MUSCOGIANA

FALL 2021

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 2

MUSCOGIANA
Journal of the Muscogee Genealogical Society

Submission of Material for Publication

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.

Book Reviews

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.

Sponsors

We invite and encourage businesses and individuals to sponsor the publication of *Muscogiana*. The suggested rates are as follows:

¼ page $25.00 ½ page $50.00 Whole page $100.00

Please direct all correspondence concerning *Muscogiana* to:

MUSCOGEE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
P. O. Box 761
Columbus, Georgia 31902

www.muscogeegenealogy.com

On the cover: Helen Russell (later Brooks), on the left, born 1905, and her sister Annie Lou Russell (later Reilly) born 1899, ca. 1910 at their home, 1606 Second Avenue, in Columbus. Courtesy of the Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.

MUSCOGIANA

Journal of the Muscogee Genealogical Society

VOLUME 32 FALL 2021 NUMBER 2

CONTENTS

In Memorium

Doris M. Halouska, 1937 - 2021
Daniel B. Olds, 1930 - 2021

Published by the Muscogee Genealogical Society

ISSN 1042-3419

From the Editor

What were things really like in the past? Attempting to answer that basic question has been at the heart of the historian's craft from the beginning of the profession. It has certainly been a core reason for the interest in learning about the past among readers of historical publications from time immemorial, and is without doubt one of the many reasons those of you opening the pages of this issue of *Muscogiana* continue to enjoy it as an important benefit of your membership in the Society. If, like me, you are intrigued by research into discovering the truth about our rich heritage here in the Columbus area, then I trust you will enjoy reading this issue as much as I enjoyed helping put it together.

While they have very different focuses, the three pieces we offer here are linked by their investigation into the realities of their respective topics using first-hand accounts and in-depth research. Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., brings us our lead article, an edited transcription of an interview he conducted with family members back in 1977. The subject is holiday traditions, but the article includes information on a variety of subjects related to living in the Columbus era in the early twentieth century. I believe readers will find it as enlightening as nostalgic.

Next up is frequent contributor Daniel H. Bellware with an intriguing investigation into one of this area's most enduring legends—the story of the naming of Lover's Leap. Most people who have read about Columbus's past have some familiarity with the legend. Here Bellware does a bit of sleuthing to get to the bottom of this captivating story, along the way shedding light on several aspects of the city's early years as well as its historical memory.

Our third feature article is contributed by Columbus State University student Samuel Owen. His piece focuses on the story of Phenix City in the 1950s, a source of endless fascination and discussion for those of us interested in regional history. Owen offers a counter approach to the standard narrative of "Sin City," however, providing evidence that the notoriety of the town during the era in which vice operations proliferated might be, at least in part, more a media construct than a day-to-day reality.

Following the articles, Callie McGinnis brings us a special memorial for longtime Society supporter Dan Olds, a veteran geneaologist whose name will no doubt be familiar to many readers of this journal. We feature our standard sections on what is happening at the Columbus State University Archives and a book review to wrap up this issue.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the journal, and I encourage you to contact me at any time if you have something you would like to offer for publication.

Mike Bunn, Editor
jamesmichaelbunn@gmail.com

Growing up in Columbus, Georgia, in the Early 1900s: Some Observations, Especially About How Holidays Were Celebrated

By

Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.

Helen Russell (later Brooks), on the left, born 1905, and her sister Annie Lou Russell (later Reilly) born 1899, ca. 1910 at their home, 1606 Second Avenue, in Columbus
Courtesy of the author

This article is based on a joint interview I conducted on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1977, at my parents' home in Columbus, Georgia. The subject of the interview was "How did you celebrate holidays in Columbus in your youth?" It came about because my maternal grandmother, Mrs. Helen Russell Brooks, was there, as was my cousin's grandmother Mrs. Lula Belle Cannon Holmes. Certain parts of the original interview have been edited for clarity.

Mrs. Brooks (1905-1993) grew up in the 1600 block of Second Avenue, specifically at numbers 1606 and then 1613. She was the daughter of Joseph C Russell (Sr.), and Jennie Hudson Russell. Her father ran a roofing company, with offices in the Odd Fellows' Hall at 1034 First Avenue. He often added on to their house and after 1912 they moved across the street to 1613. Helen lived at home until she eloped at age 16 in 1921 and married my grandfather, Joseph H. Brooks III. My mother, Mrs. Louise Brooks Thomas, was their only child.

Mrs. Lula Belle Cannon Holmes (1893-1991) lived in the Rose Hill section of Columbus, the only child of George W. Cannon and Florence Miller Cannon. Her father was a policeman. Their address was 2320 Hamilton Avenue. She lived there with her parents until her marriage on December 18, 1918 to J. Cyrus Holmes. They had three children, one of them, Dorothy "Dot" Holmes Thomas (1924-2012) was married to my uncle, Milton Reid Thomas (Sr.). It was due to this connection that she happened to be at my parents' house for Thanksgiving.

At the time, I was working for the Historic Preservation Section (later Division) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and was researching the Lapham-Patterson House in Thomasville, Georgia, in order to write and later publish a research report (book) on said state property which was open to the public as a State Historic Site. I had interviewed a lady in Savannah, Mrs. Alice Patterson Scarborough Stevens (1889-1988), who had grown up in the house. I specifically asked her about holidays, so that the site superintendent could use that information when decorating the house for various times of the year, but mainly Christmas. That lead me to asking my Grandmother and Mrs. Holmes some of the same questions, mainly about holidays, since neither one of their childhood homes was still extant or in the family.

During the interview, my grandmother talks the most, but the ladies who were over a decade different in age, do veer off holidays to talk about other subjects, such as dating, the county fair, the circus, and a few other topics. Of course, it is great to have my grandmother on tape. She was not shy around a microphone. But as you will read, Mrs. Holmes reveals a few unusual things from her youth as well. I hope you learn something about early Columbus from this.

Many thanks to Claudia Stucke of Decatur, Georgia, who transcribed this interview in early 2021. She added many of the annotations in italics. Before her retirement she was an editor (magazines, books, academic publications), and then taught high school English. She is an archives volunteer with the DeKalb History Center in Decatur, Georgia.

Key:

KHT: Me (Kenneth H. Thomas. Jr.)

HRB: Helen Russell Brooks

LBH: Lula Belle Holmes

JHB: Joseph H. Brooks

Lula Belle Cannon, age 15, c. 1908 (later Mrs. J. Cyrus Holmes)
Courtesy of M. Reid Thomas, Jr.

KEN THOMAS: It is now Thursday, November 24, 1977, Thanksgiving Day. We have just had Thanksgiving dinner and we have discussed briefly what foodstuffs were not used or cooked anymore. And Granny will now give us a brief description of—[*to Helen Russell Brooks*] What was that, sweet potato pudding?

HELEN RUSSELL BROOKS: Yes, it was sweet potato pudding, and you grate sweet potatoes—you have to cook it in an old-fashioned iron skillet in the oven in a lot of butter. Well, it just has a different taste than anything you've ever tasted. [*to Lula Belle Holmes*] It has a gritty taste, don't it?

LULA BELLE HOLMES: Oh, it's delicious.

KHT: But how would you serve it? What would you—

HRB: You just serve it—you cut it—

HRB: —like a lemon pie or something.

KHT: Was it like pie?

HRB: You usually cut it—it comes out of a round skillet. You just cut it—

KHT: Like pie pieces.

HRB: —and you'd cut it—you'd use—[*Inaudible as she and KHT speak simultaneously*]

KHT: But it's not like sweet potato pie, is it?

HRB: No—

LBH: No, but that's good, too.

KHT: **Christmas**, how did y'all decorate for Christmas?
HRB: Well, mostly with greens, because they didn't have a lot of artificial things. But we had balls of all kind[s], when I was little. I'm not that ancient.
KHT: I know, but what were they made out of?
HRB: The balls were made out of that stuff that'd break, just like the ones that they have now.
LBH: Yeah, great big [*inaudible*] and I tell you, my mother always—they had picture moldings. And while—I've seen Mama get up on a ladder and put smilax all around, haven't you? Just like they decorated for a wedding?...
JHB: What is smilax?
HRB: A vine with little white flowers.
KHT: Granny, did y'all have a main Christmas tree?
HRB: Yeah, we always had a Christmas tree, but we'd go out in the woods and get it.
KHT: So what type of tree? You have a cedar tree?
LBH: Yeah, cedars mostly.
HRB: Cedars were beautiful and thick.
KHT: What room in y'all's house?
HRB: Well, we always had ours—our main room that we sat in all the time was the dining room. So our Christmas tree—everything Christmas was in the dining room, because we'd have a fire there…
KHT: So how would you have decorated this cedar tree?
HRB: We put balls—
LBH: Tinsel. Put balls and tinsels.
HRB: —and popcorn.
KHT: What about cranberries?
LBH: Yeah, we strung that [*inaudible*].
HRB: We had those—you know, that silver stuff. What was that?
LBH: Tinsels.
HRB: Tinsel. It was just thick. You'd string that stuff all around.
KHT: What about lights?
HRB: You didn't have lights. [*LBH inaudible in background*.] Had those candles you pinch on there. But Papa [Her father, J. C. Russell] never would let us have those, because he was afraid of fire.
KHT: That's what I've heard a lot of people say. I've been interviewing a lady in Savannah who's eighty-seven, and she's been telling me about what it was like when she was growing up. And she'd be like Aunt Mae's age, see. [HRB's oldest sibling, born in 1890.] And I was just trying to—that was an interesting comparison, because she'd still be growing up in the same period of time

that y'all are talking about. She said her father wouldn't allow them to use any kind of lighting on their tree.

HRB: Well, you could get those things that pinch on to set the candle in.

KHT: It'd be a candle you lit.

HRB: Yeah, it'd be a little candle.

KHT: But it wouldn't be an electric candle, it was candlewax.

HRB: No, and when the tree began to dry out, it would be so likely to have a fire. But Papa never would let us use those. We'd have candles on the tables and things like that, but we never did have candles on the tree.

KHT: What about wreaths? Did y'all put a wreath in the windows?

HRB: Yeah. Always those bells that folded up.

LBH: Yeah, we used to have those old—hang them in the halls with the mistletoe under them.

HRB: Yeah, it was bells that you'd fold them up and keep them. But when you opened them up, it opened up like a fan yonder, only they went around like that and formed a bell. And you twisted the little things there and held them together.[1]

KHT: They had those when y'all were growing up?

HRB: Yeah. They still do, some places.

LBH: That mistletoe was—we always hung that.

HRB: Yeah, everybody had mistletoe because a boy would get you under there and kiss you. That was one of the main games.

KHT: Did y'all have—did y'all wrap packages?

HRB: Yeah, but mostly in white tissue paper.

LBH: Yes, we didn't have any fancy paper at all.

HRB: We didn't have fancy paper. But white tissue paper and red string, wasn't it?

LBH: Mm-hm. Red or green.

HRB: Or silver. You remember that silver?

LBH: Cord. Silver cord, used to be…

KHT: Well, did y'all have a dinner, a Christmas dinner?

HRB: Great day. The table would break down, we'd have so much food on it.

LBH: At Christmas they didn't think one cake was anything. They'd be about six or eight cakes.

HRB: Mama never stopped under twenty. Never. We had such a big family, Mama had so many kinfolks to come see us. And she didn't no more use a recipe than nothing in the world, getting [*inaudible*] all come out perfect.

KHT: Did people come over to eat—for dinner—or just come to visit?

[1] Honeycomb-layered paper that folded out into a three-dimensional decoration such as a bell, a wreath, or other object.

LBH: Oh, they'd drop in. People'd drop in.

HRB: It was a continuous eating. Everybody wanted to serve you something. And Papa, when he'd go out to get fruit, he was the biggest nut about those things I ever saw. He'd buy a bunch of bananas. You remember how many bunches they used to hang on? He'd buy a bunch of bananas.

LBH: And a box of oranges.

HRB: And a whole crate. You know there's—it would be two sides, and we'd make— [*Inaudible*]. And he'd buy a whole crate of apples and a whole crate of grapes. And one time—I'll never forget the nearest I ever come to getting a real bad whipping—I went up to this friend's house, and I asked her mama where she was, and her mama says, "She's gone to the Salvation Army Christmas tree." Well, I never had been to no Salvation Army Christmas tree, I didn't know what it was all about. So I go over there to find Fay. And so they lined me up with the rest of those children, you know, and they gave me a little bathtub, and they had the cutest little doll in there, I'll never forget it as long as I live. And they gave me a big old sack of fruit; I could hardly carry it, big as I was. And I go down the street with this stuff, you know, and got down there where Papa could see me. He said, "Where did you get that?"

And I said, "Isn't this the cutest thing you ever saw in your life, Papa?" I said, "They gave it to me out there at the Christmas tree."

"Young lady, where did you get that?"

And I said, "Up there at the Christmas tree."

"What Christmas tree?"

I said, "Salvation Army Christmas tree."

"You turn right around!" And he went right back of me, and he marched me—he wouldn't even help me carry that fruit. He made me carry that big old sack of fruit all the way back up there. And he said, "All the food you've got at home, to come up here and take something for underprivileged children!" You see, they were way up there on Second Avenue, and we was down further. And boy, did I—I wanted that little doll and that bathtub worse than anything that I got during Christmas, now, that's the truth.[2]

KHT: What about, like, New Year's?

LBH: Ooh, I'll tell you what else was [*inaudible*].

LBH: Christmas—Egg nog Christmas morning.

KHT: Christmas morning? Y'all had egg nog?

LBH: Yeah, we had it in the morning. Have you ever had it in the morning?

HRB: We—we had—I don't remember too much egg nog.

[2] In 1912 the Salvation Army office was at 100½ Eleventh Street.

LBH: Well, we had it. Tell you why I remember it so much, Mr. Hugh Baird lived across the street from us, and his wife was a member of the WCTU [Women's Christian Temperance Union]. [*HRB laughs*.] And Mama never would join. And we weren't drinking people, but we did take a little wine. And we had this egg nog, and so Mama could just make the best, with all this whipped cream and everything and all. And he would call up there and say, "Florence [LBH's mother], are you going to have any egg nog this Christmas?" And she says, "Yes."[3] And he says, "Well, put my name in the pot." And she says, "Well, how about [*wife's name inaudible*]? Does she mind you coming over here to get it?" And he used to come over and have egg nog with us.

