

The Connector

Newsletter of the Tar River Connections Genealogical Society
Preserving the Past ... for the Future

Summer 2006

Billie Jo Matthews & Peggy Strickland, Co-Editors Volume 10 Number 3

Bell Family Tragedy They Should've Stayed in Edgecombe

John Bell, his wife, **Lucy**, their 6 children and 9 slaves immigrated to Tennessee from Edgecombe Co., NC about 1804. [See "Bell Witch Characters" on Page 13.] Their trouble began in 1817 and the Bell family was never again the same. The first hints of what was to come were sightings of strange animals, followed by uncommon sounds—knocking on the door and scratching noises on the outer walls of the house. By 1818, the disturbances had escalated.

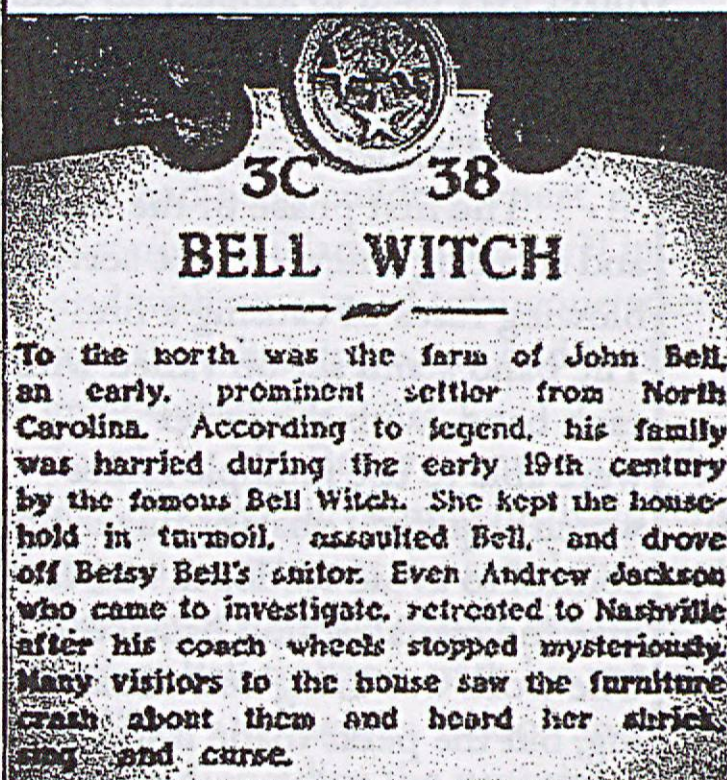
John Bell's four sons—**John**, **Drewry**, **Joel** and **Richard**

Williams—occupied a room on the second floor. Richard wrote: "Just after the family had retired, a noise commenced in our room like a rat gnawing vigorously on the bed post. John and Drew got up to kill the rat. But the moment they were out of

bed the noise ceased. They examined the bedstead, but discovered no marks made by a rat. As soon as they returned to bed the noise commenced again, and thus it continued until a late hour or some time after midnight, and we were all up a half dozen times or more searching the room for the rat, turning over everything, but found nothing." This went on for weeks, the noise moving from room to room.

As time went on, the demonstrations increased—bed covering pulled from beds, noises like lips smacking and gulping. Richard Williams described another incident, "I had just fallen into a sweet doze, when I felt my hair beginning to twist, and then a sudden jerk, which raised me. It

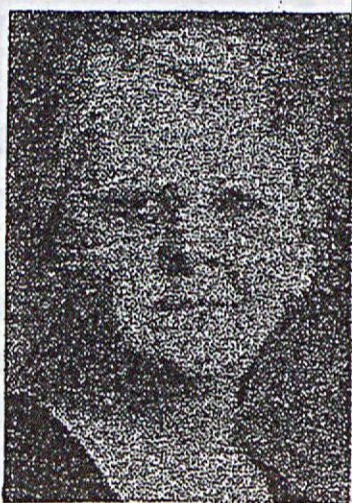
[BELL, CONT. ON P. 10]



First Female Employee at ACL

Miss Lillie

McIntyre was 19 years old when she got the job as telegrapher with the **Atlantic Coast Line Railroad** on January 20, 1887. The first



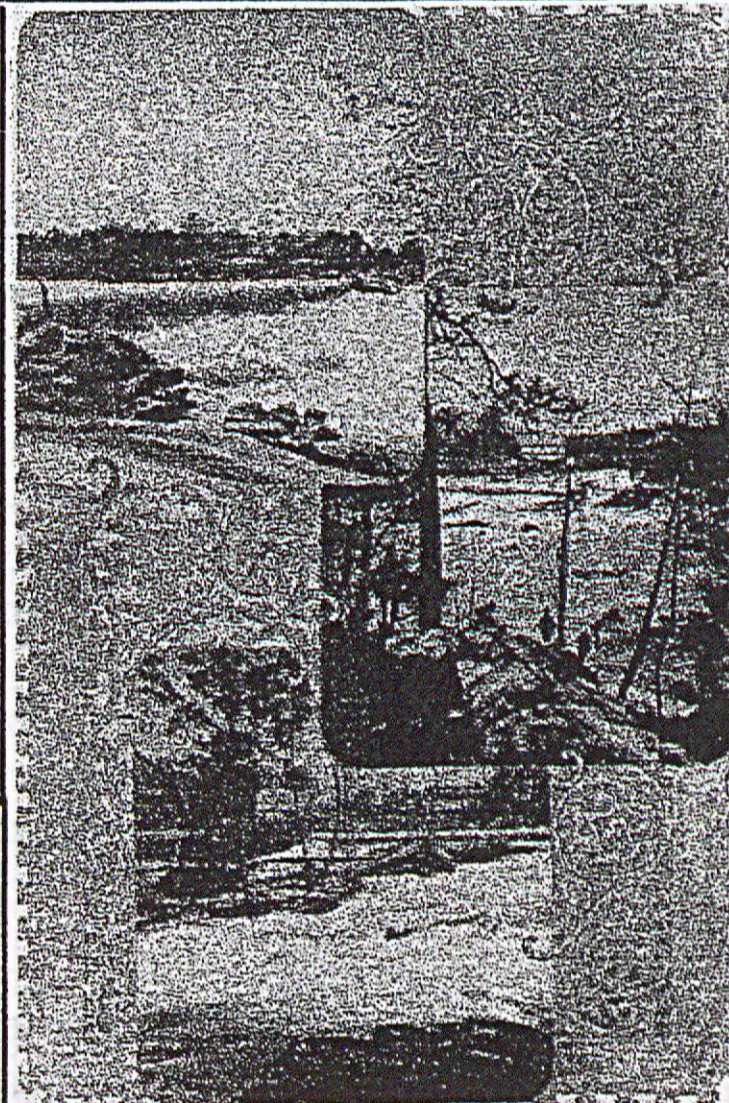
woman ever employed by the ACL, she went to work at the little town of **Warsaw** in **Duplin Co., NC** where she was born. She wanted to make money to attend **Peace Institute** in **Raleigh, NC**, but many folks felt that a young girl had no business

away from home even though she had dropped her skirts "well below my insteps and put up my hair."

Her first attempt to make money was as a teacher in the **Franklin School**, which had formerly been a military institution. But teachers were far more poorly paid 43 years ago than they are today (1930), and it was a slow way to earn college money. A friend of the family volunteered to teach her telegraphy and she was an apt pupil. The friend recommended

[SEE MCINTYRE, PAGE 4]

Picture at right from:
**North Carolina. Board of Agriculture
North Carolina and Its Resources.**
Winston: M.I. & J.C. Stewart, Public Printers and Binders, 1896.



UNC Documenting the American South

WATER POWER, TAR RIVER—ROCKY MOUNT.

QUERY GUIDELINES

1. Members may submit three queries annually to the address or e-mail below.
2. The query should include a time frame and as much pertinent information as you have.
3. Queries should concern someone who has resided in the following counties: **Person, Granville, Vance, Franklin, Nash, Edgecombe, Pitt, Beaufort**, or adjacent counties linked to the **Tar River** by streams and creeks.
4. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for reply by mail.

Tar River Connections Genealogical Society

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TRICKLES FROM THE PAST The Rocky Mount June German

BY WILLIS BOICE WALKER

The dance was always held in a tobacco warehouse, and in June, the atmosphere reached a fervid aura for all who were fortunate enough to receive a bid. The committees booked the nation's best bands, and laid out plans in detail years in advance.

It so happened that I was working at **Proctor's Jewelry and Electric Company**, which had the only record shop in town, and the only sound system with a professional sound man experienced in reproduction acoustics and modulation. **Thurman Proctor**, better known as "Snag," made the first mixer ever used to amplify an entire band. Up until then, amplifiers had only one input. That made it mandatory to use one microphone, which made it difficult to highlight a soloist. Thurman overlooked having his amplifier patented and someone else grabbed the credit and benefits.

The first phase of the German was stringing the thousands of lights, and securing a new electric service that could carry the load without risk of blowing fuses or causing a fire.

The band stand set-up varied with each band. With the mixer we were able to use multiple mikes which required constant finger-tip control to avoid feedback and to give the overall sound balance. The work was tiring and demanding, but the perks made it worthwhile and entertaining.

Travel was very slow by today's standards, so most of the bands spent several days, usually at the **Ricks Hotel**. While there they would frequent our record shop to listen to records that they had only heard while they were being recorded. At that time the only records available were 10" 78 RPMs

on a very delicate platter. Record players were bulky and portables were unheard of. Consequently travelling bands were often the last ones to hear their own music. While visiting our record shop, most of the artists were delighted to autograph records. This was done with a snub-nose pen in white ink.

Exposure over time created a condition of familiarity and interest in local geography and customs, which led to many warm conversations that extended the memories of past Germans to this day.

During the June German's early days, Rocky Mount society was segregated. However, both whites and blacks used the same facilities for June Germans on successive nights. By all accounts, a good time was had by all!

32ND ANNUAL
ORIGINAL JUNE GERMAN
"SOUTH'S BIGGEST COLORED DANCE"
PLANTERS WAREHOUSE No. 2
Rocky Mount, N. C.
MONDAY, JUNE 12
2 Bands Sunset to Sunrise
LUCKY MILLINDER - ERSKINE HAWKINS

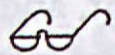
Men Admission \$1.00 Federal Tax25 State Tax05 Total \$1.30	Spectators \$1.00 Federal Tax25 State Tax05 Total \$1.30
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Sponsored By The
- RHYTHM CLUB -

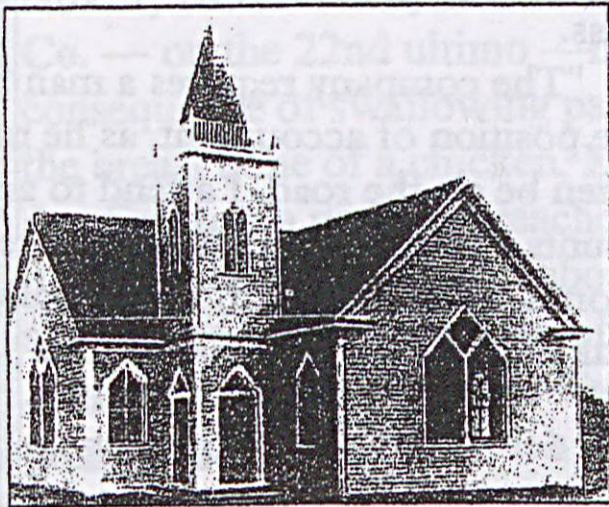
Spectators Tickets on Sale at:
Douglas-Armstrong Drug Co. until 6:00 P. M., June 12
Cor. Main and Thomas Streets, Rocky Mount, N. C.

[See "Remembering the June German" on Page 20]

Readers Choice Local Color



The History of Zebulon United Methodist Church 1907-1997, by Ann Veazey Davis



Ann Davis was kind enough to send a copy of this church history to Tar River Connections for the history-genealogy room of **Braswell Memorial Library in Rocky Mount, NC**. Many of the names are people that moved to **Zebulon in Wake County** from the TRC area.

Before Zebulon became a town in 1907 Methodist congregations were on the rise in NC. By 1778 the **Carolina Circuit** was divided into three sections – the **New Hope**, the **Tar River**, and the **Roanoke**. **John King**, a graduate of **Oxford University in England**, was a member of the first conference in **America**. He later bought a home near **Louisburg in Franklin County**, and the records show that he was asked to give a prayer at the Annual Conference of the **Methodist Episcopal church** held in the attic of **Rev. Major Green Hill**, his neighbor, on April 20, 1785.

