

# THE VOICE

of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and  
Cobb Memorial Archives

## THE "LOST CAUSE" MOVEMENT: EXPLORING THE MYTHOLOGIZING OF THE CONFEDERACY AND ITS HISTORICAL REPUTATION IN THE POST-BELLUM SOUTH

The Winter program of CVHS will be held virtually on January 26th, at 3:00 PM (EST). Our presenter, **Dr. Keith Bohannon**, is a longtime instructor of History at the University of West Georgia and an authority on the history of the Nineteenth Century South (both before and after the Civil War). This will be Dr. Bohannon's second program for CVHS, the former being an in-person presentation several years ago highlighting education in Antebellum Georgia.

Dr. Bohannon's upcoming presentation will focus on what is known as the "Lost Cause of the Confederacy." In the decades following the U.S. Civil War, many (if not most) white Southerners constructed a mythology to interpret the causes of the Civil War and reasons behind Northern victory and Confederate defeat. This movement developed during the time immediately following the Civil War known as "Reconstruction." During this time, the post-bellum south was under Federal Military Occupation. The white population of the Southern states had to go through a process of renouncing

the Confederacy in order to regain their United States Citizenship (a process that became more complicated during the Grant Administration).

In the post-war South, the white population was typically divided into two factions – the "Scalawags" (white southerners who supported Reconstruction and renounced the Confederacy) and the "Redeemers." The latter of these two venerated the former Confederacy and sought to "redeem" the South from Union control. It is from former Confederate soldiers and officers in the latter category from which the "Lost Cause" ideology (which came to mythologize the Confederate cause) emerged. Although Reconstruction would eventually end in March of 1877, the "Lost Cause" movement (and mythology) endured far longer.

The central tenets of the Lost Cause mythology appear in inscriptions on



"Confederacy's Lost Cause" Currier & Ives 1872;  
Library of Congress [image from Wikimedia]

Confederate monuments, in films such as *Gone With the Wind*, and in many generations of textbooks used in Southern classrooms. Lost Cause interpretations are still present in Southern society today and are often heard in debates over Confederate monuments and symbols. Although many in the southeastern United States today are not as aware of this movement, its beliefs and key arguments have permeated social and historical perspectives on the Civil War and its legacy even into the 21st Century. Dr. Bohannon's presentation will explore and discuss this.

*continued on next page*

THE CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY MEETING

Sunday, January 26th, 2025

3:00 PM (EDT)

VIRTUAL MEETING

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## THE "LOST CAUSE" MOVEMENT: EXPLORING THE MYTHOLOGIZING OF THE CONFEDERACY AND ITS HISTORICAL REPUTATION IN THE POST-BELLUM SOUTH -

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Dr. Keith Bohannon is a professor of history at the University of West Georgia and teaches courses in Georgia History, the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the Antebellum South. Keith is a native of Smyrna, Georgia, but his mother is a LaGrange native and has roots in Troup and Meriwether Counties dating back to the 1820s.

Join us for this very informative and interesting presentation on January 26th. To attend this virtual meeting email [ccpowers02@gmail.com](mailto:ccpowers02@gmail.com) prior to 12:00 PM noon (EST) on Sunday, January 26th. You will then be sent the Zoom link with instructions regarding how to join the meeting.

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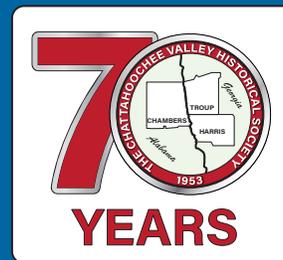
### THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Jason Williams*

As we begin a New Year, it is time once again to renew your CVHS Membership for 2025. **Please complete the Membership Renewal Form included in the Newsletter and return your payment this month.**

We appreciate your continued support of our local history and stories! We will be celebrating our 70th Anniversary in 2025 so please make plans to participate in our quarterly meetings this year and consider volunteering as an Officer or Board Member.

**We will be Celebrating  
our 70th Anniversary  
in 2025!**

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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

Editor: Ron Williams ([hopewellroad@yahoo.com](mailto: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.

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## MILL VILLAGE MEMORIES

The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society is interested in hearing from you. We would like to compile mill village stories of Riverview, Langdale, Lanett, Shawmut, and Fairfax for consideration in a possible future publication.

