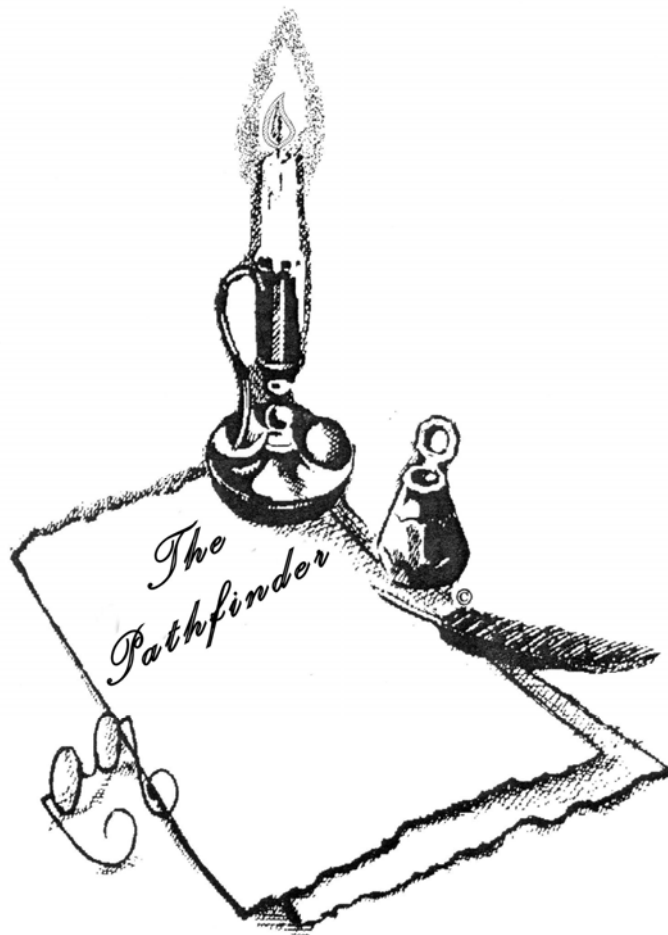


The Pathfinder

A Quarterly Publication of the Grundy County Historical Society

Grundy County, Tennessee



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Oliver Jervis

Sharon Goodman has edited The Pathfinder for many years since the tenure of Mona Moreland. She has contracted arthritis in her hands and fingers which makes it difficult for her to continue. She has submitted her resignation effective August 31, 2019. I want to thank Sharon for her long and effective service and pray that her condition improves.

Clopper Almon of College Park Maryland and Beersheba Springs has agreed to edit the December 2019 edition of The Pathfinder while we attempt to find a permanent replacement editor. Clopper is economics professor emeritus at the University of Maryland, and resides in College Park Maryland and Beersheba Springs where he spends the summers. He is a part of the Howell family who have had an interest in Nanhaven cottage in Beersheba Springs since the 1880s.

Material for the December 2019 issue of The Pathfinder should be sent to Clopper at:

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Anyone having an interest in the editorship of The Pathfinder or knows or of someone who would like to become the editor should contact me at the Heritage Center.

Origin and Development of the South Cumberland Recreation Area

Clopper Almon¹

The settlement of Beersheba Springs dates from 1833, eleven years before the creation of Grundy County. It was, from the beginning, a resort, and from its earliest days walks in the woods have been a big part of the Beersheba experience and Stone Door has been a favorite destination. The land was originally all privately owned, but the owners must have thought that being friendly towards walkers was a better policy than angering them by futile attempts to keep them out.

During the 1940s and 1950s, much of the Big Creek gulf below Stone Door was logged for white oak for making staves for whiskey barrels. The sight of huge white oak tree trunks swinging in the air as they were “snaked” up by winch and cable from the gulch to the stave mill on the plateau was impressive. But the practice was absolutely without thought of the environmental damage.

Stone Door

Not until 1968 do we hear of “parks”. On April 11 of that year, it is announced that the State will exercise its option to buy 700 acres, including Stone Door, from the J. W. Huber Corporation for future development as a state park. But the following January, a further announcement says that the purchase has “hit a snag” because the Attorney General's office has found that the title to some 150 acres is “questionable”. Some solution must have been found, for on June 26, 1969, in a ceremony in front of the new fire hall in Beersheba Springs, Charles Beatty of the Huber corporation handed Mike Baumstark of the Tennessee Department of Conservation the deed to 800 (*sic*) acres in exchange for the State's check. State Senator Ernest Crouch from McMinnville, “whose efforts helped make the park a reality” looked on, and the Grundy County High School band “played patriotic numbers.”

The Stone Door tract was remarkable for its cliffs, views and the “door” itself, a ten-foot-wide crack in the sandstone cliff with a sloping floor that offered a way to get through the cliff's

¹ I wrote an earlier version of this account for inclusion in a recent revision of vol. I of *Beersheba Springs, a History*. Because I presume that many *Pathfinder* readers would not buy the revision of this book they may well already have but would want to know this important story that does great credit to the county, I thought it not inappropriate to reprint it here. Writing was greatly facilitated by the collection of newspaper clippings and minutes of organizations made by Margaret Coppinger and in the Beersheba Springs museum.

otherwise formidable barrier between the top of the plateau and the gulf below. The land, however, had been heavily logged and much of the area on top of the plateau recently burned in a forest fire. The area is now marked for “intense use” without endangering any rare plants or animals.

Savage Gulf

A few miles to the north, however, lay a naturalist's wonderland, a gulf of virgin forest with giant trees hundreds of years old and rich in plant species almost beyond belief. It bore the name of Savage Gulf for the pioneer family that had first owned it. In the 19th century, it had been acquired by Sam Werner with every intention of logging it as he did other areas. To get the timber out, he needed to run a narrow-gauge railroad over the plateau between his saw mill and the rim of the gulf. It turned out, however – no doubt to his dismay – that there were title disputes over the land the railroad needed to cross, so the gulf had never been logged. Werner's heirs recognized the environmental value of the gulf and hoped that it could be preserved.

In it were giant beeches, basswoods, tulip poplars, sugar maples and other species typical of what ecologists call a “mixed mesophytic forest” meaning a forest that requires a moderate amount of rain – but only a moderate amount. More importantly, it was a “climax” forest, a forest in the steady state to which it evolves only after centuries of undisturbed development. In the 1960s, however, changes in land assessment laws had so increased the taxes on the property that the owners would soon be forced to sell to lumbering companies which, with modern equipment would quickly log the area and destroy one of the last virgin forests in the eastern United States. (The Tennessee Land Trust did not yet exist.)

Saving Savage Gulf was not easy. The story of the community organization and marshaling of political will would do credit to any community, and it was centered here in Grundy county, though it reached across the state,

One of the first and most ardent and influential proponents of conservation of Savage Gulf was Herman Bagenstoss of Tracy City, son of the founders of the Dutch Maid bakery. In addition to running the bakery, he was co-publisher of the *Grundy County Herald* and chairman of the Grundy County Conservation Board and used these positions to promote the idea of state acquisition of the area. It is a good guess that he had been behind the creation of the park at Stone Door. On a Sunday in October of 1969, he and Mack Prichard, the state naturalist, organized a four-mile hike into Savage Gulf to promote interest in saving it. Some eighty hikers turned up for the adventure. All of them thought themselves strong hikers, but the Savage proved too much for thirty of them who were caught in the Gulf by nightfall, and did not make it out until 4 a.m. the next morning, when they were rescued by the Trailblazers Jeep Club and the Grundy County Rescue Squad.



Gov. Winfield Dunn, Bill Jenkins and Alf Adams, Jr. in Savage Gulf,

Mack Prichard proved tireless in his efforts to bring the situation to the attention of all who would listen. Elsie Quaterman, professor of ecology at Vanderbilt University, lent additional professional support to Pritchard's view of the ecological importance of the Gulf. She added that it appeared that the flora of the Gulf had – unlike that of surrounding areas – survived the last ice age and had contributed to re-seeding of the area. She also made the first plant inventory of the Gulf.

