

Old Glennville: An Early Center of East Alabama Culture

By PETER A. BRANNON

ARTHUR IRWIN BUTTS, born in Southampton, Virginia in 1808, and who later moved to Hancock County, Georgia with his parents that same year, removed to Barbour County, Alabama in 1835.¹ He makes the statement in an autobiography dated Milledgeville, January 28, 1899 that he was an overseer for the family of William Cook Daniel and on Christmas Day, 1835 they were camping out in the woods of Barbour County, "where there were no houses, and among the Indians." This camp site was one mile south of a proposed settlement, which at that date consisted of "one unfinished pole house without a cover." He states that this was built by "Uncle James E. Glenn, a Methodist preacher for whom the town (which began with this pole house) was named." His recollections further indicate that, when they moved out of Georgia, crossed the Chattahoochee River and arrived at "Hutchachubbee River" (now Hatchechubbee Creek), they found Mr. Glenn, Ben Brown and Major William Flournoy, "the only white people living South of the river."²

The modest beginning of the town of Glennville, verified by more than one writer, would seem to fix the date as later than 1833, which is claimed for it. The settlement, destined

¹This paper was read before the annual meeting of the Alabama Historical Association, Gadsden, April 18, 1958.

²This manuscript and others cited are in the Alabama State Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

to become a center of culture and refinement equalling any locality in Alabama prior to 1860, began as a typical pioneer effort. The Reverend James Elizabeth Glenn, Major William Flournoy, one of many Georgians who "went West" after getting into trouble at home, and Ben Brown, a settler seeking his fortune where he would not be too close to his neighbors, started the little town which never had a railroad and where the business set-up seems never to have surpassed its three modest industries, a cobbler's shop, a blacksmith shop, and a grist mill. Their efforts and ambitions illustrate an outstanding example of the white man's development of Indian country. Particularly is that demonstrated, when it is recounted that those early settlers, James Daniel among them, at the Glennville site within a few months after coming into the Indian country, rushed away leaving their possessions at the mercy of the Indians, to Columbus and Roanoke, Georgia, when they escaped from the uprising popularly referred to as the "Indian War of 1836." Major Flournoy was the first white man killed by the Indians in the uprising. He was escaping from his settlement on the Hatchchubbee Creek, attempting to reach Columbus, when the Indians murdered him. The Daniel family and other friends escaped across the Chattahoochee to Roanoke, where they left their horses and Negroes and such goods as they could get out with, only to have them all burned when the Indians later attacked that place.³ Mr. Glenn's house, the first built in the "ville" of the Glens, and his "log meeting-place," the first Methodist Church in that territory, were also burned.⁴

James Elizabeth Glenn, a native of Franklin County, North Carolina, was converted, as the Methodist say, at a camp meeting at Goose Neck, in his native state, and licensed to preach

³ Letter, Thomas H. McGregor, Shreveport, La., Dec. 6, 1957, to the author.

⁴ Author's correspondence with Rev. James M. Glenn and "reminiscences" of other Glenn descendants.

at Plank Chapel, in 1806. He travelled as an itinerant preacher in Virginia and North Carolina until 1814, and was in Abbeville District, South Carolina and other mission fields until he came to the present Russell County, Alabama in 1835. He settled on the eastern line of T. 13, R. 28, then in Barbour County. A short time later that settlement assumed the dignity of a village which took his name. Glennville settlement, being a favorable situation, soon drew Georgians and Carolinians to the locality and within fifteen years the place assumed the dignity of a center of culture and wealth. The Glenn family, deeply religious, attracted a group of settlers who were largely Methodist in faith (although there were a few Episcopalians and Baptists) and the several educational institutions which sprang up there were largely religious academies, schools, and colleges.

John Bowles Glenn, a cousin of James E., settled there as early as 1837, and a census of the local cemetery indicates that the Dawsons, Barnetts, Raifords, DuBoses, Treutlens, Browns, Richardsons, Mitchells, Thompsons, Rivers, Screws and a number of other equally important families were there within the first ten years of the town.⁵

The incorporation acts of the Alabama State Legislature show male and female academies provided for under an act of January 27, 1846; the Glennville Female College, February 10, 1852; and the Glennville Male Collegiate and Military Institute, February 21, 1860.⁶ The incorporation of the Glennville Rail Road Company, February 7, 1854,⁷ which

⁵ According to Thomas M. Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography* (Chicago, 1921), III, 667, John B. Glenn and his kinsman, James E. Glenn, "helped to make of Glennville one of the most desirable villages in the State. In 1847, he removed to Auburn where he remained until his death." Dr. J. B. Glenn was one of the leading citizens of the village for the ten years he lived there, but his place in Alabama history had more to do with Auburn than with Glennville. His family was for more than a hundred years connected with the college and will long be remembered in their association with that institution.

