

Layne's Cove

by Janelle Layne Taylor

Up until about 1860, Hollingsworth Cove was the name of the area that is now known as Layne's Cove. It lies in the piedmont of the Cumberland Plateau, to the left off Highway 41 South. Prominent Hollingsworths were Benjamin, who was an early postmaster at Pelham and Salina Bell Zora Hollingsworth (1815-1849) first wife of wealthy planter Alexander Edgar Patton of Civil War fame, who, coincidentally, also served as Pelham's 10th postmaster.

With the migration of John Layne, Jr. and wife Esther Kilgore Layne from Marion County TN, there came a proliferation of Layne families while there were only two families by the name of Hollingsworth there by 1840 when the area was in Coffee County. Grundy County was not formed until 1844. By 1880 Layne's Cove was the common name for the land; however, many locals called the place Bucksnot because of the prevalence of deer.

Even though Layne's Cove is located in Pelham Valley, it has been more closely allied with Monteagle and Summerfield. Local artisans and farmers peddled their wares and produce in the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly and Summerfield was chosen as the final resting place of many of the residents. The Nickajack Trail, which led up the mountain to a point between Monteagle and Summerfield, gave an easier access to the communities on top of the plateau. Visitors from the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly often visited the cove largely because of Wonder Cave being located there. R.M. Payne, owner of the cave, had a toll road constructed to connect Monteagle with Wonder Cave to guarantee horse and buggy access to his business. Abraham K. Layne ran a taxi service using that road to transport sightseers.

Even the water for the Assembly came from Wonder Cave. It was forced up the side of the mountain by a huge steam pump. The brochures of the famed Monteagle Hotel boasted fine spring water for its affluent guests. The steam pump operated until about 1920 when it was disassembled and hauled away by mules and wagon by Bob Layne, then a mere boy of 15 years of age.

To avoid the rocky, bumpy, and often muddy roads, enterprising Layne families built a mechanism with steel cables to "drum" or "snake" a loaded wagon up the steep mountainside to a point near the Assembly Grounds so that they could market their goods.

Author Elizabeth Wilkins Purnell , resident of the Assembly and a teacher in Monteagle, penned a book entitled John Gamp; Coves and Cliffs of the Cumberlands. The book was published in 1901. Her preface to the book states " The incidents of the story are drawn from real life, just as they occurred in the early days of the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly." Purnell describes points of interest visited and individual characters. In fact, John Gamp was actually John W. Sampley, a resident of Monteagle

Residents of the Cove resented the John Gamp book to some extent because it played up the dialect used by these country folk, so they saw it as demeaning to them.

Author Purnell's description of the Billy Layne cabin was as follows: " Bill Layne's house was a small, one-room log house, with shed room and loft above. A visitor might be greeted with strains of Sunday school anthems from the pump organ and an invitation to eat pumpkin an' cornbread with po' fokes ." One visitor inquired about the Summerfield Church services he attended. Billy told of Mis' Smith who was the preacher at both Summerfield and Cinda's Chapel. She was a sister of the "ole one-armed Confederic soldier, Mr. Bradshaw, what is a-keepin' o' the post office now in the village; an' now, Mis' Smith is powerful 'ceptable 'mongst the people." He told of earlier times when Ms' Smith wasn't accepted and had to hold her meetings in the woods. He told of his own falling away from the church and of doing "mighty wrong", but that he had now decided "ef the Lord has called a woman fer to preach the gospel an' his word, thar hain't none o' us poor, weak-minded bretherin whut ought to desist." Billy Layne later became a preacher himself and along with his brother Abraham, built the Union Church in Layne's Cove on the same location as the present-day Layne's Cove Church of God. Billy was a grandson of John Layne, Jr. John's children were John Layne III; William Harrison "Spunky Bill"; Abraham; Preston D., father of Henderson "Hence" Layne and others; David ; Isaac the father of Bill Layne; Susan Layne Levan; Polly Anna Layne Johnson; Daniel; Barbara Ellen Layne Cox; Nancy Layne; Tennessee Rutielle Layne Meeks; Mattie, Peggy, Sally, and Lou Layne.

Other Families in Layne's Cove

The Aylor family members were descendants of Anthony Aylor, a chair- maker born in about 1795 in VA . His son was Joseph (Joe) B. Aylor who married Mary Summers, and their children were William H. , Alice, Anthony, John Robert, Jocie, Mary, & Mary Oda , who married Abraham Layne, son of Isaac Layne and brother of Bill Layne.

The Kilgores, like the Laynes, seemed also to have moved from Marion County to Pelham Valley. Hiram Kilgore, brother of Esther Kilgore Layne, and Stephen A. Kilgore, another brother, and wife Jane Lovelace Kilgore were living in Layne's Cove in 1860.

There was a strong connection between the Laynes and Kilgores. John B. Layne signed for Isaac Kilgore to join Company D of the First Vedette Cavalry under Cal Brixey in 1863. Kilgore enlisted at Pelham.

Two Parks families lived in the Cove. One was headed by William L. "Major " Parks, who had served in the Mexican War, and had the following children: John Franklin Parks; Ada Parks O'Neal; George Parks; Estella Parks Jackson, and William Charles "Bill Widget" Parks, so named because he couldn't stand still. The other Parks family was that of Samuel Parks whose son Robert Parks married Easter Layne. Their children were Fred A. Parks, Eva Parks Payne; Zora Parks Meeks and Ed Parks.

Lee Tucker was the progenitor of the Tuckers of Layne's Cove. His mother died when he was only 9 years old and resided for a time with his grandmother Levan, who lived where Denny and Kathy Womack now live. At 12 years old, he went to Monteagle and lived with a Mrs. Hands until he married and came to the William and Sarah Parks place in Layne's Cove where Roger "Chigger" and Anna Gilliam now live.