On Friday, April 30, 1971, Tennessee Governor Winfield Dunn made a whirlwind visit to the Gulf. He arrived at the McMinnville airport at 6:45 a.m. and had breakfast at the Beersheba Hotel where his hosts were Alf Adams, Jr., his parents and brothers. (Alf had been the Governor's campaign manager and doubtless was largely responsible for getting him to come.) A group of 15 then went to the nearby stables of Hugh Gerald Hill where they took mounts for a horseback ride out the Grassy Ridge Road, down the mountain on the WPA road, up Peak mountain on the old McMinnville Stage Coach Road and across the mountain top of Peak to a point that overlooks the Savage Gulf. There they left their horses and were joined by some ten hikers for the trip into Savage Gulf. They descended into the Gulf, stepping carefully from stone to stone, for there was no trail, walked some two miles along the creek bed, then climbed to the first bench on the north side to the head of a jeep road, where they were met by jeeps with lunch. They were then driven to an overlook north of the Gulf. The party included William Jenkins, conservation commissioner and Kenny Dale, staff naturalist with the U.S.

Department of the Interior, as well as Mack Prichard and Elsie Quarterman. At the end of the trip, Dunn told a reporter, "I have never before seen anywhere such natural beauty as we have seen today here at Savage Gulf. Its natural beauty, along with its virgin timber should certainly be preserved for naturalists and others to enjoy from now on."

In April of 1971, Robert W. Mayes, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in McMinnville, had alerted citizens there to the situation in Savage Gulf, and on November 4, 1971 the Savage Gulf Preservation League was organized there. Meanwhile, in Nashville, the Middle Tennessee Nature Conservancy Council made Savage Gulf its Number 1 priority.

On June 6, 1971, *Mid South*, the Sunday magazine supplement of the *Commercial Appeal*, the main Memphis newspaper, ran a cover story on Savage Gulf entitled "A Savage in Peril." The author, William Thomas, and a photographer had spent a day with Herman Bagenstoss in the Savage. He took them into the area in his Scout, an off-road vehicle made by International Harvest. Deep in the wilderness, the Scout mired down in mud, and it took them an hour and a half with ax and such tools as they had to get it out. Thomas's fine story, deeply respectful of the Savage, was particularly important because it gathered support for the project in West Tennessee.

On September 10, 1971, the Savage Gulf Preservation League and the Nature Conservancy Council presented plans for State acquisition of Savage Gulf to Walter Criley, Chief of Planning for the State Parks Division of the Tennessee Department of Conservation. Three versions were presented, a minimal 2,000 acre version with just the Gulf itself, an intermediate version of 4,000 acres including immediate surroundings, and an ideal version of 6,000 acres which would insure preservation of Savage Gulf and all virgin, climax forest adjacent to it. Mack Prichard argued for including the Collins River and Big Creek head waters and thus joining up with the Stone Door park. Others felt, however that this was asking for too much and might endanger the whole project. Criley assured the group that a proposal to purchase Savage Gulf would be presented to the General Assembly at its next session, which would be in 1972.

In March of 1972, Prichard, Quarterman, Bagenstoss and Mayes held a seminar devoted to Savage Gulf at the Cheekwood estate near Nashville. WLAC-TV in Nashville devoted a program to Savage.

In April of 1972, Governor Dunn included acquisition of Savage Gulf in his budget message, and Conservation Commissioner Bill Jenkins said, "We propose to begin surveys and start buying as much land as we can for \$500,000, if this figure is included in the state's capital outlay budget." On May 25, Criley told the Savage Gulf Preservation League that the budget request had been approved, but nothing except planning could be done until the new fiscal year

beginning in July. He added that the \$500,000 would be inadequate to complete the purchase, but that the State would borrow from the Nature Conservancy to do so. Senator Earnest Crouch of McMinnville and Rep. G. Stanley Rogers of Manchester and Rep. Ed Murray of Winchester sponsored a resolution that directed the Department of Conservation to purchase as much as possible of the Savage Gulf area with the \$500,000 asked by Dunn in his budget message. The resolution passed.

In July of 1972, a new and welcome force joined the movement: the TVA. At a meeting at the Sewanee Inn chaired by Herman Baggenstoss and attended by Lynn Seeber, general manager of TVA and William Jenkins, state Commissioner of Conservation, it was announced that TVA would work with the State on a plan that would include:

- * Preserving the wilderness character of Savage Gulf
- * A pilot strip-mining reclamation project on the west side of TN 56 in Coalmont
- * Constructing a park management center on TN 56 between Monteagle and Tracy City
- * Developing a conservation education center either at Foster Falls (already owned by TVA) or at Savage Gulf
- * Linking the state parks in the area by a system of hiking trails.

Then on January 17, 1973 came the climatic announcement. The State would purchase not 2000, not 4000, not 6000, but 10,000 acres including the Savage Gulf. That is nearly 16 square miles. TVA would reimburse the State for half of the cost of this acquisition, not to exceed one million dollars. It looked like Mack Prichard's dream come true. TVA would construct public access areas on some of the land, and these facilities would be maintained and operated by the State. There were also plans for Grundy Lakes and Foster Falls. Ultimately, the State appropriated \$901,935.73 for the Savage acquisition and received a Federal matching grant of exactly the same amount.

In June of 1973, Tim McCall of the State Department of Conservation announced plans to begin negotiations with Charles M. Boyd and the Werner family. The Werners owned 3,700 acres of the 11,410 acres which the State intended to buy. In all, there were ten land owners in the area. McCall said that 100 acres would also be added to the Stone Door area.

The dream became a reality. An area including Savage Gulf, the Big Creek gulf up past Stone Door and upstream reaches of the Collins River was formally designated a State Park in 1974. Soon the headwaters of Big Creek on top of the plateau, including its tributary Firescauld Creek with Blue Hole and Greeter Falls were added bringing the total acreage to about 11,360.

A complete inventory² of the vascular flora of Savage Gulf was made in 1979 by botanists from the University of Tennessee. They found an extraordinary total of 680 taxa from 360 genera and 111 families in an area of about ten square miles. There were two endangered species, five threatened, and three of special concern. Their article, however, is written for specialists, and species are identified only by scientific name and located by one or more of six zones in or around the Gulf. A presentation of Savage Gulf for the layman is yet to be written.

The Shady Valley Acquisition

By 2015, the South Cumberland State Park was recording some 600,000 visitors per year. But it offered no restaurant nor place to sleep other than the primitive campsites. Invading the woods, however, with anything like an RV campground or a restaurant seemed undesirable. Then suddenly there was a new possibility.

As a consequence of the Great Recession of 2008, the Shady Valley Nursery in Beersheba Springs had gone out of business. (The nursery business is very dependent on new construction which was hard hit by the recession.) Shady Valley's beautiful 585-acre plateau-top tract with a 65-acre lake created by damming Laurel Creek was put up for sale. The tract undoubtedly included Charley's camp in the Horseshoe (an American Indian site that figures in the early history of Beersheba) and a stretch of the Chickamauga Trace. It was contiguous, on its south side, with the north border of the park a mile or so west of Stone Door itself and less from the ranger station. On its north side, the nursery reached to TN highway 56. It had been created by Bill Earthman, who started with a nursery in the Collins River valley but in 1988 acquired this site and moved the operation to the top of the plateau – hence its somewhat inappropriate “Valley” name.

Members of the local community recognized the site's potential for the park. It was beautiful rolling country, but here there could be support facilities for hikers such as RV and automobile campsites, restaurants, and shops with hiking and camping supplies. The lake offered canoing, kayaking, and maybe even fishing. The State Senator for the district, Janice Bowling of Tullahoma, was invited to visit, and she became a strong and effective supporter. In the background, Sam Baggett of Beersheba Springs constantly kept the project moving forward.

There had been an important change in the process of land acquisition by the State since the Savage Gulf purchase. Now revenues from taxes on real-estate transactions went into a special fund for land acquisition. The executive department did not have to go to the legislature for an appropriation to buy Shady Valley. Adequate funds were available.

2. B. Eugene Wofford, Thomas S. Patrick, Loy R. Phillippe and David H. Webb , “The Vascular Flora of Savage Gulf, Tennessee” in *SIDA Contributions to Botany*, vol. 8 nr. 2, November 1979.
<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/10010391#page/139/mode/1up>

But there was a hurdle. The State had an assessment done which came in at \$1,325,000. By law, this was then the maximum the State was allowed to pay. The owner, however, felt the property was worth at least \$1,500,000 and would not sell for less. Knowledgeable people in the local community felt the owner's valuation was reasonable and through the Friends of the South Cumberland successfully raised most of the missing \$175,000. But how to arrange the deal? Giving this sum to the State would not help; it still could not pay more than the assessment. Simply giving the money to the owner was not possible for a tax-exempt organization; something had to be bought with it. Someone came up with a brilliant idea. The double trailer that had been used as the nursery office – and which the State wanted removed – was bought for the \$175,000; and the owner then, on December 16, 2016, sold to the State for the assessed value. The trailer was then sold, hauled off, and converted into a home nearby. Separately, Adams Family Enterprises bought some 115 acres adjacent to the nursery on the east and placed it in the Land Trust for eventual transfer to the park. As of this writing, development of the Shady Valley tract lies ahead. It will not be a “natural area” and thus subject to many restrictions on use. Rather it will be a somewhat civilized base for adventures in the wild.

