

Days Of Old Sumner County

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Sumner County Historical Society

P.O. Box 1871, Gallatin TN 37066
(615) 461-8830

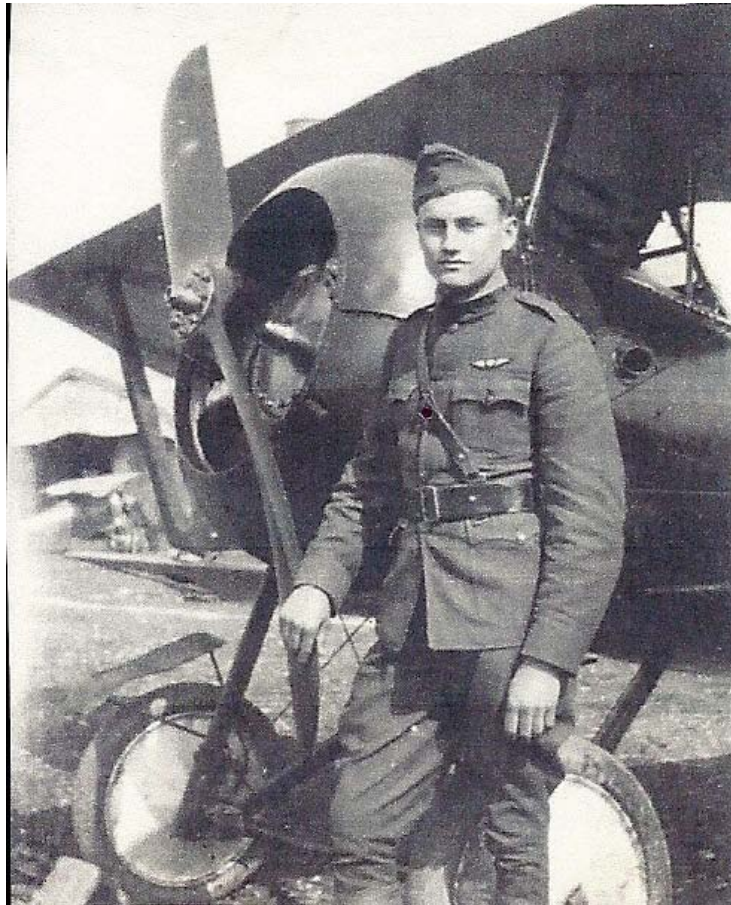
Looking Back: The Centennial Fourth of July

By Judith Morgan

Editor's Note. As we celebrate the Fourth of July with fireworks and barbeques, it is particularly fascinating to hark back to descriptions of celebrations of the Fourth in the bygone days of our great and great-great grandparents. In her book, The Lost World of Langley Hall, Judith Morgan offers a colorful picture of July 4, 1876, the nation's centennial, in Sumner County. Folks within a 10-mile radius of Gallatin woke to the sound of 13 blasts of cannon ...

It was quite a day. From early in the morning people poured into town in every vehicle imaginable: buggies, carriages, wagons, on horseback and the train. Coming from north of the Ridge and south from Nashville, the railway coaches arrive, and a procession under the direction of Chief Marshal

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Airman George Wright Puryear

He Dared Escape WWI Prison

By Bill Puryear

A Sumner County Airman was the first prisoner of war to escape a German WWI prison camp.

George Wright Puryear was born in Hendersonville in 1896, the youngest of seven sons. Graduating from Vanderbilt Law School in 1916, he joined the AEF and was flying combat missions in the

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Charles S. Douglass, formed at the depot. Led by Sam Donelson, the parade moved toward town, up Water Street, across the Square, and down Main toward the Fair Grounds. The St. Joseph's Total Abstinence Society Band of Nashville provided music as an open barouche containing the Hon. Geo. W. Allen, Col J.J. Turner and Thomas Boyers led the artillery, the Gallatin Fire Department in their bright scarlet uniforms, the Patrons of Husbandry in the regalia of their order and citizens in all manner of vehicles and afoot toward the amphitheatre. It was a moving mass of humanity so large that, when the head of parade arrived at the Fair Grounds, the rear was just leaving the square. The amphitheatre, which held 5,000, was already full when the parade arrived.

Thousands cheered as a huge national flag was raised onto a mast lashed to a tall oak, and the notes of the "Star Spangled Banner" fell upon the ears of thousands for the first time in many years. Several individuals addressed the crowd. Thomas Boyers read the Declaration of Independence. Col. Turner spoke without notes, encouraging the audience to rise above the "resentments of the late war." Both sides fought for what they believed, he claimed, the controversy has ended, and we are now one people. Prophetically, Turner believed that time would soften the "asperity of the contest" and that someday the names of great leaders, including Robert E. Lee, would be "revered in the Pantheon of the nation." Judge Allen also spoke, recounting a hundred years of county history, reading from the old records of the Chancery Court.

