

THE VOICE

of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and
Cobb Memorial Archives

A HOME WITH A HISTORY – McRITCHIE-HOLLIS HOME:



The McRitchie-Hollis Home, Newnan, Ga.

Every house (and every home) has a history—each with its own stories, memories, and legacy of those who once lived there. Many homes also reflect the history of the community in which they live. One home that encompasses an abundantly rich history of both its many residents and its community can be found at 74 Jackson Street in Newnan, GA. This 1937 Neoclassical house has such a rich history that it has served as a museum (and home base for the Newnan-Coweta Historical Society) since 2013.

Before you go, or if you are unable to, you certainly will want to join us for an online discussion about this wonderful museum. The McRitchie-Hollis Museum will be the focus of our quarterly presentation on Sunday, July 23rd, 2023, at 3:00 PM EDT (2:00 PM CDT). This virtual presentation (once again on Zoom) will feature the director of the museum. Our presenter, Ms. Larisa Scott, NCHS Exec. Director, will share the history of NCHS and the future of the museum and other NCHS services.

The Newnan-Coweta Historical Society is a non-profit over 50

years old. Originally housed in the Male Academy Museum, the organization's home base is now the McRitchie-Hollis Museum. Located near downtown Newnan, the museum is undergoing a major transformation. Once owned by Ellis and Mildred Peniston, members of a prominent mill family, later became the hospital auxiliary

offices before becoming a museum. It still houses many of the Peniston's former belongings (and even has their family kitchen preserved in its original state).

There are also many relics from Newnan itself on display. In the Peniston's former dining room, one can find preserved wooden blocks that once lined the streets of Newnan's picturesque Courthouse Square. In the adjacent room, one can find the Museum's "meet the locals" exhibit featuring local Newnan-born figures (such as Country music legend Alan Jackson). Also, there is an exhibit dedicated to the infamous "Murder in Coweta County" (a 1948 court case notable for a White defendant, wealthy and powerful John Wallace, being convicted by the testimony of two Black laborers). This infamous case became memorialized in a 1976 book by Margaret Anne Barnes (and later as a 1983 television film starring Andy

Griffith and Johnny Cash).

In another room, there is an exhibit on one of Newnan's most notable residents: former Governor Ellis G. Arnall. Elected in 1943, Ellis Arnall was notable during his day for his opposition to the Poll Tax, White Supremacy, and the prominence and influence of the Ku Klux Klan. Unfortunately, his opposition to such things cost him his re-election bid in 1947 to Herman Talmadge. Interestingly enough, Talmadge died soon after the election, igniting what became the infamous "Three Governors Controversy". Ellis passed away in 1989 and is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, just across the street from the Museum itself.

Our presenter, Ms. Scott, is a Georgia native and Newnan resident for 25 years. She is very passionate about history, storytelling, education and preservation. She looks forward to sharing the history of NCHS and the museum, plus future plans.

Join us for this very informative and interesting presentation on July 23rd. To attend this virtual meeting email ccpowers02@gmail.com prior to 12:00 PM noon (EDT) on Sunday, July 23rd. You will then be sent the Zoom link with instructions regarding how to join the meeting. ■

THE CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY MEETING

Sunday, July 23rd, 2023

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

VIRTUAL MEETING

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Jason Williams*

Thanks to all members who have renewed their membership for 2023. If you have not yet renewed, there should be a renewal form enclosed in this newsletter to do so and we continue to appreciate your support of preserving our historic documents, landmarks, and stories.

Even though East Alabama and West Georgia were areas that were among the last to be organized into counties, Indigenous Peoples had been living here for thousands of years before contact with Europeans. Mississippian culture flourished in North America from 800 AD to 1500 AD.

Hernando De Soto explored (invaded) portions of what would become Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama in the mid - 1500s, coming into contact and conflict with the Coosa and Tuskaloosa (and their Paramount Chief, Tuskaloosa) at the Battle of Mabila. Various theories have been proposed for the route that De Soto traveled but what is known is that the expedition arrived in the village of Talisi (near modern - day Childersburg, Alabama) on September 18, 1540.

