

ON COVER: The home of Major J. J. Horner and family as it looked when built, about 1867. It was located on the NE corner of Perry and Columbia Streets.

The picture on Page 1 shows the house after remodeling of the front, modernizing it to some extent. Time of this photograph was about 1910, and shows grandchildren sitting on the porch.

The picture on Page 2 shows the house in its last days, in the 1940s. It partially burned and was torn down.

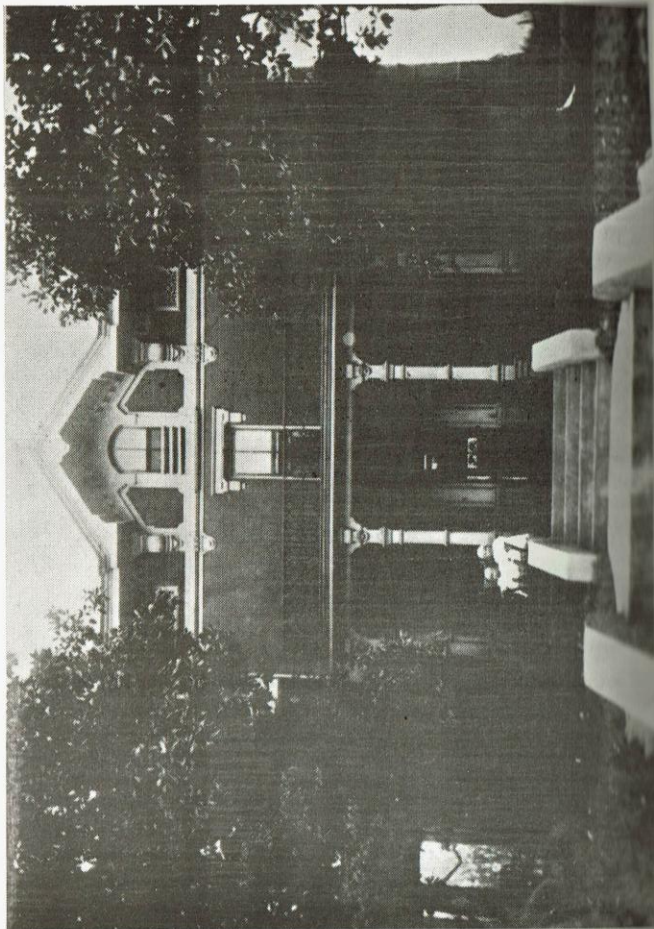
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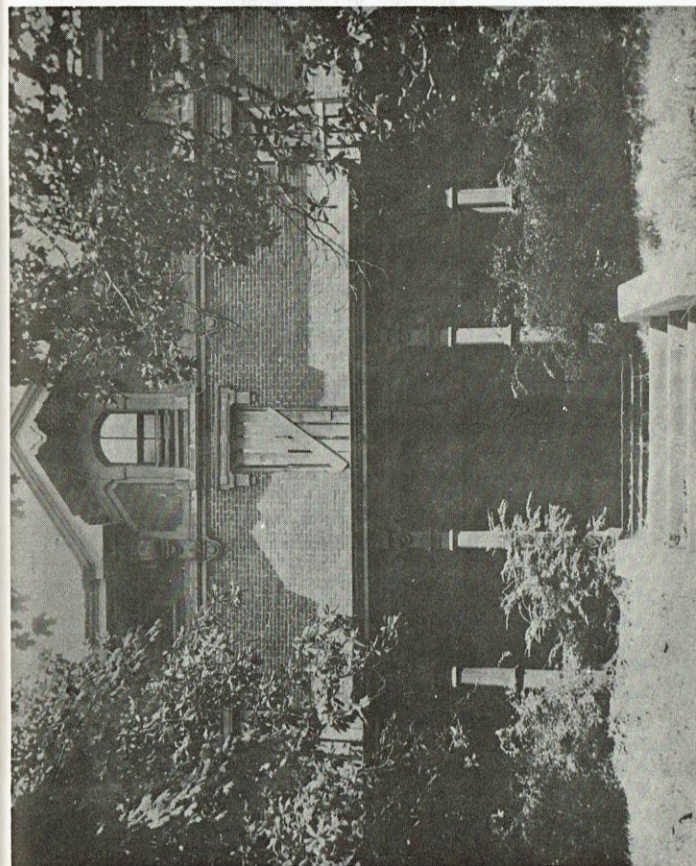
FALL ISSUE

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MR. AND MRS. CHARLES M. YOUNG
AND THE HELENA WORLD

by

Porter C. Young

This paper is from a speech given at the May, 1982 meeting of the Phillips County Historical Society.

My ancestors were early settlers in America, settling in the territory of Carolina before working their way west. Grandfather David Allen Young was a farmer who settled on the banks of the Arkansas River in Jefferson County, near a town called Tamo, 12 miles south of Pine Bluff. Floods were their biggest headache. When my father was eight years old, the family decided to move to Texas. Their small farm there was flood free, but they had trouble getting a clear-water well. Seems every place they drilled, they got greasy water. After three years the family returned to the old farm in Arkansas.

My mother, Estelle May Colhouer, was born May 3, 1888 in Pine Bluff, the daughter of Edgar Lee Colhouer and Demmaretta Lodley. She was educated at St. Agnes Academy in Pine Bluff. Her mother became bedridden with rheumatism and she was raised by an aunt, Mrs. Ida McCain, along with Mrs. McCain's 15 children. Her father was a carriage maker and undertaker by trade. He died when she was a child. Grandfather Colhouer was a veteran of the War Between the States.

Mother had a brother, Thomas Porter Colhouer, who was a columnist for the NEW YORK WORLD and was tubercular. She took her mother to the west

for her health, and divided her time between New York, Arizona and Pine Bluff. Dad described her as a "little snub nose, freckle face gal."

Dad came to Helena on July 31, 1910. In September he went west and married that little freckle faced girl. They were married in the Territory of Arizona by a bare-footed monk in a church with a dirt floor on September 27, 1910. The marriage lasted 68 years, five months. They died just 28 hours apart in February, 1979.

Mother said that on the night they arrived in Helena as newlyweds (it was her first time in Helena) they came in on a train about 10 p.m. It was raining, and Cherry Street was a street of mud. In the first two blocks of Cherry Street were about 30 saloons. The sight of the saloons and the mud made her change her mind and want to leave Helena immediately. But she didn't. She settled down, helped out on the paper, took an active civic part in the community, and raised seven children--four girls and three boys.

My father was born on January 3, 1882. He was named Charles Madison Young. His mother's name was Burilla Isphene Pollack. He had several brothers, half brothers and a sister. Because of the distance from Tamo, his father engaged a man to come and live in their house and teach school to four of his children. To quote my father, "Well, that wasn't very good because we'd get up and go out whenever we wanted to." Some more people moved in the neighborhood who had children they wanted to send to school, too. My grandfather had a sharecropper that stayed on the place named George Allen, that was one-eyed, and always in trouble with the rest of the hands on the place. Grandfather moved George to a place on the very back side of the farm. He then took the tenant

house and opened a school there. My uncle promptly dubbed it "Allen College." Dad went to Allen College when he was six years old. The school lasted three years, or until the family moved to Texas.

The family moved back to Arkansas in 1893. In 1895 Dad, age 13, got a job on a weekly newspaper in Pine Bluff for the summer. He never quit working after that until his death at the age of 97. His job on the newspaper paid him \$1 a week and he worked a ten-hour day. His main job on the weekly was running the press. By running, I mean he was the horse power--or "kicker" as they called them in those days-- The press was run by turning a large iron fly wheel. After getting it turning, a boy would kick it, keeping it spinning. The press had no electric motor.

His brother was working in Pine Bluff as a school teacher. He taught Dad reading, writing and arithmetic at night. Later Dad got a job on a daily paper in Pine Bluff, and went to business college at night. Later he took a job with the PINE BLUFF COMMERCIAL where he worked his way up from a collector to Business Manager, covering all jobs in between. He left there in 1910 when he heard that a weekly paper was for sale in Helena. When he quit, he was making \$35 a week, had managed to save \$1,000 in cash.

Arriving in Helena, he paid \$500 down on the weekly. That night several businessmen, J.C. Clamp, Ralph Lynch and others, sitting around the hotel, told him that the daily paper was for sale. He forfeited his money on the weekly and bought a half interest in the HELENA WORLD for \$500 down. He took over operations on August 1, 1910. He bought the other half in 1912.

At that time the paper was a four-page paper. Today the paper averages 14 pages and revenues each day are more than he paid for the paper.

The HELENA WORLD was founded as a weekly in 1870 by William S. Burnett, great grandfather of Attorney Bill Dinning and Mrs. Ray Burch. He founded the daily on December 5, 1872. It is the second oldest daily newspaper in Arkansas today, and the oldest continuous business in Phillips County.

Mr. Burnett sold out to W. M. Neal. Mr. Neal moved the paper from its location on a side street between Ohio and Water street to Ohio street next to Feldman Commission Co., now the location of Edelweiss Antiques. The paper burned in February, 1919, and new equipment was purchased and the paper reopened at 311 Walnut street, where it was published for 42 years before moving to its present location on York street in 1961.

Mr. Neal, sensing he was not long for this world, gave the paper to his employees in 1902. He died just a week after completing the transaction. His widow later married E. S. Ready. I'm sure many of you remember Mrs. Ready.

My folks bought the paper from George Adams, Charles Underwood, Mr. Geduldig and others. Mr. Adams had an interest in a newspaper in Pine Bluff and left immediately to take over its management. It was the GRAPHIC.

In 1908, the Editor of the WORLD, a Mr. Scott, was murdered by a politician. The crime took place in Newby's saloon, located near the corner of Ohio and York streets. J.P. Burks ran the WORLD for Mr. Adams from 1904 until 1908. His son, Edwin, was a paper carrier. Mr. Burks

moved to Pine Bluff in 1908 to manage Mr. Adams' paper and returned to Helena in 1913 to become editor for my father. Edwin worked on the paper as a carrier, in circulation and in advertising until he quit to open his insurance agency which he still runs today.

A man by the name of George Nicholls worked on the paper as a reporter for several years, later resigned and opened his own printing shop-- Nicholls Printing Company. The WORLD's job printing department was sold about 1915 to Bradfield and Hydel. Alvin Solomon was working for the WORLD when Dad purchased it in 1910. Gene Foreman, now managing editor of the PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, is a former employee. Mrs. Nanice Tappan Hornor is a former society editor. There are many others who started their careers at the HELENA WORLD.

In 1910 the WORLD was printed on a sheet-fed 2-page press. They later graduated to a 4-page press, then an 8-page roll fed press. In 1961 we changed over to a 16-page semi-cylindrical press and in 1971 installed a 24-page off-set press capable of printing four colors at the same time. In 1910 the circulation was 500. Today it is 7,500. In 1981 the WORLD was sold to Park Newspapers of Ithaca, N.Y.

Over the years there have been many newspapers come and go. Back in the olden days just about every job printer tried to put out a newspaper. As the industry became more sophisticated the job shops quit printing newspapers. Then, over the years politicians have attempted to start newspapers, but the American public has consistently refused to support such newspapers.

The HELENA WORLD did more than just print

the news. Back in 1932 Phillips County was in the heart of the depression and suffered a great drought. People were starving. Children were going to school on empty stomachs. The Red Cross allocated up to \$4.50 a week to unemployed farm families for food. My father, as Publisher of the WORLD, sent a letter to every daily newspaper in the country asking for help. The results were astonishing. William Randolph Hearst sent his personal check for \$1,000. One Michigan town sent six trucks loaded with food, accompanied by their mayor. Other loads were sent from the states of Washington and Colorado. State troopers accompanied the trucks to prevent highjacking. The food was stored in the basement of the Phillips County Courthouse and distributed to all the schools in Phillips County, parts of Lee and Monroe counties. It was the first hot lunches served by schools in Phillips County.

Early one Saturday morning shortly after that, a large crowd of blacks gathered outside Dad's home on Perry Street and asked to see him. He went to the door and was presented with a silver tray in appreciation for what he had done for Phillips County.

A sign on my desk for years said-- "I consider the day a total loss unless I catch hell about something." Such is the life of a newspaperman. He is damned if he does, and damned if he doesn't. People are funny. They want to see in print every little detail about their neighbor's shenanigans, but "don't you dare print the story about me."

I recall one old-time Helena lawyer, who had been hired to help prosecute a case in court, coming into the HELENA WORLD office and giving us a lecture on "never suppressing the news." He

wanted to be sure we covered the trial "in favor of his clients." But! The very next day he was in the office asking us to withhold the story on some of his kinfolks being arrested and jailed the night before.

Except for the most serious offenses, we never printed the names of teenagers who got into trouble. One day we had a story about two teenagers being arrested for stealing hubcaps. No names were printed. The next day I received a call from an anonymous lady saying "well, I read where two society boys are in trouble again, and you are protecting their families by not printing their names." The facts were: One of the boys was a 16-year-old being raised by his grandfather, a sharecropper. The other was a 17-year-old farm boy, a high school drop-out, home on leave from the army. But the story had a happy ending for me. The boys were found guilty in municipal court, given suspended sentences. They were sitting in the police station waiting for papers to be completed when I entered the room to copy the police blotter. They asked me not to print their names. I asked if they didn't know they were doing wrong in stealing hubcaps. "Yes, but this will kill grandpa if he hears about it," one boy said. I agreed to keep their names out of the paper, but told them that if I ever saw their names on the arrest blotter I would print the story about their previous arrest. A year later I was attending the high school graduation and the sharecroppers grandson was in the class. As he walked down the aisle in his cap and gown, he spotted me, gave me a big wink and hand signal as if to say "I'm a good boy, now." I'll never forget it. Of course, I never had any intentions of printing their names in the first place.

We had a rule never to take wedding announcements over the telephone or accept them through the mail because too many mothers would announce their daughters engagement when the daughter hadn't even been proposed to.

But not everyone wanted to keep their names out of the paper. Some thrived on seeing their name in print. One late Helena lawyer had a philosophy to keep his name in the paper--good or bad news. "If you praise me, the people will think I'm great. If you print something derogatory, the people will think you're persecuting me."

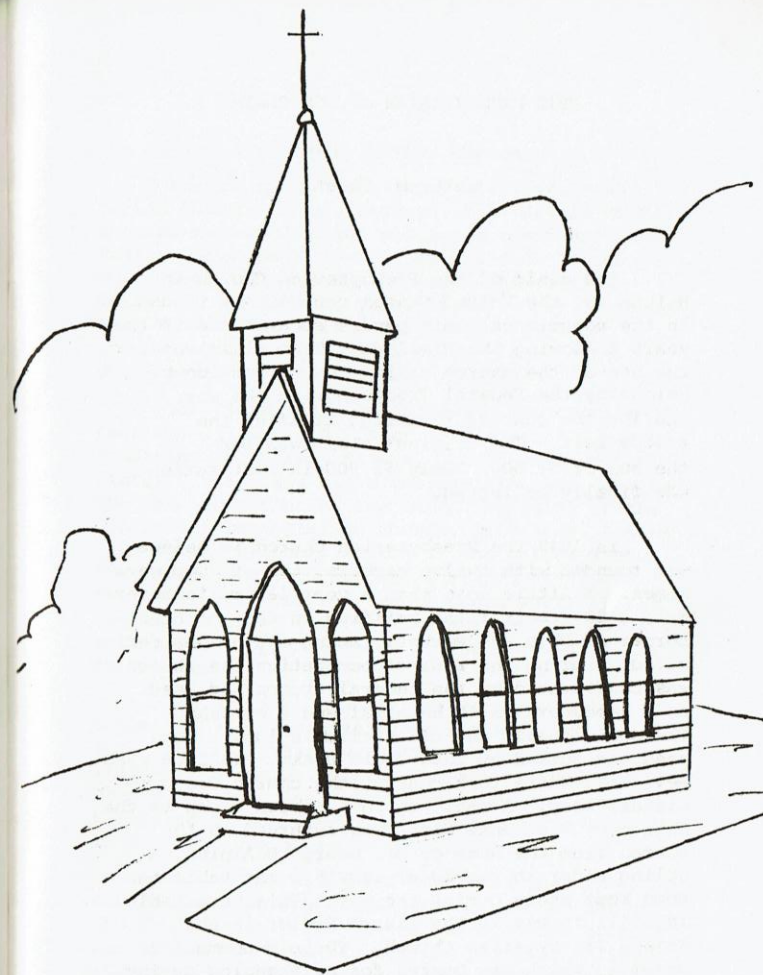
Back during the depression days, things were tough all over. The banks closed. There was no money. I still have a note from the WORLD Publishing Co. for \$12, money borrowed from my piggy bank to help make the payroll. When cash disappeared, the WORLD paid off each Saturday in scrip. For a while the merchants were spending those slips of paper just like real money.

At that time, a year's subscription by mail was \$3.95. Most farmers didn't have the money, so they bartered.

Charles M. Young fed his family for several years on barter. Pigs, turkeys, chickens, hay and oats, sweet potatoes, etc. I've helped cut up many a whole hog that was swapped for a years subscription. The farmer wanted his HELENA WORLD and we needed the food. One lady at Turner exchanged pecans. When things began to improve financially, she still continued to pay her subscription with pecans, doing so until her death in the 1950s. We swapped ads to the barber for haircuts, with the shoe repair man for resoles, with the dry cleaner for dry cleaning. Tradeouts

were the way to stay in business.

Your daily newspaper covers history in the making, as it happens. The PHILLIPS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY often carries stories taken from the papers of yore.



FIRST BUILDING 1849
Corner Ohio St. & Market St.
History of the First
Presbyterian Church
Artwork - Ruth Green

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CLAIM

by

Betty M. Faust

The claim of the Presbyterian Church in Helena vs. the United States can best be traced in the voluminous claim papers accumulated in the years following the Civil War. This claim was for the use of the church during the occupation of Helena by the Federal Troops during the war and for the cost of repairing it after the troops left. The original claim was for the sum of \$7,000. Only \$1,900 in restitution was finally collected.

