

Days Of Old Sumner County

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Cairo: Sumner's 'Lost' City

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

Sumner County's first real town, Cairo (pronounced Karo, like the syrup), may qualify as "lost" since it no longer exists as a town, but remnants remain: a foundation or two, the city's historical marker.

Sad, really, if you consider the promise with which Cairo started. In the 1790s when some of the scattered frontiersmen in Sumner County began to yearn for places in the wilderness to meet together, set up shops, worship and build schools. They sold lots meant to be towns. Cairo, sold in 1800, was Sumner County's first town lot, followed two years later by Gallatin. Cairo was a river port and early center of trade for both Sumner and Wilson counties.

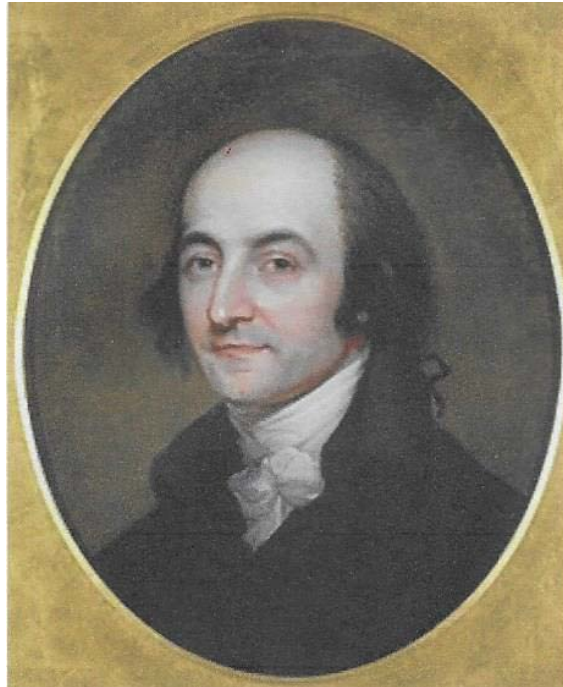
The town was the result of an enterprise by Gen. James Winchester and his partner, William Cage, Jr.

In 1799, the general and Cage acquired the 150-acre tract of land that would be Cairo on the banks of the Cumberland River. The first lots from that tract were sold on May 3, 1800.

Today those lots would be located on Cairo Road, which went directly into downtown Cairo .

Journals and day books kept by the men show how the

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Albert Gallatin by Rembrandt Peale (1805)

Albert Gallatin: The Amazing Founding Father Most People Haven't Heard Of

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

Who was Albert Gallatin? We know that the city of Gallatin was named after him, that he was a former U.S. Treasury Secretary. But what was so special about this Treasury Secretary that a town would be named after him? What was so important about Albert Gallatin?

The answer to that question could fill a book—and it does in a new 500-page biography, *Jefferson's Treasure How Albert Gallatin Saved the New Nation from Debt*. The book was written by Gregory May and introduced by C-Span's book channel earlier this year. May is an attorney with a 30 year practice in New York and D.C. and an internationally known tax expert with a keen interest in historic preservation. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School and a former Supreme Court law clerk.

This is part one of a series about Albert Gallatin from May's book.

Young Albert Comes to America

In 1780, 19-year-old Albert Gallatin and his boyhood pal Henri Serre, left their homes in Geneva, crossed France, boarded an American merchant ship in Nantes, and only then wrote home to tell their families they had run away and were setting sail for America.

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Oakland

Ken Thomson collection

The Mentlo Family Leaves the Legacy of Oakland

By Ken Thomson, SCHS President

Among the most notable families of old Sumner County were the Mentlos, whose legacy is most notably the fascinating historic home where they lived—Oakland—which is now owned by Joe Harsh. Motlo descendants remained in Gallatin until 1961, when Susie Mentlo Anderson—the last of the original family—went to her reward at the age of 94. Susie is still remembered by longtime locals and was spotlighted in one of the Gallatin Cemetery Tours, held annually each fall.

The first of the Sumner County Mentlo family, Dr. Daniel Wade Mentlo and his wife Mary Brandon Alexander Mentlo—Suzi grandparents—had Oakland built for them in 1842. Dr. Mentlo, a graduate of Transylvania University in Lexington, Ky. was a successful physician.

The Mentlo's son, James Alexander Mentlo, born in 1833, was educated at Bethany College in Virginia. In 1852, he married Susan Ann Branham, a great granddaughter of the pioneer Nathaniel Parker, whose first cabin is now being preserved in historic Bledsoe Park at Castalian Springs. The couple had three daughters: Mary Brandon, born in 1857; Nannie Lee, born in 1859; and Susie born in 1867.

Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860 blew clouds of war over the South. In the spring of 1861, the Confederate government was organized, followed by the firing on Fort Sumter. The war was on...but until they were threatened by invasion most locals were not interested in fighting. It was not until November 1861 that Capt. Ed Tyree organized a company at Camp Jim Davis at Epperson Springs in Macon County.

