

I Remember Old Tuscaloosa

By Fred Maxwell

(Editor's Note: This is a continuation of Mr. Maxwell's article last week on the old resort at Windham Springs.)

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I RECALL a family of Birds and friends who made the trip to Windham Springs from Eutaw. There were about eight people with two two-mule team wagons loaded with baggage and camping equipment (tents) to use in the compound since there were no vacancies at the hotel or cottages.

It required one long day to travel the 35 miles from Eutaw to Tuscaloosa where they spent the night at the hotel. The next day they reached Windham at about 8 p.m. They were too tired to pitch camp that night and they begged Mr. Baker, the innkeeper, to take care of them just one night.

Having no vacancies in the hotel or cottages, Mr. Baker told them that the only thing he could offer was the use of the cotton house on the grounds, explaining that he had never seen the inside of this house.

After giving the group their supper (he had to wake up the cook, Dave Watts), they went to the cotton house to break off the rusty padlock and clean up to give the ladies a place to sleep. I have never heard such screaming as these ladies made as they rushed to the hotel. In the middle of the floor of the cotton house was a complete human skeleton.

I gave my room to the ladies that night while I slept in a hammock in front of the hotel. The men slept on the hotel front porch.

The coroner made no findings of

foul play and it was conceded that it was either a specimen skeleton for a doctor's office or else the person had died a natural death in the cotton house.

Mr. Baker's son Terrell and I were able to finance ourselves for the rest of the Summer by relocating the skeleton, piece by piece on the second floor of the store (in the outer room of the W.O.W. hall, which was then inactive) and charging five or 10 cents

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admission to see the skeleton. Terrell and I chuckled many times to hear the positive identification made by viewers such as "that must be Uncle Jim. You know he disappeared about seven years ago." (Yes, that was feuding country in those days.)

But I think I'll always remember the hotel cook—Dave Watts—and his wonderful meals, chicken three times a day and his delightful Sally Lunn bread.