HRB: What we used to do more than anything else was Uncle Doc used to sell fireworks down in front of his place of business and Frank [Russell] always ran the stand out there, you know. And whatever they ended up with, Uncle Doc would let us take it home.[4]

KHT: You mean, what wasn't sold?

HRB: And there'd be barrels of it, and it was Roman candles and firecrackers—oh, those great big old firecrackers that long.

LBH: Skyrockets.

KHT: It was legal to sell this then, though.

HRB: Yeah, it was legal. And they'd get out there and way in the night, honey, we were shooting at everybody. And it was beautiful.

LBH: Try to go to sleep--"Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow!"

KHT: And this was for New Year's, you mean?

HRB: No, this was on—Christmas night, and sometimes we would wait and [*inaudible as she and LBH speak simultaneously*]…

KHT: What about **New Year's?** Did y'all do anything at New Year's?

HRB: Oh, everybody sat up to hear the whistles, and all the mill whistles blew, and the streetcars would ring the bells, and the trains would blow the whistles, and they'd blow that big old whistle out there at the [railroad yard] roundhouse, you know?[5]

KHT: Did people normally take the day off?

HRB: Oh, everybody seemed to be staying off a long time, didn't they? I never did know when anybody went back to work, except when school started back. We had two weeks off school. Out of school…

KHT: You mean two weeks off? Just like we do now.

---

[3] Hugh Baird's wife was Leigh Baird. They lived at 2323 Hamilton Avenue.

[4] "Uncle Doc" is Brooks' brother in law, Z.A. "Doc" Brooks. He married her older sister Mae. His business was located at 1028-1030 Broad Street. Frank Russell, born about 1904, was her brother.

[5] The whistles were from the nearby mills. Most mills and factories announced starting and closing times and shifts with whistles.

HRB: Well, we had two weeks, and we really made hay out of them.
KHT: Well, let's move into **Valentine's.** What did y'all do for Valentine's? Anything y'all—you know, Valentine's is a very old tradition.
HRB: Well, mostly, if you sent anybody—they call them "funny Valentines" now, but we called them comics.
KHT: Comics.
HRB: And if anybody had something that you wanted to tell them about and didn't want them to know who you were, that's the way you had of telling them.
KHT: Really like a sort of hidden message? What's an example of something you would have sent somebody? Just make up an example.
HRB: If you thought an old maid flirted, you know? Something like that. You'd send a real ugly one, an old maid.
KHT: Would you buy them?
HRB: Yeah, you'd buy them. They were [*inaudible*].
LBH: You could get six for a nickel.
HRB: You could get them for anybody—a banker, a stingy man, or anything—a preacher.
KHT: Would they be Valentines? They'd be humorous.
HRB: No, they wouldn't be Valentines.
KHT: They'd just be cards. [*LBH makes inaudible comment in background*.]
HRB: No, they'd just be old, cheap paper, like newspaper. Only they were—
KHT: But you'd buy them. And then you'd send them.
HRB: You could buy about twelve for a nickel—
KHT: But you could buy them any time during the year?
HRB: No, just at Valentine's. And then—
LBH: If somebody didn't like you, you might get a comic Valentine. [*Continues, inaudibly*]
HRB: Somebody you were kind of in love with, now, you'd get them something with lace on it.
LBH: Fancy ones, you know. I got two or three—I found a little scrapbook of mine.
LBH: I had a little boyfriend in [Hurtsboro, Alabama], and his name was Nimrod Tucker. [*HRB laughs*.] So we went down there, my cousin and myself, to visit Aunt [*inaudible—could be "Jule"*?] Hayes. And we were down there several days, and Nimrod'd come every day to play games with us. We'd sit on the floor and play—what you call it, jack stones? [*KHT, HRB, and LBH all speak at once to affirm that Nimrod was LBH's boyfriend, not cousin.*]
LBH: I was just a little girl in grammar school, though. So the other day when I was looking through that, I found this card that he sent me, and it had on there, it had a—what you call it, a glass, cocktail glass there. And it had on there, "Love is a cherry in the cocktail of happiness."

KHT: Oh, really? That's cute…[6]

KHT: Well, now, on Valentine's, did you actually mail things to people?

HRB: No, you didn't mail them. You'd go and—you'd go up to the door and—

KHT: Even if it was somebody you didn't like?

HRB: —and stick it under the door and run like heck and throw a rock up there if they didn't come and get it.

KHT: To let them know that it was there.

HRB: Let them know, yeah.

KHT: But you didn't actually put a stamp on it and mail it?

HRB: No, you didn't put no stamp on it. Shoot, we didn't waste money like that…. We sure didn't. [*Inaudible*] take a card anywhere, we didn't send them, did we?

LBH: No.

KHT: Now, these Valentines--did y'all do anything else on Valentine's Day, like any kind of party?

HRB: Well, we had parties sometimes. They'd have hot chocolate, and—

HRB: And we'd have Valentine boxes and see how many people—how many Valentines did you get, and it always made me feel bad, didn't it?

LBH: Well, every [schoolroom] had—their teacher let them have a Valentine card, and they'd—

KHT: At school, you mean?

LBH: —bring Valentines for the different children in the room.

HRB: And they always made you feel bad, because one little old curly-headed girl would get most of them. [*LBH laughs*.]

KHT: So curly hair was considered the—

HRB: Long, blond curls would just get those boys, wouldn't it?

LBH: Mm-hm. Yes, they were all [*inaudible—could be "weak"?*].

KHT: Now, what about **April Fool's Day?** Did y'all do anything—?

HRB: Yep, we always played pranks, just like they do now. We played pranks, we thought of something—

KHT: See, I was surprised that people did anything.

LBH: Yes, we'd tell the girls their petticoat was showing and all that kind of stuff. [*Both ladies laugh*.]

HRB: Anything! Anything [*inaudible*] passed off on April Fool's.

LBH: And when they'd begin to look, to see, why, we'd say, "April Fool!" [*Laughs*]

HRB: We just had a good time. Just mischievous kids.

---

[6] Nimrod died in a tragic accident at home by electrocution, an incident Holmes remembered clearly in the interview. See "Obituary of Nimrod Tucker," *Union Springs Herald*, 23 Septempter 1926. He was born, lived and died in Hurtsboro, Alabama, which is where she must have been visiting when she met him.

LBH: We had more fun with such a little bit.

HRB: We didn't have much… You could go to the picture show then for such a little.

KHT: What did you go—what did it cost?

LBH: Ten cents, we could go.

HRB: Ten cents. And we went to the picture show every time it changed, but—

KHT: Would y'all go on a school day or weekend?

LBH: Oh, we'd go any afternoon.

HRB: Could go any time in the afternoon, but I didn't live so far that we couldn't walk.

LBH: I didn't, either. We lived on, you know, Twenty-Third Street there, right around the theater…[7]

LBH: Well, I used to go downtown, too. We could take the streetcar and go down there. And I'd have a quarter. Occasionally I'd have a quarter, and…

HRB: Do you remember those open streetcars they had?

LBH: Oh, yes.

HRB: And we could go to the ball game?

LBH: I'll never forget the first date I had. I was invited to—I mean, off of Rose Hill—I was invited to a party by Pauline [*inaudible—sounds like "Chit" or "Shipp"?*]. She used to be a friend of mine, but they'd moved downtown down near the courthouse. And so she called me up and invited me, and she said, "Some of the boys will call you." And so I never had had a date to go off like that, and I told Mama, I said, "Will it be all right if I make a date if somebody calls me to go to the party?" And Mama said, "Yes, if he's a nice little boy." [*She and KHT laugh*.] And so you know who it was? Roscoe Johnson.

HRB: Aw!

LBH: And he carried me to the thing. And he had his hair—well, the boys used to wear their hair long in pompadours, you know.

HRB: Slicked back.

LBH: —yeah, slicked back, but in a—

HRB: —Pompadour.

LBH: Pompadour. And, of course, he didn't ask me where I wanted to sit, these young'uns, so he had put me up front behind the motor—[*laughs*] and when we got to the party, I wish you could have seen how he looked like a [*wreck*], with his hair just blowing everywhere. So the first thing he had to do was comb his hair when we got there. It was real funny.

HRB: Lula Belle, do you remember when we used to ride around [*inaudible*] in the park?

LBH: Uh-huh.

[7] Holmes lived at 2320 Hamilton Avenue in Rose Hill.

HRB: Now, that was the most fun in—when they did away with that park, they did away with the most important thing Columbus's ever had. They ought to still have that right there, right now.[8]

LBH: And those boat rides we used to have.

KHT: You talking about Lake Bottom?

HRB: Yeah, they ought to have that park there right now.

LBH: It sure was something that you didn't find everywhere.

HRB: No, and not only that, it would have been—just think how bad it would have been…

KHT: Well, what did y'all do at **Easter time?**

LBH: Go out to Wildwood Park and dress up.

HRB: Oh, yeah, lace. Lace, blue ribbons, we'd catch the streetcar, we'd go out to Wildwood Park, and they would have these Easter egg hunts on those islands, you know?

HRB: And they'd turn us all a-loose to go there…

HRB: I never did find—

LBH: [*laughing*]: I never did, either.

HRB: Some of them would come out of there with the golden egg, got the prize.

KHT: Well, how old were you when you did all this?

HRB: Well, just a little-bitty thing. I was just about four or five years old. [*ca. 1910 she was 5*.]

LBH: I was older than that, but—

KHT: You remember that.

LBH: —I was nine or ten years old, reckon, something like that. I don't [*inaudible*] [*ca. 1903*]…

KHT: Did they have—was there such a thing as the Easter Bunny?... [*Mechanical malfunction*]

HRB: We didn't have old rabbits.

HRB: We had—yeah, a rabbit with a carrot in his mouth…

LBH: But we didn't carry on as big as they do now.

HRB: We didn't have all those—we had Easter egg hunts. And, you know, you remember up there on North Highlands in those woods, how they used to have—it was done by the whole city. Why was that [*inaudible*]?[9]

LBH: I don't know about that…

HRB: It wasn't no special church or nothing. It was by the whole city.

KHT: The city had an Easter egg hunt?

HRB: It was—the one at the park was done by the whole city.

KHT: Wildwood Park, you mean.

---

[8] Wildwood Park existed until about 1924 when it was drained and the new Columbus High School built on Cherokee Avenue. The drained area then became known as Lake Bottom.

[9] North Highlands Park was a recreation area that was replaced about 1919 by the Bibb Mill expansion and Bibb City.

HRB: Mm-hm…

HRB: And it wasn't overcrowded or anything, and it was a nice bunch of people. It wasn't no riffraff or anything like that.

KHT: Now, what you had said about **birthdays.** What did you say about birthdays? Was it—you said when you were nine years old [*August 1914*], you had the only birthday party in which you invited friends and all. And you invited—and Mrs. Holmes said that when she was seven [*July 1900*], you had the only party that you ever had. And you invited all the people you knew your age. Which is sort of surprising when you said that on other birthdays you just had family,

LBH: Well, maybe just have a friend to spend the day with you.

KHT: A special type of thing.

HRB: Spend the night or something like that.

LBH: A special friend or something would come…

KHT: [*Addressing his grandfather, JHB*] Your mama and her twin sister's' joint birthday, then? [*JHB—his mother Sallie Snellings Brooks—had a twin sister, Carrie Snellings Tolbert*.]

HRB: One year one would have it, and the next year the other one would have it.

KHT: At the same place, though?...

JHB: Most of the time, they'd have it at out at Emmaus Church.[10]

KHT: [To JHB] This would be the joint birthday party for your mama?

JHB: They'd go to one another's house every year…

KHT: So that'd be in September, right, your mama's birthday was early September. Well, now, you were saying about coming—I think we got the party in there before [*inaudible*] at Wildwood Park and all. The birthday thing was what was important to me, because—see, this gives me things that I can ask other people about what they did, because it's helping me understand what went on in the early twentieth century, as y'all were growing up and Mrs. Alice Patterson Stevens, born June 1889, was growing up, the lady I've been interviewing. Now, let's see. What other—you said on your parents' birthdays, what did y'all—did y'all do anything special for your parents?

HRB: No.

LBH: We didn't have any money to spend on gifts…

KHT: What did they do for each other? Did your parents ever go out? Did they ever do anything like that in the old days?

HRB: No, they stayed home with the children.

[10] Emmaus Church was near the Johnson-Snellings family homestead on Buena Vista Road, now within Fort Benning, where the Snellings twins' mother lived until her death in 1940.

LBH: They looked after the children. We didn't have any babysitters or anything like that.

HRB: They stayed at home with the kids…

KHT: Well, like on weekends and all. They never—?

HRB: No, everybody—

LBH: —We went to church.

HRB: That was it.

LBH: That was the main day.

KHT: But your folks never went off by themselves anywhere and left y'all there?

LBH: Oh, no.

HRB: I don't remember my mama and daddy ever going off and leaving us…

KHT: How about your folks, Papa? Did they ever go off?..

JHB: No, she never went off as a couple. [*Inaudible*] she'd go out there with us sometimes…

KHT: Y'all went along, though, didn't you?

JHB: All-day dinner on the ground and singing [*at the church*.]

LBH: All-day dinner and singing on the ground.[11]

LBH: Oh, yeah, I used to go to singing on the ground.

HRB: Oh, yeah.

KHT: They called them "singing on the ground"?

HRB: They called them all-day singing and dinner on the ground, but Papa put [*inaudible*] all-day dinner. He meant it was all-day eating.

KHT: That's probably what it looked like, an all-day dinner.

LBH: We used to have the most fun, and after dinner, why, of course, they'd sing. But a little while, they would kind of have recreation before that. I never will forget, I was up there one time, and two or three of the boys from Columbus was—came up there. They had motorcycles, and I know I never had ridden on a motorcycle, and I wouldn't have had my mother to have known it [*laughs*]. But anyway, one of the boys asked me to ride on the motorcycle with him, and we rode up and down Fortson Road there. And you know who I saw was Frank David. He happened to come up there, and I said, "Frank, if you ever you ever tell this, I'll deny it. You better not ever tell this" [*laughs*]. We had lots of fun. And another time that I really enjoyed was circus day.

KHT: **Circus day?**

HRB: Yeah, boy!

LBH: And that was something. They had the parade on the street, you know.[12]

[11] When "all-day singing and dinner on the grounds" was held, the church community would gather for hymn-singing, break for a big picnic on the church grounds, and return to the sanctuary afterward for more singing.

