

Spring 2014

The LEGACY

A Publication of Watson-Brown Foundation, Inc.

Honored GUESTS

DINING WITH TOM COBB

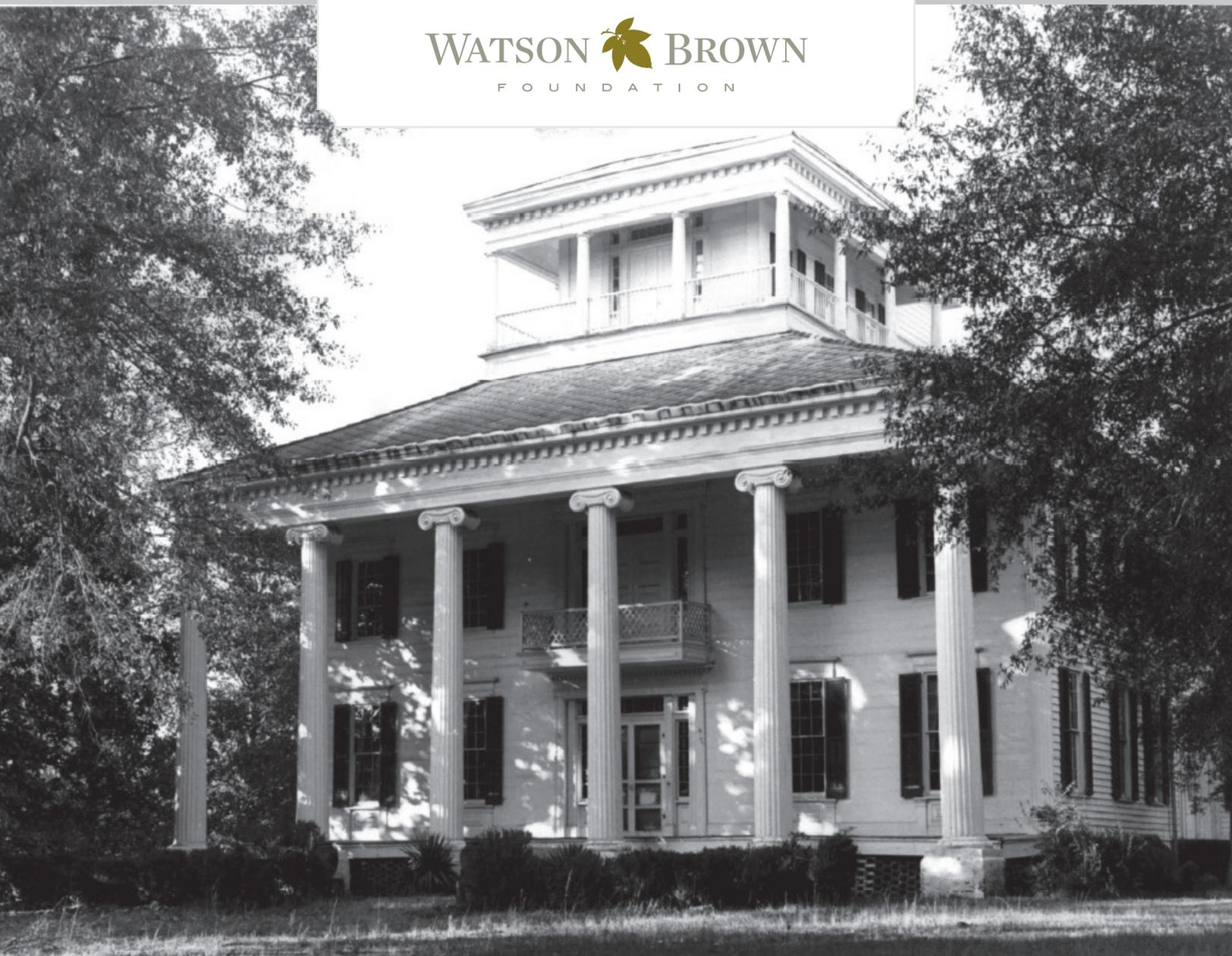
Merry WIDOWS

CAN YOU DIG IT?

GOLD Leaves

NOTHING SHY OF MAJESTIC





“It is incorrect to accuse me of ‘New South’ nonsense. I never talked it, and never wrote it. In my public life and speeches, my ideal has been the old South, its political principles, its family models, its simplicity, honesty, courage and *genuine democracy*.”



— Thomas E. Watson, *Watson’s Magazine*, December, 1916

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OUR MISSION

The Watson-Brown Foundation, through creativity, diligence and financial support, labors to improve education in the American South by funding its schools and students, preserving its history, encouraging responsible scholarship and promoting the memory and values of our spiritual founders.