Mentlo Was a Confederate Spy

James Mentlo was commissioned as a 1st Lieutenant in Company C, 7th Calvary Battalion CSA. He was mustered into service on Dec. 1, 1861, at Camp Sandy Barnes, near Gallatin. On April 6 and 7, 1862, Mentlo participated in the Battle of Shiloh. Soon after, he became a Confederate spy. He traveled in disguise through Union lines many times posing as a post rider and as a cattle trader from Barren County, Ky. He did, in fact, have relatives in Glasgow, where his father had been born and reared.

On June 15, 1862, Mentlo officially resigned his

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commission and commenced the long journey back to Gallatin. As he neared home, he sought haven at Rock Spring Farm, the Bate home. Union soldiers were everywhere.



Susie Mentlo Anderson is pictured in the parlor at Oakland under a portrait of her grandmother Mary Mentlo in this photo from the Ken Thomson collection.

The Bate family sent word to his wife that he was there. Susan immediately prepared a picnic lunch, mounted her riding mare and with basket in hand rode to the Bate place. Yankees, camped near her home, were suspicious and pursued her. They captured James and sent him to the prison at Camp Douglas in Illinois, where he remained for the duration of the war.

On a Sunday morning in 1865, Susan and her young daughters, Mary and Nannie, were attending services at Union Church when word came that James was at the Gallatin Depot. She was told to come in a wagon to pick him up. He was very ill and on a stretcher. Mentlo never fully

recovered from his ordeal in prison though he lived until 1896.

(Editor's Note: Susie inherited the saddlebags her father used as a spy. They are now the property of Ken Thomson.)

Susie was born two years after her father returned home. Times were difficult. The family lost most of its wealth but retained Oakland and its furnishings. Former slaves were freed, but most remained with the family as paid workers.

Susie recalled that some of the former slaves were family by blood and others were considered extended family. She recalled that, out of respect, she and her sisters called the older generation workers aunt and uncle, just as they did with Caucasian neighbors that they claimed as family.

The Mentlos' relationship with former slaves was close and loving, Susie said. Older ones remained with the family for the duration of their lives, well into the 20th century.

James Mentlo and his family lived in a cottage near Oakland until the death of his father in 1870, when they moved into the big house. Susie recalled an idyllic childhood.

Mary Mentlo, the eldest child in the family, married William Hall. They had five children and one grandchild, Mary Hall Harris. William Hall's grandfather, Gen. William Hall of Gallatin, was notable as Tennessee's "accidental" governor because he was thrust into office when Sam Houston resigned in disgrace. At the time, Gen. Hall was Speaker of the State Senate. He did not aspire to the office of governor.

Nannie Mentlo married William Henry Dunn in 1877 and had two children, W.H. Jr. and Clara Mentlo, who married William Marion Jones and had a daughter, Nannie Dunn.

In 1886, Susie Mentlo married Samuel Mullnis Anderson, a traveling drummer, of Richmond, Ky. They had a daughter, Mary, who married William Hardin Guthrie.

Mary Mentlo Hall and Nannie Mentlo Dunn died a few days apart.

Susie outlived her sisters by more than 60 years. She also outlived her daughter, who died in mid life. She then "adopted" her son-in-law as her son. When he died, Susie was alone for the remaining 13 years of her life.

She was survived by two great nieces, the last of her grandparents' descendants. They were Nannie Dunn Jones, who lived in a farm adjoining Oakland and died in 2001 at age 90 and Mary Hall Harris, who lived in Taft, California, and died there in 1999 at age 93.

Susan Ard Writes of a Mission Accomplished

Submitted by Al Dittes

Note from Al Dittes: In 1908, the Walen and Wallace families bought a farm along Dobbins Pike south of Oak Grove and started a home school for their children and welcomed young students from the community. It eventually became known as Chestnut Hill, and they later added a sanitarium. The Walen daughter grew up on the school/farm and later devoted her entire life to working there as a nurse and teacher, becoming well known in the community as Susan Ard. She left behind this account of lay witness in Upper Sumner County as she experienced it firsthand. Here are her words:

I know that young folks like stories that begin "once upon a time a long time ago," and this is that kind of story.

My parents were old-fashioned Seventh-day Adventists who read the "red books" (writings of Adventist visionary Ellen G. White) and believed them and did not try to explain away the message they brought to us. When the Lord said through His messenger that children should be raised in the country, they set out to follow that instruction. They ended up in a tiny school in the backwoods of Tennessee. But I found out as I grew up that the self-supporting work (no denominational subsidies) does more for those of us who do it than for those for whom we work. They don't need us nearly as much as we need them.



Susan Ard

We were poor, I guess. I didn't realize we were as I grew up. That there were things somewhat more sophisticated than hominy and beans I was sure of, but I was not dissatisfied.

