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DAN TUCKER

and other

Randolph County Heroes
in Folklore

Dan Tucker
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Randolph County Heroes
in Folklore

compiled and rewritten

by

Barbara Presnell

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illustrations by

Audrey Beck

and

Graham Cheek

The Randolph Art Guild

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For the storytellers of Randolph County
and their listeners



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Contents

Introduction	iv
Dan Tucker The true story of one of Randolph County's most famous men	1
Dan Tucker Comes to Town What just might have happened to Johnstonville.	3
The Silver Tree Randolph County's greatest swindle.	10
Fine Horses How a courageous man started a tradition in Randolph County	13
The Man at the Bridge A haunting story of a mysterious old man.	20
Martha Bell Randolph County's first liberated woman	25
Indians and the White-Haired Man Fantasy, tall tale, ghost story and adventure all wrapped up in one story	30
Why Main Street Isn't The bustling city of Asheboro in 1889	50
The Story of Naomi Wise and Jonathan Lewis The ballad of the tragic lovers of Randleman.	54
Other Books and Stories about Randolph County you may want to read.	59

Introduction

Stories have been told around camp fires and bedsides ever since the world began. In every town, every city and community, at country stores or baseball games, stories are told. The expert storyteller can draw crowds of people at any time of day or night. He can weave a tale so convincing that his listeners sometimes think they are actually there. He tells it without any pictures or any props. He doesn't act it out at all. He tells it with his words.

There are as many reasons for listening to the stories as there are for telling them. The people listen because the stories are interesting. They listen because they are funny or because they learn from them. The stories are remembered for all of these reasons and more.

Over the years, many of them were written down so that generations and generations later, they could be enjoyed just as they were when they were first told. Some were fairy tales or folk tales. Many stories explained things in nature that people did not understand. Many more were tales of heroes--men and women who had faced the greatest enemy and because of their strength were victorious.

When the first settlers came to America several hundred years ago, they brought with them the stories that their ancestors told them. As they cleared the land and began their new life, they made up more stories and more explanations of the things they discovered. These American tales were different from ones of the Old World. The new land was filled with things that the

refined people of Europe had never seen, such as Indians, wild animals and endless frontier. Again, as the years went by, many of the stories that the settlers told as they sat in their lamplit cabin were written down. Many of them can be read today. Stories such as Paul Bunyan, Uncle Remus Stories and Grandfather Tales have been told and retold.

Randolph County is proud to have a tradition of storytelling. The first settlers to move into the county brought their own Scotch-Irish and German heritage with them. As they lived and worked in the county, they began to make up stories about themselves and the new land. Many of the stories they told were about things they had done or people that they knew. When the work was done in the evenings, children gathered around the fire and listened to stories that their parents and grandparents told.

The stories in this book are some of the stories that were told a long time ago. Some are about people who have acted bravely in the face of danger and have become heroes. Some are about places in the county that are like no other places in the state. Some are stories that have been invented just for fun. All of the stories have one thing in common--they are unique to Randolph County.

There are hundreds of stories about Randolph County that have never been written. Ask your parents and grandparents to tell you stories about when they were growing up. Ask them to tell you stories that their parents and grandparents told them. Listen to them very carefully. They will tell you more about history than you could ever read in a history book. They will tell you about yourself and the special county in which you live. Try to write some of the stories down and save them so that your children can enjoy them. Make up some stories of your own about things that you have done. Years

from now they will be history too. Look all around you for stories--you will find a rich supply of them wherever you go in Randolph County.

Asheboro

Barbara Presnell
Third Century Artist
Randolph County

Dan Tucker

Dan Tucker was born in London, England, in 1714. When he was six years old, he and his parents boarded a ship that sailed to the New World. They settled in Bath, North Carolina, and there, Dan grew into a strong young man. Bath was a fairly large town for its time. Most of North Carolina was still wilderness. When Dan Tucker married Margaret DeVane, a young girl also living in Bath, they decided that they wanted to find a place of their very own to settle.

They traveled West through North Carolina until they came to Randolph County. They liked the rolling hills that they found. They liked the streams that flowed freely through the woods and they liked the warm weather. So, they stopped and made their home at what is now known as Spero.

At this time in Randolph County, there were only one or two other families living in the entire area. Dan and Margaret found that they were at least three miles from the nearest neighbor and a hundred miles from the nearest store. Even three miles in those days meant a long and hard trip.

Dan built a lean-to made of pine poles and roofed with pine and cedar boughs. They lived in the lean-to until Dan could hew logs and build a sturdy cabin. He hunted in the wilderness, trapped in the woods and streams and farmed the fields around his cabin. For many years, Dan and Margaret were very happy, although very much

alone in the wilderness.

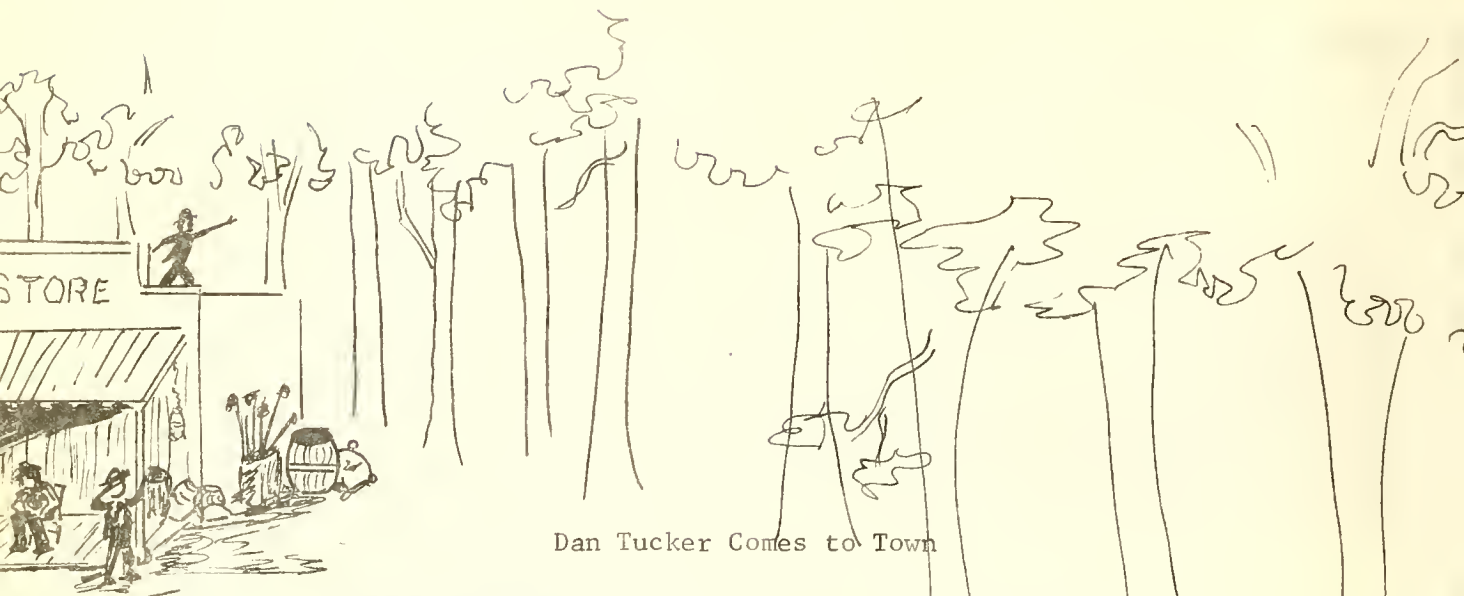
Soon, however, people began moving in to the unsettled land. They organized towns and communities. Dan was not used to so much activity. He was a strong and hard-working wilderness man. He didn't have time for fun and games, and he never spent much time talking unless he had something important to say.

Once a year, Dan went into town with the skins and furs of the animals he had caught and killed. The people thought he was eccentric because he did not keep up with the progress of the town. They liked him, though. He was a good man. He was honest and careful. He never cheated any man, for all he wanted was a square deal. He was also very good natured. The people knew that they could make up funny songs about him and he would not mind. He laughed and sang with them.

Dan Tucker lived to be one hundred years old. He was plowing in his field one day when he stepped on a sharp rock that embedded into his heel. He cut the rock out with his knife and continued plowing. Three days later, he had tetanus and died of lockjaw from the wound in his foot.

People still sing songs about Old Dan Tucker. They remember him as the great frontiersman who was honest, thrifty and hard-working until the day he died.





