

# THE VOICE

of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and  
Cobb Memorial Archives

## A MILL VILLAGE STORY *Presented by Gerald Bruce Andrews*

The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society is happy to announce that Mr. Gerald Bruce Andrews will be the speaker at the October General Membership Meeting on Sunday, October 27, 2019, 3:00 EST in the Lanier Room, The Chambers County Bradshaw Library, Valley, Alabama. Mr. Andrews will review his recent book which is descriptive of growing up in the mill villages and working in the mills of the Chattahoochee Valley. His book is biographical and his story's setting is the village with its mill and the many working people of good character in that past era.

The publisher, New South Books, describes: "A *Mill Village Story* is the record of one man's upbringing in a place and time that is quickly vanishing. A quintessentially American small town, West Point, Georgia is a place defined by its local industry—a world-class textile mill run by the WestPoint-Pepperell Corporation—and adherence to traditional Southern values of congeniality, manners, and friendliness. Everyone author Gerald Andrews knew or even just rubbed shoulders with worked at the mill, and it was Andrews'

experiences there that would take him from relative poverty to the corporate boardroom. *A Mill Village Story* is an account of Andrews' early years, his rapid rise to leadership in various textile firms, and the special character of the village that shaped him.

How does a young man go from night watchman to corporate sales in a matter of years? *A Mill Village Story* offers some explanation. Creativity and kindness set him on the right path, those characteristics nurtured in him by family members and the mill community. Gerald Andrews also quickly gained a reputation as a problem-solver—even at the lowest position at the mill—and for recognizing the importance of every employee, no matter their rank. This compassion for his employees contributed to his success. In *A Mill Village Story*, a lifetime of wisdom comes to file, with Andrews peppering his tale with the homegrown philosophies he developed from the unique social relationships he enjoyed growing up. Add to the mix personal encounters with Southern characters like

country psychic Mayhayley Lancaster and *A Mill Village Story* becomes a memorable time capsule that serves as a portrait of a uniquely American place.

Gerald Andrews grew up in a small Southern mill village. He attended Auburn University and Harvard Business School, and has received over eighty honors and awards in praise of his creative brand of leadership. He has served as Corporate Executive Vice President of West Point Stevens, Inc. in New York; President and CEO of Johnston Industries; CEO and Chairman of Accelegrow Technologies; and Executive-in-Residence at Auburn University. *A Mill Village Story* is his first book."

Members of the general public and members of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society are invited to attend the presentation by Mr. Andrews in the Lanier Room, Bradshaw Library, Valley, Alabama, Sunday, October 27, 2019, at 3:00 EDT.

**THE CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY MEETING**

**Sunday, October 27, 2019 3:00 p. m. EDT**

*The Lanier Room, Bradshaw Library  
Valley, Alabama*

*Members of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and  
the general public are invited to attend this program.*

Join us for a truly Unique Travel Opportunity!

**June 13 – 17, 2020**

# **The Creek Indians in Alabama:**

## **A Five-Day Motor Coach Immersion Experience**

*From nationally prominent sites to country back-roads, we'll explore the people, places and amazing stories that transformed two nations over two centuries ago!*

### **Featuring**

- Ancestry of the Creek People at **Russell Cave National Monument** and **Moundville Archaeological Park**
- A visit with modern-day Creeks at the **Poarch Creek Indian Reservation and Museum**
- Re-created **Fort Mims, Fort Mitchell, and Fort Jackson**
- **Chattahoochee Indian Heritage Center** commemorating the *Trail of Tears*
- The **Hermitage**, Tennessee home of General Andrew Jackson
- Southwest Alabama museums in **St. Stephens** and **Clark County**
- **Holy Ground Battlefield Park**
- Driving tours of **Autosee** and **Calabee Creek** battlegrounds
- Overnight at **Wind Creek Casino & Hotel** in **Atmore**

**For full itinerary go to [www.cvhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.cvhistoricalsociety.org)**

**Sponsored by the  
Chattahoochee Valley and Lee County Historical Societies**  
*Proceeds benefit historic preservation in Alabama*

*continued on next page*

## Details

## The Creek Indians in Alabama

### How much is it going to cost?

\$895/person double occupancy    \$1195/person single occupancy

### What is included?

- Round-trip deluxe motor coach transportation from your choice of departure locations: Auburn or Valley, AL
- 4 nights' accommodations
- On-board "history talks" and DVD presentations on related history
- Breakfast daily; complimentary snacks and beverages aboard bus
- Boxed lunch (Wednesday)
- Farewell Dinner at Pioneer Park
- All admissions and guide fees

**Do I have to pay all at once?** Not unless you prefer. Otherwise, a \$95 deposit is due at time of registration. Balance may be spread over 3 convenient payments:

<i>Double Occupancy:</i>	<i>\$895/person</i>	<i>Single Occupancy:</i>	<i>\$1195/person</i>
<i>Deposit ***</i>	<i>\$95</i>	<i>Deposit ***</i>	<i>\$95</i>
<i>1<sup>st</sup> payment due Jan 1, '20</i>	<i>\$200</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> payment due Jan 1, '20</i>	<i>\$300</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> payment due Mar 1, '20</i>	<i>\$300</i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> payment due Mar 1, '20</i>	<i>\$400</i>
<i>Final payment due May 1, '20</i>	<i>\$300</i>	<i>Final payment due May 1, '20</i>	<i>\$400</i>

**\*\*\* Early Bird Special!!! Save \$50 off your deposit by registering early with postmark on or before December 1st !** If registering *after* Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, please include deposit and any payments that were due prior to the time of your registration.