Father and mother put everything into our work, and I grew up not knowing that it was a sacrifice. Both my parents came from wealthy families and had always had everything they wanted, so to them, I'm sure, it was a real sacrifice to live in the backwoods so far from their kind who were educated and high in the social and business worlds. Now all they owned was a piece of land, and not very good land at that. Sometimes my mother did not have the two cents that it cost at that time to purchase a postage stamp so she could write home.

But I did not realize this. I was happy. We had a log cabin with the original breezeway--two rooms joined by an open walkway. The door to our cabin was several inches off the floor so we had year-round air conditioning. In winter our cabin was heated by a fireplace that roasted your face and froze your back when sitting in front of it.

The cabin was more than 100 years old. We finally put our cook stove inside of the fireplace--that was adding conveniences. A long wooden bench served as a table, and we wore our coats while we ate in the winter time. Mother had an ingenious device for keeping our feet warm while we ate. She would warm bricks in the oven and put them at our places on the floor so that we could toast our feet during our hominy and beans repast. I grew up discovering that the Lord is the best pay-master. He pays with things you really need, but the greatest pay is in the souls won.

One lady who lived near us had two children, and the third was born just after her husband died. Here she was a poor mountain woman with little education and no way to provide for her family. She took Bible studies and wanted to be baptized, but she could not give up her snuff. She said that every night after the children were in bed, she would sit by her fire and rock back and forth wondering what was to become of her and her children. She would worry and fret and stew about it. Then to ease her worry, she would take a pinch of snuff, and in no time at all she could stop worrying and go to bed and sleep. She couldn't see how she could give up this only thing that quieted her nerves.

One day she decided to take the plunge and threw away her snuff. Only then did she discover that the Lord could give her a peace of mind that snuff could not match. Eventually, He helped her to figure out how to care for her family.

It was the custom of the county to give widows \$10 every three months to help care for their

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(SUSAN, Continued from Page 4)

children. That was not very much money even in those days. But the mother figured out that if she saved it during the summer she could use it for buying shoes for the children so they would have something on their feet when it was cold weather. Sometimes she could even buy a coat for one of the children.

One day a man rode up to their cabin. Without getting off his horse he said, "I understand you pay tithes to the Adventists on the hill."

"No," said the little mother, "I pay tithes to the Lord."

"Well, if you're going to tithe money we give you, we can't send it anymore."

"Well, I'm very sorry, Sir. But if you don't send it to me, I'll just depend on the Lord."

The man rode off, leaving a very disappointed little woman behind. But she got an idea. She taught her children to pick strawberries. They became such good pickers that they got the best fields. She paid her tithes and then used that money for shoes and coats. In fact she had more than just \$10 every three months.

The little family lived in a house that belonged to her mother. There was no land with it. She decided that if she was going to get ahead she would need land, so she set out to buy some.

Before she went, she called her children to her. "Children," she said, "if we skimp a bit (what else had they been doing?) we can buy a place of our own and plant and pick and sell our own berries."

The children were willing even though they were only 12, 10 and seven. When she found the place she wanted, it was a house and 10 acres. She made arrangements with the owner to pay for it a little every year. Never did she miss a payment, and she paid it up before the note came due.

Faithful little mother! All of her children are in the (Lord's) work, and she is an old lady now, just waiting for Jesus to come and reunite her with her children in the kingdom.

Recordings of the Past are Historic Treasures

By Paula Shannon

Recently, Portland Public Library hosted a Regional Archival Roundtable about oral histories, directed by Caitlyn Haley, Assistant Director of the Red River Regional Library.

Thanks to the efforts of Bettye Glover, E.A Green, and many others, the library has now digitalized oral interviews from the 1970s and '80s by the Highland Rim Historical Society. Anita Lamberth, library circulation supervisor, transferred the tapes from 22 cassettes to a flash drive, ensuring that the interviews will be preserved and available to the public by computer at the library.

The interviews are:

- Tape 1:** Cold Springs School Dedication
- Tape 2:** Recollections of Portland from 1907 to the present taping date by Mr. E. L. Ferguson
- Tape 3:** Portland from 1915 to the present taping date by Mr. Hebert L. Gossett
- Tape 4:** Cross Plains and Portland the early 1900s by Mr. Paul Allen West
- Tape 5:** Education by Mr. V. G. Hawkins
- Tape 6:** Life and work of Mr. Elmer Hinton by Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Hinton
- Tape 7:** Teaching experiences of former teachers Norma Young, Floy Wilkinson and Edith Harris
- Tape 8:** Education and teaching experiences of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Gregory
- Tape 9:** History of the Portland Church of Christ by Maynard Meguiar
- Tape 10:** Teaching experiences by Katherine Green and Florence Hunnicutt
- Tape 11:** Education and teaching experiences Mitchell Moore and "Miss Marie"
- Tape 12:** Life, Work, and interests of Mr. E. L. Ferguson
- Tape 13:** History of Parker's Chapel Community read by Alice Smith
- Tape 14:** History of Mitchellville Community by Mrs. Lula Rucker
- Tape 15:** History of Scattersville Community by Mrs. Wava Young
- Tape 16:** History and life in Parker's Chapel Community by H.C. Johns
- Tape 17:** Pat Meguiar's family and his collection of family documents and other items
- Tape 18:** J.C. McMurtry Tribute to Elmer Hinton and author of Humor in Tennessee Justice
- Tape 19:** School Days at Cold Springs by Bailey Stinson, Alfred Barnard and Howard McDowell
- Tape 20:** School Days at Cold Springs by Opal Emberton, Erma Gore and Lorene Searcy
- Tape 21:** History of Highland Hospital and Highland Community by Mrs. John Lundquest

