

The Voice

of The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and Cobb Memorial Archives
Speaking about the Past to the Present, for a Better Future

The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society Quarterly
Meeting Sunday, July 17, 2016, 3:00 p.m. EDT
The Lanier Room, H. Grady Bradshaw Library,
Valley, Alabama



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The Valley's Textile Heritage: The Beginnings

Presenter: Malinda Powers

At the close of the Civil War, the Southland had suffered devastation of epic proportions. Yet, a small group of West Point businessmen and planters from Chambers County, Alabama and Harris County, Georgia, dared to look toward the future. Two groups emerged, each with the same vision: to harness the power of the Chattahoochee River to operate textile mills. Their only resource for capital, however, was the bales of cotton that had been hidden in nearby swamps as Wilson's Raiders had approached West Point in April, 1865. But they had to act quickly, before Reconstruction agents could confiscate their contraband.

The bales were taken to Savannah and Augusta and the daring men received a good price from eager British agents. Thus began two companies, each one building a textile mill on the banks of the Chattahoochee, just a few miles apart. On August 1, 1866-one hundred and fifty years ago this summer-the cornerstones were laid for both mills with grand ceremony.

The men who founded the Chattahoochee Manufacturing Company and the Alabama-Georgia Manufacturing Company will be the focus of our upcoming quarterly program. Speaker Malinda Powers will focus upon the founders of the mills, with an emphasis on the early management of both enterprises, especially the roles of the George Huguley family and the Lanier brothers. Rare images of both early mills will be presented as well. "A review of the historical literature and some vintage maps have yielded some interesting details that many folks have not heard before," Powers says.

Following the program, a reception will be held for all attending. A special invitation is extended to descendants of the founders to join us as we commemorate this sesquicentennial anniversary of the beginnings of Valley's textile heritage.

President's Message

2016 is proving to be a very busy and interesting time for CVHS! In April, our organization was the recipient of several pallets of historic brick from Point University. Unable to rehab the old Foundry, Point recently razed the building to make way for student housing in downtown West Point. While they are going to incorporate some of the old brick and wood into their new structure, the university gifted the remaining salvaged brick to CVHS to sell to the public and reap the financial benefit. We made over \$1,300 from the sale, which helps fund some special projects that we have underway.

Our bus trip to Civil War battlefields was once again very successful and a big hit with participants, some of whom came from Illinois, Ohio, and Texas. Proceeds from these two trips combined have enabled us to donate \$7,000 to the Cobb Archives towards the purchase of a much-needed, state-of-the-art microfilm reader/printer. Interest has been expressed to develop a third trip, returning to Virginia to visit places we did not see on our first trip. Stay tuned for more details this fall!

Please make plans to attend our summer quarterly meeting on July 17th. A final program on our textile heritage is on the agenda, this time focusing on the start-up and early days of the first two mills and the men who built them. Our second "Historical Postcard Collection", featuring

sketches and vintage photographs of West Point Manufacturing's local mills, is hot off the press and will be offered for sale during the reception immediately following the program.

And on August 1st, our organization is partnering with the City of Valley to commemorate the sesquicentennial anniversary of the laying of the cornerstones of the first two mills. The public is encouraged to attend the 10:00 am ET ceremony at the Farmer's Market pavilion, next to Langdale Mill on Highway 29 across from Valley City Hall. Rumor has it that Alabama's Governor Patton will return and deliver his speech first delivered at the same site 150 years ago!

Jason Williams, our Marketing Director, is currently upgrading our website to make it easier for us to upload information and news. Our website is www.cvhistoricalsociety.org. He's also developed a Facebook page for our organization. So, like us on Facebook (search for "C V H S") and follow us to get the latest news. We appreciate all Jason is doing to help us communicate more effectively.

Finally, we want to host a fun and memorable members' outing later in the fall. Details to be announced at our meeting, on our Facebook page, and via email correspondence with members.