⁶ *Alabama Acts*, 1845-1846, pp. 109-110; 1851-1852, pp. 359-361; 1859-1860, p. 331.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1853-1854, pp. 483-484.

was intended to lend prestige and bring business to the locality, proved objectionable and the diversion of the Mobile and Girard Rail Road to Fort Mitchell, rather than to Glennville, made the locality all the more a seat of culture rather than a place of commerce. The citizens of Glennville, the incorporators of the proposed railroad, namely, A. M. Sanford, A. C. Mitchell, G. D. Conner, L. L. Daniel, T. H. B. Rivers, John Raiford, E. E. Dubose, A. B. Starke, William Freeman, Joseph Jones, and Barney Ivey, misunderstood the temper of the Glennville settlers, immediately causing a determination on the part of those rich planters in the northern part of Barbour County to declare their unwillingness to have the road come that way. Therefore, the act was in a measure abrogated by them and the Mobile & Girard went to Seale, thence to Union Springs and southwest, instead.

The Glennville Female College, created in 1852, had E. E. DuBose, A. M. Sanford, Randolph and A. C. Mitchell, William Freeman, M. M. Glenn, and John M. Raiford and "their associates and successors in office" as trustees. This corporation was actually a successor to a school which had been established in 1851, by the Misses Weyman. The two institutions apparently were merged in 1852, but in view of the fact that the Weyman School graduated five young women in 1851, they should be classed as alumnae of the Weyman Female College. The Misses Weyman were Charlestonians. Their school was established in a two-story building located on Continuation Street, a short distance south of what was subsequently the old Methodist Church. The building had galleries above and below (on the ground or basement floor) and the first story was above ground. According to one authority, the tuition for the primary class for ten months was \$20.00; the second class, \$24.00; the third class, which would probably rank with the junior grade in a modern high school, was \$28.00, and the senior grade in high school was \$30.00. Additional

fees were paid for classical subjects—annual tuition for piano instruction was \$55.00; training in art of wax and paper flowers, \$20.00; embroidery, \$20.00 and French language, \$20.00. The board bill, which included washing and laundry, was \$1.00 and the fuel bill 50c per month.⁸

Mrs. Elizabeth Bass, widow of Hartwell Bass, resided fifteen miles northeast of Glennville on the Federal Road, and her daughter, Martha, was a student at Glennville Female College under Dr. D. S. T. Douglas.⁹ Martha's tuition bills, fees paid, charges for books and supplies, store accounts with local merchants, and the correspondence incident thereto, tell of her life as a school girl at Glennville. She paid Mr. John S. Dobbins \$12.00 per month for board. Tuition was apparently based on the length of the session—\$7.00 for one, \$13.60 for another, and \$21.00 for a third. The fee for music lessons was \$25.00 per session. She paid \$2.48 for 31 "pages" of music. Books were bought from President Douglas one session and from Benjamin Screws, a merchant, during another one. A geography and atlas cost her \$1.20, a spelling book 12c, a McGuffie's reader 60c, and a music primer, 30c. Pens and ink per session were 20c and chalk was 5c. One bill fixes her part of the expenses for "lights for commencement" at 25c and store-

⁸ Anne Kendrick Walker, *Russell in Retrospect: An Epic of the Far Southeast* (Richmond, 1950), pp. 309-339.

⁹ Mrs. Bass was the great-grandmother of the author. Martha Bass, his grandmother, carried her slave, Henrietta, to school with her. "Old" Henrietta remained with the family until after the turn of the century. "Little" Henrietta was the writer's mother's nurse-maid.

Mrs. Elizabeth Moreland Bass completed her home on the Federal Road in 1844. The same contractor also built the Americus C. Mitchell home at Glennville. These two houses, the former, now the Mott home near Seale, and the latter, now the Comer home at Glennville plantation, are two of the three old mansions left in eastern Russell County (Ihagee Mansion, the Howard home, near Hog Island, is the other). The Bases were Georgians out of Virginia, originally. Mrs. Bass's home was a "country establishment" with a large carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, barns, carriage houses, cribs, animal houses, a two-story smoke house, gin house, grist mill, pumped water supply and numerous lesser buildings, while the Randolph and Mitchell mansions were "town" residences in Glennville.

bought candles from Barnett and Glenn's cost the young student 38c per pound.

