

THE VOICE

of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and
Cobb Memorial Archives

THE HOUSE KNOWN AS "PEBBLE HILL"

The Fall program of CVHS will be held virtually on Sunday, October 27th, at 3:00 PM (EDT). Our presenter will be **Dr. Mark Wilson** from Auburn University. Dr. Wilson will be discussing the Scott-Yarborough House (known more colloquially as 'Pebble Hill') in Auburn, AL. The house is an 1847 Greek Revival style cottage that has become an

important landmark in Auburn as well as a popular event venue. The focus of the presentation will be on the history of the house as well as many notable people associated with the house. In addition, he will note some unique artifacts in the collection that illustrate important aspects of state and local history.

The origins of the home ultimately begin with Nathaniel J. Scott and his wife Mary. They moved to East Alabama as part of the massive influx of White settlers to this area following the Second Creek War of the late 1830s. Originally moving to Macon County, they eventually relocated when Nathaniel's own half-brother John J. Harper founded the city of Auburn (then in Macon County). They purchased the land that "Pebble Hill" would be built upon in 1846 for just \$800 (which was a short distance East of downtown Auburn at the time). While continuing to own



*The Scott-Yarborough House a.k.a. "Pebble Hill" in Auburn, Alabama,
[image from Wikimedia Commons]*

additional farmland in Auburn, they completed the construction of the house in 1847.

Because of their wealth as landed planters and their family ties to the city's founder, the Scotts played a big role in helping establish Auburn, with Nathaniel becoming town Commissioner in 1839. Nathaniel Scott also served in State politics, representing Macon County in the Alabama State House of Representatives from 1841 to 1845, when he was elected to the State Senate. He also helped establish what would later become the Auburn Masonic Female College. In 1856, Scott and many other of his fellow Auburn Methodists established East Alabama Male College (which is

what we now know as Auburn University). The Scotts remained in Auburn even after Nathaniel's death in 1862. Following the conclusion of the Civil War and the end of slavery, Mary Scott sold the house at Pebble Hill.

The house would change owners many times from the late 1860s up until its purchase by Dr. Cecil S. Yarborough and his wife Bertha Mae Yarborough in

1912. Like the original owner, Dr. Yarborough also served in Alabama State politics for many years. He also served two terms as Mayor of Auburn, and personally welcomed President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the community upon his visit in 1939. Following his death in the 1940s, his son Clarke S. Yarborough owned the home until finally selling it in 1982. It has officially been known as the "Scott-Yarborough" house ever since, though the name "Pebble Hill" is probably what it is best known as locally.

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THE CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY MEETING

Sunday, October 27th, 2024

3:00 PM (EDT)

VIRTUAL MEETING

THE HOUSE KNOWN AS "PEBBLE HILL" - *continued from previous page*

The house is currently maintained and cared for by the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts and Humanities, a part of the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University. The Center maintains a digital, virtual tour of the entire house, which is located at the following link: <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=g7dppkiq8K>

In addition to history related to Pebble Hill, Dr. Wilson will discuss upcoming events at Pebble Hill which might interest CVHS members.

Dr. Mark Wilson is of the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University. Originally from Saraland, Alabama, he holds degrees from the University of Mobile (B.A. Religion), McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University (Master of Divinity), and Auburn University (Ph.D. History). He is the author of William Owen

Carver's Controversies in the Baptist South (Mercer University), co-author of Living Democracy: Students as Citizens, Communities as Classrooms (Kettering Foundation Press) and several articles. In 2018, he was voted by students at Auburn University to deliver the "Final Lecture," an award coordinated by the Student Government Association. He is a past recipient of the David Mathews Center for Civic Life's Jean O'Connor-Snyder Award.

Join us for this very informative and interesting presentation on October 27th. To attend this virtual meeting email ccpowers02@gmail.com prior to 12:00 PM noon (EDT) on Sunday, October 27th. You will then be sent the Zoom link with instructions regarding how to join the meeting.

