

CHILTONIAN

Volume 33, Number 1

January 2013

QUARTERLY MEETING

The Chilton County Historical Society will hold its quarterly meeting at 2:00 PM on Sunday, January 13th, at the Chilton/Clanton Public Library. Mr. Wayne Arnold will speak on the Battle of Ebenezer Church and display some of the artifacts he's collected. All members of the Society and other Chilton citizens who are interested in our county's history and its preservation are encouraged to attend.

CREDITS:

Chiltonian is a quarterly publication of the Chilton County Historical Society & Archives, Inc.
P. O. Box 644, Clanton, Alabama 35046-0644
(A Non-Profit Organization)

OFFICERS:

President	-	Katherine Reece
Vice President	-	John Glasscock
Secretary	-	Scarlett Teel
Treasurer	-	Colyn Moatts
Reporter	-	Janette Bailey

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(Dues payable in January)

Lifetime: \$100

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EDITOR'S NOTE: It is with great pleasure (and no small amount of relief) that we are able to interrupt the series on *A Year for My Profit: Letters to Vietnam, 1969*, and present a number of articles written by other members of the Society. Since the last issue, we've had a number of submittals, and we will publish those before restarting the *Letters to Vietnam* series. The first installment of Scarlett Ray Teel's *Ramblings...* is offered below.

Ramblings in My Chilton County Place

By
Scarlett Ray Teel

My story of Chilton County begins at the foot of Mt. Pisgah Hill in what is known as Mt. Pisgah Community. I was born in the same old house and the same room in which my mother was born in 1907. I feel I still carry around the dirt of the yard of that house on my feet and the mud of the beginnings of Chestnut Creek between my toes, and I am so proud of it. Many times I followed along behind my daddy as he plowed furrows in the fields turning up evidence and reminders of even older inhabitants of our county—the Indians. I still have a display of many of these stone arrowheads and one, either a stone knife or spear point, picked up during my ramblings of my Chilton County place. Chilton County has had some most interesting people and history to make it uniquely different. I feel I am lucky to have a part here. Much of this comes from family tales over time. Everyone has a story to tell, and this is part of my story.

One of the highest points in Chilton County serves as the beautiful cemetery at Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church and Zion Ridge Church of God. Names of early ancestors and settlers of Chilton County appear here. Names such as Popwell, Baker, Scarbrough, Aldridge, Mims, Williams, Davis,

Headley, Edwards, Yeargan, Wilson and many others dot the headstones of the cemetery. Communities most often developed around church buildings. Indeed, the land on which the church and cemetery stand was first donated by some of the Aldridge family for that purpose. I remember them saying a bush arbor stood there first, then a building that served as a church and as the Aldridge School stood in what is now part of the cemetery. Mt Pisgah came about on July 19, 1885 as a church with "20 male members and 33 female members." It is disputed as to whether the first building was a log structure or a lumber structure but since Ehrman Mill people had a lot to do with the building, I suspect since lumber was available, it was a lumber structure. I first remember attending church in the second structure of the little white clapboard siding church with two small side openings for rooms on either side of the pulpit that could be drawn closed by curtains hanging on wires for use as Sunday school rooms that was built across the road from the cemetery. The heat was furnished by a potbelly heater. Cooling was furnished by open windows and hand held paper fans with funeral home advertising on them. Later—in the 1950's—the brick church building that stands today was erected. My mother always said that the Sunday School was begun at Mt. Pisgah so that my grandfather, Albert Middleton Cunningham would have one to attend.

Albert Middleton Cunningham was born in Madison County Alabama on August 11, 1869 to Louvenia/Suvilla Jane Aldridge. She was the daughter of Reuben Andrew Aldridge, who died on December 28, 1863 at Chattanooga while in the Confederate Army, and Eleander (Ellen) Baker Aldridge (Granny Aldridge, as the family called her), who is buried in the Mt. Pisgah Cemetery. Eleander Baker Aldridge was the daughter of Stephen Baker, one of the very earliest settlers of our county. She was the sister of Alfred Baker, the "Duke of Clanton." Mama always advised us that if we ever met a Baker from this area to just extend our hand and say, "Howdy, Cousin!" for surely we were. A connection to a Cunningham father has never been made. Albert Middleton was sickly and possibly a premature baby when he was born so that Jane Aldridge brought him to and turned over much of his rearing to her mother Eleander Baker Aldridge here in Chilton County. Later Jane Aldridge married J.E. (Joe) Brown and had Luther, Gus, Ada and Maggie Brown. Jane and her husband, J. E. Brown, are buried in the Aldridge family lot at Mt. Pisgah.

My maternal grandfather, Albert Middleton Cunningham, grew and developed in the community there at the foot of Mt. Pisgah Hill surrounded by his Aldridge relatives who were big land owners there. He found my grandmother and his wife in the Bethsalem Community in south Chilton County. He, aged twenty-five, and Eula Ann Hathcock, aged thirteen, were married on August 5, 1894. She was the daughter of Alfonza Thomas Hathcock and Elizabeth Dizena Mancel Hathcock from Mississippi. Albert Middleton Cunningham brought his bride home to a small cabin there near the Ehrman Mill location. Mr. Ehrman was of a German family that was a big land and mill owner in Chilton County at that time. They also had mills in Birmingham and Bibb County. Ehrman Planer and Lumber Mill was located (near where the Carrie Gray Home is located today) there at the beginnings of Chestnut Creek. There was a hotel for the workers and their families and a dinky railroad line ran from the railroad at Clanton to there. During the time I was growing up, sometimes pieces of old rail or a tool became uncovered and would be discovered in our pasture. My Grandmother Eula told of there being an explosion of the boiler at the mill once. She told of one of the workers walking out from there so badly burned by the steam that his flesh was dropping from his body. She said he later died and was buried in an unmarked grave at Mt. Pisgah Church Cemetery.