By 1906 the town of Zebulon was beginning to emerge out of the surrounding communities such as **Wakefield** and **Earpsboro**. **Frank Fletcher Eure**, a Lay Preacher, was appointed to the **Wakefield Circuit**. He lived in **Spring Hope**,
[LOCAL, CONT. ON P. 5]

CONNECTOR

AEROPLANE COPS NEEDED IN CITY

Mr. J.T. Bailey Would Have Called Them to arrest English Sparrow



"Hello, Central, give me the aerial cops."

But Mr. J.T. Bailey didn't have time to grab a telephone when one of those "damn sparrows" flew through the window into his music shop at the intersection of **Main and Washington streets**, yesterday, clutched a five dollar note that happened to be lying on the desk in its bill, and started sailing away to points unknown and unattainable. Then it was that Mr. Bailey

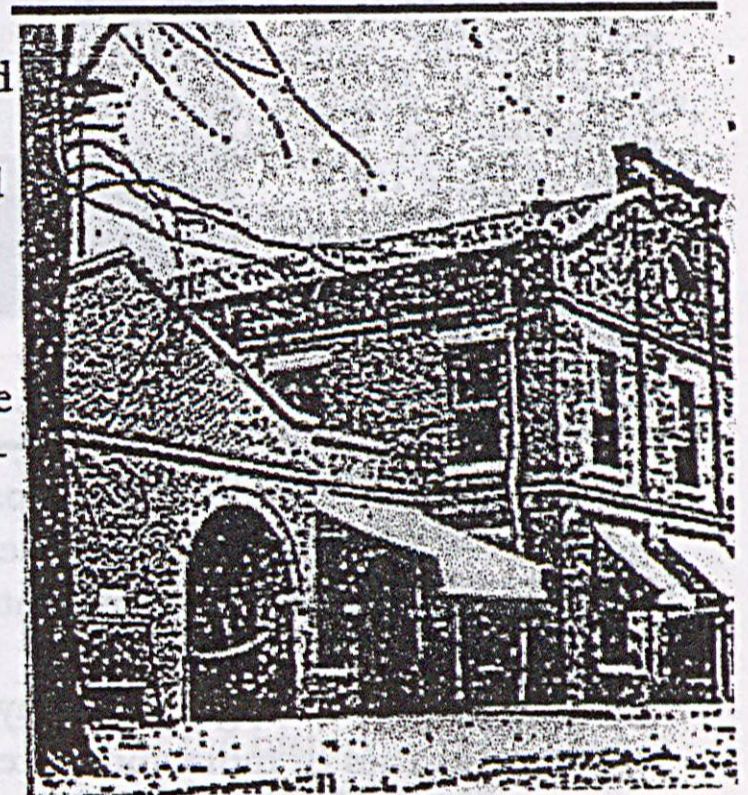
wanted an aeroplane cop.

The act of thievery happened when a girl employee in the shop left the money drawer open for a few moments. The feathery villain, who, Mr. Bailey vouchsafes, had been watching for a chance for some time, flew in through the open window from in a nearby tree in which it had been building a nest, grabbed the fluttering William [McKinley?] in the bill, and without a word to anyone started through the adjoining room and back to the great outdoors.

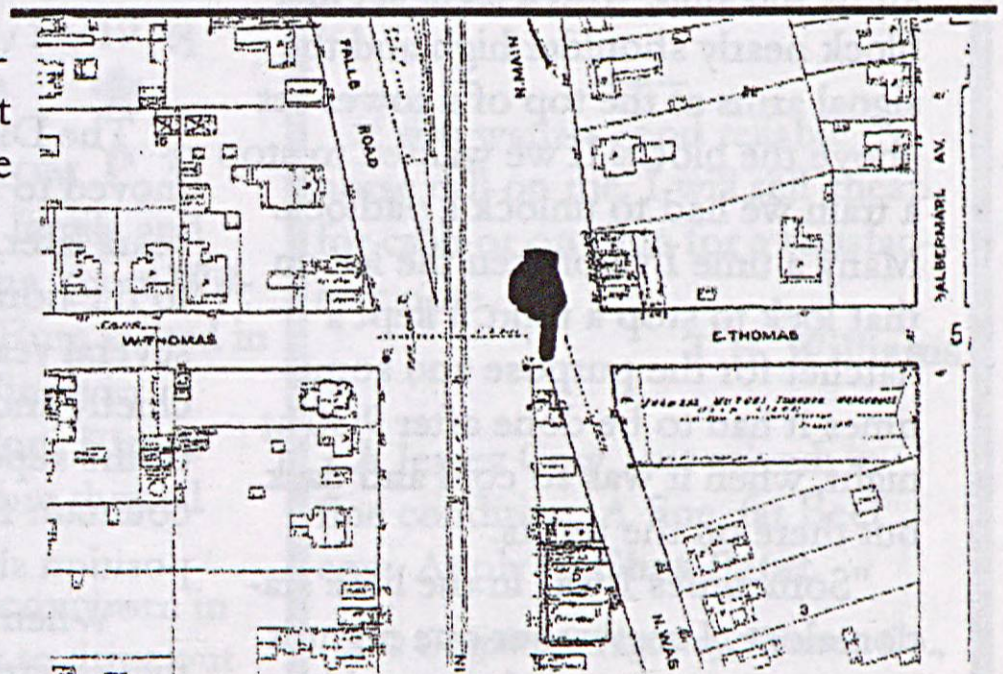
Just here Mr. Bailey commenced flying tactics. Casually turning his head while waiting on a customer, he spied the criminal sparrow struggling across the floor, half flying, half walking, with his valuable booty. With a voracious "shoo" and a mighty headlong dive the proprietor and the customer alike made for the costly visitor from the bird kingdom. With a heavy sigh at losing such a fine blanket or nest covering, the would-be criminal loosened his hold upon his fluttering burden, and safely made his way unhampered to his old reliable tree just outside the window where he perched himself and proceeded to shout naughty names at the frustrators of his scheme for a comfortable home.

Mr. Bailey and the other people, however, did not mind the chirpy song in the least, for had not the note been safely retrieved and returned to the money drawer and all employees were warned to be on the lookout for attacks from feathery friends?

[Rocky Mount Evening Telegram, 8/18/1919]



Tree Near Bailey's Store



Main and Washington Streets

[McINTYRE, CONT. FROM P. 1] her to **Edwin Borden**, Division Superintendent of the ACL with offices in **Wilmington, NC**.

One day Lillie received a message from Mr. Borden. "Would Miss McIntyre please come down to **Wilmington** to see him?"

"I just felt he wanted to see what I looked like. He could have tried my telegraphy over the wire," she recalls, but he hired her and assigned her to the **Warsaw** station.

She had been on the job just a short time when a friend of her family wrote to her father that he "had better send for her as that job around the station was no place for a girl." But Lillie's mother stood behind her and she was allowed to keep her job.

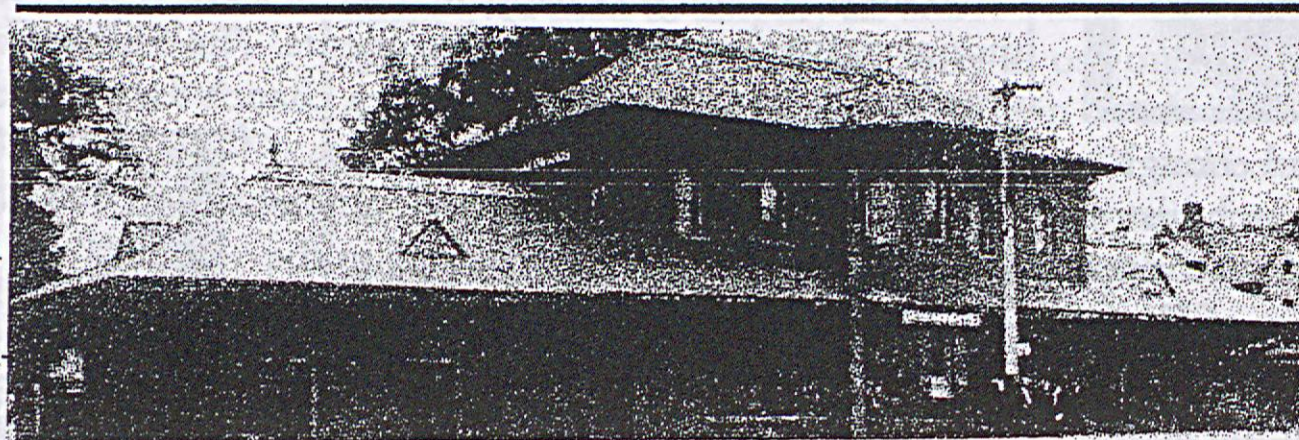
"I boarded with a family that rented one of the company's houses. The agent boarded there, too. I got my board, which amounted to about \$10 a month, and \$20 a month salary. It was right good pay, with possibilities of more and better work. The agent got my board as rent on the house.

"I had a lot to do besides the telegraphy. The signal block was a hand affair that was hard to work. You know the kind, with a lever set in a block nearly shoulder high and the signal arms at the top of a tower set above the block. If we wanted to stop a train we had to unlock a padlock. Many a time I've broken the ice on that lock to stop a train. I kept a hatchet for the purpose and sometimes it had to be done after 9:30 at night, when it was so cold and dark out there on the tracks.

"Sometimes I was in the little station alone. I remember one night it was pouring snow and very cold. There was a good fire going in the

little stove and a lamp gave out a warm cozy glow. The door opened and a dirty, ragged tramp shuffled into the station. It was getting late and I told him that 'loafing in the station was not allowed.' 'But I'm freezing out there in the snow,' he answered. so I told him he could stay until 10 o'clock, when I would have to lock up and go home.

"Just imagine how I felt, thinking about putting that poor tramp out in the cold, snowy night, and not knowing whether he would object to being put out and knock me over and take



ACL Depot at Rocky Mount, 1905

the keys to get back in again. He never bothered me, and I don't know what became of him."

"Why, it may sound strange, but back in those early days at **Warsaw** the folks would come to town and come down to the station and peep through the window at me as if I were some sort of queer exhibit in a museum. To them a woman working for a living at something other than teaching school was indeed a curiosity."

Promotion

The Division Headquarters was moved to **Rocky Mount** about 4 years later, and Lillie was transferred to the home office as telegrapher. For several years she worked on the wire chiefly and then went into the office of the superintendent as assistant accountant for the First Division, a position she still holds (in 1930).

"When I came to **Rocky Mount** ... there were no women (working) in the stores; there were no women

stenographers, or bookkeepers. Many young women came to me and asked me to teach them telegraphy. I wouldn't do that, and instead recommended that they learn a business course. I taught myself stenography and typewriting, and helped some others to prepare themselves for business.

"The company requires a man for the position of accountant, as he must often be on the road. I attend to accounts collectible and payable. Every month, about the 25th, I personally make out about 300 bills to firms who

rent and lease warehouse space, filling station space, and other storage space on our property. These bills are rendered according to contracts drawn and signed by our legal representative. Then I draw vouchers for light, water and such

bills for the offices and other buildings of the company at all the district headquarters in the First Division. These are **Richmond, Norfolk, Florence, Wilmington** and **Rocky Mount**.

"I never handle a cent of money, but every piece of paper that passes through my hands represents money. Everything is done by voucher. One office is the clearing house for the First Division, which reaches from **Richmond** to **Florence, SC**. There are five districts and all the accounts collectible and payable, made in the districts, are cleared in our office.

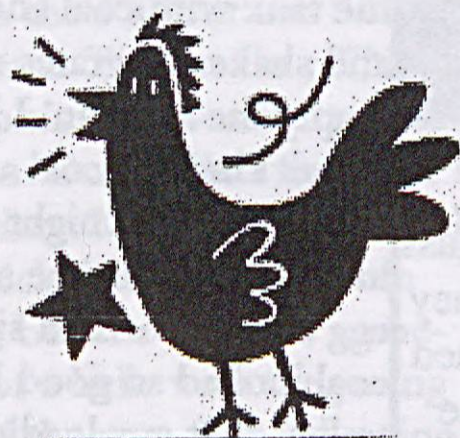
"I have no authority over anybody, but work with a lot of mighty nice people. We are like a big family. I have seen the **Atlantic Coast Line** grow into a big powerful company, working hand in hand with the **Pennsylvania**, the **Central of Georgia**, the **Louisville and Nashville** and

[McINTYRE, CONT. ON PAGE 5]

Chicken Slays Master

The *Tarboro Free Press*—Nov. 1, 1831: "Died, in **Chatham Co.** — on the 22nd ultimo—in consequence of swallowing part of the breast bone of a chicken, **Elder Gunter**, a popular preacher in the Christian church, aged about sixty years." Note: The files of the *Free Press* show that Elder Gunter frequently preached in **Nash and Edgecombe**.

["I'm Thinking," *Rocky Mount Evening Telegram*, 8/8/1952]



[**McINTYRE, CONT. FROM P. 4**] the **Florida** companies to cover the eastern part of the country."

