

# Days Of Old Sumner County

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Sumner County Historical Society

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## Its Youth Helped H'ville Survive in '72

By Jamie Clary

In 1964, Hendersonville was an unincorporated, poorly defined area of southwest Sumner County. A referendum to draw borders and create a city government failed that year, but it gave supporters ideas on how to try again.

For the second attempt at creating a city government, L.H. "Dink" Newman drew proposed borders around a much smaller area, approximately 100 acres centered on Shivel Drive. Newman felt the limited effort could win because, he explained, he knew all the voters and most of their pets.

On June 11, 1968, Newman succeeded in creating the City of Hendersonville by a vote of 53 to 26. A month later those same voters elected Newman, Louis Oliver Sr. and Ed Sisco to be their three city commissioners.

But before the new commissioners could take office, Bill Cole, manager of the Hendersonville Utility District, filed suit to stop them. Fearing that the city would take over the Hendersonville Utility District, Cole claimed that the incorporated area was too small to be a city. He also suspected that the commissioners would annex

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Garrotts' House

## Garrott House Pledged to Museum; Carriage House to be Museum Site

By Jan Shuxteau

Gallatin businessman John Garrott, whose love of local history is well known in Sumner County, is donating his historic Main Street home to the Sumner County Museum and helping museum officials purchase and renovate the adjoining Carriage House, where they will move the museum next year.

Garrott is the former president of the Sumner County Historical Society and co-founder of the Sumner County Museum, which is presently housed behind Trousdale Place mansion, 183 W. Main St., down a side street behind the Chrysler dealership in Gallatin.

It is precisely because the museum is on a side street that prompted Garrott to donate his house. "Nobody sees it," he said of the current location. "I want to move it to where it will be visible. Looking east, you are able to see to my house and Carriage House from the public square in Gallatin. This location will draw more people."

It is his mission to make more Sumner Countians aware of their heritage. "I want them to come to the museum and appreciate everything that has been collected," he said. "I want them to realize that this was the second county in Middle Tennessee. It's old, and it was important because of the people who came here—the first settlers in the state—the Winchesters, the Daniel Smith family, the Rogans and others. These early settlers had to cut through the wilderness, build forts and battle the Indians just to survive."

Garrott's own ancestors—his mother's family—were among the early

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# Gallatin Turnpike Company Builds the Road

By Jan Shuxteau, editor

From the book, *City by the Lake*, by Tim Takacs

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Before Gallatin Road/Nashville Pike, there was Kentucky Road, which began as a buffalo trail, became a primitive public road from Nashville through Sumner County, then was made a toll road from about 1835 until about 1900. The story of Kentucky Road. is told by Attorney Tim Takacs, in his book *City by the Lake*. Below, is the first hundred years of that tale.**

Settlers who came to Sumner County from North Carolina and Virginia beginning in the 1780s brought with them a legacy of road building. They saw a great need to link outlying stations (forts) with the seat of government in Nashville, both for protection from Indians and to enable travel and commerce.

"Among the first acts of the Davidson County Court in 1785 was to order the clearing out of a road from Dry Creek at Edenwold to Bledsoe's Lick. The road probably followed a buffalo trail, and the clearing out probably consisted of little more than cutting a passage just wide enough for a wagon to ramble along unobstructed by trees and brush," reported Takacs.

In 1787—after it had created Sumner County—the North Carolina General Assembly levied a tax for Sumner road building. This (*Private Acts of 1787, ch. 25*) was the first Sumner County road law. By 1799, the year Hendersonville's Sanders Ferry Road was laid out, a road had been cut from the wilderness from Edenwold to Bledsoe's Lick—the length of Sumner County to Kentucky. It was called Kentucky Road. It was the forerunner of Gallatin Road/Nashville Pike.

Kentucky Road was barely more than a trail in places in those bygone days. State lawmakers were well aware that the road needed improvements. They wanted to pay for them by selling federal land—other states were doing that—but federal land was scarce in Tennessee, so there was no revenue there. "For lack of funds, then, the state legislature [in 1804] laid the chore of doing road work upon the county courts," noted Takacs.

Road, bridges and ferry landings laid out by the county courts were declared to be public roads and follow standardized specifications. They were, for example, required to be 20 feet wide unless the road overseer deemed it "expedient" for the road to be 14 feet in places for repair purposes. Regulations read, "the overseers of public roads are hereby directed to have

completely cut and cleared of all stumps, rocks, trees, brush and obstruction, so far as is practicable for the width of 16 feet in the center of the road under their care, of which width, necessary bridges through swamps and over small runs and creeks..."

