

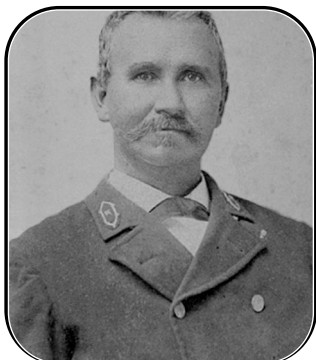


# The JOURNAL



## Historical Photo Album

*From the Tilles and Goff collections at the UAFS Pebley Center*



*Richard Smoot: Orbiting  
Booth's Inner Circle*



*Sebastian County  
Coal Mines*



*Henry Armstrong: Parks  
and Boys & Girls Clubs*



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# The JOURNAL

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COVER: Main photo—Car with scouts in front of the federal courthouse. (Photo from the Tilles Collection at the Pebley Center, UAFS Boreham Library)

Lower left—Richard Smoot.

Lower center—Coal Miner Memorial in Greenwood, Sebastian County

Lower right—Henry Armstrong

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# NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES

## Fort Smith Historical Society Quarterly Meeting

October 14, 2015, 6:30 p.m.

Fort Smith Public Library, Community Room, Main Branch. Agenda includes committee reports.

\*\*\*

## Symposium On The Great Indian Council Of 1865

September 12, 2015

10 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Fort Smith National Historic Site, second floor event room.  
All sessions are free.

\*\*\*

## 'Latina/os in Arkansas: Labor, Race and Community'

University of Arkansas – Fort Smith

September 24, 2015

Dr. Perla Guerrero, a professor at the University of Maryland, will speak at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith at 6:30 p.m. in conjunction with Hispanic Heritage Month. Guerrero's presentation, titled "Latinas/os in Arkansas: Labor, Race and Community," will take place in the lecture hall of the Gardner Building. The talk is free and open to the public.

\*\*\*

## 'Music That Moved Fort Smith' Exhibit

Fort Smith Museum of History

October 15, 2015

Exhibit opens at 5 p.m. with refreshments.

Program at 6 p.m. with Kevin Jones, Ph.D., UAFS, presenting a look at Concertmaster William Worth Bailey and Conductor Katherine Price Bailey.

\*\*\*

## Clayton House Family History Series

Reservations required

❖ **Sunday, September 27, 1:30 p.m.** Arkansas

state Representative George McGill will share his family's Fort Smith story.

❖ **Sunday, October 25, 1:30 p.m.** David Cravens, president of Regions Bank, will share the Cravens' family history.

\*\*\*

## Upcoming Clayton House Events

❖ William H. H. Clayton's birthday will be celebrated Sunday, October 11, from 1:30-3:30 p.m. with cake and a presentation on cases he prosecuted by Stephen Christian, Clayton House interpreter.

❖ Santa, carolers, a vignette troupe and refreshments will be present at the Clayton Family's Christmas Open House, Sunday, December 6, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

❖ The Clayton House provides guided museum tours Saturdays from noon to 4:00 p.m., Sundays 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., and by appointment. The Victorian mansion and museum is also available for rent for weddings, receptions, parties and meetings/day retreats. Final 2015 dates for the museum's Belle Grove Historic District Walking Tour are Sundays, September 20 and November 4 and 18, at 2:30 p.m.

\*\*\*

## Clayton House Preservation

The Fort Smith Heritage Foundation, the nonprofit organization that operates the Clayton House, is beginning preservation work on balconies and windows with funds from a 2015 preservation restoration grant from the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

For information, call 783-3000 or visit [www.claytonhouse.org](http://www.claytonhouse.org).

\*\*\*

## Crawford County Chronicles

Drennen-Scott House

Van Buren, Arkansas

Crawford County Chronicles first Sunday in September, October, November 2015.

Programs begin at 1:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. For reservations and more information, contact Tom Wing at (479) 262-2750 or [tom.wing@uafs.edu](mailto:tom.wing@uafs.edu).

## Arkansas Historical Association 75th Annual Conference

Little Rock, Arkansas

April 21-23, 2016

Theme: "Arkansas since 1941."

You may register for the conference at <http://arkansashistoricalassociation.org>

\*\*\*

## St. John's Episcopal Church Southern Style Mind Stretchers

All presentations are at 6:30 p.m. with reception beforehand in Skinner Building, 215 North Sixth Street, Fort Smith.

### On the Arkansas Ozarks

❖ "Ozark Foodways and Medicine" Justin Nolan, Department of Anthropology, University of Arkansas – Fayetteville, September 15, 2015.

❖ "Life and Times in the Arkansas Ozarks," Billy D. Higgins, Department of History, UAfS, October 20, 2015

### On Arkansas Native Americans

❖ "Arkansas and the Louisiana Purchase—Impact on Native Americans" Tom Wing, Director of the Drennen-Scott Historic Site, UAfS, January 19, 2016.

❖ "Native American Relations in the Trans-Mississippi West," Robert Willoughby, Department of History, UAfS, February 16, 2016.

### On Arkansas African Americans

❖ "African Americans in the Deep Cotton South: Has Anything Changed?" Jeannie Whayne, Department of History, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, March 15, 2016.

❖ "Race vs. Ethnicity in the South," Dan Maher, Department of Anthropology, UAfS, May 17, 2016.

\*\*\*

## Volunteers Needed!

Anyone interested in helping with the scanning, data entry, and conservation of historic documents for the Sebastian County/UAfS Archive Project should contact Dr. Kevin Jones, 788-7429 or email [kevin.jones@uafs.edu](mailto:kevin.jones@uafs.edu). Training is available. This work is vital in preserving and protecting the historic documents within the Sebastian County archives. Volunteers work on their own schedule, as much as they can give, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please contact Jones for more information.

\*\*\*

## Gifts

Paula Pharr

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# Henry Armstrong

*Man leaves mark on Fort Smith  
parks, Boys & Girls Clubs*

**By Jerry Glidewell**

**B**orn October 4, 1896, Henry Clay Armstrong Jr. was the oldest son of Dr. Minnie Sanders Armstrong and Henry Armstrong Sr. His mother was the first woman doctor to practice medicine in Fort Smith and one of the first-ever female jurors in the United States.



**MINNIE JULIET SANDERS  
ARMSTRONG, M.D.**

(Photo courtesy of the Fort  
Smith Museum of History)

Educated in Fort Smith, Henry was a star athlete in high school. Although he was a good student and voted most athletic in his class, he bypassed college to begin farming. When Henry was eleven years old, his father died in a hunting accident. Henry felt responsible for supporting his three younger siblings, Norris, Fred, and Ruth. Throughout high school, Henry delivered newspapers to help out with family expenses.

He was determined to provide support for his younger siblings so that they could attend college.

In 1918 Armstrong left for Naval Aviation School in Seattle and as a pilot was assigned to San Diego. There, the plane he was piloting fell into the ocean. After three days of searching, rescuers spotted him sitting on his downed craft.

After the war, Henry returned home and continued farming until becoming a salesman for Goodyear Tire. He sold Standard Oil & Goodyear products at the corner of North Tenth Street and North B Street. In 1928, as American Legion Commander, he sponsored the first baseball team at the newly formed Fort Smith Boys Club.

That same year, Henry was responsible for having a World War I memorial statue erected at Tilles Park. The



**HENRY ARMSTRONG**

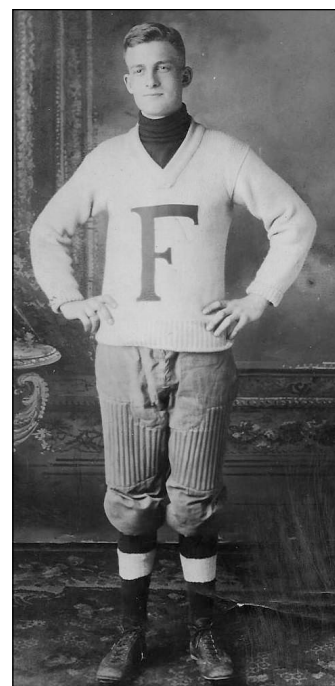
(Courtesy of Armstrong family)

“Spirit of America” Doughboy was later moved to the American Legion Post on Midland Boulevard.

In 1940, Henry was sworn in as a United States Marshal and served the Western District of Arkansas until 1945. He was a member of the Parks Commission and helped plan the development of Lake Fort Smith and Creekmore Park.

He created the Planning Commission and served with other Fort Smith business icons like Stanley Evans.

Elected to the board of directors of the Fort Smith Boys Club in 1941,



**HENRY ARMSTRONG in  
Fort Smith High School letter-  
man's sweater.**

(Courtesy of Armstrong family)



**LT. HENRY ARMSTRONG** with U.S. Navy Curtiss N-9H World War I fighter airplane  
(Courtesy of Armstrong family)

Henry was board president for five years. As chairman of the Boys Club State Area Council, Armstrong traveled throughout Arkansas helping establish Boys Clubs in other communities.

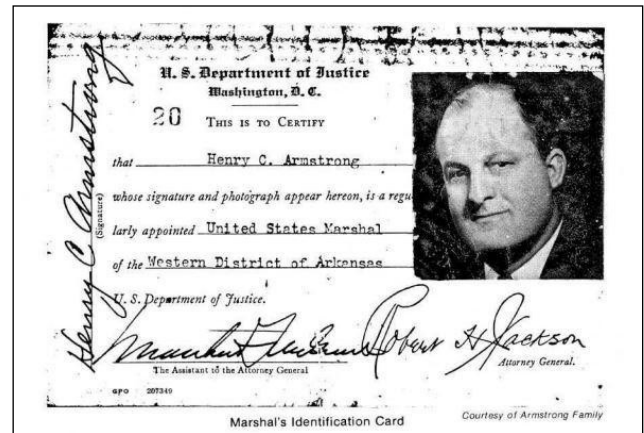
Henry married Myra Payne Sparks on November 12, 1932. They loved to travel. They had one child, Myra Payne "Missy" Armstrong, who is married to James Daniel "Danny" Roebuck, son of Dr. Fred and Blanche Roebuck.

Henry's three siblings became quite successful in their own careers. His brother Norris was a respected college coach and athletic director. His brother Fred became an attorney and an Arkansas state representative. His sister Ruth was homecoming queen at the University of Arkansas and for forty years taught science and biology to students in Fort Smith public schools. The Ruth Armstrong Nature Area is named in her honor.

Henry Armstrong died October 15, 1979. He was inducted into the Fort Smith Boys & Girls Club Hall of Fame, November 10, 2014.



*Jerry Glidewell is the Executive Director of the Fort Smith Boys & Girls Club and songwriter of "Homerun," Chicago White Sox anthem.*



**HENRY ARMSTRONG'S U.S. MARSHALS SERVICE IDENTIFICATION CARD**  
(Courtesy of Armstrong family)



**WORLD WAR I "SPIRIT OF AMERICA" DOUGHBOY STATUE**, now located at 4901 Midland Boulevard  
(Courtesy of Armstrong family)



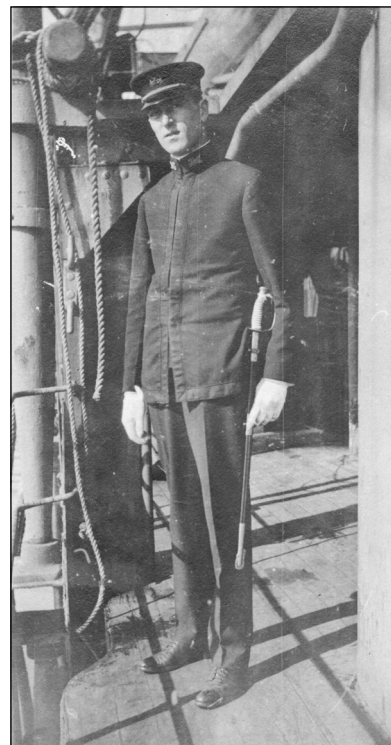
**THE RUTH ARMSTRONG NATURE AREA** was named in honor of Henry Armstrong's sister, Ruth, a longtime science and biology teacher in the Fort Smith Public School system.  
(Courtesy of Jerry Glidewell)

# Historical Photo Album

*Images selected from the Tilles Family Collection and the Goff Collection, from the Pebley Center archives, Boreham Library, UAFS*



**(ABOVE) GOFF COLLECTION.** *Undated. A luncheonette, probably in Fort Smith, with a piano in the corner, an Orange Crush advertisement, and a sign about the kitchen door reading, "Keep Out."*



**(RIGHT) GOFF COLLECTION.** *World War I soldier. On the back reads, "Me and my sword."*



**(LEFT) GOFF COLLECTION.** **THE ROCK BUILDING** *on the corner of Gary Street and Old Greenwood Road. On the back, it reads, "Seabs House, Fort Smith, 1928."*



**(LEFT)** *Tilles Collection.* Car with scouts in front of the federal courthouse. At the bottom, a line reads, "Albert, ain't you funny?"



**GOFF COLLECTION. WRITTEN ON BACK** are names, Pack, Berry, Dean, Pope, Page, McJunkin, and Leach



**TILLES COLLECTION. Undated.** Football players with a windmill in the background



**GOFF COLLECTION. UNDATED.** Perhaps from a furniture factory in Fort Smith. Some faces are damaged, but overall, a very clear photo



**TILLES FAMILY.** Children from left to right: S. W. "Bud" Jackson Jr., Caroline Jackson, Roberta Carver, Blossom Apple, Andrew Tilles Carver, Clayton Tilles Unger

Ladies from left to right: Lucille Lick Jackson, Ella Tilles Falk, Ferold Tilles Carver (with baby), Lillian Wormser Tilles, Tilles Unger (with baby), Hannah Tilles Apple

Men from left to right: S. W. Jackson Sr., Cap Tilles Lick, George Tilles Jr., George Tilles Sr.



**TILLES COLLECTION. THERE IS NO WRITING** on the back, but there is a photography stamp from Mitchell's, Fort Smith Arkansas. The house may be recognizable to some as well



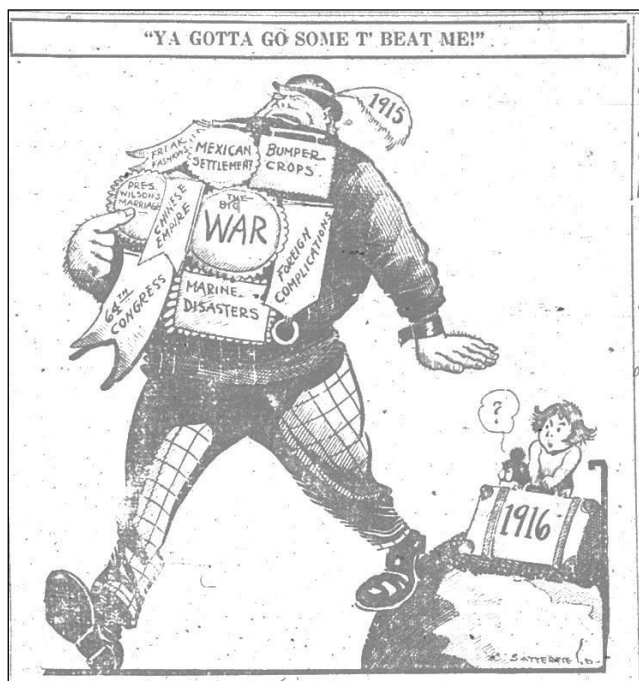
**GOFF COLLECTION. THEATER ATTENDEES** of all ages and attire. Electric lights help date the photo.

# Fort Smith and 'The Great War'

## Part III

January 1 – December 31, 1916

By Jerry Akins



**T**his cartoon was top center of page 1, January 1, 1916, *Fort Smith Southwest American*.

But the little fellow did a pretty good job of beating 1915's record. For starters, on that same page in column 1, there was an article titled, "Ford Party Has Reached Denmark." In column 4 of that page a tiny article datelined New York, December 31, titled "Ford Delayed," reported, "The ship *Bergensdorf*, on which Henry Ford is returning from his peace expedition, has been delayed by gales and will not reach this port until Sunday morning...."

The Fort Smith paper had not followed the story of Ford's "peace expedition" closely, and what was not mentioned was that he had abandoned what one contemporary observer had called, "a sublimely screwy paragraph in American history." In late 1915, Ford had embarked on a mission to personally end the war in Europe by heading a peace delegation to negotiate with the European leaders. He had said, "If I can make automobiles run why can't I steer those people clear of war?" He thought that if he could just sit down with the leaders of the warring coun-

tries, he could end the killing.

By the end of December, Ford had realized the futility of the mission and quietly slipped out of his Norwegian hotel and caught a ship back to the United States. But the ship of fools sailed on, even though heads of state refused to meet with them.<sup>1</sup>

As the "peace delegation" traveled on at Ford's expense, the European war intensified. The first mention of poison gas appeared in Fort Smith newspapers on January 27, 1916. Sub warfare increased, and more American lives were lost. On January 3, President Woodrow Wilson started from Hot Springs, Virginia, to Washington, D. C. "to take personal charge of the nation's foreign affairs in the new crisis brought about by the sinking of the British steamship *Persia* with a loss of at least one American life."<sup>2</sup> But, even though the president took charge, the negotiations over the *Persia*, like the *Lusitania* and the *Ancona*, would drag on for months while "notes" were exchanged between governments.

On December 31, 1915, the United States government had received notice of an agreement from the Austrian government regarding the sinking of the Italian liner *Ancona* by an Austrian submarine. They had agreed with the U. S. demands not to attack liners until passengers had been placed in boats.<sup>3</sup> Germany proved to be more difficult to negotiate with, but by mid-year it had come to near the same terms as Austria had. In that way, the involved governments avoided breaking of diplomatic relations. And after all, it was leap year, election year.

It might have been just as well that the newlywed president returned from Hot Springs, Virginia, for he and the new first lady were "being sleuthed through a honeymoon . . . followed by detectives on every move they make."<sup>4</sup>

South of the border, down Mexico way, the U. S. military and government had a real war going on. The revolution in Mexico had dragged on for years and had resulted in bandit raids along the Texas border, mostly blamed on Pancho Villa and his followers. An Associated Press dispatch datelined, El Paso, Texas, January 11, reported that banditos, supporters of Villa, had held up a train near Chi-

huahua City and killed seventeen American employees of American Smelting and Refining Company. The U. S. government held Venustiano Carranza, nominal president of Mexico for the moment, responsible for apprehending the perpetrators. General Frederick Funston had already been appointed head of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) to go into Mexico to capture Pancho Villa and put an end to the banditos.<sup>5</sup>

Several men, among them John Pershing and George Patton, would make names for themselves in this endeavor. Field radio and “aeroplanes” were used for the first time by U. S. military, although neither was very effective in that terrain. Aircraft had trouble getting enough lift for take-off at the altitudes they had to work in, and hackers were at work on radio transmissions. Reporters had the transmitted military information before the officers for whom it was intended.<sup>6</sup> Auto-trucks were used by U. S. forces for the first time in war, and General Pershing drove a Dodge auto across the border.<sup>7</sup>

One subject that got a lot of space in several articles in *The Southwest American* but seems not to have made it into the history books is the action of Negro soldiers, the Seventh and Tenth Cavalry Units, in the Mexican War and the pursuit of Pancho Villa. In fact, they were involved in one battle where sixty Villistas were killed and Pancho Villa was reported to have been wounded.<sup>8</sup> According to the newspaper, the Mexicans could not accept that these dark-skinned people were Americans. Gringos are pale and fair-skinned; Americans must have brought in another country to fight against them. The Seventh and Tenth Calvaries gave good account of themselves, but unfortunately for Companies C and K of the Tenth Calvary, they were victims of an ambush and what was described as a massacre.

As the troops approached Carrizal, their commander, Captain Boyd, sent forward a Mexican guide to ask permission from the commander of the Mexican garrison to pass through the town. General Felix Gomez advanced and met with Boyd, and while they parlayed, Mexican troops began to surround the Americans. The Mexican and American officers parted, and as soon as General Gomez reached the end of his line, the Mexicans opened up with machine guns. Only seven of the cavalymen escaped.<sup>9</sup>

That war dragged on until February 1917, with peace negotiations proposed and rejected by both sides all through 1916. Pancho Villa was dubbed the “\$49 Million Bandit” by The Associated Press. According to the news agency’s calculations, that is what Uncle Sam spent on manpower, food, clothing, and equipment in the manhunt.<sup>10</sup> Villa surrendered in 1920, was pardoned, and retired to his enormous hacienda near Canutillo. He was

murdered while driving home from Parral on July 20, 1923.<sup>11</sup>

President Wilson had his hands full in 1916. Besides wars, congressional disputes, railroad strikes, and Supreme Court appointees, he was trying to get re-elected. But one project that was not controversial, at least at the federal level, was the Jefferson Highway.

The Jefferson Highway was of interest to Arkansas, and Fort Smith in particular. The Jefferson Highway, when completed, was intended to connect New Orleans with Winnipeg, Canada. The program was initiated in November 1915 with a meeting of representatives of the Louisiana Purchase states of the Mississippi River Valley.<sup>12</sup> In January, February, and March 1916 there were articles in the Fort Smith paper weekly, and sometimes two and three times per week on the subject. There was fierce competition between Oklahoma and Arkansas to lure the route to their states, as well as the counties within the states. Meetings were held with members of automobile clubs, businessmen’s organizations and representatives of Jefferson Highway associations from other states in Fort Smith and other cities. Counties competed in the building of roads to become a part of the highway. Land-owners were to be the primary source of funding with taxes and dues assessed.

But, Arkansas was to be disappointed. An AP dispatch, datelined, St. Joseph, Missouri, July 20, 1916, “Arkansas Is Dropped out of Jefferson Highway Association.” The association had decided that since the highway would not pass through Arkansas, Nebraska, North or South Dakota that those states would be dropped from membership. Initially the highway went from New Orleans to Shreveport, Louisiana, and then veered off northwest to Marshall, Texas, then north on what is now U. S. Highway 69, through Muskogee, Oklahoma, then to Kansas City, and connected with present-day Interstate 29.<sup>13</sup>

While Congress and the president dealt with wars, preparedness, and compulsory military service, and as Youngstown, Ohio, dealt with deadly labor strikes, this headline dominated two thirds of the top of page one of *The Southwest American* on January 19, 1916:

### **BOB KUHN KILLED BY LIVE WIRE**

Robert D. Kuhn, assistant fire chief, had responded to a fire at the Crabtree Livery Barn, 607 North Tenth Street sometime after 11 o’clock the night of January 18. When Kuhn pushed a swinging wire aside, the end swung against his leg. Kuhn fell, staggered to his feet and ran a few yards, and fell again and never regained consciousness, although the pulmotor and artificial respiration were used. Although witness stories

varied, apparently Kuhn had been struck somehow by a 2,300-volt wire.

Twelve horses were burned, with a value of \$100 each. Fourteen cabs valued at \$500 to \$1,000 and three taxicabs at \$500 and up were lost. Four dwellings were totally destroyed, and two more were badly damaged. Thirty-two of the horses that were in the building were rescued.

Bob Kuhn was one of the most popular men of Fort Smith. There is hardly a man, woman or child in the city who did not know him and his friends are limited only to his acquaintances. Gentle, good humored, honest, gracious, capable and likeable. Bob was ever hailed a genuine delight.<sup>14</sup>

The death of Bob Kuhn led to demands that all high-voltage wires be run underground. That did not happen, but the Light & Traction Company did revise their safety regulations regarding downed wires.<sup>15</sup> The Light & Traction Company settled with Kuhn's mother for \$5,800. The City Commission awarded Robert Kuhn's mother and sister the sum of \$1,000, paid in installments of \$100 on the first payment and payments of \$75 until the amount was paid in full.<sup>16</sup>

Just the day before Kuhn's death, City Commissioner Thomas Hays had sent a letter to the Light and Traction Company requesting a more favorable rate for the city's electricity, citing their cheap source of power from local gas wells. In May, the city entered into a contract with a design engineering company to estimate of the cost of a municipal power plant.<sup>17</sup> That subject would be pursued all year. After a canvass of Fort Smith citizens, the canvassing committee recommended, and the city commissioners accepted, a proposal to put a municipal power plant up to a vote of the people. And that's how it stood as of December 27, 1916.<sup>18</sup>

January 1, 1916, newspapers reported that 1915 had been the wettest year on record since 1908. On the twelfth of the month, they commented on the vagaries of January weather with temperatures in the sixties and seventies. Two days later, the official weather report gave the temperatures for the previous day as: low four degrees, high twenty-four degrees.<sup>19</sup> Also, to prevent Grippe (influenza), which seemed to be a nationwide problem, "For adults take a tablespoonful of Swamp Chill Tonic. For sale by all druggists."

Weather forecasts in the early twentieth century were not nearly like the minute-to-minute forecasts of today, and reports of weather seemed to have lagged about two days in newspapers. By Tuesday, January 25, the temperature was again in the sixties, the river had fallen from

twenty-six feet to twenty-two feet, "but another rise is not expected."<sup>20</sup>

Expected or not, it came. By Friday, January 28, the title on the article was, "HEAVY RAINS CARRY THE ARKANSAS RIVER SIX FEET OVER FLOOD STAGE; COLD WAVE FOLLOWS." The river had reached the twenty-nine foot level and was expected to go to thirty. On Wednesday night and Thursday morning, there had been 2.62 inches of rain; flooding seemed to have been general all through the Mississippi, Missouri, and Arkansas River valleys. The wagon bridge across Lee Creek went out, and their pumping station was flooded to a depth of seven feet.<sup>21</sup> The bottom land on the west side, in LeFlore and Sequoyah counties was one giant lake, and the people had fled to higher ground, taking their belongings and spring seed grain with them.<sup>22</sup> From Little Rock, it was reported that the levee at the state farm at Cummins Prison had gone out, that all white convicts had been brought by special train to the penitentiary at Little Rock and that "a steamboat will transfer the [N]egro convicts tomorrow." Other levees were not expected to hold, and steamers were being sent to rescue the citizens.<sup>23</sup> "Over a score of persons were taken off of Arbuckle Island, in the northeast part of Sebastian County, on Sunday after being marooned several days." They were employees of Clear Creek Oil & Gas Company who were drilling for gas on the island. By Thursday, February 3, the Negro convicts had been rescued from the levee by the packet boat *Bay Queen*, and efforts were being made to get the 190 held in the Lakeview stockade to the levee where they could be taken off. People in towns normally miles from the river were rescued by steamboats, but the river currents made rescue difficult.

On March 1, *The Southwest American* reported that February had been unusually dry, with about only half the usual amount of rainfall.

While the nation struggled with floods from coast to coast, the U. S. Senate struggled with the president's appointment of the first Jew to the U. S. Supreme Court. Aside from being a Jew, Louis D. Brandeis was a liberal (some suspected a Socialist) lawyer who had worked both sides of the labor issue. His detractors had several charges against him, but only one appeared to be of real substance. Brandeis had been on the board and served as counsel for the United Shoe Machinery Company. He had resigned that position and taken up the cause of the shoe manufacturers fighting the United Shoe Machinery Company. Brandeis stood for the cause of labor, for the eight-hour workday, against child labor, for women's suffrage and for conservation of resources.<sup>24</sup> He was finally confirmed on June 1, 1916, in a vote of forty-seven to twenty-two, with twenty-one Republicans and one Democrat opposing

him.

Meanwhile, people in Fort Smith were helping the American Jewish Relief Society in New York to raise \$10 million to relieve, "The Most Awful Suffering in the History of the World."<sup>25</sup> Jews in all of the countries affected by the war were being displaced and were suffering.

While the Senate committee dealt with the Brandeis nomination, President Wilson and Congress were trying to deal with "preparedness." Congress eventually passed a bill to increase the standing army to 140,000 and provided for more ship building and other armaments. The armament building directly affected Fort Smith and Arkansas.

The war that had contributed to a depression would suddenly bring boom times to Fort Smith. Gas in abundance from nearby wells provided cheap fuel for zinc smelters. There were large supplies of zinc in easy reach of the area. It seemed that every issue of the newspaper had news of a "Gasser" somewhere in the vicinity. In the April 3 meeting, the city commissioners complained that the Light & Traction Company's twenty-five cents per cubic feet was exorbitant. In the June 2 meeting, they accepted the Clear Creek Oil & Gas Company's contract for five cents per cubic foot.<sup>26</sup> Zinc smelters, both in Van Buren and south Fort Smith, followed the development of the gas industry.

After the smelters came a "housing famine." One headline declared, "EIGHTY HOUSES ARE NEEDED FOR EMPLOYEES OF SMELTING PLANT IN SOUTH FORT SMITH."<sup>27</sup> Twelve houses were started the next week and were expected to be finished in ninety days. And, in Van Buren, transportation problems; the trolley lines didn't reach all the way to the smelter. Agreements had to be made and tracks laid to accommodate that situation.

In February, *The Southwest American* announced:

A \$50,000 bottling company has been organized in Fort Smith to be known as the Coca Cola Bottling Company that will operate its main plant here and six subsidiary plants in Arkansas and Oklahoma. The corporation is composed of leading Fort Smithians and has purchased the bottling department of J. W. Meek and Robert Meek. . . .<sup>28</sup>

In May, "Best-Clymer Sorghum Company, whose sorghum mill in south Fort Smith is the largest in the world" announced that it would erect another addition, a by-products plant, at a cost of \$25,000.<sup>29</sup> South Fort Smith was growing, but there was more to come.

