

CHILTONIAN

Volume 35, Number 1

January 2015

QUARTERLY MEETING

The Chilton County Historical Society will hold its quarterly meeting at 2:00 PM on Sunday, January 11th, at the Chilton/Clanton Public Library. The guest speaker had not been scheduled at the time we went to press. All Chilton citizens who are interested in our county's history and its preservation are encouraged to attend.

EDITOR'S NOTE: While Scarlett Teel works on a new installment of her "Ramblings", we'll devote this issue to more articles from the 1950 Chilton County News "Opportunity Edition".

From
The Chilton County News
"Opportunity Edition"
October 19, 1950

Mr. Cliff Jones

**Mr. Cliff Jones Owner
Cliff Jones Milling Co.**



CLIFF JONES

CREDITS:

Chiltonian is a quarterly publication of the Chilton County Historical Society & Archives, Inc.
P. O. Box 644, Clanton, Alabama 35046-0644
(A Non-Profit Organization)

OFFICERS:

President	-	Katherine Reece
Vice President	-	R. B. "Benny" Harris
Secretary	-	Scarlett Teel
Treasurer	-	Colyn Moatts
Reporter	-	Janette Bailey

MEMBERSHIP RATES:

Annual: Individual \$9, Couple \$12, Student \$5
(Dues payable in January)

Lifetime: \$100

NOTE: ON YOUR ADDRESS LABEL, THE TWO-DIGIT NUMBER AFTER YOUR NAME INDICATES THE YEAR THROUGH WHICH YOUR DUES ARE PAID. AN "L" INDICATES LIFE MEMBER.

"There is one feature about Chilton County, that is, it has practically all the elements to go with manufacturing. Most certainly we have a fine climate, labor is abundant, electric power, water, splendid highways. It seems to me the thing to do is to capitalize these advantages and call to the attention of those manufacturers who are dissatisfied with their locations in the north and east. There would be no labor trouble in this section and we have a multitude of advantages.

(continued on page 2)

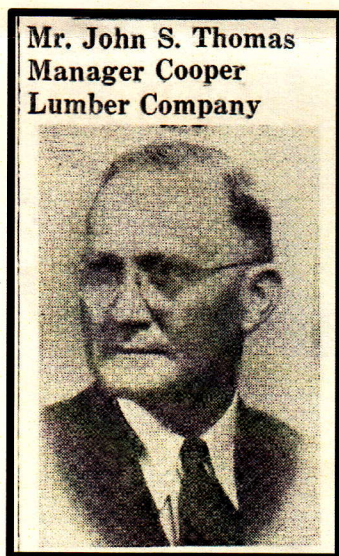
(continued from page 1)

"In agriculture and in location Chilton County is tops. We could use canning plants for many different kinds of vegetables and thus afford our farming friends a ready market," declared Mr. Jones.

The Cliff Jones Milling Co. is growing and each year shows a greater growth from the previous year. The quality is of the best in feeds and also in corn meal. Mr. Jones has trucks to give prompt service to the customers.

This gentleman is a member of the Clanton Kiwanis Club and a Steward of the Board of the Methodist Church of Clanton. The Jones family is a pioneer one and some of our most substantial people are of that name.

Mr. John S. Thomas



"In traveling through the various surrounding communities in Chilton County one is impressed with the undeveloped resources that await the magic touch of the agricultural and the industrial. We have opportunities in abundance. In manufacturing, natural resources abound. A splendid type of labor is available. The arteries of transportation both in highways and railways is

sufficient for one to travel in any direction and that in a most satisfactory manner.

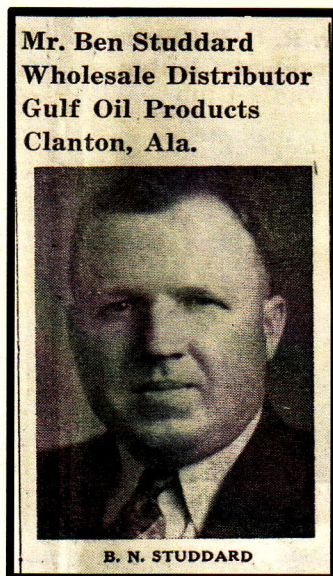
"Plenty of electricity, water power, and neighbors as fine a class of people as one may find anywhere. It would be a good business policy for this whole community to organize and set forth our attractive features for the investor, the home seeker, and the manufacturer," declared Mr. Thomas.

