

# **I Remember Old Tuscaloosa**

By Fred Maxwell

The headwaters of the Black Warrior River are in the rocky, hilly country to the north of Tuscaloosa. A one-day rain may seep into the top soil and be gradually dissipated and reach the river many days later.

However, a heavy rain of several days duration could cause a great quantity of water to reach the river in a comparatively short time. The run off of surface water to the river has been estimated to be as high as 90 per cent, causing the river to rise rapidly to flood stage. It has been said that the Black Warrior River is second only to the Columbia River (Pacific Coast) as being the most treacherous stream in the United States.

I have seen the water between River Hill and the bridge three or four feet deep on the road when the river went on some of its rampages. The

flat prairie land below Tuscaloosa suffered tremendous damage whenever these extreme high water floods occurred.

The contracting firm of Christie, Lowe and Hayworth, who built the original locks and dams of 10, 11 and 12 in about 1890, lost very heavily due to frequent river flood stages. On one occasion their steamboat, the Daisy, was swept over the dam and was demolished with a loss of life of over 10 men. Since the contractors could not sue the government in a court of law they made an official request for relief, claiming that the government had not given them sufficient data regarding the river floods. Some funds were granted.

Subsequent work on the river by the U.S. Engineers has given considerable relief from floods but not complete elimination.