The whole story of the identification and acquisition of Savage Gulf and subsequent acquisition of the Shady Valley tract does great credit to Grundy County and to the State of Tennessee. And bear in mind that as this land is acquired by the State, it goes off of the tax rolls. It is a public investment that will pay off to the State treasury if it is managed in a way to bring desirable economic development to the area.

The Chicamauga Path near Beersheba Springs

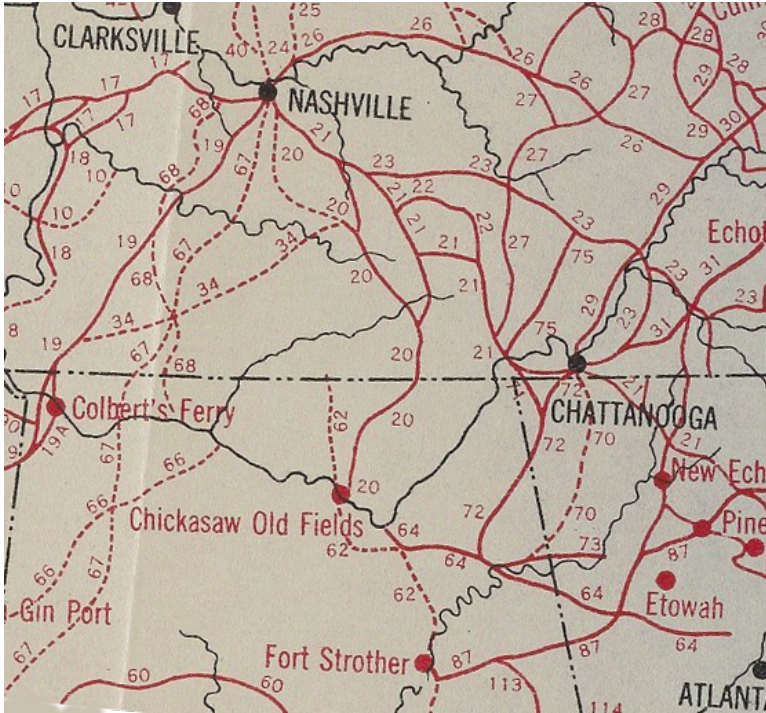
Clopper Almon

Indian Trails in the Southeast

Indian trails once criss-crossed the southeastern United States. One of the most famous of these became known after 1775 as the Chicamauga Path (or Trace), the war path of a break-away group of Cherokees bent on the destruction of the white settlements. It almost certainly ran through Beersheba Springs, Tennessee and off to the southwest of Beersheba through the Shady Valley Nursery property recently acquired by the State of Tennessee,

After a brief story of the trace, I will attempt to identify precisely its location in and near Beersheba and will report, with pictures, on its present condition. The precise location and present condition are relevant to any effort to take notice of the old trace in the newly acquired state property.

The Route of the Chicamauga Trace



William E. Myer, *Indian Trails of the Southeast*

Long Island near Bridgeport, Alabama. Indeed, Myer himself refers to it as being near Bridgeport (page 847) rather than South Pittsburgh. There were islands in the river at both sites, and there may even have been fords at both sites. Today both sites are submerged by the lake created by the TVA dam at Guntersville. South of that crossing, – wherever it was – trails diverge, one going to Chattanooga and points east and another to St. Augustine and points south. North of the crossing, they also diverge. One, called the Main Trail (numbered 21), follows Battle Creek up the side of the Cumberland Plateau not far from the present route of I-24. It then goes by the Old Stone Fort near Manchester, and then on to the Salt Lick where Nashville now stands.

As the Main Trail begins its ascent of the Cumberland Plateau, trail 27, later called the Chicamauga Path, branches off to the north. In *Indian Trails of the Southeast*, William E. Myer writes “[It] crossed the Tennessee River at the Old Creek Crossing along with the Cisca-St. Augustine Trail, led thence up Battle Creek to the forks of the creek, near Comfort, and afterwards passed along the Cumberland Plateau by Coalmont, Beersheba Springs, and the Rock Island crossing of Caney Fork River, to the prehistoric fortified Indian town at Cherry Hill, in White County.”

The map on the left shows the network of trails in Middle Tennessee and North Alabama. It also reveals that the Tennessee River was a formidable barrier to north-south traffic. At only one place between Chattanooga and the Mississippi-Alabama line was there a ford where one could normally wade across. That place was known as the Old Creek Crossing.¹ On the Myer map above, it is in Tennessee, a little upstream from South Pittsburgh at a point where the 1895 topographic map of Tennessee shows Burns Island. Other sources place it several miles downstream at

The Story of the Trace

It must be emphasized that the trace goes back long before the brief Chicamauga era. It was a north-south thruway for trade connecting Florida with the Cumberland valley. Nevertheless, it is the twenty years from 1775 to 1795 that inscribed the name of the trace in the memory of the white man.

In 1775 Richard Henderson negotiated at Sycamore Shoals with the Cherokees for the purchase by Henderson's Transylvania company of all Cherokee lands north of the Cumberland River. At the end of a day's negotiations when the elder Cherokee chiefs had agreed to the sale, a young chief, Dragging Canoe, rose and painted a vivid picture of what would happen to the Cherokees if they made this sale. The elders were awed and canceled the deal. The next day, the whites brought more food, more whiskey and rum, and the elders again agreed to the sale. Dragging Canoe rose and said through an interpreter, "You have bought a fair and pleasant land; but if you try to settle it, you will find it dark and bloody ground." Of course the white man did try to settle it, and Dragging Canoe devoted his life to making his prophecy come true.

Dragging Canoe's sub-tribe first took up residence on Chickamauga Creek near Chattanooga and took the name of the creek as the tribe's name. Following an attack on Knoxville in which they were soundly defeated and hunted into their homeland, they moved farther down the Tennessee River to settle "lower towns" on the south side of the Tennessee near where I-24 now crosses it. There are cliffs along the left bank of the Tennessee at that point, and the towns seemed totally inaccessible to anyone who did not know the terrain intimately. From there, the Chickamauga used the old trail we have described to reach the Caney Fork at Rock Island and then attack the settlements in the Cumberland valley.

Blanche Spurlock Bentley vividly describes the last of these attacks. "[On] a day in October 1793, when the ancient trail had become the Trace of the Chickamaugas, there came along the mountain a company of Chickamaugas and Creeks, their objective point, Rock Island, where an encampment was to be made as base of supplies for attacks upon the Cumberland Settlers. They marched in single file, the Chickamauga Chief, it is claimed, leading his own warriors, who were armed with war clubs, scalping knives and bows and arrows, while each Creek bore, as a gift from his Spanish allies, a bundle wrapped in bear skins containing gun, knives and vermilion war-paints. A week or ten days later a sunrise fight – one of the last important engagements in Tennessee Indian history – occurred at Rock Island between those same Indians and scouts from the Cumberland, and a band of fugitives in precipitate flight, again crossed the mountain hastening to their villages at Nickajack."

Dragging Canoe died in 1792. The failed raid described above was in 1793. In 1794, Joseph Brown, a white boy who had been a captive among the Chickamaugas, guided a U.S.

Army expedition led by Maj. James Ore to attack and destroy Nickajack and Running Water, two of the five lower towns. The surprise was complete, and this defeat in their home base broke the spirit of the Chicamauga. They sued for peace and rejoined the other Cherokees.

Where Exactly did the Trace Run Near Beersheba?