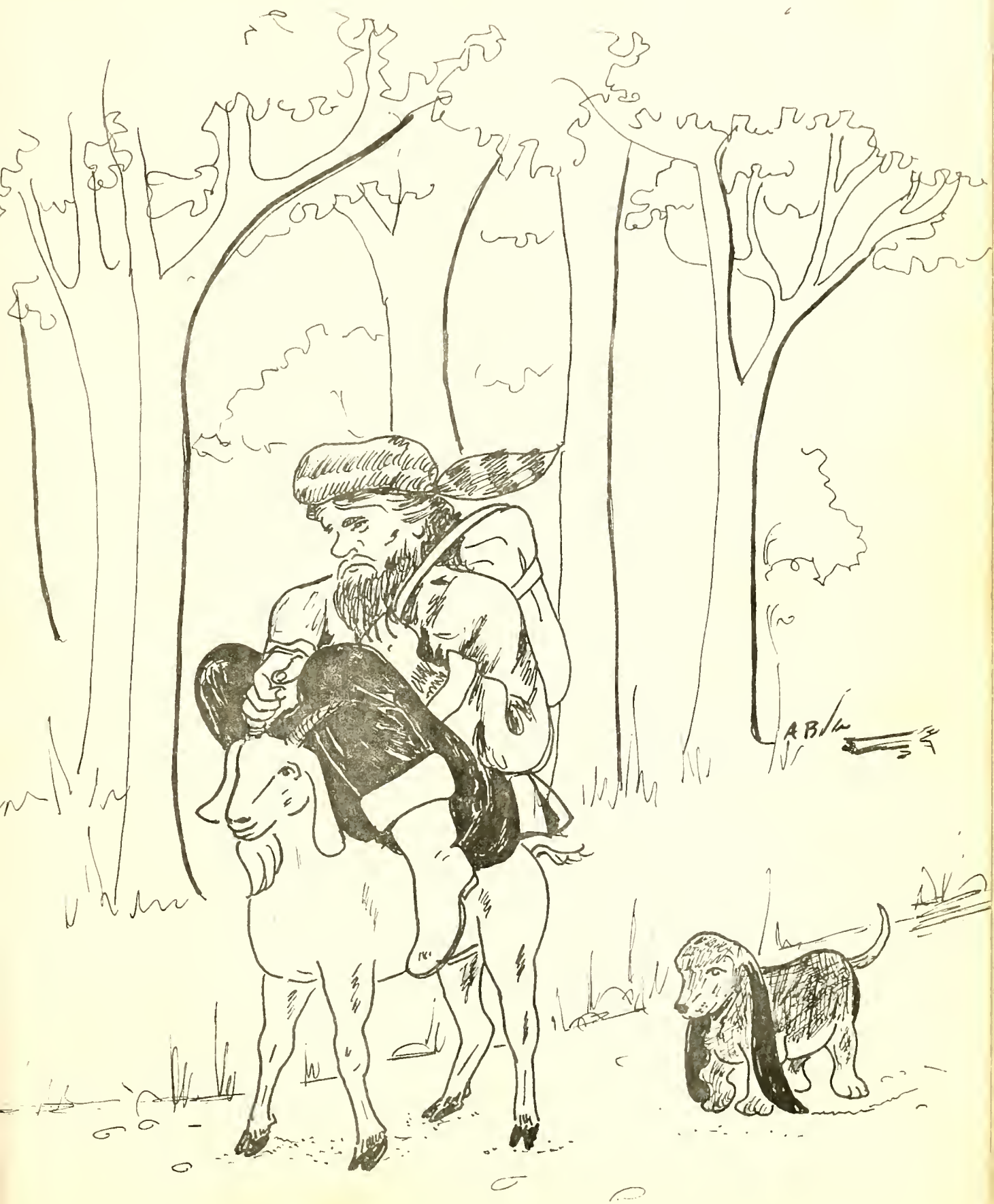
Dan Tucker Comes to Town

The town of Johnstonville was quiet. It was a lazy Saturday afternoon in May. The sun was just barely hot enough to droop the eyelids of the men who sat on the benches outside the Saxon Inn. It wasn't hot enough to make them sweat. Every now and then a horse would trot slowly down the street, his head sagging and hooves clopping in the dirt. A couple of dogs yapped in front of the general store, bit each other's ears, then fell down in the shade under the awning and went to sleep. Some young boys crowded around a circle in the dirt and pitched marbles.

Suddenly, from the north end of town, on a horse that galloped as fast as lightning, came Willie McCrew. Willie didn't live in town. He lived on a farm just outside of town. Every time something happened that he thought the people should know about, he was the first to tell them.

"Old Dan Tucker's coming to town." Willie slammed his horse to a stop and jumped off into the dusty street.

"I seen him coming my way this morning, just a 'singing and a 'whistling and a 'taking his time."



AB/14

Old John Daniel, who was the slowest and the laziest of them all on a Saturday afternoon, jumped up out of his chair as though a hive of bees had nestled in his pants.

"He'll be here this afternoon, I'll wager," Old John said. "He'll come through this town like a bolt of lightning and we won't know what hit us."

Suddenly, the boy who climbed to the top of the inn where he could see all the way down the road on both sides, leaned his head down over the shingle and said, "I see him. Old Dan Tucker's coming to town."

Henry Adams, owner of the Saxon Inn, shivered and shook and said, "Old Dan Tucker's coming to town."

The ladies whisked their skirts behind them and hurried home.

"Old Dan Tucker's coming to town," they muttered.

John Daniel eased down onto his bench and sighed.

"Old Dan Tucker's coming to town," he whispered.

Sure enough, as the people peered out their windows and settled in their places, Old Dan Tucker came riding into town, seated quite comfortably on the back of an old grey billygoat with his knees pointed high in the air. Tagging a few feet behind was a hound dog whose ears hung down so low they made a trail in the dust behind him.

"Whoppee!" Dan Tucker shouted. "Old Dan Tucker's come to town."

He hopped off the back of his billygoat and strolled to the benches outside the inn.

"Howdy, John," he said. "Evenin', Joe, William, Robert-Henry. How's the world been treating you fellas?"

"Howdy-do, Dan," the men said. "Things going okay with us, how about you?"

Dan scratched his wooly brown hair and ran his fingers through his shaggy beard.

"I had a right good winter," he said. "I got a couple of good deals to make, I reckon."

"Is that right?"

"That's right," he said.

He stretched his long legs over the porch. When he stood, he towered at least a foot over the tallest man in Johnstonville and his feet were so long that he had to be careful where he put them down in case he might step on somebody he didn't see. His hands were so large that he could wrap them all the way around the waist of a horse and still overlap his thumb and finger.

"All I want is a square deal," Dan Tucker said, with a stern look on his face. "I'm sure you boys'll oblige me."

"We'll do all we can, Dan," John Daniel said.

"Take this old billygoat here," Dan started. "I know he don't look like much, but let me tell you what he can do. This old billygoat once wrestled with a fox that was trying to get into my chicken coop. Why, if I hadn't shown up just in the nick of time, I don't think there'd be anything left of that fox a'tall."

The men looked at each other and nodded.

"I had to wrestle with him for three days before I could catch him and it took me three months to get him calmed down enough to go near him. He can tree squirrels better than any hound dog you ever saw, totes water from the spring for me every day without me even asking, chops wood faster than any man I ever saw. And fellas, let me tell you, with this old billygoat around, you'll never have to clean up after yourself again. He'll do it all for you."

Henry Dougan spoke up. "Seems like you could get a fine horse for a billygoat like that, Dan."

Dan scratched his head. "I don't know if I could part with this old goat for just a horse," he said. "He means a mite more to me than that."

"I'll give you a horse and two cows," William Johnson said. "The wife'd sure be glad to have a billygoat like that around."

"I don't reckon I have much use for any cows, thank you, William," Dan said. "Come to think of it, I don't know if I really want to get rid of this old boy. He's almost too valuable to let go of so easy."

"I'll trade you my best bay horse and my brand new wagon," John Daniel said.

"Have to have at least two horses in case one gets tired," Dan said.

"I got two fine horses," John said. "Healthy as puppies."

"And a couple extra wheels."

"Yessir, I'll throw in a couple extra wheels for that billygoat."

Dan Tucker said, "Well, I can't hardly turn you down, John, even though I do hate to part with that old billygoat. I got to have that extra wheel, you know. I promised the wife I'd comb my hair while I was in town. Haven't combed it in a year's time."

"Trade, then?" John Daniel asked.

"Trade," Dan answered. "All I want is a square deal."

John Daniel beamed proudly and took the reins of the grey billygoat's bridle. The billygoat smiled, stretched out on the porch and went to sleep.

"Course that old billygoat's no better than this old hound dog," Dan said. The hound was sprawled lazily in the street.

He perked up one long ear when he heard Dan call his name.

"This is the best old hound dog I ever seen," Dan said.

"She's a milker. Gives the sweetest, most wholesome milk I ever tasted. By the bucketfuls. Why, we've got enough cream and butter stored up at home to last another winter."

He leaned closer to the men and whispered.

"And not only does she give it, but she puts it in bottles and delivers it to the house every morning by six-thirty."

The men gasped with alarm. Imagine a hound dog such as that.

"It's true," Dan said. "And she lays eggs the size of goose eggs by the dozens, will cook and serve 'em any way you want 'em."

"Why, I'd trade you my wife for that," Joe Macon said. "She don't even treat me that good."

"Sorry, Joe," Dan said. "I don't need another wife. Not in place of my old hound dog."

"I got some land I'll trade you," Harvey Williams said. "It's two hundred acres of woods and fields and all kinds of game you can trap."

"I could use a little more land," Dan thought out loud. "Is it close to my cabin at all?"

"Well, not really," Harvey answered. "It's on the other side of the mountain."

"Could you move it?" Dan suggested. "Put it right up next to my house?"

"I'll do it," Harvey said. "Anything for that old hound dog."

"Trade," said Dan Tucker. "All I want is a square deal."

Harvey Williams took the hound dog by the collar and led him down the street.

"This way, old dog," he said. "I'm hankering for a good mess of scrambled eggs stirred up with milk and butter."

Dan Tucker picked up his knapsack and in three long steps was across the street standing at the door of Jesse Ray's General Store, unloading an armful of rabbit furs, deer skins and bear rugs. In just a few minutes, he was back outside again, empty-handed. Three boys who worked in the General Store dusting and delivering followed behind Dan and loaded flour, sugar, a barrel of salt and a keg of coffee onto the back of John Daniel's old two horse wagon with two extra wheels.

"I sure hate to get rid of those furs," Dan said. "But, every once in a while, a man's got to give up something he likes for something he needs."

The boys went back inside and came out again with their arms loaded full, until shortly the wagon was piled so high with goods that the men sitting on the benches took bets as to whether it would sink into the ground or not.

The shelves in the store were bare. The kegs and barrels that once sat on the floor were now loaded in the wagon.

Jesse Ray stood at the doorway and smiled.

"Thank you a whole lot for those fine furs," he called to Dan. "I'm the luckiest man in town to have those."

"That you are," Dan Tucker said. He turned towards the Saxon Inn. "Now, if I can get myself a good hot meal and some homemade biscuits, a shave, a haircut and a hot bath, I'll be ready to head home."

He pushed open the inn door and entered. Five minutes later, he was upstairs in a boiling hot tub of water, his face lathered with

hot bacon grease, singing as loud as he could:

'Ol Dan Tucker's a fine ol' man
Wash his face in a frying pan
Combs his head with a wagon wheel
All he wants is a square deal.

A good half hour later, Dan, in a clean leather shirt and shiny black boots, tipped his hat to the men on the porch and said, "I reckon I'll be seeing you boys later on."

"You're not leaving already, are you, Dan?" John Daniel said.

"I reckon so," Dan answered. "I got quite a bit of work to do. But, I'll be back next year, don't you worry."

"We'll be looking for you next spring, Dan."

He stepped onto the seat of his two horse wagon, picked up the reins and stepped out into the road, whistling and singing as he waved his hand high in the air.

John Daniel stood on the porch while the billygoat munched hungrily on his boot. Harvey Williams sat on the ground next to where his new hound dog lay, waiting for an egg to hatch before he placed his order. Jesse Ray was inside his store, brushing the handsome furs with a curry comb.

"Old Dan Tucker's come to town," Henry Adams said. He shook his head slowly. "And it's a good thing for us he don't come but once a year."

-End-

The Silver Tree

A man came to Randolph County many years ago named Horace Metts. No one knew him and he talked with a different accent, but he was well-dressed and mannerly, so everyone liked him. He found a room to live in with Thomas Winston, who was a farmer. He said that he was looking for some land to buy so that he could move his wife and children to Randolph County.

Farmer Winston was a smart man in such things as growing corn and wheat, and knowing whether it would rain or not, but in other ways, he was not very clever. He was used to living in a small county with honest citizens and rarely had a selfish thought or a mean suspicion in his head. Naturally, he believed everything that Mr. Metts said, for he had no reason to doubt any man's word.

One morning at breakfast, Mr. Metts said,

"I had an unusual dream last night. I came upon a red oak tree in the woods and when I kicked it, it seemed to jingle. I took an ax and cut a hole in the trunk and silver coins spilled out."

Farmer Winston laughed and agreed that it was odd.

The next morning, Mr. Metts said,

"Do you remember the dream I had about the silver coins? Well, I had the same dream last night."

Farmer Winston again agreed that it was a strange dream.

On the third morning, Mr. Metts came down to breakfast with a puzzled look on his face.

"I had the same dream again for the third time," he said. "I want you to go with me to the woods today and see if we can find anything."

