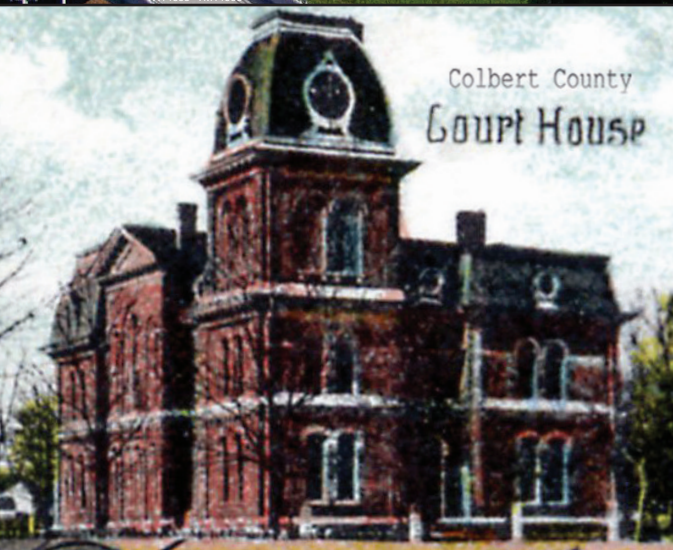


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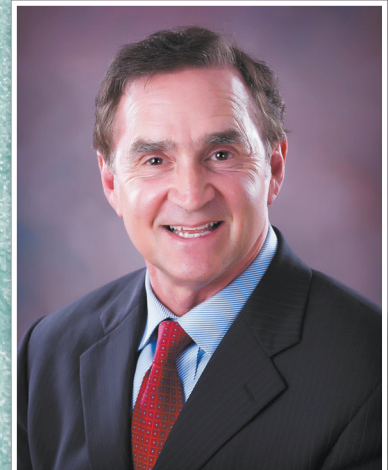


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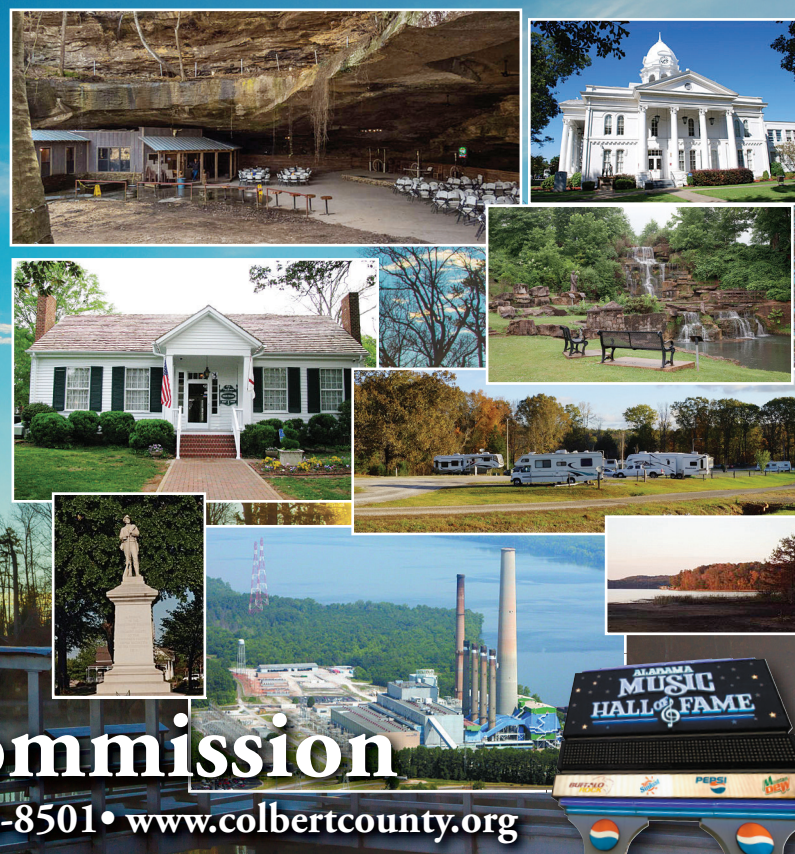
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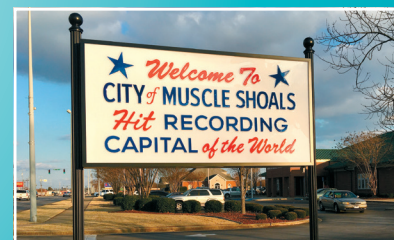
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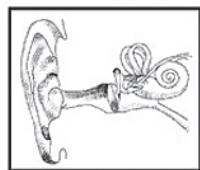
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200 YEARS and COUNTING

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About the section

Alabama is in celebratory mode, having observances to end all observances in 2017 and throughout this year, culminating with the state commemorating its 200th birthday next year.

Alabama was formed as a territory on March 3, 1817, and became a state, the nation's 22nd, on Dec. 14, 1819.

The Shoals can chronicle its growth right alongside the state's history, and in some cases, before the state was founded. This Progress edition will offer a historical overview of the Shoals cities - Florence, Muscle Shoals, Sheffield and Tuscumbia - and its two counties, Colbert and Lauderdale.

There is enough history just within these two counties to fill several historical volumes, and we invite you to schedule time to explore this area's vast legacy at your leisure. Many don't realize Lauderdale and Colbert produced five state governors. Hugh McVay, not only was governor for three months, he represented Madison County in both the Mississippi and Alabama territorial legislatures and was the Lauderdale County delegate to the 1819 constitutional convention in Huntsville.

Start your historical exploration here and expand on it so that by the time Alabama celebrates its 200th birthday next year you'll be versed in a large part of what made this state so great. If you love history, you'll love what you'll find.

Our glorious area is 200 years in the making and counting. We embrace our past, revel in our present, and look forward to our future.



North Alabama
MEDICAL CENTER

SOMETHING BETTER IS COMING.

Northwest Alabama had a hand in state's founding

By Robert Palmer
Staff Writer

Florence and Tuscumbia were already established as small frontier communities when the state of Alabama was created from the Mississippi Territory.

Tuscumbia was founded in 1817, and Florence in 1818. Tuscumbia was incorporated in 1820, and Florence in 1826.

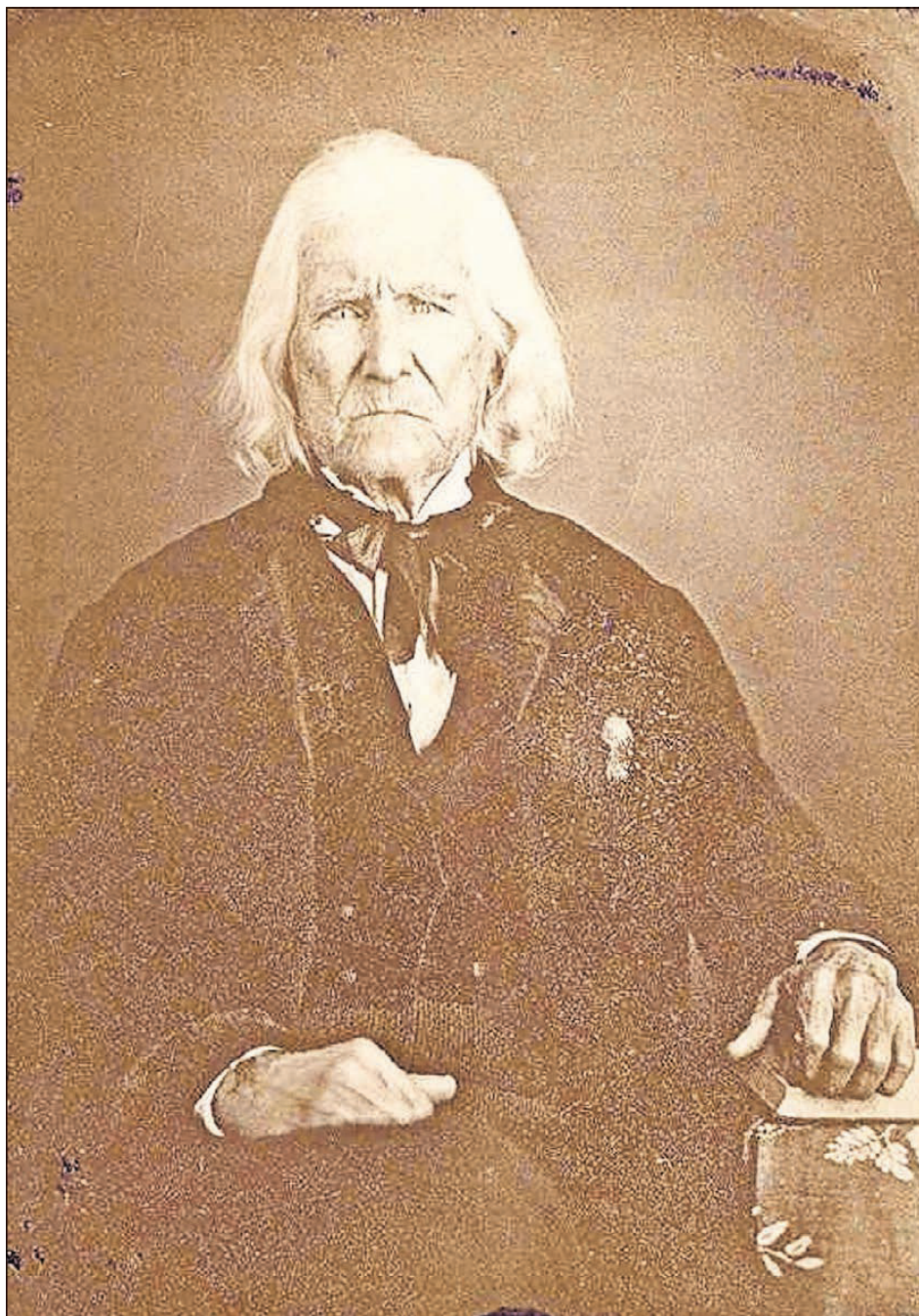
Three local men represented the area at the state constitutional convention in 1819. Hugh McVay, of Lauderdale County, and William Metcalf and Richard Ellis, of old Franklin County, were selected to represent what is now called the Shoals.

Before 1867, Colbert County, where Tuscumbia, Sheffield and Muscle Shoals are located, was part of Franklin County.

"None of the counties chose their delegates lightly," said Lee Freeman, head of the Local History and Genealogy Department at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library. "They picked the top echelon of the political and professional classes. They were among the most educated, and most wealthy, so they had a lot invested in seeing Alabama become a state."

McVay was a South Carolina native and lawyer who moved to Alabama in 1807, first in Madison County. He represented the county in the Mississippi territorial legislature.

He moved to Lauderdale County in 1817. From 1820-1825 he served in the Alabama House of Representatives, and then served 17 years in the Alabama Senate. He served much of that time as president of the Senate, at a time when the position of lieutenant governor did not exist, Freeman said.



Hugh McVay Credit: Alabama Department of Archives and History

That made him second in line to the governor.

McVay served three months as interim governor after Gov. Clement Clay left office to serve as a U.S. senator. During that time, a banking scandal was rocking the state and taking a toll on the economy. The large land owners in south Alabama benefited from the banks, and conspired to keep documents about the state bank hidden from McVay.