In June, representatives of the Mid-West Glass Casket factory began deliberating over whether to establish a factory in Fort Smith or in Van Buren. It needed to be

above the high water mark, accessible to railroads, and of vital consideration was a gas contract. Also, affordable housing for employees was important. The first publication of this information said that a decision would be made in three days, but that time seemed to have come and passed.<sup>30</sup> By the end of July, the officials of the casket company were favoring Arkoma, where the Frisco had begun lines from its main tracks and the Wildcat Oil and Gas Company had "offered a bountiful supply of gas."<sup>31</sup>

On August 31, *The Southwest American* reported:

Difficulties in closing negotiations for a right of way to a Fort Smith site tentatively selected by the officials have held up signing of the contracts for the past several weeks and Van Buren citizens are diligently urging the advantages of Van Buren for such an institution.

On the same day that article appeared, representatives of the casket company told the directors of the Business Men's club that they had closed negotiations with Arkoma and that construction would start in the next thirty days and that within a few weeks, the manufacture of glass bottles would begin. Installing machinery for the making of caskets would begin about the first of the coming year.<sup>32</sup>

But the Arkoma site was not to be, either. Several tracts of land with numerous owners created obstacles. Prominent businessmen tried to negotiate the deal, but in the end, one hold-out, or hold-up, as the case may be, stopped it. Coffeerville Vitreous Brick Company demanded \$4,000 for three acres that, in initial negotiations, the casket company thought was to be \$1,000. The Glass Casket Company eventually decided to go to Muskogee.<sup>33</sup>

But, other industry had come and would come to Fort Smith. On May 19, a wagon factory announced a large expansion to accommodate the manufacture of 1,000 tractors of the John Deere brand, which had previously only been made by the parent company in Moline, Indiana.<sup>34</sup> In October, the Ballman-Cummings Furniture Company and Shelbyville Mirror Company made an agreement for Ballman-Cummings to manufacture their products in Fort Smith. In November, the Business Men's Club approved the move to Fort Smith of "a new industry manufacturing manicure cutlery and all kinds of scissors."<sup>35</sup> In the same issue of the paper that announced the cutlery company, it was also noted that, "The deed for the site of the Fort Smith Glass and Mirror Company will be signed today." The Business Men's Club also instituted a factory fund to entice businesses to Fort Smith and raised, "Over \$18,000 in Four Days to Pay for Smokestacks."<sup>36</sup>

Throughout the year, the newspaper was full of new

businesses coming to town or of expansion of businesses. All of the business and industrial boom was largely due to the discovery of natural gas, and because of that, zinc smelting. The U. S. Geological Survey for the first six months of 1916 listed Arkansas mines, "second only to that from the Joplin field," which was rated as the largest in the world. But, the demand for zinc was tied back to national "preparedness."

Preparedness was driving the national economy, but there was also an anti-preparedness faction. On February 8, 1916, a group of pacifists warned the Senate and House military committees against being stampeded into "unwarranted appropriations for national preparedness." Helen Keller, who spoke March 27 in Fort Smith on her struggle to overcome deafness and blindness, had not spoken on that subject on January 5, 1916. On that date, at Carnegie Hall, before the Women's Peace Party and Forum, she had warned of, "The few who profit from the labor of the masses want to organize the workers into an army which will protect the interests of the capitalists."<sup>37</sup> The pacifists, "who said that they represented the farmers, working people, and voting women," opposed any expenditure of funds for increasing either the Army or Navy.<sup>38</sup>

But the farmers, at least the cattle raisers, of Sebastian County were concerned about a more immediate economic problem than funds for the Army or Navy. Sebastian County had been listed as one of the counties under quarantine for Texas Tick Fever.<sup>39</sup> Quarantines were imposed by both state and federal regulations. Tick fever resulted in compromised health, weight loss, infertility, reduced milk production, and lower prices on the market. Cattle within a quarantined area could not be shipped to any place except in an infected area. Or they could be taken directly to national stockyards, where they were immediately turned into canned beef.

In 1915, two federal eradication districts were established in Arkansas, and all stockmen in those districts were assessed a five-cent-per-head annual tax to help finance the program. Dipping vats were to be established so that no farmer had to travel more than three miles to a vat. Five cents per head per annum was a financial burden to small farmers and resulted in protests that led to dynamiting of dipping vats and even murder.<sup>40</sup>

In Logan County, ninety-one farmers were indicted for failure to comply with the dipping law. One was convicted of failing to allow the sheriff to dip his cattle. Shortly after those indictments, the first two men to be charged in Sebastian County were indicted and convicted.<sup>41</sup> In Huntington on "Dipping Day," an argument and free-for-all broke out, and Wayne Ford was struck, fatally, with a rock to the back of his head. In the fray, Jim Kuykendall

received a head wound from being struck by a piece of timber. "Recently Rev. H. E. Morris, a Baptist minister, went to the community to hold a revival and was forced to give up his efforts, because people would not attend owing to the high tension that exists. . . ."<sup>42</sup>

Eventually, agreement was reached at a meeting of cattle owners, county officials, and agents of the U. S. Department of Animal Husbandry. Mostly, it was due to the fact that tick-free animals brought higher prices on the market. Also, vaccination for hog cholera, which had been opposed, was saving thousands of hogs.<sup>43</sup>

But human disease, at least as far as the newspaper was concerned, seemed not to exist in Fort Smith; everywhere else, but not here. Although they did not state the cause of death, the City Commissioner Bruce, on February 2, 1916, "recommended that the Commission wave the cost of two graves and digging for . . . two children who died at Refuge Home."<sup>44</sup> By March 2, Commissioner Singleton reported "another case of smallpox" at a house on South Sixth Street and that all cases were "under surveillance." Two cases were quarantined, and a third near South Fort Smith was being watched. An investigation of a reported epidemic in Van Buren found that one had died and that only three remained.<sup>45</sup> Strangely, none of this appeared in *The Southwest American*, but on April 8 on page five, the newspaper did mention that a smallpox epidemic at Rush, Arkansas, was greatly exaggerated.

On April 11, without mentioning an epidemic, an article ran in the lower corner of page one about Dorothy Dabney, who lay dying in a local hospital. "It is said the girl took the poison Sunday afternoon at the city smallpox detention camp." The next day, April 12, a man named Eubanks "replaces Ned Fentress of the City Health Department, who was in charge of the camp Sunday night when Dorothy Dabney took bi-chloride of mercury tablets there. Fentress was placed in charge of the city camp shortly after his release from the county jail, March 6, at the conclusion of his sentence of ninety days for contempt of court."<sup>46</sup>

A week before the poisoning incident, in a meeting of the city commissioners, just after they approved the expenses for the previous month:

Mayor Read called attention to expense of caring for smallpox patients and urged that the commission not to loose (sic) sight of the project to build a detention hospital at the proper time. Com. Singleton reported 2 cases smallpox held over from last month and 7 new cases dismissed all but 2. He reported that they had taken care of about 20 people account of the Quaranteen (sic).<sup>47</sup>

In the August 2 meeting, it was noted that “Hester had refused to spend the money in accordance with the wish of the court making the problem of a smallpox epidemic very costly to the city under the present situation....The commission pledged their support to secure a Pest House.” No mention of these things was found in the newspapers.

The thing that did make the newspapers, that didn’t make its way to this part of the country, at least in epidemic proportions, was infantile paralysis (poliomyelitis). “Infantile Paralysis Reaps Harvest in New York” was the title of an AP article datelined New York, July 5. “The average of one death an hour was maintained today by infantile paralysis epidemic, 12 children dying of the disease between 10 o’clock last night and 10 o’clock this morning in the five boroughs of New York City.”<sup>48</sup>

At the time of no known cause, no known cure, they only knew to keep their children indoors. However, Dr. Thomas Harrington, deputy health commissioner of Massachusetts, knew what was to blame—it was automobiles. He told the American Public Health Association, “Infantile paralysis is due to chemical agents, namely gases and fumes driven out in the atmosphere by the combustion of oils and fluids used in automobiles.”<sup>49</sup> What did he think caused the disease in the years prior to the development of automobiles? The disease had been known since about 1840.

On July 21, a small Associated Press dispatch datelined Washington, D. C., appeared on page one of *The Southwest American*: “The public health service regards danger of a national epidemic of infantile paralysis as over. The state boards of health throughout the country have reported themselves able to combat any appearance of the disease.” On July 23, page three, this appeared, datelined New York: “There were more deaths in the epidemic of infantile paralysis during the last 24 hours than at any time since the inception of the disease four weeks ago . . . There were 135 new cases.”

Far too late, in November, the Keep Well Column advised people against the use of public swimming pools, warning people “of the prevalence of venereal disease” and of the “refuse from our skin and the putrefaction of perspiration” that pollute the waters.<sup>50</sup>

On October 1, the newspaper announced that doctors were “gathering for the greatest convention in the history of state.” More than 300 from Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, and Texas were “expected to attend the greatest medical gathering ever attempted in the state.” Experts from all fields of medicine were to perform free treatments and surgeries at St. Edward Infirmary and Sparks Memorial Hospital. Both hospitals were overflowing with candidates.

In November 1916, Jesse G. Putman, “a pioneer under-

taker and funeral director,” bought a motor hearse and a motor ambulance. So Mister Putman’s facility could haul you in whichever direction you needed to go.

“[A]n outrage upon the feelings and a humiliation to the pride of the persons involved” were the words of County Judge Cleveland Holland in referring to the billing methods of Sparks Memorial Hospital. The hospital received \$6,000 per year for care of paupers, but had billed the county an additional \$4,547.13 in what amounted to double billing. In maternity cases, the hospital billed to, and was paid by, the family. Then, considering the baby as a pauper, billed the county \$1.50 for each day in the hospital.<sup>51</sup> The next day, the county grand jury recommended that the county stop the practice of donating \$4,000 to hospitals to take care of the indigent. Instead, Judge Holland recommended using the third floor of the county hospital to be equipped with beds and an operating room to take care of the county’s sick.<sup>52</sup>

But, Sparks’ woes were nothing compared to American National Bank’s problems:

#### Closing of American National Bank Will Cause No Break in Fort Smith’s Wave of Prosperity

That was the banner line across the top of page one on March 26, 1916. On Saturday, March 25, American National Bank closed its doors and arrest warrants were issued for cashier Ball and assistant cashiers Dowd and Dickenson, charging them with embezzlement and misappropriation of funds. The defendants were placed under arrest in the bank by U. S. Marshal Phillip Ross. Their friends were quickly summoned and signed for the \$25,000 bond for each man. Bank examiners and accountants worked through the day and night trying to sort out the discrepancies. And the courts would labor throughout the year trying to sort out the penalties and liabilities.<sup>53</sup>

The tentacles of this thing would reach to individuals like the Leflore County farmer whose passbook showed a balance between \$3,200 and \$3,400 but the bank records showed only \$200 to the Kansas City bank that was “carrying paper on the American bank to an amount said to approximate between \$80,000 and \$100,000.”<sup>54</sup> Several local businesses, including the Goldman Hotel, eventually were deeply involved.

Assistant cashier Dickenson almost immediately admitted his guilt and was remanded to jail under \$25,000 bond, as were Ball and Dowd. But, the plot thickens. It appeared that officers of the bank were making heavy loans to themselves. The conspirators had bilked the bank and depositors in just about every way possible to the tune of \$205,546.07, according to H. L. Machen, bank examiner. But it got much worse as other note holders of

various sorts came in.

It wasn't until May 12, 1916, that the grand jury for the U. S. District Court for the Western District of Arkansas convened, and it wasn't until June 14, almost three months after the discovery of the looting, that they issued "six voluminous indictments including a total of a hundred and twenty-seven counts" that included, not only Ball, Dowd, and Dickenson, but also bank president T. W. M. Boone. "The principal indictment of accounts alleges that August 1, 1913, Ball, Boone, Dowd and Dickenson entered into a conspiracy to defraud the bank by embezzlement, abstraction and misappropriation of \$113,000 of the bank's moneys, funds and credits," and that thereafter carried out the conspiracy "from time to time."<sup>55</sup> The list goes on and on.

A reorganization committee worked day and night putting together the puzzle pieces of the business.

The result of the meeting of depositors of the American National Bank Monday night was the initiation of a project to reorganize the bank with \$100,000 capitalization under new management. The form of reorganization includes a surrender of all stock of the present bank, the agreement on the part of depositors and other creditors to accept in settlement such portion of their claims in cash as the total assets of the bank bears to its debts, and balance to be taken in stock in the new bank, the balance of stock to be taken by businessmen and investors.<sup>56</sup>

"One of the charges was that Negroes hold about one fifth of the deposits and that not one has subscribed for stock. Each and every one has made the same stereotyped explanation, 'I have been told that if I stay out I can go to the bank the next day after they open and get all my money.'" That wrong idea existed in the heads of others, too. The reorganization was a hard sell, but eventually, it was done.

In details that it would take pages and pages to tell, the problems were solved. Boone, Ball, Dowd, and Dickenson were convicted of embezzlement, misappropriation, fraud, etc. Ball, Dowd, and Dickenson were sent to federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas, where they were visited by a reporter for *The Southwest American* in November 1916. Ball was a clerk in the prison library, Dowd record-keeper of Bertillion records, and Dickenson a purchasing agent. Boone was sentenced to seven years in prison, but in November 1916 had appealed and was given 100 days for his attorneys to file bills of exception. The judge set the final day of appeal for February 19, 1917.<sup>57</sup>

In spite of all of the wars and rumors of war, smallpox, Jew in the Supreme Court, elections, local and national

and bank looting, there was some joy in Fort Smith; although not shared by all.

Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners, April 17, 1916:

Gentlemen; We the undersigned residents and property owners of your city residing and owning property on Wheeler and Carnal avenue opposite the Belle Point school grounds at the intersection of Wheeler and Carnal, beg to respectfully enter notice of protest with you against the letting of granting of the use of the space now occupied by sidewalks and parkways about said grounds to the Fort Smith-Van Buren Baseball Association for the purpose of Establishing a professional Base Ball Park on said grounds.

The letter went on at length to explain why they entered a letter of protest. The petition was received and filed. Next item of business:

Ordinance: An ordinance leasing to the Fort Smith and Van Buren Base Ball Club certain portions of certain streets and avenues in the City of Fort Smith, Arkansas.

The ordinance was read three times and was declared passed.

Almost two weeks earlier, some Fort Smith businessmen had begun circulating a petition to build a ballpark and stadium on the site of the old Belle Point school, which had not been used in many years. A week before the supplicants had submitted their petition to the city commission, the school board had granted a three-year lease on the property located at Wheeler Avenue and South Ninth streets, between Carnall and South A streets.

The newspaper articles always first mentioned the benefits to school athletics, then to the Western Association Club (Fort Smith-Van Buren Twins) then to the probabilities of a Major League farm team.

By April 12, the finance committee for the stadium had enough funds pledged to begin work on the demolition of the old Belle Point School by Friday, April 14. It was predicted that, "It will require six weeks to two months to complete the new plant."<sup>58</sup> By April 28, the project was reported half completed. Two days later, it was predicted that the stadium would be done in another week.

Elaborate plans were laid for the "New Era Jubilee," as the celebration of the dedication of "The Stadium" was to be called, in honor of the prosperity that Fort Smith and Van Buren were experiencing due to the discovery of natural gas that was bringing new industry to the cities. Governor-elect Dr. H. C. Brough was to give the dedication

address and throw out the first pitch. It was to be a magnificent three-day event on May 11, 12, and 13.

But then, on the night of May 3, the work of a fire-bug was only averted by the night watchman at the Western Grain Company. About 11 o'clock that night, he saw a flame and the form of a man high up in the grandstand. Firemen arrived to find a broken bottle partly filled with coal oil, charred paper, and shavings near the spot found burning. The same citizens who had petitioned the city against the granting of use of sidewalks and parkways for the ballpark now denounced the attempt to destroy the stadium.

Thursday, May 11, 1916, saw the largest automobile parade seen in Fort Smith. The organizers had hoped for every automobile in Fort Smith and Van Buren to participate. At 2:30, stores closed at three o'clock to allow their employees to attend the opening ceremonies. Dr. Brough gave his address, and the Twins took the field to win their opening game in their new facility. On Friday, the celebration began with a parade including nearly a mile of schoolchildren who had been let out early. At the stadium, thirty-five junior high girls gave a redbird drill, executing difficult steps to the music of the high school band. Mayor Read gave a long speech dealing, largely, with preparedness then dedicated the new city flag that had been approved on May 5 by the city commissioners. And the Twins, again, beat Dennison in a "Thrilling Eleven Inning Battle." On Saturday, "Four Homers Mark Third Straight Victory of Twins."<sup>59</sup> Sweet victory over the team that had beaten them in their last meeting.

In July, it was announced that the Willys-Overland Company would treat its 18,000 employees to six acts of the Barnum & Bailey Circus in Toledo, Ohio. But, according to reports, that act would pale compared to the Humbug Circus of Fort Smith. The day before the show even started, Chief of Police Martine Theurer was accused of shirking his duty by leaving town to avoid taking any action to stop the staging of the original dance by Fatima, queen of the Sultan's harem.

The Humbug Circus was an absurdity staged by the Ad Club, Noon Civics Club, Rotary Club, and the Parks and Playgrounds Association. It had all of the acts of the three-ring circus and featured a chariot race between Ben Her and Ben He. Ben Her's chariot was to be pulled by a team of plow horses and Ben He's by a team of mules. Fatima's dance, performed by Fred Reutzel, was one of the "snide" shows, for which there was an extra charge beyond the admission fee. But:

Police raided the snide show just as Fred Reutzel was in the act of duplicating the famous contortions of Mme. Fatima. A dozen leading

citizens were arrested and liberated into the custody of their wives after the operators were forced to return the money they had taken in. The show wasn't pinched because it violated any moral code, but because the authorities opined Reutzel was such a poor imitation of the real Mme. Fatima that the operators were obtaining money under false pretenses.

From the parade on Garrison Avenue to the chariot race, it was all a great burlesque, but it ended with genuine performances "by some of the best male musical talent of the city accompanied by a complete orchestra."<sup>60</sup>

The city commissioners, however, had real issues with some forms of entertainment. In their meeting of March 3, 1916, they passed "an ordinance regulating theaters, picture shows, vaudeville and places for public congregation for entertainment defining the character of shows permitted, prohibiting the exhibition of shows tending to corrupt private morals..."

The specific target of the ordinance or what was the final straw in the racy movies of the time was a show called *Damaged Goods* in which a young couple discovers that they have syphilis as a result of premarital sex. That movie was the prime mover in the effort to control the moral content of movies and led to the creation of the Motion Picture Code of 1930, known as the Hays Code. Article II of the Hays code states, "The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing."<sup>61</sup>

## ORPHANS FOR ARKANSAWYERS

That was the headline on the article on December 7, page 6, of *The Southwest American*. It was the announcement that The Children's Aid Society of New York was bringing "a company of homeless children" to Russellville, Arkansas, for the purpose of finding homes for them. Several people had shown their intention of adopting "particular bright-eyed rosy-cheeked tots."

Five days later, all of the orphans had found homes. There were more applications for children than there were children. "They were taken on trial for a short time and Mr. Morgan will return this week to prepare legal adoption papers for the children in homes where they are still wanted."

In the same issue of the paper, the Fort Smith Salvation Army announced the start of their campaign to provide Christmas baskets to the poor. The previous year, they had distributed 322 baskets containing, among other

things, a 24-pound sack of flour. On December 23, 1916, the Salvation Army gave out 335 baskets to families who had applied for tickets plus another thirty-five hastily prepared baskets for people who had not applied. The adjutant hurried to the wholesale house for a coop of live chickens for the baskets of those late comers. More baskets were delivered to shut-ins, and a turkey, two hens and a basket of apples were sent to the Rosalie Tilles Children's Home and to the Fort Smith Refuge Home.

But the members of the fire department got coal in their stockings that December. They asked the city commissioners for a raise, generally, of five dollars per month, and forty dollars per month for the fire chief. That would have been, for most firemen, a raise from eighty-five dollars to ninety dollars and from \$110 to \$150 for the chief.

But the mayor and commissioners said that such a raise would apply to all city employees and that unless the city could find some way of increasing revenues, they could not afford it.<sup>62</sup>

A group of former deputy U. S. marshals who served the Western District of Arkansas when it had jurisdiction over the Indian Territory hoped for better than the Fort Smith firemen. They elected Major Sam F. Lawrence and financed his trip to Washington, D. C., to stay until Congress took action on their petition for a pension law.<sup>63</sup>

Coal by the sock-full, or otherwise, might have been welcome to some in Fort Smith that December. With an unusually cold December, coal was in short supply, only enough to meet forty-eight hours need by some reports. That December had seen temperatures down to zero early in the month and one of the biggest snows in fifty years. That coupled with lack of rail cars due to the trains being used to carry that zinc produced by Fort Smith and Van Buren smelters and other war materials, the coal dealers were hard pressed to supply the city's need.

But neither cold nor snow nor dark of night kept the throngs away from the forty-foot city Christmas tree on Christmas Day. Thirty or forty children from the orphan home had arrived just before Santa arrived in a Maxwell electric car. "A most satisfactory feature was that the giving had been so well planned and carried out that no poor kiddie went away with empty hands and there were gifts left to carry away for poor children who had been unable to attend."<sup>64</sup>

In Jefferson City, Missouri, a petition was filed to consolidate all of the Bell Telephone properties in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas into one corporation to be known as the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company.

In New York railroads and employees agreed on the Adamson Act, the eight-hour law that had caused the strikes and difficulties most of the year.

In Fort Smith:

Industrially, the year just closing has been, by far, the greatest in Fort Smith's long history. It began with a state of trade better than in 1915, though still far from satisfying, but with an optimistic spirit abroad that has been entirely justified by event and accomplishments. It closed in a rush of commercial and industrial activity that has never been equaled in the city's history – with a total of nearly a million dollars additional investment in industrial enterprises, an addition of more than a thousand men on the city's pay-roll lists, and with assurances of more than a million dollars additional investment before the close of 1917.<sup>65</sup>



*Jerry Akins is a perennial contributor to The Journal and is the author of Hangin' Times in Fort Smith (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2012).*

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Giving Peace a Chance, Sort Of*: John H. McCool, Department of History, University of Kansas
- <sup>2</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 4, 1916, page 1, column 1.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 1, 1916, page 1, column

- 7
- <sup>4</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 1, 1916, page 6, column 1
- <sup>5</sup> *Kansapedia*, Kansas Historical Society, [www.Kshs.org](http://www.Kshs.org)
- <sup>6</sup> *The Southwest American*, April 6, 1916, page 1, column 1
- <sup>7</sup> *The Southwest American*, Sunday Supplement, April 6, 1916, page 4, column 3
- <sup>8</sup> *The Southwest American*, April 21, 1916, page 4 Editorial
- <sup>9</sup> *The Southwest American*, June 24, 1916, page 1, column 4
- <sup>10</sup> *The Southwest American*, December 26, 1916, page 1, column 1, Associated Press
- <sup>11</sup> [www.biography.com](http://www.biography.com)
- <sup>12</sup> Pittsburg State University Library Digital Collection, The Jefferson Highway Association, Crawford County Division, Records, 1915-2005
- <sup>13</sup> [Nola.com](http://Nola.com), *Times/Picayune*, Metairie, Louisiana, article by Mark Waller
- <sup>14</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 19, 1916, page 1 column 7
- <sup>15</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 26, 1916, page 6, column 3
- <sup>16</sup> Minutes of the Fort Smith City Commission, February 18, 1916
- <sup>17</sup> Minutes of the Fort Smith City Commission, May 2, 1916
- <sup>18</sup> Minutes of the Fort Smith City Commission, December 27, 1916
- <sup>19</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 14, 1916, page 6, column 3
- <sup>20</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 17, 1916, page 5, column 3
- <sup>21</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 28, 1916, page 10, column 1
- <sup>22</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 19, 1916, p5, column 1
- <sup>23</sup> AP dispatch, dateline Little Rock, Ark., January 31. *The Southwest American*, February 1, 1916, page 1, column 1
- <sup>24</sup> *The Southwest American*, February 2, 1916, page 4, column 3
- <sup>25</sup> *The Southwest American*, January 25, 1916, page 1, column 1
- <sup>26</sup> Minutes of Fort Smith City Commission meetings, April 3 and June 2, 1916
- <sup>27</sup> *The Southwest American*, June 4, 1916, page 1, column 1
- <sup>28</sup> *The Southwest American*, February 27, 1916, page 4, column 2
- <sup>29</sup> *The Southwest American*, May 18, 1916, page 2, column 3
- <sup>30</sup> *The Southwest American*, June 29, 1916, page 8, column 3
- <sup>31</sup> *The Southwest American*, July 27, 1916, page 7, column 5
- <sup>32</sup> *The Southwest American*, September 1, 1916, page 1, column 6
- <sup>33</sup> *The Southwest American*, October 28, 1916, page 2, column 2
- <sup>34</sup> *The Southwest American*, May 19, 1916, page 6, column 4
- <sup>35</sup> *The Southwest American*, November 15, 1916, page 10, column 1
- <sup>36</sup> *The Southwest American*, November 24, 1916, page 1, column 6
- <sup>37</sup> *Strike Against War*, by Helen Keller, speech at Carnegie Hall, January 5, 1916, for the Women's Peace Party and Forum, [gos.sbd.edu/k/keller](http://gos.sbd.edu/k/keller)
- <sup>38</sup> *The Southwest American*, February 9, 1916, page 1, column 4
- <sup>39</sup> *The Southwest American*, July 16, 1916, page 4, column 3
- <sup>40</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*, Texas Fever Eradication
- <sup>41</sup> *The Southwest American*, September 28, 1916, page 5, column 1
- <sup>42</sup> *The Southwest American*, October 7, 1916, page 1, column 5
- <sup>43</sup> *The Southwest American*, November 25, 1916, page 10, column 4
- <sup>44</sup> Minutes of Fort Smith City Commission, February 2, 1916, page 332
- <sup>45</sup> Minutes of Fort Smith City Commission, March 2, 1916, page 346
- <sup>46</sup> *The Southwest American*, April 11, 1916, page 2, column 1
- <sup>47</sup> Minutes of Fort Smith City Commission, April 3, 1916
- <sup>48</sup> *The Southwest American*, July 6, page 1, column 6
- <sup>49</sup> Associated Press, St. Louis, October 26, 1916
- <sup>50</sup> *The Southwest American*, November 29, 1916, page 4, column 7
- <sup>51</sup> *The Southwest American*, December 13, 1916, page 1, column 6
- <sup>52</sup> *The Southwest American*, December 14, 1916, page 7, column 3
- <sup>53</sup> *The Southwest American*, March 26, 1916, page 1, column 7
- <sup>54</sup> *The Southwest American*, March 26, 1916, page 1, column 7
- <sup>55</sup> *The Southwest American*, June 15, 1916, page 1, column 7
- <sup>56</sup> *The Southwest American*, April 9, 1916, page 1, column 5
- <sup>57</sup> *The Southwest American*, November 11, 1916, page 8, column 3
- <sup>58</sup> *The Southwest American*, April 16, 1916, page 6, column 3
- <sup>59</sup> *The Southwest American*, April 14, 1916, page 10, column 1
- <sup>60</sup> *The Southwest American*, July 12, 1916, page 7, column 5
- <sup>61</sup> ArtsReformation.com, The Motion Picture Code of 1930 (Hays Code). Article II
- <sup>62</sup> Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners, December 16, 1916, page 494
- <sup>63</sup> *The Southwest American*, December 24, 1916, page 2, column 1
- <sup>64</sup> *The Southwest American*, December 26, 1916, page 2, column 2
- <sup>65</sup> *The Southwest American*, December 31, 1916, page 9, column 1

# Richard Smoot

## *Orbiting John Wilkes Booth's Inner Circle*

by **Dallas Mark Potter**

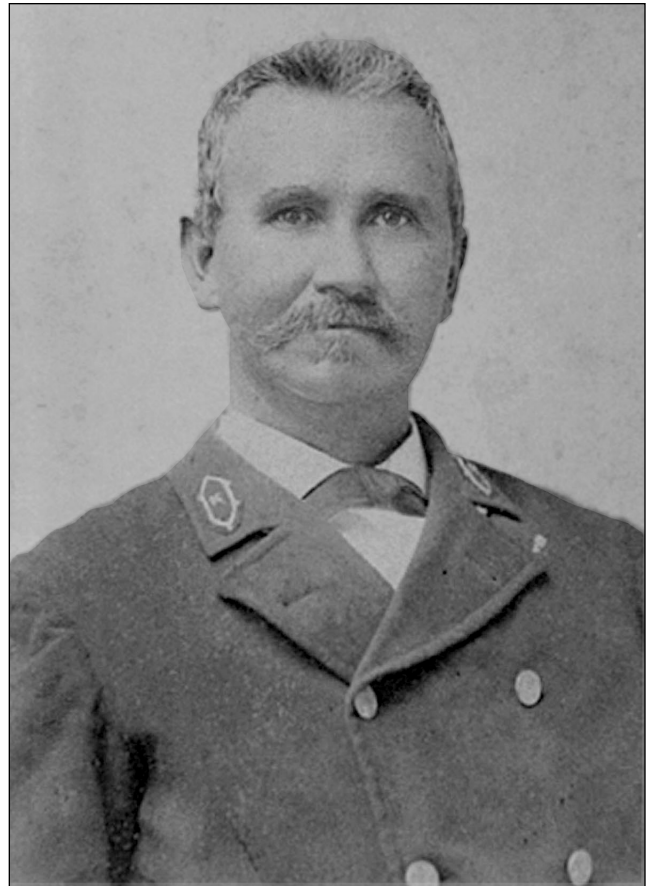
**H**istoric Oak Cemetery in Fort Smith houses the mortal remains of thousands from all walks of life, including schoolteachers, politicians, military veterans, policeman, murder victims, deputy marshals, a federal judge, and men executed on the gallows of the federal court. Each has a story, some that are known and passed on, some waiting to be discovered.