The gentleman has a wide acquaintance in Chilton County and to his friends is known as the "salt of the earth." For the past fifteen years he has been engaged in his present responsibilities. The people of all this area know his word is as good as any bond.

The Cooper Lumber Company is located at Clanton. During the course of twelve months, it distributes large sums of money to the farmers and timber growers. This money finds its way to our banks and a large part of it is spent with our merchants, which has a tendency to make the good times. The Cooper Lumber Company is rated for its financial stability.

Mr. Thomas is a member of the Baptist Church.

Mr. Ben Studdard



"Those communities that reflect growth and unfoldment in population and financial resources are a general rule those that have payrolls and employment for the people of those various communities. In summing up the assets of Clanton and Chilton County, we find that we are most favorably situated for industry. We do not lack a single element that is necessary for management to make a success of industrial plants.

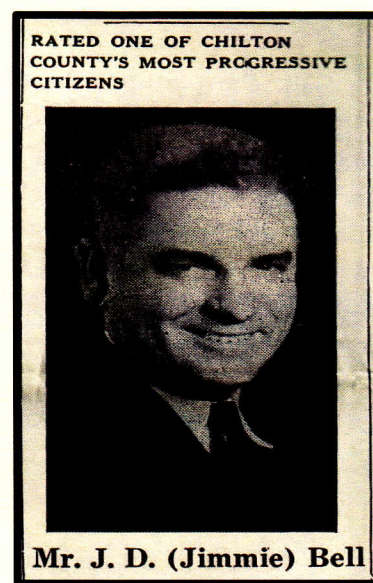
"Let us not forget our climate which during twelve months is one of the best to be found in the country. Our labor is descended from Colonial stock and one of the best American working type to be found. We have plenty of highways and railway transportation. Like everything else we must set forth our advantages, what we have to offer, to those who are dissatisfied with labor conditions where they are not located (sic). If the population acts as a unit we can swing some of those industries to Chilton County," remarked Mr. Studdard.

This well-known executive has been a resident of Clanton for many years and during those years has developed with the growth of the community. Speaking further about the growth of the area Mr. Studdard said, "One vital thing we need and that is canning factories, so that our farmer friends can find a ready market for their products here at home. Don't let us ever forget that up to date the farmer has been our friend."

Mr. Studdard is a member of the Clanton Kiwanis Club and of the Methodist Church.

Mr. Jimmie Bell

"It has been fifteen years since I became identified with commercial activities at Clanton. This community always appealed to me and for that, among other reasons, I believe that we have a great opportunity to offer small industries employing 100, 300, or 300 people. One of our



biggest blessings may be summed up in the fine class of people comprising both men and women who would become associated on the payroll. Their acts and thinking are constructive and not destructive. Everyone is of the good old American stock.

"From the standpoint of agriculture we are sitting in the golden chair. To a greater diversity of production it would be possible to bring a greater income to our farming friends. We should all put forth an effort to obtain this desirable state," declared Mr. Bell.

The Chilton County News quite well knows that Mr. Bell believes in Clanton and this great area of Alabama. He has backed that belief with an investment of many thousands of dollars. He has given this community a good hotel by remodeling the Willingham Hotel which is a model of its kind.

For one decade and five years he has owned and operated the Bell Hardware Company and it has grown with the passing years. There are names to be found on the ledger book that have been his friends and patrons since he first opened the doors. What endears this gentleman to a host of friends is his public spirit. Where the best

(continued on page 4)

interests of this community are at stake he gives both time and money.

Jimmie Bell is a disciple of Izaak Walton and at his camp on the Coosa River he maintains a charming home and delights in welcoming his friends to this lovely retreat. He has been past Worshipful Master of the Masonic Lodge No. 423. He is a member of the Shrine Temple of Alcarzar at Montgomery, and the Kiwanis Club at Clanton.

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Old Schools of Chilton County Alabama

By Lorene LeCroy

\$15.00 + \$3 S&H

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The Heritage of Chilton County

[Contact Heritage Publishing Consultants

29 Skidmore Lane

Poca, WV 25159

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Of Mrs. Grover Bice

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

CHILTONIAN

Volume 35, Number 2

April 2015

QUARTERLY MEETING

The Chilton County Historical Society will hold its quarterly meeting at 2:00 PM on Sunday, April 12th, at the Chilton/Clanton Public Library. Mr. John Kliner will be our guest speaker, and he will share with us the history associated with his National Register-listed home on Highway 22. All Chilton citizens who are interested in our county's history and its preservation are encouraged to attend.