An Alabama writer has stated that one of the few Alabama instructors holding degrees in the 1850's was James R. Ware, M.A., who was professor of "Mixed Mathematics and Natural Sciences" at the Misses Weyman's School and later at the Glennville Female College.¹⁰

The first graduates of the Glennville Collegiate Institute of 1851 were Henrietta V. Connor, Juliette A. Daniel, M. Eugenia DuBose, Harriet Anne Screws (of the family of Major William Wallace Screws), and Caroline V. Treutlen.¹¹

The Glennville Female College, after it took over the Weyman School, had Dr. D. S. T. Douglas as president. He had a flourishing institution up to the beginning of the War Between the States. Apparently, he died during the conflict and the college had no outstanding reputation after his death, although it did keep open. Associated with Dr. and Mrs. Douglas were Mrs. Pollock, "a lady from Virginia," and other distinguished teachers.

The Glennville male and female academies, two schools operating under the one 1846 incorporation and one Board of Trustees, in 1860 became the Glennville Male Collegiate and Military Institute, although the Glennville Female Academy, operating under the 1846 act, continued as a girls' school. The Alabama legislature, when it created the military institution in 1860, appropriated \$150,000 for its operation.¹² Tradition claims that the school trained a number of young men who went into Confederate service. Records of the Glennville Guards, an organization in the Fifteenth Alabama Infantry Regiment, include a number of such enlistments, but

¹⁰ Minnie C. Boyd, *Alabama in the Fifties: A Social Study* (New York, 1951), p. 127.

¹¹ See the *Annual Report of the Glennville Collegiate Institute, 1851* (Eufaula, 1852). See also Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 309ff.

¹² *Alabama Acts, 1860*, p. 331.

there is no historical data to indicate that all the company went out from the school.¹³

The Glennville Military Institute was located in a two-story building on Continuation Street, as were all other educational institutions in the village. Of course, there was a very strict enforcement of the rules prohibiting girls and boys to attend the same institution. Nor were they allowed to associate with one another, except under strict supervision. An unidentified Major Wright and a Captain Gray were the military officers in charge of training of the young men, who attended Glennville Institute. The building had a first floor on which were a large assembly room and two classrooms; the second floor had six classrooms and rooms for other designated uses.¹⁴

There is a statement, not authenticated, that Major J. W. Browder, by his will, left \$100,000 for the benefit of the Glennville Military Institute. Inasmuch as there was no military institution there after 1865, it must be assumed that this money was willed either in 1860, at the expiration of the schools, or during the war. The incorporators and trustees of the military institute are presumed to be the same men who made up the body corporate for the male and female academies in 1846, namely, H. W. Jernigan, E. E. DuBose, T. H. Mitchell, Randolph Mitchell, Massillon Glenn, William Freeman, and A. C. Sanford.

Glennville Female College burned in 1865, and Glennville Institute in the late 1870's.¹⁵

¹³ According to James M. Glenn, one member of the Glennville Guards, E. Herndon Glenn (later a judge in Seale, Ala.), was the adjutant who lined up the remnants of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's army for surrender at Greensboro, N. C. in 1865. Another member, M. B. Houghton of Dale County, a student in the Institute, later built "Morning View," his home on the eastern edge of the City of Montgomery. It was his will that made possible the "M. B. Houghton Library" of Huntingdon College.

¹⁴ Based on the author's personal interviews with members of the Glenn family in 1957.

¹⁵ See Walker, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

After the Reconstruction period several private teachers are credited to the village of Glennville. Inasmuch as there was no institute or academy, these teachers must have been tutors or governesses for individual families. One notable teacher was J. Harris Chappell, born in Bibb County, Georgia in October, 1849, who was graduated from the University of Virginia and taught a few years in Jones County, Georgia and elsewhere before finally going to Columbus in 1877. His interesting association with Glennville as a young man and his election as principal of the Jacksonville (Alabama) State Normal School in 1884, is worth recording. Glennville tradition noted him as possessing a charming timidity and as being quite subject to teasing by the young ladies who attended his classes.¹⁸

The Glennville schools, whether colleges or private academies, were all governed by the legislative acts which prohibited spirituous liquors from being retailed or vended within two miles of their boundaries. In the case of the Glennville Female Academy (the act does not make it applicable to the Male Academy) the offending person was made to forfeit and pay the sum of \$500 for each offense. Inasmuch as the limits of the settlement were a little more than two miles and the academies were located in the center, this prohibition of liquor would have covered the protection for some distance in all directions.