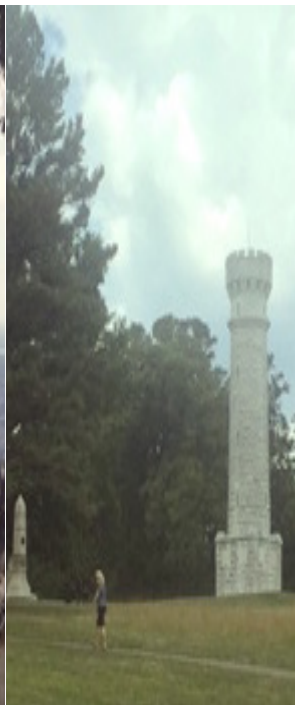
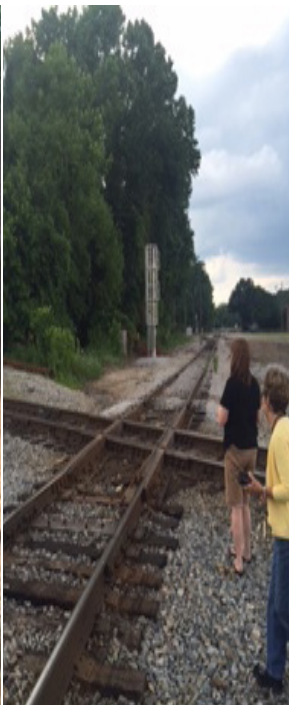
Malinda Powers



CVHS Tour of Civil War Battles, Cemeteries in the West



**Final Evening and Dinner at Stately Oaks, Jonesboro, Georgia
Iuka, Corinth, Shiloh's Victory Defeated Confederate Memorial,
Lookout Mountain, Chickamauga**



Cobb Memorial Archives Report

By Robin Brown



Coca-Cola Exhibit Coming this Summer

This Summer is gearing up to be a busy season for us at Cobb Memorial Archives. The Archives is currently working on a display that tells the history of one of the area's landmarks, the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant in West Point, Georgia. In July, 1909, George Cob, Sr. moved to West Point, Georgia. He had recently purchased the territorial right to bottle Coca-Cola in West Point and La-Grange as well as part of Chambers County. In the 1930's, George Cobb, Jr. joined the bottling business. For many residents of this area, one of the most treasured school-days memories was the Coca-Cola writing tablet and pencil they received annually from the local bottling company. While the exhibit is not yet ready, it will be on display in the coming weeks. Please contact the Archives for more information and check our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/cobbmemorialarchives) to keep up with the latest news and information.

New Microfilm Scanner

The Archives is pleased to announce the addition of a new microfilm scanner. Contributing the funds raised from this year's and last year's Civil War Battlefield and Cemetery Tour, CVHS helped the Archives purchase a new state of the art digital microfilm reader. The digital scanner offers a clearer view of the film, and allows users to enlarge, brighten, and crop images on the screen. In addition to printing images from microfilm, patrons are now able to save images to a flash drive. The Archives has census, marriage, and probate records and local newspapers available on microfilm.

Looking Back

On June 13, 1976, the Archives along with the H. Grady Bradshaw Library were dedicated and opened to the public. Thanks to the initiative and financial support of the area's citizens, with efforts spearheaded by Mr. George Cobb and Mr. Joe Lanier, the Library and Archives have continuously served the area.

Mr. George Cobb, Jr. provided the funds to establish the Archives in memory of his parents. In addition to honoring the legacy of his parents, Mr. Cobb sought to give back to this community in a significant way. Through his generosity, the Cobb Memorial Archives has provided physical space for the materials collected by CVHS members since 1954, provided for the employment of an archivist, collected and preserved additional records and items of local historical importance, initiated the systematic organization of these records, and made all of these records and items available to the public for the interpretation of the history of this area. Thankfully, we have been able to sustain this mission for forty years.

My Family's Role in the Founding of the Textile Industry in the Valley

By A. Stephen Johnson

If you've done any genealogy research or watched TV programs like Finding Your Roots, you know that the details of your ancestor's lives are always interesting no matter how unimportant they may be to others. I have been asked to write about by Johnson ancestors and how they were involved in the founding of the Textile Industry in the Valley.

First, I should explain that all these Johnsons are on my mother's side of the family. She was named Johnson before she married, and married another Johnson, no relation.

The story begins with my great-great-grandfather, Benjamin Johnson. He was born 11 January 1807, probably in Columbia County, GA. After his father, Allen Johnson, moved the family to northeast Tennessee, where he served in the War of 1812, they moved back to Georgia, to that part of Jackson County now in Hall County, where Allen Johnson died in 1817. His widow, Mary Ann Pace Johnson, moved with her children to Upson County, GA. In the 1820s, Benjamin married a widow, Jane Dodwell Leverett, who had 2 children, Lucretia and Hiram. Lucretia married Elias Davidson in 1840 and they are the ancestors of all the Davidsons and several other families in this area.