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CAMPUS NOTES



Watson-Brown Scholars in Action



PEYTON VEYTIA

Peyton Veytia, Junior, Northeastern University: “Currently, I am on a month-long Dialogue of Civilizations program with Northeastern University in Cape Town, South Africa. The purpose of the program is to learn experientially about social entrepreneurship with a focus on how it can be used to address poverty and economic inequality in a post-apartheid South Africa. For the first two weeks of the program, we partnered with local entrepreneurs and advised them on how to improve and strengthen their small businesses. In addition to the academic lectures and practical field work, we have also had the opportunity to explore the city and its surrounding areas. Our extracurricular activities included a visiting Robben Island by ferry to see where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, hiking in Constantia Nek and Kirstenbosch, going on a safari at Gondwana Game Reserve, touring the South African Parliament, and having tea with Nobel Peace Prize-winner Desmond Tutu. It’s fascinating to witness how social entrepreneurship, a subject I am extremely passionate about, can help improve the economic situation and lives of poor South Africans. It has inspired me to think about how social entrepreneurship can be applied to different social problems throughout the world and about how I can be involved in bringing about positive social change.”



ANDREW LOPER

Andrew Loper, Junior, Georgia Institute of Technology: “I have had a wonderful past year. This past fall was very eventful. Between my full course load and extracurricular activities, I found myself very busy. Outside of the classroom I spent a lot of time with my fraternal brothers in Theta Xi, a Christian fraternity.

“One thing that was very exciting was this year’s homecoming competition. We competed in a variety of events against many other organizations in the school, one of which, the famed Georgia Tech Wreck Parade, could be considered the biggest of

the whole week—aside from the football game, of course. I worked many long hours designing and building our contraption, an indirect drive vehicle that was driven in the parade. I also helped work on our parade car that took first place in the parade. Our two placing parade scores, in combination with all the other terrific work my brothers did throughout the week in other competitions, earned us first place overall.

“This was one of the most enjoyable activities I participated in, but not everything at Tech is fun and games. That same semester I took a number of important classes, one of which was Deformable

Bodies. This class, though not easy to master, has proved invaluable to me in the two internships I had this past spring and summer. This spring, I worked as a test engineer for John Deere in Grovetown, Georgia, where I worked on a number of projects, such as the design and construction of a weigh station. Among many other features, this station was required to be able to withstand the weight of our largest tractors, fully loaded. I was able to apply the tools I learned only a few months ago to verify my designs and move forward with construction. I have also used these skills in my current job as a product development engineer for John Deere on the engines team at Harvesters Works in Moline, Illinois. I have really enjoyed the opportunities I’ve had to apply what I am learning in school to the real world. This coming year I will be spending both the fall and spring at Georgia Tech learning more tools to help me in my career and moving closer to graduation.”

Meegian Gossard, Senior, Clemson University: “This year I completed my third year in Clemson’s Tiger Band and watched as our football team beat LSU in the final seconds of the 2012 Chic-Fil-A Bowl. I volunteered with the two children’s choirs at the church I attend. The elementary-age kids put on a musical this spring, for which I helped them prepare.

“The thing that has surprised me the most about college is it is nothing as I anticipated it would be. I came to Clemson with an idea of what my college experience would be like, but over these past three years I’ve had the most amazing experiences that were



MEEGIAN GOSSARD



ARIC BERNING

completely different from what I pictured.

“This summer, I will be interning at a local church in Clemson for ten weeks, shadowing the pastor.”

Aric Berning, Senior, University of Pittsburgh: “My junior year at the University of Pittsburgh was a two-semester roller coaster that left me quite different than I was eight months ago. For starters, this was my first year renting an apartment off-campus, so much of the first weeks of the semester were spent figuring out how to turn on utility service and finding a street parking permit for my car. Academically, this has been a year of new adventures, as well. One of my hobbies is learning foreign languages, and I used some of my elective space this year to start learning Russian. Once you get past the new alphabet (which isn’t actually as intimidating as it looks), Russian is a beautifully expressive language with a lot of flexibility in how sentences are put together. I’m excited to continue learning it, and I will be studying abroad this summer in Moscow in an intensive Russian-language institute. As it turns out, Pittsburgh has a large population of Russian immigrants and their families, so I’m hoping to merge my new language skills with my medical aspirations by serving as a medical interpreter when I return from Moscow in August.

“Other adventures from this past year include being an undergraduate teaching

assistant for Organic Chemistry (which made me seriously consider pursuing a degree in education), playing a lead role in the University Theatre Company’s production of *Zanna, Don’t*, publishing my first scientific paper in the journal *Animal Behaviour*, and presenting a poster at the American Association for Cancer Research’s national conference in Washington, D.C.

