

WPA Alabama Writers Project
LIFE HISTORIES/STORIES
Sumter County, #4

Microfilmed: 5-12-77

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Joe Gillespie (white)
Belmont, Alabama

Ruby Pickens Tartt
Sumter County
Livingston, Alabama

Life History

JOE GILLESPIE

An elderly woman was sitting on the narrow porch of the old four room house knitting, the click of her needles like the sound of crickets in the still air.

"Is this the home of Mr. Joe Gillespie?" I asked. "Well, no, not exactly", said the old lady. "its the old house of his grandfather and it belongs to me and my husband, Bruce Ulmer, but Joe stays here with us when he is in Belmont."

In the meantime Mr. Gillespie had walked out on the porch and stood in the door-way behind her. "Yes" he said, "this is where I stay; for you see I'm like a stray dog now, neither home nor master. I did live here tho' through three race riots and I can tell you all about them and a lot of other things that happened soon after the war.

"I was born way back in 1853, right near here. My father owned 860 acres and we farmed. You see he was one of the earliest settlers of Sumter County. In fact it was formed after he moved here from St. Stephens; that was the capitol then of Alabama. The county was formed down here at Williamson's Mill, the first mill in Sumter. Old man Williamson made the wheel. That was on Coatopa Creek just a few miles from here. Coa means panther and topa means wounded, so Wounded Panther was what the Choctaws called it.

"The mill was two miles east of Brewersville, and Brewersville was the first Post Office in Sumter County. That was back in 1831. The little cedar log cabin split with the round side out, still stands.

"My grandfather was the first white man to cross at Moscow landing down on the Tombigbee at Coatopa, and Mr. Joe Patton from the

cane^zbrake was next. They settled near each other. They were met by an old Choctaw Indian Chief, Muckelushee. He wanted my father to buy up some cleared land from him in the open prairie where there was a good water supply. The Indians were very friendly, but my grandmother thought they were too familiar. You see an Indian never says 'Mr.' or 'Mrs.', and my grandmother didn't like that. One day old Muckelushee went up to the House and said, 'Polly, where is Joe?' She said 'He is gone.' 'Got any whiskey', he asked. 'Yes, but none for the Indians; besides I'd like a hundle to my name,' my grandmother told him. Muckelushee said 'All right, Indian call you ^hhundle Polly! And after that my grandmother, Polly, Gillespie was known as Hundle Polly.

"Muckelushee took my grandfather to ^aHells Creek, not far from what is now known as McDowell's, southwest of Belmont where there was a good spring. They put a barrel over it and called it Barrel Spring. On this place they raised 50 to 60 bushels of corn to the acre. My father brought all his Negroes from St. Stephens except one. Their names were old man Clabe, Old Patsy Clabe's wife; Dutch Jim, Si, Easter, Tildy, Melvinie, Ed, and Ed's two children. We had four generations of Clabe's on the place at one time.

"Mr. Patton settled on Conkabayou which means in Choctaw, 'Grapes on Post Oak Tree.'

"Joe McCarthy was blacksmith in this section at that time, and made knives and guns. Indians would come into the shop and hang around and Joe couldn't get rid of them. Old Puchmataha, the famous Choctaw Chief, came in one day with his blanket and breech cloth on, the only clothes the Indian wore. Joe, who was hammering out some iron to make a gun, threw a hot piece of iron over his shoulder and it landed in the old chief's breech cloth. The Indian threw off his blanket and

up /
Jumped[^] and down hollering 'Hoop Tolly Holl', meaning Fire Fighter; and Joe went on hammering on the iron like he hadn't done a thing. My father always liked the old Chief and said he was a fine old warrior. He fought, you know, with Jackson against the Creeks.

"You see I'm eighty-five and can recall a lot myself, besides my father told me these old tales many times and sometimes I find myself thinking I took part in things that happened before I was born. One thing I recall having been told happened in Belmont about the time I was born and yet I've heard it so many times I feel like I must have been there. It was in '52; there was a big day at Brewersville. The Sons of Temperance paraded with banners of the brightest colors, the land then was rich with slaves and corn and the barbecue pits were filled with meat of all kinds. The long tables under the oak trees were spread with pies and salads. There were speeches, too, and rum that was said to be the abomination that maketh desolate, and water was held up to the hopes of men as the ~~S~~erpent was in the wilderness to the dying Hebrews. Well, my father said there was a young boy about twenty who spoke and by his manner and oratory he took off all the honors. Men and women liked ~~that~~ he said and all were loud in their praise.

"He was a newcomer there and with his brilliant speech he did what he had come to do; that was to teach; and the next year found him in Belmont in a long^g cabin right near the old Methodist Church surrounded by about seventy-five pupils, big and little. They were a long list of Suster's prominent people for there were that kind in Belmont then, tho' most of whom have gone to the spirit world now. This young man handled the rod in the school but when 15 minutes for recess was called, he was one of the first to grab up the baseball bat and play with the boys; just one of them and they all loved him. Well, the winter went by and spring came and one of the men in the

community got mad with him and pulled a knife on him. Well, the ^{teacher} fellow had claimed kin with Daniel Boone so he was quick on the trigger and only the door facing of the schoolhouse saved the fellow from his pistol shot. I remember hearing them all tell many times of the trial, how there was an acre or so of people out under the old mulberry tree in front of a store listening to Joe Baldwin of 'Flush Times' fame, when he defended him. He was acquitted, but it broke up the school in Belmont and a mighty good one it was. He left and the school was started again about '53 in a cabin down at McDowell's but it didn't last but a month or two. My father used to wonder what Belmont might have been, had Larkin Wortham not fired that pistol. Yes, he died over in Madison County many years ago, a fine and wealthy man but he never came back to Belmont.

