

**Greetings Chattanooga!
Hamilton Bush here
to regale you with
historical highlights
of our beloved city.**

Dear Hamilton Bush,

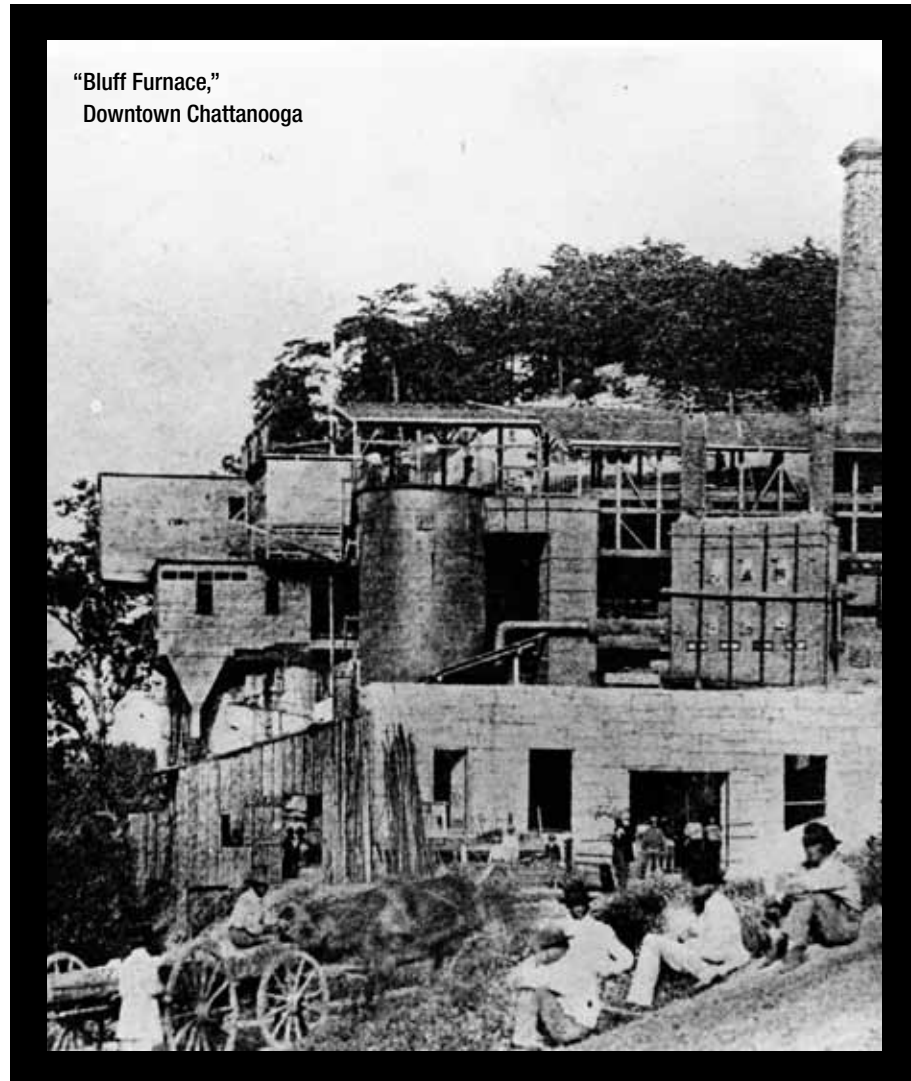
One evening not long ago, I was walking my dog across the Walnut Street Bridge and looking at the meandering Tennessee River. To my right, I noticed that the site of the old Bluff Furnace is marked near the Hunter Museum of American Art. What can you tell me about this enterprise of the early days of Chattanooga?

Sincerely,
Back on the Bluff

Dear Back,

Robert Cravens was one of the early movers and shakers in Chattanooga, and in 1854, he led a group of investors in the construction of an iron production facility that was dubbed the "Bluff Furnace" with an impressive smokestack that stood 40 feet high. A few years earlier, the Tennessee General Assembly had chartered the formation of the East Tennessee Iron Manufacturing Company as an enterprise "for the purpose of manufacturing iron, machinery, and implements." The idea behind the Bluff Furnace was to produce pig iron with a charcoal-fueled furnace. Cravens had some experience with blast furnaces in Roane County, Tn. prior to coming to Chattanooga, and that know-how was no doubt instrumental in the early success of the business.

