

Days Of Old Sumner County

Newsletter No. 16, October 2016
Sumner County Historical Society

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Franklin Cemetery Now Restored

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

On Oct. 23 at 2 p.m., the Gen. Jethro Sumner Chapter of the DAR will hold a grave marking ceremony at the grave of Revolutionary War Corporal James Franklin. Born in 1755 in Maryland, he came to Sumner Co. in 1779 or '80. James Franklin, along with 69 other families, stayed in Middle Tennessee during the harsh times of 1780-1783, defending the forts. They are known in Tennessee history as the "Immortal Seventy" and received 640-acre land grants from North Carolina .

Franklin and his wife, Mary, had 11 children and were prosperous. Their home place still exists on Station Camp Creek Road. It was renovated several years ago, and is now the home of William Golden of the Oak Ridge Boys. The cemetery is located on property nearby.

In addition to the DAR, the Anthony Bledsoe Chapter of the SAR and other volunteers assisted with the cemetery clean-up. Sandra Long, DAR Chapter regent, reported that weeds and brush were removed, a fence was donated and placed around the site, the broken grave box was restored by an archaeologist and the field stone that marked Mary Franklin's grave was put in place. Long noted that a number of SCHS members assisted financially in restoring the cemetery. **See pictures on page 9.**



Cumberland Telephone & Telegraph Co. pictured in 1904. (Ken Thomson photo)

Telephones Come Here in 1883

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

In 1883, just seven years after Alexander Graham Bell amazed the world by demonstrating his telephone at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, Sumner Countians got their first phones. Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Co. put up lines and opened a switchboard in Gallatin. Shortly after that, they provided telephone service to Hendersonville Turnpike (now Gallatin Road).

After Boston, Nashville was first city in America to foresee the economic possibilities of the telephone, according to Ken Thomson, president of the Sumner County Historical Society. In May 1877, the first official telephone conversation in Tennessee took place, and in the fall of that year the first long distance telephone message in this part of the country took place between Nashville and Bowling Green, Ky. "This historical event was witnessed by many of Nashville's foremost citizens," he said. "The next year, 1878, a long distance line 205 miles long was completed between Nashville and Louisville...One feature of the first message was the singing of a song, "In the Sweet By and By."

By 1890, there were 1,550 telephones in Nashville, 1,552 in Memphis, 450 in Chattanooga and 350 in Knoxville.

The first Gallatin exchange was "Miss Virgie Walsh's Place," a frame building adjoining the old Genesco plant.

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Sumner WWI draftees depart for training and the front in 1917 (Ken Thomson photo)

New Book Highlights WWI Memories

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

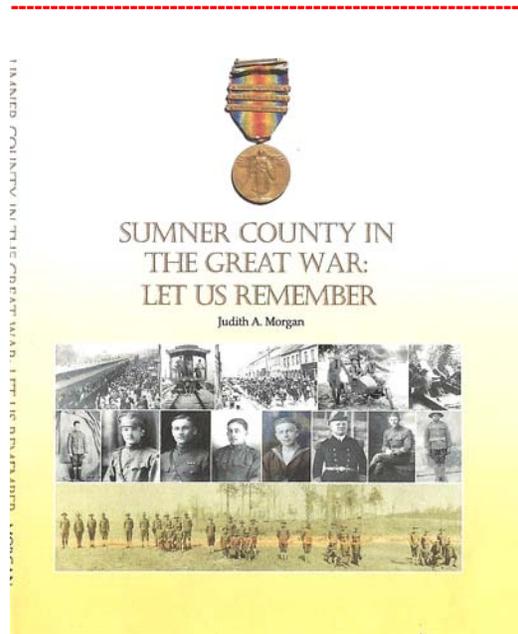
On November 11, Sumner County Historical Society will remember its World War I heroes with the presentation a new book, *Sumner County in the Great War: Let Us Remember*. The date is, of course, Veteran's Day, the anniversary of the armistice that ended WWI and the day set aside to honor America's veterans.

Written by Hendersonville author Judith Morgan, the new book is the story of what Sumner soldiers did during the war and how they lived. The beginning chapter, "Way Down Yonder in Mexico," begins in 1916 with Sumner men sent or already "way down yonder in Mexico," chasing Poncho Villa under Gen. John J. Pershing. It describes Sumner County in those bygone days and introduces local soldiers whose lives are traced in the book.

"At the beginning of the book, I try to give some sense of what life was like in Sumner County at that time for different categories of people," said Morgan. "This book is not just a story about a couple of families. WWI was an event that touched everyone in one way or another. It touched some prominent families but also people such as a man who signed his draft registration card with the letter 'X' because he couldn't write. He was in jail, but he was still drafted and sent off with the first draftees who left Gallatin in September 1917."