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Jason Williams*

Happy Fall... As we transition from the hot days of Summer to the (somewhat) cooler days of Fall, I often think of my Ancestors and the time they spent in planting and harvesting during this time. Having Ancestors who settled in all 13 original colonies in the 1600s to early 1700s, they likely looked forward to a slower time in the Winter months after reaping the harvest each year.

All members of the family would assist with the harvest and even sometimes did so at night by the light of the full or autumn Moon! In New England, there was a much shorter growing

season given the rocky soil and colder climate, so the focus was on feeding the immediate family from small farms. In the South, "cash crops" were Tobacco and (as some moved into Alabama in the early 1800s after statehood) Cotton. My Ancestors in the middle colonies of Pennsylvania and New York had access to river valleys and a somewhat longer season than those to the north.

I hope each of you will take time to visit the various fall fairs and festivals and wish you all a safe and happy holiday season.

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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.

A VISIT WITH SIDNEY LANIER (1842-1881) by James Patterson

In 1972, the U.S. Postal Service issued a First-Class Stamp honoring acclaimed poet Sidney Lanier, born in Macon, Georgia, on February 3, 1842. The stamp was one of seven issued in the Postal Service's "American Poet" series. The series began in 1970 when a stamp honoring Edgar Lee Masters was issued.

In 1860, Sidney Lanier graduated with high honors from Oglethorpe University, then located in Milledgeville, GA. He served in the Confederate Army from 1861-65. After the Civil War, Lanier briefly worked as a hotel clerk in Montgomery. He was a church organist in Prattville, where he also taught school. In addition to poetry, Lanier was an accomplished composer, musician, critic, and author.

In 1874, Lanier, then a flutist with the Peabody Orchestra in Baltimore, was at work on two poems, "Corn" and "The Symphony", that were to become his first successes. Lanier's special gift, according to the *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (NGE), was his skill at "infusing" music into poetic lines. In 1875, Lanier's "Corn" and "The Symphony" were published in *Lippincott's Magazine*.

According to the NGE, "*The Symphony*" was "thematically an assault upon materialism, [it] is a work of technical virtuosity. Employing remarkable shifts in meter and tone, Lanier structured the poem like the parts of a symphony orchestra. Violins describe the poverty and oppression caused by trade. They are followed by the flute's description of transcendent nature, the clarinet's admonition against prostitution, the horn's celebration of chivalry, and the final plea by "ancient wise bassoons" for a return to innocence. The final lines of the poem reflect Lanier's desire to spare the postbellum South its suffering, but they also illustrate his artistic vision: "And yet shall Love himself be heard, / Though long deferred, though long deferred: / O'er the modern waste a dove hath whirred: / Music is Love in search of a word."

Lanier's next poem, "Corn", was equally compelling. In this poem, according to the NGE, "the narrator wanders to the edge of a field of corn stalks that stand in rows like soldiers, born in the field and soon to die there honorably. [The narrator] recalls how a previous farmer, now fled west, had succumbed to commercialism and "King Cotton" and had suffered great loss. Now the narrator sees the field as returning to its rightful task in producing the older crop."

The NGE says: "Lanier regarded traditional southern agriculture, rather than commerce from the North, as offering the best hope for the South." While Lanier's

agricultural sentiments may have been shared by other Southerners, he was a poet not an economist. Lanier was not schooled in "trade" or "business."

In the early 1970s, Valley area high school English teachers included Lanier's poetry among their lectures and assignments. This may have been due to Lanier's celebrated 1877 poem "The Song of the Chattahoochee." With the Postal Service's 1972 stamp honoring Lanier, Valley's English teachers had additional cause to discuss his poetry. I do not recall any English or history teachers commenting about Lanier's service in the Confederate Army.

