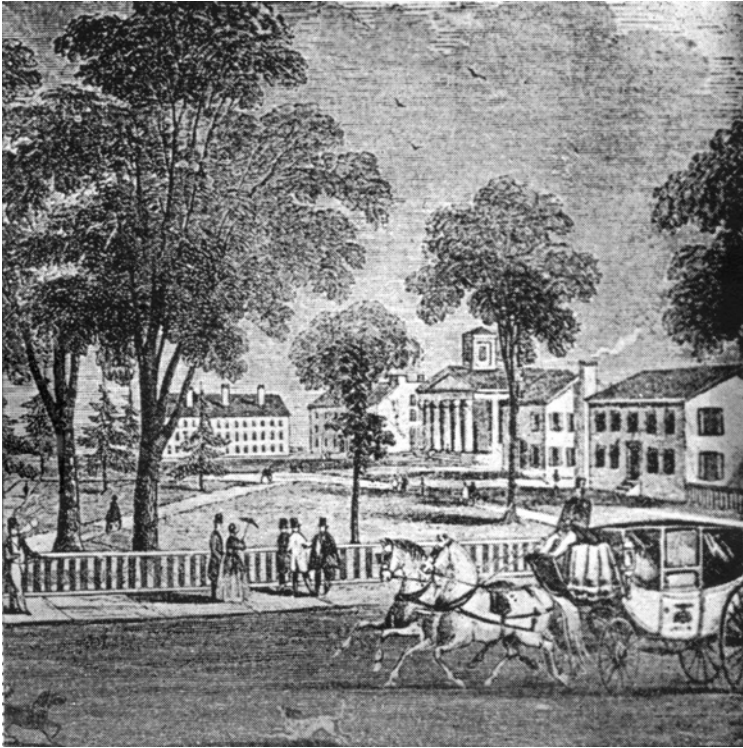


Athens Historian

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FRANKLIN COLLEGE, IN ATHENS, GEORGIA

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ATHENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Excerpted from a history by
Susan Frances Barrow Tate.

On October 11, 1959, at an informal organizational meeting the Athens Historical Society was born. This meeting was held in the Athens Regional Library, then located on the corner of Hancock and College Avenues. The founders of the Society were Sarah Maret, Director of the Athens Regional Library; John E. Talmadge, Professor of English, University of Georgia; Porter Kellam, Director of the University of Georgia Libraries; Kenneth Coleman, Professor of History, University of Georgia; Richard N. Fickett III; Marion West Marshall; Harry Hodgson, Sr.; John W. Bonner, Special Collections Librarian, University of Georgia Library; Susan Frances Barrow Tate, Library Assistant, University of Georgia Library; Lucy Clark and Robert E. Gibson. Temporary committees were formed to plan a general organization meeting to be held October 29, 1959. At this meeting, held in the auditorium of the Chamber of Commerce building, a constitution was approved, aims and/or purposes of the society were formulated, and committees were appointed.

The purposes and aims of the Athens Historical Society expressed in the current constitution are:

1. To discover, collect and preserve all materials, especially original and source materials, pertaining to the history of or in any manner illustrative of Athens, Clarke County, adjacent counties, and related areas.
2. To disseminate this knowledge for the enlightenment of our citizenry through preparing, editing and publishing historical materials, descriptive and illustrative of Athens and related areas through programs or historical papers.
3. To promote historical research.
4. To promote preservation and perpetuation of historic sites and places.
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 historic past.
7. Notwithstanding any provision of these articles, this organization shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on by an organization exempt from federal income tax under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law.

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T.R.R. Cobb and His Wandering House

By Sam Thomas

THOMAS READE ROOTES COBB was a man of great personal conviction and devoted much of his life to seeking ways to safeguard what he believed to be Southern ideals. His star shone brightest during a short ten-year period from 1852-1862.

Born in 1823 at Cherry Hill Plantation in Jefferson County, Georgia, Tom, as his family and friends called him, became one of the more prominent individuals of his era in the state of Georgia. A graduate of Franklin College (now the University of Georgia), he finished first in his class in 1841 and was admitted to the Georgia Bar the following year. In 1849 Tom was selected to serve as reporter for the State Supreme Court, and for the next eight years he published the *Georgia Reports*. He later undertook an effort to codify the laws of Georgia, resulting in *A Digest of the Statute Laws of the State of Georgia, in Force Prior to the Session of the General Assembly of 1851, With Explanatory Notes and References*, better known as simply the *Digest of Georgia Laws*.

Education was of great importance to Tom, not only for boys but also for girls. Tom championed state-supported education for males years before it took hold in the South. He was also one of the driving forces in the creation of a girls' school in Athens, Lucy Cobb Institute, named for his oldest daughter who



Lucy Cobb Institute, about 1870

died of scarlet fever in 1857. Along with his father-in-law, Joseph Henry Lumpkin, and William Hope Hull, he founded the Lumpkin Law School in 1859, which later became the College of Law at the University of Georgia. The trio held some of their first classes in the library of the T.R.R. Cobb House before moving them to their law office next

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door and then to the Franklin College campus. He became a University Trustee and led the movement as the most outspoken proponent for the college's transformation into the state university.

Like so many other Southerners of his time, Tom recognized the great importance of education and the preservation of Southern ideals. He also recognized the importance of the passing on of those traditions and ideals to future generations. In *An Address Delivered Before The Society of The Alumni of Franklin College, At Its Annual Meeting*, given August 4, 1857, Cobb chided his listeners, recent graduates of Franklin College, to build on their recent successes in college and to champion greater advancement in Southern education, particularly in Georgia.

The farmer who with care and labor prepares the ground to receive the seed and then abandons himself to idleness is not surprised to find at harvest his field grown up with weeds. The student, then, who toils through the four years of a college course to prepare his mind to receive the seeds of mental culture, and who, satisfied with his diploma, makes no further effort in the prosecution of learning, should not be surprised to find for his reward a harvest of weeds.... No higher institution opens its inviting doors in Georgia. He has stepped from the highest round of the educational ladder in Georgia, when he leaves these halls.... A place then, where college graduates, who appreciate correctly their diplomas, may prosecute successfully those branches of science or the arts to which their inclination may lead them, is another of the great educational wants of Georgia. That place is a University indeed, not in name.... Sending them to other countries for their education will not answer these purposes – is too humiliating an acknowledgment of the ignorance or inferiority of our own, and will always be the cause of so great foreign attachment, that upon principles of policy it is inadmissible.... As citizens, then, of a great State, component elements of its organization, and responsible with our fellows for its action and its destiny, it behooves us frequently to note the rate of its progress, and its

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comparative position in the scale of nations....Arouse, then, from your torpor Citizens of Georgia – friends of education! The South is sick of dependence; she is resolved to be free. It remains for some Southern State to step in and be blessed while the waters are being moved. The first in the race is the surest for the goal. Georgia, from her central position, her enterprise and her resources, is entitled to lead. Let her University, then, be the Beacon Light of Southern Education...the time is auspicious – the field is inviting; come, let us unite in an earnest effort to redeem our State's fair honor – to promote her glory – to build up her University – to make Georgia, in her educational privileges what God grant she may ever be, in physical, intellectual, and religious progress – the Empire State of the World.

In 1857, the year following the last of his Georgia Reports, he published *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States to which is prefixed An Historical Sketch of Slavery*, which brought him national acclaim, especially in the South, and posited him as a legitimate authority on slavery and property law. In this work Tom based his history of slavery on ancient history. Whereas most Americans at the time tended to view history in a linear time frame (most still do), Southerners looked on their own history in both linear and cyclical fashions. In *The Mind of the Master Class* by Elizabeth and Eugene Genovese (Cambridge University Press, 2005), two traditions are cited that have influenced Southern thinking to the present: Christianity for the linear and classical culture for the cyclical. Christianity taught Southerners to view their world as a progress toward a better world, a chance to evolve their society in a linear fashion, avoiding decadence and destruction along the way. The study of ancient Greece and Rome brought with it the realization that what has been will recur; empires rise, decay from within, and fall to outside foes. Tom Cobb, like most other Southerners



Tom Cobb, c. 1860. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Cannon, a Cobb descendant.

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of his day, based much of his thought and his writings on these traditions.

In local affairs Tom was again a mover and shaker. Not only did Tom contribute to the educational environment within Athens, but he also did his best to strengthen the moral fiber of the city. From the late 1840s until the mid-1850s Tom was instrumental in the area's temperance movement. As a prominent member of the Presbyterian Church in Athens, Tom became involved in many of the city's religious matters and was the moving force behind locating First Presbyterian Church on Hancock Avenue. Tom also worked to create a chapter in Athens of the Young Men's Christian Association.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, Tom Cobb became one of the most ardent Southern Nationalists and one of the most outspoken advocates for secession. When Abraham Lincoln was elected President, he immediately began pushing with added zeal his desires that Georgia should immediately leave the Union. Cobb delivered one of his most famous speeches on November 12, 1860, to the Georgia legislature in favor of immediate secession.

Will you stand by and see them [their families] gibbeted on Federal bayonets, or sentenced by Federal courts? I have spoken for myself; answer now for yourselves. When the dogs of war first lap the blood of freemen, what will be the consequences? I think I see in the future a gory head rise above our horizon. Its name is Civil War. Already I see the prints of his bloody fingers upon our lintels and door-posts. The vision sickens me already, and I turn your view away. Oh! Georgians, avert from your state this bloody scourge. Surely your love of Union is not so great that you can offer it on the altar of fraternal peace. Come then, legislators, selected as you are to represent the wisdom and intelligence of Georgia; wait not till the grog-shops and cross-roads shall send up a discordant voice of a divided people, but act as leaders, in guiding and forming public opinion. Speak no uncertain words, but let your united voice go forth to be resounded from every mountain top and echoed from every gaping valley; let it be written in the rainbow which spans our Falls, and read in the crest of every

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*wave upon our ocean shores, until it shall put a tongue
in every bleeding wound of Georgia's mangled honor
which shall cry to Heaven for 'Liberty or Death!'
(Substance of Remarks Made By Thomas R. R. Cobb,
Esq., in the Hall of the House of Representatives,
November 12, 1860)*

With Georgia discussing the prospects of secession, Tom was elected a member of the Georgia state convention to decide the state's course of action. He authored the 1861 *Georgia State Constitution*, the first state constitution to include a Bill of Rights. When the state finally seceded and joined with other southern states in 1861 to create a new government, he was elected to the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America, serving on both the Judiciary and Printing Committees. As Secretary of the Judiciary Committee, Tom served as the chief author of the Confederate Constitution.

Becoming frustrated with Confederate politics, he sought solace in the military, raised his own unit in 1861, Cobb's Georgia Legion, and became its first colonel. Cobb's Legion, along with the 16th Georgia Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the 24th Georgia Volunteers, and the 15th North Carolina Troops, were brigaded together under the overall command of Tom's older brother, Howell. The brigade was known as Cobb's Brigade. As commander of Cobb's Georgia Legion, Tom took part in the Seven Days Campaign and saw action at Malvern Hill, but was back home on furlough when the legion participated in the battles of Second



Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb,
1862. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth
Cannon.

Manassas and the Antietam Campaign. Rejoining the legion in the middle of September in Martinsburg, Virginia, Tom set about with his usual administrative skills and zeal to "rebuild" Cobb's Legion after its near destruction at Crampton's Gap in Maryland. Although he was only unofficially in charge of Cobb's Brigade while his brother Howell was ill, Tom was formally promoted on November 6, 1862, with the recommendation of Robert E. Lee, to brigadier-general in command of

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Cobb's Brigade. At the same time that Tom was taking over command in November, the 15th North Carolina Troops were transferred out of the brigade, and the 18th Georgia and Phillip's Legion Infantry were transferred in. The newly reorganized Cobb's Brigade then became entirely a Georgia unit.

On December 13, 1862, during the defense of the Sunken Road at the base of Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg, Virginia, Tom found himself and his brigade in the most forward position of the Confederate line behind a stone wall that lined the road. Placing his forces in four lines of about 600 men per line, he ordered the front line to hold their fire until he gave the order, after which the front line would move to the rear and the next line would quickly move forward and fire. In this way a continuous rate of fire would be kept up on the advancing Federals.