### Can I get my money back if I decide not to go?

Any payments you have made are subject to forfeiture if you back out. CVHS encourages you to consider purchasing trip insurance to recoup your investment in the event of accident or illness.

### When is the deadline to register?

Registrations will be accepted through May 1, unless we reach our trip capacity of 40 travelers prior to that date. Interested persons are encouraged to register *asap!*

### How can I find out more?

Check out our website at [www.cvhistoricalociety.org](http://www.cvhistoricalociety.org) to download registration form and full itinerary. E-mail questions to: [president@cvhistoricalociety.org](mailto:president@cvhistoricalociety.org), call (706) 645-6702 and leave message, or write CVHS Bus Trip, P.O. Box 718, West Point, GA 31833.

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Editor: Dr. Horace (Mac) Holderfield ([holderfieldh112@msn.com](mailto:holderfieldh112@msn.com))

Find us on Facebook and visit our website at <http://cvhistoricalociety.org>

**MISSION STATEMENT:** As a non-profit membership organization, the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society seeks to preserve and promote the history and heritage of Chambers County, Alabama, West Point, Georgia, and the greater Chattahoochee Valley area. CVHS produces and sells historical books and media, publishes a quarterly newsletter, and presents programs with speakers on historical topics of local and regional interest.

**VISION STATEMENT:** Having been in continuous operation since its founding in 1953, the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society strives to uphold the vision of its founders while posturing the organization for growth in the 21st century.



*Langdale Mill complex*

## THE PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE *by Malinda Powers*

Two years ago, the City of Valley sold its most historic asset, the Langdale Mill complex, including **all land** east of Moore’s Creek for \$324,500 to Henry Hudson Company for demolition. CVHS made an eleventh hour appeal to save the mill, amassing a petition with almost 500 names, many of those being folks who grew up here and long since moved away. The sale went through, but our VOICE was heard when no one else dared to challenge the powers-that-be.

To their credit, the new owners have been earnestly seeking investors to develop at least a portion of the mill property, calling a temporary halt to demolition. There are legitimate concerns. Georgia Power Company plans to breach the dam, which creates uncertainty as to the impact on direction and intensity of water flow. Also, the most historic (1888) section of the mill is problematic for developers due to its restricted views of the river. There is only one guarantee at this point: Time will eventually run out on any hope of reclamation.

**Common grounds can be just as much a historic landmark as brick-and-mortar structures. Sites such as the Langdale meadow help define the character of a particular place.**

At present the City retains the right-of-way to its Rails to Trails walking path that cuts through the old mill property. However, it must ask permission from the new owners to

erect the annual Merry-Go-Round on the old tennis court. Selling all the land east of the creek seems to have been short-sighted to say the least. Had the city kept ownership of the land, it could have preserved a beautiful green-scape for public use. Moreover, it would have maintained control of ultimate riverfront development, with very lucrative possibilities. City leaders figuratively threw out the baby with the bathwater. While working hard to attract new industry, it is also important to

not lose sight of our collective past. It is what makes our “strength woven in”. Our public commons help form our sense of place. Both are important to preserve. ■

*Below: Still a pastoral setting, Langdale meadow was once occupied by grazing cows and sheep while their owners worked at the nearby mill. The iconic rock bridge, aka the “kissing bridge”, has been a local landmark for almost a century.*



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# REPORTS ABOUT OUR REGION AND ITS CITIZENS IN 19TH CENTURY NEWSPAPERS

*From Research by A. Stephen Johnson*

*When issues of local newspapers printed in past centuries may have totally disappeared, it is rewarding for the local historians in their research to find that newspapers in other counties, states and even in far regions may have copied and printed items in our local story. Serendipity is always teasing our research. Our appreciation is again expressed to our good member Stephen Johnson for his efforts to find the fugitive reports about the people and events in our local counties. Ed.*

**The Bainbridge Argus, Decatur County, Saturday, April 17, 1869:** “**Mr. Dan Potter**, a daguerrean artist, was killed at Whitesville, Ga., on the 5<sup>th</sup> instant by a man named **Daniel**. The murderer has not been arrested.”

**The Southern Georgia, Decatur County, Thursday, June 10, 1869:** “A PROCLAMATION: By **Rufus B. Bullock**, Governor of Georgia. Whereas, I have received official information, that a murder was committed on the body of **Daniel R. Potter**, in the County of Harris, in this State, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of April, 1869, by **Thomas J. Daniel**; and whereas and it being represented to me, that said Daniel has fled from justice,—I have thought proper to issue this, my proclamation, hereby offering a reward of \$500 for the apprehension and delivery, to the Sheriff or Jailer of said county, the body of the said Daniel; and I do moreover charge and require all officers, civil and military, to be vigilant in endeavoring to apprehend and bring to trial said fugitive, in order that he may undergo a trial for the offense with which he is charged. **Rufus B. Bullock**. By the Governor, **David G. Cotting**, Secretary of State.”

