

# THE VOICE

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

## BEFORE NASHVILLE: ATLANTA AND THE ORIGINS OF COUNTRY MUSIC

Presenter *Dr. Steve Goodson*



The Spring program of CVHS will be held virtually on April 24th, at 3:00 PM (EDT). Our presenter, Dr. Steve Goodson, is a longtime instructor of History at the University of West Georgia and an authority on the history of Country Music in the Deep South. This will be Dr. Goodson's second program for CVHS, the former highlighting the life and music of Hank Williams, Jr.

"It's the story of how Atlanta became the nation's main country-music recording center in the 1920s", says Goodson. The presentation will further examine how it lost that position to Nashville in later decades. According to Goodson, this story has three main characters. First is colorful late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Atlanta itself. Second is Ralph Peer, an influential A&R (Artists and Repertoire) man for the Okeh record label. And the third is Fiddlin' John Carson, who recorded the first country hit in Atlanta in 1923.

Dr. Goodson's presentation will also include a discussion of the former property at 152 Nassau Street in Atlanta. This was once the site of the recording studio where many of these country music artists recorded their music. Unfortunately, that historic site was demolished several years ago so that developers in Atlanta could build a new location for Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville Hotel and Restaurant. There was a lengthy, but ultimately unsuccessful, battle to prevent the demolition of 152 Nassau Street. Dr. Goodson was fortunate enough, however, to be able to personally visit this location before the demolition took place.

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 in 1995. He joined the faculty at the University of West Georgia, where he is a full professor and served twelve years as department chair.

His book *Highbrows, Hillbillies, and Hellfire: Public Entertainment in Atlanta, 1880-1930*, published by the University of Georgia Press, won the Georgia Historical Society's Bell Award as the best book on Georgia History published in 2002. He is also co-editor of *The Hank Williams Reader*, which was published in 2014 by the Oxford University Press. This work has received much critical acclaim as a detailed account of Williams' life and career.

Join us for this very informative and interesting presentation on April 24th. To attend this virtual meeting email [ccpowers02@gmail.com](mailto:ccpowers02@gmail.com) prior to 12:00 PM noon (EDT) on Sunday, April 24th. You will then be sent the Zoom link with instructions regarding how to join the meeting.

THE CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY MEETING

Sunday, April 24th, 2022

3:00 p.m. EDT (2:00 CDT)

VIRTUAL MEETING

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

First and foremost, I'd like to sincerely thank all of you who continue to support us with your annual memberships. To date this year, we have had a record number of members who have upped their category of giving to the next level! This tells us that you approve of our efforts as we strive to preserve, protect, and promote our local and regional histories. Rest assured, we take our mission very seriously and deeply appreciate your continued support!

There is positive news to report on the home front. First, the City of Lafayette is in the early planning stages of applying to the *Main Street USA* program, an effort which will hopefully bring a renewed interest in historic rehabilitation of its downtown. Also, Lanett is discussing the potential creation of a residential historic district in the "Old Bluffton" area, the city's oldest neighborhood on the hillside just west of downtown West Point.

In our Fall 2021 issue, I discussed Mr. Richard Allen's efforts to honor the legacy of Major David Tate Moniac on behalf of his descendants, members of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. In 1822, Moniac was the first Native American to graduate from the United States Military Academy in West Point. During the Second Seminole War in 1836, Moniac led volunteer Creek soldiers at the Battle of Wahoo Swamp in the Tampa Bay area, sacrificing his own life to save his men.

*Update:* In November, Moniac was posthumously awarded the Alabama Distinguished Service Medal by Hon. Gov. Kay Ivey. He was also honored by a special proclamation from the governor. In addition, on February 1, 2022, Alabama Senator Tommy Tuberville commemorated the 200th anniversary of Moniac's

historic accomplishment as a West Point graduate by sharing this important milestone with the United States Congress.



*Major David Moniac*

*See accompanying document (right):  
Congressional Record, Vol. 168, No. 20.*

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

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Find us on Facebook and visit our website at <https://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 newspaper, 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.



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 168

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2022

No. 20

## Senate

### HONORING MAJOR DAVID MONIAC

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I rise today to honor the 200th anniversary of Major David Moniac, the first Native American to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Today, I would like to share the inspiring story of Major Moniac. He was born in 1802 and lived near present-day Pintlala, within Montgomery County, AL. Several of Moniac's family members were members of the Creek Nation and influenced passage of the Treaty of New York in 1790, which declared peace between the Creek Nation and the United States. This treaty is significant as it contained an important provision for the U.S. Government to educate four young Creek Native Americans. Twenty-seven years later in 1817, David Moniac was accepted into the U.S. Military Academy under this provision at only 16 years old.