'Well, let me see now, some other high points. Back in April, 1865, Lee surrendered. Forrest, you know, never surrendered; he just quit fighting, out near Brown's Station. Well, my father was a union sympathizer so when Colonel Wade, the Yankee General, came to Gainesville to receive the oath of allegiance of Forrest, he asked where he could camp. My father had bought a farm near Gainesville and so he, Wade, was told to put up on Bob Gillespie who was a Union man. Our house was set back in the woods and I remember standing in the door and watching the regiment as they rode in.

'We had, so my father said, \$1500 worth of silver in the house. My mother gathered it up and started to the smokehouse to bury it, in the dirt floor. We also had goblets lined with gold. My father told my mother not to bury the silver, but to bring it back to the porch. He stood the goblets on the shelf. Then he sent one of the Negroes out to gather a bunch of mint. Then my father asked Colonel Wade to have a drink, but first he took a drink himself to show it

had no poison in it. Some of the staff took a toddy, then Colonel Wade asked for a place to camp. 'All right' my father said, 'go on down in the woods and help yourself to all the corn in the crib that you and your 500 men want, and you may use the overseer's house as an office, but there's just one favor, don't disturb my Negroes.'

" My father said Colonel Wade put a guard at each gate to guard the Negro quarters and the house.

" One of the guards was at the front gate, he looked up at our governess, Mrs. Henshaw, and asked if she didn't live in Virginia. He had been there and had met her. The soldiers stayed only a night or two, but they used 350 bushels of corn for their horses. Colonel Wade paid for it, however, with the first greenbacks I ever saw.

" Governor Winston, first native governor of Alabama, was one of our near neighbors, so he, and Mr. Bob McMahon who ran the famous hotel at Gainesville, and Mr. Tom Long took my father up to Gainesville to see them sign the oath of allegiance. They met in the American hotel. There was a big hall running the length of the house with rooms on either side. In the last room on one side were Wade, Forrest, and Stephen E. Lee, a nephew of Gen. Robert E. Lee. Forrest signed first, and got up and went out of doors where a soldier was holding his big black horse. He slung his leg over the horse and said 'That was the damndest, bitterest pill I ever had to swallow.' Later on he was made High Cyclops of the Ku Klux Klan. He didn't take part so far as I ever heard but he directed Steve Renfree later, the famous out-law was head of it in Sumter County and he was needed. In those days Renfree was a highly respected man.

" About the first thing that I remember about the Ku Klux Klan was the killing of Billingsly who came down from the North and settled about 13 miles west of Livingston near what is known as Payneville.

He boasted to the Negroes that if he was made Judge he would take the land from the whites and give it to the Negroes, hoping to get their votes. After a speech to the Negroes near Parker's switch he and his horse were both shot and killed while on the way home. Benfroe was accused of doing this to prevent Billingsly voting on a member of congress at the next election in November.

"Then there was Tom ^eIvy, the Negro mail clerk, who had been appointed when a very capable white clerk by the name of Ed McAlpine was fired. Tom Ivy, the Negro, was already under indictment for violating the election law. A large band of Ku Klux met down near the station, flagged the train and then when Ivey poked his head out of the door they filled him full of shot. Bill Hart, living at Moscow, was one of them.

"Those were terrible times. About 1870 down here in Belmont a man named Collins was shot in the leg by a Negro. The citizens were afraid of a Negro mob so they sent out couriers asking for help.

"There were two plantations near by in the river swamp with lots of Negroes on them and they were what the community feared. Collins got out a party and went to one of the houses. He opened the gate and a rapid fire was opened up on them by Negroes in ambush. Collins was killed instantly. The Negroes continued to fire so the whites had to retire leaving Collins body to the enemy. The next day a large party collected at Belmont to recover the body, but the Negroes refused to give it up saying the white people would have to fight for it if they got it.

"Armed parties of men were continually passing back and forth all day from Livingston to Belmont, ^{and} commissary wagons with haversacks hung to the horns of their saddles. Finally the Sheriff was allowed

to get Collins' body but the Negroes kept his effects, money, arms, and all as captured property. It was said white people were seen in the enemy's lines so this made Belmont people believe the Negroes were being led and directed by them. The trouble started by a fight between a man named Jones, of Demopolis, and McBride at a political pow-wow at Belmont in which Jones got badly whipped. The Negroes sided with Jones. They were hostile toward the whites, and threatened to burn the town if any one else interfered with their meetings.

"Then the Negroes armed themselves with guns and marched from Belmont to Livingston to a Republican Convention, but there was no trouble as I recall.

"I remember Bill Jones perfectly. He had gone through the Southern army a loyal soldier. Then he turned Scalawag. I went down to see him one morning around ten or eleven o'clock and I found him in his garden. Mayor McBride arrived in his buggy about the same time. First thing I knew Jones pulled the Mayor out of his buggy and beat him up. The doctor thought he was headed for Demopolis but the Negroes said he was going toward McDowell. When Jones got to the ferry, McBride, Joe Flowers and Billy McCormick caught up with him and put a load of buckshot through his buggy. Jones went down on his knees in the buggy and got to the other side safely. He was never heard of any more.