**The Oglethorpe Echo, Oglethorpe County, May 12, 1896:** “The following letters were received by the Sheriff of this county last week. Read them and draw your own conclusions: West Point, Ga., May 5, 1876. Sheriff of Oglethorpe County: **Busby** was recaptured yesterday morning, ten miles below here, will give you full particulars in a day or two. He is not in Wedowee jail. (Signed, **T. G. Atkins**, Marshal.

West Point, May 6, 1876. Sheriff of Oglethorpe County; I sent you a postal card stating that **Busby** had been recaptured, but now reports say not. One report says that he was killed while running last time. He has not been lodged in jail, anyway. Pursuers have returned to Wedowee without **Busby**. I do not know what they have done. Will keep you posted. (Signed **T. G. Atkins**, Marshal.”

**Dawson Weekly Journal, Terrell County Georgia, April 21, 1881:** “**Mr. W. C. Gholston**, of LaGrange, has sued the Western Union Telegraph Company for \$10,000.00, on account of the operator at that place divulging to a third party dispatches sent by Mr. Gholston.

**April 28, 1881: Mr. Amos Smith**, of Harris County, has invented a self-winding clock. By Placing it in a current of air it winds itself.

**June 16, 1881:** The house of **Mrs. J. J. Crawford** of Hamilton, Harris county, was burned last Thursday.”

**December 8, 1881:** “A prominent physician of Whitesville, Harris county, in this state, by the name of **L. C. Norwood**, was burned up in his residence in a few nights ago. He was about forty-five years of age. During the war he did gallant service with the Twentieth Georgia Regiment.

**August 17, 1882:** “**Senator Ben Hill** died at six this morning, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1882.”

**August 24, 1882:** “The following gentlemen were the pall bearers at the funeral of **Senator Ben Hill: Gov. Alfred H. Colquitt, Judge R. H. Clarke, Hon. A. O. Bacon, H. V. M. Miller, Major Benjamin E. Crane, Col. P. W. Alexander, Col. G. W. Adair, Judge H. K. McCoy, Hon. J. S. B. Boynton, Hon. M. A. Condlar, Dr. R. D. Spalding, Hon. R. J. Moses, Dr. W. F. Westmoreland, Hon., R. J. Lowery.”**

**December 3, 1885:** “**R. D. Sims**, of LaGrange, who has been advertising in all the southwest Georgia papers, a preparation to prevent the fermenting of syrup, is a humbug, and is demented at that”

**Eastman Times, Terrell County, Georgia, January 9, 1879:**”**Mr. Henry Boyd**, a young man about 25 years of age, was found frozen to death two mles west of LaGrange. He was on his way home and was not very far from it, when it is supposed he was attacked with an epileptic fit.”

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**Decatur News, Early County, Thursday, April 10, 1884:**  
“**Mr. E. D. Williams**, of LaGrange, who was fatally burned in the steamer Everingham disaster, died at 8 o'clock on Friday night last, at the residence of **Mr. D. B. Fitzgerald**, near Florence (Ga), after suffering intensely for 36 hours. His remains were sent to LaGrange for interment. He leaves a wife and two young children aged 10 and six.”

**Hamilton Journal, Harris County, September 26, 1884:** “A Romantic Marriage. The West Point correspondent of the *LaGrange Reporter* says: “An intensely romantic marriage occurred near the city last week. On Friday afternoon, about 6 o'clock, **Mr. John M. Harrington** and **Miss Lula Zachry**, of this place, were married two miles from town. The ceremony was performed by **Rev. S. P. Callaway**, in a beautiful and impressive manner. The attendants were **Mr. P. T. Shutze** and **Miss Lottie Lanier**, **Mr. Frank Lanier** and **Mrs. W. L. Williams**. All the parties were on horseback, the minister standing in a buggy. The place selected was a beautiful cluster of shade trees, on a mound near the public road, away from the hum and the noise of the busy world. After the marriage the bridal party returned to the city and partook of an elegant supper at the Chattahoochee House. The bride is one of West Point's most loveliest and intellectual young ladies, and a general favorite in society circles. The groom is a young gentleman of stirring qualities, prominent cotton broker of this city, and is very popular with all who know him. We wish them long lives of unalloyed happiness.”

**Hamilton Journal, Harris County, October 16, 1884:**  
“Notes from West Point. **Dave McCoy**, colored, lost a child Saturday night by death from eating potash. **Mr. T. B. Johnson**, of Union, Harris county, has bought a place in West Point from his sister, and will soon move there. **Mr. F. M. Headly** and **Miss Eliza Raper**, of Alabama, were married at the waiting rooms of the car shed by **Rev. H. J. Ellis**, on last Monday. The river continues lower than for many years. We learn that it has not been so low as now but once or twice since 1839. **Miss Jennie Atkinson** of this place, who has been appointed missionary to China, left for the celestial empire on last Thursday. A large circle of friends and relatives were at the depot to bid her farewell.”

