

the GROUNDHOG

Volume 5 — Number 8 A Publication of the Mentone Area Preservation Association November, 1987

The Forester Sisters



Down-Home Country And Mountain Harmony

It is amazing how so many musical roots sink deep into the soil of the Appalachian Mountains. The independent hill people have much natural talent that has been carried for generations in the hearts and souls of those whose love for the land and home manifests itself in song.

The Forester Sisters are no exception, for their family tree grew from the fertile soil of Lookout Mountain and from it developed four of the best examples of down-home talent. The family harmony that is so much a part of their style is also a factor in the process that made these women the close-knit, dedicated and hard-working group they are today.

The sisters were born and raised at New Salem, on top of Lookout Mountain near Trenton. They began early to contribute to the support of the family since their father worked in Chattanooga and farmed. Their mother worked in a textile mill, usually at night, and the girls helped her do all the mowing, gardening, canning, freezing, household chores and painting and "just about everything else."

Their mother recalls those formative years: "Their Dad started doing some truck farming to help put them through school. We grew mostly green beans and that meant sticking them — there was a time when they almost turned against green beans." The family also grew turnip greens, onions and corn for market and the girls learned as youngsters to drive the big farm trucks. They shoveled fertilizer, helped haul hay and built fences. The sisters also babysat and cleaned the homes of neighbors and friends to earn "a little spending money."

In addition, "We also sewed and made all our own clothes." Throughout the hard work and keeping the family together, the sisters knew they were loved and that their welfare was the most important consideration. The girls were involved in school and community activities, basketball, cheerleading and music lessons. Their mother remembers: "The girls have always enjoyed music. We got Kathy and June their first record player at three and five years of age. Kathy always wanted to play piano and

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In Memoriam

Richard Drew Wolcott

The Rev. R. Drew Wolcott died at the University Hospital in Birmingham, Ala., just four days after his 77th birthday in November. He had struggled with leukemia for some time.

Rev. Wolcott was destined to greatness and was once nominated for President of the United States. He turned down the nomination however, for he felt his calling led him to a different life of service.

He had a long and fascinating career. He was born in Brooklyn, N. Y., while his parents were studying at Drew University in preparation for missionary service. At the age of three, they moved to Argentina and Wolcott grew up there.

Rev. Wolcott went to school in Kentucky and did graduate work at the University of Kentucky, Emory University in Atlanta, and at the Institue Tecnologico y de Estudios Superiores in Monterrey, Mexico.

For 27 years Rev. Wolcott was a missionary in Mexico. He also served churches in Birmingham, Talladega and Tuscaloosa. He was an actor in off-Broadway and in a stock company and a journalist with New York and New Jersey newspapers. He traveled, giving inspired monologues of Bible characters complete with costumes. He also did impressions of historical figures such as Benjamin Franklin.

Among the more interesting aspects of Rev. Wolcott's career have been his opening a regular session of the Senate of the United States in prayer; receiving a decoration by the Belgian government; serving as Grand Master of the York Grand Masonic Lodge of Mexico; serving as National Chaplain of the American Legion; being a member of the National Rehabilitation Commission with appearances before the Veterans Affairs Committee of the Senate; going as a delegate to the International Christian Leadership Conference in Paris; serving for many years with the Boy Scouts; organizing the Civitan International Club in Latin America; being nominated for President by the National Statesman Party, but refusing the nomination.

Rev. Wolcott served for six years in the army during World War II and saw 18 months of combat in the South Pacific. He attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Rev. Wolcott is survived by his wife, Corinne Berry Wolcott and six children. His three sons have all become missionaries and all three daughters are school teachers like Mrs. Wolcott. There are 14 grandchildren. One of the seven missions and five independent congregations that grew out of Rev. Wolcott's work in Mexico is now a church with regular attendance of 2,000, served by one of his sons.

Rev. Wolcott loved Mentone, and Mentone loved him. He once said, "The charm of Mentone has always been for me with its rustic simplicity, its bucolic pace, its peaceful semi-isolation from the frenetic activity of town, and city, a delightfully serene retreat."

Nelda Ellis Howe

Mrs. Nelda Ellis Howe died on Thursday, Oct. 22, at Baptist Medical Center in Fort Payne, Ala. Mrs. Howe is best remembered for her ownership of the DeSoto Hotel (now the Mentone Inn) many years ago. She and her husband, Hal, now deceased, operated the Hotel and hired local people to work there. Bernice Crow remembers the couple as being "some of the nicest folks I ever knew and I just loved them both."

Mrs. Howe was an important member of the community for she was always interested in the welfare of others and in the life of the town. She contributed much to the area and she will be remembered as one of those who believed in Mentone.

She is survived by one sister-in-law, Mrs. Gladys (Peggy) Howe of Mentone; one sister, Mrs. Vivian Ellis of LaFayette, Ga.; one niece, Susan Van Peldorn of Atlanta; and a nephew, Charles F. Ellis of LaFayette, La.

MAPA CHRISTMAS DINNER

Cragmere Manna

Thursday, December 3
6:30 p.m.

Phone Shurleen Froehler at 634-4450
for reservation by Nov. 29

\$8.50

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

Meeting Room, A Shared Venture



Charles Bukley and Harrell Jenkins discuss lighting.



MAPA Director Bill Riedesel hard at work.

Work is progressing nicely on the Town Hall Community Center as MAPA officers and others donate time and effort to the project. Director Bill Riedesel, Harrell Jenkins, Ray Froehler, and Harrell's son, Lee, as well as other members of MAPA have been building a new kitchen complete with new appliances, putting down floor tile, rewiring, knocking holes, filling up holes and a whole lot more to make the place a comfortable and useful center for citizens to gather.

This has truly been a community effort, as the \$4,000 MAPA donation was just the beginning. The Rhododen-

dron Garden Club voted to pay for the lighting and the window treatment and Mabel Kirk is underwriting the club's efforts for "those who in the past made Mentone what it is today — to honor those who came before."

The Craft Festival Committee is furnishing the paneling and other groups have offered assistance.

Mentone has long needed this kind of meeting place, and that it comes through the dedicated efforts of the Town Council, MAPA, the Rhododendron Garden Club, the Crafts Festival Committee and others who live here, makes the effort all the more special.

State Highway Dept. Promises Improvement

In a letter to Mayor Rob Hammond concerning a request by the Mentone Town Council for help in making the main intersection at the top of the mountain a safer place for motorists, Assistant Division Engineer A. R. Hunt promised improvements after a review was made by C. B. Tidmore and Jeff Benefield.

They are to include:
No parking signs on the southwest and northeast corners.
Sweeping the area free of gravel.
Stop bars to be placed on the side roads to give drivers an indication of where to stop their vehicles to obtain the greatest sight distance.
Mr. Hunt pledged further assistance if it should be needed.

Gail Crider will host an Alabama-Auburn victory party at the Mentone Springs Hotel Nov. 27 at 7 p.m. There will be a \$25 door prize for the person who shows his or her true colors best! — \$2.00 admission — wear your colors!