KHT: Downtown.

HRB: Now, Kenny, that was something. People lined the streets.

LBH: Oh, you never have seen as many people.

KHT: Did all the animals come out?

LBH: Oh, yes.

HRB: Yeah! The animals and the—

LBH: Those wagons.

HRB: The steam piano [*calliope*] ended it up, you know. They ended up with that steam piano playing.

LBH: It was funny—

HRB: But, you know, Lula Belle, that was one thing Papa did. He never did want us to go to the fair. He was scared to death of us getting killed on one of those old rides. But he saw to it that every one of us went to the circus. But we went to the circus, and we really lined up for that circus. And that—the Ringling Brothers—

LBH: Oh, yeah, Barnum and Bailey. It was wonderful. But, I tell you, on circus day, what we really did. Mr. Boyce had a five-and-ten-cent store—

HRB: Yes, boy.

LBH: —on Broad Street. And he had—he sold ice cream cakes, two for a nickel. They was the most delicious things. He'd make them for weddings and all that kind of stuff. And we would go down there and carry lunch, the Boyces and us—Papa, Mama, and myself. But Papa, you know, was a policeman, and so he would go down to the fairground—he'd always manage to get down there, at the gates, you know [*laughs*].[13]

KHT: And y'all got in, then?

LBH: And we all got passed in free [*laughs*]. And then, afterwards, the circus, why, then, after we stayed for the dog-and-pony show, you know, they had that afterwards, then we would ride the animals. We'd ride the elephants—

KHT: You got to ride the elephants?

HRB: Did you really?

LBH: Rode the elephants and the camels, because Daddy was a policeman, I reckon.

HRB: For goodness sake!

LBH: And we used to have the time of our lives. That was really fun.

KHT: So you actually rode an elephant?

---

[12] The circus performers and the animals, especially the elephants, would get off the train and parade down Broad Street [*Broadway*] to the area where the circus would set up.

[13] Boyce Brothers and Company, 1214 Broad Street, is listed as a 5 and 10 cent store in the 1916 City Directory. The Frank B. Boyce family lived at 2830 Hamilton Avenue. near LBH's parents.

LBH: Yeah.

HRB: And the camel?

LBH: Oh, they'd put about six children up there. We'd hold each other, and ride.

KHT: Uh-huh. That's [*inaudible—could be "fantastic"?*]

LBH: It was fun.

KHT: But you never went to the fair, Granny, when you were growing up?

HRB: Oh, I went to the fair, but Papa wouldn't—

LBH: Let you ride.

HRB: He wouldn't—

KHT: —Condone?

HRB: Well, he just didn't go all out for the fair like he did for the circus. But he went all out for the circus. We had to see that.

KHT: Did he go with y'all to the circus?

HRB: No, he just had somebody with us, or else he was with us. But as she said, we saw the dog-and-pony show and everything afterwards.

KHT: Well, I don't [*inaudible*] the dog-and-pony show, that's a separate thing from the circus?

HRB: Yeah, that was always the little ponies and was more or less a child's attraction. But it was little trained ponies. But anyway, he'd let us go to the fair, but it took a lot of nagging to get him [*inaudible*].

LBH: You know, I've never really—what you call it?—the Ferris wheel yet?

KHT: Really?

HRB: Well, you know—

LBH: I just couldn't stand it.

HRB: —you know what I did one time? I had never seen a doughnut—

KHT: A doughnut?

HRB: —until I saw it at the fair. Now, Mama had made them, but hers didn't have holes in them. Hers was just [*inaudible—sounds like "You know, hulls."*] And the first time I saw a doughnut, I took every bit of my money, and I ate every bit of it in doughnuts. And I was so sick! Until I got grown, I never wanted another doughnut. [*Background laughter*]

KHT: Doughnut. Were these sweet doughnuts or just [*inaudible*].

HRB: Yeah, they were sweet doughnuts. They were greasy, too. But that was the first time, you know, we used to didn't to see those machines turning out those doughnuts. And they had one at the fair, the first one I ever saw that turned out those doughnuts. And, boy, they were good! And every time I'd pass that thing, I'd get me some more doughnuts. And I didn't ride a thing. Didn't do a thing but spend my money on doughnuts.

KHT: Well, did they ever have **any holidays** when y'all were growing up or special days?

HRB: Every one. We celebrated Lincoln's birthday, we celebrated Washington's Birthday, and we celebrated anybody that had a birthday, didn't we?
KHT: What I mean is, did they do anything that they don't do now?
HRB: They don't have Lincoln's and Washington's Birthday now.
HRB: They didn't have Martin Luther King's [Birthday Celebration], [then].
LBH: No, we didn't have Martin Luther King.
KHT: What did y'all do on Lincoln's birthday? Y'all didn't do anything special.
HRB: Just didn't go to school.
KHT: Y'all got off from school?
HRB: Yeah. School closed.
KHT: Even in the South?
HRB: School closed for Washington's birthday [Feb. 22] and Lincoln's birthday [Feb. 12] and what else was it? We didn't have Easter vacation, like they do now.
LBH: No, no spring vacation.
HRB: But we had two weeks at Christmas, and then we started [*stopped*?] by June the first and then go back to school in September. And that was—and we had Thanksgiving. And other than that, we didn't have no Halloween or nothing like that. We didn't have Halloween carnivals, and we didn't go trick-or-treating. There wasn't no such thing as—
KHT: What did y'all do at **Halloween**, then?
LBH: We used to dress up—
HRB: And scare each other.
LBH: —and go to houses and knock on the door, and they'd come to the door, and we'd be wrapped in sheets with a mask on.
HRB: We didn't ask nobody for nothing.
KHT: You'd just scare them all?
LBH: Yeah, uh-huh.
HRB: We more or less scared each other. It would be gangs together, and you'd meet the other gang, and you didn't know who was under the sheet, whether they going to kill you or not [*laughs*].
JHB: [*Inaudible*] one of them things. We put the wagon up on top of a shed.
KHT: Really?
JHB: [*Inaudible*] in the world to get it down.
KHT: Now, was that for Halloween?
HRB: How'd you get it up there?
JHB: Just a bunch of men, all, two or three'd get to each wheel, pick it up, and push it over…

KHT: They'd all leave. Did y'all ever have any games on Halloween or any kind of get-togethers or—

HRB: Nah.

HRB: I've gone to what they call a costume party. It wasn't my gang. It was Annie Lou's. I used to have to go everywhere Annie Lou went, because Mama had to go chaperone. Papa wouldn't let Annie Lou go off out of sight without Mama with her. And Mama'd take me along. And I remember going to different ones and having that hot chocolate in those chocolate cups, you know? How they used to have those little chocolate cups? I used to think that was more fun. And they'd duck for apples for all that sort of stuff. And that bunch had a good time. [14]

KHT: How come you didn't have those?

HRB: Because when I came along, my parents were older. And they didn't have that much patience, and they had grown children that was worrying them to death. And they just didn't have that much time for me.[15]

LBH: Did y'all ever have surprise parties on Friday night?

KHT: Tell us about that.

LBH: Well, on Friday night—every Friday night when I was in Rose Hill [*Elementary*] School, why, that seventh grade that I was in, we had a surprise party. And naturally, if they didn't say anything to you about it, you knew it was going to be at your house. And that's why it wasn't much of a surprise [*laughs*]. But anyway, we used to have a good time.

KHT: Well, what would y'all do?

LBH: Pick something, we'd pick fruit. We'd just take fruit, and we'd just sit around and talk and have a good time.

HRB: It just didn't seem to take as much then to—

LBH: Oh, we used to play "Clap In and Clap Out." Did you ever play that?

HRB: Yeah.

KHT: How do you play that?

LBH: Well, you arrange the chairs all around in the living room, you know, and they'd take the girls outside, and the boys in here would name a girl. And then they'd let a girl in, and she'd go sit down in a chair, you know, and then they'd clap her out because she wasn't the right one. But finally, when you sit down in the right chair, you got a kiss. You remember that?

HRB: But one thing, how about this one, Lula Belle? Chairs, one this-a-way and one this-a-way and one this-a-way, and they'd play the piano, and they'd one—short one chair.

KHT: Musical chairs.

HRB: Yeah

[14] Brooks' older sister, Annie Lou, was born in December of 1899.
[15] Brooks' mother was thirty-seven when she was born in 1905.

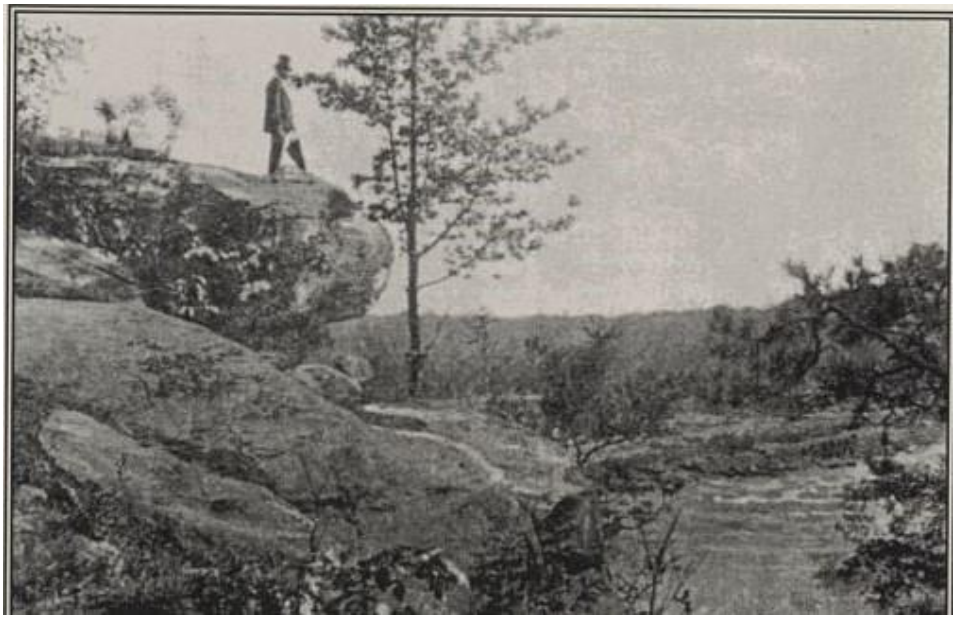
LBH: Musical chairs… And you'd be left out. And then you'd have to be "it."
HRB: You know, we got to where that toward the last we had a party there at school. You know, they had begun to try to keep children, you know, who associate with each other in the halls of the school.
LBH: But now they don't have them. They can't have them.
HRB: Well, one thing, it just didn't take enough—a whole lot to entertain us. What we did have, we appreciated. And what I enjoyed more than anything else in the world is all my gang—you know, we had—the house was here, and the sidewalk was here, and then between the sidewalk and street was a wide strip of grass, and then the curb. Well, we'd sit on that curb. We'd get enough money to buy a big old dill pickle, about like that, and some crackers and sit down out there on that curb and eat that dill pickle and those crackers. And that was as much fun as anybody ever wanted to have.
KHT: Well, I don't want to tire y'all out.
LBH: Well, we're tired…
KHT: Well, why don't we halt?

END OF RECORDING

The Story of the Legend of Lover's Leap

By

Daniel A. Bellware



Lovers' Leap as originally printed in 1892 in *Lelulah*, or, *The Heroine of Lover's Leap* by Mrs. S. M. Chandler.

An enduring story from early Columbus history is the legend of Lover's Leap. The tale uses one of the area's most recognizable geologic features as a plot point to tell an old Indian legend of a romantic tragedy. Perched high above the Chattahoochee River, Lover's Leap stood in an area known as North Highlands now occupied by the North Highlands Dam and the ruins of the Bibb City Mill. Work on the dam and mill obscured the feature starting in 1898. That natural element inspired not only several versions of the story but also pictures, music, and at least a couple of questions. Is it really an Indian legend? And where does it come from?

The story of Lover's Leap is not unique to Columbus. It is not even unique to Georgia. Similar stories exist almost everywhere you find a high outcropping of rock over turbulent waters. Stories of Lover's Leaps from around the country appeared in Georgia newspapers numerous times before the city's founding. These included one from Lyme, Connecticut, reported in the *Augusta Herald* in 1818, one from New York which appeared in the *Savannah Republican* in 1822, and a Montreal story in Hancock County's *The Missionary* in 1824, just to name a few.[1]

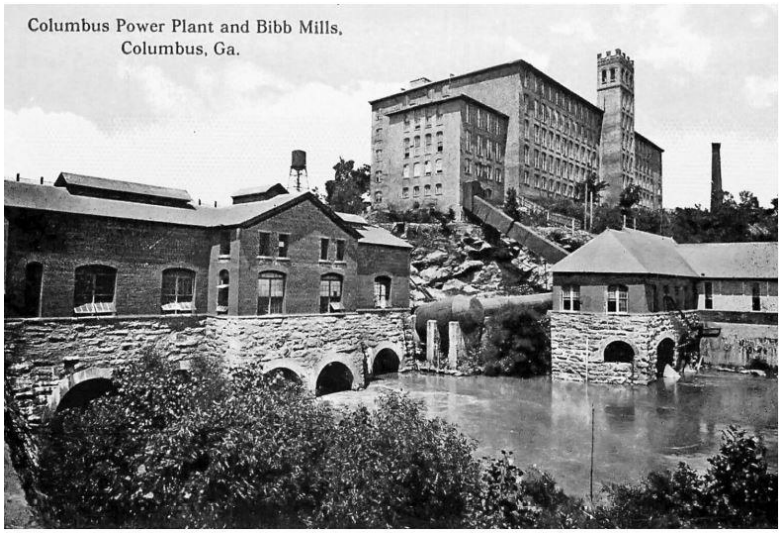
[1] "A Leap," *Augusta Herald,* July 14, 1818, 2 and "The Lovers Leap," *Savannah Republican*, April 22, 1822, 2 and "A Lovers Leap," *The Missionary*, (Hancock County, Georgia), June 7, 1824, 3.