I recently visited Lanier's resting place at Green Mount Cemetery, Baltimore, Maryland. His headstone is inscribed with "I am Lit with the Sun." It is a line from Lanier's 1880 poem, written in Baltimore, "Sunrise."



Patterson at Lanier's Headstone

Lanier wrote:

"But I fear not, nay, and I fear not the thing to be done;

I am strong with the strength of my lord the Sun:

How dark, how dark soever the race that must needs be run,

I am lit with the Sun."

In January 1942, Alabama Governor Frank Dixon issued a proclamation on the 100th birthday of Sidney Lanier:

"Whereas, the varied and outstanding talents of Sidney Lanier, as musician, soldier and poet, are now recognized and appreciated by scores of thousands in every part of our nation; and

"Whereas, the genius of Sidney Lanier, which found expression in his naturalist poems has proven, and will continue to prove, an inspiration to multitudes of men and women; and

"Whereas, Alabama, the adopted home state of Sidney Lanier, will delight to join with Georgia, his native home, in paying tribute to his memory, and honoring his great name on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth:

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A VISIT WITH SIDNEY LANIER (1842-1881)

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“Now, therefore, I, Frank M. Dixon, Governor of the State of Alabama, do hereby proclaim February 3, 1942, as Sidney Lanier Centennial Day. And I hereby recommend that this day be appropriately observed throughout the entire State.” [Source: Montgomery Advertiser, January 21, 1942.]

Also on February 3, 1942, editors at the *New York Times* praised Lanier. In an editorial “Sidney Lanier,” the *New York Times* noted the Centennial of the Georgia poet’s birth. *The Times* said that Lanier was “not a regional, but national, poet.”

The Times cited Lanier’s vision. “He worked for and seems to have foreseen the diffusion of musical cultivation in the United States.” Lanier died at age 40. Still, *the Times* said “he left at least a dozen poems that are enough to keep his name bright and high in American poetry.”

The Times editorial said that Lanier should not be forgotten. He made important and lasting contributions to American poetry. The bicentennial of Lanier’s birth should be a time for Alabamians and Georgians to learn more about the poet, his life, and his lasting impact on poets in the U.S. and around the world.

Lanier’s Macon, Georgia, birthplace, the Sidney Lanier Cottage (SLC), was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. It became a Landmark of American Music in 1976. In 2004, it became a Landmark of American Poetry. The SLC operated as a museum for many years. Today, it is part of the Lanier Center for Literary Arts. The SLC hosts book signings and writers’ workshops.

James Patterson, a 1973 graduate of Valley High School, resides in the Washington, D.C. area.

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PAST TIMES

TRICK OR TREAT MEMORIES OF LANETT

by Ron Williams

Most of the Halloweens in my childhood all run together, an endless street of welcoming front doors just waiting for a knock, a smile, and a friendly “trick or treat.” It was one of my favorite times of year, ranking right up there with Christmas.

There was one year, however, that stands out in my memory. It was the night that my brothers, cousins, and I were almost scared to death. It was the kind of night that could change a person. After that night, ringing a doorbell would never be the same.

I don’t think I was more than seven or eight years old, and that meant that the others—Don, Shane, Scotty, and Robin—trailed off like doorsteps down to about the age of four. We were five boys with empty, plastic, Halloween bags and high hopes, as we set out that night around my grandmother’s block in Lanett.

We were from the country where no front porch lights were left burning on Halloween night, and even if they were, the walk from house to house would not have proved productive. The homes were too far apart, but North 7th Avenue, in Lanett, was prime trick or treatin’ territory. We went every year.

On this particular night, everything started out great. The candy was good. None of that black-and-orange wrapped Mary Jane junk had made its way into the bag. The little candy bars and bubble gum and candy corn were piling up.

Then, we reached the corner house at the end of N 7th Ave. It is still a welcoming cottage even today. It does not look like a place that would consider torturing young children, but as we quickly learned, looks can be deceiving.