One story involves a man named Richard Mitchell Smoot, who lies buried next to his wife, Mary. Smoot interacted with several key players in one of the most dramatic, as well as infamous, events in the history of the United States of America, an event that is researched, debated, and discussed to this day. So, who was Richard Smoot, and what story does he have to reveal?

Smoot's direct male lineage can be traced back to his 4x great-grandfather, William Smute, born in the year 1596 in one of three locations in Europe, according to conflicting records. As a young man, he learned the art of boat construction and around 1633 signed up to perform fifty days of work under Colonel Thomas Burbage as part of the Boatright Guild in London, with the work to take place in York County in the colony of Virginia. The following year he married a woman named Grace with whom he would raise a large family of around ten children. About 1646 he moved to Charles County, Maryland, where he had been awarded several land grants, establishing a family foothold in the area that would remain well into the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Mitchell Smoot was born circa 1833 in Charles County, Maryland, the son of William and Violetta Smoot. Living in Port Tobacco some thirty miles south of Washington city, Richard Smoot married a local girl, Mary Elizabeth Brawner, when he was twenty-four. By 1860, the couple had a son, James, and a daughter, Violetta.<sup>2</sup> Smoot farmed tobacco, with eighteen slaves who resided in three slave houses on his property. According to the 1860 Maryland Census, he was worth \$20,000 between his real estate holdings and his personal wealth (just more than \$600,000 in today's money).<sup>3</sup> During the Civil War, Smoot would take up blockade running along the Potomac River, transporting supplies and passengers across the river into Virginia.<sup>4</sup>

During the Civil War, Maryland remained in the Union,



**RICHARD MITCHELL SMOOT**

(Courtesy of Randal Berry)

despite a split among its citizens, who held loyalties to both the Union and the Confederacy. Slavery was a way of life for some in the state, and due to Maryland's official status as a northern state not under Confederate control, the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 did not apply to the state.<sup>5</sup> It was not until the state passed a new constitution in 1864 that slavery was abolished.<sup>6</sup> Also, despite the presence of Union soldiers, Port Tobacco was a stronghold for sympathizers of the southern cause.

In the middle of January 1865, Smoot was approached by John Surratt, a courier for the Confederate Secret Service accompanied according to some sources by Thomas Harbin, Confederate agent and former postmaster in Bryantown, Maryland.<sup>7</sup> Surratt was interested in purchasing

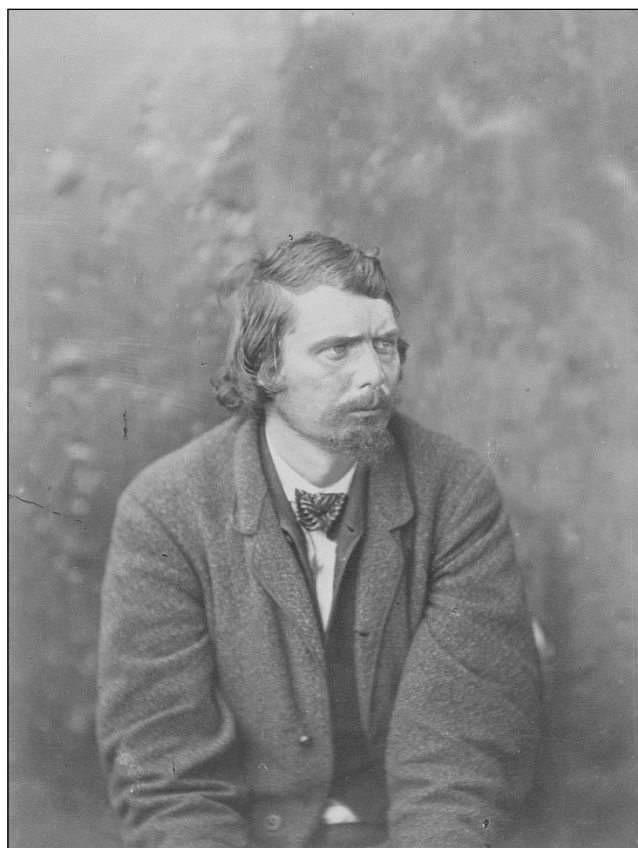
three boats that had to be large enough to transport up to fifteen passengers each. Smoot noticed Surratt appeared quite eager as he explained that the boats were meant for emergency use, which would occur in a short amount of time. At first Smoot was reluctant to sell his only boat, but Surratt was determined to negotiate a price and take immediate possession. Surratt told Smoot that “the need of the boat would be the consequence of an event of unprecedented magnitude in the history of the country, which would startle and astound the world.” Surratt did not provide any specific details, but Smoot assumed that whatever Surratt was referring to was in the planning stages and was possibly related to the rumored kidnapping plot against President Abraham Lincoln.

After a short negotiation, a price of \$250 was agreed upon, with a third party to hold the payment in trust. Once the boat had been used, Smoot would receive payment in full. The pair went to the office of former Judge Frederick Stone, where Surratt handed \$125 to Stone as a down payment. The boat was then turned over to George Atzerodt, a local blockade runner, who hid the boat at Goose Creek, a tributary of the Potomac. Later, a local farmer named George Bateman relocated the boat to King’s Creek, a small branch on the east side of Nanjemoy Creek, itself a tributary of the Potomac River about six miles southwest of Port Tobacco.

Shortly thereafter, Richard Smoot began to ask George Atzerodt as to when he could expect to receive the full payment for his boat, but Atzerodt never provided a specific answer. Three months passed without any contact between the two, until Smoot unexpectedly encountered Atzerodt in Port Tobacco. It was then that Atzerodt told Smoot that the boat would be used shortly. Determined to speak with John Surratt, Smoot inquired as to his whereabouts.<sup>8</sup>

Atzerodt pointed Smoot in the direction of Surrattsville, twenty miles north of Port Tobacco, and to a man there named John Lloyd who operated the Surratt Tavern. Lloyd informed Smoot that he could find Surratt at the boardinghouse operated by his mother at 541 H Street in Washington city.

On April 12, 1865, Richard Smoot traveled to the Surratt boarding house and was met at the door by John Surratt’s sister, Anna, who showed Smoot into the parlor where Anna’s mother, Mary, was seated. At first appearing uneasy with the unexpected caller, Mrs. Surratt relaxed once Smoot revealed the reason for his visit. She inquired as to the status of the boat, which she said would be needed soon. She showed Smoot a letter from her son stating that he would arrive in Washington on April 14, if possible. Mrs. Surratt told Smoot that that would be his best chance to see her son.



**GEORGE ATZERODT**

(Courtesy of Library of Congress)

Around 9:30 p.m. on Good Friday, April 14, 1865, Smoot again arrived at the boarding house, meeting Mary Surratt who was in a state of excitement. Smoot asked if her son was available, but he was not. Mary replied that the boat would be used that night and that he would receive full payment for it in a day or two. Again, she told Smoot to leave the city and never to return to the boarding house. Mrs. Surratt’s attitude and sense of urgency caused Smoot to feel that a crisis was imminent and that he might face possible danger.<sup>9</sup>

Walking eight miles south to Alexandria, Virginia, Smoot checked into the City Hotel at 11:00 p.m. and went to bed. Soon the sound of horse hooves and rumbling voices caused him to get up, dress, and exit the hotel to see what was going on.

Once Smoot learned that President Lincoln had been shot by the actor John Wilkes Booth at Ford’s Theater in Washington city. At that moment, he understood John Surratt’s comments regarding an emergency, the event of “unprecedented magnitude” and the purpose that his boat was meant to be used for became clear. Unable to sleep, Smoot remained awake the rest of the night.

Drawn like a moth to a flame, Smoot returned to Washington the following day, burning with curiosity about the

assassination. He fully expected that his association with the Surratts, and with George Atzerodt who was supposed to kill Vice President Andrew Johnson, would lead to his arrest. He did not attract any of the expected attention and decided to return home and go about his normal routine. All roads leading in and out of Washington were under guard, and Smoot sought and was able to secure a pass through a friend who was on good terms with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Returning to Port Tobacco, Smoot was able to carry out his usual activities but for a short time.<sup>10</sup>

Toward the end of April, soldiers arrived at Smoot's home and arrested him and his brother, Ed. Giving up quietly, the brothers were transported to the Carroll Prison in Washington. During the trip, African-American soldiers stood guard over Smoot, a situation that in the former slave owner's mind "was rather galling to his southern pride."

Smoot hired former Port Tobacco Circuit Judge Peter W. Crain as his lawyer, at a fee of \$100. During the ten days of his confinement, Smoot was never questioned nor informed as to what crime he was accused of committing. After his release, Crain told him that he had been arrested based on the suspicion that he knew the whereabouts of John Wilkes Booth. Crain had been able to convince Edwin Stanton that Smoot had not provided any aid to the assassin, nor had any knowledge concerning his location.<sup>11</sup> Before his release from prison, Smoot signed an Oath of Allegiance to the Union on May 11, 1865.<sup>12</sup>

John Wilkes Booth was shot during a standoff with the 16th New York Cavalry on Richard Garrett's farm located between Port Royal and Bowling Green, Virginia. Booth was in the barn when his pursuers set it on fire in an attempt to force his surrender. David Herold, who had been traveling with Booth, gave up. Through a crack in the barn wall, Sgt. Boston Corbett shot Booth with a Colt Revolver. Booth died during the early morning hours of April 26, 1865.<sup>13</sup>

Smoot's story has a timeline problem, however. If Smoot had been held for ten days like he said he was, and Booth died on April 26, then using the date on his oath means Smoot was released from prison about fifteen days after the death of Booth. If Smoot had been arrested based on the suspicion that he knew where Booth was located, then he could not have been in prison for only ten days, he would have been arrested earlier. Therefore there is the possibility that the suspicion never existed and Smoot was embellishing his experience. Smoot talked about his involvement nearly four decades after the fact, and if he did not have a journal to work from, then his memory would have been his only source. Memory is faulty with the passage of time, and as an older man, Smoot may have un-

knowingly grafted parts from other remembrances, as well as invented details to make his role sound more intriguing.

Following a trial before a military tribunal that lasted from May 9 until June 28, 1865, Mary Surratt, David Herold, Lewis Powell, a conspirator who had attacked Secretary of State William Seward on the night of the assassination, and George Atzerodt who was supposed to assassinate Vice President Andrew Johnson were found guilty on various charges related to the conspiracy to assassinate the president. All four were executed by hanging on the grounds of the Old Arsenal Penitentiary, now part of Fort McNair, in Washington, D.C., on July 7, 1865.<sup>14</sup>

Within a few days of the executions, a "confession" by George Atzerodt was published in several newspapers. One version, printed in *The Norfolk (Virginia) Post*, mentions the boat transaction and Smoot, although John Wilkes Booth is mentioned as the person who had purchased the boat, instead of John Surratt. Perhaps Booth had supplied the money to Surratt. James L. Brawner, a resident of Port Tobacco and Richard Smoot's father-in-law, is identified as "Branner" in the article and is noted as having been present during the initial meeting between John Surratt and Richard Smoot, a detail overlooked or missing from Smoot's account of his involvement.<sup>15</sup>

Smoot claimed that he received the full payment for his boat between "one and two months after the killing," a transaction that allegedly took place in Frederick Stone's Port Tobacco office. However, that falls during the same time span of the Lincoln assassination conspiracy trial, and whether Stone would have left the proceedings to conclude the boat deal with Smoot is open to question.<sup>16</sup> Two other possibilities are that Smoot never received full payment for his boat or the matter was resolved at a later date.

John Surratt had avoided arrest in 1865 following the assassination, and eluded authorities for two years before he was finally captured in Egypt. Extradited back to the United States, Surratt stood trial for his role in the conspiracy that had led to President Lincoln's death.<sup>17</sup>

Richard Smoot and his brother, Ed, were summoned to testify during the trial, which took place in 1867. Ed refused, at first, to appear as a witness until the prosecutor in the trial, Nathaniel Wilson, offered the sum of ten dollars a day in exchange for his testimony (standard rate at the time was three dollars a day for witnesses). Ed relayed the offer to John Surratt's defense attorney, Richard Merrick, who held that piece of information in his back pocket.

During the trial, Merrick questioned Ed Smoot about the offer under oath, implanting the idea of perjured testimony on the part of the government. The jury acquitted John Surratt who lived another fifty years until 1916, the last surviving member of the conspirators. Columbus Alexander, a member of the jury and the uncle of Mary



**(TOP)** 923 North Fifth Street in Fort Smith.

**(RIGHT)** 223 Lexington Avenue.  
(Photos in author's collection)



Smoot, revealed the fact that Ed's testimony, and the idea that the government had bought witnesses, led to the acquittal.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1870s and 1880s, Richard Smoot worked as a lighthouse keeper at two different locations along the Potomac River, Upper Cedar Point Lighthouse and Matthias Point Shoal Light, both a few miles south of Port Tobacco. Smoot earned \$550 a year in his capacity of lighthouse keeper. For some of the time, Mary, his wife, earned \$400 a year working as his assistant.<sup>19</sup>

In November 1880, James William Smoot, the firstborn child of Richard and Mary, passed away at the young age of twenty-two, childless and unmarried. The cause of death is unknown.<sup>20</sup>

Four years later, Violetta, the Smoots' daughter, married George W. Cross, a native of Louisiana. The couple raised five children, two daughters and three sons, including one named Richard Smoot Cross.<sup>21</sup>

In the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s, Richard and his wife lived in the Ellerslie Plantation in Port Tobacco. This had been the home of James L. Brawner, Richard Smoot's father-in-law.<sup>22</sup>

Around 1902, Richard and Mary Smoot relocated from Port Tobacco, Maryland, to Fort Smith, Arkansas. Their daughter's family lived in a home at 923 North Fifth

Street, which still stands today and is a private residence.<sup>23</sup> Richard and his wife lived across the street at 922 North Fifth Street, which today is an empty lot. On January 2, 1904, Mary Smoot passed away in their home at this address, with the expense of her funeral covered by her son-in-law George W. Cross.<sup>24</sup>

George and his children most likely supported Richard and Mary during their final years in Fort Smith. George worked as a millwright at the Arkansas Cotton Oil Company, which was located on First Street between North E and North H near the Arkansas River.<sup>25</sup> Richard Smoot Cross, grandson of Richard and Mary, worked at the Frisco Depot in 1904, and three years later was the manager of the billiard room in the Hotel Main on Garrison Avenue.<sup>26</sup>

By 1906, Richard Smoot was living at 215 Lexington Avenue while his daughter's family resided on the same block at 223 Lexington.<sup>27</sup> He would die in the home of his daughter on May 8, 1906.<sup>28</sup> Today the former location of both houses is occupied by four businesses: Cross My Art, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, E Squared Architecture & Interior Design and El Lorito restaurant.

Richard and Mary Smoot are buried together in Oak



**RICHARD AND MARY SMOOT'S GRAVESTONE AT OAK CEMETERY IN FORT SMITH.**

(Photo in author's collection)

Cemetery. Ages for the couple appear on the headstone, seventy-six for Richard, seventy-two for Mary. However, according to every census record, family genealogy information, funeral records and death notices in the Fort Smith Elevator, the ages on the headstone are wrong. Richard was seventy-three at the time of his death, and Mary was sixty-seven.

Obituaries for Richard Smoot appeared in newspapers across the country, from Los Angeles to New York City.<sup>29</sup> This nationwide notice was no doubt fueled by the only known written account of his involvement with the inner circle of John Wilkes Booth.

In early 1904, the John Murphy Company of Baltimore was preparing to publish that account as *The Unwritten History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, credited to Smoot.<sup>30</sup> Even though his name appeared as the author, the twenty-four page book reads as if he was relating his experience to an unknown ghostwriter.

Smoot received five copies of the small book prior to its publication, but on February 7, the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904 destroyed several houses and businesses, including the John Murphy Company. The fire burned for two

days, after which the city was shut down for ten days in order to assess the damages.<sup>31</sup>

No other known attempt to print Smoot's recollection occurred during his lifetime. In 1908, his daughter, Violetta, sent the manuscript to Orra L. Stone, an attorney in Clinton, Massachusetts. Stone had a run of 100 copies printed through W.J. Coulter, of Clinton.<sup>32</sup> Over the years, the small rare book provided unique details to those interested in the events surrounding the death of Abraham Lincoln.

In 1913, Smoot's daughter, Violetta, died and was buried in Calvary Cemetery in Fort Smith.<sup>33</sup> Seventeen years later, her husband, George, passed away in the home of their first-born daughter, Mary, in Shawnee, Oklahoma. His body was transported back to Fort Smith, where his funeral was conducted by Immaculate Conception Church, with burial next to his wife.<sup>34</sup>

Over a century after its 1908 publication, Smoot's book was reprinted as *Shall We Gather at the River: The Unwritten History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, by ECO Publishing. Edited by Randal Berry of Little Rock, this edition added historical background infor-

mation, explanatory footnotes and photographs to the original text.

This new 2011 edition brought the story of Richard Smoot into the present and is a welcome addition to modern Lincoln assassination researchers, as well as those with an interest in the events as recounted by the surviving participants.

According to his published statement, Smoot's involvement with the inner circle of John Wilkes Booth was unintentional and was birthed by random chance. Although he never mentions meeting Booth, the men did have at least five acquaintances in common: George Atzerodt, Confederate blockade runner who took initial charge of Smoot's boat and was executed for his role in the assassination conspiracy; John Surratt, Booth's right hand man who negotiated for the purchase of Smoot's boat; Mary Surratt, whose tavern and boarding house were visited by both Smoot and Booth, and who was the first woman ever executed by the United States federal government; Anna Surratt, whom Smoot met at the door of the Surratt boardinghouse during his first visit and encountered Booth at the same location; and John Lloyd, who gave Smoot the address to the Surratt boardinghouse and had supplies ready for Booth and David Herold at the Surratt Tavern during their escape.

Another intriguing detail brought forth in Smoot's book concerns Frederick Stone, lawyer and former judge in Port Tobacco, who held the payment for Smoot's boat in trust. During the 1865 trial of the assassination conspirators, Stone was the defense attorney for Dr. Samuel Mudd and David Herold.<sup>35</sup> Mudd had provided medical attention for Booth, and Herold had accompanied Booth during his escape. One can only imagine how a lawyer during the trial with a connection to the conspiracy himself must have sweated bullets every day he was in court! At the very least Stone may have appeared as a witness if Secretary of War Edwin Stanton or Judge Joseph Holt, who presided over the trial itself had discovered Stone's tie to the defendants.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, he escaped to tell their tale another day.

Discrepancies exist between what Smoot admitted to in *The Unwritten History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* and a sample of his obituaries collected by the author. For example, death notices published in Emporia, Kansas, Salt Lake City, and Los Angeles state that Smoot had knowledge of John Surratt's escape route and that he visited with Mary Surratt on several occasions.<sup>37</sup> The obituary that appeared in the *Fort Smith Elevator* went even further, describing Smoot as "a man who played a prominent part in the war between the states [sic]" and one who was nearly executed for his role in the death of the sixteenth president. Further, the notice alleges Smoot prear-

ranged every detail along the route into Confederate territory that Lincoln's kidnappers would have been taken.<sup>38</sup> In *The Unwritten History*, Smoot only admits that he sold a boat to John Surratt, which in turn led to his interaction with members of Booth's inner circle.

What gave rise to these contradictions? While an exact explanation is nonexistent, barring the appearance of documentary evidence, there are two probable theories: the *Fort Smith Elevator* took the opportunity to aggrandize the life of a recently departed citizen, giving Smoot a much larger role than he admitted to; and, did Smoot's daughter, Violetta, take the opportunity to edit the story told by her father prior to its publication two years after his death? Digital copies and physical reprints have used the 1908 edition as source material, and it is possible that the original manuscript contained details that were excised in the eventual published version. Again, the author is theorizing based on the unknown status of the five copies created by the John Murphy Company 111 years ago, and the author awaits the discovery of any material related to that edition which might possibly answer the many questions the current available copies of Smoot's admission have given rise to.

No matter what his actual involvement, Richard Mitchell Smoot, thanks to his printed reminiscence, occupies a unique place as the only known person to have lived in Fort Smith who had a direct connection to the Booth conspiracy that pulled off the first presidential assassination in the history of our country.



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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Harry Wright Newman, *The Smoots of Maryland and Virginia: A Genealogical History of William Smute, Boatright, of Hampton, Virginia, and Pickawaxon Maryland, with a History of His Descendants to the Present Generation* (Washington, D.C.: private edition, 1936). Online edition edited by Frederick K. Smoot and the Smoot Family Association, 2001 (last updated November 19, 2009, accessed December 1, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 118, 119.

<sup>3</sup> 1860 Maryland Census, p.17 (accessed via ancestry.com, December 1, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Randal Berry, ed., *Shall We Gather at the River: The Unwritten History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (ECO Publishing, 2011), 3. Originally published Richard Mitchell Smoot, *The Unwritten History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Clinton, Mass.: W.J. Coulter, 1908).

- <sup>5</sup> "The Emancipation Proclamation," National Archives & Records Administration: Featured Documents. Accessed March 22, 2015, [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured\\_documents/emancipation\\_proclamation/](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/).
- <sup>6</sup> "The Maryland Constitution of 1864." Accessed March 22, 2015, [http://www.archive.org/stream/marylandconstitu00myerrich/marylandconstitu00myerrich\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/marylandconstitu00myerrich/marylandconstitu00myerrich_djvu.txt).
- <sup>7</sup> Berry, 21n3.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, 5-10.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid, 7, 8, 10-12.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid, 8-10, 13-16.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid, 10, 11-16, 17.
- <sup>12</sup> "Richard M. Smoot Oath of Allegiance," May 11, 1865. Accessed via ancestry.com military records, December 5, 2013.
- <sup>13</sup> Michael W. Kauffman, *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies* (New York: Random House, 2004), pp. 316-320.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid, 338-374.
- <sup>15</sup> "Confession of George A. Absurd," *The Norfolk (Virginia) Post*, July 12, 1865 (front page, columns 4 & 5). Other newspapers that published this confession include the *Daily National Republican* (Washington, D.C.), July 10, 1865 (front page, column 6) and *The Caledonian* (St. Johns bury, VT), July 14, 1865 (page 2, columns 4 & 5), among many others.
- <sup>16</sup> Berry, 13; Smoot, 20-21.
- <sup>17</sup> Kauffman, 387-390.
- <sup>18</sup> Berry, 13, 15; Smoot, 21-24; "Trial of John H. Surratt in the Criminal Court for the District of Columbia," Volume 1. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1867, index, 190-192, 218, 220 (accessed December 15, 2012), [http://books.google.com/books/about/Trial\\_of\\_John\\_H\\_Surratt\\_in\\_the\\_Criminal.html?id=r3IDAAAQAQAJ](http://books.google.com/books/about/Trial_of_John_H_Surratt_in_the_Criminal.html?id=r3IDAAAQAQAJ).
- <sup>19</sup> Berry, ii; *Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval in the Service of the United States*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1878, 184; *Official Register of the United States containing a list of Officers and Employees in the Civil, Military, and Naval Service*, Volume 1. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1879 (p. 196), 1883 (p. 229), 1885 (p. 211); 1880 Maryland Census, 26.
- <sup>20</sup> Newman, 118.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid, 118; 1910 Arkansas Census, Sebastian County, Sheet 10, Line 6.
- <sup>22</sup> Berry, iii.
- <sup>23</sup> 1904 Fort Smith City Directory, 63.
- <sup>24</sup> Berry, 4; Smoot, 5; *Fort Smith Elevator*, January 8, 1904, p. 5, col. 6; Record of Report of Deaths Filed with City Clerk of Fort Smith, Arkansas, *Fort Smith Death Records, 1881-1909*, January 2, 1904; *Putnam Funeral Home Records, Book I*, page 175.
- <sup>25</sup> 1904 Fort Smith City Directory, 63; 1907 Fort Smith City Directory, 136; 1910 Arkansas Census, Sebastian County, Sheet 10, Line 6.
- <sup>26</sup> 1904 Fort Smith City Directory, 63 ["Cross, Richard S"]; 1907 Fort Smith City Directory, 136 ["Cross R Smoot"].
- <sup>27</sup> "Lincoln's Assassination: A Reminiscence of the Plot to Kidnap the Martyred President," *Fort Smith Elevator*, May 18, 1906, p. 5, col. 2.
- <sup>28</sup> 1907 Fort Smith City Directory, 136.
- <sup>29</sup> "Death Calls R. M. Smoot / Man Connected With Plot to Kidnap Abraham Lincoln Dies at Fort Smith," *Los Angeles Herald*, May 10, 1906, p. 2, col. 4; "Plotted Against Lincoln / Death of R. M. Smoot, a Pal of John Surratt and His Mother in 1865," *The Salt Lake (City) Herald*, May 10, 1906, p. 8, col. 2; "R. M. Smoot Dead / Was Interested in Plot to Kidnap Abraham Lincoln," *Dallas (Texas) Morning News*, May 10, 1906, front page; "Was In Plot To Kidnap Mr. Lincoln," *New York (City) Tribune*, May 10, 1906, p. 3, col. 2.
- <sup>30</sup> Berry, i, 3; Smoot, 3.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid, a small example of newspapers that covered the fire include, "Heart Of Baltimore A Fiery Furnace; Best Part Of The City Already In Ashes; Fire-Fighting Forces Cannot Check Flames; Residence Districts In Imminent Danger", *The St. Louis (MO) Republic*, February 8, 1904, front page, cols. 4-7 & p. 5, cols. 1-6; "Baltimore Fire-Swept," *The Tacoma (Washington) Times*, February 8, 1904, front page, cols. 1-4 and p. 3, cols. 1 & 2; *New York (City) Daily Tribune*, February 9, 1904, p. 4, cols. 1-6 [entire page covers the fire]; "Baltimore's Business Section Totally Destroyed By Fire", *The Abbeyville (South Carolina) Press and Banner*, March 2, 1904, p. 6, cols. 3-6.
- <sup>32</sup> Berry, i, ii, 3; Smoot, 4.
- <sup>33</sup> "Mrs. Cross," *The Southwest American*, March 23, 1913, p. 6.
- <sup>34</sup> "Funeral To Be Held For George W. Cross," *The Southwest American*, July 7, 1930, p. 6.
- <sup>35</sup> Benn Pitman, ed., *The Assassination of President Lincoln and the Trial of the Conspirators* (New York: Moore, Wiltach & Baldwin, 1865), 21, 22; Ben Perly Poore, ed., *The Conspiracy Trial for the Murder of the President, and the Attempt to Overthrow the Government by the Assassination of its Principal Officers* (Boston: J.E. Tilton and Company, 1865), 20; "The Military Commission for the Trial of the Accomplices of Booth," *The (Washington, D.C.) Evening Star*, May 10, 1865, page 2, column 1.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid, 17.
- <sup>37</sup> "In The Lincoln Plot / R. M. Smoot, Dead at Fort Smith, Claims to Have Conspired to Kidnap Abraham Lincoln," *Emporia (Kansas) Gazette*, May 9, 1906, p. 8; *The Salt Lake (City) Herald*, May 10, 1906, p. 8, col. 2; *Los Angeles Herald*, May 10, 1906, p. 2, col. 4.
- <sup>38</sup> *Fort Smith Elevator*, May 18, 1906, p. 5, col. 2.

# Ties to the Rail Boom

*An interview with Joe Irwin*

## UAFS Pebley Center, Oral History Program

**Editor's Note:** The following interview with Joe Irwin was conducted by Billy Higgins and Bob Worley on July 2, 2013.

**Bob Worley:** ...Foresters that graduated from OSU says there some hardwood that's softer than softwood and some softwood that's harder than some hardwood. So we kind of use a loose generic term.

**Joe Irwin:** Well I was trying to think...sweet gum is a replacement sometimes for oak. If you can't get oak then you get sweet gum.

**BW:** It's desirable in furniture I know.

**JI:** The railroad companies would take sweet gum in place of oak.

**BW:** On the ties?

**JI:** On the ties, yeah.

**BW:** I've often wondered how many... what besides oak they would take and I never knew that one of them was sweet gum.

**JI:** Well, one of them was sweet gum and where they would build a tippie to load something they had to get a car up over the track and it was a temporary thing. So being temporary, they didn't want to pay premium price for oak so they'd take sweet gum.