In his book, *Life on the Mississippi*, Mark Twain includes a story about an Indian princess that objects to her parents' meddling in her marriage plans. She climbs to the precipice with her parents and in an unexpected twist, dashes them on the rocks below. Twain goes on to say "It is a distinct improvement upon the threadbare form of Indian legend. There are fifty Lover's Leaps along the Mississippi from whose summit disappointed Indian girls have jumped, but this is the only jump in the lot that turned out in the right and satisfactory way."[2]

One of the more recent tellings of the Columbus story appeared in a biographical sketch of Mrs. James C. Cook, Jr. (the former Mary Louisa Redd) in *Southern Views Magazine* in 2019. Surprisingly, the version provided in the magazine is not the one authored by the subject of the sketch in the late nineteenth century, but a throwback to the much older original tale. It includes none of the elements introduced by Cook in her articles and book in the 1890s. Another recent retelling is the 2012 book *Haunted Columbus, Georgia.* It contains a version based on Cook's telling of the story, with several changes for dramatic effect. Just what was the original story?[3]

Readers can find faithful renditions of the original story in several places. The *Industrial Index, Columbus Centennial Number* of 1928 included one. This is the story of Mohina, daughter of the unnamed Chief of the Cusseta. Her love interest is Young Eagle of the Coweta tribe. The formerly betrothed lovers meet in secret until the hunters of the Cusseta tribe attempt to catch them. A chase ensues ending with the lovers jumping to their deaths to avoid capture. This version of the story included a contemporaneous photograph of the location above the North Highlands Dam with the Bibb City Mill looming behind it. The article also mentions that the story was more than fifty years old. Presumably, it referred to an identical version included in John Martin's 1874 history, *Columbus, Georgia, From Its Selection As A "Trading Town" In 1827 to Its Destruction By Wilson's Raid in 1865*.[4]

[2] Mark Twain, "*Life on the Mississippi*," (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1901), 421.
[3] Jack Schley, "James Carter Cook, Jr.," *Southern Views Magazine*, October 31, 2019, https://soviewsmag.squarespace.com/heritage/2019/10/31/james-carter-cook-jr; Faith Serafin, *Haunted Columbus, Georgia*, (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2012), 55-58.
[4] *Industrial Index, Columbus Centennial Number*, (Columbus, Georgia: April 18, 1928), 97.

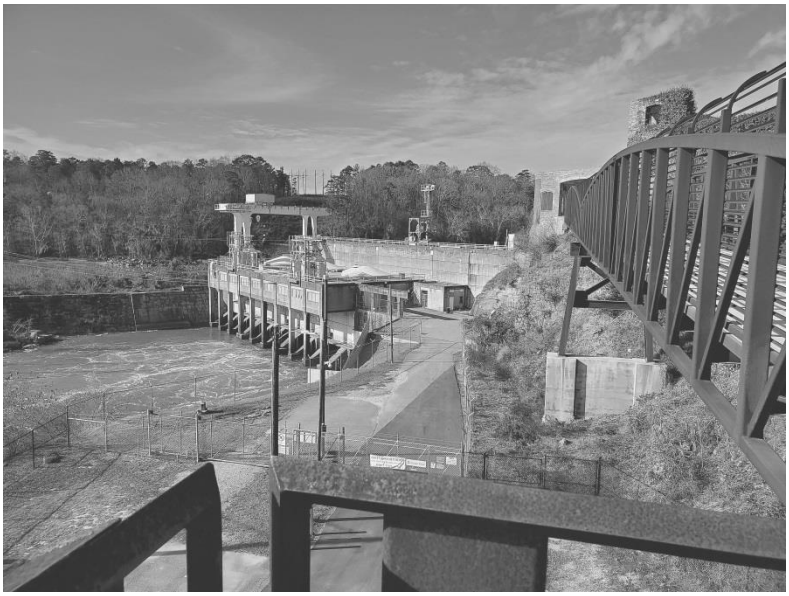


The site of Lover's Leap after construction of the North Highlands Dam and Bibb City Mill, similar to the photo used in *Industrial Index*
From *Southern Views Magazine*, October 31, 2019

Forty years after Martin, Lucian Lamar Knight's *Georgia Landmarks, Memorials and Legends* of 1914 also presented a version of the story. This one closely followed Martin's 1874 version, but is not a word-for-word duplication as appears in the *Industrial Index*. Knight reworded the first paragraph to "conform with the historical facts."[5]

The version by Mrs. Cook came out after Martin's telling and before McKnight's return to the original. Cook may have felt a certain proprietorship over the story. Her husband's family owned the land that included Lover's Leap for many years prior to her marriage in 1844. Cook, an accomplished author, who also wrote under the names Mary Lennox and Mary Wildwood, had the story published in her 1892 book *The Legend of Lover's Leap and Poems*. However, she published it first in the *Columbus Enquirer* in January 1890. It appeared again, shortly after construction of the North Highlands Dam and Bibb City Mill obscured the feature in 1899. In her version, she calls the young maiden Morning Star with the childhood name of "Mine Chee," or "Minechee" given to her by her father. Cook mentions that the legend is famous in song and story and says the area was known to the Indians as "Tumbling Waters." She adds secret messages delivered by Young Eagle using a blow gun and rachets up the drama by adding a new character to the story – Yaho Hadjo or "Crazy Wolf." He is a rival of Young Eagle for the affections of Morning Star. Leading a group of warriors, Yaho falls from Lover's Leap in pursuit of Minechee and Young Eagle. The warriors find Yaho's "mangled lifeless corpse" on the rocks below while the river sweeps away the bodies of the young lovers.[6]

[5] Lucian Lamar Knight, *Georgia Landmarks, Memorials and Legends* (Atlanta: Byrd Printing Co. 1914), 448.
[6] Mary Louise Redd Cook, *The Legend of Lover's Leap and Poems* (Columbus: Thomas Gilbert, 1892); Mrs. James C. Cook, "The Legend of Lover's Leap," *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, January 19, 1890, and *Columbus Enquirer-Sun,* January 24, 1899, 4.

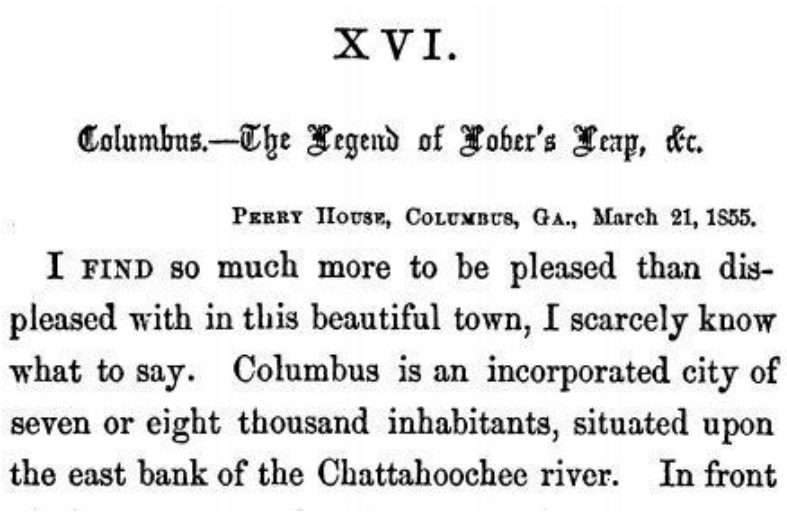


Lover's Leap today, located to the right of the North Highlands dam
Courtesy of Daniel A. Bellware

For some reason, none of these additions appeared in the version that accompanied the biographical sketch of Mrs. Cook in *Southern Views Magazine*. However, Mrs. Cook's additions do appear in the *Haunted Columbus, Georgia* telling of the legend in 2012. In this version, the author includes Yaho Hadjo and adds additional details about Creek origins and names. Minechee also gives birth to a child who is presented to her father before Yaho and the others chase the young lovers to their death. In this version, Yaho's body is never found.[7]

The first major departure from the original version is the one by "Uncle Leumas" that appeared in *Burkes's Weekly for Boys and Girls* in 1868. This weekly paper, geared towards children, was published in Macon, Georgia, between July 1867 and December 1870. In this version the young princess is named Lueena or Bending Reed and her father is named Tustenuggee. Her lover is a Choctaw named Appalachee or Bounding Elk and his rival is Leaping Panther. The tribes in question were Creeks and Choctaws instead of the Creek tribes of Cusseta and Coweta. The author claims to have grown up nearby and picnicked near the rocky outcropping as a child. In this version, the father is one of the pursuers and witnesses his daughter's death. Uncle Leumas's story seems to be a dead end, no pun intended.[8]

[7] Faith Serafin, 57.
[8] Uncle Luemas, "Lovers Leap," *Burkes Weekly*, 1868.



XVI.

Columbus.—The Legend of Lover's Leap, &c.

PERRY HOUSE, COLUMBUS, GA., March 21, 1855.

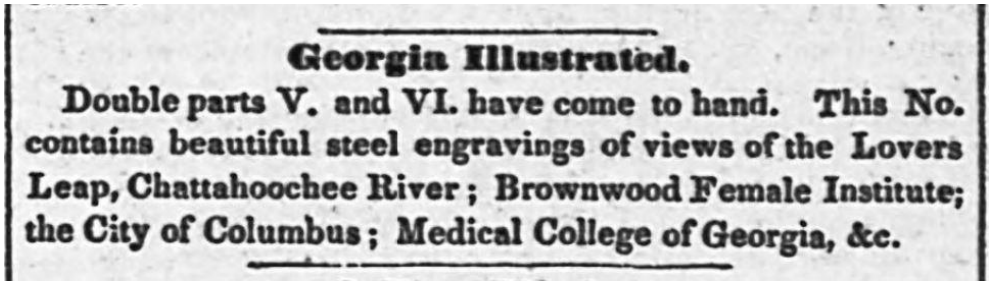
I FIND so much more to be pleased than displeased with in this beautiful town, I scarcely know what to say. Columbus is an incorporated city of seven or eight thousand inhabitants, situated upon the east bank of the Chattahoochee river. In front

Portion of Lillian Foster's Lover's Leap story showing that she stayed at the Perry House in March 1855

Less well-known is an earlier version that appeared in the book *Way-Side Glimpses North and South* in 1860. It related the story as author Lillian Foster heard it on her travels through the South. She stopped in Columbus in March 1855 and penned the story while staying at the Perry House. Between her visit in 1855 and the publication of her book in 1860, another writer published a version of the legend. In fact, several authors recycled the same tale in different publications within a short period of time.[9]

The legend appeared in the 1857 *Appleton's Illustrated Handbook of American Travel* by T. Addison Richards. Thomas Addison Richards was a British-born author and illustrator and the brother of William Carey Richards. The two brothers came to America with their family in 1831. They settled in Penfield, Georgia for a time where their father was a trustee at Mercer University. The Richards brothers collaborated on a series of pictures and stories under the name *Georgia Illustrated* starting in 1841 and sold by subscription. Thomas sketched the scenes, later engraved in steel, and William acted as editor. Later they worked together on the *Southern Literary Gazette* in Athens, Georgia, in similar roles. The *Appleton's* version of the story was identical to an 1855 version of the story that Rev. George White copied from *Georgia Illustrated* for his own book, *Historical Collections of Georgia*.[10]

[9] Lillian Foster, *Way-side Glimpses, North and South* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1860).
[10] T. Addison Richards, *Appleton's Illustrated Handbook of American Travel* (New York: Addison and Company, 1860); William Carey Richards, ed., *Georgia Illustrated In a Series of Views Drawn and Engraved From Original Sketches* (Penfield, GA: W. and W.C. Richards, 1841); George White, *Historical Collections of Georgia* (New York: Pudney and Russell, 1854).



Georgia Illustrated.

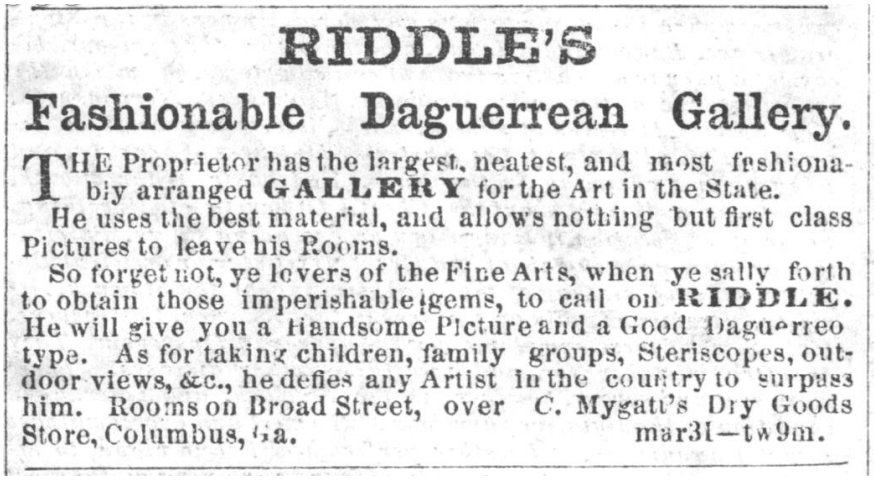
Double parts V. and VI. have come to hand. This No. contains beautiful steel engravings of views of the Lovers Leap, Chattahoochee River; Brownwood Female Institute; the City of Columbus; Medical College of Georgia, &c.

Advertisement for *Georgia Illustrated* parts 5 and 6, which included the original story about Lover's Leap as it appeared in the *Macon Telegraph*, February 1, 1842

It is more than likely that Lillian Foster got the story from Rev. George White, who happened to be staying at the Perry House at the same time. He was there to sell his 1855 *Historical Collections of Georgia* that included the "Legend of Lover's Leap." What he included was a word-for-word retelling of the legend from the Richards brother's 1842 collaboration for *Georgia Illustrated* that also included a picture of the scenery around Lover's Leap that Thomas Addison Richards sketched.[11]

In addition to the story of Lovers Leap, Foster related several other stories of interest to travelers visiting Columbus. She stated, "I visited the daguerrian gallery in Broad Street, and was most politely received by the accomplished artist, J. Andrew Riddle," to see pictures (daguerreotypes) of well-known locals. They included Tennent Lomax, hero of the Mexican War and editor of the Columbus *Times & Sentinel,* Caroline Lee Hentz, whose *Ernest Linwood* gave its name to the neighborhood around the city cemetery and the cemetery itself. Also among the celebrities was a picture of Herrman S. Saroni, the author, composer, and the man credited with founding the Columbus Symphony Orchestra around the same time. He composed a fast-paced musical piece or galop, entitled *The Lover's Leap* while residing in Columbus. This is likely the song in Mrs. Cook's "song and story" of Lover's Leap. A copy of this tune resides in the Library of Congress and is one of only two musical pieces written by Saroni during his short stay in the city.[12]

[11] "Historical Collection of Georgia," *Columbus Times and Sentinel Triweekly*, March 23, 1855, 2.
[12] Foster, *Way-side Glimpses, North and South*, 111-114; Daniel Bellware, "The Musical and Mechanical Genius of Herrman S. Saroni," *Muscogiana*, Fall 2018, 1-20.



