

THE VOICE

of the *Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and Cobb Memorial Archives*

I'LL NEVER GET OUT OF THIS WORLD ALIVE: THE LIFE OF HANK WILLIAMS *By Dr. Steve Goodson*

The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society welcomes its membership and the public to a presentation by Dr. Steve Goodson on the life and cultural impact of country icon and Alabama native Hank Williams on Sunday, January 24th at 3:00 PM EST (2:00 PM CST). This public presentation will be held online (due to the ongoing pandemic) via ZOOM. All attendees, both CVHS members and the general public, will need to send an active email address to the following address by 12:00 noon EST on that Sunday, January 24th, 2021: programs@cvhistoricalsociety.org. The moderator (Charles Powers) will respond to each email with specific directions on how to connect prior to the 3:00 PM meeting.

Steve Goodson was born in Montgomery, Alabama, and grew up in nearby Prattville. He received his B.A. in History from Auburn University at Montgomery in 1988, and earned his Ph. D in History from Emory University 1995. He has been teaching at the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, Georgia, since 1996, having served as the Chairperson of the History Department from 2006 until 2018. Dr. Goodson became an avid fan of Hank Williams in his childhood; both his father and his brothers had attended many of Williams' performances in person. Like the musician himself, Goodson also considers Montgomery

his hometown and has a special fondness for the city and its culture and people. Steve's father also had a personal collection of 78 rpm Hank Williams records that both he and his brothers would listen to frequently.

While still a senior at the Auburn University at Montgomery in 1998, Steve, along with his brother Gary, gave his first presentation on the life and legacy of Hank Williams. Many in attendance were so impressed that word soon spread to other colleges and universities in Alabama, and Steve and his brother were soon invited to give a similar presentation at Jacksonville State University. While he was still a graduate student, Steve contributed an article on Hank Williams to the *Alabama Review*, which was well-received and further established him as an expert on the country music legend. He continued to lecture and speak on Williams' legacy throughout his graduate and post-graduate studies (and he has continued as a Professor at the University of West Georgia). He has authored a book entitled *Highbrows, Hillbillies, and Hellfire: Public Entertainment in Atlanta, 1880-1930*, published by the University of Georgia Press. Published in 2002, this book received the Georgia Historical Society's



Hank Williams

Bell Award for best publication published that year. In 2014, Goodson became the co-editor of *The Hank Williams Reader*, published by Oxford University Press.

Goodson's enthusiasm for the life and legacy of Hank Williams comes from his long-standing belief that the Southeastern United States has a rich history of artists, media personalities, and others who are often overlooked or otherwise not properly understood by the general public. He believes that the life journey of Hank Williams to country music stardom was a complex and richly detailed journey that encompasses many interesting

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THE CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY MEETING
Sunday, January 24, 2021, 3:00 p.m. EST
Online Meeting via ZOOM.

continued from front: **THE LIFE OF HANK WILLIAMS**

details on life in rural Alabama in the early and mid 20th century. He has often noted the influence of African-American blues musicians on Williams' artistry and career as an example of this complex cultural history that is often overlooked by the general public.

This online meeting will be the first of our four quarterly meetings in 2021. The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society has been in continuous

operation since its founding in 1953. It is a membership-based organization with members from across the United States. The CVHS also has membership in both the Georgia Historical Society and the Alabama Historical Society. Each summer the CVHS leads a 5-6 day "bus tour" to various historical sites throughout the Southeastern United States departing from and eventually returning to Valley, Alabama. These trips have

visited many prominent sites from the American Civil War, and the next upcoming bus trip (scheduled for June of 2021 if the COVID situation improves) will focus exclusively on the Muscogee (Creek) Indians and their prominent historical sites in the state of Alabama.

To learn more about the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, follow or "like" our Facebook page. ■

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Malinda Powers*

Happy New Year! More than ever we need to hold onto the hope that ushering in a new year affords, moving forward once again while the pandemic becomes relegated to the proverbial rear view mirror. Of course we're not there yet, and until it is prudent to gather safely once more, our programs must continue to be hosted virtually. (Our regular meeting space, the Bradshaw Library, remains closed to the public at this time.)