"Then there was a posse of about forty armed men from Belmont, ^{and} Moscow, armed and disguised, who made their appearance in Livingston and went to the house of the famous Dr. Choutteau, who was no friend of the whites and was causing trouble among the Negroes. One of the men ripped a board off the house and stuck his head in, and Coblenz, who was guarding Choutteau, blew his brains out. Coblenz was then shot by the attacking party and killed. Dr. Choutteau escaped

and left this part of the country and was never seen any more.

"One of the most hellish crimes was back in '82 when a Negro named Jack Turner living in Choctaw tried to exterminate the whites. He had formed a club of 400 members and had a mature and well organized plot to kill all the white people in this section. But the papers with all their plans were found near one of their hideouts. In these papers they stated they had 400 Negroes ready with powder shot and guns; that they thought themselves sufficiently strong to accomplish their designs, and that Sunday night the 17th of September had been appointed as the date. The papers showed that this date had been selected because the people would be at a camp meeting unarmed and could then offer no resistance. The papers were taken before the solicitor and a quiet meeting of all the citizens of the town was held to discuss the best way to suppress the outbreak and massacre. It was decided that six of the ring leaders who had been assigned to the ^{by} duties of leading squads to all the towns to kill the whites should be arrested and put in jail. This was done, without bloodshed as the Negroes suspected nothing. Then the whites held a mass meeting on the same day. This brought about eight hundred men and among them 150 Negroes. The papers were read, the names given and by an almost unanimous vote they decided Jack Turner the leader, was a dangerous Negro, a regular firebrand in the community; and they demanded his death. He was hung in the presence of the large crowd and his death put an end to any further trouble there.

"Renfroe had nothing to do with that. He was at Livingston doing everything he had no business doing. Indicted for conversion of money, embezzlement, grand larceny, burglary, assault with intent to murder, and murder, he was sent to Pratt Mines for five years but in less than sixty days he had escaped and was hiding in the flat woods

near Livingston, a belt of uninhabited timber land 90 miles by 15 miles wide. No one dared try to arrest him there. The last mule he stole was from his brother-in-law, Sledge, and the silver found on him when he was finally captured belonged to Mrs. Harris, one of his closest friends who had befriended him many times. They could not keep him in jail. He burned a hole in the floor of the jail under a bathtub and escaped from Tuscaloosa and while in the Livingston jail he wrote a note to a friend, asking for muriatic acid and a ball of yarn, but the note was intercepted. He finally escaped and was captured in 1886 at Enterprise, Mississippi, brought back to Livingston and put in jail. McCormick was sheriff at the time. Renfroe asked for a drink of whiskey as he got off the train and he got it. What a strange contradictory career this was.

"Nursed in the lap of luxury, a young soldier, a tiller of the soil, a hero brave almost to rashness, he broke the neck of more than one negro insurrectionist and contributed more than any other to the restoration of peace and safety in Sumter County. But Sumter had endured all it could from Renfroe and so about 8 o'clock one night he was brought back. While McCormick was at the telegraph office making inquiries of State authorities at Montgomery as to what to do with him, a mob of armed men broke into the jail, overpowered the jailor and, having found the keys to his cell, took him out and hanged him to a tree near the Sucarnatchee. Pinned to his back was this placard, 'The fate of a horse thief.' This ended the career of the most desperate character Sumter County ever produced."

At this point Mr. Gillespie sighed, which I first thought was an expression of sadness over the Renfroe blight on Sumter's history; but with the sigh, he slumped perceptibly and I remembered that he was an old man and easily tired. I immediately departed, but not before promising to return for another visit.

1/17/39

S.J.

Name of Interviewed

(i)
John R. Estes

[white]

6 acre farm adjoining other small lots and school grounds.
Just off highway. Cedar trees. Old flower garden.

Small old four room house with hall.

Open fire place in each room, cheap furniture, no books or
magazines to be seen. Trunk with a new knitted bed spread.

Old man rather stout, dark skin and eyes, grey hair & partly
bald. Pleasant voice. Poorly dressed. Wife thin, pale sandy
hair light blue eyes. One who "enjoys poor health". Has more
education than Mr. Estes. No children.

(1)
John R. Estes,
Epes, Alabama
March 21, 1939
R.P.T.

A speckled hen and her chickens scratched contentedly in the small front yard of a four room cottage where blue Roman hyacinths and yellow jonquills bloomed.

An old man in a faded wash suit sat on the narrow porch and rocked in a home made hickory chair.

"Come on in if you ain't afraid of a cold because that's what me an my old lady's got, an' mighty bad ones at that. I'm just settin' out here in the sunshine trying to make up my mind to go put up them chickens for her, 'cause the cow kicked her over yestidy and she can't git erbout to-day. Want tryin' ter hook her or nothing like that, you see that old cow's blind in one eye and my old lady wuz milkin' her and that little old dog there run between her legs and the cow give er sudden turn and knocked the old lady flat. Her head sort of struck the side of the barn and thats what's troublin' her worse en any thing else. I took her in to see Dr. Scales last night and he give her some-ting to ease her pain, then stropped her up, said she might have broke er rib er two couldent tell, then agin hit could be er floatin' kidney. She's sick so much I tale her if the cow hadn't knocked her down 'twould er been some-thin' else, but she says that's "sorry comfort". I just been telling her while she's laid up I think if we had er stork of corn for ever one of them little old johnnie-jump-ups out there, that hit will look jes as pretty, and we'll be a heap site better off, but she'd have a fit if them chickens scratched up er one of them little old flower bushes. She says raisin' corn is my job, but them flower bushes been there ever since she come here, and there they're gonna stay. Come to think of it they're been there a lot longer than that, 'cause this here is Pa's old place en Ma set them flowers out right after they moved here from down on the Bigbee. I want noting but a little