"McVay told the legislature and public he had no idea how the banks operated and blamed the banks for the depression," Freeman said.

McVay, in the public view, was responsible for the banking crisis, Freeman said, but returned to the Senate in 1840 and was again elected president.

Ellis was a Virginia native who moved to Huntsville in 1817, then moved to Franklin County in 1818 and practiced Law. He was elected circuit judge, and was one of the earliest trustees of LaGrange College, which was the first state-chartered college in Alabama. It was the forerunner of the University of North Alabama. LaGrange was burned by Union troops in 1863 during the Civil War.

Like many from north Alabama, Ellis moved to Texas in the 1830s during the violent struggle with Mexico to become part of the United States. Freeman said Ellis served as president Texas constitutional convention in 1836, and served in the state senate until 1840.

Freeman said little is known about Metcalf. He served in the Alabama territorial legislature, and was elected to the Alabama Senate in August 1822.

Robert Palmer may be reached at 256-740-5720, or robert.palmer@TimesDaily.com. Follow on Twitter @TD_RobertPalmer.

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Florence: As old as the state itself



Andrew Jackson was one of the principles in the Cypress Land Company, formed in 1818. Land sales in March 12 of that year is considered the founding day of Florence. PHOTO FROM THE TEN-

NESSEE BLUE BOOK

By Robert Palmer
Staff Writer

Florence and northwest Alabama were already populated with native people when white settlers began to trickle in at the end of the 18th century. But after the War of 1812 and the defeat of the Creek Indians in south Alabama, that quickly began to change.

The federal government began acquiring large swaths of land from Native American tribes, often with less than honorable intent, and a land boom was on. In 1818, the Cypress Land company was formed and a sale took place beginning March 12, which is today recognized as the founding day for the city that would become Florence.

This year, events are planned to celebrate the city's bicentennial.

Andrew Jackson, the victor in the Creek wars and at the Battle of New Orleans with an overwhelming win over British forces, was one of the principles in the Cypress Land Company. So was his trusted cavalry commander, Gen. John Coffee.

Jackson would be elected president a few years later and sign an act that forced Native Americans out of the Southeast on a march to the west that became known as the Trail of Tears. The Native Americans living in northwest Alabama were mostly Chickasaw and Cherokee.

"The Cypress Land Company saw it as a for-profit venture," Lee Freeman, head of the Local History and Genealogy Department at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library, said of the company's goals. "They bought the land from the federal government and then planned a land sale."

SEE FLORENCE, PAGE 5

FLORENCE

From page 4

Freeman said the company bought 5,515 acres on the north side of the Tennessee River from Cypress Creek to Campbell's Ferry. In all, they spent \$85,235.24, a remarkable fortune at the time. The charter called for the establishment of ferries, he said.

The wealthier buyers set about creating plantations for cotton, and brought slaves with them to work the land. Merchants were hot on their heels, eager to provide goods and services for the planters. Before long, Florence was prospering.

Coffee surveyed the town and built a plantation known as Hickory Hill. It was a nearly completely self-sufficient operation, according to historical accounts, and he started one of the first schools in the region.

Ferdinand Sannoner, an Italian immigrant, was a surveyor with Coffee. He drew a map of the town and was given the honor of naming the new town. He chose Florence, after the Italian city near where he was born.

Florence and the entire region suffered during the Civil War. Though no major battles were fought here, Union and Confederate troops were in and out of the area regularly, stripping the land of anything edible. By war's end, Florence was impoverished and lawless, with bands of outlaws robbing and murdering almost at will. Federal troops arrived and civil authorities began to re-establish law and order.

As the 19th century wore on, industry in the form of mills and the Florence Wagon Works were established in east Florence. The industries were general prosperous, especially the wagon works, which stayed in business until near the middle of the 20th century.

"East Florence boomed after the war," city historian Billy Warren said. "It recovered fairly well.

Florence Wagon Works was second only to Studebaker, as I understand it. It was quite an operation. It even made its way to Europe for World War I."

World War I prompted one of the biggest public works projects of the first half of the 20th century when the Army Corps of Engineers began building Wilson Dam in 1918. It would provide electrical power for nitrate plants to make war munitions. The war ended that year, but work continued. It was completed in the mid-1920s, and for the first time made the treacherous Muscle Shoals navigable year round.

When the Great Depression hit in 1929, the depth of poverty in the Tennessee Valley was considered profound. Poor farming practices had left the soil eroded and poor, and what wealth there was all but vanished.

Newly-elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act in 1933, with Wilson Dam and the Muscle Shoals area as the center of the project. It goals were many, including soil conservation, rural electrification and economic development.

"TVA was transformative," Warren said. "As my late father-in-law said, it lit up the valley.

"TVA was more than just a hydro-electric power producing entity. It was a social experiment," he said. "There was a very progressive school on the (Muscle Shoals) reservation based on the John Dewey principles. There was a library on the reservation, and those kids had access to their own tennis court."

After World War II, the region became an industrial center with metals and chemicals among the main commodities. The University of North Alabama, initially an offshoot of LaGrange College, which was established near Tusculumbia in 1830, grew and became a major regional college. Today it has more than 7,000 students.



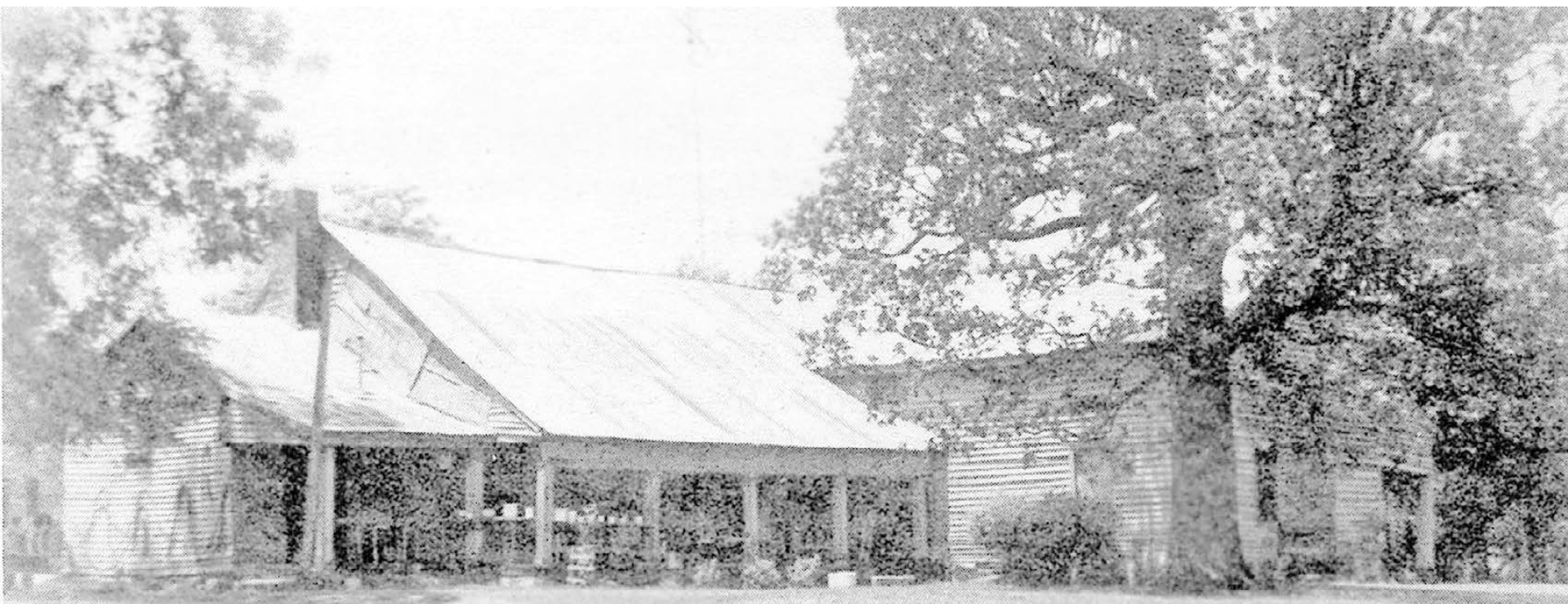
Gen. John Coffee partnered with Andrew Jackson in the Cypress Land Company and is considered a founder of Florence, where he built his plantation, Hickory Hill.

Florence was the birthplace of the world renowned Muscle Shoals sound. In a couple of rooms above City Drugs on East Tennessee Street, Florence Alabama Music Enterprises (FAME) was born in 1959. Rick Hall set up a studio in Muscle Shoals in 1961 and named it FAME Recording Studios.

Florence is also the birthplace of W.C. Handy, considered the Father of the Blues, and of Sam Phillips, considered the Father of Rock and Roll.

The arts remain an important part of Florence. Community theater has been popular and well supported for decades, designers Billy Reid and Natalie Chanin are based in Florence, and the city operates five highly varied museums, including Alabama's only Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house.

Robert Palmer may be reached at 256-740-5720, or robert.palmer@TimesDaily.com. Follow on Twitter @TD_RobertPalmer.



THE HISTORY OF LAUDERDALE COUNTY RUNS DEEP

By Tom Smith
Senior Staff Writer

FLORENCE — Local historian Darrell Glover said the rich history of Lauderdale County is almost like a never-ending novel, with chapter after chapter of the interesting people who past through or settle in a county older than the state of Alabama.

"History is like a detective story," Glover said. "The older we get, the more we want to see where we came from. And the more you find, the more you want to find."

Glover said that's the way it is about the history of Lauderdale County.

"The more you dig into some of the early settlers, the more you want to find out," said Glover, a music instructor.

According to history books, Lauderdale County was created by the Alabama Territorial Legislature on Feb. 6, 1818 and named for Col. James Lauderdale, who was originally from Tennessee and killed at the Battle of New Orleans.

The county encompasses 661 square miles, from the Elk River to

the east to the Tennessee State line to the west and north and the Tennessee River to the south.

Glover said the vast majority of the county was originally owned by Chief Doublehead, a leader in the Cherokee nation.

"For years, the early settlers were leasing property from Doublehead," he said.

Historians said in the late 1700s, settlers were moving into the county.

"People had been living and working in Waterloo in the 1700s. Shipping had become a big business

SEE HISTORY, PAGE 8

There were some major plantations scattered throughout Lauderdale County prior to the Civil War. One of the largest was the Peters Plantation that covered 6,600 acres just off of what is now Gunwaleford Road.

COURTESY PHOTO



Florence City Schools



\$15+ million – Senior scholarships offered last year

4400 – Students served annually

1890 – Florence City Schools established

1818 – City of Florence founded

116 – Fine Arts Academy Classes

96% - Graduation Rate

74 – Career Technical Courses

60 – Athletic Teams

20 – Advance Placement Courses

14 – Average class size

10 – Top Ten District in Alabama



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One Florence

HISTORY

From page 6

in Waterloo at that time,” said Fay Parker, who grew up on Panther Creek outside of Waterloo.