There is, however, an upside to our current predicament. The majority of our membership base has a strong "heritage-connection" with our Chattahoochee Valley but lives elsewhere. For out-of-towners, attending in-person meetings is usually not practical. With virtual programming, however, our members

living in North Carolina, Texas, or even Hawaii can join our meeting via ZOOM just as easily as someone living in the Valley or Lafayette! So, please consider joining us on the 24st, the fourth Sunday of January, at 3:00 pm ET. *See program article for more details!*

Good news regarding our upcoming bus trip, a joint venture with our friends of the Lee County Historical Society. Originally slated for this past June and postponed until October, this major fundraiser project is now on target for June 2021. Thanks to several vaccines now currently being dispersed, our prospects look good once again. We've also teamed up with OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) at Auburn University to create and host a **virtual** seven-session

course "Creek Indians in Alabama", beginning January 19. For more information check out OLLI at Auburn University or email Dr. Charles Mitchell at mitchc1@auburn.edu.

January begins our annual membership renewal drive, and we want to encourage you to renew your membership with CVHS once again. Our loyal membership base is our strongest asset! Without your support, our mission to preserve and protect our regional history would not prevail. Since our founding in 1953, there's never been a time when our mission is more important. This year we will begin development of a long range "Master Plan" to help ensure our mission is being fulfilled most effectively. Stay tuned and thank you for your continued support! ■

The VOICE is a quarterly newsletter of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 718, West Point, Georgia 31833

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

Find us on Facebook and visit our website at <http://cvhistoricalsociety.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.

DESCRIPTIONS OF OUR REGION AND ITS CITIZENS FOUND IN 19TH CENTURY NEWSPAPERS

From Research by A. Stephen Johnson

We must again compliment our former President, Stephen Johnson, for his interest and persistence in locating information about the activities of our ancestors and their neighbors in Georgia's newspapers from more than a century ago. Research in old newspapers can be time consuming and painful to the eyes. Stephen's research is adding color to our imagined images of the past. The true image always arises from the primary material. Editor.

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Georgia Messenger. Ft. Hawkins, Georgia. April 18, 1829. "West Point Town, The site of West Point is located on the Western Bank of the Chattahoochie river on Fractions Nos. 57, 53 and 59, in the 16th district of originally Carroll now Troup county, on a beautiful plain, bounded west by the line between Alabama and Georgia, and on the east by the Chattahoochie, twenty-eight miles by the present road above Columbus, and at the lowest point of navigation above the Pine Mountain Shoal.

.....

The place is high, the water good, and the vicinity free from Swamps, ponds or lagoons, which gives the strongest assurances of good health—It presents many advantages to the industrious and enterprising merchant and the mechanic, being the point at which the trade of the counties of Troup, Coweta, Carroll, Campbell, DeKalb Hall and others, contiguous to the Chattahoochie River will concentrate, as the navigation above is good all seasons of the year, and there being a good road at this time to Columbus on the western banks of the rivers.

.....

The Proprietors have had a number of Half acre Lots laid out at West Point which they will offer for sale to the highest bidder on Monday the 11th day of May next, on the premises. The terms of sale will be one fifth of the purchase money in cash, and the remaining four fifths in four equal annual installments—purchases will be well secured in titles by-----THE PROPRIETORS. April 11, 1829"

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Georgia Journal and Messenger. Macon, Georgia. July 28, 1854. "To Teachers. I now offer my entire premises, in the village of Bluffton, Ala., adjoining the City of West Point, known as the "West Point and Bluffton Female Academy." This school has been in successful operation for three years, with from 40 to 70 pupils yearly, and is admirably suited for a gentleman and his lady, wishing a

permanent locality for the business. The lots are among the most desirable in the city, having been selected with special reference to the school and so well adapted as to give universal satisfaction. I will sell on reasonable terms, if early application be made. For particulars address me at Long Cane, Troup, Co. Ga. J. M. C. Shemate

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May 6, 1857. Office for Sale. Mr. J. T. Whitman, it will be seen, proposes to sell to the highest bidder, on 11th inst., the office of the West Point Beacon."

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The Weekly Sun. Columbus, Georgia. April 10, 1860. "LaGrange Female College. In the LaGrange Reporter, we find the proceedings of an adjourned meeting of the citizens of that place, held the 3rd inst. Committees appointed at the previous meeting to sell subscriptions reported, when it was ascertained, that \$14,650 in the aggregate had been subscribed towards rebuilding the Methodist Female College recently destroyed by fire. It is the intention to continue to solicit subscriptions.

.....