A Meeting Of The Minds

Anyone interested in forming a group to promote the work of local artists and craftsmen, please come to the Mentone Springs Hotel, Dec. 15, at 7 o'clock.

The group will also be a discussion forum for various topics and literature. Refreshments will be served.

Fire On The Mountain



Preston and Hobson Kirby and Hershell Pruitt — Mentone Fire Chief at Fire site.

The weekend of Nov. 7 began hot and dry as warm winds whipped across the mountain, bringing no rain. The woods were a tinder box for the autumn carpet of leaves dried to parchment without moisture to slow the process.

Then carelessness or maliciousness started a battle that was to rage all night as weary but dedicated firefighters from all over DeKalb County raced to save homes, property and wildlife.

The first fire on the mountain started on the brow near Comer Scout Reservation and raced along the crest and down the side, endangering many acres and homes. In the smoky twilight of Sunday morning, it was evident that only through the valiant efforts of many caring people were the homes along that area of brow property spared. Deadwood continued to smoulder for days as wisps of smoke rose from fire-blackened woodlands.

Another fire was set near Camp Ponderosa, again on the brow, and quickly raced down the mountainside to engulf a large segment of forest owned by Barry Brown. The historic site that was once the town of Batelle was burned over, but as most of the damage was restricted to ground cover, the majority of timber was spared. Brown and his sons cut a firebreak with their dozer, and constant vigil was needed for several hours as the fire sometimes jumped the break. The crackling of the flames was punctuated by the occasional death fall of a tree which could be heard in the distance as the sound carried into the valley.

The Henagar and Ider Fire departments walked from the brow to the valley below and reached the lower destination tired and footsore, but willing to continue the struggle. The National Guard lent support as well as other groups from all over the area.

Individual acts of kindness need to be mentioned such as The Log Cabin Deli's owner Collette Forester making mounds of sandwiches for the hungry crew. Others who gave unselfishly were Martha Kerby and Sunny Mays who also gave sandwiches. Dorna Hutcheson offered assistance of any kind needed, and many others stood by waiting to join the fight if called upon.

As is usually the case no matter what the need, the Red Cross was on hand to provide food and drink. These people have come to stand for all that is helpful and hopeful in our society.

I need to advise the public to mail early this Christmas and to check with me on the dates to be sure their mail will arrive on time. We have special stamp kits for sale that will make great Christmas gifts. Prices range from \$2.50 to \$16.95.

Thanks,
Benny

From The Editor

By Mickey Strickland

Not long ago, I received a letter from the Adam Walsh Child Resource Center in Florida. The Center needs support, both financially and through petitions that seek to have child protection laws enacted throughout this land. I was asked to sign a petition and to send whatever I could to help pay for the crusade to make children safer in an increasingly more dangerous world.

John Walsh and his wife, Rebe, made headlines in 1981 when their little six year old son Adam was abducted from their home and two weeks later, his head was fished from a canal a hundred miles from there. The rest of his body was never found. A television movie was made in the hope that citizens and lawmakers would respond to the need for a better system of protection for our children. The Adam Walsh Child Resource Center was born and along with it a strong sense of purpose and dedication to the right of every child to have a loving and safe environment in which to grow and develop.

All that John Walsh has left of his son is a picture of a little smiling boy in a baseball cap poised to take his turn at bat. But it will never happen, for Adam Walsh was brutally murdered before his father and mother's hopes and dreams for him were ever to be realized. And in his memory, his parents hope to make a difference to other children; to prevent this sort of tragedy from being repeated.

But they need help, and they need it in the form of money and signatures. These people are doing all they can to protect our most precious possessions, while they can never more hold theirs. They deserve all that we can give. To contribute write:

The Adam Walsh Child Resource Center
6278 Federal Highway Suite 391
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33308

Below are two letters received by The Groundhog.

Letter to the Editor:

Dear Friends,

It is hard to sum up in one letter what one's home means. To me, it is a dream realized, a sanctuary from a hectic world, a warm place to come to after a long day's work and the one place on this earth I can truly call my own.

Without the tireless efforts of neighbors and friends from all over the county, my dream would have been lost. If Timi Bell and his friend, Rusty, had not come by when they did, if they had not worked so long and hard, if all the other wonderful people had not cared so much, I would be homeless.

I wish to thank everyone who gave so much, and who saved so much for me. It may be a worn out phrase, but it is heartfelt: Thank You! Sincerely, Polly Cameron.

To the Editor:

On Saturday night, Nov. 7, and Sunday, Nov. 8, we, the residents of DeSoto Parkway from Comer Scout Reservation area toward DeSoto State Park, underwent a serious threat to our homes from a rapidly spreading fire.

Without the help of many volunteers, some of our homes would surely have been lost.

The following is a partial listing of the organizations that helped:

Rescue Squads from Ider, DeSoto, Rainsville, Fort Payne, Geraldine, Fischer, Crossville and Fyffe.

Fire Departments from Fort Payne, Lookout Mountain, Crossville, Powell, Adamsberg, Fyffe, Geraldine, Henagar and Rainsville.

Personnel from Desoto State Park, Comer Scout Reservation, Red Cross, Civil Defense, National Guard and Boy Scouts.

There were at least 225 persons who volunteered their services.

Late Sunday night the fire flared up again and there we were, husbands, wives and children working side by side. Some of us hardly see one another during busy everyday living but all worked together to save each others homes.

One of the fire trucks ran out of water at a critical time but fortunately another one came just in time. There is not one fire hydrant along this part of DeSoto Parkway from which a fire truck could refill.

There is no possible way for us to thank everyone who helped and we might have omitted some organization. For this we apologize.

We wish to express our deep appreciation to everyone who helped.

Sincerely,
Bill Riedesel
Harrell Jenkins

P. S. The next time you see a road block for donations to these organizations, Give. Remember that it might be any of us who needs their services next!

Want The Hog?

through June 1988

THE GROUNDHOG is the official newsletter of the Mentone Area Preservation Association, and is given free to all members of that organization. To receive your copy, send \$10 to MAPA, P. O. Box 50, Mentone, Ala. 35984.

The Groundhog

765-434-4196

Published monthly by the Mentone Area Preservation Association. First conceived on Groundhog Day, 1982, and organized April 6, 1982, for the purpose of preserving and protecting the heritage, natural environment, and other unique qualities of life in the Mentone Area. Chartered as a non-profit organization by the State of Alabama.

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M.A.P.A. Meeting

Director Riedesel called the Nov. 3 meeting of MAPA to order at 7:05 p.m. Colorfest Chairperson Bernise Crow thanked her workers, especially Shurleen Forehler and Ray Froehler, Harrell Jenkins and Maggie Cordell.

In the absence of the scheduled speaker Gary Dobbs, Jack and Gary Jones of Cloudmont Ski and Golf Resort gave an interesting program on their snow making. Delicious cakes were served, courtesy of the Disneys and Maggie Cordell.

The December meeting will be the traditional Christmas dinner at Cragmere Dec. 3. Everyone is welcome. Phone Shurleen Froehler for reservation, 634-4450.