Back in the 1920s or earlier William E. Myer found a section of the Chicamauga trace running through the forest in Coalmont. He also presumed that Beersheba Cain had followed another section of the trace when, in 1833, she and her three companions rode horseback up the mountain and discovered the chalybeate spring which became the basis of the Beersheba Springs resort. On his map, Myer drew the trace as a nearly straight line between these two points. It thus shows the trace as entering Beersheba from the south. That route, however, would have had anyone following it go over cliffs. It is much more likely that, as the trace left the Coalmont area, it stayed to the west, came close to where Altamont now is, crossed Big Creek and Firescauld Creek upstream from where the cliffs begin and then came into Beersheba from the southwest. The eastern most point where there is no cliff on either side of Firescauld creek is roughly at the confluence of Piney and Firescauld where the stone abutments of the a mill dam still stand. It is about 500 yards upstream from the swimming hole now called Blue Hole. Here was at the optimal crossing point for the Chickamauga Trace. And an old road heads from here pretty straight towards Beersheba.

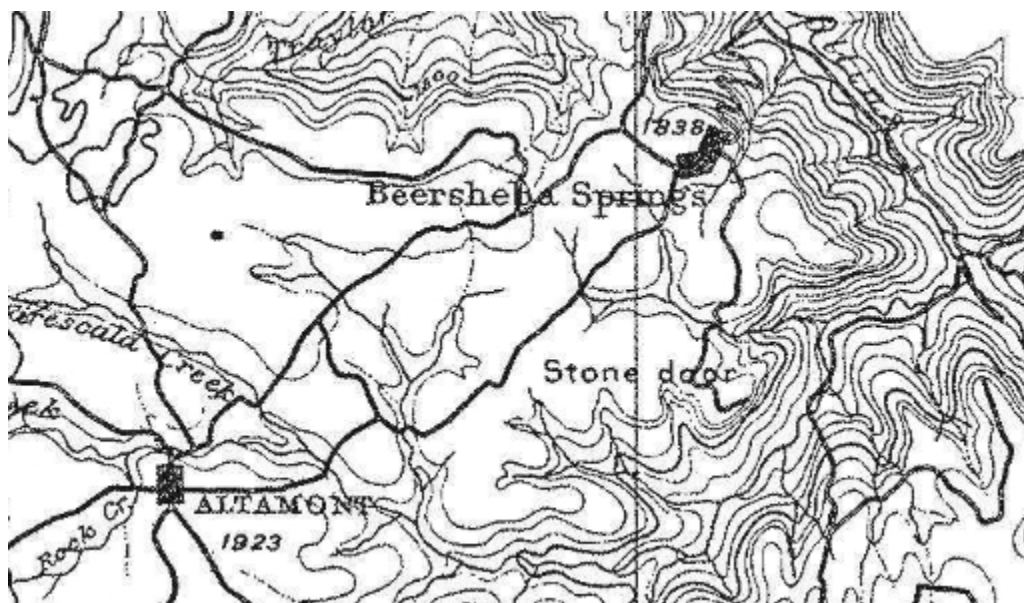
In Beersheba Springs, there is a Hunter's Mill Road that runs south from Highway 56 just west of the Howell Cottage and just east of the Beersheba Springs Medical Clinic and the Church of Christ. Shortly before his death, I asked Ralph Thompson, "Where was Hunter's mill?" He answered that, from his study of old land records, he was sure that Hunter, Arthur Long, and John Greeter were three successive owners of mills on Firescauld Creek between the confluence of Piney and Firescauld and Greeter Falls. References to Hunter's Mill Road go back to the 1840s; Long appears in the 1850s and 1860s, and Greeter first in 1880.

Thus, Hunter's Mill Road probably ran from the heart of Beersheba to that eastern-most point where Firescauld Creek could be crossed without cliffs on either side. The Indian trail ran between the same two points. It thus seems highly likely that Hunter's Mill Road followed exactly the old trace.

Within the heart of Beersheba, Dahlgren Avenue between TN 56 and Hege Avenue is pointing to the chalybeate spring to the northeast and generally towards Hunter's Mill to the southwest. It seems more than probable that this section of the modern road is lying directly on the Indian trace. North of Hege, the builder's of the hotel in the 1830s and 1840s bent the old road a bit to the west so that it would not cut through the courtyard of their hotel. South of TN

56, John Armfield, in the 1850s, put a jog in the old road to create a nice lot for the cottage he was building for Bishop Polk, the house now known as the Howell Cottage. But if in our imagination we continue from Dahlgren Avenue straight ahead through the Howell Cottage we come into Hunter's Mill Road just before it bends to the west and heads off to the southwest almost straight towards the site of Hunter's Mill.

Here we may ask, Are there mentions of the trace in this area in the early records of land transactions? Indeed, there are. In 1828, in the records of Warren County, of which Grundy County was still a part, there is an entry for Samuel Turney entering 640 acres on the "headwaters of the Collins River, on a creek called Little Laurel, near a trace." In 1831, there is an entry for William Dugan "on the headwaters of the Collins River on both sides of the trace leading from said Dugan's in the horseshoe." On September 3, 1836, William Dugan sold to William R. Stewart and George R. Smartt for \$1000 1500 acres "on top of Cumberland Mountain near the bluff and on both sides of a trace leading from said Dugans to the Horseshoe." This purchase included the hotel site and the site of the resort that would be created twenty years later by John Armfield.

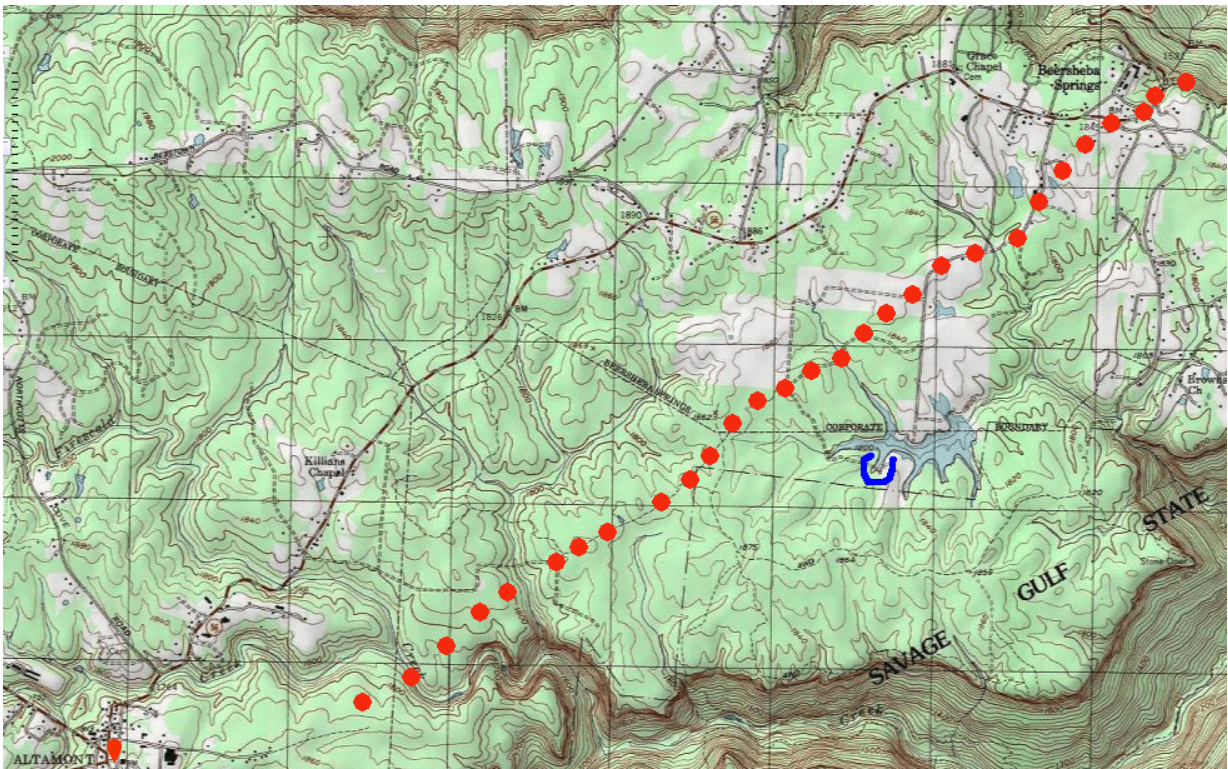


Portion of 1895 Topographic Map of Tennessee

The 1895 topographic map of Tennessee is the first fairly accurate map of this area. The Altamont-Beersheba area is shown above. It shows two roads between the two towns. One follows approximately the route of modern TN 56. The other, to the south, seems to run where we would expect the old trace to run. And it crosses Firescauld Creek at the right point. We may safely call it Hunter's Mill Road.