While warfare and slavery killed many Native Americans, infectious diseases spread by Europeans were primarily responsible for the death of mass numbers of persons in the Southeast.

Survivors of these contacts aligned to form new associations, including the Muscogee Creek Confederacy. These persons were connected by their historic culture, language (Muskogee) and kinship. At one time or another, the confederacy included tribes such as the Alabama, Chehaw, Coosa, Coweta, Cusseta, Oakfuskee, Tuskegee, and Yuchi. A tribal town (or talwa) was the central unit of social structure and, in time, lower towns and upper towns were established along the rivers and trails. Locally, settlement occurred along the Chattahoochee River (lower towns) and Tallapoosa River (upper towns). A village chief or mico was the local leader but women also played an important role in Creek society, as clans were linked to maternal ancestors.

In the 1600s to 1700s, the Creeks were at the center of three world empires attempting to expand their

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Indian Monument Ft. Mitchell. The Creek Indian Memorial. Photo from Wikimedia Commons

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Editor: Ron Williams (hopewellroad@yahoo.com)

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.

PRES. MESSAGE

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influence in the southeast: the British, French and (once again) Spanish. These contacts varied from alliances and trade to conflict and warfare. After the American Revolutionary War, the Creek War of 1813 – 1814 (and aftermath of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend) resulted in a loss of much of the Creek territory and eventually limited their settlement to portions of East Alabama and West Georgia.

However, even this initial removal was not enough to satisfy land – hungry whites who continued to move into these areas and pushed for further removal of Creeks and other “civilized” tribes in the South. With the Treaty of Cusseta in 1832, the Creeks were forced to give away their remaining lands east of the Mississippi River in exchange for land allotments and payments for relocation. Still, white settlers (squatters) continued to encroach on lands now technically assigned to Creeks.

With frustration increasing over removal and loss of rights, some Creek bands decided to fight back and regain their land in what came to be known as the Second Creek War of 1836. Some of my ancestors (the Clemons/Clements Family in Fredonia and the Harper Family who came from Harris County, Georgia) settled in Chambers County, Alabama in the mid – 1830s. Their story of contact and conflict with the Creeks is a very sad example of what was occurring in our local area during this timeframe, resulting in the “final” removal. Today, the Creek Trail of Tears story is memorialized with markers and a statue at Fort Mitchell, Alabama in Russell County.

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PAST TIMES

AS GOOD AS THE BEST *by Ron Williams*

Coon hunting is a southern tradition. Even though raccoon is not hunted for food, by most, as the animal was in past times, the thrill of the chase and the fellowship of the hunt still draw man and dog to small branches lit only by moonlight all over the Deep South.

“Barking Run” and “Barking Tree” are favorite hymns to the coon hunter. The songs are sung with enthusiasm by a motley choir of hounds-on-the-run through swamp and pasture after the ever-elusive coon.

“Barking Run” is the song that always brings a smile. There is no warm-up on many nights. A pop-up coon, one that has just crossed the road near where the dogs have been released, is a great prize.

Some hunters just want to enjoy the chase and call the dogs off when they “tree.” Others work to get the coon down and enjoy the fight between coon and dog. Some can “call” the coon down out of the tree by making the sound of another coon in danger, and the fight is on.

Located in the northwest portion of the state, off State Highway 247, between Red Bay and Tuscumbia, is the one and only, world renowned, Coon Dog Cemetery.

Key Underwood started the cemetery on September 4th, 1937, when his beloved “Troop” was laid to rest there. It was the same spot where he and his fellow hunters had enjoyed the song of the chase on moonlit nights of hunts past. It was a fitting place for a good coon dog.



Key Underwood Coon Dog Memorial Graveyard, Colbert County, AL. Photo from Wikimedia Commons

Since then, over 180 dogs, all coon dogs, have been buried at the end of that dirt road. Some of the monuments are merely made of wood. Others are grand memorials to the hobby and the dogs that hunters love.

