Days Of Old Sumner County

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Robert Taylor: His Legacy in Shackle Island

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

"Most things Robert Taylor built were intentionally designed to outlast those who requested them," said David Bowden (pictured below), a longtime admirer of the work done in old Shackle Island by 19th century carpenter/wood craftsman/ builder Robert Alexander Taylor Jr.

"Taylor possessed a rare, innate talent for knowing how to put things together," Bowden continued. "Within this talent lay an almost magical awareness of how time and climate would behave upon them. The knowledge and preparation he would need to build something—brick, stone or wood—was already in his head before he started, and the magic lay in his hands."

Taylor built pieces of furniture (mainly scattered among descendants) and historic homes in Shackle Island and special features such as staircases and mantels for them. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, these homes are: William Montgomery's "Old Brick," Daniel Montgomery's Greystone, Kirkpatrick House (Robert's inlaws) and the Taylor-Montgomery House. Sadly,

(See TAYLOR, Page 6)

In the Sunday Tennessean circa 1960 was this picture of the lavishly decorated parlor of Hancock House, then the home and antique shop of Felice Ferrell, who held an annual Christmas Open House for years.

Hancock House: Long Remembered

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

One of Sumner County's most fascinating and nostalgic old homes, Hancock House, located on Nashville Pike between Hendersonville and Gallatin, was partially destroyed by flames on Aug. 11, after electrical wiring in a small shack behind the house caught fire and fell on the main building in the middle of the night.

"We didn't realize there was still wiring in that old shack," said Roberta Hancock, who owned the house with her husband Carl for more than 40 years. They sold the property to the Rogers Group in 2019 but remain as tenants and operators of the bed and breakfast there. "At least no one was injured."

It was a quirk of fate that the couple was home alone Aug.11. The big log house is usually brimming with guests. Only the weekend before, every room was full. But that night, the house was closed; the couple was leaving to visit family. Roberta shudders to think what could have happened if the house had been full. As it was, about 40 firefighters with five engines fought to the blaze, and Nashville Pike between Cages Bend and Hunt Club Blvd. was shut down for hours.

(See HANCOCK, PAGE 10)

With the Wizard of the Saddle: Lt. Francis William Youree

By John Aaron Wade

Francis William Youree and his wife, Frances Mae Youree had the rare distinction among antebellum couples of going off to war together.

Frances William Youree was born on Dec. 11, 1838, to Alexander Porter Youree and Mary Ann Fretwell. The family owned the lands that were three miles east of Gallatin, and at one time had a merchant business in Cairo. The Yourees were successful with vast land holdings and slaves.

On Aug. 7,1860, Francis married his first cousin, who was (confusingly) also named Frances Youree, with a middle name of Mae.

Within a year, the clouds of war hovered over Sumner County, and the spirit of southern patriotism imbibed the young men—and women—of the Youree clan. Francis William joined Company C of the 7th Tennessee Cavalry Battalion on Nov. 1, 1861.

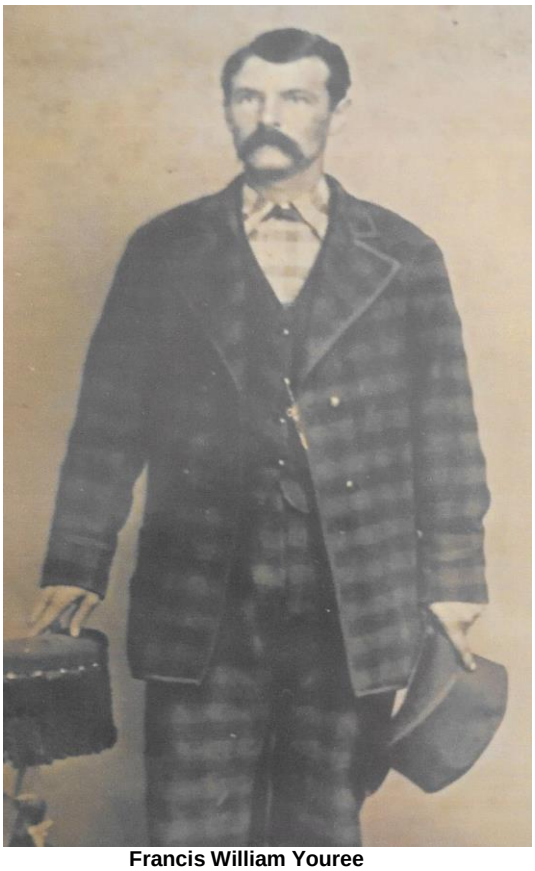
However, this Confederate organization was short-lived. Lt. Youree's unit was later consolidated and became the 22nd Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, Confederate States Army. This regiment experienced hard fighting and rough living. They mainly fought in Mississippi and were put under the command of Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest on Jan. 26, 1864. Gen Forrest took this regiment on raids in West and Middle Tennessee in '64. Lt. Youree fought in the Battles of "Brice's Crossroads" and the controversial Battle of Fort Pillow, Tennessee.

Lt. Youree was severely wounded at the major three-day engagement of Harrisburg, Mississippi in 1864. He remained in the service without any furlough.