Parker, who is the retired transportation superintendent of the Lauderdale County School System, said one section of his family moved to the Waterloo area in the early 1800s, coming from Kentucky.

“The Parkers came to Tennessee, then heard about Alabama, the rich farm land, and moved here,” Parker said.

He said the old log house, where he was born, was built by my great-great-great-great-grandfather Tommy Parker.

“It’s still standing,” Parker said. “They came here a year or so before they built the house.”

Glover said Waterloo is rich in history.

“It’s very rich in Native American history, that’s where the Indians boarded boats as a part of the Trial of Tears as they went to Oklahoma,” he said.

He said one of the first to live in the western part of the county was Dr. Gabriel Bumphus, who moved into the Waterloo area in 1807.

“He was a doctor and postmaster. He started the first post office there,” Glover said.

He said when Waterloo was founded it was originally call “The Landing.”

“A lot of people don’t realize, back then Waterloo was a shipping port, and very prosperous,” Parker said. “At one time, there were 23 stores in the Waterloo region.”

Glover said in 1785, Lauderdale County was part of the Georgia Territory.

He said it’s been documented that 80 people came and started a settlement but it was later abandoned because of a Chicksaw Indian uprising.

Glover said a lot of people who settled in the county came through with Andrew Jackson when he was building the military road (which a portion is now U.S. 43) from Nashville to New Orleans.

“They liked the area. When their work was finished, the came back here with their families and settled,” Glover said.

Also, some residents just happened

upon Lauderdale County.

“There were a lot of families in a wagon train from the Carolinas, going to the Mississippi Territory who got lost,” Glover said. “They ended up in the eastern part of Lauderdale County. It reminded them of the Carolinas, so they stayed.”

He said some traveling south, trying to find the Natchez Trace to get to Mississippi Territory, took a wrong turn.

“They ended up on the old Double-head Trace, and found their water to Bluewater and stayed,” Glover said.

Brad Holmes, who is a Florence police officer and county commissioner, has traced back eight generations of his family in the county.

He said ancestors moved to the county from South Carolina, going to Georgia, to Courtland and on across the Tennessee River into Lauderdale County.

Holmes said he found where some of the property that was owned by his family was signed over by John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson after the land act was revised in 1817.

He said some of his first ancestors settled near Anderson Creek and were sharecroppers.

“When me and my wife, Sara, started dating, her grandfather told me about ‘Old Man Holmes’ who had property on Snake Road. I had no idea that he was talking about my ancestors until I started researching it,” Holmes said.

Glover said for the most part people have always thought of the first settlers as farmers, “but they were more.”

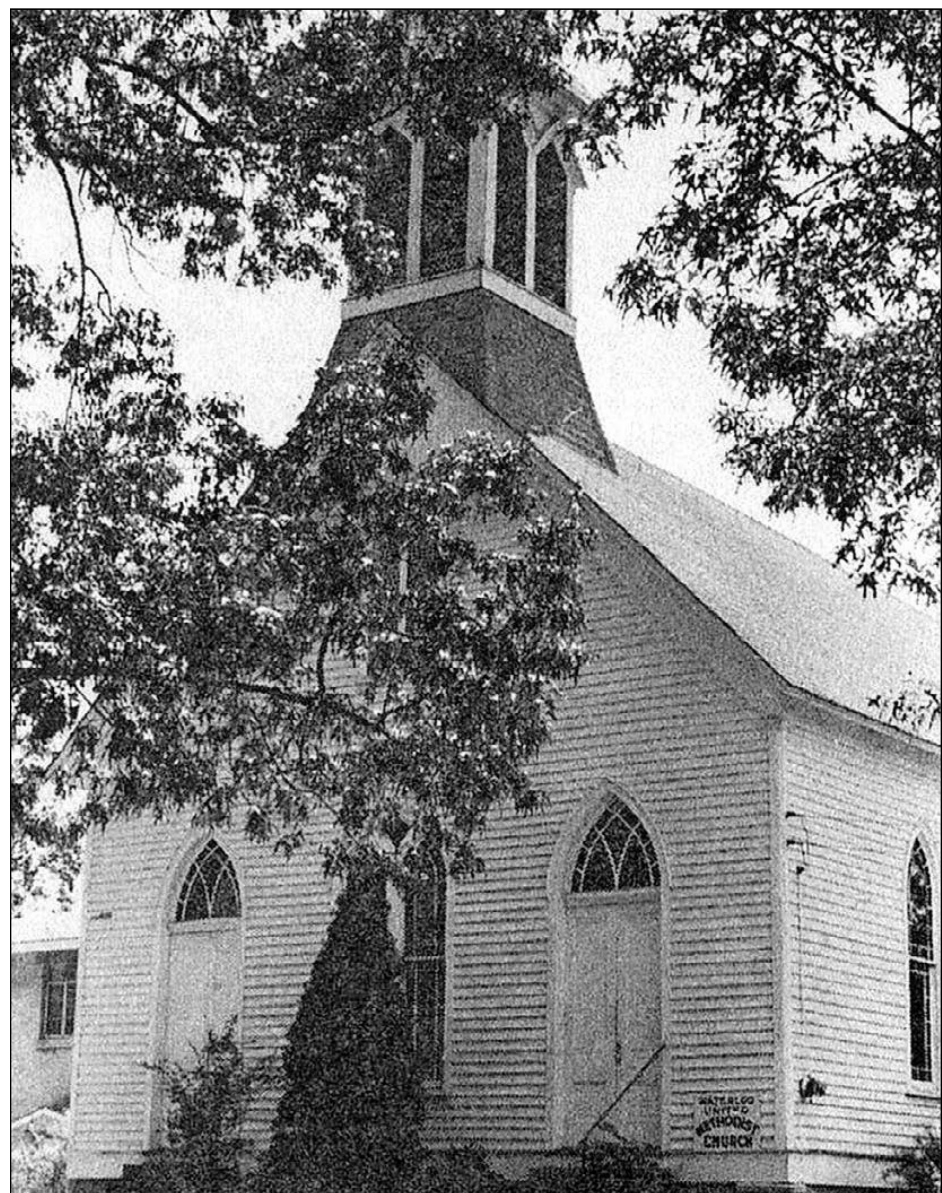
“This county has always been very diverse in industry, even early on,” Glover said. “Of course, there was a lot of farming, but there was more also.”

He said prior to the Civil War there were several different kinds of businesses and industry in the county.

There was a gun company in Greenhill, an uniform company around Cowpen, trapping, grist mills, timber, shipping and the historical Florence Wagon Works.

“The abundant natural resources allow the people to be diverse in what they did. There was farming, but there was more,” Glover said.

Florence Municipal Judge Chris Smith, who has ties to the “bend of the river” area of west Lauderdale County, said his family dates backs to 1819.



Waterloo United Methodist Church is considered one of the oldest active Methodist churches in Alabama. COURTESY PHOTO

Smith, whose great great uncle, R.C. Smith built the Oakland Gin, said there were some major plantations scattered throughout the county prior to the Civil War.

One of the largest was the Peters’ Plantation that covered 6,600 acres just off of what is now the Gunwaldeford Road.

“And one of the few actual skirmishes in the Civil War happened on that plantation,” he said.

Smith said the eastern part of the county seemed to become more populated earlier.

“In the east, there were more community centers. In the west, was the bend of the river, the bigger farms,” Smith said.

He said there is a lot of history scattered through the region in the vast number of cemeteries in the

county.

“There are family cemeteries everywhere. A lot are overgrown, unkept, forgotten about,” Smith said.

“But everyone of them holds a part of the history on this county, and what made it what it is today,” Glover added.

Smith said with the bicentennial coming, it’s great to see so many people getting excited about history.

“For me, history is fascinating. It’s a chance to learn about our heritage, where our ancestors came from, what they did,” Smith said. “It’s like I’ve been told, you have to learn from where you’ve been to know where you’re going.”

tom.smith@timesdaily.com or 256-740-5757. Twitter @TD_TomSmith.



SHOALS HOME TO ALABAMA GOVERNORS

The Shoals area has a history of governors who live here and served Alabama.

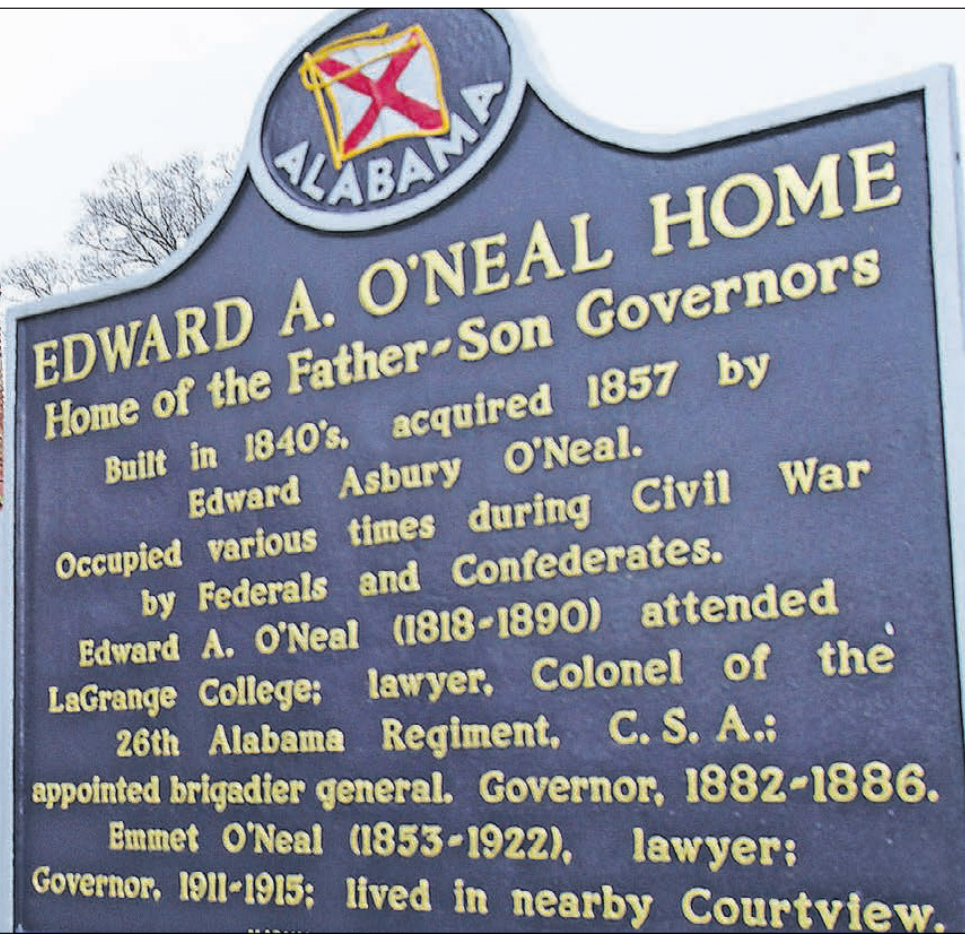
Lauderdale County

- Hugh McVay, 1837 (served three months)
- Robert M. Patton, 1865-1867
- Edward A. O'Neal, 1882-1886
- Emmet O'Neal, 1911-1915

Colbert County

- Robert Lindsay, Tuscumbia, 1870-1872

The historic O'Neal house on North Court Street in Florence was the home of Gov. Edward A. O'Neal and the childhood home of Gov. EMMET O'NEAL. FILE/TIMESDAILY



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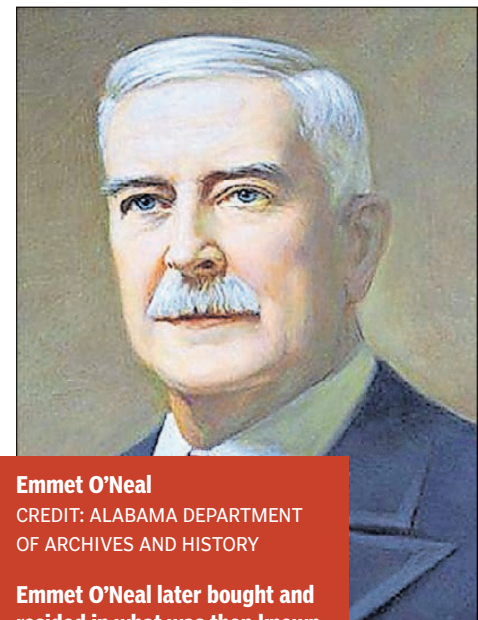
Gov. Robert Patton's home, Sweetwater, in Florence.