Though the war began in 1914 in Europe, America did not enter until April 1917. The Selective Service Act of 1917 developed the modern military draft after voluntary enlistment

fell far short of what was wanted. The draft was universal and included African Americans and immigrants. By late 1918, between 2 and 3 million Americans were in military service and many more millions were registered for the draft. Sumner men fought with many divisions, but there were more in the 30th Division than any other division.



Morgan's book cover designed by Gerald Morgan

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Morgan noted that roughly 1,200 Sumner County men were among those in military service, and about half of that number went overseas. "I can only say 'roughly' because it's impossible to know for certain," said Morgan. "The men scattered after the war, and the county by county records were not put together until the 1930s."

Morgan sought information first in the state library and archives, looking at county by county records, compiled 15 or more years after the war, and the state's collection of regimental histories. After that, she examined Gold Star records, which contain information contributed by families of soldiers killed and compiled after the war. She examined records of the Nashville War Memorial building, which commemorates the heroes of WWI and contains stone tablets with the names of 3,400 Tennessee soldiers who died.

"Roughly 40 Sumner men were killed—I actually discovered three more than the state archives had listed—and a comparable number were wounded," said Morgan. "Others may have been gassed and dealt with the effects of that the rest of their lives, but they were never reported as wounded."

Morgan interviewed descendants of soldiers, went through Sumner County burial records, and used primary documents such as letters from the front and court records. She studied sources in the Sumner County Archives, going through every issue of the old *Sumner County News*. "Community news items were especially helpful. They were those little society items that talked about which boys were heading for the front, which ones were home on leave, dinners that were given in so-and-so's honor," she said.

Personal anecdotes in the book came from letters, books and memorabilia loaned by the Sumner families of those who fought, as well as handed-down war stories. For example, Sam Doyle provided recollections of his grandfather, who skippered one of the transport ships carrying men to Europe, and Forrest (Chip) Anderson, loaned his grandfather's letters, memorabilia and book collections. Velma Brinkley gathered stories about local African American WWI veterans. Allen Haynes loaned and restored old photographs. SCHS President Ken Thomson and Eva Jane Johnston provided advice and editing.

Morgan found Sumner County men in every major battle of the war. The book describes their adventures on the high seas, dodging U-Boats on their way to the fighting. It includes the story of young Knox Doss, who went on to become a prominent county educator. It describes the



Dr. William Lackey (left) and other Sumner Soldiers pose with motorcycle.

difficulties encountered by African American soldiers, segregated in their own divisions, including Dr. Jonathan Rucker of Gallatin, who was principal of Union High School, pastor of First Baptist Church on Winchester St. and practiced medicine out of Union's school office. He was the only local black officer in WWI.

The book describes the service of men such as Virgil Goad, a newlywed, who was with Gen. Pershing in Mexico in 1916. He was on his way back home from Mexico at the same time the Westmoreland community news reported that his wife had contracted pneumonia and died. Goad went on to be one of the first local soldiers at the front. Morgan reported, "He was in battle after battle. He lived and finally came home in 1919, but he was broken by the war and died young."

***Sumner County in the Great War: Let Us Remember* will be unveiled at the Sumner County Historical Society's fall meeting, Nov. 11, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Sumner County Archives in Gallatin. Cost of the book will be \$25, and proceeds will go the SCHS to produce future historical books and reprint old volumes. Books ordered before Nov. 5 will be signed and available on Nov. 11 or mailed to you at a later date. SCHS members were mailed an order form in an October mailing. Others who wish to order the book, should contact Ken Thomson, SCHS president, at 615-461-8830.**

This book is the third historical book by Judith Morgan, who also wrote *The Lost World of Langley Hall* in 2013 and *My Name Was Elmwood: A Story of Nashville* in 2015. Morgan is a retired educator who taught English and Spanish at Gallatin High School and was later the executive assistant to two Tennessee Commissioners of Education during the Sunquist administration. She lives in Hendersonville with her husband Gerald, who designed her book jacket.

Portland: Infrastructure Gives Rise to Industry

By Al Dittes

During the strawberry era, Portland yearned for industry. "Portland wants a canning and stave factory," said a July 1908 news story promoting an ideal setting for the sale of town lots and property.

In a letter dated June 20, 1939, Mayor Elmer T. Hinton wrote to Mr. J.A. Goodman of Fulton Hosiery Mills in Indianapolis, Ind., on behalf of a branch industry for Portland. "We have only one factory here at present which is a small box and basket factory. Ours is a town of 1,400 population, good living conditions, and where you could secure all the good labor you wanted. I am sure that our town, or private capital in our town, would make you interesting concessions if you were interested in coming here."