**BW:** What were those water towers made out of, I wonder?

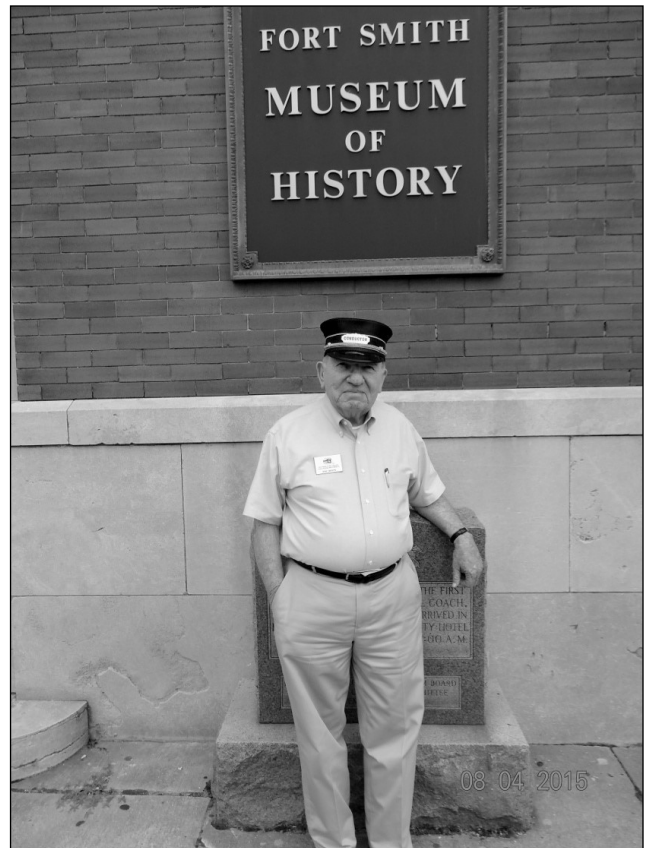
**JI:** Well, I think they were oak. They had staves in them and bands. When you filled them with water you had to wait until they swelled to make sure they'd be water tight.

**BW:** White oak would... that's the oak that has the tightest, I call it grain. That's what the World War II...

**JI:** The densest.

**BW:** Yeah, because they were a lot of these barrels substituting for the steel barrels that were going overseas. They wanted them to be white oak you know. They signed a contract down at Russellville and used prisoners of war, German prisoners of war from Fort Smith to make them down there.

**JI:** Well you know the thing that people are really not aware of is that those were all wooden vessels and they had bands on them just like barrels did and if they dried out they would leak. They had them every hundred miles



**JOE IRWIN**

(Photo courtesy of the editor)

because a steam engine had to get a drink of water every hundred miles. So they were positioned along the track to replenish the water on a steam locomotive. Now, if they had a double header sometimes they'd have two so that the double header would pull up and they could both get a drink of water at the same time. The Norfolk and Western was famous for having two reservoirs side by side, but they were strategically placed because those big mountain engines, when they stopped they took on about twelve thousand gallons of water at one fell swoop.

**BW:** Wow.

**JI:** Of course, a double-header was actually to get over the mountain. It was a helper on the back end and then he dropped off and went back into the siding to wait

for another coal train to come along.

**BW:** Yes.

**JI:** And they built some big compound locomotives that were like two locomotives welded together, articulated they called them. But that was for mountain climbing.

**BW:** I worked for the Kansas City Southern for quite a while, and they were the first railroad I believe, in the United States that got diesel engines.

**Billy Higgins:** What railroad was that?

**BW:** Kansas City Southern.

**BH:** The first railroad with diesel engines?

**BW:** Yeah.

**JI:** To switch over to diesels.

**BW:** They switched, you know, from steam to diesel.

**BH:** I'm wondering why it wasn't New York Central or . . .

**BW:** I don't know.

**JI:** They liked the electric overhead. Well, primarily because of tunnels going into New York. If you had a tunnel and you put a steam locomotive in there, you'd just about kill everybody.

**BW:** They'd choke to death before they got out of there.

**BH:** Mr. Irwin, I'm Billy Higgins off camera here. We're here as part of the information collecting program of the Hardwood Tree Museum of Fort Smith. I'm here with Bob Worley, who is the president of our organization, and we're here today to talk about the wood industries in Arkansas. If you could give your full name and address for us please sir.

**JI:** Alright, my name is Joseph Irwin, and I was born and raised here in Fort Smith but my travels involved the Canal Zone and the University of Arkansas, and out of engineering school, I went to work for the Arkansas Highway Department down at Little Rock. I built a road out to a duck blind. It was a paved highway, and it ran from the capital out to the duck blind, and I thought there was something wrong with that picture because there weren't very many paved roads in Arkansas at that time. So I questioned it, and somebody said if you really want to build roads, you ought to go to Texas. So I went to Texas to seek my fortune, and I stayed in Fort Worth forty years and worked for the Texas Highway Department. I started tearing up roads I had built thirty-five years before and widened them and made them bigger and better. So I decided it was time to come home and retire.

**BH:** Do you happen to remember the name of the state highway commissioner when you were in Arkansas?

**JI:** Well it was 1953, 54, 55.

**BH:** So, it was the time when Orval Faubus first came in there, and Francis Cherry was going out.

**JI:** That's right, the white-haired gentlemen. Two or three ladies said, "Why'd you vote for Cherry?" I said, "I

love his hair."

**BH:** Well, you mentioned in our conversation beforehand that your grandfather came from Scotland.

**JI:** Came from Scotland. He came over from the Isle of Lewis on a sailing vessel in about 1845, somewhere along in there, and he landed in Canada. His father was a lay preacher, a layman preacher, for the Presbyterian Church. He started a little country church outside of Montreal, and his name was Elder John MacLoud, and Mr. MacLoud was always prompt to spell his name M-a-c-L-o-u-d and never used M-c. He said that's like slang. He said that's not the real way you spell MacLoud. He actually got into the retail sales business in a store in...I believe it was Jerseyville, Illinois. Now Jerseyville is north of St. Louis, about forty or fifty miles somewhere along in there. He met a young lady in the store, a lady named Armstrong, her last name was Armstrong, and that was his future bride, and they hit it off. So he went to work for a store in Essex, Iowa, but along the way he heard the railroad was building railroad and they needed ties. So he went out and scouted where there was some hardwood timber, and it was in Kansas, Blue Springs, Kansas. Well, he heard that the Santa Fe was going to build a track into Blue Springs, and so he thought well if I had the ties all ready to go, I could sell them. So he went out and hired some people to cut timber and harvest ties for the Santa Fe Railroad, and he just happened to be on the spot in the right place at the right time, and he got into the tie business. He had to move around to find where the need was and when he found where the need was, then he would have to go scout a forest or a source of timber, hardwood timber. Now, the going price at that day and time was about fifty cents a tie. It was considered a mill tie. Now this was before the days of preservation for wood to not be creosoted, and so they were raw timber. He found out that a hand-hewed tie would bring a premium fifty cents more than a mill tie, because a mill tie opens up the grain when you run a saw through it, and a hand-hewed tie with a broad axe is densified as you plane it with a broad axe, and it lasted longer out on the railroad, and the going price was a dollar for the hand-hewed ties as opposed to fifty cents for a mill tie. It turned around with creosoting. A mill tie will accept creosote more than a...so the hand-hewed tie went by the wayside. Occasionally, you will find, even today as they change out ties, a hand-hewed tie out there that was not treated and has lasted all these many years out of hardwood.

**BH:** The Santa Fe was built after the Civil War?

**JI:** Yes, after the Civil War. We're talking about 1880, somewhere along in there. He moved to the Ozark Forest in about 1890. He was living Neosho, but he wanted to find ties for the Frisco Railroad so it would have to be in the Fayetteville area, and he wound up in St. Paul, Arkansas. My mother used to have a hard time. She was

born there in 1892, and they would always ask her, "Where were you born?" She'd say St. Paul, and they'd say Minnesota? She'd say "No, Arkansas," and they'd say, "Where in the world is St. Paul, Arkansas?" Well, if you come up the Pig Trail when you get to the "Y," the "Y" to the right goes to St. Paul, and the "Y" to the left goes to Fayetteville. It's probably about twenty-five miles southeast of Fayetteville, and it's right on the edge of what is today the Ozark National Forest. In those days, it was an open forest, and St. Paul was a boom town. They had five sawmills in St. Paul and Mr. MacLoud operated one of them and sold ties to the Frisco Railroad. Well, as time went on, he found out that Fort Smith had more railroads, different railroads coming through Fort Smith and plans for more track and a line between Fort Smith and Oklahoma City, which happened to the Fort Smith and Western Railway Company. They were needing ties, so he came to Fort Smith and harvested timber. Now I can't remember the forest that he used close to Fort Smith. Eventually, he wound up harvesting ties down by De Queen, at a place called Horatio, Arkansas. Horatio was serviced by the Kansas City Southern so his customer at that time, this was probably 1905, 1910, somewhere along in there...He started selling ties to the Kansas City Southern, and the forest was along the Little River out of Horatio. He built a railroad track back in to bring the timber out, and the mill was at Horatio. They moved the track around depending on where the trees were and so he said, "Well, I ought to be the operator of a railroad, and I'm going to call it the Little River Valley Railroad."

**BH:** So this is your grandfather? He decides now to just go into the business?

**JJ:** Into the business, go full bore. This is Mr. Angus MacLoud and he signed this contract A. MacLoud. I have somewhere in a drawer of socks, somewhere in my possession is an onion-skin copy of a contract he drew up with the Kansas City Southern to furnish 10,000 ties.

**BW:** Wow.

**JJ:** It's all done without legal advice, I'm sure. It says "I, A. MacLoud, agree to furnish the Kansas City Southern, as their specification, x number of ties," I can't remember, it was something like 50,000 or something like that, delivered on their direction, where they wanted the ties. I believe the price was a dollar and a half. So the price had elevated from fifty cents to a dollar and a half. This was just signed A. MacLoud and then superintendent of Kansas City Southern Construction was signed at the bottom and that was the contract. Somewhere I have that in my possession. It shows you that a handshake and an onion-skin copy is about all it took.

**BW:** Yes, that was about like a handshake.

**JJ:** Yes.

**BH:** Was there any specifications on the contract about the kind of wood?

**JJ:** No.

**BH:** Or the size of the ties?

**JJ:** It was implied that they would tell him what they would accept because it just says "as per specification by the Kansas City Southern." So they told him what they wanted.

**BH:** Generally speaking, ties are 6-by-8-by-8-feet long.

**JJ:** Yes sir, that was the standard size.

**JJ:** Now, the only time it was different than that was when they had a bridge tie, and a bridge tie, the idea was the more volume that you had the more stable it was because you didn't have any ballasts, stone ballasts to hold the tie in place. So it had to be deadweight, and so they wanted a heavier tie to go across the bridge. So a bridge tie is a larger tie but it's not a standard dimension. It's longer and heavier.

**BH:** I knew they did some double tie, I guess for switch yards and stuff.

**JJ:** Sometimes they changed the spacing on them. The railroad was pretty savvy about...they were looking for longevity so that they didn't have to buy and switch out ties. The creosote came along and then...

**BH:** When did creosote come along?

**JJ:** I think about the 1920s.

**BH:** In the '20s?

**JJ:** Yes sir. Most petroleum was kind of by accident anyway, where you had natural petroleum bubbling to the surface, and they realized it was a pretty fair preservative. They used pressure kilns in the time they developed it and put them under pressure and measured the volume and see how much was absorbed by the wood and that told them if they had a good treatment. Pressure treatment was a later innovation, probably in the '40s and '50s. The idea was that you had to have a pressure vessel, something like ninety feet long, to treat all these ties that they put in there, and then they closed it up and put it under pressure and watch and see how much liquid was used in the preservation process. The only reason I know about that, one of my jobs at the Arkansas Highway Department was to go over to North Little Rock and the highway department built timber bridges at that time, 1954. Copper's Chemical Company treated lumber, and the Highway Department would inspect the lumber before it was treated then while it was treated then when it came out to be sure there wasn't any warping or anything took place under the heat and pressure; so that was an added feature that I encountered. That was my job, to go inspect timber for the Arkansas Highway Department.

**BH:** Yeah. I don't guess it mattered to the railroad what kind of wood...

**JJ:** Only from longevity point of view.

**BH:** Most of the ties that he was hacking out, did I hear you say oak or sweet gum?

**JJ:** Oak or sweet gum, yes sir. Primarily that was the longevity that they used and utilized. Now in other parts of the country, I'm sure that they, through experience, would find a certain hardwood that would suffice.

**BH:** There's locust. There's bois d'arc. They are just small amounts.

**JJ:** Yes sir. Bois d'arc is primarily fence post material. There's a place outside of Dallas called Bois d'arc Junction, and they harvested fence posts out of Bois d'arc. Again, they had to go back in there so formed their own railroad company called the Bois d'arc and Southern, and they brought it to Bois d'arc Junction, which was I guess the Southern Pacific branch in Texas. Lots of fence posts out of Bois d'arc.

**BH:** I take it you knew your grandfather and talked to him?

**JJ:** Absolutely, yes sir.

**BH:** When he moved to Horatio, had he set up a mill or was he still hacking them?

**JJ:** No, he'd set up a mill. They would accept mill ties because they were beginning to start treatment in the early days to know that it would last longer if it was a treated type.

**BH:** What kind of mill did he have?

**JJ:** Well, it was a sure enough sawmill, and they dressed them in the woods before they brought them into the mill.

**BH:** Was it a steam-powered mill?

**JJ:** Yes, sir, steam-powered, all steam-powered.

**BH:** Did it run on the sawdust?

**JJ:** Yes, that was the fire. It was self-perpetuating. If there ever was a perpetual motion that was part of it.

**BH:** So, who did he employ to bring them in out of the forest?

**JJ:** He would employ local help. He had very few skilled people that he took with him, three or four, to set up a system to get it in and out, but he used local help, and it was folks that worked in the forest. Poles and utility poles and things like that were harvested down in that area, but those were not hardwood. Those were straight pine, and a description of a person was a pole peeler. Now that was a rather...

**BH:** And electricity came in in the '20s, and so creosote had come in then. That was probably one of the instigators for creosote.

**JJ:** I think so.

**BH:** How did he acquire the tracks?

**JJ:** He bought it from the railroad companies. Now the rail and of course he had a supply of ties but he put it in thirty-nine-foot lengths, and it was ready to go. So they put them end to end, which the railroad didn't like because you had a wiggle joint. The reason they were thirty-nine feet was the rail was produced at the mill so it could be hauled in a forty-foot car. So the standard all these years,

what you see if you see jointed rail out here is thirty-nine foot rail. And he fabricated it so that the ties were already fastened to the rail, and they would just lay them out. They had a jin (gin) pole, a steam-powered jin pole, that would move the thirty-nine foot sections of track around, and they'd move it to wherever the timber was. With a jin pole lifting hoist they could move a thirty-nine foot that had the rail attached. They never dismantled the rail at all. The only problem was it was end-to-end joints, and the railroad staggered the joints so that they weren't opposite of each other, but his was temporary, and they didn't go ninety to nothing through that.

**BH:** That thirty-nine foot section of rail could be two sections of rail joined by those ties which meant that there could be up to forty ties in this assembly.

**JJ:** Absolutely, yes sir. That's correct.

**BH:** So that was two rails, forty ties, and this hoist is putting it on a railcar to take it to . . . ?

**JJ:** To take it to wherever they were going to go. Now, it's kind of going by your bootstraps. They'd lay a section out there and pull up a flat car with the next section on it and lay it down and hook it together with a...they call them fishplates between the rails, and then they'd go on their way. Then sometimes they'd just drag the whole track over, closer to the next cut of timber. It was a temporary situation that fit their need. I think, I could be wrong but, they learned this from the Panama Canal. When they were excavating by rail, they'd cut a berm, a bench, and then they'd take that down and then move the rail over. They'd just scoot it over and drag it and then line it to get cars in. Once they got the cars in, they were ready to move it again on the next berm, and they stepped it down until they got down to the bottom. Well, the rail did the same thing; so it was not uncommon in 1909 to use prefabricated rail and move it around. Now their ties were out of hardwood from the tropics, and some of those had to be machined it was so dense. That's what I was telling...we were talking about hardwood that grows in the tropics has a slow growth, very dense; it won't float, and some people call it ironwood. So the tie business takes advantage of whatever the circumstances are in that locale, and in Panama they used lignum vitae is the name of the wood, and it is sometimes referred to as ironwood. But with ties, the idea is to give the track stability and give you a smooth ride.

**BH:** Going back to St. Paul for a moment, right when it was a boom town, the product got moved there by short line railroad back to Fayetteville?

**JJ:** Yes sir, and the Frisco picked it up there, but the Frisco built the short line out there because it was to their advantage to get the ties out of there quickly and to their needs. So it was not necessarily a short line. It may have been operated that way, but it was a branch of the Frisco Railroad.

**BH:** Shiloh Museum in Springdale has done some work collecting documents and pictures around Pettigrew, eight miles east of St. Paul, and they talk about a roundtable . . .

**JI:** Turntable.

**BH:** Turntable where that was the end of the line so the train was turned around?

**JI:** Yeah.

**BH:** Did they have one of those at St. Paul, too?

**JI:** As far as I know they did. I'm not sure, but the preference for the railroad locomotive engineer was to be going the right way. He didn't like to back up because he was in an awkward position, and his seat didn't swivel so he had to look over his shoulder. So he wanted to be out looking right alongside the boiler. So a turntable was desirable from an operating standpoint. Equipment wise and the railroad was certainly not going to build a turntable at every possibility, but it was desirable to run the train in the right direction.

**BW:** Did Mr. MacLoud live in Fort Smith?

**JI:** Yes, he did, and he built a house down Thirteenth Street, 814, I believe. It was a beautiful house. It was out of buff brick, and it had exotic wood throughout the house. It was a three-story house, and my mother's senior prom was on the third floor of this house. They didn't have a place for a senior prom so...she was the class of 1910, I believe. So that's where her senior prom was, on the third floor of this house. It was a rather elegant house. Now, unfortunately, up until about three years ago, you could tour the house. It burned down mysteriously. We don't really know what happened but it burned to the ground.

**BH:** So, far as you know, the wood products that were coming out of St. Paul and Horatio and the larger sections, most of the hardwood trees were going to railroad ties?

**JI:** Yes, sir.

**BH:** Or, did he have other markets?

**JI:** Not that I'm aware of. He may have, but I never heard anybody speak of his other than the tie business. He was, I believe, his company here was the Fort Smith Construction Company or something like that. It didn't really reflect that he was in the tie business. As far as I know, that's what he was selling primarily.

**BH:** In what year did he come to Fort Smith?

**JI:** '06 I believe, 1906. That's when he started his house.

**BH:** Well, he wasn't here during the [Judge Isaac C.] Parker years, but he was in the railroad business in Arkansas during the Parker years.

**JI:** Yes, sir.

**BH:** Wonder if he ever encountered Judge Isaac Parker?

**JI:** You know, I'm not aware of that.

**BH:** Well there were a lot of cases about who owned the trees.

**JI:** Yes.

**BH:** Have you read Brad Kidder's article?

**JI:** Yes, sir, I have.

**BH:** And that was mostly in northeast Oklahoma.

**JI:** Yes.

**BH:** Did Mr. MacLoud ever . . .

**JI:** You know, I think he harvested timber over around Spiro and that area and not so much in the northern part of Oklahoma, northeast corner of Oklahoma. He lived in Neosho in 1900. I know that because he's in the census as living in Neosho, but my mother was born in '92 in St. Paul, 1892. So I'm not certain but what Mrs. Armstrong MacLoud wanted to be close to Mr. MacLoud when her last child was born, which was my mother. She had three brothers. She didn't come to St. Paul to have her child there, even though they lived in Neosho. My mother went to school in Neosho.

**BH:** Can you just summarize that family tree, starting with Angus MacLoud coming from Scotland?

**JI:** His father was Elder John MacLoud, John Ralph MacLoud, J.R. MacLoud, and he married a lady from Scotland. Right now, I can't tell you her name, but they were lay preachers for the Presbyterian Church. There's a church . . .

**BH:** Then Angus's children were?

**JI:** Ralph (J.R. MacLoud), and Elvin MacLoud, and Angus MacLoud (Angus Jr). I've got them in the wrong order. Elvin was the oldest, then Angus, and then John Ralph, and then my mother, Ruth MacLoud. She was proud of her Scottish heritage. She'd always tell people she was Ruth MacLoud Irwin.

**BH:** Angus MacLoud married whom?

**JI:** He married . . . I'm trying to think of her given name, Ms. Armstrong from Jerseyville, Illinois . . . Carrie, no that's the Irwins.

**BH:** But she was from Illinois.

**JI:** She was from Jerseyville, Illinois.

**BH:** And your mother married whom?

**JI:** Joseph Chambers Irwin.

**BH:** And where was he born, sir?

**JI:** He was born Coldwater, Kansas. Coldwater is in Comanche County, which is where Dodge City is in that vicinity, but Coldwater is ranching country. Now, Mr. Irwin was a rancher and the blizzard of 18 . . .

**BH:** The 1880s, 1883, I think.

**JI:** 1883 wiped him out. It froze all his cows, and so he got out of the ranching business and came to Oklahoma for the land rush at Kingfisher, Oklahoma.

**BW:** That was Angus?

**JJ:** No no, we jumped over to the Irwin side.

**BH:** This was Joseph Chambers.

**BW:** Yeah, okay, excuse me.

**JJ:** And his name was Jimmy Childs, James Child Irwin, his dad. And he was a rancher, and he thought he was going to make a fortune in Oklahoma, but it turns out where he staked his claim was about ten miles from Kingfisher. So they said, "Well, you might have the blizzard hit you here, too." So he said, "Well, I'm going to Fort Smith and go to work for the Frisco Railroad." So he came probably in 1890, somewhere along there, because my aunt on the Irwin side was born in Fort Smith in 1893. So he was here in Fort Smith in 1893.

**BH:** Parker was here until 1896.

**JJ:** He was here then.

**BH:** So when were you born?

**JJ:** I was born in 1930. I was a late child. My mother had four miscarriages, and Dr. St. Cloud Cooper with the Cooper Clinic said, "Well, Ruth we're going to get you a child; we're going to do a Caesarean. It's kind of a dangerous thing but we're going to do it over at Sparks," and so I knew the day I was going to be born, March 24, 1930. Dr. Cooper died on the 22nd of March.

**BW:** Wow.

**JJ:** And so Dr. Foster did the deed, and I was supposed to be Joseph MacLoud Irwin, and I turned out to be Joseph St. Cloud, named after Dr. Cooper. I've asked the doctors, I said, "I wonder what they called Dr. Cooper?" What kind of nickname could he get out of St. Cloud, that was his name, and they all said, "Dr. Cooper, that's what they called him." So I never have heard what...but it's an unusual name. He was born in Texas. I asked Sally Turner, his granddaughter, she married Bob Turner with Fox and Turner. But anyway, before she left here I asked her if she could find where St. Cloud came from, but I never...it didn't come from Minnesota.

**BH:** So you graduated from Fort Smith High School?

**JJ:** Yes, sir, class of '48.

**BH:** Did you go to Fort Smith Junior College?

**JJ:** No sir, I went to the university. I was just a kind with a bunch of veterans that came out of World War II, and they set a healthy pace for me, you known, try to keep up.

**BW:** I bet in a lot of ways.

**JJ:** A lot of ways, that's right.

**BH:** When is the last time that Angus MacLoud was active in the timber business?

**JJ:** Probably about 1920 was when he began to slow down.

**BH:** And what year did he die?

**JJ:** He died in 1923, and of course, I was born in

1930; so he'd been gone. In fact, all of my grandparents were gone when I came along.

**BH:** But your mother had plenty of memories and stories.

**JJ:** Lots of stories.

**BH:** You mentioned that contract, are there other letters that survived?

**JJ:** He wrote a letter to my dad kind of sounding him out, what kind of man my dad was to be marrying his daughter, and it was a fatherly type letter about what do you propose to do and how to you propose to support my daughter, and I have that letter, probably with a lot of socks, but I have that letter.

**BH:** Your dad came here to work with Frisco. So did he spend his whole career with Frisco in Fort Smith?

**JJ:** No, he went to work for the Panama Canal.

**JJ:** He came out of the University of Arkansas, and they had a flyer that said if you'd like to really do some engineering work, come to Panama and be one of Teddy's diggers. Well he took them up, and a guy named Will Hennessy from Fort Smith, actually he was from Charleston, went with him. They went to Panama together. Now there's a Hennessy Foundation here in Fort Smith that's Will Hennessy's foundation. Short story long when they finished the Panama Canal my dad had an offer to work on the Mississippi River building levees, and Will said, "I've got an offer from a sugar company in Puerto Rico to build railroad out into the sugarcane patch," and he said, "Joe, why don't you go with me?" My dad said, "Well, I've already got a job with the Mississippi River." Well, Will Hennessy became the president and CEO of the Puerto Rican sugar company, and he had an office in New York City. They actually were in the Dominican Republic. This is off the track, but I thought you might like it.

**BH:** That's okay, this is interesting. It's Fort Smith history.

**JJ:** Yes, because the sixth floor of Sparks Hospital is the Hennessy floor for cancer folks, and he donated generously to Sparks Hospital, and there's still a foundation that the symphony and the...what's the choral group?

**BH:** Helps finance that and those things. Fort Smith Choral.

**JJ:** Choral is still financed or they get a donation from the Hennessy Foundation. So he was, the First National Bank runs the Hennessy Foundation, and at one time, he had the largest sugar mill in the world.

**BW:** Wow.

**JJ:** And the most acreage under that one flag. Now they sold out, I believe, to a Hawaiian outfit, and by the time he retired he had a sizable income and a sizable investment, and he had no children that survived. He had a son that was killed in World War II that's buried over here

at the national cemetery that was a P-38 pilot. So there's a lot of history.

**BH:** Speaking of these kinds of historical ties, do you know if either your grandfather or father ever encountered Ed Ballman in this town?

**JJ:** Yes.

**BH:** Is there family knowledge that you could share with us about Ed Ballman?

**JJ:** Well, I did some research on it, and I touched on the Ballmans, and there was a lady over at Willow Brook, Felicitas Ladage, that was 100 years old, and she still had to have someone do her taxes, and I did her taxes for her for a couple of years, and she's related to the Ballmans, and I did some research for her. She passed away last year. She was 101 years old.

**BH:** Was she kin to Sandy Ladage?

**JJ:** Yes, that's her daughter that was a stewardess for Delta.

**BH:** Well, that's good. I was interested in making the ties, to go back to that for a moment, and the cutting of the trees that was all hand tools, of course.

**JJ:** Yes, sir.

**BH:** Did you ever hear them say anything about the people who kept the edges sharp?

**JJ:** They had sharpeners that would just kind of wander by, and at the time, they would put them up, saying, "Well, whenever the sharpener comes by, we'll have him dress all these tools," and then he might come right out of the woods and be a local person that sharpened because, when you think about it, down in Horatio from there north clear to Waldron is all timber country. Dierks Coal and Timber Company owned most of the forest that was harvested at that time. In fact, Herman Dierks wound up buying this timber property down at Horatio from Mr. MacLoud.

**BH:** That was skill then.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**BH:** And that was the term that they used, sharpener?

**JJ:** A sharpener, yes, sir. Tool dresser, because in the meantime there were, this was before rotary bits and gas and oil. It was a . . .

**BH:** Hammer drill.

**JJ:** Yeah, it was a hammer drill that you dropped, a drop hammer, and the bits had to be dressed almost daily. Now that's where their primary business was. If they were looking for gas or even water wells were drilled. Cable tools is what they were called.

**BH:** What kind of characteristics did these tool dressers or sharpeners have?

**JJ:** They were almost gypsy-type people that wandered place to place, and usually they were there maybe a

week until they made enough to sustain them and move on to the next place, but tool dressers were wanderers and people that would wander by. You never really had a contract with them. They'd show up at the appropriate time or just about the time you needed them.

**BH:** And there would be sometimes when you'd have to go looking for them. If you hit something with a saw . . .

**JJ:** Absolutely, if you were in a dry spell for having them dressed, you'd have to find out where did you see the tool dresser last, up at Uncle Ed's place or someplace.

**BH:** I have heard tales, I'm not sure if it's true, but that in the Ozarks these people were often Native Americans, especially the Delaware Indians. Have you ever heard that?

**JJ:** That's true, and the drillers were Native Americans. True story, I worked for Arkola two years down at Hatton Gap, which is south of Mena, before you get to De Queen, and they opened a quarry down there, and the rock was not conducive to a rotary drill. So they went to a cable tool, and they bought the tools from Little Rock, from Big Rock Company, that had gone to a rotary and a burner, but the people that ran the drill were from Oklahoma were Indians. You could bet money that Monday morning after payday, they wouldn't show up for work, but Tuesday they would be back to work, but after Friday or Saturday payday, they'd be gone, and they wouldn't show up Monday, or you might have to go bail them out of prison or county jail or something. But the tool dresser was an Indian at that time because he went with the drillers. Wherever they were working, he knew there was work there, too. But you're right; he was a Native American. And he built a fire just like right on the ground, and they'd bring the tools up there and get them the right temperature and then hammer them out to a nice bit.

**BH:** It was one of those skills that could be apprenticed that people kind of passed down I guess.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**BH:** They didn't teach that at school.

**JJ:** No, they sure didn't, but they were good at it. I'll guarantee that. Usually when they were on the cable tool, you know it just kind of... it had an arm that would carry the cable up and down. Well, when they were on the last hole, they'd be riding that arm just kind of like a bucking horse because they knew they were going to get paid right away.