The primary focus of Union General Ambrose Burnside was to break Robert E. Lee's Confederate line at this point. Four Union charges were sent against Cobb's Brigade behind the stone wall that day; the brigade fought valiantly, but Tom didn't live to see the results of his men's gallant defense. During the third Union charge, carried out by the famed Irish Brigade, an artillery round exploded in the road in front of the Stevens house that Tom was using as his headquarters; a piece of the exploding shell tore through his leg, and he slumped to the ground. Seeing their commander go down, his men began to waver until Colonel Robert McMillan of the 24th Georgia Regiment stepped up and continued the organized firing by rank defense that Tom had initiated. After collapsing to the ground, Tom asked for a tourniquet, and after applying it himself, he was taken down the Sunken Road on a litter to the headquarters hospital of General Lafayette McLaws, where he slipped into a coma and died, his head cradled in the arms of his friend and chaplain, the Rev. R.K. Porter. His body was returned to his beloved city of Athens and lay in state in the library of the T.R.R. Cobb House for one day before his burial in Oconee Hill Cemetery.

Lawyer, educator, politician, military leader, defender, and promoter of Southern Nationalism, Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb was dead at the premature age of 39. Many condolences were sent to the family, and Athens saw the largest parade the city ever experienced in his funeral procession. A short letter written to his brother, Howell, probably best summed up the legacy of Tom Cobb:

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General Howell Cobb,

General: I beg leave to express my deep sympathy in your great sorrow. Your noble and gallant brother has met a soldier's death and God grant that this army and our country may never be called upon again to mourn so great a sacrifice.

Of his merits, his lofty intellect, his accomplishments, his professional fame, and, above all, his Christian character, I need not speak to you who knew him so intimately and well. But as a patriot and soldier his death has left a deep gap in the army, which his military aptitude and skill render it hard to fill. In the battle of Fredericksburg he won an immortal name for himself and his brigade. Hour after hour he held his position in front of our batteries, while division after division of the enemy was hurled against him. He announced the determination of himself and his men never to leave their post until the enemy was beaten, and with unshaken courage and fortitude he kept his promise.

May God give consolation to his afflicted family and may the name and fame of the Christian statesman and soldier be cherished as a bright example and holy remembrance. With great esteem,

Your obedient servant,

R. E. Lee

The T.R.R. Cobb House and Its Strange History

The house that Tom Cobb acquired on Prince Avenue in 1844 through his marriage to Marion McHenry Lumpkin holds a unique place in the history of Athens. Not only for the people that lived and visited there or the events that transpired under its eaves, the T.R.R. Cobb House gives to the residents of Athens and its visitors a view of a true architectural transformation and represents a wonderful 21st century case study of historical preservation at its best.

After an absence of nearly 20 years, the return of the T.R.R. Cobb House to Athens as the city's newest museum opens a new chapter of

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its history. The T.R.R. Cobb House will present something of an atypical museum in that it will be both an educational and an exhibiting facility, neither purely a house museum nor an exhibiting museum. The house will bring all the different components of collecting, exhibiting, and researching together in its pursuit and mission of advancing knowledge in Southern Studies of the 19th century.

The road has been a long and arduous one, one that took the T.R.R. Cobb House to Stone Mountain, Georgia, and back to a new location in Athens. The present house is a Greek Revival building with two flanking, two-story octagonal bays or wings. The 12 apartments or rooms, arranged 6 over 6, have been augmented with a modern rear ell addition (with a stairwell, elevator, and bath facilities) and modern half basement - with a modern kitchen and two conference/education rooms. The most pronounced Greek Revival elements include the front porch roof emphasized with the usual classical entablature and divided into the frieze above and architrave below. The front paneled door is surrounded by narrow sidelights and rectangular transom lights. The windows on the front façade and in the side octagonal bays are double and triple-hung sash windows with six panes per sash on the main level; double-hung sash windows with six panes per sash are on the upper level. The entire building, including the modern addition, totals 10,536 square feet.

The T.R.R. Cobb House was built about 1834 by Charles McKinley, an 1834 graduate of Franklin College (University of Georgia). Although there are no written records to substantiate that McKinley built the house, the Historic American Building Survey documents McKinley as the builder, circa 1830. McKinley was also the builder of the Joseph Henry Lumpkin House in 1837, which stood next door, and he was the owner of the property at the time. The house was constructed as a Federal-style 4 over 4 "Plantation Plain," and in 1837 it was purchased by Jesse Robinson from C.G. McKinley. (Charles Goodloe McKinley to Jesse Robinson, 11 March 1837, Clarke County Deed Book Q, page 282) Four years later John B. Lamar bought the house from Robinson for \$2,500. (Jesse Robinson of Clarke to John B. Lamar, 8 February 1842, Clarke County Deed Book R, page 254) Then in 1843 Joseph Henry Lumpkin, first Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, bought the property from Andrew J. Lamar, John B.'s brother (Andrew J. Lamar to Joseph Henry Lumpkin of Oglethorpe Co., 24 October 1843) and subsequently made a gift of the house to his

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daughter Marion McHenry Lumpkin upon her marriage to Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb in 1844.

In the 1840s Tom renovated the “Old Robinson Place,” as the house was known at that time, by building on and extending the rear of the structure. A more formal dining room was added and a rear room enlarged on the opposing side of the central hallway. In 1852 Tom renovated the house once again to reflect the new architectural style sweeping the nation. Among the changes were a two-story portico with monumental hollow core, Doric columns added to the front façade, and on the east and west sides two, two-story octagonal wings or bays, detailed with tapered pilasters at the corners. The entrance, oriented to the south to face Prince Avenue, featured a decorative cast iron balcony on the upper story. Similar to the portico on Joseph Henry Lumpkin’s house next door and following a common renovation of the day, Tom’s house was crowned with a tall entablature to cap the octagonal bays and the portico, effectively concealing the house’s main gable and myriad of chimneys.

After Tom’s death in 1862 at the battle of Fredericksburg, Marion continued to live in the house on Prince Avenue. In 1873 she sold the house and lot to R.L. Bloomfield, who broke ground for the Northeastern Railroad “behind the Prince Avenue home of Mrs. T.R.R. Cobb.” (“Robert Lee Bloomfield, 1827-1916,” *Athens Historian*, vol. 8, Fall 2003, p. 28) Marion then moved to Hill Street. That same year she also sold an adjoining piece of property to the Bishop of Savannah, William Gross. This property included the building and grounds of the law school next door to the house. The Catholic Archdiocese converted the school into a mission church, accommodating people from Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Sharon, Macon, and Washington. (Archdiocese of Atlanta, *Georgia Bulletin*, January 31, 1985) In 1881 Marion sold “one city lot in Athens, Ga., known as the Grove Seminary lot - 98/100ths of acre...bounded by the former residence of Thomas RR Cobb and now owned by Eustace W. Speer. ...” (*Marion McHenry Cobb to William H. Gross*, 3 Jan 1881, Clarke County Deed Book CC, p. 356)

A recent arrival in Athens, Dr. T.A. Sale opened his dental office “in the left wing of Gen. TRR Cobb house” in early 1874. (*Southern Watchman*, 14 Jan 1874) Later that year an announcement in the local newspaper again mentioned Dr. Sale in connection with the house: “Dr. T.A. Sale offering to highest bidder at the residence of late Gen. TRR Cobb on Tuesday 29th a fine lot of household and kitchen furniture.” (*Southern Watchman*, 23 Dec 1874)

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By the late 19th century several new architectural styles influenced changes and alterations to the house. These changes continued into the twentieth century as various owners and tenants left their mark on the stately home. According to the Archdiocese records housed with the Atlanta Historical Society, the owners of the T.R.R. Cobb House when the Archdiocese purchased it in 1962 were N.A. Hardin, Hazel M. Hardin Wright, and Catherine J. Hardin Newton. The Hardin family had used the property for rental purposes, and Archdiocese records show that among those leasing the property were the A.M. Dobbs family and the R.S. Taylor family, as well as University of Georgia fraternities. (See photograph of Phi Delta Theta Fraternity in, "Fraternity Chapter Houses," Hajos' *Souvenir of Athens, Ga.: Photo-Gravures*, 1900) The house served as a boarding house from the 1930s into the 1960s, run by Myrt Chandler and her husband. (Interviews, October, 2006; interview with Joe Davis, 11 May 2007: Davis was a boarder in the early 1960s) The Cobb house became the rectory for St. Joseph's Catholic Church of Athens after its purchase by the Archdiocese in 1962.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s St. Joseph's worked hard to keep the house maintained, but finances continued to be a constant struggle. Faced with spiraling costs for upkeep and the pressing need for additional space, the Archdiocese decided to try and find a buyer for the structure that might be willing to relocate it. Several groups worked to ensure that the house remain in Athens, but their efforts were not successful. At that time the Stone Mountain Memorial Association stepped forward and offered to move the house to be incorporated into the historic Stone Mountain Park. The move was carried out in 1985.

In the preparations for the move, the interior was stripped of its plaster, decorative interior woodwork, and chimneys. The house was dismantled by cutting the exterior walls of the upper floor into separate sections, while the first floor was cut into four segments by room, braced, and lifted from its foundation. Framing members, walls, rooms, sectioned pieces of the south entablature, and the two massive Doric columns were loaded onto flatbed trucks and taken to Stone Mountain where the structure was situated on a sloping, wooded lot at the park. It was then reassembled but never completely restored because of a lack of funds. Although efforts were made to keep the house watertight, incomplete reconstruction created opportunities for insect damage and water infiltration.

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After many years of unsuccessful attempts to move the house back to Athens, the possibility of its return became feasible only after the commitment and financial resources of the Watson-Brown Foundation, Inc., were brought to bear. A partnership was formed between the Watson-Brown Foundation, the Stone Mountain Memorial Association, the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation, and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation to return the house to Athens. The Watson-Brown Foundation then undertook efforts to restore the house to an appropriate period in its historic past.

A restoration of this magnitude doesn't happen quickly; it evolves over time as more and more evidence comes to light. The information that is initially available often provides only the starting point for what will become the final production. One of the first decisions before the restoration began was to determine the time period to be recreated. The Watson-Brown Foundation decided to focus the restoration on the period of 1852-1862 as these were the years when Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb was at the pinnacle of his life.

A study of the existing structure at Stone Mountain was undertaken in preparation for its eventual return to Athens. The main goal was to restore the historical design and architecture of the building so as to remain as accurate as possible with the era. Surber Barber Choate & Hertlein Architects were retained to prepare a rehabilitation study on the house in May 2003 before its removal and relocation. The framing throughout the main portion of the house is marked by numerous mortises, tenons, and splices that illustrate the various phases of the building's complicated evolution. (*Surber Report*, 2004) Despite the alterations made to the house over the years, the structure still retained much of its historical integrity for the 1844-1852 period. Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb's changes to the house from 1844 to 1852 were still evident. The Greek Revival portico was intact as well as both octagonal bays. Flush wallboards survived in the first floor octagons, indicating the location of the library casing. All of this was important so that any new interpretation could demonstrate how an urban family in the mid-1800s responded to new architectural trends.

In October 2003 representatives of the Historic Preservation Division of Georgia Department of Natural Resources paid a site visit to help determine the feasibility of a second removal and return of the building to Athens. Beams of the house were found showing evidence of the cut marks from the 1985 house dismantling. With the reports in

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hand, the Watson-Brown Foundation began making plans for the eventual return of the T.R.R. Cobb House to Athens.

The next step was to acquire a lot within Athens. Although two potential sites were initially identified for the relocation, one on Milledge Avenue and the other on Hill Street, the site on Hill Street was selected because it was determined to have the most integrity and relationship to Prince Avenue and the T.R.R. Cobb House's original location within the Cobbham neighborhood. This site also had the additional benefit of being within the original "subdivision" and near to the Howell Cobb houses on Pope Street and Hill Street, as well as to the street that Marion Cobb lived on later during the century. The site was selected in late 2003 and the property at 175 Hill Street purchased by the Watson-Brown Foundation.

The new site posed one major problem: it sloped downward from the street while the original house location sloped upward from the street. The decision was made to situate the house at the same elevation above the street as it originally sat, and after a careful analysis of photographs of the original site, fill dirt was hauled in and the lot was built up to meet the height requirements. This buildup allowed the addition of a modern half-basement to the rear of the house.