RIDDLE'S

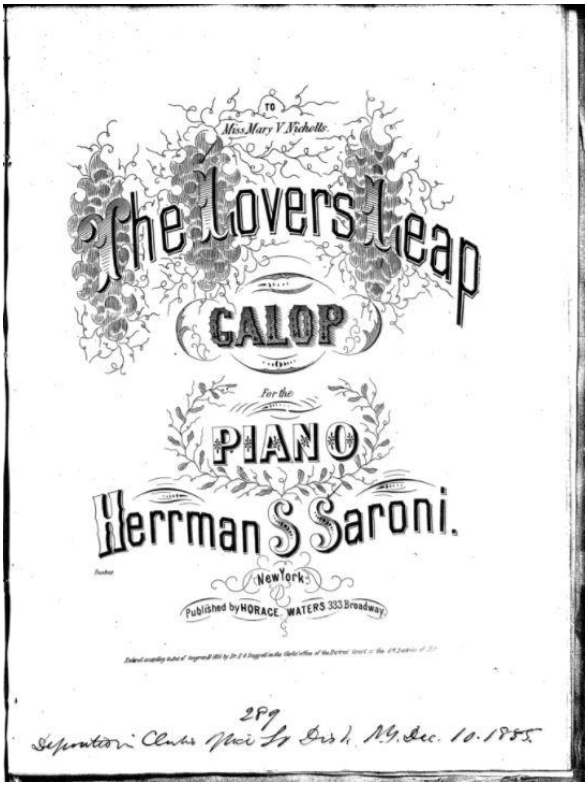
Fashionable Daguerrean Gallery.

THE Proprietor has the largest, neatest, and most fashionably arranged **GALLERY** for the Art in the State.

He uses the best material, and allows nothing but first class Pictures to leave his Rooms.

So forget not, ye lovers of the Fine Arts, when ye sally forth to obtain those imperishable gems, to call on **RIDDLE.** He will give you a Handsome Picture and a Good Daguerreotype. As for taking children, family groups, Steriscopes, outdoor views, &c., he defies any Artist in the country to surpass him. Rooms on Broad Street, over C. Mygatt's Dry Goods Store, Columbus, Ga. mar31—tw9m.

Advertisement for A. J. Riddle's daguerrean gallery that Lillian Foster visited in 1855, from *Columbus Times and Sentinel Triweekly*, April 11, 1855



Cover page of *The Lover's Leap* galop by Herrman S. Saroni
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Although the 1842 picture and story of Lover's Leap appeared a mere fourteen years after the founding of the city, it was not the first mention of an incident at that location. The *Columbus Enquirer* of September 6, 1838 contains what appears to be the original story of Lover's Leap on the Chattahoochee, after Mrs. Cook's father-in-law acquired the land. The story references the indigenous population; however, they were gone by the time of this telling:

> "On our way we passed through an old Indian field, where once the native sons of the forest had tilled the land in imitation of the more artful and scientific white man…We stood on the Lover's Leap, - a high and craggy rock, which fretted over the river Chattahoochee, forming the termination of the lofty knoll we had just ascended. It takes its name from the tradition of one of the early settlers, who despairing of obtaining the affections of one he loved, cast himself from the lofty summit of this craggy height into the dismal depth beneath, where he perished, a victim of suicide."[13]

This story appeared when the city was only ten years old. However, this is the story of a despondent early settler, not two Indian lovers. Somehow, in the intervening years, the story changed to that of an Indian legend. It seems that William Carey Richards or his brother Thomas Addison Richards were responsible for that change. One of them took the description of the nearby Indian field and combined it with the suicide story to create this bit of Indian folklore.

Engraving from *Historical Collections of Georgia* by Rev. George White in 1855, based on T. Addison Richard's sketch for *Georgia Illustrated*.

[13] "Scenery on the Chattahoochee, Georgia," *Columbus Enquirer*, September 6, 1838, 4.

Here is the version of the story from Rev. George White's *Historical Collection of Geor*gia in 1855, taken from the *Georgia Illustrated* tale of 1842:

> "This romantic locale is a high and ragged cliff, which terminates an ascending knoll of dark rocks, and projects boldly into the Chattahoochee River. Its summit commands one of the most magnificent displays of river scenery which Nature could present, or which Art could picture. On the left the river pursues its downward course to Columbus, in a straight line. Its flow is rapid and wild, broken by rocks, over which the water frets and foams in angry surges. The bed of the stream is that of a deep ravine, its walls lofty and irregular cliffs, covered to their verge with majestic forest growth. From this point the city of Columbus is but partially visible. At the "Leap," the river makes a sudden turn, and forms an angle with its course below, flowing in a narrow channel so regularly lined with rocks on both sides, and of such uniform width, as to resemble a canal. A short distance above it makes another right angle, and resumes its old course.
>
> Legend of the Lover's Leap. – In the early part of the present century, this region was inhabited by two powerful tribes of Indian. Rivals were they, and, with numbers equal, and alike proud names, well they vied with each other. There was no tribe among all the powerful nation of the Creeks, who boasted of their prowess before a Cusseta or a Coweta. Yet they were not friends; for who of those proud red men would bend before the acknowledged superiority of the other? It may have been a small matter from which their jealousy sprung, but the tiny thing had been cherished, till a serpent-like hatred hissed at the sound of the other's name.
>
> "The proud Chief of the Cussetas was now become an old man, and much was he venerated by all who rallied at his battle-cry. The boldest heart in all his tribe quailed before his angry eye, and the proudest did him reverence. The old man had outlived his own sons. One by one had the Great Spirit called them from their hunting-grounds, and in the flush of their manhood they had gone to the spirit-land. Yet he was not alone. The youngest of his children, the dark-eyed Mohina, was still sheltered in his bosom, and all his love for the beautiful in life was bestowed upon her: - ah, and rightly too, for the young maiden rivalled in grace the bounding fawn, and the young warriors said of her that the smile of the Great Spirit was not so beautiful. While yet a child, she was betrothed to the Young Eagle of the Cowetas, the proud scion of their warrior Chief. But stern hatred had stifled kindly feelings in the hearts of all save these two young creatures, and the pledged word was broken when the smoke of the calumet was extinguished. Mohina no longer dared to meet the young Chief openly, and death faced them when they sat in a lone, wild trysting-place, 'neath the starry blazonry of midnight's dark robe. Still they were undaunted, for pure love dwelt in their hearts, and base fear crouched low before it, and went afar from them to hide in grosser souls. Think not the boy-god changes his arrows when he seeks the heart of the red man. Nay, rather with truer aim and finer point does the winged thing speed from his bow, and deeply the subtle poison sinks in the young heart, while the dark cheek glows with love's proper hue. The deer bounded gladly by when the lovers met, and felt he was free, while the bright-eyed maiden leaned upon the bosom of the Young Eagle. Their youthful hearts hoped in the future, though all in vain, for Time served but to render more fierce that hostile rivalry, more rank than deadly hatred, which existed between the tribes. Skirmishes were frequent amid their hunters, and open hostilities seemed inevitable.
>
> And now it was told by some who had peered through the tangled underwood and matted foliage of those dim woods, that the Coweta had pressed the maiden to his heart in those lone places and that strange words and passionate were even now breathed by

him to her ear. Then the hunters of the Cusseta sprang from their couches and made earnest haste to the dark glen. With savage yell and impetuous rush they bounded before the lovers. They fled, and love and terror added wings to their flight. For a while they distanced their pursuers. But the strength of Mohina failed her in a perilous moment, and had not the Young Eagle snatched her to his fast-beating heart, the raging enemy had made sure their fate. He rushed onward up the narrow defile before him. It led he forgot whither. In a few moments he stood on the verge of this fearful height. Wildly the maiden clung to him, and even then, in that strange moment of life, his heart throbbed proudly beneath his burden. The bold future alone was before him; there was no return. Already the breath of one of the pursuers, a hated rival, came quick upon his cheek, and the bright-gleaming tomahawk shone before him. One moment he gazed on him, and triumph flashed in the eye of the young Chief, and then without a shudder he sprang into the seething waters below. Still the young maiden clung to him, nor yet did the death-struggle part them. The made waves dashed fearfully over them, and their loud wail was a fitting requiem to their departing spirits. The horror-stricken warrior gazed wildly into the foaming torrent, then dashed with reckless haste down the declivity, to bear the sad tidings to the old Chief. He heard their tale in silence. But sorrow was on his spirit, and it was broken. Henceforth his seat was unfilled by the council-fire, and its red light gleamed fitfully upon his grave."[14]

When Thomas Addison Richards came to Columbus to sketch the scene near the old Indian fields, the 1838 pioneer story would still be fresh in the mind of the people he met (likely including the Cook family). According to the *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, he traveled around the South "in search of picturesque scenes" for *Georgia Illustrated* and "supplied stories and illustrated travel essays" for the *Orion*, another literary journal on which he collaborated with his brother, around the same time. Richards wrote numerous stories to accompany his sketches for the *Southern Literary Gazette,* a few years later. He also reproduced this story, without the sketch, under his own name in 1857 for *Appleton's Illustrated Handbook of American Travel*. The fact that he was in the habit of providing stories to accompany his sketches, while not conclusive, points to Thomas Addison Richards being the author of the legend of Lover's Leap.[15]

[14]Rev. George White, *Historical Collections of Georgia* (New York: Pudney & Russell, 1855), 571-573.
[15] Koch, Mary L. "Thomas Addison Richards (1820-1900)." New Georgia Encyclopedia. 10 September 2013. Web. 25 August 2021.

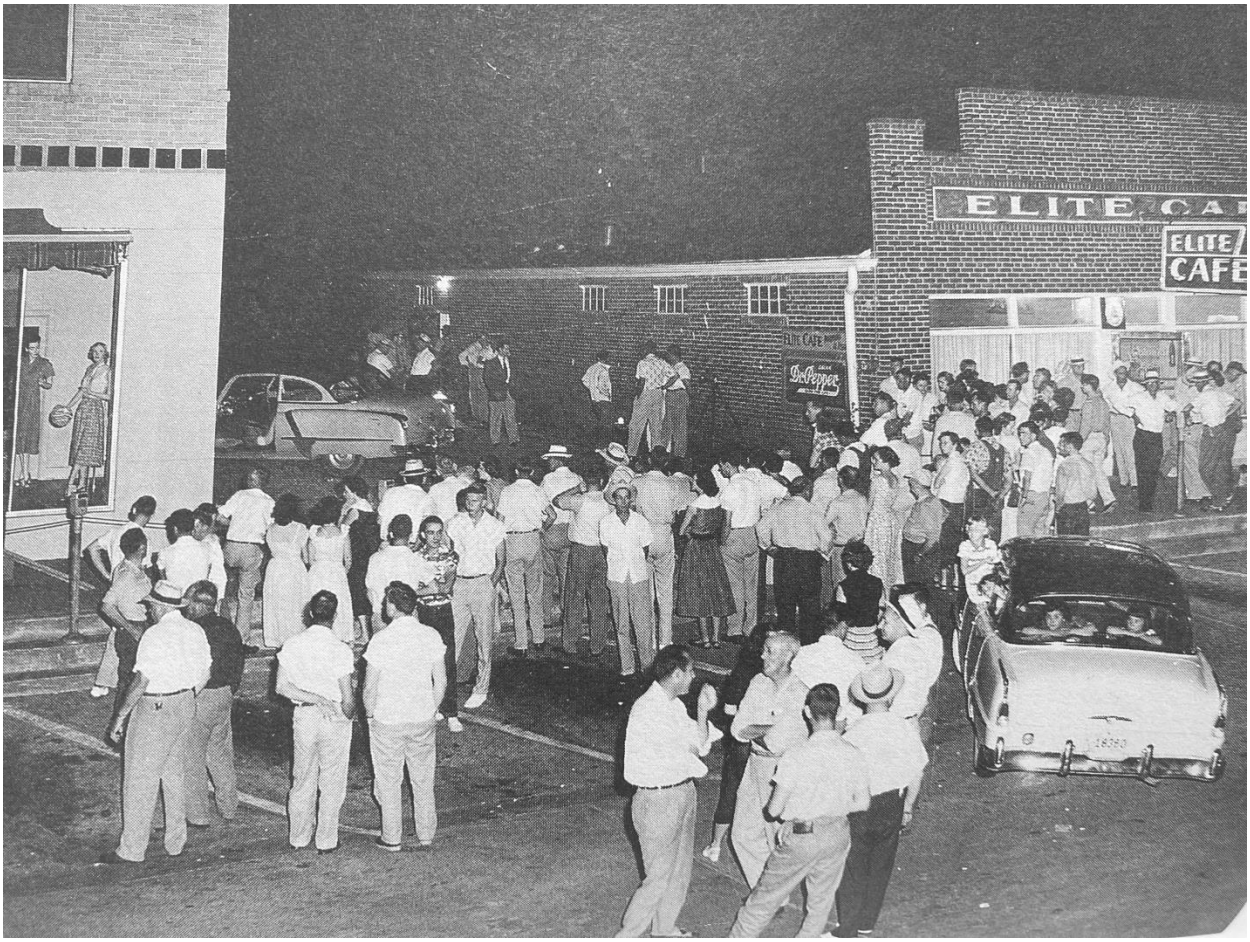
Thomas Addison Richards (1820 – 1900)
Courtesy of the *New Georgia Encyclopedia*

Lovers Leap/Chattahoochee River
J. Smillie, from a sketch from T. Addison Richards, "Lover's Leap, Chattahoochee River," 184, engraving, The Columbus Museum, Georgia; The Evelyn S. and H. Wayne Patterson Fund, G. 2007.13.2.
Note the additional people not in the *Historical Collections of Georgia* version.