Within the Shady Valley property, coming from the northeast there is first a continuation of the current Hunter's Mill Road. Then, near where the center of nursery operations were, the road is obliterated. Farther to the southwest, about halfway across the 100-acre Clem Tract – which did not belong to the nursery and does not presently belong to the State – a southwest-bound road resumes, right where Hunter's Mill Road should be. On the 1958 Coastal and Geodetic Survey map of this area, shown at the top of the next page, there appears at the southwest end of the stretch in the Clem tract an old road indicated by a single dashes like this - - - . It runs off to the southwest just as Hunter's Mill Road should. At its western end it terminates on a recently-made road marked by double dashes like this = = = =. The total straight-line distance between the beginning and end of this road is 1.1 miles. It looks very like a continuation of the Hunter's Mill Road reaching to within half a mile of the mill site. Shown on the 1958 topographic map, this road marked with the single dashes disappeared from later maps. Could it still be found? And what condition would it be in? There was only one way to find out. Go look.

I went and looked and was delighted to discover that it is easily found, is sunk several feet into the ground in many places and is in good condition for walking. The whole route from the site of the old chalybeate spring in Beersheba to the crossing of Firescauld Creek is show by dots on the map below. It is all easy walking but presently requires permission or ranger accompaniment through the state property. As the Shady Valley property is developed, let us hope that it will again become possible to tread this ancient American Indian footpath.



All Things Monteagle – Part Three

Jackie Partin

John Moffat's Doomed Dream

June 8, 1870—*Republican Banner*, “Mr. John Moffat, a Scotch Canadian, a man who is well known in Canada and throughout the Northern States as a temperance lecturer, literary and scientific man, has determined to make Tennessee his future home. Besides taking \$10,000 of stock in the Tennessee Coal and Railroad Company, he has bought about 3,000 acres of land on Cumberland mountain, on the line of this railroad, on which he proposes to locate a large number of small farmers—educated and practical farmers—under an organization which will afford facilities in transportation that individual effort could not secure. Mr. Moffat concluded these contracts some weeks since, has made his payments, and is now building his house. He is now here on his way North to prepare for bringing out the first lot of settlers...”

From the above news article, the reader would get the idea that John Moffat had all his ducks in a row—but did he? Six days earlier on June 2, 1870, Coleman F. Hord and wife Virginia L. (Thompson) Hord sold two tracts of Grundy County land to John Moffat, founder of the village of Moffat. The land was destined to become part of the future town of Monteagle, Tennessee. One tract contained 332 acres and the other 1,429 for a total of 1,761 acres. John agreed to pay for the land in installments, the last due two years later on June 2, 1872. He paid the initial notes but could never garner enough money, or concern, to pay the last note, \$656.25, which amount with interest had grown to \$849.85 by the year 1877. By 1880, the interest and court cost sum totaled \$1,025.32.

John Moffat had been subpoenaed to appear for a hearing in the Grundy County Chancery Court held in Tracy City. He acknowledged receiving the subpoena on Nov. 9, 1876. A special lien was placed on the two tracts of land for the \$849.85 owed, and the time given for payment was “the first Monday of July next.” The decree was rendered on April 11, 1877.

Meanwhile Coleman F. Hord had died in 1874, and in 1876, Virginia married Edward Morton Whitworth, and the court continued pushing on this original bill/decreed while other cases against Moffat came rolling in. The whole decade in the 1870s was filled with lawsuits against Moffat; he had made somewhat of a disgrace of himself in the little village that carried his name. Not only Virginia but Elizabeth Hooper, Jane Maupin, Harris Gilliam, Harris Bell and many in the Henley clan, all heirs of Campbell Henley, a Bostick heir, sued Moffat and each other until the beautiful little village appeared to become a scene out of the wild, wild west, hopefully without the guns.

The sale by the Whitworths allows for the year 1869, or even earlier, for John Moffat to have made his decision to put down his roots right here on our little plateau. John had formed a good relationship with Peter Staub who, during the same time frame, had managed to plant a Swiss Colony in Grundy County. John had a dream of doing the same thing, only forming a Scottish Colony on the western end of the county. He became a busy, busy man traveling over the country looking for skilled tradesmen to help him built his little village, and for the most part he got some mighty good families to move to this area and help him fulfill his dream. However, “mighty good families” will not “hack it” when money in hand is a prerequisite.

John Moffat drilled with too big of an auger. “...Mr. Moffat, like a good many other men, had more brains than money, and more enterprise than economy...A. S. C.” This quote probably can be attributed to Arthur St. Clair Colyar. No doubt John was full of energy, zeal, and desire to accomplish his dream, but had he been in this country and local area long enough to form tight relationships with monied people who were looking for secure financial ventures, men ready to dive with him right into the dream and ride on the billowy-soft clouds? Remember, John carelessly allowed his real estate venture to fail, go under, with the Whitworth debacle. His less than zealous investors slithered away, turned, looked back and saw a sincerely good man turn to a pillar of salt. That last payment could have saved him from all kinds of trouble. He had little land for all practical purposes and seemingly little money even though he worked as the Tennessee Commissioner of Immigration. He had made no answer to the court after his subpoena, being equal to a confession of wrong. What on earth was John thinking? What made him sell land that he did not own and continue selling it for years after having all of this matter brought to his attention? What a quagmire; what a mess of title confusion; what an embarrassment coupled with angry, confused locals, those to whom he had already sold land, namely: Baxter and Lappin, (1871); Winston (1872); Mabee and Shetters (1873); Tucker, Schaerer, Graenicher, Voight, and Lappin, (1874); Honeycut, Sutton, Mabee, Tucker, Rapine, Graenicher, Porter, and Mitchell (trust), (1875); Onley, Mabee, and Honeycut (1876); and possibly other instances. Lots for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, a Cemetery, and the Shoe and Leather Company also where among the ones set aside or conveyed by John. A deed for fifty acres more or less with grantees being Mrs. Hattie B. Kells and Mrs. Maria Louise Yerger has interesting information, “...being a portion of an entry made of J. G. Bostick in the year 1837 and sold to Moffatt by Harris Bell and other heirs of said John G. Bostick...” was registered in 1874 in Grundy County, TN. However, M. L. Yerger’s name was listed with the lands afore mentioned.

At the April 1877 term of Chancery Court, the decree was recorded and presented to the court by the Grundy County Clerk and Master, R. B. Roberts, wherein land not already sold by John Moffat would be auctioned off at the clerk’s office in Tracy City, and if that did not make

up the amount Moffat owed the Hord/Whitworths, not forgetting the interest accrued, then the land already conveyed by Moffat, starting in a numbered fashion already compiled by the court, would be sold, one tract at a time. All of this was to take place on the same day. Of course, before the sale could take place, ads had to be prominently placed in Monteagle and Tracy City as to the particulars of the sale. John Moffat's name, the good name he worked so many years to build was blemished.

“In selling the unsold land, the master will sell all the land, included is the Moffat purchase of Hord and wife, conveyed in trust to Deft. Steger being the 17 acres on which the hotel is located and the same is hereby classified and decreed to be sold as land unsold by Moffat, it appearing to the court by the admissions of all parties that said parcel of land was conveyed by Moffat to O. D. Mabee and that on the 22 February 1875, Deft. Mabee conveyed the same to trust to Deft. Steger for the benefit of John Moffat and after the executions of said trust deed Deft. Mabee conveyed absolutely to Moffat all his rights to the land.” (Decree Excerpt)

On October 10, 1877, the Whitworths transferred their right, title, interest, claim and any judgment the claim might bring to T. M. Steger; one might assume he was the Whitworths' lawyer, and his attorney fees were eating away at any money that might be collected from Moffat. “That Whitmore and wife had transferred their interest in said decree in the cause last above mentioned to T. M. Steger. It is ordered by the Court that Whitworth and wife be divested of their Interest in said decree and that the same vest in T. M. Sterger.” February 7, 1880, the Clerk and Master did as the decree instructed, sold the land at public auction with Thomas Maddin Steger coming up with \$3,900.00 to close the deal. This bid put 1,429 acres of land, a hotel, and any other appurtenances into the highly, respected Davidson County lawyer's hands.