In 1849 the Presbyterian Church in Helena was founded with twelve members, ten of whom were women. A little more than a year later, in November, 1850, their first building on the northeast corner of Ohio and Market, facing south, was dedicated. During the Federal occupation the church was confiscated by the federal troops and used as a headquarters, a hospital and a workshop. The pews, pulpit and all available lumber were used and worked up into field desks. In 1868 when Rev. T.W. White took charge, the church was completely bare. A table which had been given to the church by Mrs. Anna Nash¹ was returned to the church from the home of Dr. George McAlpine², a ruling elder in the local church. The table had been kept there during the war. This same table is still in use in the Church Parlor in the Helena Presbyterian Church. The old communion service, which was buried for safekeeping during

the war, is on display at the Church.

According to the history of First Presbyterian Church, it was a woman, Miss Hattie White, who was responsible for placing a claim with the federal government for the damage done to the church building during the war. She came to Helena from Richmond, Virginia, with her brother, Rev. Thomas Ward White³, who served as pastor of the church from 1868 until 1872. Later Hattie White married James Graham.

The claim reads as follows: "Congressional Case No. 11706. U.S. Court of Claims, Old School Presbyterian Church, Helena, Ark. vs the United States. This is a claim for repairs, and for the use and occupation of the church building of the Old School Presbyterian Church, at Helena, Arkansas, by the military forces of the United States from July, 1862, to May 1865, stated at \$7,000. The claim was referred to the court April 27, 1904, by resolution of the United States Senate under act of Congress approved March 3, 1887, known as the Tucker Act."

The original depositions were taken in October 1891. The attorney for the church was P.M. Ashford. There were five witnesses as follows; Samuel I. Clark, Thompson M. Oldham, John J. Hornor, Angus W. Sutherland, and Mrs. Winnifred E. McAlpine. Mrs. McAlpine was the only witness who was a member of the church.

All of the witnesses testified that the church "as a church organization" gave no aid to the Confederacy. The rental value of the property was estimated from \$25 to \$100 per month. The attorney chose the lowest figure of \$25 a month as rent on a carpenter shop. The building was occupied for 34 months, making \$850 due for rent.

Witness ANGUS W. SUTHERLAND, age 47, was a contractor and dealer in building supplies. He

testified that "at the request of Mrs. Hattie E. Graham and other ladies of the Old School Presbyterian Church...I made a careful examination of the church building belonging to the said Church... and have made the following estimate of costs of putting said building in a suitable condition for ordinary church purposes..." His itemized list totals \$1803.10.

Another witness, JOHN J. HORNOR, stated that he was not in Helena during the occupation but that he was familiar with the condition of the church at the beginning of the war and also at the end. He rebuilt at his own expense the pulpit for \$140. He remembered that the glass in the windows was almost all broken, the plaster was off and the "church was in about the condition one would expect to find after occupation by soldiers for three years."

Witness SAMUEL I. CLARK, age 57, was listed as the Clerk of the U.S. Circuit Court. He was an officer in the Federal Army, serving first with the 1st Missouri Infantry, and then serving as 1st Lieutenant and adjutant with the 56th Colored Infantry when it was stationed at Helena from 1863-1865. Part of his regiment was quartered in the Presbyterian Church.

Witness, THOMPSON M. OLDHAM, a carpenter, had lived in Helena since 1853. He worked in the church as a carpenter during the occupation, making field desks for the Federal officers. He stated that "the seats and every movable thing about it was used up and the house itself was greatly damaged."

Another witness, MRS. W.E. MCALPINE, age 52, lived in Helena during the occupation and was a member of the Presbyterian Church. She described the damage to the building and concluded "that it was thought to be a hopeless task to attempt to repair the church."

From the Congressional Record, there are copies of Bills introduced in December 1891; January 1892; August 1893; December 1895; January 1896; December 1901; November 1903; January and April 1904. All of these bills are for "the relief of the Old School Presbyterian Church, Helena, Ark."

In 1895 the church building was destroyed by fire. Mr. J.W. Clopton⁴ recorded the fire in his diary as follows: "The small residence immediately back of the Presbyterian Church took fire about 3 o'clock in the morning and set fire to the church. Both buildings burned down. The old Church steeple with the old weather cock representing a harp, which had dodged the breezes 45 years, toppled over and sank in the flames. The church building was insured for \$1900 and the organ for \$200." The fact that the church had the building and contents insured for only \$1200 which they collected after the fire greatly weakened their claim for \$7000 from the United States. Plans began for building a new church. The old lot on Ohio was sold and the lot on the southeast corner of Porter and Franklin was bought for a new church⁵. The first service was held in the church in April, 1896-- just a year after the old building was destroyed by fire.

In the claim papers there is a Petition, dated April 27, 1904, to the Claims Court for the sum of \$7,000. It is signed by the Trustees of the Church, S. A. Wooten⁶ and S. C. Moore, and their attorney, G. W. Z. Black.

Depositions were again taken at Helena on May 24, 1905, by E. R. Crum, Clerk of the U.S. Circuit Court.⁷ Present were S. A. Wooten, representing the church, and Robert Chisholm, representing the United States. Depositions were taken from three witnesses that had testified in 1891 in the hearing for the original claim. These were Samuel I. Clark, Thompson M. Oldham, and Mrs.

W.E. McAlpine. Two of the original witnesses- John J. Hornor and Angus W. Sutherland- were dead. No new witnesses testified.

It was found from the evidence that the Helena Presbyterian Church, as a church, was "loyal to the Government of the United States during the late war of the rebellion." Also, "the military forces of the United States, for a period of eighteen months,...used, occupied and damaged the church building... Such use and occupation... was reasonably worth the sum of \$1900, for which no payment appears to have been made." According to papers of the local Presbyterian Church, the sum of \$1900 was received from the United States by the church.

Most of the information for this article came from the papers of the claim itself. Also used were previous articles in the QUARTERLY by Dale Kirkman about the claims of the First Baptist Church in Helena⁸ and the heirs of Dr. Deputy.⁹ Histories of the Presbyterian Church that were used are in the 1904 Souvenir Section of the HELENA WORLD¹⁰ the church's scrapbook, and a church history in the QUARTERLY by John King, Jr.¹¹ My impetus for this article was an old yellowed newspaper clipping brought to me last May by Tucker McCollough Daggett which told of an appropriation bill introduced by her grandfather, Phillip D. McCollough, Jr., Congressman from this District. This was for the sum of \$4500 for "the relief of the Old School Presbyterian Church of Helena." The Session Minutes of the local church were not available for research.

FOOTNOTES

¹Mrs. Anna Nash was the great, great grandmother of Bart Lindsey, who is presently serving as Clerk of the Session at the Helena Presbyterian Church.

²Dr. George McAlpine was born at Port Gibson, Miss., in 1827. He graduated from the University of Maryland in 1850, married Miss Winifred Wigginton of Louisville, Kentucky, and moved to Helena in 1856. He was elected an elder in the Presbyterian Church in 1860 and served until his death in 1888.

³Rev. White and his sister Hattie White Graham were the great uncle and aunt of Graham White Woodin, an active member of the Helena Presbyterian Church.

⁴J.W. Clopton was the grandfather of Helen Clopton Polk Mosby.

⁵This is the present site of M-C Drug.

⁶S.A. Wooten was the grandfather of Wooten and Thea Epes and others.

⁷E.R. Crum took many depositions of witnesses in claims cases. A little record book that he kept in the 1890s of these depositions is in the Phillips County Museum.

⁸PHILLIPS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, Vol. 17, No. 4, Sept. 1979, p. 30.

⁹PHILLIPS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, Vol. 18, Nos. 3/4, June/Sept., 1980, p. 70.

¹⁰PHILLIPS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, Vol. 13, No. 1, Dec., 1974, p. 35.

¹¹PHILLIPS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, Vol. 3, No. 1, Sept. 1964, p. 15.

INDIAN BAY

From the MARVELL MESSENGER
Friday, July 15, 1966

Paper's editor: The following article, "Indian Bay," was written by the late Watt McKinney whose father was one of the first to build a clubhouse on the Bay. Clubhouses at that time were quite different from those being built now with all the comforts of "City Dwellers."

Indian Bay is the beautiful name of a superbly beautiful stream, a tributary of the White River, in a southern part of Monroe County. The two very words, composing its name, are suggestive of beauty, of romance, of tranquility, and of a home of an ancient race.

Indian Bay was so called by the early settlers of that area no doubt on account of the two large Indian mounds located there, one of which is unusually high and stands directly on the edge of the bay. From time to time over the past years, due to the action of a swift current in periods of high water, portions of this mound have caved away and fallen into the stream, revealing it as having been used in centuries past as a burying place for the dead, perhaps of those who built it. The other of the two mounds, located several hundred yards inland is now the neglected and abandoned site of a burial ground used by many of the early settlers of the community.

Adjacent to the shores of this beautiful stream, lies the site of the original town of Indian Bay, once a very thriving and prosperous

village, peopled by many wealthy, cultured and aristocratic families prominent in the affairs of the county and state. Extending northward and eastward for many miles lay broad, alluvial plantations on which were produced each year many thousands of bales of long staple cotton that contributed largely to the prosperity of the town and surrounding county.

According to records filed in the recorders office at Clarendon, the county seat of Monroe County, what was known as the Town of Indian Bay was incorporated and platted under the name of Warsaw, though it was never known by this name. It is situated in a Private Survey No. 2345, usually referred to as a Spanish Grant and located in the Southeast corner of Township Three South, Range One West. This survey comprised an area of two hundred and twenty-four acres and John Diana was its original owner as shown by existing records.

The first survey and map of the township in which Indian Bay is included was made by Deputy Surveyor, N. Rightor in the year 1825. With reference to this survey, it is interesting to mention that among a large collection of relics owned by one of the citizens of St. Charles, a village on the White River only a few miles distant, there is a slab of wood that was cut only a few years ago from the body of a huge cypress tree and on which appears the inscriptions made by this surveying party more than One Hundred years ago. This tree and its inscriptions, standing near a point cornered by four sections of heavily timbered forest land not far from Indian Bay was located purely by chance. A surveyor in the employ of a large timber concern was engaged in determining the boundaries of certain sections

and was using the filed notes prepared by Rightor as his guide in this work. Through his calculations, the surveyor was positive that he had arrived near the location on which stood the tree mentioned in the notes. There were many giant cypress trees standing about him any one of which might have been the one he sought and that bore the markings of a hundred years past. He had little hopes of locating the tree, when an axman swung his sharp blade and with the first stroke a large slab fell from the side of one of these age old trees, revealing the inscription concealed through a century's growth.

The first settlers or pioneers who are definitely known to have located in this part of Arkansas and Monroe County are the Mose Prices, J. Diana, Joseph Mitchell, A. Berdu, and Major Dukes, all of whom received liberal grants of land and established homes for themselves on or near the stream of Indian Bay.

The Town of Indian Bay and that part of Monroe County known as The Indian Bay Community were favored with an era of wonderful prosperity and growth dating from the period marking the close of the civil war up until 1890. Many large and substantial mercantile establishments were located there to supply the needs of its large plantation area. The most prominent of these merchants were M.D. Martin and Samuel L. Black who conducted a partnership business known as Martin and Black. In addition to their mercantile establishment, Martin and Black also owned and operated a cotton gin and saw mill. Among the other and prominent business concerns at Indian Bay were, Burge and Robinson, Silverman Brothers, Blaine and Hargis, B.F. and G.F. Johnson. Dr. Shipman was the leading physician and

Clem Clark was the proprietor of the Rainbow Saloon.

Major Samuel L. Black, father of the late John S. Black of Holly Grove several times Sheriff, County Judge and Treasurer of Monroe County, was one of Indian Bay's and the county's first citizens, a successful merchant, owner of extensive and valuable plantation properties and long prominent in the social, religious and business life of Eastern Arkansas. He was born in Fayette County, Tennessee, on March 22nd, 1842, coming to Arkansas when he was sixteen years of age. At the beginning of hostilities occasioned by the war between the North and South, Samuel L. Black enlisted in a company organized in Clarendon by Captain J.T. Harris for service in the cause of the Southern Confederacy. This, the first company organized in Monroe County, became a part of the first Arkansas regiment, commanded by Patrick R. Cleburne of Helena and Black was subsequently commissioned a Junior Lieutenant. He was promoted to the rank of Captain at Bowling Green Kentucky. The first major battle in which Samuel L. Black was engaged was that of the famous battle of Shiloh, where in recognition of his exceptional bravery and leadership he was advanced to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and attached to Hardee's staff. He participated in Bragg's invasion of Kentucky and was at the surrender of the Federal forces at Mundfordsville and engaged in the battle of Perryville. Immediately after the battle of Murfreesboro in which he took a leading part and that resulted in such a decisive victory for the Confederate forces, Black was promoted to the rank of Major. He was in the battles of Chickamauga and Missionary Ridge, fought with the Army of Tennessee from Dalton to

Atlanta, was in front of Sherman in his march from Savannah through the Carolinas and was captured by a squad of Sherman's cavalry, but after being held a few hours escaped by a wild ride. He surrendered with the Confederate forces at Greensboro, North Carolina.

Among the prominent planters of the Indian Bay Community in that period marking the crest of its growth and development were Captain William M. Mayo, Sam R. Pointer, W.D. Burge, F.J. Robinson, Lawrehce Mayo, M.D. Martin, B.P. Jackson and William H. Boyce.

Captain William M. Mayo, the owner of the most extensive plantation properties in southern Monroe County, moved there in the year of 1853 from Martin County, North Carolina, bringing with him a large number of slaves. Several thousand acres of undeveloped land were acquired by Captain Mayo, a large portion of which was soon placed in a state of cultivation. This estate, still the property of the Mayo family now owned by the grandchildren of its founder is considered one of the most valuable and productive properties in this section of Arkansas. Of the lands originally acquired by Captain William M. Mayo and still a part of the estate, there are several hundred acres of virgin forest, said to be the only remaining large and heavily timbered tract of land in this state.

Indian Bay was a regular port of call for steamboats operating out of Memphis and engaged in the White River trade. All merchandise shipments to the Memphis market of the vast numbers of bales of cotton and sacks of seed produced in the community. Among the boats that visited Indian Bay each week, it is recalled that the most noted of these were, the Hard Cash, Chickasaw, and Josie Harry. Captain E.G. Postal was

owner and master of the Chickasaw and Green Snow was one of the pilots. At the foremost part of the bow of the Chickasaw there stood a life-size figure of an Indian, a token to that race of people for whom the boat was named. Captain Milt Harry was owner and master of the Josie Harry that was named for his wife. Both the Josie Harry and the Chickasaw carried excellent appointments for the comfort and convenience of passengers. The Chickasaw sank with a heavy cargo one night as the boat was in the White River only a short distance above its junction with the Mississippi. The Josie Harry burned to the water's edge when in sight of the landing at Memphis, resulting in the entire loss of her cargo containing 1600 bales of cotton and more than 500 sacks of seed consigned by Indian Bay planters to Memphis merchants.

Extending from the shores of Indian Bay and its bayou tributaries there were in years a long past, broad areas of forest, heavy with the growth of giant cypress trees. These lands were the property of the Federal Government, however, it is said that many millions of feet of excellent logs were illegally taken each year, and that many men were engaged entirely in this business. The procedure followed by these in this unlawful practice was this, during the usual Spring rise of these streams, and the consequent overflow of their banks, these great forest lands were covered with water to a depth of several feet, and it was during these periods that the trees were cut, sawed into logs and floated out into the open water where the logs were tied together, forming a huge raft that was floated with the current down the river and sold to some large saw-mill at Greenville or Vicksburg. It is said that often several thousand dollars would be obtained for a single large raft of

cypress logs. Usually a cypress log will float, yet many of them will not, consequently many thousands of logs became detached from these rafts and sank, and it is said that Indian Bay contains many millions of feet of these sunken logs that are yet in a perfect state of preservation.

The stream of Indian Bay is formed by the confluence of several large bayous and its length from source to its junction with the White River is perhaps ten miles. Stately cypresses line its banks and here and there along its course beautiful bars of white sand extend out towards the stream.

The site of the former village of Indian Bay is situated about midway between the stream's point of origin and its mouth. The decline of the town of Indian Bay occurred some time prior to the year 1890 after which the declension was more rapid and continued until the place was practically abandoned. The decline of this once prosperous and growing community was caused by a number of successive floods of long duration and increasing destructions. Prior to the year 1882 the community had never been seriously affected by flood waters, but after that time beginning with the completion of a levee along the east side of the Mississippi River these disastrous and unfortunate occurrences visited the territory with increasing frequency finally leading to its inevitable financial ruin.

Indian Bay with its broad, deep bayous and wide expanse of forest adjoining its shores and embracing many, quiet, beautiful lakes has long been a favorite retreat of the sportsman. The waters abound in many varieties of fish in both the game and commercial species the dense forests

afford a place of sanctuary for vast numbers of wild creatures, huge flights of waterfowl annually visit this region and visitors each year in increasing numbers are finding enchantment in its wild beauty and enjoyment in the recreational facilities afforded.

Indian Bay may be reached at any season of the year over State Highway No. 17.

THE DIARY OF A SOLDIER: PART 2

Captain Thomas J. Key was born in Bolivar, Tennessee, on January 17, 1831, the son of Chesley Daniel Key who had emigrated from Virginia where he had been reared on a plantation adjoining that of Thomas Jefferson. In his early childhood young Key's parents moved to Mississippi, settling at Jacinto, the county seat of Tishomingo County. Here his boyhood was spent. When he was fifteen years of age, Thomas found employment in the office of the publisher of a weekly paper at Tuscumbia, Alabama, remaining in that position for four years until he had saved sufficient money to enter LaGrange College, in the same state. He was in attendance from 1850 to 1852, leaving school in the latter year to buy the DAY BOOK (more commonly referred to as the FRANKLIN COUNTY DEMOCRAT), the newspaper upon which he had formerly worked at Tuscumbia.

At this time the nation was greatly agitated over the question of slavery in the Kansas Territory, and the strenuous efforts towards colonization were being put forth by the slave and free states. At the height of the controversy, Key--with one hundred and thirty persons from Alabama--removed to the Kansas Territory where he himself began the publication at Doniphan of the KANSAS CONSTITUTIONALIST, the first issue appearing on May 4, 1856. Militantly slave and Democratic in its editorial policy, the paper was received with great hostility by the predominately Northern population that had settled in this part of the territory. Meanwhile, he was elected to serve in the celebrated Lecompton Constitutional Convention.