shaver then, well I want so little either, 'bout twelve I reckon, an' I'm goin' on 71 now. Been livin' right here ever since then. I was born tho' on my grand-father's plantation 'bout four miles from here at what they called old Martin's ferry. See my grandfather Mari^us Martin['] was French and that ferry was named fer him, that's how come it sounds different from the way you call it. Yes sir he wuz French all right, an' him and his brother come over here on a boat when they wuz small boys. Grand-Pa was sixteen an his brother was 14. Grand-Pa said hit wuz 3 days 'fore any body knowed they wuz on that boat. They were jes stored away and never had nothin' but a little ole hard tac, or sometin' like that to eat that they bought with them. His brother died in New York en never got to Alabama but Grand-Pa went on to Virginia and finally married there a woman name Mary Ann Cathey, they had one child an that was Ma en her name wuz Susan Matilda Martin[']. Ma wuz er baby in arms or you might say jes todlin 'bout, cause I've heered her say when they came to Alabama in the early days they come in a covered wagon, en that little chair there come right with 'em. They were 'mong the first to cross the river, the 1st white settlers round here, and they had to build a raft, tie poles to-gether so as to cross the Bigbee, and ma, child like said she tried to play in the water while they were polin' em across, and she fell in and er negro boy they owned called Lewis Martin['] pulled her out. My grand father bought up a lot of land right there on the Bigbee where they crossed at and later built Martin['] Ferry and lived there the rest of his life. At least his family did, but he wuz er land speculator and went all over evey where buyin' up land til he was one of the richest men in this part of the country, and if old Lewis Martin['] that same nigger what pulled Ma out the river had lived, I'd have as much as any-body the rest of my days. You see the Yankees marched on Livingston and the Confederates sent out runners telling every body. Well there wuz no banks here then, so grand-pa

took er old black pot and wrapped up 150,000 in gold and put in it, and him and Lewis carried it out on the river and burried it, & grand-Pa told Lewis if he tole anybody where it wuz he'd kill him. That night Grand-Pa come back home en the excetement run high, I duno, but I reckon hit wuz too much fer him, anyhow he had er stroke and was dead 'fore anybody ever knowed he'd hid the money. He just went in his clear mind no mo' after that, en when it come to paying the funeral expenses Grand-Ma couldn't find the money, en Lewis I reckon wuz skeered to tell. Well er long time after that Lewis sent fer me one dark night, he'd had er tooth pulled over in Marengo en erysiplas set in and the Doctor said wont no hope fer him, so he told his wife to send fer "Little Marster", that was whut Lewis always called me, 'cause he tole her he wuz gonna die, en he wanted to tell me where the white oak tree wuz on the Bigbee where they burried the money when the Yankees come. I tole Pa I was goin' to see 'bout old Lewis en when I got there Lewis was as dead as a door nail. His wife wuz so skeered she couldn't recollect nothing he said, jes er white oak and that was all. Well we looked fer er long time but didn't no body never find nothing. 'Twas too much territory. 'Cause Pa had er heap of land left him, but John McKinnis, (lived right up yonder near that old church) beat him out of pretty near all he had. Grand-Pa you see speculated in Florida and owned one hundred and eleven sections right where Tallahassee stands today. He owned a mile square at Pensacola where they had the first fishing shacks, and sixteen plantations in Maringo, Green and Hale, but John McKinnis beat him out of most every bit of it. Not young John of Meridian, but his Pa old man John McKinnis. He took one hundred and eighty bales of cotton on a boat down the river to Mobile and sold hit, claimed some how hit belonged to him, but it was old Mrs Thedford's, 'ick Thedford's Ma, and she never got a cent out of it. He was one of the biggest scoundrels in this section of the country. # natural born theff. Yes sir we ought to have er heap we ain't got. Been

here long enough an all of us haad worker. When my Grand-Pa come here there want no Epes, this here wuz all Jones Bluff in them days, name fer er old half-breed Indian Jim Jones. He owned 'most all this land 'round here from Warsaw to the Choctaw line. The tribes had given him a lot of it, and all the early settlers like J.P. Hillman and Abe Hillman, old man Billie Holloway and Jim Lee's father, they wanted to buy it from him. He lived up 'bout the fort on the Bigbee, you can see where the fort used to be from over here, Well one night Christmas eve I believe it was, back in 1833 these early white settlers got together an' went up there, they said to make Jim er good offer fer his land, cose I dunno what it wuz they offered him, but Jim refused to sell, and they killed him and burried him right there on the river, and in 1915 when the Colonial Dames of America wuz having that piece of marble put there to mark the old Fort, I b'lest if they didn't dig up old Jim Jones bones. Cose they burried 'em ergin right erlong close by in that bunch of cedar trees, but seem sort of sad to me, to think about old Jim. Then Jin's son in-law er French man name La Bruce what married Jim's indian daughter, claimed the land, en so they had to trade with him. Ma said he wuz wr nice gentleman to be married to that indian, but he left here/en went down in Miss. with the rest of 'em and I never heered whut become of him. Yes sir right up there where old Jim Jones lived stood the old Fort Tombecbee as she was called, built by the order of the Governor of Louisiana Bienville, and it says on the monument whut is true I know "Here Civilization and Savagery beheld the Glory of France". Yes sir I wuz right there the day they unveiled her,, fact is I barbecued every bit of the meat fer the dinner, en hit wuz erbout ez good er barbecue ez I ever et if I do say so myself. Reffin wuz the speaker, en he's er good 'en, but I ain't never voted fer him yit, en never will fur ez that goes. Yes that old Fort has seen er heap uv blood shed. The French, British and Spaniards, used to be called Fort Confederation. Close by there the whites treated with the choctaw