Miss Lillie made many friends throughout the ACL system. The president, other officials and many fellow workers contributed to a birthday gift of a beautiful diamond dinner ring for her in 1928. The superintendent made the presentation in a most casual way by simply stopping at her desk, wishing her "happy returns" and leaving a little box which he explained came from many of the Coast Line family who joined with him in his happy wishes.

Miss McIntyre has traveled north and south and knows the coast Line system like a book. "But I'm really ashamed to say that I've lived right here in Rocky Mount for over thirty-

five years and have never seen the beautiful capitol. I'm going to see it soon. Oh yes, I've been to **Raleigh** many times, but never have seen the capitol."

Benefits

Miss McIntyre began her job in the big business world in the days before workman's relief was very widespread. The company has had its policy of workman's relief in operation about thirty years. Employees are allowed a year's hospital attention during long service and group insurance is carried at little cost to the employees.

Because of poor health, Miss McIntyre expects to retire soon. "In eight years I would have to retire because of my age. It seems that I may have to go on the retired list almost any day now." On her retirement Miss McIntyre, under the present rule of the company on retired pay, will receive a monthly salary equal to one per cent for each year of her employment, of the average of her salary during the past ten years.

The Rest of the Story

Lillie May McIntyre was born 2/22/1867 and died 6/9/1949. The *Rocky Mount City Directory* of 1914-15 has her residing at 328 S. Franklin Street. **Ann McIntyre**, listed as her mother, lived with her. By 1925, she was listed as the "steno to Gen. Supt. ACLRR" and she had moved to 334 S. Franklin Street.

[*News and Observer*, 1/19/1930]



[**LOCAL, CONT. FROM P. 3**] **Nash County**, with his family and also had a church at **Sims**, (now **Wilson County**). Frank F. Eure visited in the homes of **Johnny Finch** in Spring Hope, and **Waylon, Elmer and Sigmon Finch** before they all moved to Zebulon.

Armour David Wilcox, born in **Ohio**, worked diligently to drive out "demon rum" from its stronghold.

CONNECTOR

He was traveling on a lecture tour of eastern NC when he met and became good friends with Dr. **Fred D. Swindell** the pastor of the Methodist church of **Wilson, NC**. It was through this friendship that he decided to enter the Methodist ministry. In Rocky Mount, NC in 1906 he entered the NC conference on trial. Later appointed to the Wakefield Mission he was the driving force in establishing the Methodist Church in Zebulon in 1907.

The first church roll of 1907- 1912 carried the names of **Horton, Sanders, Arendell, Fordham, Temple, Richardson, Brown, Liles, Mosely, Hoyle, Gill, Pippin, Chamblee, Allen, Wilson, White, Mitchell, Ed-dins, Finch, Bobbitt, Cone, Jones, Campion, Walker, Sheron, Tubbs, Tucker, Pierce, Cerre, Flowers, Coltrane, Harris, Driver, Boin, Pitts, Beasley, Woodruff, Ross, Watson, Jeffreys, Batts, Allen, Watkins, Clark(e), Passe, Southall, Womble and Harper**. (The Clark family moved into Wake County from the **Gold Sand** community of **Franklin County**.)

These are just a few of the highlights of the history of the Zebulon United Methodist Church.

ADVERTISEMENTS

FOR SALE.

If you want a good reliable horse call on me. I will sell cheap for cash or on time for a satisfactory note.

T.B. Williams

A Jersey Cow, just calved; in fine condition. A fine, fat Beef cow. Apply to **Chas Petar**.

[*The Graphic*, Ridgeway, Warren Co., NC, 7/17/1890.]

My Trip With Felix Boyer

BY BILL SELLERS, TRC MEMBER
[Follow-up of Felix Boyer Story,
The Connector, Winter 2006]

"I had gone south to Florence [SC] on a freight train ... I was sitting around in Roney's Cafe, the usual hash house for train crews, and drinking coffee with some buddies when the call boy came in the front door and called my name. 'Sellers,' he said, 'they want you for a deadhead equipment train with the 1807 ... and the roundhouse told me to ask if you were qualified for the 1800.' Although I had never stepped on an 1800, the other boys said it's just like a 15 or 1600 only a little larger so I told him yes I was qualified, which was my first mistake!

"My engineer's name was [Felix] Boyer pronounced Boy Yer. He was one of those men of few words, which I guess was a blessing as it turned out. ...

"I figured the incoming fireman would ... have everything in ship shape. Boy did I have a surprise coming. This must have been his first trip on an 1800 also. When the train pulled in, I climbed into the cab which looked like a dance floor compared to a smaller engine. When I looked into the firebox door it was like looking into a football field. I had never seen such a grate area in my life. ...

"The conductor signaled us ahead and the engineer pulled back on the throttle. As we moved ahead I took a look ahead out the window and it was similar to sitting on the front porch and driving a house. Operating steam pressure on an 1800 was 275 lbs. A mile or so out of Flor-

ence the pressure was down to 250 lbs. As we neared Pee Dee [SC] single track trestle I knew [Boyer] would shut off the throttle to reduce speed over the bridge which would give me a chance to examine my fire.

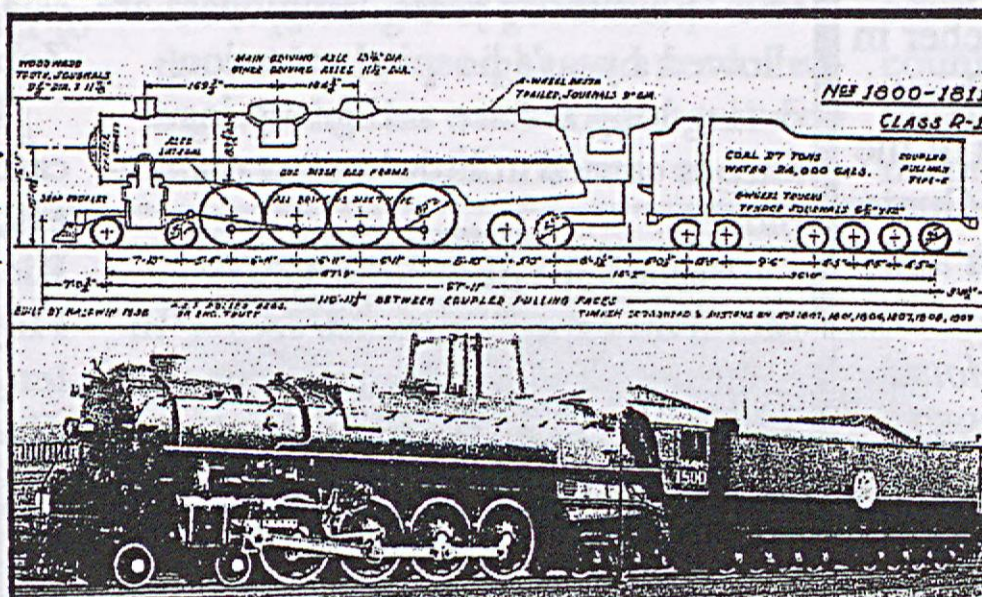
"I should not have looked. There before my eyes was a pile of coal about four feet high right in front of the firebox door. Since I already had enough coal in the firebox to go to

down to where I could run ahead and flag over all the crossings. Finally I said to myself, 'Bill, just imagine you are going on duty at the terminal and set the stoker valves just as you would from the beginning.' That is exactly what I did

"Just as we cleared Pembroke [NC] the old 1807 lifted her pop valve, which meant that the pressure was above 285 lbs, and that was the sweetest music I heard all that night long. And all of my luck would not be bad. We made the usual stop at the coal chute at Fayetteville [NC] where about a half dozen men gather around and on the engine to give alemite [grease] service to the running gear, fill the tank with coal and water and shake the grates and empty the ash pan. I have gotten all kinds of coal at coal chutes but that night each lump was about the size of an egg and uniform in size. That coal looked so good I wanted to kiss that guy loading the tender. I knew my luck had to get better and sure enough it did. ...

"Back in the roundhouse office in Rocky Mount, as I looked over the board to see how I stood for next time out, I could overhear the engineer and roundhouse clerk talking. The clerk said, 'We don't show Sellers as qualified on an 1800 yet.' The engineer replied, 'He got in a little jam between Florence and Dillon but by the time we reached Pembroke he had her on the money again.' I really expected a chewing out from the Road Foreman of Engines, but I never heard any more about the matter."

[This story, "My First Encounter with an 1800", first appeared in *Lines South*, the magazine of the Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Airline Railroads Historical Society, in 1996]



ACL Engine No. 1800.

The ACL bought 12 Baldwin steam-powered, class 4-8-4 locomotives (No. 1800-1811) in 1938. They had 80" disc type drivers and the engines weighed 460,270 lbs. They were placed in service in the summer of 1938 operating between Richmond and Jacksonville, FL. Maximum speed was 80 MPH.

Dillon [SC], I figured I might as well find some way to burn it. The engineer would look at me and then look at the steam gauge but he never did say a word. ... He knew I was in trouble. So I pulled that great long hook of the tender and went to work knocking down and spreading out that pile of coal. As any fireman knows, a good fireman does not fire with a hook. The end result is usually several clinkers. ... Since I was in trouble, the engineer, I think, worked a light engine to give me a break. With pressure as low as it was, it seems the whistle is blowing endlessly for crossings.

"There was little reason to worry about that, as I figured at the rate I was making steam, by the time we got to Rowland [NC] we would be

Far, Far From Home

THE JOURNAL OF MOLLIE A. PARHAM

Mollie A. Parham was born near Petersburg, VA in 1845. About 1871-72, she was governess to the children of Archelaus and Margaret Ann Sylvester Cutchin Braswell (she enjoyed using all her names!) of Edgecombe Co, NC. Apparently she fell in love with the son of the house, Joseph W. Braswell. It is not known why she left the Braswell household, but in 1872, she left her home in VA to be governess to children in the Palmer and Shelton families in Tipton Co., TN, near Memphis. She was to stay for 10 months. During that time, she kept a daily diary. Mollie was extremely homesick during her sojourn in TN, but she was also something of a belle with the young men of the area. The following excerpts were taken from her diary, which was given to TRC by Helen Braswell Vernon of Whitakers, Nash Co., NC. A copy of the diary is at Braswell Memorial Library.

The original is at UNC Chapel Hill.

The Trip West

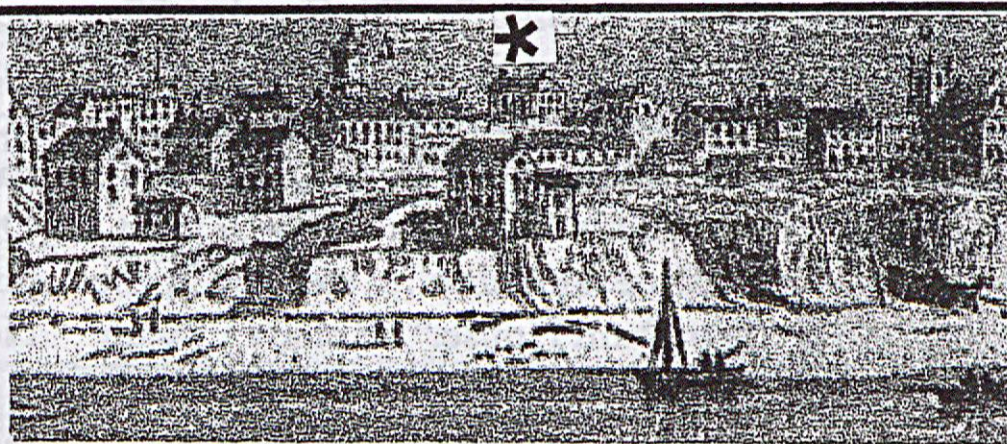
Mollie Parham left Richmond, VA in September. She described her trip west: "Having passed from the low, sultry climate of the Tidewater section [of VA] to the invigorating breezes of the Mts. one felt as if she had been lifted from the couch of sickness to a state of health & strength." The train passed Lynchburg, and then the Peaks of Otter: "... grand and imposing did they appear, as they towered up with their heads wrapped in the glory of the setting sun ... We are going to cross the Mts. & we know it too! for it is grow-

ing chilly & one could enjoy fire so much, ... Crossing the Mts. by moonlight! ... We should think that one would likely sleep after traveling all day — who could when there was such a world of grandeur without?

"I reached Memphis at 12 o'clock & was met by Cousin Peter Hatcher & Mr. Willie Shelton (nephew of Mr. [D.C.] Palmer)..., having passed some hours at the *Worsham House**, we started for my new home [Forest Bower]"

Forest Bower

The 1870 census lists 2 families at Forest Bower. The first family consists of D. C. Palmer, his wife, A.C., and 5 children: Robert, 17; James, 15; Missouri, 12; M. G., 8; and Anna, 4½. The second family is that of M. Shelton, [female] with children: Ann C, 17; W. G., 14; M. G., 13; L. B., 12; and C.O., 8. The adults were all born in VA, and the children were all born in TN.