In 1830 Benjamin moved his wife and family to Harris County, GA, where he owned a cotton plantation about 6 miles south of West Point on what is now Georgia Highway 103. The land bordered on the Chattahoochee River and also included a large island in the river still shown on maps as Johnson's Island. He became one of the first stockholders in the new Chattahoochee Manufacturing Company, which began construction in 1869 and later became known as Langdale Mill.

From this point, I will quote the more significant parts of a letter written to Mr. Floyd Tillery of West Point Manufacturing Company, dated April 14, 1947, by my great-uncle Allen Fletcher Johnson (1868-1959), Benjamin's grandson. A carbon copy of the letter was given to my family and is now in the Cobb Memorial Archives.

Uncle Allen writes:

"Dear Mr. Tillery:

My parents said when I was quite young that my Grandfather, Benjamin Johnson, was one of the first stockholders in the Chattahoochee Mills and my Grandfather, Thomas Ward, of Salem, Alabama, one of the original stockholders of the Alabama and Georgia Mills, as they were known at that time. Grandfather Johnson owned a farm of about 1,000 acres. (Note: Alabama and Georgia Mills is now known as Riverdale Mill. It was also constructed in 1869, and both mills were built out over the river to utilize water power, so most of both mills was located in Georgia, since the state line below West Point is the high water mark on the west bank of the river.)

My first remembrance of the Chattahoochee Mill was at the time when John D. Johnson, my father, was made President of the mill. I cannot say the exact date but it was about 1875. My grandfather gave his stock to three of his children, Thomas Johnson, Ms. M. A. Blackmon, and John D. Johnson, after he had sold his farm, above referred to, to his son John D. Johnson in 1869. John D. Johnson was then made a director to represent the family interest. I do not think the mill was successful or paid dividends in 1870 to 1875 and 1873 and 1874 lost money. At that time John L Lovelace of Long Cane, Troup County (he was a director in the Atlanta and West Point Railroad) was President of the mill.

At an annual meeting of the stockholders and directors about 1874, when President Lovelace submitted his annual report showing a loss, my father asked him what he planned to do to stop losses. President Lovelace resented the questioning and replied, "Will Johnson, since you are critical and know so much about a cotton mill we will make you President." The Directors forthwith elected him President. My father told the directors that he was not an applicant for the Presidency, and he did not pretend to know how to operate a cotton mill, but if they named him

President he would employ someone who knew how to operate the mill and get production.

In going through the mill he observed the machinery and noted it was old and worn, but he found a few machines, I think in the picker room, which were new or comparatively new. He made note that these machines were made by Howard and Bullough in Liverpool, England, and found they had been shipped from Liverpool. He further found on investigation that they had an office in Boston, so he wrote the Boston Office that he had been made President of the mill and would need some machinery, but first he would need to find and engage a superintendent who knew how to operate a coarse yarn mill which at that time was running on osnaburgs. They referred his letter to the Liverpool Office who got in touch with Thomas Lang, superintendent of a mill in Oldham, England. Mr. Lang had a large family and was not interested in going to America but recommended his son, Will Lang who had his apprenticeship in that mill. Will Lang was interested to the extent that instead of writing, he immediately caught a boat to Boston. On arriving he ascertained the location of West Point and departed at once to look into the job. He arrived in West Point on an early train before day and walked to the mill. On arrival he asked for President Johnson and was told that he lived at his farm on the east side of the river and he would have to go back through West Point to get there. He then walked back down to Johnson farm and introduced himself. Father took him in the home and soon took him in his buggy to the mill, about twelve miles.

After going through the mill, Lang applied for the job as superintendent and Father employed him provided he could take charge at once. The salary agreed on was not large, but Lang was to get a bonus on increased production. He took charge of the superintendent's house and went to work. He soon decided that instead of osnaburgs, on which they had been losing money, they would make some other fabric and decided on flat duck. His success was immediate and the duck proved satisfactory to the trade. He was proud of this new fabric and decided he should protect it from being copied by other mills by putting a

brand on each bolt, and decided on "Magnolia" for a brand and had it copyrighted. This was the first brand put on cotton goods in the United States.