Ronnie Williams, my father, raised a dog that is buried at the Coon Dog Cemetery, sometimes called the Coon Dog Hall of Fame.

Tiger, a dark brown plot, with deep chocolate stripes, was bred to be a bear dog, and used early on for deer hunting, before his coon hunting abilities were discovered by accident.

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AS GOOD AS THE BEST

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I remember the day that a man came up in the yard with a captured coon. The man was looking for a dog to run and Tiger surprised everyone by treeing the coon quickly. The dog had gone mad. He gnawed the tree, climbed six feet up it, and had murder in his eyes. A coon dog was born.

Daddy laughs when he remembers Tiger's first tournament. Tiger was a rookie, up against "high dollar," experienced dogs.

A dog struck in the distance. Daddy recognized the bark and spoke up— "Strike. Tiger." The other hunters snickered. "It's not a coon," one bragged. "My dog didn't strike." To "strike" or "tree" anything but a coon is a mistake that an experienced dog would never make.

Shortly, Tiger "treed" with such continuing enthusiasm and madness that the other dogs joined in. When the hunters reached the tree and shined a light up through the branches to locate the masked bandit, they were shocked to reveal a lone 'possum, the cardinal sin of a good coon dog.

Some of the hunters severely punished their dogs. Just because Tiger was so convincing was no excuse. Tiger was offered the treeing trophy that night, because he was the "treein'est" dog they had ever seen, but Daddy declined it because he had treed a possum.

That night was not a good example of Tiger's skill. He became a great hunting dog. His fame spread across the South. One hunter called my father from South Carolina and told him to name his price for the dog, but Tiger was not for sale.

Later, Tiger treed beside a mean dog and a bad fight broke out. Tiger left the choir. After that, he would only sing solo. No other dog was allowed to tree beside him. His lone voice filled the hollows and fields on many nights.

My father finally gave Tiger away. He didn't have time to hunt Tiger the way that he needed hunting to maintain his skill. Later, Tiger was sold to a man who enjoyed hunting alone. They perfectly suited each other.

When Tiger died, there was no question as to where he was to be buried. It is that special place, at the end of a dirt road, where on moonlit nights the song of the hunt can still be heard.

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THE HARPER FAMILY MASSACRE

"The Second Creek War (1836-1837), also called the Creek War of 1836, was a conflict between the U.S. Army and Alabama and Georgia militias and a faction of the Creek Nation seeking redress for long-standing grievances in Alabama," according to encyclopediaofalabama.org. "These Creeks, residing primarily in towns along the Chattahoochee River in the present-day Alabama counties of Chambers, Macon, Pike, Lee, Russell, and Barbour, faced a federal government that refused to enforce the terms of the 1832 Treaty of Cusseta. In addition, more and more white settlers were defrauding them out of their land or stealing it outright. In the wake of the conflict, Pres. Andrew Jackson established a policy of forced removal of the remaining Creeks in the Southeast to Indian Territory (ultimately present-day Oklahoma), resulting in the removal of almost all Creek people from Alabama."

Frustrated at the influx of white settlers on their land, the Creek launched an attempt to drive them out in the Spring of 1836. Homes were attacked, families were killed, and the town of Roanoke, Georgia, was burned to the ground, leaving fear in the hearts of the early settlers.

Chambers County was not spared in the tragedy.

George Washington Harper Sr. was born about 1800. Much of his early life is uncertain, as is his exact ancestry. He had at least seven children and lived in Harris County, Georgia, before moving to the newly-created Chambers County, Alabama, by the spring of 1836. Here, he built a house on Sandy Creek in the southwestern portion of the county, but this land was primarily occupied by the Creek Indians.

In the 1832 Treaty of Cusseta, the Creek Nation had ceded their remaining land east of the Mississippi River in exchange for protected land allotments and money to relocate. However, this did nothing to stop the flow of white settlers into East Alabama and the Harper Family had likely been squatting on the land.

