to follow let me digress a bit. There lived here a certain embalmer and assistant funeral director connected with one of the leading funeral parlors here. I knew him as did nearly every one here but he was the most unforgettable character I ever knew. He always wore a thick black suit with long double-breasted coat that reached to his knees and a large black hat with flat brim all around.

SINISTER SMILE

He really looked like those pictures of undertakers one sees in the "old flicker" movies. He had that sinister smile and such eyes! They were not like the proverbial story of the banker who had the glass eye stare of an undertaker but he had most penetrating eyes. When you saw him coming up the sidewalk and when about 10 feet away he would focus those eyes on you. As he got closer, with fixed stare, his eyes simply penetrated all through you. When he shook hands, your hand would get clammy. I would resent his asking how I was feeling. He also wore a brown mustache and when he smiled the ends would curl up like Mephisto. Well, to get back to the yellow fever.

I had learned stenography and was looking for a job. On a Friday I had an interview with a railroad official who gave me several dictations and offered me a job. I was to report for work the following Monday morning. On Sunday afternoon following my interview, and one day before I was to start to work, my father and I took a buggy ride around the deserted city. Suddenly I saw a terrible sight. We were passing the home of the man for whom I was to start to work the next day and I saw a lone hearse parked in front of his house. Then the front door opened and out walked my friend the undertaker, all dressed in deep black. He eased across the porch and looked in both directions as though to warn any passer by to hasten on. Then he went back to the door and stooped down and took hold of the front end of a casket and dragged it across the porch. He then walked backward down the front steps, holding up the end of the casket till it reached the edge of the porch and then bumped it down step by step to the sidewalk. He finally got it in the hearse and quickly mounting the driver's seat, he drove away to the cemetery. No friends allowed -- not even any pallbearers. People were buried almost immediately after they died. And the man in that casket was the man whom I had talked with on Friday, and he was to start to work with the next morning. He had died of the yellow fever.

Well, I was everything but paralyzed with fear. I was at first hot and then had chills all over. I just knew I had the yellow fever. I could not sleep that night, neither could I eat. My father decided that I should go away and in a day or two he sent my brother and myself to Nashville, which city, like

Atlanta, said the germ could not live in their climate and those two cities opened their gates to the refugees.

REFUGEE TRAINS

The L. & N. was still operating refugee trains. Just before a train left the station my brother went up to a front car to see who was aboard. The very minute the train started the guards locked the doors and they remained locked until we reached the Tennessee line, except for fuel and water for the locomotive. My brother and I were separated all the long day run to Tennessee.

Well do I recall passing through Birmingham which city was practically founded and built up by Montgomerians. In those days of such intense fear there was no sentiment and the train did not hesitate any more for Birmingham than the crack L. & N. Humming Bird does for Fort Deposit.

ARMED GUARDS

Armed guards were stationed at the depot and if any one attempted to get off he probably would have been shot down.

I still felt and was sure I had the yellow fever after that terrible picture but my brother suggested that we go down town in Nashville and mingle with the thousands of refugees on the streets. We met many home folks, for in those days everybody in Montgomery knew each other. I soon forgot about it and the next day felt O.K. and went to church to hear the Rev. J. B. Hawthorne, who formerly was pastor of the old First Baptist Church here and who then had a pastorate in Nashville, preach a sermon in which he welcomed all Alabamians to Tennessee.

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