Despite facing an uphill battle due to his age and being the only minority at West Point, Moniac persevered. He went on to graduate in the year 1822 as a brevet second lieutenant in the 6th U.S. Infantry Regiment.

In 1836, Moniac answered the call of the U.S. military to fight for our Nation and aid the Army in the Second Seminole War occurring in Florida. Moniac was named captain and proceeded to organize a unit of Creek Volunteers from Alabama to serve. During the war, this impactful

Alabamian demonstrated true leadership as he commanded an assault on a Seminole stronghold and earned a promotion to major in October 1836. One month later, in November 1836, Major Moniac was killed by a musket volley at the Battle of Wahoo Swamp while he was leading a charge of Creek Volunteers. Moniac's death marked the end of the battle.

Major Moniac was laid to rest at a cemetery in Bushnell, FL, near the site of the Battle of Wahoo Swamp. To remember his incredible courage and bravery, the inscription on his grave marker states, "He was as brave and gallant a man as ever drew a sword or faced an enemy."

On November 21, 2021, Governor Kay Ivey presented the Alabama Distinguished Service Medal to Major Moniac's family at the Alabama State Capitol. The Distinguished Service Medal recognizes exceptionally meritorious service to the government in a duty of great responsibility.

Today, we honor Major David Moniac for his impact and the transformational change that he led as he paved the way for other Native Americans to receive admission to West Point. His legacy continues to make not only my home State of Alabama proud and grateful for his leadership but our entire country. It is a privilege to honor Major Moniac today in Congress 200 years later commemorating his service and sacrifice.

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# WELCOME NEW EDITOR

April 2022

Hello everyone,

My name is Ron Williams and I love the history of the Chattahoochee Valley. My family history dates to the founding of Chambers County. My ancestors settled in the southeast corner of the county in 1833 and had been in Harris County, Georgia, for many years prior to that. I grew up in the Hopewell Community in the old farmhouse my 3rd great grandparents, David S. and Nancy Woodall Williams, built in 1839. I think growing up in that house and living near my grandparents and other older relatives fostered a love of family and local history.

I currently live in the Valley in the Shawmut Community with my wife of 23 years, Jennifer. We are the parents of 3 children, Aubrey, 22; Aaron, 20; and Kaden, 15. None of them enjoy hearing about family and local history, but that does not keep me from sharing information with them, much to their dismay.

I remember the day about 30 years ago when I wandered down a hall at the H. Grady Bradshaw Library and entered a room where I met a lady named Mrs. Miriam Syler. She explained that this area was known as the Cobb Memorial Archives. I had no idea that such a place existed. Mrs. Syler became a friend and resource, and I fell in love with the archives.

Over the years, I have written and compiled some family and local histories:

- *When the Dinner Bell Rang: A History of the Hopewell Community*
- *On Railroad Street: The Story of Carrie Hanson Breedlove and Her Family*
- *There is a Season: A Family Record for the Descendants of David S. and Nancy W. Williams*
- *Fieldstone Pillars: Remembering the Older Communities in the Southeast Corner of Chambers County, Alabama*
- I assisted with the compilation of *Aaron Williams and His Descendants* along with Betty Ann Henley Vollenweider and previous research compiled by the late Grace Omega Vollenweider Pridgeon.

I also wrote an article several years ago called *Past Times*, which appeared weekly in *The Valley-Times News*. The articles have been compiled into a book called *Past Times*, which includes a special section on the unsolved 1959 murders of Jefferson and Nella Jean Chambers. A *Past Times* article will be a regular feature going forward in issues of *The VOICE*.

I have been a presenter and co-presenter at four CVHS quarterly meetings. Topics included the Chambers Murders and John Howard Parnell, famed peach grower. I also was co-presenter with my friend, Mrs. Dot Moore, with topics about Joe Louis Barrow, boxer, and John Wallace, of *Murder in Coweta County* fame.

I am very excited to be a part of *The VOICE*. I look forward to researching topics and sharing items about the history of the Chattahoochee Valley.

Best Regards,  
Ron

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## SOME BITS AND PIECES IN LOCAL HISTORY by Horace McLean Holderfield

I am enjoying doing research in local newspapers using the historical newspaper function of Ancestry.com. This newspaper research can be pursued from the safety of my home in these COVID months. At almost 79 years, I enjoy pursuing the small pieces of history missing from our published cultural histories. The newspapers are excellent deposits of teasing items. I was searching for information about my school classmates at Handley High School in Roanoke recorded in the *Roanoke Leader* in the late 1950's and found the article below written by a person at the *Leader* about a very elderly citizen of Chambers County. I decided to include this article in *The VOICE* and search for additional facts about information provided in the article.

