

# Athens Historian

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2020

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**The purposes of the Athens Historical Society are:**

1. To discover, collect, and preserve all materials, especially original and source materials, pertaining to the history of Athens, Clarke County, adjacent counties, and related areas.
2. To disseminate this knowledge for enlightenment of our citizenry through preparing, editing, and publishing historical materials descriptive of Athens and related areas, or sponsoring programs and activities of historical interest.
3. To promote historical research.
4. To promote preservation and perpetuation of historic sites.
5. To bring together those interested in the history of these areas.
6. To promote and stimulate public interest in and appreciation of the history of Athens and related areas, and to develop in every way an understanding of their historical past.

# Athens Historian

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**On the cover:** *The restored old jail. Photo by Patricia McAlexander.*

## The True Story of Clarke County's 1876 Jail Building

by Gary L. Doster

Most Athenians believe that the old Clarke County jail building located at 380 Meigs Street behind the present location of the T. R. R. Cobb House is the original building put there in 1876. But it's not. In 1901, a series of newspaper articles in the *Athens Daily Banner* and the *Athens Weekly Banner* described what actually happened.



*The Clarke County Courthouse was built in 1876 on Prince Avenue. A postcard from collection of the author.*

When a county courthouse building was completed on Prince Avenue in 1876 near the corner of North Pope and Meigs streets, a two-story jail building was erected behind it. This building served the county well for twenty-five years but

became somewhat debilitated and was destined for extensive restoration early in 1901. A brief notice in the *Athens Daily Banner* on March 17, 1901, announced that bids were being received by the county for repairs to the building. The next week, the March 23 *Daily Banner* reported that county officials had recently visited and inspected both the jail in Atlanta and a new jail in Spartanburg, South Carolina, seeking ideas and information that would assist them in making the renovated jail "safe, convenient, and comfortable in every way."

Less than a week later, the March 28 *Daily Banner* announced that the county planned to strip the jail building down to the four outside walls, replace the wooden floor with a new concrete slab and rearrange the cells and apartments inside the building. An item in the April 9, 1901, issue of the *Daily Banner* notified readers that the contract for

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these renovations had been awarded to the Panley Manufacturing Company of St. Louis, Missouri.

County officials planned to have the interior of the outer walls lined with steel to make the jail more secure and reduce the threat of fire. However, when remodeling began, things changed. According to the *Daily Banner* of May 23, 1901, early work on the project revealed that the walls were cracked and unsafe, the old bricks and mortar were rotten, and the wood was decayed. It was decided that the best way to get the job done was to completely rebuild the old jail from the ground up. It was also decided that the easiest way to get rid of the old building was to burn it. So, with a fire department wagon and hose on the scene to protect nearby structures, the building was set ablaze and soon reduced to a pile of rubble.

Two weeks later, on June 7, 1901, an article in the *Weekly Banner* announced that bricks for the new jail building “are now being kilned, and the work of rebuilding will probably begin next Monday.” The newspaper further stated that “the new jail will be built on the same plans as the old jail, differing from it in only a few particulars.” Just three weeks later, on June 28, 1901, the *Daily Banner* reported that the Panley Manufacturing Company had begun shipping the steel cells that were to be put in the new jail as soon as the building’s walls were completed.

On July 18, 1901, a *Weekly Banner* story explained that the recent delay in completing the building was because the local contractor who was supposed to provide the bricks would not be able to deliver them in time, and a new



*Back of the 1901 old jail building. Photo by the author.*

contract for the bricks had been given to a company in Abbeville, South Carolina. The paper also announced that the big steel girders for the roof had been delivered and as soon as the bricks arrived, nothing would prevent completion of the new jail building.

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On October 10, 1901, less than six months from the beginning of the work in April, the *Daily Banner* proclaimed:



*Detail of jail window with bars.  
Photo by Patricia McAlexander.*

The new county jail is almost completed, and will be ready for use inside the next ten days. It will cost when completed about \$5,500. The new jail is one of the most thorough and convenient in the state. It is absolutely fire proof and the cells are made of steel that cannot be filed or cut.

The arrangement of the cells will enable the sheriff to keep all the male prisoners to themselves. The female prisoners and young boys will be kept in another part of the building. In the second story is a large cell to be used as a hospital room where the sick prisoners may be properly treated. The sanitation of the new jail is perfect.

The capacity of the new jail will be about twenty-five or thirty prisoners. It is large enough, when it is considered that the county rarely has over ten prisoners on hand at one time and at times the jail is entirely empty.

The new jail is a model of construction and reflects credit upon Supt. T. P. Stanley, under whose supervision the work was done.



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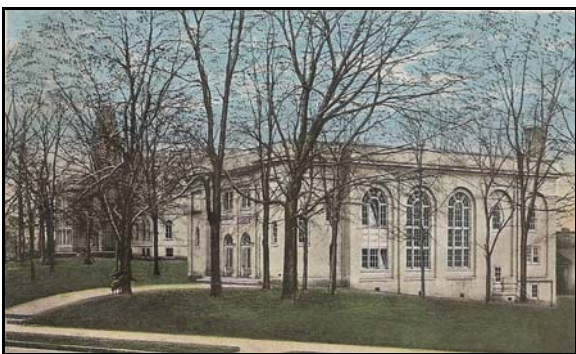


*The old courthouse building was expanded with a wing on either side and became Athens High School in 1915. Postcard from collection of the author.*

The courthouse and the jail behind it served the county until the present courthouse (which included a jail) was built on Washington Street in 1913. Then the old courthouse property was sold to the city for \$30,000 and a wing was added to each side of the

courthouse building to provide more room. In 1915, these facilities replaced the nearby Childs Street School as Athens High School. Eight years later, Mell Auditorium, named for longtime beloved principal Edward Baker Mell (1873-1959) was built next door.

A school lunch program was started after World War II, and in 1948 the auditorium became a cafeteria. The old jail building was used as a “manual training facility” and no doubt for other purposes over the next thirty-plus years.



*The Mell Auditorium was built in 1923. Postcard from the collection of the author.*

In its final years as part of Athens High School, both its downstairs and upstairs housed the ROTC department.

When the new Athens High School building (now Clarke Central High School) was completed on Milledge Avenue in 1953, the old courthouse property was inherited by the University of Georgia Demonstration School. Previously located at the old State Normal School property further out Prince Avenue, the Demonstration School



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was operated by UGA's College of Education as a training facility for its student teachers. It was attended by Clarke County children who lived outside the Athens city limits. The downstairs portion of the old jail building was a classroom for teaching agriculture to male students who were members of the Future Farmers of America and the upstairs was the industrial arts shop. The Demonstration School remained on the site until 1956 when city and county schools were consolidated and all its students were transferred to Athens High School (along with students from Winterville High School).

After the Demonstration School moved out, the facilities sat vacant until 1959. The courthouse then was demolished and Finley Street was extended through the site to Prince Avenue. Wendy's restaurant was built on the newly created corner. Later, the old Mell Auditorium/Cafeteria building next door was demolished and Captain D's restaurant now occupies that site.

**Editor's Note:** Athens historian Milton Leathers provided the following information about the old jail building:

Since 1959, the jail building has had several owners and been used for various purposes including business space for non-profits such as the Oconee River Land Trust and Georgia Land Trust Service Center. It has also been the office of The Allen Company and a studio for artist and jeweler Charles Pinckney. In 1980, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and in 1981 was locally designated as a Historic Landmark. At one time, Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center owned the property for possible expansion, but abandoned the idea as the surrounding Cobbham neighborhood was revitalized for residences. In 1995, the hospital sold the property to the non-profit Historic Cobbham Foundation for \$1. The foundation then leased the jail building for fifteen years to Tom Reynolds, a Cobbham resident and preservationist contractor.

Reynolds completely refurbished the building's interior, but left the exterior intact, appearing, some said, like an ancient edifice in the south of France. Reynolds used the building as rental space until 2011 when his lease ended and



*Sign above the door on the old jail building maintains that this is the original 1876 building. Photo by Patricia McAlexander.*

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the Cobbham Foundation resumed management. In 1996, the foundation named the building the Billups Phinzy Spalding Building in honor of the late UGA historian and champion of historic preservation. Today the building is headquarters of the foundation, which uses it for rental income and as a site for community events such as summertime cookouts and movie viewings.

## The Bass House and Other Mysteries

by Hubert H. McAlexander

The west hillside of the Milledge Purchase—the 633 acres that John Milledge bought from Daniel Easley in 1801 to provide a place to establish the University of Georgia—was, beginning in the late 1820s, divided into lots and sold to individuals. Two early archetypes of the Georgia frontier and country houses still stand on that west hillside, at 277 Henderson Avenue and at 343 Pope Street. What is not clear is the origin of these houses, nor of two other early nineteenth-century buildings on the west hill—the strange structure at 195 Henderson and the cottage at 227 Finley.

The house at 277 Henderson, known today as the Nicholson-Galis House, presents most clearly to the casual viewer its archetypal origin.

It began as a two-over-two, plantation-plain structure with outside chimneys, built about 1840-1850. Added early on to the basic house on Henderson, then named States Rights Street, was a two-story wing with an inside chimney. Built onto the ell formed by the wing was a porch with a gingerbread cornice that matches the gallery trim on the Beusse



*The Nicholson-Galis House began as a two-over-two, plantation-plain structure with outside chimneys, built about 1840-1850. Added on was a two-story wing and porch with a gingerbread cornice. (The cornice has been removed.) Photo by Patricia McAlexander.*

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house at 195 Henderson, as shown in the earliest photographs of both houses.

One explanation of origin of the Nicholson-Galis House is that Alfred Long Dearing lived in it at a different location while his mansion on Milledge was being built; and that later someone moved the temporary home to States Rights Street. This was Patricia Irvin Cooper's conjecture in her 1972 essay "The Dearing-Wilkins House, 387 South Milledge Avenue, with a few words on The Nicholson-Farrar House, 277 Henderson Avenue."<sup>1</sup>

However, evidence suggests that this structure could instead be the mysterious Bass House. The Bass family, though well connected, has received no attention by regional researchers. Three siblings in the family of Christopher Bass and Sarah Eaton Ogilby, who originally settled in Oglethorpe County, became Athens landholders. Although it is unknown how the Bass group got the land, records show that on April 2, 1849, the sisters Elizabeth Woodson Bass Gerdine Reese and Sarah Eaton Bass Crawford sold, for a token sum, one half an acre in



*Bancroft-Bloomfield House, now 343 South Pope Street. Photo by Patricia McAlexander.*

the southeast corner of Lot 38, in the middle of the Milledge Purchase hillside, to their brother William Bass.<sup>2</sup> In 1853, William borrowed from his sisters to buy the Barefield place west of Milledge, containing 45 acres (1853 #s 272 & 281). In 1856, Bass sold the half acre for \$60 to A. P. Dearing, who the same day purchased Lots 38 and 39 from the University of Georgia

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<sup>1</sup> Phinizy Spalding Collection, ms1783, series 5, box 27, folder 11, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, University of Georgia.

<sup>2</sup> *Clarke County Deed Book T*, p. 220.