Farmer Winston knew the land and the woods fairly well after having lived there all of his life. He laughed at the idea that there might really be a silver tree in the woods, but he agreed to go with Mr. Metts.

After a while, they spotted a red oak tree with gnarled limbs like the spokes of a wheel. Farmer Winston was curious, and chopped at the base of the trunk with his ax. He realized that the tree was indeed hollow and chopped a larger hole. Silver coins began spilling from the hole onto the ground.

Mr. Metts shouted excitedly, "Is this my fourth dream or is it finally my dream come true?" He pinched himself to make sure he was awake.

Farmer Winston said, "And to think that I didn't believe you. I will never doubt your word again."

Mr. Metts and Farmer Winston grabbed the coins and counted them. The treasure was worth five thousand dollars. Each man took an equal share of two thousand five hundred dollars. They decided to keep their money a secret from anyone else in the area.

After a few days, Mr. Metts announced to Farmer Winston that he had located a farm some miles away and that he was leaving to get his family and bring them to Randolph County. Mr. Metts said that the \$2500 in silver coins was much too heavy for him to carry on his journey and asked Farmer Winston if he would be willing to give him paper money in exchange for the coins.

Paper money was not well liked by the people in Randolph

County at this time, and Mr. Winston was more than willing to have the valuable coins rather than the money. So, they traded, and Mr. Metts departed on his journey.

Farmer Winston decided to use a portion of his silver coins to buy more land close to his own. When he gave the coins to the banker, the banker looked at them and said,

"I can't accept this, sir. Why, this is only lead. The coins are worthless."

Farmer Winston told the man how he and Mr. Metts found the coins. Together they went to the red oak tree. When they climbed to the top, they realized that someone had poured the counterfeit coins into the trunk by a hollow limb. Mr. Winston had been fooled. Mr. Metts had taken his \$2500 in good paper money.

Farmer Winston sighed. "I suppose I haven't been so clever after all."



Fine Horses

For many years, Randolph County has been known across the state for breeding fine horses. Many people think perhaps it is the warm weather and the gentle rain that makes the clover in the pastures much stronger for the horses to eat. Some people say that it is the land, rolling and free, that builds the horses' muscles as they run through the grass. Many people say that the feed the farmers grow is better than in other counties.

However, none of these ideas are quite true. The weather may be warmer, the rain may be gentler, the hills may be rolling and the feed may be more nutritious. But, the fine horses come from quite a different tale than these.

It began many years ago at the time of the Revolutionary War when only a few families lived in the county. The horses that the farmers owned were all very ordinary and very brown. They weren't exceptionally strong or exceptionally fast. But, they worked hard in the fields and pulled heavy wagons along the roads.

There was a man named Andrew Hunter who lived with his wife and two children on a farm in the southwest corner of the county. He had hitched his ordinary horse to a wagon loaded with goods.

Sarah Hunter stood in the doorway of the cabin, drying her hands on her white apron. The small faces of her two children peered from behind her skirt.

"Andrew, please be careful," she said. "You know that the

evil man, David Fanning, is looking for you and he won't stop until he finds you."

Andrew Hunter loaded the last basket of fruit onto the wagon and stepped into the seat. He pulled his hat down over his head to block the early morning sun.

"I know that this is a very dangerous time for anyone to be traveling in Randolph County," he said. "But, I must get these goods to the market or we won't be able to last through the winter."

"I am so afraid," Sarah said. "What would become of me and the children if anything should happen to you?"

"I will be careful," Andrew promised. "And I will come home as soon as possible."

He shook the reins and his horse stepped onto the road, pulling the loaded wagon.

Andrew rode away and watched Sarah and the children return to the cabin. It was a terrible time for all of the farmers in Randolph County. The Revolutionary War was almost at an end, but the trouble had just begun in the county. David Fanning, an enemy Tory and bandit, had camped his band of men in Cox's Mill. They sneaked through the woods and surprised farmers in the field. They burned houses and barns and destroyed crops. Sometimes they murdered men and their families for no reason.

David Fanning did not like Andrew Hunter because Andrew was a loyal patriot. The news had been spread around the farms that Fanning wanted to capture Andrew and kill him. Andrew worried, but he was a brave young man and was ready to face Fanning. He did not want to hide in the cabin. He kept his pistol in his belt, but he did not want to use it.

The sun was hot. Andrew knew that if he rode steadily, he could take his goods to the market and return home by nightfall. The road was bumpy and hard, but fortunately there were no large puddles of mud, for the wheel of the wagon might have been caught.

He traveled as quickly as he could and, in the late morning, he pulled his wagon by a stream and rested his horse. Then he moved back onto the dirt road and traveled on.

He passed another farmer returning from the market. They stopped for a few minutes and talked. Once in a while, he passed a cabin and saw children playing.

It was shortly after noon. Andrew whistled as he rode along, passing woods and fields. Up ahead, he saw a large tree that had been chopped down and stretched across the road.

"This is certainly odd," he thought. He pulled his wagon off the road to go around the branches of the tree.

Suddenly, a band of men on horses sprung from behind trees and bushes and surrounded him. He stopped abruptly and threw up his hands in surprise. The men wore rough brown cotton pants and heavy woven shirts. Many of them wore sashes of gunpowder and bullets across their chest and had large knives slung by their sides. They pointed their pistols at Andrew Hunter.

From among the trees stepped a large bay horse with a man sitting straight and tall in the saddle. He wore a long-tailed blue coat and a red-colored scarf tied around his head. His face was rough and dirty and his eyes were small.

"Andrew Hunter," the man said. "I have been looking for you for a long time now."

"Then you must be David Fanning," Andrew replied. "I have heard many reports of you and your evil band of men."

"Oh, have you?" David Fanning laughed. "I'm sure they were all very true."

"What do you want from me?" Andrew asked. "I have not done anything to you. I am just on my way to market and then back home again."

The bandit scratched his chin and glanced to the back of the wagon.

"Then you must have food," he said. "My men and I have not eaten in quite some time now."

"Take all you want," Andrew said, "and then let me go on my way."

Fanning led his horse around the wagon and carefully examined the goods.

"Yes, we will eat your food," Fanning said at last. "But you will not go free. I have waited too long to catch you. We will eat first--and then we will have the strength to hang you."

Fanning laughed heartily, then stepped down from his horse. Three of the men grabbed Andrew's arms, took his pistol from his belt and sat him on the ground by a large oak tree where they could guard him while they ate. David Fanning led his horse to a tree but did not tie him.

"That is a fine horse you have," Andrew said.

Fanning smiled and patted his horse gently.

"Yes," he said. "Bay Doe is the best thoroughbred horse in this county. I brought her from South Carolina and she can out run and out jump any horse in this state."

Andrew nodded. He saw the powerful horse's leg muscles flexing as she stood by the tree. Her coat was dark and shiny and her hooves were strong. She looked like a very fine horse.

The men plunged into the back of the wagon that was loaded with corn, tomatoes and potatoes. They sat in the grass and ate heartily, then hurried back to the wagon for more.

Andrew leaned back against the tree and watched them. The more they ate, the more food they wanted. He soon realized that no one was guarding him at all. His eyes darted around the woods. If he ran, they would surely catch him, especially with that fine, swift horse. And the wagon was too far from him and would travel too slow for him to make his escape.

Suddenly he had an idea. He pulled a handful of green leaves from a small tree and held out his palm. Bay Doe, who was only a few feet away, saw the green leaves and walked a few steps closer to Andrew so she could munch on the leaves. Andrew eased closer to the horse. When he was close enough, he looked back at the men. No one was watching him. Not even the bandit, David Fanning. He jumped on the horse, grabbed the reins and, as fast as he could, ran through the woods.

The men dropped their food when they saw what had happened. Andrew laid low in the saddle as bullets began flying over his head. He heard David Fanning cry out to his men,

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot! You might hit my Bay Doe."

The men mounted their horses and quickly followed in pursuit of Andrew Hunter. He raced the horse harder and faster through the thick woods with the men following close behind. He realized what a fine horse Bay Doe was as she carefully dodged roots and stumps and carried him further and further away.

Suddenly, Andrew rode Bay Doe to a ford of water. He stopped. Fanning and his men moved quickly to surround him. They would surely kill him if they caught him. His only escape was to plunge



Bay Doe down the steep rock to the water and ride away to freedom.

"It must be at least sixty feet to the water," he thought.

"If I jump down into the water, Bay Doe and I may both be killed. But, if I remain here and don't try, then Fanning will kill me when he catches me."

And then he thought no more.

"If I must die," he said, "then I must die trying."

With one great leap, he shook Bay Doe's reins and the two of them plunged down the steep rock to the water. It seemed as though a great bird were landing when they splashed into the stream. Bay Doe fell, but his strong legs quickly lifted up. Andrew Hunter held tight with his knees as Bay Doe leaped from the water onto dry land. He turned around and saw David Fanning sitting on a small horse at the top of the rock shaking his fist angrily. He would not dare try the jump with a lesser horse than Bay Doe.

Andrew Hunter led Bay Doe quickly through the woods until he could no longer see the figure of David Fanning or any of his evil band of men.

He thought it best that he abandon his wagon in the road where he had left it. He captured a much more valuable prize with Bay Doe than he could possibly trade for all the goods left in his load.

He traveled close to the road on his journey back to the cabin, but he stayed out of sight, not wanting to be spotted again. He knew that David Fanning was angry and would have men looking for him. Bay Doe traveled quickly, much faster than Andrew's old horse and wagon.

It was almost dark when Andrew Hunter saw his small cabin ahead of him. He saw the fields of wheat and corn and he saw

his young wife standing by the door waving excitedly.