**Lee Hunter, Buffalo Resident,  
Has Keen Memory at Age 94**

**From February 5, 1959, *The Roanoke Leader***

**"A man with a memory that spans nearly a century lives in Buffalo. His memory reaches down through the years in the months and the days and to the exact times of the days. It drops back a quarter of a century or a half or more, and the people, the places, the times, and the events fit into a story that could have happened yesterday.**

**"I want to tell you something," he said—and we were back 70 years ago.**

**"It was in the summer, about the middle of the day, and it was hot. We were fooling about the yard of the old log house, looking for excuses to stay out of the sun, when we saw a lazy cloud of dust on the road to the south. We watched it and wondered – wondered who it was or what it was. When it got closer, we saw a team of oxen pulling a wagon loaded with some kind of machinery, and with a few boys sitting on top.**

**"About a 100 yards from the house the team broke into a run, pitching the wagon about like a kite. The boys started yelling and pulling on the reins, but the oxen came, on right past the house. My mother stopped them. She took a big wooden gate and held it out in front of her, and the oxen stopped.**

**"Those were the Stevenson boys. They'd bought a newspaper press from Col. E. M. Oliver, a lawyer in LaFayette, and were on their way back to Roanoke.**

**"Why were the oxen running? To get to the shade, of course. They may not be as dumb as we think they are."**

**The man with the memory is Lee Hunter, 94, and he says with a laugh, "One time somebody said he'd give me \$1,000 for my memory, and I could have used the money." The paper the Stevenson boys were founding is the present *Roanoke Leader*.**

**Hunter lives with is invalid sister, Miss Addie, in a 60-year-old white frame house that took the place of the log cabin, on the highway at the corner where the off-road leads down by the store, across the railroad tracks, and past the stream where the old lagoon was. Buffalo once was called Buffalo Wallow.**

**"I never saw a buffalo here," Hunter says. "My daddy rode a pony three weeks from South Carolina and came here in 1836, and he never saw one. But we think the lagoon was the wallow, and before our time the buffalo used it."**

**"There hasn't been much to Buffalo since the buffalo left, except when the railroad came. A 20-mile arm came out from Opelika and stopped there in 1871, and people came by mule and ox from Roanoke and spent the night in Buffalo to catch the morning train to Opelika, and then, 17 years later, the train took another surge and lengthened to Roanoke.**

**Hunter was in the surveying party and in the one that went beyond, scouting the high, dry ways to the north.**

**"We go within a quarter of a mile of Wedowee but couldn't find ways to get down in there and out."**

**He got as far as Oxford, and there Charlie Eichelberger brought the news. "Boys, your Railroad's sold out."**

**Hunter and the other surveyors started back and got as far as Milner, halfway between the Tallapoosas, and then waited for transportation. John Hill came out of Roanoke with a wagon for them, Hunter remembers Hill's saying when they came to the ford on the Little Tallapoosa, "Hold up your feet, boys, the river is up."**

**And there's a funeral he recalls, in June of 1886 at the Lebanon church. Doc Bullock, one of the early Buffalo settlers, was being buried and a Methodist minister, John B. Stevenson, had come to preach the service. Hunter, with a little searching, remembered the subject, which he quoted: "There's a house not built with hands, eternal in the heavens."**

**Though no preacher, Hunter has a message: "Anybody can stand adversity, because you have to. But prosperity's ruined a lot of people."**

**Hunter likes company, and almost daily some one stops by to see him. Two weeks ago, he and Miss Addie had their picture and story in the *Birmingham News*. Senator Sparkman wrote, wishing them well; a widow from Demopolis wished that she might come and visit them; a man wrote from Birmingham to see if they had old coins or stamps they wanted to sell; and half a dozen other persons saw the article and wrote.**

**Times have changed and so have the people. Sometimes the changes have not been for good, Hunter thinks.**

**"When I was younger people thought more of each other."**

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## SOME BITS AND PIECES IN LOCAL HISTORY ...CONTINUED

**But neither Hunter or Miss Addie ever thought enough of anyone to marry.**

**“We looked after our parents when they were old, and after they were gone it was too late,” Miss Addie explains.**

The preceding newspaper article contained a number of first-hand facts about the local railroad. The railroad was built east of the high ridge back bone of the county topography from Opelika to LaFayette and northward. It reached Buffalo and stopped there in 1871. For almost a decade Buffalo would have benefited from being a terminus. Cotton would have been brought here to be purchased, sent and down the line. Incoming shipments of fertilizer would have been stored in cotton warehouses or sheds erected at the terminus. The local folks would have experienced a small boom time.