Apparently there is a connection to the unfortunate sinking in April of 1912 of the *R.M.S. Titanic* to the Ehrman family of Clanton, Alabama. On February 8, 2004 while touring *Titanic, The Artifact Exhibit* at the McWane Center in Birmingham, Alabama, a display and write-up of individuals on the *Titanic* caught my eye. Apparently Phillip Mock, a *Titanic* survivor, had been unusually courageous and brave—being responsible for saving many of the children passengers in Life Boat #11. The write-up about Mr. Mock went on to say that after the *Titanic* disaster, he "married Miss Alvice Ehrman, a native of Clanton, Alabama."

My mother Ennis Lovenia Cunningham married my father, Lee Roy Ray, son of William Allen (Will) Ray and Mary Alice (Mamie) Mims, and followed him around to several counties, Coosa, Tallapoosa, Macon, and Crenshaw counties to various lumber and milling locations as my father worked in the lumber milling industry. He worked for many years for the Thompson Family Logging and Milling Company from Chilton County. The lumber and milling business was a major industry in the area at the

time—until the Depression hit. Daddy continued to work in the lumber business all his life. My parents had a family of four daughters with me being the fourth and final daughter.

I happily traipsed behind my daddy when I could or my mother all the time since her job was me and being home with me. My mother never worked at a “paying” job but she worked hard and long and much of the time had more money in her pocket than Daddy. Daddy worked all the time, too, and if there was no steady milling work, he farmed, growing cotton, corn, sugar cane and always a big garden, or he would hire himself out to pick peaches or other produce. Times were hard and there was not much money but I never went hungry. Mama sold butter and eggs, chickens, pecans or whatever extra that they had. Daddy always had cows and pigs. I remember killing hogs at our house and going to others’ houses for hog killings. I do not ever remember us killing a cow but Daddy kept cows to grow and sell to add to his income. For years he kept cows and milked them to sell milk to Carnation Milk Company. He had special strainers and equipment that had to be sanitized and sterilized to handle the milk. He strained the milk into cans and kept it cool and outside at the corner of the house in a barrel of water until the milk truck came around about once or twice a week to take the milk to the processing plant in Dadeville, Alabama. Daddy’s barn was fancy compared to many other barns—his had running water and electric lights! He had to tend to the livestock early in the mornings and late in the evenings after he returned home from his mill job so these amenities were very handy. The years that he farmed he kept a great big pair of work horses—one named Nell, and one named Dixie—to pull the wagon and to plow. His wagon was a big wide-width body with wide metal spoked wheels that caused the wagon to be heard coming for a mile clanging on the dirt roads.

We did not have a vehicle to drive for years. Daddy had to arrange for rides to work or walk. He was not the only one. Enterprise Road, in front of the house, was dirt for many years after I can remember and one would not be lonesome for companionship, for the road was full of walkers. The church, as in all communities, was the center of the social life. And everyone walked to get there to socialize and to worship. Romances commenced and ended there. My sisters tell a story of one young man stopping on our porch to pull off his new ill fitting shoes and rest his feet one night on his way down the hill from Mt. Pisgah Church. The house is about one mile down the

hill from the church so he had walked long enough and far enough that his feet had begun to hurt so he stopped by our house and came upon the porch to sit in the swing to relieve his feet. Daddy did not think too much of whomever he was and did not want him visiting any one of *his* daughters and was going to ask him to leave until the girls interceded for the poor hapless fellow and explained to Daddy that he was not visiting one of them but only resting his feet! Many times, however, my older sisters told of making fudge or baking a cake to have for groups of young people to gather at the house for entertainment. They also had a wind up record player available for their entertainment.

Our Old Houses

Probably the first old house that my Grandmother Eula and Grandpa Cunningham lived was nothing more than a small shuttered cabin with perhaps only two rooms built underneath the spread of shade of three old pecan trees near today’s Carrie Gray Home. Later the couple moved into the house that some of their family still lives today. This house is where my mother was born in 1907 and I was born in 1943. It was originally an example of the Single Pen house—meaning that it had two rooms built onto each other. The smaller back room served as the kitchen and eating area while the bigger room attached to the front served as the living and sleeping area. This room served as the birthing room also and, indeed, this is the same room that both my mother and I were born. Attached to the front of that was a small front porch with half of it enclosed into a room that was known as the “parson’s room” for it was built with access from only the porch so that the traveling parson could go in to sleep without disturbing the family as he traveled from church to church on his circuit. This house has slowly evolved over the years to be as it is today as it shelters the fifth generation of our family.

The Big House

The old house that sheltered more children of our family than any was the third house that my Grandma Eula and Grandpa Cunningham bought. The big old house had been built by a doctor in the community. It was an example of the Double Pen house for it had two rooms on each side of a big wide hall running between them. The old hall ran from the front porch to the back. A dining room and a big kitchen with a big cooking fireplace were behind the rooms on the west side of the house. Bunches of children grew up in and around this old house. We

played on the big wide porches and about as much under the old house as in it. We played "Doodle Bug, Doodle Bug" by using a small stick to stir around in the doodle bug's sand home under the house. We recited "Doodle Bug, doodle bug, come out! Your house is on fire and your children are all gone!" Soon the doodle bug would be seen backing out of his sandy home! The inside of the old house gave us children plenty of places to hide during games of Hide and Seek.