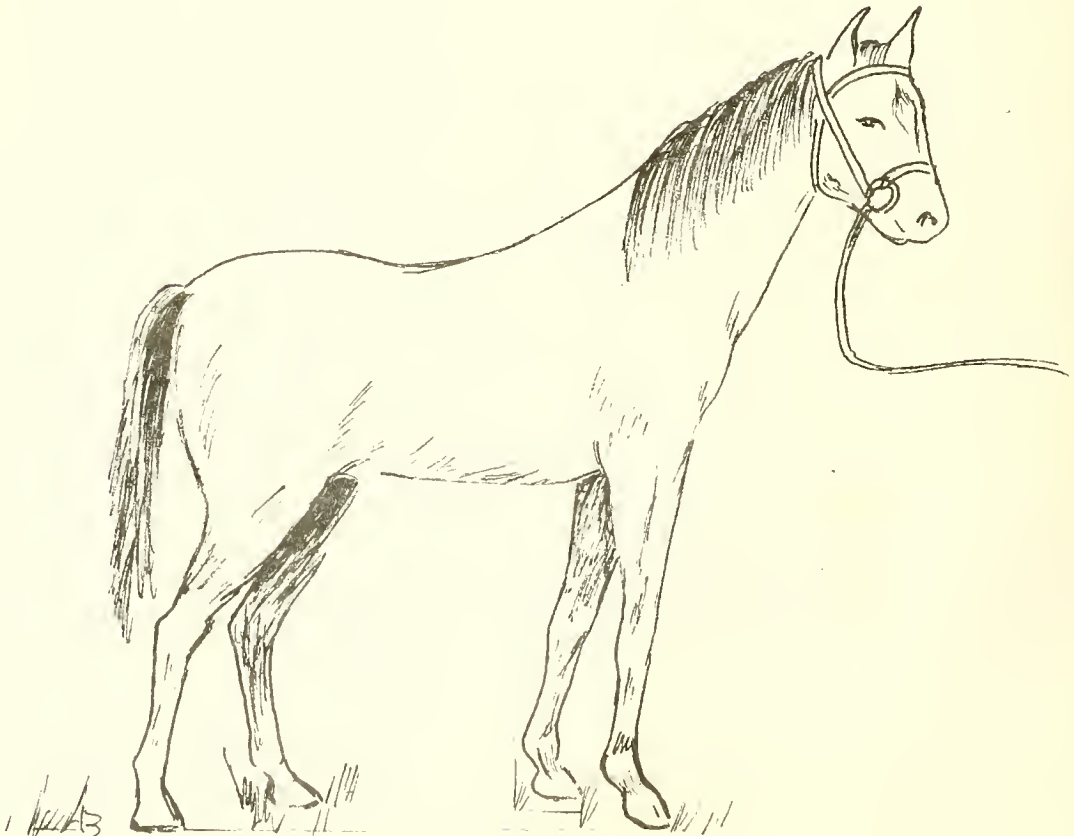
He jumped from Bay Doe, and ran to meet his wife and children.

"Andrew," she called to him. "What have you done with the wagon?
And where did you get such a fine, beautiful horse?"

Andrew smiled and patted Bay Doe's neck. "It doesn't matter
very much, dear. What matters is that I am at home with my family
once more, safe and well."

Little did Andrew Hunter know that as the years passed, it
mattered very much that he had captured such a fine prize. Bay
Doe soon gave birth to a colt, which also grew to be a fine horse.
Bay Doe grew old and died, but her children and grandchildren
continued to live in the county. To this day, these fine bay horses
prance through the woods and fields of Randolph County.

-End-



The Man at the Bridge

Michael Brannon walked home from school every day down the road that led to the old covered bridge near Pisgah. Many years ago wagons led by horses traveled underneath the sturdy boards of the bridge. Motor cars chugged through on Sunday afternoons. Now the boards were old and gray. Some of them had rotted in the rain. The rafters that stretched across the top of the covered bridge were gnawed and weak. No one used the bridge now. No one except Michael.

One afternoon in the fall, Michael stayed after school to play football with the other boys. The sun cast a pink glow on the road as he headed home. It was that odd time of twilight when the darkness is not night, but the light is not quite day. It was the time when the sky and the trees and the road seemed to burn.

Michael walked quickly, wanting to get home before it was dark. He whistled out loud and talked to himself. If he made noise, he was able to keep his mind off of other sounds that seemed to jump at him from the quiet woods.

When he neared the covered bridge, he stopped. It was dark inside--much darker than it usually was when he walked through. All he could see was the light that shined through from the other end of the bridge.

He moved closer and peered inside. The only sound he heard was the shrieking of some small black crickets and musty brown toads.

He stepped a foot in, glancing about him. Slowly he walked down the dark, wet planks on the floor of the bridge. He stepped more quickly, keeping his eyes on every side. He saw the light ahead of him. He saw the road stretching beyond the bridge. He walked faster, watching his step, but hurrying toward the end.

Only a few steps remained. Suddenly, a shadow dropped from the rafters. It was a rope, twisted, swinging slowly from side to side. Michael stopped. At that instant, from somewhere behind him, he heard a deep and terrible laugh that cut through the silence like a scream. Michael turned, but saw nothing except the light glimmering from the other end. The rope swung before him. The laugh seemed to surround him. Michael ran as fast as he had ever run out of the bridge and down the road.

When he had run just as fast and as far as he could, he fell down onto the ground. His heart beat like a thundering train. His hands shook and his legs felt like jelly.

"Boy."

Michael jumped.

"Boy, what are you running from?"

Michael turned his head slowly. A man stood above him. He had white hair and skin that sagged on his cheeks.

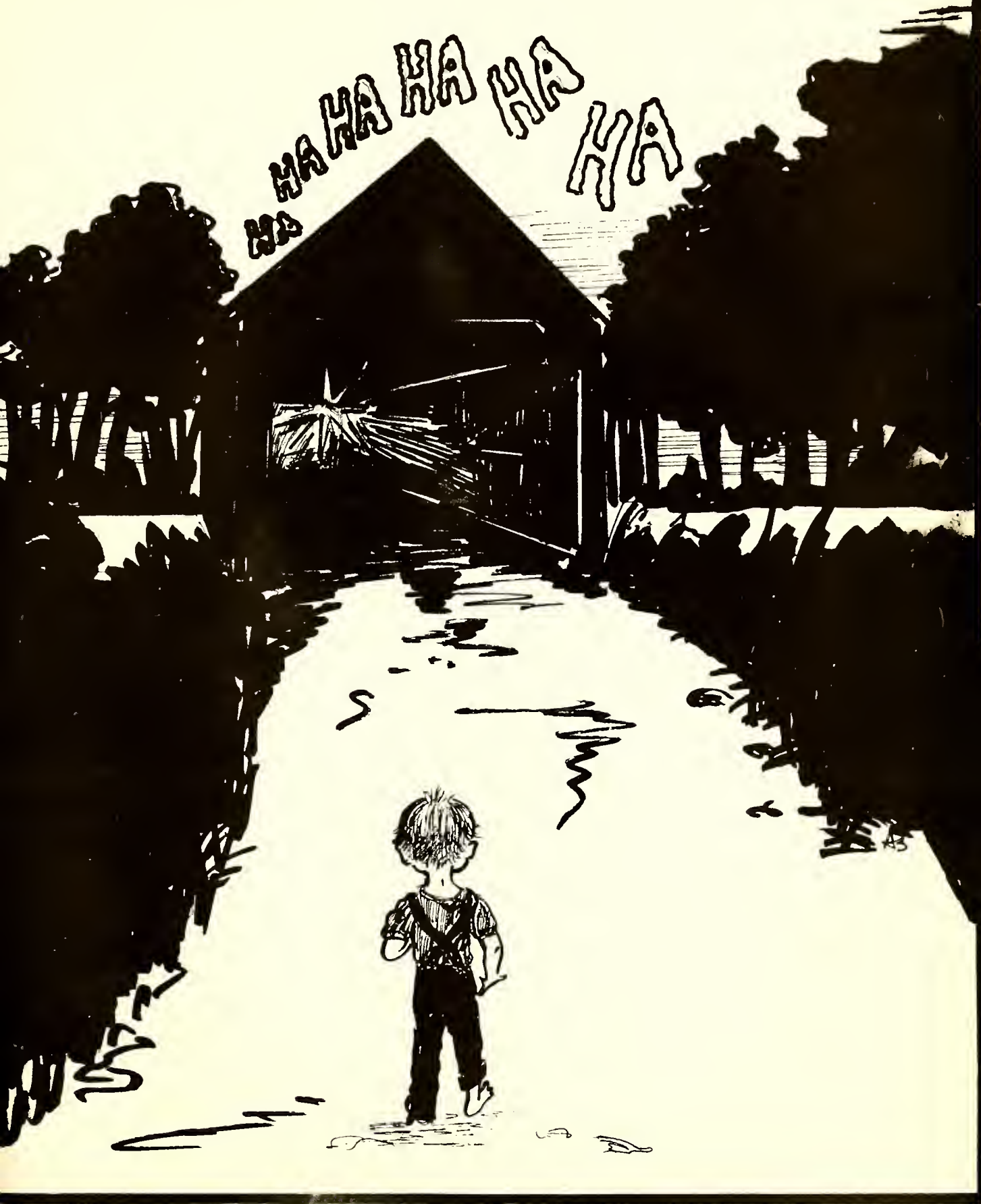
Michael's voice quivered when he answered.

"There was something in the bridge."

"Ah, the covered bridge." The man nodded his head. "Has no one ever told you that you should not go through the bridge at twilight?"

Michael shook his head.

HA HA HA HA HA



The man sat down in the road beside Michael and put his bony hand on his knee.

"I know what you saw," the man said. "I have seen it myself."

Michael sat up and listened.

"Many years ago, a man came to Randolph County. A wanderer. He worked on the farm just below the bridge. Helped pick the corn and plow the fields. He was a stranger. He didn't say much. He didn't have any friends.

"In the fall of the year, farmers noticed that things were disappearing. Men found their chickens gone in the mornings. Grain from the bins disappeared by the bucketfuls and fresh vegetables in the garden were sliced from the vines.

"Everyone suspected that the stranger was the thief. The farmers gathered together late one afternoon, about this time of day, and went to the man's cabin. They grabbed him and tied him to a horse. They carried him to the covered bridge, hung a rope from the rafters and looped the rope around his neck.

"But just before they kicked the horse from under him, the man laughed. He laughed so hard and so deep that the men were frightened. In a flash, the man and his horse were gone. The rope still dangled from the rafters."

Michael shuddered.

"Did they ever find the man?" he asked.

"No," the old man answered. "They never found him, but the corn, grain and vegetables continued to disappear from their farms."

"Last week we had a whole sack of feed stolen from us," Michael said. He turned to the man. "Do you suppose the thief is still alive? Is that who I saw in the bridge?"

"I don't think it was him you saw in the bridge," the man said.
"But, I assure you--the man is still alive!"

Michael gasped. The shadow of a twisted rope fell just above the old man's head. It dangled lifelessly and swung from side to side.

The old man smiled. "What is wrong, boy? You look frightened."

Michael didn't say a word, but pointed his finger to the shadow.

Suddenly, the man began to laugh--a deep, terrifying laugh that shook the ground they sat on.

Michael jumped up.

"It's you!" he cried. "You're the thief."

The man nodded his head slowly and smiled.

"No one has suspected me before," he said. "If you had not walked through the bridge when I was hiding, you would not have known."

"Please don't hurt me," Michael said frantically. "I won't tell anyone. It will be our secret."

"Come with me," the old man said. He grabbed Michael's arm and held it tight.

They walked a short distance into the dark woods. There was only a glimmer of light between the trees now. Michael listened for the familiar sound of birds or crickets, or the rustling of squirrels in the trees. He heard none. The woods were silent.

The man stopped suddenly and pointed his thin, bony finger through the trees to a clearing. Michael saw the stolen goods. Beneath one tree was a pile of grain that rose as high as the lowest limb. Under another tree was spread vegetables--lettuce, celery and carrots. Beneath the third tree was a pile of corn.

By the tree munching hungrily on a mouthful of grain was a

handsome brown deer. The deer looked up but did not run. A family of rabbits stood in a circle chewing on the fresh green leaves. They wiggled their noses, but did not hop away. An old raccoon lifted his head and nodded to the old man. A cluster of small sparrows fluttered from the trees and perched on his head and shoulders.

"You're feeding the animals!" Michael cried.