“Outside of school, I’ve been keeping busy playing the occasional game of racquetball, going to hockey games (go Penguins!), and



ELIJAH BAKER

finding interesting restaurants around the city. I’m also got engaged to my girlfriend (and best friend) earlier this summer, so I doubt my life will be quieting down in the near future! But I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Elijah Baker, Junior, Georgia Institute of Technology: “This year I am currently spending the summer studying abroad in China. I needed a break from the routine classes at Georgia Tech, so I figured I might as well live it up in another country for the summer. We spent the first four weeks in Tianjin at Tianjin University. The first two things I noticed were: Tianjin looks similar to cities in the states, and the food is ridiculously cheap. You can get most meals for about \$2 and the more expensive dinning will cost around \$20. A six-star restaurant in the states will run you hundreds of dollars at the minimum; in China you will pay at most \$30. I simply love it!

“While in China, we traveled to the most remote and untouched parts of the Great Wall. We camped over three nights in villages, orchards, and remote locations under the Wall. We climbed mountains, repelled off a 100-foot dam, rafted across a river, and, of course, ate some of the best traditional Chinese food in the country. It was definitely one of the highlights in my life.

“We also learned the great and important history of Tianjin and how it relates to

China. Very few people know that during the nineteenth and twentieth century, Tianjin was one of, if not the most, important economic centers in China.

“Another awesome experience was going to Beijing on a bullet train. It was so smooth it felt like I was flying, but that wasn’t the highlight. One of the most exhilarating, unconventional experiences was shopping at the Beijing Silk Market. Imagine five floors of vendors and booths of everything you could want. Clothes, jewelry, shoes, designer bags, designer eyewear, souvenirs, electronics, and even weapon optics and swords! I’ve never been the shopper, but after going there how could you not become one? You name it, the Silk Market has it. What made it so fun was that you don’t just go and buy products—you bargain with the vendors! For example, I bought shoes that cost at least \$200 for \$50 at the market! Yes, part of that is because the exchange rate is six Chinese RMB (Renminbi) to one U.S. dollar, but if you don’t bargain you’ll be paying more than the U.S. price! The Silk Market was simply incredible, if I knew about places like that in China, I would’ve definitely come with more money.

“Now we are in Shanghai for the remainder of our experience at the Shanghai Jiaotong University. After experiencing the dirt cheap pricing for food and shopping in Tianjin and Beijing, I had high expectations for Shanghai. The food isn’t as cheap as but the shopping still is. I’ve gotten a 100 percent cashmere suit tailor-made for \$180! If that is too pricy, which there’s no possible way that is, you can get a regular fabric suit for around \$70 to \$90. Silk shirts, jeans, peacoats, ties, and tuxedos—you name it—and in Shanghai you can get it tailored. So far, studying in China is the best way I’ve spent my summer in a long time. Of course, I am supposed to be studying also, but not to worry.

“Upon my return to the States, I will be off on a weeklong cruise to the Caribbean! My summer is packed full of excitement and much-needed adventure. I have been taking classes for about seven semesters straight with no break, so you could imagine I am quite burnt out. After this immense summer recharge, I will be ready for any and everything college will throw at me this fall. But for now I will continue to live and experience China to the fullest.”



Winnie Cheng, Sophomore, Georgia Institute of Technology: “Whereas some people grow up with a dream college in mind, it had never really occurred to me that I would attend Georgia Tech. Instead, my parents always joked that since my sister had become the lawyer in the family, I should logically (and stereotypically) become a doctor. For a while, I was pretty set on that route, even planning to attend the University of Chicago in my sister’s footsteps to hopefully attend medical school later on ... but I realized that path wasn’t for me. I would say that I compromised by deciding to major in Biomedical Engineering at Tech, but it has paid off more than I could have ever imagined.

“In my Freshman year alone, I managed to connect with some amazing people through student organizations. I joined Tech’s Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES) and was given the opportunity to be a part of organizing the first High School Scholars’ Lunch at the National BMES Annual Meeting in Atlanta. In addition, I provide tours to incoming BME students as a BMED FUTURES Ambassador. I also look forward to becoming the new Public Relations Officer for Tech’s Biomedical Research and Opportunities Society (BROS) and a GT 1000 Team Leader in the fall, helping incoming Freshmen transition to college life.

“While I explored both Georgia Tech and Atlanta, I stumbled upon my greatest

accomplishment of the year. During my fall semester, I attended Tech’s career fair and biotechnology career fair out of curiosity, knowing most companies were there to offer full-time offers. However, after a few interviews and a flight out to Cincinnati, I was soon offered a summer R&D internship with Procter & Gamble! For twelve weeks, I will be working in Products Research on their newly acquired vitamins, minerals, and supplements brand, New Chapter. Working for a Fortune 500 company is still quite eye-opening to me, and with the help of my Watson-Brown scholarship, my goal of graduating college debt-free seems easily in reach.”