The five of us climbed up the steps to the small front porch as our mothers watched from the road. We rang the doorbell and were delighted when two, sweet, young women, all decked out as clowns, came to the door. They seemed so happy to see us, but it turns out that these clowns had an evil side.

After we had taken the candy, said a sweet, little “thank you,” and turned to walk away, a strange thing happened. These so-called “happy” clowns turned on us. They grabbed each of us by a belt loop and held us firmly on the front porch for just a minute.

Then, from each end of the house, from around each corner, emerged a monster. Two hideous creatures from the darkness roared toward us, their arms held high. It looked as though the end was near for five little boys.

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TRICK OR TREAT MEMORIES OF LANETT - *continued from previous page*

Let me tell you, as these beasts came into view, the candy flew. You can only run so fast while wearing a plastic mask with tiny slits for eyes, but we did our best. The yard seemed a mile long as we began our sprint across it. Forget the candy, all we wanted was our Mama.

I remember that as I was running, Robin, the youngest, who had been in the lead, fell down. I pondered, for a split second, whether to stop and help him or not, but self-preservation had kicked in. If he was down, I had a better chance of making it to the road. The last time I saw him, he was screaming, face down in the grass, and his little legs were still trying to run.

Finally, we were safe with our mothers. The men in the costumes realized that what had seemed a harmless prank should have been saved for an older group of children. Later that evening, they hunted us down and apologized for scaring us.

We left North 7th Avenue wiser children. After that, we kept an eye out on the bushes. It was several houses down before all five of us were brave enough to venture together as a complete group back to a door, but as the night wore on and the bags became heavy with candy, we were much more forgiving.

The last house that we stopped at that night was the McCoy home. Actually, we had already picked up the car and we're headed back to Hopewell when our endless begging persuaded our mothers to stop at just one more house.

The beautiful McCoy home sits way back off the road. Every year they could be counted on for good candy and a good scare. Only the bravest of children ever dared the long walk across the McCoy's front yard, and on this night, it was already good dark. Well, the car was stopped, and the conversation was already started as to whether we were going to ring the doorbell or not. My

younger brother, Shane, and Robin had already stated that they were not about to take the risk. After all, our clown experience was only an hour old.

I was in full agreement with the youngest of the group, when the middle two, Don and Scotty, decided that they were willing to risk everything. Well, being the oldest, I was not about to let the two of them show me up. So, the three of us emerged from the safety of the car and made our way slowly to the McCoy's front door. As we neared the front porch, scary music started playing and heavy footsteps could be heard coming closer and closer. At that point, the little bravery that I had mustered left me, and I turned and ran as fast as I could back to the car.

Then, I really got scared. Something was following me! Every time that I took a step, I heard someone else take a step. I stopped; it stopped. The streetlight in the distance offered some illumination, and as I turned, I saw nothing behind me. Was there any end to this night's madness?

It was only later that I learned that in my flight I had entangled my foot in the extension cord that controlled the music, and that cord was the monster that I heard rustling in the leaves behind me in my quick trip back across the front yard.

It's true; I was never the same after that night. I NEVER took a Halloween chance at the McCoy's again, and even today I still can't trust a clown.

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Clowns [image Wikimedia Commons]

THE OAKFUSKEE CONSERVATION CENTER *by Wayne Clark*



The Oakfuskee Conservation Center

WEST POINT LAKE — The Oakfuskee Conservation Center is in its first year of operation in Troup County's Pyne Road Park, but the name *Oakfuskee* goes back to a time long before the county was created in 1826. "Oakfuskee" was the name of a major Creek town on the Tallapoosa River between the present-day cities of Dadeville and Alexander City, Alabama. The town was on both sides of the river and the site now lies under the waters of Lake Martin. British traders who visited the site in the 1700s said it was the largest Creek settlement they'd ever seen.