Edna Hurt: Hendersonville's Hurt Family History

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

Editor's Note: A clipping from the Hendersonville Star News with the following story was sent to me by Cindy Kimbro, Edna Hurt's granddaughter, in February of this year. It is a story I wrote for the Star News around 1980 after interviewing Mrs. Hurt, who died in 1996. She was the "historian" of the Hurt family, one of the earliest families in Hendersonville. The Hurts were (and are) related to a multitude of Sumner Countians named Morrison, Sisco, Lemon and Henderson. With a few revisions for clarity, here is Edna Hurt's story:

"Benjamin Franklin Hurt, my father-in-law told me a lot of what I know about the [Hurt] family," said Edna Hurt. "He was born before the Civil War and lived until 1946. He remembered standing in his yard with his mother and hearing the cannons at the Battle of Murfreesboro.

"He told me that the Hurts came to Hendersonville in 1889 or 1890 from Inglewood [between Nashville and Madison], which was all farm land then. He was born at Stewarts Ferry in Davidson County and went to school in Hermitage. The house in which he was born was moved for the construction of the Stewart's Ferry Dam at Percy Priest.

"Joseph Warren Hurt [Benjamin's father] built a farm across from what is now Hendersonville Hospital. A widower, he remarried sometime after this, and he moved into his new wife's house. Benjamin, the oldest son, bought the farm.

"Another son, John Hurt, owned the farm where Wessington Apartments now are. John was the father of Fred and Earl Hurt, who run the store [Hurt's Supermarket, formerly on Main Street in Hendersonville], and others."

Benjamin Franklin Hurt's youngest brother, Wallace, owned the property where the hospital is. The early Hurts, who came to Hendersonville, were farmers and livestock men. [The brothers] John and Benjamin F. Hurt also opened a meat market stall in downtown Nashville.

Edna's husband, Roy, and his brother, Franklin Hurt, ran a garage in Hendersonville for many years.

Her father-in-law was named after his grandfather, another Benjamin Franklin Hurt. He is the earliest Hurt that Edna knew about. "That Benjamin Franklin Hurt was a contemporary of Andrew Jackson. He lived in the Stones River area and voted at the same precinct as Andrew Jackson. They had an argument every election Day because Hurt was a Whig and Jackson a Democrat.



Edna Hurt, circa 1980

"He [the first Benjamin] was over six feet tall and weighed more than 300 pounds. He had red hair.

"That Benjamin Franklin Hurt had eight children, and each of the children named one son after their father; hence there are an abundance of Ben Hurts in Tennessee records. His wife was Mary Elizabeth Castleman. She molded bullets at the Battle of Bucannon Station on Elm Hill Pike. The hot lead burned deeply into her hands, and she carried the scars for the rest of her life.

"I have the most information about Margaret Marsh Hurt, Joseph Warren Hurt's wife," said Edna. This was her husband's grandmother.

She learned about this branch of the family, oddly enough, from a letter in the Nashville *Tennessean*. A Texas couple wrote asking for information about a part of the family named Matsler, which they had traced to the Donelson area. Mrs. Hurt recalled hearing her father-in-law talk about the Matslers, and facts in the letter fit her own knowledge. The two families began an exchange of information. Eventually, a family tree was published by the Texas Matlers.

"Margaret Marsh came with her mother [Elizabeth Matsler], father and little stepsister to Donelson in about 1840 from Ohio," said Mrs. Hurt.

"Margaret's mother as one of six brothers and sisters, several of whom left Ohio at one time, floating down the Sciota River in a flatboat to the Ohio and then to the mouth of the Cumberland. Part of the family went to Donelson, and part floated down the Mississippi into the Gulf and on to Texas. One sister settled in Kansas, and another sister went with her family on a wagon train to Oregon with four small children."