It was the duty of overseers "to summon or notify all white males from the age of 18 to 50 years and all owners of slaves to be notified to send their male servants from 15 to 50 years of age" to work on the public roads in the 1800s. The men generally worked along the public road where they lived, and they were not required to work on more than one road. Judges, preachers, ferry keepers and justices of the peace as well as top state officials and any free white person who could send three slaves were exempt from road work. Disabled and sick men were regularly granted exemptions. Wealthy landowners customarily paid others to work on their behalf. Anyone who shirked road duty was fined a day's wages—75-cents—for every day he didn't work.

The 1804 Act had a serious flaw, noted Takacs. County courts were forced to spend as much effort on marginal roads as on major thoroughfares. To rectify this situation, the General Assembly in 1821 divided roads into three classes with upkeep divided more logically. Trees along the roadways were marked to show travelers what class of road they were on.

## The Gallatin Turnpike

As it became more and more obvious that roadways were essential to economic growth, local entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to get in on the action, speed up construction, organize upkeep and gain a profit in the process. They saw the success of toll roads—turnpikes—in other parts of the country and decided to follow their lead. (As early as 1792, the first American turnpike—the 70-mile Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike—was chartered by Pennsylvania. It was immediately hailed as a successful feat of engineering and a lucrative investment, enabling Pennsylvania passengers and mail to cover the entire route in an astounding 12 hours.)

Several Sumner County men went before the Tennessee General Assembly in January 1830, where they asked permission and were granted the right to build a toll road from Nashville to Gallatin without state aid. According to the *Acts of Tennessee, 1829, Chapt. 232*, this toll road—

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## ROAD, continued from Page 2

dubbed the Gallatin Turnpike—would be a “public highway, free for the passage of wagons, carriages...on payment of such tolls as the board of directors may from time to time establish.” The Sumner men told lawmakers that “the generous, high spirited citizens of Kentucky are ready to second the exertions of this state...by improved public highways to bring people of the two states together, to united them in esteem, in social feelings, in manners and in habits, and thus to perpetuate the ties of political union...”

But the turnpike company, begun with such enthusiasm, foundered for five years on a lack of capital. This state of affairs continued until passage of the 1836 Internal Improvement Act, which enabled the Gallatin turnpike men to sell shares that would allow the company to begin organizing.

In May 1836, shareholders met in Gallatin and set the capital stock of the company at \$135,000—2,700 shares at \$50 per share—which were sold during the summer. A board of directors was elected, with Hendersonville planter James Sanders becoming chairman until his death only a few months later.

In February 1837, work began in Nashville on the Gallatin Turnpike, but it soon became obvious that costs were higher than expected and the company would run out of money before completing the road all the way to the Kentucky line. Directors went to the General Assembly, explaining that the company had made “great exertions,” but “owing to the sparsity of the population on a goodly portion of the route, and the limited means of inhabitants, they utterly failed” to obtain enough subscriptions to extend the road to the Kentucky line.

The General Assembly did not give the company the financial backing directors wanted, but it did save it. Legislators enacted the *Bank and Internal Improvement Act of 1838*, which had the effect of keeping the company afloat by uniting in one swoop banking, internal improvements. The turnpike was put under contract. By February 1839, it was partially built, toll rates were set and five toll gates between Nashville and Gallatin opened. Money started coming in.

But there remained big obstacles to the directors’ ultimate goal of continuing on to Kentucky and reaching from there to northern markets. First, they had to overcome a pending resolution in the Kentucky legislature that would have stopped construction of the road at the Kentucky line. Second, they had to raise more money. The Bank of Tennessee had failed to obtain even the face value of the bonds issued to the Gallatin Turnpike Company, so the company was not able to pay its creditors full price. Directors paid the road contractors in state bonds, which they valued at 90-cents on the dollar. Stockholders met at the Gallatin courthouse and agreed to increase capital stock from \$225,000 to \$285,000. After this, the situation improved.

In December 1839, turnpike directors were able to report that the road was complete except for a half-mile on the ridge. They wrote to Tennessee’s Secretary of State and to Sylvester Welch, chief engineer of Kentucky, noting the estimated cost of the turnpike to be \$290,000, the dimensions and construction of the road for 49 ½ miles and the completion of 12 substantial stone bridges and one wooden bridge. “The bridges are all finished,” the directors boasted, “and superior probably to those of any other McAdamized road in the state and perhaps the union.”