We helped our Grandma Eula to draw water out of the well with a windlass that pulled water from the depths with a bucket of cold water to replenish the water bucket with a community dipper..... and everyone drank from the community dipper! In the old kitchen sat the slop bucket in which the leftovers and dirty water was dumped until it was taken outside to water the canna lilies in the yard. Nothing was wasted.

To be continued...

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Katherine Reece

1629 County Road 77

Clanton, AL 35045

205-294-2197

October 15, 2012

Betty Collins
14260 County Road 29
Jemison, AL 35085

Hello,

As you may know, this has been a difficult year for the Chilton County Historical Society. Unexpectedly, we lost both David Dennis and Marie Smith.

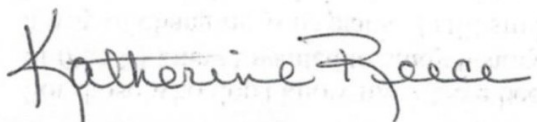
At our October meeting, I am happy to say I selected President. Our new vice-president is John David Glasscock, our new secretary is Scarlett Teel, our new reporter is Janette Bailey and Colyn Moatts remains as our treasurer. If you were present at the meeting, thank you for trusting me with this position. It means quite a lot to me.

For those who don't know me, I have been a history geek for as long as I can remember. Starting around the age of 6 or 7 I knew I wanted to study history and it was my intention to become an archaeologist, however life has a way of changing your plans. I still study archaeology as a layperson, I've run an archaeology and ancient history discussion website for over 10 years which was featured in Archaeology Magazine. I've also been published in a college textbook on pseudoarchaeology.

I know you may not have attended a meeting in some time, but I'd ask for you to come again. I'm hoping to improve the quality of our speakers and offer some really good programs.

Our next meeting will be January 13 at 2:00 pm at the Chilton/Clanton library. The speaker will be Wayne Arnold. Mr Arnold has been researching the Civil War Battle of Stanton for decades, and lives very near the battle sites, he's collected artifacts, read the diaries of the officers on both sides of the battle and spoken to the old residents of Maplesville, Stanton and Plantersville who have passed on about their family's stories of the battle. I'm hoping this will be a very entertaining program and I'd love to see you there.

Thank you,



Katherine Reece
resident, Chilton County Historical Society

CHILTONIAN

Volume 33, Number 2

April 2013

QUARTERLY MEETING

The Chilton County Historical Society will hold its quarterly meeting at 2:00 PM on Sunday, April 14th, at the Chilton/Clanton Public Library. Dr. Ned Jenkins (archaeologist at Ft. Toulouse) will speak on DeSoto's route through our area. All members of the Society and other Chilton citizens who are interested in our county's history and its preservation are encouraged to attend.

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Ramblings in My Chilton County Place

By
Scarlett Ray Teel

(Continued)

...Grandma Eula in later years was a certified State of Alabama midwife. A car would come slowly driving into the yard and a man would get out and tell her, "Miss Eula, my wife needs you. I have come to get you." Grandma Eula would get her a clean apron, her bonnet and her little black bag and leave with the man in the car. Perhaps a day or two later she would be returned to her old house after delivering a baby for the family at their home. She delivered many babies, both black and white, around Chilton County and other nearby counties. She maybe got a few dollars, but many times it was produce or other food items that was her pay.

I remember times when Grandma Eula had an old ice box on the back porch. Once a week, the ice truck came from Wade's Ice Company in Clanton to deliver to her a chunk of block ice to place in the ice cabinet of her icebox. To serve the ice, it was chipped by an ice pick from the block of ice for glasses of tea, perhaps. Sometimes the family would chip enough ice off the block to make a hand cranked freezer of ice cream before the precious commodity melted.

Grandma Eula had a small room of her old house equipped with a small wood burning cook stove in the corner. She lifted the cast iron eyes off to lay her a fire to cook her food. She always cooked a bunch for she never knew how many people would be around

(continued, next page)

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when the meal was served. She had a small three-footed cast iron cook pot in which she cooked possibly a big full pot of fresh turnip greens seasoned with a slab of "fat back." She lifted the eye off the stove and set the cook pot directly over the fire. The turnips bubbled and tendered while she prepared and baked a pan of good crunchy corn bread in the little oven.

When she had them available for cooking, she skinned and cleaned squirrels to fricassee. She cut him up like a chicken, floured and seasoned him to brown in a hot skillet of fat on the top of the stove, then she added either milk or water and put the lid on. She placed it in the oven to steam and bake to become so tender and make gravy.

I was told that she even made delicious cobblers from mulberry berries. I know she made a most delicious chocolate egg custard. She did as everyone else during her time. They used anything and everything that they had to survive.

She served her meals from the kitchen table lined with straight backed chairs on one side and against the wall, the long bench. She sat on one end near the meal bin while we kids sat on the other end during the meal. The meal bin was a small-footed cabinet with a hinged lid that covered two bins inside—one for flour and one for meal. The wooden dough bowl was stored inside.