indians old Mushulatubbe Puckshenubbee and Pushmataha for the land they owned ~~land~~ of the Tombigbee. Even I can remember the indians around here, many as 75 or a hundred when they'd come in the spring with blow-guns arrows and baskets. The squaws would sit down flat on the gourd with the papooses strapped on their backs and wait for the indian men to do the tradin'. There were 3 saloons here in them days but it was against the law ot sell "fire water" they called it, to the indians, but when the indians were ready to start home they'd let em have a few drinks and I can hear 'em yelling "whoop pee" right now as they rode off toward the bottoms. I've heered Ma tell so much can't honestly tell what I did see en what I didn't, but she knowed this country when they had so many little black bears here my Gran-Pa had to take the nigger ~~and~~ shifs en let some sleep day, so at night they'd take torches and beat on tin buckets in the corn field to keep the bears from eatin' up all the roseeneers, and they said they had high palin's to try to keep the bears from catching the chillun. Cose this was all cleared up when I come erlong, but I recollect fust electric lights, here ~~at~~ Jones Bluff. The Atlanta Constitution come out saying the Hattie B. Moore would come up the river next run with electric lights, my goodness you never saw as many folks in all your life as was on the river banks, all up and down the river men women en chillun waitin fer that boat. Pretty soon here she come puffin' en er ~~er~~ blowin' en hit wuz er sight to behold. Looked like the whole shebang was on fire. See there wuz 3 boats ~~from~~ up and down the river here to Mobile. The Hard Cash, The Tally and the Hattie B. Moore. The Rain-Deer run here too but she sunk. All them boats run 'til June, they stopped in June, had landings like Gainesville, Jones Bluff, ~~D~~ials landing 'bout four miles down the river from here, and Dirdens landing where Balzell and all his family was raised at, and the Brassfield landing come in there at Forkland. Then Demopolis and so on down to Mobile. Boats want allowed to

6 (6)
come out on Sunday t'all, had to come out on Saddy and dock above the tide water or else wait 'til a Monday Mornin'.

Pa used to load cotton fer Mr Hillman, (Alberts Pa up there,) here at Jones Bluff and I'd be erlong with him. Seen him put on as many as 5 or 6 thousand bales at a time. The mate would come out on top of one them bluffs with er ax handle in his hand and holler at dem niggers, cuss em, and some time I've seed him knock one of em off them lime rock cliffs. My me he was cruel. See the niggers had to load en unload every thing. They'd take to the stores the sugar and flour and coffee in big sacks brought up from de merchants in Mobile, en some time a nigger would git pretty careless en drop er sack en bust it, Lordy but he'd be sorry 'fore dat mate got thru wid him. See the mate always come out on land but the Captain he stayed on the boat. As I remember they had 12 deck hands, 2 engineers, en 8 pilots day en night shift. Had 2 what they called rouster bouts one for day an' one ^{for} night to split up ligh'ood for the torch pans. Had 2 little baskets on each side held Kerseine lamps for the head-lights, and if they'd land here at night they'd run hand out a couple of them little torch pans on a tree so as to see how to git up de bluff with all the stuff they had. That was before the Hattie B. got electric lights. Man she was a pretty sight as I ever seen. Now you take the people that used to go backwards en forwards to Mobile on them boats. They had a great big hotel for 'em in them days right up there on the Bigbee, back of where Doc Henegan used ter live, en they'd all come down en stay at that hotel waitin' fer the boat, and if you were a planter and had any cotton to sell those commission merchants didnt think nothin' to pay all your expenses on the boat to Mobile, and all you had to do wuz jes sell 'em your cotton. They'd make you have a good time all right.

They show fed good on the boats too. Deck hands et on 1st deck, and white folks up in de cabins. They'd stop en git er cow or er pig and cut

it up and dress it nice. and they had mighty good cooks too en every body could eat all they mind to. Want no body to stop you. Many~~s~~ the time I've rid on them steam boats. I liked Mobile so much I thought after I growned up I'd like to settle there en I did fer er little while, then I come back to be with Ma and Pa, en here I been ever since. I run the Epes Cotton oil Company's mill at night fer 'bout twentythree years, then I was the toll-keeper yonder on that bridge 'Bore they freed hit, there 'bout six years lacking form September 'til March. Right there's where I kilt Red Windham. You remember hearin' bout that I reckon don't you? Well Red was a Liakable sort of fellow when he want drinking, but trouble was he was always drinking, he didn't want to pay no toll en I didn't want to have no trouble 'bout that little money, but seemed like he was just looking for trouble, en it come to the question of me er hém, en I seed one or the other of us wuz gonna die sure en certain, so I lowed hit wuzn't no need of it being me, so long as I was in the right cordin' to law any way, so I had to kill him. Pretty bad en I ain't got over it yet, looks like on dark nights up there by the fort I can hear old Red holler fer help, but 'twant notin' else I could do I reckon. But I don't care 'bout talkin' 'bout that so much lets get back to old times.