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ANOTHER CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The *Chiltonian* is in need of fresh submissions from our readers.

The submissions may be on any subject either directly or indirectly related to the history of Chilton County, e.g., family histories, personal school stories, church histories, old homes/businesses, military experiences of Chilton County soldiers, sailors, airmen, or Marines, etc.

Your stories may be submitted in any format, as long as it's readable—we'll do the rest.

In addition, we encourage submission of genealogical queries. Why not give it a shot? One of our readers might have the one missing piece of your family-tree puzzle.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *While we wait for the avalanche of new submissions, we will continue with more articles from the 1950 Chilton County News "Opportunity Edition".*

From

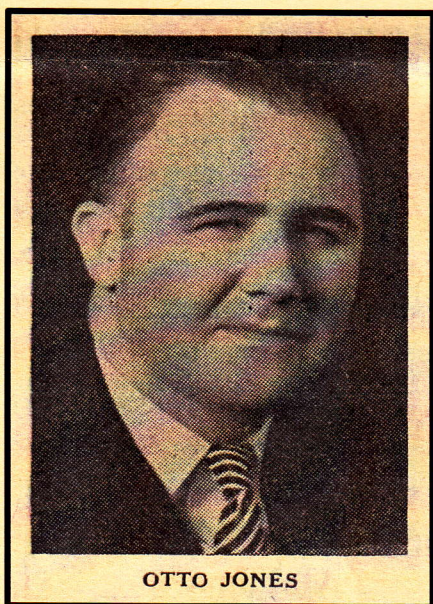
The Chilton County News
"Opportunity Edition"
October 19, 1950

Mr. C. Otto Jones

"When one looks over the agricultural resources of Chilton County we all may congratulate ourselves in living in such a wonderful area where nature does tremendous

things for the farmer and the producer. Manufacturing is coming to the South. It is worthwhile for our people to set forth our many advantages for those who are now moving to the Southland. We have good schools, churches, and a fine spirit is reflected by those who live in Chilton County in their everyday affairs.

"Among our people thousands of them are descended from revolutionary stock. They are the good old American type. Such foreign things as socialism and communism do not find any root in our people. For the investor, the manufacturer who wants to get away from the chaos and confusion up North, Chilton County will be a paradise. We have plenty of power, plenty of labor, a splendid climate and everything that goes to make an ideal condition and especially to carry on the everyday affairs of life. Let us put our shoulder to the wheel and tell the county, the state and the nation what we have to offer them," remarked Mr. Jones [*President of First National Bank*].



When one enters the First National Bank the air fairly radiates good will and worthwhile welcome. The interior impressed the writer as being most attractive and the harmony of colors is most pleasing to the eyes. The latest mechanical devices have been installed for the protection of the depositors. The bank is finely managed by capable men who are thoroughly conversant with

banking. The directors are noted for their substantial mode of carrying on their own affairs.

C. O. Jones has been associated with the First National Bank for the past twenty-two years. The writer has always noticed that where a live and progressive bank is located, there you will find a live and progressive community. Mr. Jones is one of Clanton's city fathers, a position of responsibility he has held for the past ten years. He reflects a likable personality and is loyal to his friends. He may always be depended upon to do constructive work for the best interest of the general community.

The gentleman is affiliated with the Shriners and is a member of the First Methodist Church.

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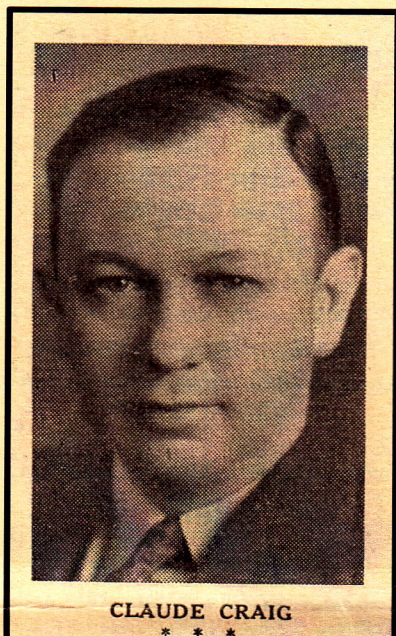
Mr. Claude Craig,
Owner of
Western Auto Associate Store

One of the most interesting merchandising marts the author has visited in many a day is that of the Western Auto Associate Store at Clanton. When one enters the store there is an air of welcome and service. There are hundreds and hundreds of items handled and each in its place that may be placed before the customer in a few seconds. Those associated on the payroll are well-trained and active and alert to the customer's request.

