

Montevallo *Historical* Times

Vol. 4 No. 2

Newsletter of the Montevallo Historical Society

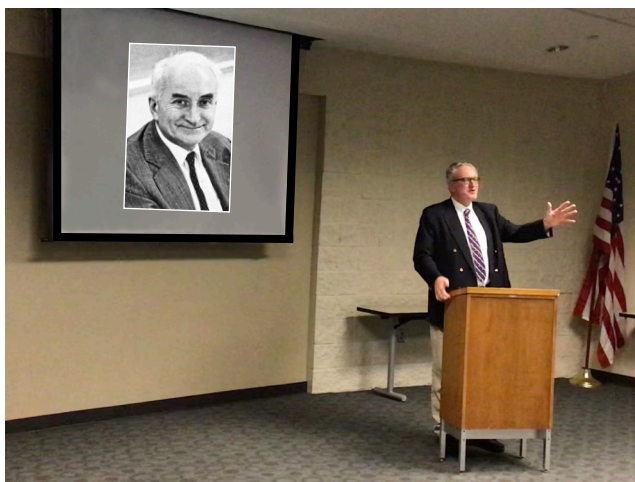
Spring 2020

Professor Van Tuyll Speaks at Winter Meeting

Dr. Hubert Van Tuyll, Ph.D., Professor of History at Augusta University in the neighboring state of Georgia, returned to his roots in Montevallo on January 26, 2020 to address the first general meeting of the year for the Montevallo Historical Society.

A native of the Netherlands, Hubert came to Montevallo with his family at the age of nine in 1966 when his father, Dr. Hendrik Van Tuyll, Th.D., accepted a position at Alabama College as professor of Philosophy and Religion. He attended Montevallo public schools, Indian Springs School in north Shelby County, and earned a B.A. in Economics from the University of Montevallo. His advanced degrees are from Duke University and Texas A&M. Hubert's wife, Debbie, also a UM grad, accompanied him to Montevallo.

Hubert's father was one of the most interesting, eccentric, and beloved scholars to ever teach at Montevallo, and the university remembers professor Van Tuyll and the family today



Professor Hubert Van Tuyll of Augusta University returned home to Montevallo in January to address the Montevallo Historical Society.

by designating the university-owned house they lived in on the corner of Oak and Vine Streets as the Van Tuyll house.

Hubert entitled his program, "The Two Sides of the Door", a shorthand description for "having a totally different life inside and outside the house".

The theme he chose to speak about resulted from the reality that his very Dutch mother was not only a naturally shy person, but also felt extremely isolated now, having been transplanted so far from all she knew to be familiar.

For these reasons, Hubert's parents

maintained what was essentially an upperclass European household, complete with furnishings and decorations from their native Holland. Dutch was the language spoken by the family and very little of the outside world penetrated this tiny outpost of continental culture in the Heart of Dixie.

Even so, Dr. Van Tuyll became delighted with what he found in his role as a teacher and scholar at Montevallo, and Hubert thrived as a young boy and eventually a student at UM.

To conclude his talk, Dr. Hubert Van Tuyll spoke movingly about the town of Montevallo and all it has meant to him over the years. He explained that as an immigrant, you're never 100% at home. But under his personal circumstances, including his unusual youth lived on two sides of the door, Montevallo has become as close to home for him as is possible.

A video of Dr. Hubert Van Tuyll's program is available for viewing at www.historicmontevallo.org

*Christmas
Open
House
2019*



Please Note: The MHS Meeting scheduled for April 26 has been CANCELLED

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

As the days and weeks go by, and more and more people around the world are compelled to make major adjustments in their lives because of the spreading coronavirus pandemic, again and again the thoughts, love, and goodwill of all of us in Montevallo reach out to you in a powerful affirmation of the historical bond we share.