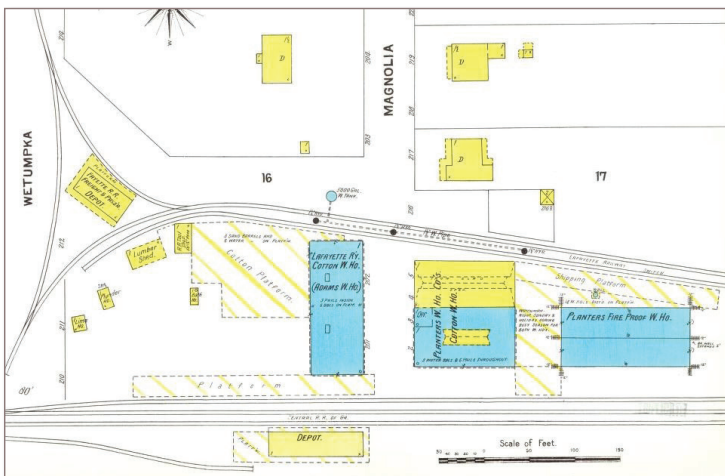
The history of Mr. Hunter's railroad is well described in the monograph *War Was the Place Old Oakbowery*, Bulletin 5 November 1961 of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, from which the following information is taken. Mr. William H. Davidson, the prolific writer in the Society in the 1950's, published a ten-page article in Bulletin 5 describing the history of the two railroads coming north from Opelika and their impact upon the little town of Oakbowery. The first railroad originated in 1868 from plans publicized as the new East Alabama & Cincinnati Railroad. It was funded by a state bond issue. This proposed railroad was to connect Opelika to Oxford, Alabama. Business freight and passengers in that era of railroad promotion from Opelika would be connected through other rail lines to markets at Chattanooga and even Chicago by this new line. The new East Alabama line was surveyed from Opelika, northward on the east side of Chambers County's topographic backbone for 37.75 miles to Roanoke, Alabama. This railroad construction missed Oakbowery by two miles. By 1871 the East Alabama and Cincinnati had only reached Buffalo. Construction stopped.

In 1880 the line was foreclosed, sold, and morphed into a new corporation, the East Alabama Railway Company. Construction began again and the rails reached Roanoke in 1888. The Central of Georgia System purchased the East Alabama Railway Company in 1895. Mr. Hunter was part of an active surveying party working to identify the right of way for the final construction to complete the railroad to Oxford when his party was told to stop and come home. According to his memory and experience the topography was too hostile for a train bed. The Central of Georgia did not extend the railway from Roanoke but did inspire, by its high freight rates, the building of a new line in Chambers County.

In the 1880's and 1890's the "cotton men" and other merchants in LaFayette began to chafe under the high freight rates of the local and connecting railroads. The monopolistic manipulation of rates made the last mile the most expensive for freight. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century railroad monopolies and haulage rates became explosive political topics. Many issues of the *LaFayette Sun* and the *Montgomery Advertiser* posted many items or articles promoting railroads or criticizing their negative influence on local business and politics. Mr. Davidson well describes the frustration of LaFayette business leaders with the expensive rates to include a description of their visit to Savannah, Georgia in 1895 to negotiate with the Traffic Manager of the Central of Georgia System. The group of LaFayette citizens were appointed to be the LaFayette Board of Trade to exchange written communications and confer with the Central of Georgia management. Nothing was achieved and the businessmen feared that Lafayette, now a growing commercial center, would become a victim of the larger commercial centers on down the railroad lines. The *LaFayette Sun* reported that the businessmen of LaFayette sent memorial requests to the Alabama Legislature to examine the rate issue and provide relief for this flourishing little town. The Probate Judge spoke before the appropriate committee of the legislature to ask for assistance, for relief, to no effect.

Having searched the *LaFayette Sun* from 1884 to 1915 for articles where the words rail- road or Lafayette Railway are used, I found a variety of upbeat, promotional articles for railroads and broad economic growth. I found only one

*This image taken from the 1897 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of LaFayette. Note the two rail lines running on the east and west sides of the cotton warehouses. On the east side you see the LaFayette Railway, its terminal Y and depot. On the bottom of the image or west side of the warehouses you see the Central of Georgia tracts and the depot.*



*continued on next page*

editorial which was severely negative, caustic in its ridicule of the public employee, the Railroad Commissioner, who was tasked by law to insure fair practices by the monopolistic railroads. *The Sun*, described in a full column on May 28, 1884, a trip by the Railroad Commissioner in his private car up the East Alabama Railway to Buffalo inspecting the roads. The writer, assumed to be the editor, described the elaborately decorated car with servant, sitting room, dining hall and sleeping room with the carpeted floors as a “millionaire’s bridal chamber.” The train sped along at “lightening speed” only stopping where it was red flagged. The only person allowed to join the Commissioner in the special car with its rich bounty of drink, food and Havana cigars was Judge Jim Cobb going home to Opelika following a term in the Randolph court. The corrupt state employee and real representative of railroad interests in Alabama would provide Judge Cobb, an old Texas cowboy, the best seat in the in the private car.