Mill village history is an important part of our heritage and those memories where life revolved around the mill whistle and the roar of a giant cotton mill are quickly slipping away.

Would you consider sharing your family's memories? Tell us about a special person (family member or friend) who lived in your village, a childhood memory, a unique story, schoolhouse memories,

a mill village character, a Christmas memory, or something unique about your village.

Do you remember when the mill whistles blew when WWII ended? Do you have a story about the ice man, the milk man, or the rag man? Fourth of July Week? Short time? The icehouse? The dye ditch? Baseball? The Merry Go Round? Maybe you even have a story of life in the village after the mills closed. From 1865 to current, we want to hear it!!!!

The mill villages are full of stories. Please email your stories, photos, or ideas to [hopewellroad@yahoo.com](mailto:hopewellroad@yahoo.com).

***We can't wait to hear from you!***

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*Photo from The Westpointer (Cobb Archives Collection): Boys Playing Rook in Lanett.*

*Pictured Clockwise are Johnny Boyd, Tommy Fields, Don Barker, Robert Burgess, Steve Willingham, Butch Arrington, and Skeeter Anderson.*

George Muse had no idea when he left Lafayette, Alabama, in 1869, for Atlanta that he would make his mark there. Muse arrived in Atlanta as the sole breadwinner for his mother and five siblings. This was quite a weight for a 16-year-old boy to shoulder, but young Muse was up to the challenge.

The venture that Muse poured himself into was the Muse Department Store, a business that made the Muse family very wealthy and left its mark on Atlanta. This business was “the place” to buy clothing in the South, and its doors remained open for more than one hundred years.

The store was located at 52 Peachtree Street NE, a building that once housed a Confederate arsenal during the Civil War period.

The home that Muse built in 1907 testifies to the family’s wealth. The home was built in the style of an English Tudor mansion in prestigious Ansley. It was the family’s private residence. Today, it is the Ansley Inn, a plush hotel.

However, it may not be the old arsenal or the Ansley Inn that will keep the name of Muse in the history books. That distinction may be the small home that Muse built in 1870 on a 5-acre plot in West End. It was a simple three-room dog trot. Later, three more rooms were added.



*Joel Chandler Harris House  
1050 Gordon Street, Atlanta, GA*

The Muse family lived on this farm until 1878, and perhaps it would have been forgotten in history had it not been for a new owner. Joel Chandler Harris purchased the home in 1883, and he named it “Snap Bean Farm.”

Harris, of course, is known worldwide as the creator of Uncle Remus. Just the year before he bought the house, he had introduced the world to Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox.

The name was changed from Snap Bean Farm to the Wren’s Nest after the Harris children discovered a nest in the family mailbox. Joel Chandler Harris built a new mailbox so as not to disturb the birds.

The simple farmhouse was transformed into an excellent example of early Queen Anne style. The Queen Anne facade and three additional rooms were wrapped around the front of the existing house.

Harris entertained some of the most famous men of his day at this home. Mark Twain, James Whitcomb Riley, President Theodore Roosevelt, and Andrew Carnegie were all guests.

In 1948, *Song of the South*, based on Harris’ work, was filmed at the Wren’s Nest, and the site was designated as a National Landmark in 1962.

The comfortable, modest home that George Muse built for his family is today the oldest home-museum in Atlanta, and this is just another story where someone who once called Chambers County home played a small part in making history.



*Brer Rabbit  
from London Charivari  
[image from Wikimedia]*

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## A RARE OBITUARY OF FORMER SLAVE “AUNT MARY” by Ron Williams

Obituaries are valuable to the genealogist. They provide information that may not be available anywhere else: location of burial, family connections, birth, and death dates. However, in past times the death of everyone in a community was not reported. Only prominent members were granted the privilege of an obituary.

Sometimes an obituary was only printed in the local paper if you subscribed to that paper. Bold letters would advertise the fact that if you were not a customer there was no need to send in an obituary for print.

19th century obituaries are even rarer. To the genealogist, an obit from the 1800s is worth its weight in gold.