* Worsham House—Memphis, TN

On 9/24, Mollie recorded the following: Accompanied by three of my pupils, I soon tended my footsteps to the neat, little white school-room in the grove ..." On 9/28, she says: "I find my five little pupils bright and studious & feel much attached to them tho' I have been here but a week." Throughout the diary, she says nothing about her lessons other than that she gives an occasional music lesson. On most rainy days, she taught in her room in the house but, on 1/15/73, it rained all day and they ate lunch in the school room. "Mr. P. sent the top-buggy for us."

Homesick

In almost every entry, Mollie reveals her homesickness and her desire for mail from home. She was in love with Joseph Braswell, but she never actually says whether she receives mail from him or not. His name is not mentioned at all in the diary. However, on 1/18/73, we find: "This is the anniversary of the birth-day of 'one who is very dear'—would that I could whisper some fond words on this eventful day!"

The mail comes from the post office at Mt. Zion twice a week. On 9/29 she says: "I feel so unhappy & unsettled I can only think of the absent." On 10/11: "No letter to cheer me — can it be that I am forgotten?" On 12/17: "We have not heard from Mt. Zion to-day. I must still my impatient heart & remember 'patient waiting is no loss.'" The passage of time does not make the homesickness better. On 2/1/1873: "I was the happy recipient of a letter & paper to-day — they sadly miss me at home. Oh! that I could see them all." On 3/15: "... one letter and paper only — why this long, cold silence? I am puzzled tho' I must try and be patient, for time will prove all things." On 4/20: "I sit and think of my loved absent — am growing sad, so sad — would that I were a bird! Good-night!"

Every night, Mollie looks at "my star" and dreams of her absent ones. On 12/14, "Good-night 'my star!'" On 1/12/1873: "'My star' — my glorious star! thou art so bright — would that you could take a message to my loved absent!" On 2/5/1873: "I have not seen 'my star' for several nights. I must sleep and dream of the absent." And on 2/21/1873: "'My star' has set & I must whisper a fond good-night."

On 11/15, Mollie recalled her dream of the night before: "Two of

[MOLLIE, CONT. ON P. 8]

[MOLLIE, CONT. FROM P. 7]
my front teeth dropped out — and I was much troubled. An old lady thus interpreted it — 'I would lose two male friends' as they were upper teeth. I am not at all superstitious & of course lend a deaf ear to all such"

A Belle

It would appear that Mollie was a hit with the young gentleman from around the area. Almost every day, some young man comes to call: **Bob Kerr**, who comes often, usually spends the night, likes her music, and, on 12/5, "wishes me to honor him by wearing an 'evergreen wreath' of his make at the Concert on the 24th"; **Dr. Bell**; **Mr. Shipp**; **Dr. Black**, with his black whiskers, quite musical, and on 11/6, "plays sweetly on his guitar"; **Willie Donaldson**; **Mr. Moore**; **Mr. June Paine**, who called on 2/22/1873, and "was dressed so elegantly & looked so handsome"; and **Willie Dickerson** were among those named.

The most persistent suitor, however, was **George Palmer**, her employer's nephew, from **Brunswick Co., VA.** She writes of George's pursuit of her affections. On 1/21/1873: "Mr. George has returned from **Stan- ton**, ... waited for the mail till a late hour — all this was done just for 'Miss Mollie' — I can't help liking him a little in return for his kind consideration" On 3/2: "... talked with Mr. George — he seems very devoted, but I can't return his affection & don't give him any encouragement, my heart is not here." On 4/20: "Mr. Geo. ... wore a long face. I wish he did not love me so."

On May 4, George declares himself: "Mr. Geo. & I took a buggy ride — he opened his kind, generous heart to me & I could scarcely restrain the tears when he spoke so tenderly and affectionately, but I had no heart to give in return. We can only be friends ... will always love me,

but will never give me the pleasure & opportunity of saying 'no' again." But George does not give up. On 5/18: "Mr. Geo. & I had a final and lengthy talk to-night, it seems so hard for him to give me up, but I command & he must try to obey of course, tho' I know it costs him a struggle. This 'love-making' is sad, sad work. I am con-

tent with the pure, deep love of one who is near & dear to me." On 7/3, just days before Mollie's departure: "he very unexpectedly 'asked me to marry him'"

Out and About

In her diary, Mollie described some of the outings she took with friends and family. On October 23, the family left Forest Bower to visit an exposition in Memphis. "**Mr. P. Ella Shelton**, the five children & I set sail for Memphis ... roads were in horrible condition ... stopped at the 'Worsham House.'" Mollie's Cousin Peter Hatcher took her to the Exposition. "[I]t was illuminated by 1700 jets of gas ... The 'German's Dream' (a piece of mechanical ingenuity) was the centre of attraction. The inventor of this wonder is now wearing out his days in an insane asylum, he was 17 years in completing it."

On the 24th, they visited the fair grounds 6 miles from the city: "... pleasant trip ... great rush for seats. ... promenaded extensively and saw all that was worth seeing — the oil-paintings were beautiful. ... two silk dresses with immense trains ending in a mere point & short waists & sleeves were on exhibition — these were worn 100 years ago. ... the pianos and organs were grand. I tried one of



Mollie Parham Braswell

Knabe's & found it a splendid instrument. My escort (Mr. **Landon Haynes**) & the agent seemed to like my music." Mollie seems to have been an excellent pianist as she often mentions playing for the guests at Forest Bower.

The party spent the 25th shopping and seeing the sights of Memphis. "... could not realize that I was on the banks of the great

'Father of Waters' [**Mississippi River**] ... went aboard one of the Steamers & looked over into **Arkansas**."

They left for home at 4p.m. "The distance seemed nothing so long as the Nicolson pavement lasted, but soon darkness & bad roads had to be contended with." They were tired and quiet, Mollie "looking at 'my star' & thinking deeply, when suddenly the horses were turned across an embankment & over the carriage went. Our horse was checked in time to prevent our sharing the same fate." No one was hurt, but "in raising up the carriage the horses took fright & ran at full speed, Mr. Palmer running after them. ... A wagon soon came on & kindly took us and the trunks to a house not far distant." They spent the night at the Baptist preacher's house.

On 1/29/73, the snow was about 3 inches deep and "Mr. Bob [Kerr] arrived with his sleigh ... Ella, he and I had a merry time ... we ran over a stump & almost had a turn over."

On 4/18/73, Dr. Black and Mr. Bob visited Forest Bower. "The Dr. played sweetly on his guitar & we sang" until after midnight. In the morning, they were up early for a fishing excursion. "I caught three

[MOLLIE, CONT. ON P. 9]

REVOLUTIONARY WAR PENSION

JOHN L. WARD, WARREN CO., NC

was discharged some time in the same year about the first of October. He mentioned my service in a company of light under the command of Captain William of his name, and was frequently in service after Tories had been in the 17th of February of the war.

John L Ward was born in Bute Co, NC 12 Jul 1763. He was drafted 8 March 1780 at Thomas Christ-mas's in Warren Co, NC where Warrenton is now lo-cated.

The following stories are included in his application for a pension:

Ward saw a little cabin on the road and called and re-ceived from the hands of an old lady a glass of milk. While drinking the same, the horse began prancing. "I looked behind, saw a cloud of dust arising. I then, with all speed, gave notice and information to the rear guard that the enemy was at hand. I then pushed for the river where I found the army nearly all crossed over. I forced [my horse] into the river. The enemy arrived at the bank and ordered me to stop or I would be a dead man, but I forced the horse in a still more rapid manner. They fired a volley of balls at me which so much alarmed the horse and myself, too, that I lost my hold on my horse.

[However] both arrived safely on the opposite bank safe and sound."

Ward belonged to Gen. Caswell's regiment. On one occasion, as the colonial forces tried to evade Gen. Tarleton, Gen. Caswell and Col. Bufort went in differ-ent directions. Tarleton soon caught Bufort and "cut the men to pieces. He then pursued Caswell's Regiment. ... Gen. Rutherford, who had previously joined Caswell's Regiment ... had a fine Stallion and fearing that Tarleton would get him delivered the horse to the declarant, con-sidered to be a first rate rider, and told him to lose his life sooner than the horse, ..."

Ward was discharged from the army in 1781. He re-mained at home until the spring of 1782 when "Captain Thomas Battle, Hertford [county], came up in Warren County to enlist Marines to man a schooner called Ha-gora fitted out as a privateer by Colo George Wm and others ... Charles Whitehead, James Ransom, Sugar Jones and my self enlisted. My friends and Capt. Battle persuading me that a sea voyage would restore to me my health. We arrived at Winton [Hertford Co] the 18 Apr 1782 where we were received by Capt. Battle and the crew. As soon as the schooner was ready for a cruise we set sail. I was appointed clerk and confined mostly below deck and having no knowledge of navigation know very little about the cruise on water. My health recovered and several prizes [were] taken. We landed at Edenton [Chowan County] the last of June from whence I came home ..."

John L. Ward can be found on the early censuses of Warren County.

[MOLLIE, CONT. FROM P. 8]

'wee, wee' fishes — some caught more, others less"

On 5/3/73, "Mr. Moore & Mr. J. Paine came in their new shining, top-buggies" to take Ella and Mollie to Ballard Springs. "We had a pleasant ride and drank freely of the mineral water at the Springs. My escort 'talked love' incessantly, but all this goes for just what it is worth."

Mollie Returns Home

Mollie left for home on July 15, 1873. She wrote of the trip: "The mountain scenery was grandly beau-tiful — when I woke on the second morning the sun was kissing the mountain tops of Va. ...I reached

Petersburg at 2 o'clock — my broth-ers met me. Father and Mother came over from Richmond on the 5 o'clock train. ... Mr. Braswell was in town last week and wished to see me, but unfortunately we did not meet at all — he seems anxious for me to make them a visit.

"Three invitations came for me to attend the pic-nic at Battleboro. ... I expect to start to Whitakers next Friday ... My absence of ten long months seems only a dream. I wonder what this week will bring forth for me."

This concludes the diary.

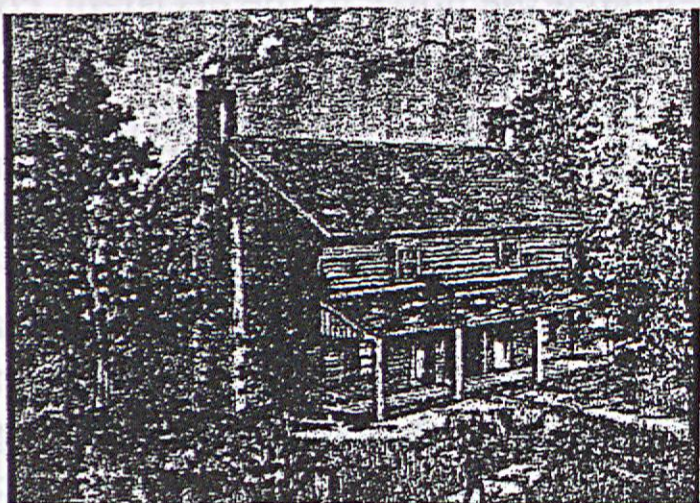
The Rest of the Story

Joseph W. Braswell and Mollie Parham were married. They had 5

children: Joe, Addie, Charlie, Mar-garet and Henry. Joseph Braswell, b. 1/19/1849, died 8/13/1907. Mol-lie Parham Braswell, b. 5/28/1845, died 3/24/1922. They are buried in the church yard of Speight's Cha-pel in western Edgecombe Co.

*"This place [Memphis] supports two large hotels, of which the Worsham House is said to be the best. It is neat, well-appointed and kept an excellent table, and polite attendance. Mr. [John Jennings] Worsham, the landlord, is an agreeable gentleman, and superintends this fine es-tablishment, and is ever on the look-out to make his guests comfortable." (Wayside Glimpses North & South by Lillian Fosta, 1860)

[BELL CONT. FROM P. 1]
felt like the top of my head had been taken off. Immediately Joel yelled out in great fright and next Elizabeth [Betsy] was screaming in her room, and ever after that something was continually pulling at her hair after she retired to bed."



Bell Home in Robertson Co., TN

At first, John Bell's family kept the visitations secret, but finally he decided to solicit the cooperation of a neighbor and close friend, **James Johnson**. He asked Johnson and his wife to spend the night. After evening worship, everyone retired. Almost immediately the disturbance commenced as usual—gnawing, scratching, knocking on the wall, overturning chairs, pulling the cover off of beds, etc., every act being exhibited as if on purpose to show the Johnsons what could be done.