This dough bowl was hauled out each time Grandma Eula made biscuits. It was a wonder to watch her skillfully start with the flour and slowly add the proper amount of lard and milk to knead and form a pan full of biscuits to place in the little oven fired by wood! There was a water shelf with the water bucket and dipper setting on it for cooking and washing dishes. The kitchen was finished by being set up with two old pie safes in which to store the clean dishes and leftover food. Some times I have seen both my mother and grandmother hand out leftovers to "beggars" passing through the community.

Grandma Eula had for a while a screechy old radio that ran only on a big battery that had to be purchased at the hardware store. A wire ran outside to a pole to pick up anything on the radio. Earlier, before my time, the old house had had a big wooden telephone hung on the wall to make calls, but in later

years she enjoyed a party-line telephone that alerted her to pick up by after a certain number of rings.

The old house even survived long enough to have a new-fangled television set (black and white, of course) installed at Grandma Eula's home. The old set was the one on which Grandma Eula and a bunch of her grandchildren gathered around to watch the live episode of The Ed Sullivan Show that had the charmer Elvis Presley gyrating on—shown only from the waist up! To show more of Elvis's torso would have been too scandalous!

In the 1940s, the federal government went around spraying houses with DDT. This was long before the dangers of DDT were discovered and it taken off the market. The purpose of the spraying was to keep down mosquitoes, flies and bedbugs. I never heard of anyone in our family having bedbugs, but we did have mosquitoes and flies, at times. Some used lye soap to wash their chairs, bed frames, etc., to keep down the infestation of bedbugs. Grandma Eula's old house was sprayed with DDT, and for years afterwards evidence of that spraying could be seen in the high ceilings of the old house.....

To be continued...

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Williams-Goodgame Cemetery

by
Katherine Reece

Located in northeastern Chilton County is a small cemetery with a lot of history. The Williams-Goodgame Cemetery only held 13 marked graves when the April 1979 survey was done by Betty Collins (see the "Cemeteries of Chilton County"), but at least three other graves could be seen that were unmarked. After this survey, the cemetery was either vandalized or logged over, but either way, 12 of the 13 headstones were destroyed. The headstones were replaced in 2009 when the Williams family, the Ellison family, Eagle Scout candidate Clint Seales and the now disbanded Chilton Cemetery Association joined together to clean and restore the cemetery.

Those graves that were previously marked were: Sarah Goodgame and her husband John Goodgame; Reese Goodgame (their grandson); Joseph Ellison; Edward W. Willis; Grover J. Willis; the first

Sheriff of our county, Thomas H. Williams; Ocie G. Williams; Robert L. Williams; Nancy Williams; Rebecca Williams; Sallie Williams; and, John Williams.

John Goodgame was John Crocket Goodgame. He served in the late Creek War of 1836 as a private in Chapman's Co. of Coosa County Volunteers. His parents were John Goodgame, buried in Talladega County, and Sarah Crockett Goodgame who is buried at the nearby Mullins Cemetery. John married Sarah Rasberry on February 5, 1822, in Bibb County.

The earliest marked grave in the cemetery is that of Nancy Williams, born in 1862 and died in 1863. Nancy Williams was the granddaughter of Sarah Rasberry Goodgame. When Nancy was two years old she went to the creek to get water with her grandmother, but she fell into the creek and died of her injuries. John Goodgame and his wife, Sarah Rasberry Goodgame, both died and were buried in the cemetery in 1889. Burials in the cemetery continued with more Williams family members coming to rest there.

Before he was named by the Alabama legislature as our first Sheriff, Thomas Williams served in the Confederate Army as a Second Lieutenant in the 44th Alabama Regiment. He resigned his commission on July 25, 1862, citing "continued bad health."

At an unknown date, according to a story told by the granddaughter of Sheriff Thomas Williams, a family traveling from Texas back to South Carolina were passing through the area when one of their daughters became ill and died. The family asked Sheriff Williams if they could bury their daughter in his family's cemetery, and he obliged the grieving family. The girl's name is unfortunately lost to history.

In 1897, the land the cemetery sets on and the surrounding land was deeded to the "John Goodgame Methodist Church" by the Alabama Mineral Land Company for one dollar. The men listed as trustees of the church in the deed were Sheriff Thomas Williams and J. F. Goodgame.

Sheriff Williams himself passed away in 1904, and no record of the church actually having been constructed has been located so far.

The Williams family supplied a list of the people they believe are buried in the cemetery.

Besides the marked graves, the names are Apsey Allison Vines, Lena Williams Lowery, Johnny Mae Davison, Pauline Davison, Forest Lowery, Forest Williams, and Charles Williams.

The Williams Goodgame Cemetery was listed with the Alabama Historical Commission in 2007, and a historical marker was erected by Clint Seales as his Eagle Scout project in 2009.

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From
The Chilton County News
"Opportunity Edition"
October 19, 1950

Mr. G. O. "Buddy" Willingham
Manager, Willingham Hotel



G. O. (Buddy) WILLINGHAM

This modern hotel at Clanton is a living vital example of how a hotel can be developed and gain a fine patronage through the energy and imagination of the management in charge. In the lobby, which is large and attractive, the colors are in harmony. Everything is spic and span. The rooms are neat and attractive. Mr. Willingham has brought to this development all the years of experience in the hotel business and today the result is that the Willingham Hotel is a dandy place in which to stop and live.

Possibly many people in Clanton do not recognize the advantages brought to their business by the Hotel Willingham. Through the year thousands and thousands of dollars are spent in this community

due solely to the guests of the Hotel who drive out of their way to be guests of Mr. and Mrs. Willingham.