The city of Portland offered many incentives to attract industry over the years. Actually, the city leadership had been developing the infrastructure needed before The Strawberry Crate Co., furnishing mainly seasonal employment, closed in 1951 and brought industrial recruitment to the top of the Portland agenda.

Hardison Got the Ball Rolling

Perhaps, the process began by electing a Portland man, Watt Hardison, to the state legislature in 1947. According to his member information in the *House Journal*, he represented Sumner, Macon and Trousdale Counties. Watson Taylor (Watt) Hardison, 58, was born in Maury Co., Tenn. After finishing college in 1915, he came to Portland as a football coach the first year Sumner County High School conducted classes in a new building adjacent to the McGlothlin family farm. He served as a Sumner County school superintendent in the 1930s and upon entering the legislature listed himself as a lumber dealer and farmer, a Democrat with the Church of Christ and Masons as his religious preferences.

Once in the legislature, Hardison authored two important bills that enabled Portland to develop a waterworks and natural gas system.

The first—House Bill No. 959—refinanced \$48,000 of a 1945 \$50,000 bond issue to build waterworks facilities and storm sewers. This occurred during the administration of Mayor J. Vernon Kerley, a son of J.E. Kerley. It also authorized the city to issue a maximum amount of \$123,000 in bonds "for the purpose of extending and improving its waterworks and drainage system, including the purchase of land and easements within or without the corporate limits of said City of Portland and all other necessary appurtenances."

Also in 1947, the Tennessee State legislature classified a natural gas system as a public works project, amending a Public Act of 1945.

Mayor Hinton Plays a Role

Portland held a mayoral election that year. Former Mayor Elmer Hinton, publisher of the *Upper Sumner Press* since 1930 and a 17-year veteran of the Sumner County Quarterly Court, defeated Sterling Dorris, a grocery store owner and alderman, 305-49, bringing in with him to the council four of seven candidates running on his slate: builder Harold Austin; service station owner Miller Goad; depot manager O.O. Massey, who had married Annie Ruth Lanier, and former school teacher and principal Clyde Riggs, then in the general merchandise and feed business and a future county school superintendent from 1956 to 1968. Harry Shaub, Earl Jernigan and Luther Johnson ran on Hinton's slate and lost.

Other elected aldermen from the Dorris slate were businessman Paul Gossett, State Representative W.T. Hardison, and groceryman Charlie Jernigan. Hardison was later declared ineligible because he represented the district in the state assembly.

Soon after taking office, Mayor Hinton called a town meeting to discuss developing a natural gas distribution system. C.C. Barnard, a consulting engineer from Baton Rouge, La., pointed out that since Portland was only three miles from a 24-inch Tennessee Gas and Transmission Co pipeline, it could have a natural gas distribution system for approximately \$150,000. He estimated the system should pay for itself in 20 years and show a profit of \$190,000.

Portland voters overwhelmingly approved a \$200,000 bond issue, 198-6, by the end of the summer and became the first town in the state to sell revenue bonds for construction of a natural gas system under this act of the state legislature.

Rep. Hardison sponsored a private act in the State House of Representatives which authorized Portland to develop a natural gas system and sell \$75,000 worth of bonds. Another one in 1949 validated \$225,000 in Natural Gas System Revenue Bonds. Under the contract, Tennessee Gas Transmission Co. supplied the fuel. The city

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resold it and used the revenue and no tax dollars to pay off the bonds. Construction of the system began in April, 1949.

During this time, Portland became the second town in Sumner County after Hendersonville to convert its telephone service to the dial system. In making the announcement, Ralph Dunn, manager of the Southern Bell system in Sumner County and son of local farmer Burns Dunn, said that 600 telephones were in service in Portland. He saw possibilities for enough customers to shortly enable dialing to serve all farms and outlying areas as well. The new system started up in April, 1950, with 635 dial telephones replacing the old-time cranking machines in use since 1902.

Portland voters approved a \$101,000 water bond issue in March, 1950, and raised rates from \$1.50 to \$1.75/month to pay for a new water filtration plant, pumping station, waterworks and drainage system. At the Jan. 5, 1951, meeting of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, A.B. Wade, operator of filtration plant, reported the old facility processed 136,714 gallons of water a day. The new filtration plant opened May 11, 1951, during the administration of Mayor Harold Austin. Portland received water from several large springs two miles northeast of town and flowed into the plant from a 30-acre man-made lake. By the end of 1952, the state had approved Portland's water system with a rating of 97 points for the first time since it began in 1926 and posted signs designating this approval at the city limits.