(IMAGE FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS FROM THE HISTORICAL AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY OF SWEETWATER: SOUTHWEST ELEVATION MARCH 17, 1934)



Gov. Robert Lindsay house in Tuscumbia

CREDIT: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Emmet O'Neal

CREDIT: ALABAMA DEPARTMENT
OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Emmet O'Neal later bought and resided in what was then known as Courtview, built in 1855 by George Washington Foster. The home was bought by the Rogers family in 1922 and is known today as Rogers Hall.



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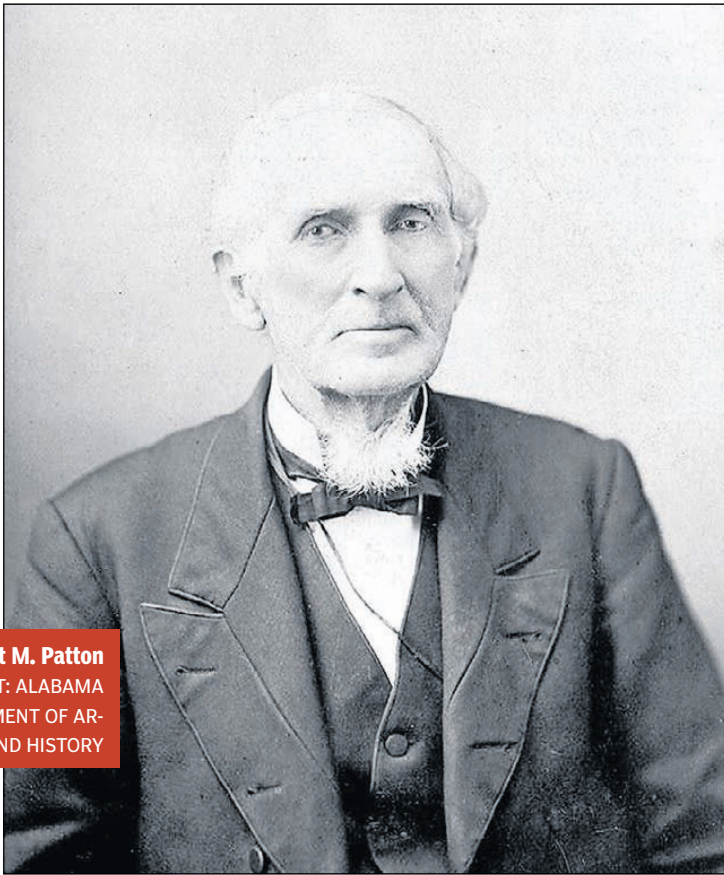
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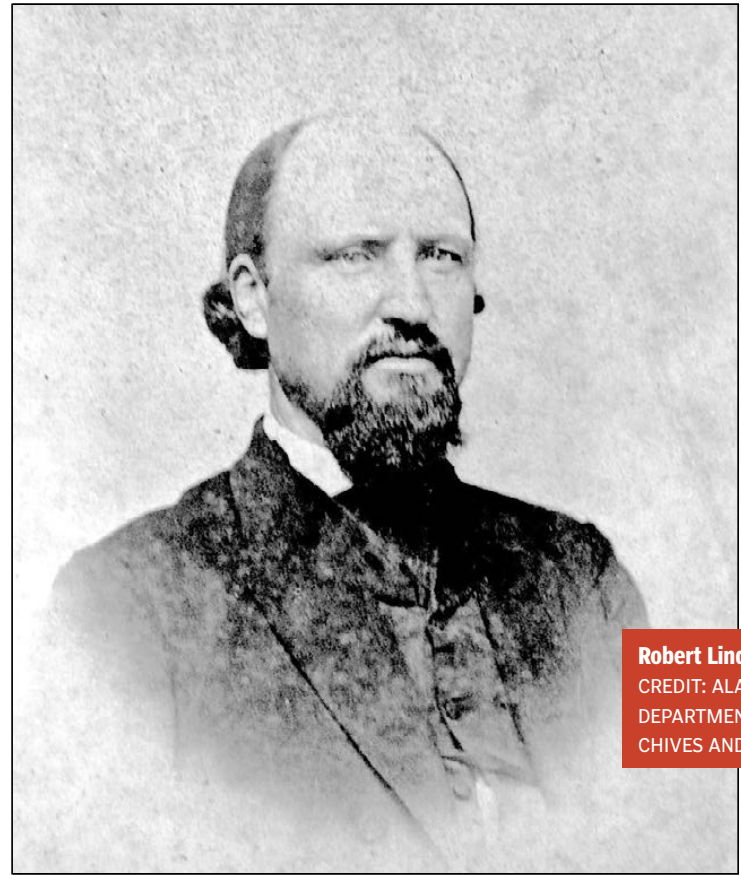
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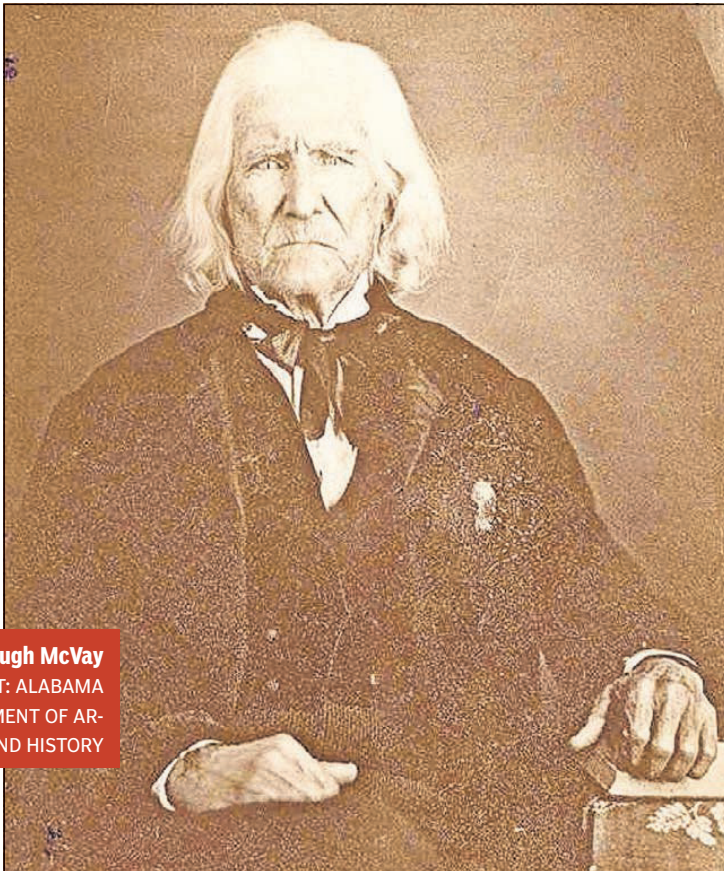
Robert M. Patton

CREDIT: ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF AR-
CHIVES AND HISTORY



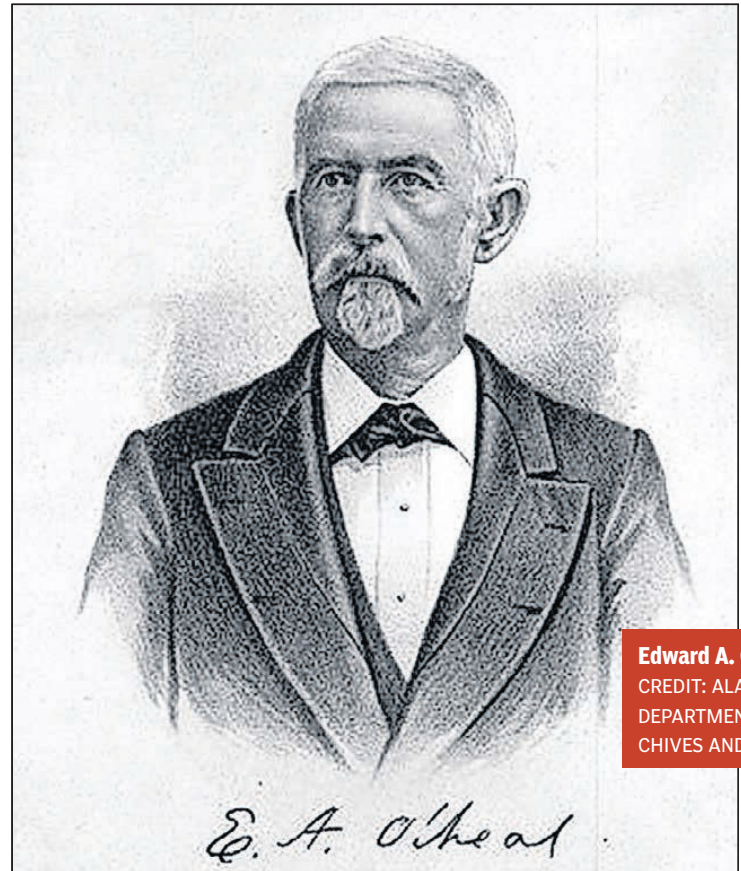
Robert Lindsay

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Hugh McVay

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Edward A. O'Neal

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CHIVES AND HISTORY

Education always a priority in the shoals

By Lisa Singleton-Rickman
Staff Writer

The area of northwest Alabama that's home to the Shoals has had one steadfast characteristic that has defined it since the early 1800's: education.

More specifically, the pursuit of education.

From the oldest documented Coffee Family Plantation School, that served white children in 1820 in Florence – just two years after Florence was founded as a town – to the Freedman's Public School that sprang up immediately after the end of the Civil War to serve black children, education and a passionate pursuit has been the standard.

The earliest schools documented in both Lauderdale and Colbert counties were largely housed in one or two-room homes, cabins and churches.

In Colbert County, the Freedman's School in Tuscumbia in 1870 marked the first formal education for black children. Just seven years later, in 1877, the Osborne Colored Academy was established.