George's Wife and two youngest children must have been caught off guard, as they were killed in a field near their house. George was attacked and chased by the Creeks for two hours before being shot

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THE HARPER FAMILY MASSACRE - continued from previous page

twice. Despite these wounds, he lingered on for two weeks. Five of the children survived, as some warned neighbors of the attack and fled with them away from the area. Two others (a boy and girl) also escaped and hid near the creek before they found their way to their aunt's house several miles away.

The *Macon Georgia Telegraph* revealed the awful truth on June 9, 1836, under a bold headline titled simply "CREEK WAR:"

"Several squaws were taken prisoner... All, however, were set at liberty again, except one, from whom some important information was obtained. She is now lodged in (the Chambers County) jail. She stated that only a few hours before, a murder had been committed upon a white family, which proved to be the Harpers; That they had killed the woman and one child in the field, near the white man's house, leaving the youngest child with this little head bruised to a jelly, lying by the jam of the chimney, against which it had been flailed in the house. The white man, she further stated, was killed down at the Creek..."

Mr. Harper did not die at the creek. The article relates that he came to and made his way to his bed, where he was found the next day. "He was taken away by our fellow citizens and brought to this place, wondering all the time, that his wife came not to administer to his wants, and to give him water, which he greatly needed. He lingered out a painful existence of two weeks after he was shot and died last Friday morning."

"Five of his children were missing, who having witnessed what was done to the mother and the two youngest fled for their lives. The three next youngest ran over to Rays, living close by and gave them warning, by whom they were brought off. The two oldest, a girl and a boy, were pursued. The boy ran and jumped into the creek and having a straw hat on

which would be likely to expose him to view. He thrust it under his feet and just held his nose out behind a log to get breath. When the Indians were gone, he and his sister ran 9 miles alone to an aunt, wading creeks up to their armpits."

Bobby L Lindsey records in his *The Reason for the Tears* an excerpt from the *Columbus Enquirer* of May 16, 1836: "On the next evening (Sunday) the forces under Major Webb brought into camp on a litter the unfortunate Harper, whose wife and children had been murdered a few days before, dangerously wounded, one ball passing through the breast and another entering the hip and lodging near the nipple."

This tragedy understandingly struck fear in the heart of Chambers County citizens. Many fled to more peaceful regions until the danger was ended.

"Between mid-1836 and mid-1837," reports encyclopediaofalabama.org, "as the Army suppressed the Creek uprising, the soldiers started rounding up Creek families and forcing them into concentration camps. The Army eventually drove more than 15,000 Creeks, west from Fort Mitchell, about 10 miles south of Phenix City, to Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, with little more than the clothes on their backs. More than 3,500 Creek men, women, and children died along the 750-mile route, sometimes known as the "Creek Trail of Tears." After arriving at Fort Gibson, the Army gave each Creek family a blanket and essentially abandoned them."

One of the surviving Harper children was James Monroe Harper.

James (or Monroe) was born about 1823 in Georgia and married Amanda Tidwell in Tallapoosa County. He enlisted in the 38th Tennessee Regiment in Tallapoosa in 1861, was wounded in the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee and was discharged at the conclusion of the war. His oldest son, Charles Madison Harper, was drafted into the 63rd Alabama Regiment at 17 years of age and was taken captive at the Battle of Fort Blakeley, Alabama in 1865.

Our very own Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society president, Jason Williams, is a descendant of the Harper family.



VALLEY AM RADIO AND ME *by James Patterson*

The Valley Times-News (VT-N) recently stopped printing a comics page. Now, we learn that Ford's new cars will no longer have AM radio. AM radio is not available in Electric Vehicles because EV technology interferes with radio reception. Ford later reversed this decision due to the importance of local AM radio to small communities.

As a youth in Fairfax, I enjoyed listening to WCJM-FM and WRLD-AM radio stations in the Valley. WCJM ended its broadcast day at dusk by playing "Tara's Theme" from the 1939 film "Gone with the Wind" and the National Anthem. WRLD signed off later in the night. It was in Valley that my appreciation for media began.