An interesting facet of Lt. Youree's military service is that his young wife went into the Confederate Army with him. Mrs. Youree was known as "The Child of the Regiment." She personally filled out the Muster Rolls for Company D and tended to the sick and wounded. In late 1864, Mrs. Youree rode a horse and travelled alone toward Sumner County. However, she never made it. In the vicinity of Nashville, she was discovered by a Union patrol, charged with being a spy and confined for a short period of time in a Nashville prison.

Lt. Youree rode with Gen. Forrest until the end of the war. He was paroled at Gainesville, Ala., in May of 1856.

After the war, Youree was active in Confederate reunions in Gallatin and also served as a steamboat captain. Mrs. Youree also survived the war and remained with her husband.



Francis William Youree

In the late 19th century, the Yourees moved to Washington County, Arkansas. In 1905, he served as the first mayor of Prairie Grove and was ever active with the old Johnny Rebs there. As time took its toll, the Yourees began to spend the winter months in San Antonio, Texas. He spent the final years of his life there and passed away on Dec. 30, 1925 at the age of 87. According to his obituary, he and Frances (called Fannie in the obit) were married for 63 years and had a daughter and two sons.

Editor's Note: Interestingly, there are nearly 400 documented cases of women who went to war with men in the Civil War, according to the U.S. Sanitary Commission records and reported by history.net. They went for a variety of reasons: patriotism, adventure, to aid the wounded. However, most women soldiers (and presumably Mrs. Youree) went because they wanted to accompany family members instead of enduring the separation and uncertainty of a lengthy war. The U.S. Sanitary Commission (USSC) was a private relief agency created by federal legislation in 1861, to support sick and wounded soldiers during the Civil War.

South Tunnel Owed Its Life to the Railroad

Editor's Note: The following story about the South Tunnel community and railroad ran in part in the Gallatin *News Examiner*'s special 1986 bicentennial edition, commemorating Sumner County's founding 200 years before.

About 1850, "Railroad fever" was sweeping the nation. There arose quite a bit of agitation for the railroad connecting Louisville and Nashville.

Trade and business in general would seem to be benefited by such a road. Perhaps one of the most important dates connected with South Tunnel was that of March 5, 1850, for on that date a charter was granted for the beginning of the railroad. A careful survey of the resources of the territory involved seemed to show that it might prove to be a very profitable venture.

Surveying for the railroad began in July 1851 and was to be finished by the spring of 1853. Counties and cities along the line bought stock in the prospective line. Some of the stock was never paid for, disputes arose over the location of the line, but these troubles were settled at least temporarily, and work contract was signed on Aug. 13, 1853. The road was finished in two and a half years.

The contractors were to be paid $35 per mile with certain specifications to be met. Actual work began on May 2, 1853. Financial difficulties soon stopped the work in May 1854.

Another contract was made with another company and work again started. The first of the line was finished and tried out on Aug. 24, 1855, taking 27 minutes to make the eight miles. Work was soon being done on both ends of the line.

About this time everything seemed to go wrong: cholera epidemics, crop failures, war in Europe and political discord between the North and South. These things, plus overcoming natural obstacles-- transversing Muldraugh's Hill near Louisville, bridging the numerous rivers and tunneling through "The Ridge" in Sumner County—slowed the work so it could not be completed in the contracted time.

The above mentioned "Ridge" caused the digging of the tunnel that gave South Tunnel its name. The North Tunnel was through Muldraugh's Hill…Most of the labor in cutting these two tunnels was done by Irish laborers who were maintained in a huge labor camp just south of the tunnels…the labor camp included a hospital…and a burial ground.

Before the railroad was completed, it was bringing in a substantial income to farmers from rail being laid in July 1855. With eight miles on the northern end of line, farmers were furnishing cross ties, wood for firing engines and sub contracting sections of rail bed. Trestles were cheaper and easier to build than fills, for all earth moving was then a pick and shovel job with wheelbarrows for moving the dirt [dynamite was not in use then]. This trestle timber was easily accessible from people along the line.

The railroad was "officially" opened on Oct. 31, 1859. It took about nine hours for a passenger train and 18 hours for a freight train to make the entire run, using the official time table. The first train went through [earlier] on Aug. 10, 1859, and was celebrated by a barbeque in Nashville attended by 10,000 people.

Soon the Civil War began. Tennessee was overrun by the Union forces. As the northern army advanced southward, the railroad became more and more a life line for the Union Army. The South made every effort to close this supply route. Confederate Gen. John Hunt Morgan made several raids, destroying trestles and bridges. The only way the Union forces could keep the road operating was to guard every bridge and trestle.

On Aug. 12, 1862, Morgan captured Gallatin and the Union force there and destroyed a 29-car train, along with the water tank and two bridges. Later, when the Confederate raiders appeared to have left, [Union] workmen were sent to Gallatin. The rebels returned, and the workmen and their guards were driven almost to Nashville. Morgan captured the Union guard at Tunnel Hill, which left 46 miles of railroad north of Nashville unguarded, all bridges out and telegraph wires destroyed…Morgan fired several freight cars and rolled them deep into the southernmost tunnel, where the supporting timbers burned and 800 feet of tunnel was filled to a depth of 12 feet with wreckage, rock, earth. It took months to clear the tunnel and rebuild the track…all rock removal had to be done with hand drills and blasting powder [still no dynamite] Then there was the problem of removing the thousands of tons of rock after it was loosened. Immense piles of stone removed from the twin tunnels still remain today. This blockage of the tunnel almost caused the evacuation of Nashville by Union forces.