Prior to the Civil War, James Henderson of New York bought the furnace and operated it for a time with another northern businessman who had worked with iron—Giles Edwards. In 1859, the furnace was converted from charcoal to coke, and it became the first furnace of its kind in the South. The following year at the height of its productivity, the Bluff Furnace produced in excess of 500 pounds of pig iron a day.



"Bluff Furnace,"
Downtown Chattanooga

Photos courtesy of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library (www.lib.chattanooga.gov)

However by 1862, it was apparent that the war would not leave Chattanooga unscathed. Henderson had headed back up north, and that summer most of the machinery was taken down and shipped to Anniston, Al.

After the Union Army arrived, the furnace was temporarily used as a lime kiln but was subsequently torn down in 1864. The stone from the furnace and available wood were used by soldiers to construct a bridge across the Tennessee River. As the years went by, the site of the Bluff Furnace became somewhat lost to history. Carved into residential lots or overgrown with

vegetation, it was little more than a footnote to an industrial base that put Chattanooga on the map for the better part of the next century.

In the late 1970s, archeologist Jeffrey L. Brown rediscovered the site, and excavations took place in the early 1980s. Today, the history of the Bluff Furnace is commemorated with informational markers adjacent to the place where it once stood. The rediscovery of the Bluff Furnace site yielded artifacts that provide a glimpse into the history of heavy industry in the Chattanooga area along with the processes involved in the 19th century production of iron.

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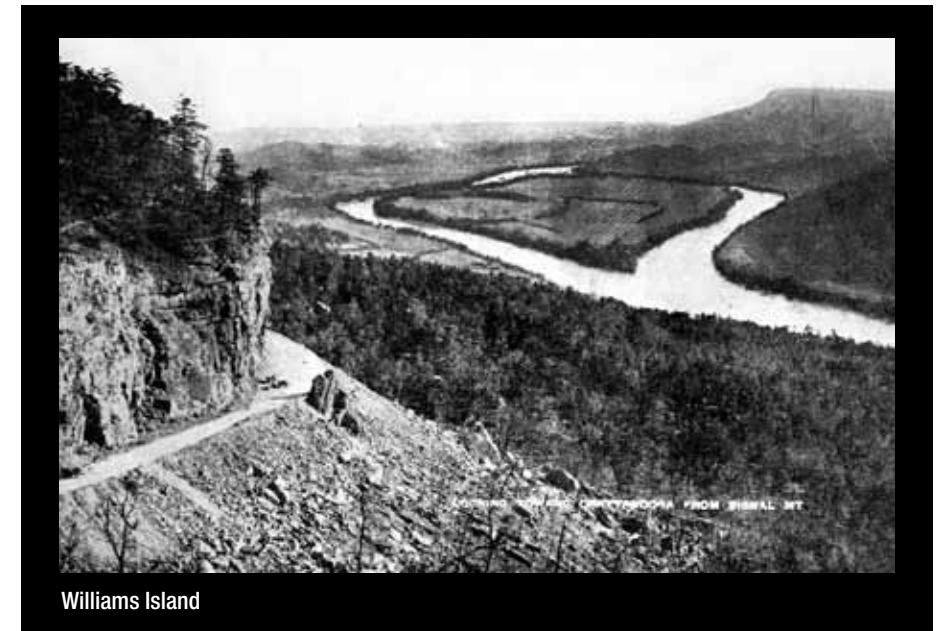
I was recently invited to board a friend's boat and take a cruise down the Tennessee River. As we sailed past Williams Island, I grew curious about the place. Who was Williams, and what is the history of the island, please?

Regards,
Island in the Stream

Dear Stream,

Williams Island happens to be one of the most historic locations in the Chattanooga area. Its 450 or so acres have seen a lot of comings and goings, and many of them pre-date Mr. Samuel Williams, a land owner and man of means whose holdings on the eve of the Civil War included acreage on the north bank of the Tennessee River and the island that today bears his name.