Key soon found that the Southern element in Kansas was fighting a losing battle because of the tremendous wave of immigration that was sweeping in from the North and East. Both he and his press were more than once thrown into the river, and when the Lecompton Constitution was rejected he decided to return to the South. Settling at Helena, Arkansas, on the Mississippi River below and opposite Memphis, he published a Democratic newspaper and served in the State Legislature. He was a member of that body in 1860 and voted for secession.

The main facts of Captain Key's military career are soon told. Having determined to enter the army, he enlisted as a private in Company G, 15th (Josey's) Regiment, Arkansas Infantry, on May 1, 1862, at Corinth. Almost immediately, however, he was transferred to Calvert's battery (Arkansas Light Artillery) of Hotchkiss's battalion, and in June he was promoted to the position of 2nd lieutenant. In this capacity, and later as 1st lieutenant, he took part in most of the fighting in northern Mississippi; in Bragg's Kentucky campaign; and, on December 31, 1862, in the bloody and indecisive Battle of Murfreesboro, fought as the army retreated south through Middle Tennessee. Here he commanded the artillery which henceforth won fame as "Key's battery."

At the battle of Chickamauga, September 19th and 20th, 1863, he served with unusual distinction. In their official reports, Lieutenant General D.H. Hill, Major General Pat Cleburne, Brigadier General Lucius E. Polk, and Colonel B.J. Hill cited him for gallantry and effectiveness, saying that in the fiercest part of the struggle he ran his battery by hand to within sixty yards of the enemy's lines.¹ At the Battle of Missionary Ridge, fought on November 25, 1863, General Cleburne stationed

Key with his battery over the tunnel where the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad passed through the ridge, and placed him in charge of all the Confederate artillery there.

In reporting that the batteries of Key and Swett bore the brunt of the fighting, he said that the former depressed his guns to the utmost and fired shell and canister down the hill in the face of a withering fire from the enemy. When the guns could no longer be gotten into position to command the precipitous slope, he led his men in rolling down stones upon the determined foe.²

With the retreat of the Southern forces after Missionary Ridge, Key helped form the rear guard which received the thanks of the Confederate Congress for saving Bragg's army from destruction, serving with particular distinction at Ringgold Gap on November 27th. Thereafter, the army went into winter quarters at Dalton while Cleburne's division, including Key's battery, acted as an outpost ten miles to the north at Tunnel Hill, Georgia (not to be confused with the tunnel through the ridge at Chattanooga). At this point the diary begins.

**

The entire diary is not printed herein. Selected parts that pertain to Helena, or people from Helena, are used, along with entries that are especially interesting.

IN WINTER QUARTERS
NEAR DALTON

February 5, 1864

Bade my friends adieu for a brief period and took the cars for Dalton where I gathered the

letters for friends across the Mississippi. The cars were so thronged with soldiers that I could not obtain a seat, and was therefore compelled to stand in the aisles almost the whole night. Shortly before daylight the train arrived at Atlanta.

February 6, 1864

Before sunrise I visited the railroad depot in Atlanta to get a ticket, and there I met Captains Kearns and Sherer, the former being "boozy," or in a jolly mood. He drew out a bottle and insisted that I should drink with him. I told him that I did not make a habit of drinking, but he would not excuse me. We took seats together in the cars for Montgomery, Alabama, where we arrived that night, but nothing particular occurred save being most distressingly bored by a pretended doctor who made a hole in our commissary and devoured a liberal share of our medical supplies-whiskey.

February 7, 1864

Early in the morning we arose, deposited our baggage with the bar keeper, and bent our steps for a restaurant to get some genuine coffee, oysters, fish, etc. The Captain took on an overload of "medical supplies," and insisted (after Captain Sherer and I had eaten very heartily) that we should have more coffee and fish. He made a servant fill our cups and so we began breakfast afresh. The meal for the three cost \$30. At 5 o'clock we took passage on a steamer for Selma, Alabama, arriving there about 5 o'clock P.M.

February 8, 1864

In order to see the city of Selma the two captains and I walked from the hotel to the railroad

depot. It is a beautiful town, with broad streets, the one which we walked up having a number of artesian wells on it. The residences are of a Gothic style, with front yards laid out in hearts, diamonds, and other shapes, and evergreens looking as fresh as a sweet sixteen Miss. The cars passed through a rich farming country until we reached Demopolis, Alabama, where we took passage on a small steamer down the Tombigbee River to the railroad four miles from Demopolis. At this place we heard that the Federal General, Sherman, had reached Jackson, Mississippi, and that the Confederate authorities would not allow us to go any further, but to our joy the latter part of the story was unfounded. Sunset found us at Meridian.³

February 9, 1864

At 4 o'clock A.M. I was aroused to take the cars for West Point on the Mobile & Ohio Railroad, the arrival of the Yankees at Jackson causing me to make a circuitous route, going north and then traveling west. Although I regretted to part from my agreeable captains, I fell in, before the day was gone, with a Mr. R. C. Davis of McNeil's Virginia Partisan Rangers. He had practiced law in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, was well read, polished in manners, and a true specimen of Southern gentleman. Arriving at West Point, Mississippi, we left the cars and I at once visited almost half of the houses in town in an effort to get a conveyance to carry us to Grenada. I had about despaired when I was directed to a Mr. Brame, whom I found to have an honest face and who talked to suit my feelings. Finally, he told me that if I could hire no one to take me across the country I should come to his house, a mile and a half in the country, and he would see what he could do for us. We called for dinner at a hotel, where we had pork and beans, but the females were beating eggs

and I discovered some cakes which, however, did not reach the table. As we walked into the bar-room I saw three shy lasses whose smiles and coquetted actions told me that a wedding was on hand. Mr. Davis and I paid our bills and bent our course for Mr. Brame's. The latter's conversation indicated an informed gentleman and Christian. After tea it was agreed that if Mr. Davis would leave his valise he (Brame) would send us to Grenada on two horses, accompanied by his son. All consented and we retired that night with light hearts.

February 10, 1864

Breakfast was announced before sunrise, the horses were saddled, we bade Mr. and Mrs. Brame good morning, and off we rode, feeling that we were on our way home. As we jogged along, the day was spent in conversation, interspersed now and then with a conundrum or an anecdote. Night found us 40 miles from West Point and we took up for rest at a residence in the fine hills of Choctaw county. The lady of the house began at once inquiring the news, saying that the South was conquered and that we had better give up the struggle. Mr. Davis and I began laying before her the promising day of victory and success, and before we bade farewell the next morning she thought the Southern cause in better condition than she did the evening before.

February 11, 1864

Before the luminary of the day shook his locks over the eastern horizon, I was up at the horse lot looking after my mount. We ate a hearty breakfast, paid our bills, and set out for Grenada. The country through which we passed was lonely and the winds sighing through the pines

added to the general gloom. At sunset we reached Grenada where, before I had dismounted, Mr. John King pursued me down the street telling me that he had two mules for me to ride back home. I replied that I had a horse for him to ride back to West Point; so fortune had favored both of us. Davis said I was the most fortunate man with whom he had ever traveled and that he regretted to part with me. I told him that I attributed my success to my faith in God and my constant prayers for His blessings.

February 12, 1864

Learning that the cars would not leave Grenada for Oakland for two days, Monroe (the negro boy) and I started on our journey of twenty-five miles on foot to the place where there were two mules. Monroe attempted to pilot me through a near route to our animals, but before we had traveled many miles he had me in a canebrake in the Yalobusha bottom without a vestige of a road to lead us from our bewildered condition. After working my way through the cane like a rabbit hiding from the pursuing hound, we discovered a road to which we gladly kept. Arriving at a house I went up to it with the intention of hiring horses to convey us to my mules. Found the farmer spaying pigs and I made my wants known. He refused to rent me his horses, but while I was resting my wearied legs I was using my tongue, and in a few moments the farmer said he would send his son with me ten miles. The horses were soon saddled and we made good time for 12 miles, for which I paid him \$6. The negro and I then dismounted and continued our journey on foot. After plodding for more than seven miles we reached a place where the mongrel animals were located and with no tardy motions we mounted ourselves and

after dark hauled up five miles west of Charleston.

February 13, 1864

Early in the morning we were fed and equipped to try the mud of the Mississippi River bottom. The first ten miles was muck and water so deep that our mules struggled to extricate their sharp hoofs from its sticky tenacity. By noon, greatly fatigued, we had reached the Tallahatchie River, which had double interest for me from the fact that twelve months prior the Yankee gunboats and transports floated on its narrow bosom. I rode eight miles down the stream, on the banks of which were many beautiful and fertile plantations. The Abolitionists had stolen from these farmers many negroes, but the people were still in affluent circumstances. We crossed the river and made good time until sunset, when we halted at a large plantation and found the gentleman and lady agreeable and polite. At night I heard some artillery firing and was somewhat alarmed, fearing that the Yankees were making a raid.

February 14, 1864

After enjoying a hearty breakfast of ham, butter, and milk, I handed the farmer a note of Confederate money to pay my bill, but he remarked, "I do not charge soldiers." This was the first service that I received on my route for which I did not pay two prices. The road lay on the banks of Cassidy Bayou and was generally dry. Two hours before the sun went down I had made 36 miles and dismounted at General Forrest's plantation where his mother-in-law and brother-in-law, Mr. Montgomery, live. The ladies let me have a yoke of oxen to drag a "dugout" a mile and a half to the river, and long before night prepared supper for my special benefit so I would not cross the river with an empty stomach. "Bless the ladies" said my heart. But when I had thanked them and bade

them farewell and was about driving off, the two negroes who were to steer my barque over the turbid waters of the Mississippi "backed out," and I was forced to return to the house and remain for the night. But I was determined to see my wife and children even if obstacles rose mountain high.

February 15, 1864

The morning was dark and the pelting rains poured down upon the earth. Mr. Montgomery nobly proposed to ride through the rain 10 miles to aid me in crossing the river. We reached Mr. William King's after twelve, but so soon as we could warm we were invited in to dinner. Arrangements were made with a neighbor to put me over, but after standing on the banks of that broad stream at a late hour in the night, and becoming thoroughly saturated with the leaking clouds, I had to ride three miles back to Mr. King's for the night. Ten days of my leave of absence were gone and I was not yet on that fearful stream. Oh, how precious time was to me!

February 16, 1864

The rain this morning was still falling. I went to see the ferryman, who consented to set me on the "other side of Jordan." We walked two miles to where his skiff was hid, but to our great chagrin there was a steamboat two miles below. Two hours passed and there she lay anchored in the middle of the stream. Whether she was wooding or repairing her machinery we could not conjecture. Three more steamers came and went, covered with Yankees, but the anchored boat moved not. The ferryman's patience being at an end, he said that if the boat did not leave in half an hour he would cross me and run the risk of being fired at by her. This pleased

me and when the time had expired I demanded compliance with his pledge. Enough said; into the barque we hopped and he rowed sailorlike for the Arkansas shore. She touched the western bank all safe, and I paid him \$5 for his trouble. I then set out alone on foot for the levee and called at Mr. Hewie's to learn if there were any Abolition raiders in the vicinity. Learning that there were none, I made good speed to Ike Alison's, six miles away, where I arrived before dark. I tried to hire a horse but they were all in the cane; so I continued my journey to the next house, a widow's, where I ate a snack and then mounted the top side of an Indian pony with a boy fifteen years old as a guide.

After making four miles in the dark, I saw two dark looking objects approaching me on the levee. I attempted to escape into the cane but was hailed and ordered to halt. There being a large log almost as high as the pony's back on one side and the levee on the other, I saw that to escape was impossible; so I halted. They called to know who was there. I answered, "A friend!" "What is your name?" I replied: "Captain Key." I asked who they were, but they gave no answer. I remarked, "I am a Southerner." They replied, "All right, if you are a Southerner, ride up on the levee." I rode up and as I approached I saw two revolvers drawn on me, glittering beneath the moonlight. I remarked, "Gentlemen, I am unarmed." Their pistols were lowered from my breast and I was delighted to discover that one of them was Captain Thomas Casteel. A few words passed and we parted. My pony being jaded when we arrived at Mrs. Mat Ward's, I obtained another horse and we made railroad time until we reached Big Creek. The bridges having been burned I would have to cross in a skiff and

and swim our horses. I offered some boys a liberal price to put us across, but they would not leave warm beds at that late hour. So for the night we had to content ourselves with the trip we had made, and called on Mrs. Hudson to allow us to sleep in her house for the remainder. The Yankees had taken her husband and sent him to Alton (Illinois), as a prisoner.

February 17, 1864

I arose early and made a fire for Mrs. Hudson, fed my horse, and prepared myself for eating. Having satisfied my appetite, I bade my friends adieu and set forth to try my luck in crossing Big Creek. Here I paid off my guide and he turned homeward with the two horses, leaving me on the bank of the stream yelling for someone to bring the canoes to this side. After I had bawled until I was hoarse, two men rode up on the opposite side, took off their saddles, and drove their horses into the rolling waters. I caught the animals when they reached the shore and the men came over in a dugout; then I gladly hopped into the boat and rowed to the other shore.

I had not gone half a mile when I discovered an old gentleman riding from me down the road. I hailed him, but seeing that I was in soldier's costume and fearing the Yankees he refused to halt. As I approached him I discovered that it was an old acquaintance by the name of Dr. Des Prez, who informed me that the Federals were in the neighborhood and that my house was surrounded by them. This news bore like an incubus upon my hopes and heart. I walked five miles to the Doctor's where I was kindly received and did justice to a good dinner. After dinner the Doctor escorted me down to Frank Lightfoot's and as I approached the house the children gave

the alarm that a Federal was coming. As I walked into the yard, Mr. Lightfoot met me and knowing me invited me in. Here I saw several old friends and a half dozen men on their way to attack the Federals, then in the vicinity of Indian Bay.

I waited until dark before I pursued my journey. Mr. Lightfoot sent me three miles, from which point I preferred to walk through a nearer route, knowing that if the Yankee cavalry were on one of their raids I could dodge into the woods before they could discover me. The night was cold, and as I waded through the "slashes" the water would freeze on the tail of my overcoat, which would dangle against the tops of my legs, creating a constant noise. To prevent this from drowning out the sound of advancing Yankees, I halted every few hundred yards, and so still was everything that I could hear only my own excited and anxious heart beat. Seven miles to walk and numerous sloughs to wade were, however, slight obstacles then, when I was that near my good and loving wife and three little children whom I had not seen for twenty-two months. On I urged my way, nothing breaking the silence that reigned in the towering forest except the almost human hoot of the owl.

The moment my eyes fell upon the house which I supposed to contain those dearest to my heart, thousands of emotions mingled with many fears sent the blood thrilling with double velocity through my veins. Though it was a late hour, I could hear the negroes talking. Taking a circuitous route I reached the rear of the house and knocked at the door before I was discovered. A voice from within inquired, "Who's that?" I answered, "Thomas Key." A servant opened the door and as I stepped in, expecting to find Mrs. Judith Lambert and Mrs. Key, I encountered a Mrs. Wiggins who, thinking I was a

Federal, would not inform me but directed me to the negroes, and, as she afterwards told me, was so suspicious that she sent a servant to watch me. I went to the cabin of a faithful servant named Wash, and called him to go and show me where my wife lived, as I had frightened Mrs. Wiggins so badly that I did not wish to surprise my wife.

Wash knocked at the door and called Mrs. Key, asking her to open the door a moment. My wife answered and began calling Cousin Jane, believing that the Abolitionists had come to search the house for Rebels. To keep her from being alarmed I said, "Nancy, open the door." Knowing my voice she exclaimed, "Oh mercy!" and ran for the door, turning over rocking chairs and other obstacles. But when it was opened she seemed to hesitate to approach me, thinking she might be deceived. It is useless to try to describe the meeting of two hearts that loved like ours. A candle was lit and I went to the beds and kissed my two youngest children, who were sleeping. The eldest, Julia-about seven years of age-was soon up to see her "Pa." My wife told me that the Federals had left the plantation since sunset and that they might return before day or before early breakfast; also that 17 of Captain Casteel's men had fired into 20 Federals two miles from the house, wounding one and taking five prisoners. I was in hopes that this would cause them to leave the neighborhood. However, I concluded that it was unsafe to remain all night in the house, but since it was now midnight and I extremely fatigued with the night march, I concluded to sleep two or three hours and then leave for the woods.

I lay down, but my wife had so much that had transpired since we separated to relate that I was too interested to sleep. Among other things she

informed me that a man who arrived at Helena on a steamer said he "saw Lieutenant Key wounded on the battlefield of Perryville," and that he, Key, told him before he died that he had a wife and three children in Helena. This threw a pall of sadness over her heart and for ten months she wore mourning for me, believing that it was all true. Her health under this strain grew ill, and she had become emaciated and almost a shadow. After the return of General Bragg's army from Kentucky, and after I had passed through the hail storm of canister at Murfreesboro, I found an opportunity to convey to her a letter which she received in August, 1863. The sight of my familiar handwriting undeceived her and she says that she wept like a child over my letter, which had proved that I was still living. Her heart was relieved and was cheered with the hope that she would see again the one who, she thought, had so long lain mouldering on the battlefield.

She related to me many of the events of the Battle of Helena, telling how the Yankees hid behind the levee while she, a woman, remained in her house with cannon balls bursting around and over it. General Prentiss,⁴ she informed me, had prepared to destroy his stores and was on the eve of surrendering the garrison when General Brice retreated. General Buford⁵ having deprived her of two of her rooms, she determined to move to Monroe County on the place of Mrs. Lambert, her aunt.

To be continued...

FOOTNOTES

¹See OFFICIAL RECORDS OF UNION AND CONFEDERATE ARMIES, Series 1, Vol. 30, pt. 2, pp. 140, 154, 158, 176077, 183. Cf. Key's own report of the battle, *ibid.*, pp. 186-87.

²Cf. *ibid.*, Series 1, Vol. 31, pt. 2, p. 750.