It has been said that one good thing about bad times is that they bring out, often in an extraordinary way, the very best within us – if we allow it. In any time of crisis, catastrophe, or threat down through history, we can see that people responded in one of two ways: Either they allowed themselves to be defined by fears, limitations, and selfishness; or they used that challenging time as motivation to discover and express the beautiful qualities and latent power of their community.

I would like to challenge each of you with the idea that now is the ideal time to consider our community and its legacy.

Each of us can make this a pivotal moment in our growth as individuals and as residents of Montevallo. Every action we take is “history-in-the-making”. It is my hope that we will look back on this unusual period and realize that this was the time when we seized the opportunity to bring out and manifest the results of years of study, reflection and efforts at self-improvement. That this was when we made the inner leap from just thinking about the things we hoped to achieve “someday” to actually living them.

It's important that we are not having historical society meetings at this time and that we stay at home and do our part to “flatten the curve” toward coronavirus recovery. However, there are other things we can do now to build upon Montevallo's history.

Protect yourself and others by observing the health and hygiene guidelines mandated for our locale. And if “social distancing” rules create a little extra time in your daily routine, use it gratefully to uplift yourself and all who you are able to serve by your actions.

So, what will you do while sheltering-in-place?

The MHS Oral History committee would remind you of the importance of telling your story and urge you to keep a diary of the day-by-day events in your corner of the world. Write about your experiences during this history-making pandemic. It's important to keep a record of what this experience means to you. As the Shelby County Historical Society recently declared, “Don't let the news outlets define this time for you. Do it yourself so that you leave a record for future generations.”

Consider planting a vegetable garden to cut down your need to make multiple trips to the grocery store. I've included a photo of our first modest harvest from our family “Victory Garden”.

If you love your camera as much as most love their phones, then consider contributing to the outreach efforts of our MHS Documenting Montevallo's History committee by recording these unique times in photographs. After all, “a picture is worth a thousand words” and is influential in a myriad of ways.

Be sure to take a few minutes to visit our historical society website www.historicmontevallo.org. MHS Vice-President Clay Nordan continues to make us proud with timely updates to this remarkable and informative platform showcasing our programs and community offerings. Be sure to scroll down to the bottom of the home page and click on “Throwback Thursdays” – a collaborative effort between MHS and Montevallo Main Street. Clay is responsible for the entire content and I promise you will be thrilled with what he has done. Also on the site you can find a collection of Marty Everse's monthly contributions to “Chamber Chatter” on behalf of MHS.

The MHS Genealogy committee would suggest that now is a great time to trace your family history. There are many resources available online to help you get started. Just think of how much you will be able to share with all of us when we have our next general membership meeting!

If we consciously embrace this opportunity, it will not be remembered primarily as a period of distress and discouragement. Rather, it will be a time when we were challenged, and we rose to that challenge – when we did everything in our power, moment by moment, day by day, to make our community proud of us by adopting its enduring historical ideals as our own.



Susan

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Montevallo Historical Society

Opening the Portals of Our Heritage

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www.historicmontevallo.org



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The *Wyatts* Of the Coosa

by Clay Nordan

and Pharriba Robinson Wyatt (1873 – 1923) and had two sisters, Alice and Edna, and a younger brother T. E. “Gene” Wyatt.

The Wyatt clan was among the first white settlers in Chilton County, having come into Alabama from South Carolina around 1804 and devoting several unsuccessful years attempting to put down roots in both Pike and Autauga Counties. Mack’s great-grandparents, Bucky and Mariam Wyatt, ultimately made their way to a spot in the deep wilderness within two miles of the Coosa around 1810 that offered them the wild game and fresh water for fishing they were looking for.

Mack’s father, J.M. Wyatt, known locally as “Uncle Jim” eked out a living as a small farmer and by renting boats and selling live bait to fishermen on the Coosa. He was the type of man, known as a “river rat”, that a life spent in close proximity to the water sometimes produced. As if to underscore the path he had chosen, he died suddenly in 1936 in a way that he might have selected if he had been given a choice. A newspaper item that appeared at the time said, “The body of Mr. Wyatt was found dead in his boat at Crumpton’s Camp on Walnut Creek about noon Sunday”.