Condensed from the minutes of Jean McGehee, secretary

November MAPA Meeting

At the November third meeting of MAPA in the Mentone Springs Hotel, Jack and Gary Jones presented a program on snow-making at Cloudmont in the absence of the scheduled speaker, Gary Dobbs. Jack introduced his son by giving an over-view of skiing in this country.

There are 26 ski resorts in the Southeastern United States. Fifteen years ago artificial snow-making began in this country. The 26 Southeastern resorts are in Maryland, 1; West Virginia, 6; Virginia, 4; North Carolina, 10; Tennessee, 2; Georgia, 1; Kentucky, 1; and Cloudmont here in Mentone. These 26 resorts are all on 100 percent snow-making machines. Cloudmont is 40 miles farther south than the Georgia ski resort.

Year before last Cloudmont had 5,000 paid skiers. Anyone may watch the skiers free of charge. Last year was the worst season ever since there were only 14 days when it was cold enough to make the snow. In 1985, for example, there were 60 days of colder weather.

The snow is made when high pressure water is mixed with air to form crystals. The crystals are denser and last longer than real snow flakes. The machines work when the humidity is lower than 60 percent and the water temperature is below freezing. The snow is made at night when it is coldest. Cloudmont now has five machines that throw out the snow as far as four acres in a 12-hour night. There are three towers upon which the machines can be raised or lowered. The snow can be thrown as far as 50 to 150 feet.

There is a holding pond on the golf course that holds 500,000 gallons of water, enough for two nights of snow-making. Water is pumped from the river to the pond.

Anyone can ski Gary Jones said. Their youngest skier last year was three years old, and the oldest was an 83 year old man. Cloudmont has a cable lift with handles and 300 sets of skis and poles to rent. There are two slopes and expert instructors. Cloudmont is open from 9 to 4 weekdays and from 6 to 10 in the evenings. On Fridays and Saturdays the slopes are open till midnight. Everyone is welcome to come to watch. Skiing is wonderful exercise and much fun.



MOUNTAIN WATCH

By CHARLES WHITE McGEHEE

Can a small town grow and keep its charm? It is entirely possible, but it is no easy task, according to an article in the November Southern Living.

Madison, Georgia, was successful in this task. With a population of 3,000 it is somewhat larger than Mentone, but it is classified as a small town and many of its problems are the same as ours. The task was accomplished with "carefully crafted local programs — and with a little friendly persuasion."

Mayor R. I. Algood explains: "It begins with a total commitment from the residents of the town and the merchants." Low-interest loans to rehabilitate downtown businesses, and matching grants for facade restoration were arranged.

A major key to success is zoning, to restrict business growth to downtown. The council passed a strict sign ordinance and a new historical preservation ordinance.

"Our citizens as a whole," writes editor Adelle Ponder of the weekly *Madisonian*, "take great pride in the town. We want to grow economically but not at the risk of losing the quality of life we have here. It's a quality that goes back for generations."

The National Trust for Historic Preservation administers the program. "By participation, the city received recommendations from consultants on preservation issues and economic developments."

Only the downtown business core was zoned. These people wanted to keep businesses downtown. A strict sign ordinance restricts any unsightly signs. The town has also recently bricked the sidewalks and made other main street improvements.

There is much to be learned from the Madison success. There is a constant re-statement in town that "we don't want Mentone to be another Gatlinburg." Unpopular as it is, zoning (and cooperation of the merchants and citizens) can prevent this happening. The worst thing we can possibly do is drift into a gaudy growth. When zoning occurs it does not affect current businesses. It merely gives some form to the nature of growth.

An adjustment to tourism is something we must live with. Mentone was established in an obvious tone of tourism, when the Mentone Springs Hotel was built in 1884. Tourism is largely an occurrence during summer, when the town comes alive with the activity of the camps. It is a major livelihood for many of our people.

Mentone could well profit from a study of Madison, Georgia.

After the long drought, and at this writing it still continues, winter is emerging with its November freezes. From the sound of the chain saws and the many trucks of firewood moving along the roads, the human indications — we're in for a bad winter. But who can really tell at this time? Our neighbor, Mr. Langston, has observed that the squirrels have been gathering the hickory nuts before they hit the ground and hornets are building their nests close to the ground.

The leaves have fallen much sooner than usual, causing Jean to work with her rake, using them to cover the garden, and to protect the precious fig tree and the rhododendrons that line our fences on the north and south sides. The gutters have been cleaned.

The oil tank that fuels our central heating system is now completely full. What a luxury! Now drying on our woodpile, in neat stacks, are two loads of wood for the wood-stove which graces our living room. The wood-stove (Consolidated Dutch West) serves three purposes: (1) a backup for the central system in event of a power failure. (2) For the occasional cooking of such delicacies as chili — in our iron pot. (3) For the joy and spiritual uplift of watching the logs burn — like an open fireplace, an advantage of our particular stove.

Most of the summer people have returned south. This is a constant temptation for some of us — whether or not to indulge in the luxury of the worst winter months in Florida. To this point, we choose to stick it out. Our neighbors, the Virgil Nolans, plan it quite well — arriving in spring soon enough to relish the beginning of a new season, and leaving in October late enough to see the beginning of autumn.

There are other pre-winter rituals: covering our attic fan; some pruning; bringing in the out-of-doors plants; getting a mind-set that most things you forget had best be left to next spring; beginning to analyze the Christmas card list; arranging the menus for the Christmas and New Year's visits from relatives and friends.



Rocky Hill Jersey Farm

Four Kinds of Cheeses
Summer Sausage
We do Christmas gift boxes
24 Flavors Ice Cream
Real Butter
Milk & Chocolate Milk
Buttermilk

1 mile South of DeSoto
State Park on
DeSoto Parkway



Groundhog Adds Staff Members

The Groundhog Staff welcomes two new correspondents — Janice Smith of Cloudland and Eloise Brown of Valley Head.

These communities are so important to the area that we felt our sister cities should be a part of any newspaper representative of the community. We are fortunate to have these women as members of our staff.

Eloise Brown, widow of Robert Donald Brown, is the mother of Eldonna Brown Root of Pasadena, Md., and Robert Barry Brown of Valley Head. She has six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Eloise helped organize the DeKalb Chapter of the A.A.R.P. and is a charter member. She teaches church school, is secretary of the Administrative Council and has held various offices at the Valley Head Methodist Church.

She is a member of the United Methodist Women and is Worthy Matron of Valley Head Eastern Star, Devotional Chairman of the Sunshine Club, a charter member of the Alabama State Poetry Society, a member of the American Academy of Poets, is included in International Who's Who in Poetry and the International Authors and Writer's Who's Who.

Eloise has had poems published in World's Fair Anthology, Creative Expressions, several volumes of The Sampler, Alabama Poets Anthology and other publications, and is also a writer of theme song for the Annual Springtime Rhapsody Beauty Pageant at Valley Head High School.

News From Valley Head



By Eloise M. Brown

We are so grateful for refreshing rain, that the air is clear and free of smoke again!

Mr. and Mrs. Travis Phillips of Duncan, Okla., and son, Michael, of California, visited Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Blackburn on Sunday afternoon.