The Rieders of Layne's Cove were descendants of John Henry Rieder of Switzerland and later Indiana where he married Sarah Elizabeth (Walls) Knee. They moved from Indiana to the Swiss Colony at Gruetli. John spoke only German, but he often came to Pelham Valley and usually brought one or more of his family to translate. His children were William H., Francis Marion, Albert D. , Sarah Elizabeth, Jacob M. and Noah Jonah Rieder. Francis Marion married Malinda Parks of Layne's Cove. Later, Albert Rieder, Francis Marion's son, married Eleanor Hill Meeks also from the Cove.

Although there are no Thomas surnames in Layne's Cove today, the Thomases there were the descendants of Jonathan and Nancy Thomas from South Carolina then Georgia before they came to Tennessee. Their son James Thomas married Marinda Walker and had Sarah "Sally" Thomas Smith, Nancy, Martha Thomas who married Preston Layne, Meredith "Daunt" Thomas, Samantha Elizabeth Thomas who married Isaac Layne, Tallitha E. who married William Adams and Eliza. James Thomas married a second time to Mary Tucker and had Frank Thomas, James Aylor (Little Jim) Thomas, George W. Thomas, Kate Thomas Meeks, David Thomas, Margaret "Allie" Thomas Tucker, Mary Thomas Sanders, John Thomas, and Fannie Thomas George. Many of these early Thomases are said to have been buried in the Thomas Cemetery, located just behind the new Tubby's in Monteagle.

The Summers families, for whom Summerfield was named, were descendants of John Summers of Prince George County MD, then Rutherford County TN. His son Basil and

wife Finey raised their family in Pelham Valley. Their children were Nancy, wife of John Meeks; Cintha Summers; Mary, wife of Joseph B. Aylor; Malinda, wife of Hiram Kilgore; William Earnest and Anderson Summers.

Families who became well known in Layne's Cove in later years were the Hassebrocks and the Hills. George Hassebrock came from Gorham, IL, during the building of Highway 41 and married Beedie Meeks. George was of German extraction and previously had been married to Carrie Blanton who had born him two sons, August Hassebrock who married Peggy Meeks and returned to Illinois and Fred Hassebrock who married Fermenda Hill and made his home in Layne's Cove. The Hill family came to the Cove in 1920 from Alto with the family of William Thomas Hill and Hattie Partin Hill. This family was eventually to be made up of Joe Hill; Edith Hill Layne; Lucille Hill Gipson; Ozler Hill, Mary Lee Hill Johnson, Margaret Hill Campbell Jordan McGhee and Fermenda Hill Hassebrock. Another Hill family of the Cove was that of Morris Hill (adopted from the Johnson family and assumed the Hill surname) who married Leora Layne and had Estle Hill, who was killed in WWII; Lillie Eleanor Hill Meeks Rieder, Olive Alucia Hill who married Ozler Hill; Ralph Hill; Jimmy Hill who married Mary Gilliam; Hamp Hill who married Pauline Shetter; and Geraldine Hill Gibbs.

William Carter Shetter was born in Claiborne County TN, but was living in Sherwood, TN, in 1880. He moved away to Texas, but two of his children stayed behind. Son, William Taylor Shetter married locally to Talithia Anne Layne and lived in Layne's Cove before also moving to Texas in 1901. Two of his children stayed in Grundy County. Isaac Carter Shetter, who worked at Wonder Cave, pumping the water up the mountain to the Assembly and Samantha Elizabeth Shetter who married Harris Gilliam and lived in nearby Bell's Cove. The Shetter name disappeared from Layne's Cove when Isaac died in 1966 and his wife Estell Moran Shetter died in 1976.

The Meeks family in Layne's Cove was that of Frank Merrill Meeks, a carpenter who married Ruetelie "Tealie" Layne and had children: John (father of Alton, Beedie Meeks Hassebrock, and Frances "Frankie" Meeks Todd); James "Jim" H. Meeks, who married Zora Parks; Priest Meeks; Taylor Meeks and Mary "Tompie" Meeks who married Wes Johnson. The George Meeks family also had Layne's Cove connections. George Meeks married Ozella Magouirk. Their children were James, Georgia, Mable Meeks Knox, Willie Meeks Moran, O.V., Alvin, and Elsie Meeks Layne Tucker. Ozella Magouirk Meeks was later the 3rd wife of Abraham Layne, son of Isaac and Esther Layne.

Certainly the most affluent family of Layne's Cove was the R.M. and Emma Payne family originally from South Pittsburg. Payne had attended the University of the South at

Sewanee and had invested in coal mining on the Cumberland Plateau. He operated a mine just below Cooley's Rift (recently removed because of rockfalls onto Interstate 24), but probably his most successful business venture was the hotel he operated in Monteagle. While operating the hotel, he purchased Wonder Cave from Francis Rieder and blasted an entrance into it in 1900 so that tourists could gain entrance to the cavern. In 1929, J.J. "Jonah" Raulston took over operation of Wonder Cave. J. J. married Mary Orme Sayles the daughter of Jack and Katie (Payne) Sayles and the granddaughter of R.M. and Emma Payne. Raulston continued to manage the cave until 1963. His son, Frank Raulston, managed it from 1965-1980, but after Frank's death in 1980, the cave was sold to Chattanooga businessman, Bruce Born. Born's sister Julia opened the cave for several years; however, after her marriage to Dennis Ray, she moved to Georgia and the cave is now closed to the public.

In more recent years, new surnames have been brought into Layne's Cove. Present now in addition to the names of Layne, Hill, Gilliam and Tucker are Edwards, Leonard, Sells, Curtis, Griffin, Mayes, Cantrell, Murray, DiGianfelice, Rorer, and O'Neal.