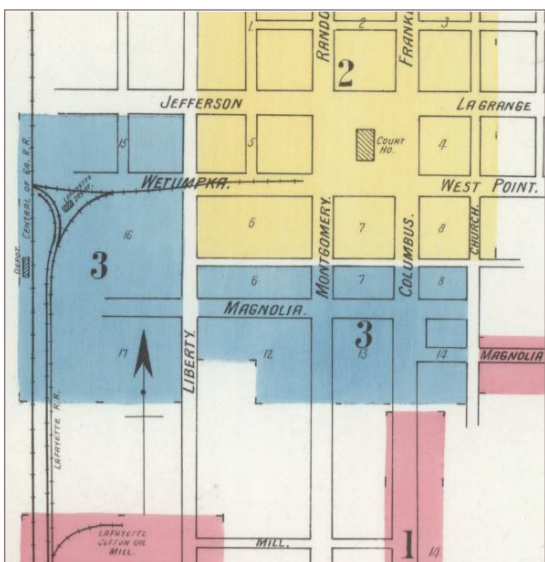
The businessmen of LaFayette gave up on their efforts to influence government regulation and the railroad organizations. They decided to build their own railroad from Opelika to LaFayette. Mr. Davidson again does a thorough job of describing the community efforts, watermelon cuttings, to build support for the new rail line. Sixty years ago, when the article was written Mr. Davidson was able to interview a few of the surviving former employees of the two railroads. When the LaFayette Railway was built, Oakbowery did get a passenger station and became a destination.

LaFayette experienced the completion of the LaFayette Railway in the summer of 1896. The tracks, and thereby the train, by the Fourth of July had reached the farm of T. H. Grimmett on the southern edge of town. A “special excursion train” was run that day from Grimmett’s place to the Fair Grounds in Opelika, as described by Mr. Davidson. The LaFayette Railway served its purpose well

and made a profit but after a decade the external conditions of governmental freight rate control had improved in favor of the small-town merchants. *The LaFayette Sun* reported April 26, 1905, “LaFayette Railway is no more. The track is being torn up and the road will be sold.” The rolling stock was sold. In examining the *LaFayette Sun* in this decade from 1896 to 1905, I found a number of articles proposing the expansion of the LaFayette Railway into Tallapoosa County to Daviston and on to Ashland and Lineville in Clay County.

Mr. Davidson was never specific in his article as to where the LaFayette Railway bed lay. While not specifically delineating the route of this second railway, he does quote a newspaper article which stated the construction began at Opelika, struck a ridge to Oakbowery, and needed to build only one bridge to cross a stream before arriving at LaFayette. At the end of his article, he states that the roadbed of the LaFayette Railway can be seen in “many places” and is over grown. I believe the Lafayette Railway followed, side by side, the old county roads which connected to allow wagon traffic northward to Lafayette and beyond to the Randolph County line. These old roads ran down the backbone of the county. This was not the only route to LaFayette but was the highest, most level, and driest. I found a number of articles in *The LaFayette Sun* which support my proposal. The August 10, 1913, issue reported on the actions of the Commissioners’ Court. Citizens were speaking for an improved road south from the County seat. Citizens from Sturkie and Morefield were offering to provide the roadbed of the old Lafayette Railway as right away for the improved road. The October 1, 1913, issue reported that an “effort was underway to build a new road to Oakbowery following the old survey of the LaFayette Railway.” Judge J.J. Robinson Jr., Messrs. Tom Pierce, C. S. Moon, Dr. W. D. Gaines, Chairman of the Good Roads Committee of the Businessmen’s League “went over the route and talked with people along the line. Nearly all were in favor of the project, ---active operations will begin at an early date.”