State Line Politics: The Middleton Offset

From *Old Sumner*, By Walter Durham

The exact location of the state line separating Sumner County and Simpson County, Ky., has been a matter of controversy since the original survey in 1779-80 by a party led by Daniel Smith [builder of Hendersonville's Rock Castle], who noted in his journal that an offset occurred in the survey because "there was some iron ore in that vicinity, which deflected the needle of the compass" [according to James W. Sames, III, 's 1971 book, *Four Steps West*, a history of the boundaries between Tennessee and Kentucky]. Whatever the reason, the offset was in the form of a shallow "V," whose bottom extended southward into Sumner County. At points both east and west of the offset, the state line was essentially a straight east-west line approximating the 36-30 parallel.

Settlers who lived in the offset area were haunted by the uncertainty of their state allegiance. In addition, they were plagued by uncertainty of their tax liability, as Sumner County had accepted taxes on real estate in the area. While Kentucky clearly had jurisdiction of the territory under terms of the Compact of 1820, there was a popular clamor for a new survey, and in 1830 Luke Munsell and James Bright surveyed the disputed offset and reported that all territory therein was a part of Kentucky.

Ten year later, a Sumner County farmer [named Middleton], who owned a rectangular piece of land "protruding across the right leg of the old Simpson County offset and into Kentucky territory," recorded his title on Oct. 20, 1840, in the county court clerk's office at Gallatin "in violation to Kentucky sovereign territory and the 1820 compact." Nothing in the Munsell and Bright

plat justified this seizure of Kentucky territory, although there seemed to be no resistance to it.

In 1859 the states of Kentucky and Tennessee designated Austin P. Cox and Benjamin Peeples as commissioners to establish [once and for all] permanent marking for the entire boundary between them. There was no authorization from either state to change the location of the line, as the survey was only for purposes of permanent marking. But, strangely enough, when the commissioners reached the Simpson County offset, they altered two parts of it. The left leg of the "V" was moved northward to allow adjacent Kentucky lands to become a part of Sumner County. The right leg of the "V" was distorted by allowing the rectangular protrusion into Kentucky that had been recorded in Sumner County in 1840. For reasons not yet clear, the surveyors made only brief reference to the rectangle, identifying it in their notes as "Middleton's offset." The two alterations in the state line, both of which brought land accession to Tennessee, passed both state Legislatures unnoticed.

A Kentucky historian writing of the Middleton offset has found no satisfactory explanation of it. He wrote, "There are many hearsay stories claiming they [the commissioners] were offered a barrel of whiskey to survey around the Middleton offset, and to allow it to become a part of the state of Tennessee. Other stories give other reasons, but the commissioners did not explain or give any reason in their report to the Legislature...Maybe they were too busy enjoying the barrel of whiskey."

19th Century Cairo Store Sold a Little of Everything

Only a bare trace of the buildings that were once part of the Sumner city of Cairo existed in 1961 when Louie E. Spivey, who wrote for the *Gallatin Examiner*, *The Star News* and the *Sumner County News*, penned a story headlined, “Iron, Groceries, Even Whiskey were Sold at Historic Cairo Store Around 1811.” Spivey died in 2008 at age 90. This story was about the James Winchester and William Cage Store that was the center of life in Cairo (and much of the rest of the county) in the early 19th century. Cairo—pronounced Karo and don’t ask me why—once thrived in Sumner County near Gallatin on the banks of the Cumberland River. Spivey wrote:

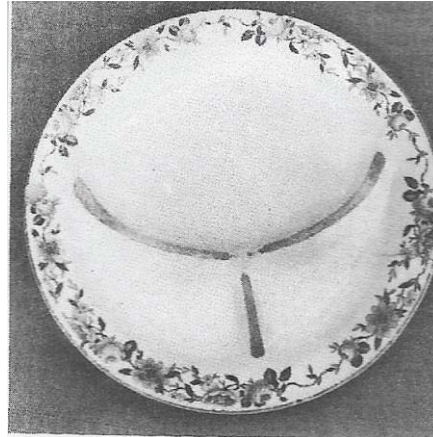
The men are gone, the store is gone, even the town is practically gone, yet there are several mementos still lying around to let those interested know that there was once a large store at Cairo, operated by the Winchester and Cage families. Unlike today’s specializing stores, the Winchester and Cage establishment handled practically every type of product on the market, from iron and groceries to whiskey and tools.

“Charge books...tell much of the store’s history. The books in legible handwriting tell much more after careful study than one would think while thumbing through them. Mention is made of practically all of the early families of the Cairo-Castalian Springs section. The books not only identify the residents of the area, but also the purchases listed to them...Doubtless poorer families had to do without things handled by the store and be content with homemade products and food raised on their farms, foregoing even the pleasure, except on occasions, of coffee and sugar...