³Just one week later, Sherman's army (of which Robert J. Campbell was a member) was to march into Meridian and begin wrecking the city.

⁴Major General Benjamin M. Prentiss.

⁵Major General Napoleon B. Buford.



TRENTON, PHILLIPS COUNTY, ARKANSAS
SCHOOL PICTURE TAKEN ABOUT 1915

Contributed by Betty M. Faust

Front Row, left to right: Edwin Bean Hicks (1898-1960), Bean Harrell, George Seeman Goldsmith, Hazel Hall (living in 1982), Jack Harris, Jim Tom King, Raymond King. Roland King.

Back Row: Fitz Bernard, Bud Kendall, Milton Washington "Pete" Goldsmith, Bob Kendall (female), Rose Porter, Burl Jenkins, Leonard Smith and the teacher Chester Terrell. The teacher was a brother of former Arkansas Governor Terrell.

This picture is from the collection of Mrs. E. Bean Hicks of West Memphis, Arkansas.

Most of the students were identified by Miss Mable Brown of West Helena.

From the HELENA WORLD, May 15, 1901
CHAPTERS IN PHILLIPS COUNTY HISTORY
CHAPTER IV

by

Major S. H. King

The stores in the arsenal were turned over to the state, and the companies dispersed. The Yell Rifles boarded their boat and were soon back in Helena, where the boys, the captors of a U.S. arsenal, were looked upon as heroes, and no doubt began to consider themselves great soldiers, and such they were; and how soon and bravely were they to prove themselves. The capture of the arsenal was resistance to the United States government, and the sentiment in favor of secession soon became almost unanimous. Phillips county, whose company was the first in the expedition to capture the arsenal we may be sure was enthusiastic for withdrawal from the Union.

The members of the Yell Rifles and the other Phillips county companies were not left to pursue their wonted occupations very long. In March the state authorities issued a call for troops to defend the state. The Yell Rifles and Phillips Guards promptly responded and about the first of April '61 were ordered to Mound City, 6 or 7 miles above Memphis on the Arkansas side. With high hopes and brave hearts our boys bade farewell, thinking that in a little while they as victors and heroes would be welcomed home again. But how many were destined never again to dwell amid the old familiar scenes, and those who came back after long years of strife returned in gloom and defeat to ruined and desolate homes. Before the Yell Rifles left

Helena a great rally was held and a beautiful flag was presented to the company by the ladies of Phillips County.

While the troops were at Mound City a regiment was organized and Captain Cleburne of the Yell Rifles was elected colonel. Here the regiment remained about three weeks and from morning till evening it was drill, drill, drill, until the heroes who had such a pleasant trip when they captured the arsenal began to think war was hard work, and this impression was deepened when the boys were ordered to unload a steamboat bound to Cincinnati, loaded with salt, sugar and molasses, that had been captured. They had never done such work as that, but they fell to with a hearty good will and the task was soon accomplished, though many a blistered hand was the result. From Mound City the regiment was ordered to Bearfield's Point, some twenty miles below the Missouri line. After an encampment here of three or four days, the soldiers were aroused one night with orders of "Strike tents, the Federals are coming. Get on the boats." Great was the confusion produced, some of the men rushing without dressing to the river, some seizing guns, and none understanding what was meant by "strike tents."

Colonel Cleburne soon appeared and when he had allayed the excitement it was learned the confusion had been caused by the arrival of General Bradfield, commander of the militia of Eastern Arkansas, who, instead of communicating his order to Colonel Cleburne, had sent runners through the camp with the above orders. This aroused all the Irish of Colonel Cleburne and he summarily put a stop to the embarking of the troops until he had consulted with General Bradley, who was on the boat. It must have been

a stormy consultation in view of later events, but the troops were ordered to come on board, and they moved down to Fort Pillow on the Tennessee side.

Next morning, soon after the arrival, our colonel proceeded to put our general under arrest. For this purpose he sent to the general's boat a detail of men who preferred to obey the colonel than any one else, and put the general under guard. Lieutenant Colonel Patton strenuously objected to any such proceeding and interfered so much that Cleburne was sent for. When he arrived he gave the lieutenant-colonel to understand that he was commander, and if the lieutenant-colonel didn't shut his mouth he too would be put under guard. Cleburne and Bradfield then had an interview, and the General was sent under guard to Memphis that afternoon. The regiment thus freed from the Bradfield impediment was then under the command of Cleburne, and began fortifying the place.

Soon the measles broke out in the camp and many of our Phillips county boys experienced another phase of army life--sickness without the ministrations of tender and loving hands. The regiment remained about three months at Fort Pillow, and then was ordered on boats to be taken down the Mississippi and up the White and Black rivers to Pocahontas. During the passage down it was known the boats would stop a few hours at Helena, and we may be sure our boys had not failed to warn their families and friends of that fact, and when at last the dear old town was reached, what a crowd was there to greet them. What joyous, happy meetings and how short those few precious hours. Friends and connections from all over the country had come, and had come, bringing boxes of good things to eat, cooked at

home, and clothing enough for a year, so when the boys at last had to go it was with many mementoes of loved ones left behind. And how few dreamed as the Yell Rifles merrily floated down the broad old river that day that its company, the pride of Helena, had gone from it forever.

But the soldiers on the boats had little time to think of home. There were few firemen, and a soldiers' detail had to take their place, fire and load on wood. Little cooking had to be done, but the boats would stop once a day to let the men go ashore and make coffee or fry their meat. At Jacksonport everything was transferred to smaller boats to make the ascent of Black River. Finally Pocahontas was reached, and the march to Pittman's Ferry was begun. This was another phase of war our boys were inducted into for the first time. When the orders to begin the march were given they had to store away many of their boxes to await the wagons, but they loaded themselves up with a full supply of good things from home. However, but a few hours of the march had passed until the soldiers began to think they would have no use for quite so much and to leave first one article and then another on the road. By the time the destination was reached most of the articles the men had were thus deposited, and it was a weary, foot-sore company of soldiers who needed no tents that night, but lay down in the woods on the bank of the river and slept the sleep of the exhausted. Here it was, at Pittman's Ferry, that these first companies of Phillips county boys ceased to be state troops and became soldiers under the Confederate states government, and were soon taken from Arkansas.

John Hanks Alexander of Arkansas: Second Black Graduate of West Point

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CONSPICUOUS AMONG THOSE PRESENT at the commencement exercises at the United States Military Academy on June 11, 1887, was a tall, stately black woman from Helena, Arkansas. A former slave, Frances Alexander was a proud woman of such regal bearing that a life-long white acquaintance thought that "her people in Africa must have been of the royalty." A widow for sixteen years by 1887, Fannie Alexander, as she was generally known, had traveled to West Point to witness the graduation of her son, John Hanks Alexander, the second Afro-American to complete the course of study at the academy. According to reporters present at the ceremony, the applause received by Francis R. Shrunk of Pennsylvania, who ranked first among the graduates, was "as nothing compared to that thunderous hand-clapping awarded colored cadet Alexander" as he stepped forward to receive his diploma from General Philip Sheridan. For Fannie Alexander, it was a moment of "great pride and joy." Ranked thirty-second in a class of sixty-four, the newly commissioned second lieutenant was a strikingly handsome young man whose trim fitting gray uniform accentuated his muscular liteness and whose "majestic carriage" resembled that of his mother. Following the graduation exercises, Fannie Alexander returned home to Arkansas, and her son reported for duty with the Ninth Cavalry at Fort Robinson, Nebraska.¹

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¹New York (N. Y.) *Freeman*, June 18, 1887; Cleveland (Ohio) *Gazette*, June 18, July

John Hanks Alexander was a member of an extraordinary black family whose experiences scarcely conformed to the stereotyped view of the slave family in the delta of Arkansas. Both of his parents, described in the census as mulattoes, were natives of Virginia. His father, James Milo Alexander, who was born on February 7, 1815, was a slave apparently owned by Lawson Henderson Alexander. A North Carolinian, Lawson Alexander married his cousin Lucy Jane Alexander of Virginia. Since Virginia was the birthplace of the slave James, he may well have been part of Lucy Alexander's dowry or inheritance. At any rate, early in the 1830s Lawson and Lucy Alexander migrated to Arkansas and settled on a sizable plantation in St. Francis County where the young male slave lived for more than a decade. Lieutenant Alexander's mother, Fannie Miller, who was born into slavery near Wytheville, Virginia, had been acquired along with her mother and several brothers and sisters by Colonel Abijah Allen, a large planter and slaveowner who also resided in St. Francis County at Allen's Landing. It appears that at some point Fannie was purchased or somehow acquired by the Alexander family whose plantation was near that of Colonel Allen. "At an early age" Fannie, a house servant, married James Milo Alexander, the coachman of his owner. Their first child, named for his father and called Milo, was born about 1844.²

The death of Lawson Alexander two years earlier significantly altered the lives of the slave couple. The absence of records makes it impossible

2, 1887; see also Chicago (Ill.) *Tribune*, June 12, 1887; Memphis (Tenn.) *Daily Appeal*, June 12, 1887; New York (N. Y.) *Times*, June 12, 1887; the reference to Fannie Alexander's background is from Margaret R. Ready, "Tante's Family History, *Phillips County Historical Quarterly*, XVI (March 1978), 13.

²Ready, "Tante's Family History," 3-5; Funeral Oration by James M. Hanks, typescript copy, Alexander Family Papers (Huntington Library, San Marino, California); Manuscript Census Returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Phillips County, Arkansas, Population Schedule, National Archives Microfilm Series No. T-9, roll 67, p. 244, seen at Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas, cited hereinafter as Tenth Census, 1880, Phillips County, p. 244. On Abijah Allen see Robert B. Walz, "Arkansas Slaveholdings and Slaveholders in 1850," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XII (Spring 1953), 52; James and Fannie Alexander legalized their marriage on November 11, 1863, see Phillips County Marriage Books, "Trans-1," p. 378, microfilm copy (Arkansas History Commission). The Huntington Library has graciously granted permission to quote from its Alexander Collection.

to ascertain precisely the sequence of events, but it appears that two of the planter's children, Mark W. Alexander, who became a prominent attorney in the rivertown of Helena, and his sister, Nancy, who married J. S. Deputy, a well-known physician in the same town, took a special interest in the slave family. Clearly the status of James and Fannie Alexander was that of favored slaves who enjoyed extraordinary privileges that set them apart from the masses of slaves who toiled in the cotton fields. James learned to read and write. Fannie learned to write, but an acquaintance of many years reported in 1895 that she wrote "with difficulty; nearly all her writing is done for her. . . ." Fannie's mother, Arena Miller, a slave, could write and apparently did so without difficulty.³

Sometime late in the 1840s James moved to Helena, leaving his wife in St. Francis County. In Helena⁴ he enjoyed the protection and support of Mark Alexander and Nancy Alexander Deputy who by that time were probably his owners. He opened a barbershop in the town which in time became a thriving establishment whose clientele included the most prominent white citizens of the city. At least as early as 1849 James Alexander was advertising in local newspapers. As his barbering enterprise prospered he employed additional barbers and periodically relocated in more spacious quarters near the heart of the city. By the early 1850s his establishment included a stock of perfumes "of every description," soap, toilet articles such as tooth and hair brushes, cigars, and even men's apparel. Alexander not only worked long hours for six days a week, usually from five in the morning until eleven at night, but he also made house calls by appointment.⁵ In an advertisement in a local news-

³Ready, "Tante's Family History," 4-7; Helena (Ark.) *Southern Shield*, January 15, 1842; Affidavit signed by Robert Wilson, May 9, 1895, and attached to Declaration for an Original Pension of a Mother, June 14, 1895, Pension Files (National Archives, Washington, D. C.); Arena Miller to James M. Alexander, April 6, 1859, as well as the letters written by James M. Alexander, dating from the early 1850s in the Alexander Papers.

⁴For an account of antebellum Helena, see Ted R. Worley, "Helena on the Mississippi," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XII (Spring 1954), 1-15; Howell and Elizabeth Purdue, *Pat Cleburne: Confederate General* (Hillsboro, Tx., 1973), 26-62, which includes information on Cleburne's association with Mark W. Alexander in Helena.

⁵Helena *Southern Shield*, April 28, November 10, 1849; April 6, May 4, 11, 25, July 20, August 3, 17, 24, September 21, October 12, November 16, December 14, 1850; January 25, February 8, 1851; March 19, 1853; Helena (Ark.) *Democratic Star*, March 15, 1854; James M. Alexander to Fannie Alexander, ? 1854, Alexander Papers.

paper in March 1854, he announced the opening of a new and larger "shaving Saloon":

Jim would beg leave to inform his old customers generally that he is as polite and accommodating as ever and is always to be found at his shop on Ohio Street in Drs. Deputy's and King's new offices, unless professionally absent, where he is prepared to execute with neatness and dispatch, all the various branches of his business, such as shaving, shampooing, hair, whisker mustache and eye-brow dyeing. Forty minutes for dyeing whiskers, 1 hour for dyeing gentlemen's hair and 2 hours for dyeing ladies' hair. The public may rest assured that this is ample time for the magic transformation. No charge unless satisfaction is given. He also has on hand a large assortment of perfumery which will be sold low for cash.⁶

In 1857 Alexander "at no inconsiderable expense fitted up a neat clean and tasty Bathing Establishment" with hot and cold baths "utilizing rainwater exclusively."⁷

Despite his success as a barber, Alexander longed to be united with his family. His tender and affectionate letters to Fannie were filled with inquiries about members of the family and with references to his long hours of work and strivings to lead a virtuous life.⁸ "Dear Frances," he wrote in 1851, "you must talk with our little son about his father. Try and not let him forgit [*sic*] me. You must make him say his prayers every night before he goes to bed. You must try and raise him obedient to everybody and especially to his mistress and master."⁹ In 1853, shortly after a visit with his wife and new son, Trigg, he again expressed his desire to have his family with him in Helena.¹⁰ The following year, after the birth of Glenn, a daughter, Alexander wrote his wife: "I want to see you so very much, dear Fannie . . . I do think it is so very hard that we

⁶ Helena *Democratic Star*, March 22, 1854.

⁷ Helena *Southern Shield*, June 27, 1857.

⁸ See especially letters from James M. Alexander to his wife, Fannie, dated September 6, September 18, 1851; September 7, 1853; ? 1854; January 5, 1859, in Alexander Papers.

⁹ James M. Alexander to Frances Alexander, September 6, 1851, Alexander Papers.

¹⁰ James M. Alexander to Fannie Alexander, September 7, 1853, Alexander Papers.

should be separated [*sic*] in this manner, but Dear Wife, I am not living in [a] world as those that have no hope. . . ."¹¹

The principal objectives of Alexander's labors were to bring his family to Helena and to secure the freedom of himself, his wife, and his children. As early as 1851 he had purchased two lots in Helena, a transaction that he accomplished with the assistance of his protector, Mark W. Alexander.¹² Despite later assertions by John Hanks Alexander that his father bought "the family out of slavery about 1850," such information is obviously incorrect. Legal documents, usually known as "freedom papers," apparently have not survived, but it appears that Alexander did purchase the freedom of at least some members of his family by 1860.¹³ What is certain, however, is that his family moved to Helena three years earlier. In fact, James M. Hanks, the twenty-four-year-old scion of a prominent white family in Helena purchased Fannie and the three Alexander children in 1857 and placed them in the household of his father, Fleetwood Hanks. It seems probable that this purchase was the result of an arrangement worked out by Alexander so that he could be united with his family and begin purchasing the freedom of his wife and children. In any event, he constructed a house on one of the lots that he had bought earlier, and the family moved into it prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. About the same time, in 1859, a fourth child, Mark Wallace, who was obviously named for Alexander's white benefactor, was born.¹⁴

In 1859 the Arkansas legislature passed a law prohibiting free blacks

¹¹ James Alexander to Fannie Alexander, ? 1854, Alexander Papers.

¹² James M. Alexander to Frances Alexander, September 6, 1851, Alexander Papers; see also bills of sale countersigned by Mark W. Alexander, dated July 28, 1851 and December 21, 1851, in *ibid.*; free blacks were allowed to own real estate and personal property, but were discouraged from purchasing slaves; see Orville W. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Arkansas* (Durham, N. C., 1958), 253.

¹³ On James Alexander's purchase of his family's freedom, see interview of John Hanks Alexander, his son, in *Cleveland Gazette*, November 29, 1884; see also New York *Freeman*, November 22, 1884; New Orleans (La.) *Weekly Pelican*, July 16, 1887.

¹⁴ Diary of James M. Hanks, Entry March 25, 1909, microfilm copy (Arkansas History Commission); Funeral Oration by James M. Hanks, Alexander Papers; New York *Times*, June 13, 1883; *Cleveland Gazette*, November 29, 1884; Lucy Sanders, "Child Life in a Southern Town Eighty Years Ago," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly*, II (February 1964), 1.

from residing in the state and stipulating that those who remained after 1860 were to be enslaved with their earnings to be used for their removal.¹⁵ Such a law obviously posed a threat to the black Alexanders, but despite the fact that the federal census of 1860 made no mention of them among the "free inhabitants," there is no evidence that they forfeited their freedom or special status. Certainly they did not leave Arkansas. In fact, James Alexander continued business as usual. In all probability their relationship with influential whites such as the Alexanders, Deputys, and Hankses enabled them to circumvent the consequences of the law.

Records of the Alexanders' experiences during the Civil War are lacking, but since Helena was under Union control from the summer of 1862 until the end of the conflict, it seems unlikely that they suffered any serious adversities. About the time that Helena was occupied by Union forces, James entered the mercantile business which expanded rapidly during the next four years. The account books of his grocery and dry goods store indicate that during and after the war his establishment was patronized by prominent whites in Helena, some of whom received extensive credit.¹⁶ When in 1865 the firm of "Jas M. Alexander, Family Groceries" moved into larger quarters "opposite the postoffice on the corner of York and Ohio Streets," the inventory included boots, shoes, and "notions" as well as groceries, fresh cakes, and candies.¹⁷ In that year Henry P. Coolidge, a well-known white merchant in Helena, provided Alexander with a letter of introduction to a major wholesale house in Cincinnati. "I have known him for over 20 years," Coolidge wrote, "20 years of that time he was a slave but he is a Gentleman, slave or free, and anything he says you can rely on."¹⁸ Alexander apparently went on buying trips regularly and enjoyed credit not only in Cincinnati but in

¹⁵See Jacob Trieber, "Legal Status of the Negro in Arkansas Before the Civil War," Arkansas Historical Association, *Publications*, III (Fayetteville, Ark., 1911), 181-82; Clyde W. Cathey, "Slavery in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, III (Spring 1944), 72-74; Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Arkansas*, 257-58, suggests that the legislation to expel free blacks was not enforced.