After the speeches, dinner was announced. The town was not prepared for the number of people present, so the meal was somewhat scanty. The day wound up with a display by the Porter rifles.

Boyers later wrote, "The town aroused itself—especially the boys—and patriotism was stirring in every heart. We are not writing for 'gush,' but

to state the fact that Gallatin was going to assert its full share of the glorious memories of the Fourth of July, 1876, to bury out of sight forever every sign of the big war that we had had a few years before, and to have a good jolly day of it. And Gallatin had it..."

Yesteryear Sumner July Fourth Parades



Patriotic float, sometime after WWI



1937 float recognizing Castalian Springs' pioneer settler, Thomas Spencer

Editor's Note: Do you have interesting old photos such as those above? The Sumner County Archives would appreciate the opportunity to scan them and keep copies in its history files. Call the Archives at 452-0037 for more information.

Love of Pioneer History Inspired His Novels

By Don Wright

(Editor's Note: The following article was written by Sumner County Historical Society member Don Wright at the request of SCHS to describe how he came to pen four bestselling historical novels in the 1980s and 90s. Wright, born in 1939, is also a former Gallatin mayor and a state senator. His brother is artist David Wright, whose acclaimed paintings are inspired by historical themes and have appeared in this publication.)

I was named Donald Kenton, after Simon Kenton, a frontiersman who lived near Louisville where I was born. Kenton saved Daniel Boone's life when the British and Indians attacked Boon's Boro in 1790.

I was partially raised in Rosine, Ky., on my grandfather's farm. We had no electricity, indoor plumbing or water. We raised everything we ate, like the pioneers when America was founded. The closest doctor was 40 miles away, and all we had to travel in was a wagon with a team of mules. We did not go to the doctor. My grandmother could cure most problems; she used a lot of coal oil, especially on cuts and for stomach ills. Our shirts were handmade, and when we were old enough (about eight) she allowed us to pick the feed sacks we wanted our shirts made of.

In 1946, my mother was offered the job of managing Avon Cosmetics in Philadelphia, Pa. We moved there immediately. My dad got a job as a pipe fitter

there. On her days off, my mom would take my brothers and me



Don Wright

to visit historical sites. We went to Betsy Ross' house where she made the first American flag. We went to see the Liberty Bell and Wilderness Road where the "Battle of the Wilderness" was fought and the place where Gen. Edward Braddock of the British army was killed fighting the French and Indians on July 13, 1775. Daniel Boone had been there; he was a wagon driver for the British and frontier troops. Forty-two women were with the troops. Of these, 38 were killed by the French and Indian soldiers. In my first book, *The Woodsman*, I write about three of those female survivors.

In 1948, after visiting historic sites in Pennsylvania, New York and Washington, D.C., I bought a children's book by Edna Mcquire entitled *Daniel Boone*. I was eight years old when I read the history of Daniel Boone. The author wrote: "This story is written so that girls and boys may know Daniel Boone and understand the deeds of thousands of other pioneers like

him. Their courage and daring made America a land of freedom and opportunity."

I am presently working with the Daniel Boone Society to publicize the historical life of Daniel Boone. We hope once again to spark the interest of America's children in the courageous spirit and fortitude of Daniel Boone and his frontiersmen.

My brother David and I have enjoyed studying history all our lives. I have read diaries, letters and notes written by those who lived before me. I cherished the stories passed down through generations of my own family.

David and I were even in a movie about Daniel Boone, "Blazing the Wilderness Road." Also, at a Frontiersman Rendezvous in the 1980s, I had the pleasure of meeting a man with a Flintlock Pennsylvania Long Rifle that had belonged to Daniel Boone.

My interests led me to write my novels. My first, written in 1986, *The Woodsman*, is about the French and Indian wars in 1755 and the few women to survive. *The Captives* takes place during the Revolutionary War in 1776. *The Last Plantation* takes us back to the largest struggle our nation has faced, the Civil War. My final book, *Gone to Texas*, tells the story of Tennesseans who once again, after the Civil War in 1866, picked up their lives and moved to Texas, another of our country's newest frontiers.

Bailey Spread Conservation Message in County

By Al Dittes

The Bailey Room in the Portland Public Library honors the memory of a Portland native who devoted his life to help preserve Tennessee's natural resources for future generations.

James Lovell Bailey was known throughout the state as "Mr. Conservation" for "tirelessly spreading his message across the state to school children, their teachers, garden clubs, environmental groups and government officials," according to his obituary in the Sept. 26, 1994, *Nashville Banner*. "He worked for the Department of Conservation from 1937, shortly after its inception, until retirement in 1976. He also was editor emeritus of *The Tennessee Conservationist* and a former longtime contributor to the magazine."