October 23, 1860. LaFayette Tragedy. We had an interview yesterday with a gentleman from LaFayette, Ala., the same day, and learned from him some of the particulars of the recent killing of Mr. James Taylor by Mr. R. C. Jeter.--When the latter stabbed the former his (Jeter's) father was prostrated on the ground wounded, and surrounded by the Taylors. Perceiving the situation of his father, Mr. Jeter rushed immediately to his assistance and stabbing Mr. James Taylor, killing him immediately. On Saturday last, Mr. Jeter returned to LaFayette with several friends and delivered himself up. The committing Magistrate waived an examination, and held Mr. Jeter to bail in the sum of \$5,000 to appear at the next term of the Circuit Court of Chambers county. The Bond was given on the spot.

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February 19, 1867. Duel.---We learn from one or two gentlemen that were present on the occasion, that a duel was fought on Saturday morning, 2nd ultimo, by two gentlemen from the neighborhood of Mobile, Major Baker and Captain Austell. They used Colt's Repeaters at the distance of ten paces, and the agreement was, that each party should fire three times before any offer tending to an amicable adjustment could be made. Captain Austell's first shot entered just above Maj. Baker's right hip and was

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pronounced by their Surgeon a mortal wound; his second shot entered grazed his body near the same place; his third missed him. Maj. Baker only fired twice, his first fire was lost by the explosion of a cap, his second shot flew wide of the mark, and while staggering from the deadly wound he had received, his third shot entered the leg of Captain Austell's second, producing a serious wound. After being informed by their Surgeon that he could not survive the wound he had received, Major Baker sent for Austell and the difficulty was adjusted. We could not ascertain the cause of the duel, but our informant inferred from their conversation that Baker had insulted a sister of Capt. Austell.---*Chambers Tribune*.

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November 6, 1873. Hard Lines. The West Point News publishes this card: I am compelled through your valuable paper, to ask charity from your patrons, as my wife has got homestead, and exemption, contrary to any wish and order, and has eloped, and carried off all my eatables and clothing; bound me over in a heavy bond to turn over to her, when called for, all of my personal and real property; ordered me to rent the land and mills, then enjoined the rentees to pay rent to her only as the exclusive owner of the property. Now, it follows, any money I have, and I am not able to work, from age and infirmity, being now 80 years old, that I must beg, steal or starve, as I have been doing for the last six months. Joseph Shaw”

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Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Georgia Journal and Messenger. Macon, Georgia. June 16, 1874. “Accident on the Atlanta and West Point Railroad.—“Nobody Hurt.” On Saturday last, as the passenger train was crossing the trestle over Long Cane Swamp, on the Atlanta and West Point Railroad the trestle gave way. The engine leaped the chasm. But the express baggage and second class passenger coach, plunged over into the swamp. One car struck on one end, and stood in that position until removed. The train was crowded and several were on the cars before they made the plunge but no one was hurt. This accident delayed the train some fifteen minutes.”

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Dawson Weekly Journal. Dawson, Georgia. May 23, 1878. “ The commencement exercises of the West Point public schools will take place the last week in June. General Alpheus Baker, of Alabama, will deliver the address on that occasion.” (*This believed to be first year of public school operation in West Point. A. S. J.*)

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Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun. November 19, 1881. Sudden Death. “ Mr. J. M. Scott Found Dead in Bed Thursday Morning. Our citizens were startled early Thursday morning by the announcement that Mr. J M. Scott had just been discovered in his bed dead. Mr. Scott had been under treatment for several days but there was no appearance of seriousness in his condition. On Wednesday night Mr. Cotton, clerk for Mr. Scott, administered to his wants until about 12 o'clock, when seeing his patient was in ease and quiet, and having slept but little for several nights previous , Mr. Cotton lay down upon a bed in the same room, and was soon asleep. No one else was present and at some hour between midnight and sunrise Mr. Scott breathed his last, unseen by any one---his death struggles, if any not arousing Mr. Cotton. It was but last week that it was our sad lot to announce the burial of Mrs. Scott. So five little children are made orphans and objects of care and charity of the good people of the community. “tis sad, but true!” Mr. Scott was a saloon-keeper, and we are truly pained to know that strong drink had much to do with his late illness and death. His remains were interred in Pine Grove cemetery to-day.— *West Point Press*”

(This Pine Grove cemetery is a mystery. It seems odd that the West Point newspaper would call the “Pine Grove “: instead of Pinewood. There is no gravestone for Mr. J. M. Scott in Pinewood and his death data does not match inscriptions of other James or John Scotts in Pinewood. A.S.J.)