To prevent any further incursions at North or South Tunnel, a fort was built on top of each of the two tunnels, and Union soldiers were garrisoned there the remainder of the war. No battles were ever fought at South Tunnel, but occasional skirmishes occurred. The tunnels were patrolled by guards day and night.

Daniel Smith: Secretary of the Southwest Territory

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

Note: This is the second in a series of stories about Daniel Smith.

No name in Tennessee was better known to George Washington and the other founding fathers than that of Daniel Smith, who lived in what is now Hendersonville in the still-standing house/museum Rock Castle. Smith, born in Virginia in 1748, began like Washington, himself, working first as a surveyor. He braved the wilderness and hostile Indians and was conspicuously honest, smart and able to lead.

Smith came to Tennessee when it was the western border, still a part of North Carolina, and later the Southwest Territory (1790-1796). The very talents that made him an excellent surveyor also made him a natural statesman, locally and nationally. He was a problem solver, and there were plenty of problems on the frontier to solve.

First, was problem of the boundary lines, which defined jurisdictions of states, counties and personal property. Smith knew these lines well; he'd drawn many of them. Also, he had been one of five commissioners from Virginia and North Carolina involved in extending their mutual boundary further west, opening new frontiers. He was a trustee for the establishment of Nashville. He was well known to settlers, so it was no surprise to them that after North Carolina created Davidson County in April 1783, it put Smith on its governing body—the first Davidson County Quarterly Court, which opened in 1784. That's when Smith and family moved from Virginia to the Cumberland settlement, then North Carolina, now Sumner County.

The second big problem was keeping the peace with Indians. Smith understood this situation and worked both militarily and diplomatically toward peace with the natives. It is worth noting that the backdrop of his childhood was the French and Indian War (1754-1763). He grew up tough and knowledgeable about the natives, conducting public land surveys by the age of 20. During the early years of the American Revolution, he commanded militia forces that defended settlements against British-supported Indian attacks. When he moved to the Cumberland settlement, he was already colonel of the Washington County militia.

Governing Was His Duty

Smith continued his work as a surveyor, but he took seriously his new position on the quarterly court. He began by helping to deal with "the usual mixture of legislative, administrative and judicial matters of the developing border country," noted historian Walter Durham in his 1976 Daniel Smith biography. In 1786, Smith was involved in petitioning North Carolina to create Sumner County from a portion of Davidson. He surveyed the official county line separating Davidson and Sumner and went from the Davidson County Quarterly Court to the Sumner County Quarterly Court, which he chaired more than once.

"It was for Smith the fourth time that he had served on the governing body of a new county," wrote Durham. "He had previously been a member of the first Committee of Safety for Fincastle County and had been named in the first Commission of the Peace for Washington County, Va., and Davidson County, N.C."

Raids and River Rights

Indian attacks continued in the Cumberland settlements during the 1780s. In addition to problems of defense, settlers faced the possible loss of their navigation rights on the Mississippi River, which they needed to get products to market in New Orleans.

Durham explained, "Spain had threatened to close the river to colonial shipping in 1784, and now in treaty negotiations with Spain it appeared that the United States representative John Jay might trade free navigation of the Mississippi for economic benefits for the northeastern states. Such a prospect caused the westerners to band together in defense of what they regarded as an essential right."

Smith chaired a meeting of representatives of militia companies in the area to discuss the navigation issue. They drew up a "remonstrance to Congress," urging the U.S. not to relinquish navigation rights. The upshot of this was that western representatives blocked Jay's treaty. As feared, Spain closed the river, and Indian attacks advanced to keep traders off. Smith devised a diplomatic plan, contacting Spanish authorities with hints that the Cumberland settlers would put themselves under Spanish rule if Spain controlled the Indian attacks and opened the river. However, North Carolina and Georgia officials stepped in and met with Cherokee and Creek chiefs, warning them that the U.S. would not tolerate attacks on settlers. The Cherokee, at least, gave "every promise of peace."

The Creeks remained a threat. Pioneer leader James Robertson wrote to Smith that his settlers were "so dispirited by the Indians continually harassing them" that he had almost lost all hope. He wrote that the Indians were emboldened, knowing that the settlement was poorly protected. The Creeks "suppose they may commit every species of devastation on us with impunity," Robertson wrote.

In 1788, Smith was elected by the North Carolina General Assembly as a Brigadier General. "With this new responsibility, Smith became the ranking military officer of the district and commandant of its militia," wrote Durham. He was 40 years old.

Smith, along with other leaders in the Cumberland settlement, believed that if North Carolina became a state, protection from the national government would follow. Smith urged North Carolina leaders toward statehood, but it was slow going. In desperation, the Tennessee country formed a separate political entity, initially with the Watauga Association, and later with the State of Franklin, which failed.

Finally, in the fall of 1789, North Carolina held its Constitutional Convention for statehood in Fayetteville. Smith was there as a delegate from Sumner County and cast his vote for North Carolina to become the twelfth state in the Union on Nov. 21, 1789.

Smith stayed on in Fayetteville, drumming up support for a cessation act that would allow North Carolina to cede its Tennessee lands to the Union as payment for war debts. Congress accepted the land and established it as the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio in May 1790. Tennessee settlers hoped that protection was theirs.