Bill Troup wrote of Bailey in the *Conservationist*, "He is the quintessential teacher, a scholar who has read more and traveled farther than most of us dream of, a philosopher who extols the wisdom that flows from nature through him, an astute listener who can find value in everyone's word... and an entertainer who is never at a loss for an amusing anecdote or a song for any occasion."

Marge McCormick added in the same magazine that he wrote from "a perspective that is deeply spiritual."

In 1992, Bailey donated his books about Tennessee history and other objects of historic significance, known as the Bailey Collection, to his native Sumner County and placed them in what is now The Bailey Room of the Elmer Hinton Library in Portland.

A citation from Gov. Ned McWherter for his accomplishments in the field of conservation led to the Tennessee State Senate honoring him with a resolution: "Whereas as we strive to act as diligent stewards of our air, water and environment for our children," the resolution reads, "our goal of responsible conservation is greatly enhanced by such worthy efforts as the Tennessee Federation of Garden Clubs Conservation Camp which focuses concern and national attention on the monumental task we face in cleaning up and preserving the Earth's natural resources; and James Bailey is truly an exceptionally diligent worker whose dedication and expertise in environmental preservation and conservation stand unparalleled in state government; all citizens of this state would do well to emulate him and the peerless



James Bailey (left) pictured with Lyndon B. Johnson

example he set because his efforts have made a difference in the way we view the fragile environmental balance of our planet..."

Bailey, whose parents were James and Annie Mae Lovell Bailey, left biographical notes that are on file in the Portland library. "I was born on Dec. 18, 1907, in Portland, Tenn., on College Street in a house now occupied by J.P. Meador," he wrote. "I descended from, on my mother's side, Robert Bruce, the noble Scotchman, Earl of Pembroke; Richard the Lion Hearted and Alphonso, King of Spain. I know very little of my father's people.

"I had very good opportunities to get a good education," the account continues. "At the age of five, I entered the Portland Seminary. Though I cannot say that I was an exception to any rule, I made the best grades in all my class work for eight years. When in the second grade, I entered the new building called Sumner County High School and there finished, graduating with as high honors as could be given. I was the first boy to be graduated from that institute in short breeches. I was 16 years old."

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One of his classmates, shown in a composite picture, was Clyde Riggs, later the superintendent of education for Sumner County.

Bailey continued his education at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Bowling Green Business College (now Western Kentucky University) and George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He worked in the Department of Commerce and Agriculture in Washington, D.C., from 1930 to 1935 and was also a World War II veteran.

He married Farrell Brown of Robertson County, who died in 1976. He later married Hester Whittinghill.

Bailey started his career at a time when Tennessee lawmakers began its protection of natural resources. He was the first man employed in the Department of Conservation after the State Legislature created it in 1937. Bailey retired in 1976 after serving 39 years as director of the education program.

Bailey later recalled that in 1937, "There was no state park program, no soil conservation district effort--cattle were on open range eating our forests alive. To provide more forage, forests were burned. Prior to the enactment of the statewide no-fence law, more than half the forest fires in many of the more heavily forested counties in the state were intentionally set by range burners. There was no program for stream pollution control."

'300 Million Trees Planted'

A *Tennessean* article stated that "Since Bailey first ambled into the field of organized conservation, some 300 million pine trees have been planted on red, raw hillsides in Tennessee. About 650,000 acres of idle, eroded and gully-scarred land has been planted with grass or trees and saved. Farmers no longer set fire to their forested acreage to create more grazing land. They know to plow across the hill, instead of up and down it. The fact that much of "common-knowledge" of conservation is, indeed, common knowledge, is because people like Bailey have awakened people to the need to know."

He taught many school teachers about soil and water conservation and also talked to garden club members across the state.

"When Bailey leads a group of school marms into the

woods to tell them about the birds and the bees, they become evangelists in their own right for more protection for birds and bees," the *Tennessean* article said. "'I know many of you will be shocked to know,' he tells them, 'that song birds until a few years ago were slaughtered and sold for meat in many rural places in Tennessee. Now this has stopped.'"

He also taught his conservation message to school children. The director of camps and conferences for the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Church wrote about Bailey to Gov. Buford Ellington in 1968. "Last summer I had occasion to talk with a 12-year-old lad in the Edgehill area who attended [Bailey's] day camp. I asked him what he learned from Mr. Bailey. Then he proceeded to take me through the whole cycle from the soil to the minerals in the soil to the grass to the cow to the milk carton in the grocery store and the importance of minerals in the milk for growing boys and girls. As I listened, I heard more than mere words—through this was his first out-in-the-woods experience—a person had broken through to him with new light and inspiration. I am glad that we have in the field of outdoor education... persons like Bailey."