John Tatum suffered an injured hip in a fall at his home recently.

Mrs. Ruby Oakes of Jernison, Ala., has been a guest of her sister, Mrs. Alba Brown, who returned home with her for a visit and attended Mr. and Mrs. Woodrow Hayden's golden wedding anniversary reception at Trussville Methodist Church. (Mrs. Hayden is Alba's brother). Mr. and Mrs. Dixie Brown also attended the reception.

Mrs. Leona Chadwick will be hostess at a salad luncheon at her home, for the Sunshine Club, Nov. 19, at noon. All members are urged to attend and bring a salad.

Earl Phillips remains in critical condition at University Hospital in Birmingham, as the result of an automobile accident in Fort Payne. Mrs. Phillips is recovering at home.

Mrs. Betty Brown is recovering from eye surgery; her sister, Lila Schlicher, is recovering from heart surgery.

Harold Hartline is seriously ill in Montclair Hospital in Birmingham.

Mr. and Mrs. Foyle Cooper spent the weekend with her daughter's family, Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Gray, Jr., in Dunlap, Tenn.

Mrs. Jane Meadows shared her musical talent and beautiful voice with the congregation of Valley Head Methodist Church last Sunday, which was very much appreciated and enjoyed.

Mr. and Mrs. E. P. Johnston, and Mrs. Stella Brewer of Rossville visited Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hawkins recently.

I went to Sarah Parker's in Chattanooga last Saturday to meet with the Planning Committee, to plan for the next Tittle-Martin reunion. Other members of the Committee were Jean Burford and Dr. A. M. Burford Jr. of Florence, Ala., and Janice Mahan of Wildwood.

The Valley Head Methodist and Baptists will worship together on the fifth Sunday night at a joint Thanksgiving service. Place to be announced.

There are many changes in the valley scene, To beautiful colors from shades of green, But alas, they're beginning to fade away, Some we welcome and hope will stay.

The Bobby McCarty family from Florida have purchased the E. N. Jones Sr. homeplace.

Mr. and Mrs. Ronnie Slaton have purchased the Raymond Chadwick place.

The Citizen's Bank is expanding and improving.

The Tiger's Inn has been redecorated and is open for business under new management.

Gordon Jones is building a nice home in our neighborhood.

Happy Thanksgiving! May you share your blessing with family and friends.

The View From Cloudland

Beginning with this issue, Cloudland news will be featured each month. For community events, family news, birthdays, church announcements or general interest comments, call Janice Smith at 862-2292. A special thanks to The Groundhog Staff for granting us this monthly feature.

A TRIBUTE TO CLOUDLAND — ABOVE THE CLOUDS By Janice Galloway Smith

Winter, spring, summer or fall
Cloudland is high above them all.
Above the clouds we do reside,
High as the eagle in the sky.

Upon high rock we behold
Winter scenes spread below.
Ice is glistening on the trees,
Snow is swirling in the breeze.

Soon the warm breezes blow;
Yellow bells bright and bold,
Dogwood trees white as snow,
Azalea blooms all aglow.
Springtime beauty everywhere,
Birds sing on our mountain fair
And mountain music fills the air.

We travel over around the lake,
Our mind does its best to recreate.
The scenes of yesterday are gone,
But memories still linger on.

Juliette Low knew where to go,
To build a place for girls to grow.
Enjoying beauty on summer days,
Enriching each life for future ways.

A little further down the road,
Lies Gilreath's Mill of long ago.
A gathering place of calloused hands,
Who worked this, our mountain lands.

Around the corner we now go,
As graceful beauty does unfold.
Trees adorned with red and gold,
Look down upon the valley low.

As Christmas time soon appears,
A trip to Sonny's is so near.
Lib, with peppermint in her hand,
Gives a child a treat from Santa's land.

Today we can visit a store or two,
A good place to eat is all so new.
Flowers bloom in nurseries too,
A view for our mountain, anew.

Now we look at our mountain homes,
And are thankful our mountain lingers on.
Upon the Lookout is where to be:
Winter, spring, summer or fall.

God Bless —

COUNTRY JOURNAL

By Bernice Crow

Everywhere there has been wonderful color — we got a little rain just at the right time to preserve the leaves and give us glorious vibrant reds, yellows, oranges and even purple hues for our autumn leaves. Each year I think this is the most beautiful autumn I have ever seen. And thank God I can see! There is such a world of beauty right outside our own back door, that some days I can hardly take it in.

I appreciate the morning sun and am always glad to see the way the rays are slanted across our northeast living room window. From different rooms of the house, one gets an entirely different viewpoint. Then the setting sun brings another shower of colors — rosy and yellow tints that glow a long time in autumn and winter.

Our own state park — DeSoto — is very pretty in any season, but right now it is showy with hollies — the beautiful native American variety. And if our grandparents were right in the predictions, we are going to have a very cold winter. The hollies are loaded with big clusters of shiny red berries. The squirrels are busily running to and from their winter nests, carrying hickory nuts and acorns to store for the cold months ahead. There seems to be an abundance of nuts this year. No wonder people love to visit our state park. There is a covered pavilion with fireplaces in each end; there is playground equipment for children; and picnic tables and barbecue pits available. There are wonderful hiking trails when one can spot wild flowers in abundance. In the winter the trailing arbutus shows, along with the shiny leaves of wild ginger. The evergreen shrubs of Rhododendron and Mountain Laurel that bloom so profusely in the spring, are a lovely deep green where other deciduous trees and shrubs are bare. The contrast in texture is interesting. The park has excellent camping sites, and rustic cabins, but also has a modern motel unit, with a stream of clear water gurgling past it. The parking is ample around the lodge and restaurant. Breakfast is wonderful, served buffet style on weekends — good home-baked biscuits, grits, hash browns, bacon, sausage and a choice of juices. This does not mean to be a commercial — it's just a fine place. And the state park belongs to all of us in Alabama.

Along with harvesting time beauty, have you been aware of the moon lately? It's been no more outstanding than usual I suppose, but October and November seems to have clearer atmospheres than any months of the year. And according to Homer's grandmother Magnusson, it is always colder weather when the moon is full. So beware — this one is true.

Thanksgiving is a wonderful time for us all to enjoy the fruits of the harvest, visit with family and friends and count our blessings. It heralds the beginning of holiday fervor, which is overly commercialized, but I love it. May your day be a good one, with good health, good food, and all the things that make you happy. We have much here in our country for which to be thankful — freedom to worship as we please, freedom of speech, etc. The pilgrims celebrated this privilege of freedom to worship God foremost. May we still hold that freedom most dear.

Our Town With Linda Brown

This is the season of Thanksgiving. How easy it is to forget to be thankful. If you had food to eat today, be thankful. If you have a roof over your head, be thankful. If you smelled a flower, heard a bird sing, or touched the hand of a child, be thankful. If you can read this article, be thankful. If a friend called to be sure you were all right, be thankful. Can a heart full of thanks have room for bitterness, envy, jealousy or other negative emotions? Be thankful.