Oakfuskee Town was the destination of two major trails through Georgia, one from the Augusta area and one from Savannah. The site where it crossed the Chattahoochee River is underneath the waters of West Point Lake. From the Georgia side, it's believed the crossing was near the present-day location of Glass Bridge Park; on the Alabama side it journeyed westward to Oakfuskee Town from the current location of Rocky Point Park.

There were two Creek villages along the river's west bank. Both had connections to Oakfuskee Town. One was near the mouth of Wehadkee Creek and was known as *Okfuskenena* and one near the point where Hardley Creek flows into the river was known as *Okfuscoochee Tallahassee*. With the coming migration of settlers in the area, *Okfuscoochee Tallahassee* was abandoned by the late 1700s. *Okfuskenena* became known as

the burnt village after being attacked and set fire to by militia in 1793. Survivors then fled west toward Oakfuskee Town.

Oakfuskee Town is thought to have been the birthplace of Menawa, leader of the Red Stick warriors in the 1814 Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Oakfuskee Town is also where the mother of the great Shawnee leader Tecumseh was from. She is thought to have been a blood relative of William Weatherford, leader of the Red Sticks in the 1813-14 Creek War in Alabama.

In the early 1800s, Tecumseh was attempting to form a Native American confederacy to resist the encroachment of white settlers onto what had been Native American land for thousands of years. In 1809, he came South from what's now Ohio to his mother's home village to rouse resistance against westward expansion of the settlers. In a fiery speech delivered in his mother's native tongue, Tecumseh railed against any kind of cooperation with the whites.

"I will return to the land of the Shawnee," he told them, "but before I do I want you to know that if I ever find out you have been friendly and getting along with these invaders, I will stomp on the ground so hard with my foot you will feel the earth tremble in Oakfuskee Town!"

Two years later when the most powerful of the New Madrid earthquakes rocked the eastern U.S. it caused the ground to move in Oakfuskee Town. Many of the inhabitants thought it was Tecumseh stomping on the ground. A series of quakes with an epicenter near New Madrid, Missouri are thought to be the most powerful ever experienced in the eastern U.S. It's said to have leveled thousands of acres of virgin forest, created Reelfoot Lake near the Mississippi River, caused a portion of the Mississippi to flow backward and triggered some temporary waterfalls on the river.

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THE OAKFUSKEE CONSERVATION CENTER - *continued from previous page*

A frontiersman named Nimrod Doyle could speak multiple languages and befriended Tecumseh, who called him the only white man he trusted. Doyle was married to a Creek woman and settled in what's now Chambers County in 1816. He is thought to be the county's first permanent settler of European descent. He and his wife opened a trading post and grist mill at the point where the Oakfuskee Trail crossed Oseligee Creek a few miles west of the town of Fredonia. The names Doyle's Mill and Oseligee Creek appear on the earliest maps of Chambers County.

An historical marker erected by the Georgia Historical Commission in 1954 on Highway 29 south of LaGrange tells of the Oakfuskee Trail being a famous Indian path. The marker is near the junction of Highway 29 and Upper Glass Bridge Road just outside the West Point Trading Post.

"The Oakfuskee Trail, main branch of the noted Upper Creek Trading Path from the Savannah River to the Creek Indians of Central Alabama, crossed this site, running east and west," it reads. "Beginning at the present city of Augusta, the route led this way via Warrenton, Eatonton, Indian Springs, and Greenville. From here it continued westward to Oakfuskee Town, early main center of the Upper Creeks, located on the Tallapoosa River to the west of Dadeville, Alabama. White traders started following this thoroughfare in the early 1700s. Much of the route remains in use today."

Early British traders called the native peoples in what later became the states of Georgia and Alabama Creek Indians because of their preference to live along streams that flowed into nearby rivers. Water provides life-sustaining sustainability for all people but was more than that for Native Americans. Water held an honored and indispensable place to them and was a symbolic image of life and death, creation and destruction, nourishment, and deprivation. It was an important part of their spirituality.