Mack and his brother, Gene, although both products of the Coosa, chose a different career path and went into business together in the years before World War I running the Republican oriented *Union Banner* newspaper in Clanton. Mack became editor of the paper in 1913 and capitalized on his lifelong love of the river and its environs by paying close attention to the Alabama Power Company’s stewardship of what was known then as “Lock 12” (Lay Dam today). When plans were made public in 1920 to build a second hydro dam at Duncan’s Riffles, 14 miles downstream, Mack ran numerous stories on the project as news emerged about what would become Lake Mitchell in 1923.

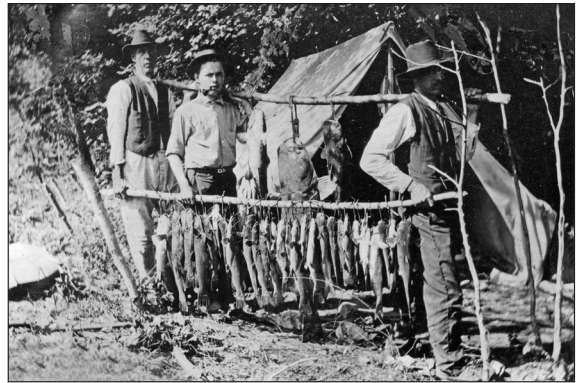
An unabashed booster for what he believed were the enormous benefits that Alabama Power had brought to both Chilton and Coosa Counties, Mack Wyatt would become a strong local voice speaking against anyone who could not appreciate the great progress and commercial advantage that Alabama Power’s river projects had brought to the area.

Local newspapers in those days took a stand politically and battled other papers over their chosen political philosophy. Mack decided to run as a Republican for the state legislature in the early 1920’s and defeated the editor of Clanton’s Democratic oriented paper. He served only one term, finding state government not to his liking, and returned full-time to the newspaper.

He and his brother remained partners in the *Union Banner* until Mack was presented with the opportunity to buy the *Montevallo Times* in nearby Shelby County in 1935. He then sold his interest in the business to Gene (who operated the *Banner* until his death in 1974) and moved his family to this nearby college town and the challenge of reinvigorating a paper much in need of an experienced newspaper man.

Montevallo provided the kind of stimulation and fodder for news stories that Mack was looking for. After a dozen years there, he decided to run for mayor just to see what kind of support he could drum up. To his surprise, he was elected by three votes and went on to serve five consecutive terms, each unopposed. He used the bully pulpit of his newspaper to sell his policies and proposals, and became respected locally for his sense of civic duty and fairness to all. He died during his fifth term as mayor at the age of 74 in 1966.

A true son of Chilton County and the Coosa river specifically, my grandfather, W. M. “Mack” Wyatt (1892 – 1966) was born and raised on the Chilton side of the Coosa River not far from what we know today as Higgins Ferry Park on Lake Mitchell. He was the oldest child of James Madison Wyatt (1872-1936)



The photos you see here were in one of Mack Wyatt’s old albums. That’s Mack at the top and he’s the pipe smoker carrying the racks of fish. Accounts from Lake Mitchell’s first years boasted about huge catches coming from the lake, and it was common for fishermen to land catfish weighing as much as 60 pounds.

