

THE COLORFUL EIGHTIES IN NASHVILLE

By **M. B. MORTON**

No. 11

***Achievement of Nat Baxter, Jr., and Col. A. M. Shook—
Duncan R. Dorris—The First Nashville Press Club.***

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A matter of great importance to Southern industry during the eighties, the perfection of the open hearth Bessemer steel process, whereby the making of steel from Southern ore became a practical fact, had its inception in Nashville. Prior to that time the presence of a large sulphur content in Southern ore had rendered it unfit for the making of steel.

Attention has heretofore been called to the fact that the rejuvenation of the South after the Civil War and the period of so-called Reconstruction, was due largely to the spirit of the men of the old South, and to younger men who had served in the Confederate army. At the time referred to Nat Baxter, Jr., of Nashville, was president of the Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railway Company, one of the strongest coal and iron development organizations in the country. Col. A. M. Shook was general manager. These two men, both ex-Confederate soldiers, put their brains on the problem of making steel from Southern iron ore. They conducted an extensive system of research and experiment, and sent one of the Bowron brothers to England to collect information. Finally the experiment was put to a successful test in a furnace at Chattanooga. The problem was solved and the construction of the great steel plant at Ensley, Ala., a suburb of Birmingham, began. Both these men lived to see the full fruition of their dream, when the South became one of the great steel-producing sections of the world.

AN OLD MARBLE SLAB.

In many ways the physical appearance of the old Maxwell House has been changed during the past sixty odd years; in others it has remained the same. The lobby remains much as it was when the giants of the old days assembled there. At the foot of the marble stairway leading to the dining room and ball room floor is a marble slab which has been in place since the building was constructed. Had it utterance, what a story it could tell! Two

inches of the surface has been worn away by the tread of feet of countless thousands, and the process is still going on. Most of those feet are now bony skeletons, while others are following in their wake. This slab is just one of the reminders in the old hostelry of "the days that are no more."

DUNCAN R. DORRIS.

Duncan R. Dorris, who passed away in 1890, was one of the leading newspaper men in Nashville for twenty-five years. He was active and efficient, a good mixer and known and esteemed by thousands of people throughout Tennessee. His honesty and integrity were unquestioned. He was one of the few newspaper men of the old regime who was able to accommodate himself to the new conditions that came about after the Civil War. He was the first newspaper man in Nashville to become an expert stenographer and because of this accomplishment he was called on to report many of the famous court trials in Nashville and throughout Tennessee. He retained his enterprise and mental vigor to the end, and was always considered one of the most alert and effective reporters in this city.

Mr. Dorris left five boys, all of whom became good, useful citizens. Of the four who are still living, Duncan R. is a resident of Nashville, Andrew is at Old Hickory, Louis lives in Florida and G. P. in St. Louis.

Douglas Anderson, who has written historical articles for *THE BANNER* for many years, was a hustling young reporter in Nashville during the latter eighties.

Wharton J. Allen, now in the insurance business, and Squire Tom Nance were prosperous young fellows connected with the business office of the American.

FIRST PRESS CLUB.

The first press club in Nashville, known as the Nashville Press Club, was organized in 1884. The club extended a welcome to the New England Press Association, which met May 13, 14 and 15, 1884. In fact, the club was organized for this purpose. Wharton J. Allen has in his possession the roster of the club, on which is printed: "Nashville Press Club, Greetings to the New England Press Association." The list of officers and members of the club contains some distinguished names in the annals of Tennessee, men who have wrought mightily for the public weal.

The officers were:

President— Henry Heiss.
 Vice-President— Charles M. Hayes.
 Secretary— R. J. G. Miller.
 Treasurer— E. H. Roberts.

Board of Governors—

Pitkin C. Wright, chairman.
 A. S. Colyar.
 A. L. Landis, Jr.
 Herman Justi.

John W. Morton.