To minimize any more loss of historical integrity, the structure needed to be moved in the largest sections feasible. It was determined to go back to the 1985 movement to Stone Mountain Park and "reuse" the 1985 cut lines, thus minimizing any additional damage. In the summer of 2004 the main floor of the house was once again cut into four sections along the previous cut lines, and the exterior wall of the upper floor was again sectioned. As much as possible of the upper story's boards, windows, doors, surrounds, and molding were salvaged, numbered, and inventoried for the move back to Athens. Reconstruction of the structure began immediately and was completed in late summer 2006.

As reconstruction began, the next problem to solve was the original colors of the house. Today the most dominant house color is white, but city houses in the 19th century were generally brightly painted with strong hues. A person of wealth or influence wanted to paint the exterior of his home so that all could witness his financial or social standing. Deep, rich colors enhanced the importance of one's house, and reds and yellows were often chosen because they were very difficult to come by and therefore more expensive, except in port cities

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such as Charleston, Savannah, or Philadelphia. Of course, the color choice was generally determined by the availability of pigments.

In 1842 Andrew Jackson Downing, considered by many to be America's first landscape architect, published *Cottage Residences*. The work became one of the most widely used architectural manuals in America before the Civil War, so popular that it was republished numerous times even after Downing's untimely death in 1852. In this work Downing argued forcefully against the use of white as a color for houses.

The color of buildings may very properly be made to increase their expression of truthfulness ... A cottage or villa should be a cheerful, mellow hue harmonizing with the verdure of the country ... There is one color, however, frequently employed by house-painters, which we feel bound to protest against most heartily, as entirely unsuitable and in bad taste. This is white ... The glaring nature of the color, when seen in contrast with the soft green of foliage, renders it extremely unpleasant to an eye attuned to harmony of coloring.... No painter of landscapes that has possessed a name was ever guilty of displaying in his pictures a glaring white house, but, on the contrary, the buildings introduced by the great masters have uniformly a mellow softened shade of color, in exquisite keeping with the surrounding objects ... (Andrew Jackson Downing, *Victorian Cottage Residences*, pp. 13-14)

The choice of green for the shutters was a common selection of the mid-19th century, as were green Venetian blinds. Green was generally thought to repel flies. In 1840 T.R.R.'s brother Howell gave instructions for the construction of a new house on Hill Street in Athens: All the blinds to be Venetian & to be painted a good green & the lower part of the blinds in the lower story as well as those in the Library room up stairs to be revolving. (*Howell Cobb Papers*, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia)

Andrew Jackson Downing makes clear reference to the color in *Victorian Cottage Residences* (1842): To render the effect still worse, our modern builders paint their Venetian window shutters a bright green! A cool dark green would be in better taste, and more agreeable

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to the eye, both from the exterior and interior. (Andrew Jackson Downing, *Victorian Cottage Residences*, pp. 13-14)

With a basic knowledge of period colors, Watson-Brown in 2005 commissioned a “Microscopical Paint and Color Analysis” report from Welsh Color & Conservation of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. The investigating team was asked to focus on addressing specific questions relating to the age and location of certain features and to evaluate layer structure and interpretation of the ca. 1850s finishes. More than 180 samples were taken of the exterior and interior of the house, and the samples were then analyzed microscopically and chemically to determine the original color palette. After extensive work the team found that in the mid-nineteenth century the T.R.R. Cobb House was painted “a moderate yellowish pink” with white trim.

As the analysis was being conducted, additional evidence as to the color of the Cobb House came to light. The Carl Vinson Institute of Government, housed in the old Lucy Cobb Institute, has a ca.1858 painting of T.R.R Cobb’s oldest daughter, Lucy (for whom the school was named) in its lobby. The painting, which was donated by a Cobb family descendant in recent years, shows Lucy standing under a tree in front of her home. The house in the background sports a yellowish pink color. Another reason why this color may have been chosen by Tom Cobb or Marion, was that, contrary to what many believe today, pink in the nineteenth century was considered a masculine color. Taking the paint analysis and comparing it with the color palette shown in published materials of the period and with the painting of Lucy helped fit the Cobb paint scheme into the broader picture of the era. Once the original color was determined, the only thing left to do was to simply drive down to the nearest paint store with the formula and have the color custom mixed.

The next step was to review the numerous changes made to the interior of the house over the years. After a careful examination of the plaster walls and the construction process, and with some supporting documentary evidence, the main floor plan was outlined. The interior arrangement of the house on the main floor included a central hallway with two apartments to either side; the front apartments included an interior passage to the octagonal bays, each with an exterior doorway to the front porch. Fireplaces were centered in each of the 12 rooms of the house. The upper floor layout mirrored that of the main floor. On the balcony porch of the upper floor a newly fabricated iron railing was added matching the original as evidenced in early photographs.

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In the 1850s several residents of Athens converted to gas for lighting. The city of Athens brought in gas with the creation of the Athens Gas Light Company in March 1856. One of the first to install the new lights was Asbury Hull, who in March 1857 had a “gasometer” with 18 burners on his property. There is some speculation that Tom Cobb may have been involved in this company in some way, although no records have been found to date. Evidence existed that the two front octagons of the house originally had gas lines run into them.

Despite numerous neoclassical style changes to the interior, the house retained much of its historic character and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on June 30, 1975. In the restoration original materials from the mid-1800s were retained as much as possible. The exterior doors of the house are original, as well as the glass panes in the front exterior windows. The floorboards in the octagonal bays are original to the house, as are the ceiling boards on the main level.

Two primary documents lend evidence to the original room layout within the house. In the *Joseph Henry Lumpkin Papers* at the Hargrett Library, University of Georgia, are a number of letters written from Marion to her sister Callie in Mississippi. In one letter Marion mentions two of the rooms on the main floor: *I only spent two days in Charleston....For the parlor we selected a set of chairs taborets or ottomans – two settees & two small rocking chairs – of a material similar to sister Mary Anns only ours is crimson & green with window curtains to correspond. A handsome carpet which took the prize for its pattern at the worlds fair, – tables &c to fill up. For the library – a set of chairs – an oil cloth table & lounge. A handsome hat rack of bronze & two grates like those you saw in Columbus. For my bedrooms – a carpet & matting – two handsome bedsteads a cottage couch – washstands & crockery – a wardrobe & bureau – towel racks &c.* (Letter to Callie, *Joseph Henry Lumpkin Papers*, 16 April 1852) In a later letter she again mentions some of her house arrangements, *My passage is finished & look very prettily and new. I am busy today putting up lace curtains & shades in the parlor and shades upstairs. My dining room is now being papered and I eat in the back porch.* [Letter to Callie, *Joseph Henry Lumpkin Papers*, 1856, month and day unknown]

In the *Howell Cobb Papers* at the Hargrett Library, University of Georgia, there is an “Inventory of House Furnishings,” taken following Tom’s death in 1862. This inventory lists the rooms of the house as

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Library, Private Sitting Room, Parlour, Sitting Room & Closet, Dining Room, and six bedrooms (Ms 1376, *Howell Cobb Papers*). The 1850 U.S. Census for Clarke County lists John B. Cobb, Howell and Tom's younger brother, as living in the T.R.R. Cobb household. His room was probably on the main floor at the rear of the house.



The restored T.R.R. Cobb house welcomes researchers and visitors.

Now in the 21st century with its restoration and construction complete, the T.R.R. Cobb House will serve a unique educational purpose for Athens and the surrounding region as a museum and resource center illuminating the life, character, and accomplishments of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, as well as aiding those interested in the history of Athens,

Clarke County, Georgia, and the South during the 19th century. The South is the only section of the United States to ever experience a loss of its cultural environment as a result of war and to feel first hand the impact that loss had on the collective memory of the region. It was a period that was the most arduous and pivotal in this country's history, particularly in Georgia and the South. It was a period that defined what it was to be a Southerner. It was a period that ended one way of life and started a new era.

The T.R.R. Cobb House will present programs and exhibits focusing on the period and on the people that created this Southern civilization. The rich cultural history of Athens and the surrounding region is a microcosm of Southern history and provides a rich field to mine for historic treasure. Through its museum activities the T.R.R. Cobb House will seek ways to contribute to the community's understanding of our shared Southern history, insuring that our inheritance is preserved, augmented, and passed on to future generations; and we will keep alive the memory of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, one of Athens' "first citizens."

Sam Thomas has degrees in history from Mars Hill College and Winthrop University. A native of North Carolina, he has worked in the museum world

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for the past 16 years following a 13-year career as a tennis professional and a brief two-year stint teaching. He is a published author and co-author of several Civil War works, including *A Rising Star of Promise: The Civil War Odyssey of David Jackson Logan, 17th South Carolina Volunteers, 1861-1864*; *Shanks: The Life and Wars of General Nathan G. Evans, CSA*; and *Under the Leaves of the Palmetto: York County's Confederate Veterans*. The son of a Presbyterian minister and descendant of seven known Confederate soldiers, Sam with his wife Lynn moved to Athens in 2006 to become the first curator of the T.R.R. Cobb House for Watson-Brown Foundation, Inc.

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Athens in 1860

By Marion J. Rice

In 1860 Athens had been in existence for almost six decades and ranked 17th in size of Georgia towns, with a population of almost 4,000, half of whom were slave and a small number of African-American freedmen. Its special distinction and main landmark was the University of Georgia. Although the university was chartered in 1785 by the Georgia legislature, a site was not selected until June of 1801 – at Cedar Shoals on the Oconee River in the extreme southern part of Jackson County, which had been carved out of a larger Franklin County organized from the Cherokee land cessions of 1783 and 1790. By December of 1801 the area that included Athens had become a part of the new Clarke County when it was formed from Jackson. (Doyon, p. 30; *Atlas of Georgia*, p. 74)

Land-hungry settlers from east of the Alleghenies had long been pushing into the Georgia Piedmont. It was no trackless wilderness, but crossed with many Indian trails that led to an important Indian trading center on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River. Opposite, on the Georgia side, Gen. James Oglethorpe in 1735 had begun the settlement named Augusta in a move to capture the Indian trade from the Charleston merchants. The traders simply changed their base of operations to the new town, terminus of the Cherokee trading paths along which new towns such as Washington and Lexington were to develop. Athens was simply an extension of that growth in an area of free lottery land. (*Atlas of Georgia*, p. 68)

When the university selection committee chose the Cedar Shoals site on the west bank of the North Fork of the Oconee River, the area already had the beginnings of settlement by pioneers drawn by the rich brown loam soils, moderate climate, and water resources. Here Daniel Easley, a frontier entrepreneur from Virginia, had already erected three mills on the east bank of the river to meet the needs of settlers – one for milling flour, one for grinding corn into grits, a southern staple, and one for sawing logs. (Doyon, p. 91) The headwaters of the Oconee had many tributaries favorable for water-power development when water,

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rather than steam, was a major power source. (Doyon, p. 67; *Atlas of Georgia*, p. 18)

Sixty years after the site selection there were a number of buildings on the land reserved for the university along Broad Street (at that time called Front Street), but the university remained an anemic institution, despite the fanfare that accompanied graduation time. First, the institution had begun on a financial shoe string and was always starved for funds by a parsimonious state legislature. In the 1850s state appropriations for the university were in the \$15,000 annual range. In 1860 enrollment was 169, all male, with an additional 53 in the newly established one-year term law school. In the next year, with the coming of the Civil War, the university lost half of its enrollment as students left to join Confederate units. Reduced enrollment brought about a 20 percent reduction in professors' pay. (Reed, pp. 613-614).

Second, the university curriculum did not reflect changes toward science and engineering that were being introduced into other universities during this time. During the 30-year administration of President Alonzo Church, 1829-1859, a strict Presbyterian, the university operated more like a church-related school than a public institution. Particularly distasteful to more liberally minded faculty was the monitoring of student behavior insisted on by President Church. The erection of faculty houses on campus was not for the convenience of the faculty but to facilitate faculty surveillance of student behavior. The last house erected for this purpose was the circa 1857 two-story brick house, sometimes called the Lumpkin House because of its location on Lumpkin Street. The changes in administration and curriculum recommended by Chancellor (President) Andrew Lipscomb, who began his term in 1860, were not realized with the coming of war. Classes were suspended in 1863 and did not resume until 1866.