I am so thrilled with the progress of the community center. MAPA is heading this project with other organizations helping. This is going to be a nice place for organizations to hold their meetings, for birthday parties and other celebrations. The site of the new center is the room that has been vacant in the city hall. Go by and see what is happening there. I think you will be pleased.

The Rhododendron Garden Club did something different for their meeting this month. Mrs. Gladys Stott of Stotts Arts and Crafts in Fort Payne was the guest speaker. She instructed the members in a hands-on demonstration of the making of holiday wreaths. Most everyone completed at least one Thanksgiving or Christmas wreath. Some members seemed quite surprised that they had created such a beautiful arrangement but all were very proud of their accomplishments.

I want to thank everyone who helped me with the project of locating the old ballads. The residents of the nursing home are enjoying them very much. A friend of mine (and theirs) made a tape of piano music for some of these songs. This will make it much easier for us to sing them. I received copies of songs from residents of Mentone and Valley Head. But — no one can find a copy of "John Henry." One verse is something like this:
John Henry had a little woman,
Her name was Polly Ann,
John Henry got sick and had to go to bed,
Polly drove steel like a man,
Lawd, Lawd, Polly drove that steel like a man!
If you have a copy of this (even if only the words) let me now.

I would like to report on all Christmas programs in my December article. If your church or organization is having a program, call me and I will let the community know about it.

Linda Brown, Route 1, Box 271, Phone 205/634-4755.

Welcome To Mentone



O'Brian and Kathy Smith, with daughter, Kelly, have moved here from Houston, Texas. They are living with Homer and Bernice Crow at present.

The Smith's love the mountain and think it is the most beautiful place they have ever seen. "The people are warm and friendly and we are planning to build a house and settle here."

O'Brian has just gotten a position as a salesman in the Chattanooga area, and plans to commute. Kathy is a talented musician, and is playing piano at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church.

Kelly is happy with her new friends, Jennifer Keefer, Karen Bosworth and Ivey Godbois. She is adapting well to country living after residing in Houston all her life.

THE FORESTER SISTERS

Continued From Cover

would make a pretend piano from a box, or anything, even furniture. When she was 10, we got her a piano and she began lessons, first locally then with Ed Smith at Dan Williams Piano in Fort Oglethorpe. After a few years, he arranged for her to attend Cadek Conservatory in Chattanooga. She studied there until she entered college, then took piano in college.

June started piano lessons also, but hated them so much that she agreed to do all the housework while Kathy practiced if she could quit. (It really shows now in the difference in the way they keep house). Kathy taught June the lead and she would do the alto. They began to sing in church, and as Kim had learned the songs when she heard them practice, she would sing them from the pew. The congregation insisted they let Kim sing, too, so Kathy taught her the alto, being as she had the lowest voice.

Kim had a natural ear for music, and lessons at the piano did not last long for her either, for she would remember the music from just hearing Mr. Smith play, and she would not practice. "She wanted a banjo, so here comes banjo lessons. We drove her to Falling Water, Tenn., once a week, which is several miles north of Chattanooga. Kim also taught herself the guitar."

Christy also plays the piano and played flute in the band at school. The girls sang at weddings and funerals. It was often a struggle to fit all the work and activities in, and to find the money to pay for them. "I always said we wore out two or three cars and spent a fortune (we didn't have) running them to and from all this. I always worked... so I could be there to do it, and so we could manage to have the money. There were times we would go to music lessons, when I didn't know if we had the money to get back home, but somehow the Lord provided and we never ran out of gas."

Mrs. Forester talked of the support she and her husband provided the girls: "Although we were helping them to get these music lessons, we never thought of trying to prepare them for what they are doing. We were just helping them to do it because it was what they were wanting to do at the time. We were always encouraging them to get a good education, so they could support themselves if need be."

The love and encouragement payed off, for Kathy has an A. B. in piano from Wesleyan College at Macon, and a Master's Degree in Music Theory from Eastern Kentucky at Richmond. She taught in college while she worked toward her master's, then worked with the Dade County school system teaching Basic Music and gave private lessons in her off-hours.

Christy is a few hours short of a degree in Sociology from Emory University in Atlanta. The break in their careers came before she had a chance to finish, and both Kim and Christy vow to complete their educations someday.



On the porch of the Bunk and Vonnice Forester home.

June graduated from Wesleyan with a double major in Elementary Education and Special Education. She also taught in the local school system in Dade County.

Kim attended Wesleyan for two years studying biology before transferring to UTC in Chattanooga. She also attended the Erlanger Nursing School before returning to UTC to major in Archaeology and Anthropology.

About 10 years ago, Kathy married Terry Adkins, who was also from a musical family. He and a friend played guitar, Kathy played piano, and June joined in, along with a drummer, and the group began to form. Kim, who had been singing backup with other bands, became part of the ensemble. When school let out for the summer, Christy joined them for practice several hours a day. They were doing festivals, and clubs and as there were many requests for a record, they planned a demo. It was a risk, and a hard decision to make, but the girls' attitude was "we won't know until we try."

The girls worked during the day and played at night and on weekends. It proved to be hectic; they wanted to devote full time to the development and promotion of the group. They made a demo of five songs at Muscle Shoals, and somehow it got into the hands of a Warner Brothers Record talent scout. The girls were opening for Larry Gatlin at the Calhoun Musicland when the scout told them that they needed a showcase in Nashville for the record companies to hear them. Warner Brothers called and set up a date for the showcase. The girls thought some friends were playing a trick on them when the company called. "Yeah, sure," they answered.

They sang before a private Warner Brothers audience of about 20 people and were "scared to death," but after completing an a capella gospel number, they got a standing ovation.

Warner Brothers liked what it heard, for the girls were told to get a lawyer. "They called home so excited, I think you could have almost heard them from Nashville. They were all talking on the phone at once. The contract was for eight albums or eight years," their mother told the story of their first big break.

The producers of the first demo, Terry Skinner and Jerry Wallace, found material for them, and their "That's What You Do When You're In Love" made it to number 10 on the charts and got the **Discovery** award for 1985.

The girls quit teaching and did odd jobs such as pulpwooding to make ends meet while they cut their first album. It was released in the spring of 1985, and in August "I Fell In Love Again Last Night" made number one on the charts. Off the same album, there were two more number one hits: "Just in Case" and "Mama's Never Seen Those Eyes." The album was entered in the Hall of Fame because that was the first time there had ever been three consecutive number one hits from a debut album. They were also given an award for "Outstanding New Artist" from the Atlanta Songwriters Association. The second album, **Perfume, Ribbons and Lace**, wasn't as strong although "Lonely Alone" went to number 2 on the charts. In the meantime, the Bellamy Brothers contacted the sisters and wanted to do a song with them. "Too Much Is Not Enough" went to the top.

Their new album, **You Again**, was released in July of 1987 and the lead song went to number one. And now, "Lying In His Arms Again" is climbing the charts.

Their latest effort is an album called "A Christmas Card," and the familiar lyrics and music take on a new sweetness when sung by the group. One can just see visions of Christmas cards, snowy hillsides, big family Christmas trees and church choirs as the soft, nostalgic melodies drift from the tape.