Bailey himself said, "There are many things that man can do in this enlightened age to make servants of natural forces and resources, but the idea that man can conquer nature is a fallacy. He conquers nature only as he learns to obey her immutable laws. He is blessed if he abides by them—cursed if he does not."

He also said, "The man who unleashes wildfire in the field or forest violates natural and moral law as does the man who contaminates the air and water or exposes the land to the destructive forces of erosion. Just as mankind depends on the resources of the earth for his physical needs, so, also, do their sustained quality and quantity depend on him.

"From 1.5 to 2 million acres in Tennessee are in a nonproductive state," he continued. "In many cases, they contribute to siltation of streams and reservoirs, cover fertile farmlands with subsoil, contribute to upkeep cost on roads and highways. Erosion control for runoff of water on unstabilize road banks is needed. Tennessee has 58,000 miles of rural roads. Eighteen percent of the silt in streams of West Tennessee can be traced to unstabilize road banks. Each 250,000 acres of this nonproductive land could--if planted, provide within 25 years adequate raw material for another pulp and paper plant in the state, which would greatly contribute to Tennessee's economy."



The S.S. Shannon home on Main Street was city hall from 1981 until 2006

H'ville Finds Its First (Permanent) City Hall

By Jamie Clary

Almost 45 years ago, Hendersonville found its first city hall.

With City Manager Sam Walton working from the trunk of his car and city commission meetings taking place wherever enough room could be found, Hendersonville's three commissioners were happy to find a home in the Simpkins Building at 327 West Main. There, they met for the first time on September 11, 1969.

Walton followed this meeting by furnishing the administrative and legislative headquarters with a desk, chair, side chair, filing cabinet, two tables, and six folding chairs. Having the office enabled Walton to hire secretary and city recorder Carolyn Vaughn, the first full-time employee and, for a while, the only full-time employee.

The building's primary tenant was Simpkins Realty, opened by Robbie and Jack Simpkins earlier that year. Jack, later a charter member of the Hendersonville Area Chamber of Commerce, also leased space to other businesses, including Jane and John Steinhauer's B.A.T.-- Business Services, Advertising and Public Relations and Telephone Answering Service. The building was the center of Hendersonville activity, and the location was in the center of town.

As the city grew and employees were added, the city commission continued to look for a more permanent home. They considered property on

Dunn Street--the former site of Hendersonville Grammar School. When the school closed, the Sumner County Board of Education had deeded the property to the Hendersonville Utility District. The city commission inquired about the property, but the utility district commissioners rejected any interest at their Nov. 11, 1969, meeting. They later erected their own home there.

With limited space in the Simpkins Building, the city's police department created its headquarters at a residence at 112 Shivel Drive on July 1, 1971. When the house next door became available, the city commissioners moved to it from the Simpkins Building.

In months, low visibility and growth had the city commission again looking for a location. They also wanted to own instead of rent. They seemed to have found an answer when the Hendersonville Church of Christ offered to sell its building at 315 Main Street, adjacent to the library and next to land that would become the utility district office.

The church's first offer came to the city prior to March 1973, but Walton said that the church was asking too much for the property. Walton's successor, Louis Oliver III, thought enough of the idea to pursue it. With the church years away

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from breaking ground on a new facility, the city went ahead and moved to the lower two floors of the Lakeside Realty Building (also known as the Bryant Building) in May 1974 at 530 West Main Street. With continued talk that the move was a temporary solution, speculation progressed that the Church of Christ property was still on the table as a permanent home for city offices.

A study by Oliver, completed in February 1976, highlighted the Church of Christ building. Seven months later, without revealing which buildings they were, the city commission was told of two evaluations being done on the issue. Likely, the two were Hazel Path Mansion and the home of the Church of Christ.

The city focused more on the church as the church came closer to vacating its building in 1978. Consideration was rushed. A study committee was appointed by Oliver, consultants were hired, and the Church of Christ property was recommended unanimously by the committee. Upon being presented with the recommendation, City Commissioner Pat Patterson went so far as to move that Oliver negotiate terms with the church.

The site very well may have been best for the administrative offices of the city. The asking price was \$450,000. It would include more than enough office space, two acres of land, access from three sides, complementary surroundings, a centralized location and a sense of community responsiveness by solving the congregation's need. The total cost with renovations and financing would be close to \$1 million, including demolition of some of the structure. Also, moving would generate equity versus continuing monthly payments of \$1,200 for the Bryant Building.

By that time, however, some members of the community were voicing concern about the path of purchasing the property. They accused some decision makers of conflicts of interest.

Mayor Charles Kimbrough had said that he felt uncomfortable about the situation since he was a deacon of the church. Commissioner Bill Cole had been a member until 1973 but was at the time worshipping at First Baptist. Commissioners Chuck Taylor and Ken Woodard used those facts to object to the purchase and proposed calling a referendum on the issue. Legally, they could not ask for a referendum unless the question included financing by bonds.