**Hamilton Journal, Harris County, November 4, 1884:**  
“Notes from West Point. *West Point Press*. The sugar cane crop in this section is not turning out as well as was

expected some time go. A few days ago **Dr. Miller** was summoned to Griffin to attend the funeral of his aged mother. A telegraph line has been established between West Point, Ga., and LaFayette, Ala. The first message was sent over the wire Tuesday last. **Mr. W. H. White** has moved to Lampasas, Texas. We wish him abundant success in the Lone Star State. **Mr. L. Lanier's** new Building is nearing completion, and will be the largest and most imposing structure in town. **Mr. Higginbotham** has leased the opera hall in this building and will have it handsomely fitted up.”

**Hamilton Journal, Harris County, January 27, 1885:**  
“Notes From West Point. *West Point Press*. The late cold weather has caused damage to the oat crop. It is not yet too late to seed land to oats for a paying crop. The Franklin made her first trip down the river Tuesday, carrying a large load of cotton, grain and fertilizers. In two weeks both boats will be kept busy. **Mr. R. L. Mealor**, of Montgomery, came up yesterday, bringing the remains of his youngest child to be buried in the cemetery here. Only a few months ago Mr. Mealor made a similar sad visit to our town to lay away a bright little child. He and his wife have the sympathy of this community. The new council has had a number of street lamps put up. Judging from the way **Mayor Harrington** induces offenders to contribute to the city's finances we will soon be able to have lamps at every corner. Dealing in cotton seed has become an established trade with some business houses here. Hundreds of tons have been shipped from West Point to various oil mills, and there is a probability that many farmers would be short of seed to plant if the first planting should be killed.”

**Hamilton Journal, Harris County, November 25, 1884:**  
“The man **Willis Greene**, who was married to **Miss Henderson**, both of Alabama, a week or two ago in West Point, it has turned out, has a wife and three children living. The brothers of the young lady offers a large reward for his apprehension. A little son of **Mr. Shackelford** of Heard county was found dead in the lint room of his father's ginhouse the other night. He was not missed until supper time, when a search was instituted with the above result. It is supposed that in jumping into the cotton he struck his head against the wall and was stunned, and being unable to get out of the lint was suffocated.”

*Hamilton Journal*, Harris County, January 13, 1885: Troup County Topics. *LaGrange Reporter*. **Willis Greene**, the bigamist is now in jail in LaGrange. He was brought up from West point, where he had a commitment trial. **Mrs. Eliza S. Smith**, relict of the late **Dr. N. N. Smith** died at the residence of her son-in-law, **Mr. W. P. O. Henning**, in this city on Friday night, and was buried on Saturday afternoon in Hillview cemetery. Special prayer was made for **Hon. W. O. Tuggle** and family at the Baptist Church last Sunday. Mr. Tuggle is in Thomasville, and the latest news is that he is growing weaker. He is in a very happy frame spiritually. **Rev. S. S. Pennington** informs us that a young man named **Syron** from Hamilton passed his house Saturday evening in an almost frozen state; that he took him in, warmed him, and sent him on his way. West Point is in a buzz over her local chief magistracy. The young men have a ticket headed by **Mr. J. M. Harrington**. **Captain R. A. S. Freeman** is also in the race. The election will take place next Monday. **Capt. J. P. Wilson's** little son was bitten by a vicious dog last Thursday.

*Hamilton Journal*, Harris County, March 10, 1885: Troup County Items. *LaGrange Reporter*. It took 92,000 shingles to cover the bridge at West Point and the cost to the county was five hundred and sixty dollars. Some thief entered the Western Union Telegraph Office on Saturday night, and after a close examination thereof, departed with **Cliff's** Sunday shoes. West Point was presented here last Tuesday by the following creditable delegation: **Col. B. L. Harris**, **Capt. R. A. S. Freeman**, **Mr. G. T. Mitcham** and **Dr. H. A. Beasley**. By applying cocaine---the new anesthetic---a doctor in LaGrange wrenched a tooth from the jaw bone of a darkey, the other day without giving the patient the least pain. This discovery will be a boon to suffering humanity."

*Hamilton Journal*, Harris County, March 31, 1885: "West Point is agitated on the prohibition question. It is presumed that a number from that city will attend the mass meeting to be held in LaGrange on the first Tuesday in April."

*Hamilton Journal*, Harris County, April 28, 1885: "The eye lashes of **Mr. Geo. W. Calaway's** infant child were singed off the other night by the nurse carelessly holding its face over a lamp flame. Mr. C. lives in West Point.

*Hamilton Journal*, Harris County, May 31, 1881: Buggy Advertisement.