The Forester Sisters have gone from the fields of North Georgia to the television studios of California, but those fields and mountains and home are so much a part of who they are, that it is impossible to separate the sisters from their heritage. They are country harmony, Mom and Dad, the green grass of home — and that is what makes them so special.

The Hitching Post

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Riverboat Ramblers

Play To A Full House



Dale Meador, Junior Honeycutt, Dickie Mathews

On the night of Nov. 9, lucky patrons of the Landmarks Production at the Fort Payne Opera House were treated to an evening of entertainment that offered the kind of talent Landmarks is famous for providing.

The Riverboat Ramblers, a trio from the Southern Belle in Chattanooga, regaled the appreciative crowd with an array of songs that ranged from nostalgia to honky-tonk with a few stops along the way to include bluegrass and classical.

Dale Meador charmed those present with his wit and laid-back style as the spokesman for the group. In addition to Meador's guitar, Junior Honeycutt played the banjo like a house afire as Dickie Matthews beat out the blues on some of the hottest piano keys this side of Bourbon Street.

Dr. William Hotalen who first heard the group and persuaded them to entertain in this area, joined them for a little melody that brought down the house and proved that doctors can be fun, too.

From the foot-stompin' Rocky Top to the wistful strains of Vangelis' Hymne, this trio proved that talent is alive and well and living nearby.

Bookmobile Rides Again



The Bookmobile has a regularly scheduled stop at Mentone, and local citizens Sunny and Becky Mays make good use of all it has to offer. Judy Dowlat, who drives the literary speed on its appointed rounds, hopes others will take full advantage of this library on wheels.

The Bookmobile will be around again on Dec. 2 and again on Jan. 13 from 9:30 until 11 in the mornings.

New Owners At Tiger's Inn



Phyllis McElhaney and her mother, Ruth Hester, purchased the Tiger's Inn in Valley Head from "Granny" Foshee on Oct. 22. They hail from Sulphur Springs where Phyllis lives with her husband, Ernest McElhaney, and their four children, Phillip, Alan, Leshia and Penny.

"My mother has done this kind of work, and is quite well known in the area as a good cook, so when this place went up for sale, we bought it together. I have always wanted to own something like this," Phyllis told of the acquisition of the restaurant in downtown Valley Head. "We remodeled and have plans to do more, like put up more pictures of the football team. We hope this will be a gathering place for the young people that it once was."

The staff consists of Francis Scruggs in the kitchen, Naomi Chandler is the waitress with Ginger Johnson being the waitress on the weekends. Patsy McElhaney, a relative, also works there.

The Tiger's Inn serves sumptuous breakfasts and homemade lunches of meats and vegetables and desserts. Fountain Cokes have been added and the menu updated to reflect the owners style of cooking. Supper is from the menu.

"We just want to make welcome everyone in the area," said Phyllis, and from what I have sampled, the area certainly welcomes this family to restaurant ownership.



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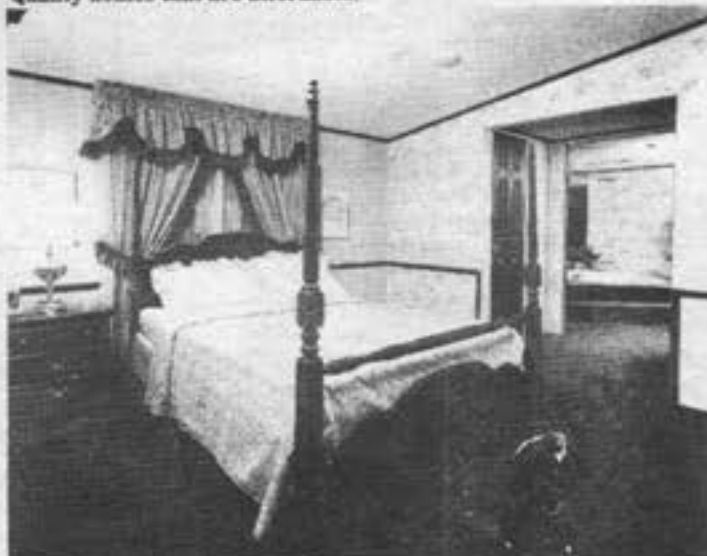


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Jim Cameron

Personal Images

Jim Cameron was born in California, but he calls this mountain home, for this is where his father grew up. Jim's mother was a Nebraska native who was in California for the war effort when she met Jim's father who was in the service there. When Jim was very small, his family moved back to Cloudland and he developed and nurtured a love for the simple elements of life. This feeling for the real meaning of things gives him the ability to capture the best of the individual or scene he photographs.

Jim's family moved around during his childhood, and he graduated from high school in Ogalalla, Nebraska. They moved back to Cloudland where he met his wife, Shirley Gold. "I first saw her picking up potatoes in a field; she looked good in overalls, so I asked her out." Jim tells of their first meeting, "we married while she was in school."

Jim was in the service at the time of his marriage and did two years in Vietnam in communications. After his release from the Army, he and Shirley took up residence in Dalton where Jim obtained a job in a carpet mill and took up photography seriously. He took a correspondence course and attended seminars and worked for a photo studio on the weekends. He developed a style that he feels is best suited to the challenging field of portrait photography.

His daughter, Kathy, was born in Dalton and the family lived there for 12 years. When the opportunity came up to obtain a house and land here at Mentone, the decision was made to move back to the mountain.

Jim does beautiful work and his woodland scenes capture the spirit of the subject. He prefers portraits, however, and feels they are more of a challenge. Children are his favorite subjects. "Basically, I try to break the pose and aim for a natural element. I try to forget the camera and focus on the subject, for that is the most important part of the situation," Jim continued, "I want to flatter the persons, but reveal something special about them. And I don't want the subject to dress up; I like to photograph them in the natural environment, especially outdoors."

Jim and his wife, Shirley, who works for Camp Alpine, and his teen-age daughter, Kathy, who is a student at Valley Head High School, live on their farm on Cove Road near Mentone.



Jim is available to do any sort of photographic work and is an accomplished musician as well who sings and plays for mountain gatherings. His work is an extenuation of his grasp of the true nature of things, and his ability to capture that feeling in images that record not only the surface, but offer a glimpse into the character as well.



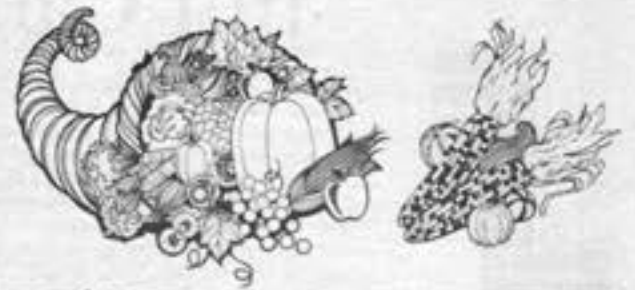
Examples Of Jim's Artistry



Mtn. Top Market At New Location



Robert Green and Betty Key of Mountain Top Market



Buck Lows Log Cabin

LEFT-OVER MASHED POTATO CASSEROLE

About 4 servings cold left-over mashed potatoes
1 pint sour cream
1½ cups grated medium Cheddar cheese

Mix cold mashed potatoes and sour cream in a medium mixing bowl; set aside. Grate cheese; set aside. Spray covered baking dish with no-stick spray. Spread layer of mashed potato mixture, a layer of cheese; repeat, topping with remaining grated cheese. Cover and heat for 30 minutes in 350 degree oven. Goes with any meat. Can also be heated or reheated in microwave oven.