The existence of the university in Athens encouraged the growth of private schools to facilitate admission. Georgia did not yet have a public school system, and Athens supported several private schools for white children. The most notable was a girls' school, the Lucy Cobb Institute, founded by T.R.R. Cobb in 1858, along with other prominent Athenians. It developed its high reputation under the direction of Miss Mildred Rutherford in post-Civil War years and existed until 1931 when it was closed because of the Depression.

Compared with other north Georgia towns such as Gainesville and Dahlonega, Athens did have more population and more substantial, stylish homes, more industry, more business and stores, more lawyers

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and doctors and dentists, churches of varied Protestant denominations – the four major Protestant denominations, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal, all had developed flourishing congregations with substantial houses of worship before the Civil War; two weekly newspapers, *The Watchman* and *The Southern Banner*; a variety of literary publications that did not last over time; rail connections to Augusta and Atlanta via Union Point; horse-drawn stagecoaches to other areas; and both Democratic and Whig political parties.

Athens in 1860 had two cemeteries. The old Athens City cemetery, also called the Jackson Street Cemetery, had been in use since before 1800 and was running out of room. It was already in disrepair and was a hangout for vagabonds. In 1856 the Athens City Council acquired 17 acres west of the North Oconee River for a cemetery and named it Oconee Hill. Ninety additional acres on the east side of the river were acquired in 1898, and in 1899 an iron bridge was built to connect both sides of the cemetery, which is still in use today.

Although Athens, like the rest of the country, was inching toward mechanization and had an abundance of water power, it must be emphasized that 1860 was still a time in which man power was still the major source of energy, whether on the farm, at the forge or shop, or in the family home. There are good records for the importance of black labor to the Southern economy, but none specifically for Athens. But since half of the population of Athens was black, a large percentage of the labor force can be attributed to them. Blacks not only served in a great variety of domestic roles – cook, laundress, cleaner, coachman, milker, stable boy, handyman, but were also present in most of the skilled trades – carpenter, brick mason, plasterer, shoemaker. About half of the labor in the three Athens cotton mills was black, a tradition that was not continued after the war.

At the 1860 Democratic convention at Charleston, Stephen Douglas of Illinois was nominated as the presidential candidate, and Democrats and Whigs of Athens both became secessionist in outlook. After the election of Lincoln as president, Clarke County delegates helped take Georgia out of the Union at the Milledgeville secession convention on January 19, 1861. It would take years for Athens to recover the prosperity it had enjoyed before this ill-fated decision.

What did the Athens of 1860 look like? Streets were unpaved, red dust bowls in dry weather and muddy bogs in wet. The railroad terminus for the Georgia Railroad was on Carr's Hill on the east side of the Oconee River, and to get a wagon load of goods, whether pulled by

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mule or oxen, from the station was a long, hard pull over the rickety wooden bridge that spanned the river above Cedar Shoals and then up the dirt road, now Oconee Street, which led up the hill to the town center. A city ordinance required wagons and carriages to lock their brakes to slow the vehicles as they came downhill before gaining the bridge.

Sidewalks in front of stores were provided by the owners, not the city, and were not uniform, usually made of wood or brick. Riders were prohibited from hitching animals on the sidewalk and were admonished to tie their horses to the hitching post at the street edge. The streets in the business area were usually messy from animal manure and other litter. Hogs were common scavengers. There was no sanitation department.

The business district was small, mainly on Broad and Clayton Streets and the beginning of College Avenue, running north from the university entrance, marked by an arch in the iron fence, which had been cast by the Athens Foundry and installed in 1858. Business houses were generally small, and retail stores often functioned as mini-department stores, carrying food, textiles, and hardware.

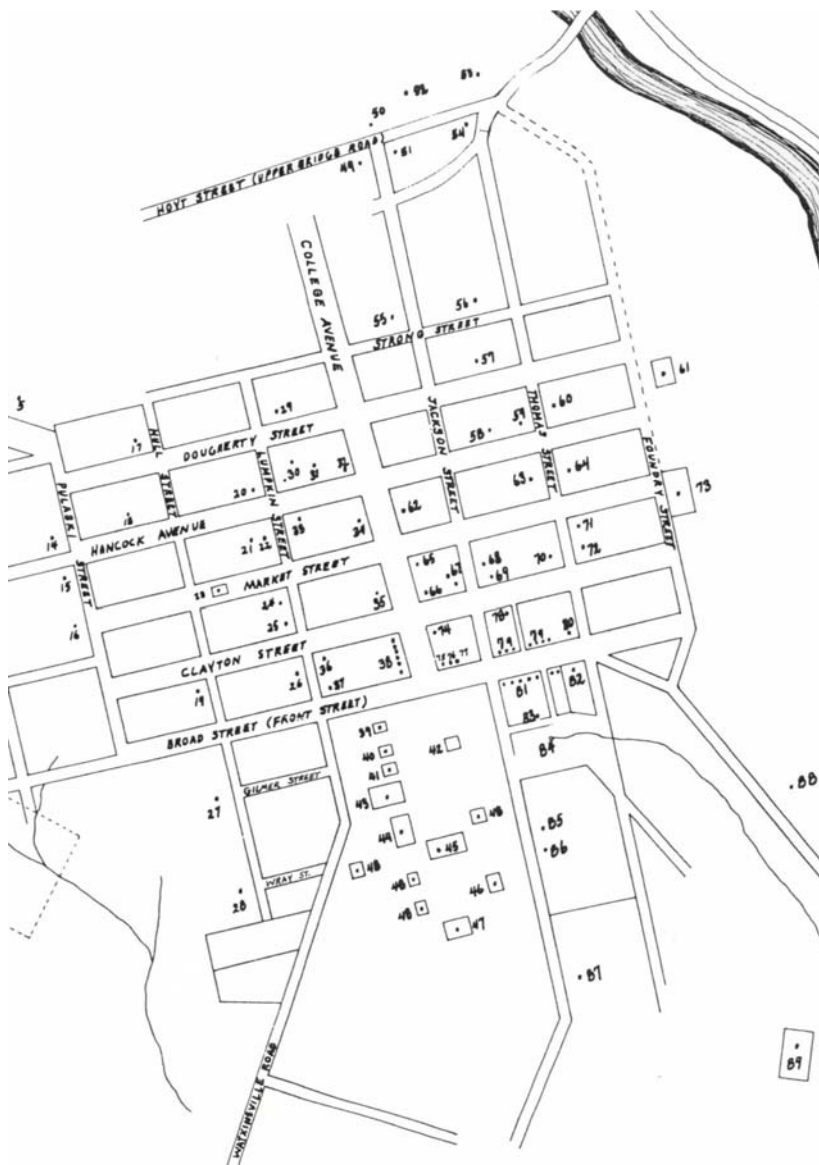
Since there was no public works department, downtown Athens was poorly maintained. White males, 16 to 45, were subject to road duty and were required to work five days a year or pay \$1 in lieu of work. Those who could not pay or have a servant work for them worked, and thus public maintenance was left to the poorest or most negligent. Blacks were sometimes hired to fill out the number of workers required.

No major crime or vice plagued the city, but gambling, drinking, fighting, hitching horses to sidewalks, using firearms within the city limits, and prostitution were recurrent problems. Excessive drinking and billiard parlors staying open beyond hours led to fighting, and thus were common concerns. For many years the police force in Athens had consisted of just the town marshal, but in the 1850s arrangements were made to add night police, two working in the early evening and two in the morning.

Increasing agitation over the question of slavery led to more restrictive hours for the black population. In 1850 an ordinance was passed that blacks had to be in their homes by 9:15 p.m., unless they had a special pass. At that time they lived mainly on the premises of their owners. The segregated black areas of east and west Athens were post-Civil War developments.

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Detail of Downtown Athens from *Confederate Athens*



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A Brief Key to the Detail of Downtown Athens from *Confederate Athens*

prepared by Marion J. Rice

All other numbers not listed here are private residences.*

Churches

- 22 Methodist, First (still in that location on Lumpkin)
- 31 Presbyterian, First (still in that location on Hancock)
- 36 Episcopal (formerly on Lumpkin, now on Prince Avenue)
- 65 Baptist, First (formerly on College Avenue, now on Pulaski)

Public Sites

- 23 Town Hall and Market (formerly in center of Market Street, now Washington Street; the City Hall is now at #25, no longer a city market)
- 74 Athens Post Office (formerly on College at Clayton, now at #30 on Hancock at Lumpkin)
- 84 Town Spring(s)
- 87 Old City Cemetery (Jackson Street)

Schools and Colleges

- 54 Miss Emily Witherspoon's Girls School (top of map on Hoyt Street)
- 56 Athens Female Academy (Mrs. Coley's school on Strong Street)
- 85 James Fulton's Boys School (on Jackson Street near current site of North Campus Parking Deck)
- 39-48 University of Georgia campus

Hotels

- 82 Franklin House (still in use for offices, corner of Broad and Thomas)
- 38 Newton House (across from the Arch, now contains shops, offices and restaurants)

Businesses and Offices*

- 38, 61, 69, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81

Industrial

- 61 Gas works, Foundry Street
- 68 Bakers, Jackson Street
- 78 Harness maker and dealer, Clayton Street
- 73 Athens Foundry, Foundry Street
- 83 Coach works
- 89 Athens Factory (cotton textile mill)
- 90 Cook & Brother Armory (built in 1862, now Chicopee)
- 91 Train Depot (Carr's Hill)

* See a more detailed map and legend in *Confederate Athens*, by Dr. Kenneth Coleman. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967)

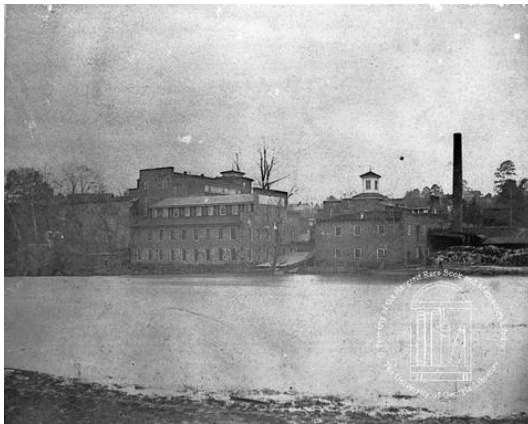
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Residential housing was on large lots, sometimes occupying an entire city block. The most imposing residences were built in the Greek Revival style after the 1840s. They were often set back a good distance from the street so that the effect of columns and portico could be most appreciated. Behind the big house there was usually what could constitute a small village, making life in the big house possible: kitchen for cooking, slave quarters for domestic help, stable and corn crib for horses, chicken houses, vegetable garden, a well for water, and an outdoor privy.

The city of Athens had no waterworks for bringing water to homes or business establishments. The famous spring of 1801 at the foot of Spring Street was still a major source of water, especially for farm teams coming to town. Some locally manufactured gas was available for a little home lighting, but there were no street lights, and in the dark of the moon Athens was indeed a dark city. Ice was available, but it was an expensive luxury. Some of the bigger homes had their own ice

house, in which imported ice could be packed in sawdust

Roofs of most houses were made of wooden shakes. With no centralized water supply and only volunteer fire companies, fire was a constant threat. In most cases of fire, success meant that the fire was contained and did not spread to adjacent buildings. Although a



Athens Factory, courtesy of Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

number of volunteer fire brigades in Athens had fire engines, they were generally ineffective because of a lack of water in the city cisterns. (Hull, *Annals of Athens, Georgia*, p.165)

Business growth in Athens increased in the 1850s. In 1860 there were 60 stores in Clarke County with an investment of \$430,000, 48 of them in Athens. Two banks: the Athens branch of the State Bank and the Bank of Athens, incorporated in 1856, which in 1860 declared a dividend of five percent. The Athens Building and Loan Association

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was incorporated in 1854. And three insurance companies also had offices in Athens: Southern Mutual, 1857; Georgia Equitable, 1857; and Athens Insurance, 1860.

The manufacturing scene was dominated by the three cotton textile mills: Athens Factory at Cedar Shoals, the Georgia Factory at Whitehall, and the Princeton Factory on the Middle Oconee River on the road to Watkinsville. The latter two, although not in the city proper, were managed and directed by Athens businessmen. The Pioneer Paper Mill, located southwest on Barber's Creek, produced from 500 to 600 pounds of paper a day. A small Bobbin Mill turned out wooden bobbins for the textile industry. In addition to improved gas works, another significant addition to the industrial capacity of Athens was the Athens Steam Company, later known as the Athens Foundry, which could cast and manufacture a great variety of iron products, from pumps and circular saws to steam engines. Foundry Street, now behind the Athens Classic Center, was once served by rail tracks and is a memorial to this Athens enterprise.