*Abbeville Chronicle*, Wilcox County, Thursday July 8, 1915: THREE MURDERED NEAR WEST POINT. Bodies of White Men Found in Chattahoochee River---Were Weighted with Rocks. West Point, Ga., July 1.---Within the last 24 hours three dead bodies have been recovered from the waters of the Chattahoochee River, 15 miles south of West Point. They were all young white men. Two of them were brothers, **Mack M.** and **Epps Melton**, residents of Harrison County, Ga. , and **J. S. Leak**, of Riverview, Ala. The verdict of the coroner's jury held yesterday afternoon over the first two bodies was "They came to their death by pistol wounds and acts of violence at the hands of unknown parties."

# CHATAHOOCHEE VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIPS 2019

## LIFETIME

Mrs. Lillian Cauble  
Stephen Johnson  
Richard H. Monk, Jr.  
Virginia Weldon  
Mr. George C. Zachry, Sr.

## HONORARY

Martha Lee Gatlin  
Mary Hamilton  
Beverly Perryman  
Sherrie Waller Sorrell  
Marjorie D. Wheeling

## BENEFACTOR

Dr. H. M. and Linda  
Holderfield

## PATRON

Gerald and Claire Andrews  
Rea S. and Debra Cark  
Dr. Robert and Jenny Copeland  
Dr. Jonathan Dailey  
Larry B. Duncan  
Col. (Ret.) Gwen Gibson  
James Grover Leak  
Charlie Maxwell  
J. C. and Janice McGinty, Jr.  
Joe W. Miller  
Morris and Sarah J. Plott  
Marshall and Ellen Sapp  
Hunter and Brenda Searcy  
Anthony and Martha Stone  
Col. M. Reid Wallis  
Jason Williams  
Helen F and Grigg Zachry, III

## FRIEND

Randall Alan  
John and Lee Barker  
Henry and Judy Bledsoe  
Debbie Cook  
Mendl W. Djunaidy  
Bill Gilbert  
Bruce and Rosa Alice Gray, Jr.  
Eleanor Greene Hemmes  
Bert Hitchcock  
Brenda K. and William Howell  
Clark and Deborah Johnson  
Elisabeth W. Lanier  
Malinda Powers  
William G. Sikes, Jr.  
Daniel G. Smith

Judge and Mrs. William Smith  
Cassandra Thomas  
Dr. Jane Upshaw

## INDIVIDUAL

Brenda Adams  
Wesley Adams  
Julie Alexander  
Mary Alsobrook  
Danny Lee Anglin  
Ronny Berry  
Sanford W. Blanton  
William Edward Booker, IV  
Glenda Brack  
Susie Britt  
Barbara Brooks  
Wayne Bryan  
Cindy Calhoun  
Marie A. Cantlin  
Don Clark  
R. Chris Cleveland  
Barbara Clifton  
Eugene Covington  
Jenny F. Cummins  
Mrs. Adelle Curtis  
Roger Davis  
John DeLoach  
Suzanne Dewberry  
Cherry Duve  
Kirby Elder  
Donald Flynn  
Bill Ford  
Jane Fulghm  
Gloria Garner  
Emily Garrett  
Bill Gilbert  
Jane L. Gordon  
Elizabeth G. Hall  
Jeffery Hall  
Dr. Edward Hill, Sr.  
Rachel Jade Hodge  
Ann Holderfield  
Jim Holt  
Don Hudson  
Nancy Irvin  
Mr. Frederick S. Johnson, Jr.  
Dr. Vasanti Kharkar  
Rex Kienel  
Paulette Leavins  
Richard Ledyard

Earl Marsh  
Roy McClendon  
Barbara Moore  
Suzanne Newberry  
Margaret Newman  
Fay Newton  
Sam Oliver  
Laure Stephens Patterson  
Richard Perryman  
Charlie Powers  
Melissa Brewer Reinwald  
Naci N. H. Rieter  
R. Norman Satterwhite  
Mrs. Bertha Schroeder  
Lorraine Seeby  
Richard Stevenson  
Marilyn Stokes  
Patricia Hegarty Tepper  
John E. Thrasher III  
Ida Vollenweider  
Nancy Warren-Holland  
James "Lee" Weaver  
Barbara T. Wingo  
Carole Wood  
Amy Yates  
George C. Zachry, Jr.

## INDIVIDUAL PLUS 1

Jim and Judy Allen  
John and Lee Barker  
Reginia and Lexi Barninger  
George and Bernice Barrow  
Frank and Mary Helen Benford  
Denson and Phyllis Blackston  
Joseph and Gayle Brewer  
Jerry and Mac Bryant  
Mrs. And Mrs. S. L. Burney IV  
Roy and Lee Burton  
Lynda and Buddy Burton  
Capt. And Mrs. Charles T.  
Creekman, Jr.  
Sybil and Charla Crowder  
Carey and Roxanne Daughtry  
Cecelia and Tim Dillard  
Gail and Donald Douglas  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Newell Floyd  
Curtis and Vicki Ford  
Edmund and Sandra Glover  
JoAnne and Shannon Hunter  
William and Virginia Hayes  
Jim and Susan Hudson