In 1880, Thomas Maddin Steger acquired, on the steps of the courthouse, most of the Whitworth land that Mr. Moffat had not already conveyed in the 1870s. Later Mr. Steger put his land into the care of a new resident of our village, Egbert Welles Holcombe, who sold it for him. Some still living today (2018) bought land from descendants of the Holcombes. Other real estate dealers gnawed into these large grants and remnants thereof aiding in the downsizing of the Indian lands into villages like Moffat, the original name of our town. Several thousand acres were whittled down until my parents could buy in 1943 five acres more or less from Holcombe descendants. When I left Monteagle behind in 1960, it was a small town loved by all its citizens. Its journey from Indian lands to Moffat Station/Monteagle covered approximately forty years, more or less. Of course, the town is now (2019) nearly 150 years old.

(To be continued in next issue.)

My Life as a Coal Miner

James W. Mooney

transcribed from author's journal by his daughter, Barbara Mooney Myers

edited by Janelle Taylor

Coal is hard on the outside, but once it has cracked it is soft, crumbly and has sand-like material on the inside. That aptly describes a miner, hard on the outside, but not throughout. We'd be up in the clouds for a while due to good mining, then it would be back down somewhere stuck between dog holes digging that black gold, hoping to survive and maybe even get rich. As my wife and I struggled through the early 1920's living there at the old Tom Headrick home place in the Colony, we hardly managed to survive from week to week.

I decided it was time I went from one mine to another for a better job. The old John Powell Mines had an opening to load coal, so I accepted it. Me, I had to borrow black powder, a pick, and an auger from the owner Mr. Powell, who had a few extra tools.

I fixed the powder, loaded the three shots after drilling holes six feet deep, got them ready for the shots that night after I had loaded a few cars during the day. I needed the blast to finish off a good bit of coal from the inside so I could load it up to go on my paycheck. If Powell paid me any money, I'd round myself up some mining tools from Papa (Will Mooney) and my own powder over the weekend.

Getting to and from the mines was a savage trip for me, a five - mile walk from the homeplace. It was the old E Mines where I worked. I'd carry a keg of powder, the auger, and my lunch packed in a lard bucket that Mama (Martha (Cook) Mooney) gave me. The powder weighed 25 pounds, at least, because it was enough for a week's worth of blasting. The auger I'd tote on my shoulder, the pick, shovel and lunch bucket under my arm.

Often, I'd stop off at the front of the mines to leave my lunch bucket and tools. There was still quite a way to walk to where we all had to work following the blasting. Sometime later on in the day, I'd get my lunch, take it back with me along with the powder and tools so that they would be closer to where I was working. Many days I'd load 6 to 8 tons of coal, and I was paid \$1.50 per ton. We always worked 5 days a week if we could.

Soon my wife, Josephine, was expecting our first child. I usually slept with one eye open and one eye closed. By June 1923, she was due at any time. Then on July 12 , 1923, our first son William Carl arrived. We were happy over him, so we remained there at the Headrick home place until early fall; then I got a three-room house closer to where I was working. It was in a little area called "Dog Town" in Coalmont. We hadn't been there long until I bought our

first milk cow from a Mr. Shields. I got a good buy, paying only twenty-five dollars for the cow and her calf. The cow gave us lots of milk and butter.

It was dangerous to work in the mine, but I was making pretty good money. And it was not such hard work for me. I was closer to the mines since we'd moved, so that made it easier on me. Boy, I sure got black and nasty, but I took baths in an old zinc wash tub, one I hardly fit in! It was a means of getting clean, though. It was nearing Christmas time that year, time had been flying by, and our son was growing like a weed. Then the weather started getting cold. Carl took pneumonia on Dec. 23, 1923, and shortly died. It broke our hearts to lose our first child, and at Christmas too. That year neither of us had a heart to do anything except grieve over our son. We locked the doors to our house and went and stayed a week with Papa and Ma in Sewanee, TN. Papa made Carl William's casket from pine wood he got purposefully for things like that. He varnished it, and the next day we put our son away with a funeral on December 24.

He was buried at Harrison Cemetery in Sewanee, TN. We went back home, but things weren't the same anymore. Our son was gone, and my wife wasn't the same anymore either. I was almost afraid to leave her and go back to work that next day. It wasn't much of a New Year for us either when the time arrived. We went to church hoping this might ease our pain and comfort us a little.

Our baby's death caused my wife to cry all the time. She didn't even speak to me. I was trying to work in the mines every day, but I knew something had to be done.

Her younger brother, Arnold Dove, came to see us. He spent the remainder of the winter with us, and this seemed to give her a little comfort, having her brother there. This hurt within wouldn't leave; it hadn't for me.

Another summer grew near and Arnold got homesick for Tracy City, his home. He said he was going to look for work. He was about 16, I think. My wife got the urge to go see her mother, so, short of cash, I sold our milk cow and this provided us with money to go see her mother. We packed the next morning, got everything together we needed and locked the house up tightly. We walked to Coalmont, TN, and caught the 2:30 PM passenger train to Alabama.

If I recall the train arrived in Cowan at 3:30 PM and then proceeded on to Decherd and then on to Huntsville, AL, to Decatur, then Warrior, and finally arriving where her mother lived in Beltone, AL. She was married to Will McCoy who was a big talker and bragger, but he was the finest coal miner I believe I have ever met. After a few days he taught me how he took black powder and fixed his shots. He began digging the coal, and said, "I'm leaving the shooting up to you". Just as I'd done before, I drilled the holes six feet deep, filled them with black powder then he lit them with a carbide lamp, and we ran for our lives to the outside. Suddenly a blast sounded like kingdom come. He didn't talk much, grabbed me by the arm and said, "Come

with me". We went to the entry of the mine back to where we'd drilled and set off the powder. As far back as you could see, black gold lay spread out in front of us everywhere. "Come on, son, let's get to work. You need to earn that dollar don't you"?

I couldn't believe my eyes! This man was a genius at mining, but my brothers-in-law all considered him a "creep" for a stepfather. I'd say he may have had many imperfections, like we all do, but that man certainly knew his mining skills and how to get that coal out fast.

My wife was pregnant and due in five months with our second child, so we stayed on a few weeks longer to earn extra cash. Her mother, Mary Headrick Dove, didn't like Beltone, AL, very much and longed for the folks back in Grundy County. When we packed up to leave, she took it hard, and my wife did too. It was getting near early spring, and we needed seed for our garden. Her mama gave her bunches of dried seeds to plant.

In due time, I'd get the land plowed, land where we would start a garden. I'd borrow one of Mr. Powell's mules after mining hours, ride it home, and then we'd get everything taken care of during the weekend. Our little home was shabby, but we called it home for the time being. In due time, maybe better things would come our way.

Television Comes to Grundy County

Jackie Layne Partin

One evening in the early 1950s, John Campbell, Jr. walked over the railroad tracks in Monteagle to go to the movie at the Eagle Theater which was in Grundy County. As usual, the patrons arrived early for several reasons---to visit friends and family members not often seen, to be first in line for a ticket, to read all the upcoming movie events, in general "to do what people did in small towns while waiting in line at stores, banks, post offices, depots, bus stops, and theaters, socialize.

John noticed a few people standing in front of the window at the C. J. Cantrell's Furniture Store which was attached to the theater building. Wondering what they found so interesting, he strolled down to the group. There in the window he viewed for the first time a television. Notably, the picture was so grainy or snowy that he could not tell just exactly what was on the screen, but he was excited never-the-less. Like many other families, John's family did not have a television set in their home for many more years.

Carl Wayne Goodman wrote, "I grew up in a home without a phone, television or indoor plumbing. We were a family of eight. Dad was a coal miner. We had very little money."



C. J. Cantrell's Store in Monteagle. His wife, Margaret, is standing in front of the window that held the TV set that John Campbell saw. It appears at the time this photo was taken that televisions had not yet reached the store.

I'm not sure exactly when television came to Tracy City, probably in the early 1950s. If it had not been for WWII, television would have entered our homes sooner. The technology was well underway by folks at RCA under Richard Sarnoff, but the war effort needed their expertise for things military--like radar and sonar. I watched my first television at my grandmother's. She lived in the big two-story house across the street from Lottie Bell. Her name was Maude Goodman. We called her Momma Goodman. Our Uncle Lude Goodman, who had a CPA business in Chattanooga, took care of things like that for her. She also had an old wall phone. In winter one of us kids, usually me, stayed with her and brought in coal for the two-grate fireplaces (the house was always cold). In the morning, we watched



Maud (Warren) Goodman aka "Momma Goodman" with her husband Edward Goodman.

the “Today Show” and on Sunday evenings “What's My Line.” But more than TV, my reward were the waffles she made me before school.

