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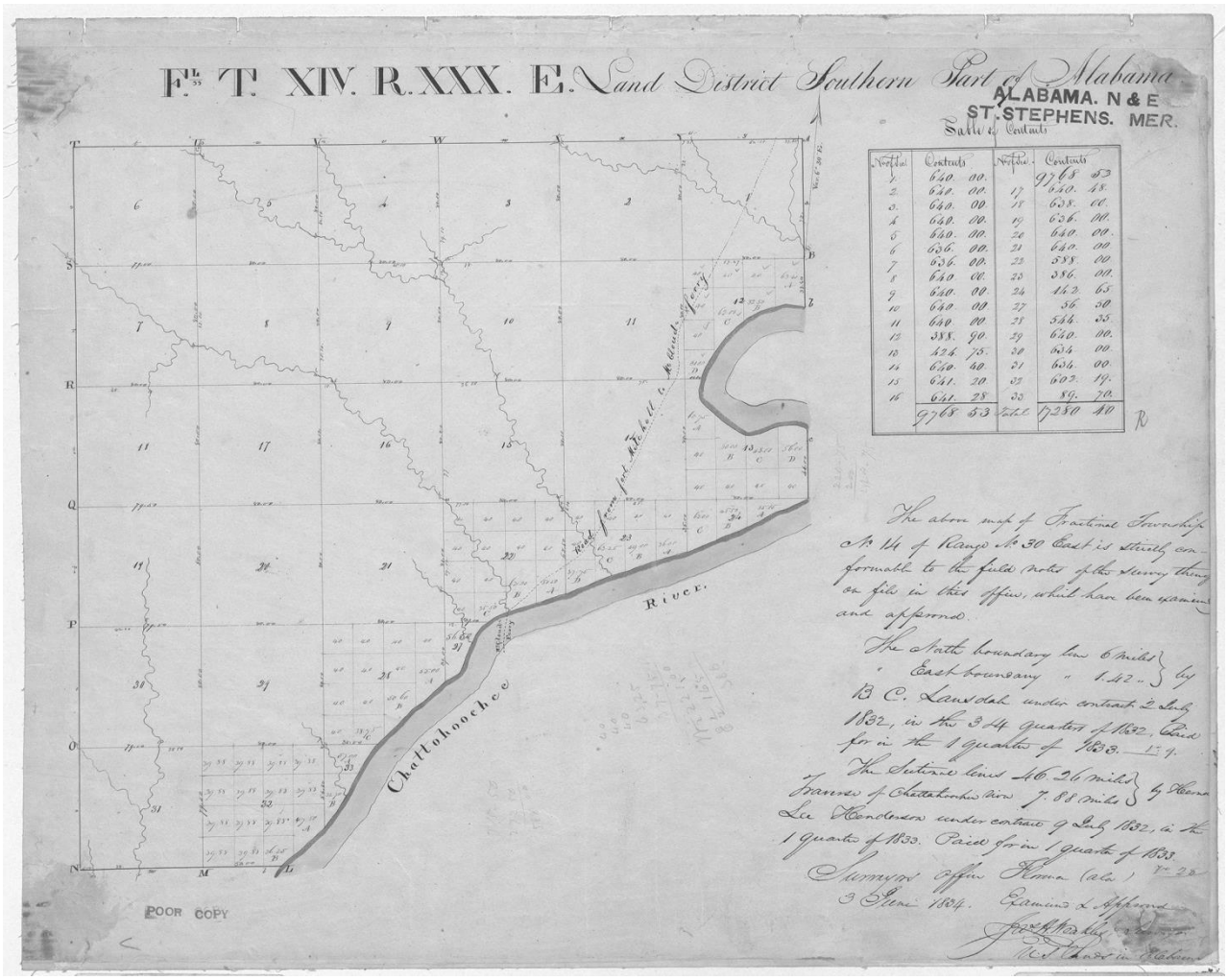

FALL 2020

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 2

MUSCOGIANA
Journal of the Muscogee Genealogical Society

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Interested parties are welcome to submit primary source material and journal articles for publication in *Muscogiana*. Submissions should be e-mailed to calliebmcginnis@gmail.com as a Word document. To be considered for publication, material must be of cultural, historical or genealogical significance to the Columbus/original Muscogee County, Georgia, area. This includes the contemporary Georgia counties of Muscogee, Harris, Talbot, Marion, and Chattahoochee, as well as Russell County, Alabama. Vital information about living persons should not be included. All articles should be footnoted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and should be 1,000 to 5,000 words in length. The Editors and the Editorial Board make final decisions on the acceptance of material for publication. Neither the Muscogee Genealogical Society nor Columbus State University can accept responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in material submitted for publication.

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Book reviews of both local titles and general genealogical monographs are accepted for inclusion in *Muscogiana*. Reviews should be 350-1,000 words, and should contain an overview of the work and an analysis on the value of the work to genealogists and other researchers in the region.

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On the cover: 1832-33 survey map indicating "Road from Fort Mitchell to McCloud's Ferry" beginning at the mouth of Bluff Creek and passing through some of James Boykin's lands, bypassing fractional section 13 which may be where Boykin's Ferry was located. James H. Wheatley, General Land Office Records, "Fractional Township No. 14 of Range No. 30 East," Sections 1-33 (Washington, D.C., Bureau of Land Management, 1834), https://glorecords.blm.gov

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In Memoriam

Lucille Frances Edwards Harris
1925 - 2020

George Lawrence
1921 - 2020

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From the Editor

I sincerely hope each of you are staying safe during the ongoing national health crisis and are getting adjusted to what is so often referred to as the "new normal." As people interested in reading about the past, I am sure you will agree with me that various degrees of upheaval seem to be much more of the norm throughout history than any sort of continuity. Change, as the old saying goes, is the one constant in history. It is the stories of how people in the past dealt with disruption and exceptional circumstances that are often the most interesting. In this issue we bring you three stories of such times and events from three different eras in regional history. Each enlightens us on their main characters, helps us better understand the times in which they lived, and assists us in making sense of their place in regional heritage.

About half of the pages of this issue are occupied by our lead article, the final installment of the two-part article by Rachel Dobson on early Columbus resident James Boykin. This fascinating glimpse into the life and times of a man who witnessed some of the most tumultuous events of Columbus's antebellum era, notably including the sordid saga of Creek Removal, helps us not only understand him as an individual but also the society in which he lived. The article is both an interesting read and a valuable contribution to local historiography.

For our second article, we offer a piece submitted by Thornton Jordan, former professor of English at Columbus State University and an authority on Columbus's literary history. Here he turns his attention to a forgotten episode early in the career of noted Hollywood screenwriter and Columbus native Nunnally Johnson. In the 1920s, while working as a New York newspaper columnist years before his work would appear on the silver screen, Johnson become embroiled in a unique controversy over the authenticity of a child poet hailed as a prodigy. It would be one of the first times Johnson's name came to the attention of millions, but of course far from the last.

Following that article is a short piece I put together about Noble Leslie Devotie. Perhaps some of you, like me, had heard of the name owing to fact that it is usually mentioned as a piece of Civil War trivia. As a young man in February of 1861, months before the first shots of the Civil War were fired, he perished in an unfortunate accident near Fort Morgan on Mobile Bay and was consequently hailed as this area's first martyr to the Confederate cause. As he is buried in Linwood Cemetery and his family has connections to Columbus, I thought it might be interesting to share more of his story.

As is our custom, we wrap up the issue with a quick look at the latest happenings at Columbus State University Archives and our book review section. I hope you enjoy this issue of the journal. Please be in touch with me if you have something you would like to have considered for publication in its pages. We are always looking for new articles!

Mike Bunn, Editor
jamesmichaelbunn@gmail.com

Creek Removal, State Rights Politics, and Financial Loss in the Chattahoochee Valley: James Boykin, 1830-1846

by

Rachel Dobson

James Boykin, one of the Chattahoochee Valley's wealthiest citizens in the 1830s and 1840s, has rarely been mentioned in the historiography of the region, and those brief appearances are usually cursory or idealized. In this essay, the second of two, I will elaborate on three important stories about my four-greats grandfather that may be familiar to a few readers: his heart-wrenching letter about the plight of the Creek Indians in 1831, his purchase of land from seven Indians in 1834, and the loss of a tremendous amount of money in the late 1830s or early 1840s that led to his financial downfall. I will delve into not one, but two existing letters that he wrote to Governor George Gilmer, as evidence of his behind-the-scenes influence in the removal of Creek Indians from the Chattahoochee Valley. Creek removal brought Boykin great economic advantage. In a discussion of his huge financial loss later in life, I will piece together information that fills in some – but not all – of the mystery behind the loss, delving into his property interests and financial dealings with others. And, I will also outline his political participation in the burgeoning states' rights movement in Georgia, which went hand in hand with the expansion of cotton production and slavery throughout the lands that had recently been opened up to whites by the Creek removal. My hope is that providing these important stories with more historical detail will paint a more accurate picture of the times and encourage readers to research further into antebellum Columbus and the Chattahoochee Valley during the 1830s and 1840s.[1]

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[1] Part one of this essay was published in the spring, 2019 issue: Rachel Dobson, "An 'Agreeable Villa in the Suburbs' and a Mansion in the Northern Liberties: James Boykin in Stewart and Muscogee Counties," *Muscogiana* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 1-18. Author's note: In part one of this essay, three of my conclusions or statements were incorrect. First, James S. Calhoun and Anna V. Howard Williamson were most likely married at a home named Rose Hill in Baldwin County, Georgia, not at James Boykin's Rose Hill in Muscogee County. As Kenneth S. Thomas has pointed out, the marriage was recorded in Baldwin County, and the minister who married them, Rev. Myles Green, was well-known in that area. There is an existing antebellum, albeit younger, property named Rose Hill in Baldwin County that may or may not be the same location as the one mentioned in the *Southern Recorder* in 1830. Second, Mark A. Cooper took over ownership of the Western Insurance and Trust Company from James S. Calhoun, rather than founding the company himself. Finally, in going more thoroughly through the online database, Georgia's Historic Newspapers, I found that James Boykin was more involved in political activity than I had realized, as I will outline here. None of these corrections changes my underlying ideas about Boykin – that he built his mansion, Rose Hill, around 1829 or 1830, and that he was a behind-the-scenes but influential actor in the development of antebellum Columbus and the lower Chattahoochee Valley. But the corrections have reminded me that this research is ongoing and that it is important to stay open to new discoveries.
Claudio Saunt, "The War the Slaveholders Won: Indian Removal in the State of Georgia," presentation, November 10, 2015, invited public lecture, Carlos Museum at Emory, said: "[Removal] was unabashedly an attempt to protect slavery, to extend it across the Black Belt, and to plant more cotton, the most profitable crop in the world in the 1830s." https://southernspaces.org/2016/war-slaveholders-won-indian-removal-and-state-georgia, accessed April 3, 2018.

The First Letter, August 25, 1830: Interference by the Cherokees

An 1831 letter describing the "truly lamentable"…"situation of our red brethren," co-written by Grigsby E. Thomas and James Boykin to Governor George Gilmer may be familiar to those who have read the landmark local history, *Columbus on the Chattahoochee*. However, a year earlier, Boykin himself penned a less well-known letter to Governor Gilmer concerning a council meeting of the Creek Indians in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley. This one in 1830 is brief, less dramatic, and a bit more cryptic.[2]

Although more research into the precise nature of the 1830 meeting and the reasons for Gilmer's choice of Boykin is needed to bring out exactly why he was writing the letter, a little historical context may help us begin to understand the circumstances surrounding it. The timeline is a complicated one, and this meeting described in Boykin's 1830 letter is only one event in a complex web of actions taken by both sides.

With President Andrew Jackson's signing of the Indian Removal Act in May of 1830, and passage of the extension laws in Alabama, which stripped Creeks of any protection under their own laws or from the U.S. legal system, white settlers began swarming into the new Creek Nation in Alabama knowing there was little the Creeks could do to defend their land rights in court. However, the Creek chiefs had still not agreed to cede their Alabama lands to the federal government. Between the signing of the Removal Act and when the Treaty of Cusseta was finally enacted in 1832, state and federal officials worked ceaselessly to push the Creeks to agree to cede their land, and prepare it for sale to white settlers.[3]

In June of 1830, President Jackson invited the Lower Creeks to meet with him in Franklin, Tennessee, hoping that he might be able to make them agree to removal. The Chiefs refused come to the meeting, probably on the counsel of Cherokees John Ridge and David Vann, who already had been advising the Upper Creeks in negotiations with the government. Sometime in mid-August of 1830, probably after the Creeks had notified President Jackson that they would not attend, a Creek Council meeting was held near Fort Mitchell. Soon after that council meeting, the Chiefs were persuaded to meet with the Indian Agent (unnamed in the letter; presumably John Crowell). This second meeting is the one James Boykin would attend and write about. It is not clear in Boykin's letter what the exact purpose of the meeting is, but it is likely that Governor Gilmer wanted Crowell to meet with the Creek chiefs in hopes of pushing them away from their Cherokee advisors and back to the negotiating table.[4]

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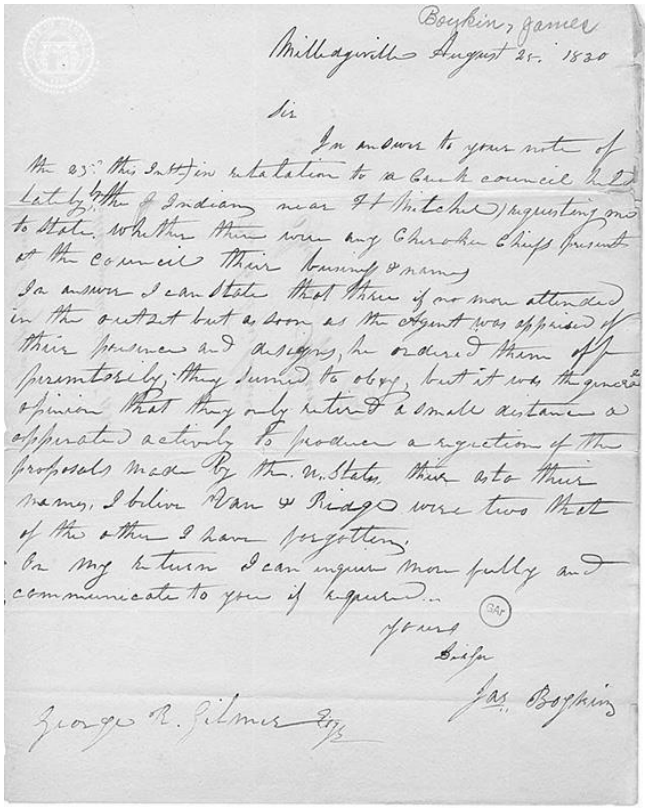
[2] Etta Blanchard Worsley, *Columbus on the Chattahoochee* (Columbus: Columbus Office Supply, 1951), 258-259, discusses Boykin's and Thomas' 1831 letter only cursorily.

[3] Christopher Maloney, "Treaty of Cusseta (1832)," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3083; Mary E. Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks – Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860* (Norman, OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 38-39; William W. Winn, *The Triumph of the Ecunnau-Nuxulgee – Land Speculators, George M. Troup, State Rights, and the Removal of the Creek Indians from Georgia and Alabama, 1825-38* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2015), 238-242, 280-284, 300-306.

[4] Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal – Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 166, 161-162.



Boykin, James
Milledgeville August 25. 1830

Sir

In answer to your note of the 23d. this inst. in relation to a Creek council held lately by the Indians near Ft Mitchel requesting me to state whether there were any Cherokee Chiefs present at the council their business & names.
In answer I can state that three if no more attended in the outset but as soon as the Agent was apprised of their presence and designs, he ordered them off peremptorily; they seemed to obey, but it was the general opinion that they only retired a small distance & opperated actively to produce a rejection of the proposals made by the U. States, their as to their names, I believe Van & Ridge were two that of the other I have forgotten.
On my return I can inquire more fully and communicate to you if required.
Yours
Resp
Jas. Boykin

George R. Gilmer Esq

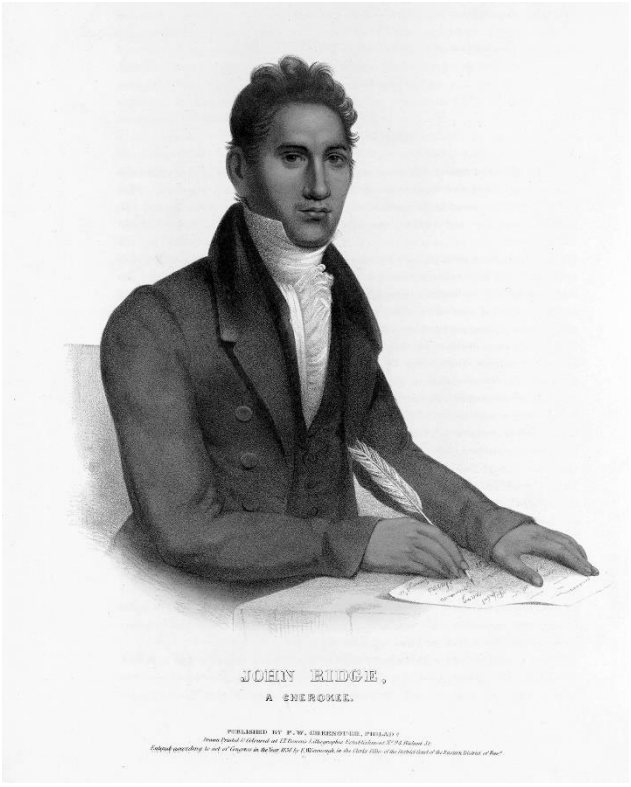
"Sir, In answer to your note of the 23rd this inst in [relation] to a Creek council held lately by the Indians near Ft Mitchel [sic], requesting me to state whether there were any Cherokee Chiefs present at the council their business & names. In answer I can state that three if no more attended in the outset but as soon as the Agent was apprised of their presence and designs, he ordered them off peremptorily; they seemed to obey, but it was the general opinion that they only retired a small distance & opperated [sic] actively to produce a rejection of the proposals made by the U. States, their [sic] as to their names, I believe Van [sic] & Ridge were two that of the other I have forgotten. On my return I can inquire more fully and communicate to you if required. Yours [illeg.], Jas. Boykin"[5]

James Boykin's letter to Governor George Gilmer, August 25, 1830.
Courtesy, Georgia Archives, File II Names, James Boykin

John Ridge (1802-1839) and David Vann (1800-1863), the two Cherokees Boykin identified at the Creek meeting, had already been acting as advisors to the Creeks for the past several years and were powerful influencers of the Creeks against the Indian agent John Crowell. They were well-educated members of prominent Cherokee families and highly skilled negotiators and writers. They were also thorns in the side of the Georgia state government in general, and the Indian Agent John Crowell in particular. The most recent example had been a run-in with Crowell at the Creek village of Wetumpka at the beginning of August 1830, just before the Fort Mitchell meeting. Invited by the chief to a Creek Council meeting there, David Vann reported to a sympathetic newspaper that he witnessed Crowell order troops to use force on a white man and "a half breed Creek" who opposed Indian emigration. Now, just a couple of weeks later, as Creek advisors, Vann and Ridge were again making it difficult for the agent, the governor, and the federal government to move the Creeks out of Alabama.[6]

[5] James Boykin to Governor George R. Gilmer, 25 August 1830, File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives, Digital Collection, File II Names, http://vault.georgiaarchives.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/FileIINames/id/10890/rec/37, accessed 20 June 2017.
[6] Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 129-130, 160-162, 166; David Vann, "Cherokee Nation, Aug. 24th 1830 – Mr. Boundinot [sic] Editor of the Cherokee Phoenix," *Journal of Humanity and Herald of the American Temperance Society*, September 30, 1830, 1; Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks* , 38; Green, *Politics of Indian Removal,* 129, 159-162.

David Vann. A Cherokee chief / drawn, printed and col'd at the Lithographic & Print Colouring Establishment, No. 94 Walnut St., Phila., 1843 (date of print), Library of Congress.