PORK CHOP AND RICE CASSEROLE

1 cup rice
4 pork chops
1 can beef consomme soup
1 can onion soup

Pour rice in casserole dish. Brown pork chops on each side, not done, but brown. Place on rice. Cover rice and pork chops with beef consomme and onion soup. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

BATTER FRANKS

1 cup flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons corn meal
3 tablespoons shortening
1 egg
¾ cup milk
1-pound frankfurters

Mix together in order given and dip franks into batter and fry in deep fat until brown. Drain on absorbant paper. Serve with mustard or catsup.

QUICK CHICKEN POT PIE

4 chicken breasts
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 small onion, chopped
1 small can English peas, drained (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste
1 or 2 can buttermilk biscuits
4 to 6 Irish potatoes, peeled and sliced into ¼-inch circles
1 or 2 tablespoons cornstarch

Cover chicken with water in pot; add onions, salt and pepper and cook until chicken is tender. Remove chicken to cool. Pull into small pieces. Add soup and slices of potatoes and cook until potatoes are tender, but not falling apart. Mix cornstarch with ¼ cup of cold water until smooth. Pour into hot mixture to thicken. Add chicken (without bones) and peas to the potatoes. Spray deep baking dish with PAM. Pour mixture into dish. Open cans of biscuits and place over top of hot chicken and potato mixture. Bake at 400 degrees until biscuits are brown.

PEAR CONSERVE

1 orange
2 lemons
5 cups peeled, chopped pears
2 cups raisins
5 cups sugar

Run the orange and lemons through food grinder, using coarse knife. Combine ground fruit, chopped pears, raisins and sugar. Cook slowly until thick. Pour into hot sterilized jars and seal. Makes 3 or 4 pints.

STUFFED GREEN PEPPERS

6 large peppers, stems and seeds removed
¼ teaspoon pepper
½-pound ground beef
1 teaspoon salt
1 can condensed tomato soup
¾ cup dry bread or cracker crumbs
½ cup chopped onion

Mix ground beef, bread crumbs, salt, pepper, onion and ½ can of tomato soup. Stuff peppers with meat mixture. Stand upright in small baking dish. Pour over remaining soup, diluted with ½ soup can water. Bake covered 45 minutes, uncovered 15 minutes longer.

MACARONI CASSEROLE

1 (12-ounce) package macaroni
1 small can pimiento
2 cans cream of mushroom soup
1 cup mayonnaise
1 small chopped onion
1 stick margarine
1-pound Cheddar cheese
Salt to taste

Cook macaroni according to directions on package until tender, but not soft. Chop pimiento, onion and cheese. Combine all ingredients while macaroni is hot. Bake at 300 degree oven for 30 minutes. Delicious!

NOTE: This may be prepared a day or two in advance and refrigerated until ready to cook.

Betty Key, who has for several months been operating a grocery store and service station in the Ferguson building, has moved the entire operation to the store building last occupied by Lynn and Don Castleberry, antique dealers.

The place has an interesting history: The site was purchased by Buck Low in 1945 right after World War II. He constructed a log home for himself, which is now on the back portion of the lot.

In 1959, when Charles Malcome bought the property from Mr. Low, he moved the cabin and built the existing structure for Bill Smith who wanted bigger quarters for his store, which was in the building currently owned by William Blackburn, the Mentone Superette. Bill Smith opened for business in 1960.

Charles Malcome owned Standard Oil in Fort Payne and the structure was leased for five years to that company. After Bill Smith passed away, Ruby Stalvey operated

a restaurant there for several years. She now owns Ruby's Variety in Valley Head and has owned businesses all over the area.

After Ruby, Charles McGee operated a general store there until his death. The store remained empty for some time, until Lynn and Don Castleberry rented it for an antique and junk business.

Mr. Low remembers returning from the war and purchasing the land and getting Herman Jones and Joe Jones to build the home he wanted. "I bought the logs here, there and mostly yonder, but mostly from Clyde Rose. He's dead now. I went on his place and cut them, then we peeled them. I put about five coats of creosote on them."

Now it is the new home of Mountain Top Market. A special feature of the Market will be a tune-up shop in the grease bay. It will be operated by Robert Green of Mentone and will specialize in oil changes, lube jobs and tune-ups.

A Message From The Dekalb Council On Alcohol And Drug Abuse

By Vivian Nappler
Certified Addictions Counselor

Alcoholism is definitely a family illness. There is no way that the family members can keep from being affected by the alcoholic's erratic behavior. Just as the alcoholic continues on his downward progression caused by drinking, so does the family by their reactions to it.

The alcoholic may hit a mental, spiritual or physical bottom, or all three. This means he knows he cannot cope with his problem alone and is ready to accept help. Not all alcoholics hit bottom at the same stage of their drinking. Some recognize early that they are on the way to disaster and begin seeking help. Other alcoholics are not so fortunate as they go farther down the scale in their drinking before they are able to admit that they are powerless over alcohol.

During any stage of the alcoholic's drinking is certainly a difficult period for the family members. Anger and resentment many times provide an excuse for more drinking, as the alcoholic uses any excuse that might help him rationalize his continuous drinking. Since the alcoholic is a sick person, it is useless to blame him for a lack of will power, or to plead with him to stop damaging himself, his family or his business prospects. Relatives should not blame themselves, either; however, they can hinder recovery by their attitudes toward the alcoholic.

So what can the family of the alcoholic do? After they

have tried all of the "home remedies": the pleading, the scolding, the pampering, the threatening, the praying, the vain attempts at keeping alcohol from him (or her), they realize that they too have hit bottom in their own lives. They can no longer handle the situation alone. The most simple thing to do would be to wait patiently until the alcoholic faces his problem for himself, but this is an absolute impossibility. There is something the family can do in the meantime.

There is a program called Al-Anon, a great source of help in rebuilding the troubled lives of the relatives of alcoholics. Understand that Al-Anon's primary purpose is not to try to stop the alcoholic's drinking but to help his family lead a saner, happier and more productive life. The increased knowledge of these modern times about alcoholism is fortunately bringing many people into Al-Anon at early stages of the alcoholic problem. Today thousands of relatives of compulsive drinkers are seeking aid before drinking has ruined their home life beyond repair, or already taken its toll of sanity and health.

To do nothing is the worst thing you can do. There is an Al-Anon Group near you, no matter where you may live. Why not find the help that is available to you by attending one of these groups.

For more information or help with any alcohol-related problem call, write, or come by the DeKalb Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Council: Activities Building in Fort Payne. The telephone number is 845-5924.