**BH:** One other skill . . . you said they made an assembly of the thirty-nine-foot rails and then the ties.

**JJ:** Then they spiked the ties.

**BH:** Was that by hammer?

**JJ:** Yes.

**BH:** One man with a hammer?

**JJ:** Yes sir. Now modern times, they drill a pilot hole so that the machine doesn't have to start it, but in those days, that hammer looked like how in the world could you hit that spike with a hammer that was about that long and the face of it was about as big as a quarter, maybe a half. He still could swing that sucker overhand and hit every... well, they had three of them driving spikes at the same time, and they would all hit, pow, pow, pow, and they never missed. I watched them many times, and I never saw them ever miss.

**BH:** Have you ever heard a term called "Gandy dancers"?

**JJ:** Yes, sir.

**BH:** Have you seen that?

**JJ:** Yes.

**BH:** Where they move the rails or keep it straight?

**JJ:** Yes.

**BH:** Teamwork.

**JJ:** The Gandy dancers would be a hundred-man crew in order to change rail. When I went to work in Texas, the Texas and Pacific still had not merged with the Missouri Pacific, and they had rail gangs of a hundred men and a foreman, and those hundred men stayed busy all day either lifting rail or spiking rail or moving ties or changing ties out, and it was a gang. They called it a hundred-man gang to change out rail, and that was, in my day and time that was probably about 1960, they were still around then doing all this labor and hand-spiking rail to the ties. Now I'm not certain they had a pilot hole. I think they had to drive the thing from scratch. Somebody had to hold that sucker while they got started. Now I'm not sure that was the most desirable job, to hold that spike to get it started, but there were at least three, sometimes maybe four, and they got in sync just like you were a musician. They knew the timing.

**BH:** That is an amazing thing, how they can stay together.

**JJ:** Yes. Now, as a matter of fact today, this very day that we're talking, rail is continuous rail called ribbon rail, but ties are still ties. Now they're trying to go to concrete ties for fast rail, for high-speed rail, but the ribbon gang are Navajo Indians, and they work nine months out of the year. There are two to each job, this is today. You hire this rail gang to lay ribbon rail, and the rail is laid out alongside of the track, and these guys come along, and they don't spike it anymore. They clamp it. They got a machine that clamps the rail. They boxed it in on either side of the tie, and they heat the rail as they go so that in the summertime, it doesn't look like spaghetti. They get the expansion to go across the rail. It's tempered as they lay it, and that way instead of having elongation, this way the rail gets a little fatter instead of longer. But they've got a heater or burner that goes along that looks like it's probably twenty

feet long that heats this rail as they're getting ready to box it in. So they're working with hot rail. It's interesting that they've made a science out of it, because otherwise, in the summertime it would look like spaghetti down through there, and that would mean a whole lot of work to line and grate ribbon rail again. But these are Navajo Indians that only do rail work, and you hire them through a contractor, and in the wintertime, they don't work. They coast for three months out of the year, and the rest of the time, they are busy. But if it was the Santa Fe or the Union Pacific or whoever it is, they hire these same guys to lay rail this day and time. That's not hardwood but that's...

**BW:** Very interesting.

**BH:** Oh yeah. But back to hardwood on this wood products, you started to say something about... we said that he really wasn't interested in other markets but at times he must have done some specialty woods.

**JJ:** Yes, he would've had to. Now if you were building something for a dock, a loading dock or not necessary a marine dock but a loading dock of some sort, and you had bumpers or something there was hardwood involved in that, but I believe it was sweetgum. Some places, you can find sweetgum just as plentiful as you can oak. So I got to believe he had some business on the side that kept him going, because eventually, you know the rail business fell off drastically once they made connections, and even in Fort Smith because by 1940, the Fort Smith and Western went belly-up right here in town. But they had freight business between here and Oak City out in the Oklahoma coal mines out there, not mines but open pits. They had good business going to Oak City and good business coming back this way but eventually it played out.

**BH:** What was the fate of the Little River Railroad?

**JJ:** I think it got all the timber it could get out of there, hardwood because they were selective. There's still a forest down there. What was interesting about Mr. MacLoud was one of the things along with his contract are these passes, railroad passes, for nine men—they're called tie handlers—to unload or load ties, and he would get a pass, and it would state how many were in the workforce on the Kansas City Southern, the Missouri Pacific. He had all these railroad passes that would entitle him. He'd show the pass, and they'd say, "Oh, you're the guys that are going to unload the ties down here at..."

**BH:** Space available, sometimes they'd have to ride in the boxcar?

**JJ:** Yes, sir. Sometimes they'd ride in a boxcar. He had all these passes, and I was just thrilled as a youngster to see Kansas City Southern, Iron Mountain and Subiaco, and...

**BH:** Where was Iron Mountain? I've heard that term.

**JJ:** I do not know. I've wondered if it's Backbone Mountain.

**BW:** Was Iron Mountain associated with what turned out to be the Missouri Pacific?

**JJ:** Yes.

**BW:** St. Louis and Iron Mountain and Wheeler?

**JJ:** Yes, Iron Mountain, and I've heard that all my life, but I never knew where it was. But he had all these passes for workmen. When he'd sell ties, they'd go to the other end and put them out along the right-of-way. That was a part of the deal. It didn't say we'd ship you a gondola full of ties. We'll unload them and put them on your right-of-way.

**BH:** Was there a difference, did you ever hear any oral evidence that from the 1880s in St. Paul to the 1910s down at Horatio or so was there a difference in how many ties you could get from a tree?

**JJ:** I was not aware of that, no sir, except that you had to be careful. There's sapwood that was not conducive to durability as far as ties are concerned. So there was some stripping as far as depending on where you were and the particular forest maybe there was more sapwood.

**BH:** Yes. What do you know about stave bolts? White oak stave bolts, did they ever produce any of those?

**JJ:** Not that I'm aware of.

**BH:** Okay. That would be a different business altogether than ties.

**JJ:** Absolutely, and I'm sure it was a different market, too.

**BH:** Yes, yes.

**BW:** Most of us may not know what sapwood is. Tell us what sapwood is.

**JJ:** Well, sometimes you know they talk about the sap rises in the spring and all of that? Well that's close to the surface because as the tree hardens and grows, the center wood really becomes dense.

**BH:** Called the heartwood.

**JJ:** The heartwood, yeah.

**BH:** Heartwood, and then the closer to the bark is the sapwood, which is porous. It will conduct moisture, and . . .

**JJ:** And insects and all kinds of things.

**BH:** Good for the tree. Takes water up to the leaves, but it's not good for the ties.

**JJ:** No, sir.

**BW:** You want heartwood for the ties.

**JJ:** So what he was asking was, sometimes you might utilize, say sixty percent of a fallen tree to get ties out, where other times you might be able to get maybe eighty percent and only have twenty percent waste. But there was a certain amount of waste, and you know even the . . . not too long ago in the Fort Smith furniture business, they'd try to get as many pieces out of lumber as they could and have as little waste, because it might have a curve in it or something like that. So they did try to use fabrication ra-

ther than try to cut it all out of wood.

**BH:** Well, Mr. Irwin, artifacts. Are any of those hewing axes left?

**JJ:** I might have a surveyor's chain or something like that, or a plumb bob. I was by trade a surveyor to start with but . . .

**BW:** If you run across that contract you mentioned. If we could photo it or make a copy of it?

**JJ:** Sure, but I'd like to find it first.

**BH:** It's in there with the socks.

**JJ:** It's in there with the socks, that's right.

**BH:** Well, anything else you want to leave us with?

**JJ:** Well, I'd like to leave you with one story about hardwood. I told this story once before, but during the San Francisco earthquake, the trolley system in San Francisco was put out of business overnight, and people could get around. The trolley company said, "We've got to get up and running quickly." So they said, "Well, we're going to have to have some new insulators because all of our poles are down and all the glass is shattered." So they said, "Well, why don't we try to fabricate our own out of hardwood," which happened to be *lignum vitae*. Now *lignum vitae* is a dense, non-floating wood that is also an insulator, and it was plentiful on the docks of San Francisco. The trolley company had shops, machine shops, and they said, "Well, let's see what would it take to machine insulators to temporarily get back up in our own shops and we control our own destiny." It turned out they could mill these *lignum vitae* insulators for two cents apiece, and they said, "Well, hell. It would cost four cents apiece to buy glass. We could save money on top of that, and it will be a temporary situation. When we get back on our feet, we'll replace it with glass." Seventy-five years ago, in '06 plus seventy-five is what? 81. 1981 they started taking some of these down and replacing them. So they lasted seventy-five years.

**BH:** Wow.

**BW:** Wow.

**JJ:** And what they did, they put a little indentation in the skirt so you could, you couldn't tell from the ground what was wood and what was actually, it's porcelain nowadays. So they put a little indentation in the skirt—the skirt is the part that covers the peg that it sits on—and they put a little dip in it. Well, that's the only difference between, they sculpted these to look like a regular insulator. It was glass at that time, now they're porcelain, but you couldn't tell, so they said, "Well, it's doing the job. Let's just leave them up there."

**BW:** Where there's wood there's a way.

A subsequent interview with JOE IRWIN at the Fort Smith Museum of History occurred on August 4, 2015.

**Billy Higgins:** Joe, we were talking here in the muse-

um about Joe's encounter with the origins of a significant baking company in Fort Smith.

**Joe Irwin:** Yes, sir, I was looking for a deceased member of my class of '48, and I hadn't been able to find him. So, I thought maybe he might be buried in the National Cemetery. So, I put in his name, Alexander Hamil – H-a-m-i-l. Usually when you Google that, you'll get Alexander Hamilton.

**BH:** Sure.

**JI:** Because Alexander and Hamil just don't go together, but at any rate, his father was buried in the National Cemetery, and he was a junior, my classmate that I was looking for. So, I said, "I'll go down and look at his grave because he was a World War I veteran." Well, on his gravestone, it said he belonged to the 310th Bakery Company. Now, that's opposed to the phonetic alphabet that the military uses, baker and bravo and all of that. This said Bakery Company. So, I went home and Googled that. Sure enough, the 310 Bakery Company originated in 1916 as a way to feed the soldiers eighteen ounces of bread a day. Now, that's more than a loaf and a half. Well, the Quartermaster Corps said, "We can't keep up with that a day, there's just no way. Our cooks have to be cooks, and we don't have that many bakers."

**BH:** That ration of bread a day was Army regulations?

**JI:** Army regulations. Evidently the doctors said there is enough nutrition in bread . . . we're talking about 1916 and the nutrition in bread at that time was sufficient to sustain a fighting man to get ready to go to war. So, the Quartermaster said, "Well, we can't put all these men in unis, because they'll be going hither and yon, so we'll form baker companies that will do nothing but bake bread." And the organization was taken from the Army manual to require a company to have a hundred enlisted men and one officer, and fifteen of them were sergeants in charge of, they were the bakers. They went to baking school and baking school alone so they could bake this bread. I said, "Well, the rum ration was only four ounces, and here the bread is eighteen ounces per day per man." So, they figured out it's going to be a lot of bread and that's what's this organization was. Well, a good friend of mine, when I related this story to him because I knew he was a descendant of the baking business and I told him about the baking company, he said, "You know, my dad, Mr. Benjamin Harrison Shipley, was in one of those units. When he got out of the Army in 1919 and came home, he said, 'I've been trained to do a job, and I think I could make a living doing it.'" Well that, he and his six brothers formed the Shipley Baking Company here in Fort Smith.

**BH:** What year was that?

**JI:** That was in 1920, 1920 that he started the Ship-

ley Baking Company, and it grew to the point that one of his brothers ran the bakery in Muskogee, one of his brothers ran the bakery in McAlester, and one of his brothers ran the bakery in Fayetteville, and they had a plan to open a bakery in Little Rock, but it never got off the ground. But, the six brothers, all were in the baking business, the Shipley Baking Company.

**BH:** Wow. So this document you have here, does it go with that?

**JI:** Yes, it does. I prepared it for you. And this is the tombstone that I found out there, and you'll see that it talks about the bakery company, the 310th Bakery Company, and when I googled it, this is what it tells how it was formed and what it was composed of. That is the personnel and would tell what their job was and their rank. It says that the bakers were sergeants, and the assistant bakers were corporals, the pot scrubbers were privates and then you had some neophytes that were down to just running errands and, of course, you had two cooks to take care of the bakers. So, this was an organization chart for a bakery company.

**BH:** Does the U.S. Army still have bakery companies?

**JI:** No, no that's, that's been. . .

**BH:** Was this only during World War I?

**JI:** Only during World War I. That's is correct.

Now, there were not attached to, say, a cavalry unit or an artillery unit. They still belonged to the Quartermaster Corps.

**BH:** Huh, huh.

**JI:** And they did not go overseas, because by the time they got this up and running, the war was over. So, they were in business about eight months, getting people ready to go overseas, but the bakery companies never went overseas.

**BH:** So, one of the main legacies of this whole organization and that Army regulation was Shipley Baking Company throughout Arkansas and Oklahoma then? (laughs)

**JI:** That is correct. Yes, sir. Well, even this is rather complete, because it says what equipment they were to draw from the Quartermaster . . . and it is rather dated.

**BH:** You had mentioned to me before something about oven overseers or oven constructors, field ovens.

**JI:** Yes, field ovens. Well, some of the corporals and privates took bread out of and shake it out. Now in modern bakery, one of the secrets is they have a compound in there that does not impart anything to the texture or the taste of the bread but lets it fall out when they turn it over. Automatically, but that is trade secret. Harry Shipley told me that.

**BH:** And this in the era before pizza? (laughter)  
Thank you very much, Joe.

# Steep Hill Cemetery of Sebastian County, Arkansas

*Established in 1850*



**STEEP HILL CEMETERY**

(Photo courtesy of the Fort Smith Historical Society)

**by Gina Caperton Ervin**

**B**ordering Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), Sebastian County, located in the West Central part of Arkansas, was established by a legislative act on January 6, 1851. It was created from territory that previously comprised Crawford, Scott, and Polk counties and was named after William King Sebastian, who served as a U.S. senator and judge of the first circuit court for a number of

years after the state was admitted to the Union in 1836.

Steep Hill Cemetery dates to the same time period as the establishment of the county in mid-nineteenth century. John B. McAlester/McAllister,\* infant son of William Jackson McAlester/McAllister and Elizabeth Holcomb McAlester/McAllister, was the first recorded burial. According to his gravestone, he was born August 25, 1848, and died May 29,

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\*Note: William Jackson used the spelling McAllister throughout his entire life. His sons, James Jackson and Nathaniel, changed the spelling to McAlester and documents indicate they likely placed the gravestone markers for their parents and siblings with the spelling McAlester. The name is therefore interchanged or duplicated throughout this document.

1850. John's gravestone dates as the oldest in the cemetery. The second oldest is that of his infant sister, Frances McAlester/McAllister. She died just four months later, September 24, 1850. Both graves are in the original, McAlester/McAllister family plot along with those of their parents and two other siblings.

Eleven years lapsed before the next was buried at Steep Hill. Annis Tucker Bugg, mother-in-law of Martha "Mattie" Temperance McAlester, died July 13, 1861. She was the first adult buried in the cemetery. For historical perspective, Annis died the same year Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as president of the United States. Annis and her husband, Benjamin Nicholas Bugg, moved from Tennessee to Little Piney, Johnson County, Arkansas (1850 census) where they received a land grant in 1860. Around that same time, they migrated to Sebastian County where they were enumerated in the 1860 census.

Although Annis Tucker Bugg was the first adult buried, she is not the oldest person buried in the cemetery. A complete census of gravestone inscriptions revealed that William Rogers, born 1792, and Hugh Sehorn, born 1793, are the oldest individuals (by age) according to their dates of birth.

**THE MCALLISTER/MCALESTER, BUGG, AND RUTHERFORD FAMILIES:** William Jackson McAllister was born in Kentucky to James Garland McAllister and Temperance Jackson McAllister, his father and mother being originally from Virginia. After his father's death, William migrated, first, to Missouri, then onward to Arkansas. He received land grants in both states. The grants were signed by three different presidents: Van Buren, Tyler, and Buchanan. His homestead in Sebastian County, Arkansas, was established by a land grant signed by President Buchanan. The cemetery was established on his original acreage.

Noted among the earliest settlers of the county, William Jackson McAllister was a farmer, stockman, and an elected official. He served two terms as Sebastian County's first coroner (1851-1852) and was elected and served as the county's fifth county and probate judge (1860-1864). Politically, he was an engaged member of the Democratic Party. January 1, 1851, he served as vice president for a historical "Union Meeting" in Van Buren, the purpose for which was to debate/determine succession from the union with the states. Active in the community, William Jackson McAllister was also a founding member and elected officer of the Greenwood Masonic Lodge. The first meeting of the lodge was held April 20, 1858.

William Jackson McAllister and his wife, Elizabeth Holcomb McAllister, had seven children: James Jackson (founder of McAlester, Oklahoma), Martha Temperance



**THE GRAVE OF JOHN B. MCALESTER**, born August 25, 1848, and died May 29, 1850, is the oldest grave at Steep Hill Cemetery.

(Photo from the author's collection)

(wife of William Thomas Bugg), Frances (infant), Nathaniel Holcombe, John B. (infant), Louisa E. (wife of James William Rutherford whose family migrated from the same county in Kentucky as the McAllisters), and Mary (wife of William F. Keith). His son, James Jackson McAllister, and son-in-laws, William Thomas Bugg and James William Rutherford, served the Confederacy during the Civil War during the era of President Abraham Lincoln. All of William Jackson McAllister and Elizabeth Holcomb McAlester's/McAllister's children, with the exception of James Jackson and Nathaniel, are buried at Steep Hill Cemetery.

William Jackson McAllister died February 12, 1875. His wife, Elizabeth, died one day later, February 13, 1875. Their graves are next to their son John and two daughters in the McAlester family plot in the northwest section, the oldest section, of the cemetery. The family land was divided among heirs that included their son, Nathaniel, and son-in-laws, William Thomas Bugg (husband of their daughter Martha "Mattie") and James William Rutherford (husband of their daughter Louisa). By then, their oldest son, James Jackson McAlester, had become wealthy and well-established in McAlester, Oklahoma, with mercantile, coal mining, and railroad business. He was later elected lieutenant governor of Oklahoma (1911).

After the death of her parents, daughter Martha "Mattie" and her husband, William Thomas Bugg inherited the old McAllister home place, where they resided with their four children: Ollie Lee, Juliet, William Benjamin, and Lon Jackson. They had more children, James Franklin, and an infant, but neither survived. William served as Sebastian County sheriff from 1892 to 1896. Their son, Lon Jackson Bugg, remained in the home of his parents. When he married Mary Ida Elizabeth Hayes Bugg, they added to

the extended household ten children. Lon Jackson and his family lived with William Thomas Bugg and Martha “Mattie” McAllister Bugg until they passed and inherited the home. The home provided for and endured for four generations.

**EXPANSION OF FAMILY CEMETERY:** By 1887, land owner plats, indicate that William and Mattie had parceled some land to William’s sister, Sarah Bugg Harris, and her husband, James. William Thomas Bugg and Mattie McAllister Bugg and James William Rutherford and Louisa McAllister Rutherford had also donated land to extend what has become Steep Hill Cemetery “beyond the original one acre that had been originally set aside for burying.” The Bugg, Rutherford, and Harris land adjoined creating a family community. As a result, many of those buried at Steep Hill during that period are related by blood or marriage, or had close community friendships. A good number, including the Harris family migrated with the Benjamin Nicholas and Annis Tucker Bugg family from Tennessee to “Little Piney,” Johnson County, Arkansas, before finally settling in Sebastian County, Arkansas (census records).

**EXPANSION BY RONK FAMILY:** In January 1945, Mr. and Mrs. Moses Ronk gave to Steep Hill Cemetery a strip of land approximately 200 feet in length and twenty feet wide to be reserved for them and their heirs. After Jessie’s death, Moses remarried Rachel Audrey Willett Ronk. He is buried next to Jessie and Rachel on the land donated, as are many of their descendants. The Ronk land referenced runs from the center driveway to the northwest corner, along the fence.

**EXPANSION BY FORT CHAFFEE DONATION:** The McAllisters’ original home accommodated four generations of the family until taken in 1940 to establish Camp Chaffee. The groundbreaking of Camp Chaffee was held on September 20, 1941, as part of the Department of War’s preparations to double the size of the U.S. Army in the face of imminent war. Camp Chaffee thrived for three decades before falling into disrepair after diminished need.

In 1997, the federal government decided to return much of Fort Chaffee’s land to the state. The Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority was established in the late 1990s to begin redeveloping 6,000 acres. As a part of the development efforts, acreage was deeded to Steep Hill Cemetery, which expanded the cemetery on the east side of Steep Hill Road. According to Opal Harris, sexton for Steep Hill Cemetery, “it took several years to get that land. Several people wrote and phoned asking for land. We asked for 10-15 acres. Finally, we got 5.” The deed was signed October 18, 2002, by

## Steep Hill Cemetery Timeline

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>1817</b>          | The first troops arrived at Belle Point to establish Fort Smith.  |
| <b>c. late 1830s</b> | William Jackson McAllister and Elizabeth Holcomb McAllister settled in Sebastian County, Arkansas.  |
| <b>1850</b>          | First and second burial—Two children of William Jackson McAllister and Elizabeth Holcomb McAllister:<br>❖ John B. McAllister/McAlester – age nineteen months, first burial, May 1850.<br>❖ Frances McAllister/McAlester, age two months, second burial, September 1850. |
| <b>1861</b>          | Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as U.S. president. The Civil War erupted. Many buried in Steep Hill served.   |
| <b>1861</b>          | Third burial (first adult)—Annis Tucker Bugg, wife of Benjamin Nicholas Bugg and mother-in-law of Martha “Mattie” Temperance McAllister/McAlester.  |
| <b>c. 1875/1880</b>  | Cemetery expanded by donation of land “beyond the original one acre set aside for burying” by James William Rutherford, husband of Louisa McAllister/McAlester Rutherford, and William Thomas Bugg, son-in-law of Martha “Mattie” Temperance McAllister/McAlester Bugg. |
| <b>1941</b>          | Camp Chaffee established.   |
| <b>1945</b>          | Donation of land Mr. and Mrs. Moses Ronk consisting of a strip 200 feet in length and twenty feet wide to be reserved for them and their heirs that runs from the middle of the driveway along the back fence in the “Oldest NW Section.”                               |
| <b>2002</b>          | Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority donation of five acres, expanding Steep Hill Cemetery on the east side of Steep Hill Road with deed signed October 18, 2002, by Bugg descendants, Lilly Bugg Wingfield and Opal Maness Harris, and Opal’s husband Jack Harris.     |
| <b>2012</b>          | Pavilion erected in the new “East Section.”   |

Bugg descendants Lilly Bugg Wingfield, daughter of Earl Breen Bugg, and Opal Maness Harris, daughter of Lila Annis Bugg Maness, and Opal’s husband, Jack Harris. Approximately two and a half years later (January 6, 2005) ground was broken for the Janet

## Notable Burials at Steep Hill Cemetery\*

Though impossible to unveil and note the many contributions made by those buried at Steep Hill Cemetery, the following provides a glimpse into the early historical engagement of those who settled the community and had a part in the establishment of Sebastian County.

### County Officials

- ❖ **William Jackson McAllister**, 1851-1852, Sebastian County's first coroner.
- ❖ **Samuel Brooken Stephens**, 1851-1852, Sebastian County's first sheriff (no stone, grave documented by family members)
- ❖ **Judge William Jackson McAllister**, 1860-1864, Sebastian County's fifth county and probate judge.
- ❖ **John Howard**, 1864-1868, Sebastian County's sixth county judge.
- ❖ **William Thomas "T.W." Bugg**, 1892-1896, Sebastian County's thirteenth sheriff.

### Civil War Veterans

- ❖ Daniel Alverson, Confederate, Mississippi Infantry, Company H.
- ❖ Simpson Leory Autry, Confederate, Company B of the Tennessee Infantry.
- ❖ James M. Blythe, Civil War pension paid to his wife, Charity, also buried at Steep Hill.
- ❖ James Cook Bourland, Confederate, 35th Arkansas Infantry, Company B.
- ❖ James R. Bradberry, Confederate, Company C, Georgia Tenth Cavalry Regiment.
- ❖ Zachariah F. Brooks, Confederate, Tennessee Calvary.
- ❖ William Thomas Bugg, Confederate, sergeant in the King's Arkansas Regiment, Fagan's Brigade, Trans-Mississippi Department C.S.A. Lost a leg in the Battle of Helena.
- ❖ William J. Bullington, unknown side, registered for the draft in Missouri, July 1, 1863.
- ❖ Martin W. Bunch, Confederate, private and corporal, Gordon's Regiment of the Arkansas Calvary.
- ❖ Lorenzo "Lorenzy" K. Burrow, Confederate, Simington's 1st Arkansas Regiment, thirty-day volunteers, Company I of the Arkansas Thirty-eighth Infantry Regiment, and Fifteenth Missouri Calvary
- ❖ James D. Byrum, Union, Company

E, Arkansas First Infantry Regiment (no stone; grave documented by newspaper obituary and family members).

- ❖ William R. Cannada, Confederate, Company H, Tennessee Infantry.
- ❖ William Cargile, Union, Company G, Arkansas Second Infantry Regiment (field stone with small metal funeral home marker).
- ❖ J.L. Chappell, Confederate, Fifth Regiment, Arkansas Infantry (no stone; burial documented by Birnie Brothers' Funeral Home record).
- ❖ George W. Combs, Civil War pension paid to his wife, Harriett, also buried at Steep Hill.
- ❖ J.B. (Jessie B.) David, Confederate, Tennessee Calvary, Company E, Civil War pension paid to his wife, Mary Ann David, also buried at Steep Hill.
- ❖ Ed Ethridge, Confederate, Tennessee in Cruse's Calvary in the Sebastian Regiment
- ❖ James N. Ethridge, Confederate, Civil War pension paid to his wife, Nancy.
- ❖ John N. Ferguson, Confederate, Fifteenth Regiment, Arkansas Infantry (Northwest).
- ❖ Josiah Nelson Haggard, Confederate, Company A Calvary.
- ❖ Mitchell Lafayette Hallum, Confederate, Georgia Infantry, Company C.
- ❖ James A. Harris, Confederate, corporal for the Ninth Regiment of the Arkansas Infantry, Company H, wife Sarah E. Bugg Harris. (No stone for James A. Harris; burial is recorded by Birnie Brothers' Funeral Home records).
- ❖ James Lee Horne, Confederate, South Carolina Infantry, Company E.
- ❖ Melvin Hurd, Union, Fourth Regiment of the Indiana Infantry, Company K.
- ❖ Richard Hutchinson, Listed as a Civil War veteran buried by Fentress Funeral Home
- ❖ Lemuel Benjamin Howard, Union, Company I of the Arkansas First Calvary Union Regiment.
- ❖ Barton H. Johnson, Union, Compa-

ny E of the Sixth Kansas Calvary

- ❖ G. L. Johnson, Confederate, Company B, Tennessee Infantry.
- ❖ James S. Jones, Confederate, Alabama Infantry, Company I.
- ❖ John Keating, Union, registered at St. Louis, Missouri, July 1, 1863.
- ❖ Thomas E. Misee, Confederate, Thirty-fifth Arkansas Infantry, Company D.
- ❖ Walter "Henry" Moody, Union, private, Second Mounted Regiment, Arkansas Calvary
- ❖ Enoch Newman, Civil War pension paid to his wife, Eliza Jane Newman, also buried at Steep Hill.
- ❖ Jefferson "Jeff" Odum, Confederate, Arkansas Calvary, Newman Company, Cardwell Regiment.
- ❖ Enoch B. Petty, listed as a Civil War veteran buried by Fentress Funeral Home.
- ❖ George Washington "G.W." Pryor, Confederate, Fifty-first Regiment of the Arkansas Militia.
- ❖ John S. Robison, Confederate, private, Twenty-seventh Regiment of the Arkansas Infantry
- ❖ Lewis Philip Rogers, Union, enlisted in Kentucky.
- ❖ James William Rutherford, Confederate, private, Fifteenth Arkansas Regiment, Company B.
- ❖ Nicholas Sehorn, Confederate, Dawson's/Hardy's Regiment, Arkansas Infantry, Company D.
- ❖ John J. Taylor, Confederate, private, Company G of the Arkansas Second Infantry Regiment.
- ❖ John H. Weir, Confederate, Seventh Regiment, Arkansas Infantry.
- ❖ James D. Williams, Confederate, Company B of the Arkansas Infantry.
- ❖ Andrew W. Wyman, Union, lieutenant, Company C, Iowa First Calvary Regiment & Commissioned Officer, Company L, Arkansas Second Calvary Regiment.
- ❖ Two unknown soldiers. Two stones simply inscribed "Confederate Soldier" are located in the old northwest section of the cemetery.

\*Though not included in this document, which outlines the earlier history of Steep Hill Cemetery, the number of foreign and domestic veterans buried to present date is more than extensive. The important contribution of our service men and women buried within is hereby esteemed and acknowledged with deepest respect and gratitude.

Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center. The center sits on 170 acres that was previously a part of Fort Chaffee, and prior to that, a part of William Jackson McAllister's acreage. It, too, was established from the efforts of the Redevelopment Authority.