For some strange reason, our parents enjoyed those awful fake wrestling matches broadcast from Chattanooga on Saturday evenings. We had a standing invitation from a friend, Billie Charles, to watch at her home near E.J. Cunningham's. I wanted to stay home and read or listen to the radio but was not allowed. My Aunt Alma Shook would let me watch detective shows like “77 Sunset Strip” and “Hawaiian Eye.” She liked the soap operas.

I have owned one television, a small black and white set that my mother gave me when she won a color set from a local furniture store. I kept it in a closet most of the time and rigged it up on occasion with coat hanger-style rabbit ears when I wanted to watch some event. I gave it away and haven't owned one since.”

On my search through the Grundy County Herald, on May 29, 1952, I finally fell upon an ad with the word television in it. That ad was placed by W. R. Geary who had numerous business ventures going on in Tracy City. It seemed strange that nothing was said about the item; I was expecting an explosion or maybe a ticker tape parade. However, less than two weeks later, Mr. Geary introduced the town and thus the county to television with a large ad all about this great wonder.

“Announcement! WE ARE NOW READY TO SERVE YOUR TELEVISION NEEDS; Complete line of ZENITH 17” or 21” Screen; New 1952 Zenith TV with CUSTOMIZED PERFORMANCE FOR YOUR LOCATION...ON EVERY STATION POSITIVELY...THE PRESCOTT \$339.95...We Install, We Service, We Do the Complete Job FROM ANTENNA TO RECEIVER...Get Ready for the conventions, Elections and Fall Football Games... INSTALL T. V. NOW...W. R. Geary & Sons.”

The words, “We service,” brought the name Kennerly Cunningham to mind. I have been told he was the man in the know when it came to television repair. He had worked on radar equipment while he was in the Army. Stepping into his small shop on Apple Orchard Rd. with one's inoperative television set was like walking into an Emergency Room at a hospital. Kennerly had every piece of equipment needed to repair one's tv set just as an emergency room would have to repair a broken body. If he didn't have it, he would make it. He mostly ordered kits and put them together in his shop according to Kenneth Roberts who worked for Kennerly. Together they made “house calls.”

Kennerly and Kenneth often made trips to Palmer at a \$3.00 service charge, but gas was only thirty cents back then.

It was in Kennerly's little shop that my husband Grady Ward Partin saw his first tv set. His Uncle Jim Bell had taken him on a show-and-tell trip to see what was happening under that tall tower that rose above the shop. The picture was grainy, to be generous, even with the tall antenna. That seemed to be the foremost need for the skills of Kennerly—"Please make my television picture better," or "I need better reception."



Kennerly Cunningham's aerial bent by the tornado. (Photo courtesy Grundy County Herald)

The tornado of Feb. 13, 1952, wreaked havoc on TV aerials all around Monteagle and Tracy City.

T. V. BRINGS JOY AND TRAGEDY AT BEERSHEBA was the lead story on July 24, 1952 in the *Grundy County Herald*. "Beersheba youth killed was holding ground wire...The first death directly contributed to Television in this county, perhaps the state, occurred at Beersheba Springs last Saturday...when Mr. John Richardson on returning home from work found his small son lying on the ground near their home, electrocuted. His hand was still clutching the ground wire of their television set...Little Fred Wayne Richardson was three and one-half years old."

I was born in 1942; my own introduction to television was probably when I was around ten years of age. My family, like the Goodmans, had very little money. Long before a television was brought into our little house, I have the memory of viewing my first one in the living room of the Wilburn and Josephine Sampley house. Of course, by invitation we four children were allowed by Mama to go across the road and watch "The Big Top," a circus show (1950-1957), and at least once, my siblings and I viewed "The Howdy Doody Show," (1947-1960) with the Sampley children. The excitement of this new invention, the wonderments of a real circus, and the curiosity of what we had just participated in kept us talking for days. "Daddy, can we have one of those? Please Daddy, please!" My dad didn't talk much, but we understood that televisions were rather expensive and out of the financial reach of our household.

Down the street toward town, Monteagle, lived the Jim Short family. Often, I kept their youngest child busy on Sunday afternoons by taking her to the matinee at the Eagle Theater on College Street. Mrs. Irene Short always financed two tickets and enough money for two bags of

popcorn and two cokes. When I stepped inside their living room to wait for the child, I was always mesmerized by a large television set, operating without a soul in the room. I didn't understand. Wasn't electricity expensive? Wouldn't it wear the television set completely out? Often, I stood and stared not even aware of what was going on around me—just watching in amazement.

Then one day Daddy came home with a television. He set about getting it ready for viewing. But first came the rules; never turn it on without permission; watch it only the limited time allotted by him; do not touch the control buttons, etc. I remember that we asked if “The Big Top” and “Howdy Doody” could be two of our viewings. That was acceptable to him.

That big cumbersome tube never became very important in the few years before I left home except on Saturday evenings when my mother's folks came from Clouse Hill to watch the very same wrestling that Carl W. Goodman wrote about. That was a big deal for those relatives, but I never fell for all that stuff. If one had taken a poll in those early days of television in Grundy County, I dare say that the number one show would have been “Wrestling!” In the neighborhood of “Buffalo,” Tracy City, lived two quite elderly ladies. The community houses were close together, so everyone knew on Saturday afternoons to get ready for wrestling to come on tv at the ladies' home. The yelling, screaming, banging, that came from that house would cause one to think the ladies themselves were wrestling, possibly with their allegiance belonging to different sides of the ring.

For most of my married life with three sons to rear, we did not have television. We lived for six years overseas where there was no television. My husband and I haven't had one in years, but I do have computer access to many shows I missed during those years should I want to share my time with Andy Griffith or Lorne Greene (Bonanza).

1952 seemed to be the magical year for Grundy County for those who had money. Jerome “Pete” Bouldin thinks that Kennerly had the first television; then Henry “Stokes” Flury got the second one. Bright Eyes Crisp may have had the third, but those are only Pete's memories. For those who didn't have money, there was always a way to be involved especially if one had a sharing neighbor; scores gathered on lawns to watch the television that had been placed in the open window pointing outwardly. In cold weather, certain rooms were packed to watch sports events, mostly wrestling.

It is now 2019; seventy plus years have passed since John Campbell, Jr. looked through that window at Cantrell's store and saw his first tv. I used to say, one had to search hard sometimes to decide if the cowboy was on or off his horse, but either way, all eyes were fixated on the big tube waiting for all the world to come into Grundy County's homes.

Happy Bottom, Tracy City, Tennessee

Jackie Layne Partin

Does it not lift one's spirit a little just to hear the word *happy* no matter how grim the situation really is? Maybe that is why the residents of this area let it be called Happy Bottom. As soon as the slaves were freed and began to make homes for themselves, "happy bottom" communities began to pop up in the South. There was one in Tracy City.

These little settlements weren't part of some Home Owners' Association. They probably were not even owned by the occupants, but the flat land usually near a creek with tiny board houses, sparsely placed, was a much better place to call home than the slave cabins of a plantation. If we knew the truth, there probably was little happiness in the flats, but one would not have known it by listening to the singing voices of those living there. At sunset and on toward bedtime, spiritual hymns and songs made up while working the fields could be heard over the farmland and even in the towns.

Today one would rarely if ever get to hear this singing in Grundy County, but I heard about it from one of my aunts. One of my father's sisters, Patricia Ann "Patsy" (Layne) Harris, told me that when she was a young girl, her father (my grandfather) worked off the plateau in Pelham Valley. He labored at the dangerous job of digging hand-dug wells for some valley farmers. Her mother took her to Pelham to see her father on the weekends. At times, little Patsy begged to be allowed to stay with her dad for the weekends. She told me of the evenings sitting next to her father on the porch of an old farm shack and listening to the songs floating from far across the fields; the songs were the Negro spirituals sung by some of the field hands of



Pines now stand on the northwest side of Nathurst Street where probably once stood the meager homes of Happy Bottom.

the land owners. She was struck by how spiritually happy they sounded. She couldn't understand why they were so happy at that time of evening. Everyone's body and mind should have been ready for sleep, not singing.

I have no proof, but to me it is the spiritual joy in these songs that account for the "Happy" in the names of these communities.