This flat duck proved profitable and the mill showed a profit for the first and second years. The production had so increased that Lang's bonus was considerable. The mill was so well organized and producing so well that Lang asked for a leave of absence to visit his father in Oldham. His report was so favorable on the United States and on the mill at West Point, that his father, T. Lang, returned with him and brought all his family except one son, Edward Lang, who was a Captain in the British Army in South Africa.

On arriving at West Point he moved in the superintendent's house. Will Lang then resigned as superintendent and T. Lang was elected superintendent. Then Will Lang was elected superintendent of the Alabama and Georgia mills and was as successful there as he had been at Chattahoochee Mill. T. Lang remained at Langdale until 1905 or later, and Will Lang at Alabama and Georgia Mills for a number of years until he had accumulated enough funds to build a knitting mill at Macon, Georgia. Soon improved automatic machines put him out of business and he went to Brookside Mills at Knoxville, Tennessee, as superintendent and manager.

As to the operation of the Chattahoochee, it is my impression that it did not close down in 1870, or afterward to 1880 or 1886 when the mill burned. Before 1870, I do not know, but certainly dividends were few or nil before my father was made president. The mill under my father and the Langs' administration did make money and paid dividends.

The control of the mill in 1878 or 1879 was in three interests, J. L. Lovelace, Johnson, and Lanier, each owning about one-third. Mr. Lanier who had interested some Boston people in acquiring the mill came to my father and wanted to buy all the Johnson interest which would give him control. He asked the price for the stock and father told him he did not care to sell. He persisted and finally father told him to

name a price he would give or take. After Mr. Lanier had communicated with Boston he named a price, the amount I do not know, but it was a considerable premium, and father decided to accept, which gave Mr. Lanier control. This was just prior to 1880 when the mill was reorganized as West Point Manufacturing Company with L. Lanier as president. (Note: a copy of the minutes of the reorganizational meeting were retained in my family. A cousin had a number of copies made to give to various family members, and a copy is now in the Cobb Memorial Archives.)

When the Langdale Mill burned in 1886, I saw the fire from West Point. The fire started in the late afternoon, just after the mill closed down, in the pump house, which contained the fire pump. The only pump was operated by water power and the first thing burned was the rubber belt which drove the pump, so there was no chance to stop the fire.

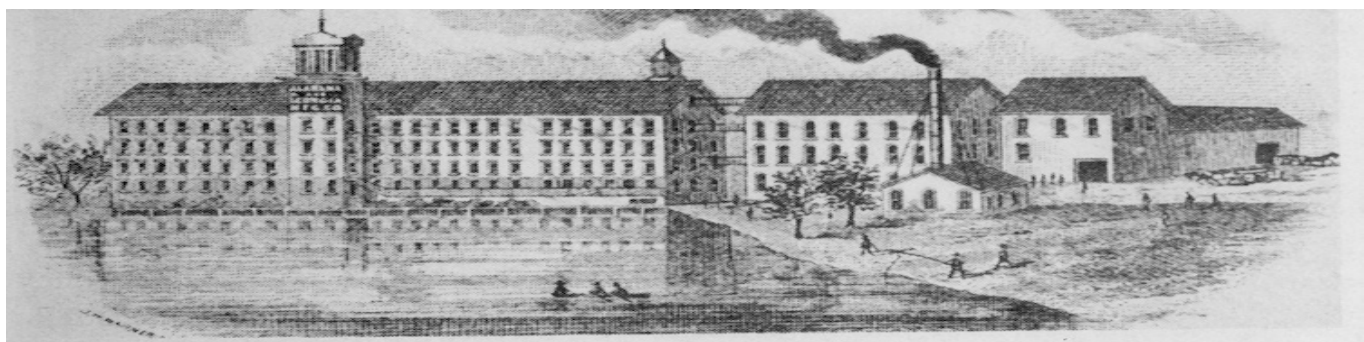
I think full credit should be given to Thomas Lang for I consider him the best superintendent of that period. I know he got the best production and at the lowest cost of any duck mill. He was a good manager and was never short of help. He looked after the spiritual, educational, and social welfare of the community and everyone loved Mr. and Mrs. Lang.