**IMPROVEMENTS:** In 2012, a pavilion was erected in the new east side of the cemetery to offer covered shelter for funeral services and cemetery activities under the supervision of Opal Maness Harris. Row numbers were added for all sections. A full cemetery census was also conducted through January 2013 to document all graves with gravestones and their location by row. Bobby Jack Caperton, son-in-law of Reba Bugg Mackey, and husband of Rohena Mackey, is thanked for the many hours he contributed to create burial location records.

**STEEP HILL BOARD:** As of this history February 2, 2013, Steep Hill Cemetery board members\* continue to be direct lineal descendants of the McAllister and Bugg families noted:

- ❖ Opal Maness Harris (daughter of Lila Annis Bugg Maness).
- ❖ Buddy Bugg (son of Hayes Bugg).
- ❖ Gina Caperton Ervin (granddaughter of Reba Bugg Mackey).
- ❖ J.L. Didier serves as an adviser.

Former board members through the decades have included many dedicated to the upkeep and preservation of Steep Hill Cemetery: Lilly Bugg Wingfield (daughter of Earl Breen Bugg), Van Bugg (son of Harve B. Bugg), Hayes Bugg (son of Lon Jackson Bugg), James Franklin "Jim" Bugg (son of William Thomas Bugg and Martha "Mattie" McAllister Bugg), Hurshal G. Mackey (husband of Reba Bugg Mackey), Reba Bugg Mackey (daughter of Lon Jackson Bugg), Parker J. "P.J." Weir (grandson of Eliza Jane Bugg Williams), Jack Harris (husband of Opal Maness Harris), Warren Wingfield (husband of Lilly Bugg Wingfield), John Franklin "J.F." Mackey (father-in-law of Reba Bugg Mackey), L.J. Mackey, Ed Richert, Ruby Franklin, Raymond "Jelly" Franklin and others. All board members past and present are unpaid volunteers.

**CURRENT/FUTURE PRESERVATION:** February 1989, The Perpetual Care Trust Fund of Steep Hill Cemetery was established at Merchants National Bank in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The Trust was initially started with \$22,000, with an interest rate of seven and a half percent. Approximately two years later, interest rates fell and bank



#### STEEP HILL CEMETERY

(Photo from the author's collection)

fees rose. As a result, the care and preservation of Steep Hill Cemetery relies on the community for donations.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** This author, Gina Caperton Ervin, thankfully acknowledges the contributions of Opal Maness Harris, cemetery sexton and board member, for providing important information included in this document, and parents Bobby Jack Caperton and Rohena Marie Mackey Caperton for their tireless efforts in recording gravestone locations and taking photographs to ensure every grave was recorded. The census began in 2012, and concluded January 31, 2013, with the full record printed February 3, 2013. Readers should note that this record does not include the new East Section, located east of Steep Hill Road.

**RESEARCH/GENEALOGY:** For more information, see Findagrave.com and the individual memorials that have been established for all those interred. For anyone researching those with unmarked graves (not included in the following gravestone census), a significant number have been recorded by volunteers on Findagrave.com.

Family members with known unmarked graves of relatives buried at Steep Hill are encouraged to list those individuals on Findagrave.com to further enrich the cemetery's efforts to account for and document all interred.



*Gina Caperton Ervin is a genealogist and the dedicated historian of Steep Hill Cemetery.*

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\*Joey Mhoon (also a Bugg descendant) and his wife, Sheba, joined the board after this history was written.

# Descendants of Henry Byrom of Virginia

*The Seaborn Byrum Family History (1697-1990)*

## Foreword

This narrative of my mother's family history was found among her things when she died in January 2015 at age 95. I knew of her extensive work on the family genealogy but she had not shared this particular document with me. Never one to trumpet her accomplishments, she has left us with a treasure map that traces our family history, as she notes, from "the earliest days of colonial America." Her genealogy work was conducted before the Internet and before such rich resources as Ancestry.com. She and a cousin, Lorna James of Oklahoma City, wrote letters, hired researchers and often sat in dusty old courthouses rooting through ancient documents. She and my father traveled to family locations from Virginia to Arkansas looking for evidence of the family's life as they steadily moved south and west.

With deep appreciation to Professor Billy Higgins, my family is so very pleased that the Pebley Center, an archive of Fort Smith history at the University of Arkansas Fort Smith, will receive and maintain all of Amy Byrum Miller's original genealogy work—the basis for this family story.

**Mary Kay Kisseberth**  
Denver, Colorado  
May 2015

This is a summary of many years of research and personal contact with family members and others to provide for myself, my children and grandchildren, a better understanding of the Byrum ancestry.

If there is anything unique in this history, it is that the Byrum family goes back to the earliest days of colonial America. They did not land with the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth Rock in 1620, but Henry Byrom, our Pilgrim Father, landed in Virginia from Liverpool, England, in 1697, beginning a trail of ancestors which crossed many states and almost 300 years of American history. From Virginia to North Carolina, then Georgia, Florida, Texas and Arkansas, the Byrums followed a southwestward migratory movement typical of many colonial Virginians.

Along with other colonial Americans, the Byrums were trail-blazers, moving from settled locations to wild, uncharted lands, and always moving farther westward until their own frontier was reached in the 1870s in Texas then Arkansas.

Like most Americans, the Byrum niche in history is very small, recorded only in legal files: census reports, wills, land deeds, tax

reports, marriages and deaths; but for 300 years, the Byrums were on record, doing whatever they had to do to survive in the era in which they lived. They were tough and determined. They valued land ownership and independent living as the essentials of life. They married, raised families, voted, paid their taxes and, when necessary, fought wars: from 1776 to the twentieth century.

After three centuries, descendants of Henry Byrom (the Byrums, Byrams, Byrums or some other variation of the spelling) are settled on their own frontiers—north, south, east and west, making their own place in American history.

Amy Byrum Miller  
160 Meadowbrook Lane  
Plant City, Florida  
January, 1990

## The Byrum Family History (1697-1990)

### The Virginia Beginnings

**T**he family history of the Byrums begins in 1697 when Henry Byrom and his brother, Peter, arrived in Essex County, Virginia, from Liverpool, England, to begin a four-year indenture period to pay for their ship passage to the colonies.

Henry and Peter Byrom were the sons of Peter Byrom of Parr, Lancashire, England. He died in 1695 and is buried in the cemetery of Winwick Parish, Parr. The following year the two brothers applied for indenture papers from Alderman Thomas Tyrer of Liverpool. Under the terms of the indenture, the brothers, a gunsmith and an apprentice gunsmith, would serve at their trade for four years at an assigned place in either Maryland or Virginia. If the terms were met, the men would be free of debt and each would receive fifty acres of land to homestead.

Both men completed their indenture in Essex County and lived out their lives there. Henry Byrom married Frances Mills and settled on land at Mount Landing's Creek, near the Rappahannock River. By 1711, Henry owned 300 acres of land, located between present day Beasley and Tappahannock, Virginia, near state road 627.

Henry Byrom died in 1717 and is probably buried in

## Henry Byrom Indenture 1696

This Indenture made the first day of February in the eight year of raigne of our most gracious soveraigne Lord William the Third by the grace of God of England Scotland Fra & Ireland King Defender of ye faith &c: Anno Dom. 1696 between Henry Byrome of Parr the County of Lanc. and Kingdome of England Gunsmith and Peter Byrome brother & Servant to the Sd Henry of the one part & Alderman Thomas Tyrer of Liverpool in the Said County of LancS merchant of the other part witnesseth that ye sd Henry Byrome and Pete Byrome have put themselves Covenant Servants to & with the Said Tho Tyrer to serve hir or his assignes for & dureing the term of four years next after they shall be arrived in Maryland or Virginia and the Sd Tho Tyrer doth hereby Covenant & agree to & with the S Henry Byrome & Peter Byrome that the Said Thomas Tyrer shall and will pay for their passages and provide them with sufficient meate drink apparrell washing and Lodging an also with all sort & manner of Tools necessary for the Said Trade of a Gunsmith dureing their service and at the expiracon thereof the said working tools to be their own use and as their own Goods and shall allow them fifty acres of Land and all other benefits and advantages allowed by the said place where they Shall arrive att according to the Custom of the Countrey in witness whereof the said Thomas Tyrer to these present Indentures hi hand & Seale have put ye day & year first above written.

Tho: Tyrer (seal)

Sealed & delivered on Six  
penny stamp paper in the  
presence of \_\_\_\_\_

John Thomas  
Tho Roe  
Jon. Plumbe

Truely recorded according to an order of Essex County Court  
dated ye 10th day of Jany. Ano Dom. 1697

Test Francis Merriwether Cl. Crt.

### HENRY BYRUM'S INDENTURE CONTRACT, DATED 1696.

(Document from author's collection)

the cemetery of St. Ann's parish, near Tappahanock. Henry left no will but his widow, Frances, was left with nine children, the oldest, fourteen or fifteen years old. In 1719, Frances Mills Byrom married Alex Somerville but was widowed again in 1724. By that date, the nine children were scattered about. Some had been placed with guardians, and the oldest son left for North Carolina as soon as he received his inheritance as one of "Henry Byrom's orphans" following the death of his step-father.

James, the second son of Henry and Frances Byrom, remained in Essex County, married Elizabeth (surname unknown), raised ten children, died and was buried in the county. A copy of his 1749 will is on file at the courthouse in Tappahannock, Virginia. From this will, the family line

has been traced seven generations more.

James and Elizabeth Byrom spent their entire lives in Essex County, Virginia, but many of their children, like their uncles and aunts (and relatives of the Peter Byrom line) moved to other counties and states before 1776. One son, another James, did remain in Essex County. This James was the lineal ancestor of my family. James (II) married Ann (surname unknown, possibly Upton) and records have been found for three of their children: John, James (III), and Ann. Ann married an Archer West and sold Essex County land inherited from her father. Both John and James served in the Sixth Virginia Continental Line in the Revolutionary War, both married in Virginia, and both migrated to North Carolina sometime in the

1780s. They followed relatives to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and thus began the second phase of family history.

### **The North Carolina Years**

The North Carolina years lasted from the 1780s to the 1830s and were the most difficult to research. The many descendants of Henry and Peter who had migrated to North Carolina were difficult to sort out. In the mass of material available, common first names and the many spellings of Byrom on handwritten documents in archives and courthouses complicated the search. Most records were found in Mecklenburg County, and here the Byrom spelling changed from family to family. Byram became the most common spelling, but Byrum, Biram, Byrom, Bynum and Bigham were found, often multiple spellings on the same document.

From documents retrieved, a fairly clear picture evolves of the brothers, John and James III Byrom (sons of James II and Ann). Sometime after the Revolutionary War, the two brothers left Virginia to join relatives in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. One or both may have received land as payment for military service. Records for James were easier to find, but both men apparently settled in the Steele Creek area of Mecklenburg County, now a part of Charlotte, North Carolina. Documentation for John is probably buried under some strange spelling, but documentation for his oldest son, Upton Byrum, was not too difficult to find and follow.

Upton Byrum, son of John and (unknown) Byrom, born in 1770, probably in Essex County, Virginia, was listed on a marriage bond issued in 1793 in Mecklenburg County. The marriage bond on file in the state archives lists him as Repton Byrum, but the bride's name, Dolly (Dorothy) McDowell, is correct, and the bondsman is John Byrom, his father.

Upton and Dolly Byrum had at least five children, according to the 1800 Census. Their oldest son was Upton (II). Dolly died about 1806, and Upton married Peggy (Margaret) Porter in 1807. Before 1860, only heads of household were listed by name. Wives and children were listed in age groups by sex, so only a partial list of Upton Byrum's family is known. Records show his death as December 30, 1840, and his burial in the Steele Creek Presbyterian Cemetery, along with his second wife and a daughter of the first marriage.

The name Upton made researching easier, and it was the connecting link between later generations and the original Virginia Byroms. The origin of the name is unknown, but both John Byrum and his brother James Byram have several generations of descendants named Upton, including my father's oldest brother, Spencer Upton Byrum. The

DAR record of James Byrum has the same patterns. Upton may have been the maiden name of the Ann (surname unknown) Byrom, mother of the brothers. Using the mother's maiden name for sons is an old Southern custom.

Because the North Carolina research was extensive and because Upton Byrum was the central figure in the years 1793-1840, some details of the documents retrieved add human interest to the chronological data of Upton and the period.

No will was found for Upton Byrum or either of his wives, but the search led to the wills of William and Esther McDowell, the parents of Upton's first wife. William McDowell's will was filed in 1780. Through the will, his wife, Esther, was left only personal property and "maintenance" on the plantation. The "said plantation" was to be "wholly and solely" the property of daughter Dorothy, at age eighteen. The will names three other daughters who received money or personal property. Dorothy married Upton Byrum in December 1793 and apparently the couple lived on the plantation, White Hall, maintaining the mother and an unmarried sister from 1793 until Dorothy's death about 1806.

Esther McDowell's will was dated 1804. Again, Dorothy, Upton, and their daughter Jenny received the bulk of the estate, personal property only. Money was again provided for the daughter Margaret who may have been handicapped.

The 1810 census showed that Upton Byrum had remarried but still had legal rights to White Hall, the plantation inherited by his first wife. In 1829, he leased that plantation to a Stephen Gallant, and in 1830, he was living on a different plantation leased from a John W. Byrum (relationship unknown). This plantation was also an inheritance. It belonged to John's wife, Nancy, who had inherited it at the death of her first husband.

These transactions are noted to show how early American laws gave men exclusive control of property, even that which was legally inherited by women. Wives were part of the "goods and chattels" of an estate; they were entitled to few legal rights.

As for the plantations, neither crops nor acreages were listed. Because of the mountainous terrain of Mecklenburg County, these plantations probably were not the vast landholdings of the romantic Old South. Slavery did exist, and one document listed a slave named Jim as collateral for a loan amounting to \$180. And, a few slaves were mentioned in family wills.

The Upton Byrum era ended with his death in 1840. Bonds were posted in 1845 by John P. Byrum and in 1847 by other relatives to administer the final estates of Upton and Margaret Byrum. John P. Byrum was a son of the second marriage; a descendant of his—the Reverend Thomas

F. Hudson of York, South Carolina—contributed some family information for these records. A year or so before Upton's death, his oldest son, Upton (II) moved from North Carolina to Georgia, and the family history continued there.

### Byrums to Georgia to Florida and back to Georgia

A mass migration of North Carolinians to Georgia began in the 1830s when the entire western half of the state was opened for settlement after the treaty between the United States and the Cherokee leaders was signed. As with all other treaties between the government and the Indians, this was not a bright spot in American history. However, for those who moved into former Cherokee lands, the migration was not only legal but also encouraged through land lotteries and various military entitlements.

Relatives of Upton Byrum were established in Murray and Coweta counties by 1834, but he arrived in Georgia about 1838. His first home of record was Floyd County.

Upton, son of Upton and Dorothy McDowell Byrum was born in 1801 in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. He married Mary A. Cloninger, daughter of Adam and Susanna Clemmer Cloninger on January 18, 1831. No records except the marriage bond signed by his father and Adam Cloninger were found for Upton, but the Cloningers and Clemmers were well documented. They were pioneer families of Lincoln County, which joins Mecklenburg County in North Carolina. Originally from the Palatine, upper Rhine area of Prussia, the Clemmers and Cloningers were part of an early German migration to Pennsylvania.

A personal historian of the Cloninger family states, "Mary Byrum and her husband moved from North Carolina to Coosaville, Georgia, and later to Chatooga (sic), Georgia. I have failed to get an account of the family." Coosaville is a community near Rome, Floyd County, Georgia, and the 1840 birthplace of my grandfather, Seaborn W. Byrum. "Chatooga" is, no doubt, Catoosa County, where the Byrums lived both before and after the Civil War. One of my great aunts was called "Aunt Coos" after the family hometown.

A census report for 1840 lists a W (no doubt U) Byrum in Floyd County, Georgia. No record was found for 1850 but the 1860 census report lists U. Byrum, wife M. and children Wm 23, S. 20 (my grandfather, Seaborn), A. 16, Jas. 14, and C. 11 living in the Chambers District of Catoosa County near present-day Ringgold, Georgia. The father was a farmer with land valued at \$6,000 and personal property, \$5,100. This was my grandfather Byrum's family.

The Civil War began shortly after this census, and their part of Georgia was not only devastated by battles and

(Official and Private.)	
12 Cav.   Ga.	
J. H. Byrum	
Co. B, { Avery's Squadron, Georgia Dragoons.*	
Age 21 years.	
Appears on	
Company Muster-in Roll	
of the organization named above. Roll dated	
Dalton, Ga., May 15 1862.	
Muster-in to date May 15, 1862.	
Detained for duty and enrolled:	
When	May 15, 1862.
Where	Dalton
By whom	J. H. L. Cook
Period	Nov
Valuation in dollars of	
Horse 180; horse equipments	
Remarks:	

MUSTER ROLL, Georgia Twelfth Cavalry, 1862  
(Document from author's collection)

pillaging on both sides, but also in the path of Sherman's March to the Sea. The Byrum family, like all Georgians, was profoundly affected by the war. They survived but were never again a complete family unit.

A considerable amount of research in the Georgia Archives and also in Catoosa County failed to produce a clear picture of the Byrum family during the Civil War years and immediately thereafter. The military record of my grandfather, Seaborn W. Byrum (officially listed as S.W. Byrum, age twenty-one) shows his voluntary enlistment, with his horse, for the duration in the Twelfth Regiment, Georgia Cavalry, Company B, Avery's Squadron on May 15, 1862, at Dalton, Georgia. This unit became a part

of the Twelfth Regiment, Georgia Cavalry on January 30, 1863, in the Army of Tennessee under General Braxton Bragg.

Records were not searched for his brothers, William and James. Both probably served, and it is known that Seaborn and his brother William were together in Ocala, Florida, at war's end. What they were doing in Florida is unknown, but that area was the primary source of saltpeter (sodium nitrate) used in gun powder. Soldiers may have been sent to Florida to assist with the production in those last desperate days of the Confederacy.

The only official record found for Upton Byrum was a deed dated November 13, 1862, for sale of 337 acres of land located in the ninth district, third section of "originally Walker but now Catoosa county" for the sum of \$6,000 "to him in hand paid." This land located on an official county map shows the site to be northwest of Ringgold on Chickamauga Creek, one of the areas of most intense fighting during the final days of the Civil War. Perhaps Upton, Mary and children Ann and C--- left Catoosa County in the early days of the war. They were not listed in the 1870 census in the Chambers District where they were living in 1860. That property was occupied by sons William and Seaborn Byrum several years after the war ended.

No records were found to establish the time or place of death of Upton Byrum. Later records indicate that Mary died in Parker County, Texas, sometime after 1880. She was listed in the 1880 Census, Weatherford, Parker County Texas, Precinct 2, as M.A. Byrum, head of household, age seventy-five, born North Carolina. No other person was listed in that household. Her sons Seaborn, William, and James and their families all lived in either Precinct 1 or 2 of Weatherford, Texas, in 1880.

After the Civil War, the family history continued with Seaborn and his wife, Marthena Smith Byrum. Their life together began in Ocala, Florida, where they were issued a marriage license July 18, 1866. Marthena Smith Byrum was born in Georgia but little else is known of her family or why she was in Ocala. It is believed she and Seaborn had known each other in Georgia before the war, but they married in Ocala and their first child was born there. A few years later, they and brother William, who also married in Ocala, moved back to Georgia.

Legal records in Florida provided little information about Seaborn Byrum and his brother William, except marriage records. By 1868, the two families had moved back to Georgia, and the 1870 census shows them living as one family unit on the same property listed for their parents in the 1860 census. This appears to be an attempt to salvage war-ravaged family property. Byrum land valued at \$6,000 in 1860 was valued at \$200 in 1870. The person-

al property of both brothers was valued at \$4,600 in 1870.

### **West to Texas**

Records indicate that Seaborn and Marthena Byrum and now four children left Georgia about 1874 to join relatives in Texas. Seaborn's sister Ann was married and living in Denison, Texas, where she remained the rest of her life. Perhaps Upton and Mary and the two younger children left Georgia with her during the war years, but no records were found until 1880, when most of the family was again united in one area—Parker County, Texas, near Weatherford.

Seaborn and William either traveled together to Texas or, what was more likely, accompanied a larger wagon train of fellow Georgians who had heard that land was cheap in west Texas and Confederate veterans would receive favorable treatment there. Many Georgians made the long wagon trip to Texas to begin new lives in a state removed from the war's devastation.

The Seaborn Byrum family settled in Parker County, Texas, and for the next nine or ten years, they lived on farms in that county. Census reports and tax records are on file for other family members: the mother, M.A. Byrum, and brothers William and James and their families also lived in the same area on separate land.

During the Texas years, four more children were born to Seaborn and Marthena Byrum, but Seaborn's health was declining. In 1884, they left family and friends in Weatherford and moved to the Ozarks in western Arkansas. It was hoped that by moving from the dust and dryness of west Texas to the clear mountain air of Arkansas, Seaborn's health would improve.

### **The Seaborn Byrums arrive in Arkansas**

Seaborn and Marthena and their eight children settled first in Washington County, Arkansas, in a fertile valley along Hog Eye Creek, south of Fayetteville. Once noted as the route of the Butterfield Stage Coach line between St. Louis and San Francisco, the Hog Eye Way Station was a significant stop. Passengers and animals were rested there before an extra team was attached to pull the coach over the Boston Mountain into Van Buren, Arkansas. Now the area is a scenic part of the Ozarks, beautiful and peaceful, neither highway nor railroad disturbs the rural beauty.

The Byrum family lived in Washington County only a few years but long enough for the birth of their ninth child, my father, Robert E. Lee Byrum, on June 11, 1885. By 1887, the family had moved across the Boston Mountain into Crawford County and settled in the rural community of Uniontown, the place the family would call home for the next fifty years.

The community was made up of independent small farmers, living in the creek valleys and on low hillsides of

an area in the far northwest corner of Crawford County, bordering at that time on Indian Territory. Uniontown, located twenty miles from the county seat, Van Buren, was considered quite progressive in the 1880s. The little town had a post office, general merchandise stores, a cotton gin, doctors, churches, fraternal lodges, and a high school, which was most uncommon in rural communities of the 1880s.

Shortly after the Byrums moved to Uniontown, their tenth child was born. All of the children attended school and church in Uniontown, and all participated in the many community activities of the times. While much of every family's time was taken with the farm work necessary to provide for their livelihood, the boys could always find time to hunt, fish, and play baseball. The girls joined their mothers and friends in church, school, and community functions. Life was never easy, but family and friends shared work and play.

Along the way, neighbors' sons and daughters met and married. Marriage licenses are on file in the Crawford County courthouses for nine of the ten children of Seaborn and Marthena Byrum. The youngest son, Tom, died at age thirteen. All of the spouses of the nine Byrums were from the immediate Uniontown area.

Many of the Seaborn Byrum grandchildren were born in Crawford County. A few grandchildren and later descendants of Seaborn and Marthena remain in the area, but after the Indian Territory became Oklahoma in 1907, a number of Byrums moved into the new state. Others moved to adjoining Sebastian County, Arkansas, where Fort Smith offered more advantages. By the third generation, descendants of Seaborn and Marthena Byrum were scattered from coast to coast and from north to south.

Seaborn died October 6, 1906, of the chronic heart disease that had troubled him so many years. He is buried in the family section of the Uniontown cemetery and, at his request, was buried in his Confederate uniform. Marthena died August 20, 1928, at age eighty of pneumonia. Most of the grandchildren remember "Grandma Byrum" and her hand-fashioned, polished briar cane. She had suffered a broken hip but refused to stay in a wheelchair. She remained quite alert to the very end of her life.

A new era had begun before the death of Marthena Byrum in 1928. The horse and buggy days were over, and rural family life was in the midst of change. The Byrum family and Uniontown were typical of the rapid changes.

Although all of the Byrum sons remained farmers and the daughters married farmers, they soon left Uniontown for other places that offered better schools,



**ROBERT E. LEE BYRUM** in a baseball uniform, early 1900s.

(Photo from author's collection)

transportation, medical facilities, and job opportunities for their growing families.

By 1928, Uniontown was fading away. Only one general store remained on the dusty main road. There was a church but fewer and fewer people to attend. Only one of the ten Byrum children, Spencer, resided in Uniontown in 1928. Families of the original settlers did return from time to time, usually for the Fourth of July picnic reunions or on Decoration Day to decorate the family graves in the Uniontown cemetery.

When the Byrum children gathered at the cemetery in 1928 for their mother's funeral, the family plot already contained the graves of father, Seaborn (1906); son Thomas Marion (1900); daughter-in-law Julia E., wife of Henry Byrum (1900); twin infants of Henry and Julia; James Roscoe, infant son of Cyrus and Lula Byrum; and Bonnie Opal, (1912) infant daughter of Robert E. Lee and Mary Byrum. Daughter Anna Eliza Byrum Snow (James) had died in 1904 at age thirty and was buried in a nearby cemetery.

Of the remaining eight sons and daughters, Spencer Upton married Amanda Howell in 1890. They and their one son lived their entire lives in Uniontown. Spencer died May 10, 1931 and a few weeks later his son, age thirty-five, died of typhoid fever. With these two deaths, direct family ties to Uniontown were severed. (Note: Many years

later when life became more complicated, buyers eagerly purchased land in Uniontown to enjoy the scenic beauty and quiet rural life. Some Byrum land was repurchased by younger family members.)

Sarah Ovie Byrum married George Snead in 1887. After many years in Crawford County, their final home of residence was in Fort Smith, Arkansas, but the family cemetery is Macedonia, near Uniontown. Ovie died January 5, 1954.

Ida Fletcher Byrum married Harry Kilgore in 1896. They lived their entire lives on land homesteaded by Harry's parents in the Rena community north of Van Buren. Their children and grandchildren still occupy that land. Ida died June 10, 1954. The Kilgore family cemetery is Grace Lawn in Van Buren, Arkansas. (Note: The Kilgore property was subsequently sold for development. A Walmart now occupies their farm.)

After the tragic first marriage of James Henry Byrum whose twins died at birth and whose wife was killed when he dropped a loaded gun, he married Audocia Howell of Uniontown in 1901 and soon left to settle in Oklahoma. The exact date of Henry's death is unknown.

Mary Marthena Byrum married Benjamin Andrew Snead in 1894. After their early married life in the Uniontown area, they too moved to Oklahoma. Their family home is Oklahoma City. Mary Marthena died October 24, 1956.

Edwin Smith Byrum married Myrtle Walters in 1898. Ed was born in Texas and was the only one of Seaborn's children to reside there. After leaving Uniontown, the family lived a number of years in Oklahoma in the Atoka area before moving to Muleshoe, Texas. Ed died there in 1959.

Cyrus Seaborn Byrum married Lula Marshall in 1903. The family never lived far from Uniontown, mainly in the Van Buren area. In their later years, they returned to Uniontown and lived on former Byrum land purchased by their daughter for herself and her parents. Cy died June 20, 1967, the last of the ten to die.

Robert E. Lee Byrum married Mary Rachel Bohannon in 1906. In the early days of the marriage, the family lived in Sequoyah County, Oklahoma, then several years in Van Buren and the final thirty-eight years in Fort Smith. Lee died June 19, 1966. The family cemetery is Forest Park, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

With the death of Seaborn and Marthena Byrum's children, a very long history of life in rural America ended. The family that began in 1697, when Henry Byrum started his family on fifty acres of Virginia land, had produced eight generations of independent farmers. The family history of the Byrums parallels a much larger history—a country developed by individual families, like the Byrums,

who came to America for freedom from strict governmental, religious, and social control of their lives.

The Byrums were yeoman farmers, freeholders of small farms, determined to work their own land and to be self-sufficient. The plantation system was regional and limited and did not greatly affect those who were determined to be independent farmers. Two hundred fifty years of pride in land ownership and self-sufficiency ended with the mechanical and technological changes of the twentieth century. For 250 years, they were the basic agricultural system of America.

## Epilogue

To bring this Byrum history to 1990, perhaps a short account of the two generations of my own family is needed. My parents were Robert Edward Lee Byrum and Mary Rachel Bohannon, both born in 1885. Lee was born in Washington County, Arkansas. Mary was born in Wright County, Missouri.

Lee Byrum and Mary Bohannon met in Uniontown Arkansas in 1903, a few years after Mary's family had moved from Wright County, Missouri, to the Indian Territory a few miles west of Uniontown. Mary was employed by Dr. and Mrs. J.E. Blakemore and remained in their employ after they moved from Uniontown to Van Buren in 1904. She returned to Uniontown to marry Lee in December 1906.

Like all his Byrum ancestors, Lee was a farmer; first on the family farm in Uniontown after his father's death in 1907, then in Sequoyah County, Oklahoma. The family moved back to Arkansas in 1920 to the Rena community north of Van Buren, then in 1928 to Sebastian County between Van Buren and Fort Smith where Lee and Mary Byrum spent the last thirty-eight years of their lives.

Six children were born to Lee and Mary Byrum:

- ❖ James Lafayette, 1907-1986.
- ❖ Theron (Tom) Jennings, 1910-1979.
- ❖ Bonnie Opal, May 28-30, 1912.
- ❖ Leo Spencer, 1915-1998.
- ❖ Amy Armistice, 1919-2015.
- ❖ Harry Elmer, 1922-2011.