John Ridge, a Cherokee / drawn, printed & coloured at John T. Bowen's Lithographic Establishment No. 94 Walnut St. Abstract/medium: 1 print : lithograph, hand-colored ; 51 x 35.5 cm (sheet), 1838, Library of Congress
http://cdn.loc.gov/service/pnp/pga/07500/07512v.jpg

The governor's choice of Boykin to attend the Fort Mitchell meeting in the late summer of 1830 was likely prompted at least by the fact that Gilmer knew him, and that James Boykin was already in the area. The Boykin brothers were both prominent in Milledgeville (Samuel was a state legislator). In addition they had a personal financial interest in seeing the Indians removed. By 1829, James had begun buying land south of the new town of Columbus in Stewart County and by 1830 was the largest slave-owner there. Eager to accumulate more land and develop cotton production along the river, he would have been highly motivated to assist in the state's attempts to move the Indians out of Georgia and Alabama. After the encounter that Boykin witnessed at Fort Mitchell, the Creeks continued to hold out on treaty negotiations until early 1832, when their hands were finally forced by the government to sign the Treaty of Cusseta, which divided the Creeks' lands into individual allotments and paved the way for land sales, and ultimately, the Creeks' forced emigration west.[7]

The Second Letter, June 1, 1831: "Take Them Off Either by Hundreds or Thousands"

By 1831, throughout the Chattahoochee Valley, Indians were suffering from a serious scarcity of food, due at least in part to a severe drought that had been ongoing since the summer of 1827. To make matters worse, many Creeks had not planted crops that year, anticipating that they would be emigrating soon. With few ways to support themselves, starving Indians wandered the streets of Columbus begging for food. On May 31, 1831, one hundred and twenty local "highly respectable Gentlemen" signed a memorial to President Jackson, describing the dire straits of the Indians, and urging the president to begin removal immediately. The memorial was first delivered to Governor Gilmer, who wrote a cover letter to the President, also urging him to move "as rapidly as possible" on emigration to Indian Territory.[8]

At the same time, Grigsby E. Thomas, one of the signers of the May 31 memorial, also co-wrote a letter with James Boykin to Governor Gilmer. Boykin and Thomas likely intended for their letter to be seen by the governor at the same time the governor was writing his cover letter to Jackson, in order to impress on Gilmer the urgency of their problem, and possibly even to influence Gilmer's letter to the president.[9]

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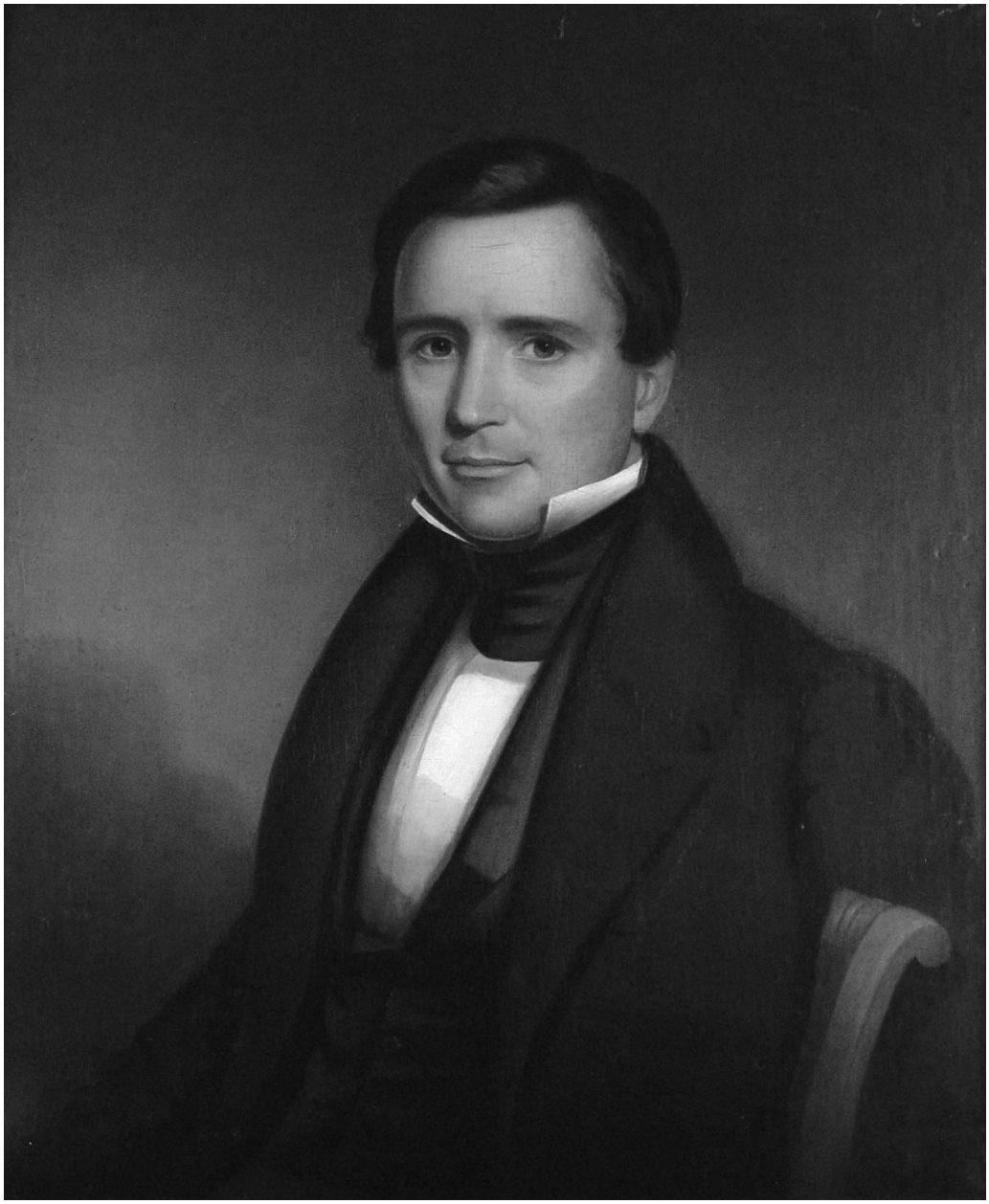
[7] 1830 U.S. census, Randolph [County], Georgia, p. 248, line 15, James Boykin, https://www.ancestry.com, accessed March 12, 2018, citing NARA microfilm publication M19, roll 20; Christopher Maloney, "Treaty of Cusseta (1832)," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3083; Winn, *Triumph*, 281-283; Young, *Redskins*, 38-39; Green *Politics of Indian Removal*, 171-173.

[8] James C. Bonner, *A History of Georgia Agriculture, 1732-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964), 56; Gilmer to President Jackson, June 4, 1831, transcription by T.J. Peddy, 31.6.4.G.P., T.J. Peddy Collection (MC 36) Columbus State University, Columbus, Ga.; Winn, *Triumph*, 318.

[9] James Boykin and Grigsby E. Thomas to Governor George R. Gilmer, June 1, 1831, Governor's Subject Files, Executive Dept., Governor, RG 1-1-5, Georgia Archives, Digital Collection, Ad Hoc Collection http://vault.georgiaarchives.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/adhoc/id/63/rec/1, accessed 20 June 2017.



C.R. Parker (1799—1849), *Grigsby Thomas Sr.*, 1838, oil on canvas, The Columbus Museum, Georgia; Gift of Dr. William L. Sibley III and his wife, Ruth F. Sibley G.2005.36.1

Grigsby Thomas, the co-author of the letter, was a prominent lawyer and former legislator from Warren County, Georgia. He was new to Columbus but familiar to Gilmer and the political elite of Milledgeville. In his youth, Thomas had been a schoolmate of future Alabama legislator Dixon Hall Lewis and other influential lawmakers and powerbrokers in Georgia, including Mark Anthony Cooper, who would become a close friend, business partner, and brother-in-law of the Boykins. A year after penning the letter with Boykin, Thomas was elected Superior Court Judge for the Chattahoochee Circuit. He was also highly interested in purchasing Indian lands. By 1837 Judge Thomas had received land patents solely, or

with co-owners, for more than forty fractional or whole sections of land in Barbour, Bullock, Elmore, Macon, and Russell counties, more than three times as many sections as James and Samuel Boykin together owned during the same time.[10]

In their letter, Boykin and Thomas described in heartrending and graphic detail the awful circumstances of the Indians in and around Columbus:

> "They are seen lingering about our town, half starved, half naked; with their little bundles of firewood which they barter for bread or anything else, even for slops to live on. Whenever an old sugar hogshead or barrel is thrown out, they hasten to it as bees to the honey comb, to lick off the few remaining particles."

It could easily have been James Boykin, the owner of the Snake Shoals plantation in Stewart County, who the writers refer to when they told Gilmer:

> "One of your corespondents [sic] is in the habit of daily passing through their settlements to his plantation below; and from what he has observed as to their present prospects for another crop they are very scanty & gloomy indeed. Their little ones cry for bread as he passes along – Cannot something be done?"[11]

Their plea made clear the depth of the Indians' plight, and their own experiences emphasized to the Governor the truth and urgency of the situation. Clearly, Boykin and Thomas were not unfeeling about the Indians' situation. In their minds, however, – as in the minds of most white settlers – the best solution to the Creeks' famine and poverty was their immediate removal from their homelands to Indian Territory in the west. Boykin and Thomas, as well as a large number of their peers, were eager to acquire more land in Alabama to expand their fortunes, and the Indians' departure would clear the way for that.

The letter, while evoking pity for the starving Indians, revealed the white setters' attitude of superiority and their view that the Indians were animal-like, by referring to them as "bees," "creatures of impulse," and "swarming." Boykin and Thomas emphasized the moral urgency of the situation, when they refer to any delay in removal as "the sin of their longer remaining among the whites, under their present, and still more fearful degradation to come!" "The sin," they imply, would be on the governor's and the president's hands if they did not force the Creeks to move.

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[10] "Grigsby E. Thomas, Jr." *Biographical Souvenir of the States of Georgia and Florida* (Chicago: F.A. Battey and Company, 1889, reprint 1975, Southern Historical Press, Rev. S. Emmett Lucas, Jr., Easley SC), 721-722; Worsley, *Columbus on the Chattahoochee*, 258; Sara Robertson Dixon, *History of Stewart County Georgia,* vol. 2 (Waycross, GA: A.H. Clark, 1875), 27; Lee G. Barrow, *Stewart County Georgia, Superior Court Minutes: Stewart County Records*, ([Gainesville, GA: BarGraphica], 2013), 30, 38-40, 46, 57-58, 60, 65-67, 83-84, 87-88, 93, 108; "Candidate for the State Senate - A Brief Sketch of His Life" *Marion County Patriot*, June 22, 1888 (reprinted from the *Columbus Enquirer*), http://files.usgwarchives.net/ga/muscogee/bios/ bs260thomassr.txt, accessed March 29, 2018. Figures are based on patent searches at the website of the US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, Alabama land patents, https://glorecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx.

[11] Boykin and Thomas to Gilmer, 1831.

One of the main points that Boykin and Thomas reiterate to the governor (and thus communicate to the president) is that the Creeks need to leave now, en masse, rather than one by one (and voluntarily). They write that some Indians might be staying back in hopes that if they wait, other Indians will go ahead and emigrate and that then there will be more land in the future for a smaller number of Indians remaining. Boykin and Thomas suggest that Jackson could stop this behavior and thus also encourage more Indians to go immediately if he declared that there would be no advantage for those who were waiting and not emigrating:

> "This temptation might be removed and thereby one great difficulty overcome, by a distinct declaration on the part of the President, that the benefits of any and all future treaties & regulations (if indeed any) should inure to the advantage of those emigrating most certainly as a part of the nation."

The primary and most important message to Jackson is clear: "the urgent necessity...for their speedy removal by all and any means calculated to take them off either by hundreds or thousands."[12]

White Settlers on Indian Lands: "Stealing is the order of the day"

The two letters James Boykin wrote and co-wrote in 1830 and 1831 were a small but important part of larger efforts that eventually succeeded in giving the Creeks no choice but to sign the Treaty of Cusseta in March of 1832. By 1833, greedy speculators were anxious to get their hands on these "new lands." Immediately following the proclamation of the treaty in April 1832, Judge Eli S. Shorter (1792-1832), along with some of the wealthiest and most well-connected citizens of Columbus, formed the Columbus Land Company (CLC) for the purpose of acquiring as much land in the Creek Nation as quickly as possible. Even before purchasing land was legal, the CLC had "procured title bonds to at least seven hundred allotments," an early sign of the fraudulent behavior to come, behavior at which, in the end, the federal government would mostly shrug.[13]

A census of the Creek Nation was completed in 1833, and a portion of the land was surveyed, divided into sections, and assigned to heads of households in the Nation: sections assigned to chiefs and headmen were 640 acres; to heads of households, 320 acres. As soon as the survey was completed, land assigned to the Indians, and certifying agents were in place to approve sales, James Boykin began buying allotments from Indians along the Chattahoochee River opposite his Stewart County plantation and ferry, from Bluff Creek, north to and just past Ihagee Creek. That land also included one tract bought by his brother-in-law, John J. Owens (1791-1836). Boykin purchased five allotments in late January and early

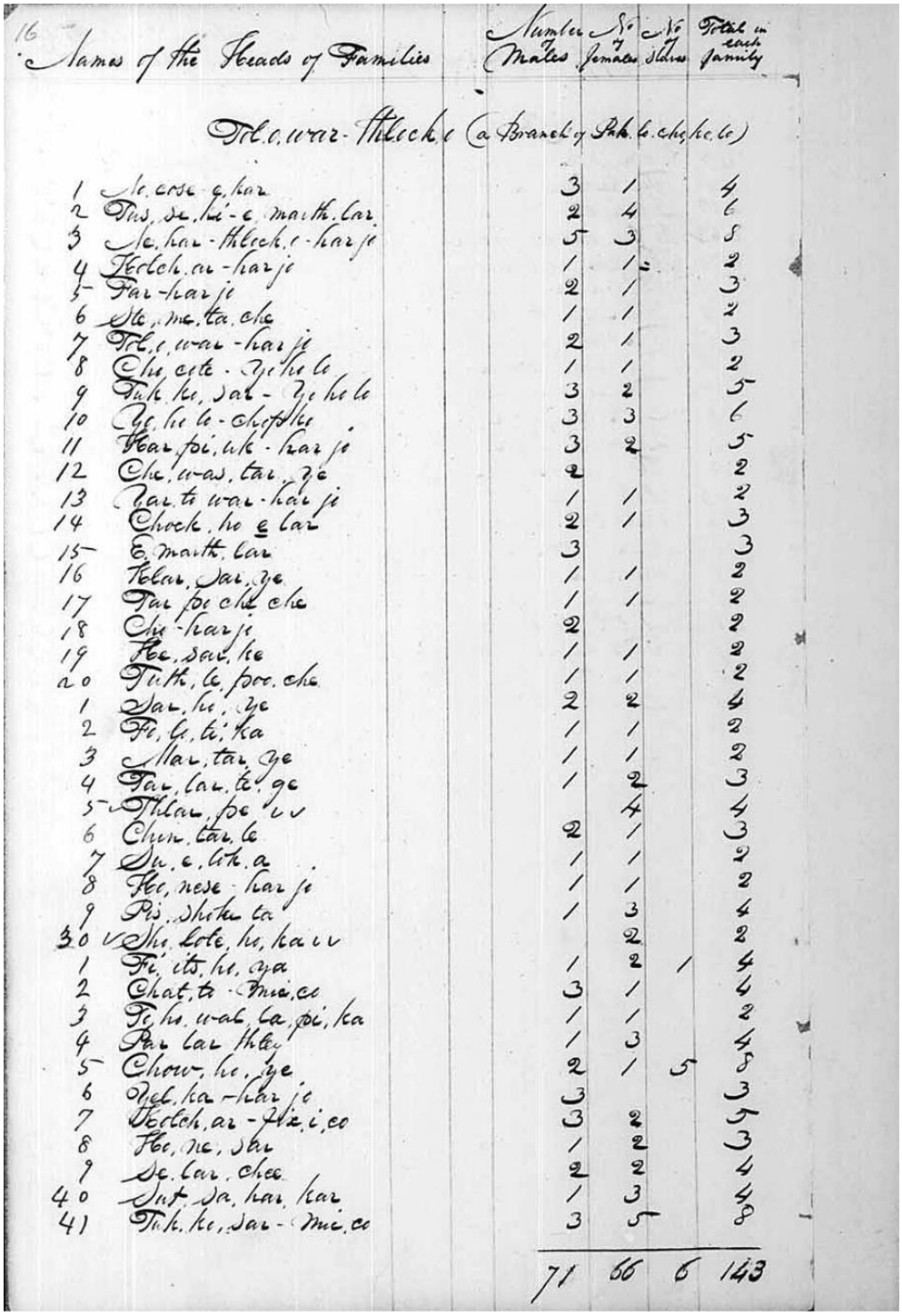
[12] Boykin and Thomas to Gilmer, 1831.
[13] *Sen. Docs.*, No. 425, 24 Cong., 1st Sess., 86; Mary E. Young, "The Creek Frauds: A Study in Conscience and Corruption," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 42, no. 3 (December 1955), 419-420; Young, "The Creek Frauds," 419.

February of 1834 and two more in mid-March. By early in 1835, at least six of the eight Russell County properties James Boykin and Owens had acquired from the Creeks had been transferred to James' brother Samuel and it is likely all were by then. With James' property along the Georgia side of the Chattahoochee and Samuel's along the Alabama side, the Boykin brothers owned a strategic swath of prime cotton producing and shipping lands just a few miles below Columbus with direct access to the river. The evidence here and below suggests that James and Samuel – and possibly other family members such as John J. Owens, James' son-in-law James R. Jones, and Samuel's brother-in-law, Mark Cooper – cooperated with each other in land and other business deals.[14]

The Creek Census tells us that the seven men and one woman who sold their allotments to Boykin and Owens were all from the town of Tolowarthlocko. The town is historically connected to the town of Apalachucla, or Apalachicola, visited by William Bartram, and "situated on a peninsula formed by a doubling of the river," roughly thirty river miles south of Columbus, encompassing modern day landmarks Bickerstaff Landing and Upper Bradley Place. These families were likely Hitchiti-speaking (rather than the Muskogean language of the Creeks) and likely lived on or near the land that they had been allotted. We can tell very little else about these individuals from the census; we only know the names of the heads of household, and the number and gender of each person in each household. We don't know their ages or their relationships to others in the house – or to their neighbors.[15]

[14] Young, "The Creek Frauds," 413; Russell County Courthouse, Phenix City, Ala., Deed Book A: Fi its ho ya to James Boykin, Jan 29, 1834, Township 14 Range 31, fractional section 7; Sar ho ye to James Boykin, Feb 4, 1834, Township 14 Range 30, fractional Sec 24 (pp. 104-106); Ne har Thlocco (principal chief) to James Boykin, Feb 7, 1834, Township 14 Range 30, fractional Sec 13 (pp. 106-108); Chow ho ye to James Boykin, Feb. 10, 1834, Township 14 Range 31, fractional section 18 and 19 (pp. 108-110); Harpelik hadjo to James Boykin, Feb. 7, 1834, Township14 Range 30, west half Sec 23 (pp. 101-103); Parlarthly to James Boykin, March 19, 1834, Township 14 Range 30, east half Sec 23 (pp. 99-101); Tuk o sar Yoholo to James Boykin, March 20, 1834, Township 14 Range 30, east half Sec 22, (pp. 96-98). Also, from General Land Office Records, Alabama land patents: Fola ti ka to John J. Owens, April 23, 1834, Township 14, Range 30, west half Sec 22 (p. 110). Notes in five of the seven original deeds show that James transferred ownership to Samuel by 1835; final patents for all seven of Boykin's allotments were issued to Samuel in 1839. The brothers may have had a planned strategy of cooperative land acquisition. Before heading to Columbus about 1828 or 1829, James sold his Baldwin County plantation to his brother Samuel. Subsequently James purchased Creek allotments that formed the basis for the Russell County lands that he transferred over to Samuel.

