

# Jim Calhoun's Cowbell: B'ham Civil War Legend

By SALLY RUHF  
Special Writer

"Notwithstanding the rain, a goodly number of citizens arrayed in the order designated and headed by the Cornet Band marched up Saginaw St. in Pontiac where the further observances of the day were carried out. The parade consisted of Sunday school children, Knights Templars, Odd-Fellows, Good Templars all in uniform, the Steam Fire Engine and Hose Cart, the former drawn by horses, the latter decorated with bouquets of flowers and draped with the American flag."

This is part of an account of the first Decoration Day, June, 1869. It originated when Southern women scattered spring flowers on the graves of the soldiers killed in the War Between the States.

In 1861 when the Civil War began, the Birmingham area consisted of "900 souls." When President Lincoln asked for volunteers, 89 young men responded. Lincoln thought that with his conscription of 75,000 men the war would be over in three months.

BUT THE war continued for three more bloody years and the young men of the area went to Pontiac to volunteer their lives "to defend their flag and all that makes home dear" that August in 1861. On the 14th the women and children waved tearful goodbyes along the tracks as the carriages of the Detroit Grand Haven Milwaukee Railroad rolled by from Pontiac with the fresh recruits.

Far to the south in northwestern Georgia, at the Battle of Chickamauga, the Birmingham boys of the Company D, regiment 22nd, Michigan Volunteer Infantry, distinguished themselves.

Color Sergeant Philo Durkee, a local boy, was killed carrying his regimental flag. Forty-four years later at an annual reunion in Birmingham this same flag, blood-stained, and another silk one presented originally by two young girls of Pontiac were part of the memorabilia carried by the veterans through the years. These flags are now on display in the rounds in Lansing.

A STORY which survives today is of Jim Calhoun's cowbell. It was brought from his home to Pontiac at the start of the war and was rung at every skirmish to cheer up the men. Calhoun never lost it and it turned up at the same reunion in Birmingham along with the flags in 1911.

At about the time of the Battle of Chickamauga, President Lincoln issued his Proclamation of Emancipation, stating that "all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the U. S. shall be henceforward and forever free."

THE PEOPLE of the Birmingham area were, indeed, sympathetic to this proclamation "as a Birmingham Green of the Detroit News" research, was an alternate route on the Underground Railroad "station" on the way to freedom and the Canadian border.

The people hid runaway slaves by day as they rested from their journey from Morency on the Ohio border. Stations along the way included Farmington, then Birmingham, Pontiac, Rochester, Utica, Romeo, New Haven, then a cross-over to Canada at a narrow point on Lake St. Clair or the Detroit River.

THE TOLL of lives in Birmingham area: 8 killed, 21 died. Their names are inscribed in stone on the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument standing today in front of the Birmingham Municipal Building across from Shain Park "where it belongs."

John Allen Bigelow, a West Bloomfield Township boy, enlisted in the Union Army after Fort Sumter as a bugler. He was captured in a battle with Stonewall Jackson's Confederates and sent to Libby prison.

He was paroled, discharged and re-enlisted under the name of John Allen, this time as chief bugler. After the Battle of Gettysburg, he became a second lieutenant and later a brevet captain.

HE LATER had his arm amputated, then returned to Birmingham to resume civilian life. As Birmingham's first and most impressive Civil War hero up until his death in 1935 he appeared on Memorial Day "at the head of the procession" in uniform, with an empty sleeve. (His Civil War equipment and documents are on display during Centennial Week and are in the possession of the Birmingham Civil War Centennial Commission appointed by then Mayor Florence H. Willett in 1961.

In 1911 a reunion held annually by veterans celebrated the 44th year after the War. Under the heading in The Eccentric "Boys in Blue," a story appeared telling of the 92 veterans who arrived, most of them in flowing white beards and moustaches. They brought with them war uniforms, regimental insignia, drums, muskets, the two flags and Calhoun's cowbell.

TODAY, ONE HUNDRED years later the memory of the Civil War and why it was fought has had a resurgence of interest. Because of the Civil Rights issue, local organizations are active, including the History and Heritage Society headed by James Flack; the city Civil War Commission, whose most authoritative members are William Price and Dalton Lamb; Civil War Regimental Round Tables, with William Stringer as chairman; the North-South Skirmish Association, which holds "shoots" in the area, using reproductions of authentic weapons; Women's Relief Corps Auxiliary of the GAR; and Miss Helen Ellis, local historian, whose years of Michigan Civil War research will be published and is now possessed by the Burton Historical Collection.



THIS IS THE picture of George R. Averill as he looked with a "crew cut" in February, 1920—not the one that appears in Column 2 on Page 7 of Section III.

# City Different Today For Retired Rector, 96

By JACKIE O'BRIEN  
Special Writer

A venerable and dearly beloved gentleman with a generous crop of curly white hair and an Irish twinkle in his eye may well be the oldest man in Birmingham. Certainly, he is one of the oldest.

Dr. David W. Thornberry, who can be seen on cold, wintry days shoveling snow in front of his home at 488 Southfield, will be 96 years old May 1. He enjoys reasonably good health and displays a lively interest and good humor in everything that is going on.

His great disappointment at present is in having a grandchild who "just adores the Beatles!"

DR. THORNBERRY was born in 1868 in Castle Caulfield, a small village in Northern Ireland. He came to the United States at the age of 20 and after a brief stay in New York moved to Cleveland where he worked in an office for three years. Here he was able to save enough money to realize a dream which he had as a boy of 12—that of becoming a minister.

He entered Kenyon College, Gambier, O., in 1892. Following his graduation in 1896, he studied at Bexley Hall for two additional years.