Then, in 1887, the Tuscumbia Colored Public School opened with the first graduation exercises in 1888.

The Tuscumbia Colored Public School moved in 1905 to High Street with a name change to Trenholm High School in 1921.

In Lauderdale County between the early to late 1800's there were up to 115 schools, according to Florence City Historian Billy Ray Warren.

"If there is anything that can be emphatically stated in truth about Florence, Alabama, it's that it has always been an education town," he said.

In 1890, Florence City Schools began operation with the opening of Patton School. That same year, the Colored Public Free School was located on Court Street. Eight years later, Brandon Elementary School opened.

The city operated the Slater School on South Court Street for black children attending grades first through seventh.

In 1914 Florence High School was established on North Pine Street.

Coffee High School was established in 1917, then Gilbert Elementary in 1921.



Leighton Training School

Burrell High School, (formerly Burrell Normal School) became part of Florence City Schools in 1937. It was renamed again in 1952 as Burrell-Slater.

In Colbert County, public education for Sheffield's black children began in 1889 in a frame building on 20th Street and S. Atlanta Ave.

Benjamin J. Sterling, a former slave, became principal in 1896. Sheffield Colored High School began in 1920 with 13 students. That school was renamed Sterling High School in 1942.

Sterling closed in 1963 under federal court orders and its 225 pupils and 12 teachers were absorbed into Sheffield Junior and Senior High Schools. The building was razed in 1978.

In Colbert County in 1892, a growing movement for educating black children began at the old Galilee Church, then in 1894 moved to the city limits of Leighton to a section of town called the Grove.

One of the most storied black schools, and what came to be the most populous was Leighton Training School, that began in 1928. Within two

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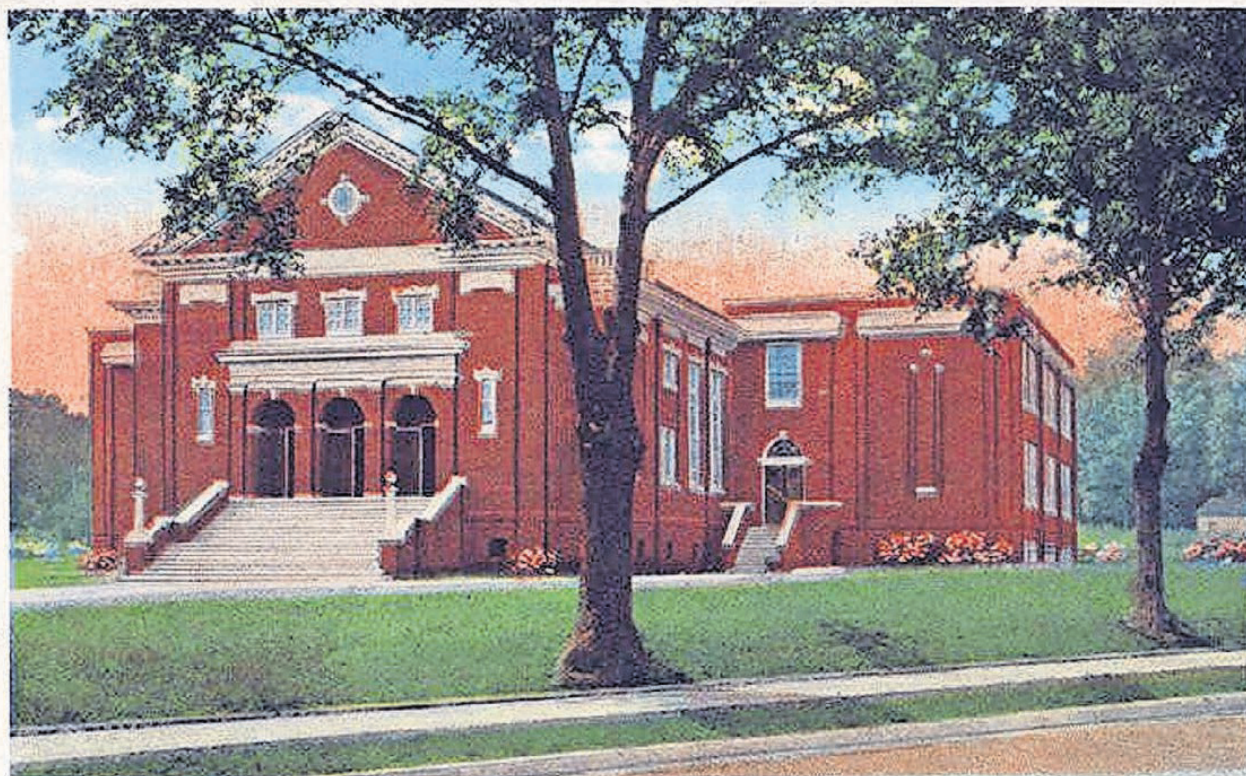
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EDUCATION

From page 13

weeks, \$1,000 was raised to purchase five acres of land.

Leighton historian Frankie Hogan said both whites and blacks gave to the building fund drive.

"It was a testament to the spirit of a close community," Hogan said.

Grants from the county and state totaling \$8,000 went to construct a brick building for the school, first named Leighton Colored School in 1929.

The first graduating class consisted of three girls in 1932, according to Hogan.

The school was patterned after the first training school in the state established in 1913 in Coosa County.

Leighton Training School educated children from throughout the county as well as some from neighboring towns.

The last graduating class at Leighton Training School was in 1970.

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Colbert has a vast and interesting history

By Russ Corey
Staff Writer

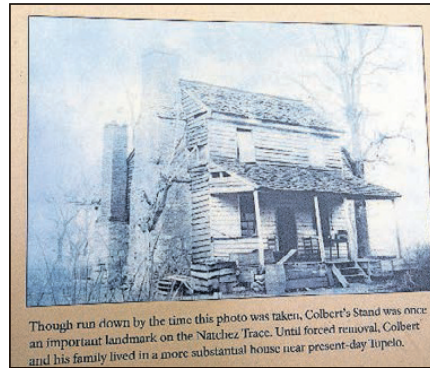
TUSCUMBIA — Colbert County was originally established on Feb. 6, 1867, after splitting from what was then Franklin County, 48 years after the State of Alabama was founded.

But that doesn't mean there weren't people there in the early 1800s.

Colbert County was named for brothers George and Levi Colbert, two Chickasaw Indian leaders who operated a ferry across the Tennessee at Colbert Ferry Park on the Natchez Trace Parkway.

"The Creek Indian Wars is what opened Alabama," Shoals historian Joel Mize said.

Before that time, "the Indians would not allow white people south of the Tennessee River. An 1804 treated opened up the area, but there wasn't significant settlement of the area until after the Battle of New Orleans in January 1815," he said.



Though run down by the time this photo was taken, Colbert's Stand was once an important landmark on the Natchez Trace. Until forced removal, Colbert and his family lived in a more substantial house near present-day Lupele.
Photograph of the original house of George Colbert on the new historical marker at his home site at Colbert Ferry on the Natchez Trace. [MATT MCKEAN/TIMESDAILY]

Mize said there was a large influx of people into the county from 1815 to 1819, including many from Tennessee and the north. Native Americans still occupied parts of eastern Alabama and western Georgia and "passports" were necessary to travel in some of their controlled areas.

The state and county became even more open to white settlers after

President Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act, which involved the forced removal of Native Americans from their homelands to reservations in the west. The act is known among Native Americans as the "Trail of Tears."

"Some (settlers) trickled in pre 1815, but most married Indian women," Mize said.

Many of those men were "hunter-gatherers" who fit in with the Native American culture.

"There was not a significant white settlement before 1815," Mize said.

The city of Tuscumbia is the county seat and was settled in 1815, but not incorporated into a town until 1820. The city of Sheffield was founded in 1884.

According to Colbert County resident and local historian Ninon Parker, Franklin County was established prior to Alabama gaining statehood. She said Colbert County celebrated its 150th anniversary last year.

"The logistics of travel influenced

the formation of the county, and politics," Parker said.

The formation of Colbert County took place at what was known as Horne House, a hotel located on Railroad Street, what is now known as Fifth Street, in Tuscumbia, Parker said.

"It's where the people met and formed the new county government," she said.

While settlers began to move into the rural east Colbert County town of Leighton in 1810, the town was not incorporated until 1890. Mize said the town was once known as Jeffrey's Crossroads,

"Leighton wasn't incorporated until much later after it was settled," Colbert County historian Harold McNeece said.

Mize said many of the families who settled in that area came from the coastal areas of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, "the cultured

SEE COLBERT, PAGE 16

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Photo courtesy of Marcus Lowery

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This artist rendering of life at LaGrange College is on display at Leighton Library. LaGrange College south of Leighton is known as the first state chartered college in the state of Alabama. It operated from 1830 to 1855. The college moved to Florence in 1855 and would become Florence Wesleyan University, known today as the University of North Alabama.

COLBERT

From page 15

areas of the country around the East Coast."

"It was a big cotton town," Mize said. "There was fertile (soil) and some big farmers. The Ricks family owned the largest plantation in Alabama."

McNeece said people came to the Leighton area because of the fertile farm land.

The town of Littleville sits along U.S. 24 south of Tuscumbia while Cherokee lies in the western part of the county.

According to McNeece, the western part of the county was settled later than the east because it was still Native American territory.

"It wasn't until after the Indian Removal Act that the areas around Cherokee and Barton were settled," McNeece said.

The youngest city in Colbert County, Muscle Shoals, is also its largest. Muscle Shoals, which was once called "The Hit Recording Capital of the World," was founded in 1923 and is now the largest retail center in Colbert County.

Colbert County is the home of several important historic sites.

LaGrange College south of Leighton is known as the first state chartered college in the state of Alabama. It operated from 1830 to 1855. The college moved to Florence in 1855

and would become Florence Wesleyan University, known today as the University of North Alabama.

LaGrange College was reorganized as LaGrange Military Academy in 1857. On April 28, 1863, the college was burned by Union Army troops. The college site is operated today as a cultural tourist attraction. Parker said troops also burned towns along their route, including the town around the college.

"Colbert County has probably the earliest and most significant archaeological site in the state, the Stanfield-Worley bluff shelter near the western end of the county," Parker said.