Lily Elsner, Senior, Wellesley College: “The Spring 2013 semester has been stressful and an absolute whirlwind, but I have been the happiest of my life at Wellesley. I decided to take an overload to get the most out of my two majors, Philosophy and Biological Sciences. I took a History of Modern Philosophy course that allowed me to really understand the basis of our current society’s ideals and founding, and more important, to get to know the philosophy professors a lot better. I truly feel at home in that department and am so blessed to have such an incredible group of professors.



AMY LI

“I also took three biology courses— Biomechanics, Global Change Ecology, and a course on Lake Baikal. I will be going to Siberia to Lake Baikal for the month of August to continue the research we began in the class, with an emphasis on the cultural and societal influences on the lake.

“I rounded out the semester with an unofficially requisite Wellesley course, Women in Health, in the Women’s and Gender Studies department. I found that it contributed a great deal to my understanding of my own health and improved my awareness of a variety of problems and their circumstances in the U.S. health-care system.

“In my extracurriculars, I was elected the Chief Justice of the College Government. This means that I am the Chair of the Honor Code Council, comprised of appointed deans, faculty, and students at Wellesley. I will chair hearings of both non-academic and academic charges of violations of the honor code, as well as sitting on the CG cabinet, Senate, and various additional committees of the academic council, all the while raising awareness on campus of the honor code. I am excited and nervous to serve in this

new role as it comes with a great deal of responsibility.

“This summer, I shall be putting my energies into my internship at the Department of Disability, Aging, and Long-Term Care Policy at the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C. as a part of the Wellesley in Washington program. I cannot wait to begin this adventure.

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank Watson-Brown again, though I doubt that I ever properly can, to help allow me to attend Wellesley, which has blessed me with so much. I truly appreciate not only the immense financial support, but also the feeling that I am a part of a truly great organization. I love receiving *The Legacy* and learning about other fantastic scholars and alumni and the Foundation itself. Thanks for being so wonderfully inclusive. I look forward to telling the tales of D.C., Russia, and the wild world of College Government in the Fall, as well as more laud and honor of Wellesley.”

Amy Li, Senior, Princeton University: “My year has been fantastic! I gained so many wonderful new experiences. I spent a lot of time this year in a neuroscience lab for research, working with genetic mouse models of autism to explore differences in sensory learning and neuronal alterations in the cerebellum (the ‘autism project’). By using genetically altered mice, we hope that our research can provide valuable insight into probable factors contributing to autism development in humans. This project will be a large component in my Senior thesis.

“I am still very involved with residential and campus life at my university. I am on the Wilson College Council and help coordinate activities that enhance community, identity, cross-class connection, and social life on campus. I further represent Wilson College on the Residential Life Team, one of four teams that work to implement recommendations from President Shirley Tilghman’s Working Group on Campus Social and Residential Life. I also volunteered every week at the nearby nursing home, which confirmed my enthusiasm for patient interaction and a future as a physician. My internship this summer will be at the Department of Surgery with the Greenville Health System, where I will be conducting research and shadowing all types of surgeries. I am very excited to begin!”

Ethan Holliman, Senior, Georgia Regents University: “As I finish up my last year as an undergraduate, I can honestly say that



ETHAN HOLLIMAN



TACARA D. HARRIS

Alumni Spotlight

BY SHANNON FRIEDMANN HATCH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ASHMILL PHOTOGRAPHY



Were there ever a shadow of a doubt that TaCara D. Harris, Esq., would one day graduate from a prestigious law school and work for one of the country’s most respected law firms, you’d need not look far for supporting evidence.

Exhibit A: The journals and diaries she kept as a young girl. While other adolescents filled pages with tales of crushes and cliques, TaCara says from age eleven, “whether it was a personal diary or a school essay or poem, I have been writing about becoming an attorney.”

Exhibit B: The multiple internships in the field she completed—Office of the General Counsel, Alabama A&M; Office of the General Counsel, Vanderbilt; three summer associate positions in firms from Nashville to Birmingham.

There are also verbal testimonies from her parents. “I told them when I was in fifth grade that I was going to be a Supreme Court Justice,” she recalls. “My parents have been my number-one fans and supported me in every endeavor to accomplish my dreams.”