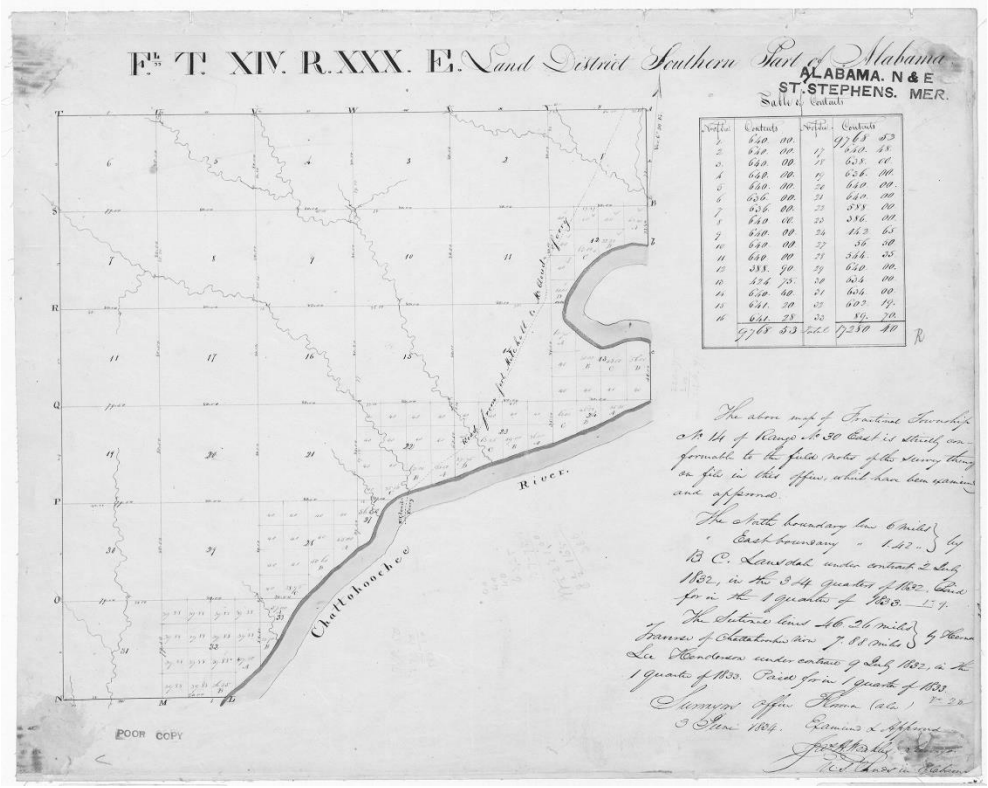
[15] Thomas H. Foster II, *Archaeology of the Lower Muskogee Creek Indians, 1715-1836* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 47, 258; *The Travels of William Bartram: Naturalist's Edition*, Francis Harper, ed. (reprint, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 246; Janis Elaine Campbell, "The Social and Demographic Effects of Creek Removal, 1832-1860," 1997, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 90, 166; Dobson, *Muscogiana* 30-1: 4-5.



16 Names of the Heads of Families	Number of Males	No. of Females	No. of Slaves	Total in each family
Tol o war-thlock o (a Branch of Pak lo cho ko lo)				
1 Se. cose-e, har	3	1		4
2 Das, se, hi-e, marth. car	2	4		6
3 Se. har-thlock. e-har je	5	3		8
4 Ferlch. ar-har je	1	1		2
5 Far-har je	2	1		3
6 Se, me. ta. che	1	1		2
7 Tol. o. war-har je	2	1		3
8 Che, cete-Je he le	1	1		2
9 Tuk. ke, sar-Je he le	3	2		5
10 Je, he le-chop ke	3	3		6
11 Har, poi, uk-har je	3	2		5
12 Che, war, tar, Je	2			2
13 Tar, ta war-har je	1	1		2
14 Chock. ho e car	2	1		3
15 E. marth. car	3			3
16 Telar, sar, je	1	1		2
17 Tar, poe che che	1	1		2
18 Che-har je	2			2
19 Fee, sar, he	1	1		2
20 Tuth, le, poe. che	1	1		2
1 Sar, he, je	2	2		4
2 Fe, le, te, ka	1	1		2
3 Thar, tar, je	1	1		2
4 Far, car, te, ge	1	2		3
5 Thlar, poe		4		4
6 Chun. tar, le	2	1		3
7 Su, e, lik. a	1	1		2
8 Fee, nese-har je	1	1		2
9 Pis. shoke ta	1	3		4
30 Shi. lole, he, ka		2		2
1 Fe, its, he, ya	1	2	1	4
2 Chat, ta-Mic. co	3	1		4
3 Je, he, war, la, poi, ka	1	1		2
4 Par car thla	1	3		4
5 Chow, he, je	2	1	5	8
6 Nek. ka-har je	3			3
7 Ferlch. ar-Flir. i. co	3	2		5
8 Fee, ne, sar	1	2		3
9 Se. car. chee	2	2		4
40 Sut. sa. har. kar	1	3		4
41 Tuk. ke, sar-Mic. co	3	5		8
	71	66	6	143

First of the two census pages of the town of Tolowarthlocko with the names of Indians who sold their allotments to James Boykin. "Names of the Heads of Families, Tol o war thlock o (a Branch of Pak lo cho ko lo)." Courtesy of Rootsweb.com, http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~usgenweb/special/native_american/creek/census/1832/0130.jpg

The structure of households in this census set up by white Americans, with men being the heads, did not reflect the matrilineal reality of Creek society. All but one head of household among these allotment holders were male. Tuk o sar Yoholo headed a household of two males and two females, as did Har pi uk Hadjo. A man, Fo lo ti ka ("Fola ti ka" in the land patent), formed a household with one female; another man, Parlarthly, headed a household of three females. The two households that included enslaved people (of unknown ethnicity and gender) were headed by Chow ho ye, in a household with another male, a female, and five slaves; and Fi-its-ho-ya, who headed a household of two females and one slave. Ne har Thlocco, one of two principal chiefs of the town, headed a household of three males and three females.[16]



1832-33 survey map indicating "Road from Fort Mitchell to McCloud's Ferry" beginning at the mouth of Bluff Creek and passing through some of James Boykin's lands, bypassing fractional section 13 which may be where Boykin's Ferry was located. James H. Wheatley, General Land Office Records, "Fractional Township No. 14 of Range No. 30 East," Sections 1-33 (Washington, D.C., Bureau of Land Management, 1834), https://glorecords.blm.gov

[16] Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 74-75. Creek names were often spelled by white interpreters in several different ways in different documents, depending on the transcriber's ear; for example, "Har pi uk Hadjo" is written as "Harpelik hadjo" in the Russell County deed. *1832 Census of Creek Indians Taken by Parsons and Abbott*, Microcopy No. T-275, Roll 1 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1963), digital images available here: https://web.archive.org/web/20150212014028/http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~texlance/1832census/index.htm and https://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/1832-creek-census-tolowarthlocko-town.htm, accessed 5 June 2018; Campbell, "The Social and Demographic Effects of Creek Removal," 64-66 and passim.

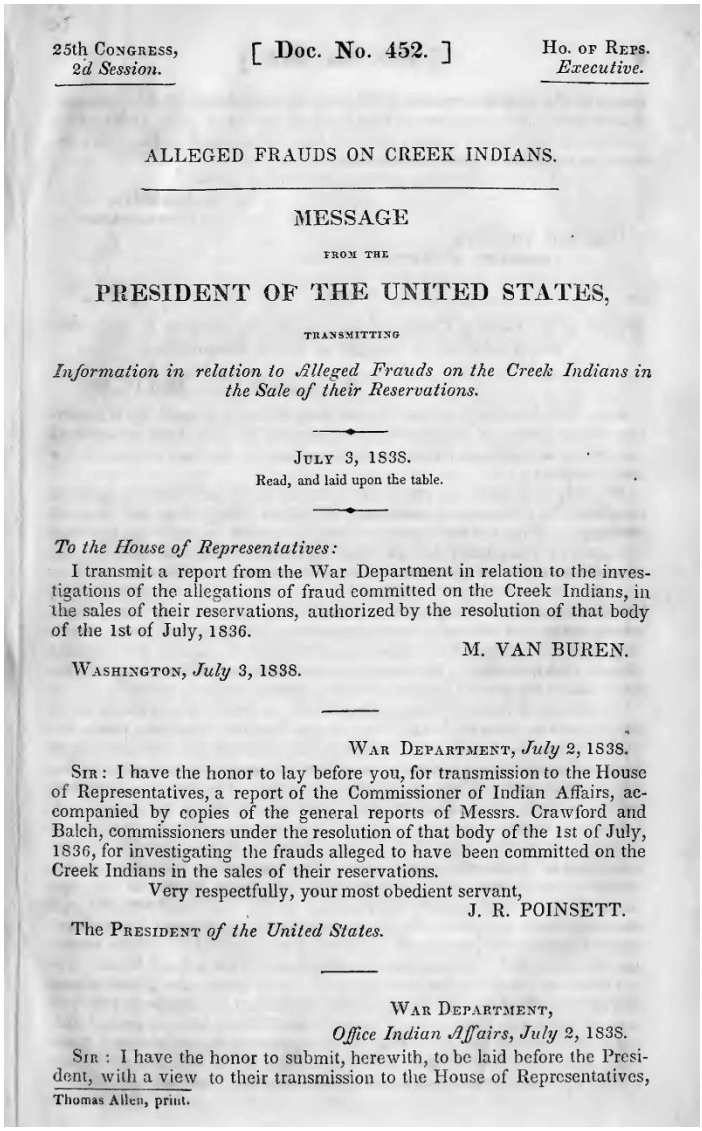
The sole woman head-of-household among this group was Sar ho ye, with two females and two males in her household. Her allotment was small, a fractional parcel that was near where the "Road from Fort Mitchell to McCloud's Ferry" passed on the west and part of the thumb-shaped peninsula to the east where Boykin's ferry was probably located. Boykin owned the Stewart County land on the east side and had run the ferry for several years without actually owning the Russell County land where the landing was located. It is probable that he had an agreement with a Creek headman on the opposite shore to run the ferry. Once the land became available, access to Sar ho ye's land and the allotments owned by Chow ho ye and the principal chief Ne har thlocco were particularly important. Chow ho ye, who owned five slaves, must have been wealthy and the ferry may have been part of the reason for that. His allotment was the tip of the peninsula where Boykin's Ferry was located, so it is highly likely that he was already running the ferry or being paid ferriage (tolls collected for riding the ferry). Maybe, in a deal with Boykin, Chow ho ye would be able to continue to collect income from the running of the ferry on the Alabama side headed "out of the Creek nation" and into Georgia.[17]

On the other hand, the Indians selling land to James Boykin may not have fared so well. Eli Shorter was recorded as the agent in the sale of the allotments owned by Sar ho ye and Ne har thlocco. Shorter was a leader among those speculators who were accused of illegal behavior in their treatment of the Indians and in making land deals with them. This fact begs the unanswerable question: under what circumstances did Sar ho ye and Ne har thlocco (and the other Indians) relinquish their land?

Even during their own time, the illegal acts of huge numbers of speculators were well known. In 1835, Shorter, a founder of the Columbus Land Company, wrote brazen encouragement in a letter to his fellow speculators: "Stealing is the order of the day." Another salivating speculator publicly toasted, "Here's to the man that can steal the most land to-morrow without being caught at it." Chattahoochee Valley speculators committed a range of often barely concealed illegal – even heinous – acts in the pursuit of that. They purchased land from Creeks using goods and alcohol rather than money; buyers would get Indians drunk and induce them to sign away their allotments; slaves of the whites were sent to harass Creeks in their villages and homes until they gave in and sold. An Indian might be paid a small fee to impersonate the rightful owner of an allotment, or the speculator might steal the purchase money back from the recent owner (or pay someone to do it for him). Sometimes threats, violence, and even murder were involved. Certifying agents and local officials wrote letters and gave depositions to federal

[17] James H. Wheatley, General Land Office Records, "Fractional Township No. 14 of Range No. 30 East," Sections 1-33, (Washington, DC, Bureau of Land Management, 1834), accessed https://glorecords.blm.gov, Nov. 28, 2018; Dobson, *Muscogiana* 30-1: 6-7; Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 152, regarding the rights of Creeks to "have exclusive rights of ferriage *out of* the Creek Nation," also 137, 16, 140; see also Kathryn Braund, Gregory Waselkov, and Raven M. Christopher, *The Old Federal Road in Alabama: An Illustrated Guide* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019), 23-24; and Winn, *Triumph*, 287.

authorities about the illegal acts, but in the end, after investigations and a few-months-long intervention, the Jackson administration essentially shrugged its shoulders at the crimes the men committed.[18]



25th Congress, 2d Session. [Doc. No. 452.] Ho. of Reps. Executive.

ALLEGED FRAUDS ON CREEK INDIANS.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

Information in relation to Alleged Frauds on the Creek Indians in the Sale of their Reservations.

JULY 3, 1838.

Read, and laid upon the table.

To the House of Representatives:

I transmit a report from the War Department in relation to the investigations of the allegations of fraud committed on the Creek Indians, in the sales of their reservations, authorized by the resolution of that body of the 1st of July, 1836.

M. VAN BUREN.

WASHINGTON, *July* 3, 1838.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *July* 2, 1838.

SIR: I have the honor to lay before you, for transmission to the House of Representatives, a report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, accompanied by copies of the general reports of Messrs. Crawford and Balch, commissioners under the resolution of that body of the 1st of July, 1836, for investigating the frauds alleged to have been committed on the Creek Indians in the sales of their reservations.

Very respectfully, your most obedient servant,

J. R. POINSETT.

The PRESIDENT *of the United States.*

WAR DEPARTMENT,

Office Indian Affairs, July 2, 1838.

SIR: I have the honor to submit, herewith, to be laid before the President, with a view to their transmission to the House of Representatives,

Thomas Allen, print.

Senate Documents, No. 452, 25th Congress, 2nd Session, "Alleged Frauds on Creek Indians," July 3, 1838, 1. Internet Archive.

James Boykin and John J. Owens seem not to have been directly involved in the Creek frauds, although it is impossible to know the conditions under which the Tolowarthlocko Creeks sold their allotments to them. Although Boykin and Owens were not members of the Columbus Land Company, they had business dealings (and family relationships) with many of the CLC members, including Shorter. James Boykin was on the board of directors of the Insurance Bank of Columbus in 1832 with CLC members James Wadsworth, Farish Carter (an old friend and business partner of Samuel Boykin's), Wiley Jones (the brother of James' future son-in-law), Williams Rutherford (James' brother-in-law), and Daniel McDougald (who James had purchased an Indian allotment with). Others in Boykin's wider circle of relatives were accused of participation in the frauds. A son-in-law, James W. Woodland, was named as a fraudulent speculator by two accusers in the commission's report. General Thomas S. Woodward, who was the first cousin of James' wife, Clarissa

[18] Eli S. Shorter to John S. Scott, E. Corley, and M.M. and N.H. Craven, March 1, 1835, *Sen. Docs.*, No. 452, 25 Cong., 2nd Sess., 64; Deposition of Arnold Seale, *Sen. Docs.*, No. 452, 25 Cong., 2nd Sess.,78. Arnold testified: "They seemed to carry on the business in the way of sport, and [CLC member Col. James] Wadsworth toasted a little crowd, in my presence, 'Here's to the man that can steal the most land to-morrow without being caught at it;'" "Report of T. Hartley Crawford on the frauds charged to have been perpetrated in the transfer of Creek Indian lands," *Sen. Docs.*, No. 452, 25 Cong., 2nd Sess.,19. For more about Shorter's land fraud activity, see Winn, *Triumph*, 317-325, 345-347, 372-393.

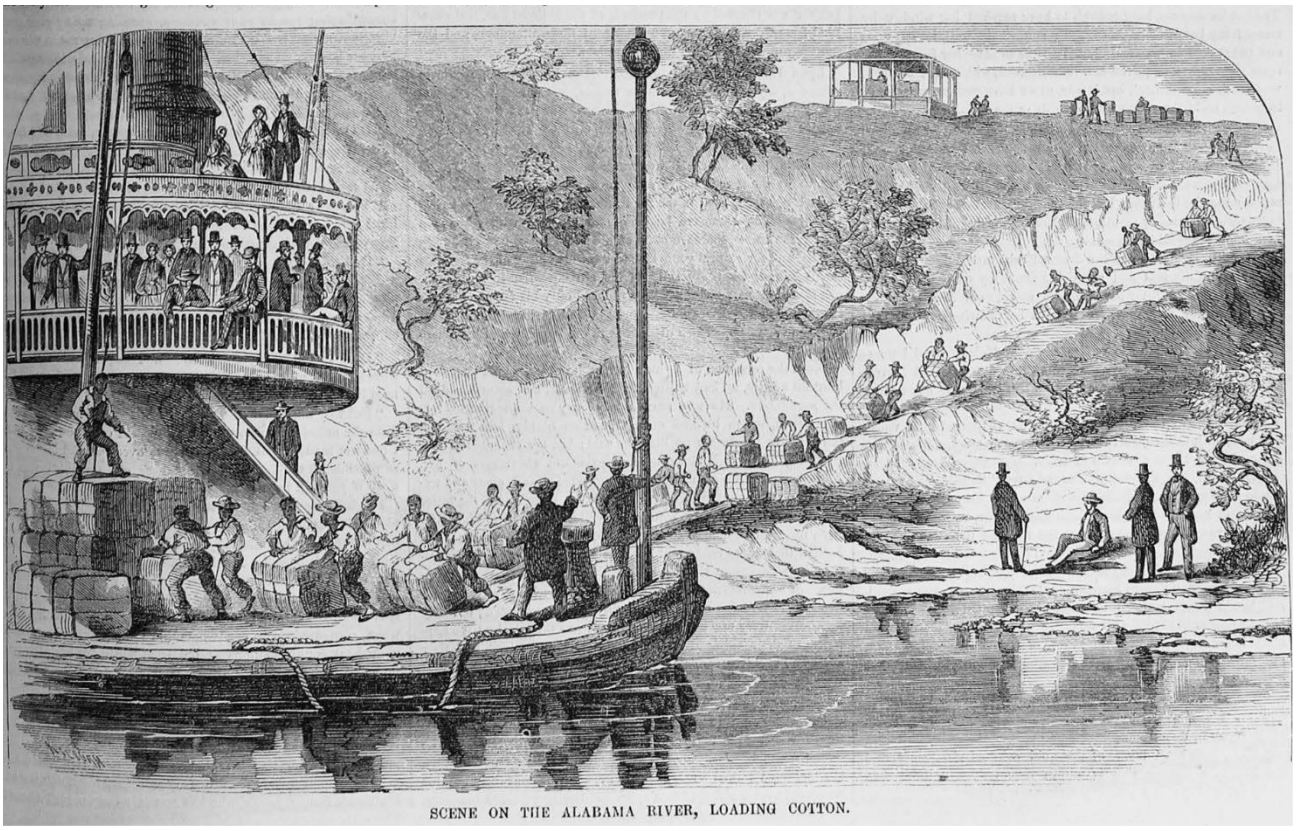
Boykin, was also accused in the 1838 report of being a conspirator and attempting to bribe a deponent. Boykin also had close ties with CLC lawyer Seaborn Jones, whose wife Mary Howard Jones was also Clarissa's first cousin. Even if James Boykin was not participating in the same level of criminal behavior as the Columbus Land Company members and other speculators, the frauds were no secret to area settlers. It would have been difficult for him not to be aware of the illegal and harassing behavior going on around him.[19]

The Panic of 1837 and A Loss of Fortune

Despite a drought that began in Georgia in 1827 and a depression from the late 1820s into the early 1830s, the early '30s were years of increasing production and growing profits for large cotton producers throughout the South. By 1834, Apalachicola was well on its way to becoming what one worldly traveler predicted: "a place of trade only second to the cities of New Orleans & Mobile – for there is back country to support it which is daily increasing in wealth and population." At harvest time in Stewart County, where the land "never has yet failed in producing a luxuriant and full crop of cotton and provisions, since it has been settled," the enslaved people of Boykin's Snake Shoals plantation would have processed and packed the cotton into bales and loaded them onto steamships headed downriver, likely directly from the river bank on his property. By 1836, all signs showed that James Boykin and his neighbors up and down the river, with the benefit of enslaved labor, were helping make Apalachicola the

[19] Sarhoye to James Boykin, pp. 104-106 and Ne har Thlocco to James Boykin, pp. 106-108; Georgia General Assembly, "An Act to Incorporate the Insurance Bank of Columbus," *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, Passed in Milledgeville at an Annual Session in November and December 1831* (Milledgeville: Prince & Ragland, 1832), 31; Columbus Land Company incorporation papers, Box 1, Folder 57, Henry Benning-Seaborn Jones Collection (MC 6), Columbus State University Archives, Columbus, Ga.; Winn, *Triumph*, 320-325; Russell County Courthouse, *Reverse Index to Conveyances of Real Estate, Book B*, p. 372: Au har par kee to [James] Boykin and [Daniel] McDougald; *The Reflector*, March 31, 1818, 3, notes that Samuel Boykin was married at Farish Carter's home. In addition, James C. Watson, president of the Insurance Bank of Columbus, was part of a complicated dispute among CLC and other speculators over what would become of the allotments that had been fraudulently purchased, which resulted in more federal investigations and law suits, see Young, "The Creek Frauds," 428-432. Regarding Woodland, see *Sen. Docs.*, No. 452, 25 Cong., 2nd Sess., 46, 58-59; "Will of James Boykin," 1846, Muscogee County Courthouse, Columbus, Ga., *Will Book A*, p. 64-66. James W. Woodland and his father-in-law James Boykin had several land deals between them and Boykin's granddaughters, Eliza and Emma Woodland, are named in his will. Regarding Woodward: *Sen. Docs.*, No. 452, 25 Cong., 2nd Sess., 46, 48. Regarding Seaborn Jones: *Sen. Docs.*, No. 452, 25 Cong., 2nd Sess., 35-36; On the other hand, Clarissa Boykin's maternal uncle, Col. Joseph H. Howard, chaired a meeting of Macon County, Ala., citizens who resolved to publicize the wrongdoings of the speculators by forwarding a copy of the meeting minutes to President Jackson and to the editors of the *Alabama Journal;* see also Young, "The Creek Frauds," 420-421, note 29; Winn, *Triumph*, 374-375, and 529, note 6. *Sen. Docs.*, No. 452, 25 Cong., 2nd Sess., especially 16, 35-36, 45-46, 56-59, and passim. See also James M. Kelly, *Reports of Cases in Law and Equity Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of the State of Georgia Commencing July 1847* (Savannah: W. Thorne Williams, 1848), 176-184. Woodward was the author of *Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek or Muscogee Indians* (Montgomery: Barrett and Wimbush, 1859), a landmark volume in Alabama historiography containing first-hand accounts of events of the time period associated with the Creek War and the era of removal.

third largest port in the Gulf of Mexico, where cotton and other products were regularly shipped overseas to major ports like Liverpool.[20]



SCENE ON THE ALABAMA RIVER, LOADING COTTON.