My family listened to "Paul Harvey News and Comment" at noon daily on WRLD. At night, I listened to AM stations in New Orleans, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, Detroit, Chicago, and St. Louis. Listening to these evening radio programs introduced me to some very talented radio presenters or DJs. I still recall the energetic voices of Detroit's African American DJs as they talked about music, movies, and life in their city. AM radio introduced me to America!

While at Valley High School, my favorite nightly AM radio show was from Louisiana. At 8:30 p.m. the CBS station in New Orleans rebroadcast the morning's "Arthur Godfrey Show." Most folks associate Godfrey (1903-1983) with the early days of radio. His network radio show continued until 1972. His format was talk, music, and light comedy. His favorite topics included books, conservation, and the environment. He strongly opposed pollution, whaling, the clubbing of baby seals, and smoking. I met several of Godfrey's musical guests including the Irish American singer Carmel Quinn (1925-1921),

African American jazz singer Ethel Ennis (1932-2019), Ragtime pianist Max Morath, and pop singer Beverly Bremers. I once spoke with Quinn by phone. Bremers gave me an autographed photo. AM radio introduced me to great entertainers!

When the popular NBC-TV game show "Jeopardy" ended its initial daytime run in the 1970s, host Art Fleming (1924-1995) joined KMOX AM radio in St. Louis. I enjoyed his Sunday evening program of talk/interview/trivia. I spoke with him on air. I shared with him how much I had enjoyed his work on "Jeopardy." AM radio allowed me to do that.

While an undergraduate at Auburn University, Opelika's WJHO-AM radio introduced me to The Dr. Demento Radio Show on Sunday evenings. This odd three-hour program of novelty records was a delightful way to spend Sunday evenings. Host Barry "Dr. Demento" Hansen, introduced me to great novelty song artists like Spike Jones (1911-1965), wrestler "Classy" Freddy Blassie (1918-2003), Stan Freberg (1926-2015), the amazing Tom Lehrer, Weird Al Yankovich, and many others. Dr. Demento eventually moved to XM satellite radio and, after that, to his own Internet channel. AM radio introduced me to such great artists!

In the 1970s, talk formats became popular on AM radio. While enjoying a summer with relatives in Boston, we listened to radio hosts who were experts in real estate, law, finance, and psychology. For years, Larry King (1933-2012) dominated late-night talk radio.

In the 1980s, the talk format expanded nationally with the NBC radio program TalkNet hosts including personal finance hosts Bruce Williams (1932-2019) and Dr. Bernard Meltzer (1916-1998),



Patterson at a SiriusXM broadcast event in Washington, D.C. 2018

relationship hosts Sally Jessie Raphael and Dr. Harvey Ruben. I regularly listened to and spoke with radio wisemen Williams and Dr. Meltzer. Williams's popular syndicated column "Smart Money" was once in the VT-N. When Williams's AM radio career ended, he moved to XM Satellite radio network. I became an early investor/subscriber in satellite radio. AM radio contributed to the wisdom I needed to succeed in my career.

As a government employee, I was interviewed on radio stations across the U.S. Some of my interviews with New York City radio DJ Shelli Sonstein are on the Internet.

The VT-N and Valley radio gave me a lifelong passion for news. Valley media gave me a closeness to the news that motivated me to make friendships and meet people that I would not have otherwise met. I am hopeful that Valley residents will continue to find ways to develop media closeness for entertainment, friendship, and personal success.

James Patterson, a member of the Alabama State Society in Washington, D.C., is a retired U.S. diplomat.

JOE LOUIS

11 – Pounds that baby Joe Louis Barrow weighed when he was born on May 13, 1914, to Munroe and Lillie Reese Barrow on Buckalew Mountain in Chambers County, Alabama.

6 – age of Joe Louis when he began to speak. He spoke very little prior to this due to a speech impediment.