The man smiled. "Many of the small creatures would starve when the snow comes."

"Why, you're not a thief," Michael said. "You're a very kind man."

"Then you won't give me away?" he asked.

Michael only smiled.

Later that night, when Michael was at home with his mother and father, his father said, "Another bag of grain disappeared today. Just out of the clear blue it seems. No tracks anywhere. No hints as to who's doing it. Makes me think we must've used more than we thought,"

Michael's mother said, "Every year we lose more and more vegetables. I suppose it must be cutworms. The ends are sliced as clean as if they were cut with a knife."

Michael smiled and said nothing.

-End-

Martha Bell

Martha Bell lived near the Deep River with her husband, William, and her five children. She was not a beautiful woman, but she was attractive. She had strong bones and smooth brown skin. Her hair sparkled as she walked through the sun. People in Randolph County liked her very much. She liked them too. She loved her children and her husband and she wanted to know that they were well cared for.

Her husband, William, owned a large grist mill that ground corn into meal and feed. Many people came from miles away to grind their corn at Bell's Mill and talk with the neighbors and friends. The Bells also owned a farm and grew corn and tobacco. They worked hard in the field plowing, sowing and harvesting their crop.

It was near the end of the Revolutionary War. The colonies in America wanted to be independent of the British King George III. They wanted to elect their own president and make their own rules in their government. The settlers who were fighting for their freedom were called Whigs. Those who sided with the British "redcoats" were called Tories.

Randolph County was in deep trouble. There were many people in the county who were Whigs, but there were also a large number of Tories. They did not fight any large battles, but often, they burned each other's homes and farms and sometimes murdered families of soldiers who were in the war. Many people were afraid to

sleep at night. They worried that while they slept, someone would attack their homes.

William and Martha Bell were Whigs. They believed that America should be free and they wanted to do all that they could to win the war. William Bell left Martha and the children at home and went to fight the British.

Martha stayed home to care for the children, the mill and the farm. She did not mind being left alone. She was used to working hard and was a very strong and healthy woman. She was proud of her husband for fighting for what he believed in.

Martha felt like she should help too. Most of the women in Randolph County were satisfied to stay at home, cook and sew. But, Martha wanted to help the Americans win the war. She knew that she couldn't fight with the men. Even though she was strong and very brave, she needed to stay close to her home and her children because they needed her as well.

One thing that she could do to help the American soldiers would be to take care of them when they were wounded. She knew all about taking care of people after raising five children and keeping them well.

She went to the battles with bandages, knives and medicine. She found the men who were hurt and helped them get well. She encouraged the strong men to fight harder to end the war. Sometimes, because she was a nurse, she was allowed to go into the enemy camps to help wounded men. Because she was a woman, the British soldiers did not think she would do any harm. But, while she was there, she listened carefully to everything that was said, and when she returned to the American camp, remembered and told the leaders what she had



heard. Many times they were able to know what the British troops were planning to do even before they did it because of Martha's courage. She was not afraid to put her life in danger because she believed very strongly in her country and its people.

There was a big battle at the Courthouse in Guilford County, which was very close to where Martha Bell lived in Randolph County. It was a long, tiring battle and both sides suffered many losses.

A few days after the battle ended, Martha Bell was working in the field when she saw a group of soldiers riding towards her. They were wearing red coats and riding fine horses. She knew immediately that they were British troops, but she was not afraid.

The men stopped. A man stepped down from his horse and walked towards her. She recognized him as General Cornwallis, the British general who had been fighting at Guilford Courthouse. She put down her hoe and walked towards him.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"My men are tired," General Cornwallis answered. "We need food and water. We need to rest and we need to care for our horses. We have several wounded men who need to be taken care of. I want to camp here on your land for several days and use your mill to grind corn."

"You are not welcome here," Martha answered. "We are Whigs and are loyal to the American cause. But, you have many men and I am just one woman. I cannot stop you from taking what you want."

General Cornwallis said, "That's right. But we are not here to harm you, only to take care of ourselves."

"Tell me just one thing," Martha Bell said. "After you use our mill, do you plan to burn it?"

"No, I don't," he answered. "Why do you ask?"

"Because if you did, I would burn it myself before you had a chance to use it."

"I admire your bravery," Cornwallis said. "I will not harm you or your property."

General Cornwallis and the British troops stayed at Martha Bell's farm for several days. They ate her food, drank her water, ground corn in her mill and slept in her barn. She helped to care for the wounded men and provided Cornwallis with the things he wanted. Just as he promised, he did not harm her. When he left, he thanked her for being kind to them.

But still, Martha Bell was a patriot. She respected him as a man, but not as a British general. After Cornwallis and his men left, General Harry Lee came to Martha's home. He was an American soldier. He heard that Cornwallis, his enemy, had been at the Bell farm.

Martha had listened very carefully to everything that was said in her house when Cornwallis was there. She heard them make plans and talk about where they were going. So, when General Lee wanted to know where Cornwallis and his men were, she remembered what she had heard.

"I will take you there," she said. "I know the woods and the hills of Randolph County very well and I can show you where to find them."

She stuck a pistol in her skirt, mounted her horse and rode at the front of the army with General Lee. They traveled through woods and over streams. They rode many miles. Martha stopped her

horse at the edge of a field and said,

"I believe if you go through that field, you will find Cornwallis and his men in the woods beyond it."

Martha Bell turned her horse around and headed home. General Lee and his men surprised General Cornwallis. They fought a long battle, but the British soldiers were not prepared. General Lee captured many men and won a great victory for the Americans.

When the war ended and the Americans won their independence from the British, Martha Bell was as happy as anyone in the county. It had been a hard war with many losses. She was proud that she had done more than her share to help win the war. Freedom was a wonderful thing to have.

-End-

Indians and the White-Haired Man

1

In the very early days of Randolph County when only a few Indians still hunted and fished in the woods, there lived a small settlement of people close to the Deep River near Pilot Mountain. There were only five families living in the area and sometimes they didn't see one another for days at a time. When they first moved to Randolph County, the settlers heard frightening stories of attacks by wild Indians. They did not see any, nor did they find any trouble, but they were still afraid. So, to be safe and to feel protected, they laid a large pile of wood in the middle of a field that, when burning, could be seen for miles around. If anyone saw any unfriendly Indians, they were to light the fire at once to warn the neighbors of the danger.

Years went by without trouble. The wood pile remained unlit in the field. The farmers went about their work cheerfully. The sun shined down on their golden cornfields and the rain washed their crops clear and bright. In the fall, they harvested, and winter, they roamed safely through the woods in the snow to hunt game. The Randolph County hills became home to the families. They grew to love the river that rushed through their land and the mountains and rocks that kept them cool and secure.

But, one night something dreadful happened to disturb the peaceful lives of the settlers. The sun had almost disappeared for

the day and night was settling on the land, when Enoch Hammer looked out his front door after supper and grasped the side of the door in fright.

"Emily," he called in a weak and quivering voice. "Emily, come quick. The woodpile is burning."

Emily hurried to the door to find that what her husband said was true. The woodpile that had been unlit for so many years was suddenly aglow with fire.

"Keep the children in the house," Enoch said. "I must round up the other farmers to find out what the trouble is."

Emily obeyed. She huddled the children inside the cabin while she stood by the window and watched her husband ride towards the flame.

Several farmers were gathering in the field when Enoch arrived. John Barker stood in the center of the field. His three young children clung to his legs.

"It's Mary, my wife," he cried. "She's gone! And look. . . ." He held out a single shoe and a handkerchief covered with drops of blood. "The Indians have stolen my wife and killed her."

The farmers looked at one another with fear in their eyes. They thought of their own families alone in the night.

"We must try to find her," Enoch said. "Perhaps she only went to the spring and cut her hand on a twig."

The men turned their horses to the woods and tried to follow the trail of Mary Barker. They looked for broken twigs or overturned rocks, but they found none. Presently it became very dark. The men were discouraged and started to turn back when John Barker stopped.

"Mary! There she is! My wife!"

The men looked to the tree where John pointed and saw the figure

of Mary Barker standing very still. To her left stood a young Indian warrior with red feathers on his head. They looked at the group of men without moving or without speaking a word.

John Barker jumped from his saddle and ran towards the tree.

"Mary!" he called. "I thought you were dead. I was so worried."

But when he approached the tree, Mary and the Indian disappeared. John looked all about--behind the tree and through the bushes--but there was no sign of his wife.

There was an old superstition that everyone knew in the county which said that when someone died, the ghost of that person roamed the land until the body had been properly buried. This is what the men decided they had seen. Poor Mary Barker had been killed by the ruthless Indian tribe and a young brave had died with her.

John Barker was heartsick. He had loved his wife and children so much and had been so happy on the farm. He went home that night, gathered his children close about him. He was thankful that at least they were still alive.

The other farmers became frightened by the Indians in the woods. The Indians had never attacked the white settlers or made trouble of any sort. The settlers could not understand what had caused them to kill Mary Barker and they were frightened that perhaps they would attack another peaceful family in the same way.

Enoch Hammer kept his wife and his children as close to the house as possible. When he left for the fields on his horse or in his wagon, he carried his rifle, loaded and ready to fire.

Several days passed and no more attacks were made. John Barker searched for the body of his wife, but could not find it.

Late one night, Enoch stepped out of his cabin and saw a brilliant yellow glow in the sky. He gathered other farmers together to watch the light.

"It seems to be moving over the river," a man said.

"Perhaps it is the ghost of Mary Barker again," another suggested.

Enoch said, "Whatever it is, we must follow it or we will never know."

The men jumped on their horses and followed close behind the yellow torch as it passed down the river and through the woods. It seemed to be going in a circle around the mountain. But, suddenly the direction became clear: it was going to the house of John Barker.

John and his three children were fast asleep inside the cabin when the light came to rest on the rooftop. The settlers stood at the edge of the field and, as they watched, the light rose slowly into the sky and faded away.

John Barker was awakened by the noise outside his cabin. The farmers were slowly bringing their horses closer to the cabin when John Barker flung open his door, stood in the black night air and cried,

"My son! He's gone! My oldest boy has been stolen!"

2

After the mysterious disappearance of John Barker's son, the people became terrified. They were afraid that at any time an Indian would jump from behind a bush or a rock and drag their children away. John Barker was the most frightened of them all. He knew of no reason why the Indians were attacking him and his

family. He was a peaceful Quaker man who only wanted to raise his children and grow his corn. But now things had changed. For some reason, his home was being destroyed and he did not know what to do. He watched from his window at all times and kept his two remaining children in the house. He looked for tracks near his cabin that he thought would lead him to his family, but he could find none. He searched for signs in the sky or in the wind, but none were to be found.

Late one night in early summer, trouble struck again. Enoch Hammer was in his cabin sitting at the kitchen table reading by a candlelight. His wife was by his side, knitting a scarf for winter. He looked up suddenly and said,

"Did I hear someone scream?"

Emily listened silently.

"Are the children all in bed?" he asked.

"Yes, they are," she replied.

Suddenly, a loud cry filled the air outside the cabin. Enoch jumped from his chair and grabbed his rifle.