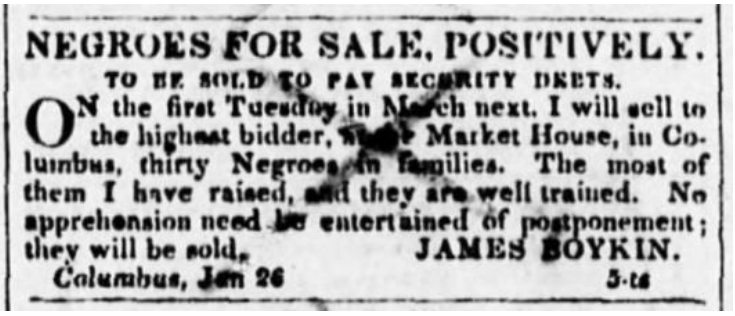
James Boykin would have had a system to move his cotton product loaded from his property where it had been baled onto a steamship headed to Apalachicola. Enslaved people could have carried bales by hand or wagon down to the river or used a cotton chute built on the bluffs at the bend in the river near Snake Shoals.

"Scene on the Alabama River, Loading Cotton." From *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, 1857.
Courtesy Alabama Department of Archives and History.
http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/singleitem/collection/photo/id/4456/rec/30

In the second half of the decade, however, Boykin's financial problems increased. As I wrote in part one, James Boykin's mysterious loss of $100,000 (about $2.5 million in today's money) must have clouded the end of his life. Later writers said that he lost the money in a "security debt" – one source claims that it was to a friend – but no other direct information about the loss has surfaced. The term "security debt" is not an official bank term, but it was likely a loan he made or guaranteed. As one of the wealthiest men in several counties, he could afford to lend money or serve as security for others and he

[20] Bonner, *Georgia Agriculture*, 56-57. John H.B. Latrobe in his 1834 observations of Columbus and the surrounding areas, quoted in Mike Bunn, *Well Worth Stopping to See – Antebellum Columbus, Georgia, Through the Eyes of Travelers* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2016), 87. "Valuable Property for Sale," *Macon Telegraph*, Dec. 19, 1843, and the ad goes on to say, "On the plantation there is a Grist Mill substantially built and recently, and Gin, which are on a bold stream." Lynn Willoughby, *Fair to Middlin' – The Antebellum Cotton Trade of the Apalachicola/Chattahoochee River Valley* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 4-6, 11.

undoubtedly made a profit from it. The sheriff's sales in numerous newspapers show several instances in which he is collecting on debts. James Boykin himself used the term "security debt" in 1842 in an advertisement to sell "thirty Negroes in families." He was probably attempting to assuage any concerns of potential buyers about why he was selling these people, as he headed it: "To be Sold to Pay Security Debts." In further explanation that he was not selling his human property because it was defective, he added, "The most of them I have raised, and they are well trained." Lawyer and historian Chris McIlwain suggests that the term "security debt" would have been used to distinguish this particular type of debt from the more common type, which carried a stigma of shame. Boykin may have wanted to make that distinction clear to those around him.[21]



NEGROES FOR SALE, POSITIVELY.

TO BE SOLD TO PAY SECURITY DEBTS.

ON the first Tuesday in March next, I will sell to the highest bidder, at the Market House, in Columbus, thirty Negroes in families. The most of them I have raised, and they are well trained. No apprehension need be entertained of postponement; they will be sold.

JAMES BOYKIN.

Columbus, Jan 26 5-ts

Columbus Enquirer, Jan. 26, 1842, 3.

James Boykin's financial erosion was probably set off by the Panic of 1837. International and domestic factors, including a drop in cotton prices and tighter limits on credit from Great Britain, triggered nationwide economic difficulties that hit Georgia planters especially hard. Local panic rippled throughout the Chattahoochee Valley when Columbus banks suspended specie payments from 1837 to 1842. Credit had been the fastest path to wealth, but suddenly, real money – coinage – was difficult to come by. Boykin, one of the richest men in the Valley, must have had enough access to cash to make loans to other businessmen, and, apparently, in at least one significant case, his debtor could not repay the loan when it came due. For a time, Boykin continued to make large financial deals, and to support his educational, social, and religious causes. He even married again. But at the end of his life, he was left with almost nothing to bequeath to his family.[22]

Indirect clues scattered throughout newspapers and a few deeds tell some of the story of his substantial loss. As I outlined in part one, in July 1837, Boykin sold several lots of his 3,400-acre Snake Shoals plantation in District 22, Stewart County, to John D. and Richard M. Pitts for $7,300. Those lots lie

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[21] "Boykin, James," *The Baptist Encyclopedia - A Dictionary of the Doctrines, Ordinances, Usages, Confessions of Faith, Sufferings, Labors, and Successes, and of the General History of the Baptist Denomination in All Lands with Numerous Biographical Sketches of Distinguished American and Foreign Baptists, and a Supplement*, ed. William Cathcart (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 123: "A security debt swept away nearly $100,000 of his property, yet he never murmured, or spoke an unkind word of the man who caused his financial ruin but preserved his cheerfulness and gentle serenity until called 'up higher' at the age of fifty-four." Anne Jacobs Boykin Murphy, History and Genealogy of the Boykin Family (Richmond, Va.: Mrs. Robert Neal Murphy and Bernard Carter Boykin, ca.1964), 59, writes "A friend caused his financial ruin." *Columbus Enquirer*, January 26, 1842, 3, and February 2, 1842; Chris McIlwain, email message to the author, July 23, 2019.

[22] Lynn Willoughby, *Fair to Middlin' – The Antebellum Cotton Trade of the Apalachicola/Chattahoochee River Valley* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 72, also 63-64, 71; "Will of James Boykin," 1846; Sworn testimony of James R. Jones, Executor of James Boykin, Jan. 10, 1848, Muscogee County Probate Court, [no title], 1843-1848, Journal B, p. 441.

north and east of the bulk of Boykin's property and none are close to the central part of his plantation. He may have merely been doing a favor for family friends – or maybe they were doing him a favor? No particular significance would have been attached to the sale if it had not been the first of several apparent "downsizing" actions Boykin took between 1837 and his death in 1846.[23]

James Boykin continued to engage in property transactions – some of which may have been speculative – even during what seemed to be challenging economic periods. His transactions of 1839 appear to be a turning point in his fortunes. In March he purchased Lot 138 in Columbus on Broad Street between Few and Baldwin from Hampton Smith. In September he made two large transactions with his son-in-law, James W. Woodland. Boykin rented a warehouse full of Woodland's merchandise and offered it for sale for cash. Then he purchased two town lots from Woodland for $10,000. Two months later, on November 15, Boykin bought a one-hundred-acre lot in the 33rd District of Muscogee County (formerly Lee), from Battle A. Sorsby for $1,000, nowhere near Boykin's own plantation. Then, the very next day, Boykin transacted a surprising deal with the Western Insurance and Trust Company. He signed over his Snake Shoals plantation—now around 2,240 acres—along with more than fifty enslaved people and livestock, in exchange for $21,960.60 in company stock. His son-in-law James Randall Jones, brother Samuel Boykin, both major company stockholders, and his friend and the company owner Mark Cooper signed the deed as endorsers. Boykin's reasons for trading his plantation for bank stock are unclear. If he knew that he was about to lose a great deal of money because of a security debt, and therefore owe money to creditors, he may have been attempting to protect his property.[24]

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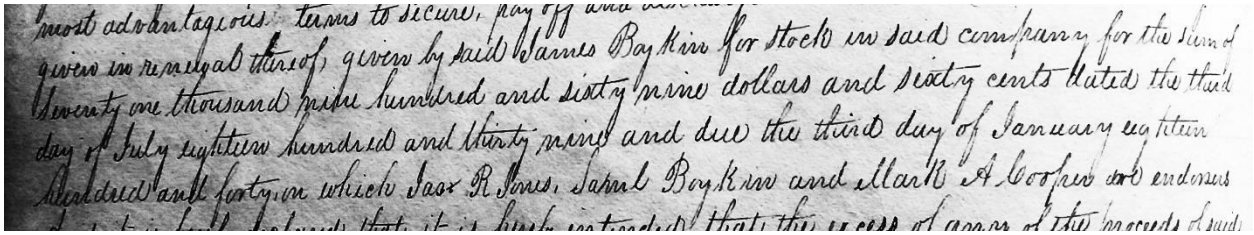
[23] Stewart County Courthouse, Lumpkin, Ga., *Deed Book H*, James Boykin to John D. and Richard M. Pitts, July 4, 1837, tracts 337, 338, 339, 342, 344, 345, District 22, Stewart County (288-289).

[24] Muscogee County Courthouse, Columbus, GA, *Deed Book A*, Hampton S. Smith to James Boykin, March 19, 1839, Town Lot 183 (pp. 154-155); *Columbus Enquirer*, Sept. 11, 1840, 1; Muscogee County Courthouse, Columbus Ga., *Deed Book A*, James W. Woodland to James Boykin, September 28, 1839, Town Lots 340-341 (p. 216). It seems that Woodland may have been preparing to leave Columbus. Boykin's daughter, Eliza or Elizabeth C. Boykin Woodland, the mother of Emma and Eliza, probably died before the June 1840 census, when the children were living with James and Elizabeth Rutherford Boykin. After selling his property (some of it to Boykin), James Woodland apparently went to Arkansas in 1841 with Thomas Woodward. Thomas S. Woodward, *Woodward's reminiscences of the Creek or Muscogee Indians - contained in letters to friends in Georgia and Alabama* (Montgomery, Ala.: Barrett and Wimbish, 1859), 40, writes, "In 1841, a Mr. James Woodland and myself were travelling in Arkansas, and met with the Chief Spy Buck..." Woodland is sighted in New Orleans recruiting soldiers for the Mexican War in May of 1846 (*Columbus Enquirer*, May 20, 1846). Later, Woodland became city assessor for the city of Sacramento, California. During the Squatters' Riots of August 14, 1850, he and several other men were shot and killed on the city docks (*Federal Union*, Oct. 1, 1850); Muscogee County Courthouse, Columbus, Ga., *Deed Book A*, Battle A. Sorsby to James Boykin, November 15, 1839, 33rd District, Stewart County, lot 203, 101-1/4 acres (p. 315); Muscogee County Courthouse, Columbus Ga., *Deed Book A*, James Boykin to Western Insurance and Trust Company, November 16 1839, District 22, Stewart County (pp. 321-322); Stewart County Courthouse, Lumpkin, Ga., *Deed Book A*, James Boykin to Western Insurance and Trust Company of the city of Columbus, November 16, 1839, District 22, Stewart County (pp. 516-518, a duplicate to the Muscogee County deed with a few errors); Mark Cooper Pope III, *Mark Anthony Cooper – The Iron Man of Georgia* , with J. Donald McKee (Atlanta: Graphic Publishing, 2000), 17; Walter G. Cooper, "Mark Anthony Cooper," in *Men of Mark in Georgia: A Complete and Elaborate History of the State from its Settlement to the Present Time, Chiefly told in Biographies and Autobiographies of the Most Eminent Men of Each Period of Georgia's Progress and Development*, William J. Northen, ed., vol. 2 (Atlanta: A.B. Caldwell, 1910), 209.


most advantageous terms to secure, pay off and
given in renewal thereof, given by said James Boykin for stocks in said company for the sum of
Seventy one thousand nine hundred and sixty nine dollars and sixty cents dated the third
day of July eighteen hundred and thirty nine and due the third day of January eighteen
hundred and forty in which Jas R Jones, Saml Boykin and Mark A Cooper are endorsers

Stewart County Courthouse, Lumpkin, Ga., Deed Book A, James Boykin to Western Insurance and Trust Company of the city of Columbus, November 16, 1839, District 22, Stewart County (pp. 516-518). Excerpt of the deed showing the names of endorsers James R. Jones, Samuel Boykin, and Mark A. Cooper.

Just eight months later, in June of 1840, James' eldest son Francis was running the Stewart County plantation, with his own young family and eighty-five enslaved people. Apparently the property was still in Boykin hands. James and his new wife Elizabeth Rutherford, two teenaged children (probably James Owen Boykin and Clara Boykin), as well as his grandchildren, Emma and Eliza Woodland, were living in the 774th District of Muscogee County, at Rose Hill. Two months later, however, Boykin was clearly in financial trouble. Rose Hill's "thirty acres of land, more or less, adjoining lands of James R. Jones, Wm. Redd and others, and being the place where James Boykin now lives," along with two half-acre lots in Columbus, were advertised to be sold on the first Tuesday in September at the sheriff's sale at the Muscogee County Courthouse, "to satisfy three fi fas from Muscogee superior court, two in favor of the Bank of Milledgeville, and one in favor of E.E. Powers vs. James Boykin." In the same newspaper, the properties of William I. Rylander are listed for sale, some for which Boykin was the endorser. That same column is filled with ads for the sale of the properties and assets of several of Boykin's wealthy peers, including James S. Calhoun, Henry King, Battle A. Sorsby, and Thomas Preston, Jr. The precarious financial straits of Columbus' wealthy elite were unavoidably obvious in the columns of the *Columbus Sentinel and Herald* and other papers. It seems almost a courtesy that Boykin was listed last in the newspaper's first column of the page-long roll call of the financial failings of local citizens.[25]

1840 did not see much of an upturn of events. Deed records from October of that year show that Boykin borrowed $9,340.00 from his son-in-law James R. Jones (to be repaid in three years with interest), and put twenty-seven enslaved people up as his collateral for the loan. The year ended with two half-acre lots on the corner of Troup and Bryan streets (modern-day Third Avenue and 13th Street), and other property of Boykin's for sale again – although this time not the thirty acres of Rose Hill – in the sheriff's sale column of the *Sentinel and Herald*.[26]

[25] 1840 U.S. census, Muscogee County, Georgia, District 774, p. 324 , line 30, James Boykin, digital image, Ancestry.com; *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, Aug. 22, 1840.
[26] Muscogee County Courthouse, Columbus, GA, *Deed Book B*, James Boykin to James R. Jones, October 9, 1840 (p. 101); *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, Dec. 2, 1840; Nancy Telfair, *A History of Columbus, Georgia 1828-1928* (Columbus: The Historical Publishing Co., 1929), 201-202, for corresponding modern street names.

After the new year, James Boykin continued to relinquish property. In January 1841, he advertised for sale twenty enslaved people, partially for cash, which he surely needed, but again he clarifies his motives for selling:

> "PUBLIC SALE OF NEGROES, IN STEWART COUNTY. The undersigned will sell, at public outcry, at the court-house in Lumpkin, Stewart county, on the first Tuesday in February next, *Fifteen or Twenty Likely Negroes* consisting of men, women, boys, and children – among them, a first rate Seamstress and House servant – Terms, one-third cash; the balance payable January 1, 1842. Good security will be required. *The property is sold for no fault, but to pay debts* [italics mine]. Titles indisputable. Jan 29 4.2t JAS. BOYKIN"[27]

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Fifteen or Twenty Likely Negroes,

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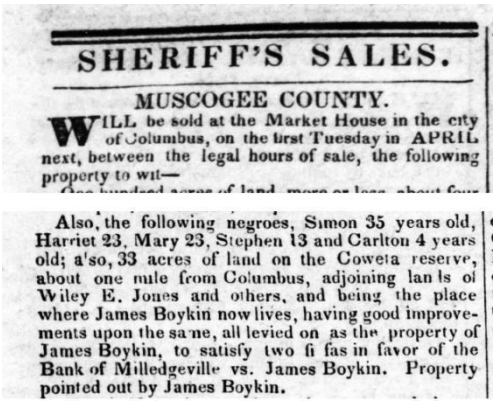
Columbus Enquirer, Jan. 20, 1841, 3.

A couple of months later, Rose Hill was again listed in the sheriff's sales, as well as five more enslaved people, "to satisfy two fi fas in favor of the Bank of Milledgeville vs. James Boykin."

> "Also, the following negroes, Simon 35 years old, Harriet 23, Mary 23, Stephen 13 and Carlton 4 years old; also, 33 acres of land on the Coweta reserve, about one mile from Columbus, adjoining lands of Wiley E. Jones and others, and being the place where James Boykin now lives, having good improvements upon the same, all levied on as the property of James Boykin, to satisfy two fi fas in favor of the Bank of Milledgeville vs. James Boykin. Property pointed out by James Boykin."



SHERIFF'S SALES.

MUSCOGEE COUNTY.

WILL be sold at the Market House in the city of Columbus, on the first Tuesday in APRIL next, between the legal hours of sale, the following property to wit—

Also, the following negroes, Simon 35 years old, Harriet 23, Mary 23, Stephen 13 and Carlton 4 years old; also, 33 acres of land on the Coweta reserve, about one mile from Columbus, adjoining lands of Wiley E. Jones and others, and being the place where James Boykin now lives, having good improvements upon the same, all levied on as the property of James Boykin, to satisfy two fi fas in favor of the Bank of Milledgeville vs. James Boykin. Property pointed out by James Boykin.

Columbus Enquirer, March 25, 1841, 4.

[27] *Columbus Enquirer*, Jan. 20, 1841.

Advertisements for the sale of James Boykin's estate appear as late as January 1844 but after his death in 1846, Rose Hill is still known as his residence, in notices for its sale or rent. Somehow, Boykin and his family remained in the estate until his death.[28]

In March of 1839, widowed for almost four years, Boykin married Elizabeth Rutherford, the daughter of Thomas Brooks Rutherford of Cahaba, Alabama, and probably wealthy in her own right. The Rutherfords and the Boykins had been longtime family friends at least from the time the Boykins had lived in Baldwin County. Elizabeth's first cousin, Williams Rutherford, had married James' and Samuel's sister, Eliza Boykin (1788-1837), who had died just two years before. Elizabeth Rutherford and James Boykin had known each other for many years and undoubtedly considered themselves family even before they married.[29]

Elizabeth may have been independently wealthy at the time she married James and there is evidence that she helped him financially through this difficult time. In James' will of 1846, he writes: "The carriage & houses in use in my family having b[een] purchased by the separate funds of my beloved wife I wish them to remain along with all other property & monies belongin[sic] to he[r] separate estate." Of course, Boykin had to specify that the property should stay with her, because, although women could own property, their rights were limited. The sentence, "the houses in use in my family having been purchased by the separate funds of my beloved wife," may have meant that Elizabeth Rutherford Boykin had indeed put up the money needed to protect the property from creditors.[30]

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[28] *Columbus Times*, March 25, 1841, 4. The names of more than 125 enslaved people, as well as houses, estates, horses, plantations, and more properties are listed in first column of the "Sheriff's Sales" in that issue as being sold to pay the debts of their white owners. Note that one of James Boykin's named slaves is Stephen who is 13 years old. It is possible that Boykin was not able to sell all of his human property at this time, as five years later, in 1846, an 18-year-old Stephen is mentioned in his will. *Columbus Enquirer*, January 31, 1844; Dobson, *Muscogiana* 30-1: 15-16.