Some formidable public works obstacles still had to be overcome. Drainage problems affected Tennessee Foods, Portland Feed Mill and Kraft Co. Besides this, Hill Lumber Co. wanted a gas line connection. As late as 1978, a 3.5-inch rainfall in 10 hours could flood 66 homes and businesses, close many streets and shut down some businesses.

Nevertheless, these efforts to upgrade infrastructure bore fruit in finding an industry for Portland--the Sandye Shirt Co. The city widened two bridges approaching the Market Street location and approved bids to run a 6-inch line of 3,000 feet and an 8-inch line of 200 feet water lines to the spot. Leading citizens then organized the Portland Development Co., to erect a building for the Sandye Shirt Co. H.B. Lane, Jr., served as president. He owned a furniture store along the Russell Street strip

of businesses and had married Rebecca Enders, daughter of banker Raymond W. Enders. Billy Johns was vice president. He had married Jennette Moore, daughter of Walter Moore, and was part of the family auto agency. Pat Stovall, the secretary, operated in partnership with longtime pharmacist Carl Bass, the drug store Dr. Lanier had started on Main Street in 1887. The Sandye Shirt Co. factory opened Feb. 8, 1954, and announced an expansion the next year.

Editor's Note: More about the rise of industry in Portland will be reported in the January 2017 newsletter.

Jack Masters' Land Grant Book Is For Sale Now

A new book is now available from Jack Masters ***Land Grants on Elk River in Tennessee***, which is the continued work to place Land Grants in Tennessee. This edition places North Carolina and Tennessee land grants on the Elk River in southern Middle Tennessee in the counties of: Bedford, Coffee, Franklin, Giles, Grundy, Lincoln, Marshall and Moore Counties.

Unlike the large color Atlases, this book is in the 8 1/2 x 8 1/2 format and is perfect bound with a soft cover. It is 658 pages long. (Similar to our previous Data Supplements or Land Grant Genealogy books) Much of the same type information is contained and includes 1,436 grantees, which are shown on 123 map pages.

Interesting details are included as well on the development of the Second Survey District and old roads and traces that run through the area.

This last volume will complete land grants in Middle Tennessee from the Kentucky to Alabama line and was four years in the writing. Details may be found on Masters' Web site:

www.cumberlandpioneers.com/lgg5.html

For anyone interested, the cost is \$59, which includes postage, handling and any applicable taxes. Normally, shipping and handling charges would be \$6, but they will be waived for Sumner County Historical Society members. The book is available to ship immediately. Make a check or money order payable to Jack Masters and send it to:

Jack Masters
1049 Robertson Road
Gallatin, TN 37066 615-452-6382
jmas09@comcast.net

Brinkley Book Opens Her Family's Past and Present

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

This summer Velma Howell Brinkley of Gallatin, who has written or co-written four books related to the African Americans of Sumner County, completed a volume of her family history entitled *The Howell Family Album 1837-2015*.

"I knew I had relatives though I didn't know where they were or what had happened to them," said Brinkley in an interview. "But I realized that in today's age of technology, this should not be. I set my mind to finding them, and I did."

It was no easy task for Brinkley, an African American and the only member of her family living in Tennessee. According to family lore, her ancestors—the Howells—were slaves, living in Mississippi in the 1800s. "I was bound and determined not to let the horrific vestige of slavery prevent me from knowing who I am. I knew that slavery destroyed any hope of having some questions answered, but I knew I had African American, white and Indian ancestors."

She knew from census records that her great great grandfather, Alfred "Alph" Howell was born in 1837 and was mulatto. A researcher who helped her guessed that Alph's father had remained a part of his son's life. The researcher theorized that he must have stood with Alph to buy a 120-acre farm in Rankin County, Miss., in 1871. The deed's wording indicates that Alph bought the farm as if he were white, probably because his father was present. Brinkley and her family still own that farm; it was never sold away.

It Took A Lot of Looking

Her search for family began about five years ago and involved considerable leg work for herself and help from researchers at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Jackson, Miss., archives, as well as assistance from genealogist Shirley Wilson of Hendersonville.

Brinkley began in Rankin, looking for 19th century county records, but she was quickly discouraged when told that records of that era were boxed up, stored in the basement of the courthouse and hard to reach. She searched records of the adjoining county, Hines Co., joined the Mississippi Historical Society, scoured census reports—which are notorious for misspelled names. "It was exceedingly difficult," she said.

Through family tradition, Brinkley discovered that her white ancestor (Alph's father) originated in Wales. DNA research showed that her great great grandmother, a slave, was Gabonese from the Fang tribe in Africa.