A mind's eye "picture" of "Old" Glennville may be had from the following personal recollections, penned by Dr. James M. Glenn, now in the twilight of life:

The site of old Glennville Methodist Church was several hundred yards eastward from the present highway, on the street which turned eastward opposite the home—formerly occupied by the Bass and also Boykin families—now occupied by the McGough family. Going east-

ward, passing the church site, on the right, and continuing a short distance, upon the left and extending down the steep hill there found, there is today a deep gully. That formerly was the road leading down to the 'Little Barbour' branch. It was on that steep decline that an accident caused the death of the man for whom Glennville was named.

He was a large man and very much given to walking long distances. It was in March, 1851, that he was to preach in the Glennville Church, and he wanted to walk the two miles from his home, preach, and then walk back. Being 65 years old, his family finally persuaded him to ride a gentle old horse. A lady who was present has told me about his sermon, at the conclusion of which he administered the Lord's Supper, and at the last call only one person was left to commune. That was his oldest son, Massillon, some of whose descendants live now in Eufaula. After the service, he started homeward. As he rode down that steep slope, a hog jumped out of a fence corner and scared the horse, which plunged, throwing him against the pommel of the saddle, injuring him so severely that he died a few days later. That accident occurred quite near, and just east of where he had built his two pioneer homes, in the Spring of 1835 and Fall of 1836.

A few years ago there died in Midway an elderly lady (Mrs. Orum, formerly Miss Dixie Feagin) who was once a pupil in the Glennville girl's collegiate school. The male school was 'The Glennville College and Military Institute' and I, from about two miles way, saw the dense smoke from the abandoned building when years later it burned. Today there is no trace of either building, or of the old hotel, later used as a school building, almost opposite the Methodist Church.

Westward from the church, back toward the present McGough home, there was a number of homes, now gone. One home still standing, on the left, was formerly the parsonage, where my father, then a widower, was living in 1876, but today, much dilapidated, it is locked and nailed up. Almost opposite to it formerly stood the Screws home, where Major W. W. Screws, later for years editor of the Montgomery Advertiser, and his brothers were reared.

Further, on the right, was the brick store of Mr. John Daniel, and on the left, Mr. E. C. Perry's store and several other buildings. Turning northward, opposite the former Bass home, and along the present highway, were several stores on the left and on the right stood the Masonic building, with a 'well' showing that there was also a 'Chapter' there. Later that building was removed to Jernigan, several miles to the east. On both sides were other homes, most of them gone, but the

¹⁸ *Memoirs of Georgia . . .* (Atlanta, 1895) I, 260-261. Chappell was a grandson of Mirabeau Lamar, second president of the Republic of Texas.

former Dr. Raiford place, on the left, now occupied, I was told, by a member of the Comer family, and the former Dawson-Griffith place, on the right, now occupied by the Fariss family, from South Carolina, show splendid care and attention.

From Spring Hill church I have seen clearly the tall steeple of the Methodist church—12 miles way—and that steeple could be seen, with a telescope, on a clear day, from Enon, 25 miles away. My grandfather Glenn built the first house in Glennville. It was across an open space from the church and he gave the land for both the Methodist church and cemetery back of it. The Indians burnt his first house—he had taken his family to Meriwether County, Ga. in May 1836. He had befriended an old Indian, Estothlee, and who warned him the Indians were going to rise, but he doubted it. After Flournoy was killed, Estothlee came again, so Grandfather sent a messenger to warn the other settlers, so they escaped. He with his family crossed the river at Roanoke on Friday afternoon and the Indians captured the town Sunday morning. In October he returned to Glennville and rebuilt at the same place. Later he moved about two miles eastward, not far from what is known as the "Thompson Place"—still standing. That house was built by my Uncle Mack (Massillon) and later he exchanged places with Mr. Thompson—a mile or two northwest of Glennville. He sketched a map for me and said,

'On chart 1, I show the Dawson home, once owned by Mr. Dawson, physician and local preacher. It is in good order.¹⁷ On the west side stands the Dr. Raiford home, well kept. In childhood days I have been in that house, when Dr. Raiford lived there. On the east of that street were several homes, and "Col." Tom Rivers lived on the west side. Below the Rivers place were several stores, and next to them—where the *old road turned eastward*, to the left, still stands what I know as the Bass place—from Mr. John Bass.