Sin City, the Scapegoat:
How the Media Sensationalized Phenix City, Alabama

By

Samuel Owen



Scene at the site of the assassination of Albert Patterson the night of the murder
Courtesy of the Alabama Department of Archives and History

On the night of June 18, 1954, Alabama Attorney General nominee Albert Patterson was shot three times and killed outside of his Phenix City, Alabama, office. The assassination came as a shock to absolutely no one who lived in Phenix City, and certainly not Patterson, who said during the election month, "They've put it in for me. There's nothing you can do about it." Phenix City was a town whose economy was inextricably associated with vice. In 1954, Phenix City had more liquor and gaming licenses than any other place in the state, as well as several brothels and a safe-cracking school. At its height, it was a multi-million dollar industry. Patterson ran his campaign on the stance that he would rid Phenix City of its crime syndicates, knowing full well that he would be making powerful enemies. His assassination was front-page news for local media outlets, and Alabama governor Gordon Persons called in seventy-five Alabama National Guardsmen, led by General Walter "Crack" Hanna, to put Phenix City under martial law and rid it of corruption shortly after the incident. Following this, the events in Phenix City became a veritable gold mine for newspaper publishers, authors, and movie producers looking for a story.[1]

Courtesy of Heritage Auctions

The infamy that accompanied this national exposure still resonates today. Many continue to refer to the town by its former monikers: "Sin City, U.S.A," "Wickedest City in America," or even the biblically-inspired "Sodom." Others continue to be intrigued with the time when Phenix City supposedly was full of mobsters and cutthroats, and it was not safe to walk the streets at night for fear of being robbed, beaten, or killed. The assassination of Albert Patterson thrust the town headfirst into the spotlight. Media outlets across the country picked up news of the town and its corruption and vice. In their hands, the events turned into a harrowing tale about a martyred war veteran and father who tried valiantly to combat a criminal syndicate in a town whose wickedness was immeasurable. The 1955 movie *The Phenix City Story* dramatized the entire ordeal to a national audience, painting a picture of a dangerous, ruthless Phenix City that chewed up and spit out ordinary citizens like sunflower seeds.[2]

Yet most Phenix City citizens who lived during the time before the assassination and were not connected with the known criminal activity remember the town as being peaceful and safe. "This is not the truth," stated Phenix City resident John Hartman upon seeing the film for

[1] Alan Grady, *When Good Men Do Nothing: The Assassination of Albert Patterson* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2003); Emmett Perry; "The Story Behind Phenix City: The Struggle for Law in a Modern Sodom," *American Bar Association Journal* 42, no. 12 (1956): 146-179.
[2] Phil Karlson, *The Phenix City Story* (Los Angeles, CA: Allied Artists, 1955).

the first time, for example. Mayor Elmer Reese, during the initial lockdown, said, "I was very shocked over it (the declaration of martial law)...This was one of the quietest places in Alabama. I don't see any reason for it." In truth, the town was not dangerous for most beyond the prospect of going bankrupt at a rigged slot machine. Many of the syndicate leaders are remembered as courteous members of the community who kept their business to themselves and their clients. But even now, with Phenix City's less-than-clean past well behind it, it is still often remembered by those outside of the community as a twentieth-century Dodge City, and this is a direct result of the media coverage that followed the 1954 assassination. Even though 1950s Phenix City was not innocent by a long shot, its representation by news outlets and other media only painted one side of the story, and thus impeded accurate historical analysis of the era. This paper intends to analyze the media coverage of Phenix City post-Patterson assassination and contrast the story it pushed with actual accounts by a sampling of citizens who lived through the era. Please note that, while all of the accounts given are related as told, John Hartman, Ben Cardinal, and Donald Jones are aliases for individuals who were interviewed by the author. They did not wish for their true identities to be revealed.[3]

The bullets that killed Patterson would come to define Phenix City, Alabama, seemingly indefinitely. Patterson was a father of four, a veteran of the Great War, and, most importantly, a Phenix City native who ran for Alabama Attorney General on the grounds that he would rid Phenix City of its criminal element once and for all. The Phenix City mob, including syndicate leaders Jimmie Matthews and Hoyt Shepherd, grew fearful of Patterson—understandably, as Patterson had won the Democratic primary election and was almost certain to be elected. However, the main cause of the criminal element's fear and contempt of Patterson was his deep knowledge of the Phenix City underworld. Patterson had been a lawyer in Phenix City since the years following his military service and he had defended many clients, including mob associates. "We were neighbors with the Pattersons," claims long-time Phenix City resident Ben Cardinal. "Albert and his wife Agnes would come by sometimes and chat with my parents." Cardinal recalls a visit a little more than a year before the assassination, when Albert Patterson talked with Cardinal's father about a client he had defended who happened to be a patriarch of one of Phenix City's top criminal families who had been convicted of racketeering. Indeed, years before Patterson had run for office, he was rumored to have been on retainer for several of Phenix City mob associates.[4]

This information would not have been common knowledge for those not "in the know" in Phenix City, and certainly not to those outside Russell County. To the newspapers which ran stories about Patterson and his murder, the tale was one of clear heroes and villains. Patterson was a veteran father on a righteous quest who was martyred by a city too corrupt to rid itself of its own filth. On June 19, 1954, the day following the murder, the *Columbus Ledger* published an editorial titled "Alabama Must

[3] John Hartman, interview with author, October 24, 2019; "Troops Sieze Court House," *Columbus Ledger*, July 22, 1954.
[4] Grady, *When Good Men Do Nothing*, 11-12; Ben Cardinal, interview with author, October 24, 2019.

Avenge Murder of Patterson." The front-page article speculated on the ramifications and possible aftermath of Patterson's assassination, proposing some very incendiary ideas about the incident. "It is a crime against the people of the whole state of Alabama," stated the newspaper. "It must be avenged." The murder was an atrocity that affected the moral fiber of every Alabama citizen. It was "an affront, a challenge to all the people." The Columbus, Georgia, newspaper used rich sensory description to convey the evil that it claimed embodied Phenix City, saying the town had a "smelly and ominous omen of murder." Its minority criminal element was now depicted as the root of a viral infection that was at risk of spreading to its seemingly morally upstanding neighbors.[5]

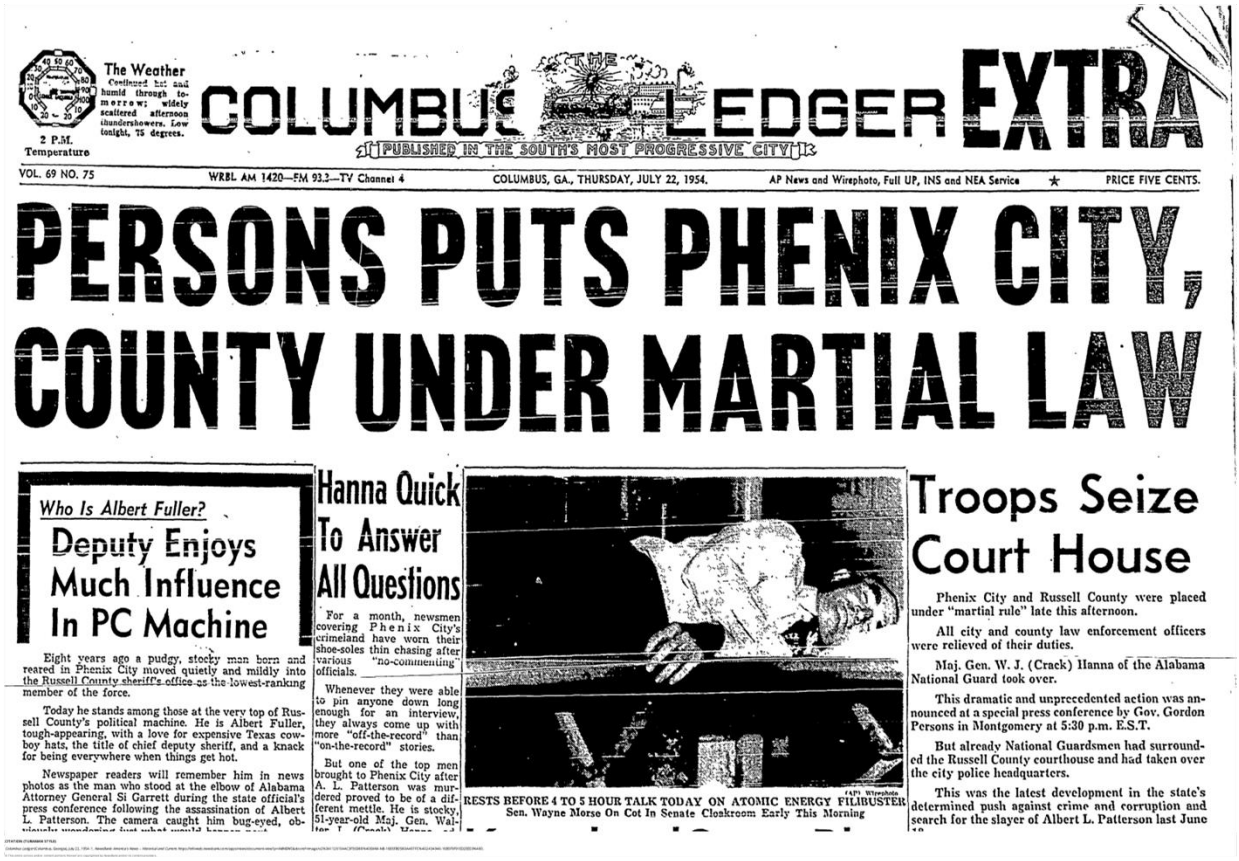
The day following that editorial, the *Columbus Ledger* stated in another that an "atmosphere for murder" was allowed to flourish in Phenix City, and the town's regular citizens were responsible for the tragedy that had beset their community by not having acted to run out the criminals. "The triggerman need not have been any of the vile men who make up but a small minority of the town," the author claimed. "It was Phenix City that got him." In one damning statement, all of Phenix City's residents, most of whom had no involvement whatsoever with the town's juke joints and their mob proprietors, were made accomplices to murder. "The public opinion of the nation became the new public enemy number one in Phenix City." For the next several months, the *Columbus Ledger* took full advantage of the public's newfound fascination with Phenix City, publishing article after article about the unfolding Phenix City situation, using Patterson's assassination as a launching point for countless exposés.[6]

Flyer distributed by the Russell Betterment Association
Courtesy of Columbus State University Archives

[5] "Alabama Must Avenge Murder of Patterson," *Columbus Ledger*, June 19, 1954; "Phenix City is Patterson Slavery," *Columbus Ledger*, June 20, 1954

[6] Ira Greenberg, "Air of Horror Pervades Phenix City Atmosphere," *Sunday Ledger-Enquirer*, June 20, 1954; William C. McLean, "From the Ashes: Phenix City, Alabama and its Struggle With Memory," Master's thesis, (Florida State University, 1995).

"EXTRA," the *Columbus Ledger*'s front-page headline read on July 22, 1954, "Persons Puts Phenix City, County Under Martial Law." The title was printed in all capital letters, in a slightly larger font than normal headlines. Additionally, the statement was in crimson red, as if printed in the very blood of the slain attorney general - and it stood out from the normal sepia tone palette of the newspaper. The cover also featured a picture of Alabama senator Wayne Morse lying asleep in an abnormal position on a cot in the senate courtroom, reminiscent of a corpse. This imagery created by the *Ledger* would have been very effective at catching the attention of passing consumers. The article once again created a frightening image of the town, quoting Alabama governor Gordon Persons in saying that there existed a "state of lawlessness, breach of the peace, [and] organized intimidation and fear" in Phenix City.[7]



The Weather
Continued hot and humid through tomorrow; widely scattered afternoon thundershowers. Low tonight, 75 degrees.

2 P.M. Temperature

COLUMBUS LEDGER EXTRA

PUBLISHED IN THE SOUTH'S MOST PROGRESSIVE CITY

VOL. 69 NO. 75 | WRBL AM 1420—FM 93.3—TV Channel 4 | COLUMBUS, GA., THURSDAY, JULY 22, 1954. | AP News and Wirephoto, Full UP, INS and NEA Service | PRICE FIVE CENTS.

PERSONS PUTS PHENIX CITY, COUNTY UNDER MARTIAL LAW

Who Is Albert Fuller?

Deputy Enjoys Much Influence In PC Machine

Eight years ago a pudgy, stocky man born and reared in Phenix City moved quietly and mildly into the Russell County sheriff's office as the lowest-ranking member of the force.

Today he stands among those at the very top of Russell County's political machine. He is Albert Fuller, tough-appearing, with a love for expensive Texas cowboy hats, the title of chief deputy sheriff, and a knack for being everywhere when things get hot.

Newspaper readers will remember him in news photos as the man who stood at the elbow of Alabama Attorney General Si Garrett during the state official's press conference following the assassination of Albert L. Patterson. The camera caught him bug-eyed, ob-

Hanna Quick To Answer All Questions

For a month, newsmen covering Phenix City's crimeland have worn their shoe-soles thin chasing after various "no-commenting" officials.

Whenever they were able to pin anyone down long enough for an interview, they always come up with more "off-the-record" than "on-the-record" stories.

But one of the top men brought to Phenix City after A. L. Patterson was murdered proved to be of a different mettle. He is stocky, 51-year-old Maj. Gen. Wal-

(AP) Wirephoto
RESTS BEFORE 4 TO 5 HOUR TALK TODAY ON ATOMIC ENERGY FILIBUSTER
Sen. Wayne Morse On Cot In Senate Cloakroom Early This Morning

Troops Seize Court House

Phenix City and Russell County were placed under "martial rule" late this afternoon.

All city and county law enforcement officers were relieved of their duties.

Maj. Gen. W. J. (Crack) Hanna of the Alabama National Guard took over.

This dramatic and unprecedented action was announced at a special press conference by Gov. Gordon Persons in Montgomery at 5:30 p.m. E.S.T.

But already National Guardsmen had surrounded the Russell County courthouse and had taken over the city police headquarters.