Alph Howell "took a wife" (slaves were not permitted to marry) named Louisa. They had 11

children. It was these children and their descendants who became Brinkley's quest. She knew that they all grew up and went in different directions. Because they went to different places, Brinkley turned up branches of her family tree in several states and two other countries.



Louisa Howell

For example, the fourth child, Sarah Howell Evans, born in 1867, ended up in Mexico. In 1888, Sarah married a mulatto man—Thomas Evans—whose white father helped him buy a farm in Simpson County, Miss. According to family lore, others (likely racist whites) tried to buy the farm from Evans. When he declined, there were repercussions. While hunting one night, he barely escaped a barrage of gunfire. Instead of hitting him, shooters hit a stump and a sharpened stick he'd stuck in the ground to hold a light. Evans, himself, was nearby in the dark looking for the game his dog had treed. Shaken but unhurt, he raced home, woke his wife and children and told them to pack. Meanwhile, he went on horseback out into the night, carrying his gun for a purpose no one knows. When he returned, he freed both his horse and dog and fled with the family to Boley, Okla., an all black town. Some years later, the family moved again to Yuma, Ariz., where they got passports in which they purposely misstated birth dates. Then they migrated to Rascon, Mexico. They bought land, and kept expanding their ranch. They prospered.

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The children married and multiplied and are now Brinkley's wealthy, Spanish-speaking Mexican cousins.



Sarah Howell Evans (1867 - 1948) with her oldest son, Thomas Evans circa 1947.

Another of the children, Henry Howell, born in 1868, had similar experience with racist whites. It was unlawful for a black person to strike a white even in self defense. Henry was attacked and fought back. He and his family fled in the night. They found a home in Greenwood, Miss., then bought a big farm in Moug Bayou, Miss., an all black city known in history as a place that did not tolerate mediocrity, smoking, swearing or unemployment.

Brinkley also located a daughter of Sarah Howell Evans—Josephine—who had moved with her husband to Liberia. They were part of the Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) movement, which urged African Americans to go back to Africa. In 1978, some of Brinkley's American cousins travelled to Liberia and actually found Josephine, who was still living. They stayed a month and invited Josephine to visit them in the U.S. Her decision to come home for the first time in 48 years resulted in the inaugural Howell family reunion—now a longstanding family tradition that draws dozens of Howells to different venues.

Until 2002, some family members resisted having reunions in Mississippi for fear that the racism experienced by their forebears still existed. Brinkley and others persisted, telling them their worries were groundless and urging them to visit the Rankin Co. home place. They finally agreed.

“They were quite pleasantly surprised by the New South,” said Brinkley. “We were greeted by the mayor, and we were inundated by white Howells wanting to know if they might be related. When I left, I had 12 names and phone numbers of white Howells who wanted to be contacted if I discovered that they were kin.”

Old Projects and New

By the time she finished her family book, Brinkley had found five of the 11 Alph Howell children. Two weeks after its completion—too late to be included in the printing—she found descendants of the eldest child, Fanny. “I answered the phone, and the voice on the other end said, ‘Hi, I’m Eugene Harmon. I heard you’re looking for me.’”

Just because Brinkley's book is finished doesn't mean her family project is over. She's already promised to write more about Fanny, and she will follow up on other leads to family.



Velma Brinkley

Brinkley is well known in Sumner County for her books. In 1996, she co-wrote with friend Mary Malone a book entitled *Generations* in honor of the state's 200th birthday. The book, which bears the state seal, is a history of African Americans in Sumner County. In 1998, Brinkley and Malone co-wrote *African American Life in Sumner County*. In 1999, Brinkley compiled and edited a book of poetry by Nora Turner Bate, a Latin teacher in Sumner County. In 2000, Brinkley wrote *Up From a Log Cabin*, a history of her Gallatin church, the 150-year-old East Winchester Street First Baptist.

Finding Historical Connections: 'Six Degrees of Separation'

By Bonnie Martin

"Six Degrees of Separation" is the theory that everyone and everything is connected by six or fewer steps. That theory was confirmed by Sumner County archivist Randy Tatum while working on preservation of a 1792 Sumner County court document. Tatum linked the men named in the Archives' document to important events in Sumner County history.