Despite their pride, the directors continued to face problems. The revenue from the company’s 10 tollgates (three in Davidson County and seven in Sumner) was barely enough to keep up the road and pay salaries. Road contractors, who were owed more than \$30,000, could not be paid. Several filed suits in Sumner County Circuit Court.

The Supreme Court ultimately spared the Gallatin Turnpike Company from dismemberment at the hands of its creditors, said Takacs. It remained under the protection of the Chancery Court for several years as its toll revenue slowly paid its debts, but by 1845 public financing for turnpikes was dead in Tennessee. “However, it was to no one’s advantage to dismantle the Gallatin Turnpike Company, for everyone associated with it—the promoters, directors, officers, shareholders, and contractors—could proudly say they had used public money to build a turnpike road, and a good one too.”

**The story of Sumner’s main road will continue in the July issue of this newsletter.**

# Author Gives Vision of Old Nashville, Elmwood Mansion

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

Hendersonville author Judith A. Morgan invites readers to, "Draw back the curtains of time. Step into another age, a statelier age," in her new book, *My Name Was Elmwood: a Story of Nashville*. The book begins in 1812 Gallatin and ends in 1920s Nashville.

Morgan, who wrote *The Lost World of Langley Hall* in 2013, will be the featured speaker at Sumner County Historical Society's annual dinner meeting, Thursday, April 23 at the First Baptist Church on Winchester St. Tickets are \$18.50. Invitations were sent to members, but non-members are also welcome. Call Sumner County Archives at 452-0037 for reservations.

Morgan will discuss the Sumner County connections of her newest work, which will also debut at the dinner and be available for purchase.



**Judith Morgan**

In *The Lost World of Langley Hall*, Morgan told the biographical love story of Eleanor Katherine Trousdale, a member of the prominent Trousdale family, and Gallatin banker William Young Allen. Through their lives the story of Gallatin unfolded. The new book is the story of young Nashville over the course of a century told through the lives of the William Wells Berry family, relatives of Katie and William Allen.

Nashville druggist and banker William Wells Berry (1813-1876) had strong ties to Sumner County. His wife's father was General William White, who began both his legal and military careers while living in Gallatin in the early 1800s. Three of the Berry children married into Sumner County families of Gallatin and Hendersonville.



**Tennessee Archives Photo of old Elmwood**

Building the house that became Elmwood was Berry's long-held dream. Situated on acres of farmland on Nashville's city limits, the Elmwood estate was on the site of the community now known as Berry Hill, "the city within a city" of trendy shops and light industry that took its name from the Berry family.

The Elmwood mansion, an Italianate brick house, was started in 1860 and barely under roof when the nation plunged into the Civil War. Construction was halted, and before the war was over soldiers had built breastworks throughout the property and destroyed hundreds of trees, gardens and orchards. Construction resumed after the war, and the family moved into the house in 1867. Elmwood's glory years began, and it joined neighboring estates such as Traveler's Rest and Glen Leven as one of the notable homes of Tennessee. The house burned in the 1920s.

Told from the point of view of the house, *My Name Was Elmwood* follows the Berry family from General White and the War of 1812 to the Federal occupation of Nashville during the Civil War, from the "nice little war" of 1898 to the bloody battlefields of "the Great War." Readers attend weddings and debuts, take the Grand Tour of Europe and meet the belles and beaux of the Gay Nineties.

"The book gives readers a glimpse of the Nashville that once was," said Morgan. It takes them to the Tennessee Centennial celebration, tells the story of Belle Meade plantation's tragic demise, partition and sale and describes the Women's Suffrage movement as it unfolded in Nashville.

# How Did Households Run in the Old South?

By Ken Thomson, President of SCHS

In the old South, successful households and plantations were often as meticulously managed as a well-run business, with each person handling their role like cogs in a wheel. In addition, there were traditions to be followed, protocol to be observed and a well-recognized hierarchy that kept people working in tandem.

A typical plantation household would include the master and the mistress, the old master and old mistress, children and possibly some aunts, cousins and a few visitors—some of whom “visited” for months or years at a time.

## The Lady of the House Ruled

The mistress was the most important person in the home. The master proudly yielded to her the management of all household matters and simply carried out her directions. She was often far better organized than the master, and he recognized her superiority and wisdom. It would never have occurred to him to make a suggestion about the management of the house; he knew her skills and acknowledged her infallibility.