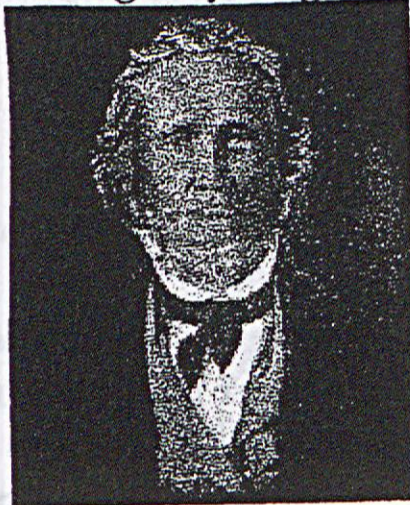
Johnson determined to try speaking to it, inquiring, "In the name of the Lord, what or who are you?..." Of course, he got no answer. He advised Bell to invite others into the investigation, and try all means for detecting the source of the disturbance. From that time on, the Bell witch became a public figure. Friends and strangers came almost every night to sit and watch. The spirit reacted by slapping people on the face, especially those who resisted the action of pulling the cover from the bed, and those who came as detectives to expose its tricks. The blows were heard distinctly, like the open

palm of a heavy hand, while the sting was keenly felt.

Spirit Speaks

The phenomena continued to develop force, and visitors persisted in urging the witch to talk. Finally it commenced whistling when spoken to, in a low broken sound, as if trying to speak in a whistling voice, and in this way it progressed, developing until the whistling sound was changed to a weak faltering whisper uttering indistinct words. The voice, however, gradually gained strength in articulating, and soon the utterances became distinct in a low whisper, so as to be understood in the absence of any other noise. It soon developed sufficient strength to be distinctly heard.

The witch always seemed to know what was going on in NC. Once, John Bell, Jr. was preparing to leave for a trip east to look after John Sr.'s interest in an estate that was being settled. It was a long journey and he would be gone several months. Several visitors were present when the witch tried to dissuade John from going. She told him he would have a hard trip for nothing, that the estate had not been wound up and that he would get no money, but return empty handed. She also told him that an elegant young lady from VA was



John Bell, Jr.

on her way to visit friends in Robertson Co., and that he could win her if he would stay. John left as planned. He was gone for six months, and returned empty handed as predicted. Soon after his departure, the young lady in question arrived, and left before his return, and John never met her.

The excitement in the area grew as the notoriety of the witch spread, but

no concrete information was gained from the spirit until a neighbor, John Gunn questioned it. Finally, the witch replied, "I am the spirit of an early emigrant. I buried my treasure for safe keeping and died without divulging the secret. I have returned to make known the hiding place." The hiding place would be revealed only when certain conditions were agreed to. At last, the spirit told them the money was under a certain flat rock. The spirit insisted that the search begin at dawn the next day. When the crowd arrived at the site, everything was as described.

Treasure Hunt

They were soon at work, devising ways to move the big rock. They cut poles, made levers and fixed prizes, after first removing much dirt from around the stone, so as to get under it. Then Drew Bell and **Bennett Porter** prized and tugged, Mr. Johnson occasionally lending a helping hand, and after a half day's very hard work, the stone was raised and moved from its bedding, but no



money appeared. A consultation and discussion of the situation followed. They reasoned that the glittering treasure was possibly sunk in the earth, and they decided to dig for it. They went to work in earnest, Porter digging, and Drew scratching the loosened dirt out with his hands until they had a hole about six feet square and nearly as many feet deep, and still no money was found. Exhausted, they returned to the house late in the afternoon much disgusted and

chagrined. That night the spirit appeared in great glee laughing and tantalizing the men for being so easily duped—making much fun of Porter and Drew Bell.

The witch was often questioned about its origins. Several stories were offered at different times, but when Rev. **James Gunn** asked, the witch replied that it could not lie to the preacher and that it was nobody else but "Old **Kate Batts'** witch." Mrs. Batts was a neighbor who had come to TN from the same section of NC as the Bells. Though she was certainly eccentric, she was harmless. From that time the goblin was called "Kate" and always answered to it.

Kate kept up with what went on. Whatever happened in the community was reported on that night. This brought about a great improvement in the morals of the community. No one wanted their sins to be aired by Kate in the Bell parlor.

Andrew Jackson Visits

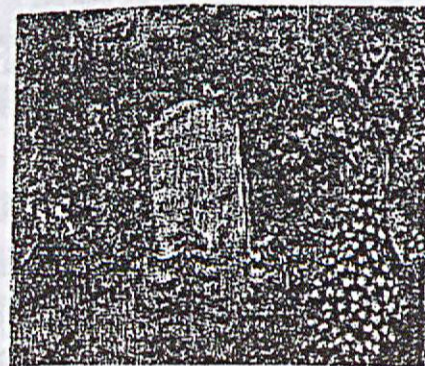
Two of John Bell's sons, John Jr. and Jesse, fought under Gen. **Andrew Jackson** in the **Battle of New Orleans**. When Jackson heard about the witch, he decided to see for himself. He traveled from Nashville, bringing several men and a large wagon. As they neared the Bell farm, the wagon stopped. Although the horses were pulling as hard as they could, they could not get the wagon to move. Shaking his head, Jackson exclaimed that it must have been the witch. Immediately, a feminine voice spoke, telling Jackson and his men that they could continue and that she would see them later. At once, the wagon began to move.



One of Jackson's men claimed that he would shoot the witch if she was present. No sooner had he spoken than the man began to scream and jerk, claiming he was being stuck with pins and beaten. Jackson's men were so frightened they begged to leave at once. They were finally persuaded to retire to their tents for the night, but early the next morning, they were on their way. Jackson later said, "I'd rather fight the entire British Army than to deal with the Bell Witch."

The spirit proved it could be in more than one place at a time. One Sunday, Rev. **James Gunn** preached at **Bethel Methodist Church**, six miles southeast, and Rev. **Sugg Fort** filled his appointment at **Drake's Pond Baptist Church**, seven miles northwest,

thirteen miles apart, both preaching at eleven o'clock. Both ministers visited the Bells that evening.

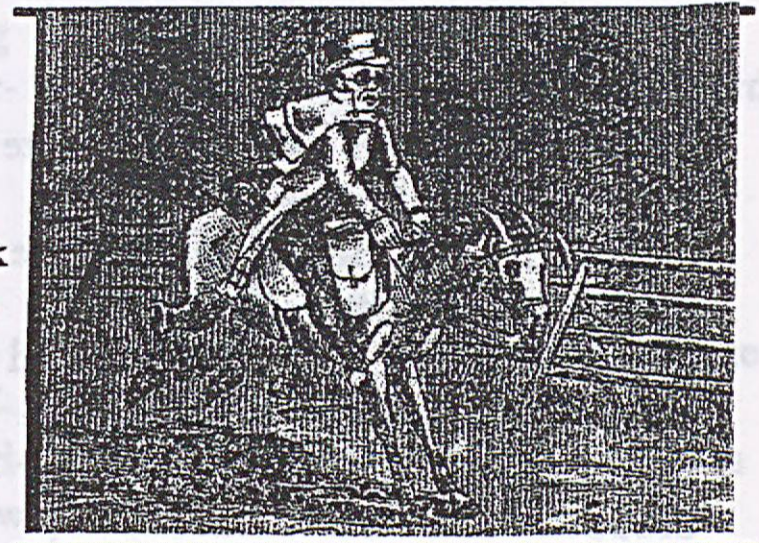


Bell Cemetery

After supper the witch directed the conversation to Brother Gunn, claiming to have heard his Sunday sermon. She proceeded to recite it word for word. When asked about Brother Fort's service, she claimed to have heard that also and repeated his sermon. Both ministers, thoroughly amazed, verified that they were correctly quoted.

Dr. Mize, Conjurer

In desperation, the family decided to invite **Dr. Mize**, a conjurer, to try to dislodge Kate. He arrived and stayed for several days. At first, Kate was completely quiet while Dr. Mize worked sorcery, made curious mixtures, performed incantations, etc. Finally Kate asked him what he was doing. Mize refused to answer and eventually, Kate told him that he was



an old fool and didn't know what he was doing, and then started in to cursing Mize like blue blazes. Dr. Mize was frightened out of his wits, and anxious to get away. He arranged for an early start the next morning. However, his horse refused to go off kindly—rearing and kicking up. Finally Kate came to the rescue, offering to make the horse go and accompany the doctor home. Immediately the horse started with a rush, kicking and snorting, and went off at full speed with the Doctor hanging on to its mane. That night, Kate, in great glee, described the trip home with the "old fraud," and the tricks played on him along the way. Mize described the affair to his neighbors in the same way.

Kate and Lucy Bell

The witch seemed to bear special ill-will toward John Bell, Sr. and his young daughter, Betsy. However, Mrs. Bell had decided it would be wise to try to stay on Kate's good side, and this seemed to work. Kate always seemed to have a fondness for her. Once Mrs. Bell was very ill for several weeks. Kate would come and ask how she was and sing for her. Mrs. Bell always complimented her. As Mrs. Bell's condition deteriorated, her appetite failed and this distressed Kate. One day, she asked, "Luce [Lucy], poor Luce, how do you feel now? Hold out your hands, Luce, and I will give you something." When Mrs. Bell opened her hands, hazelnuts dropped from above into her hands.

[BELL, CONT. ON P. 12]

[BELL, CONT. FROM P. 11]

This was seen by several ladies who were visiting. After a short time, Kate asked, "Luce, why don't you eat the hazelnuts?" Mrs. Bell replied that she could not crack them. Kate replied, "Well I will crack some for you," and instantly the sound of the cracking was heard, and the cracked nuts dropped on her bed within hand's reach. Grapes arrived at Mrs. Bell's bedside in the same way. Mrs. Bell eventually recovered from her illness.

Kate and John Bell

The witch was especially hateful to John Bell. First, he was afflicted by a curious stiffness of the tongue, something like a stick crosswise, punching each side of his jaws. Eventually, his tongue began swelling so that he could neither talk nor eat for almost a day. Later, he had contortions of the face, a twitching and dancing of his flesh, which grew more and more severe. Through all this, Kate openly expressed a strong dislike for him, using the vilest and malignant epithets toward him, declaring that she would hound him until he died.

As time went on, Mr. Bell's health grew worse. He recovered somewhat from a severe attack in October 1820, and called son Richard Williams to go with him to the hog pen, about 300 yards from the house. They had not gone far before one of his shoes was jerked off. His son replaced it, tying a double hard knot. After going a few more steps, the other shoe flew off. This continued as they walked, and Mr. Bell was extremely upset by it. Presently, he complained of a blow on his face that almost stunned him, and he sat down on a nearby log. His face commenced jerking with fearful contortions, and then his shoes flew off as fast as Richard could put them on. At last, the torment ended for the moment, but Mr. Bell was near the end of his endurance. He told his

son he could not "much longer survive the persecutions of this terrible thing. It is killing me by slow tortures, and I feel that the end is nigh."

John Bell was able to walk to the house, but he took to his bed immediately, and never left the house again. The crisis came on Dec. 19th. That morning, he did not wake up at the usual time, and after breakfast, it was discovered that he was in a deep stupor and could not be aroused. A mysterious vial of smoky liquid was found in the medicine cabinet. No



one recognized it or knew where it came from.

Kate broke out with joyous exultation, exclaiming, "It's useless for you to try to relieve Old Jack. I have got him this time. He will never get up from that bed again." She claimed to have put the mysterious vial in the cupboard and to have given "Old Jack" a big dose of it. They decided to test it by giving a small dose to a cat. When they did, the cat jumped and whirled over a few times, stretched out, kicked, and died. John Bell remained in a stupor and on the morning of Dec. 20th, he died.

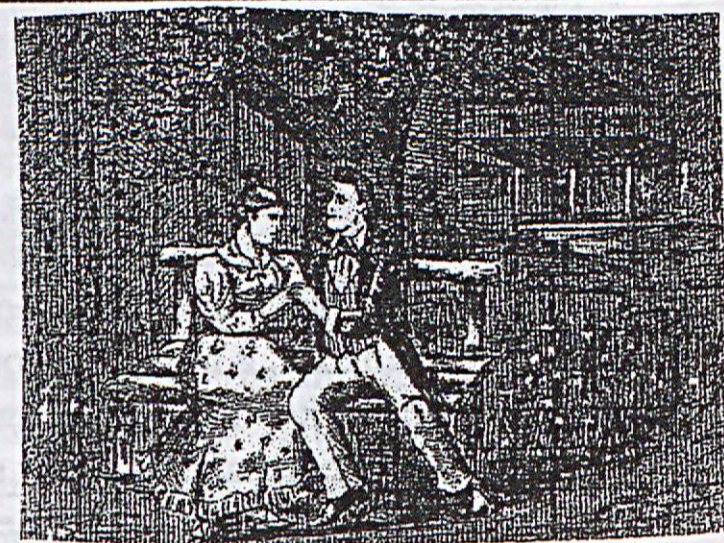
Kate and Betsy Bell

In the case of Betsy, Kate was averse to a growing attachment between a local boy, **Joshua Gardner**, and Betsy, and punished Betsy severely for receiving his attentions. After the death of John Bell, Kate became less virulent and ceased to torment Betsy as she had before, even manifesting sympathy and tender compassion toward her. Joshua took advantage of Kate's relenting

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and pressed his suit, begging Betsy to marry him. Finally, Betsy gave her consent. Still Kate remained quiet.