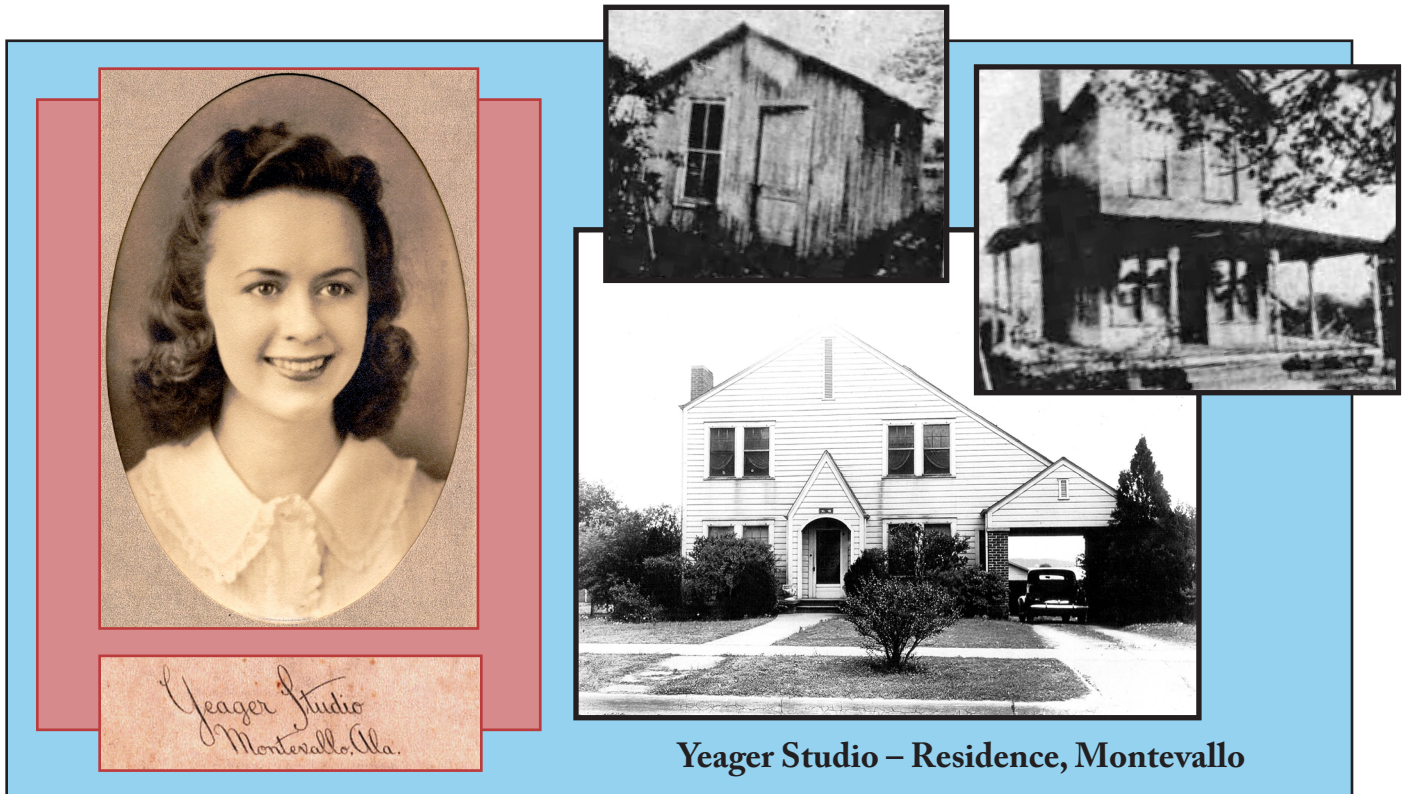
A Day Trip to the River

A bunch of us hard-boiled fishermen carried Judge Reynolds and his son Omar and brother W. A. out to Coosa River last Thursday and introduced them to the art of climbing up and down those pine-straw hills under the scorching heat of a summer sun. When we reached the river, a temporary camp was made and a dinner of fresh fish was prepared by members of the party who were more or less acquainted with the culinary side of camp life. After dinner we all proceeded across the river and up a gentle slope for a short distance to where a bee tree had been previously located. Perhaps the greatest piece of fun in the whole trip was the cutting of the tree and eating all the honey we wanted.