The *LaFayette Sun* reported on September 14, 1914, “Another Road Contract Let, The contract was let last Wednesday for the building of the State highway from LaFayette to Oakbowery. ----This road will follow mainly the bed of the old LaFayette railroad and when completed



*This image taken from a 1903 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of LaFayette shows the location of the LaFayette Railway in relation to the Courthouse, its switching Y, and depot location inside of the Y. The locations are in the blue area on the left side of the image. Inside the blue area were located cotton warehouses. Note that the switching tract on the right side of the Y goes up the street almost to the Courthouse square. The Central of Georgia Railroad is located to the left of the LaFayette Railway. The Central of Georgia depot is the small black box on the left of that railroad. Both depots were located near the cotton warehouses.*

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## SOME BITS AND PIECES IN LOCAL HISTORY ...CONTINUED

will be a splendid highway to the Lee County line.” It can be said that today we ride the old LaFayette Railway line every time we cruise up and down US 431 in Chambers County. Please read Mr. Davidson’s article to get the detailed history of the rail lines.

Well, this article began with the memorial to Mr. Lee Hunter of Buffalo and it shall end with another memorial from the *Birmingham News* which predated the *Roanoke Leader* article by a couple of weeks. I have included this article to point out how much better the writing was in a small-town paper than in the city paper. The News article prompted Senator Sparkman to congratulate our citizen on his long life and the writer in our neighboring county, who read the News item to write an excellent, detailed article about our citizen and his home place. I learned for the first time that there was a specific occupation, the cotton warehouse employee who specifically weighed the cotton with the manual steel yard scale. Mr. Hunter was skilled. Mr. Hunter was proud of his mathematical ability to accurately weigh 400 bales in one day. I read in a *Sun* article that a good day in season for all warehouses in LaFayette would be to weigh in about 400 bales.

**While others drift away, oldest resident of Buffalo stays,  
Only a dozen families remain----**

**From Sunday, January 18, 1959, *The Birmingham News*  
Buffalo, Ala. Jan 17---Buffalo is pretty quiet during the  
week nowadays. And on the week-ends too...**

**In fact there hasn’t been much to talk about since the rail  
road depot burned five or six years ago---or was it seven?**

**And folks in Buffalo aren’t expecting any big new  
developments this year, except a few more families will  
move away.**

**Lee Hunter will probably stay around, though. And his  
baby sister, Miss Addie, won’t leave.**

**Lee Hunter has been in Buffalo most of the time since he  
was born there 94 years ago. He regrets now that he never  
married.**

**“I had two or three girl friends to tell me they’d marry me  
if I wanted in. ---- I wanted to get married, but I couldn’t  
offer them a home----I didn’t have any money. I was just  
a poor boy.**

**“I’m sorry now I never got married.”**

**And Miss Addie never married either. “I am not opposed  
to folks getting married, you understand,” says Miss  
Addie, “but we stayed at home and took care of our  
parents after they got old. Then it was too late to get  
married.”**

**And now there isn’t much to make the days go by. Hunter  
and Miss Addie don’t have a television set, and they quit  
taking the newspaper two years ago.**

**Hunter farmed for many years, but several years ago they  
rented out the farmland.**

**And his sight is getting too weak to permit much reading  
now.**

**“I read a good bit I my life, but I only went through the  
eighth grade.”**

**But Hunter is an avid student of history. “Every morning  
when he wakes up, he tells me that something happened  
so many years ago today, and so forth,” says Hunter’s  
housekeeper.**

**“He sure remembers dates.”**

**There hasn’t been much what city folks call excitement  
in Lee Hunter’s life. He was Postmaster of Buffalo for  
many years. And for many years he worked in Opelika in  
Winters weighing cotton. And he went to the World’s Fair  
in Chicago in 1893.**

**And 62 years ago, Lee and Miss Addie recall, a man went  
crazy at Buffalo and decapitated three children.**

**The train used to stop at Buffalo but now it just goes on  
through.**

**The post office was closed last year. It had been in the  
Hunter family for four generations**

**So, Buffalo is just waiting for the end now. There are only  
a dozen families or so. There are a filling station and a  
tiny store and a cotton gin and a chinchilla farm, but  
nearly everyone has gone, either into LaFayette, three  
miles away, or to the bigger cities.**

**The town used to be called Buffalo Wallow because there  
were Buffalo a long time ago, someone said, but no one  
can recall ever seeing one.**

**Lee Hunter had to stop to think, a long moment, before  
he could think of a single thing he would like to do before  
he dies.**

**“I’d like weigh cotton again, the way I did in Opelika a  
long time ago. I weighed and gave receipts for 400 bales  
of cotton and never made a single blunder. That was a  
real day’s work. I’d like to do it again.**

**“You know what I liked about it. I liked to meet people. I  
enjoyed talking to folks who brought their cotton in.**

**“That’s about all I can think of I’d like to do.”**

**Lee Hunter still enjoys talking to people but there aren’t  
many left in Buffalo.**

**“I guess you would say I am a happy man... Only I am  
sorry now I never married.”**

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## ANOTHER LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK IN PERIL *by Malinda Powers*

In our last issue, we highlighted one of the City of Valley, Alabama's most beautiful historic structures, Sears Hall. Unfortunately, this well-known local landmark, owned by the Chambers County School District, will require significant rehabilitation if it is to endure into the future.