"It sounds like it's coming from John Barker's place," he said. "The Indians must be back."

"Don't go, dear," his wife said. "I am afraid for you."

"I must," Enoch said. "He is my neighbor and my friend. He would do the same for me if I was in trouble."

On his way through the woods on his horse, Enoch heard more screams coming from John Barker's house. Then suddenly, he heard a loud explosion. Sparks filled the black night and the noise trembled the earth. He was frightened but hurried on.

When he arrived at the Barker farm, he saw a terrible sight.



The land around the cabin was aglow with dozens of small fires that looked as though they had been scattered like seed on the ground. John Barker stood in the yard with his rifle in his hand shooting wildly into the night. Enoch saw the most frightening thing of all. He saw a creature that he had never seen before. It looked like neither a man nor an animal. It seemed to be a giant with several human heads. On each head were two eyes that glowed like balls of fire. It had several blue flaming tails and a dozen legs that it seemed to lengthen or shorten as it ran. It could stretch itself as high as a chimney or lower itself completely to the ground. Finally, it had two large birdlike wings under which Enoch saw the two remaining Barker children, screaming and crying out in terror. The beast stretched the children out toward John, who grabbed for them, only to have the creature jerk the wings back in. The beast turned to the woods then, flapping his horrible wings, ran through the trees to the river.

Enoch stood at the edge of the woods watching the creature disappear in the dark woods. John Barker stood by the cabin, angry and terrified. The fires in the yard flamed, and the dog ran around in circles as though it were lost and mad. The door to the cabin slammed shut, startling the men, and they thought they heard a rattling of ghostly chains on the rooftop.

John told Enoch this story:

"The children and I were fast asleep when I thought I heard a noise out by the cabin. I looked out the door, but saw nothing. Then I heard some wild screams coming from the woods and suddenly, without warning, or without seeing any men at all, the entire field burst into flame. I ran out into the yard thinking that

someone must be there. Then I remembered the children, asleep in the cabin, and hurried inside to wake them. They were gone! I ran back outside and saw this monster--this horrible creature--carrying my children away."

The men rode slowly back through the woods to Enoch's cabin, leaving the fires in the yard to simmer. The next morning, they went to John Barker's cabin. They hoped that it wasn't real--that it had all been a terrible nightmare. But as they neared the cabin, they saw first the smoldering fires scattered over the yard. Leading from the cabin to the woods, they found tracks--animal claws that were almost two feet long with claws that stretched on every side. The men were horrified, but realized that what they saw was proof that the terrible monster really did exist. It had not been a dream at all.

John insisted that he stay at his cabin, even though Enoch invited him to stay with his family. John wanted to wait and hope that something would happen. That perhaps his own family would return. He was all alone now. All of his hopes and dreams for himself and his family were lost. He had nothing to live for unless they came back.

Enoch left him there to try and repair the damages to his house and yard. Early the next morning, he mounted his horse and traveled through the woods to the cabin.

John's horse was tied in the barn. The front door to the cabin was open wide. Enoch's heart fluttered when he realized--John Barker had disappeared!

Many years before moving to Randolph County, John and Mary Barker lived in Pennsylvania. John lived with his parents on a farm at the time and had not met nor married Mary yet.

Mary was also living with her parents in a large two story house in Pennsylvania. She knew a man named William Gatlin who came to visit her quite often. She was a hard-working girl and also quite pretty, and William Gatlin knew that she would make him a fine wife.

But when he proposed to her, she turned him down. It seems as though she had just met a man named John Barker who she liked very much. He wasn't as wealthy or as handsome as William Gatlin, but he was a hard-worker and a kind man. Soon, John Barker asked her to marry him and she accepted. William Gatlin became very angry at Mary for not marrying him, and at John, for stealing his hopeful bride.

When John and Mary Barker moved to Randolph County, North Carolina, William Gatlin did not forget them. He tried hard to be a good man, but he could not control his jealousy. He wanted revenge on John and Mary Barker. They did not know that Gatlin followed them to Randolph County and watched them from the woods as they built their cabin and plowed their fields.

While hiding in the woods, Gatlin met a tribe of Indians living in huts. He lived with the Indians, gained their respect and soon became one of the leaders of the tribe. The chief was a very old man with a young son named Tonlin and a daughter named Velna. He listened with great interest to the white man's words. He



was impressed with his friendliness, intelligence and strength. He welcomed him into the tribe. He liked to sit in his wooden hut at night, smoke his pipe and listen to the wise words of the white man.

Gatlin waited until he knew that the Indians trusted him and then he told them his plan. There was a white woman, he said, living on a farm nearby who had been his wife until she was stolen by an evil white man. His plan was to steal the white woman back and have her live in the tribe as his wife.

The Indians agreed that injustice had been done to Gatlin and that it was his right to go and reclaim his wife, Mary Barker.

Gatlin knew that Mary had a sister in Pennsylvania, and he thought that he could trick Mary away from the cabin by letting her think that her sister was in danger. He carefully wrote this note and sent it to Mary:

Dear Sister Mary,

I am a captive. Our father and mother have been killed by the Indians and I am to be burned to death tomorrow. It is an old Indian custom that if my sister lays her hand on my head, I will be spared. You are my only hope. Please come tonight and we will both be free in the morning. Don't tell anyone of this or we will both be burned.

Your sister,
Sarah

Mary was alarmed to read the message. She was determined to save the life of her only sister. That night, she slipped through a plank in the floor and hurried to the woods. Standing by a tree at the edge of the woods was William Gatlin.

He smiled evilly and said, "I thought my little note would bring you out."

"You!" Mary exclaimed. "But, my sister. . ."

"Your sister is safe in Pennsylvania," he laughed. "I am the

one who wants you."

Mary turned around and began walking back to the cabin.

Gatlin grabbed her arm. "Don't go," he said. "I want you to come with me and be my wife."

"I am John Barker's wife," she said.

"He will think you have been killed," Gatlin said. "You loved me once. Surely you must still love me."

Mary Barker said, "Yes, I did love you once, but that was before I met my husband, who I love more than anyone. I could never, as long as I live, call myself your wife."

"Then I will have to make you come with me," he said. He grabbed her around the waist and pulled her through the woods. He pulled the shoes from her feet so that she could not run away. He pricked his own finger with his knife and let the blood drip on Mary's handkerchief that he threw on the ground. He wanted the settlers to believe that the Indians had taken her and killed her.

When he got her to the Indian village, he took her to a hut and threw her carelessly into a corner. She sat on the floor wondering what to do and how she might escape and find her way back to her husband. She was thinking this way when a young Indian girl entered.

She was a very beautiful girl with brown skin and shiny black hair. Mary was surprised that the girl spoke to her in English for most of the Indians did not.

"Your husband has just thrown in the death belt for you," the Indian maiden said. "He says that you have been unfaithful to him and now you refuse to live with him and be his wife. The death belt means that you must die before the sun comes up tomorrow."

"But, I am not his wife," Mary said. "I have a husband and three children living on a farm and I would like very much to return to them."

"Is this the truth?" the Indian girl asked.

"As true as you are there and I am here," Mary said.

"Then you should rightfully go back to your husband," she said. She leaned close to Mary and whispered.

"Here is what you must do. Tonight someone will come to you with a long staff like a shepherd's. When he comes, you must follow him. Trust him and you will be safe."

The Indian maiden left the hut. Mary waited. An old Indian woman brought her some corn for dinner and sat with her while she ate. After dinner, the sun became cooler as it started to lower in the sky. She waited until it was totally black outside. Then, very quietly, a young brave entered. In one hand he held a large wooden staff. He stood straight and tall, held his smooth brown hand to Mary and said, "Come."

Mary stood up, took his hand and followed him. He led her out of the quiet village, through the woods, over streams and rocks. It was so dark that Mary could barely see the ground that her feet were touching, but the Indian's eyes were sharp and he seemed to know the path very well. She trusted him, just like the young maiden advised, but she did not know where she was going, and she was afraid. It seemed like miles that they traveled. Once, they came upon a group of white settlers. Mary wanted to talk to them and see if her husband was among them. But before she could speak, the Indian grabbed her arm and pulled her quickly back into the woods.

"You will be safer with me for now," he said.

Finally the Indian stopped.

"We are here."

"But where?" Mary asked, for all she saw around her were trees, rocks, leaves and dirt.

The Indian pointed to a large rock. He rolled it to the side and uncovered a large gaping hole. He motioned for Mary to go in. She looked at him curiously, but remembered what the Indian maiden said, and crawled into the hole. She saw a bright ray of light at the end of the small underground tunnel and when she crawled a short distance, suddenly a large cave-like room opened up to her.

She looked around. In the room was a large wooden bed piled high with soft straw. A fire burned warmly in the fireplace. A long wooden table stretched across the room, and on it, Mary saw meats, vegetables and fruits like she had not seen since she left Pennsylvania. Beside the table stood the Indian maiden, and beside the maiden stood a tall, stout man with snow white hair and a white beard that covered his face and grew down onto his chest.

The man held out his strong hand.

"Mary," he said. "I thought you would be hungry."

4

Early the next morning when the evil Gatlin went to the hut to prepare for her execution, he discovered that Mary was gone. He was furious.

"Where is she?" he shouted.

No one knew. Gatlin fumed and stormed through the village in a rage.

"You have allowed her to escape!" he said to no one in

particular. "She must have found her way to the farm by now and I don't know how I shall ever get her back."

Gatlin sent a group of Indian scouts to spy on John Barker's home to see if she was there. They did not see her, they reported. They saw John working in the field and his three children playing in the yard.

"He has hidden her somewhere out of my sight," Gatlin said. "But I will not forget it. I will torture her so that she will beg for her return." A group of Indians boarded a canoe on the river very late one night and headed for the Barker cabin. They held a torch high above their heads. The Barker house was dark. One Indian climbed to the roof of the cabin and held the torch high into the air while another climbed in a window and grabbed the sleeping boy.

Gatlin was pleased. Not only had he stolen the child, but at the same time had frightened all of the farmers who saw the mysterious light.

He put the boy into the same hut that Mary had escaped from. That night while Gatlin was asleep, the young Indian brave sneaked into the hut, grabbed the boy in his arms and carried him through the woods to his mother.

Gatlin was again outraged.

"How can you guards possibly sleep so soundly as to allow a small, noisy boy to escape?" he asked. "He is now safe from me too, but I will not be discouraged."

A few nights later, Gatlin had another plan. He dressed some Indians in a ceremonial costume that they used to worship the Great Spirit. The costume looked like some kind of horrible

monster from another world. On the Indians' feet he tied large blocks of wood with twigs fastened around the edge so that the footprints the creature left would be strange and frightening.

He sprinkled piles of gunpowder around the Barker cabin and instructed the Indians to fire their rifles into the piles to make a terrific noise.

The Indians did this. William Gatlin watched from the woods as John Barker ran screaming from his house, frightened by the noise and horrified at the creature who had stolen his children.

Gatlin placed these children in a different hut, thinking that perhaps there was a secret door in the old hut that the prisoners had found.