Larger cities, such as Atlanta and Macon, outranked Athens in capital invested in manufacturing; in 1860, however, Athens still ranked ninth in Georgia. As a whole, Clarke County, which in 1860 had a population of 11,200 - 34 percent in the city of Athens - remained agricultural and relied on cotton as its cash crop. Data for antebellum Clarke County includes what is now Oconee County, a much larger, predominantly rural land area.

From its inception in 1801, Athens was not the county seat of Clarke County; Watkinsville, ten miles away, was. It was not until January 1, 1872, that the county seat moved from Watkinsville to Athens. The Clarke County residents west of the Oconee River became so angered that they petitioned the Georgia legislature for a separate county. Oconee County was formed from the western half of Clarke in 1875, and Athens became the seat of the smallest county in the state for land area.

But the Athens of 1860 bustled about its daily business, with an ever-watchful eye on the threatening storm clouds of war that would affect so many lives for generations to come.

Dr. Marion Rice is a professor *emeritus* of the University of Georgia's College of Education, where he was chair of the Social Science Education division. Marion has been an advocate of many civil causes and active in a number of social and civic organizations. He is a past president of the Athens Historical

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Society and in retirement has been a popular teacher with the Athens group of Learning in Retirement.

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The Saga of Chalky Level

By Eve B. Mayes

The Lexington Road in eastern Clarke County has served as a major thoroughfare for more than 200 years. Originally a Cherokee trading path, it was widened in the late 1790s as the post road connecting Lexington, the county seat of Oglethorpe County, to Jefferson, in Jackson County. As settlers came into this area following the treaty of 1783 with the Chero-

kees, many farmsteads and plantations grew up along its length. One such plantation was Chalky Level, the home of the Greer family for more than five generations. The home place stood near the intersection of Whit Davis Road and the Lexington Road.



Chalky Level, the home of the Greer family for five generations, burned in 1933.

The original log structure (on the left in the photo), built in the early 1800s, served as a stagecoach stop and was shown as Greer's Tavern on early plats. The 1840s two-on-two addition with a wide, welcoming front porch was built by John Cox Greer and his wife Francina Elizabeth Cox Greer. The surrounding plantation was part of a headright land grant of 1,000 acres to Walker Richardson.¹

¹ Deed of Henry Carleton of Wilkes County to William Puryear and Susannah Cox, dated 20 June 1794, recorded 1 July 1815 in Clarke County, GA, Deed Book K, pp. 41-42. Carleton sold 1000 acres of land in what was then (1794) Franklin County for 500£ sterling. "on Cedar Creek, sometimes called Beaverdam Creek, waters of the Oconee River and known by the name of the Dogwood Grove Tract..." surveyed 7 May 1785 by John Gorham, Esq., and granted to Walker Richardson 24 August 1785 "by his Honor Samuel Elbert," governor of Georgia.

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An earlier generation of Greers was part of the great migration of settlers who came to Georgia from Virginia after the Revolution. Thomas Greer and his brother-in-law Richard Cox came to Athens as contractors to construct the first permanent building for Franklin College. Greer directed the molding and firing of over 300,000 bricks from Georgia red clay for Old College, which opened in 1806.²

The Cox and Greer families built prosperous estates and enjoyed the privileges of the upper stratum of antebellum Athens society. When Richard Cox died in 1837, his will gave his widow, Elizabeth Mead Cox, the use of the real and personal property during her lifetime. Then it was to be divided between their two surviving daughters, Elizabeth Francina Greer and Mentoria Bushrod Harrison, or their heirs. His son-in-law John Cox Greer, Francina's husband, was named as executor. John Greer would manage the Cox estate as well as Chalky Level until his death in January 1860.³

Francina Elizabeth Cox was born on the last day of 1810, daughter of Richard and Elizabeth Mead Cox. She and her sister Mentoria grew up on the plantation to the west of the Greer property, enjoying all of the luxuries and benefits of their social status. In that era, it was not customary for girls to be taught much more than rudimentary sums, embroidery, and the social graces.⁴ Fortunately, their father saw that his daughters received a good education, which Francina later put to good use to record her day-to-day life in 14 diaries and numerous letters.

Francina married her cousin John Cox Greer, son of Thomas Greer and his first wife Francina Cox Greer, sister of Richard Cox, on January 17, 1826. In her diary years later, she tells of their moving into Chalky Level the following January and having dinner there with John's

² Gary Doster L. *A Postcard History of Athens, Georgia*. Athens Historical Society, 2002, p. 4

³ Will of Richard Cox, dated 13 Dec 1836, Clarke County, GA, Will Book B, pp. 170-171, gives Francina's name is given as "Elizabeth Francina Greer," although she signed letters and legal documents with "F.E. Greer" or later "F.E.G. King." See the Cox cemetery transcription in Eve B. Weeks, *Athens-Clarke County, Georgia Cemeteries*, Athens Historical Society, 1999, pp. 97-98. (hereafter noted as *ACC Cemeteries*)

⁴ Mary Levin Koch, "The View from Chalky Level: Francina Elizabeth Greer and the Plantation World of Clarke County" in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. LXXX, no. 1, Spring 1996, pp. 27-52. Also, Mary Levin Koch, "Plantation life in Clarke County: the world of Francina Elizabeth Greer," published in *The Athens Banner-Herald*, 15 June 2001.

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parents and a family friend, George W. King.⁵ Their first child, daughter Eveline Francina Greer, was born 14 December 1826, but died in 1842 at age 15. Over the next 20 years, Francina bore 14 more children, only three of whom lived to adulthood.

Family tradition says that Francina was not five feet tall and that she never weighed more than 90 pounds in her life. A diminutive rocking chair made especially to her measurements is now owned by her great-great-granddaughter. Her cousin John Howard Mead described her as a “sprightly little woman, fond of display and fashion, with an ingenious and intelligent mind.”⁶ Soon after the death of her 14th child in 1844, she started keeping a daily journal in legal-size bound books with marbled covers, recording the comings and goings and doings of the family, neighbors – the Maynes, Deans, Mortons, Friersons, Tucks, Billupses – and the community. Already a prolific letter writer to the extended family in Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas, Francina filled 14 of these books over the next 40 years, marking the deaths of neighbors and family members, the heartaches and deprivations of the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the almost constant struggle to preserve and maintain Chalky Level for her family and others who depended on her for their livelihood.

She noted who “stopped at the gate” on their way to or from town for a quick exchange of news and those who came to call or stay for the day or longer. Travelers on the road would often stay overnight; the stagecoach driver would blow a signal to her on a wooden horn (that is still in the family), giving her time to get a meal together for the passengers. Even Georgia Governor George Gilmer and his wife stopped for supper one evening on their way to Lexington.⁷

In addition to her day-to-day activities, she was frequently called whenever there was illness – she usually dropped everything to provide whatever comfort she could, whether the patient was black or white. Diseases like scarlet fever, cholera, tuberculosis, typhoid, and smallpox

⁵ Diaries of Francina Cox Greer King, Ms 3054. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA. Entries of 22 Jan 1861 and 22 Jan 1862. Digitized files are now available online at http://fax.libs.uga.edu/MS3054_Greer_Diaries/. Hereafter referred to as “Diaries,” with date of entry. Used with permission.

⁶ Mead, Philomena. *Mead/e and Extended Families*, genealogical chart on www.Ancestry.com, accessed by the author 26 Aug 2007.

⁷ Diaries, 11 Dec 1848.

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kept the mortality rate high. Whenever the doctor was summoned from Athens five miles away, he often had more than one patient to see on the trip.

The years before the Civil War were prosperous ones for Chalky Level and the Cox plantation. When her health permitted, Francina, John, and sometimes the children would travel to visit family in Augusta, Savannah, or Atlanta by coach or train. She saw her first Catholic church and Jewish synagogue on a visit to Charleston, South Carolina.⁸ She would “take the waters” at mineral springs such as Helican Springs above Athens in an attempt to alleviate persistent pain in her side.

Attending church and reading the Bible each evening before going to bed were very important to Francina. A member of nearby Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, she would also drive the five miles into Athens to attend services at the Baptist, Presbyterian, or Methodist church to hear other preachers. She grieved for most of her life that none of the menfolk in her family would become Christians and follow the strict expectations of the church.

Every year on her birthday, Francina would summarize her activities of the previous year. On December 31, 1859, her 49th birthday, the thermometer was 40 degrees when she arose, and dropped to 34 degrees by noon, with snow. She had read 5,230 pages during the year, read the newspaper nearly every week, and “several tales of considerable length in papers and weeklies.” Eighty-two different ladies had come to call, “some of them many times;” she had made 325 visits and calls during the year, heard 34 sermons, and spent a great deal of time with the sick. Also during this year, five members of her sister Mentoria’s family died, including Mentoria, her husband, James J. Harrison, Jr., two daughters, Eliza Mead and Agyra, and son Richard. Their oldest son, Alonzo Tyler Harrison, would die in June 1860, leaving only young James Harrison (called “Rough” in Francina’s diaries), who came to live at Chalky Level.⁹ Francina closed the year with the prayer, “Teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Prophetic words indeed.

The new decade would severely test the mettle of Francina and so many other wives and mothers throughout the South. After an illness of some weeks, John Cox Greer, “Mr. G” in the diaries, died on

⁸ Diaries, 12 May 1848.

⁹ Diaries, 31 Dec 1859, 27 June 1860.

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February 6, 1860, and was buried two days later in the Greer family graveyard above the spring at Chalky Level. She wrote, "I have often thought I had been sick so much, suffered so much, lost so many children and had gone through so many trials that I could feel for anyone, that I knew all about trouble, that no one could tell me anything, but now I find I was mistaken, all I ever had was nothing compared to this. ... I do feel alone, feel like I must now act and think alone. ... No one ever had a better husband ... now what shall I do?"¹⁰

No sooner had she started to adjust to this heartache than her mother, Elizabeth Mead Cox, died at the age of 70.¹¹ Thus Francina undertook the management of both Chalky Level and the Cox plantation, containing over 1200 acres of land and 44 slaves.¹² She often called on her lawyer, T.R.R. Cobb, for assistance with legal problems. She also found help in the form of George W. King, a long-time family friend and business associate of her husband, whom she called "the General" in her diaries. After a suitable time in mourning of two years, she and the General were quietly married February 11, 1862. But George died in April 1864, leaving her to struggle on alone, or with minimal assistance from her sons.

Francina's only surviving daughter, Victoria America Greer, called "Nap," was born June 17, 1834, and married Walter A. Appling February 8, 1853. Nap died April 17, 1854, from complications of childbirth and was buried in the Cox cemetery off Whit Davis Road near present-day Orchard Circle, one of only three marked graves.¹³ Francina's surviving sons, Richard Cox Greer, born July 30, 1830, at Chalky Level, called "Dick," and John Thomas Greer, born July 8, 1842, at Chalky Level, called "Stump" in her diaries, were a constant source of worry to their mother as they grew into adulthood.

Stump enlisted as a private in the Athens Guards in 1861, was wounded twice, once at Chancellorsville, and finally returned home to

¹⁰ Diaries, 9 Feb 1860.

¹¹ Diaries, 3 Apr 1860.

¹² The 1860 Clarke County, GA, federal census gives the value of real estate held by F.E. Greer as \$7000, with personal estate valued at \$27,000. Personal estate included 44 slaves on the two estates, as well as household articles, wagons, livestock, etc. By the 1870 census, her personal estate was listed at \$3,900, real estate at \$3,000.

¹³ *ACC Cemeteries*, pp.96-97.

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Chalky Level in May 1865. Stump never married, died November 6, 1880, and was buried in the Greer family cemetery at Chalky Level.

The last 15 years of Francina's life were marked by almost constant worry about finances, her health, and her home. Her skills with a needle, cake baking and decorating, and flowers brought in a little money, but cash was in short supply for everyone. In 1872 she tried to apply for a government pension as a soldier's widow on either of her two husbands' service in the Indian Wars in Florida, but was turned down because she was married after the 1815 cut-off date for the pension.