This was the latest development in the state's determined push against crime and corruption and search for the slayer of Albert L. Patterson last June

Columbus Ledger, July 22, 1954, Courtesy of Columbus State University Archives

The Birmingham News, though often more objective and thorough in its coverage of Phenix City, also did its fair share of sensationalizing the town's problems. July 18, 1954, a full month after the Patterson assassination, saw the release of a *Birmingham News* article, titled "Narcotics and Phenix City." It told a story about a Phenix City girl who became addicted to heroin. The article used children to draw in the audience emotionally and to provoke fear. "...there are hundreds of boys and girls in Phenix City

[7] "Persons Puts Phenix City, County Under Martial Law," *Columbus Ledger*, July 22, 1954.

today. Some of them have already experienced the twilight of a narcotics dream. Others will surely follow unless the vicious racket can be stomped out." Aside from the article describing marijuana as an equal to heroin, it contains one other glaring problem. It dehumanized people suffering from addiction. The article describes the girl in question as a "hopeless and helpless drug addict." Recounting a failed suicide attempt by the girl, the article says, "Her life was saved, if that term can be used in connection with a confirmed addict for whom death would be the sweetest release." The author gives a very draconic and cruel depiction of the worth of an addict's life. Addiction is a serious problem and most often those who fall victim to it suffer greatly. However, for an accredited, widely-read newspaper like the *Birmingham News* to describe the death of an addict, especially that of a teenage girl, as preferable to seeking help and recovery, was both morbid and unprofessional. Moreover, the drug rackets in Phenix City were not as vicious or widespread as the article attempted to portray them. "In those days, you could get nearly anything you wanted in Phenix City," stated Columbus resident Mary Jane Wadkins, "you could go to a doctor and they'd prescribe you nearly anything." Phenix City resident John Hartman stated that there were drugs in Phenix City, but you had to know where to find them. There weren't pushers on street corners trying to get children addicted to heroin.[8]


The Birmingham News EDITORIAL and MAIN NEWS PAGE 17-A SUNDAY, JULY 18, 1954

NARCOTICS and Phenix City

BY EDWIN STRICKLAND
News staff writer

PHENIX CITY, July 17 — Narcotics habit is like a searing flame in the blood. It burns away all self-respect, morals, conscience and eventually life itself.

And in this city today, the traffic in this hellish business is reaching frightening proportions.

Obvious vices like gambling and prostitution can be cleaned up by policing or closing the places where they originate. But narcotics are pushed from cafes, around schools and playgrounds and anywhere people, especially young people, congregate.

So long as one marijuana cigaret or one grain of heroin or morphine is sold, it creates a serious social, health and morals problem. But when it is sold in large quantities to young people it becomes broad disaster.

Traffic reported growing

FROM A CONTACT with intimate knowledge of the narcotics traffic here comes the statement that the traffic is growing in this river town by leaps and bounds.

There are known dope dens in this wide-open town. These are presently closed, or have ceased operations, during the current cleanup which started after the murder of Albert L. Patterson.

A veteran law enforcement official has named names of known narcotics "pushers" to The Birmingham News, and pinpointed their areas of operations.

But for a graphic example of what narcotics can do and have done in Phenix City, we'll take the case of a girl we'll identify only as Jane.

Story of Jane is typical

THIS GIRL was a beautiful blonde with a bright future and every advantage. She is from a prominent Phenix City family—an only child.

Her parents today are crushed, broken people, deeply in debt and bitter at the cruel blow life has handed them. The girl herself is today in another state, broken in heatlh and morals—a confirmed addict for more than 14 years.

The tragic story began in Phenix City while the girl was still in high school. Narcotics were to be had here even them, and no one is sure today just how she began using narcotics.

Her parents were unaware at first why their beautiful daughter had changed so drastically from a laughing, popular girl to a sullen, secretive woman.

Was badly 'hooked'

THE FATHER, who loved his only child above everything else in life, began to suspect the truth but fought against certain knowledge.

Finally, in a desperate attempt to save his daughter before it was too late to try, he began watching to find the dreaded evidence—the spoon and hypodermic syringe—trademark of the "mainliner."

The proof came soon. When he confronted his daughter, he learned the whole horrible truth. She had been on the needle for months and was badly "hooked."

Goes to Eastern city

IN AN EFFORT to help the girl help herself, the family agreed for her to go to a large Eastern city to work. She was talented in the arts and quickly got a good job through her beauty, family connections and own energies.

But "the habit" follows persistently wherever the pathetic victim goes. Before long she was in with a crowd of "users" in the big city and was writting letters home begging for money with which to satisfy the habit.

Unable to deny his daughter, the father, who was of something more than modest means, tried to fulfill these requests.

The demanding letters came more often. Finally the desperate parents brought the girl home and tried with loving care to help her break the habit that was dragging her down.

But through her connections, she still obtained dope to feed the insatiable craving.

Sent to federal institution

WITH THE HELP OF THE father, a shipment of the dope was intercepted and a federal case was made against the girl. She was given a sentence and sent to the federal narcotics sanatorium at Lexington, Ky.

After several months she was released. But the habit was not broken. She went immediately back to the needle, and sought out her friends in the East.

Again her parents got her committed to Lexington, but she ran away to continue her habit and to sink lower into the bogs of degradation.

Drug wrecking health

NOW HER ONCE striking beauty was fading as the ravages of the powerful drug wrecked her body.

Even her family could no longer hold out hopes. She was a hopeless and helpless addict—another human sacrifice to dope and the inhuman gangsters who supply it.

On one occasion, haunted by the demons that tortured her mind, she attempted suicide.

Her life was saved, if that term can be used in connection with a confirmed addict to whom death would be the most blessed release.

At 30, the pathetic victim could not be recognized by close friends who remember her as the charming belle of her neighborhood with the ready laugh and dancing feet.

Her parents today are old far beyond their years. They are bitter, beaten people, loaded with debts they may never be able to satisfy.

There may be others

BUT THE URGENCY of this story lies in the fact that there are hundreds of girls and boys in Phenix City today. Some of them already have experienced the twilight of a narcotics dream. Others will surely follow unless the vicious racket can be stamped out.

The sordid history of Phenix City's underworld lists many instances of deaths from overdoses of narcotics. Laced into its criminal past are several murders in which dope was involved.

The tragic part of the narcotics picture here is that it is still moving ahead unchecked—and there are no forces to check it.

Only one officer in state

IN THE ENTIRE STATE of Alabama the U. S. government has but one full-time narcotics agent. Throughout the United States, narcotics agents are spread so thinly as to be nearly ineffectual.

Only the largest cities have narcotics squads on their police departments. Knowing this, the dope pushers are scattering to the unprotected towns and finding fertile

Turn to Page 24, Column 6

The smoke of the damned—Marijuana, the harmless looking cigaret pictured here, is just a part of Phenix City's huge traffic in narcotics.

Alabama politics—

Investigation of St. Clair vote may be moved up

BY HUGH SPARROW, News staff writer

MONTGOMERY, Ala., July 17—It appears now that Judge Frank Embry will launch the Grand Jury investigation of reported vote irregularities in St. Clair County sooner than had been expected.

It had been planned to call the jury into action next

gies were going to the war effort, and little or no road building was undertaken. Only 854 miles of new highway paving were chalked up by Sparks.

The total number of miles of highway paving completed by

Turn to Page 24, Column 1

The Birmingham News, July 18, 1954, courtesy of Columbus State University Archives

Perhaps the most contemptible dramatization of Phenix City was the depiction given by the 1955 Allied Artists film *The Phenix City Story*. The film, shot on-location in Phenix City, was a very loose retelling of the Patterson assassination. Though the film was a blend of fact and fiction, its documentary-style opening and use of some real names convinced many, if not most, viewers that its contents were wholly legitimate. The film starred Albert Patterson's son, John, as himself—that is, a highly heroic version of himself. The movie's version of John Patterson got into fistfights with vicious mobsters and singlehandedly rallied the town to fight against the evil criminals. The movie's criminals were diabolical

[8] Edwin Strickland, "Narcotics and Phenix City," *The Birmingham News*, July 18, 1954; Mary Jane Wadkins, interview with author, October 22, 2019; John Hartman, interview with author, October 24, 2019.

and ruthless, at one point killing several young children just to intimidate Albert Patterson into abandoning his campaign. These events never happened, but to a national public, most of whom had never even heard of Phenix City, the movie might as well have been a documentary. The film was especially helpful to John Patterson, at that time on the campaign trail for Attorney General of Alabama. Patterson said in a 1994 interview that, "it helped a heap… People would say 'John, is that true?' And I'd say, 'Every word of it!'" At the same time, it gave the general public an image of Phenix City that was widely overdramatized. Later, Patterson said, "I cooperated with them (Allied Artists) because I didn't care what they said about Phenix City. They could not have made the thing bad enough for me."[9]

John Patterson being sworn into office, courtesy of Columbus State University Archives

Phenix City resident Ben Cardinal stated, "Almost none of it happened. The campaign, the killing, the bombing; those were true. But Patterson did not go around brawling with mobsters and the mobsters certainly didn't kill little girls." In fact, some syndicate leaders were remembered as being kind, if not respected members of the community. Jimmie Matthews, co-boss of the S&M Syndicate, was especially remembered for the friendly manner in which he treated people. "Mr. Matthews would always walk around with a clean suit and a smile. I'd see him chat up my father at his machine shop where I worked,"

[9] Karlson, *The Phenix City Story*; John Patterson. Interview by William C. McLean, transcript, Montgomery, AL, July 18, 1994.

said Phenix City resident Donald Jones. To anybody passing through Phenix City, the thin, wiry man presented no threat, and neither really did he to most residents of Phenix City. In fact, most citizens of the town felt no fear of the minority criminal element. "I knew about what went on," said Phenix City bank teller Jean Andrews, "but it didn't affect me. I just went about my business." "Most of us didn't even lock our doors at night," said John Hartman. "Our parents let us walk around the city, even at night, and we weren't afraid." To the average citizen of Phenix City, their town was just like any other tightly knit community in the South at the time. Everybody who lived in the city, even the mobsters, were well acquainted with each other. "If the church softball team needed uniforms and bats, they got a donation from one of the big men," stated Ben Cardinal. George Carradino, a Columbus saxophonist who played in Phenix City clubs, described the club owners as being kind and cordial. He never saw violence in the establishments, and the proprietors were very protective of clientele and performers alike in his description. Additionally, Phenix City saw a renaissance of live music, something which was rare in the South at that time. "There was some top-level talent in Phenix City," claimed Carradino. However, nobody remembers the town for its thriving music scene. Especially since the Patterson assassination, the town has struggled with its image as a locale that was once a modern-day Sodom.[10]

Media producers looking for a story took full advantage of the Patterson assassination to print stories that verged on pulp fiction. This sensational journalism has since impeded accurate historical analysis of Phenix City and the events that preceded and took place in 1954. It still does today, and distorts Phenix City as it existed in reality. Now, more than half a century after the declaration of martial law, the residents of Phenix City want nothing more than to leave this sordid image behind, and they very nearly have. *The Phenix City Story* has long since faded into obscurity, and many young people growing up in Phenix City and Columbus have never heard of people like Jimmie Matthews or Albert Patterson. Hopefully, this research paper will do a small part in showing Phenix City for what it is and always has been: a small Southern community of people who care for and trust each other.

[10] Ben Cardinal, interview with author, October 24, 2019; Donald Jones, interview with author, November 28, 2019; Jean Andrews, interview with author, December 19, 2012; John Hartman, interview with author, October 24, 2019; George Corradino, interview by Ansel Whatley. Columbus State Oral History Collection, October 25, 2000.

A Note on the Historiography of Phenix City During the 1950s

There is a small amount of secondary source material about Phenix City during the criminal syndicate era. Margaret Anne Barnes, in *The Tragedy and the Triumph of Phenix City, Alabama*, gives what is probably the most complete recounting of the "Phenix City story." The book is split into three sub-books; the first book focuses on the town itself, the second focuses on the assassination of Patterson, and the third focuses on the investigation and legacy of the assassination. Alan Grady's *When Good Men Do Nothing: The Assassination of Albert Patterson* simply focuses on the assassination of Patterson, the investigation, and the people involved, and the legacy of the event on the region, though his coverage of the topic is quite thorough and he uses an extensive list of primary sources, including over forty oral interviews that he personally conducted. Virginia Causey's *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues* is a history of Phenix City's neighbor, Columbus. However, as the two cities are inextricably linked by the Chattahoochee River and the textile industry it sustained, the book also has information about Phenix City as it relates to Columbus history. A section from page 218 to 220 gives a summary account of the clean-up of Phenix City. A chapter in *Crime and Punishment in the Jim Crow South* by Tammy Ingram, "The South's Sin City: White Crime and the Limits of Law and Order in Phenix City, Alabama," covers Phenix City during the mob rule as it related to the treatment of black people. Finally, a 1956 journal article published by the American Bar Association and written by Emmett Perry called "The Story Behind Phenix City: The Struggle for Law in a Modern Sodom", gives a good summary of the rise of vice in Phenix City during the Great Depression, and uses interviews and newsprint as sources. However, these news articles are all from well before the assassination, and so do not contribute towards the topic of how media affected the public's view of Phenix City post-lockdown.[11]

While all sources seem to agree on key premises, such as that Phenix City was saved by the cleanup that followed the assassination of Albert Patterson and that most of the town officials were corrupt, some disagree on the nature of the origins of the mob rule in Phenix City. Causey holds that the problem started in 1935, when Phenix City became the seat of Russell County. The town's suddenly central position in the government made it "easier for local organized crime to control the city and county governments" and illegal gambling, among other vices, flourished as a result. Meanwhile, Perry holds that the lawless nature of the town began at the turn of the century, when the town was smaller and a corrupt sheriff allowed bootleggers to make illegal liquor in the area. In 1916, National Guardsmen swarmed the area and destroyed millions of dollars of bootleg liquor in what then stood as the biggest

[11] Margaret Anne Barnes, *The Tragedy and the Triumph of Phenix City, Alabama* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999); Alan Grady, *When Good Men Do Nothing: The Assassination of Albert Patterson* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2003); Virginia Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2019); Amy Louise Wood and Natalie J. Ring, eds., *Crime and Punishment in the Jim Crow South* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2019); Emmett Perry, "The Story Behind Phenix City: The Struggle for Law in a Modern Sodom," *American Bar Association Journal* 42, no. 12 (December 1956): 1146-49.

raid of its kind ever conducted in the United States. Barnes holds that the town's lawless nature began as early as the founding of its neighbor across the Chattahoochee River, Columbus, Georgia, in 1832, before the towns of Phenix City or Girard even existed. As Alabama was still Native American territory and therefore technically another country entirely, outlaws would flock across the river, where Columbus jurisdiction did not exist. The outlaws and their children became the citizens of the towns of Brownville, Girard, and eventually Phenix City when the smaller towns were incorporated in 1883.[12]

Most of the existing literature tends to focus exclusively on the assassination of Albert Patterson and the subsequent investigation. While several works make use of newspapers as sources, the majority are from before Patterson was assassinated. Only one source, a Florida State University master's thesis by William Campbell McLean IV entitled *From the Ashes: Phenix City, Alabama and its Struggle With Memory*, addresses media coverage of Phenix City and its effect on Phenix City's image. When media coverage of the assassination in Phenix City occurred in the rest of the country, regional publicity only exacerbated the depiction of Phenix City as a lawless community. Newspaper articles, national magazine articles (including one in *LIFE* magazine), a tabloid-style book, and the film, *The Phenix City Story*, intrinsically linked the town of Phenix City to its minority criminal element. McLean makes extensive use of newspaper articles and even conducted a personal interview with John Patterson, Albert Patterson's son.[13]

[12] Causey, *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues*, 218-220; Perry, "The Story Behind Phenix City," 1146-49; Barnes, *The Tragedy and the Triumph of Phenix City, Alabama*, 1-19.
[13] William C. McLean, "From the Ashes: Phenix City, Alabama and its Struggle With Memory," Master's thesis, (Florida State University, 1995).