She was mistress, manager, doctor, nurse, counselor, seamstress, teacher, housekeeper and slave to the house, all at once. She was at the beck and call of everyone, especially her husband, to whom she ideally was guide, philosopher and friend.

What she really was was known only to God. Her life was one long act of devotion—devotion to God, to her husband, children, servants, friends, to the poor and all humanity. The mistress managed her family, including the training of her children. She regulated the servants, fed the poor, nursed the sick and consoled the bereaved.

## The Master Was CEO

The master of a plantation was similar to the president of any great establishment with a variety of employees. He, by having a good overseer, shifted a portion of his burdens from his shoulders, but the mistress had no such help.

Along with tenacity, the master had strong convictions, was partisan to the backbone and generally incapable of seeing more than one side of any argument. His first duty as a Christian possessing the qualities of a virtuous life was to be a gentleman. The master believed in democracy and was usually conservative and a wonderful talker—discussing on philosophy,

politics and religion. His loyalty to his family, his extended family, friends and workers was steadfast.

Next in the hierarchy, we find mammy, who was zealous, faithful and the efficient assistant of the mistress in all that pertained to the children. Her authority was second only to that of the mistress and master. The mammy regulated the children, disciplined them with authority to administer correction. Her regime extended up to three generations. At all times, she was the children's faithful ally, shielding them, excusing them, petting them, aiding them, yet holding them up to a certain high accountability. She was an honored member of the family, universally beloved and universally cared for.

## Aristocrats Among Servants

Next to the mammy were the butler and the carriage driver. These three were the servant aristocrats of the household, who helped train the children in good manners and other exercises. Tradition has it that the butler would be severe and feared. The driver would be genial, kindly and much adored. He would be the ally of the boys of the family. As head of the stable, he would be an important personage in their eyes.

Other servants with special places and privileges were the gardeners and ladies' maids. Whenever parents were absent, children were cared for by servants, who expected to be obeyed. Children knew they would face the eventual wrath of their parents if they strayed.

## A Societal Foundation Arose

All of these individuals formed a great household, a social structure that many think perished along with the antebellum South. However, the hierarchy of family life and the customs that were its foundation were not entirely swept away by the ravages of the Civil War and its aftermath. The beloved mammy became more commonly referred to as “nurse,” and other individuals—particularly cooks and maids—remained as paid servants. Even on into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those individuals who remained as servants lived in a way similar to that of their antebellum ancestors. The best of the “old ways” lived on. And, some maintain that the greatness of this country is owed in part to the societal foundation created by a hierarchy found in the plantation South.

# James Gwin: the first Fountain Head Pioneer

By Al Dittes

While Andrew Jackson did business and horse racing in Sumner County, he cultivated a close friend north of the ridge: James Gwin.

Gwin, a fellow emigrant and contemporary of Jackson's from North Carolina, also helped to carve a civilization from the wilderness. His relationship with Jackson began when they first came to Tennessee as young men and continued the rest of their lives. Gwin served as chaplain in the backwoods American army that beat the British in the Battle of New Orleans.

"Gwin was absolutely fearless in the presence of danger and was a great favorite with Andrew Jackson," reported an early newspaper. "He was present at the battle of New Orleans, had charge of the sick and did good service in preaching to the soldiers, attending the disabled and burying the dead. His conduct secured the confidence of men and officers alike so that after the war he had unbounded influence with all who knew him in the perils and hardships of the severe campaign. He so completely won the heart of the commander that when he came into office as President he conferred office on his sons and his friend throughout life."

Born in 1768 (Jackson was born in 1767), one account says Gwin, then 19, moved to Nashville in 1788—another says 1791. Either way, he came to Tennessee about the same time as Jackson and found a role for himself on the frontier. He joined the Methodist Church, later becoming a minister.

"The settlers are buying up land and clearing off farms, and a surveyor can earn a good living there now," he told his future mother-in-law according to an early account. "It is a new country just opening. Now is the time for me to do the most good as a minister and also as a surveyor."

He married his sweetheart, Mary Adair McAdams and went to Middle Tennessee, a land of "wild bears and wolves, and the Indians prowling round, sometimes on the warpath."