Bobby and Nita Johnson  
Dr. Charles and Peggy Mitchell  
Richard Virginia Lee  
Dr. Taylor and Lucy Littleton  
Bob and Mary Lowe  
Early and Mary McKnight  
Julia and Earl Norton  
Tom and Joan O'Connor  
Ralph and Cathy Pitts  
Frank and Susan Ponder  
Terri Slade  
Monroe and Leslie Smith  
Joe and Debbie Thompson  
Dianne and Holly Reese  
Michael and Mary Susan  
Underwood  
Trish and Jerry Waldman  
Billy and Barbara Williams  
Christine and Kerry Williams

## COMPLEMENTARY

Ala. Dept. Archives and  
History  
University of Ala. Library  
Museum of East Alabama  
Auburn University Library  
Archives  
University of Ga. Library  
Roanoke City Library  
Mrs. Bonnie Bonner  
Historic Chatahoochee  
Commission  
The Tallapoosa Ranger  
Alabama Welcome Center  
Mr. Wayne Clark, Times-News  
Hawkes Library  
Lanett City Hall  
Opelika City Library  
Greater Valley Chamber of  
Commerce  
City of West Point  
Clay County Historical Society  
Heard County Historical  
Society  
Lee County Historical Society  
Troup County Archives  
Valley Preservation Society  
Valley City Hall



## JOHN THOMAS JOHNSON *by A. Stephen Johnson*

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*Some weeks ago Stephen Johnson was encouraged by Board members to write an article for **The Voice** about his grandfather, John Thomas Johnson, the first burial following WWI in the Marseilles Cemetery in West Point. This Johnson family has a most interesting history in West Point, demonstrating leadership in the development of the textile industry, business, politics and social institutions in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Again, appreciations to Stephen for his research and writing a good story. Ed.*

My grandfather, John Thomas Johnson, was born February 3, 1874, on a farm in the New Hope community of Harris County, GA, about six miles south of West Point. He was the fifth of seven children born to John David Johnson and Frances Amanda Ward Johnson. They had moved there in 1870 from another farm in the Union community near Jones Crossroads. The New Hope community consisted of several families and a Methodist church, but all that remains today is the church cemetery. Mr. Johnson built a schoolhouse for his children and the other children of the neighborhood, and hired a teacher, Miss Charlotte McMurray, to teach all the children. The children called her "Miss Sharlie", and loved her so much that when the youngest Johnson girl child was born in 1880, her brothers and sisters asked for her to be named for their teacher, and so she was named Sharlie Lee Johnson.

John David Johnson represented his father, Benjamin Johnson, at a stockholders meeting of the Chattahoochee Manufacturing Company (later Langdale Mill), and was elected President of the Company. When the company was reorganized in 1880, he was again elected President, and during his leadership he ordered new machinery for the mill and got the Lang family from England to be superintendents. Then in 1881 he sold his shares to the Lanier family and went back to cotton farming.

In 1884 the Johnson family moved into West Point so the children could go to public school. Public schools were first authorized in Georgia in 1879, and West Point had one of the first ones in the state. Families were actually moving into West Point so that their children could go to the public school. The Johnsons moved into a house at the corner of present-day Avenue E and East 5<sup>th</sup> Street, previously owned



*John T. Johnson as Young Man with Bowtie about 1900.*

by Mr. A. F. Kendrick and Mr. Amos Huguley, and probably built around 1850. One story that has come down in my family relates that on August 31, 1886, the family was gathered around the dinner table celebrating Sharlie Lee's sixth birthday, when they felt the house shake. My grandfather was sent under the house, which had a high crawl space, to run the cows out. They thought that the cows had gotten under the house and were shaking the foundations. He came back and reported that there were no cows under the house. His mother said, "Well, we felt the house shake again while you were under there. It must have been an earthquake." The next day the newspapers reported the news of an

earthquake at Charleston, S.C., which killed 41 persons and caused property damage of five million dollars. It was felt all the way over here in West Point.

The youngest Johnson children graduated from West Point High School, and the girls attended Southern Female College (Baptist) in LaGrange, since Papa was a Baptist and he was paying the bills. My grandfather's older brother, Uncle Allen, went to the University of Georgia in the late 1880's, but my grandfather did not go to college. My mother thought it might be because after Uncle Allen got to Georgia, Grandpa Johnson found out the boys at Georgia drank liquor and he wouldn't let my grandfather go to college. An older cousin said, "No, I don't think that's true at all. He just didn't need a college education to go into business." At any rate, my grandfather did go into business, operating a grocery store in downtown West Point.