Directly across Highway 29 lies the historic Langdale School and Auditorium. According to the city's website, [cityofvalley.com](http://cityofvalley.com):

"After the original Langdale School Building burned, this building was started on the same site in 1934 and completed in 1936. It is designed in stylized Georgian by architect Kennon Perry. It is a two-story, structural tile building on a terraced elevation. From the outside, the structural tile looks like standard brick. The façade is formal with fanlights, nine over nine wooden Austal windows and a gabled roof. Twelve grades were taught here until the construction of Valley High School in 1939. The 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades were relocated there. In later years, the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades were removed leaving only the kindergarten and elementary grades. Currently grades 3 – 5 are taught at the school. The school continues to be a triumph of architectural beauty and an inspiration to educators, students, and area citizens. It is owned by the Chambers County Board of Education."

Recently, Chambers County Schools' Superintendent Casey Chambley announced a schools consolidation plan to satisfy federal courts, allowing (the Chambers County School District) to gain unitary status. Much work and intense deliberation on the part of Chambley, the school board, and multiple stakeholder groups has resulted in a plan that, among other changes, will shutter Langdale School. The situation is far too complex to go into detail here, except to say that one of the results will be the permanent closing of Langdale School.

So, what next? Perhaps a way to repurpose this historic building? Unlike Sears Hall, the schoolhouse has been maintained fairly well over the years. And the auditorium has undergone some renovation in recent years.

Developers in other cities have transformed such structures into apartments, business centers, retail shoppes, etc. Historic preservation is not easy, but isn't it at least worth consideration? Imagine Valley's "historic downtown" without these historic buildings. Places in peril, indeed!

Source for information and photographs:  
<https://cityofvalley.com/community/about-valley-al/>



*Close-up view of Langdale Theatre. According to [cityofvalley.com](http://cityofvalley.com), "The theater was built in 1937, after the old wood frame theater and school burned. Originally designed by Kennon Perry, an architect of Atlanta, it is a stylized neo-Georgian two-story brick building, it has a formally balanced façade connected by a cloister to LaFayette Lanier School. Three porch arches give the theater a Gothic Temple appearance. The building has been used for school functions, stage plays, church groups, concerts, pageants, dance recitals, cantatas, and religious events. For Langdale community natives, it is fondly remembered as the 'Picture Show.'"*



*Street view of Langdale School*



*Frontal view of Sears Hall.*

## BELL AND MARY *by Ron Williams*

Bell and Mary lived off the beaten path. Old timers in Beulah (Lee County, Alabama) called the place, “Back down the mountain.” The paved road had turned to dirt when you took the right down their long, dusty drive. Little would a stranger have realized that he was about to take a trip one hundred years back in time.

I knew Bell and Mary Morgan as a child in the 70’s and early 80’s. My great aunt had known them for years, and in the evenings, or on a Saturday when a trip to Bell and Mary’s was promised it was always a treat.

The way I hear it, the Morgan’s were very particular about who crossed their land. They threatened trespassers with a shotgun and this method was usually very effective. The same thing happened when two power companies wanted to cross their 200 acres many years ago. Permission was denied and no amount of discussion changed the Morgan’s minds. Electricity ran so many feet on each side of the Morgan property and abruptly stopped.

So, there, between the power lines—time stood still.

When America was watching *I Love Lucy* with Lucy in her modern apartment with her modern kitchen, Bell was cooking on a wood-burning stove. While the rest of the world gazed in awe as man stepped on the moon, Mary still plodded along behind a mule working the cotton. As the rest of us shuddered at the thought of nuclear war, these ladies blew out the lamp and slid beneath hand-sewn quilts.

The Morgan’s were different. It wasn’t just the lack of modern things that kept them to themselves, shut out against the rest of the world. There was more, but whatever “more” there was to the story just added to their mystery and made them all the more interesting to me.

At the end of the long driveway, we topped a hill, and the Morgan home came into view. It was a wood-frame house covered with weather-boarding and unpainted.

The yard was swept clean, and chickens pecked here and there. The frame of an old well house sagged in the front yard and the porch stretched all the way across the front of the house.

On that front porch sat Bell. She wore a long dress down to her Brogan shoes and a big apron. A bonnet shaded her face and she, like Mary, smelled of sweet snuff.