Now, some family anecdotes about Benjamin Johnson: As mentioned above, he retired from farming in 1869, sold the farm to his son John David Johnson (my great-grandfather), and moved into West Point. He lived with his wife in a house on what is now East 6th Street, just inside the Troup County line. The house was occupied in later years by Mrs. Lura Harrell, and since has been demolished and a newer house built on the lot. The John David Johnson family

moved into West Point in 1884 so the children could go to Public School. Public schools were authorized by the Georgia legislature in 1879, and West Point had one of the first in the state. Families were actually moving into West Point so their children could go to Public School.

Benjamin Johnson was said to be a very large man, with a hot temper, and many people, including his grandchildren, were somewhat intimidated by him. His wife Jane was 7 years older than he, and she died first on 21 December 1881. Apparently Benjamin expressed a desire to get married again, and on the night of October 11th 1882, his children were assembled at his house, trying to persuade him to wait a full year to marry again, out of respect for their mother, Benjamin lost his temper and ordered them out of his house. He then went out to the barn to sulk, had a stroke, and died there in the barn. In doing research in the LaGrange newspapers on microfilm, I found an article in the West Point column which supports this story:

“Mr. Benjamin Johnson, of this place, was found dead this Wednesday morning on a pile of oat straw in his barn. Mr. J. was a citizen of Harris County from a young man until about 13 years since he came to this place. He had been in bad health for some years and had been complaining for some time that he could not rest at night. And some time, during the night, left his bed and went to this house, it is supposed, for a change, taking his overcoat with him, with which he had partially covered himself. His disease was softening of the brain. Dr. Pattillo, his physician, thinks some heart trouble the immediate cause of death. Mr. Johnson was 76 years of age, and a consistent member of Sardis Church in Harris County. Peace to his ashes.”



Alabama & Georgia Manufacturing Company 1869.

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Lifetime

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 Stephen Johnson
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 Carl Summers, Jr.
 Mrs. Miriam Syler
 Virginia Weldon
 Marjorie D. Wheeling
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 Nina Langley
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 Suzie Lanier Maxwell
 J. C. & Janice McGinty, Jr.
 Morris & Sarah J. Plott
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 Martha Shepherd
 M. Reid Wallis
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Friend

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 Mendl W. Djunaidy
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 Bill Gilbert
 Bruce & Rosa Alice Gray, Jr.
 Brenda K. & William Howell
 Harold G. Prather
 Ret. Col. William Sikes, Jr.

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Carson Abrams
 Brenda Adams

Julie Alexander
 Mary Alsobrook
 Danny Anglin
 Betty Barrett
 Ronny Berry
 Pat Blakenship
 Glenda Brack
 Sally Breedlove
 Barbara Brooks
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 Ty Ragsdale
 Gayle & Howard Sewell
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 The Tallapoosa Ranger
 Alabama Welcome Center
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 Mr. Wayne Clark, *Valley Times-
 News*
 Lanett City Hall
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In Memoriam

Fay Mezick Ross 1934-2016

Annette McClendon Waites 1940-2016

*Cobb Memorial Archives Images Collection:
Mid-20th Century Post Cards of Valley
Textile Mills*



**A Description of Two Cotton Factories
in Progress of Erection
Selections taken from
The LaGrange Reporter, Friday Morning,
February 5, 1869**

‘West Point Enterprise:
Bridge over the Chattahoochee
A Female College
Two Cotton Factories in Progress of Erection
All Since the War Ended

Our people are moving on to an advanced position in the race of progress, and in a few years, the evidences of wealth and prosperity will be seen all over the State. We are led to the fore going reflections by a visit to our sister town of West Point, on Friday and Saturday last ---two days pleasantly and we hope profitably spent among friends and acquaintances. Unpretentiously, but steadily and perseveringly, her people have striven, since the war ended, to better their condition, by building up the trade and commerce of their town..... But the two enterprises which shall have our most immediate attention in this article are two cotton manufacturing companies, which were organized in March 1866, with capital stock, at present, amounting respectively, to \$100,00. and \$60,000. The factory building of the first is completed---the walls, roof and joists, &c., of the other are up and ready for the flooring, and we hope will soon be completed.