My grandparents were married on January 10, 1900, in the Methodist Church in West Point. Grandmother was the former Ola Estelle Miller, daughter of Henry W. and Lura D. Miller. He was also a merchant in downtown West

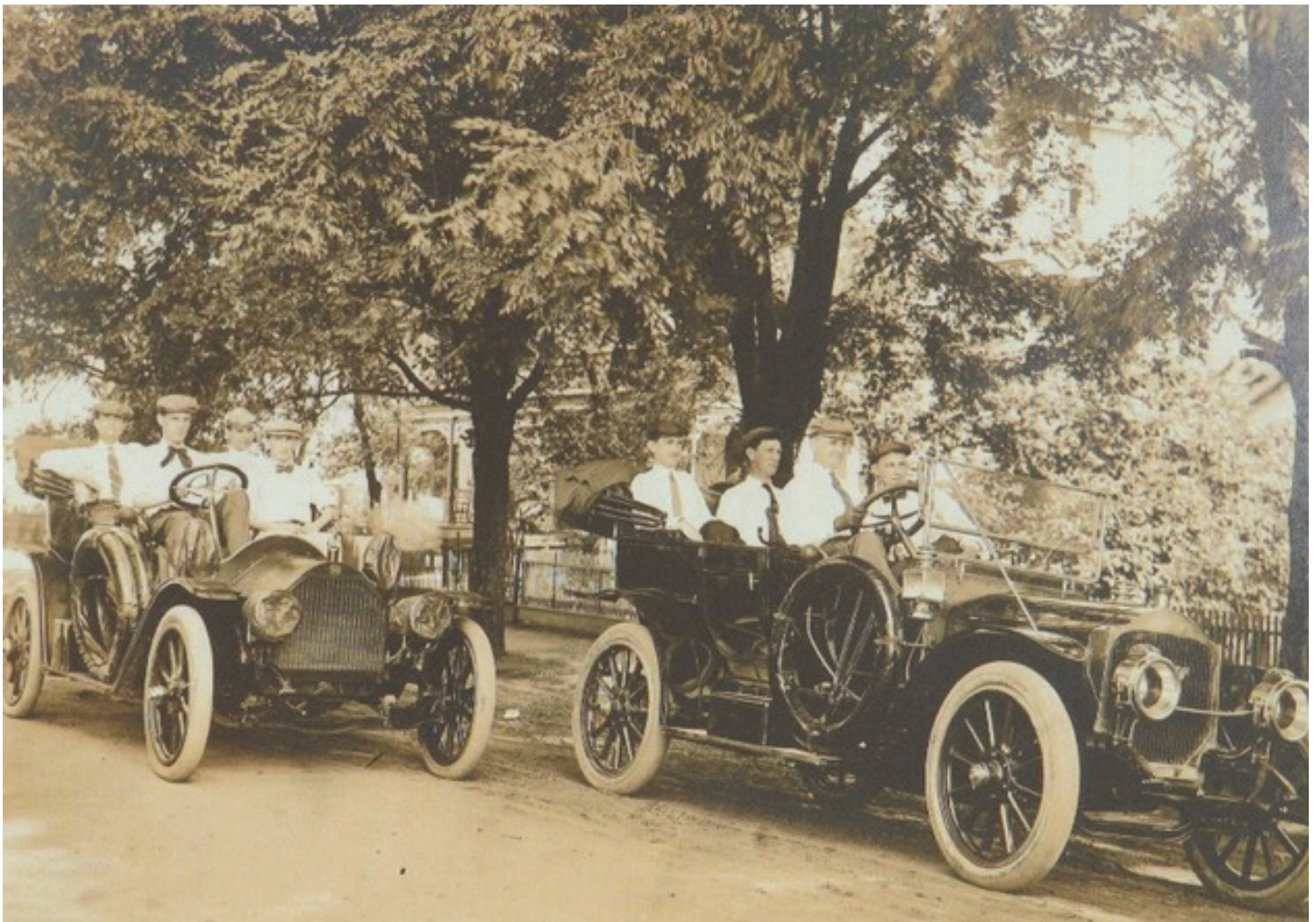
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Point. "Daddy Miller" as my mother called him, had a second story added to his house in 1894, and he insisted that his daughter and son-in-law should live in the house with them. My grandparents lived upstairs and raised five children, with my Aunt Lura Frances being the oldest and my mother the youngest, and three brothers in between. My great-grandparents lived downstairs, and Daddy Miller walked to town to work every day. He never learned to drive a car.

In 1908 my grandfather, thirty-four years old, ran for Mayor of West Point, and was elected. He served two terms. In 1910 he and the city council members set off on an automobile trip, headed for Savannah. The purpose was to study how other cities were dealing with the new problem of automobile traffic. On the way, my grandfather



*City Hall Office about July 1909, seated are Mayor John T. Johnson and City Clerk L. Strong; standing are two policemen.*



*Fact Finding Trip to Savannah in early July, 1910. Mayor John T. Johnson is seated left rear seat of front car. The other men are members of the West Point City Council. According to oral family history the car in rear is Rolls-Royce; front car is unidentified European make believed to have belonged to Lanier family. Photo was taken in front of Virent Hotel on present-day West 8th Street. The cars are headed toward river bridge.*

came down with typhoid fever, was taken by horse ambulance to hospital in Griffin, GA, where he remained until August 17. He survived the illness, but I never have found out whether the others completed the trip or what they recommended. Another accomplishment he made as mayor was to arrange for the city to purchase a large plot of land next to Pinewood Cemetery as an addition to the cemetery, since most of the lots in Pinewood had been sold by this time.