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The Weekly Banner. Athens, Georgia. December 29, 1899. “Cannon Cracker Causes Death of Young George Poer in West Point. West Point, Ga. Dec. 28---One of the saddest accidents that has occurred here was the one that befell young George Poer on Christmas morning. While discharging fireworks, he lit a cannon cracker, but it seems that it went out. He turned it towards him and blew to see if a spark stilled remained when the cracker exploded in his hand, shattering it to pieces and blowing some of the heavy paper into his throat and windpipe. Physicians were immediately summoned and did all in their power to save, but despite their efforts he succumbed. He was only thirteen years old and the youngest son of Mr. George W. Poer, one of West Point's prominent citizens. He was a prime favorite among both old and young and stood at the head of his class at school.”



THE ONLY KNOWN PHOTOGRAPH OF A SOUTHERN FRONTIER FOLKWAY IN ALABAMA

By Horace McLean Holderfield

“The historical folk culture of Georgia’s frontier era was shaped by five foundation groups: Native American, British, African, Irish, and German. Blending of traditions from these groups mainly occurred farther east, in the Carolinas and Virginia. The resulting frontier folklife—which carried the value system, provided the survival skills, and supported the quality of life for early Georgians—including community “workings” such as cornshuckings, the school ritual of “turning out” the teacher to gain a holiday, the sport of “gander pulling,” and the Christmas custom of “riding fantastic” or “sernatin.” As older, agrarian-based traditions succumb to modernization, recently introduced urban and immigrant traditions represent the Georgia folklife of the future.” – Source: <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/folklife-overview>

The descriptive paragraph above, although written to apply to the evolving culture in Georgia, is equally applicable to the areas of Alabama, such as east Alabama, settled by families that had migrated southwestward over the decades across the Piedmont Plateau seeking new land for farming. Many of our families for some specific decade or lifetime may have been Marylanders, Virginians, North Carolinians, South Carolinians, Georgians, and not finally Alabamians. As pioneers we learned and shared our knowledge with our neighbors every time we occupied new land to grow our crops. We have lived in many communities. In our historical past our families enjoyed and practiced many cultural traits which we no longer remember. We have heard of corn shucking, school boy pranks on field school teachers. We may not have any folk memory of gander pulling or fantastics riding.

Fantastics Riding is to be found only in academic writings about the evolution of the Southern cultures. Folk memory of this folkway has dimmed. My aunts and uncle born in the 1880’s talked about the Fantastics Riders, making persimmon beer, drinking sassafras and rabbit tobacco tea, home distilling brandy, making syllabub, wearing dough faces, hunting with muzzleloaders and crossbows, building

log houses, making Jerusalem Oak candy and many other frontier folkways. More than a decade ago I quizzed Joey Brackner, Folklorist and Director of the Alabama Center for Traditional Arts, about Fantastics Riders when I discovered all but one of my peers working to select images for our Arcadia publication did not understand the meaning of the name. Don Clark, the Chambers County local historian and Sacred Harp singer, knew the term from his discussions with family and older members of the LaFayette and Marcoot, Alabama, communities.

In a grandmother’s trunk I found a photograph of Fantastics thought to be made in the time period of the 1890’s or first decade of the 20th century, which we published in our book of images in 2010. Recently I have been thinking about the old photograph and how limited our folk memory is. I called Joey Brackner last week to learn if he had ever seen another photograph of Fantastics Riders, other than the one in the *Chamber County Images*. He had not. I thought it might be appropriate to interpret the image in a short article here.

My old folks told stories about when they were young before 1900, when young men would dress up in homemade costumes and ride from farmhouse to farmhouse around Christmas or New Year’s Day. Some would be dressed like women; others might be in black face or wearing dough faces. These riders would be making a lot of noise, singing and shouting greetings and shooting. It was a scary scene for little children, these men wearing dough faces (masks made of salt dough). The riders in good nature would wish the house a happy new year, serenade and expect a reward which could be a cookie, cake, or drink.