The 224- year-old court document was discovered by the Archives packed away in a cardboard box. It is a small, fragile scrap of paper, measuring less than 8-inches by 7-inches, specifying a legal resolution about the sale of a slave girl. In addition, the document also conveys many connected stories and family ties to Sumner history. Each man (Michael Shaver, Frances (Roger) Gibson, Joel Eccles, Gabriel Black, Isaac Bledsoe, George Winchester) and the event are researchable in the Archive's library and court document collection. The document reads as follows:

Territory of the United States south of the River Ohio

Sumner County July Term 1792

*Whereas it has been certified to us that a Bill of Sale from the late **Michael Shaver {Shaffer}** to **Frances (Roger) Gibson** for a negro girl, is tested by **Joel Ehels {Eccles}** & **Gabriel Black**, both of whom, are wounded by the Indians and thereby rendered unable to attend our court at this Term, to prove said Bill of Sale, and whereas it appears that the time limited by law for proving and recording such conveyances will be expired before our next Term.*

*These are therefore to empower **Isaac Bledsoe** & **George Winchester, Esquires**, them or either of them to take the de position of the said Joel Ehels {Eccles} and Gabriel Black relative to the execution of the said Bill of Sale, and such deposition so taken & return onto our ensuing court to be held for said court on the first Monday on October one thousand seven hundred twenty two.*

*By Clerk of Court
David Shelby*

Walter Durham's book, *The Great Leap Westward*, relates the tragic story of the Indian attack and burning of Ziegler's Fort. On June 26, 1792 **Michael Shaver (Shaffer)** while working in the field was attacked and killed by Indians. Indians also wounded **Joel Eccles** and **Gabriel Black**, a brother-in-law of Gen. James Winchester, as they attempted to retrieve Shaver's (Shaffer) body to Fort Ziegler. After sundown, Col. Isaac Bledsoe led a company of men who brought Shaver's body to the fort. However Indians attacked during the night, burning the fort to the ground and killing Jacob Ziegler. Indians captured a number of the fleeing settlers, including Ziegler's three children.

(It is interesting to note that families and friends of the captured settlers collected ransom in an effort to buy the captives freedom. In the Archives court papers is a request from James White dated 1792 to the estate of Jacob Ziegler seeking reimbursement for the ransom of the three Zeigler children. James White paid 66 dollars and 66 cents for redemption of Mary, Betsy and Hannah Ziegler.)

Sadly, **Isaac Bledsoe** (d. April 9, 1793) and **George Winchester** (d. Aug. 9, 1794), who were authorized to attain the deposition of Joel Eccles and Gabriel Black, were also latter murdered by Indians. Bledsoe was killed walking in the fields near Fort Bledsoe and Winchester was killed on his way to County Court in what is now Gallatin on the east end of now Water Street. George Winchester, 27, was buried at Cragfont.

Michael Shaver's body was burned with Fort Ziegler, and his burial site is not known. Michael Shaver's will, found in Sumner County Will book 1 page 19, bequeathed his estate to his wife Catherine with the remainder to his nephew, John Shaver. An extensive inventory of Michael Shaver's estate can be found in book *Sumner County, Tennessee Inventory and Sales 1787-1807*, located in the Archives library. His inventory included a great deal of linen cloth and other items of a substantial estate. Shaver was a participant at the battle of King's Mountain, owned land in Sumner County and acted as a sworn chain bearer on land grant surveys. Michael's brother, John Shaver (d.1859), and nephew ,John Jr., are buried in the Shaver cemetery near Castalian Springs. No record exists of Michael's wife Catherine remarrying in Sumner County or where she is buried. Perhaps,

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Michael and Catherine are interred at the Shaver cemetery in an unmarked grave.

Gabriele Black, wounded attempting to retrieve Shaver's body, married Jenny McKain on March 15, 1796. Gabriele was prominent in Sumner County court, held office as a constable and was a captain in the Sumner County militia. Gabriele Black and Jenny moved to Franklin County, Tennessee, about 1812 to act as an agent for his brother-in-law, James Winchester. Black and Winchester held interest in a Franklin County land grant. Black continued his public service in the Franklin County militia and other civic offices. Black is believed to have died around 1839 or 1840, and his burial site is unknown.

Sale of the slave girl to Frances (Roger) Gibson is noted in the book, *Thoroughfare for Freedom*, found in the Archive's library. The slave sale is registered in North Carolina land grant page 458, January 17, 1792 (found on Archive microfilm) and witnessed by Eccles and Black. The slave girl was named Sala or Sela, age 13, and sold for 50 pounds sterling or about \$166.50. No record of her subsequent sale by Roger Gibson has been found. Her burial site is also unknown.

Roger Gibson arrived in Sumner County around 1782 with his father Jordon Gibson. Jordon Gibson's daughter Marah Black was mother of Gabriel and Susan Black, (Susan married James Winchester). Jordon Gibson (d. 1787) was also killed by Indians near Halls Station (buried in the Hall Cemetery). Roger Gibson (Gabriel Black's uncle) bravely fought the Indians at Ziegler's Fort and aided in the escape of settlers. Gibson left Sumner around 1812 and is believed to be buried (d. ca 1854) in Henderson County, Tennessee.