Look out there on that fence at them 2 old quilts. Bet you aint never seen none no prettier. Ive been offered by Moreland Nixon fifty dollars er piece for 'em. But I'll have to be poorer than I am now to take it. The dye for them quilts was made right down at Martin's ferry at Grand-Pas plantation, out of ooperous and bark and suck like, the thread was spun there and the cloth woven every speck of it by the negroes on the place. One's the tulip pattern, and I ferget the other name but to my way of thinking they dont make quilts pretty as them two hanging out there. Them en er old china hen dish is all I've got left of Ma's old things, that been belonged to my little sister, ma give it to her and she died when she want more en seven years old,

so I've kept it as er remembrance of her.

I've got Grand Pa's brather pocket book I forgot that, lined with red silk and his name Marius Martin cut in it. Pa cut it there I'm pretty sure. Lots of folks wants to buy them quilts but I aint hungry yet. Well I better feed the old lady's chickens and put em up fer her er she 'll be hopping out here herself 'fore long. Tell Miss Head, the lady what sees about the niggers, to come out any time after to day en I'll go with her down on the bend 'cause don't no body hardly know this country and the folks down in de bottoms like I do, just been here so long. I reckon, but some times I think it wont be so long now. The old lady's trying persuade me not to farm none this year, didn't really farm none to 'mount to nothing last year, jes er little corn on this here six acres, but I hates to give up, hates to git old en I doan want to be dependent. I ain't yet, I've got a little saved up, mine en the old lady's nest egg I calls it, and that reminds me I better be putting up them chickens 'fore I hears somethin' I aint after hearin'. She's mighty peaceful tho, the old lady, when she's right well, but she's ^{been} ailin er heap looks like lately.

Recently literature of the American frontier has given especial interest to Joseph Baldwin's *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi*.

Many of the characters in this book were taken from real life. One of these characters is "Samuel Hele, Esquire" and the original was Samuel Augustus Hale, a young lawyer of Livingston, Alabama.

Samuel Hale and Joseph Baldwin were practicing attorneys and intimately associated in this small town of west Alabama at the time Baldwin's book was published in 1853. Older citizens of Livingston today remember that it was common knowledge among their parents that Joseph Baldwin had caricatured his friend in his book and they have told many episodes of Samuel Hale as revealed in *Flush Times*.

For instance younger Livingstonians have been brought up on the story of the New England school marm who was an abolitionist and the way Samuel Hale got rid of her. In *Flush Times* the schoolmarm is one Miss Charity Woodey, at a party one evening "Samuel Hele "Esquire" entertained her with the wickedness of certain Livingston people talking at length of the young men and the horrible things they were apt to do. The next day Miss CHarity packed her trunk and left.

Samuel Hale was closely related to Samuel Nathan Hale, the martyr-spy of the American Revolution, and Edward Everett Hale, author of "The Man without a Country." His brother was John Parker Hale who by the spectacular "Hale Storm of 1845" converted an apparently overwhelming Democratic majority in New Hampshire to the ranks as an Abolitionist and a humanitarian crusader won for him the presidential nomination of the Free Soil Democrats in 1852 and later the post as minister to Spain.

Samuel Hale was born in New Hampshire in 1809. He was educated in law and came early to Alabama where he found a congenial atmosphere

for the tradition of his New Hampshire family had been strongly Democratic.

In 1837 he became editor of the Flag of the Union published at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, then the capital of the state. He was twenty-eight and had just finished at Bowdoin College. Some years later his brother was read out of the Democratic party because of opposition on antislavery grounds to the annexation of Texas. Samuel Hale himself was a Democrat. The Flag of the Union had been established to oppose the spread of the doctrine of nullification in Alabama. He was urged to keep the paper true to the principles for the support of which it had been founded and for nine years he was an influence at his post and enjoyed the patronage of the Democratic administration in the State.

Problems however growing out of the re-annexation of Texas and occupation of Oregon set many men on their guard. The rapidly decreasing proportion of the Southern representation in Congress and the disputes over the introduction of slavery into newly acquired territories increased their uneasiness. Southerners were everywhere turning to the Constitution.

The Alabamians had generally renounced nullification as inexpedient and unconstitutional, but by the late forties many of them felt that the very foundations of their welfare and happiness were threatened.

A minority advocated secession. From his office in Tuscaloosa, Samuel Hale watched the growth within the Democratic party, of an extreme States' Rights group. As he saw the rising tide of secession sentiment about him he came to be dominated by a devotion to the ideal of the union, this became the ruling passion.

Samuel Hale could not stop the rising tide. For his opposition to the members of the Democratic party holding extreme opinions on the doctrine of States' Rights he was denounced as an "unsafe" man. By 1846 the inevitable had happened. He was deprived of the patronage of the party and in that year ceased to be editor of the Flag of the Union.

For a decade now Hale had made himself one of the people among whom he had lived. He had imbibed Southern notions and the local mode of life. The lines were not yet so sharply drawn so Hale decided to return to his study and practice of law. He sold his interests in Tuscaloosa and moved to Livingston.

The above facts giving the back ground are from Hunter Farish what followed after moving to Livingston is known by all of its older inhabitants and Alabama Historians.