Claude Craig has a wide acquaintance in Clanton and the rural community. He has people trading with him who have done so from the day he first opened his store and the doors stood ajar to patrons.

Speaking to the Chilton County News we quote this well-known executive: "The passing years are bringing a development to this area that is most gratifying to those who expect to see this section grow and develop both in the city and the rural regions. Our farming friends would no

doubt be gratified to have small plants that could take care of their products and find a ready market of cash for them. We are close to Birmingham and the port of Mobile. Transportation is good. That will be something advantageous both to the farmers and the management of industry. The payroll stimulates the heart throb of commerce," declared Mr. Craig.



CLAUDE CRAIG
* * *

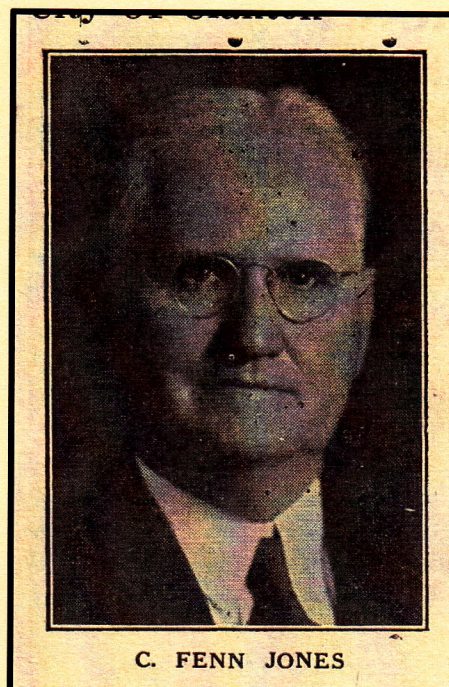
Each year Mr. Craig inaugurates a gala fishing event. During the fishing season each week it is announced the one that has caught the largest bass during the week. The disciples of Izaak Walton look forward to this event with joy and enthusiasm.

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C. Fenn Jones, **Mayor of Clanton**

This well-known executive, and he is an executive of high caliber, is putting forth a tremendous effort to get natural gas for our community. And if we judge the future by the past, most certainly he will put it over. Mayor Jones first became Chief Executive of Clanton during 1934 for a two-year period. In 1936 for a term of four years, and in 1948 the voters recognized his constructive ability and what he

had previously done for Clanton and recalled him to office. He is a worker and has great plans for this prominent city and may be found on the job every work day.



C. FENN JONES

Mayor Jones came to this community on May 1st, 1902, and has the vision and the imagination to see what Clanton and the adjoining territory might develop into. He has put his shoulder to the wheel from the very beginning and has been a regular wheel horse where the best interests of Clanton have been concerned. He is a native of Coosa County and has been endowed from the beginning with natural leadership. He has a sixth sense that tells him and directs him what will be good for the community. During these more than 48 years Mayor Jones's life and activity have been intimately interwoven with the progress of Clanton.

During his three administrations the water department, sewerage, streets, paving, fire and every betterment for the city have passed through his hands. Right now the City of Clanton is putting in miles and miles of the sewerage system that will give convenience of a high order to the good people who reside with us. That will increase the value of every bit of property within the limits of Clanton.

Speaking to the Chilton County citizens the Mayor vouchsafed the following: "The next few years will be years of growth for Clanton. Agriculture is on the verge of great improvement. The Dairying Industry should grow by leaps and bounds. The workers will become more and more engaged in industry."

It is difficult to estimate the many benefits that Mayor C. Fenn Jones has brought to the community. It is well known that neither money nor social pull can influence him from a course which he believes to be right. He impresses the writer as having his whole heart set on the well-being of Clanton.