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trustees. This explains why Dearing used this structure as his temporary home.<sup>3</sup>

Further evidence supports the theory of the Nicholson-Galis House being a Bass house. In the 1860 census, William Bass is the next entry (family number 737) after Albon Chase. Chase was president of Southern Mutual Insurance Company, and Bass, the bookkeeper. When Bass died in 1863 and the inventory of his estate was made, his holdings consisted of “House & Lot, & adjoining Land, about 20 acres,” (no location given) and nine slaves.<sup>4</sup> The inventory of the house could be that of a two-over-two with detached kitchen—like the Nicholson-Galis House. Later records of the Bass family show sales of the property west of Milledge, with Robert Lee Bloomfield often the buyer.<sup>5</sup> Robert Lee Bloomfield, then, could have purchased and moved the Bass house to his land on the south side of States Rights Street.

Another mystery is the house at 343 Pope, originally the Bancroft place of 20 acres on the west hillside. On June 6, 1845, William Lehman, a German and first professor of modern languages at UGA, sold everything he held in Athens to James Bancroft of Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>6</sup>

Everyone, beginning with Augustus Longstreet Hull in his *Annals of Athens*, credits Lehman with building the “little bandbox of a place” at 392 Pope Street, long occupied by the Edward Bancroft family, of which it was said



*The “little bandbox of a place” at 343 Pope Street, originally the Bancroft place. Photo by Patricia McAlexander.*

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<sup>3</sup> Clarke County Deed Book V, pp. 206-207.

<sup>4</sup> Clarke County Probate Book W, pp. 353-356.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Clarke County Deed Book JJ, p. 551; and Deed Book X, pp. 414-415.

<sup>6</sup> Clarke County Deed Book S, p. 200.

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that “small as it was, eight children were reared within its walls.”<sup>7</sup> It began as a two-over-two, plantation-plain structure with a detached kitchen. But a farm tract of that size might well have included a farm house as well as a residential home.

When James’s son Edward Bancroft began farming in 1850, his father sold the whole Athens tract to him. Then in 1860, Edward sold the property back to his father, and right away they split the place.<sup>8</sup> The 1860 census shows both men and their families in the same house (family number 846), listed right after the Meeker place on Dearing (Meeker-Pope-Barrow House, now 197 Dearing Street). In the 1870 census, the Bancroft father and son (family numbers 362 and 363) are each living in their own houses, obviously very near each other.

Sylvanus Morris, in his *Strolls About Athens During the Early Seventies*, describes passing the house of John W. Nicholson, the Athens patriarch, on Hull Street and then, he writes, “We go down the lane to Tanyard Branch and climb the steep hill . . . and we reach the Bancroft farm. Going through the field we reach the house of Mr. James Bancroft, and come to Mr. Edward Bancroft’s house. . . . [The stroller] may be getting dim-sighted but Mrs. Bancroft looks to him today the same lovely lady of the old times. . . .”

On December 8, 1873, James Bancroft sold to his youngest son, George Dalton Bancroft, six acres “with the buildings thereon” for \$2,000. The boundaries are given as “north on Waddell Street, east on Finley, south on land owned by Edward Bancroft and west on Pope.”<sup>9</sup> George died four years later, and his widow sold the property to Robert Kearney Bloomfield, son of Robert L. Bloomfield, in December 1878.<sup>10</sup>

Adjoining the Bancroft lands was the home of Bloomfield’s father, R. L. Bloomfield. The Bloomfield son, in James Bancroft’s house, was right down the hill from his father’s Italianate mansion. In the 1880 census, their households have sequential numbers—268 and 269. Robert Kearney Bloomfield died unexpectedly in 1882, and his wife and three children continued to live in this house afterward, and later they rented it out. On February 27, 1904, Bloomfield’s heirs—Mrs. C.

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<sup>7</sup> A. L. Hull, *Annals of Athens, Georgia 1801-1901*, Athens, 1906, p. 140.

<sup>8</sup> *Clarke County Deed Book W*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>9</sup> *Clarke County Deed Book AA*, p. 145.

<sup>10</sup> *Clarke County Deed Book BB*, p. 299.

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O. Bloomfield, Mrs. C. O. Talmadge, Miss M. M. Bloomfield, and R. E. Bloomfield—sold to J. Van Straaten, for \$1,250, the parcel of land bordered on the North, “by the lot of the parties of the first part, East by Finley Street, South by the lot of Mrs. Fayerbrother, West by Pope Street”.<sup>11</sup> On April 11, 1910, Mrs. Kate Moore Williford bought the property from Van Straaten for \$2,500, double the price for which the Bloomfield heirs sold it.<sup>12</sup>

These next occupants and owners of the property were descendants of the Moore family, prominent in the early history of Athens, after whom Moore College on the University campus is named. The two people connected with this property—Thomas Cobb Moore, a married but childless engineer for the Southern Railroad, and his sister, Kate Cary Moore, who married, first, William A. H. Moore and, second, realtor John S. Williford—were children of Peyton Edward Moore (1821-1889). Kate had two children by the second marriage who survived her—an unmarried daughter and a daughter who married James Bancroft Eppes, son of Francis Eppes and Mary Bancroft. The present owner, Candle Brumby, bought the house from Mrs. India Nelson in 1979.

So the chain of title is clear, but that does not answer questions about the changes made to the house. The Bancroft-Bloomfield House originally had an exterior chimney, at least on the eastern end. About the turn of the century, the old house received a complete make-over. A room was built across the front containing an elaborate 1900-era staircase and some Eastlake detail was added, such as the design element on the west gable (now the front of the house). The house is described well by Maude Talmage Wood in *Once Aponce a Time*.<sup>13</sup> It is also pictured in the background of a photograph shot on the porch of the Bloomfield-Talmage House.<sup>14</sup> The silhouette has been covered with clapboard and another chimney built inside the wall. The silhouette can still be seen clearly from the east. What will probably never be clear is just how long the two-over-two plantation plain farm house had been on the lot, and just when it received the make-over. The two Bancroft-

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<sup>11</sup> *Clarke County Deed Book XX*, p. 362.

<sup>12</sup> *Clarke County Deed Book 9*, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Maude Talmage Wood, *Once Aponce a Time*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>14</sup> Wood, p. 4.



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owned houses, dated 1830 and 1850 with chain of title confused, were on the Athens tour for the First Georgia Garden Pilgrimage of April 15, 1937. In describing their Bancroft roots, Mrs. Nelson's kin would frequently mix this structure up with James Bancroft's "little bandbox of a place," the other Bancroft home. Thus the history of this Bancroft-Bloomfield House remains tangled and murky.



*The residence at 195 Henderson, the home of Athens mayor Henry Beusse, was pictured in the 1901 Souvenir of Athens, a photogravure by Albin Hajos, showing a doorway with transom and sidelights. Photo by Patricia McAlexander.*

There are two more mysterious houses in this area. The history of the one at 195 Henderson, the home of Athens mayor Henry Beusse, may begin with this notice in the *Southern Banner* of September 19, 1869: "Maj. Dearing of the firm of Lucas and Dearing, is removing the Rum[n]ey House to his lot in the upper part of town, and will reconstruct it into an elegant family residence." Alfred Long

Dearing moved from Athens in 1878.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the Rumney House was left in a pile somewhere on the property he left. However, parts of that pile may well have gone into the house constructed at 195 Henderson. The residence is pictured in Hajos's 1900 book on Athens,<sup>16</sup> distinguished by a doorway with transom and sidelights, obviously from an older structure. Smith Wilson, who did the restoration for Dr. Katherine Dittmar in 1998, thinks that this was not a moved house.

The cottage at 227 South Finley is the greatest mystery of all. According to Patricia Irvin Cooper, who researched the property for the 1975 nomination of the Dearing Street district for the National Register of Historic Places, the house appears on this lot between 1905 and

<sup>15</sup> Clarke County Deed Book EE, p. 312.

<sup>16</sup> Albin Hajos, *Souvenir of Athens, Ga., Photo-Gravures*, residence of Henry Beusse, n.p. (1900).

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1919, when the land was owned by Dr. D. D. Quillian. Cooper calls it a “Greek Revival cottage.” It well may be. But it also may be a house that received high style Greek Revival elements from an older house torn down, perhaps downtown. The windows and the trim setting them off and the door and doorway, including a beautiful Greek shelf above, are obviously from a much earlier and more pretentious house.

Even with research into old wills and deed books and analysis of architectural elements, the mystery of these four houses on the west hillside of the Milledge Purchase remains, tantalizing historians still.



*The mysterious cottage at 227 South Finley, with high style Greek revival elements that may have come from an older house that was torn down. College students live there today. Photo by Patricia McAlexander.*

## A Supporting Role: A Student's Recollections of Desegregation at the University of Georgia

by Joan Zitzelman



*Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes walk onto UGA campus to enroll as first African American students on January 9, 1961. Photo by Charles Pugh. Courtesy of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution Photographic Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library.*

**Editor's Note:** January 9, 2021, will mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the day Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes walked through a crowd of reporters, photographers and protesters at the University of Georgia Arch and into the registrar's office in the Academic Building. There they enrolled as the first African American students, shattering 160 years of racial segregation at the nation's oldest state university. Among the first

students Hunter met in a class in the Grady School of Journalism was Joan Zitzelman of Athens, who was a senior in the school. Hunter and Zitzelman struck up an immediate friendship that continues today.

In 1988, Zitzelman wrote a memoir recalling the eighteen months she and Hunter spent as students. She has continued to update it with events that have occurred in the subsequent decades of their friendship. Copies of the entire memoir are in UGA's Russell Special Collections Library and in the Athens Regional Library. The *Historian* is grateful to Zitzelman for permission to present the following edited excerpt in celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of integration at the University.

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In January 1961, when Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes entered the University of Georgia, I was a senior journalism major and had a very full life. I was aiming for a June 1961 graduation as an honor student. I belonged to a sorority that had colonized recently at the University and our members were expected to do a little more at school spirit and charitable activities to establish a good reputation. I was an officer in the broadcasting club and also in the theatre club. The Drama Department was my second love after journalism at the University, and I was involved in productions as box office manager, also fulfilling backstage responsibilities. Further, the Journalism School then required that students complete an internship before graduation, and I worked 8 hours a week from March through May at the public television station housed in the Georgia Center for Continuing Education.



*Joan Zitzelman,  
1961 Pandora.*

Integration had been an unfolding drama for several months, with hearings, injunctions, press conferences, and hints of executive orders by the Governor or an extraordinary legislative session by the Georgia General Assembly. The legal proceeding had been going on for years, during which both Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes were taking classes at other colleges. Thus, they were at the junior level when they arrived in Athens to enter the University of Georgia in January for the winter quarter.

The first day that Charlayne and Hamilton spent on campus was mostly going through registration for their classes, learning the layout of the campus and settling in their living accommodations. Charlayne was to reside in a women's dormitory (Myers Hall), although she was given a self-contained apartment with private bathroom near the ground floor entrance, rather than housed with a roommate in the double rooms on other floors in the building.