On Easter Monday, 1821, three young couples set out near dawn to meet others of their friends for a fishing expedition and a hunt for wild flowers to celebrate the holiday. Betsy, for the first time, wore a beautiful engagement ring, which Joshua had placed on her finger the day before. As the day wore on, Betsy seemed less gay and happy, and confessed to her lover strange forebodings that depressed her feelings. As they sat on the bank, Kate's familiar voice pierced their ears, pleading, "Please Betsy Bell, don't have Joshua Gardner," repeating the entreaty over and over, until the lovers were overwhelmed with dismay. They sat motionless and speechless for some minutes. At last Betsy broke the silence. She told Joshua that she could not endure the storm which threatened. She was convinced that her tormenter would follow her throughout her life should she resist its threats. Finally, Joshua accepted the inevitable, begging her to keep the ring in memory of one who loved her dearer than his own life. She refused, and slipping it off, she handed it to her



lover.

The lovers separated that afternoon, and never met again. A few days later, Joshua Gardner left, settling in West Tennessee. Kate never bothered Betsy again. Eventually,

[BELL, CONT. ON P. 13]

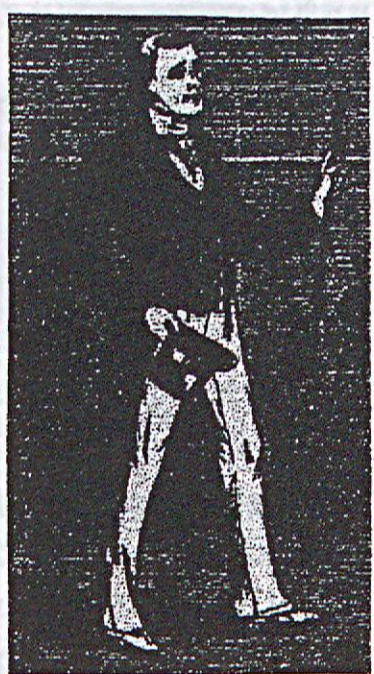
[**BELL, CONT. FROM P. 12**]
Richard Powell, who had been her school teacher, became her suitor, and they were married. He was many years older than Betsy, but was prominent in public affairs and well respected. He died 17 years after their marriage.

The story of the Bell witch is more than just a local legend. In 1849, *The Saturday Evening Post* published an account of the "Bell Witch" in which Betsy was implicated as the culprit. She threatened legal action if the story wasn't retracted and an apology and retraction appeared in a later issue.

Bell Witch Documentation

This story just touches the surface of what has been recorded about the Bell Witch. In 1846, John Bell's youngest son, Richard Williams Bell, wrote the only eye-witness account of the four-year ordeal of the Bell family. It was called *Our Family Trouble* and was included in *Authenticated History of the Bell Witch*, a book written by **Martin Ingram** in 1894. Most of this story was taken from Richard Williams Bell's account. **Harriet Parks Miller** wrote *The Bell Witch of Middle Tennessee* which was published in 1930 and in 1934, John Bell's great grandson, **Charles Bailey Bell**, published *A Mysterious Spirit: The Bell Witch of Tennessee*. Several modern books have been written about Kate's activities and the Bell family.

As a final symbol of legitimacy, the state of TN erected a highway marker in Robertson Co. near **Adams**. It is titled Bell Witch and tells the following story: "To the north was the farm of John Bell, an early, prominent set-



Richard Powell

tlar from North Carolina. According to legend, his family was harried during the early 19th century by the famous Bell Witch. She kept the household in turmoil, assaulted Bell, and drove off Betsy Bell's suitor. Even Andrew Jackson who came to investigate, retreated to Nashville after his coach wheels stopped mysteriously. Many visitors to the house saw the furniture crash about them and heard her shriek, sing, and curse."

[An internet search for "Bell Witch" will produce numerous hits.]

Bell Witch Characters Robertson Co., TN Settlers

John Bell, the son of **William Bell** and the main character in the Bell witch story, was born in 1750 in **Halifax Co., NC**. He went to **Edgecombe Co.** before 1787. In 1782, he married **Lucy Williams**, d/o **John and Mourning Williams** of **Upper Town Creek, Edgecombe Co., NC**. He became a prosperous farmer in Edgecombe.

Bell was a member of the **Falls of Tar River Baptist Church**. [See Falls of Tar River Church articles in *The Connector*: Summer, Fall 1998 and Winter, Spring, Summer 1999] On 11/28/1802, he became a charter member of **Union Baptist Church**, which later became **Upper Town Creek Baptist Church**. He received a letter of dismissal from this church on 9/15/1804 and was received at **Red River Baptist Church** in **Robertson Co., TN** on 4/20/1805.

John and Lucy Bell had 6 children in NC: (1) **Jesse m. Martha Gunn**; (2) **John, Jr. m. Elizabeth Gunn**; (3) **Drewry**, who never married; (4) **Benjamin** who died young; (5) **Esther m. Alexander Bennett Porter**, and (6) **Zadok** who was not married. After the family moved to TN, they had 3

CONNECTOR

more children: (7) **Elizabeth "Betsy" m. Richard Powell**; (8) **Richard Williams m(1) Sallie Gunn, m(2) Susan Gunn, m(3) Elizabeth Orndorff**; (9) **Joel Egbert**.

Kate Batts

The Bell witch claimed to be **Kate Batts's** witch. **Kate Batts**, and her husband, **Frederick**, were neighbors of the Bell family in TN and were from the same area of **Edgecombe Co.** as the Bells. Batts first acquired land in **Sumner Co., TN** in 1796, but was still living in **Edgecombe Co.** in 1800. TN records place him in **Robertson Co., TN** by 1809. **Frederick** was an invalid and **Kate** was forced to take over the management of the farm. By all accounts, she did well at it.

Kate Batts was well-known for her eccentricity. She was a large woman with a fearful tongue. She could fling epithets with the best of them, and no one wanted to upset her when she was in a bad humor. She begged a brass pin from every woman she met, and some of her neighbors believed that gave her power over them. She kept a riding horse, but never rode it. She always walked with two boys and her maid, leading the horse.

One story that was included in *An Authenticated History of the Famous Bell Witch* tells of **Kate's** late arrival at church one day. The house was packed and the audience was singing a rapturous and transporting song. The interest centered around **Joe Edwards**, a "wicked and undone sinner" who was down on his all fours at the mourner's bench, supplicating and praying manfully. "Just at this critical moment **Sister Batts** rushed in, and elbowing her way into the circle, she deliberately spread her skirt all over **Joe Edwards** and sat down on him. The poor man did not know what had happened. He felt that he was in

[Characters, Cont. on P. 14]

Stole His Bride.

John Odom, a well-to-do young man of Nash county came down here Sunday and stole the girl he loved.

Miss **Julia Armstrong**, the 17-year-old daughter of **R.D. Armstrong**, who lives about five miles west of here, in visiting a married sister in **Nashville**, met Mr. Odom. It was a case of love at first sight.

Mr. Armstrong objected, basing his veto on his daughter's age. Mr.

Odom came down to see her, spent part of Sunday with her and them seemingly departed, but he had only driven over to a neighbor's to wait until after nightfall.

Miss Julia retired early, and that's the last her parents have seen of her. Next morning her room was vacant, and the outer door open, and her tracks, going to the front gate where there were all the signs of a buggy, having stopped there, told the rest.

Next morning they were married in Nash.

[Contributed by Pam Edmundson, TRC member, Tarboro. 11/17/1904]

[Characters, From P. 13]

the throes of the last desperate struggle with Satan and that the devil was on top. He shouted and yelled the louder, 'Oh I am sinking, sinking. Oh take my burden Jesus and make the devil turn me loose or I will go down, down, and be lost forever in torment. Oh save me, save me, blessed Lord.'

Sister Batts was invited to another seat, but she politely declined. "No I thank you; this is so consoling to my disposition that I feel amply corrugated."

"But," insisted the good deacon, "you are crowding the mourner."

"Oh that don't disburse my perspicuity; I'm a very plain woman and do love to homigate near the altar whar th'r Lord am making confugation among th'r sinners."

"But, Sister Batts, the man is suffocating," still interposed the deacon.

"Yes, bless Jesus, let him suffocate; he's getting closer to th'r Lord," exclaimed Sister Batts.

Suddenly, Sister Batts felt the foundation beneath her giving away beneath her. Joe Edwards rose up shouting joyously for his deliverance, as if some unknown spirit had snatched him from the vasty deep. Sister Batts clasped her hands and

shouted, "Bless th'r Lord, bless my soul, Jesus am so good to devolve His poor critters from the consternation of Satan's mighty dexterity."

Other Neighbors

Rev. Sugg Fort was a prominent preacher in Robertson Co. while the Bell Witch was present. He was born in Edgecombe Co., NC, the youngest of 9 children. He moved to TN with his family in 1788. The area where they settled became known as the **Fort Settlement**. His father, who had been associated with the **Tar River Association** in NC, was pastor of **Red River Baptist Church** until Sugg became pastor about 1816.

The **Gunn** brothers, **James** and **Thomas** were from VA and moved to **Caswell Co., NC** about 1791. They moved to Robertson Co., TN about 1811 and settled near the Bell family in the Red River area. They were instrumental in the establishment of Methodism in the area and preached at several area churches.

James Johnston and his family lived next door to the Bells. He was born in PA, youngest child of **John** and **Mary Patterson Johnston**. The family later moved to Caswell Co., NC. Johnston served in the NC **Continental Line** during the Revo-

FOR SALE.



Having moved my hennery and been crowded for room I will sell very cheap 60 young silver laced Wyandotte roosters. One pure blood rooster will benefit your whole stock of poultry.

JONATHAN WHITE

Near Baptist Church.

[King's Weekly, Greenville, Jan. 11, 1895]

lutionary War. He married **Rebecca Porter** in 1780 and they had 9 children. They moved to Robertson Co., TN in 1800 and lived near his brother, **William**, who had migrated 20 years earlier.

Prof. Richard Ptolemy Powell taught school in Robertson Co., TN, and eventually married **Betsey Bell**. He was born in Halifax Co., NC. He moved to TN about 1815, going first to **Nashville**, and then to the settlement in Robertson Co. He taught in a small schoolhouse on land donated by **James Johnston** near the Bell farm and taught the Bell children along with the other children in the neighborhood.

Other Robertson Co., TN settlers included the following: **Porter, Long, Byrns, Gardner, Bartlett, Darden, Gooch, Pitman, Ruffin Mathews, Morris, Miles, McGowen, Bourne, Royster, Waters, Gorham, and Herring**. The names were all known in NC before 1820.

[An Authenticated History of the Famous Bell Witch by Martin Van Buren Ingram, 1894; "I'm Thinking," Rocky Mount Evening Telegram, 12/29/1955, 12/30/1955, 2/14/1965, 2/17/1965, 3/7/1965, 3/10/1965; and research by Pam Edmondson, TRC member.]

Recollections of Memucan Hunt Howard

FINAL IN A SERIES OF THREE ARTICLES

There lived immediately around where I was born and reared [Granville County, NC] eight Revolutionary soldiers, all of whom I knew, and I went to school with the children of most of them. My paternal grandfather and his eldest son [Groves and Allen Howard] were of the number, the latter having entered the army at the age of sixteen. Benjamin Hester and two of his brothers were of the number and it used to be said of the first that at the **Battle of King's Mountain** an American officer rode up to a company during the raging of the fight and asked if there was among them a man with a first-rate rifle and was himself a first-rate shot; to which Ben. Hester replied he was the man and had the rifle. The officer pointed to an exceedingly active officer, **Col. Pat. Ferguson**, commander of the British forces, and said, "I want you to take him off his horse for he is a host of himself." Hester took deliberate aim at the officer and he fell. Wheeler (p. 107) says: Ferguson had seven or eight bullets shot through him; Hester's may have been one of these or may alone have brought him down. ...



I so much admired the characters of **Washington** and **Franklin** that I had their likenesses (both very good) represented on the gold face of my watch made of Tennessee gold in Nov. 1835 and have worn it ever since, 50 years next Nov. ...

Nashville Tragedy

On or about the 14th of March 1846 there occurred at Nashville the wildest and most reckless tragedy I ever witnessed. A stranger [had come to town], **E. Z. C. Judson**, who showed off in driving tandem about ... and [had] paid particular attention to a married lady, ... which caused talk among people fond of gossip.