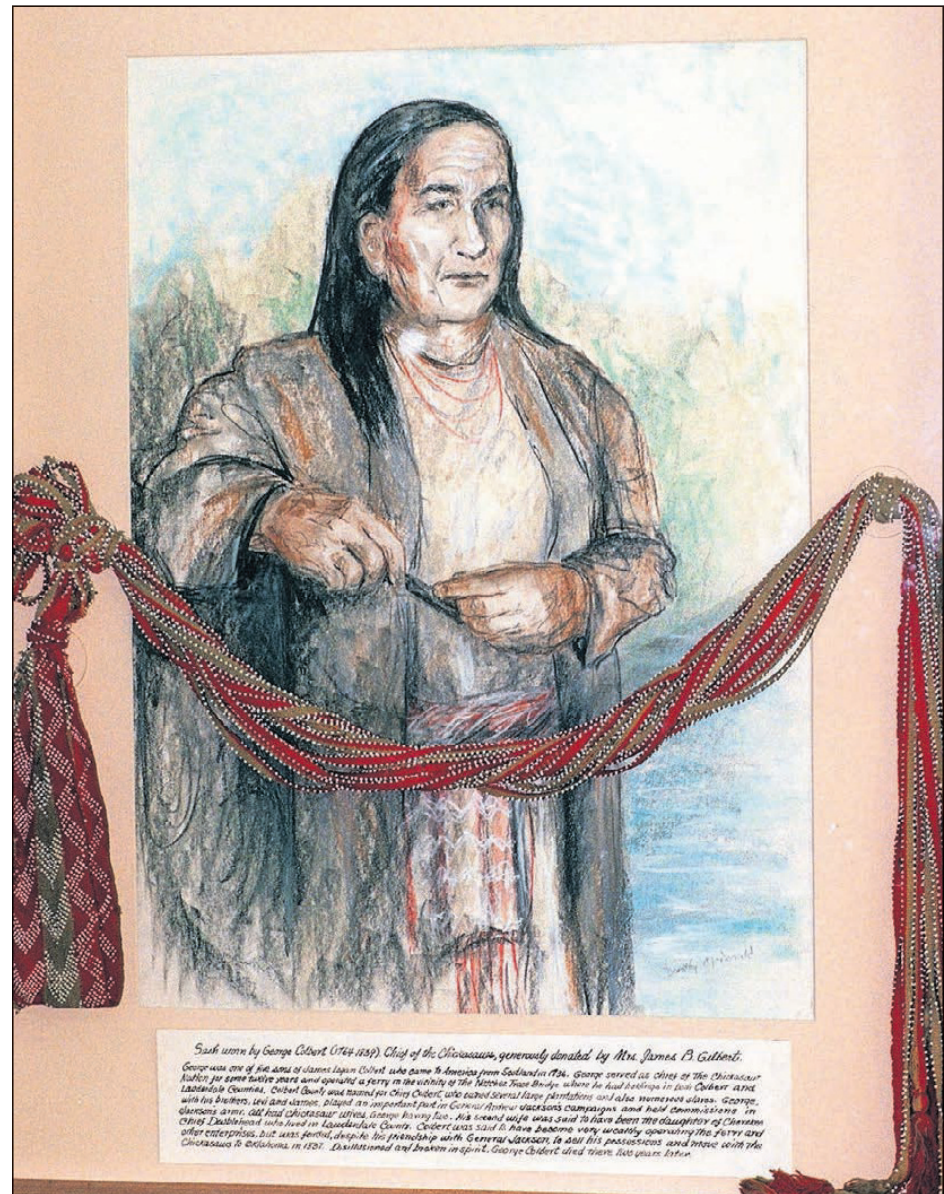
Studies of the shelter indicate it was inhabited over 10,000 years ago or more.

The county had the first railroad west of the Appalachian Mountains, the Tuscumbia Courtland Decatur Railroad, which came through Tuscumbia and terminated at Tuscumbia Landing in Sheffield. Tuscumbia has what is believed to be the state's earliest commercial building, the Southerland Building, which was built in 1820, and one of the oldest downtowns, Parker said.

Agriculture has always played a major role in Colbert County's past.

"The eastern part of Colbert County was more satisfactory for large crops," McNeece said. "While there's very good land there's a lot of hills in the western part."

Parker can trace her lineage back to



This artist rendering of what Chief George Colbert (1764-1839) would have looked like was displayed with his sash at a local museum. Colbert was one of five sons of Logan Colbert who came to the U.S. in 1736. He was chief of the Chickasaw nation for some 12 years. He operated a ferry business on the Tennessee river at the Natchez Trace, owned a plantation and numerous slaves. Despite being very wealthy and a friend to Andrew Jackson and Gen. John Coffee, Colbert was deported to Oklahoma during Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830.

the formation of the state.

"Some of my family members were some of the earliest settlers in Tuscumbia," Parker said.

Hugh Finley, a relative on her mother's side of the family, settled in Tuscumbia around 1815, she said.

She said they lived in a home on the banks of Spring Creek near where Spring Park is today. When it would flood, they had to use boats to rescue occupants from second-story windows.

She said the stories about those early settlers had been passed down through the years through family members.

Another maternal relation, William

Reece Julian, a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate Army, became the first sheriff of Colbert County. She said seven generations of her family lived in the house, which is located on Dixon Street in Tuscumbia, along the route of the Jackson Military Road.

"The Julian House I grew up in on Dixon Street in Tuscumbia was originally built near Cherokee," Parker said.

She said the house was transported up the Tennessee River on a large raft and pulled two miles to its present location. Parker still owns the house, but lives in another home next door.

russ.corey@timesdaily.com or 256-740-5738. Twitter @TD_RussCorey



The Horne House in downtown Tuscumbia was the location of the meeting that separated Colbert County, creating Franklin County and establishing Tuscumbia as the county seat in 1867.



This is a photo taken in 2005 of the Julian House in downtown Tuscumbia. FILE/TIMESDAILY



William Reese Julian (shown her with his son) was a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate Army, and later became the first sheriff of Colbert County.
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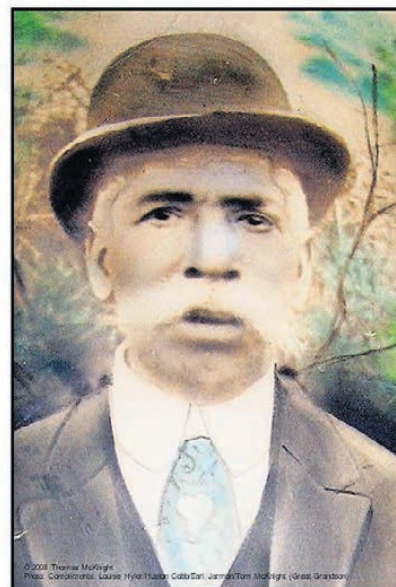


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McKnight's great-great grandfather, Fred Watkins, was a Cherokee Indian born in Tennessee in 1811. He has been able to trace his family for several generations. COURTESY THOMAS MCKNIGHT

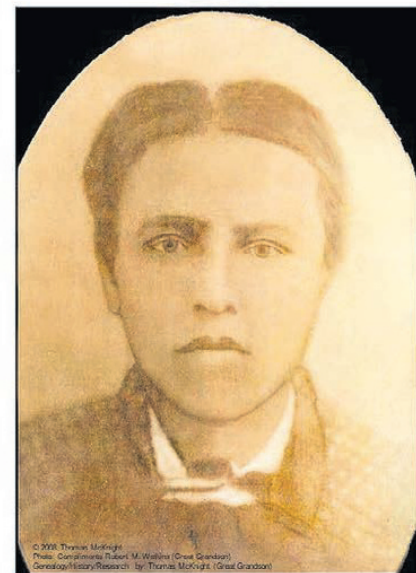


Rev. Fred W. Watkins

B: 25 Dec 1852 - D: 24 Feb 1911

Funeral: First Baptist Church, Tuscumbia, Alabama
Buried: Oakwood Cemetery, Tuscumbia, Alabama

© 2008 Thomas McKnight



Sophia Napier Watkins

B: 20 Jul 1854 - D: 14 Aug 1917

Helen Keller Family Cook - Tuscumbia, Alabama
Buried: Oakwood Cemetery - Tuscumbia, Alabama

Thomas McKnight, in tracing his family's roots, learned of his great-grandfather, the Rev. Fred Watkins, a high-powered Baptist minister, who married Sophia Napier, who was a cook for Helen Keller's family at Ivy Green in Tuscumbia. COURTESY THOMAS MCKNIGHT

Thomas McKnight: 'Everybody is Somebody'

By Lisa Singleton-Rickman
Staff Writer

TUSCUMBIA — Thomas McKnight abides by a rule of life that defines not only his vast knowledge of his lineage and humankind, but how he treats others: "Everybody is Somebody."

The Tuscumbia resident, an Air Force veteran who has spent most of his adult life on humanitarian operations around the world with the United Nations, has a passion for knowing where and from whom he came, but also connecting cultures in unity and understanding.

McKnight's family research dates

back to members born well before the incorporation of Alabama in 1819.

Born and raised in New York, McKnight went on to serve in the Vietnam Conflict. About a decade later he began his humanitarian operations.

In 2004, while on mission in South Sudan, McKnight learned of his mother's death. He came to her home in Tuscumbia to take care of her arrangements and spend a few months.

It was during his time in Tuscumbia that he said he "started wondering who we were."

Making contact with an elderly uncle, he learned the family's origins were actually in Tuscumbia.

"I decided to take a couple of years off and find my folks," he said. "I began with one physical address, a GPS and a couple oral history stories. In 2005 I started searching, trying to find family I never knew existed. That journey encompassed 14,497 miles in 86 days."

In his research, McKnight found an elder cousin who remembered his grandmother, one of 13 children. She'd hitch-hiked to visit her sister in New York during the Depression. The year was 1937 and she wasn't well and, "wanted safety and to be among family to live out her last days."

SEE MCKNIGHT, PAGE 19



**Thomas
McKnight**

MCKNIGHT

From page 18

He also learned of his great-grandfather, the Rev. Fred Watkins, a high-powered Baptist minister, who married Sophia Napier.

Fred was quite the formidable force in civil rights and other social matters, while Sophia was the cook for Helen Keller and family at their homeplace, Ivy Green in Tusculumbia.

McKnight's great-great grandfather, also Fred Watkins, was a Cherokee Indian born in Tennessee in 1811.

McKnight learned stirring details of the removal of the Cherokee tribe with options of banishment to cruel western lands or being sold into slavery.

"With African-American or Native American history, one is lucky if he can go back more than two generations. In that day, there was assurance of no paper trail, as there was a definite lack of importance placed on any such individual," McKnight said.

His great-grandmother's brother,

"It's so very liberating to know you are somebody."

Thomas McKnight

James Carroll Napier started the first African-American Bank in Nashville, still in existence today.

He earned a law degree from Howard University in 1872 and entered politics, becoming registrar of the United States Treasury from 1911-1913 during President William Taft's administration.

Napier's great nephew, Lt. Carroll Napier Langston, was among the famed Tuskegee Airmen.

"It's so very liberating to know you are somebody," McKnight said. "It makes me proud to have all these individuals in my family. Their accomplishments are great, but I recognize the fact that we are all God's children. When I speak to groups, especially young people, I stress that we are all somebody and we should never believe differently."

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James Carroll Napier
Nashville TN Lawyer, Politician,
Banker, Registrar U.S. Treasury

McKnight's great-grandmother's brother, James Carroll Napier, had a great nephew, Lt. Carroll Napier Langston, who was among the famed Tuskegee Airmen. COURTESY THOMAS MCKNIGHT

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President John F. Kennedy speaks to a crowd of 15,000 in front of the Chemical Engineering Building on the Tennessee Valley Authority Muscle Shoals Reservation occasion of TVA's 30th anniversary, May 18, 1963. PHOTO COURTESY OF TVA.

Muscle Shoals: A history in the making

By Jennifer Edwards
Staff Writer

MUSCLE SHOALS — When the other Shoals cities were maturing, Muscle Shoals was just beginning.