[29] James W. Boykin and Elizabeth Rutherford, *Georgia, Marriage Records from Select Counties, 1828-1978*, 263, Ancestry.com; "Will of Elizabeth (Rutherford) Boykin," 1853, Georgia. Court of Ordinary, Richmond County Courthouse, Augusta, Ga., Will Books, 1777-1900, Vol C-D, 1853-1881, p. 8-9, Ancestry.com, accessed July 27, 2019, shows that she owned a farm, "Burrough Place," in Richmond County, Ga., and a plantation in Alabama, as well as town lots in Union Springs, Ala., when she died. "Will of James Boykin," 1846; Edward M. Boykin, *History of the Boykin Family, From Their First Settlement in Virginia 1685, and in South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama to the Present Time* (Camden, SC: Colin MacRae, 1876), 12.

[30] "Will of Elizabeth [Rutherford] Boykin," 1853, 8-9; "Will of James Boykin," 1846; Angela Boswell, "Married Women's Property Rights and the Challenge to the Patriarchal Order: Colorado County, Texas," in Janet L. Coryell, ed., *Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood - Dealing with the Powers that Be* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 92. Boswell writes, "The primary cause of revisions in the law [giving women property rights] was the unstable nineteenth-century economy, particularly the panic and depression of 1837. Married women's property acts provided ways to shelter family fortunes by allowing some property to be held in the wives' names, free from the claims of creditors."

In September of 1841 a notice for "My Snake-Shoal Plantation for Sale" first appeared, and continued with slight variations ("My Snake Hill Plantation") in papers from Muscogee to Macon counties in Georgia, and as far away as Camden and Charleston, South Carolina, at least through February of 1844. Potential buyers must have been few and far between, as the newspaper columns during those years were packed with advertisements for plantations for sale all over the state of Georgia. The men who, in better times, would have been wealthy enough to afford a 2,200-acre plantation or a 30-acre estate, were now still reeling from the fallout of financial difficulties after the Panic of 1837.[31]

MY SNAKE HILL PLANTATION FOR SALE.

I OFFER FOR SALE the above PLANTATION, lying in the upper part of Stewart co.

Containing 2250 Acres!

near 700 of which are cleared and in good order for cultivation, with all necessary Buildings, and a Gin, with good mill-going Water. The place is in a large bend of the Chattahoochee River, and entirely detached from all others.

1100 acres are of Bottom Land; the balance good oak and hickory and pine land. The place is well and favorably known by many planters, and by gentlemen in this city. Terms satisfactory.

Sept. 8. 37tf JAMES BOYKIN.

*** Charleston Mercury, Camden S. C. Journal, and Augusta Chronicle publish weekly till October 20, and forward accounts to the Enquirer office.

Daily Chronicle and Sentinel (Augusta, GA), Oct. 7, 1841, 4.

James Boykin's Social and Political Activity

Despite financial ups and downs, James Boykin never seems to have lost his social, political, or spiritual credit among his peers. He and his brother Samuel, part of the "Troup aristocracy," were active in state politics and wielded influence in banking, local and state education, religion, and social regulations. From 1832, when he was named a director on the board, he was continually involved in the Insurance Bank of Columbus. In 1836, he was elected to the bank's board of directors, and continued off and on in that role until at least the latter part of 1841, with other wealthy businessmen such as Eli S. Shorter; Grigsby E. Thomas; Thomas Preston, Jr.; James Randall Jones; Charles Stewart; John Fontaine; Edward Carey; and John Woolfolk.[32]

Boykin was active in the establishment of education for children of the elite of Columbus. In August of 1838, a group of wealthy and prominent men including James and Samuel Boykin, Wiley E. Jones (James' neighbor in the Northern Liberties and brother of his son-in-law James Randall Jones), and

[31] Ads to sell "my Snake-Shoal plantation," "my Snake Hill plantation," or "Valuable Plantation" appear in the *Chronicle and Sentinel* (Augusta, GA) and the *Columbus Enquirer* in 1841; from 1843 through 1844 they are published in the *American Democrat* (Macon, GA), the *Federal Union*, *Macon Telegraph*, *Georgia Messenger*, and *Southern Recorder*, most with messages to reprint in the *Charleston* (SC) *Mercury*, *Charleston* (SC) *Courier*, and *Camden* (SC) *Journal*. In existing papers in Georgia Historic Newspapers digital database, I find no ads for the plantation in the years 1839, 1840, 1842, 1845 – or in 1846, the year of James Boykin's death.

[32] Paul Murray, "Party Organization in Georgia Politics 1825-1853," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 29, no. 4 (December, 1945), 197. Murray quotes *Columbus Democrat* editor Cosam E. Bartlett (a Union party sympathizer), "castigating" the "Troup aristocracy" in Columbus in 1830. "An Act to incorporate the Insurance Bank of Columbus," Georgia General Assembly, *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, Passed in Milledgeville at an Annual Session in November and December 1831* (GALILEO Digital Initiative Database), 33; *Columbus Enquirer*, March 4, 1836; *Columbus Enquirer*, May 3, 1838; *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, November 22, 1838; *Columbus Enquirer*, October 4, 1841.

the Boykins' friend, attorney William H. Mitchell, were appointed trustees of a new school in Columbus by the mayor and city council. That same year, James Boykin was recognized as an honoree in "Other Directors for Life," along with Rev. Thomas Cooper, in *The Fourteenth Annual Report of the Baptist General Tract Society*. He was one of the largest of the earliest donors for the establishment of what became Mercer University and in 1840, and he was named a trustee of the Baptist Church of Columbus, a continuation of his earlier service in the church. From 1839 through at least 1841, Boykin led the Reform Association of Columbus in a petition drive to support "a law to prohibit the further retail of spirituous liquors within the state," and continued to work against liquor sales.[33]

Along with influencing education and social behavior in Columbus, James Boykin was part of the inner circle of states' rights activity in Georgia in the 1830s and 1840s. Led by George M. Troup and initially known as the Troup party, its members later changed its name to the State Rights Party. During South Carolina's stand against the "Tariff of Abominations" in 1828 and when the second Tariff of 1832 passed, Troup rallied his followers to stand against the federal government's dictates. They organized an Anti-Tariff Convention in Milledgeville, and in August of 1832, Stewart County grand jurors selected "James Boyakin [sic] and Kenady Dinard" [sic] "as suitable persons to represent us in the anti-tariff convention." James' brother Samuel was appointed to the Central Committee of the convention, along with W.H. Torrance, Samuel Rockwell, John H. Howard, and James S. Calhoun. In 1833, the Central Committee of the State Rights Party of Georgia included Samuel Boykin, James Randall Jones, and several of the same men from the Anti-Tariff Convention. Various newspaper mentions show that the Boykins and J.R. Jones were active in the State Rights Party into the next decade, condemning tariffs and federal intervention in state business, defending state sovereignty, and, of course, fighting against abolitionists and the laws that would curtail their right to enslave people.[34]

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[33] *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, Sept. 6, 1838; *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Baptist General Tract Society* (Philadelphia: Rackliff & King, 1838), 26. Rev. Thomas Cooper was a highly respected minister in Georgia, and the father of the Boykins' friend and business associate Mark Anthony Cooper (and thus also Samuel Boykin's father-in-law); *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia with Biographical Compendium and Portrait Gallery of Baptist Ministers and Other Georgia Baptists, vol. 1* (Atlanta: J. P. Harrison & Co., 1881), 46; Georgia General Assembly, *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, Passed in Milledgeville at an Annual Session in November and December 1840* (Milledgeville: William S. Rogers, 1841), 85-86 (Trustee); "First Baptist Church," *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, Nov. 12, 1890, named James Boykin as an early deacon; Frederick S. Porter, ed., *The Origin and Growth of the First Baptist Church, Columbus, Georgia, 130th Anniversary* ([Columbus]: First Baptist Church, 1959), 71. According to Dr. Porter, at the dedication of the new church building in 1860, the Reverend James H. DeVotie included James Boykin among "a faithful band of deacons;" *Columbus Enquirer*, April 24, 1839; *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, October 3, 1839; *Columbus Enquirer*, Sep. 1, 1841.

[34] In this essay, the ideology of "states' rights" is spelled differently from the "State Rights Party." Murray, "Party Organization in Georgia Politics," 199; George R. Lamplugh, *Rancorous Enmities and Blind Partialities: Factions and Parties in Georgia* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2015), 310-313; Barrow, *Stewart Co. Ga., Superior Court Minutes,* 28-29; Stephen F. Miller, *The Bench and Bar of Georgia – Memoirs and Sketches* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1858), Vol. 1, 39. Although a list of delegates in Miller's *Bench and Bar* who attended the convention does not include James Boykin (or Dinard), "James Boykin" (but not Dinard) is listed in the *Georgia Telegraph*, Nov. 21, 1832. *Federal Union*, Nov. 13, 1833. James Randall Jones is often known as Randal or Randall Jones. There is also another Randal/Randall Jones in Columbus, who died Sep 22, 1845 (see Muscogee County

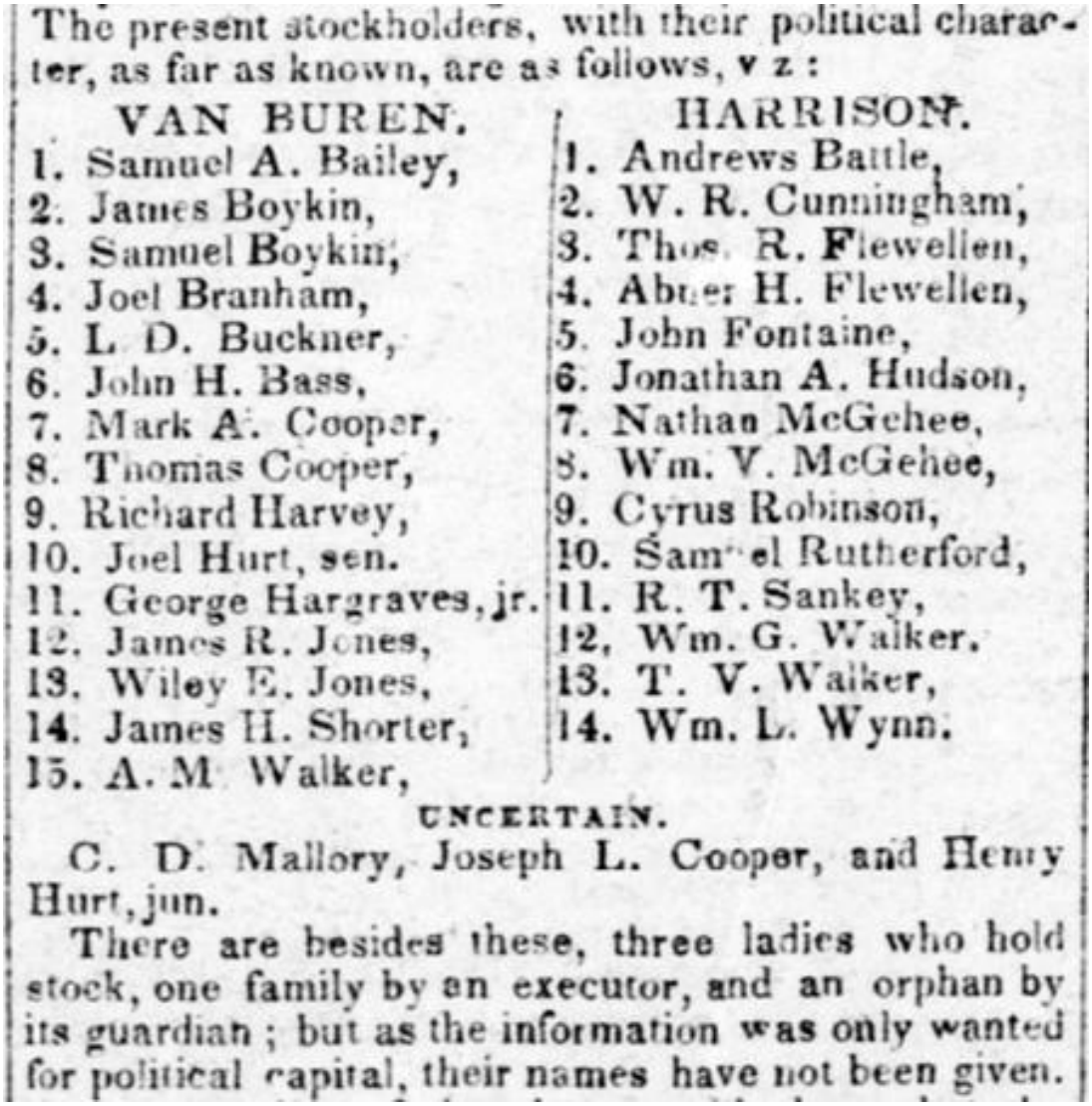
When the political winds shifted at the end of the decade, many members of the old State Rights Party (SRP), including several prominent Columbus men, followed the "handful of Southern Whigs" who supported Senator and former Vice President John C. Calhoun and moved to the Democratic ticket of Martin Van Buren and John Forsyth for the 1840 election. Those Whigs-turned-Democrats included U.S. Senator Mark A. Cooper, and his old schoolmate, Alabama's Dixon Hall Lewis. The summer before the election, in a strongly worded newspaper editorial, a long list of "citizens of Columbus and members of the State Rights party" charged that unnamed SRP political operatives had banded together with "their old opponents the Northern Federalists" to take control of the State Rights Party in Milledgeville. The Columbusites proclaimed that these operatives, "with whom the Convention has desired us to co-operate, and to aid, to be fixed and unalterable advocates of the Bank [of the United States]; the Tariff; Internal Improvements; and to be in alliance with the abolitionists," four of the worst possible political positions these men could imagine. The editorial was signed by John H. Howard, Seaborn Jones, Edward Carey, Samuel Boykin, James Boykin, Jas. Randal Jones [sic], Wiley E. Jones and other familiar names among the Columbus elite. Unfortunately for these new Democrats, Van Buren – as well as their candidate for U.S. Senate, Mark Cooper – lost the election to William Henry Harrison and the Whigs in 1840.[35]

After Cooper lost the election, another developing calamity concerning him and the Boykins came to a head. Previously, in the fall of 1840, the Columbus city council had apparently sued Cooper's Western Insurance and Trust Company for unpaid taxes. Samuel Boykin presented to the council an "affidavit of illegality" regarding the action, but the council dismissed the affidavit and ruled that the proceedings to repeal the corporation's charter could proceed. The matter became a political controversy between the Harrison supporters and the Van Buren supporters, unavoidably perhaps, since Cooper was running as a Van Buren Democrat. Evidence of this showed up before the election in a surprising document of Columbus history. "To gratify the malignity of one individual and the curiosity of others," the stockholders of the Western Insurance and Trust Company had agreed to publish in the newspaper the presidential candidate each one planned to vote for. Who knows whether the revealed information eased anyone's mind or confirmed anyone's suspicions, since the newspaper item revealed that the members were divided almost completely down the middle. It does, however, reveal directly what often must be inferred in historical research: which presidential candidates certain elite Columbus citizens intended to vote for in the 1840 presidential election.[36]

Courthouse, *Will Book A*, p. 85-88). *Columbus Enquirer*, Sep. 15, 1832; *Georgia Telegraph*, Nov. 21, 1832; *Columbus Enquirer*, Jan. 11, 1834; *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, July 18, 1840.

[35] George R. Lamplugh, *Rancorous Enmities and Blind Partialities - Factions and Parties in Georgia, 1807-1845* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, [2015]), 310-312; Charles Grier Sellers, "Who Were the Southern Whigs?" *The American Historical Review*, LIX (1954): 339; "Mark Anthony Cooper (1800-1885)," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, https://georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/mark-anthony-cooper-1800-1885, accessed March 1, 2020: Cooper had been elected to Congress as a Whig in 1838 and then switched to the Democratic Party in 1840 when some southern Whigs transferred to that party. *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, June 13, 1840, 3.

[36] *Columbus Enquirer*, October 14, 1840; *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, October, 1, 1840, 3.



The present stockholders, with their political character, as far as known, are as follows, v z :

VAN BUREN.	HARRISON.
1. Samuel A. Bailey,	1. Andrews Battle,
2. James Boykin,	2. W. R. Cunningham,
3. Samuel Boykin,	3. Thos. R. Flewellen,
4. Joel Branham,	4. Abner H. Flewellen,
5. L. D. Buckner,	5. John Fontaine,
6. John H. Bass,	6. Jonathan A. Hudson,
7. Mark A. Cooper,	7. Nathan McGehee,
8. Thomas Cooper,	8. Wm. V. McGehee,
9. Richard Harvey,	9. Cyrus Robinson,
10. Joel Hurt, sen.	10. Samuel Rutherford,
11. George Hargraves, jr.	11. R. T. Sankey,
12. James R. Jones,	12. Wm. G. Walker.
13. Wiley E. Jones,	13. T. V. Walker,
14. James H. Shorter,	14. Wm. L. Wynn.
15. A. M. Walker,	

UNCERTAIN.

C. D. Mallory, Joseph L. Cooper, and Henry Hurt, jun.

There are besides these, three ladies who hold stock, one family by an executor, and an orphan by its guardian ; but as the information was only wanted for political capital, their names have not been given.

Stockholders of the Western Insurance and Trust Company reveal their presidential preference in the *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, October, 1, 1840, 3

After the election and in anticipation of the repeal of the corporation's charter, Western Insurance and Trust presented memorials (memoranda) to the Georgia state senate and house asking "to obtain the Legislative clemency towards the Institution." According to the pro-Harrison *Enquirer,* WI&T had been charging "exorbitant interests" for loans. Oddly, the newspaper did not hold the members of the corporation responsible for the "evil" of the charter and said the charter should be repealed even if the members had to be compensated for their loss:

> "The minds of members were not awake to its objectionable features. They had not bestowed due reflection upon its adaptation to become an engine of oppression to a large portion of their constituents. Now they have witnessed its effects – they have seen its evil – and if any thing can be done to rid us of them, it ought to be done, and unless speedily done, the whole of Western Georgia may stand prepared to suffer the evils of scarcity of money, exorbitant interests, and a general depreciation of property."

The fate of the Western Insurance and Trust Company was eventually decided following a robbery in 1843. After a portion of the money was recovered, according to the *Columbus Enquirer* – which had railed so vehemently against the corporation and now rejoiced at its undoing – the members divided what was left and parted ways on good terms.[37]

It is not clear why the directors of WI&T agreed to exchange James Boykin's 2,200-acre plantation for almost $22,000 in stock in 1839. However, Samuel and James had an obvious interest in keeping those lands across the river from the Russell County property in the family. Indeed, Samuel may have ended up owning the Snake Shoals plantation before James' death, as advertisements for its sale disappear after 1844 and the property is not mentioned in James' will. In writing about his visit to Stewart County in 1846, eminent British geologist Charles Lyell referred to his visit to *Dr.* Boykin's "agreeable villa in the suburbs," not *Mr.* Boykin's. It is hard to imagine that Lyell, known for his keen observations of Southern geology as well as society, would have gotten wrong a detail like the ownership of the property where he was a guest. It seems as if James' Snake Shoals plantation was never sold to an outsider, but simply stayed in the family with Samuel.[38]

Thirty-five years after his death, James Boykin's nephew, Samuel Boykin, Jr., an influential Georgia Baptist editor and publisher, wrote about his uncle, referring to the manner in which James handled his financial loss, in idealizing terms:

> "Yet, he never murmured, or spoke an unkind word of the man who caused his financial ruin but preserved his cheerfulness and gentle serenity until called 'up higher' at the age of fifty-four."