Within two weeks, President Washington appointed Smith as Secretary to the territory, which had its capital in Knoxville. This gave Smith authority to act for territorial Gov. William Blount when he was absent. "Smith's appointment cast him in a broader public role than he had heretofore undertaken," wrote Durham. "Daniel was selected primarily because of his leadership in promoting the cession."

His duties were to serve as Gov. Blount's chief administrative officer, make copies of all acts and proceedings of the governor and submit them to the Secretary of Congress every six months.

Early in his days as Secretary, Smith was also named Treasurer of the territory. "His candid relationship with Blount—as with others—was enhanced by the fact that he had not overriding personal ambitions to be fulfilled in the political arena," wrote Durham.

Still the top military man in the district, Smith continued to try to keep the territory safe from Indian attack. Nevertheless, attacks continued, and Smith received letter after letter detailing Indian raids. "By the autumn [of 1792] Daniel Smith had reluctantly concluded that a war 'well directed' by the United States against the Creeks and Cherokees was the only remaining route to peace…He wrote a carefully reasoned plea to the Secretary of State [for a strike at the southern Indians]," stated Durham.

Instead, President Washington decided to make another try at a treaty. He invited Gov. Blount and the Cherokee chiefs to come meet with him in Philadelphia in the spring of 1793. Blount left for the meeting, and Smith arrived in Knoxville to fill in for Blount. Then, Washington's plan fell apart. Capt. John Beard of Knoxville took it upon himself to attack with his infantry a group of chiefs and their families as they prepared to travel. The Indians were furious and threatened retaliation. The lives of hundreds of innocents hung in the balance.

Blount was gone, and Smith was the man on the spot, brokering deals to placate chiefs and stop a war. And, as it turned out, he also had to deal with a group of volunteers led by Beard who again took matters into their own hands and attacked a Cherokee settlement. They weren't able to do much damage and returned to their homes, but tensions stayed high, and fights broke out during the summer and fall. Blount got back to Knoxville by October, and Smith returned to Sumner County.

Smith and other leaders in Tennessee country had from the beginning seen the territory as a bridge to statehood. In 1795, Smith was chosen as a Sumner County delegate to the convention that organized the State of Tennessee, and he chaired the committee that drafted its constitution and bill of rights. Tennessee became the 16th state on June 1, 1796***. Though his territorial duties ended, Smith duties as a statesman continued, and the story of his life will continue in the next edition of this newsletter. No portrait of Smith has ever been found.***

Please Pay Dues, Join SC Historical Society

Because of the pandemic, Sumner County Historical Society did not hold its annual fundraising dinner this spring.

However, we ask that you please pay your yearly dues: $20 per person or $25 per family. Dues support this newsletter and the preservation of historical sites.

Make your check to Sumner County Historical Society and mail to: P.O. Box 1871, Gallatin, TN 37066.

(TAYLOR, Continued from Page 1)

Robert Taylor's own house, which burned down to the bare rock in 1982 or '83, was unlisted.

But Bowden, who has lived in Shackle Island most of his life, is bringing Taylor's old, stone house back to life. Using the original materials, he is slowly rebuilding it—a task he figures could take years since a spinal disease has hampered his ability to work. Nevertheless, the project delights him. "I can stand here in the present and be a part of the past at the same time." he said. "It's the nearest thing to a time machine."

Bowden has laid many of the massive foundation stones already.

Taylor built his house in 1822 on the side of a hill off of Long Hollow Pike, near the turnoff to Longview Acres. Around 1900, the Taylor family sold about half the original Taylor land (but not the house) to the Willis family. In the late 1940s, the remaining Taylor land and house was sold to Herbert and Rita Stone. Bowden's parents bought the Willis farm in 1963, when he was a kid. Bowden purchased the remains of the Taylor house--"every existing scrap"—from Mary and Michael Stone in 2007 with the intention of moving it and rebuilding it after retiring from his job at UPS.

Remains of the house after it burned in 1980s

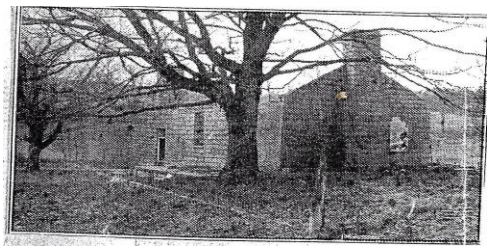
"I'd wanted that house restored since I was a kid," said Bowden, a self avowed history buff. As a child, he often played and spent the night with the Stones' son, Herbert "Bubba" Stone. "I may be the only person alive who spent many happy nights in the Taylor house and knew its layout and all of its secret little places to hide."

He witnessed the house, which he describes as "one of Sumner County's most elaborate and historic structures"--burn in the 1980s. Flames consumed the log portion of the house and the interior, but the massive, dressed stone blocks, walls and fireplaces remained. Bowden has moved most of them to his own Shackle Island property, situating them on a slope just as Taylor did. He is using original measurements and drawings. He has the unique advantage of remembering from his childhood details about the rooms and their layout. Before any work started, the exact mapping of all foundation dimensions, doors, windows and even the cellar was meticulously recorded and photographed.