Members, giving papers with which they were affiliated:

Henry Heiss, American.
 R. J. G. Miller, Banner.
 Pitkin C. Wright, Artisan.
 A. L. Landis, Jr., Banner.
 John W. Morton, Spirit of the Farm.
 John C. Cooke, Banner.
 James D. Andrews, Banner.
 James B. Clarke, Banner.
 Owen Prentiss, American.
 Albert Roberts, American.
 B. M. Hord, Spirit of the Farm.
 Dr. Deering J. Roberts, Southern Practitioner.
 E. Baird, Southern Lumberman.
 Lee Fitzgerald, American.
 R. A. Halley, Jr., American.
 Walter Cain, Student World.
 M. C. Currey, Sunday Journal.
 Charles M. Hayes, World.
 Eugene H. Roberts, American.
 A. S. Colyar, American.
 Herman Justi, Budget.
 M. M. Kline, Artisan.
 W. L. Kline, Artisan.
 Ira P. Jones, Banner.
 A. B. Clark, Banner.
 A. J. Grigsby, American.
 Charles Hodges, American.
 A. T. Jones, American.
 R. F. Osborne, Southern Journal of Education.
 H. A. Hasslock, Journal of Medicine and Surgery.
 H. A. Dodd, World.
 J. E. Green, Jr., World.
 Wharton J. Allen, American.
 B. F. DeBow, Student World.
 George Armistead, World.

Of the thirty-five, members of the club seven are living, a remarkable showing after forty-six years. The seven living are John C. Cooke of the Banner editorial staff; James D. Andrews, real estate, Nashville; James B. Clark of the editorial staff of the Chattanooga News; A. J. Grigsby, treasurer of the Banner; A. Tillman Jones, heating expert, Nashville; Wharton J. Allen, Insurance, Nashville and George H. Armistead, editor of the Banner.

OLD HOTELS.

In addition to the Maxwell House, Linck's Hotel and the Duncan Hotel, mention of which has already been made in this series of articles, there were half a dozen other smaller but well-known hotels in the eighties, all of which have disappeared save one, the old Broadway Hotel. The

others were the Nicholson House, where the Tulane now stands; the Battle House, on Church Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues; the St. Cloud Hotel, on Fifth Avenue near Church, occupying part of the space on which the Cain & Sloan store now stands; the Commercial Hotel, on the northeast corner of Fourth-Avenue and Cedar Street, and the St. Charles, on Second Avenue, on the spot now occupied by the Brandon Printing Company building.

The latter dated back into antiquity. It was here that Col. E. W. Cole, then a poor country boy, lived when he first came to Nashville. Afterwards, when he was one of Nashville's wealthiest and most prominent citizens, he purchased the old hotel for sentimental reasons.

Another poor country boy, at whose door the wolf no longer howls, also found his first shelter in the St. Charles. A water cooler containing ice water stood on the counter, and nearby was a glass for drinking water, which was drawn from the cooler through a shining faucet. This country boy had been used to wells and springs and moss-covered buckets, and drinking out of tin cups and gourds and cow tracks. The faucet was a nine-day wonder to the boy, who drank so much water, in order to have an excuse to play with the faucet, that the clerk found himself called upon to remind the young hayseed that "ice water cost money." That boy was and is Sandford Duncan.

SCIENTIFIC DEMONSTRATION.

In those good old days there were no lunch rooms, and little indigestion in Nashville. Everybody ate dinner in the middle of the day and supper at night, which was the next best course to that of "Natty Bumppo," who ate when he was hungry, rested when he was tired and slept when he was sleepy. There was a popular song:

"Feed me when I'm hungry,
Whisky when I'm dry,
Greenbacks when I'm hard-run,
And Heaven when I die."

In those days of the long ago the perennial crop of country boys who flooded to the urban Utopia "to make a fortune," slept in garrets, over stores and in various tubby holes, and ate at cheap rate hotels and cheaper boarding houses. The railroads were then growing young industrial giants, and all the boys, who could not get to sweep out somebody's store, sought a job with the railroads, all expecting soon to become magnates of large dimensions. Quite a bunch of these young countrymen were handling freight at the N. C. & St. L. freight depot on Church Street, and they were in the habit of going to the St. Cloud Hotel for dinner, where they could get cabbage, beans, potatoes, country ham, fried chicken, milk, coffee and pie, dumpling or pudding, all for 25 cents.

Three of these promising youngsters were Bill Huggins, Bill Napier and Jake Stevenson, the latter's nickname springing from the fact that he had

recently emerged from the Mud River Bottoms in Logan County, Kentucky. All three are now prosperous and well-known elderly gentlemen, known to the public as Mr. W. T. Huggins, Mr. W. W. Napier and Mr. E. B. Stevenson, Sr.

New theories were being advanced even at that early date and one day, as the boys were getting ready to leave the freighthouse for dinner a hot argument developed over the theory that no matter how much a man might eat, he weighed the same after eating as he did before.

