

Hobbs Island gets a study

The House of Representatives approved the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development's bill Tuesday by a vote of 393-29.

Included are several interesting provisions for North Alabama:

- \$150,000 for a feasibility study on creating an environmental park at Hobbs Island on Huntsville's southernmost river-edge.

- \$1.8 million for the U.S. Department of the Interior to establish a national wildlife refuge at Key Cave in Lauderdale County.

- \$100,000 for a study of flooding conditions at Huntsville Spring Branch and \$150,000 for an ongoing flood study at Muscle Shoals.

- \$100,000 for historic preservation projects in the Shoals area and in Huntsville. This will involve historic recording of several sites by the Historic American Building Survey and Historic American Engineering Record, including "Wilson and Wheeler dams, a TVA nitrate plant in Muscle Shoals, a stone arch railroad bridge in Huntsville, and the Huntsville Railroad Depot."

The study concerning the future of Hobbs Island, a 340-acre breadloaf in the Tennessee River at Huntsville's southernmost edge, is particularly intriguing.

For one thing, the study meshes with a concept plan, prepared by LDR Associates in 1991, for the Ditto Landing recreation complex. Here are a few highlights from that Ditto Landing plan:

"The entire 340-acre island is the setting for a proposed wildlife and nature preserve, and Native American historic park / preserve.

"Its purpose will be to retain the natural environment and encourage wildlife, and to enhance the archaeological themes that enrich the island. Access to the island will be via the pedestrian bridge near the golf course, and in a later phase, from a second pedestrian bridge to be located in the vicinity of the current ferry. The island's existing wooded edges will be preserved and enhanced with the addition of riprap edges and revegetation.

"The nature preserve will encompass almost all of the 340-acre island. Ponds

current agricultural land to be excavated as fill for the new golf course.

"Nature trails, picnicking facilities, and bird-watching blinds will be randomly situated to take advantage of the island's scenic overlooks and viewpoints. In order to minimize impact, pedestrian access trails will be limited to viewing spots.

"The island's second preserve will be the Native American Indian park and nature preserve, which will serve to enhance the archaeological aspects of the native Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians.

"Although this preserve is concentrated in the southern tip of the island, it is likely that archaeological digs will occur throughout the island as part of the island's redevelopment into a nature park."

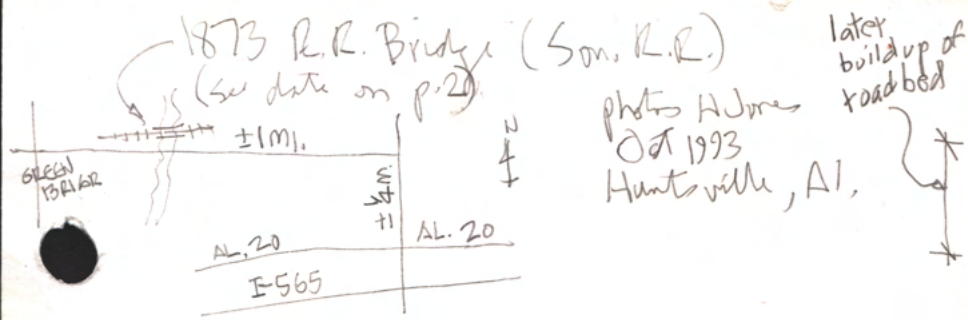
With the exception of the marina facilities at Ditto Landing, Huntsville and Madison County have done relatively little with its Tennessee River frontage. Part of the reason, of course, is that a good chunk is part of the 38,000-acre Redstone Arsenal military reservation and the rest is under the "management" of the Tennessee Valley Authority, which has thousands of miles of shoreline in its care.

But this study should be significant, one way or the other, particularly if the major archaeological sites on the island are to be dealt with in a sensible way.

We appreciate the active participation of Rep. Bud Cramer's office in getting these environmental and cultural-resource appropriations through all the legislative hurdles.

After some decades of relative indifference to enhancing our environmental quality of life, we are returning to a "do the right thing" attitude. We should credit organizations like the Huntsville Land Trust, which has saved big chunks of Monte Sano, the city's scenic backdrop, and is encouraging better stewardship of our most valuable natural acreage. City and county environmental planning has developed access points to Flint River and has created the new Aldrich Creek Greenway, between Mountain Gap and Green Cove Road. This prototype of many such greenways will be given a ceremonial ribbon-cutting on Sunday,

to link end of Greenway



↑ N

bottom-most arch is mod. conc., ± 12' d.



↑ N

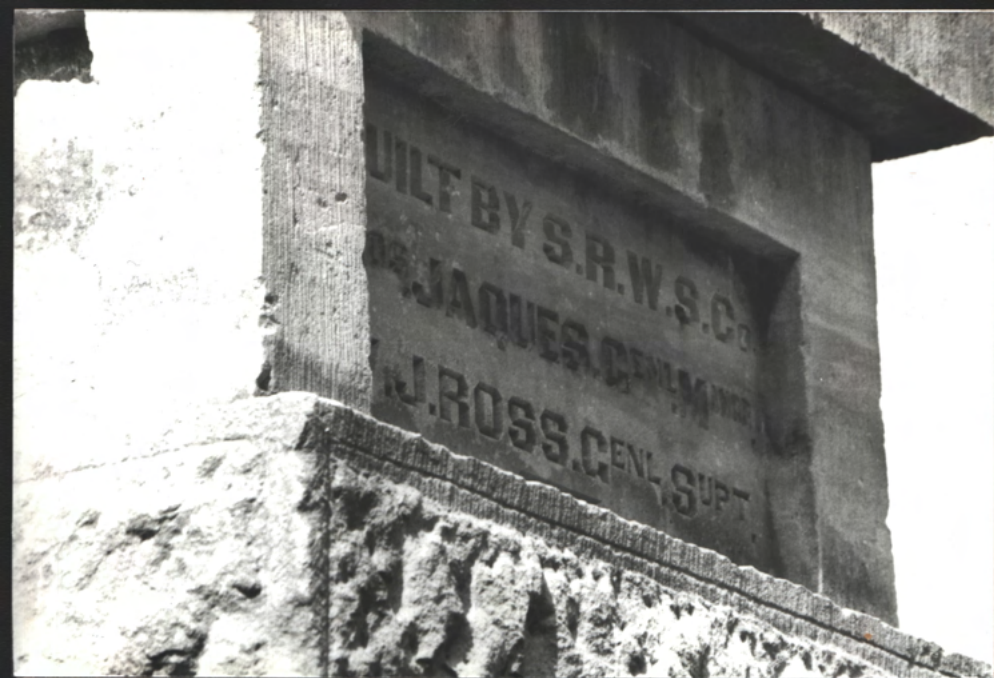
Note - lowest part of arch is modern conc.

Limestone -
 (probably local)

1 of 2

↑ N

1873 SON. R.R.
 BRIDGE



S.W. Pier



S.E. Pier



S.E. Pier