Current Events from "back in the day"

By Chip Gates, HOBO Historian

In 1912 two of Clanton's competing newspapers merged to form the *Union-Banner*.



In 1917 W.M. "Mack" Wyatt and his brother Gene took over as editors and continued to publish the newspaper every Thursday until 1935. In addition to the latest news at the local through international level, the once-a-week paper also contained ads, short jokes as space fillers, a list of who was in court, who visited whom, who was in the infirmary, church information and much more. Obituaries and memorials were printed for free up to 100 words, with additional words costing 1 cent apiece.

A 6-month subscription was \$1.00 and a 1 year subscription was \$1.50. Note: According to *dollartimes.com*, \$1 in 1921 would be worth about \$12.95 today. A century later, here is just a small sampling of what you would have found in the first Thursday paper of 1921, January 6th:

An ad by First National Bank in Clanton states the bank pays 4% on "time deposits" and has \$33,000 in capital and surplus. (Adjusted for inflation, this would be about \$400,000 today. Not bad for a small town bank.)

Alabama Power Company has applied for "a power permit on the Coosa River, with a dam located at Duncan's Riffle, creating pool 14 miles back to lock No. 12". Objections or a request for a hearing should be submitted on or before January 20, 1921, to the Executive Secretary, Federal Power Commission, Washington D.C. Better hurry, you only have two weeks to get your letter there.



Alred Drug Company in Clanton has Frost Proof Cabbage plants for sale.

Back on Monday, January 3rd, stockholders of the Peoples Telephone Company met in Clanton. Officers for 1920 were elected and included these persons: W.M. Wyatt as President, M.D. Foshee of Chilton County Abstract Co. as Vice President and J.N. Dennis as Secretary and Treasurer. Also voted upon and seconded were fees for the year. People living outside the Town of Clanton would be assessed a fee of \$3 to have a telephone, and they would be responsible for maintaining their lines up to the corporate limit. Person living within the town limits would pay \$5/year, but the board would be responsible for maintenance of the lines within the town.

Dr. V.J. Gragg, a well-known physician and associated with the Clanton Infirmary (hospital), offers up a second hand Overland Automobile for sale, cheap. It was a Country Club model, recently overhauled and in fine condition. Dr. Gragg also has some "good young Jersey cows" for sale.

Rudolph Moatts and Burns Goodgame at the Sanitary Meat Market announce a price cut on their meat; Choice Steaks 20 cents/lb., Rib Steak 15 cents, roast for 12 & ½ cents and stew meat for 10 cent/lb.

On Monday night, Jan. 3rd, "a crowd of popular young people of Thorsby enjoyed a possum hunt". They caught "two real possums", and later enjoyed a weiner (sic) roast. They kept the possums as evidence of their success. Back then fake news probably wasn't an issue but maybe fake possums were.

In the county probate court this week 10 cases were dealt with. Two of these cases involved John and Andrew Cleckler who were both charged with "failing to send to school". Perhaps the kids had been sick or were needed to help at home or on the farm. Whatever the reason for the truancy, their cases were continued. The most egregious, or at least most expensive case, was against Albert Thompson for violating the prohibition law. Yes, prohibition was in effect and Albert's plea of guilty got him a fine of \$50 and court cost. Remember, this is 1921 so that \$50 would be today's equivalent of \$650! One would logically assume with that amount of fine Mr. Thompson must have had more than a bottle or two of beer, wine usually being allowed for religious purposes. Or it may have been that local laws pertaining to alcoholic beverages in Chilton County were stricter than federal law. Whatever the case, the dam that Alabama Power wanted to build would be completed two years later in early 1923, but it would still be nearly 11 years after that when the great social experiment of Prohibition was finally repealed in December of 1933.