There was a crush of media following every move of the new students for the first two days. That attracted a considerable crowd of people, many students and some not, who were curious to watch the drama. I am a reverse snob about that sort of thing. If everyone is rushing out to look, I hold back unless I have a particular role in the proceedings. And so I did not personally observe these events.

Soon, however, I did find myself with a small role. As I entered my Journalism Ethics class, a large class taught by John E. Drewry, Dean of the Journalism School, in an auditorium with semicircle rows of

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seats, I knew that Charlayne was to attend this class. The Dean's classes often had a hundred or more students, and he seated us alphabetically to make it easier and faster to check the attendance roll each day.

As *Zitzelman*, I walked up to the last row and took my assigned seat. Down below and just behind the podium Dean Drewry used for his lectures, there was a blackboard. On the blackboard was scrawled in large letters "N--- Go Home." Looking at that obnoxious phrase in my journalism classroom, knowing that Charlayne would walk in and see it, that our elegant and courtly Dean would walk in and see it, I felt this could not be. I stood up, walked back down the stairs, to the blackboard, picked up an eraser and erased the phrase. My mind was churning, wondering what my 50 or so classmates were thinking and doing as they watched me. I turned and walked back up the stairs and took my seat. I was shaking. I wondered whether anyone would have the audacity to walk down there and write the phrase again in full view of the class, and even more, I wondered if I would be able to walk down and erase it again.

But the doors opened, and Dean Drewry and Charlayne Hunter walked into the classroom. He indicated a side seat down front where she could sit for the first class. He proceeded to call the roll, then continued with his lecture. I tried to concentrate on the words and make helpful notes, and I tried not to look over at Charlayne sitting in a side section of the auditorium with empty seats all around her. I could only imagine what she must be feeling, isolated and set apart, the continued target of dozens of pairs of eyes. At the conclusion of the class, Dean Drewry indicated that students would no longer be required to sit in alphabetical order, but if they chose to continue mostly in that method, it would be more efficient for him in noting attendance.

Marcia Powell, a sorority sister and friend who was also a journalism student and member of this class, was following all the events of enrolling Charlayne and Hamilton and reporting for the campus newspaper, *The Red and Black*, as well as for her hometown paper in Columbus, Georgia. Marcia formed an acquaintance with Charlayne as soon as she entered the University. As the next Journalism Ethics class assembled, most of the students kept to their alphabetical seat assignments. Marcia and Charlayne took seats in the side section down front, looking very set apart from the rest of the class. I walked down and sat with them. Marcia introduced me to Charlayne and we proceeded with the class.

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Within two days of Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes's enrollment at the University, there was a scheduled men's basketball game on our campus against arch rival Georgia Tech. Several student organizations had been quietly working through the Presbyterian Student Center to ease tensions caused by integration, and this group arrived at a consensus judgment that there might be high risk in gathering six thousand or more high-spirited fans of the University in a place only a few blocks from Myers Hall, the dormitory where Charlayne Hunter was housed. Using whatever contacts that were available, many student leaders called faculty members or officers of the administration and asked if the game could be postponed or moved to Georgia Tech in Atlanta. These attempts were unsuccessful. I attended a meeting of interested students earlier in that afternoon to determine how we could help prevent a dangerous situation. Those student government leaders and organization officers in our ad hoc group determined that they would attend the game and be as visible as possible in keeping people calm and well behaved. People like me, who did not have an official capacity, decided to stay home and not add to the crowds.

The story is now well known. Georgia lost the basketball game by a very narrow margin. As crowds of agitated people exited the basketball court, numerous individuals encouraged these large numbers to walk up the hill to Myers Hall and congregate around Charlayne Hunter's dormitory. Flash photographers and television news crews were there. Some of the crowd began shouting. Shouting led to throwing rocks and bricks. Additional police and the Georgia State Patrol were called in to restore order.

The University administration quickly decided to remove Hunter and Holmes from the campus and from Athens. While that was occurring, University officials circulated among the crowds and confiscated student identification cards, so that those participating in the event could be identified later and called in for questioning and appropriate discipline. Tear gas was used around the dormitory to disperse the crowds. As soon as it became known that Charlayne Hunter was no longer in the dormitory, the incident ended quickly, and the crowd melted away.

Dealing with the aftermath the next day, from what I and my student associates could determine, some windows at the dormitory had been broken, and the grounds around the dormitory were littered and trampled. One or two women residents in Myers Hall had been injured

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by glass from the broken windows. Of nearly twenty persons arrested, few were students and most had come from out of town to participate in the event. The news media in Georgia and around the country termed the event a “riot.” I think most people in Athens and those affiliated with the University, even if they opposed desegregation, were embarrassed to see themselves portrayed in the media as symbols of racism and lawlessness.

Some of the state political establishment and University System hoped to use this occurrence as a strong reason not to readmit Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes to the University. The students and their attorneys had to get a court order so that they could return and they were back in school the following Monday.

I continued to sit with Charlayne and Marcia in my Journalism Ethics class. Getting acquainted conversation led to more substantial discussions about our class, our other studies and interests. Our class met just before lunchtime. It soon became a habit to walk away from class talking together. That habit led to the suggestion that we have lunch together a few times a week at the coffee shop in the nearby Georgia Center for Continuing Education where I worked as an intern at the WGTV studios located there.

I learned, partly from our conversations and partly from observation, that desegregated facilities were available to Charlayne only on the University campus. Restaurants, movie theaters, and other facilities in Athens continued with the segregation policies they had followed for generations. I am embarrassed to acknowledge that I continued with my routines and made no effort to change such policies.

The more Charlayne and I became acquainted, the more mutual interests we discovered. We both



*University and law enforcement officials escorted Charlayne Hunter to classes for several days after her enrollment. Photo by Bill Young. Courtesy of Atlanta Journal-Constitution Photographic Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library.*



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read a great deal, followed news in newspapers, magazines and on television. We both wanted careers in journalism, she as a newspaper or magazine reporter, I in television broadcasting. During the years of litigation to enter the University of Georgia, Charlayne had been in contact with people in the news media, government and the law that were well-known names to me. I enjoyed hearing her perspective of her experiences.

When spring quarter began in mid-March, Charlayne returned to Athens with an automobile. When we completed our classes in the Journalism Building, Charlayne often offered me a ride to her dormitory, which was within walking distance of my home.

We didn't talk often or in depth about her current ordeal as one of two African-Americans on a campus of ten thousand students. On at least one occasion, I observed that someone had let the air out of the tires of her car while she was in class. When I stopped in to visit with her in her dorm room every week or so to study or continue a conversation at length, I noticed she was taking medication for ulcers and stomach upsets. Only once in the eighteen months that we had regular contact in that period did any student make a hostile remark directly to the two of us as we were walking on the campus. As it was more than a year after she became a student there, that incident took me completely by surprise. Charlayne stiffened for a moment but passed on without saying anything. I followed her lead, stifled the surprise and flush of anger I was feeling, and resumed our conversation.

In the spring of 1961, Charlayne was part of a wonderful experience I'll never forget. I was a great fan of John and Robert Kennedy. John Kennedy was the first President for whom I was able to vote. Robert Kennedy, as Attorney General of the United States, had accepted an invitation to speak at Law Day at the University of Georgia in May. He did this partly to acknowledge that the University of Georgia had dealt with desegregation in an honorable and peaceful way. Charlayne planned to hear his speech and then come to the Georgia Center afterward in hope of meeting him before he attended a reception and then left Athens. I planned to meet her at the Georgia Center, hoping I might see or talk to him. When she glimpsed him entering the building, she bravely walked forward and introduced herself. She and Attorney General Kennedy spoke together for a few moments, and then she brought him to where I was standing and introduced him to me. He was very gracious, and I thanked him for coming to Athens and the University of Georgia and expressed my

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hope that his experience there would be a good one. He then excused himself and walked away with his entourage to continue his engagements.

I received my bachelor's degree in journalism in June 1961, then went to New York for the summer and looked for the big beginning to my career in journalism. I found the city full of bright young college graduates looking for the same kind of employment. After three months, I had not found a job in journalism so I returned home to Athens to earn a master's degree. During the fall of 1961 and through 1962, I continued my friendship with Charlayne, whose requirements for her journalism degree caused her to remain at school until the spring of 1963.

As we spent more time together, I introduced her to several of my friends in the Presbyterian student organization and the Drama Department. We had mutual friends in the School of Journalism. Charlayne invited me to Atlanta to meet her mother, brothers, and some of her friends. I appreciated her hospitality and once again I was treated with great kindness by all I met in this way. But it also brought home to me in a most uncomfortable way that I could not return that hospitality while living at home with my parents.

My parents and I had always been close. I spoke to them about my convictions regarding desegregation of the University of Georgia and racial equality, but I stopped short of telling them that Charlayne and I were friends and that I spent many hours every week in her company. I disliked the dishonesty, but even our generic discussions on the issue of desegregation and civil rights led to heated debate and an often-expressed opinion by my mother that I was being brainwashed by liberal ministers and "do-gooders" at the University. She even once invited the Presbyterian campus minister, Bill Rogers, to our home for a family discussion of proper respect for my parents and their views. That meeting was deeply embarrassing to me, and afterward I kept an even lower profile of my beliefs and activities.

One particular thing was eating away inside me. After I had been a guest in Charlayne's home, I felt terrible that I could not invite her to visit my family home in Athens. I determined that I would find some way around this. My parents went out to dinner every Wednesday evening with friends and were away from the house at least three hours. I explained my important desire to a good male friend who had an automobile, and I asked him to meet Charlayne and me for a meal at the Georgia Center and then to drive us both back to my family home for

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a short visit. Then we would take Charlayne back to her dormitory and he would drive me home. He thought this a very poor idea, but I coaxed him into it.

Surprisingly to me, Charlayne expressed reservations about following through with my plan. She clearly didn't see any important symbolism in my inability to return her hospitality, and she felt that if my parents would disapprove, that I shouldn't defy them in secret. I was determined, however, and on the appointed Wednesday, we followed my plan. We spent about a half hour at my home, where I showed her my room and my things and we sat briefly in the living room talking, while my friend and Charlayne looked at their watches and were eager to be gone. I never told my parents I had done this.

In the fall of 1962, I shared in a plan that had some risks attached. I became mildly acquainted with Hamilton Holmes through Charlayne. He lived with an African-American family that owned a restaurant not far from the campus. Two or three times I went there with Charlayne, and we had lunch with Hamilton. He was a great sports fan, and so am I. I had attended all University of Georgia home football games since my high school years and continued that regular attendance throughout my college life. In those days, students did not pay for tickets or have assigned seats. They simply arrived at the student gate, showed their identification cards, were admitted and found the best available seats in the student section. In the fall of 1962, Charlayne and Hamilton noted that they had not attended one University of Georgia game at Sanford Stadium and that they would like to do so before they graduated in 1963. Another male student and I decided that we would accompany Charlayne and Hamilton to the Georgia-Georgia Tech game at the end of the 1962 season.