"When I'm done, we're going to live in it." Bowden said. Meanwhile, he and his wife, Sharon, live in a farmhouse on top of the hill, and Bowden walks down to his Taylor project, which is now foundation/walls showing where rooms will be located. A few dozen feet away are his own sawmill and a couple of shops, where he works on wood and stone and perfected the craft of chinking logs together. Piles of dressed stone surround the "house."

What We Know About Taylor House

Taylor built his house in an unusual tri level design to fit his land. The main section was rectangular and constructed of hand-dressed, coursed limestone, one room in depth. The house included a parlor and transverse hall and a second story chamber built under the eaves. An adjoining section was composed of two rooms with a basement. The gable roof was built on queen post trusses, forming a continuous line extending across both sections. There were balanced chimneys on each end, one enclosed and the other projecting out from the north wall.



This is an old photo of the original house.

Several years ago the National Register of Historic Places described the work, "Taylor chose the finest materials for constructing and finishing this house. Like other houses he built, the coursed limestone masonry bearing walls are laid with care. Obviously the work of a skilled stone mason, they measure precisely four feet thick at the gable ends [at the fireplaces] and two feet thick across the sides [the rest of the house]. For added strength, the hand-dressed, squared stones are patterned as headers and soldiers running through the wall. Built on solid rock, there is no sign of settlement in the building."

Another Shackle Island history buff, Debbie Robinson, reports that the Taylor house featured

hand-carved walnut woodwork, mantels and paneled doors with a wood-grain finish. “This home is said to be his greatest example of skill in design and craftsmanship,” she said.

Bowden noted that the original property deeded to Taylor from Montgomery contained a log house that Montgomery and then Taylor lived in. Taylor built his stone house abutting the log house. It was this log section that burned.

What We Know about Robert Taylor

Robert Taylor, born in North Carolina on March 11, 1777, and his four-years-younger brother, Benjamin, came to Tennessee from Lenoir, N.C., around 1800. This was a time when craftsmen such as the Taylor brothers were in high demand to work on homes and public buildings new to the frontier. They brought with them the Pennsylvania Dutch style of building, unseen in this area before, and the wood working skills they learned from their father.

We know that Robert Taylor was living in Wilson County in 1804, when he contracted with William Montgomery to build or finish Montgomery’s fine home, Old Brick. By that time, he had been married to his wife, Margaret Kirkpatrick, for two years, since Aug. 9, 1802. They had one son, Joseph Kirkpatrick, born in 1803 and another, Alexander Kirkpatrick Taylor, on the way.

Taylor may have been drawn to Sumner County by the promise of payment in land as well as coin—a home place for his growing family and the expectation of plenty of carpentry work in the Shackle Island area. Montgomery deeded him about 210 acres as partial payment for Old Brick. A rare framed copy of the contract is on display at Beech Church, along with some of Taylor’s tools and his family Bible.

Joseph and Alexander Taylor were eventually joined by brothers: Benjamin, born in 1807; John, born in 1809; William McGee, born in 1811; Robert, born in 1813; and finally a sister, Elizabeth Jane, born in 1815; then James, born in 1818; Finis Anderson, born in 1822; Margaret Ann, born in 1824; and Lucy Jane, born in 1828—eight boys and three girls.

A Taylor descendant, Vicky Seibel, whose husband is Robert’s fourth great grandson—provided census information about the Taylors. She reports that the 1820 Census records that Taylor and his family lived in Gallatin. The household had 12 free people—six in agriculture and six in manufacturing—and nine slaves.

We know that he was building, maybe completing, his own house sometime around 1820 because the date carved in stone on the on the front of the house is 1822. Bowden has that date stone (photo above).

The 1830 Census records Taylor in Sumner County in a household of 10 with three slaves.

The 1840 Census records him still living in Sumner County with a total of 30 people—12 free people and 18 slaves.

Personal information about Robert and the family is hard to come by, but we do know that he was listed as an elder of the Beech Church, which he built in 1828. “In his day, he was considered a very righteous man,” note Bowden.

We know that his services were in much demand in Shackle Island. We know that he built the Taylor-Montgomery House on the south side of Long Hollow Pike in 1824. The front of the house is of very large, hand dressed coursed limestone masonry. There is a stone lintel over the front entrance carved with the date 1824.

We know that Taylor worked on Greystone, designing its graceful staircases and hand-carving its mantels. William Montgomery gave the land for Greystone, which was part of his plantation, to his son Daniel.

We know that he designed furniture for some of his patrons. In her research, Seibel discovered that a mirror-topped dressing stand that Robert designed and signed was featured in the September 1971 issue of *Antiques Magazine.* Bowden recalled seeing a large Taylor cabinet in the home of the late Sadie Hurt of Shackle Island. “The work of this remarkable man is still very much in evidence. From structures to furniture, he got it right,” said Bowden.

We know from Taylor’s will that at his death, he had more than 300 acres of land, as well as considerable cash, and that he divided his assets as equally as he could among his many children and also left bequests to his grandchildren. In his will, Robert said his son J.K. (Joseph) lived north of him “many years & has never left me, but has devoted most of his time to the management of my affairs…”

We know from his will that several, maybe all, of his children were still alive, but his wife was not. He left James his home tract of land—about 100 acres, and he left his daughter, Margaret 50 acres. John got 40 acres. Alexander got $600. William McGee got $1,000, and Robert got $500.