We cannot overlook that Mrs. Willingham has been an important factor in the unfoldment [sic] of this plan to its present attainment. She is lovely, attractive and reflects a most gracious temperament.

"My wife and myself have enjoyed our sojourn at Clanton. The citizens of this community have been very fine to us. The last few years one can notice the great possibilities of this region in industry and agriculture," remarked Mr. Willingham.

Mr. and Mrs. Willingham are members of the Methodist Church, and he is also a member of the Clanton Kiwanis Club.

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July 2013

QUARTERLY MEETING

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EDITOR'S NOTE: We continue with Scarlett Ray Teel's *Ramblings*, which began in the January issue.

Ramblings in My Chilton County Place

By
Scarlett Ray Teel

(Continued)

Clanton's V. J. Elmore Dime Store

My oldest sister, Lois Ray Davis, worked at V. J. Elmore Dime Store in Clanton. This was usually the first working experience of many young ladies of the community. Of course, she had to walk the three miles to and from the store and our home on what is today Enterprise Road. Believe it or not! The Dime Store and other businesses in Clanton stayed open until 7:00 P. M. Many times, Daddy would wait in Clanton until that time so he could walk with her so she would not have to walk the three miles home alone. She worked all day for a salary of \$1.00 with two cents deducted for Social Security, so her pay for a day's work was \$.98.

Mr. V. J. Elmore, a businessman of Clanton, started his first store in Clanton in the 1920's soon after World War I to sell military surplus and old uniforms. At that time Upchurch Drug Store was the first business on the corner of Second Avenue North and Highway 31 South, then a dead alley; then the V. J. Elmore Store beside a through alley; then a Klinner Furniture beside the first Martin Funeral Home location; a Western Auto and on the end of the block, Hayes Chevrolet, an auto dealership run by Mr. Dick Hayes and Mr. Jack Hayes. All of these businesses faced Highway 31. The office for the entire chain [of

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stores] was connected to the V. J. Elmore Dime Store by an enclosed walkway over the alley into the upstairs of Kliner Furniture. Stores were set up all over Alabama, Georgia and north Florida with our dime store in Clanton being the very first one. The store sold knickknacks, or "prettys," as some called them; thread; sewing materials; costume jewelry; jewelry boxes; cosmetics; toys and dishes. The thing that enticed many to venture through the open doors was the smell of the popcorn wafting into the air on the sidewalks. Not only did they sell popcorn but dipped ice cream, candy bars and dipped and weighed candies from jars.

Sidewalks of Clanton

Saturday was the big shopping day in Clanton. Everyone came to town on Saturdays to shop after working all the week days. Daddy, as others would meet his employer on the north side of the sidewalk on Second Avenue in front of the People's Savings Bank and the First National Bank to get paid for his week's work. Sometimes Mama and I would be with Daddy and I would be lucky enough to have a few cents—usually less than a dollar to spend in the dime store. My favorite thing to buy was coloring books and paper doll books. Two toys that I was lucky enough to buy were a Slinky, a coiled toy that walked on its own, and a Hoola Hoop, which one kept circling the hips by gyrations of the hips. Mr. Dan Mims, the County Agent, told me much later that I was the first kid that he ever saw playing with a Hoola Hoop. Mama might buy a spool of thread, a sewing pattern or some little something for the kitchen at home when we visited the V. J. Elmore Dime Store.

The traffic on Second Avenue in Clanton was heavy and continuous. Trucks and cars with multiple families came in from the outlying areas of the county. Mothers and small children would be riding in the cabs of pick-up trucks with the driver while others sat in straight oaken chairs, manufactured in Clanton by the numerous chair factories in production, lining the sides of the back of the pick-up. Others would be standing on the back looking over the cab top or sitting on the open tailgate with their feet hanging down. There might even be a rider or two standing on the running boards of the truck or car. Others would be walking toward Clanton, while others rode in wagons with mules pulling them. In the fall of the year, trucks and wagons full of cotton moved toward the gins located in Clanton. Mothers could be seen on the sidewalks holding an infant and holding the hands of older children as she made her way to perhaps a shoe store to

buy shoes for the children to go to school. She, perhaps, sat there nursing the baby while older children tried on shoes offered by the shoe salesman. The shoe salesman would measure the foot of the child, then go to the back of the store to bring out one or two different styles of shoes to choose from. Perhaps before they left the store, feet with new shoes could be inserted into a new fangled x-ray machine to see how well the new shoe fit. One could see the outline of the new shoe with the bones of the feet clearly visible. Of course, this was before the dangers of too many x-rays were known!

Scales set along the sidewalks into which a penny could be inserted for a small card to drop out on which one's weight and perhaps a fortune was printed. Drug stores such as Alred's, Wright's and Upchurch's opened their entire fronts onto the sidewalk. They had soda fountains and snack bars from which tasty ice cream treats could be worked up by a soda jerk and served with perhaps a hot dog or a hamburger. Of course, the sidewalk smelled of all these wonderful odors.

The final stop on Saturdays of families in Clanton was the grocery stores. Only the basic staples for the kitchen at home were purchased, for most families grew their own hogs and cows for ham, eggs, milk and butter. They had to do so to survive. Many homes inside the town limits of Clanton even had their own chicken pens to have yard-fresh chickens. It was easy to go to your pen and select a nicely grown off chicken and ring its neck and have it frying in hot grease in short order.