The four of us met at Myers Hall and we began the walk down the Lumpkin Street hill toward the stadium entrance. Quickly we were mingled in with thousands of other fans approaching the same gate. I was aware that many people were staring at us, but no one said anything that we could hear. We entered the stadium, found seats in the midst of the student section, and we watched the game with great interest. Perhaps the most symbolic moment of the event was when the University band, then named the Dixie Redcoat Band, played "Dixie" at halftime. I used to enjoy the song, but never stood up when it was played, as I did not regard it as an anthem. Most of the students around us did rise and sing out, while we four remained in our seats. It's a

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significant note that I remain to this day more aware of where I was and who I was with than what transpired in the game or who won.

The white male student who completed our foursome at the Georgia-Georgia Tech game was Walt Stovall. He was a journalism student whom I had met early in 1962. He was older than most undergraduates, having served in the military and been overseas, living for some time in Paris. Fascinated with the larger life he had led, I quickly developed a crush on him. We shared at least one class together and had numerous stimulating conversations about his experiences in Europe. I invited him to my home for a dinner that I cooked for him one evening when my parents were out. As he and I encountered each other regularly on campus, and as I spent several afternoons a week having lunch and visiting with Charlayne, we often formed a threesome at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education.

Charlayne was to graduate in June 1963, and she then intended to move to New York and begin a job with the *New Yorker*. I completed all course requirements and examinations for my master's degree at the same time, but I did not complete my master's thesis in time to be included in the June commencement. I was to spend the summer as a counselor at a camp in Maine and move to New York in the fall to look for work in broadcasting. In August, following my camp service, a story broke that Charlayne and Walt Stovall had married in the spring of 1963. National and state media descended on Athens to check out the story. At least one reporter found my name and called me for a comment. I knew absolutely nothing about this. Neither Charlayne nor Walt had ever spoken to me of any romantic interest in the other, nor had I ever witnessed any romantic exchanges between my two friends. I had no comment to make.

My parents knew about the reporter contact I had and questioned me as to why I should be called. I told them then in the most skeletal way that I had shared classes with Charlayne and had lunch and visits with her during her time as a student. My mother in particular was very disturbed by this news, and she feared she might find a cross burning on the lawn one day. With the invulnerable wrap that most young people in their twenties have, I declared emphatically that I had never been in any danger from my activities and that certainly our family had nothing to fear. As I was never quoted in any story that appeared in Athens, no one of their circle of friends would probably ever know of my connection. Several years later, after an Athens location had been searched for documents that related to Ku Klux Klan activity, a local

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friend told me that a document was found that listed University of Georgia students who were friendly to Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes and that my name was on it. I have no direct knowledge whether this is true or not, but hearing this helped me to develop some compassion and understanding of my mother's fears for us.

Looking back on my experiences during those years, I realize Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Hamilton Holmes were worthy star performers in an era of removing harmful racial barriers and promoting a better environment in higher education. I feel privileged to have played even the smallest of supporting roles in this effort.

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**Editor's Afterword:** *Joan Zitzelman* worked in television news in Atlanta, held marketing positions with Georgia Power, was director of the Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau and worked in tourism marketing. She is retired and lives in Athens.



*Joan Zitzelman.  
Photo by Patricia  
McAlexander.*



*Charlayne  
Hunter-Gault, 73<sup>rd</sup>  
Peabody Awards,  
2014.*

**Charlayne Hunter-Gault** retired after a distinguished career as a broadcast journalist that included serving as an international correspondent for National Public Radio and CNN. The recipient of many honors including two Emmys and two Peabody Broadcasting Awards, she is author of two books. The journalism college named her a Grady Fellow and established the Charlayne Hunter-Gault Distinguished Writer in Residence professorship. She serves on its Peabody Awards Board of Jurors, and UGA named the Academic Building in honor of Hunter-Gault and Hamilton Holmes. Hunter-Gault has returned to UGA for celebrations of the 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of desegregation and for numerous speaking engagements and other activities. She and Zitzelman have met at many of these events and hope to continue this tradition.

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After graduating from UGA, **Hamilton E. Holmes** became the first African American to enroll in Emory University School of Medicine. He became a prominent Atlanta orthopedic surgeon, was medical director and head of orthopedic surgery at Grady Hospital, and was Associate Dean of the Emory medical school. He died of a heart attack in 1995. The Holmes family has continued to be supportive of UGA.



*Dr. Hamilton E. Holmes, UGA Columns.*



*(L-R) President Michael F. Adams, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Isabella Holmes (mother of Hamilton Holmes, Sr.), Marilyn Holmes (wife of Hamilton Holmes, Sr.) and Georgia Governor Roy Barnes at the unveiling of the historical marker during the Holmes-Hunter Academic Building dedication ceremony on January 9, 2001. Courtesy of University of Georgia Marketing and Communications.*

**Lizzie Orr Stands Up to the Cavalry:  
A Case of Resistance to Impressment  
of Private Property in Athens in 1864**

by Dottie Kimbrell

The account of Lizzie Orr's refusal to surrender a portable blacksmith forge and tools to Col. Andrew Young's 11th Georgia Cavalry Regiment was published with slight variations as a humorous anecdote in at least three books about Athens: *Annals of Athens, Georgia 1801-1901* (1906) by Augustus Longstreet Hull, *Strolls about Athens in the Early Seventies* (1912) by Sylvanus Morris, and *These Men She Gave* (1964) by John F. Stegeman.<sup>1</sup> Hull wrote the following in the earliest account that the other authors read:

Col. Young a man of great firmness, commanded this regiment of State troops, encamped for a time at the old fair ground. He had need of a portable forge and smith's tools for shoeing his horses, and the only one to be found was owned by Mrs. J. C. Orr. Under his authority to impress such things for military use the Colonel sent a demand for the forge. His report to Gen. Howell Cobb in relating this incident says: "Mrs. Orr refused to surrender the forge and said I could not have it except across her dead body. I have sent a wagon for the forge with orders to shoot Mrs. Orr if necessary to get it." Then a postscript: "The wagon has come with the forge, the necessity of the case not requiring the shooting of Mrs. Orr."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. L. Hull, *Annals of Athens, Georgia 1801-1901*, Athens, 1906, 1978 ed. p. 263; Sylvanus Morris, *Strolls about Athens during the Early Seventies*, Athens, undated (published in 1912), p. 33; and John Stegeman, *These Men She Gave, Civil War Diary of Athens, Georgia*, Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1964, p. 109. Stegeman cites Hull and Morris in note 19, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> Hull's use of quotation marks implies that he saw the report to General Cobb, but he did not cite where he saw it or its archival location. He might have used artistic license by crafting part of the anecdote as a quotation based on the story as he heard it. A search for the dispatches between Young and Cobb was not successful.



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Hull might have been in Athens at that time. He turned seventeen on September 8, 1864, and joined the Confederate Army right after his birthday. He would have left town soon afterward for service in the engineer corps but still might have been in town in November. Forty-two years later he wrote about the incident. The anecdote probably lost and gained details as it was repeated during the years before and after Hull wrote his account.

None of the authors named Col. Young's regiment. Sylvanus Morris was the only author to state his exact source. Major Lamar Cobb, who was a participant, told him the story many years after it happened. Morris wrote, "When Gen. (Howell) Cobb, in Macon, got the report, he was shocked and sent Maj. (Lamar) Cobb of his staff post haste to Athens. At Union Point a courier was met with a dispatch, saying he was glad to report to the commanding general that . . . the case did not require the shooting of Mrs. Orr."

Elizabeth Towns (Lizzie) Orr was born in Athens on February 23, 1824, to Athens carpenter, Benjamin Towns, and his wife Mahala. On June 14, 1855, she married Dr. Josiah C. Orr who grew up near Jefferson in Jackson County. His occupation in the 1860 Athens census was listed as "MD," and his profession was "physician" on the form for the loyalty oath that he took on July 13, 1865. Since at least 1859, he had operated a blacksmith shop on the corner of Oconee and Foundry streets. He was not in active military service in the Civil War. In 1862, he applied for an appointment from the Confederate Congress for the position of postmaster for Athens which was approved in January 1863 retroactive to October 10, after which he probably did little, if any, blacksmith work himself. Josiah was in poor health, and as postmaster, he was exempt from active military service. Josiah was probably at work at the post office when Col. Young's impressment officer came to his house and was met by his defiant wife Lizzie, at home with their only child, seven-year-old Benjamin Towns (Townie) Orr.<sup>3</sup>

Col. Andrew Young was also a doctor. He practiced medicine in Blairsville and served as a state representative and state senator before the war. Dr. Young was a surgeon in the Confederate Army before he raised the 30th Georgia Battalion Cavalry in 1864 from men in

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census, Georgia, Athens, 1900. Ancestry.com.

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northeast Georgia, including some from Athens and Clarke County.<sup>4</sup> When they camped at the fairground near Athens in July and August, he could have known about Orr's blacksmith equipment.<sup>5</sup> His quartermaster at that time, Capt. James S. England, purchased fodder from Josiah Orr on August 30 for their cavalry horses.<sup>6</sup> He was promoted to Colonel on November 14, 1864, and the 30th Georgia Battalion Cavalry that he commanded became the 11th Regiment Georgia Volunteer Cavalry.<sup>7</sup> "It was organized near Athens by consolidating the newly formed 30th Georgia Cavalry Battalion and four companies raised under the authority of the War Department where the conscript act could not be enforced. The unit was assigned to the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida."<sup>8</sup>

The Confederate Army had the power to impress, or take, private property necessary for military use when there was no other way to get what was needed to feed, equip, and care for the soldiers and horses. Fair payment was required at the time of taking if the impressment officer had the funds. If not, he gave the owner a voucher for future payment. Too many instances of unauthorized impressment without compensation forced the Confederate Congress to pass the Act to Regulate Impressment on March 26, 1863.<sup>9</sup> However, the impressment of private property continued to be a problem for all concerned, especially in the summer and fall of 1864 when stragglers from the Confederate Army robbed farms and plantations for their own needs. Georgia citizens became distrustful—and eventually even fearful—of

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<sup>4</sup> Sam W. Melton, Major & A. A. G., authorization from the War Dept, Richmond, January 9, 1864, for Captain Andrew Young to raise a Battalion of Mounted Infantry. Civil War Soldiers, Confederate, Georgia, Compiled Service Records, Andrew Young, Fold3.com database. Young at that time was Captain of the Alleghany Troopers organized August 1, 1863, for local defense.

<sup>5</sup> David Evans. *Sherman's Horsemen: Union Cavalry Operations in the Atlanta Campaign*, Indiana University Press, 1999. p. 191.

<sup>6</sup> Confederate Citizen Files, J. Orr, Fold3.com database.

<sup>7</sup> Civil War Soldiers, Confederate, Georgia, Compiled Service Records, Andrew Young. Fold3.com database.

<sup>8</sup> National Park Service, The Civil War, Confederate Georgia Troops, 11th Regiment, Georgia Cavalry.

<sup>9</sup> *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States*, v. 3, March 26, 1863, p. 128.

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anyone who tried to take their property, which might explain Lizzie's response when she was approached.