Joel Eccles, also wounded, may have moved to and later died in Wilson County around 1820-1828. Joel Eccles sale is noted in Wilson County, Tenn., Will book dated July 1, 1828. Eccles burial site is unknown. Additional information of the Eccles family came from a recent Maryland visitor to the Archives. She mentioned that her family (the Smart family) were acquaintances of the Joel Eccles family. The two families lived

near each other in Virginia and traveled to Sumner County around the same time.

CEMETERY, Continued from Page 1



Above is the repaired grave box at the restored James Franklin cemetery on Station Camp Creek Road in Hendersonville.

Below is a photo of the entire grave site overgrown by weeds and brush as DAR and SAR volunteers clean away the the site. The Gen. Jethro Sumner DAR Chapter spearheaded the project and will hold a grave marking ceremony on Oct. 23 at 2 p.m.



The Mysterious Case of Solomon Mitchell

By Shirley Wilson, Genealogist

After reading Al Dittes' article on the Moore family of Portland in the July SCHS newsletter, I realized that I *knew* these people. Actually, I knew genealogically about the allied family of Mitchells. Dittes' article stated that Risdon Dent Moore married Asenath Mitchell in 1811 in North Carolina. Asenath was the daughter of Levin and Nancy Mitchell of Rockingham County and kin of Solomon Mitchell.

Solomon was born in 1761 in Dorchester County, Md., and was a Revolutionary soldier, a volunteer Minute Man in a Maryland regiment. After moving to Guilford County, N.C., he volunteered in the North Carolina militia. Solomon married a woman named Elizabeth a few years prior to 1790.

There is a pattern of migration in the Mitchell and Moore families from Dorchester County, Md., through Guilford and Rockingham Counties in North Carolina, to Sumner County. Solomon Mitchell of Sumner is related to Levin Mitchell of Rockingham County, N.C. Exactly how he is related is the first of many genealogical mysteries that I encountered researching this family.

From 1780-1810, the names Levin and Solomon Mitchell were found on deeds and census in Rockingham, sometimes on the same record. In Rockingham on April 25, 1794, Levin Mitchell bought 300 acres on the Cumberland River in Sumner from one William Gillaspay for 100 pounds. This may have been land in Tennessee although the deed did not say that. No further information can be found in Rockingham or Sumner. The question is: Where was the land?

Levin was clearly older than Solomon and died by February of 1809 in Rockingham, leaving a widow, Nancy. Records there establish that Hiram Mitchell, Asenath Mitchell, and Amelia Mitchell were among Levin's proven children. Another mystery is that despite the fact that Levin's estate was large—almost 800 acres of land and slaves—records about it are unexpectedly, oddly sparse. Why is that?

Levin's children migrated to Sumner along with his widow Nancy. Her ancestry is the third mystery. Some reports indicate she was born a Polk, but this can't be right. Nancy lived in Sumner until her death in 1832 and left a will naming two children with the surname Polk. Perhaps whoever reported that her maiden name was Polk did not know about a first marriage. Her will, makes a first marriage obvious.

Interestingly, Nancy left \$1 to each of her children: Silas Polk; daughters Jane Williams, Amelia Brashaer, and Asenath Moore; and another son, Hiram Mitchell. She also left 100

acres "where I now live" and a slave to her daughter, Lucilla Polk, probably her oldest daughter and still unmarried. Could Nancy's land in 1832 be part of the missing 300 acres that Levin bought way back in 1794? Were they planning that long ago to migrate?

On Nov. 16, 1836, Lucilla Polk married William Grainger in Sumner County and died in 1838, leaving her own will that named her siblings.

Now Back to Solomon....

Though Solomon was living in Sumner by 1809, there are no deeds or grants to or from him in county records. But tax lists show that he was taxed on land. Why is that?

Solomon's proven son, Wiley, wrote his own will in 1819. He left a life interest in his estate to his father and mother, Solomon and Elizabeth. Though Sumner County, Loose Lawsuit #2269 showed that money arose from the sale of town lots and 50 acres known as Mitchell's Crossroads, there is no record of the purchase of this land—another mystery.

On an 1816 tax list, Solomon Mitchell (who paid no tax himself) was listed as the administrator of John P. Mitchell, who owned 194 acres of land. In 1827, Solomon was taxed on 194 acres. It is possible that this is the same 194 acres that John P. Mitchell owned, but John's relationship to Solomon is unknown.