“One of the books has the date February 22, 1811, on the opening page and continues through November 18, 1811. Some of the entries in this book follow: Feb. 22, 1811, to Joseph Motherall, 10 ½ yards renshaw-\$17.50; 1 pair cotton hose-\$1.25; 4 yards cambric-\$3.00; 24¼ yards cotton shirting-\$10.73; 1 coffee boiler-\$.75; 1 patty pan-\$.37 ½ ; 1 ladies comb-\$.37 ½ ; 1 pudding pan-\$.37 ½ ; 2 yards baste-\$.25; 4 ¾ yards dimity-\$2.76; 1 shawl-\$.75; 1 funnel-\$.19... “This list is one of the longest in the book and suggests that they buyer was making a yearly purchase or was just setting up housekeeping. “On the same day, Winchester and Cage bought a quire of paper for \$.44. Peter Wynne bought 6 pounds of coffee for \$2.75 and 15 pounds of sugar for \$3.00. Also, Peter Townsen bought a pair of Moracco slippers for \$1.37 ½ .

“That day also two of Sumner County’s most distinguished names made purchases at the

store. “Isaac Bledsoe bought 6 yards of calico for \$3.37 ½ ; 1 paper of pins for \$.25; 1 ½ yards of cambric for \$1.25... [This was not the original Isaac Bledsoe, who was scalped and killed by Indians, April 1, 1793.] Col. William Hall bought 30 ½ bars of iron for \$3.05. The next day, Feb. 23, Col. William Hall also bought 2 jasper tea pots for \$5.51...Other prominent names listed are those of James Winchester, Strother Key, William Allen...



A large divided English China plate from of the early taverns at Cairo is one of the few relics left of the town. Circa 1820.

“Looking at the record, one would think that Peter Stealey was a drinking man. Most of the whiskey sold was listed to his account, and in one place, perhaps in a fit of humor, the clerk headed Stealey’s account, ‘Peter (Whiskey) Stealey’... The book also suggests that the country was growing because many of the names found near the end of the year are not found at the beginning. Some of these are: Walter Carr, Terry Williams, Willis Hunley...Also, many names listed at the beginning of year are missing at the end. However, Peter Stealey was still in the neighborhood. On the day before the last entry in the book, he bought a quart of whiskey...

“Although many of the items sold at the Winchester and Cage Store were brought up from New Orleans in later years, in the early days of the store they were brought mainly over the mountains from Baltimore.

“Col. Alfred R. Wynne, who was a clerk in the store during the year 1815, and afterwards became a partner when he married a daughter of Gen. James Winchester, told a reporter that goods for the store were hauled over the mountains by wagons, a journey that took over three months. And often the teamsters were killed by marauding Indians.”

(CAIRO, Continued from Page 1)

little river town grew. An 1811 journal (Journal B) notes that the town had a boatyard, a cotton gin, a smithy, a tanyard and shoemaker's shop. Some of these were part of a mercantile--a business begun by Winchester and the Cages that was the center of the community.

The little town's shipping business bustled, especially with goods going back and forth from New Orleans, especially Sumner-grown tobacco. Goods also came overland by wagon, mostly from Baltimore and Philadelphia.



The ferry at Cairo was photographed about 1890 returning to Cairo landing after crossing the Cumberland River.

The late state historian Walter Durham of Gallatin, wrote in his book, *Old Sumner*, "The prospects for growth and further settlement at Cairo were so appealing that in 1808 the town received its first medical doctor. A Nashville newspaper printed a brief notice directed to 'the inhabitants of Cairo' informing them that Doctor John McDowell had commenced the practice of medicine there at Mr. Steele's house."

By 1813 or 1814 (and maybe earlier) children regularly attended a school in Cairo, and in December 1819, notices appeared about a lottery to raise funds for the construction of a new Lancasterian School and Meeting House in Cairo. This project apparently fell through because there is no record of the school actually being built. However, in 1822 the Legislature chartered Cairo Academy.

In 1815 the Legislature passed an act incorporating Cairo and Gallatin, stating that the towns would be "under the same rules, regulations, restrictions and privileges of the town Franklin in this state."

The first steamboat to operate out of Cairo was *The Cumberland*, owned by Winchester and

Cage, reported Durham. "The exact date that *The Cumberland* first steamed into Cairo is uncertain. In 1819 Winchester and Cage had contracted for the steamboat to be built in Pittsburgh and during the year made payments totaling \$17,850 to the contractor and subcontractors. . . . As the boat was first in Nashville in April 1821, it must be assumed that the Nashville visit was made en route to Cairo on the boat's initial voyage to its purchasers' home port. . . . By the autumn of 1821, steamboat arrivals and departures were frequently noticed in the Nashville press. The impending departure of the steamboat *The Cumberland* from Cairo for New Orleans was announced Nov. 28, 1821."

Why Did the Town Die?

In the late 1820s, Cairo's growth—along with other parts of Sumner County—began to slow. Durham noted, "The relocation of the Sumner County part of the main east-west road connecting Nashville and Knoxville to a location south of the river in Wilson County effected a sharp reduction in travel through Hartsville, Bledsoe's Lick, Cairo and Gallatin. At the same time, the improvement of roads generally contributed to the decline of river travel and sounded the death knell for Cairo and for smaller river towns everywhere.