One of the first things that Brig. Gen. Alexander W. Reynolds did when he assumed command of the Northeast Georgia District in Athens was to issue General Orders No. 2 on October 10. Everyone in Athens probably read it and/or talked about the order from the new general in town. More than anything else that Lizzie Orr could have read in the newspaper, this might have influenced her response to the impressment of her property at her own home. The *Southern Banner* ran it *seven* times between October 12 and November 23:

The Brigadier General Commanding has regretted to discover that officers and Men of the Army, under color of the law of impressment, have been engaged in seizing upon the property of the citizens in an irregular and illegal manner. Defenseless women, peaceable and loyal citizens, and the families of our brave soldiers . . . have been deprived of their scanty subsistence. Such outrages are unworthy of the Confederate soldier—alienate the affections and confidence of the people, and embarrass the provisioning of the army. Such proceedings are no less than marauding and robbery, and unless promptly checked, will create just discontent and destroy the *morale* of the army. [emphasis found] All officers in this District are enjoined to take necessary precautions to suppress such lawless and wanton acts of plunder; they will institute a rigid scrutiny into all acts brought to their knowledge, arrest the offenders, and forward them with a statement of facts to these Headquarters. The greatest care must be taken to comply with existing laws regulating impressments, and all officers on duty will be held to the most strict accountability for the same. All impressments must be made by duly authorized and commissioned officers, and all property taken in pursuance of such authority must be paid for, or the proper receipts given to enable the parties to receive their pay. Citizens in all cases of illegal seizure of their property, are invited to make known their grievances. They should be careful to secure evidence, and be able to identify the offenders, that punishment may be inflicted upon the guilty

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parties, and reparation made. By command of Brig. Gen'l Reynolds.<sup>10</sup>

During this time, on November 18, 1864, Senator Benjamin H. Hill sent an appeal to Georgians from Richmond asking them to “put everything at the disposal of our Generals, remove all provisions from the path of the invader, and put all obstructions in his path.”<sup>11</sup> The next day, Governor Joseph E. Brown issued a proclamation from Milledgeville that began, “The whole people understand how imminent is the danger that threatens our State. Our cities are being burned, our fields laid waste, and our wives and children mercilessly driven from their homes by a powerful enemy. . . .”<sup>12</sup> The governor and the state legislature fled Milledgeville a few days later, and Sherman's forces occupied the capital on November 23. These were desperate times.

The anecdote about the Orr impressment was repeated because readers are amused at the unbelievable thought of Col. Young ordering his officer to shoot a lady. Considering the rapidly unfolding events of the war in November, Lizzie Orr's resistance to the impressment of her property would not have been humorous at the time. The delay she caused could have meant a matter of life and death to Col. Young's cavalymen who depended on having their horses shod wherever they were camped in order to move quickly against the enemy. The Act to Regulate Impressment included penalties for using oppressive force to impress private property. Col. Young knew the penalties and probably just made an off-hand, outrageous comment about shooting her to make his point, revealing his frustration and emphasizing the urgency of the need for the blacksmith equipment. Hopefully, his “order” was recognized as such. The unidentified impressment officer would not have shot a lady to take her property. He would have taken it according to lawful procedure in spite of her resistance. That is what happened: the issue was referred up the chain of command to Maj. General Howell

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<sup>10</sup> *Southern Banner*, November 23, 1864, p. 4. Also Oct. 12, 19, 26, Nov. 2, 9, 16, & 30. Reynolds assumed command of the District of N.E. Georgia on October 9 with headquarters in Athens. He reported to Maj. Gen. Howell Cobb. Col. W. J. Magill was the commander of the post at Athens and reported to Gen. Reynolds.

<sup>11</sup> *Southern Watchman*, November 23, 1864, p. 3. “Appeal to Georgians by Senator Hill.”

<sup>12</sup> *Southern Watchman*, November 30, 1864, p. 2. “A Proclamation by Joseph E. Brown, Governor of Georgia.”

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Cobb, then it went to the Chief Inspector for Field Transportation for approval.

The military action taking place in Georgia in the months and days before, as well as during, the settlement of the incident underscores the urgency of Col. Young's need for the forge and tools. In the summer of 1864, about 60,000 Union Army soldiers commanded by Maj. General William T. Sherman had marched from Chattanooga to Atlanta, and after the Battle of Atlanta, finally occupied the city on September 2nd. On November 10th, four days before his promotion, then Lt. Col. Andrew Young's Cavalry Regiment was headquartered near Jonesboro, Georgia, when he issued General Orders, No. 33 revoking all details and ordering them to report to his headquarters without delay.<sup>13</sup> On November 12th, General Sherman gave the order to burn everything in Atlanta that could be used by the enemy. The city was in flames as his army evacuated on November 15th. On November 23rd the *Southern Watchman* reported, "From a hundred different sources we have had news of the burning of Atlanta one day last week." "The Federal column advancing towards Augusta . . . burnt the Oconee bridge, near Greensboro, Saturday evening [November 19]. They are destroying every foot of the railroad and all private property, as they advance."<sup>14</sup>

Sherman's army was moving South toward an unconfirmed destination believed to be Charleston or Savannah, and Augusta was in their path to Charleston. Bits of information from many sources, including rumors, appeared in the same issue of the *Southern Watchman*: "For days past we have had startling rumors of the approach and near proximity of the enemy along the line of the main trunk of the Georgia Railroad—at Social Circle, Buckhead, Madison, &c. . . . Although they are now near us while we write, we do not apprehend any danger of an immediate attack. . . ." On the same page,

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<sup>13</sup> *Southern Watchman*, November 23, 1864, p. 3. Dated November 16. Alexander W. Reynolds Brig. Genl. Comdg., from headquarters Athens, Ga. to Genl. S. Cooper Adj. & Inspector General, Richmond Va., Sept. 15th 1864, about Young's Cavalry. "The organization is now known as the 30th Georgia Battalion, Cavalry, that was completed on August 20, 1864, to ten full companies. Lieut. Col. Andrew Young to be colonel. . . ." Civil War Soldiers, Confederate, Georgia. Record Division War Department Rebel Archives, Andrew Young. Fold3.com database.

<sup>14</sup> *Southern Watchman*, November 23, 1864, p. 2. "Atlanta Burnt!" and "Vandalism."

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the paper noted, “We have heard many rumors of a battle between the Federals and Young’s Regiment, Cook’s Battalion [from the armory in Athens], and other Confederate troops, between Jonesboro and Atlanta.”<sup>15</sup>

Col. Thomas T. Dorrough’s Cavalry Regiment (34th Georgia Infantry) headquartered in Phi Delta, Georgia, and Acting Brigadier General Jesse A. Glenn’s Cavalry (36th Georgia Infantry) headquartered in Athens notified their members to report “to Athens with four days’ rations, forthwith.” The *Southern Watchman* also published information from November 19 about the burning of Atlanta, and Sherman’s plans gleaned from newspapers from Philadelphia and New York.<sup>16</sup> Lizzie and Josiah Orr, and every other Athenian, likely read those reports as soon as they could get their hands on the newspapers.

Brig. General Joseph Wheeler commanded all the cavalry in Georgia, and thousands of Confederate cavalrymen, including Col. Andrew Young’s 11th Georgia Cavalry, rushed to block Sherman’s forces. Even the cadets from the Georgia Military Institute in Milledgeville took up arms to defend their state. All the horses and mules required to move the supplies and cavalry of both armies had to be fed and maintained from scarce resources while supply lines were disrupted. Cavalry horses required fodder and access to blacksmith equipment to keep them fed, shod, and ready to move. Both armies were impressing private property, and Georgia citizens were afraid of losing their recently harvested crops and their livestock. Such was the situation in November 1864, when Col. Young sent an unidentified officer to Athens to get a portable blacksmith forge and smith’s tools from Mrs. Orr.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Southern Watchman*, November 23, 1864, p. 2. “The Enemy on the Georgia Road,” and “From Young’s Command.” Cook’s Battalion was at the Battle of Griswoldville with General Joseph Wheeler on November 22.

<sup>16</sup> *Southern Watchman*, November 23, 1864, p. 3. “Sherman’s March.” Notices by Acting Brigadier General Jessie A. Glenn (Nov. 17) and Col. Thomas T. Dorrough (Nov. 20) appeared for the first time on November 23.

<sup>17</sup> Capt. James S. England of Athens had been Col. Young’s quartermaster for the 30th Georgia Battalion Cavalry, but he resigned on August 9, 1864, so an unidentified officer confronted Mrs. Orr in November. Civil War Soldiers, Confederate, Georgia, Compiled Records . . . , James S. England. Fold3.com database.

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Her refusal to hand over the blacksmith equipment triggered the procedure to take the property over her objections according to the Act to Regulate Impressment. When parties involved in an impressment dispute could not agree, Section 4 required appraisement and certification by two outside parties, one chosen by each side.<sup>18</sup> Josiah C. Orr and Capt. Benjamin F. Bruton, Assistant Quartermaster of the Athens post, chose two well-respected Athens merchants to satisfy that requirement. John W. Nicholson, who was also a purchasing agent for the Commissary, and Sidney C. Reese, the current Intendant (Mayor) of Athens, appraised and certified the value of the blacksmith tools at \$845.00 and signed the voucher issued on November 25 by Capt. Bruton from the Confederate States to J. C. Orr for the following:

1 Bellows \$300.00, 1 Anvil \$300.00, 1 Stock & Die \$50.00, 4 Hammers 40.00, 6 Tongs \$30.00, 1 Patent Butress [sic] \$50.00, 1 Drill Iron \$25.00, and 1 Vice \$50.00.<sup>19</sup>

Capt. Bruton signed as purchaser. Hull wrote that Col. Young got the forge, and it was transported by wagon. The regulations required payment when the property was taken, but the Orrs were not paid that day. Bruton wrote on the voucher "I have not paid the account for want of funds." The letter to his superior officer in Richmond that accompanied his returns for the quarter that included November 1864, described the dire financial situation in the quartermaster department at the Athens post:

Having no funds on hand, I have to rely for forage entirely on the tax in kind, which is not sufficient to supply the demands made upon me. It is absolutely necessary that I should be placed in funds without delay. . . . The currency being already bad is becoming still worse on account of the failure of

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<sup>18</sup> *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, March 6, 1864, v. 3, p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> Form No. 25. Confederate States to J. C. Orr, "purchd 25 Nov 1864" stamped with the oval Rebel Archives stamp. Written across the voucher in the opposite direction is an undated notation: "approved Norman W. Smith Maj & Chf Insp. Fl Tn [Field Transportation] 2 Dist." No voucher for rental or payment for a portable forge by Col. Andrew Young is in Josiah C. Orr's file. Confederate Citizens File, J. C. Orr. Fold3.com database. A buttress was a tool made of metal and wood used by a farrier to pare a horse's hoof.