Williams Island is now owned by the State of Tennessee's Division of Archaeology and is managed by the Tennessee River Gorge



Williams Island

Photos courtesy of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library (www.lib.chattanooga.gov)

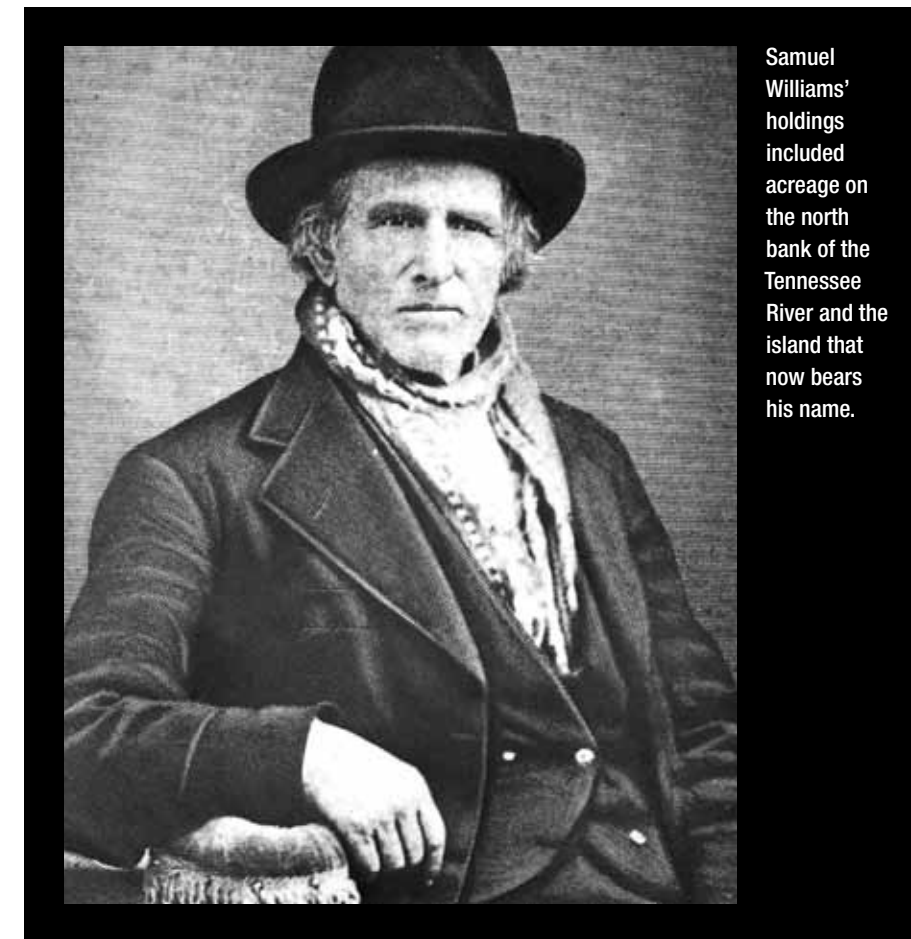
Trust, and there is good reason for this. There is evidence of at least 25 sites of settlement on the island. These range from the tools and stones left behind by Native Americans who

lived there from 9,000 to 10,000 years ago to the remains of towns of the Chickamauga faction of the Cherokee tribe that date back to the time of the Revolutionary War.

In fact, one of these former settlements was called Taliminco and it is dated somewhere between A.D. 1200 and A.D. 1500. A ceremonial mound remains there that belonged to Mississippian peoples.

Some historians believe that during the bitter rivalry between France and Great Britain for dominion over the New World, the French attempted to aid friendly Native Americans who had seized Fort Loudoun on the Tennessee River to the northeast. When the French were unable to navigate the wild rapids of the Tennessee, particularly in the area below Signal Mountain known as "The Suck," it has been said that they simply set up shop on Williams Island and sold supplies intended for Fort Loudoun to the local population.

A century later during the Civil War, James J. Andrews, leader of the Union raiders group that purloined the locomotive *General* at Big Shanty in Georgia, hid out on the island before his capture by Confederate authorities. Andrews was later hanged in Atlanta, and more than 20 years later his remains were exhumed and reinterred in the National Cemetery in Chattanooga.



Samuel Williams' holdings included acreage on the north bank of the Tennessee River and the island that now bears his name.

Photos courtesy of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library (www.lib.chattanooga.gov)