He started his ministry with a total congregation of six people in a rented room at the YMCA at New Philadelphia, O. He promised these six people that he would stay with them and help build their church, which he did, despite several calls to go to larger parishes. Trinity Church was consecrated in seven years.

AFTER HE HAD fulfilled this promise, Dr. Thornberry came to Birmingham in 1905 as rector of St. James Episcopal Church. Under his leadership, St. James was consecrated on June 13, 1907.

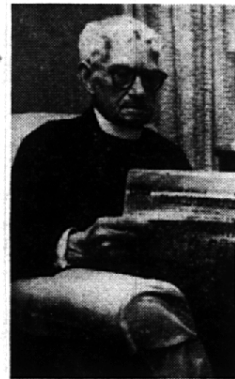
During his pastorate here he also served a mission church in Royal Oak. At that time street cars ran on Woodward Ave., a convenient way for him to get to and from his mission church, since he lived right on Woodward in what was then the Hagerman house (where Jacobson's Home Furnishings Store now is).

But there were many times when he walked all the way to Royal Oak to conduct services when the street cars weren't running. "Nowadays," he says with high good humor, "people jump in their cars just to go to the corner drugstore!"

IT WAS WHILE he was rector of St. James that he met and later married Ann Frances Hulbert, who at that time was attending the University of Chicago but was a member of St. James parish.

Born in Detroit, Ann moved with her family to Birmingham early in this century and occupied a large gray brick house on Woodward Ave. that stood where Frank's Nursery now is. At that time this was a residential area of nice large homes, and the business district was a block away.

THE THORNBERRYS remember St. James at that time as a "warm, happy little church



DR. D. W. THORNBERRY

with a small but fervent congregation."

The building was in the same location as the present church but considerably smaller and the interior was Gothic, dark wood in contrast to the present light modern interior.

At that time the church was badly in need of a baptismal font. Knowing this, Dr. Thornberry set out to find something appropriate. As a result, many persons were henceforth baptized from a lovely old stone vase that had originally stood in a private garden in Detroit.

PUFFING AWAY on his daily cigar (the rest of the time he smokes a pipe), Dr. Thornberry chuckled about some of his memories of Birmingham after the turn of the century. He recalled sitting on the front porch of a boarding house on Woodward Ave. and watching a somber funeral procession go by.

In the lead was a horse-drawn

hearse and immediately following was a load of coal. He wondered just where that poor soul was headed. Another time, this same hearse plodded by laden with picnic baskets—a far cry from the funerals of today.

After leaving St. James, the Thornberrys settled in Laramie, Wyo., where Dr. Thornberry was dean of St. Matthew's Cathedral for 20 years. During this time he started seven mission churches and served in a total of 13 in that area. He also was chaplain of the Wyoming State Penitentiary for three years.

IN THE course of his chaplaincy Dr. Thornberry was shot at and narrowly missed by one of three convicts escaping from the penitentiary.

He later saved one of these same convicts from lynching by holding back singlehandedly a mob of 50 angry men with a six-shooter (which he still has). Shades of Marshal Dillon!

During the First World War, Dr. Thornberry served as a chaplain with the 82nd Division of the Army in France.

The Thornberrys have three children—two daughters living in California and a son, David Ritchie Thornberry, who is presently archdeacon of the Diocese of Southern Ohio, and four grandchildren.

DR. THORNBERRY'S life and ministry have been characterized by a simple and fundamental faith in God and the courage to achieve what he set out to do against all odds.

If there is any one bit of advice he would impart to the young people of today it is this: "Set your sight on something worthwhile, and be not discouraged or deterred from it."

His favorite quotation from Scripture is "Promise unto the Lord your God and keep it." He urges the youth of today to establish a set of values—and then have the independence and courage to keep them, no matter what others may say or think.

When asked the inevitable question: "To what do you owe your longevity?" Dr. Thornberry replied: "The Lord gave me a strong body and I have never abused it. I felt it would be a sin not to take good care of it."

He overcame serious illness and 62 weeks in the hospital through faith and sheer determination to get well. "And," Mrs. Thornberry added wisely, "keeping a sense of humor helped a great deal, too."

## PEABODY'S GENERAL STORE:

# Big Clock and Cracker Barrel

Lyman Burt Peabody, the father of Mrs. Florence Evans of Frank St., came to Birmingham in 1866 when the town was just a huddle of homes around the Saginaw Trail.

He was born in Newfane, Niagara County, N.Y., in 1836 and came to Michigan by way of Minnesota, where he was the first postmaster of the village of Spring Valley in the late 1850's, and Washington, D.C., where he had a general store during the years of the Civil War. John Peabody, one of Mrs. Evans' uncles, was in the audience at Ford Theatre the night Lincoln was assassinated.

IN BIRMINGHAM, Lyman Peabody opened a general store on the

present location of Lake's Jewelers. Mrs. Evans recalls that it had a big clock, the traditional cracker barrel, as well as penny candies, dry goods and work clothes for sale.

Peabody became a trustee of the village in 1887 and president of the village in 1891, a post he held for four years. He also served on the school board.

Florence Evans, youngest of the four children of Lyman and Sarah Foster Peabody, was born June 26, 1875, in a frame house on Chester at Willis St., where the Christian Science Church stands now.

IT WAS while her father, was a village trustee that the water works were installed. The first

tap water drawn in the village was in the Peabody home.

Mrs. Evans attended school in the Hill building, which now houses the offices of the board of education.

Her recollection of Birmingham in the old days conjures up board sidewalks, muddy roads, hitching posts and the lamplighter who came around each evening.

Anyone could keep cows, pigs and chickens. A cow wandering down the street was not an uncommon sight; nor were bolting horses. She was taught as a small child to come into the fenced-in yard immediately when a horse was on the rampage.

—E.V.L.