An early news story reported that Gwin and his family lived the first year at Hamilton Station in the northwestern part of Sumner County, but "the wickedness of the place was such, he preferred to build a cabin in the forest alone and trust to God for protection from the savages." Thus he moved to Fountain Head at a time when most

settlers feared ambush and chose to live in stations and blockhouses. Nobody left a fort without a rifle, and armed sentries protected all outdoor work.

Gwin found his skills as a surveyor in demand, and work took him away from home. People often paid him with land he had surveyed. He would, in turn, sell it or exchange it for property near his own home. In this way, he became one of the prominent frontiersmen—but also a target for robbery from some who thought he had money stored in his house.



James Gwin

Gwin entered the Methodist ministry in 1803 through the influence of his close friend, Bishop William McKendree, the first American-born bishop. "Parson Gwin rapidly became noted in the region for his energetic piety and powerful exhortations to repentance," states one of his chroniclers. "Intensely patriotic, in the War of 1812, he enlisted as chaplain of the Tennessee volunteers, going with them to New Orleans; and in the battle Gen. Jackson rated his neighbor's fighting qualities so highly he placed the parson in command of 1,400 sharpshooters in the second line of defense."

That position carried the rank of colonel, but Gwin chose to operate as a clergyman. One story coming out of the campaign summed up his

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## **JAMES GWIN, Continued from Page 6**

Christian-soldier image. "When a quartermaster sneered at the chaplain's black coat, Gwin took it off and thrashed the scoffer into a respectful mood. Then pulling on his coat, he knelt and prayed just as vigorously for the quartermaster's salvation."

These qualities commanded respect among settlers. One contemporary described Gwin as "a sturdy pioneer of religion and patriotism..."

He fought in several Indian battles, including Caney Fork and Nickajack, and when the Indian menace faded he devoted himself to surveying and ministry. After Jackson became president, Gwin wrote a letter to him at the White House. In frontier spelling, he wrote, "I spent the evening at the Hurmitage and returned there agane after supper and stayed all night. It is quite Lonesum to be there now. I conversed with your overseer."

### **Preaching to the Slaves**

In 1829, The Rev. Gwin started preaching to local Nashville slaves. They organized the "African Mission," which had a membership of 819 by 1833. It became the present Capers Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church in 1853. The congregation is still active.

### **More Work With Jackson**

In a May 16, 1829, letter to a Hardy Murfree Cryer, President Jackson indicated he was saving an office for Samuel Gwin, son of James Gwin, and later gave him a \$1,000 clerkship in the Post Office Department in Washington, D.C.

Other correspondence indicates James Gwin participated in Jackson's presidency by helping out with negotiations with the Choctaw Indians and supporting the president in the controversy involving Peggy Eaton, wife of Secretary of War John Eaton. (He spelled the name Ettan)

### **Move to Mississippi**

Shortly after 1830, Gwin and his sons Samuel, William M. and Alexander purchased tracts of land in Issaquena County, Miss., and he took an appointment in the Mississippi Conference at Vicksburg in 1838.

Andrew Jackson visited him there on his way home from celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans in 1840. "I had the pleasure of meeting with my old friend, Father Gwin, in good health but dissatisfied with the lower country," he wrote. "He has a wish to spend his last days in Tennessee if it meets the views of

his wife, to whom he wrote by me. I made him an offer of Ward's place, now owned by my son and myself, which Dr. William Gwin said if his father selected he would buy for him. I enclosed the letter to Mrs. Gwin requesting to know her desire and as yet have not heard from her. To have (a good old) man as my neighbor in my declining life would be a great pleasure to me."

Mary Gwin did not want to make this move, and James Gwin died the next year (1841) at the Buena Vista Plantation near Vicksburg, which was built his granddaughter Caroline's husband, Basil Kiger.

Gwin summed up his life in a letter to Andrew Jackson, with pioneer spelling, dated Dec. 18, 1830:

*"I have spent the prime of my life in serving the church & state nerley graciousley and have bin unfortunate in the things of this world. I have obeyed the call of my country from 14 years of age at which age I went with my elder brothers in to the armye of the revelution. 40 years ago I reached this country--I then found you hearr a young man full of strenth, and readey to meet danger. I can say with you I never shund danger in all the perilous scens of indean warfare that we was subject too in the setling this country and down to the close of perials on the plains of orlens. There are but few Left now to tell thaire children what the furst settelors of this country had to incoiunter. I have served the church about 30 years in my feabel manor, she has not bin abel to do aney for my help in my st years, my country has never done aney thing for me untill your good heart noticed my unfourtinate Samuel--but I have no complaint againts my country nor the church, I carry my bountey with me, which is I have indeavoured to serve my generation from pure motives for the genral good and am still readey & willing to suffer and die for my country & her pure institutions which makes her children free men."*