The youngest of the Quad Cities, Muscle Shoals was incorporated in 1923.

In the decades before incorporation the land that is now Muscle Shoals was farm land with cotton being one of the major crops produced.

The city began to change in 1918 when the construction of Wilson Dam began. The dam was constructed to supply power to two nitrate plants that were to produce nitrates for ammunition and explosives for World War I.

Many residents of the area that is now Muscle Shoals were employed in the construction of the dam and in the Muscle Shoals nitrate plant.

World War I ended before the dam was completed, and the conversation shifted to what to

HISTORY, PAGE 21



Construction on the "new" lock at Wilson Dam. The dam was constructed to supply power to two nitrate plants that were to produce nitrates for ammunition and explosives for World War I.

HISTORY

From page 20

do with the project. Muscle Shoals' history could be markedly different if the government-owned dam had been sold into private ownership, which was the desire of Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company.

Ford came to Muscle Shoals in 1921 with a vision of turning the farms and fields into a metropolis. When Ford's plan began to circulate with the public, land speculators arrived in Muscle Shoals and bought swaths of property and divided it into 25-foot lots, which people from all over the country bought. These tiny spec lots

remain in some parts of the city.

Congress ultimately turned down Ford's \$5 million offer to purchase Wilson Dam, and instead opted to create the Tennessee Valley Authority to develop the dam and the rest of the river valley.

The population of the area that became Muscle Shoals grew in the early 1920s to the point where residents petitioned to become an incorporated town. The vote was held March 31, 1923, and 321 residents voted for incorporation. Six voted against it. The town was incorporated April 23, 1921, with 727 residents of Muscle Shoals.

The town saw small growth in the first 20 years of incorporation, but industrial growth in the 1950s help



Muscle Shoals began to change in 1918 when the construction of Wilson Dam began.

spur development and population growth.

The town gained international fame in the 1960s as record producer Rick Hall cranked out hits at FAME studios, which still operates today. In its heyday FAME studios recorded hits for Aretha Franklin, Etta James, the Staples Singers, Clarence Carter, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding and Candi Staton.

Hall's story and legacy was the subject of a celebrated 2013 documentary "Muscle Shoals" that brought a renewed interest in the city's music history.

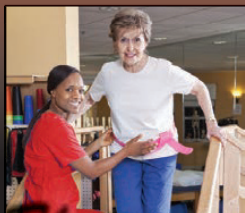
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Henry Ford and Thomas Edison stand on the platform of a train leaving the East Florence train station Dec. 23, 1921. Ford came to Muscle Shoals in 1921 with a vision of turning the farms and fields into a metropolis. Photo by G.W. Landrum. COURTESY OF JERRY LANDRUM COLLECTION.

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Sheffield: A vision from the bluff

By Russ Corey
Staff Writer

SHEFFIELD — While there were settlers in the region that would become the city of Sheffield before Alabama gained statehood in 1819, it wasn't until 1894 that the city was formally incorporated.

In the late 1780s, a French trading post and Indian village existed at the mouth of Spring Creek, which empties into the Tennessee near Tusculumbia Landing.

The landing would later become the terminus of the Tusculumbia Courtland Decatur Railroad and a thriving port where steamboats were loaded with goods. It would also become sacred land to Native Americans after it was used as a point to transfer Native Americans from their homes to reservations in the west during the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

Native Americans referred to the removal as the Trail of Tears, and today the landing is poised to become an interpretive and educational center dedicated to Native American culture, early industry, transportation and its role in the Civil War.

Gen. Andrew Jackson passed through what would become Sheffield during the Creek War of 1813 and later he and fellow officer John Coffee purchased land in the area through their Cypress Land Company in 1816.

A memorial marker is located at the point where he was supposed to have crossed the Tennessee River and camped. The marker is next to a Black Walnut tree that is believed to be over 200 years old.

In 1820, the town of York Bluff was laid out, but the town eventually failed. That same year, the federal government completed what would become the Jackson Military Road which passed through Sheffield.

In wasn't until the fall of 1883 that Capt. Alfred Moses, a Montgomery banker, toured the area and created the Sheffield Land Coal & Iron Company. A land sale was held in 1883 and in 1885, the city of Sheffield was incorporated.



City Hall
1949

A photo of the Sheffield City Hall in 1949. COURTESY SHEFFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

SEE SHEFFIELD, PAGE 23

SHEFFIELD

From page 22

In 1918, the Village One neighborhood was built to house workers employed at U.S. Nitrate Plant No. 1, which was built to produce munitions for World War 1. The historic neighborhood, known for its stucco exterior bungalow style houses and red tile roofs, will celebrate its 100th anniversary this year.

The nitrate facilities were not completed in time to contribute to the war effort and were eventually abandoned. The Tennessee Valley Authority purchased the facilities to produce fertilizer. TVA's efforts eventually gave birth to the International Fertilizer Development Center on the TVA reservation.

In the late 1960s, a group of musicians working for FAME Recording Studios founder Rick Hall decided to open their own studio at 3614 Jackson Highway in Sheffield. They named it Muscle Shoals Sound Studios and recorded artists including Boz Skaggs, Bob Seger, Willie Nelson, Odetta, Rod Stewart, The Rolling Stones and many others.

In 1979, the studio moved to 1000 Alabama Avenue near Riverfront Park and continued to produce albums for the likes of Bob Dylan, Widespread Panic, Julian Lennon and others. The studio closed in 1985. The studio is now the home of Cypress Moon Productions and operates as a film and recording studio.

Local music promoter David Johnson said the city was also the home of Widget Recording Studio, Quin Ivey's Norala and Quinvy recording studios, later Johnson's Broadway Sound Studio.

"Quin's first studio was Norala Recording Services on Second Street," Johnson said.

There were also lesser known studios including Cactus and Paradox recording studios that Johnson said were primarily known for recording song demos.

Johnson said while music is a major part of the city's history, he's been most impressed with the recent revitalization of the downtown area, which began during the tenure of the late Mayor Billy Don Anderson and has continued through the present.

He said he likes to take credit for having a role in the rebirth by assisting local businesswoman Laquita Logan with several empty buildings. Local and her son have opened several downtown

I think it showed the city still had confidence. It's given our citizens something to smile about once again."

Ian Sanford

businesses, including a new building at the corner of Montgomery Avenue and Third Street. Shoals developer Danny Hardeman has also renovated several downtown buildings that include loft apartments.

Current Mayor Ian Sanford agrees with Johnson and added that a streetscape project aided by a grant secured by Anderson helped show others that the city was serious about turning itself around.

"It was a little bit of a gamble, will that help," Sanford said. "And it did. I think it showed the city still had confidence. It's given our citizens something to smile about once again."

Like Johnson, Sanford tried to show interested parties available buildings in hopes of landing another restaurant, retail or professional business.

"Without people willing to invest in your city, it doesn't happen," Sanford said. "I'm very thankful to all those people who had confidence enough to do so."

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An undated photo of the U.S. Post Office in downtown Sheffield. The post office is still in use today.
COURTESY SHEFFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY



A steam locomotive is parked near Sheffield Land Coal & Iron Company. COURTESY SHEFFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

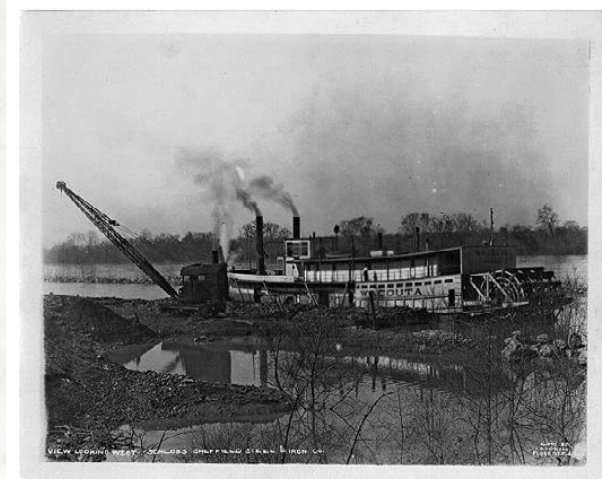
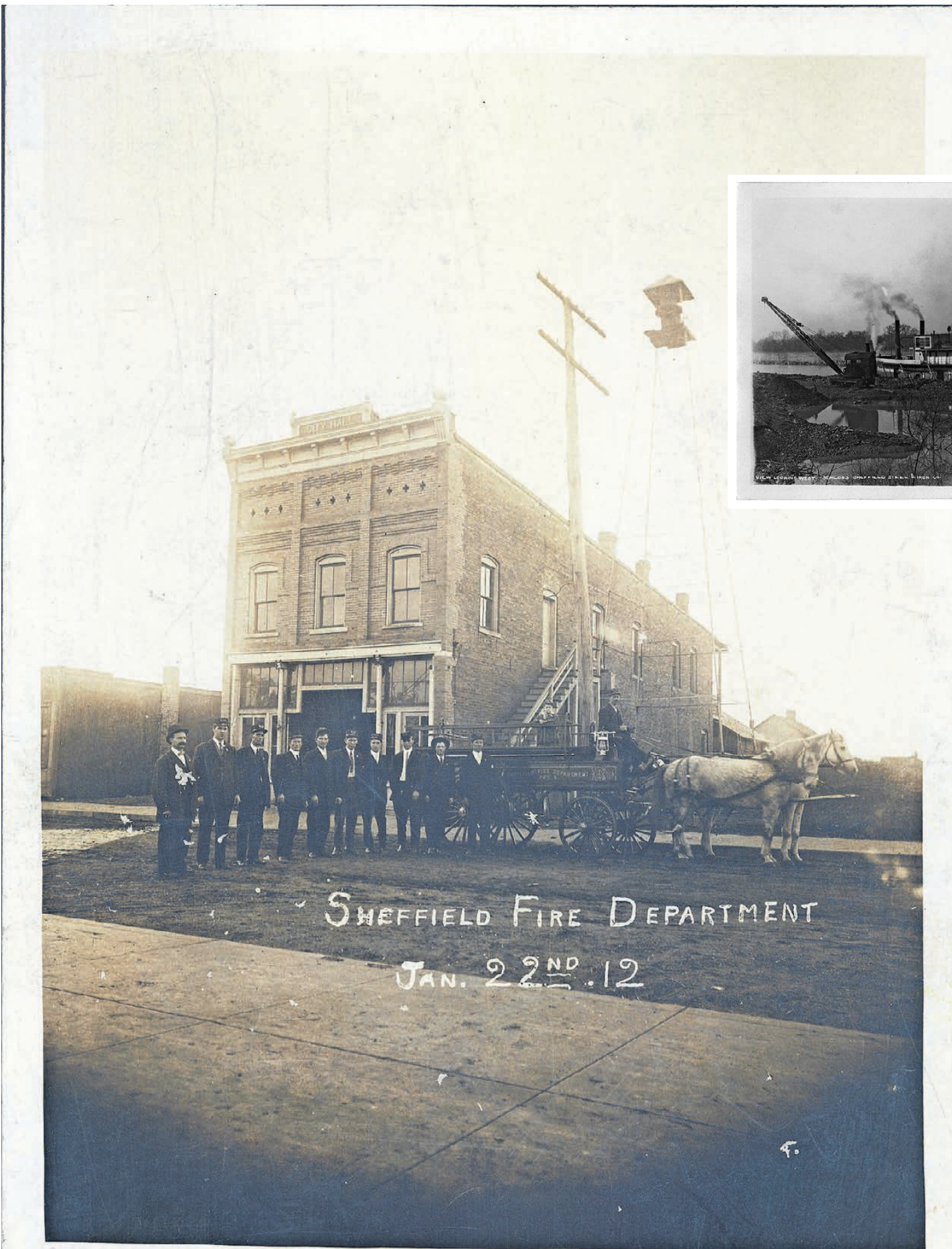


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A view looking west on the Tennessee River in Sheffield of a steamboat and steam shovel belonging to the Sloss Sheffield Steel and Iron Company. COURTESY OF SHEFFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Sheffield Fire Station No. 2 on Raleigh Avenue downtown, dated Jan. 22, 1912. The fire station is currently being renovated to be used as apartments. COURTESY, SHEFFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY



Tusculumbia's Colbert Hotel

Tusculumbia is deep in history

By Bernie Delinski
Staff Writer

A downtown boasting the oldest operating commercial row and first railroad west of the Allegheny Mountains is surrounded by beautiful historic homes, including the birthplace of Helen Keller.