Alabama & Georgia Manufacturing

Company: The buildings of the company are located between six and seven miles below West Point, on the high side of the Chattahoochee River, the high water mark being the State line on that side of the river, and the building for the machinery being erected upon a foundation below that water mark, the factory is located in Georgia, while the tenements for operatives, offices, &c., are in the State of Alabama.

The finger of Nature seems to have pointed out this locality as peculiarly adapted to, and intended for, manufacturing purposes. There is no better site to be found in the world. A shoal begins just above, while the prong of the river, running around the west end of 143 acres of land known as Campbell’s Island, sub-divides and forms a smaller island. Here is the main current of the stream, upon a solid rock basis. The foundations of the building are laid across the stream, the upper base wall forming also the dam, throwing the surplus water over a substantial dam into the lesser channel of the river, affording a head of water of nine feet. The prong of the river on the west side of Campbell’s Island is a natural canal taking the great bulk of water, and therefore will afford sufficient power to propel a dozen factories in the driest season of the Year.

As we have said, the upper base wall of the building, which is 210 feet in length, by 50 feet in breath, for also the dam, in which five extra eyes have been left for propelling as many more factories. These stone walls are of solid masonry, laid with cement, and are eight feet thick for several feet above the highest water mark. The thickness of the brick walls are graduated as they rise above the stone walls from four feet to eighteen inches in thickness. The building is four stories in height, and is already completed, ready for the machinery to be put in. A tower has been run up with the building on the upper aide, for winding stairways, leaving the whole space in the main body of the building for machinery

The architecture has been designed with an eye to strength and durability as well as beauty. The floorings are well supported by heavy girders which are also sustained in the centre with upright posts along the whole length of the building. The flooring is doubled---first laid with three inch wide plank in the rough and that floored over with well seasoned and neatly dressed two inch flooring four inches in width---thus making the whole strong enough to bear the heaviest of machinery and capable of sustaining the severest jars or shocks. The whole building is well ventilated with large glass windows.

The tenement houses for the operatives are seven in number, all ready for occupation. There is also a large boarding house for operatives, containing eighteen rooms and seventeen fireplaces. The architect of this factory building is Mr. William Gabbett, of Atlanta; J. J. Harris of Oak Bowery, builder; and the masonry by M. F. Echols, of Opelika, Alabama. The present stockholders are: George Huguley, M. T. Walker, William H. Huguley, A. F. Kendrick, George W. Huguley, Wyche S. Jackson, Thomas F. Nolan, B. L. Turner, W. C. Lanier, B. L. Harris, A.H. Finley, and the estate of A. T. Zachry.

Chattahoochee Manufacturing Company: The location of this factory is considered by some to be as favorable as its twin sister. It is about three miles below west point on the same side of the Chattahoochee River. Though not quite so large, it is nevertheless, the equal of the other in point of the structure of the building, &c. The building is four stories high, 162 feet in length, and 50 feet wide. It is covered in, the joists in position, and flooring dried and ready to be laid. It also has a splendid water power, being situated on a descending shoal and built in the same style of architecture as the one below. The company has a large boarding house ready for occupation, costing about \$3,600., containing eighteen rooms. So far, about \$15,000. has been expended, more stock can also be taken in the company,... The water wheel has already been received, and is a Leffel American Double Turbine. The stock holders are Elisha Trammell, L.B. Lovelace, N. L. Atkinson, Benjamin Johnson, W. C. Darden, A. H. Finley, James T. Moore, E. G. Richards, Lewis Schuessler, Jonathan Ware and B. L. Harris.”

A NNUAL DUES

The annual dues of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society are due each year on the first of January. Dues are \$20.00 per individual and \$5.00 for each additional member of the same household, and \$5.00 for any student who is still in school and is under 21 years of age. Other membership levels include Benefactor-\$250; Patron-\$100; and Friend-\$50. For any NEW member who subscribes after September 1, their membership will be for the remainder of the current year and also the following year. In becoming a member you will receive a quarterly newsletter *The Voice* that will inform you of quarterly meetings, new publications, articles of historical interest in the tri-county coverage area and upcoming events.

Please make checks payable to CVHS and mail with your name and full address to The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, Inc., 3419 20th Ave., Valley, AL. 36854



Thomas Lang



The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society
Cobb Memorial Archives
3419 20th Avenue
Valley, Alabama 36854