For African-Americans in search of their ancestry, any 19th century document is a prize. Today, I want to share a rare find—the Thursday, April 4th, 1889, obituary of former slave, Aunt Mary, from the *LaGrange Reporter*.

It was written by a white man, from a white man’s point of view in those post-Civil-War and slavery days, and it is full of prejudices, but it is still valuable to the researcher for its genealogical information as well as a glimpse into the mindset of the South almost 25 years after the Civil War.

The headline reads: **“Mammy Mary. She nursed 4 generations. Death of Old Aunt Mary, Governor Gordon’s family servant—A venerable colored woman who represented the Grand Old Days.**

“Sunday night old Aunt Mary, 40 years in the household of Governor Gordon, breathed her last.

“She had seen the snows of four score and five winters.

“Sunday afternoon, when she knew that she was going out with the sunset, her last moments were cheered by the presence of Mrs. Gordon and her family, and the parting was so affecting that there was not a dry eye in the room when the mistress gave the departing hand clasp to the faithful old servant.

“Aunt Mary was born a slave to the family of Judge Lewis, who lived first in Greene County, and afterwards moved to LaGrange. Her ancestry had belonged to the family for 200 years back on the James River, Virginia where the Lewis’ lived.

“She went with Miss Lewis, as maid when the latter became the bride of General Haralson, and through the stormy period when General Haralson represented his district in Congress, Aunt Mary went with the family to Washington, New York, and other northern cities.

“Abolitionism was red hot, and nurse Mary was so afraid of being kidnapped that she refused to go with the children in the parks and on the streets of New York City. She would say, ‘T’se feared dey gwine take’n steal me ‘way fom my folks, lak dey does dese ‘ere common (slaves).

“When baby Fannie grew a winsome lassie and was wooed and won by dashing young John Gordon, nurse Mary, for the second time, went as part of the inheritance of the young mistress of the house.

“With her young mistress, to whom she was devoted, she shared the vicissitudes of the camp and the field when the hills of Virginia reverberated with the tumult of war.

“Governor Gordon said of her yesterday: ‘She was just as near a perfect personification of all that was honest, faithful, and true as any human being that I ever saw.’

“When she came to Kirkwood, the country home of the Gordons, she was provided for in the most comfortable manner that her former master and mistress could devise. She cared not for the freedom that Lincoln’s proclamation brought her, and remained true to the instincts of the old Southern slaves who were blessed with kind and indulgent owners.

“Four generations of people whom she had nursed were there at her death: Major Lewis, who is an inmate of Governor Gordon’s household, representing the oldest; Mrs. Gordon, his niece, who, with Mrs. Judge Bleckley, Mrs. Overby, and Mrs. Pace, represented the second; Mrs. Hugh Gordon of the 3<sup>rd</sup>; and her children of the 4th generation.

“And, as a striking parallel, there were three generations of Aunt Mary’s family on the place—her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

“The old nurse was hale and hardy till within a few days of her death. This was brought about by a violent attack of pneumonia, which, at her advanced age, proved fatal in about four days.

“A handsome coffin was sent out for her body yesterday and the funeral will occur today. She will be laid to rest in the old family burying ground at LaGrange, where sleep so many of those whom she loved and served during her long life.”

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## MARY WEISS, THE SHANGRI-LAS, AND ME *by James Patterson*

Mary Weiss, lead singer of the 1960s all-girl group The Shangri-las, died in January 2024. In 2021, Weiss certified me as “a Member in Good Standing” of The Shangri-Las Fan Club. She was the president.

I contacted Weiss, then living in Palm Springs, California, about her 1967 appearance in Lanett at Jennings Field. I lived in Fairfax. She did not recall. Instead, we became friends.

Alabama in 1967 was still racked with racial violence. My dad, a Korean War veteran, had served with the Alabama Army National Guard for the integration of the University of Alabama (UAT) in 1963. In 1965, President Johnson federalized the entire Alabama Guard for the 3rd Selma to Montgomery march led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Though Fairfax was far away from UAT at Tuscaloosa and Selma, the era’s violence affected our daily lives.

When the Shangri-Las announced a stop in Lanett, I was excited. It was a moment when I believed that Alabama was in the present 1966 era, rather than in the Civil War era. After the violence of Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma, I was ready for the Shangri-Las! If this sounds silly, you had to have been a twelve-year-old in Alabama in 1967.