The name "Oakfuskee" is all about water. In one interpretation it's the Muskogean word for sharp water, a reference to how the streams they lived by ran clear all the way to the bottom. In another version, it meant "point of land surrounded by water," referring to what they considered good places to live. During the Native American era, the Tallapoosa River near

Oakfuskee Town ran clear, much more so than rivers do today. The combination of large-scale farming, livestock grazing, timber harvesting, industrialization, sewage, and wastewater treatment, plus the runoff from highways, railroads and airports affect both water quality and the appearance of rivers and streams.

The new Oakfuskee Conservation Center seeks to honor the rich history of our land and the Creek Indians who once lived here. The Oakfuskee Trail, which ran very close to the present center, offered a lifeline to the Native American culture, allowing for journeys in pursuit of game, fish, and trade. It was commonly called the old horse path for the many long-distance east and west journeys that took place on it.

"Oakfuskee is a bridge to the past," its website reads, "a commitment remembered in every leaf and ripple. It's our promise to safeguard and celebrate the natural beauty that surrounds us."

The impressive new building has two ground-floor entrances. The side facing a large parking lot serves as an event center with three large rooms named for the types of pine trees that have dominated the forests in Georgia and Alabama. There's a longleaf room, a shortleaf room, and a loblolly room.

There's a second ground-floor entrance facing West Point Lake. It's the headquarters for Chattahoochee Riverkeeper. A wrap-around deck area on the top floor offers some great views of the lake.

"Sustainability is at the forefront of Oakfuskee's design," the website reads. "We utilized eco-friendly materials, including responsibly-sourced wood, shiplap and other components like rain chains and cisterns. From the ground up, every detail including energy-efficient insulation and the integration of electric vehicle charging stations were thoughtfully chosen to minimize environmental impact. This ensures that our commitment to conservation is seamlessly woven into every aspect of the building."

The Oakfuskee Conservation Area at Pyne Road Park is open daily from 7 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. EDT. Tours of the center are available upon request. Contact Anna Knight at (706) 298-3767 or at anna@oakfuskee.com for details.



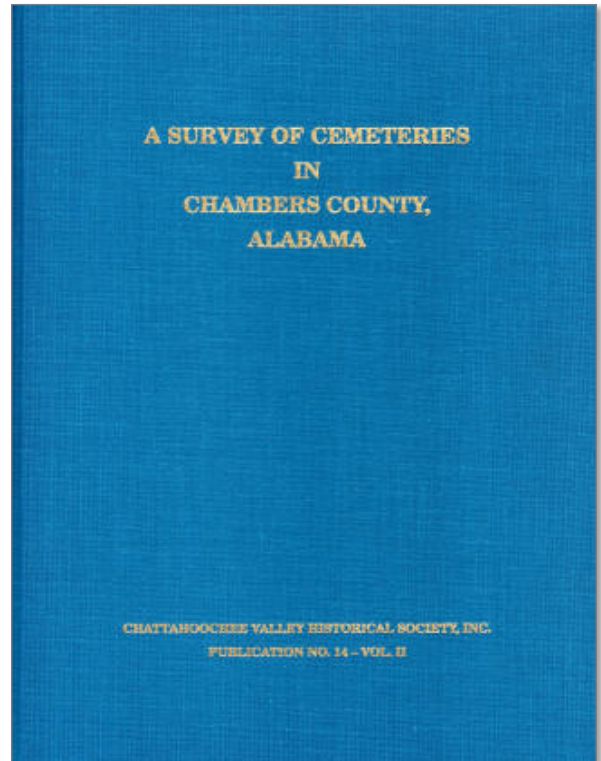


\$15 *A Survey of Cemeteries in Chambers County, Alabama*

Includes early church and family cemeteries in the county. This listing includes inscriptions from the oldest gravestones through those of persons born during the year 1885, with a few exceptions in family cemeteries. Copyright 1983. 3rd printing 1999. CVHS Publication No. 14 – Vol. II.

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