We know that Robert Taylor died at the age of 82 in Sumner County on March 30, 1859, and is buried in the Beech Church cemetery next to his wife, who died on March 25, 1845.

A Medical History of Portland: 1812 to 2022

By Al Dittes

When James Gwin brought civilization to Upper Sumner County around 1791, it was logical that certain service providers would follow such as shopkeepers, pastors, teachers, and, of course, doctors.

Dr. James McKendree was probably the earliest physician to come. He settled in Fountain Head area around 1812. Some of his 5th generation descendants remain. (He also brought along a famous brother, Bishop William McKendree, who served the entire frontier Methodist Church.)

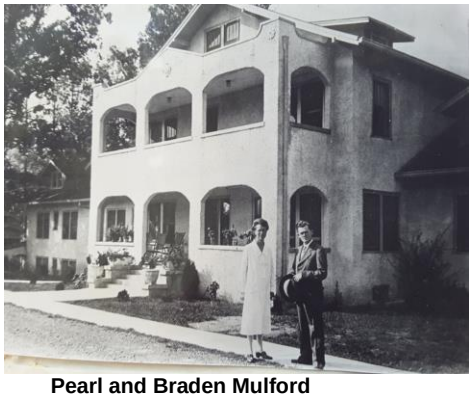
Dr. William Polk Moore, Sr., of Portland (then called Richland) saw patients in Portland and later at Camp Trousdale during the first summer of the Civil War in 1861. When the Federals took Nashville early in 1862, he took care of Union soldiers. According to legend, the Union Army spared his home because he treated its soldiers. Moore's son, Dr. William Polk Moore Jr. also became a physician.

The first hospital of its kind in Sumner County opened years later as part of a Seventh-day Adventist lay religious movement in Fountain Head. (Sumner Regional Medical Center opened in 1959. Several Gallatin physicians previously operated private hospitals.)

Here's How the Sanitarium Started

Braden Mulford, a native of Iowa, moved to Tennessee as a charter student at the Nashville Agricultural and Normal Institute, which started on a farm near Madison, Tenn., in 1904. The institute's religious faith involved health and medical care as well as classroom and agricultural education. Mulford and fellow student, Charles Alden, extended their parent institution to nearby Goodlettsville.

A year later, Mulford purchased a farm near Fountain Head. He and his brother-in-law, Forrest West, opened a school there. They saw a need for medical care in the community, so Mulford and his wife Pearl retrained as nurses and started a sanitarium.



Pearl and Braden Mulford

This first sanitarium was built about 1913 and was destroyed by fire in 1928.

The first public announcement I have found of its opening was in 1916. A Seventh-day Adventist church newsletter quoted a description of the sanitarium from a man named W.C. White, who visited it in December 1914. White said that the Mulfords "built a two-story, 12-room cottage with bathrooms in the basement for the care of the sick. With this equipment they will be able to care for five or six boarding patients and to do whatever work is needed…"

Another visitor, M. Wheeler, reported in the same newsletter on Jan. 20, 1916, "They have just completed a neat little sanitarium where patients can receive treatment at a very low rate."

Two other lay Adventist families—the Walens and the Wallaces—started a similar enterprise near Oak Grove, naming it Chestnut Hill. They operated a school, farm and sanitarium there for many years.

More Physicians Practiced in Portland

When Fountain Head Sanitarium began, Dr. Fount Hobdy (1871-1937), a graduate of Vanderbilt Medical School and great grandfather of the present generation of Meguiars, was already seeing patients. He practiced medicine locally for 28 years, then moved to Nashville and bought two-thirds interest in Lovelace Candy Co.

Dr. M.Lee Alton Absher (1905-1990) graduated from SCHS in 1921, UT Medical School in 1928 and saw patients in the Peden Building in 1931, the year it was built. He later moved to Texas and then to Knoxville, Tenn.

Dr. T.L. Lanier (1848-1934) went into medical practice and business with Dr. W.P. Moore, Jr., in the early 1900s. He also earned a pharmacist license and opened a drug store in Portland in 1887, which later operated many years as Consumers Drug Store.

Dr. J.M. Oliver practiced medicine in Portland for 26 years, dying in 1939.

Dr. Edgar F. Peden (1872-1951) began a medical practice in Portland in 1904. He was listed as

doctor in general practice in the 1910 census, a druggist in the 1920 census and a merchant in the 1940 census.

Dr. Ralph Simonton Sr. (1892-1950) moved to Portland around 1942, transformed a church building into his medical office and started a family tradition in medicine. His son, Dr. Ralph Simonton, Jr. (1923-2008) practiced in Portland for 54 years, and his grandson, Dr. Ralph Simonton III, is an optometrist in White House.

Sanitarium and School Linked

Meanwhile, the Fountain Head Sanitarium found a role for itself. A statement from Braden Mulford in the April 1, 1926, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* noted that the sanitarium's work provided essential funds to keep the Fountain Head Rural School going. "In fact, it would hardly be possible for the school to continue if we did not have the sanitarium," it reported. In addition, students and sanitarium patients were encouraged to interact. "This means much to those who are seeking health, and it also means much to the young people to have to deal with those who need tender care," it reported.