1 – The number of ropes that slipped causing the casket to shift to its side as Munroe Barrow's body was lowered into the grave on Buckalew Mountain. In 1916, "Mun" had been committed to the Searcy Mental Hospital, where he lived for the rest of his life. It is said that he escaped many times and made his way back slowly to Chambers County, only to be returned to Searcy. He died in 1938. Joe Louis knew very little of his father. The family thought that Mun had died years earlier at Searcy.

1920 – Approximate year Lillie Reese Barrow married Pat Brooks. It was under Brook's direction that the family moved to Detroit, Michigan, in 1926.

2700 – House number on Catherine Street, in Detroit, where the Barrow\Brooks Family lived. Joe's mother wanted him to play the violin. It is rumored that he would hide his boxing gloves in the violin case to keep his mother from knowing of his boxing ambitions.

17 – Age of Joe Louis Barrow when he made his boxing debut in 1932. According to Wikipedia, "Legend has it that before the fight, the barely literate Louis wrote his name so large that there was no room for his last name, and thus became known as "Joe Louis" for the remainder of his boxing career (more likely, Louis simply omitted his last name to keep his boxing a secret from his mother)."

3 – Number of losses Joe Louis had in his 69 professional fights. The Brown Bomber, as Joe Louis was known, held the Championship for 12 years, longer than any other heavyweight title holder.

4 – Number of languages the rematch between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling was broadcasted in: English, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. The fight occurred on June 22, 1938. Over 70,000 people were present for the fight, and it was broadcast to millions around the world. The fight lasted 2 minutes and 4 seconds and Schmeling was knocked down three times. The third time Schmeling's trainer threw in the towel. It was arguably the greatest boxing match of all time. Joe Louis became a national hero and is considered the first African American to achieve this status.



3 – Number of significant words that Rocky Marciano said after defeating the Brown Bomber in his last fight on October 26, 1951. "I'm sorry, Joe." Rocky had been a huge fan of Joe Louis. He said it was like punching his father.

0 – the number of times that Joe Louis visited Buckalew Mountain after the move to Detroit.

1981 – the year, on April 12, that Joe Louis died. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

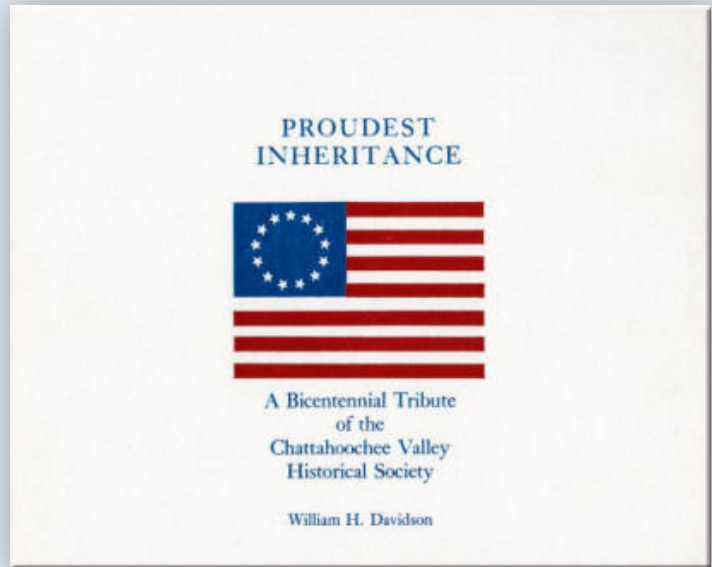
8 – height in feet of the bronze statue of Joe Louis erected in Lafayette, Alabama, on February 10, 2010. Joe Louis Barrow, Jr. was present. ■



Proudest Inheritance

Proudest Inheritance: A Bicentennial Tribute of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society. Information taken from records of the Chattahoochee Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, organized in West Point, Georgia, on November 7, 1917, and disbanded December 20, 1933. Also includes text of Captain J.W.F. Little's historic address at West Point on July 4, 1876. William H. Davidson, editor. Copyright 1975. CVHS Publication No.12

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