The commission moved ahead by passing three readings of an appropriation ordinance to buy the church. Woodard and Taylor opposed the motions, and the two continued to push for the referendum. Through his vociferousness and exaggerations, Woodard was able to generate

enough interest to get 1,500 people to sign a petition supporting the referendum. Many of these people would become the base of a movement to change the form of government. For his stand, Woodard lost his commission seat one year later.

But before he faced reelection, Woodard continued to lead the opposition and created enough discomfort to kill the entire idea. The ordinance to purchase the church property for \$450,000 passed final reading in July 1978 and was followed by a resolution to finance the purchase with capital outlay notes. Regardless, the formation of the Concerned Taxpayers Association--residents opposed to the purchase--led the church to withdraw its offer in August.

The church's elders stated that the decision was to prevent the church "from further malignment and defamation." Minister James Vandiver said, "We never intended to be a source of political, much less religious, controversy." That left the city no closer to finding a permanent home than it had been nine years prior.

Moving into the first permanent city headquarters required two more years, but it was obvious that the city could not remain in the Bryant Building much longer. There was little parking, and city offices were confined to only the lower level of the building.

The situation changed in 1980, when the city purchased for \$180,000 a building that had been the home of the S.S. Shannon family prior to becoming Bill Towe's office and Hendersonville House Smorgasbord. The 1950 house had 7,800 square feet and an adjacent 3.9 acres, which were included in the purchase for an additional cost. Requiring some remodeling at a cost of \$85,000, the building became the official new home of the city on April 24, 1981.

By then the Church of Christ building was vacant and the church had moved to its present location on Rockland Road. All but the newest sections of the old church were razed to create offices in what is known as the 315 Building.

A worse fate befell the Simpkins Building. All of it was demolished. Jack and Robbie Simpkins decided to tear it down in 1985 and move their offices to another location. Jack's illness and subsequent death closed the business later. With the Simpkins Building gone, the land became home to a branch of Regions Bank and Q-Lube. The Regions' building was bought and recently renovated to be Collier Wealth Management.

Jamie Clary is the author of The City by the Lake, Volume II: A History of Hendersonville, Tennessee 1968-1988. Signed copies will be available at Daniel Smith Days on Sept. 20-21 at Rock Castle.



Governor Andrew Johnson, his wife, and other members of the family lived in this building across Cedar Street from the state capitol. It was the governor's residence from 1862 until 1865 when Johnson moved to Washington to become Vice President of the United States.

Nashville Was Key Supply, Distribution Center

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

In his book, *Reluctant Partners—Nashville and the Union*, the late historian Walter Durham of Gallatin offers a sequel to his *Nashville The Occupied City*, taking up the story of wartime Nashville on July 1, 1863, and following it past Appomattox to June 30, 1865.

Reluctant Partners provides a picture of how this major southern city, Sumner's nearest neighbor, changed after its capture and conversion into a principal supply base, hospital center and transportation hub for the Union army.

By fall of 1863, Nashville's largest enterprise was the maintenance and repair of firearms and equipment for the Union's western theater of war, Durham wrote. Large numbers of mechanics and laborers were brought in from the North. By the first of October, more than 200 men were employed at the ordnance

depot at a magazine and workshop. At the end of the month, a single train unloaded 250 workers of all trades. A large blacksmith shop was built on North Market St. in the city.

At the same time, most warehouses in the city were appropriated by and/or rented to the Union army. So much gunpowder was stored in these warehouses throughout the business district that citizens feared even a thunderstorm might provide the spark that would blow up Nashville. In December, Gen. Robert Granger addressed the problem, ordering all powder moved to locations outside the city. Engineers then constructed a huge underground powder magazine on an eight-acre field, the site of a city hospital that had been destroyed by fire in February 1863.

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Nashville's population swelled with workers and thousands of camp followers in early 1863, but the number of soldiers in town actually lessened beginning in July when Gen. Granger prohibited soldiers and officers from visiting without permission.

'No Army In The World Was Ever Better Prepared Than Sherman's'

As the war continued, Nashville became increasingly important as a distribution center for the Union Army. For example, the city received and forwarded to Sherman's forces supplies for 98 thousand men and 35 thousand animals. From Nov. 1, 1863, to Sept. 1, 1864, which Durham called the "period of building supplies and funneling them to the army," 41,122 horses, 38,724 mules, 3,795 wagons, 445,355 pairs of shoes, 182,300 woolen blankets, 107,715 waterproof blankets and 397,112 infantry tents passed through Nashville. In addition, there were millions of bushels of corn and oats, thousands of tons of hay as well as arms and ammunition. Gen. Robert Allen, chief quartermaster in the West, reported that "no army in the world was ever better provided than Sherman," Durham wrote.