I saw the Shangri-Las perform on that long ago Friday night in Lanett High School’s at Jennings Field, a large football field. I recall a large audience. We wanted to hear the group sing their popular 1964 hit song “Leader of the Pack.”

Critics describe the song as “teenage tragedy.” It is about a teenage girl who falls in love with the leader of a motorcycle pack. Her parents disapprove of the relationship. When the girl tells the young man, he

angrily speeds off on his motorbike. She witnesses “the leader of the pack” die in an accident.

Valleyans liked “Leader of the Pack.” It was requested on Valley’s AM radio station. It was a number one Billboard hit in late November 1964. It was a controversial hit in the United Kingdom. Some British critics disliked its death theme. As views changed, the song became popular with British audiences and critics. It last charted in the U.K. in the mid-1970s.

The Shangri-Las had other hits, notably “Remember (Walking in the Sand)” before the group broke up and their recording careers ended

in 1966. Tastes had changed. The Beatles reigned. Other all-girl groups, especially The Supremes, were big.

The early girl groups, like The Shangri-Las, enjoyed a few more years of popularity as they traveled America to sing at small clubs and the Alabama high school football field where I saw them in 1967.

Because The Shangri-Las had only a few hit songs, they performed

with other groups who only had a few hits. At Jennings Field, Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs opened. After Sam and his faux Egyptian band performed their 1965 and 1966 novelty hits “Woolly Bully” and “Little Red Riding Hood” the audience had a brief intermission. When the Shangri-Las took stage, Weiss and her two backup singers got a wild Alabama reception.

Though I was only 12 years old at them, I watched Weiss and understood what the older guys appreciated about the Shangri-Las. They were talented and attractive.

That evening was early rock and roll music amidst early teenage and pre-teenage conversations



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## MARY WEISS, THE SHANGRI-LAS, AND ME - *continued from previous page*

about the facts of life. My date that long ago Friday evening with the beautiful Mary Weiss and The Shangri-Las in an Alabama high school football field was stimulating entertainment and education. Tis a sweet memory.

In addition to her autographed photo and small Shangri-Las certificate, Weiss sent me a sweet handwritten note. She mentioned that she was 15 years old when The Shangri-Las recorded "Leader of the Pack" and "Remember (Walking in the Sand)." She wrote that her birthday was "12/28/48." She said Internet sources often got it wrong. In my letter to her, I included my telephone number. She phoned.

How did it feel to have a number one song in the same year that The Beatles, an all-boy band, invaded America. "It was unforgettable," she said.

"Fans remember," I told her, slipping in the title of the Shangri-Las second hit song from 1964.