The loss of money – the exact time and details of which are still a mystery – left Boykin legally with no assets at the end of his life. In James' will, the only property of any significance that he was able to leave his heirs were eight enslaved people. Yet, none of James Boykin's children were in danger of impoverishment. His sons, Francis E. and James Owen Boykin, already had established plantations in Pike and Dallas counties in Alabama. His youngest daughter, Clara Boykin, married John R. Billups and lived

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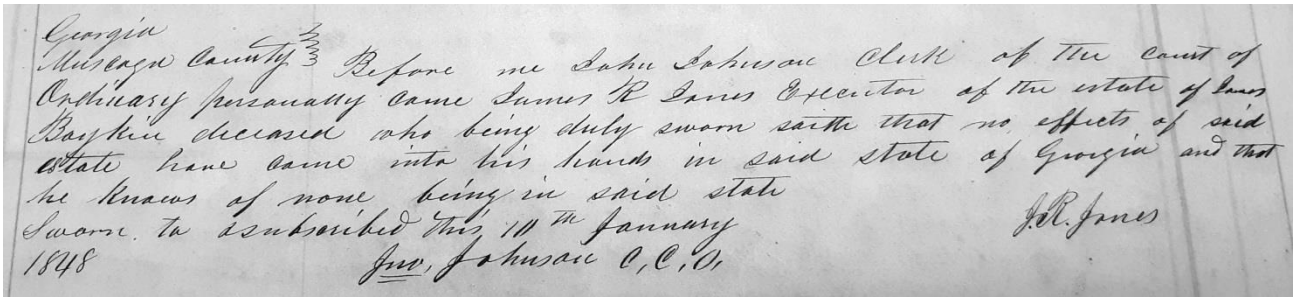
[37] *Columbus Enquirer*, November 25, 1840; *Columbus Enquirer*, December 2, 1840. A memorial was also submitted to the Georgia House of Representatives on November 12, 1840 by Mr. Alexander, presumably on the same subject. *Columbus Enquirer*, April 19, 1843; *Columbus Enquirer*, July 5, 1843; Pope, *Mark Anthony Cooper*, 21-23.
[38] Sir Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to The United States of North America, Vol. II* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1849), 35.

on a parcel of land in Russell County, and James Randall Jones, who married James' daughter Ann Catherine, owned a plantation in Russell County.[39]


Georgia
Muscogee County } Before me John Johnson Clerk of the Court of
Ordinary personally came James R Jones Executor of the estate of James
Boykin deceased who being duly sworn saith that no effects of said
estate have come into his hands in said state of Georgia and that
he knows of none being in said state
Sworn to & subscribed this 10th January
1848 Jno. Johnson C.C.O. J.R. Jones

After his death, James Boykin's son-in-law James R. Jones reports to the court that Boykin legally has no assets. Photo by the author. Muscogee County Courthouse, Columbus Ga., Muscogee County Probate Court, [no title], 1843-1848, Journal B, sworn testimony of James R. Jones, Executor, Jan. 10, 1848, p. 441.

This essay portrays a wealthy antebellum Southerner who lived during a time when white men of property were the primary powerbrokers. James Boykin and his society believed that white men like him were, by divine right, the proper leaders and caretakers of the world and that white supremacy was the proper world order: supremacy over women, children, and animals. People of color were considered less than human and unable to care for themselves, therefore, enslavement for African Americans and removal to a reservation for Creek Indians were considered the best possible scenarios for each group. Boykin enslaved more than one hundred people during his lifetime and worked with the state of Georgia for the removal of the Creeks. In addition, his wealth gave him the means to acquire as much property as he could afford – land, livestock, goods, and people. And Boykin worked to uphold the social order that would support his interests and beliefs through his support of education, local and state Baptist organizations and institutions, and through his political activism.[40]

If James Boykin had lived to see the Civil War, he undoubtedly would have been an ardent supporter of the Confederacy. He certainly laid the groundwork for his children's support of secession – generally, through his worldview, and specifically, through his political activity in the State Rights and Democratic parties in Georgia. His eldest son, Francis E. Boykin, became a prominent secessionist organizer in Pike County, Alabama, fighting to protect a way of life that depended heavily on slavery, and

[39] "Boykin, James," *The Baptist Encyclopedia,* 123. Although James' nephew Dr. Samuel Boykin Jr.'s name does not appear in early editions of the book, a 2000 edition published by the Baptist Standard Bearer credits Samuel Boykin (1822-1899) and includes a note in the preface: "This book, though anonymous, was actually written by Dr. Samuel Boykin." Muscogee County Courthouse, Columbus Ga., Muscogee County Probate Court, [Journal of Court of Ordinary], 1843-1848, Journal B, sworn testimony of James R. Jones, Executor, Jan. 10, 1848, index page and page 441; "Will of James Boykin," 1846. A man named Stephen, 18 years old, went to Boykin's son Dr. James Owen Boykin. Chancy, a woman about 50 years old, Suzan a woman about 24 or 25 years old, with her child William (no age given), Caroline, a girl about 16 or 17, Green, a man of 21 or 22, Peter, a man about 17, and Wilson, a man whose age was not indicated, all went to James' daughter Clara Boykin Billups, who had recently married John R. Billups.

[40] Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning – The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2016), 15-30.

his grandson and namesake, James W. Boykin, served in the Confederate Army. Yet other descendants of Boykin's worked to repair the divisions and rectify the injustices created by enslavement, allotment, removal, secession, the Civil War, and its violent aftermath. James Boykin's legacy to us is a rich and complex story – not a simple or idealized one – from which to learn about ourselves and our society.[41]

[41] "Secession Meeting," *Southern Advertiser* (Troy, Ala.), Dec. 7, 1860; *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, May 9, 1926. An example of a repairer is James Boykin's great-great grandson, W. Cliff Tucker, who was city editor under managing editor and publisher Julian Harris when the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun* won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 1926 for "its brave and energetic fight against the Ku Klux Klan" and other social justice issues of the day; see Gregory C. Lisby and William F. Muggleston, *Someone Had To Be Hated: Julian LaRose Harris: A Biography* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), esp. 119, 192, 272-273.

Nunnally Johnson and the Problem of a Child-Prodigy Poet from Brooklyn

By

Thornton F. Jordan

Nunnally Johnson, from *Photoplay*, November, 1939

Columbus native and noted Hollywood screenwriter Nunnally Johnson had a remarkable Hollywood career that spanned the four decades from the 1930s to the 1970s. Notable among his sixty-nine films were *The Grapes of Wrath, Jesse James, The Three Faces of Eve* (Academy Award for Joanne Woodward), *How To Marry a Millionaire,* and *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit.* His Hollywood career was actually his third career, however. Prior to being a screenwriter, Johnson had been a newspaper columnist and a magazine writer. He was so well-respected that in one issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* his name was listed on the cover with F. Scott Fitzgerald's. It was his fame as a magazine writer that caught the eye of Hollywood studios. After the first talking motion picture was made in 1937, Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*, Hollywood studios were eager to draft successful writers anywhere they could find them to write dialogue. Johnson moved to California in pursuit of this new opportunity and became the best-known and best-paid screenwriter during the Golden Age of Hollywood, mostly working for Darryl Zanuck at Twentieth-Century Fox. During his time as a newspaper columnist, prior to his becoming a noted national figure, Johnson became embroiled in a unique controversy over a child-prodigy poet from Brooklyn named Nathalia Crane, which brought him unprecedented attention. The incident, which sparked hot debate in New York papers and among literary types across the nation, is a forgotten chapter in Johnson's long and distinguished career, and the subject of this article.

For readers unfamiliar with Johnson's biography, a little background on his life and connection with his hometown is in order. Nunnally Hunter Johnson had been born in Columbus, Georgia on December 5, 1897. He lived there through high school, worked briefly for the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, then eventually landed a newspaper job in New York. He wrote a successful humor column called "One Word After Another" for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* for several years in the 1920s under his own byline. Then, in the 1920s and 1930s, he published about seventy stories and essays, mostly in *The Saturday Evening Post*. About a dozen of his humorous stories were about Columbus, which he called "Riverside." They were either about Northerners who had moved to Columbus for marriage or business, or Columbusites in New York, both of whom were suffering culture shock.[1]

Johnson's deep roots in Columbus made such stories a natural outlet for his creativity. It was a connection that would remain strong throughout his life. His father, James N. Johnson (1869-1953), was a coppersmith for the Central of Georgia Railroad, and later a foreman and superintendent of the metal works. His mother, Johnnie Pearl Johnson (1878-1946), founded what later became the Parent Teacher Association in Columbus. Johnson Elementary School is named in her honor, and a portrait of her hangs in the school lobby. Johnson maintained a connection to his alma mater, Columbus High School. In 1941, for example, the Quill and Scroll, the local chapter of the national honor society for high school journalism

[1] For more on these stories, see Thornton F. Jordan, ed., *Nunnally Johnson's 'Riverside' Stories and Other Selected Works* (The Archives: Simon Schwob Memorial Library, Columbus State University, 2004).

students, was named the Nunnally Johnson chapter in his honor. In appreciation, Johnson presented the *Columbus Ledger's* inaugural Tucker award (later named Tucker-Wilder Award), a typewriter, to the top journalism student. As another indication of his ongoing association with his alma mater, in 1956, he was invited to pick the Most Handsome and Most Beautiful senior for the annual, the *Cohiscan*.[2]

Photo of Johnson which appeared in the 1956 Columbus High School annual, the *Cohiscan*.
Courtesy of Cliff Tucker, Jr.

During his Hollywood years, Johnson returned to Columbus many times to visit his good friends, Cliff and Daisy Tucker, and his parents. Cliff's father, W. H. Tucker, who was editor of the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, gave Nunnally his first job. Later, when Nunnally moved to New York to work for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Cliff roomed with him and got a job on the *Eagle* himself. When his father died, Cliff

[2] From 1900 to 1953 the Johnsons moved twelve times in Columbus. They resided at 406 11th Street, 115 Sixth Street, 837 3rd Avenue, 308 10th Street, 1016 3rd Avenue, 924 2nd Avenue (twice), 1229 Eberhart Avenue, 1551 16th Street, 1240 Peacock Avenue (twice), and 1136 Dinglewood. Cliff Tucker, Sr. (1898-1961), editor of *The Columbus Enquirer* from 1937-1961, and his wife Daisy (1912-2009), who created the newspaper library, were lifelong friends of Nunnally's. Before she died, I asked Daisy why she thought the Johnsons had moved so often. She said, "That's just what people did back then." Nunnally's last residence before he left Columbus in 1915 was 308 10th Street, now the Office of Dispute Resolution.

returned to Columbus and was City Editor when Julian Harris ran his Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage of the Klan in Columbus.

Nunnally Johnson in his parents' home with W. C. "Cliff" Tucker, 1950s
Courtesy of Cliff Tucker, Jr.

Johnson's involvement in the incident which is our focus here began during his years of work with The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle.* Young Nathalia Crane had come to prominence at the time. Since poetic prodigies were and are still almost unheard of, a long and contentious debate ran in the New York papers over whether she was a genius or a fraud. Johnson believed in her and tried to defend her through his humorous attacks on her detractors, culminating his defense in an article he wrote for H. L. Mencken's *The American Mercury* in 1926.

Generally limited to three fields—mathematics, music, and chess—child prodigies are very rare in literature. Yet, in the 1920s, a critic no less discerning than Louis Untermeyer considered Nathalia Crane to be a prodigy at age nine. Before she was twelve she had published two collections of poetry. Her

works were immediately included in an Untermeyer anthology in 1926 in the company of Frost, Sandburg, Aiken, Millay, Louise Bogan, Masefield, and Amy Lowell. At age twelve she shared the platform for readings with Elinor Wylie, Edwin Markham, and Untermeyer himself. Untermeyer, who also championed Frost's career, would include Crane's work in at least seven editions of his *Modern American Poetry* through the mid-1940s, alongside that of Delmore Schwartz, also born in 1913. Her poetry was set to music, and at age thirteen she was picked up in *The Pamphlet Poets* series under Simon and Schuster. From age eleven to seventeen she published six books of verse and two novels. In her twenties she published three more books of verse.[3]

Nathalia Clara Ruth Crane (1913-1998), Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 90-105, Science Service Records, Image No. SIA2008-0687

In her early works Crane was likened by more than one critic, including Untermeyer, to Emily Dickinson. As for her general precocity, Untermeyer remembered an episode when she was ten-and-a-half shopping in Woolworth's and yearning for an old-fashioned hour glass. When he asked if she wanted

[3] Throughout his career, Untermeyer was a well-respected editor of anthologies of American and British poetry and of poetry for children.

it "to help you cook four-minute eggs?" she replied, "Oh, no. I want to *see* how time goes by." "It was the first thing she had said," wrote Untermeyer, "to make me remember I was shopping with a poet."[4]

As pieced together from three different accounts, her career began when, unknown to her parents, she started making up poems in her head at age nine for her own amusement, then writing them on a battered typewriter. One day her mother inadvertently threw out a stack of the badly typed pages with some other trash. Nathalia wailed that they were her "songs" and her mother promised to be more careful. A few days later, she brought her father two new poems, which he showed to a newspaper friend, the managing editor of the *Brooklyn Daily News*. Interviews followed and, in Nunnally Johnson's words, she was soon "slathered with columns of praise."[5]

She then sent a poem to Edmund Leamy, poetry editor of the *New York Sun*, who paid her for it and published others subsequently. In Leamy's "Afterword" to her first published collection of forty-seven poems, at age eleven in 1924, he explained that he had never heard of her when he accepted her early submissions by mail, and that when the poet eventually called at his office in person, he was "embarrassed—or rather taken aback" to be face to face with a little girl, since nothing in her poetry indicated her age. He had accepted the poems, he explained, "on their merits and their merits alone," and he argued that "many a poet of greater years and of recognized standing would not despise being known as the author" of them.[6]

William Rose Benét, the associate editor of the Literary Review of the *New York Evening Post*, accepted two of Nathalia's poems from her mother. One was "The Blind Girl" which opened:

> In the darkness, who would answer for the color of a rose,
> Or the vestments of the May moth and the pilgrimage it goes.
> In the darkness who would answer, in the darkness who would care,
> If the odor of the roses and the winged things were there.
> In the darkness who would cavil o'er the question of a line,
> Since the darkness holds all loveliness beyond the mere design.
> Oh, night, thy soothing prophecies companion all our ways,
> Until releasing hands let fall the catalogue of days.

Though skeptical of prodigies, Benét was impressed with Crane's "individuality," her "maturity of melody and diction," and her insights, which seemed to betoken an inborn "instinct for remarkable phrase and striking figurative expression."[7]

But at age twelve, this meteoric young girl, who was to be touted in *Who's Who Among the Poets* as the "most astounding literary phenomenon of her day," was the center of a debate which would

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[4] Louis Untermeyer, "Foreword," in Nathalia Crane, *Swear by the Night and Other Poems* (New York: Random House, 1936), 1.
[5] Nunnally Johnson, "Nathalia from Brooklyn," *The American Mercury*, IX, no. 33, September 1926, 53.
[6] Edmund Leamy, "Afterword," *The Janitor's Boy and Other Poems* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1924), 81.
[7] William Rose Benét, "Foreword," *The Janitor's Boy and Other Poems* , xii, xiv.

draw in such luminaries as Untermeyer, William Lyon Phelps of Yale, A. A. Brill, Faith Baldwin, Hervey Allen, Edwin Markham, and many other critics, editors, poets, psychoanalysts, educators, ministers, and journalists, including columnist Nunnally Johnson. At the publication of her first collection, *The Janitor's Boy and Other Poems* (1924), many, like Benét and Leamy had marveled at the maturity of her imagination. After her second book, *Lava Lane and Other Poems* (1925), astonishment turned to doubt that her works, with their wide range of allusions, exotic vocabulary and technical competence, could possibly be the work of a mere child. As her detractors came forward, they began to compile objections—moral, intellectual, aesthetic, economic, sexist—but all profoundly suspicious of disparity they perceived between the young girl and her impressively mature poetry. For about six weeks, in November and December 1925, the debate ran in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

Reporters quizzed Crane's former grade school teachers at Brooklyn's PS 109 to discover some antecedent for her genius and wide knowledge. According to interviews with seven of her teachers, neither her I.Q. of 101 nor her school compositions, neither her ordinary knowledge and vocabulary, nor her weakness in arithmetic argued in her favor. To compound the doubt, the *Eagle* printed one of her typical poems composed at age eleven, "The Playbox: To the Trinket." Beneath it the paper glossed the host of allusions in the poem: to King Tut, Queen Mary's doll-house at Wembley, Florence Nightingale, King Arthur, the "classic references to the lantern and the sword," the bugle at Balaklava which sounded the charge of the Light Brigade, Gen. Havelock of the Indian Mutiny, his pipers who played "The Campbells are Coming," Lady Godiva's ride through Coventry, and the non-ending of Kubla Khan. One teacher said flatly, "I do not believe that child wrote that book."[8]

In addition to intellectual skepticism, two others sounded a second objection—moral impropriety. One target was a poem called "The Warming Pan," an allusion to Abishag, a beautiful woman who had been brought in to warm a cold King David in his old age. Another teacher charged, "It is unjust and unfair to a modest, sweet, and innocent child like Nathalia Crane to sign her name to poems dealing with mature love and sex knowledge, an ugly and unnatural thing in a child of 7 or 11 years."[9]

Two days later the *Eagle* reported that Nathalia's father had agreed to a meeting that the paper had requested several weeks earlier with a committee to study the child poet's mind. This committee was to include Hervey Allen, professor of poetry at Columbia, and Dr. A. A. Brill, translator of Jung and Freud and then lecturer on psychoanalysis at New York University. Their aim was "with tactful questions [to] bring out the quality of the mind which had produced words like the following: cicatrix, nullah, plim, blastoderm, sindon, sistrum, cygnet, and trireme"—that is, her display of exotic vocabulary which had mystified her former teachers. The committee planned, as well, to ask her to write something on a topic of their choice in their presence. Her father canceled the meeting. Notified, A. A. Brill wrote the *Eagle*

[8] "Nathalia Crane's Poems Puzzle Teachers After Noting Her Class Work," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 10, 1925, 3, www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020.
[9] Ibid.

that he found the father's refusal "interesting, to say the least." Further, he found it "very strange that a girl who had such a wonderful command of language and such versatile English should be just average in her school work."[10]

In one of his earlier columns, Nunnally Johnson had already considered her vocabulary from *Lava Lane and Other Poems*, writing that "the word hasn't been written that she can't rope, throw, tie and brand in record time." He offered his own humorous definitions of:

> Teasel: where one teases
> Nullah: to cancel something
> Plim: slang for Plam
> Sarcenet: (absolutely unknown)
> Barracoon: what you hide behind when they begin shooting
> Cygnet: a ring with your initial on it, or, if bought from a pawnshop, with somebody else's initial on it.[11]

Taking the *Eagle's* skepticism head on, Nathalia wrote her own letter defending her exotic vocabulary. In her characteristic style, she explained that "Thoughts often seize odd raiment from the wardrobes. Mirth prances forth in a single flounce and meditation absent-mindedly dons cloak after cloak without apparent reason." She offered her definitions of the twenty words under question, including Plim—"Destiny's mark upon the bell of a ship. Truly the dictionary spells it 'Plimsoll,' but I cut it to 'plim,' because our Lord Tennyson did the same thing with 'Russian,' making it 'Russ' to fit a certain fling."[12]

The next day, Edwin Markham, famous for "The Man with the Hoe," and dubbed by the *Eagle* "the Dean of American Poets," fired the next volley. He charged that Nathalia Crane could not possibly be the author of her poems, but that he believed four young men and two young women had published under her name as a genial joke. Qualifying slightly, he stated in a follow-up interview with the *New York World*, "It looks impossible to an outsider that a girl so immature could have written poems so mature. And yet, anything is possible in this world, and it is entirely possible that Nathalia Crane has written these poems with her own mind and pen. In that case, if she has written them, she is perhaps the most extraordinary girl in America, and in that case I wish her high good fortune on the path of the poetic life." Mr. Crane, insulted by Markham's "unprovoked attack" on his daughter, demanded an apology.[13]

Markham's theory of ghost writers invited speculation, and the *Eagle* took the lead by naming the candidates from Nathalia's circle of literary friends: poets Louis Untermeyer and Jean Starr Untermeyer;

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[10] "Crane Now Is Willing Nathalia's Mentality Be Tested By Reporters," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle,* November 12, 1925, 3, www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020.
[11] "One Word After Another," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 5, 1925, 20, www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020.
[12] "Never Has Striven for Strange Words, Nathalia Says—Gives Meaning," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle,* November 12, 1925, www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020.
[13] "Edwin Markham Brands Nathalia Crane's Claims to Authorship a Hoax," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 13, 1925 and "Weaver Agrees with Markham in Doubting Nathalia," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle,* November 14, 1925, 1-2, www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020.

Benét and Johnson, who had both written forewords to her first book; Leamy, who had written the afterword; her agent; and Faith Baldwin, Brooklyn's most famous novelist and poet.

Benét became the *Eagle's* first prime suspect. In a long series of parallel passages, the editors attempted to demonstrate the similarities in theme, vocabulary, and sophistication of meter and knowledge about such mature subjects as evolution and chess—"a realm," the *Eagle* noted, "where few women have dared to tread." For instance, the *Eagle* cited Benét's couplet:

> His burro sneezed again, behind: gray gophers whisked aside;
> Screamed a blue-headed pinon-jay; a far coyote cried.

then Nathalia Crane's:

> A flower flamed, a parrot screamed, night spread her peacock tail
> And beauty tripped the platform of that lilac-tinted vale.