Livingston is in the heart of the fertile Black Belt of Alabama. Sumter had been part of the rich domain of the Choctaws. When they had relinquished it by the Treaty of the Dancing Rabbit of 1830 settlers had rushed in to seize the rich lands. Soon it was peopled almost wholly by large slave holders and their slaves, This settling of the land resulted in much litigation and Sumter became a "Rich haven" for the aspiring young lawyer Hale. Here he practiced successfully for many years. In many respects these years brought Hale contentment, for in Sumter were brilliant colleagues, here was a cultivated and hospitable Society composed largely of Virginians. Twice Hale married Livingston women belonging to prominent Virginian families. His first wife was Mary Ann Bolling and he later married a widow the former Ellen Lee, the richest woman in the county. Through these marriages he became a cotton planter and large slave owner, and yet until the war came he called himself a Union Man and always expressed himself freely.

The years of the war however brought distress to Samuel Hale. His isolation became all but complete. He denounced secession as an act of "criminal folly" and soon he faced personal violence and loss of property. He was placed with seven Union men to be hanged by enraged

secessionists and his escape he attributed to the timely arrival of Sherman at Atlanta.

When peace came Hale did not long enjoy days of quiet. He was soon stirred by the course affairs were taking about him. Sumter County with its large black population was proving an El Dorado for the political adventurer. It was soon in an uproar.

Toward the end of 1867 Hale wrote a series of eloquent letters to Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts. He warned the Republican leader of the unwisdom of the course his party was pursuing in Alabama and protested against the domination of the party in the South by a carpetbag and scalawag element. Appealing to ^{the} bond as a fellow Republican he now sought to check the course so madly followed under Radical inspiration.

In a letter in 1868 that reaffirmed his loyalty to the party he pointed out that with a large body of whites in Alabama, disfranchised, the negroes, of whom the great majority were utterly unfitted for the task would under proposed constitution for the State have it in their power to make all political decisions. He regarded this constitution as an infamous outrage upon civilization. He explained that he favored giving the negro a qualified right of suffrage for the present, believing this was necessary for his protection under the new order and that it would stimulate him to improvement. But he thought it utmost folly to confer upon him, immediately and without condition, full privileges of citizenship. He warned Senator Wilson that the circumstances under which the two races there found themselves were sufficiently antagonistic of themselves to cause serious apprehension in the minds of all thinking men, and that these fears were greatly increased by the diabolical

conduct of the reckless and unprincipled adventurers who have come among us from the Northern States and affiliated with the blacks. But Senator Wilson did not agree with Hale and his views representing the negroes believing that the start in reorganization should be on a basis of equal rights for all men. Hale's appeal had failed.

During the summer of 1870 the town of Livingston was thrown into a frenzy of panic when it was reported on the day set for a Republican convention there, that a body of armed freedmen was approaching the town with the purpose of sacking it. The alarm was spread and the negroes were disbanded by ~~the sheriff's posse~~ before they arrived at Livingston. Whatever their intention had been, serious-minded citizens were aghast at the trend of events. This unfortunate affair resulted in the killing of a negro Baptist preacher who was said to have incited the action of the freedmen.

In 1870 a group of Liberal Republicans in the North despairing of influencing Republican party counsels began to denounce the corruption of the Grant administration and to oppose Grant's policy of federal interference in Southern politics. In 1871 the radically controlled Congress appointed a "Joint Select Committee to inquire into the condition of affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States".

It was in this capacity as a Republican and an honest man that Samuel Hale was summonsed by the minority before the subcommittee sitting at Livingston in the fall of 1871. Hale was now ~~an~~ old and retired from the practice of his profession. Again he appeared in the role in which Joseph Baldwin had cast him. He is induced to aid in driving the mischief maker out of the land.

When questioned Hale did not conceal or condone injustice and oppression where it had occurred. But he denounced the policies of the

Radicals, the interference of the military and the behavior of the carpetbagger. The carpetbagger he conceived to be the sum of all the evils. These he called "worthless vagabonds, homeless, drunken knaves- who had caused more bitterness toward the North than had existed at any time during the war."

In 1874 Alabama was finally redeemed from carpet-bag rule and Samuel Hale lived to rejoice in the election to the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes.

To day Hale lies in an unmarked grave in Livingston, Though called by some Alabama historians a carpetbagger, he was said also to have been true to certain ideals. A man who as he said " would prefer to suffer in support of right than to prosper in the support of the wrong."

~~WHITE~~
L. B. Runkle ^{White}
Livingston, Alabama
May 20, 1939
R. P. T.

"I ain't sorry I

~~L. B. RUNKLE~~

Done what wuz Right"

(Cano)

If you can get in this little ole shack you're more than welcome. You see this room was for coal. Mr. Lyon over there built it, and when me en my two little boys rode in here on the ~~emigration~~ ^{immigration} train, I smuggled the boys in, we slept in this here shed, then we just stayed on in it. And finally the ladies in the town built that little sleepin' porch you might call it, on to the back so as the boys could get some fresh air. 'Tain't much of a house, but it beats sleepin' out all right; en anyway it meant I could keep the boys with me and that's what I wanted to do. See, I come from Shelby County, Illinois. At least, I was born there back in '82 and I stayed between two rows of corn till I was twenty-one years old. Then I went out to Brandon, Colorado, and homesteaded. I had er half section out there and had to farm forty acres for three years to make proof. I raised mostly cane and a little caffer corn. I finally put six hundred dollars of mine and my paw's money into that place. Put in er deep well,

know his business, and so I called hit murder. The Presbyterian minister said hit wuzn't nuthin' else. "ell, after that I took my two little boys and went to Fisk, Missouri. We stayed there two or three years, I can't remember which. I worked there for Mr. Lyon and when he moved here, I followed with his cows. I knew hit wuzn't a good idea. You just can't move cattle too far. I found that out back in Missouri. But he wanted them five cows moved, so I smuggled my little boys in with me, and I undertook it. Four of them died, but we got here, and I liked it and we stayed. Mr. Lyon said they got poisoned on the trip and he collected from the rail road. I don't know about that, but I buried the cows for him after we got here.