After high school in Van Buren, Jim and Tom Byrum enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Jim had a thirty-year career, returning to Fort Smith upon retirement. He and his wife, Izona (Hinson) had one daughter. Jim died of heart complications and is buried in Forest Park Cemetery, Fort Smith. Tom had both a military and civilian career. He spent most of his life in New York, an employee of the state government. He and his wife, Anne (LaTempa), had one son. Leo and his wife, Marjorie (Cain), had two children who remained in the Fort Smith and Greenwood area.

Leo was a professional golfer; he designed and managed golf courses in Arkansas and Oklahoma. He died in 1998. Harry and wife Dorothy (Martin) had one son. Harry worked and resided in Fort Smith, then Van Buren until his death in 2011.

I was one year old when the family moved from Short, Oklahoma, to Van Buren and eight years old when we moved to Fort Smith. My schooling and growing up were in Fort Smith during the Depression years of the 1930s. After completing high school in Fort Smith and college in Clarksville, Arkansas, I began my teaching career in September 1941 just before Pearl Harbor, which changed everyone's life, including mine.

Phil Miller had been sent from Minnesota for military training at (then) Camp Chaffee, Arkansas, a huge training center located just outside Fort Smith. We met in 1942 and married in the chapel of the (then) Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma City, in May 1943. We were to be a military family for the next twenty-seven years. Phil retired in 1969 after a final tour in Vietnam. We returned to Fort Smith and semi-retirement until 1983, when we moved to Florida, where we finally retired from all but volunteer activities and the enjoyment of recreation we could not participate in during those busy years between 1943 and 1983.

### Acknowledgements

1. *The Byron Chronicle 1066-1800*
2. *Descendants of Henry Byron of Virginia*, By Mark Bennett Byron III.

These two publications served as the basis for all of the colonial history of the Byrum family. An elderly Mr. Byron was living in Boca Raton, Florida, when this family history was in preparation. He responded to an inquiry from Lorna Snead James with some out-of-print material from his personal manuscript files. I am deeply indebted to him for his publications and his generosity with his private collection.

3. *Byram Family – England 1697 to Georgia, USA 1960*  
By Mrs. James J. Byram, Atlanta, Georgia

This family history prepared for DAR membership is of James Byrom, brother of John Byrom, the great grandfather of Seaborn Byrum. This record, filed in the Georgia Archives, was reviewed and I corresponded with Mrs. James Byram concerning the Upton Byrum family of Georgia.

4. Lorna Snead James

Great-granddaughter of Seaborn and Marthena, my cousin and colleague in family research. Lorna spent many hours of research and correspondence locating family records and documents. Without her continued interest and capable researching, this family record might never have been completed.

Amy Byrum Miller  
January 1991  
Plant City, Florida

## Letters From Readers

Inquiries will be published in the *Journal* as space allows and should include the following:

- ❖ Your full name and address.
- ❖ Full name of ancestor about whom you desire information.
- ❖ Definite time period (birth, marriage or death date, or date appearing in a certain record at a definite time period.)
- ❖ State the relationships (names of parents, names of children, names of brothers and sisters, or in-laws).

Material should be submitted using word-processing programs supported by Windows. Do not abbreviate any words; put all surnames in capital letters; capitalize only the first letter of given names and places; write dates as follows (day, month, year: example 25 January 1978.)

## Suggestions for Submission of Articles

We welcome the submission of articles, previously unpublished, covering significant historical events and persons in the Fort Smith and surrounding area. Manuscripts, including quotations and footnotes, must be double-spaced, using *The Chicago Manual of Style* (University of Chicago Press). Footnotes should be numbered consecutively in the text, assembled at the end of the article, along with a list of any additional sources. The author's name, address, phone number and email address should appear only on the title page. Manuscripts may be submitted on CD disks, using word-processing programs supported by Windows. Photographs should be submitted in digital format.

All correspondence and manuscripts should be submitted to:

Managing Editors

*The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society*

P.O. Box 3676

Fort Smith, AR 72913-3676



**COAL MINER MEMORIAL AND EXHIBIT, GREENWOOD, ARKANSAS.** *In tribute to hard-working miners who fueled the economy of Sebastian County and western Arkansas, the South Sebastian Historical Society, Greenwood citizens, and businesses erected an impressive coal miners memorial on the southeastern side of the city square. Altus in Franklin County and Paris in Logan County have also placed such memorials in their town squares.*

(Photo courtesy of the Fort Smith Historical Society)

# Sebastian County Coal Towns

1900-1930

by Tony Stermetz

**A**t the turn of the twentieth century, coal mining was one of the foremost industries in Sebastian County, Arkansas. Production peaked 1900-1930 when coal provided a major energy source and served many purposes, but was especially important in powering railroads. In 1900, several coal companies in the county—Excelsior Coal Corporation, Central Coke and Coal, Mammoth Vein Coal Production Company—together mined 1,447,954 tons of coal.<sup>1</sup> While substantial coal deposits were mined in Franklin, Johnson, Logan, Pope, and Scott counties as well, Sebastian County accounted for fifty-five percent of the state's total output, which in its peak reached nearly three million tons a year.<sup>2</sup>

A thick vein of coal, discovered about 1880, part of which is known as the Hartshorne Seam runs under western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma.<sup>3</sup> This vein varies in thickness being two to seven feet thick.<sup>4</sup> The upper sec-



**COAL MINER MEMORIAL, ALTUS, ARKANSAS**

(Photo courtesy of the Fort Smith Historical Society)

tion, Hartshorne, is made up of the semi-bituminous coal, while the lower part is comprised of bituminous type coal. Semi-bituminous coal is hard and brittle with a high fuel ratio and burns relatively smoke-free. This is a more preferred coal than bituminous and brings a better price.

At first, the Hartshorne could be surfaced mined, also called strip mining, a simple operation that involved removing overlying rock and soil exposing the coal vein at which time the miners shoveled or extracted the exposed coal, placing the resource into wagons or rail cars. When the strip mining exhausted that readily available supply, underground mining and slope methods had to be put into place to reach coal further below the surface. The shafts were laid along coal veins following the natural downward slope of these veins. As tunneling supported by timbers advanced, steel tracks were laid allowing coal miners working in the shafts well below the surface to load coal into carts which were then pulled to the mine opening. Both semi-bituminous and bituminous coal came from these shaft mines.

All of this work required, of course, labor. Companies attracted workers, who were sometimes immigrants, with steady wages and housing. Thus came into being the coal communities that were scattered throughout Sebastian County, some of the most prominent being Hartford, Excelsior, Huntington, and Bonanza. Hartford, known as Gwynn until 1905, was the oldest and became a coal town in 1899 when the Choctaw Railroad Company bought a majority of land around the town, and the population soon included many new residents of Italian descent. Excelsior, five miles west of Greenwood, was not as densely populated but still got tagged with the title, “Coal capital of western Arkansas.” Huntington, about ten miles south of Greenwood, was incorporated in 1888 after strip mining started the year before on land acquired by the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Coal Company—part of the MKT railroad, which also owned and operated the coal company town of Bonanza. Fidelity, three miles from Greenwood, was home of the Liberty mine on land purchased for \$2,500,000 by the Cherokee Coal Company.<sup>5</sup>

Coal companies constructed towns and housing in them because the mines were located in rural areas, and companies had to offer basic services to attract the workers.<sup>6</sup> Company towns were typically compact because the coal companies wanted to minimize the amount of land developed so that more land could be used for coal production. With these company-owned towns, coal companies had the means with which to monopolized miners and their families.

Company stores, for example, had all the commodities needed. Often, miners were required to buy most, if not all of their groceries, clothes, and tools as the company store.



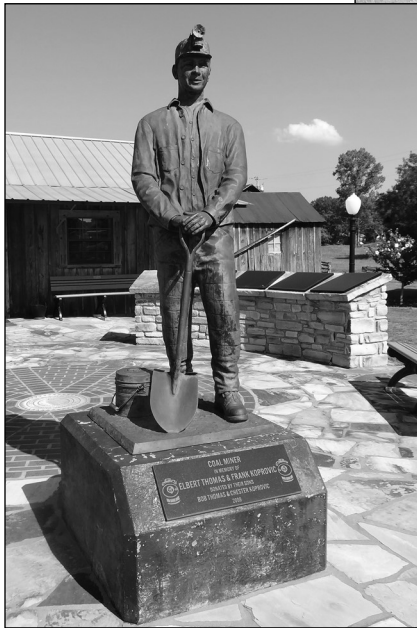
**COMMEMORATIVE MARKER** at the Coal Miner Exhibit in Greenwood, Arkansas

(Photo courtesy of the Fort Smith Historical Society)

Stores, typically, charged higher prices for goods and services than could be found in independent towns and stores. In a coal town without many amenities, the mercantile served as a gathering spot and as a pay center. On pay day, miners could be lined up for a block to collect their wages. Given the low wages, sometimes the store debt equaled the pay check. Many miners were in poverty and despair, giving meaning to a popular song, “Sixteen Tons,” recorded by Merle Travis in 1946:

You load sixteen tons, and what do you get?  
Another day older and deeper in debt. St. Peter  
don't you call me, cause I can't go. I owe my soul  
to the company store.<sup>7</sup>

Companies owned housing, too. The companies actually wanted miners to be satisfied enough or poor enough to stay on the job. Low worker turnover normally meant higher productivity and higher profits. Owners thought workers were less likely to quit or go on strike if the housing was adequate. Since workers had little choice of other homes, mine owners often deducted the rent straight from the paycheck. An important benefit in most coal towns was schools for the miners' children. But there was no



**(ABOVE)** Coal car exhibit at the Coal Miner Museum in Paris, Arkansas

**(LEFT)** Coal Miner Memorial at the Coal Miner Museum in Paris, Arkansas  
(Photos courtesy of the Fort Smith Historical Society)

doubt that the desired end on the part of ownership was control of the labor supply, and a main fear of miners was the eviction notice.<sup>8</sup>

The large coal companies were not just making money from the coal that they produced; they were actually diversified and invested in lumber, shipping, railroads, clothing, meat packaging, and commodities. This gave the company stores an advantage over “mom and pop” stores because they could afford to buy goods in large quantities, like the modern day Wal-Mart stores. Company stores in the coal towns stocked all commodities that the miners deemed necessary for daily living.

A significant way that companies restricted their miners was with “script,” redeemable only at the company store, and this tended to keep miner earnings within the company town.<sup>9</sup> In one coal community, Jenny Lind, companies employed medical doctors to treat miners. With a deduction of one dollar per month, the miner and his family had unlimited visits to the doctor’s office. The Colonial Hospital in Fort Smith with its employee plan developed around a small regular payment was another of these early experiments in universal (or affordable) health care in Sebastian County.<sup>10</sup>

Coal mining is a hazardous and dangerous occupation. The long-term effect called black lung (pneumoconiosis) is caused by inhalation of coal dust over a period of years. Sebastian County coal miners had their share of this debilitating disease in which breathing becomes increasingly

difficult. In their workplace, miners can and do die from suffocation, roof collapses, gases, and explosions. The deadliest of the explosions comes when enough fine coal dust in the air goes into spontaneous combustion. Managers try to neutralize the coal dust with rock dust in the mine, a legal requirement. Literally rock dust is scattered on the ceiling, walls, and floor of the mine until it makes up sixty-five percent of the air content.<sup>11</sup>

Coal mines are also at risk of gas explosions, which the miners call “damps.” Damps come in five varieties, the two most common of which are fire damp and black damp. The first of these comes when methane content is too high. Black damp is a mixture of carbon dioxide and nitrogen, which occurs when there are massive amounts of corrosion in the shafts which removes oxygen from the air.

Sebastian County is no stranger to gas explosions, the most horrendous of which occurred at 8:30 a.m. on February 24, 1928, and claimed thirteen lives in the tunnels of mines number 3 and number 18 near Jenny Lind.

With harsh working conditions and social oppression by employers, it is no wonder that worker organizing and coal miner unions were a common theme of discussion. Although coal miners had been attempting unions since 1865, it was not until the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) came into being in 1890 that some relief came to miners through these organizations. To better secure safety and well-being, Sebastian County coal miners, notably in Bonanza, welcomed labor union organizers.

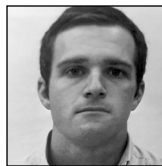
Once the UMWA had been established, strikes began as a way of bargaining with the ownership. Strikes in the coal towns became the underlying cause of the Bonanza Race War of 1904. Coal companies employed African Americans who sometimes did not join the union, and in the case of Bonanza, in the strike of 1899, the blacks continued to go to work, which resulted in bad feelings and intimidation of African Americans by strikers who turned their anger and violence toward them. In addition, the Kansas and Texas Coal Company brought in African Americans to work the mines. After the arrival of these non-striking replacement workers, the striking union miners demanded that they leave town or be removed by force. Although the UMWA denied any involvement with this decision and in fact pledged protection for African American miners, the matter did escalate into physical violence. On the night of April 30, 1904, in Bonanza, whites and African Americans fired more than 500 shots and wreaked havoc. No deaths were reported, but within a week, nearly the entire African American population vanished from Bonanza.<sup>12</sup>

Evidently turning into a “sundown town” did not bode well for the future. Soon afterward, Bonanza went into a decline, with mine closings in 1907 (even though that was a peak production year for Arkansas coal) and another in 1919. Bonanza businesses closed, and Central Coal and Coke Company dismantled the company homes and moved them to Oklahoma.<sup>13</sup>

Bonanza lost more of its population and infrastructure than any of the other South Sebastian County company towns, but they were all affected by drastic changes in the 1920s with the bringing in of large oil and gas fields in the southwestern United States. These alternate energy sources were advantageous for railroads and industrial steam-powered equipment. Most railroads converted to diesel engines, and industries switched to oil and gas burners. General manager of Excelsior Coal Corporation, Degan Boyd released a statement in the mid-1920s referring to oil and gas competition, “. . . as a result, over seventy-five percent of our steam business was taken from us.”<sup>14</sup> From that point on, coal production in Sebastian County declined on the average of 800,000 tons of coal each year.

For thirty years, from 1900-1930, however, coal production had flourished in Sebastian County and served as a vital fuel for transportation, industry, heating, and generating electricity. While the industry provided needed jobs, the work was severe. Coal miners encountered hardships from the nature of their work and from the overwhelming power of the coal companies. The owners’ monopolies over housing and commodities caused constant turmoil for miners and their families. Although the UMWA fought for and sometimes gained better compensation, an eight-hour work day, and job security, miners were still subjected to harsh conditions

throughout the twentieth century. Sebastian County coal miners were brave in submerging themselves below the earth’s surface day after day to earn a paycheck. An anonymous coal miner once said, “You’ve never seen dark ’til you’ve seen dark in a coal mine.” The coal miner was indeed a unique kind of person.



*Tony Stermetz holds a bachelor’s degree in History with a minor in Business Administration and is employed by ABF Logistics in Fort Smith, where he has worked since graduating from the University of*

*Arkansas-Fort Smith in 2013.*

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> H. G. Alvarez, *Fire in the Hole: The Story of Coal Mining in Sebastian County* (Greenwood: South Sebastian County Historical Society, 1983).
- <sup>2</sup> William V. Bush and Lonnie B. Galbreath, “Comprehensive Inventory of Surface and Underground Coal Mines in the Arkansas Valley Coal Field” (Information circular 20-L, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1978), 1 -13.
- <sup>3</sup> Jerry H. Moore and Lonnie C. Roach, *No Smoke, No Soot, No Clinkers* (Frank Boyd, 1974).
- <sup>4</sup> Arthur J. Collier, David White, and G.H. Girty, *The Arkansas Coal Field with Reports on the Paleontology* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 57.
- <sup>5</sup> Alvarez, *Fire in the Hole*, 107-08.
- <sup>6</sup> Price V. Fishback and Dieter Luszus, *The Quality of Services in Company Towns: Sanitation in Coal Towns* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- <sup>7</sup> Merle Travis is credited with writing and recording “Sixteen Tons” in 1946. A 1955 version by Tennessee Ernie Ford reached number one on the Billboard chart and was inducted into the Library of Congress’s National Recording Registry.
- <sup>8</sup> Margaret A. Mulrooney, *A Legacy of Coal: The Coal Company Towns of Southwestern Pennsylvania* (Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, 1991.)
- <sup>9</sup> [www.perryopolis/sjcompanystore.com](http://www.perryopolis/sjcompanystore.com), accessed November 12, 2012.
- <sup>10</sup> Amelia Martin, *Physicians and Medicine: Crawford and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas* (Sebastian County Medical Society, 1977).
- <sup>11</sup> M.J. Sapko, E.S. Weiss, K. L. Cashdollar, *Technology News 515: Float Coal Dust Explosion Hazards* (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/works/coversheet71.html>.
- <sup>12</sup> Guy Lancaster, *Racial Cleansing in Arkansas, 1883-1924* (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 65-68.
- <sup>13</sup> Guy Lancaster, “Bonanza, Sebastian County, Arkansas,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*,
- <sup>14</sup> Moore and Roach, 12-13.

# WHO KNEW?

*The Fort Smith Historical Society received the following email from Krystan Moser, Cultural Art Coordinator of the Cherokee Nation, Catoosa, Oklahoma.*

## Question:

Good morning, my name is Krystan Moser and I am a Cultural Art Coordinator for Cherokee Nation Businesses. I am researching the history of Lee Creek in western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma as it pertains to Cherokee history. In the course of my research I came across the title of a documentary produced by Eric Allen in the 1970s, "The Land of the Racing Water." It is my understanding that this documentary was financed by the Eastern Oklahoma-Western Arkansas Heritage Foundation in opposition to the Pine Mountain Dam Project. Does anyone know where I can find a copy of this documentary or if the group that financed it is still active? I have not been able to find any information on the group through Google. I would appreciate any information or guidance that you can provide. Thank you in advance for your time.

## Answer:

*There is a list of volunteers who have agreed to share their knowledge by also answering questions. I am going to send your query on to that list also.*

Krystan,

I had trouble finding information on Eastern Oklahoma-Western Arkansas Heritage Foundation also. In Arkansas, you have to file with the Attorney General's office if you plan to do any fundraising. Perhaps it is the same in Oklahoma and there are records in Oklahoma during the 1970s listing the officers of Eastern Oklahoma-Western Arkansas Heritage Foundation. The list of officers and other organizations the officers belonged to could possibly lead to finding other members and contributors to Eastern Oklahoma-Western Arkansas Heritage Foundation. There were very vocal opponents.

I included the M89-17 - HAROLD E. ALEXANDER COLLECTION site address and a list of some of the collection's holdings, see further down in my notes. The papers on the Lee Creek Project should be very helpful. Mr. Alexander was a well-known Arkansas conservationist.

Eric and Millie Allen were the owners of the *Big Ba-*

*sin Herald*. In the January 6, 1977, *Big Basin Herald* issue, we are told that Eric Allen was the author, director, writer and narrator of the film, "The Land of The Racing Water."

I did a little research on Eric Allen. I was very familiar with Mr. Allen's accomplishments in the newspaper field as well as a writer of numerous published novels and short stories. He was a noted historian in the Eastern Oklahoma, Western Arkansas, Fort Smith, his Westerns were fiction based on truth. He was as member and Past President of Western Writers of America (WWA). Eric Allen was said to look and sound like a cowboy also quoted as saying, "Back during the Depression, I left home with Steinbeck's Okies," he said laughingly, "and in the '30s, I was a ranch foreman for the Babbitt Brothers in Arizona. Heck, I once ran three ranches for fifty dollars per month." Eric Allen had also written the screenplay for the 1971 movie, "Smoke in the Wind."

I did not realize that Eric had written the documentary opposing the Lee Creek/Pine Mountain Dam Project until I read your query. He was in the newspaper business for years. He had been a reporter, photographer, writer, editor and Eric Allen purchased the Big Basin Herald newspaper in Muldrow, Oklahoma. He retired from the newspaper a little more than three years later. Eric continued writing; he also used a pen name when writing from a woman's point of view, (his mother's real name.) Erica Long Allen. Mr. Allen published thirty western novels in his career. He seemed so interested in life, had so much talent, Eric Allen did it all. Sorry I never met him.

❖ I looked up Eric Allen in the holdings of Muldrow Public Library. The Muldrow Library had several of his novels, it did not list his documentary, "The Land of The Racing Water."

❖ I checked Fort Smith Public Library, no copy of Eric Allen's documentary.

❖ I searched Eastern Oklahoma Library District. No listing of Allen's documentary.

❖ I searched the M89-17- Harold E. Alexander Collection, no listing of Eric's documentary.

❖ I searched the M89-17- Harold E. Alexander Collection, one 16 mil film- "Headwaters," not Eric's.

\*\*\*

January 13, 1977

*Big Basin Herald* from Muldrow, Oklahoma, Thurs-

day, January 13, 1977, p. 16

Documentary Film Termed Successful- The documentary film, "The Land of The Racing Water" premiered last Friday night at the Shamrock Church House with an estimated attendance of sixty persons. According to Eric Allen, who was the author, narrator and producer, it will probably be shown in Muldrow in the near future. The film was produced and partially financed by the Eastern Oklahoma-Western Arkansas Heritage Foundation and was made to help keep Lee's Creek a free flowing stream.

\*\*\*

**University of Central Arkansas, 201 Donaghey Ave., Conway, AR 72035 (501) 450-5000**

**M89-17 - HAROLD E. ALEXANDER COLLECTION**

**<http://uca.edu/archives/m89-17-harold-e-alexander-collection/>**

This collection contains the correspondence, manuscripts, and publications of Harold E. Alexander. Mr. Alexander was a well-known Arkansas conservationist who worked as a dedicated career employee at the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. His positions included chief biologist and wildlife researcher, recreation planner, environmental consultant, endangered species coordinator and technical advisor for various conservation organizations, as well as the state. These papers and other materials chronicle Mr. Alexander's contribution to the preservation of streams, wildlife, endangered species, and natural resources.

Arrangement: This collection has three series: (I) Personal Papers, (II) Career and Profession, and (III) Oversized Materials. Furthermore, as the bulk of this collection deals with Alexander's professional life, series II has Sub-series. They include (1) Administrative Materials (2) Outdoors Recreation Materials, (3) Endangered species, (4) Water Resources, (5) Wildlife Management, (6) Land Management, and (7) Organizations, Associations, & State Agencies

**Series II – Career and Profession**

**Sub-series IV – Water Resources**

Box 3

File 31- "The Lee Creek Debate - - A Probably Biased Viewpoint"

File 32- "Comments and Criticisms of the Pine Mountain Reservoir, Proposed for Construction on Lee Creek, Western Arkansas, 1976"

File 33- "Review of Application from the City of Fort Smith, AR," Submitted by Arkansas Wildlife Federation, 1983

File 34 - Map of Lee Creek Project

File 35- "Fisherman Use Survey of Lee Creek in Crawford County, Arkansas, and Sequoyah County, Oklahoma, and Fish Population Samples of Lee Creek in Crawford County," 1976

File 36- Report on Lee Creek Project by Fish and Wildlife Services, 1976

File 37- "Pine Mountain Lake Field Reconnaissance, 1977"

File 38- "Fact Sheet Pine Mountain Dam and Lake Project," 1977

File 39- "The Effects of Pine Mountain Dam on Lee Creek and its Fishery," 1979

File 40- "A Report of the Fishes of Lee Creek from Natural Dam, AR to OK-AR State Line," 1979

File 41- "Draft Environmental Statement, Pine Mountain Lake, Lee Creek Arkansas," 1979

File 42- "Lee Creek Issue: A Chronology, 1979-1987"

File 43- "Public Hearing Statement of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Dept of the Interior," 1985

File 44- "Lee Creek Project: Hydroelectric Application, 1985"

File 45- "Objection of the City of Fort Smith, Arkansas, to the Motion to Intervene and Request for Hearing of Oklahoma Resources Board," 1985

File 46- "Position Statement: Proposed Dam on Lee Creek," 1985

File 47- "Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Office of Hydropower Licensing, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Lee Creek Water Power Project FERC No. 5251 -- Arkansas/Oklahoma, 1986"

File 48- "Notes, Lee's Creek Discussion/Strategies," 1986

File 49- "Lee Creek: Resolution Declaring Actions and Assurances of the City of Ft. Smith regarding construction of Lower Creek Water Supply Reservoir, 1986"

File 50- "Reviews of EIS Pertaining to the Proposed Lee Creek Small Hydropower Facility, FERC 5251, Arkansas/Oklahoma, Rough and Final Drafts, 1986"

End of Box 3

**Series II – Career and Profession**

**Sub-series IV – Water Resources**

Box 4

File 1 – "Lee Creek Project Not Feasible," National Wildlife Federation, 1986

File 2 – "Proposal to Add Upper Lee Creek As a Scenic River and Lower Lee Creek as a Pastoral River to the Registry of Arkansas Natural and Scenic Rivers, 1986"

File 3 – "Final EIS for the Lee Creek Project FERC No 5251, 1987"

File 4 – "Lee Creek: Motion for Stay, 1987"

File 5 – "Lee Creek, Proposed Conditions of a FERC License, 1987"

File 6 – Water Quality Certification for the Lee Creek Project, 1987

File 7 – "Lee Creek Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Office of Hydropower Licensing, 1987"

File 8 – "Pine Mountain Lake, Lee Creek Arkansas, Design Memorandum No.1 General Single Phase Table of Contents"

File 9 – City of Ft. Smith's Application for Initial License for the Lee Creek Water Power Project, 1983

File 10- Lee Creek Newspaper Clippings, 1977-1985

File 11- Lee Creek Newspaper Clippings, 1986-1988

## **Series II – Career and Profession**

### **Sub-series IV – Water Resources**

Box 13

File 23- Articles on Lee Creek and Arkansas Scenic Rivers Commission in American Rivers, June 1985

**University of Central Arkansas- 201 Donaghey Ave., Conway, AR 72035 (501) 450-5000**

Article by Becky and J. P. Chancey, *The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society*, vol. 26, no. 1 (April 2002).

November 2001, Property Owners Fight Proposed Dam Project, Natural Dam.

Josef Hobson and wife Sharon own land where the Pine Mountain Dam project on Lee Creek has been proposed. The River Valley Water District has proposed reviving a plan to construct a 60 million gallon per day reservoir on the upper section of Lee Creek.

Hobson said, "No amount of money could pay for the property that he isn't sure what the land appraises for, but its value cannot be determined by money."

The lawyer said he is not against water projects. He just doesn't want it in his front yard, or for that matter in his kitchen.

(Abstracted from *Fort Smith Times Record*, and the *City of Fort Smith Citizen Newsletter*)

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Pine Mountain Dam Project gathers more opposition  
*The City Wire* 06/02/2009

Add the Corp Reform Network to the list of organizations ready to oppose the construction of a Pine Mountain Dam on Lee Creek in northern Crawford County.

The River Valley Regional Water District and the US Army Corps of Engineers on May 8 announced an agreement to study a future long-term water supply source in western Arkansas.

The Army was appropriated \$478,000 to conduct the study.

The RVRWD was formed in June 2000 for the purpose of building a long-term water supply for western

Arkansas. While initial engineering studies have identified Lee Creek (Pine Mountain Dam) as a suitable location, NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) requires a thorough analysis of all "reasonable alternatives," the RVRWD noted in its May 8 release.

Construction of such a dam faces two major obstacles. The upper portion of Lee Creek that would be controlled is designated an Extraordinary Resource Waters, which prevents mining, construction, dams and other activities that alter the quality or nature of the water. Second, Oklahoma officials- portions of the Lee Creek watershed are in Oklahoma- are on record opposing construction of a dam on Lee Creek.

## **READY TO FIGHT**

George Sorvalis, with the Washington, D.C.-based Corps Reform Network (CRN), recently told *The City Wire* that the group (affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation) will support local and Arkansas organizations that oppose a Pine Mountain Dam. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, The Nature Conservancy, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Arkansas Heritage Commission and the Sierra Club are on record opposing Pine Mountain. Sorvalis also said "the premise of the (study) is flawed," with the Corps and the RVRWD looking to justify building Pine Mountain Dam instead of objectively seeking to research structural and "non-structural" alternatives in the pursuit of securing a long-term water supply.

"Looking at this, the question seems to be 'How are we going to build this dam?' But that's not the question that should be asked?" Sorvalis said.

Indeed, a May 7, 2009, memo from Brigadier General Kendall Cox, U.S. Army Engineer Division Southwestern based in Dallas, to the Corps commander in Little Rock provides "Review Plan Approval for Pine Mountain Lake, Van Buren County, Arkansas, General Evaluation Report." (Obviously a general mistake on the county.)

And an Aug. 11, 2008 memo from Steven Stockton, director of civil works for the U.S. Army Corps office in Washington, appears to authorize studies for "Pine Mountain Dam on Lee Creek, Arkansas & Oklahoma."

Sorvalis said this approach is "symptomatic of the Corps of Engineers," in which they often seek to justify projects instead of conducting broad and objective research to address water supply issues. Sorvalis also noted that the lack of funding for the Pine Mountain research in President Barack Obama's budget indicates that the executive branch of the government does not see the dam as a funding priority. (Funding for the study was appropriated by Congress.)

## OPEN PROCESS

The Corps rejects Sorvalis' claims, saying its role is to create a forum in which all groups and citizens — including the CRN — can participate “equally in trying to develop the right solution,” P.J. Spaul, a Corps spokesman said in a note to The City Wire.

Spaul said the Corps and RVRWD will hold public and agency “scoping meetings” this fall to begin the process of gathering public input.