Such parallel passages, claimed the *Eagle*, offer a "haunting similarity, which causes all kinds of conjectures." Her detractors apparently failed to appreciate that Crane's word play was superior to Benét's. As for Benét, he flatly denied that he had written Crane's poems. He had never seen her, and he had judged her talent solely on the poems her mother had brought him. Of her vocabulary and sophisticated allusions, he argued that "the use of an unusual word or a reference to mythology, archaeology, or astronomy might cause the reader to believe that the child has a more profound knowledge of these subjects than is actually the case. It is difficult to explain how poetry is written." In short, he accepted that Nathalia used words intuitively.[14]

The most extended, serious theoretical defense of the child prodigy came a few days later in the *Eagle's* front-page interview with Untermeyer. His first line of argument was that it was unlikely that she was a hoax, since it would have been strategically difficult to sustain such a complicated ruse. It would require "a combination of magnificent stage-managership, diabolic cleverness and a genuine poetic genius to write the poetry; and I don't believe in any such triple combination . . . because if it existed, it would have broken down by this time." Untermeyer then faced the tough question: how was it believable that "fine poetry, containing . . . mature conceptions and ideas, shrewd and clear-eyed observations of life could have been produced by a little girl" with apparently only common abilities?[15]

His answer is a fair register of early twentieth-century psychology, genetics, and romanticism trying to account for literary talent. "There is something in Nathalia which produces all this," he

[14] "Nathalia Crane's Poems Strikingly Resemble William Rose Benét's," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 15, 1925, 3; "More Varying Opinions on the Authenticity of Nathalia Crane's Poems," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 18, 1925, 3, www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020.
[15] "Untermeyer Tells Why He Believes Nathalia Has the Gift of Poesy," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 17, 1925, 1, www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020.

explained. "Perhaps it's the peculiar combination of the parents. You have there an old man and a much younger woman. You have the Puritan and the Jewess. You have the repressed New England stock and the stock of the fiery Spanish Jews. That may explain it, in part, on the basis of heredity. . . . But genius is never entirely explicable." Johnson noted that as Crane's genealogy became more complex, she traced her ancestry to Plymouth Colony pilgrims John and Priscilla Alden. Her mother traced her ancestry to ancient Jewish Spaniards, the Abarbannels, one of whom had been prime minister at the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella.[16]

Dismissing the theory that she was a medium in the pseudoscientific sense, Untermeyer explained that in another sense she was "a medium for the transmission of the experience, the wisdom, of the race which, like other children, she has inherited" but "is uniquely able to express." The meaning of her words and sentences, whose implications she did not know consciously, "come out of her unconscious," he declared, "that vast reservoir of race experience which Freudian psychology has discovered to exist." Moreover, all poets were "continually trying to recapture the vision which a child has instinctively."[17]

This instinctive wisdom in an eleven-year-old prodigy, Untermeyer explained, was not to be confused with knowledge, a product of age. Thus, her Egyptology, the military terms picked up from her father, her grasp of the nebular hypothesis, her "glittering words . . . universally loved by children and savages" had been all merely picked up as phrases and rendered in "remarkably fine craftsmanship and imagination." As for her lackluster student work, Untermeyer said, "as one who failed to graduate from high school because I failed in geometry, I would take that as proof that she had poetic genius. Teachers have proverbially failed to recognize genius."[18]

The last extended attack ran in the *Eagle* in several long articles by Clement Wood, a critic, poet, and amateur psychoanalyst, who believed he had at last found the Svengali behind Nathalia's career—her father. In his youth, her father had been a newspaper reporter, a soldier in the Spanish-American War, and a sailor, but, more importantly, a failed poet and playwright. Nathalia's worldly knowledge, mature cynicism, and technical sophistication, even the "nudity motif" all derived from her father, who was vicariously succeeding now through her name and unconsciously desiring to be caught at it. Wood's exhaustive interpretation of Nathalia's imagery in poem after poem rode on his torturous Freudian analysis of Oedipal conflicts in the Crane family. He concluded that Nathalia's poetry resulted from "an excessive, almost hypnotic influence on [the] part [of the father], or outright writing of most of the

[16] *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 17, 1925, 1; www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020; *The American Mercury*, 59.
[17] *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 17, 1925, 1, www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020.
[18] Ibid.

poems by him." Yet Wood conceded that whoever the author was, "The result . . . has been to enrich our singing with one more authentic poetic voice."[19]

The debate over this child prodigy was serious on both sides. The single figure who managed to maintain his humor through it all was Johnson, who had been sent to interview her when she was first discovered. He genuinely liked her, as he did children in general. In "Nathalia at Ten," his foreword to her first collection, he tried to keep her talent in good-humored perspective. He saw her as merely an articulate child with a childlike penchant for arcane knowledge and exotic words, and without concern for fame or controversy. In his later *American Mercury* piece, he took the Mencken tact of spearing downright silly the cultural pretentiousness, moral righteousness, and nebulous newspaper ethics of Nathalia's detractors.[20]

According to Johnson, "the initial spark of righteousness in the *Eagle* office burned in the bosom of a woman reporter, a spinster who . . . has the force of an ambitious district attorney." She convinced the woman editor of the children's section of the paper, and together they convinced the managing editor, to investigate a possible hoax. They hatched the theory of a conspiracy of ghost writers and conveyed it to Edwin Markham, "who," Johnson charged, "obligingly repeated it back to them for publication."[21]

Johnson included in his article a summary of an unpublished inquisition of Nathalia conducted by the two zealous investigative reporters from the *Eagle* in the presence of her parents and the two Untermeyers. One of the reporters thought of herself as a poet, since she had published "R U A Rooster" in the children's section of the *Eagle*. "[T]he elder . . . demanded of Nathalia where she had learned so perfect an exposition of the nebular hypothesis as was to be found in *Lava Lane*, [since they regarded such] highly technical information [as] entirely too correct for a child to know." Untermeyer here intervened and explained that she had simply set forth the skeleton of the nebular hypothesis clothed in childish fancy. Nunnally Johnson thought the source of her knowledge was an animated educational film which she had seen in a theater in Flatbush. (The nebular hypothesis was a theory that the sun and the solar system formed from a cloud of gas and dust).[22]

The reporters then asked Nathalia if she were atheistic. "What," Nathalia asked, "do you mean? The reporters opened *Lava Lane* to the poem "Sunday Morning." One read the first stanza:

> God, on a Sunday morning,
> Sits in his old armchair

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[19] "Nathalia Crane's Poems Credited to Father in Clement Wood's Analysis," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 22, 1925, 1, www.newspapers.com, accessed August 4, 2020.
[20] *The Janitor's Boy and Other Poems* , xvii.
[21] *The American Mercury*, 54, 55.
[22] Ibid., 55-57.

Comforting May Madonna—
Slip-heel who fell the stair.

Taking "May Madonna" as an allusion, they insisted that the poem was "plainly a charge that the Virgin Mary did something she shouldn't have done." . . . Nathalia was disgusted. "May Madonna is a little girl's name," she exclaimed; "I liked the sound of it." The reporters remained unconvinced. They then asked Nathalia if she had studied the physical properties of the prism, and if she was acquainted with the chromatic scale and the phenomenon of refraction. Nathalia shook her head, now obviously determined to say nothing. "Then," declared the reporter quietly, "you could not possibly have written this line—

In the darkness who would answer for the color of a rose.

"And why," demanded Nathalia, "couldn't I have written it?" "Because, dear," explained the reporter, "you say you haven't the scientific knowledge." "But couldn't I," Nathalia asked, "have taken a rose into a dark room?" "The person who wrote that line," insisted the reporter firmly, "was thoroughly familiar with the physical basis for the statement."[23]

Next they demanded that Nathalia tell them what she knew about sex. After a couple of minutes of her silence and their haranguing, she began to cry on Mrs. Untermeyer's shoulder and the interview ended. A few days later the managing editor of the *Eagle* determined to put her to a test, characterized by Nunnally Johnson as "a two-fisted business man's, with none of this artistic whangdoodle about it." She was to write a poem in his presence. After about ten minutes of squirming, she produced:

Lo and behold, God made the starry word,
The maggot and the mold, Lo and behold.
He taught the grass contentment blade by blade,
The sanctity of sameness in a shade.

Though it was a fairly impressive performance, the editor ruled that the test was inconclusive. After he recalled that Nathalia had used the idea before in a letter to Nunnally Johnson, the editor never published the interview. The controversy ran on for several weeks in the *Eagle*, then finally played out.[24]

In Johnson's own view, Crane's father was one source of her erudition. Johnson had visited the Cranes in their home and had held long conversations with the father. He had bumped about the world in the military in various forms in his past. In the evenings he would sit in his wicker chair and narrate to her "tales of the countries he ha[d] seen, of the army, of ships, of history, of exploration, colored always with contemptuous irony," while Nathalia lay back in a chair "transfixed, plucking from his discourse a

[23] *The American Mercury* , 56.
[24] Ibid., 56-57.

strange and arresting word occasionally, to grasp its sound and get its meaning." The other source of her learning was some outdated reference works, including a set of 1895 encyclopedias with two volumes missing, "the result of which is, if skeptics care to look it up," wrote Johnson, "that Nathalia's erudition is somewhat weak on matters beginning with G, H, I, J, K, and L."[25]

In Johnson's summary judgment, Nathalia was neither a "mastermind" nor a "subliminal giant." "She is simply a curious child with a rudimentary grasp and tremendous colloquial hold on a number of uncommon matters . . . which have caught her interest. She has, in addition, a flair for obsolete and ungodly words, a flair which leads her to collect and treasure them with the zeal of any fancier, and which forces her to press them into her writings with ostentation. Thirdly, she has an intelligence, a mind which holds facts as tanglefoot holds flies."[26]

Nathalia Crane later graduated from Barnard and published her sixth collection of poetry at age twenty-two, *Swear by The Night and Other Poems* (1936), again with a "Foreword" by Untermeyer. His estimation of this adult volume was more cautious. He wrote that the book was "by turns unusually graceful and surprisingly awkward; the language is alternately simple and over-literary; the communication is sometimes direct as a flash, sometimes elaborately obscure, as if the child had turned pedant," all of this taken together he summarized as indicating "erratic genius . . . but genius in any case." [27]

In her twenties, she published two additional books of poetry, the last one entitled *The Death of Poetry* (1942). Five years later her father died, and she produced nothing for the next twenty-two years, which her skeptics should have been keen to notice. She appears in the Pratt Institute yearbook in 1939 as a member of the faculty in English and Public Speaking. She later moved to California, married three times, and taught at San Diego State College. In 1969 she published (at age 56) an undistinguished book of didactic protest poetry entitled *The Campus Drum Beat*. It appears that whatever poetic talents she might have had in childhood, if they were truly hers, did not develop. She died in in San Diego in 1998 at age eighty-five.

Since the question of her father's possible influence was never disproved or affirmed, it is possible, though not certain, that for a shining moment in her early life she heard her own muse. Occasionally the startling line, the intuitive perception and instinctive sense of the music of words might have been hers when, as a child, she tapped her pencil on her desk in Brooklyn and made up "songs" in her head.

As for her two most consistent defenders, Untermeyer argued theoretically that "there was no more reason to question Nathalia's gift than . . . Yehudi Menuhin's." Johnson believed that "she had one talent which is mysterious in her as it always is in considerable poets, and that is the talent to assemble

[25] *The American Mercury* , 58-59.
[26] Ibid., 59.
[27] Untermeyer, "Foreword," 4.

her material, assimilating it, and in the end, issuing it in the curves and colors of genuine fancy. The existence anywhere of that talent is a matter for marveling, but since it has not, so far as I know, ever been analyzed, no matter where found, there doesn't seem to be any logical reason why it shouldn't exist in a child.[28]

Nathalia Crane's works in Chronological Order

The Janitor's Boy, and Other Poems. "Foreword" by William Rose Benét; "Nathalia at Ten" by Nunnally Johnson; "Afterword" by Edmund Leamy. New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1924. Rpt. with new introduction by the author. New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1935. Rpt. Great Neck: N.Y.: Core Collection Books 1976.

Lava Lane, and Other Poems. New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1925.

Nathalia Crane Songbook. Music by Frances E. Friedman; introduction by Felix Deyo. New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1925.

The Pamphlet Poets. Ed. Hughes Mearns. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926.

The Singing Crow, and Other Poems. Illustrated by Mac Harshberger. New York: A. C. Boni, 1926.

The Sunken Garden. (novel) New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1926.

Venus Invisible, and Other Poems. Illustrated by Ruth Jonas. New York: Coward-McCann, 1928.

An Alien from Heaven. (novel) New York: Coward-McCann, 1929.

Pocahontas. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1930. Limited to 150 signed copies.

Swear By The Night, and Other Poems. Intro. Louis Untermeyer. New York: Random House, 1936.

Nathalia Crane and Leonard Feeney. *The Ark and the Alphabet*: *An Animal Collection*. New York: Macmillan, 1939.

In The Last Lodging of Simplicity. Richmond Hill, N.Y.: Monastine Press, 1941.

The Death of Poetry: A Dramatic Poem in Two Parts, and Other Poems. New York: Monastine Press, 1942.

Nathalia Crane Black. *The Campus Drum Beat*. El Cajon, CA: Cal West, 1969.

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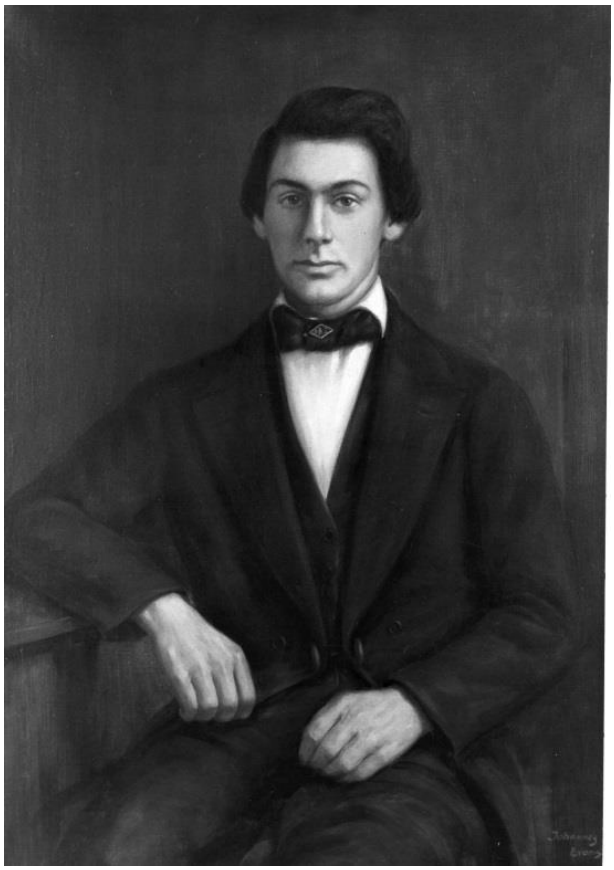
[28] Untermeyer, "Foreword," 3; Johnson, *The American Mercury*, 59.

Noble Leslie DeVotie:
"First Martyr to the Southern Cause"

By

Mike Bunn



Noble Leslie DeVotie
Wikipedia.com

Among the hundreds of tombstones standing as silent testimony to once-vibrant life stories in Columbus' venerable Linwood Cemetery stands a monument to a twenty-three-year-old man whose short time on earth has become one of the more interesting footnotes in local history. Bronze plaques attached to the stone appropriately pay tribute "To one whose life was brief but whose influence is lasting." "Greater love had no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," it continues. What is the inspiration for those words?[1]

[1] Linda J. Kennedy, *Historic Linwood Cemetery* (Charleston: Arcadia Press, 2004), 93.

Noble Leslie DeVotie, whose grave this stone adorns, was born on January 24, 1838 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the first of four children born to James H. and Margaret Christian DeVotie. His father, a New York native who had moved to Savannah as a young man, had become a prominent church leader, educator, and editor in Georgia and Alabama by the time of his birth, and his devotion to his duties doubtless influenced his choice of careers. The elder DeVotie studied at Furman Theological Seminary and pastored churches in three states—including later Columbus's First Baptist—as well as serving on the boards of organizations ranging from missionary societies to college and public school boards. He also found time to help found Howard University, a private Baptist institution in Marion, Alabama (the forerunner of Samford University). Raised by such a prominent minister and a loving, pious mother, Noble DeVotie by all accounts developed into a sober and well-behaved young man who at an early age displayed an unusual focus and maturity. He reputedly made the decision to give his life to Christ at the age of eleven and never looked back, convinced of his calling to minister to others.[2]

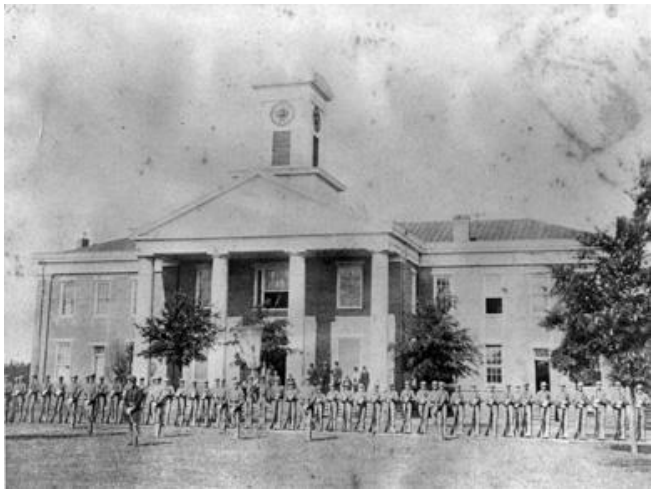
James H. Devotie,
From *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia*

James H. Devotie's grave in Linwood Cemetery
Findagrave.com

As might be expected from such a serious young man, DeVotie was a model student who loved reading and learning, and was encouraged to further his studies at college after completion of basic education. At the age of fifteen he enrolled in Howard College in Marion, Alabama, a small private school

[2] Kennedy, *Linwood Cemetery*, 93; The Christian Index, *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia* (Atlanta: Harrison and Company, 1881), 187-191; Grady McWhiney, Warner O. Moore, Jr.. and Robert F. Pace, eds., *"Fear God and Walk Humbly": The Agricultural Journal of James Mallory, 1843-1877* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013), 494-495; Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 18-19, 31. The DeVotie Legacy Society, a planned giving channel supporting Samford University, was founded in 1995 and named in James H. DeVotie's honor. https://www.samford.edu/giving/giving-societies.

which had been chartered a little over a decade previously by the Alabama Baptist State Convention. He attended Howard only one year, choosing to complete his undergraduate degree at the University of Alabama. He excelled in his studies, becoming recognized for his knowledge of both English and French literature and achieving the rank of valedictorian upon his graduation from the university in 1856.[3]



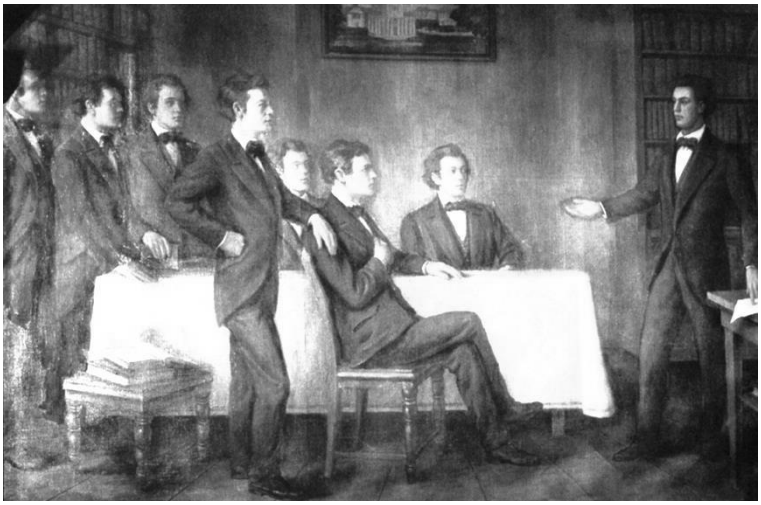
Howard College in 1858, Samford University Special Collections

The University of Alabama campus in 1859
University of Alabama Libraries: William Stanley Hoole Special Collections Library

Though mild-mannered and rail-thin—he weighed a mere 120 pounds during his college days—DeVotie seems to have left an enduring impression on those he met and naturally assumed a role as a leader. During his senior year at Alabama all of these qualities were on display in his influential role in the founding of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity, an accomplishment which has earned him enduring fame. DeVotie was one of eight young men who helped organize the brotherhood and he is credited with

[3] *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia*, 191.

writing its first rituals, creating its original secret grip, and the choosing of its symbols: Minerva, goddess of wisdom, and a lion, thought to reference an untamed spirit. The organization grew rapidly, claiming several chapters by the end of the decade and no less than fifteen by the early 1860s on campuses across the South. By the 1880s northern chapters of the fraternity had been founded, the first at Pennsylvania College (now Gettsyburg College). It continues to grow even today, currently active nationwide and claiming over 330,000 members.[4]



Depiction of the founding of SAE, by Johannes Waller, www.SAE.net

Upon completion of his bachelor's degree, DeVotie decided to attend Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. Not only was the school one of most prestigious in the nation, but owing to mounting tensions over the issue of slavery in the country, was one of the few elite northern institutions of higher learning which Southern boys found culturally acceptable at the time. He completed his studies in 1859, and moved to Columbus, where his father had taken the job as minister of the First Baptist Church during his seminary training. The 1859-1860 city directory shows he listed as his address his parents' home on St. Clair Street at the corner of Forsyth Avenue (currently 11th Street and Veteran's Parkway). He would not remain in Columbus long, though, as offers of employment for the well-educated, determined, son of a regionally-known minister were not long in coming. Shortly after his graduation he had at least two opportunities (and likely more) to consider; congregations in both Eufaula and Selma, Alabama, solicited his services. He chose to take the position in Selma, at the time one of the

[4] Kennedy, *Linwood Cemetery*, 93; "Sigma Alpha Epsilon," https://www.sae.net; John Hechinger, *True Gentlemen: The Broken Pledge of America's Fraternities* (New York: Public Affairs, 2017), 22-23; Dr. H. Rondel Rumburg, "Chaplain Noble Leslie DeVotie: *First Death in the War of Northern Aggression,"* http://confederatechaplain.com/archives/devotie-noble-leslie/.