"Cairo had in fact passed the zenith of its growth by 1830, when a census taken by Eastin Morris [a Gallatin attorney who authored *The Tennessee Gazetteer*, published in 1834] showed that the town contained 30 families, two physicians, an academy and church, one tavern, one cabinet maker, one machine maker, one cotton and wool factory, one rope walk, two tailors, two blacksmiths, one gunsmith and two shoemakers. The death of James Winchester in 1826 had been an irreparable loss to Cairo, as he had been the town's founder, promoter, and its most active single business operator. . . . He was also the principal owner of Winchester and Cage. . . . whose activities had expanded from general merchandise store to shoemaking and operating a steamboat.

"An account of Cairo's early days was written almost 30 years later, in 1885, for the *Nashville Union*. It reported that there had been 13 stores in Cairo in 1812 as well as a still house, a saw mill, a grist mill, carpenter, cooper, blacksmith, silversmith and a steam-powered cotton mill and horse-powered woolen mill. It also said that the corner marker stones for the streets, alleys and town lots were still visible. It said that Mrs. Betsy Jackson in 1885 lived in "the only tenable house among the original buildings [of Cairo], which had earlier been the location of Bell's Tavern."

This house, formerly Bell's Tavern, is still there.

(GALLATIN, Continued from Page 1)

Gallatin had a little money—he hoped it would be enough for both of them—but he carried little else on the trip. He and Henri spent about half of their funds getting across France and buying ship passage and most of what remained on nine boxes of tea, which they hoped to sell when they landed in tea-less Boston.

Gallatin never explained why he came to America, which was still embroiled in revolution in 1780. A family story claims that he refused his grandmother's offer to help him get a commission in the Hessian army, which fought for Britain. He allegedly declared that he would not serve a tyrant! He got a smack on the ear for that bit of sass. Historians have speculated that he was drawn to America by sympathy for the Revolution and was fascinated by republican ideals. He'd grown up seeing the heavy-handed Calvinism that dominated Geneva, then a city-state with problems of class and governance. However, his own youthful experience was not restrictive. He stated in later life that he "never exactly knew the extent of Calvin's opinions" until he learned them from Presbyterians in America.

Albert, whose full name was Abraham Alphonse Albert Gallatin, was born into what May describes as a "comfortable patrician family," the ninth generation descendant of a gentleman named Jean Gallatini who had helped establish Geneva's independence. Both of his parents belonged to Geneva's elite.

His father, a watch merchant named Jean, died when his son was only four. His mother, Sophia Albertine Rolaz du Rosey, took control of the family business, but she was overwhelmed with also trying to care for Albert and an emotionally troubled nine-year-old daughter. She sent the girl for treatment at a French medical facility in Montpellier but kept Albert in Geneva. She asked her close friend, Catherine Pictet, a distant cousin of Jean, to let Albert live with her.

Albert was nine when his mother also died, but he was well looked after by Pictet, who was middle-aged and unmarried and doted on the boy. His grandparents, who lived in country houses outside the city, helped support Albert, and the extended Gallatin family acted as his protector, guarding his modest inheritance and ensuring that a trust for the relief of family members would provide money for his education. He attended Geneva Academy, one of the leading Protestant educational institutions in Europe. Its reputation extended even to America. Thomas Jefferson was known to have recommended it to American parents when he was American minister to France. The college focused on the classics, but it also had rigorous

programs in algebra, geometry and calculus. All of which served Albert well.

Immediately after leaving school, while most of his wealthy classmates went on to study law, Gallatin went home to tutor Catherine Pictet's nephew. But within a year, he and Serre had made their secret plans and set sail. In later years, Gallatin told Pictet in a letter—they corresponded for years until she died in 1795—that he left because his situation in Geneva made him feel dependent. He saw no paths open to him, no hope of success. However, he deeply regretted that he left home in secret and that he never saw Catherine again.

Albert and Henri landed in America in July and saw first hand the destruction of the Revolution: ruined farms, houses and businesses, poverty; incomes had dropped by 20 to 30 percent since the war began. They first went to Boston where they found that Bostonians, traditionally anti French, were wary of French-speaking strangers such as themselves. They couldn't sell their tea.

Albert and Henri befriended a French-speaking couple also from Geneva, and, hoping to improve their situation, they traveled with them to Maine. First, they exchanged their tea for sugar, tobacco and rum in order to trade with the natives. Letters to Jean Badollet, a friend in Geneva, show the boys' enthusiasm for the natives and the great, wild woods of Maine. They stayed for some months; however, the prospect of another cold winter chopping wood in Maine was daunting. Albert and Henri went back to Boston in the fall of 1781. They tried to support themselves by giving French lessons, but it was hard going.