**Editor's Note: Rev. James Gwin's son William was the subject of a story in the January 2015 edition of this newsletter. William Gwin, who benefited greatly from his father's friendship with Andrew Jackson, became the first Senator of the newly organized state of California in 1850 and was instrumental in writing the state Constitution. William Gwin, born in Sumner County, was also a physician and a member of Congress (1840).**

## GARROTT, Continued from Page 1

settlers. She was a Baker, descended from Isaac Baker, who came to Sumner County in 1783 or 1784. Now—six generations later—the family remains. His mother, the last of 10 Baker children, lived to be 96 years old, instilled an appreciation for the past in her children. Among Garrott's earliest memories are those of going with his mother "downtown" on Saturday nights to Gallatin square to get a soda. "My mother was so interested in family history. We'd walk down the street, and she'd name all the cousins and tell me all about them."



**John Garrott is pictured with his wood workshop and home in the background.**

As a student at Gallatin High School—he graduated in 1947—Garrott became fascinated with stories of old Tennessee. The idea of saving local history took root in his mind.

"I started collecting things as early as high school," said Garrott, who has contributed heavily to the museum's bounty, especially its collection of vintage cars. "The oldest car I ever had and the one I donated to the museum was the car I bought when I was 16—it is now 106 years old."

Garrott has been a force behind most historic preservation projects in the county. "I was in the concrete business," he said, "so naturally I went into a lot of the old houses looking at construction." Garrott retired as president of Garrott Concrete, a family business founded by his father.

He worked on the preservation of Cragfont first, then Rosemont. He has been involved in Bledsoe Lick Historical Association from its beginning. He is one of the three surviving incorporators.

Garrott loves best the history of the first western movement into Middle Tennessee—the late 18<sup>th</sup> century—when settlers pushed from the East into the wilderness. "Sumner County was the pathway west," he said. "We became a county in 1786, 10 years before the state of Tennessee was formed in 1796. At the time we became a county, we were part of North Carolina."

Garrott and his wife June, a fellow 1947 GHS graduate, bought their present home in 1972. At that time, Carriage House, which is where most of the museum will be moved, was a six-unit apartment building. Museum officials recently raised \$325 thousand to buy the building and are seeking additional contributions to renovate it.

Property around the Garrott house/Carriage House was once owned by former Gov. William Hall, the Gallatin governor who finished Sam Houston's term of office after he left in disgrace. Dr. Levi Ring bought the land from Hall and built the Garrott's house in 1831. He was head master of Gallatin's Transmontania Academy, which was located on the west side of Garrott's property. The academy president's original house, built between 1812 and 1815, is also on the property. Transmontania was a boys' school chartered by the state in 1806.

Ring lived in the house for two years, then he sold it to a lawyer named James Leath and returned to his hometown of Clarksville. Five years later, he returned to Transmontania and built Carriage House, apparently as a place to live. However, he moved away—never living in the house—and scandalized the county by refusing to pay for construction. Lawsuits were filed against him, and Carriage House was sold, probably on the courthouse steps.

Carriage House was a residence for carriage factory owners—hence its name—and the factory was built behind the house on a separate lot. The factory was used by two different carriage companies from 1848 until sometime during the Civil War, when it was taken over as the Harrison Barracks for Union soldiers. The house changed hands many times until it was made into apartments by John B. Swaney in 1925. Among its owners was Capt. Samuel Robert Simpson, an architect who operated a business there. Simpson was the prominent, infamous murderer of Judge Sylvanus Benton, who had an affair with Simpson's wife. A clever defense enabled Simpson to spend only a year in prison.

The fate of the Garrott's house from about 1840

**(See GARROTT, Page 9)**





**John Garrott and Carriage House, where SC Museum will move**

**GARROTT, Continued from Page 8**

until 1871 is not known. In 1871 a group of men bought it, apparently to be used as rental property. In any event, they rented it to Neophogen College to be used as a boys' dormitory. Neophogen College was a private co-educational university that relocated to Gallatin in 1874 after a fire in burned them out of their Cross Plains campus. The town boys were not pleased with the Neophogen interlopers whose snappy uniforms intrigued the hometown girls. They nicknamed the Neophogen lodgings "The Buzzard's Roost," in derision of their rivals.