A bright child that marched around the country at the pace of her military father’s relocation orders (she attended nine different schools from kindergarten to twelfth grade), TaCara quickly learned to adapt and easily make friends. Her young, wide eyes took in Georgia pines and red

clay, Louisiana bayous, Alaskan snowcapped mountains, and Hawaiian sunsets. But the scene that impacted the course of her life the most, was a female litigator presenting to her fifth grade class on career day. Typically, it’s the doctors, firemen, and police officers that command a captive audience. There is the guts and the glory that keep listeners on the edge of their seats. But there was something awe-inspiring in the law to TaCara that day. “[The litigator] talked about her pro bono work. At that time, I had no idea what that meant, but she described how she gave legal advice and help to family and friends if they needed it,” she says. “She also said she planned to teach constitutional law at a law school. Even at that tender age I was fascinated by the pervasiveness of the law and the flexibility of a law degree, and right there and then I decided that’s what I wanted to do.”

She worked hard in school, graduating as the valedictorian of her high school and earning a full-tuition scholarship to Vanderbilt. When it came time to choose a law school, she considered other institutions that grace the diplomas of the nation’s top lawyers—Duke, Columbia, Emory, and UPenn—but, in the end, decided to stay in Nashville at Vanderbilt, a notable university in its own right, to complete her degree. “Law school can be very stressful,” she says. “At Vandy I already had support, I had a family.”



“One of the things that initially drew me to the law is that it’s always changing. There’s a reason it’s called a practice.”



If any town in America is full of stories of chasing dreams in the wee hours of the night—be it a singer with a steel guitar and notes that end in a twang on Music Row or a young woman bent over case studies illuminated by the dim light of a law library lamp—it would be Nashville. TaCara held her law school diploma in May 2013 (she earned the highest GPA in Legal Writing and Pre-Trial Litigation) and passed the bar “with flying colors” in October of that year. She officially accepted an offer from Baker Donelson and started as a first-year associate in August. “The culture of the firm drew me in,” she says of the company, which is ranked in *Fortune* magazine’s “Best Companies to Work For” for the

fifth consecutive year. “Everyone is smart, works hard, is family-oriented, and values professional development.” A particular draw for her was the fact that the firm allows 100 pro bono hours of service to count towards her billable goal.

The hard work is far from finished, however. Currently, her group focuses on general litigation, but her primary practice areas are health-care and labor and employment issues. It’s not unusual for TaCara to juggle researching legal cases, drafting memorandum and briefs, filing complaints and motions, and preparing for upcoming depositions. The sometimes 65-hour workweeks can be exhausting, but this young lawyer finds them invigorating. “One of

the things that initially drew me to the law is that it’s always changing,” she says. “There’s a reason it’s called a practice.”

As she perfects her practice, she keeps her eye on future goals. “Ultimately, I’d like to be a shareholder [in the firm] and establish a legacy of service inside and outside the legal field,” she says. Her vision is to one-day start a foundation that mentors underrepresented minorities who aspire to careers in the legal and medical field (her fiancé is currently studying medicine at Vanderbilt). “Giving back is so important to us. We have decided that this will be one of the many ways we seek to invoke change on the world,” she says. After all, TaCara herself can testify that inspiration and dedication to education yields conviction.





RESTORING LADY GOODRUM



More than a Makeover



Restored boxwood allée leads to monogram garden



Patio lawn and rear elevation



Aerial view of newly installed monogram garden:
initials for May Patterson Goodrum



Restored decorative iron gate at serpentine garden entrance



DINING WITH TOM



BY SAMUEL N. THOMAS, JR.

Dining with Tom and Marion Cobb in the 1850s would have been a much different experience than we are accustomed to these days. Mid-nineteenth century dining rituals were more elaborate, especially among those of higher social standings. As the century progressed, dining and the rooms designated for the practice became increasingly more private and more intimate, intended for the master of the house, his family, and their honored guests. Kenneth Ames wrote in *Death in the Dining Room* that the space transformed “the commonplace and even bestial act of eating into the civilized ceremony of dining [that] elevated Victorians above all other creatures and most other human beings. It was a period of “artful dining” and the dining room, itself, became the most public room in the house; a room where the family exhibited proper etiquette that informed their guests of their hosts’ status within the community.

Andrew Jackson Downing wrote in 1842, “a family fond of social intercourse, and accustomed to entertainment, would greatly prefer, in a cottage or villa of moderate size, to have ... [a] dining room...” [AJD, *Victorian Cottage Residence*, p. 3] The Cobbs added a new dining room onto the rear of the house about 1847. The new room would have been one of the most decorated rooms in the house with access available only to the family and honored guests.

Southerners adopted Victorian traditions from the English and with them Victorian dining principles. For Victorians, and for the Cobbs, the dining room was the “best” room in the home. Even though it was a room primarily used by women,

the room’s purpose was to provide for the master, thus making it a masculine space. The dining room was an area for the public display of the family’s position within the community, a place where guests judged the family’s wealth and power.