Knowledge of this talk reached the ears of her husband, **Robert Porterfield**, who was a devoted husband and an excellent young man of one the best and most prominent families of the place. He was greatly mortified and offended, and a family meeting was held 14th of March. After it was over Robert and his brother **John** ... went to the **Sulphur Spring** about a quarter of a mile northwest of the public square, both armed with pistols. Most unexpectedly Mr. Judson ... came suddenly to the spring from the opposite direction ... and they com-

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menced firing their pistols at Mr. J. who retreated and when doing so begged them to let him alone. Finding he had probably to kill or be killed, he fired once only, his bullet taking effect in the forehead of **Robert Porterfield**, who fell mortally wounded. The attention of **J. Porterfield**, was required by his brother, and Mr. J. proceeded to the public square where he was taken in charge by the authorities and carried into the Court House.

The news of the affair spread like wildfire, and a mob speedily collected in and about the Court House. I boarded at the City Hotel, and as I was going ... toward the hotel [I heard] pistol firing begin and when I was between the Court House and Nashville Inn, a rush was made by Mr. Judson and a pursuing mob for the City Hotel. The firing [was] all at the fleeing Judson who, it was said, showed the activity of a cat and [the] strength of an ox. He was fired at twice when dashing up stairs and in all was fired at ... thirteen times as counted by myself, and had been shot at least 3 or 4 times at the Sulphur Spring yet without having had his skin broken.

He reached a vacant back room on the ladies part of the hotel, was discovered, leaped through a rear window on to a gallery, dashed along that and another running along the wing of the hotel toward the river. Not being able to enter a room, he attempted to let himself down by some lattice work erected to protect the gallery from the sun. The lattice work gave way immediately and he fell 41 feet as measured by me afterward to the ground below and was immediately surrounded by a mob who purposed to throw him over the bluff, some 40 or more feet ... on to the rocks below, but was dissuaded from doing so by **Doctor W. A. Cheatham** and **Sheriff O. Lanier**. I saw him open his eyes.

The general belief was that he was as good as dead. The mob was prevailed on to allow the fatally injured man, as he was thought to be, to be placed in jail. That dark night he was taken by a mob from the jail, carried to the square near the City Hotel and hung. In the darkness the rope was cut by **S. V. D. Stout**, a carriage manufacturer and once mayor of the town. ... Mr. Judson was again taken to prison and attended by **Doctor T. R. Jennings**, ... [He] soon began to improve, and, in a short time, was taken hurriedly to escape a mob to **Hude's Ferry**, ... where it had been arranged that a steamboat should be waiting for him and carried him away.

...

General Andrew Jackson

I had some personal acquaintance with both **General Jackson** and **Mrs. Jackson**, having spent several nights at the Hermitage. ... Both the General & his wife have

[HOWARD, CONT. ON P. 16]

Railroad Line Constructed in 1887

The 10 miles of railroad track from Rocky Mount, Nash Co., to Nashville were opened for business on March 1, 1887, and on August 1 of the same year, the 8.5 mile addition to Spring Hope was completed.

For many years the [Atlantic] Coast Line operated two passenger trains a day between Rocky Mount and Spring Hope through Nashville. Passengers could board the train in Rocky Mount at 9:15 a.m. and be in

Nashville at 9:35 a.m. The train arrived in Spring Hope at 9:50. The second train left Rocky Mount at 4 p.m. and arrived in Nashville at 4:20 p.m.

Travelers to Rocky Mount could leave Spring Hope at 11:25 a.m. or Nashville at 11:40 a.m. and arrive in Rocky Mount at noon.

The passenger schedule was discontinued on Nov. 1, 1926, when the advance of the automobile and improved highways made it more convenient to drive to Rocky Mount and board passenger trains there for more distant trips.

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Railroad personnel on the Rocky Mount — Spring Hope route included conductors Robert Hill and W. H. McGee and engineers F.D. Swindell and J.M. Donlan.

[Nashville Graphic, 8/20/1964]

JOHN W. YORK,

Dealer in

Family Groceries and

General Merchandise,

Battleboro, N.C.

[Battleboro Progress, Jan. 2, 1880]

[HOWARD, CONT. FROM P. 15]

been ridiculed & slandered about their intimacy & marriage. The facts I believe are about as follows. Mrs. Jackson, who was a **Donaldson**, had been married to one **Lewis Roberts**, who proved to be a very worthless, drunken man who treated her very badly, and General Jackson being a lawyer, of whom there were but few in that very sparsely settled country at that time, it was natural that she should ask his advice, A divorce was applied for in **Virginia**. ... An attachment had taken place between Jackson and Mrs. Roberts, and being informed

that a divorce had been obtained they were married, but not long afterward it was ascertained that a divorce had not been but was in a short time and they after a short separation were married again. ...

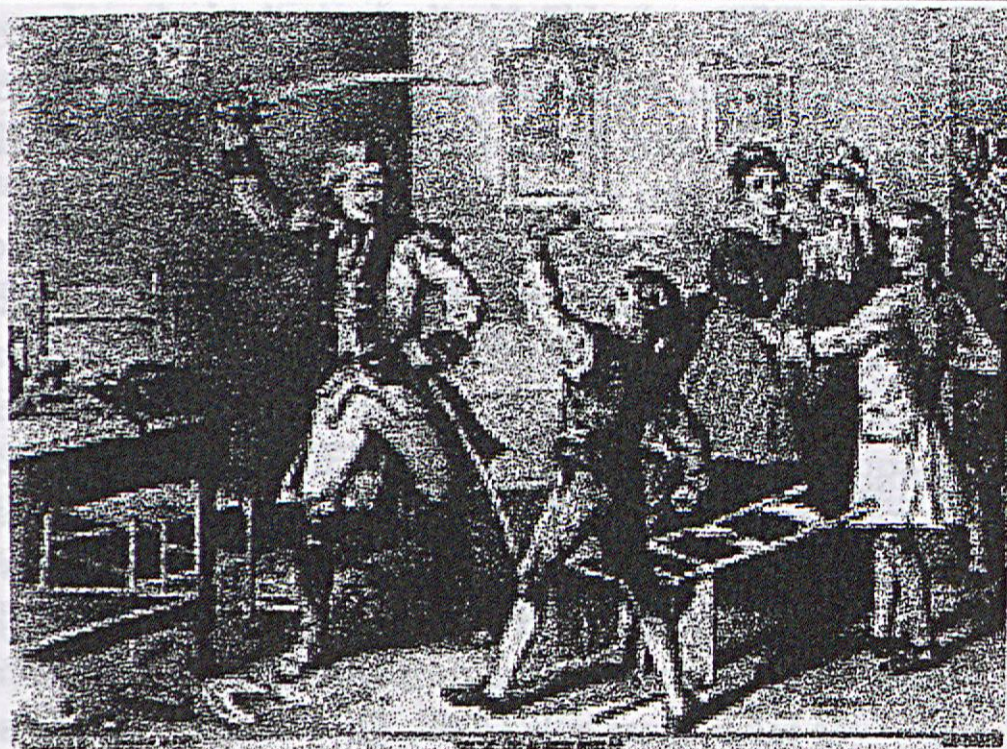
There were very few schools of any sort in the country at that time and ... I suppose Mrs. Jackson's education was about such as well to do ladies generally had at that time. I liked Mrs. Jackson. She was a good kind amiable lady and had the entire love and devotion of Gen. Jackson, who was a first class husband, master and friend and a bitter enemy; to use a very coarse expression I have heard, he went "the whole hog, bristles and all."

I believe it was in 1880 that Col. **J. George Harris**, then of **Groten, Connecticut**, now Nashville I believe, told me that **Waitstill Avery**, his relation, a prominent lawyer of upper N. C. but a native of Connecticut, and Gen. Andrew Jackson fought a duel when the latter was quite young, and before he removed from N. C. in which neither were hurt. I never heard it from any other source, but have no doubt it was so.

...

Foreign Investment

[I] was disgusted with what seemed to me to be utter recklessness and roguery permeating law makers and officials of the Republican party under whom a great part of the extensive and valuable lands of the government had been recklessly frittered away for little or nothing and many made rich. I see it stated in a news paper that the nobility of **Europe**, of **England** mainly, owned 21,000,000 of acres of our western lands, How did they get it? How large a space is it? It is 179 miles & a fraction square, or more than four times as large as **Massachusetts**.



THE BRAVE BOY OF THE WAXHAW.

1876 Currier & Ives lithograph depicting an incident from the life of the young Andrew Jackson. The caption reads "Andrew Jackson, the Seventh President of the United States; in 1780 when a boy of 13 enlisted in the cause of this country, and was taken prisoner by the British. Being ordered by an officer to clean his boots, he indignantly refused, and received a sword cut for this temerity."

Funerals Were Social Events in Colonial Times

BY VAL LAUDER

To die in Colonial times was to miss the best party your money could buy. Invitations went out to relatives and friends. Great stocks of food and drink were laid in, if not already on hand. And many a family soon found itself swept away to the poorhouse on the tide of rum, whiskey, and high spirits—not to mention new clothes, funeral rings, and elaborate dinners—that marked what was one of the great social occasions in early America.



Attempts to curb the excesses, to protect widows and children against financial ruin... were frequently enacted into law by the various Colonial assemblies. But these attempts to legislate away the extravagances that had for so long made funerals not only great public events but also memorable social occasions flew in the face of custom. Custom won.

One of the more rousing features of the old funeral was the firing of guns. So popular was this part of the festivities that not even the need to conserve gunpowder could put a damper on the traditional Boom! Boom! A law passed by the **Virginia** assembly in 1655, which forbade the wasting of gunpowder at entertainments, specifically excepted funerals.

Not that many a guest might not have wished it otherwise. The strong drink that flowed in such abundance had a way of causing shots to go astray. On more than one occasion a friend or relative who had journeyed a long distance to pay his respects to the departed came perilously close to joining him.

For all of that, there was grief. Tears were shed. Mourners, alone or in small groups, filed silently, solemnly, into the still chamber—usually the front parlor of the house—to look for the last time on the features of the one they had come to honor. But the occasions on which friends and family were brought together in those days of

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difficult travel over long distances were so few that, coupled with the shared bond of their loss and the restorative spirits of the mellowing liquids imbibed, an atmosphere of good cheer and fellowship was soon induced.

That the delicate balance often flashed the TILT sign may be deduced from the will of a Virginia gentleman who died in 1749 with the strict provision that, "Having observed much indecent mirth at Funerals," his burial be a simple one.

There were a number of reasons for the social approach to funerals.

—In many states, including **North Carolina**, it was illegal to have private burials. No one could be buried until "at least Three or Four of the Neighbors (had been called in) to view the Corpse."

—Death was a commonplace event. Plagues, poxes, ailments that we would treat with antibiotics or vaccines, took their toll. The Colonists' attitude thus carried a sense of recognition for a fait accompli.

—Common courtesy, not to mention Southern hospitality, demanded that those who had traveled long and far to attend the funeral be housed and fed—well fed.

If the funeral feast was an old **English** custom that crossed the **Atlantic**, it reached its zenith in Colonial America.

Funeral expenses for a **John Smalcombe** included a steer and a barrel of strong beer—cost nine hundred and sixty pounds of tobacco, almost four times as much as the cost of the coffin. Powder at the funeral cost twenty-four pounds of tobacco. That was in 1645.

A short twenty-five years later, a funeral feast listed items including a steer, three sheep, five gallons of wine, two gallons of brandy, ten pounds of butter, and eight pounds of sugar.

Seven gallons of whiskey were drunk at a funeral in **Mecklenburg County**, at the expense of the estate, naturally. And by 1774 the funeral expenses for a **John McClanahan** included three gallons of wine, over nineteen gallons of spirits, twenty-seven pounds of flour, and a quantity of cheese, butter, and sugar.

In 1775, when **Jean Corbin**—the widow of **James Innes** and **Francis Corbin**—died at "Point Pleasant" near **Wilmington**, she was buried between her two husbands "in a manner suitable to her fortune." A visitor translated that to mean "Everybody of fashion both from the town and round the country were invited. ... A hog-head of rum and broth and vast quantities of pork, beef and corn-bread were set forth for the entertainment of these gentry."

The funeral dinner of **Caleb Dawes**, a prominent

[Funeral, Cont. on P. 18]

Search and Research: What You Can Learn from Deed Books

FROM AN ARTICLE BY GEORGE G. MORGAN

Deed books, located in the county courthouse, are a treasure trove of genealogical information. Generally, every transaction involving the transfer of property is indexed in the grantor/grantee indexes. Sometimes you will find other documents indexed as well.

The seller is the "Grantor" and the buyer is the "Grantee." These are listed in separate alphabetized indexes. The index contains a reference to the property being transferred and the volume and page of the deed book where a copy of the deed or other transaction is recorded.