A few months later, the pair were surprised to receive a letter from Philadelphia merchant and financier Robert Morris, the powerful Superintendent of Finance for the Confederation Congress. He told them their families feared for their safety and urged them to write home. The upshot of this was that Catherine sent Albert a letter of introduction that helped him find work teaching French to students at Harvard.

But Albert had no desire to remain a teacher. He dreamed of acquiring land—maybe starting a settlement where sharecroppers could work for him until they earned land of their own—or owning woodlands he could harvest for making clocks. He wanted to settle in Pennsylvania or Virginia. He judged that lands further south were too hot for Europeans and that New England was too backward.

In the spring of 1783, Albert struck up a partnership with a young Frenchman, who had similar aspirations of land ownership. Jean Savary de Valcoulon was politically connected and wealthy enough to buy land, but he spoke no English. Albert agreed to translate and help

Savary buy land in exchange for a partnership interest. They travelled to Philadelphia, which had a booming market selling Virginia land grants (called warrants). By autumn, they had bought warrants for an extensive tract in the Virginia backcountry south of the Ohio River. But buying the warrants was only the first step in acquiring land. Buyers had to locate their tracts in the wilderness—often while fending off wild animals, hostile natives and squatters—survey the tracts, then register the titles. Henri Serre, who had caught up with Albert and Savary in Philadelphia, decided to try his luck in Jamaica instead. He died there in less than a year. Meanwhile, Albert learned to survey and spent the summers surveying the land and the winters working in Richmond and Philadelphia.

“He was becoming a new man,” wrote May. “The difficult years in America had chastened him.”

Albert wrote to Badollet that his opinions of aristocracy superiority had changed upon seeing the American system of government. He saw wisdom in separate elected legislative and executive bodies and judges who interpreted the law and were chosen for life. Albert wrote, “America seems to me the best country in which to settle because of its Constitution, its climate and the resources that I find here.”

Albert surveyed his wilderness tract, but he wasn’t able to follow through. Native tribes banded together and fiercely attacked surveyors and settlers. (In fact, Albert’s death was falsely reported to his family in Geneva, prompting a diplomatic inquiry to Jefferson in Paris and requiring Albert to identify himself to a lawyer in Philadelphia.) He and Savary abandoned their efforts in the back country and instead established themselves in Fayette County at the edge of the frontier, just across the Pennsylvania border. Albert came of age under Geneva law when he turned 25 in January 1786 and then received a small inheritance from his parents that he used to buy a 370-acre farm he called Friendship Hill.

Albert, Savary and a few other Genevans and Frenchmen lived at Friendship Hill. Since they dared not go back into the wilderness, they farmed, distilled spirits and tended store. His friend Badollet joined them in mid 1786, but soon moved to a nearby place of his own. He and Albert remained close friends for the rest of their lives. The letters they exchanged give biographers the best insight into Albert’s life.

Albert spent the winters traveling to Richmond, Philadelphia, New York and Boston searching for land buyers, trading claims and looking for opportunity. He became interested in the controversy over ratification of the new federal Constitution. A local political committee in Fayette County sent him to Harrisburg, to

participate in the constitutional convention being held there. Though the convention itself had no real consequence, Albert made a name for himself urging a Union-wide election of delegates to another constitutional convention. He enjoyed debate.

Shortly after this, Albert married. He had long been interested in Sophia Allegré, the 22-year-old daughter of a widow with whom Albert boarded when in Richmond. However, he had not pursued a romance, had not even written her in a year. When he did write, she refused his letter. This lit a fire under the young man. He rushed to Richmond, but she was not there. He hurried on to New Kent County, where Sophia was visiting a sister. He spent two weeks courting her and proposed. He told Badollet, “She never played the coquette, but from the second day gave me her complete acceptance and told me that...she believed she had always loved me.”

Sophia’s mother was furious about the proposed match. She did not want her daughter to marry a man with no money and no connections who spoke English like a Frenchman and lived in the wilderness.

Leaving her mother a note begging forgiveness, Sophia eloped with Albert on May 14. She wrote to her mother that Albert was essential to her happiness. “He is perhaps not a very handsome man, but he is possessed of more qualities which, I shall not pretend to numerate—as coming from me they might be supposed to be partial...”

Unfortunately, the couple had very little time together. Only a few months after their marriage, Sophia fell ill and died at Friendship Hill in October. May wrote of Gallatin, “Her death shook his confidence; he even considered returning to Geneva. But politics gradually revived him and set him on a path he would follow for the next 26 years.”

Albert went to Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1789, arriving two weeks late due to Sophia’s death. He had not expected to attend the convention at all since he and other Antifederalists were against changing the state constitution, but the citizens of Fayette County sent him, and once again he stood out among the other delegates because of his sharp intellect and obvious education.

Editor’s Note: This was the beginning of Gallatin’s political career, which will be discussed in the next issue of this newsletter.

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