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By Lorene LeCroy
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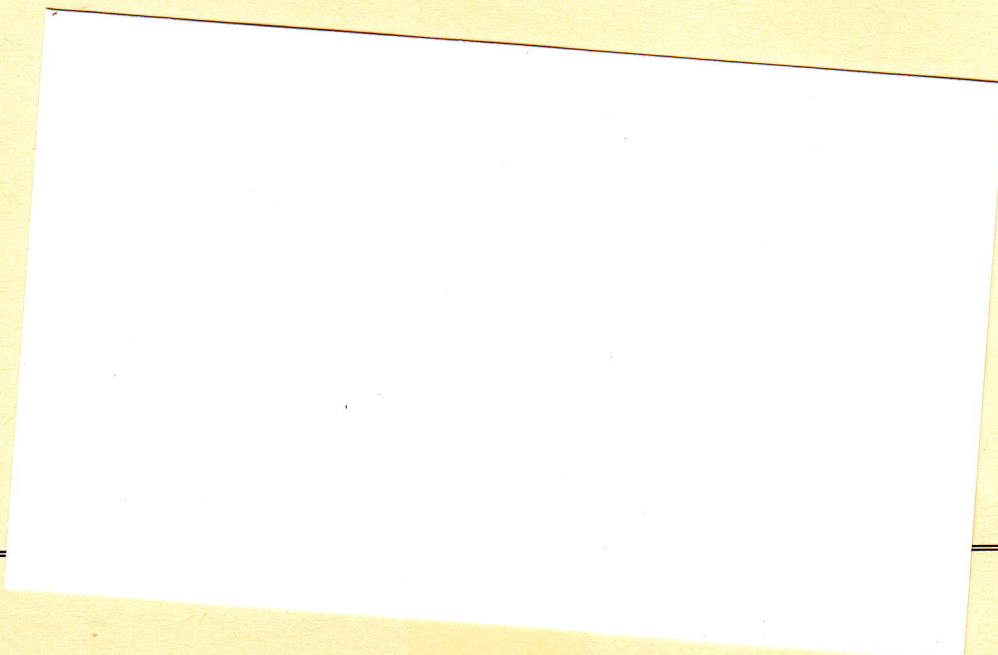
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CHILTONIAN

Volume 35, Number 3

July 2015

QUARTERLY MEETING

The Chilton County Historical Society will hold its quarterly meeting at 2:00 PM on Sunday, July 12th, at the Chilton/Clanton Public Library. An Alabama Power Company representative will speak to us about the history of hydroelectric dam development in and around the county. All Chilton citizens who are interested in our county's history and its preservation are encouraged to attend.

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IN MEMORIUM

Sadly we report the untimely death of the Chilton County Historical Society's Vice President, Riley Bernard "Benny" Harris, on June 22, 2015.

"Benny"—born April 28, 1955—loved history and was very proud of his association with the Sons of the American Revolution and the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

He is survived by his wife, Glenda Dorriety Harris; his daughter, Andrea Nicole Harris; his sister, Charlene Harris (Roger) Yeargan; and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Lowell Harris.

May he rest in peace, as God comforts those who mourn his passing.

FAMILY QUERY

Submitted by
Ms Jane Fazio

I need to know the parents of Frances Jane (Henley) Reynolds.

Frances was born in Georgia on April 17, 1835, and she married William Lewis Reynolds in Macon County, Alabama, on October 16, 1853—this was a second marriage for William Lewis.

The children of Frances and William were named Exar, Ida, and Elizabeth Jane.

Frances Jane Henley Reynolds died in Chilton County on April 6, 1903, and she is buried in Providence Baptist Cemetery near Jemison.

I would be very grateful for any additional information you might be able to provide.

My mailing address is as follows:

Jane Fazio
1704 Manchester Place
Escondido, CA 92027

EDITOR'S NOTE: *In the absence of any new materials, we will continue with more articles from the 1950 Chilton County News "Opportunity Edition".*

From
The Chilton County News
"Opportunity Edition"
October 19, 1950

Mr. Grady Heflin



"Chilton County is one of the choice counties of Alabama. It has fertility of soil and the climate to make it what it is, an ideal producing county, and a lovely place in which to live and carry on business. There is a great opportunity at the present for small plants in industries in which to carry on and do a

thriving business. We have the labor, which by the way is American, and most of it descended from Colonial stock.