John Burrison, in a 2003 publication, cites more than a dozen academic studies and describes a southern Christmas custom “known as riding ‘fantastic’ or ‘ser-natin’ (serenading), disguised teenagers walked or rode horse back to visit neighbors and beg for treats; the wearing of homemade masks called dough faces, cross-dressing, and prank-playing were variables.” Burrison recorded incidences of this custom in Georgia as late as 1950. He claimed the practice dated from the British Middle Ages and was a variation of mumming and the belief that “first foot” into a household on New Year’s Day would bring

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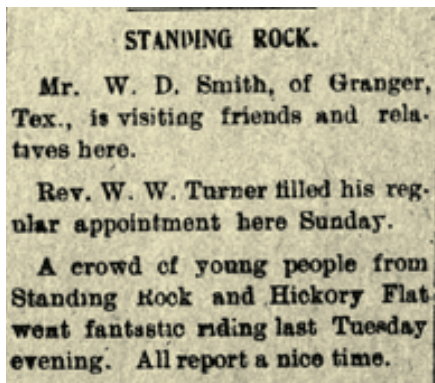
Fantastics Riding Image - from the Holderfield family collection



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a family good luck. The oral history from my and Don's families was consistent with the Georgia description of the tradition. Our ancestors were practicing a folkway hundreds of years old, possibly dating from our pagan practices at the winter solstice, when food became scarce for some families and behaviors for sharing or redistributing food evolved in rural communities.

Working from home I sought to document the occurrence of Fantastic Riding in Alabama through online literature searches and ancestry.com's newspaper collection. In the statewide newspaper search the word 'fantastic' was used frequently but most interestingly was mated with the word 'riding' only once. Here is the newspaper clip from Chambers County *The Lafayette Sun*, January 6, 1904:



From the 1880 to 1930 period I found no mention of Fantastic Riding in the West Point and LaGrange, Georgia, newspapers or the Lee county newspapers.

The historical Montgomery and Birmingham newspapers, requiring an additional fee, were unavailable to me. I did review newspapers for the same time period in north and south Alabama with no success. As a test for my search I also sought articles about the practice of another folkway, the shivaree. I found numerous mentions and descriptions of that practice in the press which could be the subject of a future article. My old folks also talked about the shivaree. But I found no other newspaper items of the Fantastics or Fantastics Riders. It is possible in this article you may be seeing the only Alabama photograph and newspaper acknowledgment of Fantastics Riders.

The large centerfold image has no marks or initials for attribution of photographer or date. Our best estimate is that the photo was taken by Francis (Frank) Millard Anglin, the rural photographer whom I described in the Spring 2017 issue of *The Voice*. In the article, "Shot from a Wagon: 19th century Photographic Images of Rural People of East Alabama by Itinerant Image-Maker", I described a collection of more than 200 images I inherited from my step-father, William Frank Smith, which was his grandfather's

photographic work. Other photographs, with unknown provenance, were also inherited but Don Clark and I feel certain the above image was taken by Frank Anglin at his home during a Christmas week or about new year's prior to his death from typhoid fever in October 1896. This is not an image of the event recorded in the 1904 *LaFayette Sun*. Another Fantastics Ride took place in the Standing Rock and Hickory Flat communities in January, 1904.

In the 1890's no rural local telephone system existed near Stroud in Chambers County where Anglin lived and worked in his darkroom in a rear room of his home. In this picture we would suggest that the mounted young men, cross-dressed, and dough faced, and black faced, decided to ride to the home of the photographer who made the picture. The location of the house was across from Mt. Pisgah Primitive Baptist Church on US Highway 431 north of Stroud. Anglin set up his camera in his barn lot. You see the wide lot planks and gate hinges on the left. Likely he has set the tripod for the camera on his wagon in order to shoot over the fence at the level of the mounted men. Two white dough face masks are clearly visible on riders on the left of the image. One dough face is holding a riding whip across the horse's neck and a pistol in the air with the other hand. The female attire is clearly visible and some of the young men may be riding side saddle. They certainly are sitting in the side saddle manner. Another young man in a white coat is possibly holding up a pistol. At least three of the twelve young men are riding mules. The black faces are clearly visible. No one was serving food in this photograph; the scene may be strictly a commercial arrangement between the rural photographer and the Fantastics.