After serving two terms as mayor, my grandfather volunteered, at the age of 44 years to go to France with the Y.M.C.A. in 1918. The Y.M.C.A. served as the supply corps and chaplains for the Army, distributing uniforms, blankets and sheets, etc. He first had to go to New York City to take a training course and there is a picture of the entire group in the training course in the Cobb Archives. Then on August 25, 1918, he sailed for France, and landed on September 12. While in France he wrote letters to his wife and each of his children almost every day. My grandmother saved all of them, and kept them in a metal box in a safe place in the house for years. Some of the letters are 5 or 6 pages long. There is also a two-page essay on his views of the war in France. I have deposited all of this in the Cobb Archives. The postmarks on the letters are as late as October 18th. Then came the great influenza Epidemic of 1918. I don't know how long my grandfather was ill with the disease, but it must have been a relatively short time. He died in Marseilles, France, on October 30<sup>th</sup> and was buried there in the American Cemetery. It was not possible to ship any of the dead back home, either to America or to Great Britain. They all had to be buried in Europe. One of my mother's first cousins, John C. Dennis, was in the Army at his time, and he visited my grandfather's grave and took a picture of it, as well as the hospital where he died.

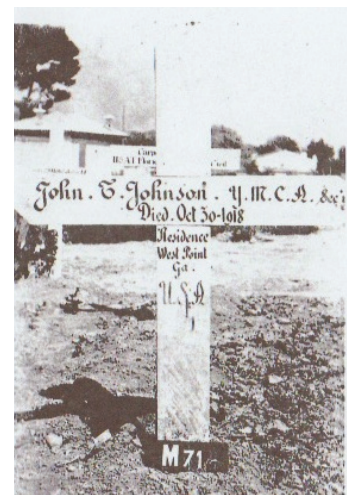
My mother remembered the day they got the news that he was dead. Grandmother had been receiving letters right up until that day, since the mail took so long to get to America. Mother looked out the front window and saw Daddy Miller and Mr. Phil Lanier coming up the front walk, and she knew something was wrong, since Daddy Miller never came home during the day. They had received a telegram with the news that my grandfather was dead. Some of the letters that he wrote continued to arrive over the next few days; my grandmother wrote the date on each letter as she



*John T. Johnson in WWI Y.M.C.A. Uniform.*

received it.

My grandmother went through a great deal of correspondence with the Y.M.C.A. trying to get all of grandfather's personal belongings shipped back home. Finally, in 1921, she was able to have his body shipped back home to be buried in West Point. He was the first person to be buried in the new cemetery he had purchased for the city when he was mayor, and the City Council voted to name it Marseilles Cemetery in his honor. It is still called by that name today.

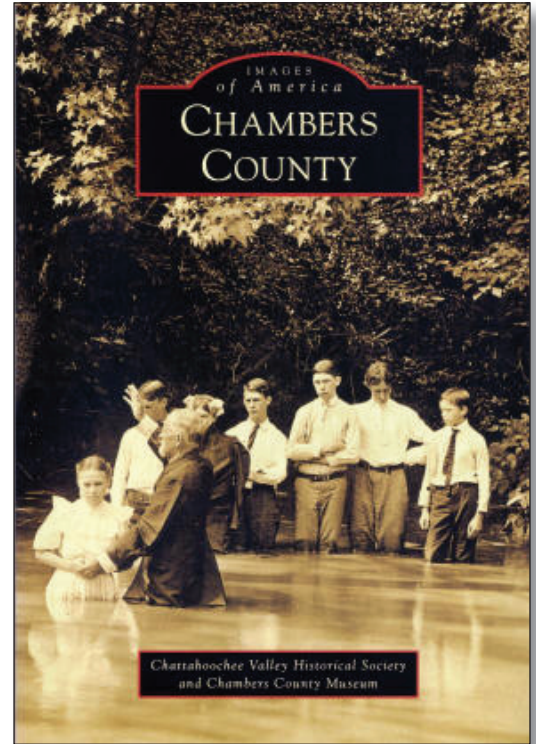


*John T. Johnson's first Burial Marker in Marseilles, France.*



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: CVHS PUBLICATIONS

*Chambers County*, a publication in the Images of America Series by Arcadia Publishing, celebrates through images 150 years of living in Chambers County, a region on the Piedmont plateau between the Tallapoosa and Chattahoochee Rivers in Alabama. This bounty of images, mostly photographs from family collections, shows places and people who began life on the frontier, created local government, experienced Native American uprising, served in the Civil War and two world wars, cultivated thousands of productive acres with ox and mule, organized towns, constructed railroads, and built one of the nation's largest textile operations. This collection of pictures furthers the readers understanding of the unique story of Chambers County in the ongoing development of the American experience. The publication was created by members of CVHS and The Chambers County Museum who found, selected, organized the images and wrote the concise interpretations. The book is 127 pages in soft cover. To order, go to our website at [www.cvhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.cvhistoricalsociety.org) and click on our on-line bookstore.



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The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society  
P.O. Box 718  
West Point, GA 31833