T.R.R. Cobb wrote, “Judge Bibb invited the Georgia delegation to come to his house last night to a ‘small party.’ About nine o’clock Bartow, Howell, and myself dressed in our best and with white kid gloves walked in and found to our mortification that it was only ordinary ‘tea drinking,’ and that we had kept the supper waiting for one hour and a half. By the way, there is a great uniformity in suppers in this city. They commence with oyster soup, then comes fish salad and fried oysters, then grated ham or beef and sardines with waffles and coffee or tea, then cakes and jellies, charlotte russe and what is considered here the greatest delicacy called ‘Ambrosia’ which is nothing but sliced oranges and grated cocoanut. After tea the gentlemen retire and smoke, take some champagne wine, and then return to the parlor where the ladies sing and chat... There is to be a large party tonight at Col. Siebel’s where the town promises to exhibit.” [T.R.R. Cobb to Marion, February 8, 1861, *T.R.R. Cobb Papers*]

From his voluminous writings, we are aware that T.R.R. Cobb enjoyed being at home, and based on photographs of him prior to the war, he made frequent use of the dining room. The dining room was a place for him to hold court. Seated at the head of the table in the only chair with arms, with his back to the fireplace,

indicating his superior status, T.R.R. was in full view of anyone entering. As their gaze was immediately fixed upon their host. For the guests, this was a very clear reminder of who the host was and how this house was firmly under his control.

Although the dining room was generally considered more of an entertainment space during this period, some family meals were consumed in the space. Marion wrote her sister, Callie, in 1856, that she was eating on the back porch while the dining room was being “newly papered.” Later that year Marion was again fretting over the space: “We will have I fear a sorry table at Commencement and a big crowd as strangers are already coming in.” [Marion to Callie, 1856?, *JHL Papers*]

Modern-day Americans, even most Southerners, would be judged quite harshly, as barbarians, by Cobb’s standards of proper dining rituals. Children and other family members were not allowed to freely come and go from the dinner table as most do today. Children did not join their parents at the dinner table, at least not until they were considered young adults (about fourteen) and were quite knowledgeable of the proper etiquette and behavior expected of them. Until then, children were fed in a separate room, usually a sitting room, or perhaps in the kitchen with some of the slaves.

The next time you are out dining in public try to remember your manners and act more like Tom Cobb. Don’t put your elbows on the table. Tom would appreciate that—and so would your mother.





ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES



Sticks & Stones

BY MICHELLE L. ZUPAN

Museum work is a process of discovery. Sometimes the museum worker discovers a fascinating bit of information about a town's history, sometimes it's an artifact. It's nearly always interesting and, occasionally, very entertaining. Such was the case over the last months at Hickory Hill—the discoveries were both interesting and entertaining.

Some months ago our avocational archaeologist cum groundskeeper, Dexter, was turning the soil a bit to the north and east of Hickory Hill in an effort to “clean out the trash.” When, not unexpectedly, non-biological trash began to emerge from the soil. First came bits of fireplace tiles—the lovely late-nineteenth century colorful bits that often surrounded the firebox. Next, were curious white porcelain pyramids with holes in them. And the curious little pyramids kept appearing—some twenty in all. Dexter somberly brings them to my office with the explanation of “I broke Watson's electrical system.” He was convinced that the pieces were certainly part of the original knob and tube wiring. After thoroughly cleaning the small bits and digging through the online patent files, I was able to reassure Dexter that he had not unearthed the Delco system, but rather a historic someone's stash of hooch! These were beer bottle stoppers made by the K. Hutter Company, patented in 1893. (Hutter stoppers were used until the 1920s.) What a party it must have been!



The next fascinating discovery was made during the Dig History Summer Camp. It was a wet summer for archaeology. So wet that we asked Dexter to excavate a backhoe trench just to drain water out of the excavation units. Anywhere on Hickory Hill's grounds could be classified as an archaeological site, and the pine grove below the Jefferson Publishing Plant site is no exception. On a drizzly Wednesday, I hauled a dozen muddy campers and two damp camp leaders out to rescue whatever had been unearthed during the trenching. Almost immediately the kids began finding these curious gray cylinders, some grooved, others covered with a flaking casement, nearly 5 inches in diameter. We

thought we had discovered part of the printing equipment. But this time Dexter really had unearthed a Delco system! What we had found were the inside portions of Delco light plant batteries. Those cores would have been suspended inside a glass box and placed in series with up to a dozen other similar boxes to power the lighting in the publishing plant. All of the batteries were damaged and all of the glass boxes were broken.