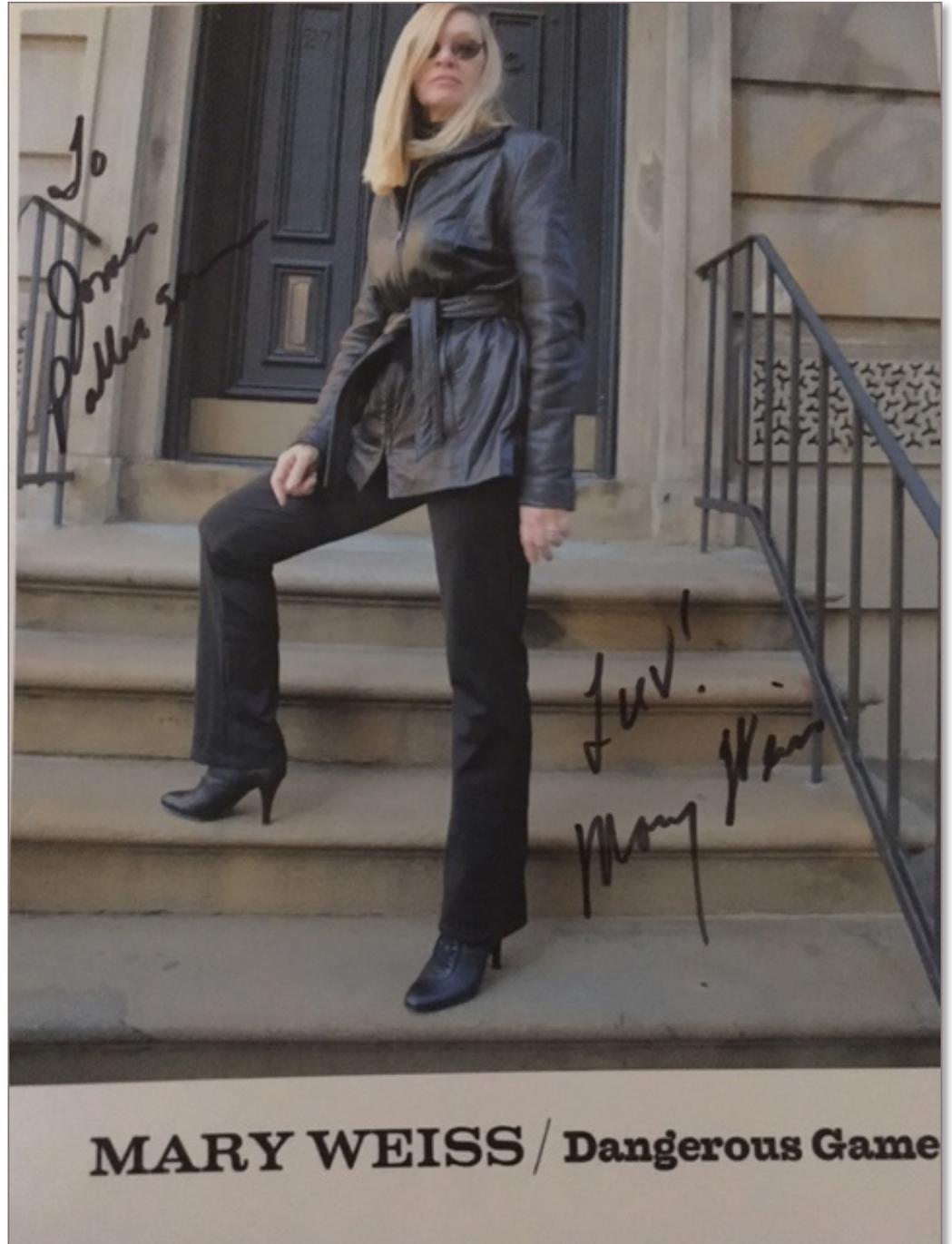
"I know," she said, sounding a bit proud and a bit sad.

I told her that I would enjoy meeting her when work brought her to the East Coast.

"I'll keep that in mind," she said.

Mary Weiss RIP

*Former Valleyan James Patterson is a life member of the Auburn University Alumni Association. He resides in the Washington, D.C. area. His author profile is at <https://go.authorsguild.org/members/4150>.*





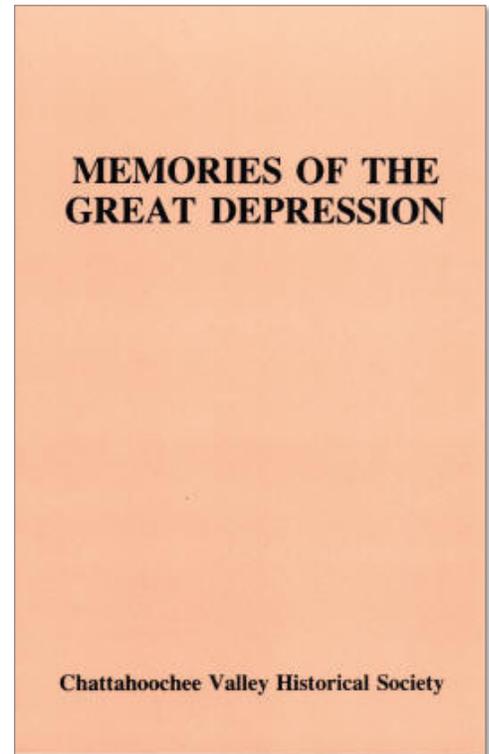
## \$10 *Memories of the Great Depression*

*personal essays; soft cover*

Memories of the Great Depression. A collection of 65 essays, including “humorous anecdotes and poignant stories mixed with a generous dose of philosophy”. 136 pages. Randall Allen, editor. Copyright 1993. CVHS Publication No. 17

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