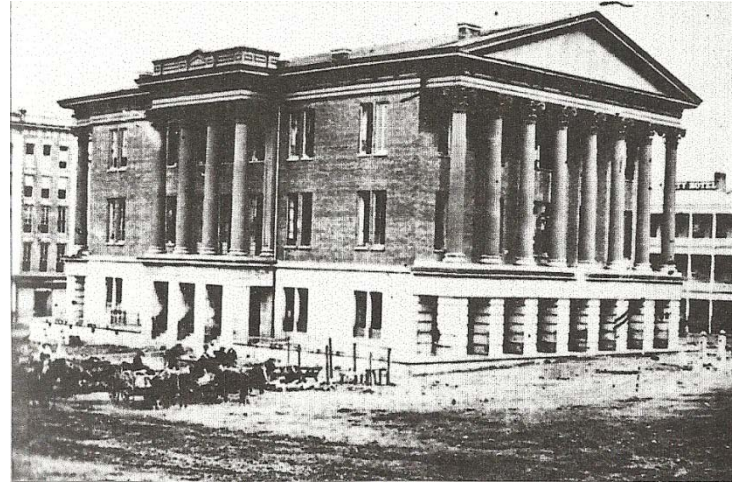
As distribution of war materials accelerated, Nashville became a center for the repair and construction of railroad equipment. By the spring of 1864, the main shops of the United States Military Railroads, Division of the Mississippi, was consolidated in Nashville. In these shops, routine maintenance was performed on the 221 locomotives of the division. As many as 100 locomotives could be found in Nashville at any one time. In addition, rail cars were repaired and equipped in the shops.

Supplying Horses For Troops

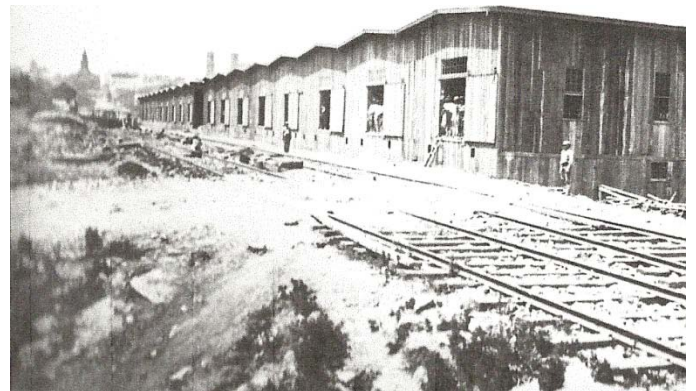
Horse trading was major business throughout the war. Government-owned corrals throughout Nashville were crowded with horses held, pending issue to various military units. Good quality horses were in such short supply that Quartermaster Allen suggested that horse inspectors and purchasing quartermasters were defrauding the government.

Orders were issued forbidding soldiers and others from trading in horses, cattle and mules, but Union demand was so high that many illegal sales were made to quartermaster agents more interested in acquiring the animals than in how they became available.

There were many opportunities for theft, Durham wrote. One cattle drover, moving a herd from Cairo, Illinois, to Nashville, sold 52 head en route and pocketed \$3,100 from the sale. He was one of the few who were caught. He was charged and sentenced to five years in prison.



Davidson County Courthouse, built in 1857, was under control of the Union Army from 1862 to 1865. The building, which resembles the capitol three blocks away, was designed by Francis Strickland whose father, William Strickland, was the capitol's architect.



Taylor Depot, located at the corner of Summer and Broad streets, faced the tracks of the Tennessee and Alabama Railroad. It was erected by the Union Army to funnel supplies to its armies in the field south of Nashville. Buildings were partially destroyed by fire on June 9, 1865.

Sarah Michie Smith: Rock Castle Matriarch

Sara Beth Gideon

Rock Castle may be known as the home of Daniel Smith, surveyor, senator, and founding frontiersman of Tennessee, but it is also the home of generations of Smith family women whose lives helped shape the story of Rock Castle. The life of Daniel Smith may be catalogued in the state archives; his possessions may now be artifacts at the state museum; his home may be preserved by the state celebrating the impact he had on the founding of Tennessee, but the truth is, there is more to the story.

The documents in the archives make little mention of Sarah Michie Smith, Daniel's wife and mother of their two children. Nor has a portrait of her been found. The artifacts displayed in the museum do not include the Smith family Bible that has a handwritten poem by a teenaged Polly who dreamed of her future husband. The tours of the historic home barely mention Sally Sypert Smith, the 24-year-old woman who witnessed the horrors of the Civil War from inside the limestone walls of Rock Castle

Nor are there many mentions of Easter Smith, the former house slave turned freedwoman who worked for the family before, during, and after the Civil War; nor Nannie Smith Berry, the first female owner of Rock Castle who managed the farm even after moving to a new home at Hazel Path; nor even Sarah Crosby Berry, the last owner and operator of Rock Castle who sold the home to the state of Tennessee and founded the Friends of Rock Castle group.