Sources:

Burrison, John. "Transported traditions: Transatlantic foundations of Southern Folk Culture." *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 36 (2).(2003) Georgia State University, pages 1-24. scholarworks.gsu.edu

"Holiday Traditions in Colonial America and the Early Republic," *The Norfolk Towne Assembly*, December 8, 2019, <https://www.norfolktownassembly.org/post/holiday-traditions-in-colonial-america-and-the-early-republic>

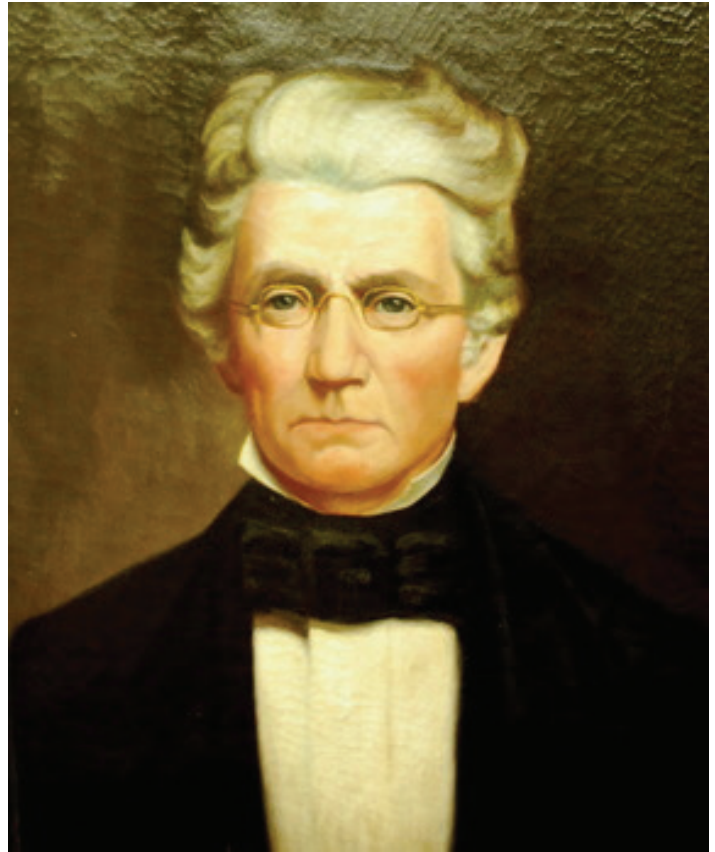
"Mumming at the American Folklife Center," *Folklife Today* (blog). Library of Congress. December 24, 2013

ALEXANDER MEANS: A GENIUS WITH WEST POINT CONNECTIONS

By Stephen Johnson

Alexander Means was born February 6, 1801, in Statesville, North Carolina, to Scots-Irish parents of relatively poor circumstances. His father, Alexander Means Sr., had emigrated from Northern Ireland at the age of twenty-one and married Sarah McClellan, a girl of twenty from Pennsylvania. Alexander Jr. had very little formal education as a child. He was taught “the 3R’s” by his mother, and at the age of ten or eleven he was able to attend an “old field school” for a year or two. He was an only child. The family moved to Wilkesboro, North Carolina, a year or two later, and Alexander Jr. received instruction in languages and basic chemistry from a Mr. Milton Ladd. Eventually he was able to attend a private academy at Statesville, but had to withdraw when his father’s finances became exhausted. He began teaching at Wilkesboro. Shortly afterwards his mother died, and he decided to leave North Carolina and move to Georgia.

He made his way to Madison, Georgia, where he made acquaintances who secured him a position teaching school in Greene County. After two or three years of teaching he decided to seek a more distinguished profession, and decided on medicine. He studied under Doctors Randolph and Walker at Madison, then spent one session in the medical department of Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky, making the journey of four hundred and fifty miles, part of it through Indian country, on horseback. When he returned to Georgia in the autumn of 1825 he was granted a license to practice medicine. He practiced his new profession in Putnam County, then joined Dr. Henry Gaither in Covington in Newton County. He joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, and on Christmas Day, 1827, he married Miss Sarah Ann Elizabeth Winston in Covington. She was a daughter of Thomas Winston and a sister of George Hendree Winston, both of whom later moved to Troup County and built plantation houses. Thomas Winston owned “Newcastle” plantation on what is now Ga. Highway 18 east of West Point, and his son George built “Woodlawn”, which still stands just north of the city limits of West Point, and has been restored by



Dr. Alexander Means Jr., Oxford Historical Society

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Garland, descendants of George Hendree Winston.

In 1828 or 1829, Alexander Means became a licensed “exhorter”, or local preacher, and became interested in education, which led to his taking an active part in establishing a manual labor school under Methodist leadership near Covington, which evolved into Emory College, the forerunner of Emory University. In 1837, Dr. Means was selected Professor of Natural Science at Emory. He began a critical study of chemistry and electricity which continued through his life. He served briefly as President of Emory, in 1854. He later lectured both at Emory College and at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, traveling back and forth each week.