“We are neither proponents nor opponents of Pine Mountain Dam. We are engaged in studies to determine the best long-term water supply solution for River Valley Water District from both environmental and economic standpoints,” Spaul said.

Mark Yardley, project manager for RVRWD, was more spirited in his response to the CRN allegations.

“I would call the CRN activists elitists from Washington, D.C. but they obviously lack basic knowledge of how Corps-led water-supply projects are funded in the federal budget,” Yardley noted in an e-mail response. “The truth is that it has been a long-standing policy of the Corps of Engineers (under Presidents Bush and Obama) not to fund water-supply only projects. It wouldn't matter if everyone in the River Valley universally agreed that we needed water next year and that we should take it from the Arkansas River. Funding to study it or build such a project would not be included for the Corps in the president's budget.”

## HEADED FOR COURT?

Although neither aforementioned memos from the Army Corps specifically outline measures to study other water-supply alternatives, Yardley and Spaul say such alternatives are critical components of the process.

“All of the assumptions, analysis and conclusions that form the basis of the Environmental Impact Statement are required by law to go through independent external peer review,” Yardley said in continuing his response to the CRN comments. “The National Environmental Policy Act requires that all reasonable options (structural and non-structural) be given substantial evaluation and consideration. If CRN or anyone else believes that the study is not being conducted in strict compliance with the law, then they should immediately contact the Inspector General for the Corps of Engineers or the U.S. Attorney General.”

Yardley also noted: “It is unfortunate that this organization is resorting to deceit and maligning character instead of participating in a constructive and civil debate.”

There will be a debate, but even the Army Corps acknowledges such debate may not be altogether civil. “Project risks are assumed to be high since there is a large amount of public controversy in Arkansas and Ok-

lahoma,” Brig. Gen. Cox noted in his May 7 memo. “In Arkansas the project must meet stringent standards set forth in Regulation 2.310 before it would be approved by the state Pollution Control and Ecology Commission. Oklahoma maintains that no dam is permissible in the State of Arkansas on Lee Creek regardless of its design features. The River Valley Regional Water District disputes this claim. Regardless, this project is highly controversial and will likely end up in court.”

\*\*\*

## Water district suspends effort to build Pine Mountain Dam

The City Wire, 08/31/2010

The push to build Pine Mountain Dam has ended. Board members of the River Valley Regional Water District voted Monday (Aug. 30) to suspend efforts to identify a long-term water supply for the district that were focused on building Pine Mountain Dam on Lee Creek in northern Crawford County.

“Given that current conditions indicate an adequate firm yield for our region for the foreseeable future, coupled with the recent trend of slower growth and less than stellar economic conditions, the board felt that the best course of action was to suspend the study in the absence of data that clearly demonstrates a pressing need,” noted a statement from the District. The RVRWD was formed in June 2000 for the purpose of building a long-term water supply for western Arkansas.

The RVRWD faced a significant environmental hurdle with the Extraordinary Water Resource designation placed on Lee Creek. According to the ERW regulation, lifting the designation requires two triggers: “(1) the sole purpose for the funding and construction of the reservoir is to provide a domestic water supply; and (2) there are no feasible alternatives to constructing a reservoir in order to meet the domestic water needs of the citizens of the State of Arkansas.”

More than 35 bodies of water in Arkansas are named Extraordinary Resource Waters, which prevents mining, construction, dams and other activities that would alter the quality or nature of the water. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, The Nature Conservancy, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Arkansas Heritage Commission and the Sierra Club were on record opposing Pine Mountain.

Mark Yardley, project manager for RVRWD, said in October 2009 that the ERW tag was not a deal killer and the public hearings conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers were scheduled for later in that month.

RVRWD officials and the Corps agreed in May 2009 to pursue the Pine Mountain Dam Study. The study

was appropriated \$1.709 million in federal funds as of April 2009. Between federal fiscal years 2010 and 2014, the Pine Mountain Dam study was scheduled to receive \$3.44 million.

The money was to fund a long process. A draft report and more public comment was scheduled for the summer of 2013, with a final report and public comment scheduled for summer 2014. All of the draft and final reports and public comments were to be encapsulated in a final Final Report in 2017. According to the statement issued Tuesday (Aug. 31), documentation could not be found to support previous assertions that a Pine Mountain Dam would impound enough water to create a yield of 21 million gallons per day (mgd). Yardley explained in the statement: "As we prepared to provide the Corps of Engineers with documentation concerning this matter, neither we nor the Corps were able to locate the detailed analysis that stated Frog Bayou had a firm yield of 21 mgd.

In the absence of this data, the water district began to query experts around the country to determine the proper method for determining firm yield of a basin. Using these techniques, our engineering firm was unable to replicate anything close to 21 mgd. Our only assumption is that either the previous study was flawed or it utilized data that predates the 60 years of rainfall data on record for our region."

By way of comparison, the expanded Lake Fort Smith contains almost 28 billion gallons when full and can generate up to 35 million gallons of water a day.

The RVRWD said it would remain active to help cities in Crawford County "work together to facilitate small water distribution projects as they may arise." The board also eliminated a 50-cent per meter assessment used to pay for the long-term water supply study.

\*\*\*

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer my query! I look forward to looking through the information that you all sent.

Kristen Moser

\*\*\*

My Pleasure

\*\*\*



Mary Jeanne Black, Inquiry Coordinator and Researcher, Fort Smith Historical Society

## BOOK REVIEWS

Anita Paddock, *Blind Rage*. Fayetteville, Arkansas: Pen-L Press, 2015, Pp. 168.

History is not always writ large. Not every event is a D-Day, or Bull Run, or even a national election. History is more often made of the individual events of everyday people, in everyday lives, and the occasional unusual and dramatic event that happens to them. What was the spark of World War I but a couple out to ride in a provincial parade?

And so it is that the brutal murder of the matriarch of an influential small town family became its own bit of history. The crime leads to a long (if perhaps incomplete) police investigation and eventual prison for the confessed killer. Between the crime and confession, the town is abuzz with conjecture and consternation. Did the alcoholic and flamboyantly gay son do it, or one of his unsavory friends? Is there some unknown killer on the loose? Are other families of the town in danger?

The small town, in this case, is Van Buren, Arkansas, a historic town just across the Arkansas River from Fort Smith, and the victim, found brutally murdered in the den of her home was Ruie Ann Park. She had been married to Hugh Park, who for fifty years was owner and publisher of the local *Press Argus* newspaper. The flamboyant son, Sam Hugh Park, a lawyer and former U.S. prosecuting attorney, was also well known in the community. Ruie Ann, besides being the former wife of the newspaper publisher, was a school teacher in town, which made her automatically well known in her own right, as well as a local historian, founder of the garden club, and a half dozen other claims of self-importance. Her death, then, in the spring of 1981, was big news.

It is suddenly news again. Author Anita Paddock, now living in Fort Smith but a proudly self-proclaimed "Crawford County girl" who was born in Mulberry and grew up in Van Buren, remembers the case well — she was a student when Ruie Ann Park was teaching — and long wanted to write about it. Indeed, she did write about it, years ago, but found the project lacking and shelved the unpublished manuscript. It was not until after her retirement (as a branch library manager) that she had the time and renewed enthusiasm to revisit the project. This time she delved deeper into the research, seeking out surviving witnesses and participants, digging up old police reports, old transcripts, and old photographs, doing the foot work she had not done before.

As a result, *Blind Rage* remains true to the facts of the

story, while relying upon Paddock's substantial skill as a writer to create believable dialog and give life to the characters. From the beginning moments of the investigation, she gives the sheriff and police chief distinct personalities, and Sam Hugh and other characters too, and allows them to develop. Sam Hugh's sister, Linda, adopted from a Kansas City orphanage at a young age and joining the family almost as a hired playmate for him, plays an increasingly important role, and we hear more from her as we go. Like any good narrative, the people inhabiting the story are, in the end, more important than the overall arc. The topic of the book is the murder, but the story is the survivors.

Paddock builds the story through the eyes of these participants, and leaves out some of the descriptive detail she could have perhaps added, and the result is fairly short, compact story. Some readers, especially those with an interest in history, might wish for more about the Van Buren of the time, a more complete setting of the events, but a more careful reading shows that such details are indeed present, just strategically placed, not interrupting the story.

Many local readers already know the ending, and it is to Paddock's credit that she keeps the story interesting even for those who know whodunit. As she has Sheriff Trellon Ball say midway through the story, it is not only a murder case, but a case that centered on a family with a whole lot of secrets.

*Blind Rage* is an easy read, short and to the point. It is a book for fans of the true crime genre, but even more so for those who live close, and who may remember the events as they happened.

— Reviewed by Doug Kelley, author of *The Captain's Wife*.

\*\*\*

**Nancy E. Carver, *Making Tracks: The Untold Story of Horse Racing in St. Louis, 1767-1905*. Pp. 354. Preface, three parts, epilogue, indexed, photographs. \$29.95.**

Nancy Carver, St. Louis resident and author, gave a talk on this book at the Fort Smith Public Library in July 2015. She was invited through a partnership of the Friends of the Library and Fort Smith Historical Society and signed books afterward. Her talk included photographs of segments of the book, including one of Andrew "Cap" Tilles, a former Fort Smith resident and Ms. Carver's great grandfather. She has written on Cap previously in *Talk with Tilles* (2003) which she describes as a history of her family and of Fort Smith.

In *Making Tracks*, Carver, former archivist with the National Archives in St. Louis, shows remarkable development as a writer and historian. Beginning with an interest in her family's role in establishing and operating race tracks in the St. Louis area, Carver's research took her far back into the Spanish and French colonial period. She incorporates events of the Louisiana Purchase and the coming of American settlers across the Mississippi River, many of them Virginians and Kentuckians who brought their love of

racing. Historical figures abound in Carver's account, too, from Meriwether Lewis to Lincoln Steffens.

In St. Louis, Cap Tilles formed a partnership with Louis Cella and Sam Adler to build or operate a number of race tracks. CAT, as this union of "unlikely partners" was called by Carver, came to control by the start of the twentieth century most of the horse racing in St. Louis. In addition to owning race tracks, CAT leased Sportsman's Park on Grand Avenue, which also housed the St. Louis Browns professional baseball team and later the Cardinals. The CAT syndicate held controlling interests in race tracks over the country, including Fair Grounds in New Orleans and Oaklawn in Hot Springs, a track still owned by a descendant of Cella, and "is the only family-owned track in the country" (p. 179).

Carver's *Making Tracks* stands as an academic history, well documented and showing the impact of the topic on U.S. culture and politics. A significant point she makes with her research is how close Missouri came to being what Kentucky is to racing. Only blue morals of the Victorian age prevented that from happening and, as she says, the coming to St. Louis (the fourth largest city in the U. S. at the time) of a horse racing venue on the scale of Churchill Downs or Keeneland Race Track. She points out that today the horse racing industry which creates jobs for 400,000 people and generates \$39 billion for the economy is imperiled not by Victorian morals, but by competition from casinos.

Nancy Carver includes details about Fort Smith during and just after the Civil War, a time when Louis Tilles, an army sutler, followed the Union Army here, stayed in town and found business opportunities in retail supply after the war. Louis' wife Rosalie and their five children may have remained in Fort Smith but for her untimely death in 1872. Cap Tilles moved to St. Louis in 1886 where he continued his business acumen and his generosity to the communities in which he lived. For example, there are Tilles Parks in Fort Smith, in St. Louis, and in St. Louis County. A Rosalie Tilles Home for Orphans stood in St. Louis and in this city on North 19th Street (see Carole Barger, "The Plight of Civil War Orphans and the founding of the Rosalie Tilles Home," *Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society* 37, 2, September 2013: 7 -12).

Andrew "Cap" Tilles was an energetic and far-sighted individual whose compassion and love of community insured that many other people had opportunities. One only needs to visit Fort Smith's Tilles Park between Grand Avenue and Kinkaid to see its remarkable multi-cultured use today. Tennis players, basketballers on the outdoor courts, Frisbee golfers, footballers, runners, and walking exercisers use the oak tree shaded grounds for recreation and to enhance their daily lives. Thank you to the Tilles family and to Nancy Carver, an excellent writer and historian, for offering us a splendid view of the past that keeps St. Louis and Fort Smith historically connected. I highly recommend this book to a wide range of readers.

— Billy D. Higgins

# 1915 NEWSPAPERS

## SOUTHWEST TIMES RECORD

July-December 1915

By Crystal Jenkins

Abstracted from microfilm  
at the Fort Smith Public Library



Editor's note: Most spelling, punctuation  
and grammar appear as printed  
in the *Southwest Times Record*.

July 6, 1915

### Big Ditch Pays Off

Your Uncle Sam'l has collected more than 4,000,000 in tolls for the use of the Panama canal since it was opened to the commerce in May last year. The figures for April last show that the canal paid for its maintenance and operation and turned over a profit of \$84, 112 for that month. The advance estimate of the May receipts indicates that operating deficit now existing will be entirely wiped out. If the big ditch is turning over a profit now what will she do when the world's commerce gets to moving across the seas again as it did before Europe staged her big conflict?

\*\*\*

July 20, 1915

### Police Dog a Peacemaker

Bob the police dog is rapidly accumulating a record as a peace officer of which any of 'the finest might be proud.' The patrolmen were might Monday of a stunt which Bob had pulled off in the role of peacemaker. Bob was on the beat with Patrolman Howard Saturday night and the dog discovered that the alley opening off the beat

was a fine cool place in which to take a dog siesta. It was dark in there and two men who went into the alley to settle a personal difficulty a la pugilist failed to see the dog. They had scarcely begun the first round when the officer heard Bob making no end of the row when the officer got in he found that Bob had not only separated the men but had both of them "treed." They put up bonds.

\*\*\*

July 22, 1915

### Short Story Writer

In the August number of *The Story Book*, published by the Short Story publishing company of Chicago, there appears a story contributed by Mrs. Jassamine Fishback of this city. The short story art is conceded to be the most difficult of literacy creation. The writer of the "The Laverder Flower" exhibited unusual such talent.

\*\*\*

August 21, 1915

### Sebastian Corn in Prize Exhibit

Corn from Sebastian county figured prominently in the exhibit at the Panama-Pacific exposition which has been declared first place winner, according to messages received Friday from San Francisco. The prize winning exhibit was selected by W.J. Jernigan, state agent from boys' and girls' club work, and come principally from Sabastian and Washington counties.

The exhibit was in competition with exhibits from every section of the United States, and the prize winning is a great encouragement to the profitable farming advocates of this section.

\*\*\*

August 21, 1915

### Let Travelers Vote

Dr. C. H. Brought in a recent speech at Fayetteville before a banquet of the United Travelers that he would favor a bill permitting traveling men to vote for state offic-

ers anywhere in the state on presentation of the poll tax receipt.

\*\*\*

## September 18, 1915

### Rise River due Today

River telegraphic reports Friday to the local Weather bureau indicated that the river at this point is due for a considerable rise today and Sunday. From nearly every up-river station reports came of sharp rises in the Arkansas river and its tributaries.

Oswego, Kansas reported a stage of 20 feet with rise of 6 feet, Wyandotte of 24 with rise of 7 feet, Fort Gibson 20.5 with rise of 3 feet and Tulsa rise 6 feet. The river at this point stood at 12 feet Friday night with a rise of over a foot in the preceding 24 hours.

The weather map indicated fair and cooler weather due for the first of the week.

\*\*\*

## September 19, 1915

### Grinding Ark. Grain into Ft. Smith Flour

For the first time in many years, wheat and corn grown in western Arkansas is being ground in Fort Smith into flour and meal to feed people in the Fort Smith trade field. Just as a hint of this movement, there was wheat brought to the Fort Smith roller mills Saturday by wagon from Alma, Rudy, Muldrow, Marble City, and Sallisaw, and much grain from nearer points. The price was from 50 cents to \$1 per bushel.

The Fort Smith roller mills are now turning out the best grades of flour, made from west Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma grown wheat. The mills are not only paying the growers cash for their wheat and corn but are supplying them with four and meal from grains produced on their own farms.

On Saturday the roller mills made another record in ginning the first bale of cotton of the season. It weighed 538 pounds and was grown by John Price near Spiro.

\*\*\*

## September 21, 1915

### Tomatoes Grow in Clusters

R. J. McCoy, 600 North Second street, brought to the Southwestern American Monday samples of tomatoes of unusual growth. Each tomatoes is of the size of a small apple and as round as a billiard ball; and of a rich yellow

with solid meat. They grow, Mr. McCoy states, on running vines ten to twelve feet long and set in clusters like grapes. The sample was less than an eight inch stem but with minor branches carried eight tomatoes.

\*\*\*

## October 12, 1915

### Saw Uncle Sam's Men Fly

James Biggerstaff, southwest representative of the Keystone Type Foundry, was a Fort Smith visitor Monday, coming here from Fort Sill. Mr. Biggerstaff was enthusiastic over a visit he made to Uncle Sam's aviation field at Fort Sill. He says there were sixty air men at the fort and they have seven aeroplanes in which the corps is becoming expert in navigating the air. At the time of his visit there were three of the planes in the air, two of which he saw loop the loop as if it were an every-day commonplace occurrence.

\*\*\*

## October 15, 1915

The scientists claim that another comet is "on its way" and that it will soon be visible to the naked eyes. As soon as it gets near enough to the earth to know what it is going on down here, however, it will likely turn its tail and run.

\*\*\*

## October 16, 1915

### Local Boy is with Marines Now in Haiti

A local boy, Harold R. Wood, is with the fighting United States Marines who are disarming the rebellious Cacos in the region of Petitriviere Delartibonite, Hayti. The Cacos killed two and wounded ten of the brave "Sea-Soldiers" in action near that place recently, but young Wood appears luckily to have escaped unharmed.

Wood, who was formally a well-known newspaper man of this city, is a fighting unit of that highly-efficient military arm of government service-the United States Marine Corps - which is always first landed when trouble threatened and which always bears the brunt of the initial fighting. Marines may have brushes in some far-off place with hostile natives, but under international law, a declaration of war does not necessarily result. The matchless marines go everywhere in performance of duty-to all parts of the world on battleships or expeditionary transports, and no history of the United States will be complete until the full story of these pioneers of civilization is told.

Private Wood enlisted in the United States Marine Corps at Chicago, Ill., on March 30, last, and already has had many interesting and exciting experiences while serving with the "oldest branch of the service."

\*\*\*

## **October 30, 1915**

### **Killed in War.**

Word has been received here from Bluejacket, Okla., stating that E. C. Hunt, a merchant of that city who formerly resided on North Tenth street in this city, has received word from England telling of the death of his brother, Leo, who was killed last September while fighting in the Dardanelles campaign on the Gallipoli peninsula in the English army against the Turks. Hunt was shot in the face while the Turkish troops were charging a British trench in which Hunt was fighting. Letters to his widow and children from his commander highly commend Hunt for bravery. The Hunt brothers are native Englishmen.

\*\*\*

## **November 5, 1915**

### **Zinc Money**

Several of the warring nations have begun issuing zinc money, instead of making it out silver. They have decided that the zinc will answer every purpose of silver and cost much less, and issuing the baser metal instead.

The world is going to learn a great deal about "money" through the war. Gold isn't going to be dethroned, and it is still going to be used as a standard for many years to come. But the real nature of "money" is going to be understood. It is going to be impressed upon the world as never before that money is only a medium of exchanged, and that it really makes no difference whether it is made out of paper, silver or zinc, as long as it is accepted as a medium of exchange.

\*\*\*

## **November 10, 1915**

### **New "Quality Food Shop"**

H. C. Loeb, a former resident of Fort Smith, will on Thursday open a quality food shop at 8 North 9th street where he will serve tamales, chili, barbecued meats, etc. He has employed a Mexican cook for producing the genuine Mexican quality foods. He announced that he will also cater to those who desire to take home the principal part of

their meals already to serve.

\*\*\*

## **December 8, 1915**

### **Seventy-Six Year Old Farm and Deed of Historic Value**

It may be a matter of surprise to many to learn that there are farms in the Fort Smith district to which the government first gave title four years before the government first gave the title to northern Illinois lands, including the city of Chicago. The first government land sale in that city was in 1843. On Tuesday there was filed in the office of the circuit court in this city a certified copy of the government patent for a quarter of land which lies on both sides of the Greenwood road half a mile beyond the Burke brick plant.

The government patent for that land was issued September 20, 1839, the title running to John W., Theodore C., and Washington Wilson and Alfred Shores. The technical description is northeast quarter 27-8-32. The original patent shows that the practice of officials in throwing soft snape to relatives was not unknown even in that sixty-fourth year of the nation's history, for the patent was signed by Martin Van Buren, president by Martin Van Buren, Jr., secretary. The patent was countersigned by H. M. Garland, recorder, general land office.

The copy of the patent is itself an interesting document. Instead of being written, typewritten, or printed copy it is a photograph of the original record of the patent on file in the government land office at Washington. The background is photograph brown and the writing and printing are white. The original writing is like copper plate in its perfection and form.

\*\*\*

## **December 16, 1915**

### **White Oak Supply Is Very Scarce**

The Arkansas Tight Barrel, Stave and Heading Manufacturers Association held a business meeting in this city afternoon to discuss the growing scarcity of the white oak timbers for staves and heading, and the inroads white oak consumers are making the stave dealers. Members of the association from Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas submitted reports at today's meeting showing that little movement in timber is expected this winter on the account of weather conditions, the lowlands being already flooded delaying production: The association meets again next month.

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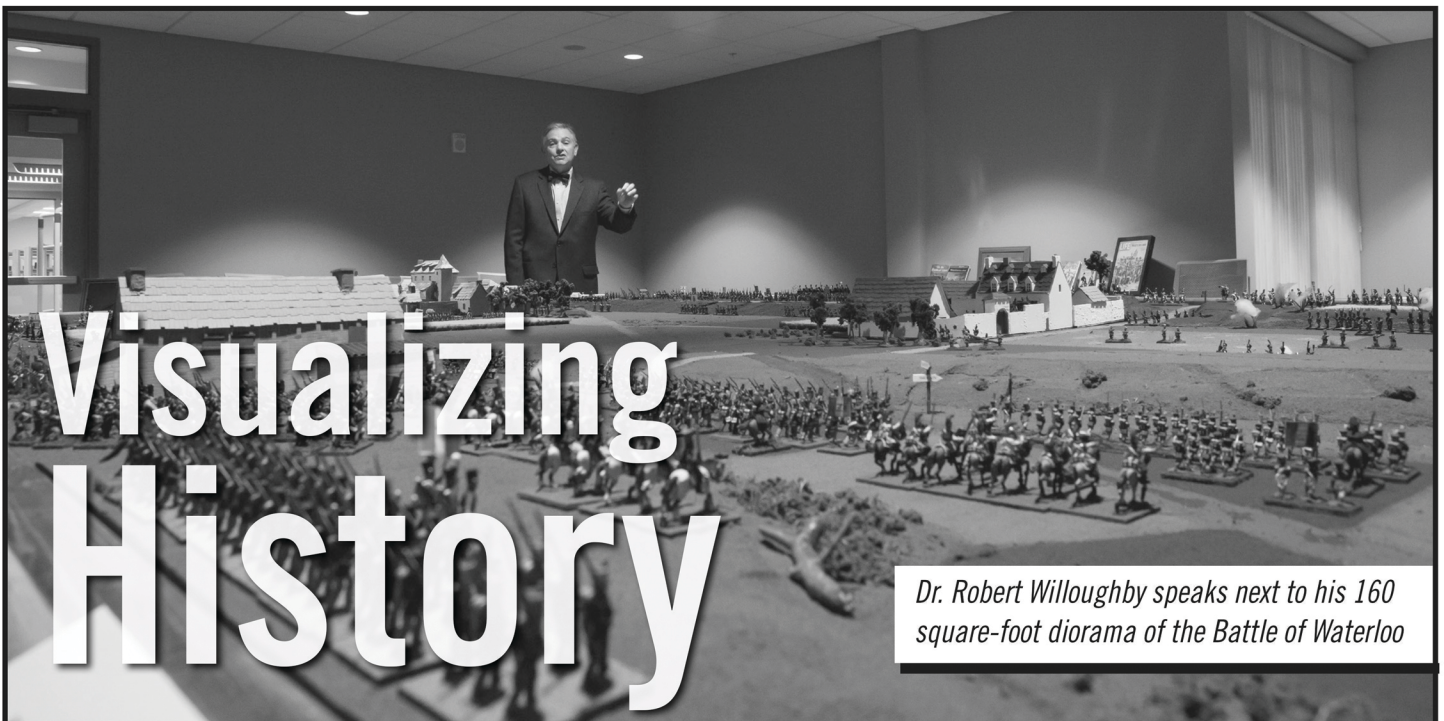
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*Dr. Robert Willoughby speaks next to his 160 square-foot diorama of the Battle of Waterloo*

Dr. Robert Willoughby, professor of history at the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith, has made the Battle of Waterloo a topic of lifelong study. Willoughby created a 160 square-foot diorama of the battlefield where the Duke of Wellington defeated Napoleon in June 1815 following the French emperor's return to power. The display will feature Willoughby's own collection of hand-painted miniatures representing the British, French and Prussian forces. Willoughby has studied the pivotal battle for more than 40 years after becoming interested in the battle as an undergraduate student.

"Every historian has a pet project that they work on over time, and I've been a student of the Battle of Waterloo really all my adult life," Willoughby said. "Historically, it changed the course of European history and created a political atmosphere that helped cause World War I and ultimately World War II."

"But it also had two of the greatest generals of the 19th century – the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon – facing off against each other," Willoughby continued. "It's the equivalent of having the world's two greatest chess masters on the stage at the same time. And it's fascinating to see the outcome."

Although the diorama, which took Willoughby a year and a half to construct, is the culmination of a lifelong fascination with the battle, the UAFS professor hopes to instill that same passion to students who view the exhibit.

"One of my prime motivations is students who are interested in seeing this type of visual history, which is pretty unusual," he said. "They'll be able to look at the battlefield from all angles, and also see some artwork from the battle. There will also be placards describing the landscape and the commanders of the battlefield. So it will be a true learning experience."

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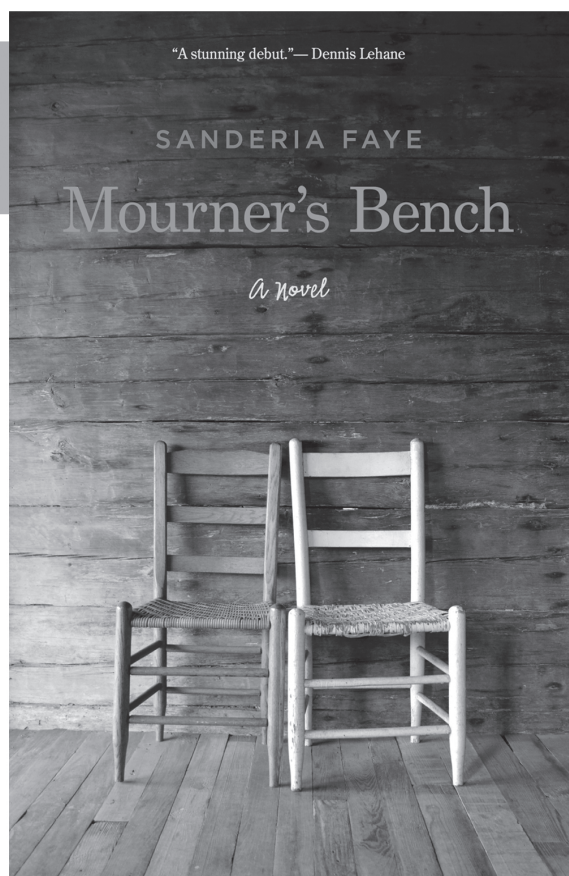
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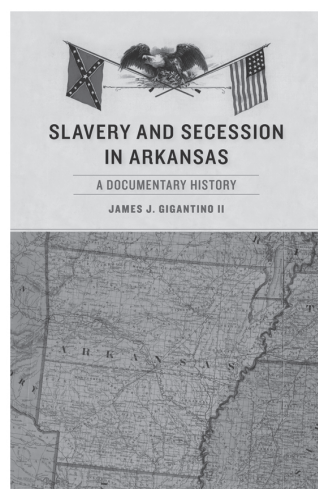
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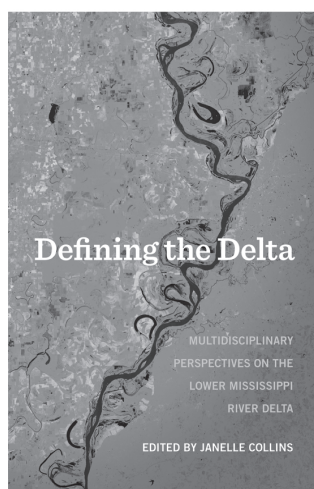


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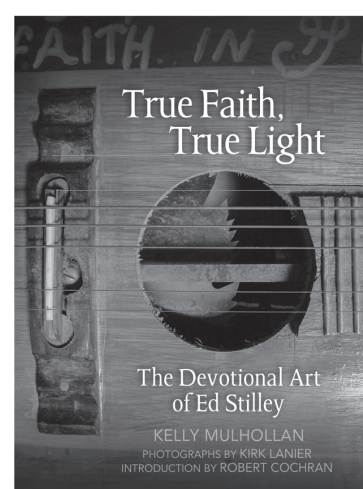


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