In the fall of the year if one went near or into the Clanton Post Office, the chirps and peeps of baby chickens (also known as "biddies" or "deedies") could be heard coming from approximately 36"x36" square cardboard boxes. The "biddies" would be ordered by the farms and delivered by the rural mail carrier. Many times, Mr. Zebbie Gray, the Rural Route 2 mail carrier, would blow his horn and drive up into our yard with a box full of chickens for Mama.

Mama grew them off in her prepared brooders so that we might have fresh eggs from the hens and fried chicken or chicken and dumplings from the fryers. Daddy often took a dozen or so of her eggs or a pound or two of her butter to Clanton to sell for her. Mama never held a job in her life but much of the time, due to her making and selling different farm products, she had more money in her pocket than my daddy,

even after he had worked every day at his job! Not only did my daddy work at a lumber mill but many years he often farmed, growing cotton, corn, sugar cane and a garden for our family. Later, pecan trees were planted to add some income for the family. These products were gathered in the fall and taken to the proper locations in Clanton to sell. Each fall that Daddy had cotton planted, Mama would go along wearing her homemade "pick sack" through the rows of cotton after the fields had been picked to clear off the bolls of cotton that had matured after the final picking. This was called "scattering cotton" and could be sold in amounts less than a bale to help the family's income. Mama wasted nothing! Today's "new" idea that one has to *become* "green" was needless at our house for we were born "green" and became even "greener" under the influence of our mother. The "scattering cotton" was an example. She had Daddy to take it to the one of the cotton gins in Clanton for what little money could be made this way.

Clanton had several cotton gins. One was located near downtown across the road on the corner from the former Ace Hardware building. This one was run by Mr. Horace Popwell and Mr. John DeRamus. A little farther out of Clanton on Second Avenue, North, Mr. Hugh Thompson ran another gin. In the fall of the year, cotton would be strewn on the sides of the roads throughout Chilton County from vehicles carrying the cotton to the gins. The trucks or wagons would be lined up near the cotton gins to await their turn for the cotton to be sucked from the vehicle. Then the finished bales would be lined up at the gin as evidence of the production. Saturdays were big days at the gin, for the families had worked all week to pick the cotton to bring into Clanton.

Passenger trains still came through Clanton and stopped often to pick up or deliver passengers to the Clanton Railroad Depot. I went often with Daddy to take my Uncle Fonza Cunningham to catch the train designated as the Hummingbird. It was quite a sight and a memory for a little country girl such as I. The trains were coal fired then and it was quite a sight to see and hear one come to a stop or leave the depot. The trains had to have a ready stock of water and coal supply. You could see the coal being shoveled with the outline of the fireman in front of the bright red open doors of the furnace. Puffs of steam and black smoke came from the train as the noise increased as it left the station and picked up speed on its way to its destination. The mail was picked up and delivered to Clanton by train, so often the man from the post office

with a big wire wheeled cart could be seen picking up or delivering mail to and from the depot—probably the little chickens had had a train ride before they arrived at our house!

I never rode a train until I was a junior in Chilton County High School and went with my friend, Sandra Mims Swenson, and her mother's (Mrs. Eunice Mims's) Clanton Elementary second- grade class on a field trip to Birmingham Zoo. During the day we rode the miniature train at the zoo and rode a *real* train home to Clanton's L & N Railroad Depot, so I, the little country girl, had finally ridden two different trains that day.

If one walked by the old Chilton County Jail that was located behind where the Clanton City Hall is located today, the prisoners might yell or attempt to talk to you from the open windows of the jail. Of course, that building was used before the time of air conditioning, so the prisoners tried to get some fresh cool air and to look out of the open barred windows. Once a display of a confiscated whiskey still set up outside the jail caused quite a stir.

Another stir along the sidewalks of Clanton was the advent of the first black-and-white television sets being set up in the windows of Tiffin Furniture Store. The new fangled set was set up, drawing curious people to assemble on the sidewalk in front of the store; to drive by or neighborhood children to ride bicycles by in an attempt to see the grainy images on display. Sometimes the only display to be seen by the interested crowds on the tiny—perhaps nine-inch screen—was the black and white, grainy, still image of the test pattern. The first television channels went on and off the air at set times by using the test pattern to come on and a recording of *The Star Spangled Banner* to go off the air.

On the north side of Second Avenue and Highway 31, a Clanton police car parked in a designated parking place. There was a large power pole there on which a metal box was attached. Much of the time the police car set there with a policeman inside the car. Other times the policeman would be out walking around on the sidewalks amongst the people. Suddenly, a loud clanging sound would come from the box. The clanging could be heard for blocks around. The policeman would get out of the car and open a metal door on the box to answer a telephone. It was the operator at the police station telling the officer to check on a problem at another location. He would slowly

drive away to return shortly to park in his same location. Crime was pretty low key or none at all in Clanton. This was during the time that people rarely locked their houses and left keys in their car, if they had a car. Another noise one might hear in Clanton of those days was a loud crackling noise or recorded music coming from a loud speaker mounted on a car going around town. The car would drive slowly (Everyone drove slowly then!) around with someone inside the car announcing a political rally or a sidewalk revival to be held on usually the sidewalks around Clanton's Chilton County Courthouse. At the appointed time, a crowd would begin to congregate near the steps of the courthouse to hear, perhaps, Big Jim Folsom, one of our Alabama governors. You may have heard of the "hell-fire and brimstone" preachers, but the politicians could deliver about the same passion in their political speeches.

To be continued...