Mary was just the opposite. Younger than Bell, Mary did the hard work. She wore britches, a man’s hat, and a long sleeve shirt as she went about her day on the working farm that provided all of their needs.

The home was four rooms. The front door opened to a dark living room with a fireplace and a bed to the left of the door. In old Southern homes, there was almost always a bed in every room, including the living room. I always hurried through this room because of the mean dogs that growled from beneath that bed.

The next room was the kitchen with a wood-burning stove and a bucket of cold spring water. That water was hauled to the house each morning from a spring, pronounced “sprang,” about a quarter of a mile away from the house. It was a matter of pride that this spring provided clear water that was as cold in August as it was in December.

My uncle, Denny Williams, has spent a winter with Bell and Mary around 1965 when he was a teenager. His job was to help clean the terraces of briars and underbrush to help make spring planting easier.

“Cotton was their money crop,” he said. They grew and raised everything that they needed. They went to town once a month on a Saturday in one of the few modern conveniences that they had, a 1961 Comet. Their grocery list was reminiscent list of the pioneers: flour, corn meal, sugar, coffee, and tea. That was it!

“The best eatin’ I ever ate was off that old wood stove,” Denny bragged. Every morning they would go to the smoke house and cut some fresh bacon. They would make biscuits and serve farm fresh eggs.

My uncle also remembered that once a friend of theirs died and they went to pay their respects. The family asked if they could warm the food and prepare the dinner. One of them walked into the kitchen and came back out not knowing how to work a modern stove.

Once, they were having problems with a prowler who was trying to kill the Morgan’s stock and he had succeeded in killing a mule. The two ladies went to visit a fortune teller way back up in the country. The fortune teller gave them a fine powder with instructions to sprinkle it around the house in a circle. If the man crossed the line, he would get very sick.

*continued on next page*



*This photo of the Morgan home was taken several years ago.  
The home, which was located "back down the mountain" in Beulah, Lee County, Alabama, no longer stands.*

We are not sure if the man got sick or not, but his health was definitely affected. A few nights later, the Morgan dog, Coco, treed the unfortunate prowler in a cedar near the barn. One of the ladies simply reached above the living room door for the shotgun and fired a few shots in the tree. The next morning, they found blood but no prowler, and they never had had a problem after that.

Another interesting occurrence during my uncle's stay was a visit to their old burying ground. It was a simple family cemetery. The graves were mounded. Rotting wooden crosses marked some. Though there were no names, they knew who was buried in each grave. Once a year they came to this place for one purpose— "to keep the haints off 'em."

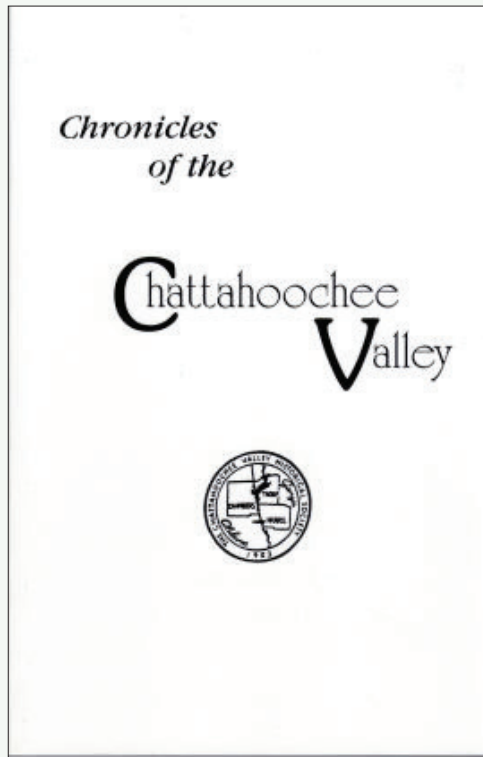
To keep the ghost away, a hole was dug at the top of each grave and a few pennies were dropped in. A few words were said each time and the Morgan's could live ghost free for another year.

I am not ghost free, however. Bell died, I think in the late 70's and Mary in the 80's, I cannot tell you how many times I have thought back about these two dear ladies over the years. Their ghosts, in a sense, haunt me. What is their story? What stopped the clock? Why were they like they were? What was in their past?

I am glad that I knew Bell and Mary, whoever they were. I am glad I sat on the front porch and drank spring water from a dipper. I am glad that I played in a fresh swept yard and went to a hog killing. I am glad that I knew this place, between the power lines, where time stood still.

*This article comes from the book "Past Times", a collection of articles about the people and history of the Chattahoochee Valley. For more information or to purchase a copy of the book email [hopewellroad@yahoo.com](mailto:hopewellroad@yahoo.com).*

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