In 1830, Solomon was 69 and lived in Sumner County with an apparent wife. According to DAR records, Solomon died Jan. 27, 1839, probably in Sumner. But there is no record of Solomon's estate. What happened to the land he apparently owned? Where are the records?

Based on census reports, Solomon probably had six children, three sons and three daughters. Only three have been identified: Elizabeth, Sarah "Sallie" and Wiley. Wiley's 1819 will named the children of his two "surviving" sisters as his heirs. They were Sarah "Sallie" Mitchell, who married John Heermans, and Elizabeth, who married John Moore—another link between the Moores and Mitchells of Sumner County.

Author's Note: I will continue to study the Mitchell family until more of its mysteries are solved. A big clue at this point is that Solomon's son's land was identified as 50 acres at Mitchell's Crossroads in the upper northwest corner of Sumner County, land that was once within the State of Kentucky. Please contact me at swilsontn@aol.com or 615-824-1203 if you know anything about the mysteries of Solomon Mitchell.

Telephones, Continued from Page 1

According to a February 1977 story in the *News Examiner*, the first Gallatin exchange manager was Mrs. Bettie Sullivan, and the first switchboard served nine telephones. By 1892, J.M. Walsh Jr. was the exchange manager. A long list of other Gallatin managers and key personnel was also reported, including: H.D. Dulin and John G. McKoin who worked for the Cumberland Co. in the 1890s through the early 1900s; Sam Pierce who became manager in 1917 and worked in the then newly constructed telephone building on Gallatin's West Main in what later became the location of Houchen's grocery; W.R. Yearwood, who followed Pierce as manager and remained until 1930 when Will Ford became manager.

"The first telephone installed in Gallatin was in the Tomkins and Blakemore Drug Store," according to the *News Examiner*. "Over this phone, Alex Schell played the harmonica for Nashville friends, thus the first broadcast from Gallatin. By 1885, the Gallatin exchange had 18 telephones."

The Gallatin exchange was converted to the dial system in 1960.

Phones Spread, Come to H'ville

Though interest in telephones was immediate throughout the United States, widespread use was slow in early days, probably because the rate system discouraged installation in private homes, said attorney Tim Takacs, in his book, *City by the Lake*. "Reform in rates about 1900, however, brought in hundreds of thousands of new subscribers. By World War I, there were 10,000,000 telephones in the United States—almost one for every 10 Americans.

"In 1912, many Hendersonvillians who did not live on the Turnpike joined these numbers. On January 17, 1912, the Tennessee Secretary of State issued a charter to the Hendersonville Telephone Company, a mutual benefit corporation incorporated by W.L. Franklin, J.E. Johnson, M.R. Curtis, E.D. Dunn and W.L. Reed. Matching the work crews of the Nashville Gallatin Interurban Railway almost stride for stride in their march down the pike to Gallatin, the Hendersonville Telephone Company erected its poles and wires to Avondale, tying in the wire from the Gallatin switchboard. The company also strung a wire two and half miles down Shackle Island to the Shackle Island community. The villagers thereby retained control over their own switchboard, operated for most of the years of its existence by Miss Lillie Hudgins."

H'ville Service with Nashville

In April 1913 after the Hendersonville Telephone Company's equipment was installed and lines strung, stockholders elected a board of directors. Its officers, included R.F. Long, president. He drove to Nashville and closed a contract with the Cumberland or Bell Telephone Co. for free exchange service within Sumner and to put a wire from Nashville in the Hendersonville switchboard—a big deal to residents.

"For 10 cents, a Hendersonville subscriber could talk for three minutes to a friend, relative or business associate in Nashville," noted Takacs. In 1961, the Hendersonville exchange became part of the Nashville system, and long distance rates between Hendersonville and Nashville finally ended.

Rural Exchanges Serve Scattered Farms

Hendersonville Telephone Company was one of the first rural exchanges in Tennessee, providing service to scattered farms. "From about 1916 continuing through the 1920s, rural Tennesseans strung lines and bought switchboards, usually installing them in farmhouses along country roads," reported Takacs. Service required only a one-wire grounded line strung on short, untreated wooden poles. "At a typical rural exchange for a salary of a few dollars a week, the operators kept the circuits open, listening in on conversations over party lines coiled like snakes inside the board."

Sumner County's early rural exchanges were modest, easily operated and satisfactory until electric service increased. Additional electrical lines caused a humming sound over the phones, forcing owners to abandon the lines. Exchanges entered into maintenance contracts with telephone companies.

Tackas noted that in the 1930s and '40s, storms may have contributed to the deterioration and decline of the early rural exchanges.

Also, in her book, *Historic Rock Castle*, Mrs. Willie Ellis reported that "a wind storm in 1926 left the poles and lines in unrepairable condition."

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