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the Government to pay its debts promptly. Many persons now refuse to sell at all, others hide their supplies & others again have resorted to exchange as a medium. In order to uphold the credit of the Government financially & politically in this region, it ought to keep good faith, promising no more than it can perform, performing what it promises & paying as it goes.<sup>20</sup>

Maj. Norman W. Smith, Chief Inspector, Field and Transportation, 2nd District signed the voucher, approving the sale. His headquarters was in Augusta, but he was temporarily posted in Macon in September and could have been in either city when he approved this voucher.<sup>21</sup> Maj. Smith's department was running out of money, too. Near the end of the war he wrote to Major W. H. Gibbons, Acting Inspector General, Field and Transportation in Richmond, "It is very difficult if in fact almost impossible to make impressment as law says that the property

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<sup>20</sup> Capt. Benjamin F. Bruton A.Q.M., Athens to Brig. Gen. A. R. Lawton, Quarter Master General, Richmond, Va., January 17, 1865. Bruton was in the mercantile business in Bainbridge before the war and was Assist. Q.M. for the 59th Regiment of Georgia Volunteers before being transferred to Athens. Civil War Records, Confederate, Officers, Compiled Service Records. . . . NARA M331 and Confederate Amnesty Papers M1003, Benjamin F. Bruton. Fold3.com database.

The tax in kind took 10% of all agricultural products and livestock raised for slaughter. Tax and Assessment Acts. . . the Tax Act of 24th April 1863, as Amended, An Act to amend an Act entitled "An Act to lay taxes for the common defense and carry on the Government of the Confederate States," approved April 24th, 1863. pp. 9-12. Documenting the American South, docsouth.unc.edu

<sup>21</sup> Civil War Service Records, Confederate, Officers, Compiled Service Records . . . , NARA M331, Norman W. Smith. He appears on a report of officers on duty in the Quarter Master Department at the post of Macon on September 9, 1864. Fold3.com database.

It is doubtful that he traveled to Athens to sign the voucher because he had had several small strokes and was in poor health. Maj. N. W. Smith from Augusta to Maj. A. H. Cole, Inspector General Field Transportation, in Richmond, January 16, 1865. "I am forced to ask you to relieve me from my present duty & assign me to some lighter work. I have had two light strokes of Paralysis & am not equal to the strain upon my brain or my body."

## ATHENS HISTORIAN

must be paid for when impressed. I owe for wagons, harness, almost everything & not a dollar in hand.”<sup>22</sup>

The three authors who published the anecdote about the encounter between Lizzie Orr and the impressment officer from Col. Young’s Cavalry did not see this voucher, but it adds new information to this old story. None of them gave the date of impressment or mentioned that Josiah Orr sold the blacksmith equipment. According to Hull, Morris, and Stegeman, military dispatches went back and forth about the impressment of the “forge,” so the initial contact with Lizzie was probably about November 22 or 23 but before November 25, 1864, the date of the voucher.

The voucher verifies Hull’s account that Col. Young got the “forge” which he wrote was transported in a wagon. Portable blacksmith forges used in the Civil War were typically a two-wheeled cart with a fire box and space for tools and fuel. The “portable forge” in the anecdote might not fit that description and might not be what Col. Young received. It is possible that the parties involved considered the bellows and anvil to be “the portable forge.” The only thing missing from the list of tools in the voucher is the two-wheeled cart with a fire box that would have been part of a standard portable forge. Col. Young’s Cavalry could have built a fire anywhere and used everything listed on the voucher, plus fuel (preferably coal), to create a temporary blacksmith shop in the field for shoeing their cavalry horses.<sup>23</sup>

The delay in resolving the impressment problem was significant. The blacksmith equipment could not have reached Col. Young’s 11th Georgia Cavalry before they engaged Sherman’s Right Wing at Ball’s Ferry, a major crossing on the Oconee River between Wilkinson and Washington counties southeast of Milledgeville. His regiment and a detachment of Lt. Col. J. F. Gaines’ 53rd Alabama Partisan Rangers

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<sup>22</sup> NARA M331, Major N. W. Smith to Maj. W. H. Gibbons, April 20? [2nd no. is illegible], 1865.

In the letter to Maj. A. H. Cole, January 16, 1865, about impressments of horses and mules, he wrote, “I have lost the purchase of a great many animals for want of funds & the truth cannot be disguised, that now it is as much as a man’s life is worth to attempt to impress stock in some sections of Georgia. . . .”

<sup>23</sup> No voucher for fuel sold for Col. Young’s cavalry was found. However, The Confederate States bought 32 bushels of coal for \$16.00 from W. S. Grady & Co. on November 15, 1864. Date of payment was December 31. It was available if the impressing officer wanted to take it. Confederate Citizens File, W. S. Grady & Co. NARA M346. Fold3.com database.

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arrived there on November 25 and participated in the second skirmish at that place. The cadets from Georgia Military Institute fought at Ball's Ferry the day before. "After two skirmishes at Ball's Ferry on November 24 and 25 the Federal Right Wing forced a small Confederate force to retreat. This enabled two pontoon bridges to be constructed allowing the entire 15th and 17th Corps [of Sherman's Army] to cross the Oconee River on the 26th."<sup>24</sup>

On November 28, the Confederate Congress passed House Bill, No. 233 entitled An Act to Consolidate and Amend the Laws Relative to Impressments by the Confederate States of America, which added to the requirements to be followed by "the officer empowered to make the impressment." The revised wording strengthened the penalty for using "oppressive violence" while making impressments of private property, and expanded the act to include the owner's wife or other relative over sixteen to whom the impressment order should be delivered.<sup>25</sup>

On January 25, 1865, Col. Andrew Young, "11th Ga. Cav. (late 30th)" placed a notice in the *Southern Watchman* requesting "those who have informal receipts and accounts . . . to send or bring them to Athens to Capt. J. S. England, late Q. M. to my Battalion, preparatory to having them adjusted."<sup>26</sup> No evidence was found that the Orrs presented a claim to Col. Young or that they were ever paid. Col. Young's notice was still in the paper on February 15.

Col. Andrew Young survived the war and moved to Cleburne, Texas, where he practiced medicine and was the political editor of the *Cleburne Tribune* until he died in 1889 at the age of 76.<sup>27</sup>

Josiah C. Orr and Lizzie lived long lives as highly esteemed citizens of Athens. He served another term as postmaster around 1880

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<sup>24</sup> Ball's Ferry Historical Marker 158-11 Georgia Historical Commission 1958, text David Seibert. [dig.usg.edu](http://dig.usg.edu)

R14. The Defense of Ball's Ferry. [civilwarheritagetrails.org](http://civilwarheritagetrails.org) Ga. Highway 57 crosses the Oconee River there today.

<sup>25</sup> An Act to Consolidate and Amend the Laws Relative to Impressments by Confederate States of America, Congress. House of Representatives. Section 12, p. 7 & Section 13, p. 8. Civil War in the American South, Digital Library of Georgia. <http://www.archive.org/details/abilltobe00conf>

<sup>26</sup> *Southern Watchman*, January 25, 1865, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 25, 1869, Dr. Andrew Young obituary as posted on [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com).

and was later the Sanitary Inspector for the city.<sup>28</sup> Both died in their seventies within months of each other in 1901. Josiah's obituary called him "one of the old landmarks of Athens."<sup>29</sup> Judge Howell Cobb, son of the General, was one of his pallbearers. Lizzie's obituary stated, "Her home life was beautiful. She was quiet, unostentatious, but nevertheless a woman of very positive virtues."<sup>30</sup> In 1864, judging from the story about her in the books by Hull, Morris, and Stegeman, she was also a strong, confident woman determined to stand up to the Cavalry.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MRS. JOSIAH C. ORR</b> <b>PASSES AWAY.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">One of the Oldest Residents of This City.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE OLDEST MEMBER</b></p> <p><small>Of the First Baptist Church of Athens—The Funeral of Mrs. Orr will be held this Morn- ing at 11:30 O'Clock at the First Baptis- Church.</small></p> <p>Mrs. Josiah C. Orr is dead. For several days her death was expected to occur at any moment and when the spirit winged its flight it was not unexpected by those who watched at the patient sufferer's bedside.</p> <p>The deceased had been critically ill for nearly two months. About Christmas Mrs. Orr slipped on her back veranda and fell backwards down a high flight of stairs.</p> <p>The fall was one of great violence, and the shock was heavy. From the effects of the fall Mrs. Orr never recovered. Through careful nursing and medical attention she fought off the grim reaper many days, but the brave</p>	<p>struggle was of no avail. Death came to her Friday night and found her waiting and ready to answer the final summons.</p> <p>Mrs. Orr was prior to her marriage Miss Anne Elizabeth Towns. She was born in this city February 23rd, 1824, and was seventy-seven years of age when death came. She was probably the oldest resident of Athens, having lived here all her life. She was a relative of the late Gov. George R. Towns.</p> <p>On the the 14th of June, 1855 she was married to Dr. Josiah C. Orr, who also for more than half a century has resided in this city. One son blessed this union, Mr. Towns Orr, of this city.</p> <p>Mrs. Orr was a consistent member of the First Baptist church, in fact the oldest member of that church at time of her death. She joined the church when a young woman and for almost half a century followed in the footsteps of her Master.</p> <p>Her home life was beautiful. She was quiet, unostentatious, but nevertheless a woman of very positive virtues. Her devotion to her husband and son was sublime.</p> <p>The funeral of Mrs. Orr will be held this morning at 11:30 o'clock at the First Baptist church and will be conducted by Rev. H. R. Bernard. The remains will be interred in Oconee Cemetery.</p>
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*Her obituary in the Athens Daily Banner, February 24, 1901, p. 2, gives many details of the life of Lizzie Orr. From the Georgia Historic Newspapers Collection on the Digital Library of Georgia.*

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Federal Census, 1880 and 1900, Ancestry.com

<sup>29</sup> *Athens Daily Banner*, June 15, 1901, p. 2. Dr. J. C. Orr obituary.

<sup>30</sup> *Athens Daily Banner*, February 24, 1901, p. 2. Mrs. J. C. Orr obituary.

## **Partners in Flight: Documents Cement Partnership Between Athens Aviation Pioneers**

by Dan A. Aldridge, Jr.

My 2016 book, *To Lasso the Clouds, the Beginning of Aviation in Georgia*, explored the early aviation partnership between Benjamin Thomas Epps, Sr., and Zumpt Alston Huff of Athens, Georgia. The book confirmed that a monoplane (a single, fixed-wing plane) designed and built by Epps and Huff was the first airplane to fly in Georgia and the first flight of a monoplane in the United States. The book also revealed for the first time in 100 years the correct date of the flight (August 28, 1909), the location (Lynwood Park, Athens), the plane that flew (the Epps-Huff III Monoplane), and the fact that the flight was achieved not by a single individual but through a partnership of Epps Sr., and Huff.



*Zumpt Huff, about age 10.  
Courtesy of the author.*

Epps, Sr., and Huff had met as teenagers in 1905 as employees of Morton & Taylor Electrical Contractors in the Commercial Building on College Avenue in Athens. Both had a natural talent working with their hands on all things electrical and mechanical, and they were fascinated by the new motorcars appearing in town.