The discoveries were not yet over. After the field season ends, there is much cleaning, cataloguing, and researching of artifacts that must take place. Our summer intern, a truly dedicated lab worker, cleaned and recorded her way through dozens of paper bags of dirt encrusted bits

of rusted metal, broken glass, and shattered porcelain. One small piece caught her eye. It was a flattened aluminum round that looked like a container lid. Further cleaning and the addition of a magnifying lens revealed an inscription: "3 Merry Widows: Agnes, Mabel, Beckie." Research revealed that "3 Merry Widows" was a popular brand of men's reusable prophylactic in the early 20th century. Interestingly, William Faulkner mentions this item in *The Sound and the Fury* when a character picks up a similar lid from the ground thinking it is a quarter. And what a party it must have been!

Till next time!

HOW DO TREES GROW?



Forest for the Trees

BY DEXTER RHODES

When I was little, cousin Mayzell would come to live with us a week at Thanksgiving. There were two things in this world Mayzell loved: mayhaw jelly and me. She used to call me “Dexter the Wonderer.” Cousin Mayzell was harellipped, so when she called me aloud by that name it came out closer to “Dethter de Wunerthul.” I always loved Mayzell for saying I was wonderful, even if she drooled when she said it.

Truth was, Cousin Mayzell gave me that name because of my habit of wandering around in the woods, amazed at nature. Then, like now, I could spend hours on end just gazing at trees or clouds with my mouth hanging open. Mayzell would watch me in the yard from her perch on the glider chair with a curious smile on her face. I think she was humored by me. Sometimes she would walk off the porch into the yard and try to figure out what I was looking at. We were a pair, Mayzell and I. When my mother would see us together, she used to say we formed half a circus.

I grew up and went to college where I could do serious wondering. Mayzell got old and went to the home on Highway 25 out past Perkins Station. Before she died, Mayzell married a man she met in the home. Roscoe Hubris was from Evans County. He had spent thirty-eight years as the janitor of the Claxton Bakery. Every Thanksgiving, his former employer would thoughtfully send him a gift basket full of cakes and preserves.

Cousin Mayzell always said the only thing she lacked in this mortal world was a proper provider. When she saw Roscoe’s jellies, I think she went to scheming. Anyway, she and Roscoe (Rothco Hoopith, to her) got hitched one Saturday right there in front of the television in the activities room of the home. The caregivers served five different colors of Jell-O at the reception that day. They turned up the volume on “The Lawrence Welk Show” to dance by. It was something.

Mayzell and Roscoe were together through two Thanksgivings before she met Jesus. Mayzell died a happily married woman.

But I’m getting off track again. I was trying to tell you about wonders of nature. Claxton fruitcakes are one. Beech trees are another.

There’s a special place at Hickory Hill that Tom Watson planted: an allée of beech trees to the west of the house. Of the noble trees, a beech ranks pretty near the top. In the spring, the tiny beech leaves break out mint green and almost sparkle in the sunlight. In the fall, they

turn radiant yellow then gold. The bark of a beech tree is smooth and almost silver, and those gold leaves against the gray bark will take away your breath for their beauty. A walk lined with old beeches is nothing shy of majestic. If you have to wander through the woods, a beech allée is about an amazing place as possible to do it.

The American Beech is monoecious: It has male and female flowers that occur simultaneously on the same tree. A beech grows slowly and can live well past 300 years. The beeches at Hickory Hill are more than 100 years old. They are sort of a signature here, and if you ever wonder what the hyphen is in the Foundation’s logo, it’s a cluster of beech leaves.

Not too long ago, Dexter the Wonderer morphed into Dexter the Wanderer. I wandered all the way to Greenville, South Carolina, to spend a weekend with close friends. We went to a party on the Reedy River near downtown. I kinda wandered away from the crowd and found myself on the riverwalk looking at all the pretty people. Then I stumbled upon it: an enormous beech tree with an exposed root system.

If you’ve been to Greenville, you surely know the tree of which I write. This beech grows out of the side of a hill that was



possibly excavated to make way for the walking path just beneath the tree. The main taproots and all the subordinate roots are perfectly and beautifully visible. You have to see it to believe the complexity of the vascular system of the tree.