The deed book may also contain transcriptions of documents other than deeds. Some of the documents that may be found in deed books are :

1. Deeds, which contain a legal transfer, bargain or contract. Not every transaction was recorded and others were recorded long after the transfer was made. Taxes were still due, but the bills may have been just passed to the new owner. Deeds can be an excellent source of information about the death date and children of a property owner. This might include married names of daughters. Sometimes, property passed from generation to generation without being recorded. However, when it is eventually recorded, a deed must be created showing the chain of inheritance.
2. Indentures, which state the terms under which a security or bond is issued or secured. They may relate to land, such as a mortgage, a term of servitude, or the purchase of slaves, livestock, or other items.
3. Births were sometimes recorded in deed books.
4. Slave sales or trades recorded in deed books can provide some of the most important clues for African American researchers.
5. Cemetery lot sales are sometimes recorded in a deed book.

If you have not visited the courthouse where your ancestors lived, you may be missing valuable data.

Happy hunting!

[Contributed by Jim Stallings, TRC member. The article appeared at MyFamily.com. George Morgan is president of the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors.]

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[Funeral, Cont. From P. 17]

Bostonian who died July 6, 1797, shows how lavish the funeral feast was as the nineteenth century loomed—and the kind of tab the estate had to pick up. In addition to large sums of such

items as "Beef," "Fowls," "Fish & Oysters," the following items were among those cited in specific quantities: 25 pounds Potatoes; 3 Hams; 25 pounds Flour; 12 pounds sugar; 150 Eggs; 45 pounds butter; 6 Bottles Rum; 24 Pajarete Wine; 18 Bottles Malaga; 30 Bottles Sherry; 36 Ditto Bourdeaux; 6 Bottles Peralta; 2 Ditto Frontignanc; 4 Red Wine; 2 White Wine; 42 Bottles Beer; plus unspecified "Gin & Brandy."



This was more than 75 years after the first attempts to limit funeral expenses by legal statute. But the winds of change had begun to blow.

The years preceding the Revolution had brought strained relations between the colonies and Mother England that forced the colonists to curtail their imports of the trappings of elaborate funerals. The Revolution itself brought a crisis atmosphere and economic strain that put a further damper on ceremony and show. But the early years of the new republic saw the most telling blow of all.

Early in the nineteenth century, an elderly gentleman up in New York was heard to complain, bitterly, that temperance had taken all the fun out of funerals.

[News and Observer, Raleigh, NC; 7/4/1976]

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Janet Sadowski, TRC member, has updated the index of *The Connector*. It can be found on the Braswell Memorial Library website,

<http://www.braswell-library.org/>

The index is terrific when you need to find an ancestor's name.

Thank you, Janet!!!

THE FIRE FIEND IN ENFIELD

Burning of the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad Company's Warehouses.

Alsop's Large Warehouse and Cotton Gin Reduced to Ashes.

The Entire Town for a Long While Endangered. — Heavy Loss.

Last Sunday morning, about 11 o'clock, while our citizens, little dreaming of the calamity that was almost upon them, were at church, flames were discovered issuing from under the saw, at **John T. Alsop's** wood yard, opposite the **W. & W. Railroad** warehouse. In ten minutes from the time the fire was first discovered, the whole building was wrapped in flames, though by this time, the congregations of both churches, white and colored, were present, and at work trying to save the freight &c. from the Railroad warehouses, which they succeeded in doing, with the exception, of twelve bales of cotton, about thirty tons of fertilizers and a few other things, a list of which we will give in our next.

The fire leaped from the engine house to the R.R. warehouse on the east, and to Alsop's cotton gin on the north, almost at the same instant, and then clasped a firm hold on the warehouse of Mr. Alsop to the south of the wood shed.

At this time the streets of our town were alive with men, women, and children, all at work, some carrying water, others helping to move goods &c. from the burning buildings. High up in the air leaped the flame, and then again falling, as it seemed, to the ground, only to make a new effort to enwrap everything in its fiery embrace, and threaten to burn every building in the neighborhood. The scene was sublime, the excitement intense. Men rushed with a ladder to **Branch & Cook's** store southeast of the warehouse, and ere one could count ten, the roof was saturated with water and wet blankets. At this point Messrs. **Sam Whitfield, Johnson, Kepler and Battle** held the post of honor. The heat was terrible and at one time it was feared that they would be driven away. Sam Whitfield was so overcome by the heat that he had to be removed to the ground, and others had to pour bucketful after bucketful of water on their clothes to keep themselves from burning. Again and again, the hot

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blaze dashed at them, but those brave men still held their own, until the Fire Fiend, insatiate as ever, was foiled.

The point of the force on the other side of the railroad was the store of John T. Alsop, and ably was it defended by Messrs. **Sam** and **John McGwigan, M.E. Hamlin, Webber**, and last but not least, **J.E. O'Hara** and several others, who succeeded in saving the building.

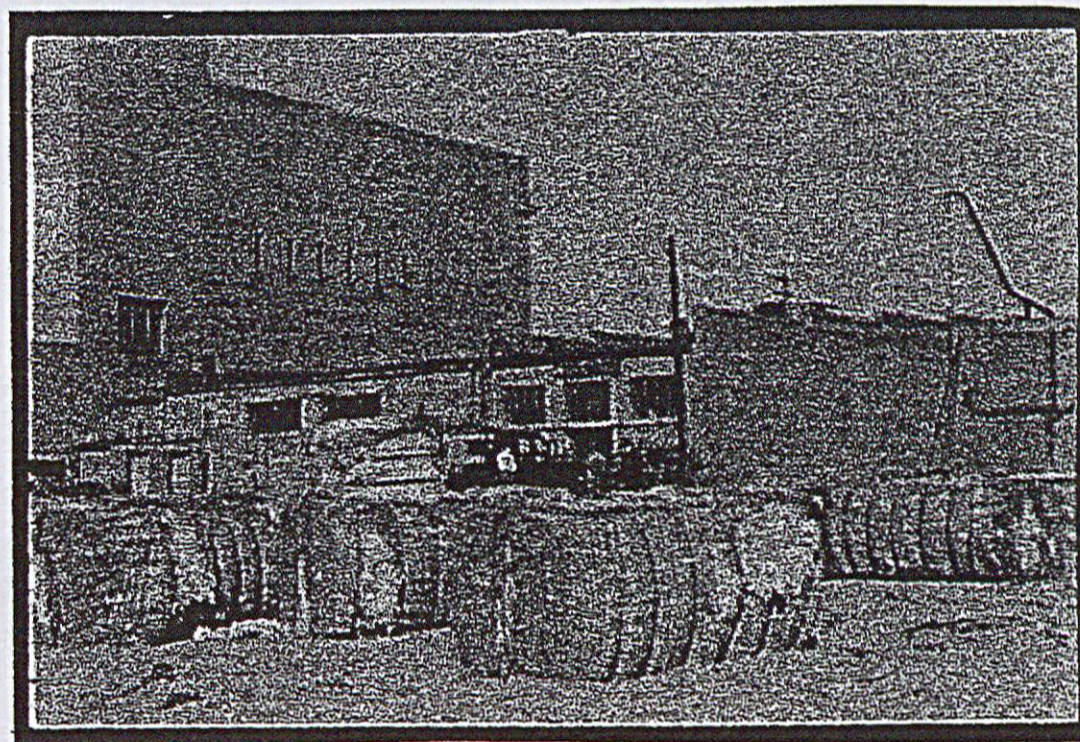
At last the roofs of the burning building fell, and the danger was declared to be over. With a sign of relief our citizens turned their attention to counting the losses, and restoring the goods of Messrs. **Branch & Cook** and Mr. John T. Alsop to their stores, the goods having been removed during the excitement!

Messrs **Branch & Cook's** loss will be in the neighborhood of five hundred dollars, insured in the **G.W. Mutual Ins. Co. of New Orleans**.

John T. Alsop's loss on gin, engine, machinery and buildings about five thousand. Machinery, cotton and merchandise insured in the **Old Dominion Ins. Co. of Va** for thirty nine hundred. Loss on goods small. As to the loss of the Railroad company, it is impossible to form even a rough estimate. It being placed at various amounts, varying from three to ten thousand dollars.

We have mentioned the names of some who worked at the fire. To mention all who deserve praise would name every one in **Enfield [Halifax Co, NC]** and vicinity. We, however, must mention the names of three colored women who rendered themselves conspicuous by the spirit and energy they manifested in doing all they could do. Their names are **Susannah, Lucy Mason, and Dolly Gunter**.

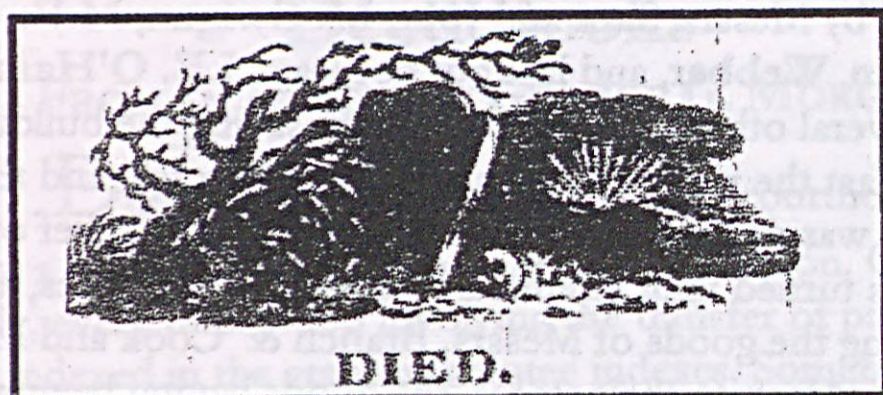
[*Enfield Times* April 12, 1873]



Cotton storeyard, Enfield, North Carolina 1938
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs
Division

GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN!

[FROM TENNESSEE OBITUARIES COLLECTED
BY JONATHAN K. T. SMITH]



S. [Sarah] B. MONTAGUE [nee Cook] born Granville Co., N.C., Oct. 25, 1801; [first]wife of Young Montague; married Nov. 7, 1820; moved to Tenn.,

1826; died Fayette Co., Tenn. [date not provided]

BENJAMIN H. WORTHAM born Warren Co., N.C.; lived for years in Granville Co., N.C.; died Maury Co., Tenn., Dec. 11, 1847 in the 69th year of his age. Presbyterian; husband and father (12 children).

MARTHA E. WRIGHT widow of Joshua Wright; d/o William and Lucy S. Kittrell, Granville Co., N.C., born April 4, 1809; died July 31, 1854, Maury Co., Tenn.

ETHELDRED WILLIAMS born Halifax Co., N.C., 1792; moved to Nashville, Tenn., 1809; an alderman, Nashville; freemason; died July 8, 1848.

[Contributed by Tim Rackley, TRC member.]

Remembering the June German

BY WILLIAM R. JONES

Woody Herman played the dance,
a highlight in my life.

The pretty girl who went with me,
my sweetheart and my wife.

The place, The Great June German,
Smith's Warehouse No. II
on North Church Street in Rocky
Mount.

The guests were not a few.

More like a thousand dancers
in tux with ladies fair.
All wearing gorgeous full-length
gowns
and flowers in their hair.

Huge old warehouse came alive,
the theme "Woodchoppers Ball."
An evening filled with magic
and enchantment I recall.

The old Cotillion Club reached out
to folks across the land.
with bids to come and have some fun
and party with the band.

Homes were open. Cops provided
safety for us all.

Throughout the intermissions
'til sunshine closed the ball.

A Visit From The Orphans

Oxford Orphanage Concert

A VISIT FROM THE ORPHANS.—

On Thursday night the 25th last, Mr. J. H. Mills, the Superintendent of the Orphan Asylum, visited our place and brought with him 12 little Orphans, 7 girls and 5 boys. The Methodist Church was tendered him for the Concert.

The Church was filled. It was a truly impressive scene and one calculated to touch the heart of the most indifferent, to hear the songs of those children.

North Carolinians you should feel proud of the Oxford Orphan Asylum, it is doing a great and useful work. Mr. Mills, the superintendent, is exactly in the right place. Others may do as well, but none can do better, none can manage the institution better than it has been managed by him. God bless the Orphan Asylum.

The citizens made up a purse of about \$130 for the Asylum, besides distributions of about \$20 among the children.

[Franklin Courier, April 2, 1875]

200
YEARS AGO
TODAY

LOOK, ANYTHING
IS BETTER THAN
"FORKS OF TAR RIVER"

September 15, 1775

Citizens of the North Carolina village called Forks of Tar River vote to become the first American community to adopt the name Washington.

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Historical Highlights of Washington
and Beaufort Co., NC by the DAR.
Contributed by Gene Viverette,
TRC member.