A fire destroyed the first sanitarium building in 1928. With insurance money and the support of the community, it was rebuilt larger. However, in 1935 the facility burned again, and this time there was no insurance money. Enduring a financial crunch due to the Great Depression, the Mulfords had let their policy lapse. They turned the school-sanitarium-farm over to the Martin and Dysinger families in 1937 and moved to Monteagle, Tenn.

Fire destroyed this sanitarium building in 1935

Ralph Martin, the new headmaster, left a big mark the community by not only rebuilding a smaller sanitarium but by bringing in his close friend, Dr. Reuben Johnson, as an affiliate. Dr. Johnson bought the medical practice of Dr. M.Lee Alton Absher around 1937 and opened an office in Portland. Almost single-handedly, he kept the sanitarium/hospital going during WWII.

The war years left the Fountain Head rural enterprise financially exhausted, with all of the male students drafted into the military. The Martins and Dysingers turned it all over to the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in June, 1945. They renamed the school Highland Academy. The Fountain Head Sanitarium and Hospital later became Highland Hospital. The conference voted to close the sanitarium and use the building for a dormitory.

But, with WWII ending, Dr. Johnson was able to obtain needed help. He added Dr. Albert Dittes, a young man just discharged from the U.S. Army, to his medical practice in 1946. And W.D. Walton, the business manager assigned to close the hospital, found the real solution to the shaky financial situation to be reorganization. The community still needed and wanted a hospital, but operating it as a department of the school was not working. So, they put Highland Hospital under separate management, and the two physicians attracted enough patients to make it pay. Dr. Johnson moved to Mississippi around 1950, but Dr. Dittes saw patients in Portland for 53 years.

The hospital attracted other Adventist physicians to the area, including Dr. James Ladd in 1955, Drs. Ralph Ruckle and Lou Ponce in the early 1970s and Drs. John Taylor and Paul Porter in the 1980s, along with others: Drs. Michael Littell, Guillermo Ludi, Albert Handel and Robert Ladd.

Drs. Ralph Simonton, Al Dittes and James Ladd served Portland for many years.

A Changing Economy

Starting in the 1960s, Portland began to change from an agricultural to an industrial economy, which adversely affected the hospital as well as Main St. businesses. The coming of I-65 made Nashville easily accessible for health care as well as shopping. The hospital attempted to grow with the community by opening a more modern facility in 1983. But while the community liked and appreciated the hospital, people with money and good insurance preferred to go to Nashville for their healthcare needs.

The Adventist Health System sold its Madison and Portland hospitals to the Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) in 2005. Its TriStar division operated the Portland hospital for a few years but eventually closed it down and maintains it only as an emergency room.

(HANCOCK, Continued from Page 1)

So, the Hancocks mourn for their home, and they are not alone. Every guest who spent a night there, celebrated an anniversary or birthday has memories of Hancock House.

Hancock House

And many who grew up in Sumner County, mainly the girls, have happy memories that go back 60 years or more to when the house was owned by Mrs. Mary Felice Ferrell Booth (called Miss Felice), who lived and sold antiques there, and every year held a lavish Christmas Open House the first Sunday of December. Little girls came with their mothers and were spellbound (I know because I was one of them) by each room, sparkling with decorations, old toys, antique furniture and big beautiful trees hung with giant Christmas balls and fruit. Best of all were Miss Felice's antique dolls, poised under Christmas trees and enthroned throughout the house.

In a 1960s story in the *Tennessean*, columnist Clara Hieronymus wrote: "She [Miss Felice] decorates every room, so that the color and fragrances of Christmas are everywhere. The delicious scents of oranges, apples, fresh carnations, holly branches and hickory logs burning cheerily in the fireplace mingle to become the attar of hospitality…

"On this one, green-gold Christmas tree, beads loop back and forth. Small red applies—real ones—give it color, along with ornate tree balls, trimmed with ribbons and sequins. There are cookies (with children's names on them), gilded Dixie cups tied on the ribbons and filled with wrapped candies and, like the cookies, are meant to be taken home by small visitors…"

A worthy stage for this vision of Christmas was the house itself. It was an amazing creation of four old log buildings put together. The front section of the house was moved from where it was built on the square in Gallatin by Robert Morris Boyers (1788-1871). She also moved a cabin from her family farm on Cages Bend Rd., another from the Leonidas Baker farm in Gallatin, and the Menlo log barn.

Author Rowena Rutherford Farrer (1903-1999) interviewed Miss Felice and described in the *National Historical Magazine* how she "built" the house. "First she bought the site of the last tollgate [known as Avondale Station] in use in Sumner County…Then, by shrewd dickering, she purchased two historic log houses, one 137 years old and the other 94, built by settlers of Sumner County. The houses were razed, each log and window and door carefully numbered and hauled to the old tollgate site.

"Next she scoured the country looking for a very special old man to put them together. He had to very old to know how it was done years ago, and very special to take enough interest to do it well because every beam had to go in its groove…

"The houses were combined cleverly to preserve the original floor plans and at the same time more or less crawl up the hill [behind it]. This meant adding attractive and unexpected little stairways, which are a delight to the eye. The spacious entrance hall contains a rare old cherry stairway of graceful proportions, which is one of the lovely features of the house. Two architects offered her a fortune for the stairway, which she promptly declined, notwithstanding the fact that cash would have come in handy at this point.