¹⁶Extensive records of James M. Alexander's mercantile establishment are found in the Alexander Papers.

¹⁷Helena (Ark.) *Western Clarion*, April 8, October 26, 1865.

¹⁸H. P. Coolidge to J. Pittman and Company, January 19, 1865, Alexander Papers.

Memphis, St. Louis, and New Orleans as well. According to one acquaintance, his name was "good in mercantile circles for five to ten thousand dollars."¹⁹ When on March 5, 1867, the levee at Helena broke and "let the Mississippi in . . . with a rush and violence," Alexander's mercantile establishment suffered such heavy damage that he never fully recovered from the financial loss. By the following year he had resumed his trade as a barber and his wife was supplementing the family income by taking in boarders.²⁰

But James Alexander was more than a successful entrepreneur. In the aftermath of the Civil War he emerged as a leader of blacks in Helena and Phillips County. In 1866 one observer, who described him as a "gentleman of enlarged mind" with "the good of his people at heart," placed him "first in a list of those elevating the race" in Arkansas.²¹ He was identified with virtually every movement among blacks in the state in the immediate postwar era. Among his principal activities were those concerned with the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Colored Masons. In the latter organization he ultimately became District Deputy Grand Master. Although the title "reverend" sometimes appeared before his name and on several occasions he was referred to as a "local preacher of the African Methodist Episcopal Church," it is not clear whether he was a regularly ordained minister or merely a lay preacher in the AME Church. But his correspondence reveals that he was a close student of the Scriptures and was skilled in quoting and paraphrasing appropriate passages from the Bible. As early as 1854 he wrote his wife that he attempted to "preach somewhere every Sabbath."²² Regardless of whether Alexander became an ordained minister of the AME Church, it is obvious that he was one of the most prominent figures in the denomination in east Arkansas.

¹⁹"Arkansas," *Christian Recorder*, VI (May 20, 1866), 78.

²⁰"Excerpts from the Diaries and Letters of Reverend Otis Hackett . . .," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly*, I (Summer 1962), 45-46; New York *Freeman*, November 22, 1884.

²¹Moses Dickson, "Letter from Arkansas," *Christian Recorder*, VI (June 30, 1866), 101.

²²*Ibid.*; James M. Alexander to Fannie Alexander, ? 1854, Alexander Papers; for sermon notes based on scriptural passages from Exodus, undated but signed J.M.A., see *ibid.*

Although black "carpetbaggers" such as James T. White and William D. McCoy²³ of Indiana were conspicuous in Helena during Reconstruction, Alexander was among a handful of local blacks who played a leading role in politics in the area. A vigorous champion of the Fourteenth Amendment and an activist in the cause of black suffrage, he was a loyal member of the Republican party from its organization in the state in 1867 and was especially identified with General Powell Clayton, the party leader in Arkansas for almost a half century. In Helena, Alexander and his oldest son, Milo, assumed positions of prominence in Republican circles. Both signed a call in October 1865, for "a mass meeting of colored citizens" to elect a delegation "to wait upon the legislature in Little Rock in the matter of the right of suffrage."²⁴ Three years later, Alexander served as postmaster of the lower house of the general assembly, an appointment which he obviously received as a reward for his services to the Republican party. By 1869 he and Milo, who was a constable, had become political factors of considerable significance in Phillips County. The elder Alexander was a justice of the peace, school trustee and member of a grand jury. As a justice of the peace, elected for a four-year term, he occupied an office of considerable local importance. The so-called Reconstruction constitution of 1868 provided that a justice of the peace had "exclusive original jurisdiction in all actions of contract and replevin where the amount in controversy" did not exceed \$200 and jurisdiction in criminal cases involving "all matters less than felony." The legislatures of 1868-69 enacted measures which further enhanced the powers of a justice. Of these the most important was an act that allowed the governor to appoint a justice as president of the county board of registration.²⁵ Although the local Democratic press was rarely generous in its treat-

²³ On White see Joseph St. Hilaire, "Negro Delegates in the Arkansas Constitutional Convention of 1868: A Group Profile," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XXX (Spring 1974), 46; on McCoy see Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., ed., *Slave and Freeman: The Autobiography of George L. Knox* (Lexington, Ky., 1979), 222.

²⁴ Helena *Western Clarion*, October 14, 1865; on Powell Clayton see William Burnside, "Powell Clayton" in Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., eds., *The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography* (Fayetteville, 1981), 43-54; Roster of the Officers and Members of the House of Representatives of Arkansas, Session of 1868 (n.p., n.d.) in Alexander Papers.

²⁵ Helena *Western Clarion*, May 12, 26, August 11, 18, December 1, 1869; Dale P.

ment of Republicans, especially black Republicans, one such journal, the Helena *Weekly Clarion*, paid the elder Alexander the high compliment of observing that he conducted "himself with as much decorum as any of us."²⁶

In 1870 James Alexander waged a successful campaign for a seat in the state house of representatives from the Eleventh District made up of Monroe and Phillips counties.²⁷ In the following year during the legislative session he took seriously his responsibilities as a member of the committees on enrolled bills and federal relations. As always he was a strong supporter of Governor Powell Clayton. He not only voted to elevate Clayton to the United States Senate but also spoke out against the movement to impeach him—a movement which he characterized as the work of the "meanest set of lickspittles and Spanish poodles that can be found in the State."²⁸

During his absence from Helena, Alexander, as usual, manifested great concern about the welfare of his family and assured his wife that he would never again be separated from her. His second son, Trigg, who was sometimes described as an "invalid," was with him in Little Rock throughout the legislative session. When he bought Trigg a new suit that cost twenty dollars, he promised to bring home "something nice" to the younger children—Mark, John, Coolidge, Fannie, and Titus. One of his concerns while in Little Rock was to make certain that his oldest daughter, Glenn, who was a student at Oberlin College in Ohio, had sufficient funds to care for her needs. He instructed his oldest son, Milo, to send her some money, even "if it is but \$10." Milo was apparently a young man of some means who regularly contributed to the cost of educating his siblings.²⁹

On May 27, 1871, shortly after the end of the legislative session, James

Kirkman, "The Second 10 Years: Officers of Helena City Government," *Phillips County Historical Quarterly*, XIV (June 1976), 40; Arkansas Constitution (1868), Article VII, section 20; *Arkansas Acts*, 1868, p. 52; *Arkansas Acts*, 1868-1869, p. 9.

²⁶ Helena *Western Clarion*, December 1, 1869.

²⁷ Little Rock *Arkansas Gazette*, November 19, 1870.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, January 7, 1871; *Arkansas House Journal*, 1871, pp. 5, 56-57, 74, 548.

²⁹ James M. Alexander to Frances Alexander, February 6, 1871; James M. Alexander to John H. Alexander, February 24, 1871; Glenn A. Alexander to James M. Alexander, September 30, 1869(?), Alexander Papers.

Alexander died suddenly at the age of fifty-six. The *Christian Recorder*, an AME paper, noted his death with the headline: "Another Hero Fallen." The *Morning Republican* of Little Rock, in a lengthy obituary, characterized him as a man "respected by his political foes and very popular with his own party."³⁰

For a time it appeared that his son, Milo, would continue in his father's political footsteps and achieve even greater prominence. For example, when he attended the Republican state convention in Little Rock in 1872 as a delegate from Phillips County, the newspaper described him as one of "the most influential colored men in the state."³¹ But his influence was short-lived because two years later the triumph of the Democrats marked the end of Reconstruction in Arkansas and the decline of the Republican party.

Because James Alexander had never recouped the losses suffered in the flood of 1867, his estate consisted of little other than a debt-free house and several lots along the river front that had been so seriously eroded as to render them practically worthless.³² The responsibility for rearing the five younger children fell to his widow, Fannie, an extraordinarily resourceful and industrious woman whose skills as a maid and cook were in much demand by the leading white families of Helena. Despite her meager income, she was determined that her children would be educated. In this respect she was remarkably successful. Glenn completed her course of study at Oberlin College where John and Titus later enrolled. The former eventually graduated from West Point while the latter transferred to the University of Michigan. After attending seminary, Mark became a well-known Congregationalist minister, and Fannie, the youngest child, acquired a high school education. At one time or another, Milo, Glenn, John and Trigg were teachers.³³

³⁰J. T. Jenifer, "Another Hero Fallen," *Christian Recorder*, IX (June 17, 1871), 1; Little Rock *Morning Republican*, June 1, 1871.

³¹Little Rock *Republican*, May 19, 1872.

³²Phillips County, Probate Court Records, 1868-1869, Book D, microfilm copy (Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock); Declaration for Dependent Mother's Pension with Affidavits, May 10, 1897, Pension Office Files (National Archives).

³³James M. Hanks, Funeral Oration, 1909, Alexander Papers; Cleveland *Gazette*, November 19, 1884; Los Angeles *California News*, October 8, 1931; Phyllis Scott, "Titus Alexander," Los Angeles *California Eagle*, November 13, 1947; University of Michigan,

Even though Fannie Alexander lacked any formal education, spent most of her life as a domestic servant, and possessed little more than a subsistence income after the death of her husband, she was regarded by both blacks and whites as a valuable member of the community. Judge James M. Hanks, a former congressman and a member of one of Helena's most prominent white families, did not exaggerate when at her funeral in 1909 he described her as "intelligent and industrious, patient and prudent, self-sacrificing and full of good works," as a woman whose life possessed "a beauty and blessing . . . to all those who knew her."³⁴ She encouraged her children to take maximum advantage of all their opportunities and impressed upon them the importance of work. No one was more keenly aware of her self-sacrificing qualities than her children or more directly affected by her faith in the school and the church as institutions necessary for virtuous living. One of her sons later recalled that "even if there was not a crust of bread in the house," she would insist that the children remain in school.³⁵ Everyone, white and black alike, recognized Fannie Alexander as a woman of great dignity. As one who "held herself erect and held her head high,"³⁶ she inspired her children with a sense of pride and self-confidence. In their intimate association with upper class whites, the black Alexanders maintained a posture that was at once deferential and dignified. There is no evidence to suggest that their behavior was ever obsequious or servile. Fannie Alexander, in fact, taught her children that they "could not be insulted with impunity any more than can be a Tappan, a Horner or a Pillow," all prominent white families in and around Helena. When Titus encountered racial slurs at Oberlin, he reacted vehemently and left the college. Of his mother, John Alexander said: "She can not blame her children for being as proud and manly as the most aristocratic on earth

General Catalogue of Officers and Students, 1837-1911 (Ann Arbor, 1912), 600; Tenth Census, 1880, Phillips County, p. 244.

³⁴Hanks, Funeral Oration, 1909, Alexander Papers; Diary of James M. Hanks, Entries for March 25, 27, 29, 1909.

³⁵John H. Alexander quoted in Cleveland *Gazette*, November 29, 1884; see also Wesley A. Brown, "Eleven Men at West Point," *Negro History Bulletin*, XIX (April 1956), 149-50.

³⁶Ready, "Tante's Family History," 13.

for that is the way she has reared them."³⁷ When Fannie Alexander died in 1909 five of her seven children were living, and, according to one knowledgeable observer, all were "well-to-do and respected in the communities in which they live." Titus, for example, settled in Los Angeles where he held a responsible position in the city's Bureau of Power and Light for over forty years, figured prominently in Democratic party affairs and various civil rights efforts, and achieved wide recognition as an authority on the history of Negroes in the West.³⁸

Of the seven Alexander children, however, the best known was John, who as the second black graduate of West Point, attracted widespread public attention. The first black graduate from the academy was Henry O. Flipper who was court-martialed and dismissed from the army in 1882, a year before Alexander arrived at West Point. Johnson Whittaker, another black cadet admitted in 1877, was the subject of a much publicized investigation and was finally dismissed for academic deficiencies.³⁹ Blacks who attended West Point before Alexander's arrival had been routinely subjected to verbal and physical abuse and ostracized by the white cadets. Their existence was as lonely as it was treacherous.⁴⁰ That Alexander avoided the serious problems encountered by his predecessors, was graduated from the academy, and served with honor as an officer in the United States Army until his death undoubtedly owed much to his early training and the influence of his parents.

Born on January 6, 1864, in Helena, Alexander grew up and attended school there. His father early recognized his ability and expressed great pleasure at the speed with which he learned to read, write, and figure.⁴¹

³⁷ John H. Alexander to Mark W. Alexander, August 10, 1892, Alexander Papers.

³⁸ Hanks, Funeral Oration, 1909, Alexander Papers; Scott, "Titus Alexander"; *Opportunity*, XI (May 1933), 129; see also "Foreword" in Sue B. Thurman, *Pioneers of Negro Origin in California* (San Francisco, 1952); Titus Alexander to Whitefield McKinlay, May 7, July 6, 1894, Whitefield McKinlay Papers (Carter Woodson Collection, Library of Congress, Washington).

³⁹ On Flipper see Henry O. Flipper, *The Colored Cadet at West Point* (New York, 1878); on Whittaker see John F. Marszelek, Jr., *Court-Martial: A Black Man in America* (New York, 1972).

⁴⁰ Marvin Fletcher, *The Black Soldier and Officer in the United States Army, 1891-1917* (Columbia, Mo., 1974), 72-73.

⁴¹ New York *Freeman*, November 22, 1884; James M. Alexander to John H. Alexander, February 24, 1871, Alexander Papers.

While John Alexander placed much emphasis on the example provided by his father, he declared on several occasions that credit for whatever success he had achieved belonged to his mother. "To her," he once remarked, "I owe all."⁴² It was her labors that provided the means for him to remain in school and to graduate from the Negro high school in Helena where he ranked first in his class. At the graduation ceremony held in the Second Baptist Church on the evening of December 19, 1879, he delivered the class oration entitled "Principles of Life," an address typical of the times, ornate and verbose, which extolled the importance of cultivating the mind and morals. But both in content and style the oration was a remarkable feat for a fifteen-year-old boy. Alexander concluded with a tribute to his mother and with a plea for blacks to continue to press for more education because "the destiny of the colored race is in the school room."⁴³

Following graduation, Alexander taught school during the spring of 1880 near Carrollton, Mississippi. In the fall he traveled north to Ohio to visit an uncle, Nicholas Alexander, a well-known barber in Cincinnati. Once in Ohio he decided to follow the example of his sister Glenn and enrolled at Oberlin College. "I went to Oberlin College," he declared, "not intending to go through but simply to have it said that I had been to college." But once at Oberlin he discovered how much he "did not know" and determined to complete the course of study.⁴⁴

Alexander proved to be an apt student. A black classmate recalled that he "got a perfect mark on daily recitations . . . and also the highest marks possible on examinations for a period of two years." No less than his classmate, Alexander discovered at Oberlin "higher educational standards and a general atmosphere of culture on a higher plane than" he had ever known. Among other black students at the college at the time were Ida and Hattie Gibbs of Little Rock, Mary Church of Memphis, and Ralph Langston of Virginia, all of whom were children of well-to-do blacks.⁴⁵ Alexander was acquainted with these students, but

⁴² *Cleveland Gazette*, November 29, 1884; New Orleans *Weekly Pelican*, July 16, 1887.

⁴³ John Hanks Alexander, "Principles of Life," December 19, 1879, Alexander Papers.

⁴⁴ New York *Freeman*, November 22, 1884.

⁴⁵ Reverdy C. Ransom, *The Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom's Son* (Nashville, Tenn., n.d.), 33-34; Harriet and Ida Gibbs were the daughters of Mifflin W. Gibbs, an attorney

his closest friend was Reverdy Ransom, a black youth from Ohio whose red hair was said to have matched his temperament. Ransom and Alexander "had two things in common, poverty and love of study," and their "lack of money and leisure" created a "gulf" between them and the other black students who possessed more substantial means. Ransom supported himself by working for a white family in return for room and board and by holding an assortment of odd jobs in local business establishments. Alexander may have had similar living arrangements, but he also relied on summer employment to provide for some of his financial needs. In summers he was a waiter in the Weddell House, the leading hotel in Cleveland, where he became acquainted with many of the most prominent members of the black community. One of these was John P. Green, a black attorney and politician, who became his life-long friend.⁴⁶

At the end of his second year at Oberlin Alexander decided to enter the competition for an appointment to West Point to be made by Democratic Congressman George W. Geddes of Mansfield, Ohio. He later explained that his desire to attend the academy had been prompted by reading about Flipper and "other colored boys who have distinguished themselves there." A white attorney by the name of De Wolf, who had "taken a deep interest" in Alexander's welfare for some time, encouraged and assisted him in seeking the appointment.⁴⁷ William G. Frost, a professor of Greek and clerk of the Oberlin faculty, strongly endorsed Alexander, asserting that his performance in the classical course had been uniformly excellent. "He is," Frost wrote, "a young man of pleasing address, good character and very rare ability as a student. He enjoys the esteem of his teachers and will always have their best wishes for his true

and Little Rock municipal judge, whose wife Maria, known as "Lady Gibbs," maintained a "home for colored students" at Oberlin while her daughters were in school there. Mary Church was the daughter of Robert R. Church of Memphis who was one of the wealthiest black men in America. Ralph Langston was the son of John Mercer Langston of Virginia, an attorney, diplomat, and congressman. See Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in A White World* (Washington, 1940), Chaps. 3-6.

⁴⁶ Ransom, *Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom's Son*, 33-34; *Cleveland Gazette*, November 29, 1884.