This short item ran in Clanton’s Union Banner newspaper in 1920, three years before the gates on the dam at Duncan’s Riffles were closed permanently to create Lake Mitchell

News From Montevallo

BY FLORA B. SURLES



This story on Yeager Studio, a commercial photography business that served Montevallo for 35 years from 1912 until 1947, appeared in a 1932 issue of the Shelby County Reporter.

Typical of Town's Building Progress

Perhaps no better or more graphic illustration of building progress in Montevallo during the past 20 years could be portrayed than that shown in the picture above.

The little one-room "shack" shown at the top left was the first photographic studio of which the town boasted. It was operated by Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Yeager, more than 20 years ago. A sky-light in the roof furnished the needed rays for indoor camera action. The building was located at the side of the Yeager residence, the property now occupied by Prof. and Mrs. C.B. Richmond.

As time went by and it became evident that the business of photography could become a reasonably

profitable enterprise in Montevallo, the Yeagers enlarged their plant, moving it over to the present site. The building shown at the top right of the picture then became the home of the business, providing for an enterprise which had bigger and bigger demands made upon it with the growth of Alabama College and the increased population of the town.

Three years ago, Mrs. Yeager, who has carried on the business independently since her husband's death, erected the building at the bottom of the picture, a modern residence-studio, on the site of the second building.

From the attractive entrance of this two-story English style frame building of ivory color with green trim, one enters a large reception room. At the rear are located a small sales room, a commodious workshop, and the charming dinette and kitchenette which make part of the residence apartment.

From the reception room one enters the large, modern studio upstairs with its conventional backgrounds

and ample sky lights. Here also are located a small dressing room for use of Mrs. Yeager's clientele, and her own living apartment.

Contrast Representative

The contrast shown in the outward appearance of the three buildings in the picture is typical of that represented in a number of residences and other buildings in the town of Montevallo, many of which have undergone improvement within the past five or ten years, and particularly since the streets were improved three years ago by paving.

Contrary to an idea current in the minds of many, even of older Montevallo residents, Mrs. Yeager did not succeed her husband in the business of photography. It was she who initiated the enterprise.

Outgrowth of Natural Talent

Mrs. Yeager's entry into the photographic field was really the outgrowth of a natural talent, the development of which, as has been the case in the lives of many women who have launched into business ca-

reers, was necessitated by economic circumstances.

Her husband had been a professor of mathematics. His health failed, which necessitated his retirement from the school room. He undertook a stock farm business, which paid none too well.

Meantime, an intimate friend of the family, the late Miss Anne Kennedy, professor of history at the Alabama Girls Industrial School, who saw the possibilities of more than "pastime" in Mrs. Yeager's amateurish attempt at water color sketches and portrait painting, urged her to develop her talent against the time of economic need.

Twenty-five years ago a business career for a woman in a small Alabama town was not looked upon in the same light it is today. Mrs. Yeager confesses that she was "a bit timid" about it. She had a great deal of respect for Miss Kennedy's opinion, however, and confidence in her counsel. And so it came about that Mrs. Yeager entered a school of photography at McMinnville, Tenn., and prepared to launch a business in which she has succeeded.

It was not she therefore, who assisted her husband in the business of photography, but it was Mr. Yeager who assisted her.

WHEN IN MONTEVALLO CALL AT

YEAGER STUDIO

Work for Schools and
Colleges a Specialty

We make the pictures for TECHNALA and A. G. T. I.

Before his death, Mr. Yeager did much of the work connected with making outside pictures, but all inside sittings were taken care of by Mrs. Yeager, as was most of the developing and printing of films.

Large Territory

Not only does Mrs. Yeager take care of the immense volume of photographic business which originates on the campus of Alabama College to meet the demands of student publications, the college news bureau and the individual requirements of the large group of students; but she also takes care of the needs of the immediate community and those of surrounding communities, and counties. She does the high school

work for Centreville, Columbiana, and Clanton. Her assistant is Miss Pearl Cahoon.