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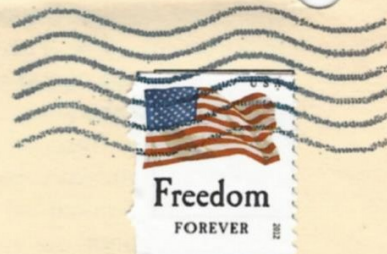
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CHILTONIAN

Volume 33, Number 4

October 2013

QUARTERLY MEETING

The Chilton County Historical Society will hold its quarterly meeting at 2:00 PM on Sunday, October 20th, at the Chilton/Clanton Public Library. Our guest speaker will be Mr. Doug Ward, who will talk about Legends and Ghost Stories of Chilton County. All members of the Society and other Chilton citizens who are interested in our county's history and its preservation are encouraged to attend.

CREDITS:

Chiltonian is a quarterly publication of the Chilton County Historical Society & Archives, Inc.
P. O. Box 644, Clanton, Alabama 35046-0644
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EDITOR'S NOTE: The 3481st Company CCC, Camp Clanchilala, SCS-7, Clanton AL, was located on the north side of Alabama Highway 22 and just east of 17th Street North. Its establishment (and the entire Civilian Conservation Corps) came about as part of the "New Deal" assault on the effects of the Great Depression. Once World War II began, its demise as a CCC Camp was certain, even though the physical plant continued service as a German POW camp. Mr. James M. Sims, Sr., who now lives in Texas, was a member of the 3481st Company. He has graciously agreed to provide us with his first-hand memories of the CCC experience, and his writings will be serialized in the next few issues of the *Chiltonian*. We thank Scarlett Teel for allowing us to delay the next installment of her "Ramblings"—which will resume after this special series—in order to bring you Mr. Sims's story.

James Sims and The CCC Camp

By
James M. Sims, Sr.

I spent the first 15 years of my life in the suburbs of Birmingham. My stepfather became disabled to work in 1935, so we moved to Jemison where he had bought a house for his retirement. I attended Jemison HS the second semester of my junior year and graduated in 1936 with eight others.

The discussion about Jack Hayes [*reference to previous communication*] was very interesting to me. He and his brother had a Chevrolet Dealership in Clanton for many years. I believe their father was Dr. Hayes, a MD. I also played second base during my youth. Jemison didn't have a team at that time, so I played in Clanton on a team of youths 15 to 18 years old. Morgan, Grady Jr, and Sidney Reynolds, and Guy McKee—later the Tax Collector, were on the team. I think Grady Jr. was killed in WWII. George Smith, once the County Tax Collector, went to JHS and

Thomas Hays, a Probate Judge, played on the Thorsby team. I confess I didn't reach the professional height of many of my contemporaries.

I'm very impressed and pleased so many of you are researching your ancestry and writing History. History is very important because we don't know how far we have progressed unless we know where we started from and how the paving stones in the path were formed. History is always after the fact and sometimes boring to many; however, the CAUSE of history is very interesting and mostly a learning experience.

Chilton, as many rural Counties, had its share of lore and legends, and I will share one with you.

There was a farmer who lived in County Beat 3 being tried for a misdemeanor. He pleaded Not Guilty and stated he could prove he was a person of good character and would not commit such a deed. Since he had no witness to testify, the Judge picked two of the spectators to go to Beat 3 and bring two character witnesses to court. The men returned empty handed about 4 P.M. The Judge asked where are the witnesses. The searchers replied, "There is no character in Beat 3".

Company 3481 CCC was activated August 8, 1935. Its mission was to support the Soil Conservation Service Branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which designated the project as SCS-7. It was rumored the land where the Camp was located belonged to a member of the Mullins family. The Lease included that the owner would get *[be delivered]* all the kitchen garbage, which he fed to his hogs. The land across the street was used as a baseball field and other recreational activities.

The remaining building, covered with Kudzu, was the Headquarters (front, East) and the rear was the Company Supply Station. Facing the Supply Station and parallel to the street was a building containing the Library, Recreation Hall and Canteen. The next building was a three-room school house. The last building in this group was the offices of the civilians who worked for the Soil Conservation Service. North (toward Thorsby) was the Vehicle and miscellaneous repair shop and east of that was the Bath House/Latrine and the Mess Hall, composed of the main dining hall, kitchen and dining room for the Military and Civilian employees. The next building toward the street (south) was the Military and Civilian Bachelor (permanent and

visitor Quarters). Please notice I have constructed a square (Cavalry Post). Within the square were four barracks facing north and south that would accommodate about fifty persons in each one.

This completes this *[first]* submission. I will send more, including the military/civilian structure, the work, the educational system, personnel, camp life and the effect on some of our lives. Feel free to omit whatever you desire. I don't know when the Camp was closed. There was legislation in 1942 to close all Camps, so I would guess it was late 1942 or early 1943 *[camp was closed in 1942 and began receiving POWs late that same year]*.

Although the Camps were named "Civilian", they were governed by the U.S. Army. The Company Commander and Subaltern (Assistant) were Army Reserve Officers. I served under three Commanders. The third member of the Camp Staff was the Educational Advisor, who could or could not be a Reserve Officer. Most of my time our Educational Advisor was Thomas H. Walker, a native of Lawley and a Reserve Officer. Our Subaltern was Lt. Luke Blanton, who married a Clanton native. I saw him in the 1950s and he was living in Clanton. The "Using Command", Dept. of Agriculture who ran the work projects, were all Civilians. Basically, when in Camp we were under Military Rule, while at work off camp, we were supervised by Civilians.