Jake took the affirmative and Bill Napier the negative side. Bill Huggins was umpire. Bill Napier asserted that sometimes he weighed five pounds more after eating a hearty meal than he did before. Notwithstanding he was considered a gastronomic marvel, this seemed impossible, and so Jake proposed to bet him \$5.00 that he would not weigh five pounds more when they returned from the St. Cloud.

The boys put up the money, and Bill Huggins was appointed weighmaster and stakeholder. Arriving at the hotel Napier drank buttermilk and sweet-milk, ate raw tomatoes as an appetizer, and then proceeded to eat everything else he could lay his hands on. Returning to the railroad, Bill Huggins weighed him, and he tipped the beam at just six pounds more than when he left.

Mr. Napier says that Mr. Stevenson has been unsuccessfully trying to get that five dollars back ever since.

To be continued next Sunday.

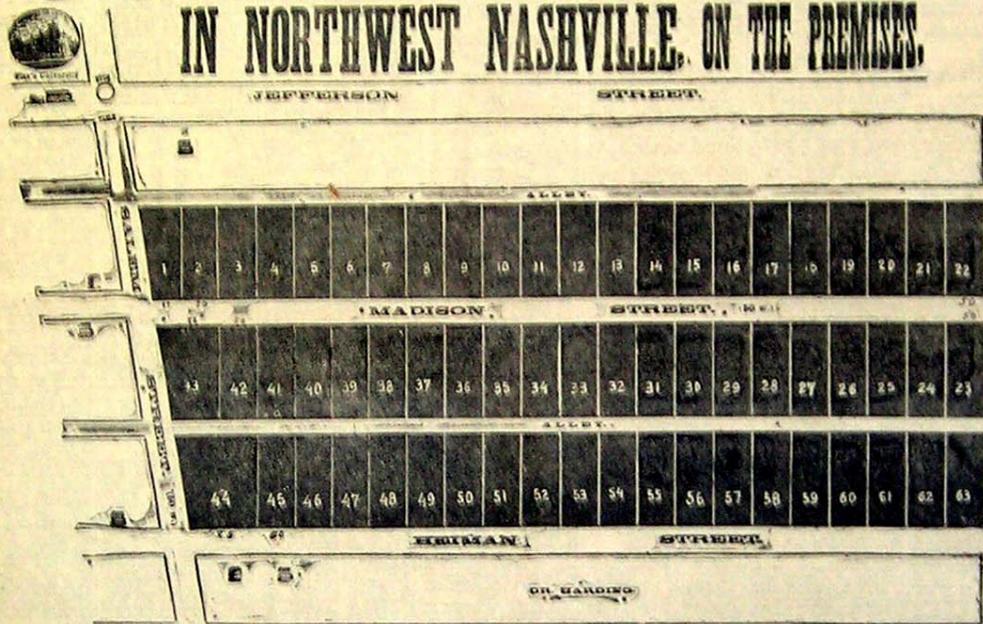
Over: A full-page ad in the *Nashville Daily American*, December 12, 1886, attests to the boom in residential development throughout the city. The advent of electric streetcar service at the end of the decade would hasten a trend toward suburban homebuilding.

AUCTION SALE

OF

63 BEAUTIFUL RESIDENCE LOTS

IN NORTHWEST NASHVILLE, ON THE PREMISES.



WEDNESDAY, DEC. 15
AT 11 O'CLOCK A. M.

We will sell, on the day and time above mentioned, that Beautiful Tract of Land as above platted, fronting on Madison, Heiman and Salem streets. These lots are the most beautiful property in that section of our city and is situated convenient to the street cars, besides just on the LINE to the NEW BRIDGE that will span the Cumberland at Hyde's Ferry. There is no property in Nashville that will enhance more rapidly in value than in this section, as there is not one foot of bad land in this whole 63 LOTS, all graded, high elevation and attractive property. We will sell these lots on most liberal terms. We have assurances that the Jefferson Street Car Line will be extended up to Salem Street within the next few months.

If bad weather prevails on day of sale, the sale will take place at the same time of day at the Merchants' Real Estate Exchange, corner of Church and College Streets.

NOTICE.—We will serve an elegant Turkey Lunch, free to all, on day of sale. Take FREE RIDE on Jefferson Street Cars.

For further particulars, call on us at our office.

N. W. TAYLOR, Auctioneer.

ANSON NELSON, Cole Building.
REED, SHIELDS & CO., 135 Union St.