"Like all others who have undertaken the development of a business," Mrs. Yeager said when interviewed for this story, "I have oftentimes met with discouragement and disappointment, but economic necessity and a genuine love of my work have forced me on. I believe that photography comes well within the pale of woman's work. What I have done, others can do; for the secret of whatever success I have met with has been merely a matter of hard work coupled with a determination to succeed in that in which I have been most interested, and in which I feel my greatest talent lies."



The specially designed house that Mrs. Yeager built on Highland Avenue for her photography studio as well as her residence remains today on the corner of Highland and Plowman Streets. At some point the carport was enclosed and a two car garage was added. A new second front entrance provided access to an apartment occupied by the new owner, Mrs. W.E. Montgomery. The original entrance was then used to enter the former studio portion of the building, which Mrs. Montgomery rented for housing to Alabama College faculty members and their families.

Remembering

Sabin Oral Sunday

As the United States and the rest of the planet continues to reel from the onslaught of the COVID-19 virus, we thought it would be timely to revisit the successful efforts in Shelby County, and Montevallo specifically, in the early 1960's to eradicate the polio virus, which had been a scourge and source of dread for parents of young children for generations.

I can well remember the near-panic that parents in our Montevallo neighborhood felt when the mother of a friend came down with Polio in 1956. They knew full well that their young children were most susceptible to the insidious menace that had now hit so close to home.

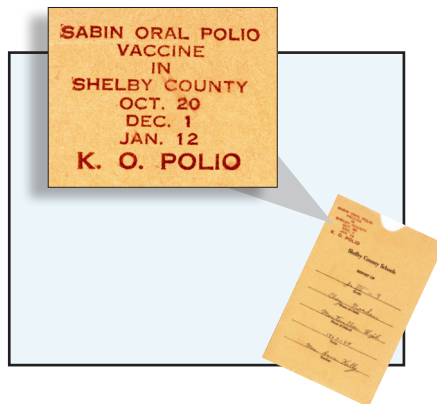
When the Salk Vaccine came out, there was no hesitation in Montevallo about inoculating all school children. When the Sabin Oral Vaccine was announced it was viewed as a God-send and the national program for it was embraced almost universally.

I well remember the first Sabin Oral Sunday. Cars were parked on Main Street on both sides of the street from City Hall to the Bus Station. We joined the procession of other families and made our way to City Hall where Dr. Lewis Kirkland and Dr. Leslie Hubbard, supported by city officials, had worked out a highly streamlined system for distributing the life-saving medicine.

The line entered the Council Chamber entrance and passed through to a table covered with cups containing sugar cubes. We each took a cube, ate it, and left through the other door. This simple process was repeated twice more on succeeding Sunday afternoons, dealing a fatal blow to a disease that had ruined so many young lives for so long.

Clay Nordan

Shelby County schools notified parents and students about Sabin Oral Sunday by cleverly stamping report cards with a reminder about the event.



(Upper Left) The Sabin Oral Vaccine consisted of two drops of medicine on a sugar cube which was eaten by each recipient. (Above) Parents and children line-up on Sabin Oral Sunday in Ohio to get the first of three different sugar cube doses that were required of everyone for complete protection against polio.

Wipe Out Polio

This article by correspondent Mary Alice Ballantine, ran in the October 17, 1963 edition of the Shelby County Reporter

Dr. Lewis E. Kirkland, Chairman of the Sabin Oral Sunday program in Montevallo met with his committee on Monday, October 14th, at the City Hall.

Details of the program were discussed and every effort is being made by the workers to assure a well-coordinated, effective and efficient operation on October 20th.

It is most important that everyone should be fully aware of why the Sabin oral vaccine should be taken by EVERYONE. Many people are under the misapprehension that because they or their children have had the Salk shots and booster injections that the Sabin vaccine is not necessary. It IS necessary. The period of immunity offered by the Salk shots is limited; booster shots are needed every two years.