"We have splendid transportation in which to cater to agriculture and many other producing products of the soil which can be cultivated to the financial advantage of the growers. It is the part of good wisdom to set forth our many advantages," declared Mr. Heflin.

H. G. Heflin has been associated with Peoples Savings Bank for one year and three decades. He recently assumed the presidency. This gentleman has a wide acceptance in this area and is noted for his sound banking principles. He has remained with the bank since he first became associated which was on July 1st, 1919. H. G. Heflin knows real estate values in Chilton County and adjoining counties. He is always glad to receive any of the depositors of the bank and give them his experience without cost and obligation in anything in which they are interested.

He reflects civic spirit and puts his shoulder to the wheel for the public good. For 20 years he has been a member of the Clanton City Council. The Peoples Savings Bank is a finely conducted financial institution.

Mr. Heflin is a member of the First Baptist Church.

Mr. Bob Taber

This gentleman is recognized as one of Clanton's greatest assets. He is civic-minded and his advice and suggestions are sought in movements for the public good. Robert B. Taber is manager of Radio Station WKLF at Clanton, which is the spoken word for one thousand watts voice, of this area of the state. Before becoming associated and accepting this responsibility, R. B. Taber had developed newspaper sense which had placed him in a responsible position in well-known newspapers. He was with WYSR, the 5,000 watt station at Syracuse, N. Y.

When Uncle Sam called his sons to armed conflict, among others, Mr. Taber responded and with the coming of World War II he entered the armed forces during 1942, and served with gallantry for four

years, and for quite some period within the European theatre. When he discontinued his association with the infantry he was appointed as program director of Radio Station WFEB, Sylacauga, Ala. Two years ago he came to Clanton as manager of WKLF.



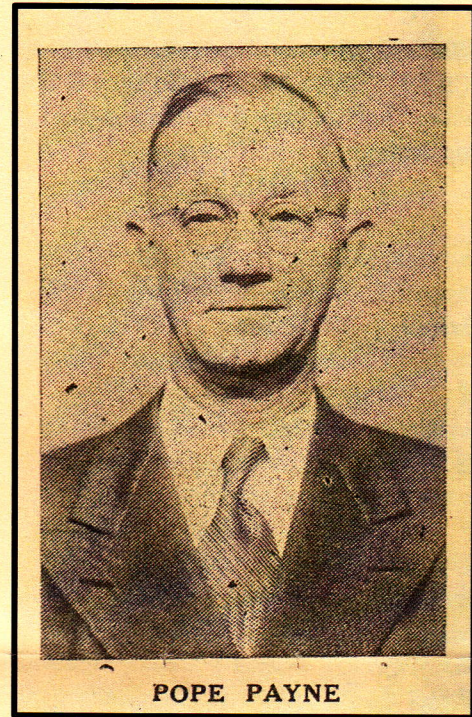
"As chairman of the Peach Festival during 1950, I became better acquainted with the resources of Chilton County. They really abound in this area. We are close to the port at Mobile and only a short distance from Birmingham. We really are sitting on top of the world as far as opportunities are concerned. Nature has placed its signet of approval upon this area. Both in manufacturing and agriculture let us reflect the spirit of development. Let us work as a unit for the good of the whole population," remarked Mr. Taber.

Mr. Taber is a member of the Clanton Lion's Club and the Methodist Church.

Mr. Pope Payne

This well-known business executive entered the hardware business at Maplesville during 1923, and after living there for seventeen years and being identified with the community, he came to Thorsby

where he opened up a very fine store of hardware, dry goods and associated lines. There are plenty of people in the community who will go out of their way to trade with this well liked merchant. They know he will supply their requirements in merchandise at reasonable prices and furnish them exactly what they order.



While reminiscing with the writer Mr. Payne expressed the thought, "It is a fact that agriculture has done great things to raise Chilton County and adjoining counties to the preeminence it [*sic*] occupies today. We should be most grateful to our farming friends. Along with the farms our golden opportunities are to attract industry and secure payrolls. That would make Thorsby just about the best town in the state. Most certainly we have all the elements necessary for successful industry. Plenty of electricity, good roads and American labor of the finest, are to be found in our midst."