⁴⁷ Alexander interview, *Cleveland Gazette*, July 2, 1887; George W. Geddes to secretary of War, May 15, 1883, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, RG 94 (National Archives).

success."⁴⁸ From the beginning, Alexander was supremely confident of being admitted to West Point. When his friend Reverdy Ransom expressed concern that he might be disappointed, Alexander replied: "I know I shall win, because they can ask me nothing on the subject prescribed that I do not know."⁴⁹

Of those who took the initial examination on May 14, 1883, in Elyria, only two, Alexander and William Waites, the son of Ohio's chief justice, passed. Although Alexander proved to be Waites's superior in the academic portion of the examination, it was discovered that Alexander had a physical condition described by an acquaintance as "pidgeon breasted," which resulted in Waites becoming the principal nominee and Alexander the alternate. Congressman Geddes, however, made it clear that he would appoint the one who scored highest on the admission examinations administered at the academy. In order for Alexander to participate in this second round of testing, his white benefactor, De Wolf, and his black friends at Oberlin and Cleveland raised enough money to pay the expenses involved in a trip to the academy. At the railway station at West Point, Waites greeted Alexander and "showed him every courtesy." Both passed the physical examination, but Waites failed the academic portion in which Alexander excelled. True to his promise, Congressman Geddes designated Alexander as his appointee.⁵⁰

The admission of another black cadet created "some commotion" at the academy and attracted widespread notice in the press. Both the *New York Times* and the *New York Tribune* provided detailed coverage of the appointment of a "dark mulatto with a bright intelligent face." The *Times* reporter noted that when Alexander appeared in the hotel dining room of a West Point hotel during his visit to the academy to take the examinations no one seemed inclined to associate with him. But, after a lengthy conversation with him, the reporter concluded that he was "a clever and very intelligent young man fully equal in appearance and

⁴⁸ William G. Frost to Whom It May Concern, May 17, 1883, Records of the Adjutant General's Office.

⁴⁹ Ransom, *Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom's Son*, 34.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; *Memphis Daily Appeal*, June 29, 1883; "Autobiography of W. S. Scarborough," p. 156 (typescript copy in possession of Dr. Wilhelmina S. Robinson); *New York Times*, June 13, 1883.

manners to any of the candidates I have met and superior to many."⁵¹

The black press manifested a keen interest in Alexander and predicted that he would succeed. The *Arkansas Mansion*, a black weekly published in Little Rock, was quick to correct those who referred to the new cadet as an "Ohioan" and to insist that he was an Arkansan, the son of "old Jim Alexander" whose family was widely and favorably known throughout Arkansas. A Negro newspaper in Hot Springs suggested that Alexander's skill as a boxer would insure him respect from white cadets who might otherwise be inclined to mete out to him the same kind of treatment that they had accorded other blacks admitted to the academy.⁵² The black press outside Arkansas depicted Alexander as a model youth whose career would serve as an example and inspiration for other blacks. According to the *People's Advocate* of Washington, D. C., Alexander's admission to West Point constituted a triumph over great odds and demonstrated to black young people the rewards of hard work and persistence. "He possesses as much manhood to the square inch," the *Advocate* concluded, "as any white man at the Academy."⁵³ The *Cleveland Gazette*, whose editor Harry Smith undoubtedly came to know Alexander during his summers in Cleveland, followed his career at West Point more closely than any other black newspaper. The *Gazette* consistently expressed pride in his achievements and especially in the fact that he was admitted to the academy "upon passing the examination after the white boy whose alternate he was had failed to pass."⁵⁴ For the *Cleveland Gazette*, as well as the black press in general, Alexander's triumph over a white competitor stood as tangible evidence to contradict notions of black intellectual inferiority. For Negro editors, Alexander's case confirmed their contentions that blacks, if "given a white man's chance," could compete successfully in American society.

Throughout his four years at the military academy, Alexander proved to be a competent student. In 1884, for example, his grades in English and French placed him near the top of the class of 104. In mathematics

⁵¹ New York *Daily Tribune*, June 23, 1883; New York *Times*, June 13, 1883.

⁵² Little Rock *Arkansas Mansion*, June 23, 1883; Hot Springs *Sentinel* quoted in *ibid.*, August 25, 1883.

⁵³ Washington, D. C., *People's Advocate*, July 7, 1883.

⁵⁴ *Cleveland Gazette*, September 15, 1883.

he generally remained in the upper 20 percent of his class which began with an enrollment of 122. By graduation day in 1887 this number had fallen to 64.⁵⁵ While Alexander acquired a large number of demerits, few reflected adversely upon his academic performance. Most resulted from minor infractions such as the demerits he received for behavior when he drew a balky horse in cavalry drill. Always "a lively fellow," he dismounted and kicked the animal vigorously.⁵⁶ Early in his career at West Point, he and a white cadet were placed under arrest in connection with the discovery of a lot of damaged subsistence stores. Upon investigation both were exonerated and released from arrest.⁵⁷ In 1884 an academy official observed that Alexander was "making a better record than any other colored cadet ever admitted" and described him as "a splendid scholar, getting along finely."⁵⁸

In view of the ostracism suffered by Negroes previously admitted to West Point, it is not surprising that blacks displayed considerable interest in Alexander's treatment by white cadets and instructors. The commonly accepted view was that he was "treated as equal by the boys of his class in their work and their play." The *Cleveland Gazette*, convinced that Alexander occupied "a very different position" in the academy from that of Flipper and Whittaker, echoed such sentiments and thought it all the more remarkable that white cadets "treated him as an equal" without any prodding from the authorities.⁵⁹ Almost everyone acquainted with Alexander at West Point referred to his "gentlemanly and amiable disposition" and credited it with winning him respect and consideration from instructors and fellow cadets. While Alexander was at the academy four other blacks entered, but only one, Charles Young, was to graduate. One of these, William A. Hare, was so light complexioned that he passed for white. "None of the boys know that I am colored," Hare wrote to a black friend, "so that I can easily find out what their sentiments are

⁵⁵ Class Records 1883-1887 in Correspondence Relating to the U. S. Military Academy, 1867-1904, RG 94 (National Archives); cited hereinafter as U. S. Military Academy Correspondence.

⁵⁶ *Cleveland Gazette*, July 2, 1887.

⁵⁷ Special Orders No. 142, September 3, 1883, U. S. Military Academy Correspondence.

⁵⁸ New York *Globe*, January 26, 1884.

⁵⁹ *Cleveland Gazette*, September 15, 1883; Washington *Bee*, November 17, 1883.

[regarding black cadets]." According to Hare, Alexander was "very popular with the corps," while Young was "not as much so."⁶⁰

Although Alexander may well have enjoyed "the good will of all the professors, officers, classmates and everyone with whom he came in contact,"⁶¹ he was scarcely treated "as an equal" and was far too sensitive to be unaware of some obvious evidences of prejudice. At Sunday chapel, for example, he and Young regularly occupied a "whole pew to themselves" since white cadets would not sit with them. In commenting on the racial attitudes of white cadets, Hare observed: "They dare not make any demonstration of their being prejudiced but one can see it in every action they take regarding color."⁶² But in public Alexander either avoided answering questions about his encounters with racial prejudice or gave the appearance of attaching little significance to it. After graduation, when asked directly whether he had found any "prejudice on the part of the students" because of his color, he simply answered: "Yes, a little, but it soon wore off."⁶³

Despite such public statements, it was clear that the "long, incessant strain" of cadet life was all the more difficult for Alexander because of his lonely existence. His color precluded social intercourse with white cadets and prevented his participation in certain extra-curricular activities. Alexander attempted to cope with his loneliness by writing and receiving letters which he considered "long-distance . . . conversations" and by constantly reassuring himself that his success at the academy was of such importance to his race that it was worth any amount of personal sacrifice and hardship. Writing to a friend in February 1885, he confided:

You can not realize to what extent I have been shut off from all refining influences (social) and how utterly West Point is isolated from the rest of the world. Were it not for changes in the climate and stream of visitors that come here it would seem that I had spent the last two years in the confines of the highest and most

⁶⁰ *Cleveland Gazette*, January 19, 1884; W. A. Hare to John P. Green, June 28, 1885, John P. Green Papers (Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio).

⁶¹ *New York Freeman*, June 18, 1887.

⁶² W. A. Hare to John P. Green, June 28, 1885, Green Papers.

⁶³ *Cleveland Gazette*, July 2, 1887.

secluded peak of the Himalaya Mountains. Just to think of a person going two years without speaking to anyone! Of course, most other cadets have friends visiting them and enjoy social advantages at hops and with the families of officers which advantages are closed to me. I hope, however, that the positive wholesome influences at work will render this a very slight offset."⁶⁴

He marked off the days on his calendar between February and the beginning of his leave in the summer of 1885. When the date for his leave finally arrived, he left West Point and traveled first to Ohio to visit his uncle, Nicholas, in Cincinnati and his friends in Cleveland. Then, he returned home to Arkansas for the first time in five years. "I wish to see my mother as speedily as possible," he wrote earlier, "for . . . you know she will be anxious to see her soldier-boy."⁶⁵

Alexander's last two years at West Point seem to have been filled with as much hard work and loneliness as the first two. But he had come to realize that the life of a cadet was something to be endured rather than enjoyed. Always reluctant in public to convey the impression that his experience was different from that of any other cadet, he declared: "I think I got as much fun out of it as the next man." Throughout his tenure at West Point, Alexander conveyed to white reporters, who interviewed him, an image of contentment. He was, in the words of one journalist, "as cheerful as a lark."⁶⁶ Regardless of what his attitude may have been about his own situation, he was keenly sensitive to the plight of blacks in his native South. He was especially aroused by the so-called Carrollton Massacre in Mississippi in March 1887,⁶⁷ which resulted in the death of several blacks and the wounding of others. As a teacher in the vicinity of Carrollton several years earlier, he knew the area and

⁶⁴ John H. Alexander to J. P. Green, February 8, 1885, Green Papers.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Cleveland Gazette*, July 2, 1887; *New York Times*, June 13, 1883.

⁶⁷ The affair in Carrollton involved a confrontation between J. M. Liddell (white) and Ed Brown (black). Following a shoot-out on the streets, several blacks were arrested. During the trial, a mob of armed whites stormed the courthouse and killed twelve black men including Ed Brown, who was accused of being "impudent" to whites. For the details of this affair, see *Memphis Daily Appeal*, March 19, 1886; *New York Daily Tribune*, March 18, 1886; *New York Freeman*, April 3, 10, 17, 1886.

several of the blacks involved in the affair. A lengthy letter about the massacre which he wrote to John P. Green revealed an aspect of Alexander which never appeared in the white press:

My soul was deeply stirred to the very depths by the massacre of colored people in Carrollton, Miss. . . . Because a colored man and his friends have the courage to stand up and resist and resent the impertinence of an insolent, overbearing white man, the latter's friends club together and at the trial open fire and coldly murder this colored man with 10 or 12 of his friends and wound several others. It was a damnable, perfidious and cowardly act worthy of hellish imps as they are. I know this man Ed Brown as Irishmen do Robert Emmett. . . . A man that can thus stand up for his right—his manhood—when low public sentiment all conspire to make him a cringing, cowardly, servile brute . . . is more than a man, he is a hero. Would to God that such a spirit animated more of us.⁶⁸

Moral suasion, he continued, was "a good thing," but it was never a substitute for defending one's manhood. In his view all efforts to force blacks to ride in "filthy smoking cars" or to do anything "inconsistent with true manhood" should be openly resisted "even though the consequences be perdition itself." Otherwise, Alexander believed, the idea that black men "had no rights that white men are bound to respect" would become even more firmly fixed in the public mind.⁶⁹

There is no evidence to suggest that Alexander himself openly opposed segregated railway accommodations or other manifestations of Jim Crowism, but it is clear that he was not disposed to tolerate racial slurs or actions that he considered direct assaults upon his "manhood." Though amiable and personable in his contacts with white cadets, his behavior was not overly deferential and certainly not servile. Rather he appears to have conducted himself in a manner that elicited respect from his peers. Without ever saying so explicitly he made them aware of the convictions that he candidly expressed in his letter to Green.

To insure that his mother would be present at his graduation, Alex-

⁶⁸ John H. Alexander to John P. Green, March 27, 1886, Green Papers.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

ander had regularly put aside money so that he could purchase her a railroad ticket from Helena to West Point. For Fannie Alexander, her son's graduation from West Point was a source of great personal pride. Treated with "the greatest consideration by both the professors and students," she attracted almost as much attention on graduation day as did her son.⁷⁰ Those in attendance could scarcely fail to appreciate the significance of her presence on this occasion: Fannie Alexander, a former slave, and her son, now a second lieutenant in the United States Army, gave meaning to the phrase, "out of the depths," used so often by blacks in the half century following Emancipation.

Following a leave of more than two months after graduation, Alexander reported for duty with the Ninth Cavalry at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, on September 30, 1887. One of four black regiments in the regular army formed shortly after the Civil War, the Ninth Cavalry had been stationed on the western frontier throughout its existence. Its contribution, along with that of the other cavalry unit, the Tenth, and the two infantry regiments, to the pacification and protection of the West had won for the black regulars an enviable reputation. The black cavalrymen in particular were famous for exploits in the Indian wars. Popularly known as "Buffalo Soldiers," they attracted "a good deal of interest and not a little envy" among other troops. All commissioned officers of the black regiments in the regular army were white, except for a few chaplains who were never allowed command positions and Henry Flipper, the West Point graduate dismissed from service in 1882.⁷¹ Five years later when Alexander assumed his duties, he was the sole black officer with a regular command position in the United States Army. He could scarcely have been oblivious to the heavy responsibility imposed upon him by both blacks and whites who made it appear that the reputation and good name of all Negroes rested upon his shoulders. "The country especially the Negroes," a black editor in Kansas wrote, "will look to see the mark that Cadet Alexander will make in life, the result of which will raise or lower the estimate of the Negro population

⁷⁰ *New York Freeman*, June 18, 1887; *Cleveland Gazette*, June 18, 1887.

⁷¹ Brown, "Eleven Men of West Point," 150; *New York Freeman*, October 15, 1887; Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., *Black Americans and the White Man's Burden, 1898-1903* (Urbana, Ill., 1975), 42-43.

as he is a success or a failure."⁷²

About the same time that Alexander arrived at Fort Robinson, Booker T. Washington, the principal of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, wrote to Adjutant General Richard C. Drum in an effort to have the newly commissioned black officer detailed to his school as professor of military science. But according to Drum, such an assignment could be made only after an officer had served a minimum of three years with his regiment. Furthermore, even if Alexander had met this condition, his appointment would have been "impracticable" because Alabama already possessed its quota of officers "for duty of this character."⁷³ Six years later, however, the black lieutenant would receive a similar assignment to a college in Ohio.

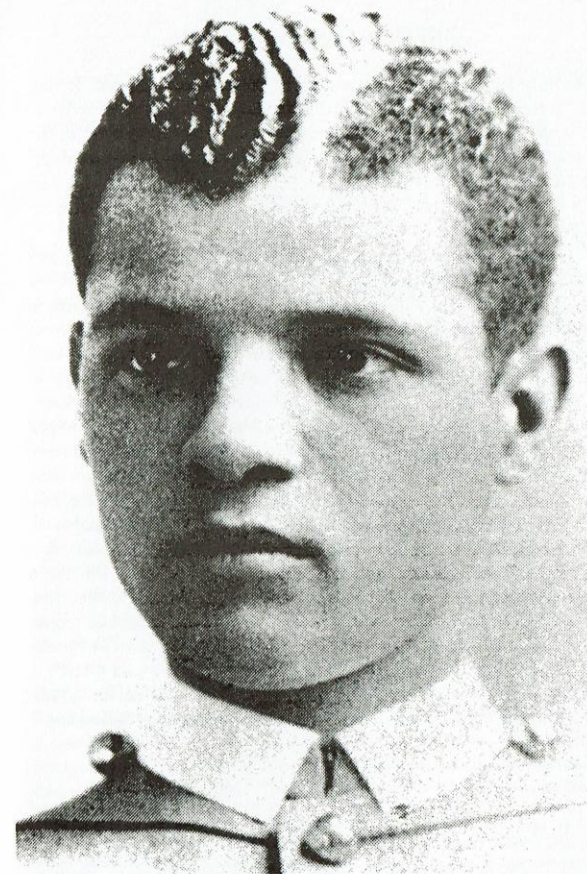
Alexander remained at Fort Robinson until March 1888, when he was transferred with his troops to Fort Washakie, Wyoming. His tour of duty in the Far West involved the usual activities of a second lieutenant at a frontier post. He appears to have been an exemplary officer. A model of sobriety, he acquired a minimum of "bad habits" other than cigarette smoking. Periodically he renewed acquaintances with white officers whom he had known at West Point. In the frontier environment they impressed him as being more congenial and relaxed in their social relations with him than they had been at the academy. On one occasion he mentioned having tea with a Miss Roberts, a black woman who lived in a village near the fort.⁷⁴ Although Alexander obviously enjoyed the company of females and was undoubtedly considered a prime candidate for marriage, there is no evidence that he ever seriously considered abandoning bachelorhood.

On June 11, 1888, the black lieutenant began a seventeen-day march with Troop M of the Ninth Cavalry from Fort Washakie, Wyoming, to Fort Du Chesne, Utah. Entries in a diary that he kept on this march referred repeatedly to the rough, mountainous terrain which was often

⁷²Nicodemus (Kan.) *Western Cyclone*, July 1, 1887.

⁷³Booker T. Washington to Richard C. Drum, October 8, 1887, Richard C. Drum to Booker T. Washington, October 11, 1887, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, edited by Louise R. Harlan (2 vols., Urbana, Ill., 1972), II, 390-92.

⁷⁴Pocket Diary of John H. Alexander, June 11-June 27, 1888, Alexander Papers (no pagination); Leavenworth (Kan.) *Herald*, April 7, 1894.