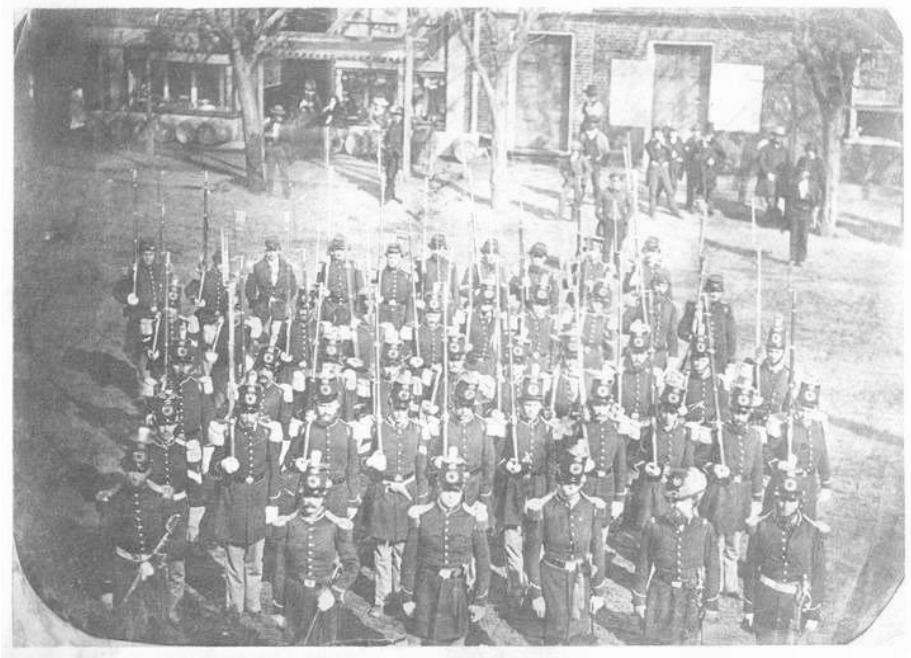
largest and most promising cities in Alabama, and began his duties as pastor of the First Baptist Church there in November of 1859.[5]

The Princeton Theological Seminary as it appeared shortly after DeVotie's time there.
From John Frelinghuysen Hageman, *History of Princeton and its Institutions*

First Baptist Church in Columbus, where James H. DeVotie once served as pastor.
From *Columbus, Georgia: 1828-1978*, by John Lupold

[5] *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia*, 192; "Columbus City Directory, 1859-1860," *Muscogiana* 7 Nos. 1 and 2 (Summer, 1996): 3-20; Thomas Waverly Palmer, *A Register of the Officers and Students of the University of Alabama, 1831-1901* (Albany, NY: Brandow Printing, 1901), 118.

Just over a year later, DeVotie and the community he served would find themselves caught up in the chaos of the onset of the turning point of American history we know as the Civil War. The Alabama Black Belt in which Selma was located was one of the hotbeds of secessionist sentiment, and once the state declared it was leaving the union in January of 1861 a veritable rush to arms by young men from the region occurred. They desired to demonstrate their loyalty to their home communities and its interests, and perhaps just as much wanted in on the adventure before it was too late. DeVotie, just twenty-three years old and possessed of a deep affection for his home and its people, could scarcely help being caught up in the moment. With many of his friends and colleagues volunteering for military service in defense of Alabama in the looming martial contest with United States forces, DeVotie determined to offer himself as a chaplain for local militia groups being organized in the wake of Governor A.B. Moore's call for troops to occupy Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines at the mouth of Mobile Bay in the days after the state's formal secession. These fortifications were deemed to be some of the most critical in the state, guarding access to the state's port city of Mobile and its extensive river system. Thus he accompanied the colorfully-named Independent Blues and Governor's Guards in January of 1861 when they departed Selma for the glimmering waters of the Gulf. According to some sources, he had only recently asked a young lady named Emma Hagerty, herself just nineteen years old, to marry him. She had accepted, goes the story, but wanted to wait until the spring to exchange vows.[6]



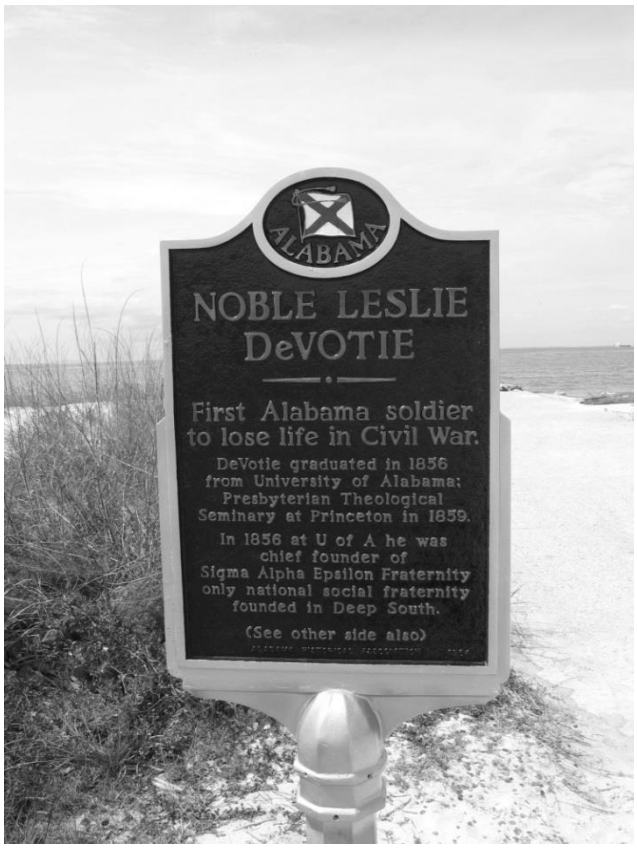
The Selma Independent Blues just before they departed for Fort Morgan.
Is Noble Leslie DeVotie among the men standing behind them?
Alabama Department of Archives and History

[6] Rumbert, "Chaplain Noble Leslie DeVotie."

About seven p.m. on the windy evening of February 12, 1861, DeVotie left the fort where his unit was garrisoned and walked out to the wharf where the steamer *Dick Keys* sat, gently bobbing in the waves of Mobile Bay. On board were some acquaintances from Selma whom he wanted to say goodbye to before they took passage on the vessel for Mobile, some thirty miles up the bay. Who they were and exactly how and why they had hopped on the steamer and ventured down to the fort are lost to history. What is known is that after a short stay onboard the steamboat visiting, DeVotie prepared to return to his quarters by walking down the ship's gangway at the wharf. Somehow he made a misstep in the gathering darkness,—one report says he was blinded by light from the boat—and fell into the turbid waters. He apparently struck his head on a rock during the fall which knocked him unconscious, for he made no obvious attempt at escape from what should have been only a temporary but embarrassing bit of danger. A rope was hastily thrown to him but met with no response, and a soldier who witnessed the accident is reported to have jumped into the water in an attempt to save DeVotie. In a matter of moments, though, the strong current had carried his body out of sight. Had he sunk beneath the waves and drowned nearby or had he been carried out to sea? As there were no cries for help, no splashes indicating a frantic struggle to remain afloat, it was impossible to tell. In a grisly discovery which provided devastating confirmation to what all aware of the incident assumed, three days later young DeVotie's body washed ashore near the fort. Save for a tear in the black suit he had been wearing at the time of the fatal accident, his body was eerily undamaged. He was still wearing his red sash, and his pocket watch chain was still tightly wrapped around his wrist, the timepiece dangling at its end.[7]

Fort Morgan as it appears today; the wharf where DeVotie suffered his fateful fall is just out of view along the bay at right. At the top of the photo is the Gulf of Mexico. Courtesy of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism.

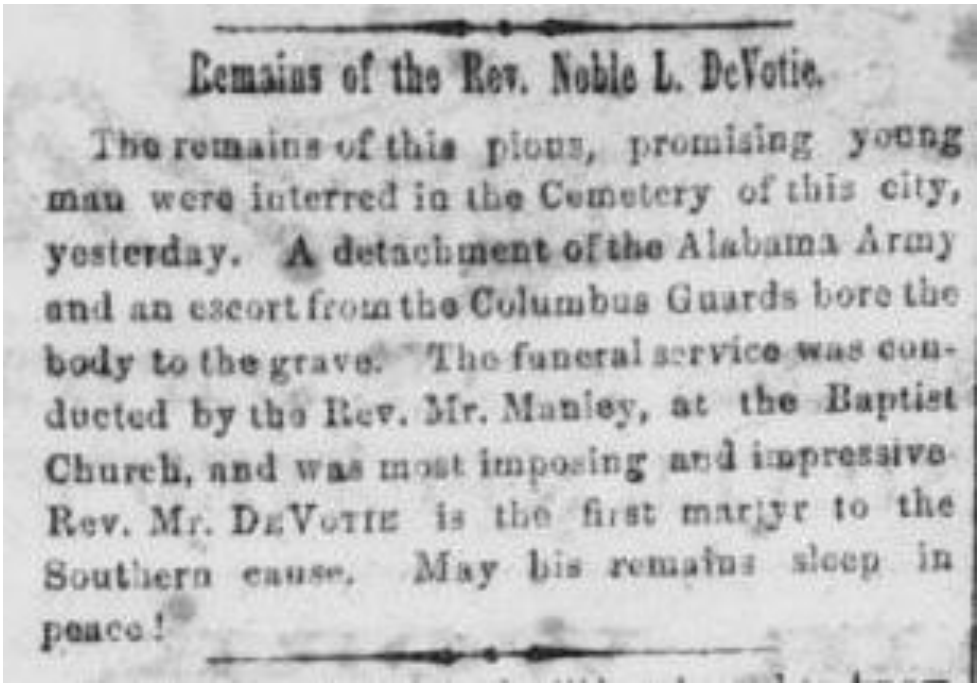
[7] *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia*, 192; Rumbert, "Chaplain Noble Leslie DeVotie"; Hechinger, *True Gentlemen*, 22-23; *New Orleans True Delta*, February 16, 1861; *South Western Baptist*, February 28, 1861. According to at least one contemporary report, the steamer was late in departing for Mobile since some cargo had to be offloaded at Fort Morgan.



Historical marker at Fort Morgan commemorating the life and death of Noble Leslie DeVotie.
www.HMdb.org

A committee of three men from Selma, presumably from the church he pastored, hastily made the trip down to Mobile Point upon learning what had happened, and made the somber return trip to Columbus with the young man's lifeless body in just a few days. A detail of about twenty soldiers from the Selma regiments he served and others stationed at Fort Morgan accompanied them and attended DeVotie's funeral, held on February 20, 1861 at First Baptist Church. The service was conducted by Rev. Isaac T. Tichenor, a noted minister who would go on to become president of Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama (later renamed Auburn University) and featured an eloquent sermon by Dr. Basil Manly, former president of the University of Alabama and the recently-named official chaplain to the Confederate government being formed in Montgomery. In a touching tribute, Manly pronounced DeVotie to be "noble by name and noble by nature." An escort from the Columbus Guards accompanied the funeral procession to the gravesite in Linwood Cemetery.[8]

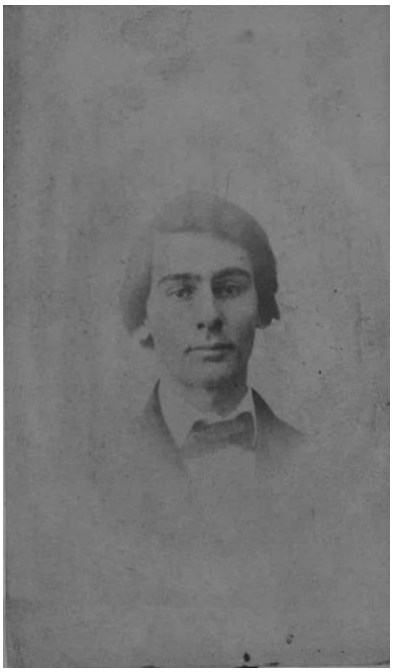
[8] *Columbus Weekly Sun*, February 26, 1861; *Montgomery Confederation*, February 22, 1861; "Our Fraternity," *SAE Record* 3 (January 1883), 140; A. James Fuller, "Basil Manly," http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1182; *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia*, 193; Daniel J. McDonough and Kenneth W. Noe, *Politics and Culture of the Civil War Era: Essays in Honor of Robert W. Johannsen* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 244.



Remains of the Rev. Noble L. DeVotie.

The remains of this pious, promising young man were interred in the Cemetery of this city, yesterday. A detachment of the Alabama Army and an escort from the Columbus Guards bore the body to the grave. The funeral service was conducted by the Rev. Mr. Manley, at the Baptist Church, and was most imposing and impressive. Rev. Mr. DeVotie is the first martyr to the Southern cause. May his remains sleep in peace!

Article on the funeral of Noble Leslie DeVotie, *Columbus Daily Times*, February 21, 1861.



Carte de visite of DeVotie distributed by SAE to members in the late 1800s.
Sigma Alpha Epsilon Digital Legacy, https://sae.historyit.com/

DeVotie's untimely demise had an obvious poignant quality few could fail to miss in the unsettled times, and has been remembered over the years as the first Alabama soldier death in the Civil War, despite the fact the war had in truth not yet begun at the time of his death. At least one Alabama historian, Thomas McAdory Owens, claimed in his 1921 history of the state that DeVotie was not only the

first to fall in the line of duty in the war for the state, but that his casket was draped by the first Confederate flag to be made. That claim is clearly a bit of a stretch, as the first documented Confederate flag was not produced until March of 1861. But that DeVotie became an unlikely symbol of Southern patriotism at least for those communities in which he was known is undeniable. In its coverage of the memorial, the *Columbus Daily Times* referred to DeVotie him as "the first martyr to the Southern cause." And so he has been memorialized among the small circle of those who are aware of what transpired where Mobile Bay meets the sea that gloomy February evening in 1861. While DeVotie did not technically die defending his beloved homeland from invaders in a martial contest, the sudden nature of his demise—a promising young man in the prime of his life who had voluntarily gone to serve his state in a time of crisis—served as a harsh reminder of what might soon be throughout the region. Today DeVotie's story as a footnote in America's great cataclysm lives on, in large part owing to the dedication to his memory of his SAE fraternity brothers who erected the monument immortalizing his short life back in the 1920s.[9]

DeVotie's headstone in Linwood Cemetery, placed in 1929 by the SAE fraternity. Members of the fraternity he helped found have been making pilgrimages to this site for over a century. Findagrave.com.

[9] Thomas M. Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography, Vol. III* (Chicago, J.S. Clarke, 1921), 484-485; *Montgomery Weekly Mail*, March 5, 1861; *Columbus Daily Times*, February 21, 1861; Alston Fitts II, *Selma: A Bicentennial History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2016), 56.

Focus On Columbus State University Archives

Many of you undoubtedly know that preserving the past is a large part of our mission at the CSU Archives and Special Collections. However, many do not realize that we are equally interested in documenting and preserving the present, knowing that one day it too will be considered history. We are not always aware that we are living through history as it is happening and that the moments we experience in the present will one day be of interest to future generations, but it is true in so many cases. Just as we study the past, people fifty years or even a hundred years from now will one day be looking back at our times as history. One example that will certainly be of interest to future generations is the current global pandemic. How did we react to quarantine and mask orders? How did schools handle closures and reopenings? What are the story of essential workers on the front line and stories of those who lost their employment? How were lives changed by the loss of family and friends?

Courtesy of CSU Archives

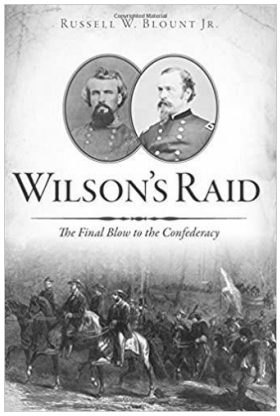
In an effort to document these and other ways COVID-19 has changed everyday life, we have created an online submission form for you to contribute your story. Everyone in the community is invited to participate. Please join to help us show how life has changed. The stories, photos, and other items we collect will allow us and future generations to study and explore these historic times. Submissions will be viewable online and kept permanently as part of the Archive's historical record. Individuals may choose to make their submissions anonymously if they do not wish to be identified.

For more information on how to submit to this project or to explore submissions from your friends and neighbors please visit: digitalarchives.columbusstate.edu/covid19.

David M. Owings
Head of Archives and Special Collections
Columbus State University

Book Reviews

Russell W. Blount, Jr. *Wilson's Raid: The Final Blow to the Confederacy* (Charleston: The History Press, 2018), 176 pp.



In large part because the major Civil War campaigns occurring within Alabama's borders took place near the end of the war, there has long been a tendency to overlook them by historians. We have remained ignorant of some of the most compelling actions of the war as a result. Had the largest cavalry force mounted during the war swept through one of the Confederacy's most important industrial states and into Georgia and wreaked a swath of havoc and destruction for some 200 miles in 1862, for example, I would think we might remember as something more than a footnote in the story of the conflict. Yet that is exactly what happened in the spring of 1865 in Alabama in the form of a devastating raid by Gen. James H. Wilson, and that is exactly how we have unfortunately often remembered the affair.

Wilson's Raid deserves better, for it involves an incredible story and rendered a final, crippling blow to the Confederacy's ability to make war with unprecedented speed and precision and stands as a seminal event in Columbus history. In the course of just over two weeks, Wilson cut through the heart of northern and central Alabama, beginning at the banks of the Tennessee River and exiting the state at the Chattahoochee at Columbus. Along the way he and his men defeated two armies, rendered useless numerous iron-making facilities, captured and destroyed two of the South's largest military-industrial complexes, secured the surrender of the first capital of the Confederacy, dismantled a state university, and handed Nathan Bedford Forrest one of his very few whippings. In the days after the fighting concluded, Wilson's men would go on to become involved in the capture of Confederate president Jefferson Davis. To say the raid was eventful and is worthy of remembrance is an understatement.

Russell Blount's account of the affair is a rollicking tale, providing an overview of military operations but at the same time allowing space to incorporate civilian perspectives in what promises to be an essential introduction to the topic. He follows Wilson's path and lays out his strategy, providing us with some of the best short summaries of the fighting that occurred at places such as Selma and Columbus that one is likely to read and bringing the communities touched by the campaign to life. These accounts, along with his use of accounts of the raid from a variety of civilians, shows a command of the available resources on the topic. His prose is smooth, his pace just right, and the key players in the story he tells emerge as real people. *Wilson's Raid* is a quick read but one that thoroughly treats it subject. If you have an interest in local Civil War history, this book is definitely worth your time.

Mike Bunn
Editor, *Muscogiana*

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The Muscogee Genealogical Society is dedicated to the preservation of the history of the Columbus/Original Muscogee County area and its people, as well as the education of individuals in the techniques of discovering their own heritage.

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