But this city's rich history dates much longer before it was settled by the Michael Dickson family at approximately 1817.

Spring Park, which is downtown, boasts the Big Spring and an historical marker that states this area was inhabited by Native Americans as much as 10,000 years ago.

Its first settlement was at Spring Creek. It was a French trading post and

Native American village around 1780. The creek had been known as Cold Water Creek and the city was incorporated on Dec. 20, 1820, as Ococoposa, which was the Chickasaw word for Cold Water.

Tusculumbia was along the path of the tragic displacement of Native Americans under the Indian Removal Act of 1830, but the city developed a reputation for kindness during that time, with Native Americans fondly speaking of the respect and assistance provided by Tusculumbia residents during an otherwise horrible ordeal. Today, the city's annual Oka Kapassa Festival commemorates that outreach.

While the Dickson family arrived by keel boat, Jackson's Military Road came

SEE TUSCUMBIA, PAGE 26

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TUSCUMBIA

From page 25

through Tuscumbia in 1817. The city's name changed to Big Spring in 1821. The name was changed a final time to Tuscumbia in 1822. The name honors the old Chickasaw chief.

The city's official website, cityoftuscumbia.org, recalls the importance steamboats played in Tuscumbia's early days. In 1824, the city built a landing on the river 2 miles from town, which helped trade business. Soon, another landing was built that connected Tuscumbia by rail, and in 1830 the Tuscumbia Railway Co. was formed.

The website describes it as "the first railroad on the American frontier." It was a success and soon a rail from Tuscumbia was built.

Many of what today remain some of the city's oldest buildings were built during this booming time for Tuscumbia. However, the Civil War started in 1861 and lasted through 1865, and Tuscumbia ultimately had to rebuild much of itself from those remains afterward.

Tuscumbia became Colbert County's county seat in 1867 and a courthouse was completed in 1882. Fire destroyed it in 1908 so it was rebuilt a year later.

One of the biggest dates in Tuscumbia's history is June 27, 1880 -- the day Helen Keller was born to Capt. A. H. Keller and Kate Keller. When the child became struck by illness at 19 months, she was left deaf and blind. From there, teacher Anne Sullivan taught her to read Braille at the Ivy Green water pump and the story of the girl who would become known as "America's First Lady of Courage" was started.

Today, Tuscumbia cherishes its history and the structures that remind us of them and the city has enjoyed a rejuvenation, thanks in part to the efforts of retired industrialist Harvey Robbins, who invested time and money into downtown revitalization efforts that include upgrades at Spring Park.

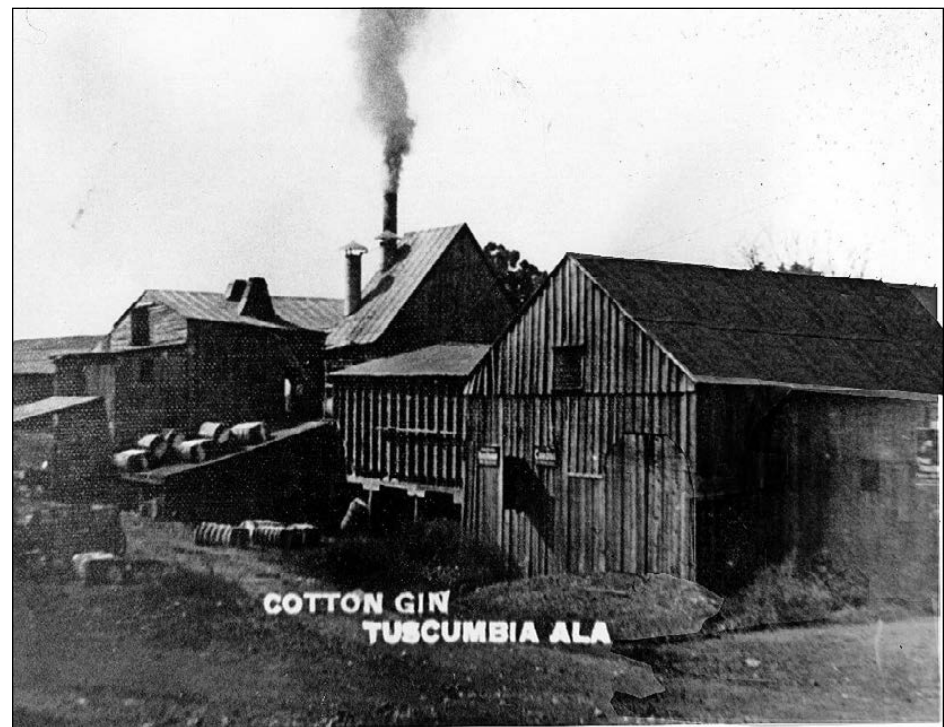
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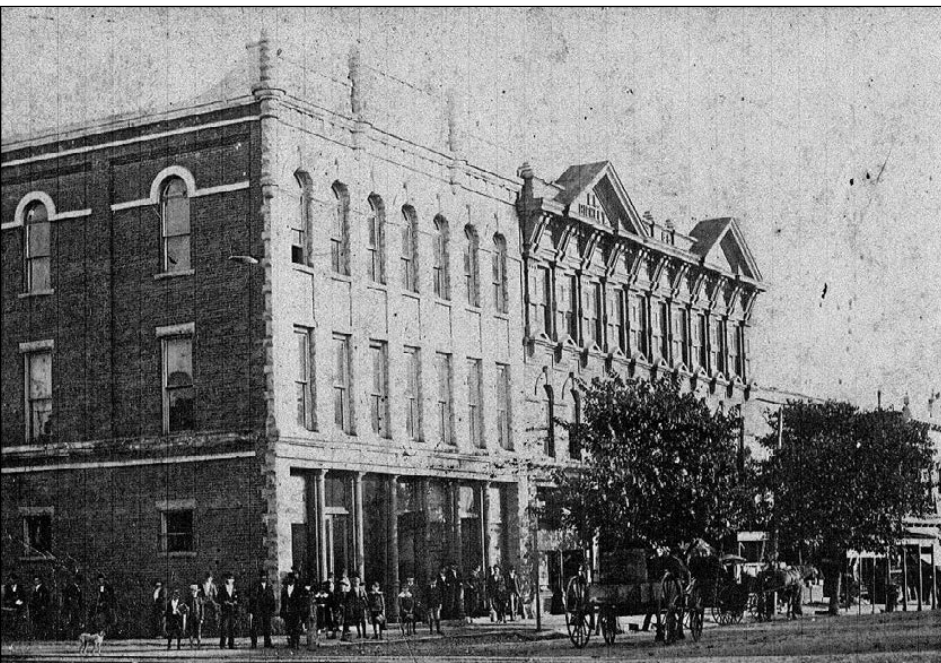
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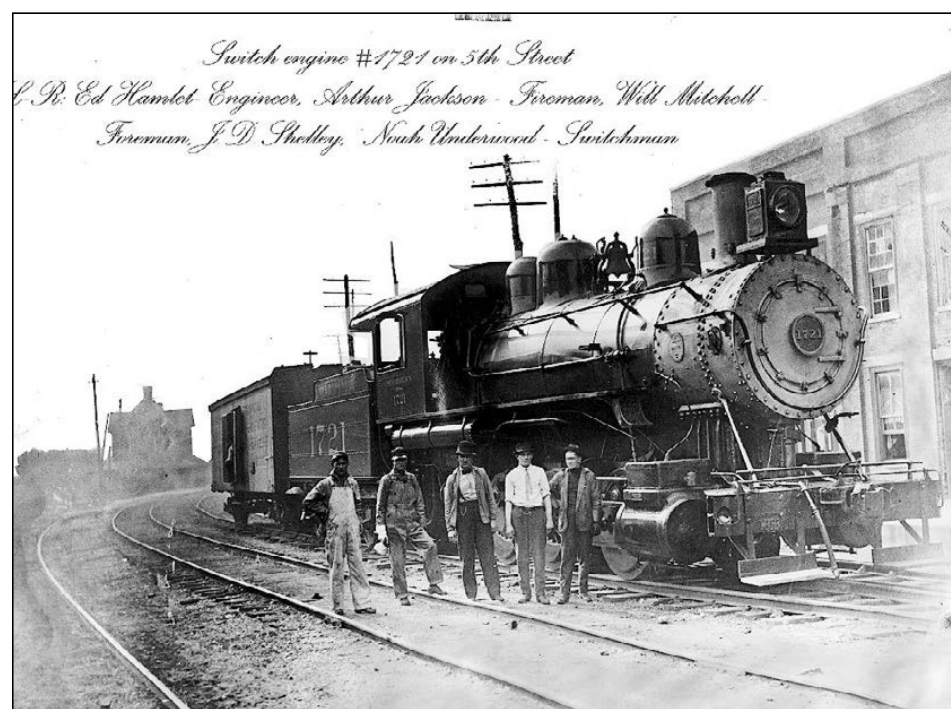
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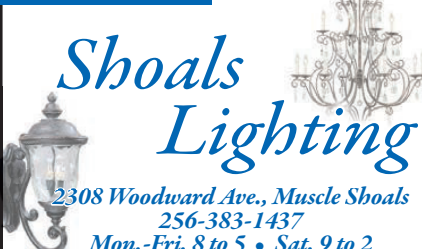
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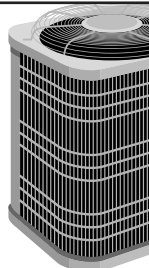
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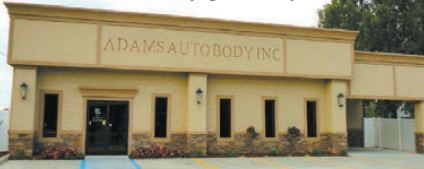
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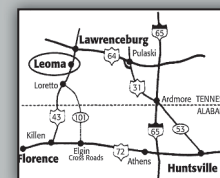
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