In Memoriam
Daniel Beryl Olds
August 4, 1930 – January 31, 2021

Earlier this year, the Muscogee Genealogical Society lost a very special member: Dan Olds, who had joined our group back in the 1990s. A retired Army veteran (Chief Warrant Officer 3), he became an avid genealogist and was one of the first of our members to explore the wonders of DNA as a tool for researching family history. Dan served for a number of years as a member of *Muscogiana's* Editorial Board, and, for a while, was a member-at-large on the Executive Board.

One of Dan's most brilliant ideas was his suggestion that the Society investigate having *Muscogiana* printed by the Columbus College (now Columbus State University) Print Shop, where he had served as manager before his second retirement. The Fall 1999 issue (Volume 10, No. 3&4) was printed on campus, and, since then, every issue of the journal has come off the CSU Press. In fact, now, the CSU ePress has mounted digitized issues of *Muscogiana* on its website for public viewing.

Dan was always physically active. In his later years he continued to bowl and ride his bike on the Riverwalk. He was also mentally active. In the early 2000s, Dan started pursuing his favorite retirement hobby: indexing! He was an inveterate indexer, and thanks to Dan, Columbus researchers have easy access to many local resources. His first major project was an index to deaths in the Columbus newspapers from 1872 through 1918. As many readers know, the late Buster Wright compiled such an index covering up to 1872, and the State of Georgia started collecting death certificates in 1919. So, Dan's work covered the gap between those two works. Two of Dan's other indexing projects are posted on the Society's webpage: Index to Muscogee County Will Books, A-M (1834 – 1964) and Muscogee County Death Index, August 1890 – December 1918 (extracted from Muscogee County Health Dept. records).

One of the most valuable tools that Dan produced was his *Muscogiana* Surname Index, also available at the Society's website. It covers surnames from Volume 1, no. 1 (1989) to Vol. 31, no.1 (2020). Dan also compiled most of the subject index to *Muscogiana*, also available at the same site. Dan's final project was a comprehensive index to burials at Historic Linwood Cemetery, which he finished a few months before his passing. That index is still a work in progress at the Linwood office. Hopefully it will be accessible online for researchers to use in the near future.

The Society would like to offer sincere condolences to Dan's family: his daughter, sister, and many others, and we want them to know how much we valued Dan as a friend and a contributing member of the Society. He will be sorely missed.

Callie B. McGinnis
MGS Executive Director

Focus On Columbus State University Archives

Dear friends,

I am happy to announce two tremendous local history collections coming home to Columbus! Earlier this year we were awarded a major grant from the Mildred Miller Fort Foundation. Part of this grant provided funding for new storage infrastructure. A second part consisted of a challenge grant to purchase two distinct newspaper archives. The grant funded half of the purchase cost and challenged us to raise the other half. Over the last couple of months we have been working on raising these funds, and I am proud to announce that we have successfully met that match! This means that we are now moving forward with bringing these two archives back home.

The first is an electronic database of the local newspaper going back to 1858. This is available online and fully searchable, allowing researchers to explore particular years for specific keywords and view the articles online instead of panning through microfilm reels. Since we have met our challenge match, we have already purchased this database. This resource is freely available to anyone (including the general public) on campus. Come visit us in the Archives or by using one of the computers on the main floor of the Schwob Library. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need help navigating campus. We do have a limited number of remote log-on credentials for community members to access this resource from home without needing to be physically on campus. To apply for an account, send me an email at owings_david@columbusstate.edu.


DAILY COLUMBUS ENQUIRER.

FURNITURE

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.

T. S. SPEAR,

Ayer's Hair Vigor.

Sample image from the newspaper database

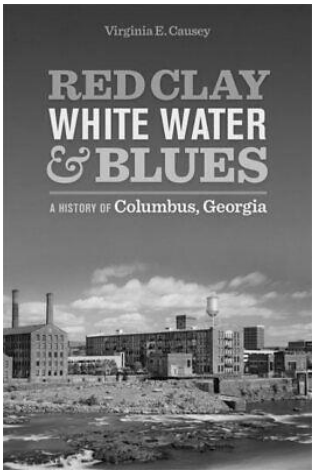
The other collection is the *Ledger – Enquirer's* historic photograph archives. It consists of over 100,000 historic images going back to the early 1900s. This will be an incredible resource to illustrate life in Columbus and the surrounding area. Once we receive these images, they will be publicly available for researchers to consult in-person in the Archives. We will also work diligently to upload these photos online to our Digital Archives so they will be accessible around the world. We are continuing to work with the seller on this, so stay tuned for more news on the photograph collection.

Image from the *Ledger-Enquirer* photograph archive

Even though we have met the necessary challenge match, we are continuing to accept donations. Any contributions donated towards this project will fund extra staffing to help process these new photos and upload them online.

David M. Owings
Head of Archives and Special Collections
Columbus State University
Owings_david@columbusstate.edu

Book Reviews



Virginia E. Causey. *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues: A History of Columbus, Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 344 pp.

Readers of this journal need no reminder of just how rich and storied is Columbus's history. Filled with regionally and even nationally significant sagas of triumph and tragedy over nearly two centuries of development from a planned riverside trading town to the dynamic third-largest city in Georgia, our community's past is complex, intriguing, and a vital part of its unique sense of place. Above all, though, despite what we sometimes can be led to think, it is not forgotten. For a community of its size, Columbus actually boasts a rather impressive historiography. Few researchers into Columbus history are unfamiliar with the work of the accomplished historians over the generations who have left us with our understanding of the city's story in the form of a sort of local canon of books that must be consulted in any research project involving city history—Billy Winn, Clason Kyle, John Lupold, Joseph Mahan, Roger Harris, Nancy Telfair, and John H. Martin to name just a few. What a pleasure it is, then, to welcome the newest, most comprehensive, and one of the most thoroughly researched books of them all to the list in the form of the splendid overview of Columbus history by Dr. Virginia E. Causey, professor emerita at Columbus State University. *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues: A History of Columbus, Georgia* is an inclusive account of the city era by era from its founding to its current situation. It is without question the standard source on the subject and promises to be so for many years to come.

Causey has been a part of the Columbus community for nearly four decades through her role as a faculty member at CSU and as a part of numerous other endeavors investigating local history. She brings to the task of writing its story not only in-depth familiarity with the city's past, but an exemplary scholarly method, a clear-eyed, unbiased approach, and a lively, conversational writing style. This is a book that points out what the city can be proud of, makes no attempt to hide what it should not, and keeps the pages turning with a brisk pace that seamlessly connects events and eras in a continuum of development. Causey sets the tone in the introduction by clearly stating the major themes she believes have influenced the distinctive way the city has developed and which she examines to varying degrees in the pages of the book. These include the many ways its physical location has shaped Columbus's economic successes and contributed to its shortcomings, how what she terms as a "benevolent elite" (2) has often, usually for the better but sometimes for the worse, guided or discouraged civic initiatives, and how violence—be it in war, slavery, racial unrest, and even in the form of serial killings—must be reckoned with in understanding the city's historical trajectory.

Though this book is in some ways the culminating contribution of a distinguished career as a professor at the Columbus State University, readers should not assume this is an academic treatise bent upon bending local history to fit inane academic paradigms. As is her right as an author, Causey certainly makes judgment as to what stories have been most impactful in the city's past. Refreshingly, though, in an era when fewer and fewer academics attempt such work, her book is in essence a grand narrative history that aspires to serve as a truly comprehensive chronicle of the life and times of a community that has long deserved such treatment. To do so convincingly in just over 250 pages of text illustrated with a few dozen images requires brevity and precludes in-depth analysis of any one topic.

Readers can rest assured all the stories are here, however, and their relationship to the city's story is adequately explained. Columbus's rise as one of the Deep South's rare antebellum industrial centers, its development into a nationally-significant textile powerhouse afterwards with some of the South's largest mill operations, its symbiotic relationship with Fort Benning, one of largest military bases in the United States, and the recent rebirth of its downtown and newfound focus on the river which originally gave it birth for both work and play—Columbus has become a rather unlikely center for whitewater rafting, after all—are all detailed. But so are the city's long struggle with racial disparities, its torturous decision to consolidate city and county services in the 1970s, and the persistence of an unusually robust corporate community headlined by international firms such as AFLAC which continues to play an outsized role in the city's civic life. Along the way so many of the stories that contribute distinct local color to Columbus are related in context, ranging from the city's connection to the invention of both Coca-Cola and Royal Crown Cola to incredible individuals such as "Blind" Tom Wiggins, "Ma" Rainey, Alma Thomas, and Carson McCullers, which have left an exceptionally rich legacy in the arts in a city seemingly consumed with economic enterprise for the better part of its history. *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues* is a significant book and a pleasure to read. Anyone attempting to understand the city's past will need to consult Causey's work.

Mike Bunn
Editor, *Muscogiana*

Index

MUSCOGEE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Purpose

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.

Board of Directors
2020-2021

President	Linda McCardle
Vice-President	Daniel Bellware
Secretary	Vacant
Treasurer	Cheryle Wadsworth
Past Presidents	Tom and Judy Hanley, Carol Ranieri
Journal Editor	Mike Bunn
Assistant Editor	Rachel Dobson
Webmaster	Jacqueline Radebaugh
Member at Large	Martha Ragan
Member at Large	Dr. Hugh Rodgers
Member at Large	Dr. Brian Schwartz
Member at Large	Cliff Tucker
Executive Director	Callie McGinnis

Become a member by completing and mailing the form below. Annual membership dues include a subscription to the biannual publication *Muscogiana: Journal of the Muscogee Genealogical Society*, ISSN 1042-3419. Those with family memberships will receive only one journal per family. Annual membership runs from January through December.

Muscogee Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 761
Columbus, GA 31902

2021 Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Membership Dues January 1 to December 31, 2021

Choose one:

Individual – includes electronic access to two 2021 issues: $20.00 _____

Individual + – includes electronic access to two 2021 issues
PLUS print copies of same: $25.00 _____

Family – includes electronic access to two 2021 issues : $25.00 _____

Family + – includes electronic access to two 2021 issues
PLUS print copies of same: $30.00 _____

Library – includes electronic access to two 2021 issues : $25.00 _____

Library+ – includes electronic access to two 2021 issues
PLUS print copies of same: $30.00 _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

Send a check made out to the Muscogee Genealogical Society to the address listed above.
Website: www.muscogeegenealogy.com
Contact: calliebmcginnis@gmail.com (executive director)

MUSCOGEE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
P. O. Box 761
Columbus, Georgia 31902
Webpage: www.muscogeegenealogy.com

Index to *Muscogiana*

A cumulative personal name index is available at the Society's website. A subject index is also available at that site.

Muscogiana – Back Issues (Digital)

All but the last two years of *Muscogiana* are available digitally through the Columbus State University ePress: https://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/muscogiana/. The last two years are available at this site only to dues-paying members of the Muscogee Genealogical Society.

Muscogiana – Back Issues (Print)

$7.00 for each issue ordered.

Vol. 1, No. 3	Vol. 13, No. 1	Vol. 23, No. 1
Vol. 1, No. 4	Vol. 13, No. 2	Vol. 23, No. 1
Vol. 3, Nos. 1&2	Vol. 14, No. 1	Vol. 24, No. 1
Vol. 3, Nos. 3&4	Vol. 14, No. 2	Vol. 24, No. 2
Vol. 4, Nos. 1&2	Vol. 15, No. 1	Vol. 25, No. 1
Vol. 4, Nos. 3&4	Vol. 15, No. 2	Vol. 25, No. 2
Vol. 5, Nos. 1&2	Vol. 16, No. 1	Vol. 26, No. 1
Vol. 5, Nos. 3&4	Vol. 16, No. 2	Vol. 26, No. 2
Vol. 6, Nos. 1&2	Vol. 17, No. 1	Vol. 27, No. 1
Vol. 6, Nos. 3&4	Vol. 17, No. 2	Vol. 27, No. 2
Vol. 7, Nos. 1&2	Vol. 18, No. 1	Vol. 28, No. 1
Vol. 7, Nos. 3&4	Vol. 18, No. 2	Vol. 28, No. 2
Vol. 8, Nos. 1&2	Vol. 19, No. 1	Vol. 29, No. 1
Vol. 8, Nos. 3&4	Vol. 19, No. 2	Vol. 29, No. 2
Vol. 9, Nos. 1&2	Vol. 20, No. 1	Vol. 30, No. 1
Vol. 9, Nos. 3&4	Vol. 20, No. 2	Vol. 30, No. 2
Vol. 10, Nos. 1&2	Vol. 21, No. 1	Vol. 31, No. 1
Vol. 11, Nos. 1&2	Vol. 21, No. 2	Vol. 31, No. 2
Vol. 11, Nos. 3&4	Vol. 22, No. 1	Vol. 32, No. 1
Vol. 12, No. 1	Vol. 22, No. 2	

Please include $2.50 for shipping and handling for one issue; $5.00 for two or more issues. Make check payable to "Muscogee Genealogical Society" and mail to the address above. An order form is also available at the Society's website.

MUSCOGIANA
Muscogee Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 761
Columbus, Georgia 31902