Their partnership lasted only a couple of years, from the time Epps, Sr., opened his business on East Washington Street in Athens in late 1908 until Huff moved to Atlanta at the end of 1910, later relocating to Florida. The two did not seem to keep in touch, and Huff's role in building and operating the monoplane faded from Athens's memory, not to be referenced again in print for some six decades.

However, I have uncovered information that sheds new light on the story and clarifies the roles of these pioneers in American aviation.

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This information includes a long-forgotten part played by the Athens Historical Society a half century ago.

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In the summer of 1968, the *Atlanta Journal & Constitution Magazine* ran a story<sup>1</sup> about Epps Sr.'s son, Ben Epps, Jr., who had built a replica of his father's 1912 monoplane while working as a pilot for Southern Airways in Atlanta. Huff was living in Florida and one of his relatives in Georgia sent him the article. It prompted Huff to contact Epps, Jr., who invited Huff to Atlanta to see the plane. Huff decided to go that fall.

Huff was thrilled to meet Epps, Jr., and impressed with the replica monoplane, kept at the time in a hangar at Epps Aviation at Peachtree-DeKalb Airport. The highlight of the trip was learning that Epps, Jr., had his father's old scrapbook that included pictures of the planes he and Huff had built. Huff had not seen the planes in nearly sixty years. He asked if he could have copies of pictures and arrangements were made.



*Zumpt Huff, Evelyn Epps Galt and Ben Epps, Jr., 1969. Courtesy of the author.*

Later that year, Epps, Jr., contacted Huff and invited him to the January 9, 1969, meeting of the Athens Historical Society where he would be presenting a program titled "Ben Epps and the Beginning of Aviation in Georgia." Huff met Epps, Jr., in Atlanta, and together they flew to Athens, where they were met by Epps, Jr.'s sister, Evelyn Epps Galt.

That night, Epps, Jr., introduced Huff to the historical society audience as "a friend" of his father's. At the conclusion of the program, someone asked for the specific date of the first flight, which Epps, Jr.,

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<sup>1</sup> John Pennington, "Ben Epps's 1912 Monoplane," *Atlanta Journal & Constitution Magazine*, 7 July, 1968, p. 8.

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said had occurred in 1907. Epps, Jr., didn't know, and Huff couldn't remember, but he wasn't sure 1907 was correct. Huff was asked what he remembered about Epps, Sr., and he spoke of his former partner with great admiration and offered several anecdotes about attempts to get the early planes to fly. In a thank you letter to Epps, Jr., for the program, AHS President Richard Fickett III described Huff as "remarkable for his age, has a remarkable memory, and can certainly talk."

Based on an article about the meeting in the Athens newspaper, it did not appear the full extent of Huff's role in building the first planes was understood or appreciated. The article barely mentioned Huff, referring to him as someone who "worked closely with Ben Epps in Athens when the pioneer was building and flying the very first airplanes." Although it was the first time since 1910 that Huff's name had appeared in print in connection with Epps and the early planes, he did not receive credit as a full partner with Epps.

However, at the end of the meeting, Huff was given a certificate of recognition by Athens Historical Society for "his contributions to the early constructions and flying of airplanes in Athens. His activities in assisting pioneer aviator Ben T. Epps, Sr., in those days contributed to the practical development of the airplane."

The certificate was long forgotten until Huff's granddaughter, Teri Genshimer, found it in a box of papers kept by Huff's youngest daughter, Mildred, who died in 2009. While they did not acknowledge Huff's partnership with Epps, Sr., the certificate and newspaper article did serve to spotlight the Athens Historical Society's important role in documenting and preserving the rich history of people and events in Athens.

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Huff's experience of meeting Epps, Jr., seeing the photos of the planes he'd helped build and telling stories about his work with Epps, Sr., reminded him of the significance of what they had accomplished at such a young age. They had done it without formal education or experience in the field of aerodynamics and using only their meager funds. He was the only one left who could tell the story, and as he neared his 80th birthday, now was the time.

However, the Epps children had never been told about Huff and his partnership with their father in building the early planes. And Huff, a modest man, had not expounded on his role or the extent of his involvement when he first met with Epps, Jr. But as Huff developed his

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plan to tell the story of their partnership, it became clear to Epps, Jr., that Huff was contending he had played a more important part in building and perfecting the development of the planes. Epps, Jr., was naturally skeptical, and absent proof, he was not going to let Huff share the spotlight in his father's legendary achievements.

Huff became aware of Epps, Jr.'s feelings and his protective position for his father's place as the "Father of Aviation" in Georgia. He hoped to convince Epps, Jr., and Evelyn that he had, in fact, been a partner and was not an imposter seeking to share fame. Believing that Evelyn would be more receptive to his appeal, he wrote to her on August 17, 1972, providing his recollections of the formation and work of their partnership. This letter had been unknown until 2019, when a copy that Evelyn had sent to Epps, Jr., turned up in a filing cabinet when Epps's office at Epps Aviation was being cleaned out. Huff, who typed the letter when he was 83 and living in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, wrote:

I wish to give you and Ben information that is the true facts concerning your father, of his start in Aviation. These are as accurate as can be, as true as truth can be...I want to start with the article that was in the *Atlanta Journal*, July 31, 1966, by Tom Dunkin.[sic]<sup>2</sup> This was an excellent article, containing much I did not know. However, there are some parts of his story that need correction; that is if you want the facts and the truth. Which I am sure you do. The parts I know are not what occurred will not detract from the now legendary figure of Ben T. Epps.

He told Evelyn how he had felt during the AHS program in Athens: "That night at the meeting...when Ben Jr., showed [sic] the slides, the whole story flashed thru [sic] my mind; the story was as clear in my mind as if it was re-enacted by your dad and myself." He then continued,

I did not meet Ben until the first of January 1905, when he came to work for Morton-Taylor Electrical Contractors-Engineers. They were located...on the corner of Broad and College Ave...It was here that Ben Epps saw his

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<sup>2</sup> Huff had a copy of this article from the Epps, Sr.'s scrapbook.



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first automobile...a 1904 Cadillac. In a few months...he knew what made it tick... He was not a tinker of automobiles; he became their master.

There are no witnesses ever to Ben working on an aeroplane in 1905, as stated by Mr. Marion N. Todd [*Atlanta Journal & Constitution*, July 31, 1966]. Ben did not have a shop in 1905, he was working with, or for, Morton-Taylor Electric Company...along with Julius Baker and myself...If you want any more verification for this I can get you a statement from Julius D. Baker who is still living...

Work on the first plane started in December 1908 was a Bi-plane, modeled along the lines of the Wright Brothers, Kitty Hawk...it was completed in May 1909...We worked closely for many weeks, many times twenty-four hours, without sleep. There was no one to go to for advice on how or where to start to build an aeroplane, only the Wright brothers. They were giving out no information, and all but impossible to see.

Building a plane capable of sustained, controlled flight was a daunting challenge. Finding expert help was all but impossible. The first one to ever offer us advice was Glenn Curtiss [an accomplished pioneer aviator from New York, who became known as the "Father of Naval Aviation"]. He happened to come through Athens to check up on Ben's sales of the Curtiss Motorcycle, for which he was a sales agent. He never mentioned motorcycles during the time he spent in the garage until time to catch his train. He made drawings of the Biplane on its saw horses, in the rear of the garage; asking questions faster than Ben or I could answer them. Everything he saw was an improvement over his plane [Curtiss was a partner, along with Alexander Graham Bell and others, in the Aerial Experiment Association, which was building pusher-type biplanes in New York] he was working on, except for the piano wire we were using. He had wire of his own, more flexible and stronger than piano wire. He was vastly impressed with the way we had joined the ribs, the studs, and the frame together, along with guy-wires.

When he left, he promised to send a coil of his wire to Ben. A few weeks later it arrived by Southern Express, C.O.D. \$18.50. Ben refused it. When the Express Co.

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notified Curtiss of this, he released the charges and sent a telegram apologizing for the mistake.

When the first biplane was ready for its flight, Huff recalled that “we had no engine for it and used it as a glider....” At the old Athens horse racing track, they tied one end of a tow rope to the biplane and the other to the bumper of a Studebaker-E.M.F. automobile chassis with the body removed. One steered the plane while the other drove, pulling the biplane around the track. The Epps-Huff I had a short life: “it crashed,” Huff wrote to Evelyn. “I was in the plane.”

After several weeks of use, the tow rope broke and the plane was reduced to a pile of rubble. The biplane had not performed as they’d hoped, so Epps, Sr., decided to try a completely new design. The next model was a monoplane: a single, fixed-wing design. Huff explained why they had made this decision:

We abandoned the Biplane after we had read of Louis Blériot<sup>3</sup> going to fly the English Channel in a monoplane. The Epps-Huff I Biplane was dismantled and the photograph in Ben Sr.’s scrapbook of the Monoplane [Epps-Huff II] you see in front of the garage...was Ben’s concept of Blériot’s monoplane, though he had never seen a picture of it until he (Blériot) sent us the photo you have of his plane, by request from a letter I had sent him some two months earlier.

Revamping Blériot’s idea of building a monoplane, we soon had the monoplane ready for its tests...Many, many times we raced it up and down Washington Street. The neighbors who lived on Hancock Street and those the noise might have been annoying to never reported to the police, nor did they say anything to us. Police headquarters was just up on the corner at College Avenue. [*sic*]

The Epps-Huff II proved too heavy, unstable, and unwieldy to fly. It was disassembled and they began work on the Epps-Huff III, a lighter, smaller, better balanced model made of higher quality materials. Struts were added under the wing on both sides of the fuselage to

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<sup>3</sup> In April 1907, Louis Blériot, became the first person in the world to fly a monoplane, the Blériot V.

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support the wing and prevent the sagging at the ends that caused too much drag for the plane to lift.

The Epps-Huff III made its first successful flight on August 28, 1909, in Lynwood Park. Huff described it to Evelyn:

I know you will be surprised; the first flight was made after midnight, under a full moon bright as daylight over Lynwood Park [Athens], the second was made around 11:00 a.m. of the same day.

Here is something you can smoke in your pipe for a while...over beyond the creek that flowed along the northern edge of Lynwood Park, there were two groups of pine woods. A big road divided the patches. On his first flight he circled over one group of these pines and came down very nicely for a landing. The trouble was there was no consideration given to brakes. He nosed the plane into a high terrace and smashed one of the wheels. That was not unusual, we smashed plenty of wheels on Washington Street trying to get the hang of turning the plane. It was an accident, pure and simple.<sup>4</sup>

After receiving the photograph of the Blériot XI, the young men saw the distinct differences between his plane and theirs, most importantly, the placement of the engine and the propeller. His engine pulled the plane forward,



rather than being placed at the back to push the vehicle, the design they had chosen after talking with Glenn Curtiss. They attempted one more plane with a

*Ben Epps (L) and Zumpt Huff (R) inspect the Epps-Huff III. Courtesy of the author.*

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas W. Reed, "Echoes from Memoryland, The Late Ben Epps and the Flying Machine He Built," *Athens Banner-Herald*, 1 March, 1949, p. 4.