In his diary, for the year 1861, Dr. Means mentions going to visit West Point several times. His oldest son, Leonidas, had moved to West Point, and his wife’s brother George and father Thomas also lived there. Alexander and Sarah Elizabeth Means named their youngest son Hendree Winston Means (nicknamed Toby).

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Here are some of the items from his 1861 diary:

“Thursday Jan 3rd: Left home by sun-rise for Auburn, Alabama. Stopped in Atlanta and drew my Dividend from Atlanta & W. Pt. R Road (\$172.) on 43 shares of stock at 4pr. Ct. Saw son Leonidas, at W. Pt. and went on to Auburn.

Friday July 26th: Our glorious victory at Manassas has been confirmed.....Cousin Tinsley Winston comes tonight from Athens.

Wednesday 31th: Cousin Ann Eliza Erwin & Tinsley Winston leave here for home today.

Tuesday Aug. 6th: I leave for Atlanta – on visit to West Point. Wednesday 7th: Wife Toby (Hendree Winston) & Sallie join me and we reach son’s Leonidas in W. Pt. at 3 ½ P. M. – rainy weather.

Monday 12th: Go up in two buggies with children & Benny Hill to Bro Tom’s – very rainy today. Stopped a while at Mr. Ellis’s of N. Car. Originally 2 miles from West Pt. Tuesday 13th : Cloudy & damp morning. Partly sunshine in afternoon. Saw Tom’s Gin house and Cotton screw. My health very feeble and precarious. Wife complaining much. Wednesday 14th: Went down with wife and Sallie and Toby to Benny Hill to Bro T. J Mad. Hill’s- dined there – Heard that Pa – Capt. Winston was sick and left after dinner for his house. Leonidas & wife accompanied us. Found Pa better of his attack- cholera morbus.

Thursday 15th: Left Pa’s for our dear Home in Oxford – going by Wright’s bridge over Long Corn (sic Cane) Creek – now very high from excessive rain on yesterday – Ate dinner at Leonidas’s and took train at about 1 ½ OC – 10 miles above W.Pt. had a break on road last night – flood washed out culvert – 1 box car thrown off – no one hurt. We reached the break – transferred baggage & took train on the other side – Took supper in Atlanta, and grateful for the privilege reached Oxford at 10 OC at night.

Friday December 13th: Leave at 4 OC for West Point with son Olin. Saturday 14th : Reached West Point safely at 7 ½ OC A.M. Went over to Leonidas’ and got breakfast – himself and Celestia being from home, but returning soon after our arrival.

Sabbath 15th: Preached at W. Pt. to a large and attentive Congregation from Psa. 33 “Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord” etc. Dined with Pa and Bro. Madison Hill, etc. at Son’s. Olin preached at night. Go over to Pa’s this evening . Monday 16th. Went with Pa in carriage to sale 7 miles below. Property high. Returned to Bro. George’s to night with Olin. Tuesday 17th. Went to W. Pt. Saw Mr. Bergmott & tried to hire Sam (? *slave, ed.*) - did so conditionally for \$300 with the privilege of coming home 4 times per year & he (Bergmott) pay passage. He to board & clothe him. Furnishing 3 or more pr. Shoes. Staid at Bro. Hill’s with Olin.

Wednesday 18th: Stay today at Leonidas’ & to night. Dined with Pa & Ann Eliza & Olin & Leonidas at Mr. Wm. Reid’s. On yesterday. -Pa promises to pay the hire of a negro man for me for the next year. Thursday 19th: Got 6 bushels fine yams from Thos. Winston & 3 Do. Large Spanish from Bro. Hill to bring home.

These are only the diary entries which pertain to West Point and its residents. Much of the diary describes Dr. Means’ participation in the Georgia Legislature during its session which debated secession from the Union (which he voted against), news of the battles and family members and friends in the Confederate Army, and how the War affected the lives of everyone around him. All those words make for interesting reading and would make another article.

Probably the most interesting accomplishment Dr. Means demonstrated to his colleagues and students was his invention of a working incandescent lamp (i.e., electric light bulb), over twenty years before Thomas A. Edison invented it. In 1851, he visited Europe, and made the acquaintance of several prominent scientists, including Michael Faraday and Sir Charles Lyell. Electricity was one of his special interests, and on his return to Oxford in 1852, he began experimenting with producing light by electricity.