The old (and for many years the *only*) road in Glennville turned directly in front of the Bass home, with several stores on the right, and Mr. John Daniel's store on the left. What I have marked as the "parsonage" was occupied as such by my father, Rev. James W. Glenn, in 1876. Captain Ed Perry had lived in another house, almost opposite

¹⁷ A member of this family was Colbert Dawson, a patron of the turf. One of the most vivid memories of the author's childhood is seeing him, about 1890, drive the winner on a one-mile circular track at the Chattahoochee Valley Exposition, in Columbus, Ga., and as he stepped from his sulky to hand the reins to a hostler, shot to death by three prominent Georgians. He is buried at Glennville.

Daniel store, but later moved into what I label "parsonage." Across from it was the Screws home.

'What I label "Hotel" was once used as a school house. Large building. To the east of it was original Glenn-place site.

The Baptist church stood on the west side of the old road, Continuation Street. It had extra large windows and a "pool" under the pulpit. It had a groove running from front of the building to the rear to separate the women from the men. Across the road there is a small cemetery, right by the road and the Doctor Pawling home stood near.

In that small roadside cemetery were two notable graves—and between them there is a slab. One grave is that of a man who was killed or as it says, "Robbed and murdered." The accused was lynched—on suspicion. Here is the inscription written by a friend. On the other side of the slab is an inscription to the mother of the murdered man, and it is said that she died across her son's grave. The slab is between the two graves, and there are Mitchell and Browder graves in the small lot.

In 1898 I went to Seale to interview "Uncle Buck" (Glenn) and took down in shorthand his account of early days, verbatim. I was glad, some months ago, to furnish the Pike Co. Historical Society his account of the battle of Pea River, March 1837. So far as I know, that is the *only* account of that battle. Both he and his brother (Massillon) were in it.

Doctor Jimmie named among early settlers of Glennville, James Allen, John Allen, John Bowles Glenn (later of Auburn, about a century ago, a cousin from South Carolina) Rev. James Daniel, the Jackson brothers, Virgil Bobo, Tom Sanford, Major Gerrard Dennard, Captain Julius Mitchell, Noah Pitts, Gardner Davis, Gabriel Treutlen and others. He further recollected that Uncle Buck was a merchant in Glennville for a time, the firm-name was "Allen and Glenn." Later he married a widow Richardson and they lived for years not far south of Hatchechubbee in the Richardson home. She, the Catos and Thompsons were related.

Glenn's Chapel was named for my grandfather and it is said that some of its timbers were used in building the "John M. Brannon home," still standing.¹⁸ John Bowles Glenn did not remain in, or near

¹⁸ This early Methodist church, the predecessor of the present one, was three miles east of Seale, on the road to Columbus on the plantation of Sterling Bass, kinsman of John Bass of Glennville.

Glennville, very long. However, I think that John Bowles did much to foster the "education" idea before he left. He had been a member of the S. Carolina Conference with Rev. James E. Glenn and the latter's brother Thomas D. James E. was often spoken of as "Old Uncle Jimmie Glenn," but his grave shows he was only 65 years old—while I was 88 last May 12th!!

'The first person buried in "Methodist" cemetery in Glennville was grandfather's oldest child—Narcissa Sharp Glenn. She was teaching school in Fort Gaines, Ga. Got her feet wet, took pneumonia and died there. Her body was brought to Glennville and buried there—where her father had donated a burial ground.

'In that old cemetery there is a mound-like memorial, of bricks and earth, and some time ago some writer stated that it "marked victims of Indian-killing." That is a great mistake. Buried there was a small son of a brick-maker. Not long before his death he left hand-prints on some wet bricks. When he died, his father placed that brick on top of the mound, and I used to see it there. That mound is still visible, but the marked-brick has disappeared. Nobody in Glennville was killed by Indians. Estothlee's warning saved a number of settlers. Flournoy was killed not far from Villula on Wednesday before the first day of May.

'My uncle Lucius Glenn was a physician-graduate of Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, died in Glennville while still a young man and unmarried.'

The glamour that was Old Glennville's is no more. There today is a quiet country village with one "great house" and a few charming smaller ones, but no hoopskirts and carriages and liveried drivers to flash evidences of the wealth and snob-bishness of "Befo' de wah." Today the south wind whispers a requiem over that spot where was the yard of the old Methodist Church in which three generations of Glenns preached and only the carved epitaphs tell the story:

*God has lingered there;
And in its hallowed dust
Time has knelt
In prayer.*