Mr. Payne lives at Thorsby and enjoys wide acquaintance in both the rural communities and our little cities. The gentleman has been a member of the Chilton County School Board since 1933 and the writer believes that this is one of the most important responsibilities that one may have. If you want people to follow the highway of the right it is necessary to let the sunlight of intelligence fall upon that highway.

Pope Payne is a member of the Thorsby Businessmen's Club and for many years a member of the Baptist Church.

NOTE: Our newest Life Member, Ms Audrey Johnson, is researching the names MIMS, ARMSTRONG, POPWELL, MOONEY, COX, and ANDERSON. Those having info they'd like to share may contact her at the following e-mail address—triplealphaa@gmail.com.

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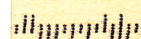
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Gragg Field Dedication

(Reprinted from *The Heritage of Chilton County*)

Clanton's airport was a project of the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA), and it was completed in 1937. To mark the occasion, a great public dedication and celebration took place on Saturday and Sunday, the 3rd & 4th of July, 1937. According to the published program, the event was sponsored by the Clanton Aero Club, whose President at the time was Dr. V. J. Gragg and whose Secretary was J. Mell Martin.

Hundreds of local residents attended the landmark event, which included parachute jumps by Walton Peteet and Mercer Cox, a "10,000-foot Delayed Parachute Jump" by Faye Lucille Cox, a model plane contest, a demonstration of formation flying by the Alabama National Guard's 106th Observation Squadron, aerobatics by Odell Garrison and Glen Mercer, a "Street Dance" on Saturday night—with "Band Music by Avondale Mills (Sylacauga) Band"—and "Passenger Flying Until Dusk" on both days. On Sunday, all activity ceased between 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM, out of respect and observation of "Church Hour."

At Saturday afternoon's official dedication program, Mayor C. Fenn Jones gave welcoming remarks on behalf of the City of Clanton, and Probate Judge J. Lee Smith offered welcoming remarks for Chilton County. Then, after short speeches by Judge L. H. Reynolds and three WPA administrators—the State Administrator, the State Deputy Administrator, and the District Director—the airport presentation address was given by W. M. Wyatt, followed by an acceptance address by Dr. Gragg.

News coverage of the “spectacular and colorful” two-day event identified the “leaders of the movement which obtained the airport” for Clanton as Dr. V. J. Gragg, J. Mell Martin, Charles Wade, Leo Thompson, and John Hollis, all familiar names to the citizens of Clanton.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *As many of you know, dismantlement of the Gragg Field Historic District has been underway for over a year. In July 2015, the following letter was sent by the Society to the public officials as indicated. FYI, the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) was sent a courtesy copy because of its responsibilities regarding management of federal funds for air transportation; the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) was sent a copy because they are the federal agency with approval authority for federal funds authorization; and, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was sent a copy because of their responsibilities regarding historic preservation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.*

July 20, 2015

Chilton County Historical Society
P. O. Box 644
Clanton, AL 35046-0644

Mr. Craig Cleckler, Chairman
Chilton County Airport Authority
702 Airport Road
Clanton, AL 35045

RE: Gragg Field Historic District
National Register of Historic Places
(NRHP)
#04000557 (June 2, 2004)

Dear Chairman Cleckler:

As you may know, the Gragg Field Historic District is one of only three sites in

Chilton County that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). A total of seven resources made Gragg Field eligible for the NRHP—four contributing and three non-contributing. Of course, the contributing resources (three buildings and one structure) are key to the District's approved listing.

Of the four contributing resources (the WPA hangar, the Tuskegee Army Airfield hangar, the beacon light tower, and the generator shed), two have been removed as a result of ongoing upgrades at the airport—i.e., the beacon light tower and the generator shed.

We are not aware of any Section 106 (National Historic Preservation Act) public involvement that might have been effected as part of the federally required process for avoidance/mitigation of this removal of Register-listed properties. In addition, we also are not aware of any Section 4f (Transportation Act) analysis that resulted in a determination of no feasible and prudent alternative to removal of the protected resources.

As a party interested in preservation of local historic resources, the Chilton County Historical Society respectfully requests a copy of all National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation (e.g., Categorical Exclusions, Environmental Analyses, Section 4f Assessments, etc.) that was approved as part of the process for securing federal funding for the undertaking of upgrades at Gragg Field.

Our interest at this point is in preservation of the remaining Gragg Field Historic District resources, although we would very much like to preserve—and have documented or recorded—any available portions of those contributing resources which already have been removed.