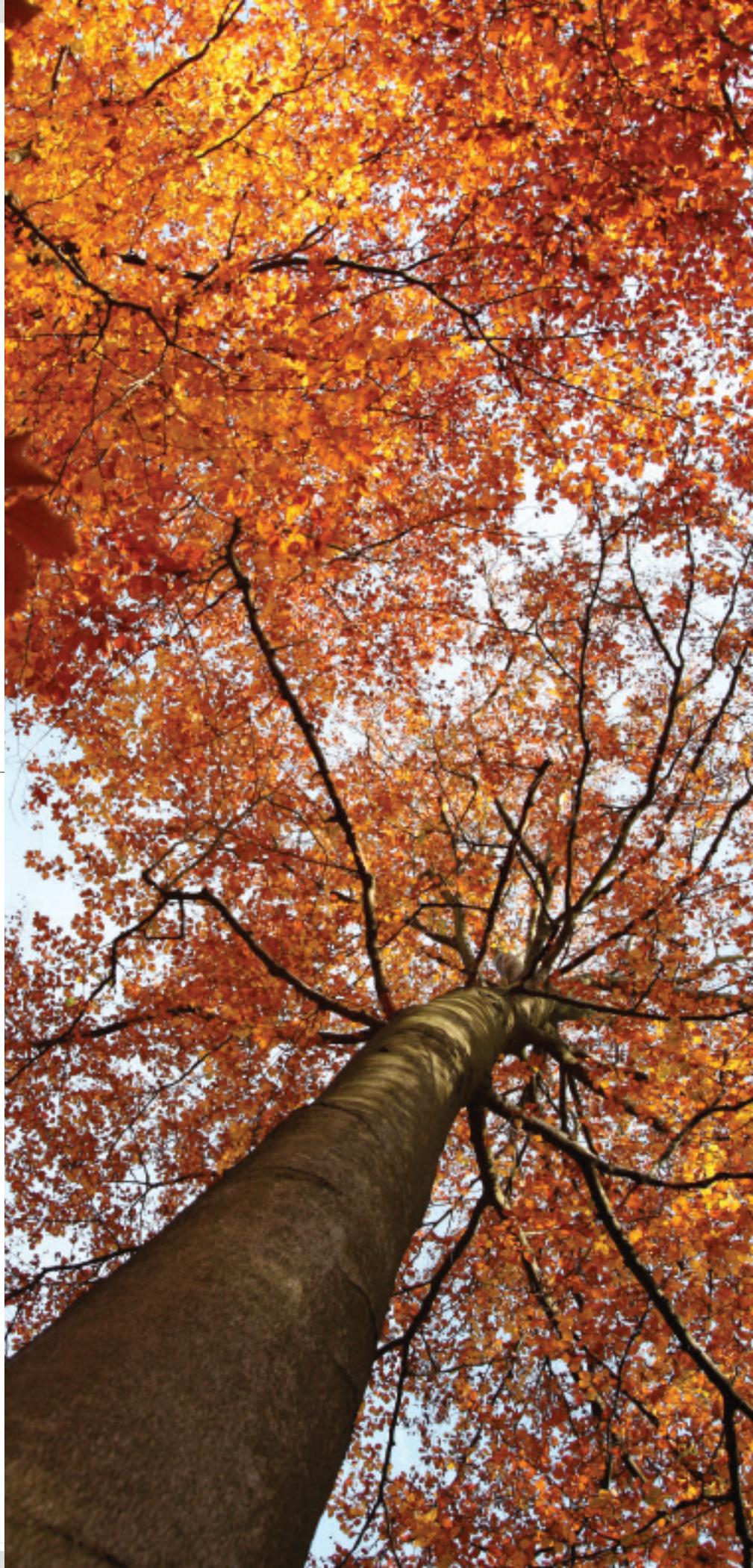
I had a hard time thinking of all of the obstacles the tree had to overcome. One good thing is its close proximity to the Reedy falls. A beech is mesophytic; it can utilize water twice as much for transpiration and growth. The mists from the falls have no doubt helped sustain the beech.

I was sort of drinking all this in, staring up at the tree with my mouth open, when a tourist walked up to the tree and started taking snapshots of it. I thought that was kind of rude—it seemed like he was invading the tree's privacy. Then he asked me to pose in front of the tree. He spoke funny. I think he said he was from Massachusetts. Maybe they don't have trees in Massachusetts.

Anyway, he asked me for one of my business cards and what do you know? A week later he e-mailed me the photograph.

If I told you the man's name was Zell Mayfair you wouldn't believe me, would you?

Come see me—by now you know where I'll be.



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Correctly identify the historic structure and the college campus on which it resides, and we will send you a \$25 bookstore gift certificate.

Awards will be made to the first five e-mails received in our office with the correct information.

E-mail your responses to: tbrown@watson-brown.org



Elijah Fletcher bought Locus Ridge at auction in 1830 and renamed it Sweetbrier. By 1852 Fletcher had added the distinctive tower wings and arched portico. In 1901, under the terms of the will of Fletcher's daughter, Indiana, the house and its grounds became Sweet Briar College. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and has served as the home of the college's presidents.

Congratulations to Andre Walker, Jessica Kaczmarek, and Kayla Morgan for correctly identifying the property!