The Greer family cemetery is sheltered in the woods above the Chalky Level spring, within the fenced boundaries of the Southeast Clarke Park off Whit Davis Road.

When her childhood nurse Silvia died in February 1878, Francina wrote that she cried all day, attended the funeral, and mourned that the ties of 66 years together were broken.¹⁴

Richard Cox Greer married Martha A. (maiden name unknown), called "Mattie" in the diaries, about 1861 and had three children: John Elsy Greer (1854-1901), Mary Eliza Greer (1855-1905) and Richard Dudley Greer (1861-1930). Dick joined the 3rd Georgia Infantry in March 1862, was with the 19th Georgia by May 1862, and returned home safely after the surrender at Appomattox.

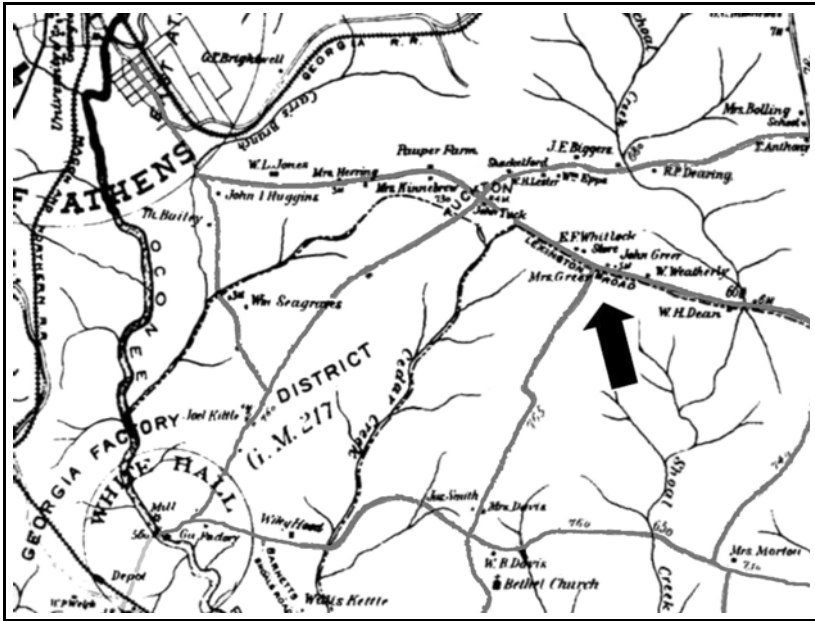
Mattie died in April 1865 and Dick then married Mary Frances Forbes about 1866 and had seven more children.¹⁵ Dick and his large family lived for almost 20 years at Palmetto, Campbell County, Georgia, (now part of Fulton County).¹⁶ They may have moved back to

¹⁴ Diaries, 6 Feb 1877, 19 Feb 1878.

¹⁵ Greer family Bible record as transcribed by the Elijah Clarke DAR in the 1930s.

¹⁶ 1880 federal census for Campbell County, Georgia, shows Richard C. Greer at age 49, a farmer, wife Mary F. Greer, 32, and children Richard D. (18), Florence A. (10), Lizzie King (8), Edwin C. (5), and Emmet K. (3). Accessed on Ancestry.com 10 Aug 2007.

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A detail from the 1893 map of Clarke County shows the neighborhood of Chalky Level, with the Lexington Road and the dirt farm road that is now Whit Davis Road. The house at Chalky Level is indicated as “Mrs. Greer” (black arrow).

Chalky Level before Francina’s death on January 22, 1885. Richard filed the will of Mrs. Francina E. King with the Court of Ordinary for probate on February 23, 1885, and gave his mother’s death date as given above, not 1886 as found on her grave marker. Francina was buried next to her husband in the Greer family cemetery.

A survey of the lands in Francina’s estate made October 28, 1885, indicated that the property was divided up into 12 parcels, with the Chalky Level homeplace in the corner of lot no. 10.¹⁷ Some of the outlying lots were sold later at public auction to provide income for the family. A horse race track on “Greer’s Lane” had been famous for exciting horse races for many years and was kept in good repair, according to an article in the *Athens Weekly Banner*, December 1, 1891. One race pitted horses owned by Messrs. Hixon of the G.C. & N. Railroad against W.L. Pittman of Clarke County. Pittman’s horse won by a good lead, and “considerable money was passed on the race.”

¹⁷ Clarke County, Georgia, Deed Book LL, p. 373-A.

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When Richard Greer died June 11, 1889, his widow, Mary F. Greer, appeared before the court requesting that she be made administrator of both Dick's and Francina's estates. Since Dick's children were the only surviving heirs to Francina's estate, the request was approved, and Mary was provided with funds to support herself and her six minor children – Florence Adelia, Lizzie King, Edwin Cox, Emmett Keely, Warren Coryell, and Bertha Mae Greer – for 12 months.

The family lived at Chalky Level until the children, except son Keely, moved on with spouses and careers. Mary Frances Forbes Greer died at the Athens home of her daughter Bertha and husband, Dr. Dan Hughes DuPree, in 1914 and was buried in the Greer family graveyard at Chalky Level beside her husband.¹⁸

The family of Emmett Keely Greer was the last to live in the Greer homeplace at Chalky Level. Across the Lexington Road near where the Wal-Mart shopping center is now, Keely operated a cotton gin and a number of other business concerns. Born on April 12, 1877, in Campbell County, Georgia, Keely was the fourth child of Mary and Dick Greer. He did not finish school and spent most of his adult life trying to save the family homeplace.

Keely Greer married Mrs. Norma Grant Witcher, widow of Thomas Augustus Witcher, December 10, 1910, at the Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Athens. Norma Estelle Grant was born August 5, 1882, in Athens, Georgia, in a house near where the First Baptist Church now stands. Her son, Thomas Augustus Witcher, Jr., was raised by his grandmother in Athens, but often visited at Chalky Level when he was growing up.

Her daughter, Norma Greer Ogden, remembers that her mother tried one year of the State Normal College and decided she had rather have a job than teach school. She worked in various local offices the rest of her life, including the county agent's office where the problems of the farmers and Roosevelt's New Deal were part of her experience. Her oldest son Keely, Jr., went on to become a county agent himself, in Whitfield County, Georgia.

¹⁸ The obituary of Mary Frances Greer mentions that she was survived by three daughters, Mrs. [Bertha] DuPree, Mrs. Frank [Lizzie King] Kent of San Antonio, and Mrs. M.D. [Florence] McClair [of Atlanta], and three sons, Edwin Greer of Chicago, E.K. [Emmett Keely], and W.C. [Warren Coryell] Greer of Athens. *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 Jan. 1914, accessed on Ancestry.com obituary database 2 Sept 2007.

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Mrs. Norma Greer's favorite job was her last one, in the office of the new Athens Housing Authority for low income people. After marrying Keely, she moved to Chalky Level where she maintained a fine garden of vegetables and flowers. She always had a warm rapport with the black workers on the property, who called her "Miss Norma."

Intrepid in adversity, the widowed Norma Greer was aided by her grown sons to move the family of five into town. They lived in Athens until the children graduated from the University of Georgia and went on to make his or her way in the world. Full of humor and spirit, when asked by daughter Norma if she were afraid of dying, she replied, not really, but she hated not to know what was going to happen next in the family. Norma Grant Greer died April 13, 1962, and was buried in the Grant lot in the old section of Oconee Hill Cemetery in Athens, next to her parents.¹⁹

Keely and Norma Greer had six children, all born at Chalky Level: sons Emmett Keely, Jr., Dan Dupree, and twins James Alfred and John Cox, and daughters Belle Mell and Norma Grant Greer. They enjoyed life in the country at Chalky Level until the boll weevil destroyed the cotton market, followed by the Great Depression.

The Chalky Level property was sold to satisfy mortgages against the farm in 1932. The family then moved into two tenant houses belonging to Toombs "Mr. Toon"



The Keely Greer family poses at Chalky Level about 1927. Front (L-R): twins James and John flank the youngest child, Norma; back: Keely, Jr., mother Norma, Dan, and Belle.

¹⁹ Norma Estelle Grant Greer was the daughter of James Alfred Grant and Laura J. von der Lieth, granddaughter of Alfred Grant and his wife Tamson C. Nickerson, and Eibe Henning von der Lieth and his wife Caroline Florina Skylumeyer. The Grants and von der Lieths are buried in Oconee Hill Cemetery in Athens. See *Oconee Hill Cemetery; Tombstone Inscriptions for that Part of Cemetery West of Oconee River and Index to Record of Interments*, ed. Charlotte Thomas Marshall, Athens Historical Society, 1971, pp. 5, 17 & 28.

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Morton, several miles away. Keely Greer worked on the Morton farm to support the family, died of a stroke June 19, 1933, and was buried in the Greer family graveyard at Chalky Level near his mother.

Like the women of Chalky Level before her, Norma Grant Greer went to a great deal of trouble to save heirlooms when the family had to vacate their beloved home. Some of the mementoes that have been passed down are four family portraits, the wooden horn that the stagecoach driver used to signal Francina how many passengers would be stopping for a meal, Francina's rocking chair, and the massive front door lock and key. Her young daughter Norma saved 13 volumes of Francina's diaries from the bookshelf in the parlor as her special treasure from Chalky Level. The diaries traveled with Norma to Europe and back, and are now in the collection of the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Georgia.²⁰ The missing 14th volume dating from 1866 to 1871 was discovered in the Hargrett collection, along with numerous letters written to and by the Greers. All of Francina's diaries and the letters have been digitized and placed on the Hargrett website at http://fax.libs.uga.edu/MS3054_Greer_Diaries/.

The house at Chalky Level burned to the ground in October 1933. Another house was built on its site by the new owner of the property, L.H. Cooper. The remaining property in the estate of W.A. Cooper, including this house, was put up for auction in July 2007.

Emmett Keely Greer, the oldest son of Keely and Norma, was born on August 16, 1911. He graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in agriculture. While a student, he was a member of the swim and polo teams. As the devoted husband of Mary Emma Ashcraft, the couple became prominent residents of Whitfield County, Georgia, (Dalton), where they pursued interests in agriculture, real estate, insurance, and civic affairs. They had no children of their own, but were "second parents" to the twin daughters of Keely's younger brother James, says Keely's niece, Norma Crawley. Keely died on July 24, 1978, while jogging on the beach at St. Simon's Island, Georgia.

Dan DuPree Greer was born November 22, 1912, and died December 8, 1963, in Athens. He attended the University of Georgia, but when his father Keely died, Dan left school to help support his mother. During World War II, he graduated from Officer's Candidate

²⁰ Quotes from the diaries of Francina Elizabeth Cox Greer King have been used with permission of the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA.

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School as a first lieutenant. After the war, he returned to Athens, and he was employed as a sales manager for several years at Hanna Manufacturing Company, which was best known for turning out wooden baseball bats. According to Dan's daughter, Laura Greer Castrillon, Dan enjoyed being outdoors and was an avid hunter and fisherman. He also loved to paint and draw. Dan married Shirley Nolan Orr in 1945, and they had a son and a daughter. Shirley was instrumental in the restoration work of the historic Greer family cemetery which is now an integral part of Southeast Clarke Park. Shirley, Dan and son Dan, Jr., are buried in Oconee Hill Cemetery in Athens.

The older daughter of Keely and Norma Greer, Belle Mell Greer, was born February 23, 1914, and died December 15, 1996, in Savannah, Georgia. She worked her way through college at the University of Georgia and was a social worker until she married Andrew Jackson Bowen of Portal, Georgia. According to her sister Norma, Belle was an extraordinary homemaker, a superlative cook, and much beloved by all who knew her. She could make a pie so perfect that the meringue wept crystal pearls. Belle's two sons own two of the family portraits and several other items from Chalky Level.

John Cox Greer, twin brother of James, was born May 13, 1918 and died September 21, 1996 in Jacksonville, Florida. According to his wife, Emily Jean Daniel, whom he married in 1941, John was athletic and loved all sports, but his greatest pastime was reading, especially the Bible. During his time in the Navy in World War II, John decided to become a pilot, and he returned to Athens to attend Flight School. The war ended while he was still in training to be a pilot at Saint Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. After a long career with the Seaboard Railroad in Savannah, John moved his family to Jacksonville, Florida. John and Jean had three sons and one daughter.