But the next night, while Gatlin slept, the brave sneaked quietly into the cabin and led the children through the woods to the underground cave where their mother, brother and the old white-haired man were living.

This time Gatlin was so mad that his face was red and his hands were shaking.

"Someone is playing a trick on me," he thought. "But this will be the last time, for I will bring John Barker here and have him killed before he can possibly escape."

The Indians surprised John in his sleep, tied his hands behind his back and led him to the Indian village.

Gatlin was waiting by the fire for his return. He gathered the Indian tribal council around him and stood in the center of the ring.

"This is an evil man," Gatlin told the Indians. He pointed to John Barker. "He stole my wife from me many years ago and now when I have finally found her, he has stolen her again."

John Barker stood straight and tall. He looked around the circle of Indians.

"That is not true," he said. "The woman he speaks of is my wife and has been my wife for many years. She was never this man's wife, nor will she ever be, for she loves me and our children."

Gatlin paced before the fire which flared out angrily in the night.

"They are my children," he said. "My three lovely children that were lost."

The Indian council members looked at one another wondering which man they should believe.

"I am a stranger to all of you," John Barker said. "But, I have never lied to any man red or white, and I am not lying now."

"And I say that you are," Gatlin said. He turned to the Indians. "I have lived with you for many months. I have eaten from your bowls and ridden upon your horses. Can you not trust me as a brother?"

The Indians were puzzled. They talked among themselves and looked at the two men standing before them. The old chief raised his hand for silence.

"We must decide among ourselves which man is telling the truth," he said. "Let us go to the council hut, smoke the pipe and let the wisdom of the Great Spirit come down on us."

The Indians agreed. They walked slowly and silently to the council hut and left the two white men waiting by the fire.

Mary Barker and her three children sat around the wooden table in the cave. A bowl of fruit had been placed before them.

by the old man. The children munched quietly on fresh red apples.

Mary was restless. She stood up, walked around the large room and gazed to the rock which blocked the hole leading to the woods outside.

"Mary," the old man said. "Why don't you sit down for a while and be patient."

"How can I be, Aaron?" she said. "At least I know that my three children are safe here with me, but where is my husband?"

"Velna and Tonlin will see to it that he is unharmed," Aaron said. "Trust me. Trust them. They are good."

"Yes, I know they are," she said. "They have saved us all from harm. And you, too, Aaron. What would we have done if you had not fed us and given us a place to sleep?"

Aaron shrugged. "You have been a joy to me. It has been a long time since I have had a family around me."

"You have said that before," Mary said. "But still you won't tell me who you are or where you have come from."

Aaron shook his head. "And I won't. It doesn't matter," he said. "All that matters is that you and your family are soon together again."

Mary said, "Do you think we will be? I don't think I can bear this hiding much longer. I want to know that my husband is safe."

They heard the rock above them roll to the side and Tonlin's brown face appeared at the door.

Mary rushed to his side. "Oh, Tonlin. Is there any word? Have you seen my husband?"

Tonlin took her hand. "I cannot tell you anything right now," he said. "But you must come with me--all of you. Come immediately for we have a long journey to travel in a short time."

"But where?" she asked.

"Come with me and you will see."

Tonlin carried the youngest boy in his arms and Mary held the hands of the other two children as they hurried through the dark woods. Mary stumbled over roots and vines, but followed close behind Tonlin. Shortly, they arrived at the Indian village.

As they entered the camp, the Indian council was breaking up and gathering again by the fire. The chief sat at the head of the group and the braves gathered around him. In the center of the ring stood John Barker and William Gatlin.

As soon as the Indians had taken their positions, Tonlin led the family from the woods. Mary looked at the fire and the council seated in a circle. Suddenly she saw John Barker, the husband she had not seen in several weeks.

She ran ahead of Tonlin excitedly.

"John!" she called. "John Barker!"

John saw her at the same instant, and saw the children following close behind. He ran from the circle and grabbed them into his arms.

"I thought you were dead," he cried. "I thought that these Indians had killed all of you as they were about to kill me."

The Indian braves looked at one another and then looked at William Gatlin, who stood in the center of the ring watching the family. His face was red, his eyes were dark and his fists were balled into knots.

The chief stood up.

"I see that our decision has been made for us," he said. "This man and this woman must certainly belong together and the children are unquestionably theirs."

He turned to William Gatlin.

"This is the man who is lying to us and has lied for all the months he has been with us. Sieze him!"

6

"The old man seemed so lonely," Mary Barker told her husband. "He was so kind to us, and I hoped perhaps we could take him to live with us as a grandfather."

John smiled. "He must be a wonderful man for taking such good care of you and the children."

Tonlin agreed to lead them once more to the hideout in the woods. They walked more slowly this time, fearing no one and happy to be together again. Velna, the Indian maiden walked beside her brother and the Barker family followed close behind.

When they came to the white rock in the woods, they stopped. The rock had been rolled away and the hole was gaping open.

"They've taken him!" Mary cried. "They found him hiding here and have taken him prisoner."

Velna put her hand on Mary's shoulder.

"No," she said. "He has left of his own will."

Mary was puzzled.

"You see, he has been living in the woods for so long that he doesn't want to live in a cabin anymore. He loves the trees and the soil."

"But we have lots of that at our cabin. He could be so happy there."

Velna nodded. "Perhaps."

"Where did this strange man come from?" John asked.

47

Velna sat down on a stump and told this story:

"Many years ago when I was just a small girl and my father was chief of this tribe, this man was taken captive. He pleaded with the warriors to spare his life for he had a wife and small child. But they did not listen. He was to be killed. That afternoon, my brother, Tonlin, and I were fishing in the river with nets that we had weaved. Suddenly a big storm came and in my haste to return to the village, I stumbled on a log and fell into the river.

"Tonlin jumped in and tried to save me for he was a much stronger swimmer than me, but he was just a small boy and the waters in the storm were rushing swiftly. This man at the village heard our screams, ran from his captives and carried us safely to our father.

"Our father, the chief, wanted to spare the man's life for saving his children, so that night, he helped him escape. Aaron went to his family, but they were gone and he did not know where to find them. He was all alone. We led him to this cave and, for many months, brought him food and water. Finally, the other braves forgot about him. They thought he must be dead. He has lived quietly in these woods since that time, eating wild berries and fruit, fish and small game. He has kept peace in these woods for many years."

Mary said, "I wanted to thank him for what he has done for us."

"He knows that you are thankful," Tonlin said.

"Will you see him again?" Mary asked. "Will any of us ever see him again?"

Tonlin and Velna looked at each other and smiled.

"Don't worry," Velna said. "If you ever need him he will be

right there. If the children are lost, he will guide them home. If you are hurt or sick, he will help you get well. If you are in trouble, he will find you."

Mary nodded. She took her husband's hand, and together the family walked back through the woods to their small cabin and field.

Enoch Hammer and his wife, Emily, were surprised when they saw the Barker family walk through the field towards the empty cabin. Enoch ran to them excitedly.

"This is truly a miracle," he exclaimed. "You were all dead and now you are alive again."

Mary told him the story of how they had been protected from harm, fed and sheltered in the woods.

"This pleases me very much," Enoch said. "We can again feel happy to be safe and alive. Gatlin, the evil white man, is gone. The Indians are again our friends."

"Most of all," said Mary, "we should be happy to know that we have a friend in the woods who is watching over us."

-End-

Why Main Street Isn't

Everyone in Asheboro knows that Main Street, which runs all the way from Salisbury Street to Cox Road, isn't the main street at all. The main street in town is Sunset Avenue. There was a time, almost a hundred years ago, when Main Street was exactly that. The courthouse sat on the corner of Main and Salisbury streets. The Post Office was close by. Shops and stores lined up and down the street. Blacksmiths and stables were there. When someone "went to town," they went to Main Street. But something happened that caused the entire town to shift to Sunset Avenue, almost five blocks away.

It was in the year 1889. People in those days rode horses and drove wagons down dirt roads. The town was much smaller then, but many people had large white houses that were close to Main Street.

The day was the fourth of July. The town was bustling with excitement. People woke up at the crack of dawn, finished their chores, then hurried downtown. Storekeepers locked their doors, put on their hats and joined the crowd that was gathering on the new street.

"I can't wait to see it," Billy Wilson said. "I haven't ever seen one before."

"I saw one," his friend, Thomas, said, pulling proudly on the straps of his suspenders. "I saw one when I was in High Point visiting Aunt Louise. It came right by the house where she lived."

"I saw a picture of one," Nancy Adams said. "They showed us a book in school when they found out one was coming here."

The children clustered together and talked about it. They were the early ones. The adults watched their clocks and knew when it was time. Many of them were too excited to stay at home, so they joined the children and neighbors along the side of the street.

"It's time!" someone shouted. Those who were sitting down stood up. Those who were standing moved closer. Small children pushed their way to the front so they could see.

Finally, they saw it. Chugging slowly down the tracks, a cloud of smoke following along behind it, the train pulled slowly into the depot.

People cheered and waved excitedly. Children jumped up and down and shouted for joy. A band in fresh new blue uniforms played "Dixie." The elderly men removed their hats and placed them over their chests. The women sang along with the band. Everyone was too excited to stand still.

This was the very first train to ever come through Asheboro. The men worked on the tracks for months, stretching the ties from end to end and hammering the rails down. Finally, the track was finished and the train came bringing mail, loads of freight from High Point, and passengers. The conductor leaned over the rail and waved to the people on the street as the train slowed to a stop.

On that exciting day, the town of Asheboro buzzed with activity. The mayor stood by the new depot and welcomed the train. The people cheered, danced and celebrated.

Every day after that first day, the people gathered at the



depot to wait for the train. It brought mail to the families, news of other cities and newspapers from far away places. It linked the people of Asheboro with people in other cities in the state. It helped to keep them informed of what was happening around them.

Daily, people met at the depot or waited in the streets for the train to come. But the new train was never on schedule. Sometimes it would be as much as an hour late. The people didn't mind. They looked forward to seeing their friends and chatting while they waited.

When the train arrived, it unloaded many large bags of mail. The bags had to be carried all the way down to the post office, which sat by the courthouse on Main Street. Many people did not wait for the mail to be carried and sorted. They poured through the heavy bags looking for mail that had come for them.