Medical scientists now know that every community has numerous carriers — persons who have no visible evidence of the disease, but who carry the virus within their bodies, in the intestinal tract. Most of the time they carry a very weak strain of the virus, presenting little or no threat to persons around them. But every so often, particularly during hot weather, this virus becomes active, breaks through the carrier stage and becomes a dreadful threat to the community.

The Salk vaccine protected those persons who were vaccinated, but it DID NOT eliminate the carriers of the disease. Even those who were vaccinated could still transmit the disease to others, even though they suf-

ferred no polio attack or symptoms themselves.

The Sabin oral vaccine, which is painless, odorless and tasteless, sets up an intestinal barrier to the disease – similar to that which would occur if a person had been subjected to a natural infection with each of the THREE types of polio. CARRIERS ARE ELIMINATED, that is, those carriers who take the Sabin oral vaccine.

If YOU neglect to take the Sabin vaccine on October 20th, you may unknowingly be a carrier of polio and be responsible for infecting others with this dreaded disease. Remember Typhoid Mary? Don't be a Polio Pest!

Please remember these facts:

There are no SHOTS or INJECTIONS! The vaccine (2 drops) is placed on a cube of sugar. Just eat the sugar, that's all! (Donated Sugar came from local Food Centers).

YES, there is an AGE LIMIT! Babies less than two months old are not quite mature enough for the vaccine. But there is NO age limit in the other direction – the oldest resident in Shelby County is still young enough to be a carrier of polio and needs the vaccine.

The Shelby County Medical Society, assisted by a great number of Volunteer workers, is doing its utmost to protect the health of every person in this County. Montevallo physician, Dr. Leslie H. Hubbard is General Chairman for the entire county while his local counterpart, Dr. Lewis E.

Kirkland, is General Chairman for the town of Montevallo. They have, and will be, working long and hard on this program. Remember – SOS for YOU on October 20th.

27,728 TAKE POLIO VACCINE

Writing in the Shelby County Reporter the week following the first Sabin Oral Sunday, County Coordinator Frank Sloan said, "The response by Shelby Countians to the call to "Wipe-out-polio", can only be described as fantastic".

Twenty seven thousand seven hundred twenty-eight (27,728) Shelby County citizens have been vaccinated against Type I poliomyelitis. This is certainly a great event, and marks the beginning of the end of paralytic polio.

Never before in Shelby County history have 84.7% of the population joined in a common endeavor. The young citizens and the elder citizens responded. To that great number of fine citizens over forty who are not as susceptible to polio as those younger, but who vaccinated themselves as a means of protecting the younger citizens, especial gratitude is due. The importance of this program cannot be overstated, for the eradication of polio is at hand.

In Alabaster, 5082 people were vaccinated; in Calera, 3006; Chelsea, 2005; Columbiana, 5056; Helena, 2006; Montevallo, 5641; Vincent, 3972; Alabama College, 959.

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Montevallo Historical Society Financial Statement December 31, 2018 – December 31, 2019

Balance brought forward 12/31/2018 \$7,502.35

INCOME

Membership dues \$4,160.00

2019 Gala contributions 6,713.00

Total \$10,873.00

EXPENSES

Quarterly Newsletters (Printing and mailing) \$2,762.30

2019 Gala (Food, tables, chairs & linens) 3,340.00

Places in Peril (Aldrich Museum clean up) 1,927.00

MHS Trademark (Sirote Law firm) 1,248.00

Board Liability Insurance (Bates, Roberts, Fowlkes, & Jackson) 750.00

Articles of Incorporation (Mr. John McCulley, Attorney) 492.00

Tax Preparation (Yeager & Christian CPA) 115.00

Supplies (For serving refreshments) 86.50

Veterans Banner for Main St. (Donation to Montevallo Main Street) 300.00

Total \$11,020.80

Balance as of 12/31/2019 \$7,354

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