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Local Wildlife: Bobcats

By Seth Banks

Bobcats, which also go by the names Bay Lynx and Wildcats, are only slightly smaller than the Lynx. They thrive in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Sometimes they live near houses and big cities. They like open land.

The Bobcat's basic color is brown, streaked out and spotted with black, but there are distinct variations over the animals. Bobcats have whitish bellies. They also have large feet. Bobcats may sink to their bellies in snow; they adapt well to weather changes. Its bobbed (stubby) tail, from which it got its name, has black on the top and white underneath. Bobcats have pointy ears with whitish cups and black backs. Its ears are tufted. The bobcat's fur is not valuable.

Bobcats are known for their fierceness in fights and will attack animals twice their own size. It eats small rodents and rabbits. Occasionally they eat deer, birds and domestic livestock. Some, that live near settled areas, will catch mice and eat scraps. Their diet is varied.

If captured while young, bobcats become quite tame. Their tempers are unpredictable when they get older. They can live over 20 years in zoos.

The bobcats in this part of the country have become more scarce as their habitats have diminished; but on a quiet night in the deep woods, their shrill cry may still be heard.

"ONE NATION UNDER GOD"

Adapted from The Pledge of Allegiance
and America The Beautiful

America is the land of the free and the home of the brave. From sea to shining sea, there is liberty and justice for all.

America's sons and daughters have produced the highest standard of living the world has ever known. Our tables are blessed with food from the fruited plains and amber waves of grain.

We, as Americans, are a brotherhood, and we stand indivisible. Our flag — our glory — the stars and stripes — stands for this republic that has been blessed ABOVE all nations.

God shed his grace on America. Our coins and bank notes pay tribute to our belief in God, and our Constitution provides for our freedom of religious belief.

In 1976, we celebrated 200 years of independence. This very year we celebrate our Constitution's 200th birthday.

America survived the war between brothers; both world wars, and two conflicts of limited engagement. The blood on foreign land was shed so that you and I might sleep at night in safety in a warmer bed with a full stomach.

America, symbolized by the eagle, is the spirit of freedom in flight.

The statue of liberty still shines her torch for the many people that still hunger for the freedoms we sometimes take for granted.

Yes — I love America. But I wonder as I write this paper if America's future is as bright as her past? I wonder if her backbone is weakening from the pressures of world crisis? Sometimes I'm scared, but when I begin to doubt, I realize that as long as we as a people show others the blessings of love that has been given us, then America will persevere.

For, to me, America is summed up in the four words found in the Pledge of Allegiance — "One Nation Under God."

Howard Cash Marsh

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DeSoto Falls

Photo By Sharon Barron

Horace Holt, a former manager of the park, spent many years researching the explorations of Hernando DeSoto, the Spanish adventurer for whom many places in the area are named. In Holt's paper on the subject, which is a part of the archives of DeSoto State Park, he tells of DeSoto's introduction to the North Alabama mountains: "In the latter part of May and first of June 1540, DeSoto and his army of Spanish Conquistadors made their journey down the Chattooga River in what is now Northwest Georgia. Passing through the vicinity of the present day cities of LaFayette and Summerville, they entered the present state of Alabama by following the course of this small river to the mouth of the Chattooga where it flows into the Coosa River near the present town of Cedar Bluff, Ala.

"They arrived at this point June 4, 1540 and camped for nearly a month, 24 days to be exact, on an island later to be named McCoy's Island. This island in the Coosa River was called 'Chiha' by DeSoto's historians. The purpose for their long encampment at Chiha (McCoy's Island) was two-fold. One reason was to allow both horses and men to rest and recover from their long and difficult journey across the Appalachian mountains, a journey they described as 'a way over rough and lofty ridges.' The other reason for their long stay in this area was because of an abundant supply of food at the fork of these two rivers on the plains of the beautiful Coosa Valley.

"At Chiha, DeSoto continued to hear rumors of gold to be found in the hills and valleys of Lookout Mountain to the North and West. His thirst for gold finally won and he sent a small group of men, under the leadership of two of his lieutenants, named Silva and Vilabo, on a side trip exploration into Lookout Mountain. These men left Chiha in the latter part of June 1540 and made their way up on Lookout Mountain somewhere between the present towns of Blanche, Ala., and Menlo and made their way to DeSoto

DeSoto State Park A Historical Overview

Falls near the present town of Mentone, Ala. They camped at DeSoto Falls at least two days and perhaps longer and searched the area for gold and precious stones. From DeSoto Falls this small group of brave men went west across Big Wills Valley at about the present site of Valley Head, Ala., and came up on Sand Mountain near the present town of Henagar, Ala. From there they followed the west side of what is now called the South Sauty Creek through the area of Sylvania and arrived at what is now known as the Point Rock area of Buck's Pocket State Park. They arrived at this place on Friday, July 9, 1540 the same day DeSoto and the main body of his expedition reached Coste in present day St. Clair County. Silva and Vilabo, and their small group of companions must have reacted in a special way to the beauty of the scene as they stood at this scenic vista on Point Rock and looked into the mighty canyon below. DeSoto's historian makes a note of their experience by saying: They came to this place and found no gold, an area of lofty hills and stupendous rocks.

"From this point in their journey this small group of DeSoto's men returned to Chiha near Cedar Bluff traveling by way of the present towns of Portersville and Sand Rock on Lookout Mountain. They arrived at their camp on McCoy's Island and found that DeSoto and the main body of his expedition had departed June 28, 1540 to continue their journey down the Coosa. DeSoto had left behind at Chiha several men too sick to travel and these were joined by the small exploring party from Sand Mountain. They all set out by canoe on the Coosa River to rejoin the main expedition camped at Coosa which was situated at the mouth of what is now known as Talledega Creek in present day Talledega County. This group arrived at Coosa on July 18, 1540 two days behind the arrival of DeSoto and the main body of his expedition July 16, 1540."

It is unlikely that Hernando DeSoto ever set foot at the places that are today famous namesakes of his here at Mentone, and the theory that the stone fortifications near the DeSoto Falls were built by him or his men is unlikely. In 1850, Pickett's *History of Alabama* states: "Other residents of the area claim that the fortifications were built by some of DeSoto's men in the 16th century as a defense against the Indians." There is no evidence of this, however.

In Horace Holt's literature, he stated that the men were only at the falls for approximately two days, so it would have been quite impossible to construct such a huge wall in that length of time.

From the time of Hernando DeSoto's exploration to the present, this mountainous region has offered some of the most beautiful scenes in the world, and far-sighted individuals began to realize early on that for this natural wonder to be preserved for generations, steps had to be undertaken to protect segments of it within the framework of wilderness areas, wildlife management areas and parks. The idea for a park on the mountain began early in this century and today over 5,000 acres are within DeSoto State Park's domain.

Next month, we will discuss the theories concerning the caves located on the rocky prominence above DeSoto Falls, as well as the stone fortifications found near there. The "rock houses," as they are known locally, are part of the park property, and plans are underway to protect them from amateur archaeologists.

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