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pushing design, the Epps-Huff IV, but were dissatisfied with the results. The last plane Epps, Sr., and Huff built together in fall 1910 moved the engine and gave the body of the plane a sleeker design, providing more speed. Huff told Evelyn that Curtiss “had given...some bad advice.”

Huff again offers Julius Baker as a witness to the truthfulness of his account, “I expect a letter from Baker most anytime now, putting in writing what he knows and remembers of Ben, myself, and the ...planes we built...” Whether Baker ever wrote isn’t known.

Huff ended his letter to Evelyn, “If there is any doubt of the above being true, let me know and I will try and convince you of its authenticity. Yours truly, Zumpt Alston Huff.”

There was no further communication between the Huff and Epps families. Huff lived another three years, dying at age 86 in 1975.

Epps, Sr., and Huff were remarkable individuals whose national and state record-setting accomplishments and contributions to early aviation will long be remembered, thanks in part to the records and programs of the Athens Historical Society.

**AERO-NAVIGATORS ARE  
BUSY AT ATHENS, GA.**

ATLANTA, Ga., Aug. 29.—Athens claims the first aeroplane flight in the state of Georgia. Ben Epps and Zump Huff, in a monoplane of their own construction yesterday at Athens made a trial flight of 50 yards. The machine, however, rose but one foot above the ground and was wrecked when it bumped into a terrace.

The machine was repaired today and another flight will be attempted tomorrow.

*The announcement of the “first aeroplane flight” in Georgia appeared in newspapers all over the country within days of the event. This clipping appeared in the Duluth, MN, News-Tribune, on August 30, 1901. From the digitized newspaper archives on GenealogyBank.com.*

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*Don't need to send this to Ben*  
*Ben - Do you have this already? Just forward it to Dick*  
*RANK*  
*8/17/18*

1543 6th Ave North  
 August 27, 1972  
 Jacksonville Beach  
 Florida, 32250

Mrs Evelyn Galt  
 825 Hill St  
 Mr Ben T. Epps Jr  
 c/o Mrs Galt.  
 Athens, Georgia.

Dear Friends;

I have not been able to do much writing this past year due to Arthritis in my wrist's. However I wish to give you and Ben some information that is the true facts concerning your Father, of his start in Aviation, these are as accurate as can be, as true as truth can be.

I want to start with the Article that was in The Atlanta Journal & July 31, 1966 By one Tom Dunkin. This was an excellent Article, containing much I did not know. However there are some parts of his story that needs correction; that is if you want the facts and the truth. Which I am sure you do.

The parts I know are not what occurred, will not detract from the now legendary figure of Ben T Epps.

I cannot go along with Mr Duncan on Bens operateing a bicycle Shop, In 1905 there were two bicycle shops in Athens, One down on Foundry Street, run by a Pawnbroker, The other was on N Lumpkin Street at the Corner of Washington Street. I did not meet Ben until the fifts of January 1905, when he came to work for Morton-Taylor, Electrical Contractors-Engineers, they were located in the store room north of the building that was known as the Commercial Hotel Corner of Broad and College Ave. The building was still standing Dec 9th 1969. During our close association, he never mentioned a Bicycle Shop to me or <sup>David</sup> Julius D Baker, who came to work for the company a few days later, he says Ben had never spoken to him about bicycle shop.

It was here that Ben Epps saw his first automobile, it hypnotized him, Julius Baker became infatuated with the 1904 Cadillac, in a few months they both knew what made it tick, all three of us learned to drive this car. He was not a tifier of automobiles he became their master.

He was selected Judge for the big drive for better roads from here to there, any place in Georgia, he was an inspector for the auto's, it required a some persuasion, from his close friends to accept the job, it became neccessary for him to realize he was now depending on the Auto for his livelihood. Julius Baker gave me a list of auto's in Athens-Clarke County and who owned, I cant lay my hands on the letter right now but I beleive it was less than Fifty.

He did rent a vacant store room on Washington Street in 1906, and <sup>David</sup> opened an Electrical contracting business, through the demand of the owners of auto's he was forced to use the large portion of the building for auto's, to repair them. There is no published reports of him building and flying an areoplane in 1907 His firts plane started in 1908 was a Bi-plane modeled a long the lines of the Wright Brothers, Kitty Hawk.

There are no witnesses ever to Ben working on an aeroplane in 1905 <sup>stated by</sup> Mr. Marion N Todd. Ben did not have a shop in 1905, he was working with or for Morton-Taylor Electric Co, along with Ruyledge Hunter, Charley Fellows, Julius Baker and myself all Athens boys. If you want anymore verification for this I can get you a statement from Julius D Baker who is still living last reports. Let me know.

The first Plane was a Bi-plane, it was completed in 1909, we had no engine for it, and was used as a Glider until it Crashed, I was in the plane at the time.

Letter from Zumpt Huff to Evelyn Epps Galt, 1972, page 1. Courtesy of the author.

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:Page 2

The night at the meeting of the Athens Historical Society, when Ben showed the slides, the whole story flashed thru my mind, the story was as clear in my mind as if it was being re-enacted by your Dad and myself.

We worked closely for many weeks, many times twenty-four hours, with out sleep There was no one to go to for advice, on how or where to start to build an aeroplane, only the Wright Brothers, They were giving out no information, and all but impossible to see.

The first one to ever offer advice was Glenn Curtis, he happened to come through Athens, to check up on Bens Sales of the Curtis Motorcycle, he had the Agency for. He never mentioned motorcycles, the time he spent in the Garage, until time to catch his train. He made drawings of the Biplane on saw horses, in the rear of the Garage, asking questions faster than Ben or I could answer them. Every thing he saw was an improvement over his plane he was working on, except the piano wire we were using, he had wire of his own, more flexible and stronger than the piano wire. He was vastly impressed with the way we had joined the ribs, the studs, and the frame together, along with guy wires.

When he left he promised to send a coil of his wire to Ben, A few weeks later it arrived by Southern Express, C.O.D 18.50, Ben refused it. When the Express Co notified Curtis of this he released the charges, and sent a telegram apologizing for the mistake. He also gave Ben some bad advice, place the motor so the propellor would push the plane; he Curtis was successful in building his Fusher type plane.

When we abandoned the Bi-plane after we had read of Elieriot going to fly the English Channel, plane was dismantled and the the Monoplane you see, in front of the garage, said by a note with pencil, just 1907. This was Bens conception of Elieriots monoplane, tho he had never seen a picture of it, we did not until he sent us the photo you have of his plane, by request from a letter I had sent him some two months earlier.

Revamping his idea, we soon had the monoplane ready for its test's, we knew it would fly from the many, many, many times we had raced it up and down Washington street, the neighbors lived on Hancock Street, and those the noise might have been annoying never reported to the Police, nor did they say anything to us, headquarters was just up on the Corner at College Ave.

There was only Two Planes built from 1908 until September 1909.

The Ansana two cylinder Motor used, was obtained from Walthour & Hood, of Atlanta, Georgia, in exchange for an old 1904 Two Seater Cadillac. This was a powerful Two Cylinder engine, it was built for Bobby Walthour at the time for a Face maker, he hoped to set a record that would never be topped, by anyone riding a bicycle, Bobby Walthour had just won all World Champion Ship in Bicycling. It was Lucky for Ben and I, that he could never get up speed peddling his Bicycle to get into the dust he expected the motorcycle to give and create.

He had Two pieces of Boiler plate to encircle the front Wheel and Fork and to extend to past rear wheels, they were about two inches from the ground, along each edge, The frame of the of the cycle sat low, there were no peddles to put on brakes, there were no brakes just a stirrup on each side to rest your feet on.

Near as we could determine the horse power of this Engine was about 35-34 h.p.

I am having a lot of research done through French Consul, to see if there is any records of this Company or, the records of Bobby Walthour.

Walthour & Hood now have no records of the original Walthour and Hood.

I hope you will give this your deepest consideration and take it for what it is, just as it happened.,

I have a tape recording of Julius Baker telling me of the time he and Ben went to work for Morton-Taylor in 1905. I am going to have it recorded, will send you a copy of it.

I expect a letter from Eker most anytime now, putting in writing of what he

*Letter from Zumt Huff to Evelyn Epps Galt, 1972, page 2. Courtesy of the author.*

# ATHENS HISTORIAN

e3

knows and remembers of Ben, myself and the two machines (one was revamped )  
we built ~~and~~<sup>of</sup> the Bi-plane.

I have my book almost completed...I want first to verify the dates the first  
two flights were made.

I know you will be surprised, the first flight was made after midnite, under  
a full Moon bright as daylight over Lynwood Park, the Second was made around  
Eleven a.m of the same day,

Here is something you can smoke in your pipe for a while.....over beyond the  
Creek that flowed along the northern edge of Lynwood Park, there were two groups  
of Pine Woods, A Big road divided the patches, On his first flight he circled over  
one group of these pines and came down very nicely ~~for~~<sup>for</sup> a landing, the trouble  
was there were no consideration given to brakes, he nosed the plane into a high  
Terrace, and smashed one of the wheels, that was not unusual, we smashed plenty of  
them on Washington Street trying to get the hang of turning the plane; It was an  
accident pure and simple; the plane Ben built to imitate the one of Bleriot's  
gave us the idea, he was running it up and down Washington Street one night. I was  
standing at the corner of Pulaski Street when Ben came wobbling down Washington  
Street trying to turn the plane to his left as he passed me, I grabbed the the  
right wing by the corner and gave it a hard pull downward, Ben had the Rudder  
over, and the plane lunged around and its wild plunge busted the two left wheels.  
That is the only thing we learned from that plane, that was of much importance  
to us, he saw the Pusher type plane was not so good and later found out for sure  
it wasn't, when it did not get up sufficient speed and the unmanageable bulky  
did not respond to controls, it crashed headon, into a wire fence. 1909

It might have been this flight Mr Todd was speaking of, only this was in 1909  
If there is any doubt of the above being true, let me know and I will try and con-  
vince you of authenticity.

Yours truly

*Zumpt Alston Huff*  
Zumpt Alston HUFF

*Please forgive writing and spelling -*

Letter from Zumpt Huff to Evelyn Epps Galt, 1972, page 3. Courtesy of the  
author.

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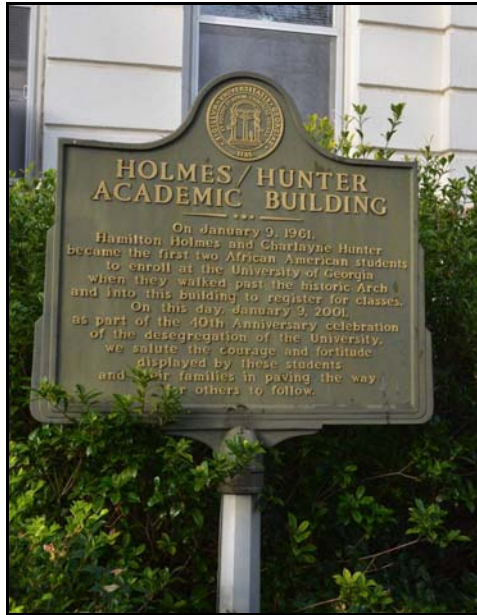
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