" I got here with \$3.50, but I tore my pants so bad in the car that the first thing I done I bought myself a pair of overhauls with part of it. "ight about that time I was pretty much worried 'bout what was going to happen to everybody. Times wuz mighty hard, and I had ~~er~~ hard time. They wanted to put the little boys in a home somewhere, but I didn't have nobody left and so I wanted to keep 'em myself. I thought I could manage somehow. Then the relief office wanted to help us, but I was strong and well and I didn't see no reason why I couldn't get some sort of work without

being a burden on the Government, so I piddled 'round. I didn't let a lady give me some clothes for the little boys - said her boy had outgrow'd 'em, and they helped out ~~er~~ lot. Then one day I didn't have no reg'lar job so I got offered one to be janitor at the Court House. Paid twelve dollars ~~er~~ week, and that's the best job I ever had. Me and the chillun were gettin' on fine. I got us a cook, ~~er~~ ole Negro woman, an she helped me look after the boys. See it took pretty nearly all my time at the Court House, en I wuz skeered they'd git burnt up or runned over, en that Court House wuzn't no place for 'em. Yes ma'am, I'd be there now, but I wasn't willing to cover up all that I seen. I jes' ain't that sort of man, so I wrote the Governor and told him whut went on and so I got canned. I wasn't surprised, but I think I done whut wuz right.

" Mr. Coleman in there is ~~er~~ big Baptist, has charge of the Sunday School, an' Mr. White is a Presbyterian an' a good man, he's in charge at his church an' I ain't got nothing to say against them. But, of course they are right there in the Court House an' know what I said wuz so. 'Cose

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Well, I saved up twelve dollars, an' I bought the shack from Mr. Lyons - that paid for the lumber - an' the ladies built the boys that little gallery and put screens on it and Junior learned to cook. Harold's all time buildin' airplanes, he ain't much help. If the war comes, it will git both of 'em, I reckon. But they tell me you have to be pretty smart to run ~~er~~ airplane.

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but not that bad. They wanted me to say nothin' an' help them put over things like all the drinking some of 'em wuz doing an' just wouldn't do it. So the sheriff went before the Board of Revenue and they fired me. It may have helped beat him in that last race, I don't know, but it could have.

"Twa'n't long 'fore I got this here job sellin' papers. It don't pay much, but it's jes' continually droppin' nickles. 'Cose, there's some loss in collectin', always, but the profits is the greatest. Not real money in this like the janitor business, but then I get to fish some and sell a good bit. I caught a twenty-nine pound yellow cat this morning and sold him for twelve cents ~~er~~ pound and that's right good pay. Then I had ~~er~~ small one for me an' the boys. The big one wa'n't on the hook but the little one wuz. See the big one was swallowing the little one, so wa'n't none of 'em no trouble to take off, but in a little while they'd ~~er~~ both been gone. Some more though, where they come from. Then now as it is, I has a small garden an' ~~er~~ cow, so we get more to eat that way.

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Life story

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L. B. Runkle - WHITE.
Livingston, Alabama
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R. P. T.

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got married to a woman who was homesteadin' out there from out in Kansas and after she got po'ly me and her left and went back to Kansas.

Paw got twenty-two hundred dollars out of the place. 'Twas healthy all right, but the wind wuz so bad, blew you off yo' feet, ear 'bout. So I was kinder glad to leave. Hit wuz pretty lovely out there in them days. Of course, I made that claim before I ever found the woman, just lived by myself out there, never knowed nobody. We went to Cuba, Missouri, from there, and I had eighty-five acres of land, mostly wood. I cut wood and sold it. It was mostly rocky there - couldn't raise much. I had five or six acres in hay, but that country wa'n't whut you might call healthy, not like this here climate here. I like it here better than anywhere I been.

'Fore I come here, I never passed a winter without seeing zero weather. But I got restless after the woman died. She died at the birth, after Harold my youngest boy. Had five births, and three of 'em died. The first two died, then I saved Junior, then Harold, and the woman died. Had three doctors, but I say the first one didn't

know his business, and so I called hit murder. The Presbyterian minister said hit wuzn't nuthin' else. "ell, after that I took my two little boys and went to Fisk, Missouri. We stayed there two or three years, I can't remember which. I worked there for Mr. Lyon and when he moved here, I followed with his cows. I knew hit wuzn't a good idea. You just can't move cattle too far. I found that out back in Missouri. But he wanted them five cows moved, so I smuggled my little boys in with me, and I undertook it. Four of them died, but we got here, and I liked it and we stayed. Mr. Lyon said they got poisoned on the trip and he collected from the rail road. I don't know about that, but I buried the cows for him after we got here.

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