The enrollment period was six months and the limit was two years unless one was made "Permanent Party", where there was no limit. There were three Ranks: 1. Enrollee; 2. Asst. Leader; and, 3. Leader. All Permanent Party were Leaders in critical jobs. The Enrollee's pay was \$30.00 per month. \$22.00 was sent to his designated family members and he received \$8.00. An Assistant Leader's pay was \$36.00 per month and a Leader's pay was \$45.00 per month. Each rank sent \$22.00 home. The County Welfare Director (or Social Worker) determined who was qualified and selected the Enrollees that went to the Camps.

CAMP LIFE

The day began at 5:30 A.M. when the Barracks Chief, a Leader, turned on the lights, stepped out of his small room and shouted "Rise and Shine". After he dressed, he walked down the middle (aisle) and turned over the cot of anyone who was still in it. I saw many who were "flipped" but very few the

second time. One had about 30 minutes to dress, wash up and be ready for breakfast about 6:00 A.M. After breakfast, back to the barracks to make up your cot (Army Style), dust off and arrange your shoes, galoshes, hanging cloths, footlocker and sweep your area and help the middle aisle, if on "Barracks Duty".

The next was to get in the trucks and travel to the worksites, one site was about 2 miles west of Thorsby where the Kudzu plants were taken from the starter beds and transferred to rows in a field. They would grow there until they were about a foot high, and then be taken to an erosion work site and permanently planted. Hot lunches were carried to the work sites. The work day ended about 4:00 P.M. and the Crews were all back in Camp in time for the evening meal at 5:00 P.M. The work crews would have a Leader that helped the Civilian Foreman. There were one or two Assistant Leaders who supervised the Enrollees who did the work, mostly on their knees or in a squat position.

Sometimes the Commander would schedule a Retreat (Flag lowering Ceremony at Sundown). This required the entire Cadre to shower, dress and stand formation during the Ceremony. Supper was delayed until after Retreat. The day did not end until 8:30 three nights a week for some Enrollees. A number of Enrollees could not read or write or had not completed the third grade. They were required to attend "Three R's" classes Monday and Wednesdays from 6:30 P.M. to 8:00 P.M., taught by Certified Teachers.

End of this submission.

I'm going to speak a few things about myself. I was a fairly good baseball player in my youth and played on the Jemison Team. We played the CCC team several times which was managed by "Lefty" Gilmore who was also Senior Leader of the Camp. When I was enrolled I planned to go to the West Coast to work in the National Forests and Parks. Lefty told me, "You're going to stay here and play baseball". That decision turned out well for me.

The Assistant to the Educational Advisor was an Assistant Leader rank. The one present when I was enrolled was unhappy with his situation and obtained a discharge about ten days after I enrolled. Mr. Walker selected me for the position so I was promoted to Assistant Leader in one month after being enrolled. Mr. Walker was a second father to me and his guidance and advice are with me today. One job for the

Assistant was to keep open and be the Librarian from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M., Monday through Thursday. As the Librarian I had contact and relationships with Enrollees, Civilian Supervisors and some Military Officers. I heard a lot of life stories.

Education extended beyond the Three R's. Every Friday Morning before work time, all of the enrollees gathered in the Recreation Hall for a one hour lecture on whatever subject was chosen by the Lecturer. Most of the subjects were Junior or High School level. The lecturers were Mr. Walker, Lt. Blanton, Lt. Johnson, Civilian Supervisors and sometimes a guest. Mr. Walker and Carey Haigler were the Enrollees' favorites. I lectured about History, Civics, and Social Studies. During my first appearances, there was a lot of giggling about an upstart, already promoted and speaking to many older than he was.

In 1940, our educational program was extended into trades that could be used in civilian life and especially the war industries, which were growing in preparation for WWII. These were Electrical, Sheet Metal, Welding and Auto Mechanics. They were taught by skilled local people. Participation was voluntary. I chose electrical, obtained further instruction and worked for the Air Force as an Aircraft Electrician for ten years of my WWII Army time and Civil Service career.

Saturday Mornings were Post clean-up times and minor building repair. We combed the entire area for cigarette butts, scraps of paper, mowed, weeded flower beds and washed all the windows, trucks and other vehicles. Those tasks usually ended about 1:00 P.M. After lunch, we were all free for the week-end until 10:00 P.M. (the permanent curfew) Sunday night when lights went out and everybody was supposed to be in bed.

My layout of the buildings skipped one important building, the Dispensary or Clinic. It was the last (East) building in the back row. It was managed by an Assistant Leader who was trained in First Aid, allowed to give certain medicines, and who had limited authority to excuse an Enrollee from work for a limited time. It contained a space for the Asst. Leader's cot, clothing and six cots for bed patients. We had a full time Doctor for the first three months I was there; however, he was called to active duty and afterwards we had local contract Doctors. One was Dr. Charles Moore. My memory is he came three days a

week and for any emergency. There was a Mumps Epidemic in the whole county in the fall of 1940. I spent two weeks in the Clinic. They moved two more cots in to care for the afflicted. We all completely recovered except one person who was affected mentally. I and our ambulance driver carried him to the Army Hospital at Fort McClelland. He recovered and returned to our Camp about a month later. An Army dentist came every six months and examined everyone's teeth and did whatever was necessary. He was the first Dentist I had ever seen and filled three teeth which I still have.

More is coming.

To be continued...

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