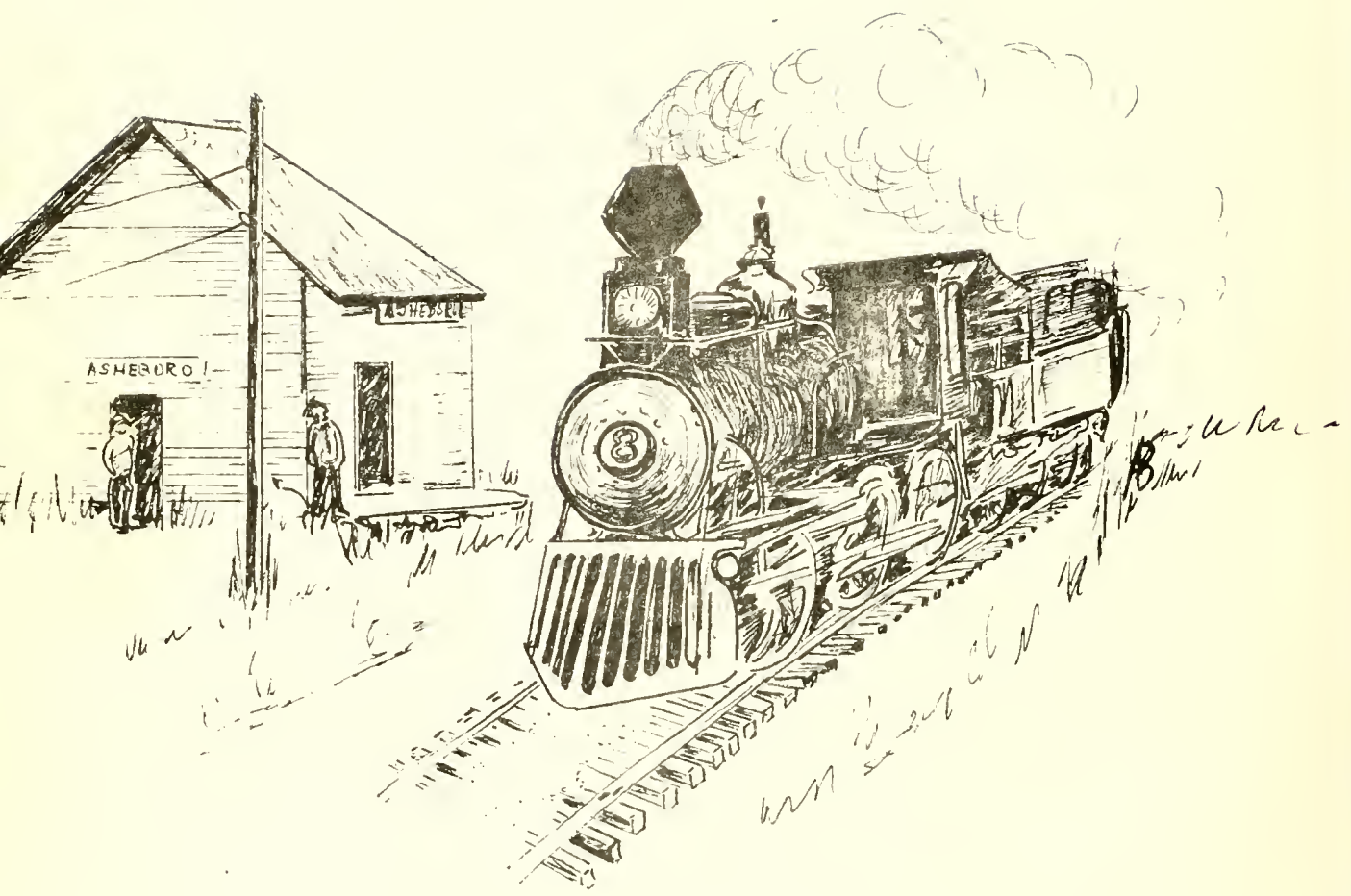
Soon, it became necessary for the Post Office to move to Depot Street. The bags of mail were very heavy. Main Street was so inconvenient to the people as well as the train.

The people continued to close up their shops, leave their homes and gather at the depot and the post office.

Mr. Wood, who owned a hardware store on Main Street, decided that perhaps it would be wise if he opened a new store by the depot. That way, when the people were waiting for the train, they could browse through his store. He would not have to close, and perhaps he could make more sales.

Pretty soon, other stores followed. Mr. Stedman moved the General Store to the new street. Clothing stores moved, abandoning their old shops and erecting new buildings.

Before long, all of the stores on Main Street had relocated by the depot on Depot Street. When the courthouse was rebuilt,



it too was moved closer to the center of town, now Depot Street.

The stores moved where the people were. And, they did so wisely. For just as Mr. Wood predicted, the people no longer waited in the depot for the train, but they went to a store, or different stores, while they waited. Women could save time by doing their shopping while waiting for the train to come. Men who owned shops were able to remain open. The post office was so close by that the mail could be sorted quickly.

Depot Street was renamed Sunset Avenue. But, it is now the main street in Asheboro. As the town continued to grow, it grew up around the small depot. There were always enough people around the depot to keep the nearby stores busy.

Now Main Street is away from the center of town. It is no longer "Main Street" as it was meant to be.

-End-

The Story of Naomi Wise and Jonathan Lewis

Naomi Wise was an orphan who lived in Randleman with a family named Adams. She was a beautiful girl with brown hair that hung loosely on her back and skin as fair and delicate as a flower. Her eyes were blue and gentle, and twinkled happily when she smiled. She worked hard in the Adams' house, helping with the chores, cleaning and cooking, and they loved her very much.

Jonathan Lewis lived in Randleman also, but worked a few miles away in Asheboro for Mr. Benjamin Elliot. Mr. Elliot owned a small store that sold cloth, flour, sugar and many other things that the people wanted to buy. Jonathan was a clerk in the store and helped the customers find the articles they wanted. Jonathan's family had lived in Randleman for many years and almost everyone knew them. His father and brothers were tall men with powerful arms and legs that sometimes frightened people. Many people thought they were mean and anxious to find trouble. Jonathan himself was a strong man like his brothers, but he seemed to be a very kind man and had many friends.

One of Jonathan's friends was William Adams, who was the head of the house where Naomi lived. Jonathan came to visit Mr. Adams. He liked to sit on the porch in the evenings and talk or join the family for dinner after a hard day's work. This is how he met Naomi and very shortly fell in love with her. He loved her because she was gentle, kind and beautiful. She was the loveliest girl he had ever met. And, she quickly fell in love with him

because he was strong and protective, yet very kind.

Jonathan began coming to the Adams' house not to visit with Mr. Adams, but to see Naomi. He would rush to the house as soon as he could from work, sit with her for hours and talk. He escorted her on walks through the woods and to the stream, holding her hand as though it were gold. When Jonathan asked Naomi to marry him, she accepted, and he felt like the happiest man in all of Randolph County.

Jonathan's mother wanted great things for her son, as every mother does. She struggled many years to raise him into a good man. She wanted him to be respected by the people in the town. When Jonathan told his mother of his plans to marry Naomi, she became very upset. She had different plans for her son, and realized that Naomi, being an orphan, did not have many valuable things and did not have a name as important as the Lewis name. She did not understand that Jonathan loved Naomi so much that neither the money nor her name was important.

Mr. Elliot, Jonathan's boss, had a daughter about the same age as Naomi named Hettie. She was also a beautiful girl, wore fine expensive clothes and was liked by many men. Jonathan wanted to please his mother, and also realized that if he married Hettie, then he would soon inherit wealth from Mr. Elliot and be a very respected man. He began to call on her in the afternoons after work. Even though his heart longed for Naomi, he postponed their wedding, and puzzled to himself about what he should do.

Rumors began to spread around Randleman of Jonathan's engagement to Naomi. Soon the news reached Hettie, who was alarmed that Jonathan had deceived her. Jonathan assured her that

the stories were not true and that he did not plan to marry Naomi.

On the same day, he went to Naomi and told her to meet him by the Deep River that night and he would take her to Asheboro to they could be married.

"But, why can't we be married in the daytime?" Naomi asked. "Wouldn't it be better if all of our friends could be there?"

"It must be done this way," Jonathan answered. "Trust me."

Naomi trusted him. That night she left the Adams' house with her water pail in her hand and walked through the dark woods to the river. She felt very happy as she sat on the bank waiting and, when she heard Jonathan's horse coming, she jumped up excitedly.

Jonathan was acting strangely, as though he had a very dark secret that he did not wish to tell. He helped Naomi into the saddle behind him and said to her,

"Naomi, I love you more than anyone in the world and never would I wish any harm on you."

Naomi was puzzled and said, "Why, Jonathan, who would ever have a reason to harm me?"

Jonathan did not answer, but stared straight ahead into the dark night. They rode on silently. Shortly, Naomi became worried.

"Jonathan," she said. "We aren't heading for Asheboro at all. Where are you taking me?"

"You're right. We aren't going to Asheboro," he said. "I am taking you to the river because I must drown you."

Naomi gasped and pleaded with him to spare her.

"I have to do it," he said. "I love you very much but I can't marry you. I can't let you live if I can't have you for my own."

Naomi's struggles were useless, for Jonathan would not set her free. He lifted her from his horse, tied her skirt over her head and held her in the water until she died.

A family living nearby heard Naomi's screams, but when they came to the river, Jonathan was already gone. All they found were hoofprints in the muddy bank and Naomi lying face down in the water. The next day Jonathan was arrested and taken to jail. His brothers did not want him to be in trouble or to be punished for the crime, so they broke into the jail house and freed him. The sheriff was so frightened by the size and strength of the Lewis brothers that he did not chase them.

Many years later Jonathan was captured again and brought back to Asheboro for a trial. However, because so much time had passed, no one could remember exactly what had happened, and Jonathan was again freed. He never saw the young girl, Hettie Elliot, again. He roamed aimlessly through the woods and fields of Randolph County for several years.

After a time, Jonathan suddenly became very ill. He had a very high fever and knew that he was soon to die. He sent everyone from his room but his father, now an old man, and confessed to drowning Naomi.

"When I was in jail, I couldn't stop thinking about her," he said. "Her face was in front of me when I was awake as well as asleep and I could hardly endure it. All of the days since that time have been miserable for me. I know now that I truly cannot live without her."

After he spoke, he closed his eyes and died. He was

freed from his misery and united again with sweet Naomi,
who he loved more than anyone else on earth.

-End-



Here is a list of books in which you can find the original stories of some of the ones you have just read. If you want to read more books and stories about Randolph County, ask your librarian to help you find them.

Blair, J. A. Reminiscences of Randolph County. Greensboro: Reece and Elam, 1890. Reprinted 1968 by the Randolph County Historical Society. (Fine Horses, Martha Bell)

Burgess, Fred. Randolph County: Economic and Social. May, 1924. Reprinted 1969 by the Randolph County Historical Society. (Fine Horses, Martha Bell)

Fanning, David. The Narrative of Colonel David Fanning. Reprint Co., 1973. Reprint of 1865 edition. (Fine Horses)

Holmes, E. P. Angels in Dream Bring Fortune to Aunt Ellen. Winston Salem: Clay Printing Co. 1959. (The Silver Tree)

"Old Dan Tucker," The State. Vol. 29, No. 14, December 9, 1961. (Dan Tucker, Dan Tucker Comes to Town)

The Randolph Story. Randleman Rotary Club. 1976. (Reprint of the "Story of Naomi Wise" by Charlie Vernon)
(The Story of Naomi Wise and Jonathan Lewis, Martha Bell)

Vernon, Charlie (Braxton Craven?). Mary Barker.
(Indians and the White-Haired Man)

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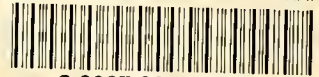
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Presnell

Dan Tucker and other Randolph
County heroes in folklore.

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