James Alfred Greer, twin brother of John, was born May 13, 1918 at Chalky Level and died December 31, 2007, in Dalton, Georgia. After graduating from the University of Georgia with a chemistry degree, he served as a sergeant in the Army Medical Corp in Italy during World War II. He married Miss Tom Middlebrooks Nisbet on August 16, 1947, and they settled in Dalton, Georgia. They have twin daughters. According to daughter Norma Greer Crawley, James enjoyed golf, reading, and crossword puzzles, but his joy and his passion were his wife Tom, his daughters, and his beloved St. Mark's Episcopal Church. After working for many years with Lawtex Industries, he became a

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highly respected and devoted Red Cross Volunteer at Hamilton Memorial Hospital in Dalton.

Norma Grant Greer, the younger daughter of Keely and Norma Greer, was born January 9, 1921, at Chalky Level. She graduated from the University of Georgia in 1941 with degrees in zoology and chemistry. While in college, she worked in the dean of men's office, was on the rifle team and played in tennis tournaments. She went to work for Bell Laboratories in New York, where she met and married Clement Moore Ogden in 1947.²¹ She and Clem lived in Switzerland for a time before settling with their two sons on a farm called "Hillfields" near Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Clem died in New York in 1952, but Norma remained in Stockbridge until the late 1990s and was a founding trustee of the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, one of the first modern museums devoted to a single artist. The museum has received over a million visitors in its almost 40 year history and is now an accredited American museum. Norma moved back to Athens in 2002 and has taken an active interest in preserving her family's legacy.

Sharecropping on Chalky Level

The Greers were not the only ones to have an impact on Chalky Level and the surrounding community. After the Civil War, many of the black families who had grown up on the plantation continued to work the land as sharecroppers, and eventually became landowners in their own right. The black community worked together to build a school to educate their children near their church on Whit Davis Road. The original



Five generations of the Roberson family, taken about 1979.

²¹ Clement Moore Ogden was the great-grandson of Clement C. Moore, author of the beloved Christmas poem *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*. His ancestors were early settlers of Manhattan.

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St. Luke A.M.E. Church was built on property given to church trustees by Mrs. Victoria Graham Mayne in 1887.²²

A history of the church and its people has been compiled by Ruth Roberson Hughes, who also grew up on Chalky Level.²³ Mrs. Hughes is a granddaughter of Pink Roberson, born 1875, the youngest son of James and Eliza Roberson, who were sharecroppers on land that had been part of Chalky Level in 1880. Pink's wife Ella Craig was born in January 12, 1886, daughter of Harry and Julia Craig. Pink and Ella married May 1, 1909, and lived with their extended family near where present-day Jockey Club Road joins Whit Davis Road. Pink died on January 28, 1953, and Ella on May 8, 1980; they are buried in the cemetery at St. Luke's.²⁴

The poignant memoir of Pink and Ella Roberson, written by their granddaughter Ruth Roberson Hughes for *The History and People of St. Luke A. M. E. Church*, is reproduced here with permission:

Pink Andrew Roberson and his wife Ella Craig Roberson were anchors of their extended family, St. Luke A. M. E. Church and the community. In addition to their ten surviving children, their household often included nieces and nephews as well as me, their oldest grandchild. And a number of other relatives looked to them for help. In order to provide for all of these people, they had to be very industrious and efficient. They not only worked long and hard themselves, they organized the children and taught them to work.

²² In 1887, Mrs. Victoria Elizabeth Graham Mayne gave "for love" one acre of land "on the Georgia Factory Road at the old Cox place" to the trustees of St. Luke A. M. E. Church, to be used as a place of worship. The men named in the deed were George Washington, Frank Wyche, Jerry Hawkins, Grant Hawkins, Joe Hawkins, Guy Hawkins, Tom Tyler, Will Coleman and Andy Smith. Clarke County, Georgia, Deed Book EE, p. 717, dated 5 Feb 1887. In 1915, Mrs. Mayne's daughter and sole heir, Mrs Fannie S. Dean, gave the parcel with additional land to the members of St. Luke without any limitation or condition. Clarke County Deed Book 19, p. 36.

²³ The five generations of the Roberson family shown in the photograph on page 41 are: front row (L-R): Ella Craig Roberson, great-great-grandson Tayaka Parrott, daughter Daisy Roberson; back row, standing: Denise Hughes Parrott and her mother Ruth Roberson Hughes, daughter of Daisy Roberson.

²⁴ 1870 - 1930 federal census records for Clarke County on *Ancestry.com*. The marriage license for Pink and Ella Roberson was recorded in Clarke County Marriage Book L, p 501. For information about the history of St. Luke A. M. E. Church, send an email to ebmayes@windstream.net with "St. Luke" in the subject line.

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My grandfather lost his first and second fingers and the tip of his third finger on his right hand as a young man working a mule-powered sugar cane grinding mill. Despite this, he had beautiful penmanship and could use his hands to do so many different things: farming, blacksmithing, tool and plow sharpening and repairing, and barbering.

He was a sharecropper with John B. Gamble, growing cotton, corn, and wheat. The corn and wheat were taken to the mill to be ground into corn meal and flour. Grinding the wheat produced three different products: “firsts” or flour; “seconds” would be called whole wheat flour today, and bran. The bran was given to the hogs.

My grandfather grew large amounts of vegetables to feed the family – peas, beans, sweet and Irish potatoes, tomatoes, corn, okra, greens, cabbage, cucumbers, onions, bell peppers, red peppers, and other things I can't remember. What wasn't eaten immediately was dried, cured or canned for future use. When the sweet potatoes were dug, they were stacked in three large banks covered with hay, pine straw, and soil to cure. Irish pota-



Ella Roberson stands in the doorway of their house, while grandchildren play in the yard.

atoes were dug and spread out to dry near the shop and later stored in the shop. My grandfather dried some of the okra to use in soup.

Another crop was sugar cane. There was a syrup mill on Gamble's place for grinding the cane and cooking the juice down to syrup. My grandfather made three barrels of syrup, and each barrel held 60 gallons.

And there were fruits. I remember apples, cherries, peaches, pears, strawberries, dewberries and wild blackberries.

Meat was home grown also – chicken, beef, and pork. The chickens provided eggs and meat. The cows provided cream which churned into butter; milk which was used for cooking and drinking; and finally beef. Hog killing took place in very cold weather in order to keep the meat from spoiling. Three hogs might be killed at a time. This was a lot of hard work. After the carcass was dressed and cut up, the meat

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was spread out in the cold air. Then each piece was rubbed with salt. There was a large box for storing the meat. A framework of sticks would be laid in the base, and pieces of salted pork were placed on the sticks. Extra salt would be added, then another framework of sticks and more salted pork until the box was filled. After the pork was cured, it would be washed and covered in a paste made of meal, syrup and red and black pepper. When it was ready to eat, a piece would be cut off for the next day's meal. The rind of paste would be removed and the pork would be soaked in water overnight to remove excess salt.

My grandfather's journal shows that he earned extra money with his barbering, smithing, and shop work. He ordered large quantities of Indian Herbs tablets and then re-sold them in small quantities. He also did this with cabbage plants, buying 400 and then making small bundles for resale. Selling fodder provided a bit more income. It is interesting to see how some of that money was spent in the 1930s: shoes, dresses, shirts, overalls, outing and sheeting, rice, sugar, salt, kerosene, lamp wicks, Rumford powders, and at Christmas, coconut, fish and blocks of chocolate. Poll tax of \$2.55 was paid in 1933, along with \$2.60 on the insurance policy.

My grandmother cooked for immediate consumption and then canned, preserved, and pickled for the winter. I remember all the jars of canned peaches, apples, tomatoes, soup mix, and chow chow. Extra beans and little Lady peas were dried, shelled and stored in a flour sack until needed. Fruits were turned into jellies and preserves. Watermelon rinds became pickles and preserves.

In addition to rearing her family, my grandmother did washing and ironing for Frances Cooper, Mrs. Evans, the family of her son Hugh Evans, Mrs. Keely Greer, the Vaughn family, and other neighbors. Most of this was done at home, but she went to the Evans house to do their washing and ironing. She usually took one of the girls with her to help. The ones left at home were assigned chores.

My grandmother patched but didn't sew. A seamstress made the clothes they didn't buy. I can remember that my wardrobe usually consisted of three dresses. If I got a fourth dress, something immediately ruined one of the others.

My grandparents believed in being well informed. In addition to reading the Bible, they subscribed to the *Market Bulletin*, *Progressive Farmer*, *Southern Ruralist*, *Southern Cultivator*, *Athens Banner-Herald*, and *Athens Daily Times* in the early 1930s. Now looking back as an adult on all we had as a sharecropping family during the Depression impresses me profoundly with my grandparents' accomplishments.

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And the Legacy Continues

The 21st century has brought many changes to the neighborhood of Chalky Level, including paved roads, residential subdivisions, shopping centers, and the development of the Southeast Clarke Park. The 124-acre park has two softball fields, two soccer fields, two tennis courts, a walking/jogging path, the Chalky Level History Trail, the World of Wonder playground, Wiggly Field Dog Park, and a skate park, providing recreational opportunities for all ages.

An innovative way of teaching the history of the new park and the surrounding Whit Davis neighborhood was developed in the fall of 2006 by Mrs. Dorsey Stroup, the Whit Davis Elementary School's instructional coach. Using a federal Learn & Serve Grant, the entire school studied various aspects of the history of Chalky Level, from the Creek and Cherokee Native Americans who lived here, through the American Revolution, the Civil War and Reconstruction, and into the modern era. They also interviewed people who grew up in the area, including Norma Greer Ogden and Charles Carter of Winterville.

The students used computer technology to develop PowerPoint™ presentations complete with audio scripts for their assigned era of study, which were presented to the school and placed on the school website. They also used their research findings to develop an audio trail guide that can be downloaded from the school website onto an audio device.²⁵ In the early spring of 2007, volunteers and students cleared the half-mile history trail at the park. Accessible from either side of the park, the trail winds through the woods to the spring that served the Chalky Level house, crosses the small stream flowing from that spring, and pauses near the Greer family cemetery, now enclosed by a wrought iron fence.²⁶

The people who lived, loved, worked and died on Chalky Level would not recognize the land they once knew, but their legacy will not be forgotten.

²⁵ See the Whit Davis Elementary School website at www.clarke.k12.ga.us/do/teacherView?id=96501 to explore the information that these innovative young people have assembled.

²⁶ Jeffery Whitfield. "Cutting a path through history – Whit Davis students help clear interactive trail in Southeast Clarke Park." in the *Athens Banner-Herald*, 22 Jan 2007, online at www.onlineathens.com. See the park website at www.accleisureservices.com/southeast.shtml

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Eve B. Mayes grew up in a history-loving family and remembers attending AHS meetings as a child. She has worked for the Extension Food Science Outreach Program at UGA for the past six years, and has been the AHS webmaster and Historian since 2003. She and husband Rick live in Pocatigo in northwest Madison County.

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My sincere thanks to all of the Greer descendants for their interest and assistance in tracking down the Greer family portraits and other Chalky Level heirlooms, and for sharing their memories of earlier times. To Ruth Roberson (Mrs. Leonard) Hughes for sharing her memoir of her grandparents from her book, *The History and People of St. Luke A.M.E. Church*. To Mary Anne Hoit Abbe for her assistance in tracking down estate records of the Coxes and Greers. To Laura Carter and her staff in the Heritage Room at the Athens-Clarke County Library for compiling such a wonderful resource for genealogical research. To Mary Ellen Brooks and Mary Linnemann of the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the UGA Main Library for making Francina's diaries and letters available to researchers. To Charlotte Thomas Marshall for generously sharing information from her voluminous files about Athens, and for her encouragement and friendship. To Rick for his generous support and assistance. And, last, but certainly not least, thanks to Mama, Mary Bondurant Warren, for passing on the "gene-allergy" bug!