In the years immediately after the Civil War and on into the twentieth century, Tracy City had its own such section on the northwest side of town that became known as Happy Bottom. The front or main part of town was on the southeast with gently curving Railroad Avenue being the main street. At the back of town, Colyar Street ran southwest to northeast and parallel to it farther northwest ran Nathurst Street, (hardly in any condition to call a street); both crossed a creek, a tributary to Little Firey Gizzard. Even detailed maps show no name for the creek, but more about that later. It was in this area northwest of Nathurst Street and on the banks of the creek that Happy Bottom lay. My source of this information is Frank Brawley. His parents' old home place is a low field with the creek flowing through it. Above the creek and field is a recently planted stand of pine trees. Mr. Brawley was told by his parents that it was in and around the area where the pines grow that the black citizens had their homes. The creek was useful in many ways, but it was a demon during rainy periods when it often covered the roads and fields and came up near houses. The residents needed the creek, but they steered clear of being washed away by its occasional temper tantrums.



Flat land, creek and pines on what was Happy Bottom

Why was the area called Happy *Bottom*? I'm going to use a little common sense to answer this question. The land lay low, thus "Bottom". It was near the town, but obviously at the back

of the sections that held large, beautiful, houses mostly painted white. The newly freed inhabitants of Happy Bottom were the cooks, housekeepers, baby sitters, gardeners, or servants for the more financially fortunate citizens of the town. The folks who lived in Happy Bottom, however, were not part of the convict labor force used in the coal mines and coke ovens in those days in Tracy City.



Colyar Stree Bridge across Happy Bottom creek in Tracy City.” This view is from The Lunch Box looking toward the Dollar General store.

Here are some references to Happy Bottom in the press of long ago.

The Daily American, June 09, 1884— Tracy City, June 8—Early last night, Henry Cook, a quiet, inoffensive negro, was shot and instantly killed by Abner Street. The killing took place in the thicket between that part of town known as Happy Bottom, where the negroes live, and the business portion of town. The body of the dead man lay where he fell until this morning, when it was found by some negroes. As soon as the body was found, the Coroner was notified and proceeded to hold an inquest. Warrants were issued for the arrest of James Nunly, a boy of about 15, and Abner Street. Nunly was arrested first, and from information given by him, Street was soon found and after some maneuvering, arrested. Nunly’s testimony before the Coroner was in substance that he and Street had started home, but were returning to look for a lost knife

when they met the negro, who was going to the store for supplies. Street halted the negro, spoke a few words to him and shot him through the heart. There had been no previous difficulty, and there seems to have been no provocation whatever. Street's preliminary examination is set for 10 o'clock, tomorrow, before Squire W. J. Thomas. Street is quiet when sober but desperate when drinking. There is considerable excitement".

The Daily American—Oct. 15, 1887, Tracy City News: Bob Teague and three other prisoners escaped from jail at Altamont last Wednesday night, knocking down the Jailer and breaking down two doors. They were seen in "Happy Bottom" at about 2 o'clock Thursday morning, but made themselves scarce before the officers could get them.

Let's go back to Colyar Street and talk about Happy Bottom from that viewpoint. If you have ever driven through Tracy City, then likely as not, you crossed a creek that flows under Colyar Street. Today the creek meanders along passing near the Dollar General Store and The Lunch Box. I never knew its name until I found a small newspaper clipping published in 1924.

The Daily American July 13, 1924 — Tracy City, Tenn., July 12—County court met at Altamont and a bridge was ordered built across Happy Bottom creek intersecting with the pike from Colyar street at Tracy City.



Happy Bottom Creek leaving Nathurst Street on its way to Colyar Street.

Of course, the current bridge is a modern one, but this quote gives us a date when the residents finally took the little creek seriously. It is not always a gentle little creek, but sometimes roars up and over the bridge. I figure that the creek furnished the low land in that area with water for the happy evening singers. It's time for the city to put up a sign reading, "Happy Bottom Creek." It would help us remember our past history and even the little creeks that flow from the back side of our towns.

Publications Available For Sale

- Beersheba Springs, a History Vol. I* 2010, \$20.00
Beersheba Springs, a History Vol. II Family Homes, Love and More, \$20.00
Beersheba Springs, a History Vol. II Supplement 2012, \$20.00
Beersheba Springs, a History Vol. III Classics, \$20.00
Dad's Railroad by Mary Priestley, \$14.00
Family History of Flury – Stoker Family compiled by Catherine Flury, \$25.00
Grundy County by James L. Nicholson (Tennessee County History Series), \$47. Used condition
Grundy County Family Portraits by Jackie Partin, \$15.00
Grundy County Cemeteries Vol. I, \$40.00
Grundy County Cemeteries Vol. II, \$40.00
The Heritage of Grundy County, \$50.00
Grundy County Tidbits Vol. 1 by Euline Harris \$30.00
Grundy County Tidbits Vol. 2 by Euline Harris \$30.00
Grundy County Tidbits Vol. 3 by Euline Harris \$30.00
John Armfield of Beersheba Springs by Isabel Howell, \$15.00
Morton B. Howell Memoirs, \$10.00
Mountain Voices & Index, The Centennial History of Monteagle Sunday School Assembly, \$60.00
The Swiss Colony at Gruetli by Frances Helen Jackson, edited by Clopper Almon 2010, \$20.00
The Pathfinder (Quarterly Publication of Grundy Co. Historical Society) back issues \$12.00 ea.
Pictures of Our Past Grundy County Tennessee, collected and edited by Grundy County Historical Society 2008 is out of print. Persons interested in placing a reservation for a second printing of the edition should contact The Heritage Center at 931 592-6008 or email history@blomand.net in the event that we are able to reprint it.
175th Anniversary of Grundy County Pictorial History - Due out winter 2019. \$39.95 if ordered in pre-publication. Price will increase after publication.

Book orders costing \$25 or less, include \$7 postage. Book orders over \$25, include \$10 postage.

Our 175th Anniversary of Grundy County Pictorial History book is now with the printer. We hope that all of you sent in pictures to be included in the book. Acclaim Press tells us that the book will be complete by December 2019; we are looking forward to it and hope that you will be too. If you haven't purchased a copy, the book will be \$49.95 plus \$6.50 if you want it shipped to you. Please send your payment to Grundy County Historical Society; P.O. Box 1422; Tracy City, TN 37387 along with your mailing information. If you have questions, please contact us at heritagelibrary@blomand.net.

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Finance	Ron Buffington
Library & Research	Janelle Taylor
Membership	Nadene Moore
Museum	Cynthia Killian
Publications & Publicity	Barry Rollins

Membership Dir.	William Beard
Membership Dir.	Woody Register
Community Dir.	John W. Hargis, Jr.
Community Dir.	Gerald Sitz

LIFETIME MEMBERS

Howell E. Adams, Jr., Madeline Adams,
David Patton, Marian V. Savage, Inez
Winton

SOCIETY MEETINGS

The Grundy County Historical Society meets semi-annually (June and December) at the Heritage Center. Meetings are normally on the 2nd Saturday unless otherwise announced. These meetings are open to anyone with an interest in the history of the region.

MEMBERSHIP

Dues are \$30.00 and include delivery of The Pathfinder electronically by email. Paper copies of The Pathfinder delivered by U.S. Postal Service, are an additional \$15.00, for a total of \$45.00. Membership is for the calendar year and expires on December 31st.

EDITOR

The Pathfinder is published quarterly by the GCHS. The Society welcomes articles submitted for publication. The GCHS is looking for a new Editor. If you are interested in becoming the Editor, please contact the Heritage Center.

QUERIES & RESEARCH

Queries are free. Please be brief. Submit by e-mail to Janelle Taylor at jantay641@gmail.com or send on a 3"x5" card to the Grundy County Historical Society's address, Attn: Janelle Taylor. The Historical Society will perform quick lookups at no charge. Further research will be performed at a rate of \$10 per hour plus the cost of copies at \$.20 per page plus the cost of postage and handling. Contact jantay641@gmail.com with queries.

**Grundy County Historical Society Heritage Center
P.O. Box 1422
Tracy City, TN 37387**

**465 Railroad Avenue
Phone 931 592-6008
Fax 931 592-6009**

Heritage Center	heritagecenter@blomand.net
Museum & Administration	history@blomand.net
Tennessee Consolidated Coal Company Library	heritagelibrary@blomand.net

**Website
www.grundycountyhistoricalsociety.com**



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