John Hanks Alexander

"beautiful and grand beyond description," the varieties of wildlife, and the "piercing cold winds." "My first experience in practical field service," he wrote early in the march, "is very pleasant." But at the end of the seventh day which proved to be especially "long, weary [and] fatiguing," he was less inclined to view field service as pleasant or enjoyable. "After this day's trying march," he wrote in his diary, "I feel as if I were entitled to my spurs."⁷⁵

Despite rumors in 1889 that Alexander was to be appointed military attaché in the American legation in Haiti,⁷⁶ he remained at Fort Du Chesne for more than three years. In 1889 he conducted prisoners to Fort Omaha in Nebraska and, in the following year, was twice in command of a detachment of black troops at the government sawmills near his Utah post. During a leave early in 1890, he visited his family in Arkansas. On October 22, 1891, he traveled to Raleigh, North Carolina, to inspect the Charlotte Light Infantry, a black militia unit encamped there. Following another leave, he was transferred to Fort Robinson, where he remained for more than a year. At this post he won commendation from superior officers for his accomplishments as assistant commissary officer in charge of the post exchange.⁷⁷ But notwithstanding such commendations and an honorable record in general, Alexander "remained an inconspicuous second lieutenant" for six years.⁷⁸ Finally in October 1893 he underwent examination for promotion to first lieutenant. He informed his friend John P. Green that he hoped to receive the promotion "in about six months."⁷⁹ At the time Alexander was unaware that he would soon be back among friends in "old Ohio."

Through the influence of Senators John Sherman and Calvin S. Brice of Ohio, the War Department designated Wilberforce University, a

⁷⁵ Pocket Diary, Alexander Papers.

⁷⁶ New York Age, September 14, 1889.

⁷⁷ Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents* (13 vols., Wilmington, Del., 1977), III, 123; St. Paul (Minn.) *Western Appeal*, October 24, 1891; Brown, "Eleven Men at West Point," 150; John H. Alexander Service Record, Pension Office Files 1426 AGO (National Archives); O. G. Villard, "The Negro in the Regular Army," *Atlantic Monthly*, LCI (June 1903), 728.

⁷⁸ John M. Carroll, ed., *The Black Experience in the American West* (New York, 1971), 266.

⁷⁹ John H. Alexander to John P. Green, November 17, 1893, Green Papers.

black institution in Xenia affiliated with the AME Church, as "a school for military training." At the urging of Wilberforce's president, W. S. Scarborough, an Oberlin graduate, the War Department placed Alexander on detached service as professor of military science and tactics at the school on January 6, 1894. The announcement of his transfer to Wilberforce received considerable publicity in the black community as the first appointment "of its kind [involving a black officer] in the military history of the country." The faculty and administration of the college had "high hopes" for the new military department under Alexander, who was delighted to return to an academic environment.⁸⁰

A little more than a month after his arrival on campus, the senior second lieutenant of the Ninth Cavalry and the new professor of military science at Wilberforce was dead. On March 26, 1894, while in the barber's chair in Springfield, Ohio, where he was spending the weekend to attend the annual meeting of the Knights of Pythias, Alexander complained of a severe headache and suddenly collapsed. He died immediately. The official cause of his death was listed as apoplexy. A white military company from Springfield accompanied his body to Wilberforce where funeral services were held. His oldest brother, Milo, was the only member of the family present at the funeral and the burial which took place in the cemetery in Xenia. In the regimental order announcing his death the colonel in command of the Ninth Cavalry spoke of Alexander "in high praise and did not use the customary stereotyped phrases of regret."⁸¹

News of Alexander's death at the age of thirty produced "severe shock in Helena" and in the black community throughout the nation. The black press in general mourned the "loss to the race" of so exemplary a young man and agreed with the *Planet* of Richmond, Virginia, that one of his most noteworthy attributes was his "devotion to his people" and to their advancement.⁸² "The Negroes of the United States," a black

⁸⁰ Scarborough, "Autobiography," 155-57; Indianapolis (Ind.) *Freeman*, January 20, 1894.

⁸¹ Villard, "The Negro in the Regular Army," 728; Indianapolis *Freeman*, March 31, 1894; Scarborough, "Autobiography," 157; Cleveland *Gazette*, March 31, 1894.

⁸² Richmond *Planet* quoted in Topeka (Kan.) *Call*, April 14, 1894; see also Leavenworth *Herald*, April 7, 1894, Indianapolis *Freeman*, April 7, 1894.

editor in Kansas City declared, "can ill afford to lose a man like Lieut. John Alexander. . . . For a young man of unusual brilliancy with a long and useful career before him to be cut down just at the beginning of life . . . is a sad blow to the whole race."⁸³ President Scarborough voiced a common view when he insisted that Alexander's life stood "out as a shining example of the possibilities of the young men of the race." That a young man of such potential usefulness had been struck down impressed the university president as another example of the "thwarted endeavors" suffered by blacks.⁸⁴ "May another soon take his place," a black newspaper declared, "in order that the work which he has begun may be carried on."⁸⁵ Charles Young was presumably that individual. The third black graduate of West Point (1889), who was to be the last until 1936, Young succeeded his former classmate as professor of military science at Wilberforce.

Between the arrival of Michael Howard of Mississippi and James Webster Smith of South Carolina in 1870 and the graduation of Young in 1889, twenty-two blacks were admitted to West Point. Of these only three graduated: Flipper, Alexander, and Young. Flipper and Young have been the subjects of considerable historical inquiry, and even some of those who did not graduate have attracted attention. Whittaker's career, for example, has been treated in a book-length monograph.⁸⁶ In contrast Alexander has rarely received more than brief reference in literature devoted to the military history of Afro-Americans.⁸⁷ The reasons for this neglect are not altogether clear, but they may be related to the fact that he was never the center of controversy as were Flipper and Whittaker and did not live long enough to compile a military record worthy of comparison to that of Young who rose to the rank of colonel. Whatever the reasons, a scholar writing in 1971 correctly noted that Alexander had gone "almost unnoticed in history."⁸⁸ Five years later

⁸³ Kansas City *American Citizen*, March 30, 1894.

⁸⁴ Scarborough, "Autobiography," 158.

⁸⁵ Richmond *Planet* quoted in Topeka *Weekly Call*, April 14, 1894; see also John S. Durham to Whitefield McKinlay, April 22, 1894, McKinlay Papers.

⁸⁶ See Marszalek, *Court-Martial*.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Robert E. Greene, *Black Defenders of America, 1775-1973* (Chicago, 1974), 109-10.

⁸⁸ Carroll, *Black Experience in the American West*, 266.

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another specialist in military history seemed to suggest that he had been ignored because "there is little information on this officer."⁸⁹ Despite the lack of attention devoted to Alexander, he was not completely forgotten either in the black community⁹⁰ or in military circles. During World War I the War Department gave his name to an installation near Newport News, Virginia. By General Order No. 294, dated August 15, 1918, the stevedore cantonments and labor encampments in the vicinity were henceforth to be known as Camp Alexander "in honor of the late Lieutenant John H. Alexander, 9th U. S. Cavalry, a colored graduate of the United States Military Academy" who was "a man of ability, attainments and energy."⁹¹

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⁸⁹ W. Sherman Savage, *Blacks in the West* (Westport, Conn., 1976), 52.

⁹⁰ See, for example, T. G. Steward, *The Colored Regulars in the United States Army* (Philadelphia, 1904), 88-89; W. Allison Sweeney, *History of the American Negro in the Great World War* (New York, 1969), 97-98.

⁹¹ General Orders No. 294, signed by Colonel Daniel Van Voorhis, August 15, 1918 (copy), Alexander Papers.

STEAMER ST. NICHOLAS
WRECKED 63 YEARS AGO

MANY OF THE INJURED WERE
BROUGHT TO MEMPHIS

By J. H. Curtis

Probably no person is living in Memphis and this territory who remembers the terrible river disaster that occurred 63 years ago today at Island 60 a few miles this side of Helena, Ark., when the ST. NICHOLAS burned.

She was one of the great Mississippi River palaces in her time, operating from New Orleans to Memphis and St. Louis, and was not only the finest, but the largest in service.

The steamer was en route from St. Louis to New Orleans, with a heavy cargo and about 200 passengers. She had left Memphis on the evening of May 23, 1922, in charge of Capt. McMullen.

Pilot James Reid went on watch at midnight. It was early next morning when the steamer made a crossing in the river at the head of Island 60. The captain's young wife was in the pilothouse talking with Reid. He wrote a personal account of the explosion, which is among the valued keepsakes of Capt. Henry C. Cullen, of Memphis.

PILOT'S OWN STORY

Pilot Reid's statement reads that he was in

the act of giving the engineer a signal for a full head of steam when there came a report like a cannon being fired under his feet "Instantly," he wrote, "I felt myself lifted into the air. When I recovered my senses I found myself down among the boilers. Soon as the steam and smoke from the explosion cleared away I commenced crawling toward the roof, in doing so I ran across Capt. McMullen lying with his right foot under the caved-in hurricane roof. The pilot house and a lot of other rubbish had been thrown together in one common wreckage. It was this that held the captain. Seeing me he called for help. I found his right foot held fast under the debris and I tried to get him free, but failed. I called the second mate, whom I saw near at hand; and we both worked several minutes, but could not free him.

FATE OF MISS KENNEDY

Finally Capt. McMullen begged us to cut off one leg. We could find no axe or anything to cut it off with. Fire had started from the boat's boilers exploding. It was eating its way fast to us. The captain's last words were for us to save ourselves. Let me alone and go he said. "I will have to burn." He was very cool as he always was when facing danger. We saw him burn, unable to give him any assistance.

Capt. McMullen's wife resided in St. Louis for many years. He was survived by her and a son.

Miss Lucy Kennedy was a passenger on the steamer. She was thrown by the explosion from her stateroom into the river. She managed to keep afloat by grabbing a plank, drifted to the stern of the boat, where she caught a ring in the side of the hull and clung to it, every minute the fire threatening her death. She remained this way until the fire burned the hair off her

head. That part of her body above the water was roasted to a crisp. She was finally rescued and with others, brought to Memphis, but she died.

A queer coincidence is told in old records of this explosion. A few minutes before the boilers of the ST. NICHOLAS let go, Captain McMullen, Charles J. Reynolds, of Sioux City, Ia., and a man from Warrenton, Miss. were in the pilot-house discussing the explosion and burning of the steamer PENNSYLVANIA, which occurred a short time before in the same neighborhood. (See PHILLIPS COUNTY HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, Vol. 18, June 1980, p. 22).

The man from Warrenton remarked that he believed he was always ready to meet his Maker. That was the kind of life he had always lived, he said. The three left the pilothouse in time to escape instant death.

Coming up the river a short distance away was the steamer SUSQUEHANNA. She rescued many and brought them to Memphis where the good people gave every assistance. Many private homes were turned into hospitals to accommodate the injured. Society women of the city volunteered as nurses.

It was the steamer PENNSYLVANIA that exploded her boilers, fatally injuring a brother of Mark Twain, who was a third clerk on that boat. He was brought to Memphis and died.

The above article was copied from the COMMERCIAL APPEAL of May 21, 1922, by T. E. Tappan.

OLD TOWN SCARE-1922

by

Thomas E. Tappan, Jr.

Old Town, or sometimes known as Old Town Landing in south Phillips County, Arkansas, twenty miles south of Helena, at the end of Arkansas State Highway 20, was very much in the news in April and May of 1922, as well as were Laconia Circle, Snow Lake and Elaine. All due to a high water level in the Mississippi River, and a threat of a levee crevasse.

There were heavy rains all over the Plains States during March 1922. These were on top of heavy snows in the Rockies. There was heavy rain at Arkansas City, Kansas and winds up to 40 miles per hour, on top of a snow storm that had lasted for the longest period in the history of Kansas, resulting in high stages all along the Missouri River.

Unusually heavy rains were reported in Tennessee at Chattanooga and Nashville. The rains over the Tennessee watershed resulted in high stages of the Ohio River. These indications caused a threat of high water on the Mississippi River.

On March the fifth the COMMERCIAL APPEAL predicted a colder period for a few days followed by normal heavy spring rains.

By March the 10th the COMMERCIAL was reporting daily on the rising river as in the following direct quotes:

March 10: "Heavy rains covering a wide area fell yesterday and at 7 P.M. last night rain was

still falling at Memphis with about 2.51 inches on the gauge at that time. Rains over such a wide area as occurred yesterday usually send a considerable amount of water into the tributaries of the Mississippi. This amount will be increased by heavy rains over the Ohio Valley."

March 20: "The Mississippi passes flood stage at Cairo and standing at 30 feet, where rise is expected, the Arkansas and White Rivers are expecting higher water as well as the St. Francis."

March 25: "The COMMERCIAL APPEAL predicts a stage of 51.5 at Helena early in April. The river reached 39.5 at Memphis, flood stage is 34 feet on the old Beale Street gauge. 46.5 was reported at Helena; flood stage is 42 feet."

By March the 26th the river situation was front page, headline news and stayed that way for almost a month as follows:

WEATHER MAP THREATENS

March 26: "If predictions for rain in the upper valley come true the crest of the Mississippi will be beyond the figures so far announced. The weather map is very threatening. Everything depends on the rain storm travelling out of the west toward the Ohio Valley. More rains in the upper watersheds will result in dangerous levels of the river. At all points below Cairo to New Orleans."

HEAVY RAINS CONTINUE

March 27: "A report from Helena stated that there was no trouble. Levee engineers report the situation well in hand, both up and down the river, the gauge stands at 49.5 feet but the levee here

can stand 60 feet or more. The citizens of Helena are resting easy."

"A sand boil reported at Old Town, is one of the usual occurrences when the Mississippi is at its present stage and caused no uneasiness, it has already been repaired."

From Helena March 28. "Officials of the Cotton Belt Levee District after careful investigation of the situation below Old Town declared yesterday morning that there were no grounds for anxiety. There are some sand boils and seepage, but these have received prompt attention and are usual occurrences under these high water conditions. Sandbags for emergency use have been sent from Memphis and these will be instantly available if they happen to be needed. The levee at Old Town is in much better condition than in 1913 and there appears to be no danger of a break. Officials of the levee board are in constant touch with the situation, and accurate news can be obtained from any member at any time."

(Gauge at Helena 1912- 55.3; 1913 - 55.2; 1916 - 55.4; 5/3/1922 - 53.1; 1927 - 56.75.)

"With the reconstruction of a sub-levee around the sand boil at Old Town, the levee board reported that the situation was well in hand. Levee patrols are maintained night and day. Careful watch is kept from Helena southward."

CAVING AT OLDTOWN

SWIFT CURRENT BELOW HELENA EATS AT THE LEVEE.

March 30: "An urgent telephone message was received at Police headquarters asking that a hundred men be sent to Old Town. The desk

sergeant sent 52 men in motor trucks and the entire department was scouring the city for additional men. The torrential rain last night added to the difficulties confronting the levee officials now engaged with the battle night and day with the Mississippi flood. Caving conditions occurred at a point two miles below Old Town Landing on the Arkansas side, and precautionary measures are centered there. The caving had reached the crown of the levee and a strong sub-levee of sand bags had been constructed on the inner bank. A swift current sweeping against the levee from the Mississippi side piles the water against the threatened section and runs against the embankment."

"The Cotton Belt Levee Board members believe that the emergency measures already and still being applied will prevent a break from the present flood. But there is still some doubt as to whether the levee at Old Town will stand a prolonged high stage of water. The cave-in at Old Town occurred in a part of the levee which has always given more or less trouble. The last slice of dirt to fall in the river carried the cave-in area to the crown of the levee on the river side. There is still a considerable width of crown intervening to withstand the pressure, and back of that is the standard banquettes. Here the levee board has erected an embankment of sandbags that will hold the water if the crown gives way. This sub-levee, it is asserted, will stand against the crest now passing Osceola, but no prediction can be obtained if the flood will exceed that height."

"Levee officials have numbers of men at work at the danger point and there is an ample

supply of sandbags to be used in an emergency. Residents and land owners of the territory which would be affected in the event of a crevasse are lending every possible assistance and stand ready to respond to any call."

"Backwater from the White River had already reached the rails of the M. H. & L. RR at Ferguson, and assistant superintendent J. D. Moore, in charge of the Missouri Pacific lines in Helena, announced this morning that box cars had been placed along the M. H. & L. tracks at convenient locations for use to refugees from the flood. He also stated that he did not think that the water would rise enough to cause suspension of traffic."

April 1. "The COMMERCIAL APPEAL correspondent at Helena, Arkansas said over the long distance telephone that a large part of the forces sent to Old Town had returned to Helena. A sand bag embankment had been finished to the crown of the levee. The engineers in charge reported that everything was holding, with no immediate trouble anticipated. L. Y. Kerr, assistant engineer at Memphis said that a quarterboat was sent to Old Town yesterday afternoon to house the workmen there. He said the report that the government was rushing men and supplies to the point was false. We sent the quarter-boat because there were no provisions for taking care of the men working on the levee. Conditions there are greatly improved."

OLD TOWN IS HOLDING

April 1. from Helena: "Statements made by the officers of the levee board say that the levee is holding much better than expected, levee caving continued until last midnight, but since that time had been holding its own against the swift

current surging against it."

"At one point the levee has caved until it is only three or four feet wide, but a back levee of sand bags had been made at this point and for several hundred feet at the most dangerous points. The situation was considered dangerous last night. A hundred men were asked for to keep a vigil and make a cross levee of sandbags. A telephone had been stationed on the levee and every precaution had been taken in case of an emergency. A new supply of sandbags came in on the KATE ADAMS. Several hundred men are at work placing patches of logs and trees where the current is the swiftest, so as to break the constant surging against the levee."

"Major Yaeger and hundreds of prominent citizens were at the scene yesterday afternoon."

"The situation below Old Town is much more encouraging than it was yesterday, according to Mr. W. K. Monroe, local engineer in charge. There had been no sloughing since three this morning and the work of holding back the flood had been more thoroughly systematized. Relief crews sent from Helena arrived before noon to take the place of men who worked in the mud and rain yesterday afternoon and up to nine last night."

"The main sub-levee on the edge of the banquettes had been heightened and the two ends have been extended to join the main part of the levee; these ends have been brought up to height. Yesterday afternoon the highest portion of the levee was ten inches above the water level in the river, and has been increased by several tiers of sand bags. There is now little probability of a break and general confidence in the levee has returned."

"There are ample bags for use in constructing the sub-levee and with more thorough organization since yesterday the work in combating the flood is moving forward more rapidly and more effectively than formerly. A few refugees are still leaving the lowlands, but most of the people that would suffer from inundation in case of a crevasse at Old Town left the area yesterday. It is not believed now that the break in the levee would be followed by the loss of human life. Most of the livestock has been removed."