"Another lovely feature is the poplar paneling, feather-edged, some pieces fully 16 inches wide, which she used in the library. Felice discovered this treasure in one of the houses, buried under sixteen coats of paper and one coat of plaster, which she scraped away herself…

"One of the houses was used during the War Between the States as headquarters for Union troops, and when the hardwood floors were taken up she found the names of officers and men scratched into the wood. Andrew Jackson and Sam Houston were frequent visitors…

"The mantels and doors and fireplaces are exquisite. The rooms are large and the ceilings high. The walls are covered with original colonial wallpaper—which she dug up from heaven knows where..."

It Became Hancock House

The Hancocks purchased the house from Miss Felice's estate after her death in 1977. Though the house retains its original character, additions have been made over the years. The Hancocks added two small cabins to the rear of the original structure and a two-story cabin across the lawn from the main house.

The debris from the fire is gone, and it is obvious that rebuilding would be extensive and expensive. "We simply don't have enough insurance to cover it," said Roberta. "But this is a wonderful old house, and we pray someone will preserve it. That would be a miracle."

Felice Ferrell: Lifted Up By Work, Talent and Charm

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

The story of Mary Felice Ferrell Booth, called "Miss Felice," is the story of a lovely, self-made woman, a Gallatin native (1897-1977), who built a nationwide reputation as an authority on "Colonialana"—everything about colonial living--and established a memorable local business, Log Cabin Antique Shop, now Hancock House. She did it through what author Rowena R. Farrar, who wrote about her, described as "a gallant spirit which recognized no obstacles."

Farrar interviewed "Miss Felice," for the June 1934 issue of the *Magazine of the South*. At that time, the dark-haired, bright-eyed Felice was 37 years old. She had worked since she was 18, when the death of her mother ended any dream of college. She became the woman of the house, caring for her father and 9-year-old sister. She needed money to keep the family and their farm on Cages Bend afloat. "Well, my dear," she told Farrar, "I simply had to do something! I didn't have any money! There I was, stuck on the farm…I had been taught to sew and cook, and also to care for the lovely old pieces of furniture which had been handed down in our family for generations.

"I started out sewing, making cunning little girl dresses. I loved making them! But I couldn't make very much money sewing, so I decided to serve old-time Southern chicken dinners to parties from Nashville. I had my great-great-great grandmother's favorite recipes, and my old colored nurse Jane to help me." she said.

The reservation-only dinners became popular, and groups of visitors, including debutant parties and Vanderbilt professors, came to the farm. They were charmed by Felice, enjoyed the food and admired the family's antiques. One lady mentioned that she was looking for an antique day bed. By chance, Felice knew of a neighbor who had one for sale, so she took the proceeds of her latest chicken dinner and bought the day bed, hoping to sell it to this visitor.

"That $25 dollars was all I had in the world," Felice told Farrar. "And you can imagine my consternation when I was informed that the bed was not the right wood. My customer wanted a cherry bed, and mine was walnut! Well I simply had to sell that bed, so I inquired around among my customers, and I sold it for $45! I was thrilled with such a profit. Since it was much easier than frying chicken all day and making up beaten biscuits by the barrel, I immediately invested the money in other antiques…My sales increased, and I soon found myself so busy hunting antiques, refinishing and delivering them that I did not have time for the dinners any longer."

She bought herself a car, reasoning that it would pay for itself, and searched the countryside for furniture, old paintings, chests and other things that families often had stored in their attics. Business was brisk, and people realized that Felice had impeccable taste and got things done!

A case in point was when the governor of Grasslands Downs race course asked Felice to manage a lavish ball that would crown its 1930 International Steeplechase festivities. Hesitantly, Felice accepted, and according to Farrar "the Bal Poudre is talked of to this day as the most colorful affair the modern South has ever known. Felice worked, planned and cooked. There were a thousand details that were her responsibility.

"She had the walls of the double drawing rooms of the beautiful antebellum house, Fairvue Manor, painted white, then decorated with garlands of boxwood and cedar, studded with bright apples and oranges…Between the graceful garlands, she hung old family portraits and gold-leaf mirrors, and on the floors of the hallways and stairs she spread old carpets…Across the large dining room, she extended a long table covered with snowy white linens and large silver platters of whole hams, turkeys, spiced round, beaten biscuits and other typical Southern dishes. In the center of the table, she placed a pig, cooked whole, the traditional apple in its mouth…The sophisticated guests simply 'went wild'…They gave her unstinted credit and praise, and insisted that she duplicate the affair for the second Steeplechase ball, which she did a year later."

After that, Felice was swamped with orders for fruitcakes, hams and antiques. Farrar noted that she had "other breaks" that helped her business. She found antiques in unlikely places, including a dilapidated chest she spotted among a wagonload of household belongings and bought for $27.50. "It had good lines," said Felice, "but you can imagine my surprise and delight when, after washing that old paint away, I found I had a lovely old cherry serpentine chest, beautifully inlaid. A museum piece!"

Felice bought land on Nashville Pike and moved four log buildings to it for her home and antique shop. She married John Booth, who died in 1959. Her business grew, and she travelled the world, buying and selling antiques, collecting dolls. Felice died in 1977 at the age of 80 in a car accident on Douglass Bend.

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