Thank you very much for your assistance in this matter.

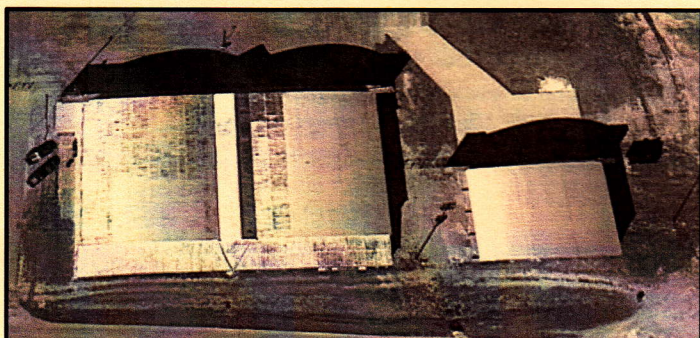
Sincerely,

[SIGNED]

President

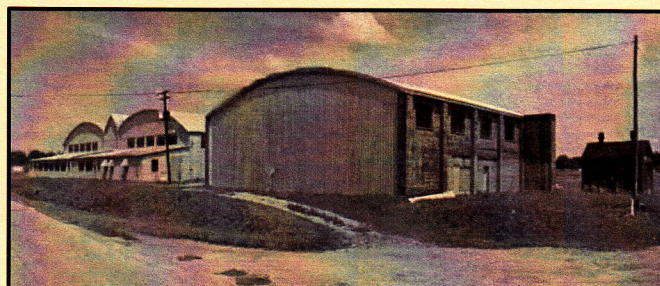
Cc: The Honorable Allen Caton
The Honorable Billy Joe Driver
Mr. John C. Eagerton, ALDoT
Mr. Dennis Roberts, FAA Regional
Administrator
Ms Lisa D Jones, SHPO

[ADDITIONAL NOTE: As of the printing date for the *Chiltonian* (last week in September 2015), there has been no written response from the Chilton County Airport Authority.]

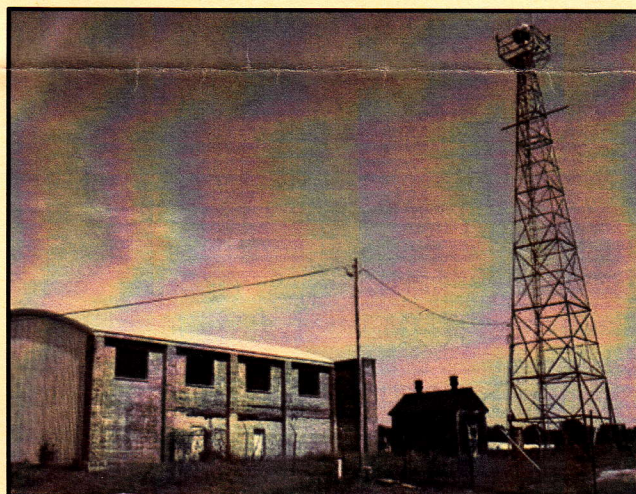


The above overhead image (November 2014) shows the large Tuskegee AAF hangar on the left, the smaller WPA hangar on the right, and the small generator shed just off the northeast corner of the WPA hangar. Note that the navigation beacon tower (formerly located adjacent to the generator shed) already had been removed on the date of this image.

It is also worthwhile noting that a group of local pilots (in conjunction with the Chilton County Airport Authority) completed renovation of the old WPA hangar in 2010, after it had been identified (at the urging of the Chilton County Historical Society) on the Alabama Historical Commission's 2007 list of "Places in Peril". The old hangar was crumbling from neglect, and the pilots' action—applauded by the local community—no doubt saved this historic structure and helped maintain the integrity of the Gragg Field Historic District, at least until overcome by more recent events.



The above, ground-level image shows the road-side (rear) of the Tuskegee AAF hangar and the restored WPA hangar, as well as the generator shed which was still present in 2014. The shed—also a contributing structure to the National Register of Historic Places designation—was removed in 2015, as part of the ongoing airport upgrade.



The 2011 image, above, depicts the east side of the renovated WPA hangar plus the intact navigation beacon tower and generator shed—both the tower and the shed have now been removed and (one assumes) demolished.

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