"Late this afternoon it was announced that government engineers in charge at Memphis had dispatched a quarter-boat to Old Town for the use of the emergency workers. This boat will comfortably house over 100 men."

"The crest of the present flood will not pass Old Town until next Tuesday, which affords encouragement, as the delay will allow the engineers to strengthen the levee sufficiently to withstand an even higher stage than is now forecasted."

FALL OF MISSISSIPPI IS PREDICTED TODAY CONDITIONS GOOD EXCEPT AT OLD TOWN LEVEE

April 2: "Danger has passed Memphis. Levee engineers from these sections reported last night that everything was in the best of condition with the exception of Old Town, where another 100 feet of break-off was reported yesterday morning at four A.M. The break is nothing more than a widening of the old slough and engineers at that point report to L. Y. Kerr, engineer in charge at Memphis, that they expect to hold the break. The COMMERCIAL APPEAL reporter at Helena said over the telephone yesterday evening that 450 men

were rushed to Old Town on information of the widening of the original break. Half of the number were held in reserve at Helena and when necessary can be sent there in a very short time. Double rows of sand bags placed in position by engineers will hold back further breaks, barring a very heavy rain."

"The correspondent said that the engineers were sincere in their belief that they would make further cavings impossible, except some small parts that would not affect the situation, as a whole."

NOT VAUNTED BY THE ANGRY WATERS OF THE MIGHTY
MISSISSIPPI WHICH ATE ANOTHER HOLE IN THE
OLD TOWN LEVEE 175 FEET LAST NIGHT

April 2: "At 11 P.M. the authorities, engineers, laborers built an entirely new semi-circular levee of sand bags to crown the old levee."

This afternoon at 4:30, 150 reserve laborers made available by the voluntary closing down of the Chicago Mill & Lumber Plant in West Helena, left in trucks loaned by various firms for the scene of operations at Old Town to relieve part of the 450 men there."

"Every competent authority connected or not with the actual work at Old Town agrees that with the material and skill at the sight, almost anything short of a catastrophe can be coped with. The spirit of general cooperation shown by all the authorities and every citizen of both colors would be a marvel to any but those familiar with the spirit that has always prevailed in Phillips County."

"The constantly changing current of the

"Father of Waters" has perversely made an unbelievably swift flow of water in a straight line from the Mississippi shore to the points now giving trouble in the levee at Old Town. Trees and other materials have been placed in front of the levee in the attempt to change the current slightly."

"The levee board issued a request this morning that the general public refrain from visiting the section of the levee at present undergoing repairs. All vehicles and pedestrians are being stopped at a point about three miles south of Helena, where the Elaine - Old Town roads diverge."

"Too much credit can never be given to the efficiency created by the paved highways of Phillips County, which has enabled materials and men in almost unlimited quantities to be transferred with seeming lightning like rapidly to the threatened points at will."

"The local telephone management and employees have rendered supreme service during the crisis. Special instruments were installed where needed in the Old Town sector and beside the army like efficiency created by such intelligent service, the main exchange at Helena has consistently given courteous information to the general public at all hours of the day and night."

"The slough last night increased the length of the cave-in from 50 to 174 feet, but it was delayed sufficiently to allow the completion of the sub-levee on the inner edges of the banquettes, and engineers believe that they will be able to prevent a crevasse, if the stupendous current does not eat into the bank far enough to undermine the sub-levee. It is not believed that this will occur, although it is one of the contingencies to

be guarded against."

"Precautions already include the establishment of a strong patrol of the threatened section and considerable distance beyond. Patrols are kept on other sections of the levee night and day."

"Sub-levees constructed of sand bags are built on the banquettes to a height above the water level and the ends are constantly growing in order to keep the barrier ahead of the possible extension of a cave-in. The water has now spread over the top of the banquette and is washing against the sand bag barrier, here and there it trickles through where the bags have not been sufficiently close to prevent it, but this is causing no uneasiness. It is the possibility of the undermining of the banquette which is causing anxiety."

"Refugees from the menaced farm lands are assembling at Elaine, Wabash, Lakeview and Barton all on ground above possibility of inundation. A few refugees have come to Helena, but the bulk of them have stopped at points nearer to the threatened section."

"The Red Cross Chapter had been preparing for the emergency since the first reports of the dangerous stage of water. A field representative reached here early this week and a director of disaster service will arrive tomorrow morning from the west where he had charge of the Red Cross activities at Pueblo, Corpus Christi and San Antonio."

"Dr. H. H. Rightor, the chairman of the local Red Cross Chapter declared today that every resource of the Red Cross will be used to prevent unnecessary suffering among the refugees and others who might be affected by a break in the levee. Every preparation has been made to care for those in need of succor, and the Red Cross

officials are ready to respond instantly."

"Assistant superintendent of the Missouri Pacific lines here is in personal charge of the emergency work on the Memphis, Helena and Louisiana branch of the system and has placed empty box cars on the route from Oneida to Elaine for use by the flood refugees and other victims. The same precautions have been taken at Barton. Emergency trains are held in readiness to be sent into the flood districts, if necessary to bring out any residents who have failed to reach safety."

"The backwater from the White River has already covered the railroad tracks at Mellwood to a depth of fourteen inches, and a break in the Mississippi River levees would cover them many feet."

"The lands which would be devastated by a crevasse at Old Town are among the richest in the world, they comprise an area in Phillips County of some 400 square miles."

"Water from a break in the levee at Old Town would cover part of Monroe County and the northern part of Desha County; Arkansas County would also probably get some of it. If the break should occur and the stage of water increases according to forecasts, it is believed here that the Arkansas River levee protecting Arkansas City and Lake Village would be endangered. If it should go out at any point, a vast section of the country from the Arkansas River to the Louisiana line and beyond would be inundated."

"In the territory menaced by this sloughing at Old Town are great plantations, where costly development work has been going on for several years. Some of them comprise as much as 5000 acres in a single tract. Most of the timber has been removed from the land and practically all of

the land is under cultivation. Planting operations are well under way and a crevasse would stop them for weeks. For the first time in the Delta, fall plowing was general last year, and plantation owners expected to reap large harvests this year. These hopes will be blighted by an overflow."

"Late this evening, automobiles and motor trucks bearing 150 reserve workers left for Old Town. They will relieve the men who have worked in relays since yesterday. Reports coming in over the emergency telephone lines erected yesterday to connect Helena with Old Town were unchanged and that the sub-levees were growing steadily higher and longer."

NO ADDITIONAL RISE EXPECTED IN VALLEY

OLD TOWN IS HOLDING

April 3. "Red Cross on hand, will help in case of break in levee. ** Dr. H. H. Rightor, chairman of the local chapter of the Red Cross announced yesterday that while need for such a step might not arise, every necessary step had been taken to care for the refugees and to prevent suffering. The local resources of the American Red Cross would be at the service of the people in case of a crevasse. Miss Harmon Newman, field representative of the southwestern division of the Red Cross, arrived in Helena and Capt. Harry M. Baker, director of the disaster service will arrive here tomorrow. He comes here from Gower, Oklahoma, where there was a small flood last week. The local Red Cross chapter has selected two citizens committees which stand ready to cooperate with the Red Cross workers."

"The Helena committee is composed of the following representative citizens: Phillip

Solomon, Chairman, S. Straub, E. P. Moore, Wellford White, T. L. Love, J. F. Epes, E. M. Polk. A sub-committee to operate along the M. H. & L. R. R. and contiguous territory has been named as follows: S. S. Stokes, Chairman, T. H. Lee, W. F. Craggs, K.P. Alderman, John D. Krow. These committees, working in cooperation with the Red Cross will act in any emergency, caring for any and all persons who may need assistance of any kind."

"Manager Benton with the local exchange of the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, not only constructed an emergency line from Helena to Old Town, but he placed a special operator at the disposal of the levee board officials in order that instant connections could be made whenever necessary. All official communications come over this line. Many persons feeling uneasy over the situation have used it daily. The Old Town call is rural operator 1519F11. Service is maintained night and day free of charge."

April 3: OLD TOWN LEVEE SAFE

SIGHTSEERS ORDERED TO KEEP AWAY FROM WHERE MEN WORK.

April 4:

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HIGH WATER IMPROVES

OLD TOWN IS HOLDING

April 3: OLD TOWN IMPROVES

CREST OF HIGH WATER IS EXPECTED THERE BY TOMORROW
NIGHT

From Helena: "There was another slough from the levee last night, the new gash in the embankment is approximately 75 feet long and is located upstream from the original cave-in. The persistent 9 mile current and the prevailing high

winds last night are blamed for the most recent slough. Every available carpenter and laborer in Helena has been pressed into service by the levee board and engineers and supplemental barriers are raised and lengthened as rapidly as possible. There is a triple barrier between the river and the outlying farm lands, and none of the protecting work has given away."

"The water is pressing against the lessor barrier of oak planks two inches thick and surrounded by rows of burlap bags filled with earth and is now three feet above the water level, and can be carried higher if deemed necessary. The water in the river is now 12 feet or more above the ground level and rising slowly and is not expected to go more than 6 inches higher before the crest passes Old Town on Wednesday. With the arrival of about 200 refugees at Helena Crossing last night, it is believed that all lands threatened by inundation have been cleared of people and the work of caring for refugees is already under way."

"At 1:30 this afternoon, word was received that levee board headquarters in the Chamber of Commerce, that the situation at Old Town had improved considerably since early this morning. There had been no more sloughing and preventive work has progressed most satisfactorily, and with the beginning of the fall which will follow the crest, the principal danger to the levee will be from subsidence due to the withdrawal of water pressure and under the levee."

"It is not known at this time whether the levee has been sufficiently undermined to cause a subsidence and the situation as to the undermining cannot be determined until the crest has passed and the river has reached a stage which

will make examination possible."

"Deputy Sheriffs have been stationed at each camp with instructions to arrest all labor agents as soon as they appear. A peremptory notice has been issued stating that the presence of labor agents at any of the camps or elsewhere in Phillips County will be instantly resented."

"Refugee camps have been established at Latour, Lexa, Barton Junction, Helena Crossing, Oneida, Lake View, Wabash and Elaine. There are about 40 families at Helena Crossing, three miles south of Helena on the Solomon-Straub Pike."

HIGH WATER SITUATION SHOWS IMPROVEMENT
FALL OF THE MISSISSIPPI WILL BE AT INCREASING RATE
OLD TOWN MUCH BETTER

April 5: "The big whirlpools seen hereto before close to the levee at Old Town have moved out into the mainstream. Early Monday morning the gauge at Helena was changed to read 52½ and changed from rising to standing. It is expected to be at a standstill for another 12 hours. Some authorities state that one of the gravest dangers to a levee which has sloughed in a rising river is when the falling stage is taking place, the pressure is somewhat relieved and sloughing begins at a greater rate."

April 6: The flood news was off the front page, dropping back to page 13.

OLD TOWN SAFE ** WILL PROBABLY GET DROP TODAY

April 8: MISSISSIPPI TO FALL AT INCREASED RATE.

"Helena and Old Town get drops on the gauge. People have quit fighting the levee at

Old Town. They have gotten out their fishing poles and plows and are now getting ready for amusement and work, laughingly remarked L. Y. Kerr, assistant engineer at Memphis, after receiving a late report from the troubled section south of Memphis."

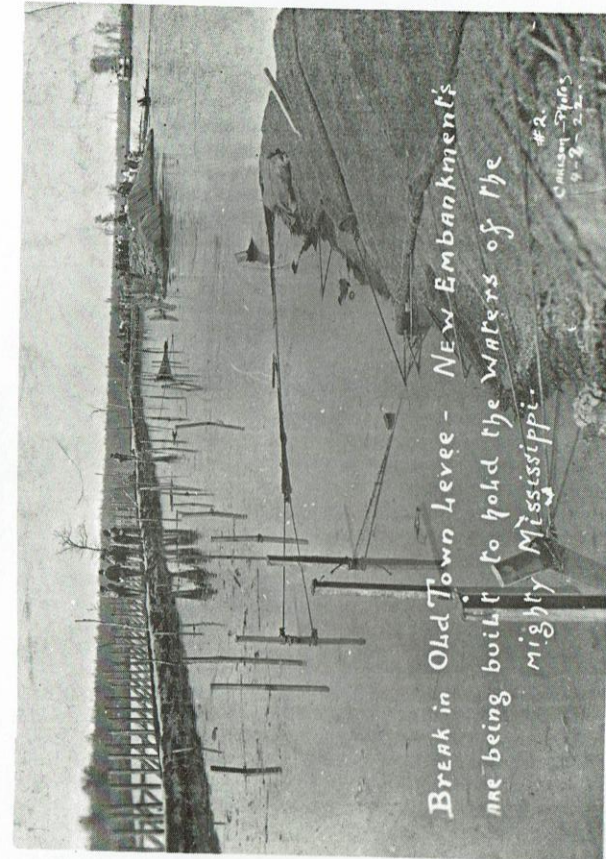
"Conditions at Old Town are said to be excellent. A slight fall in the river was reported there yesterday afternoon, it will likely show to a better advantage this morning."

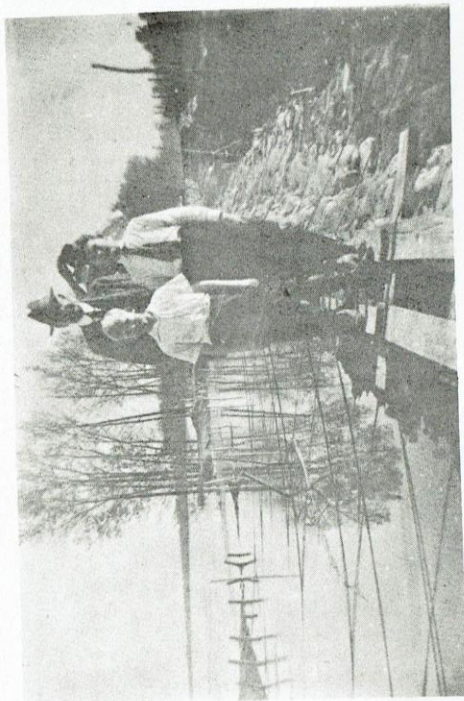
April 10: MISSISSIPPI FALLS TWO FEET IN A
WEEK DECLINE IS REPORTED FROM CAIRO TO
HELENA OLD TOWN IS SECURE

ENGINEERS WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS AFTER RAIN

"No apprehension is felt here, concerning the levee at Old Town. Engineers and a small force of men are kept constantly at work strengthening the already powerful barricade at Old Town. It is believed that no further emergencies will develop, although a higher water level as a result of the rise in the river above Helena creates a danger and this along with the strong current must be watched. This afternoon a terrific rain storm with a very strong wind deluged Helena with at least 1½ inches of rain water. This did not effect the levee in this territory. A good deal of the rise reported at St. Louis and other points above here will be scattered before it reaches Helena, but this will keep up pressure against the levee and engineers are watching developments."

TO BE CONTINUED.





This photograph was taken in April of 1922 by Mrs. T. E. Tappan, Sr., from the sublevee looking south. It shows clearly the remains of the main levee and the first and second sub-levees. I observed some of the trees in the background as they were swallowed up by the whirlpools in the river. They did not fall over, but disappeared, sucked straight down in the vortex of the tremendous whirlpools. Pictured left front William Tappan, right front T. E. Tappan, Jr. and their step-grandfather S. C. Moore.

NOTES

The Twentieth Anniversary of the Phillips County Historical Society was celebrated at Habib's on Cherry Street in Helena on Sunday afternoon, June 27. Officers for the next year were elected. The program was a presentation by the new Task Force, CAN-DO (Community Action Now), which was formed to get some projects completed for the betterment of the community. A wooden sign to be placed at the historic homes at the discretion of the owner was displayed. After refreshments, there was a tour of the Short Home at 517 Biscoe Street. The home was formerly the Delta Haven Center and is to be restored by new private owners for a "bed and breakfast" facility.

*

The Fall Meeting of the Historical Society was held at the Phillips County Museum on Sunday, October 17. About 50 people attended. Ernest and Cathy Cunningham presented the program on the Allin House which they have recently purchased and are remodeling to be used as a professional office building. John Robinson, architectural historian, is supervising the construction. Cunningham explained that the Allin House was thought to have been built as early as 1858 because of information found in the local tax records. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was the first home in Helena to be placed on the National Register. Afterward the group toured the Allin House and were served hot punch and cookies.

**

Alma Faust, a member and past president of the Historical Society, recently published a history of her church, the West Helena Baptist Church. Mrs. Faust is a charter member of this church and served as its treasurer for 50 years.

In her book Mrs. Faust relates the beginning of the church as a mission of the First Baptist Church in Helena and how it became a self supporting church between 1912 and 1914. Her book lists the known charter members which include Mrs. Faust's mother and father, herself and her brother and sisters. When she became treasurer in 1922, she began saving financial statements, weekly bulletins, letters and pictures which she has used in her history. In 1973 she began writing a historical column for her church's monthly newsletter. This book is a compilation of those columns dealing with the history of the church from 1910 through 1972.

The author concludes her history in 1972, the year she resigned as church treasurer. A committee of church members wrote history of the church from 1972 to 1982, and that is in the concluding chapter in the book.

Copies of the book may be purchased at the West Helena Baptist Church and at the West Helena Library for \$4.00. Please add 75¢ for mail orders.

Graveside services were held at Maple Hill Cemetery on June 19 for Dr. Albert A. Hornor, resident of Chestnut Hill, Mass. Dr. Hornor, who was 95, was born in Helena and was a member of the Historical Society. He practiced medicine in New England until his retirement in 1968. His boyhood home was the Hornor-Gladin Home. He was a frequent contributor to the QUARTERLY.

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Meetings are held in September, January, April and June, on the fourth Sunday of the month, at 3:00 P.M. at the Phillips County Museum.

The Phillips County Historical Society supplies the QUARTERLY to its members. Membership is open to anyone interested in Phillips County history. Annual membership dues are \$5.00 for a regular membership and \$10.00 for a sustaining membership. Single copies of the QUARTERLY are \$1.25. QUARTERLIES are mailed to members. Dues are payable to the Phillips County Historical Society, 623 Pecan Street, Helena, AR 72342.

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