The absence of these stories leaves a rather large hole in the Rock Castle narrative, one that the castle staff is currently attempting to fill by shining new light on the lives of these extraordinary women. The task is no easy feat considering women have historically left fewer primary sources detailing their thoughts, feelings, and actions. But by studying the few documents that do exist, we can trace an outline of what their lives looked like.

Sarah Michie Smith (1755-1831)

Sarah Michie Smith accompanied her husband from the frontier of Virginia into the unknown and untamed wild of present-day Middle Tennessee. We know little about her life before she married Daniel Smith except that she was one of two daughters born to John Michie Jr. and Mary Burrus, on the Virginia frontier.

She received a good education, and she was orphaned by the age of 12.

After her parents' deaths, she moved to her uncle, Robert Michie's, plantation, which adjoined that of Dr. Thomas Walker. It was here that she met a young surveying apprentice by the name of Daniel Smith and married him on June 20, 1773. While Daniel Smith's career as a surveyor, local politician, Indian negotiator, soldier, and much more is well documented, what is often not taken into account is how his career would have affected Sarah Smith.

Left home alone quite often, Sarah would have had to execute all of the traditional roles of a wife and mother as well as any other duties that Daniel could not accomplish in his long absences. After the move in 1784 to their new home in present-day Hendersonville, Sarah would have had to take on additional duties such as overseeing the construction of their house as well as educating her two children George and Polly.

Although we hear very little from Sarah in her lifetime, we know that she was dedicated to her family and home. Her sole-surviving letter to her husband demonstrates that they had a mutually respectful relationship and that she missed him during his long absences. Additionally, we know from a letter written by her granddaughter-in-law that she was well-known for her sense of humor and "never let a joke pass."

Sarah's character and commitment were a major part of what made Rock Castle successful in its early years. Without a strong woman to run the home in Daniel's absences, the place could not have thrived the way it did. Although her impact may not be told in archival documents or museum artifacts, she started a long lineage of courageous women whose lives would be integral parts of the story of Rock Castle.

Sara Beth Gideon is the Executive Director of Historic Rock Castle. She is a Nashville native and a graduate of Middle Tennessee State University.

The annual Daniel Smith Days festival at Rock Castle will be Sept. 20-21, featuring historic crafts and entertainment.

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squad with Teddy's Roosevelt's son Quentin by 1917. George brought down his first German plane June 24, 1918. Landing to capture the gunner, he found him dead and himself behind German lines, which had changed overnight. He was a prisoner of war.

Officers were decently fed and allowed out with a guide for exercise. But George, raised by a strong mother in Gallatin after his father had moved out, would escape with school mates for night rambles. He was a daredevil by blood, for his father, Will Puryear, had ridden with the legendary Confederate General, John Hunt Morgan, burning the railroad tunnel above Gallatin and isolating the Federals in Nashville for months. His father was later among the last 50 of his men captured with Morgan in Ohio.

Breaking out of prison, George trudged 25 miles through cold rain, through the Black Forest, scaling mountains, raiding turnip patches, sleeping in empty barns. A heavy wool Russian overcoat he borrowed from a fellow prisoner grew heavier as it soaked up the rain, but it fooled some German officers outside a tavern into thinking him one of their own. He returned their salute and passed on.

After midnight on the fifth night, he reached the mighty Rhine River, surging and hissing with whirlpools from the cold October rains. Across the river lay neutral Switzerland. He timed the intervals of the searchlight sweeping the river. Unfolding a map, he studied the bends of the river – the first mile sweeping him towards the far bank, a pause, then surging back towards Germany. He had grown up in Hendersonville, swimming the Cumberland. He knew the effects of cold and currents, but nothing like this. He prayed, lay down and slept. In the dark before dawn, he heard, *Go Now*. He sucked his last cubes of sugar, pulled his olive drab sweater over his white undershirt, shucked shoes, coat and pants and slid down the bank into the river. The shock of the icy current swept him off his feet, but he gave himself to it and angled across with the current, as he had learned as a lad. Hypothermia would not be far off. As the searchlight probed the fog for him, the current eddied and began pushing towards the German side. It was now or never.