On June 2, 1857, he demonstrated his new apparatus to a group of invited colleagues assembled in his laboratory at the Atlanta Medical College.

Dr. Henry Capers, Assistant Professor of Anatomy, who was present, described the demonstration as follows: "The Doctor had his lecture room darkened so that it was as dark as a moonless night. Over his table was suspended a large globe, probably a foot in diameter. Within it he has placed by wires to suspend it a large and long stick of charcoal. Opposite the lower end of this charcoal, two wires came in close contact with the coal.

"Near him was a large electrical machine from which these wires came..."

By hand-turning a large disk which worked against small brushes, frictional electricity was generated. The assembled gentlemen almost leaped out of their seats as sparks began to jump from the disk to the connection for the wires. (Today this machine is called a Wilmshurst Machine, which was developed and popularized in the 1880's. It is often seen in old movies which feature a "mad scientist's" laboratory.)

Suddenly the spectators saw that stick of dead black carbon glow red, then burst into brilliant light. The darkened room was illuminated by such a brightness that it put to shame the new gaslights of which Atlanta was so proud. Green B. Dodd, pioneer Atlanta citizen, was also present. He wrote: "Never since that remarkable day have I seen a more brilliant light. Nothing in all the phenomena of our wonderful age has ever impressed me more than this exhibition and I can never forget it as long as my memory lasts."

Alexander Means never patented his invention or put it to any further practical use, due to the absence of a continuous supply of electricity. All machinery at that time was powered by steam engines, which were hazardous



Dr. Alexander Means' Invention of Incandescent Light Bulb, Oxford Historical Society

because of the possibility of explosion, and petroleum had not been discovered in America. Since he was a minister and an academic professor, fame and fortune were probably not among his priorities, anyway.

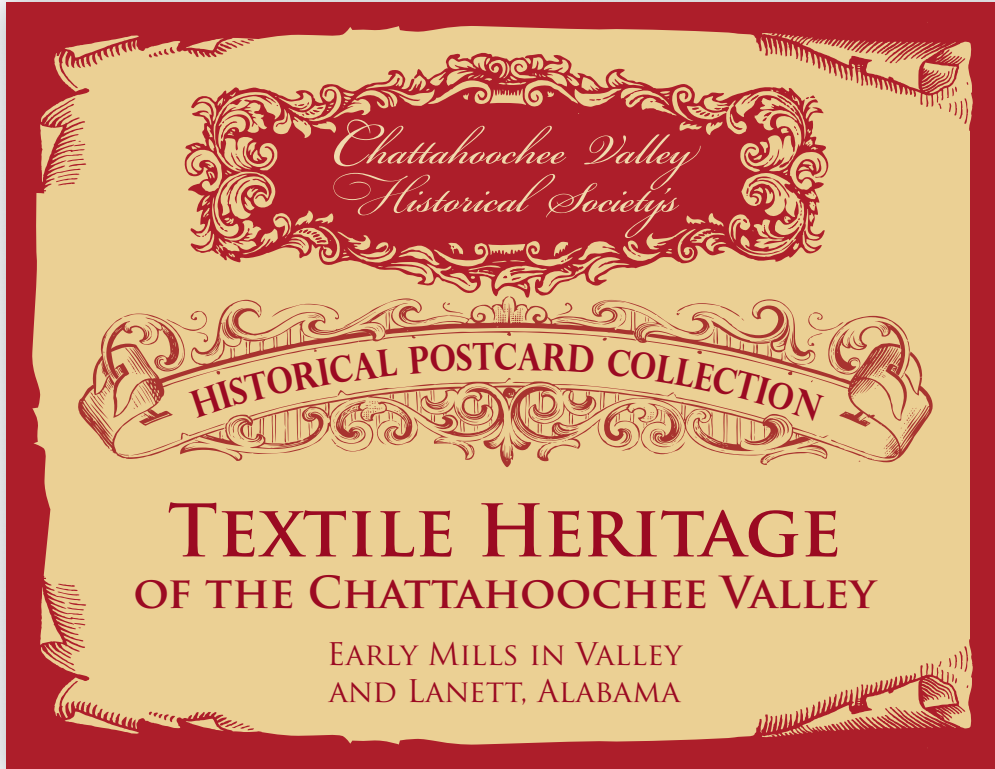
Dr. Means lived to the age of 82, dying on June 5, 1883 in his home in Oxford, which he named Orna Villa, a relatively simple Greek Revival house which still stands. He is buried in the Oxford cemetery.

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