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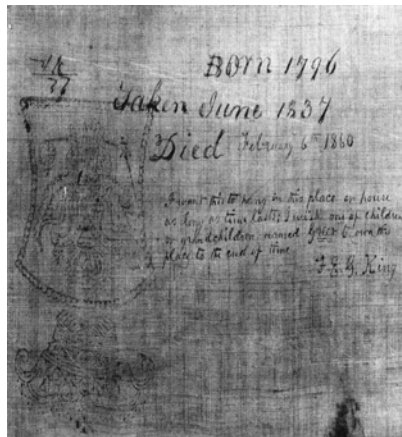
A Chalky Level Photogravure

The following portraits and photographs from Chalky Level have been graciously shared with the author by various Greer descendants. The captions contain the explanations furnished by the owners.



John Cox Greer (1796-1860), son of Thomas Greer and his first wife Francina Cox Greer. He married his cousin Francina Elizabeth Cox Greer 1826, and lived at Chalky Level from 1827 until his death; he is buried at Chalky Level in the family cemetery.

This note on a linen square was found on the back of John Cox Greer's portrait with a statement by his widow Francina Cox Greer King, "I want this to hang in this place or house as long as time lasts; I wish one of [my] children or grandchildren named Greer to own this place to the end of time," and is signed "F.E.G. King." Also written in an earlier, stronger hand are "Born 1796/ Taken June 1837/ Died" to which Francina added "February 6th 1860."



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Family tradition gives this portrait the name of “Aunt Wix” and was thought to be Francina Cox Greer at a later age.

Engraved plaques placed on the frame of this portrait by Richard Greer DuPree indicate that the mother is Francina Cox Greer and the baby is her younger son, John Thomas Greer, called “Stump.”



This portrait is known in the family simply as a Greer daughter.

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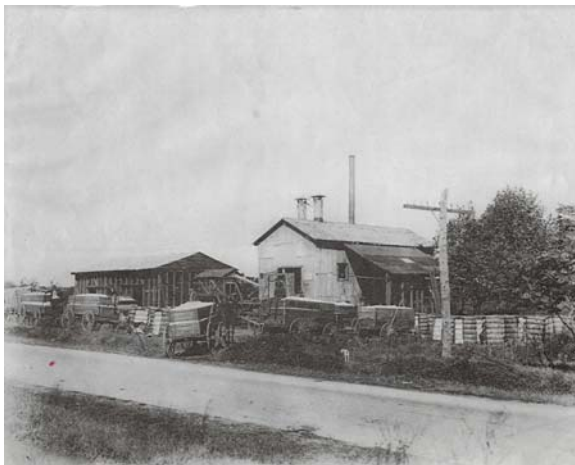


Chalky Level about 1930, from collection of Norma Greer Ogden



Chalky Level from the rear, about 1930.

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Keely Greer's cotton gin stood across Lexington Road from Chalky Level, taken about 1930.



Keely Greer drives his favorite horse, Dandy, about 1927.

More photographs of Greer family heirlooms and family history information may be found on the Chalky Level website on RootsWeb.com at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~chalkylevel/>.

A Family Memoir

By Jim White

Dear Reader,

I may be naïve and overly optimistic to think that anyone living in the hurley burley of the Jet Age will take the time to read this story of a young man born and raised in a small southern town at the beginning of the twentieth century – that century in which man progressed from the horse and buggy days to the period when a manned space craft could circumvent the earth faster than man could drive from one county seat to another.

Perhaps this may bring back memories to some and be used as escape reading by others – anyway, my children and grandchildren can read this story and say grandpa was even a bigger “squat” than we realized.

I was born in Athens, Georgia, during the summer of 1900. Athens was proudly proclaimed by its citizens “The Classic City,” for it was the home of the University of Georgia, the first state chartered university in the United States, counting its birth from 1785, although it first graduated a class in 1804.

My grandfather, John White, a Scotch-Irishman from Larne, County Antrim, Ireland, was the first member of my family to appear upon the scene and to plant his roots in Georgia’s red clay soil, and it came about in this manner.

My grandfather’s family owned a linen and lace factory in Larne. Whether they were shanty or lace curtain Irish, I cannot prove, but as they owned a lace factory, I shall defend against all comers their right to be called “Lace Curtain.”

As the market for linen and laces was very limited in Ireland, each year it was the custom of the family to send a sailing ship to America to sell their products in the various cities along the Atlantic Seaboard,

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so my grandfather sailed with the annual shipment in the early 1830s to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah.

I don't know whether the markets were dull in these cities or not, or whether he decided to try to expand their outlets. Nevertheless, he sailed around the tip of Florida and up the Gulf of Mexico to New Orleans, and that is when fate intervened in the form of a Florida hurricane.



Ruin of White linen mill near Larne, County Antrim, Ireland.

Grandpa may have developed a nose for trade, but he was sorely lacking in sea legs, so *mal de mer* completely floored him, and upon completion of his business in New Orleans, he decided to risk the dangers of the Natchez Trace and the Murrell and Harps gangs, rather than subject himself to the tender mercies of a turbulent sea. He bought a horse and set out on a danger-fraught journey to meet the ship at Charleston. At least he would have running room under him – on land.

Fortunately, he met no dangers on the Trace worth recording and in due time reached the little town of Athens, Georgia, nestled in the foothills between the prongs of the Oconee River. There he was laid low by typhoid fever. In those days no one had ever dreamed of the Hill-Burton Act. There were no hospitals awaiting the sick, but fortunately hospitality was considered next to Godliness. He was taken into the home of one Augustus Clayton, the chancellor of the University of Georgia, a man of learning and substance, who nursed him until well.

Chancellor Clayton believed strongly not only in trying to educate the youth of Georgia, but also in improving the economy of his state. Georgia was strictly agricultural and shipped its crops to either New England or abroad to be processed, and the finished product was sent back to Georgia for sale at much higher prices. He and a group of progressive men were planning to build a cotton mill to process cotton, which was fast supplanting indigo and rice as Georgia's money crop, into yarn and cloth for sale at home.

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The Richards family home near Larne,
County Antrim, Ireland

As Grandpa had some experience in textiles, he was persuaded to join this group. So upon his return to Larne, he settled his affairs there and cast his lot with those starting to bring industry into the Deep South. In due time he took unto himself a wife, one Janet Richards, gathered what assets he had, and sailed for America.

The dream became a reality. The mill was built and named the Georgia Factory. It was built on the banks of the Oconee River, for water was to be the source of power, and Grandpa ultimately built a house on a high hill about a mile from the mill and proudly named it White Hall.

Building a mill in this area presented many problems to the builders. All machinery had to be imported, and hauling heavy loads over Indian trails was almost an insurmountable task.

The machinery was shipped by sea to Savannah, barged up the Savannah River to Augusta and then hauled by oxcart from Augusta to Athens. The machinery started the trip from Augusta to Athens in the fall of the year, but heavy rains set in so the carts sunk to their axles in Georgia's red clay, and efforts to move proved fruitless. Shelters were erected, and it was decided to wait until summer when the roads were dry before continuing the trek.

The mill owners then decided that a better means of transportation must be built if they were to have access to markets, so a railroad was organized to connect Athens with Augusta where barges and boats terminated their run from the sea. Early in 1833 the Georgia Railroad was chartered by the State of Georgia, and in due time the rails were laid.

The first cars were pulled by mules, but even this was a vast improvement. Finally a steam engine was secured, which greatly enhanced progress. By the way, a picture of this first steam engine hung

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over the door to the vault of the Georgia Railroad Bank in Augusta for many years.

Grandpa prospered, and in due time he and Grandma were blessed with four children - two boys and two girls, my father [Captain James White] being the second child, born in 1839.

My father and his brother attended school in Athens, educated by a Professor Scudder, who had come down from Princeton to teach the children of the gentry in the Deep South.

My grandmother's only brother, John Richards, was a doctor who had left Ireland for America and settled in Washington D.C., where he had a successful practice. My father, upon reaching the age of 14, went to Washington to live with his uncle and to attend school as the surroundings in our national capital were expected to have a broadening influence on a young man from the rural South. Ultimately my father returned to attend the University of Georgia. However, he never graduated for he was expelled for dueling.

At this time the Civil War was about to break the slim ties still uniting the slave-holding South and the free North. There is no point in mentioning the Civil War further, except to say that my father organized a company, became its captain, and carried lead and the title of captain the rest of his life. Athens was passed by by General Sherman in his march to the sea, so it was spared destruction.

The story is told by old settlers that some local tactician in the Home Guard had read of Gen. George Rogers Clark's use of multiple flags along the distance of company fronts and cannons made of logs to make the British think his force was much larger than it was, so this was done on the hills overlooking the Oconee River, and Athens was avoided by Gen. Sherman's troops.

Grandpa, being the cagey Scotch-Irishman that he was, had accumulated property in England and Ireland, and though Confederate bonds and money were gone with the wind, he was not completely broke like many Southerners. And as my father at the time was an un-reconstructed rebel, he sailed for France where he attended the Sorbonne, completing his education. He spent several years in Europe attending school and traveling.

Athens, like all of the rest of the South, was flat on its back financially - no money, no banks, no business - so my grandfather with a group of other citizens organized a bank, Grandpa drawing on his

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John White, the immigrant ancestor and entrepreneur

foreign resources. The National Bank of Athens received its charter and opened for business on Feb. 20, 1866. Some years later my grandfather became president and held this position until his death in 1881.

My father, upon completion of his education in Europe, returned to Athens in early 1870, became cashier and chief executive officer of the National Bank, and then guided the bank through good times and bad until his death in 1915.

As the leading banker in a small town, my father of necessity had to play a part in all progressive undertakings. He was a moving factor in establishing the Athens Railroad & Electric Company and the Athens Gas Company. He owned two cotton mills - the Star Thread Mill and the Princeton Manufacturing Company. He was a stockholder in the Georgia Manufacturing Company, High Shoals Manufacturing Company, and Southern Manufacturing Company, all either in or around Athens. He was appointed a trustee of the University of Georgia and for years was chairman of its financial committee. He also was a director of the Georgia Railroad & Bank Company, Southern Mutual Insurance Company, and a number of other companies.

At the age of 44 my father married Julia Devereux Ashton of Waynesboro, Burke County, Georgia - my mother. Mama was 18 years old at the time and the daughter of John D. Ashton and Janet Roberts. Grandpa Ashton was from Warrenton, Virginia, where the Ashtons had lived since the late 1600s on a land grant, their county seat being named "North Wales." Grandma Ashton was a member of the Young family, her grandfather being one Remember Young.

There were 11 children born over the years to my mother and father, of which only my sister Rosena and I lived. Sister was fifteen years older than I, and in 1905 when I was five years old, she married William Francis Bradshaw of Paducah, Kentucky, where they resided until his death in 1930.

Sister and Uncle Will had one child, a daughter, Julia Ashton, named for my mother. Julia was born in 1906 and was much more of a sister to me than a niece.

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And here the family memoir ends.

Editor's Note: The memoir was written by Jim White, the grandson of John White and son of Captain James White. It was contributed to the *Athens Historian* by Gilbert Milner, grandson of the author, and has been edited only minimally to conform punctuation and spelling, and in a few places to add clarity. Its historical value, charm, and distinct tone are credits to the author.

John White, founder of White Hall, was also a founding director of the National Bank of Athens and its president from 1866 until his death in 1881. In August 1879, the *New York Times* published an article by a correspondent of the *Atlanta Constitution*, "Georgia's Rich Men," in which the author wrote, "I am inclined to think that Mr. [John] White is probably the wealthiest man in the State... He is now an old man, and in wretched health, but his restless little figure is seen daily in Athens - hopping in and out of his buggy, and attending to business with as earnest an air as if his rent was due, and he didn't have the money to pay it. He is a man of strong head, good heart, and estimable in all his relations."

John White's Rules of Life

These rules were published in a special edition of the *Athens Daily News* honoring the centennial of the National Bank of Athens, February 1964.

Persevere against discouragements.

Keep your temper.

Employ your leisure in study and always have some work on hand.

Be punctual and methodical in business. Never procrastinate.

Never be in a hurry - preserve self-possession and do not be talked out of conviction.

Rise early, be an economist of time.

Maintain dignity without the appearance of pride.

Manner is something with everybody, and everything with some.

Be guarded in discourse, attentive and slow to speak.

Never acquiesce in immoral or pernicious opinions.

Be not forward to assign reasons to those who have no right to ask.

Think nothing unimportant or indifferent.

Rather set than follow example.

Practice strict temperance and in all your transactions, "Remember the final account."

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