His feet slid along the bottom as he groped with stiff fingers for the rocks on the bank. The last thing he remembered were those rocks sailing by, like a passing freight train. When George regained consciousness, he

was looking at a man in uniform swinging a lantern over him, questioning him in German. George, thinking the current had carried him back into Germany, began to pass out, when the bridge guard, understanding the young man's terror, gestured toward himself and shouted, *Nein, nein: Swiss!*



Lt. George Puryear

The Swiss Red Cross bought him an ill-fitting dark wool suit, which he wears in a film clip, as he is interviewed by Gen. John Pershing, Commander of all U.S. Forces in Europe. George was the first American officer to escape German captivity in World War I.

When he reached Paris, his brother, Lt. Alf Puryear, and his cousin, Ann Wright, who served in the special services there, locked him in his hotel room and would not let him out until he wrote a detailed account of his exploits and his escape.

He returned to the States as a celebrated hero and flew acrobatic mock-combat exhibitions to benefit the War Bond efforts. Two years later, returning from border patrol duty, he crashed on takeoff at Calexico, Calif., and died in minutes – a tragic end to an illustrious career. After a flyover of George's home, flowers were dropped from the squadron of Army Air Force planes in George's honor. Every business in Gallatin was closed the day of his burial in the Old City Cemetery. A painting of Lt. Puryear hung for several years in the Smithsonian. Now, a hundred years on, he remains a family icon.

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1811-1812 Earthquakes Rattle Sumner Residents

One of the oddest stories recounted in Dr. Charles Moffatt's book, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*, is an account by an eyewitness of the 1811-1812 earthquakes, which were felt in Sumner County and caused residents to fear the end of the world. No other local accounts have yet been found. Moffatt, who is pastor emeritus of the First Presbyterian Church of Gallatin, found the accounts in old church documents. He reports:

"Beginning on Dec. 16, 1811, and continuing for weeks, the central Mississippi region was rocked by a series of earthquakes in which it is said the Mississippi River flowed upstream and formed Reelfoot Lake in northwest Tennessee. Rev. Peter Cartwright, a Methodist minister, was in Nashville at the time of the earthquake. He vividly describes what he saw: 'Chimneys were thrown down, scaffolding around many new buildings fell with a loud crash, hundreds of citizens awoke and sprang into the streets, loud screaming followed, for many thought the day of judgment had come.' He added that hundreds and even thousands joined churches out of fear. It was a panic situation,"

Rev. John Allan, a son of Shiloh [a church formerly located in Gallatin on Hartsville Pike], and his family, who then lived in Christian County, Ky., were in Sumner County during the earthquake days, visiting relatives. Allan was then in charge of Lebanon Academy in Christian County. According to Moffatt, "Allan wrote, 'Here we found the religious excitement quite as great as in the place of our residence. Prayer meetings were held almost every night somewhere in the bounds of the congregation of Shiloh.' Allan attended one of the prayer meetings and was deeply moved. Mr. Richard King, a Shiloh elder, talked with him. The family then spent the night with an uncle, William Hodge. "During the night there was a powerful aftershock," said Moffatt, "and everywhere people were praying."

Allan's story continues. A few mornings after that aftershock, Allan went into the woods at the foot of old Shiloh Hill on which the meeting house stood to pray. He said, "I was blessed with such views of the divine character as I never had before."

Moffatt records that Allan reported "worrying that his epiphany might have been 'an earthquake religion,' but he determined to make a public profession of faith, which he did, and eventually became a Shiloh

elder and an ordained Presbyterian minister. He served the Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Ala."

The 1811-1812 earthquakes are considered the most violent quakes ever recorded in North America. Had they occurred in a heavily populated area instead of rural West Tennessee—the New Madrid fault zone—they would have caused disasters of epic proportions. The first great quake on Dec. 16 was of greater magnitude than the entire 1906 earthquake in California, and it came without warning early in the morning.

Most eyewitness accounts of the New Madrid quake have been passed down from individuals living in or around Memphis. The Sumner County Historical Society would like to know more about its effects in this area. If you have seen the earthquake damage in old buildings (as we've heard rumored) or have read descriptions in family records and letters, please contact editor Jan Shuxteau at 615-822-1220. We'd just like to know more.

Web Site Coming Soon!

You are invited to check out the Sumner County Historical Society's new Web Site, which is now being built and can already be viewed at: sctnhs.org.

After passwords are provided, you, as a member, will be able to go online to look at all editions of the historical society's newsletter. Of course, we will continue to provide the newsletter by mail to those who prefer to receive it the same way as always. The site will also contain information about such things as SCHS book sales, special historical events and reports.

Books for Sale at Archives

Sumner County Historical Society has reprinted some historical books, now on sale at the Sumner County Archives, 365 N. Belvedere, Gallatin. They are:
The Great Leap Westward by Walter Durham: \$40
Old Sumner by Walter Durham: \$50
Sumner County Cemetery Records: \$50
The Lost World of Langley Hall by Judith Morgan: \$20