The college, which was quaintly dedicated mainly to matters of etiquette, spent four years in Gallatin before moving back to Cross Plains.

The year after its move, one of the three owners—James Turner—bought out the other two and gained the house. In 1905, it was sold as part of Turner's estate to Ernest House. The House family owned it for the next 50 or more years. It changed hands again then was bought by John Garrott.

**Sumner County Museum: A Repository of Local, Historic Artifacts**

**Sumner County Museum, founded by John Garrott and Bob Ramsey of Gallatin and incorporated in 1975, was first housed in Trousdale Place mansion, 183 W. Main, until museum supporters completed a building on the back of the property. Over the years many people donated or loaned items to the Museum, some of which are unique to the area. These include: the first pumper fire engine of Gallatin, a workable tinsmith shop, a blacksmith shop, a music exhibit and the military area of the War Between the States, WWI, WWII and Vietnam. There have been many projects, fundraisers or events at the Museum or for the Museum, including the Gallatin Candlelight Cemetery Tour held on the first Saturday of October, quilting bees, music on the law with country and bluegrass entertainers, craft and art demonstrations and auctions.**

# The Great Flood of 1927 Led to Big Changes

By Bonnie Martin, Director SC Archives

The Great Flood of 1927 ranked as the worst flood in Tennessee history until May of 2010. On May 1 and 2, 2010, Sumner County's rivers and small streams swelled from lazy trickles to torrents of mud and debris washing away roads, inundating homes and businesses. Sumner County residents navigated their streets by boat, watched their cars float away and rescued what they could from their soggy homes. The outcome would have been far more devastating if the Army Corp of Engineers Cumberland River system of dams and locks had not been built. The destruction caused by the Great Flood of 1927 was what led to the Corp's construction of Tennessee's dam system and Cumberland River flood control.

## What Happened in 1927?

The Great Flood of 1927 actually originated in a very wet 1926. Abnormal rainfall soaked Sumner County through the fall of 1926 and continued into the wettest December on record. The week of December 20<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>, 1926, measured the highest recorded rainfall in Sumner County history. In Nashville on January 1, 1927, the Cumberland River reached 56.2 feet, 16.2 feet above flood stage and at one point was three miles wide. In Sumner County at Woods Ferry Landing, the river was more than a mile wide. Homes and farms near the river went under water. Fortunately, Gallatin's pumping station for drinking water remained dry, situated on a high bluff above the river.

Three feet of water covered the Interurban Railroad tracks at Number One and Mansker Creek, suspending rail service between Gallatin and Nashville. Sections of Nashville/Gallatin Pike were impassible to automobile traffic from Gallatin to Nashville. Boats became the mode of transportation as bridges at Number One and Bledsoe Creek were engulfed. Cairo and Castalian Springs communities were inaccessible, and Gallatin's Town Creek overflowed its banks, flooding parts of the city. Businesses and homes were severely damaged.

## Flooding Was Wide Spread

By spring of 1927 months of rain had discharged Cumberland River flood waters into the Ohio River. The Ohio River flood emptied into the Mississippi River, adding enormous amounts of water to an already perilously elevated river. By April 1927 the Mississippi River could not be contained and breached its levees, flooding 27,000 square miles of farms and cities. Over 637,000 people were left

homeless. Rescue and relief efforts prevented a major loss of life.

## Flooding Causes a Shift in Population

The Great Flood of 1927 altered the southern way of life, shifted the southern political system and contributed to thousands of African Americans migrating to northern cities. By 1927, southern African Americans comprised an estimated 95 percent of an agricultural system dependent on cheap labor (comparable to legal slavery). After the Great Flood, African Americans fled in droves to the big cities of the North.

Plantation owners, aided by National Guard troops, attempted to stem the tide of migration by forcing African Americans to rebuild the levees and unload relief supplies intended for white refugee camps. Violence and racial hostilities broke out and elected Republican officials made little effort to intervene. Subsequent resentment swayed African-American loyalty from the Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln to the Democrat Party. The bitterness created by the treatment of African-Americans in 1927 may have sowed the seeds of future racial divide and civil unrest.

## Dams, Flood Control Begun After 1927

One positive consequence of the 1927 flood was *The Flood Control Act of 1928* directing the Army Corp of Engineers to control and prevent future floods of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Along the Cumberland River, the Army Corp of Engineers constructed a series of dams and flood gates to regulate the river. Damming the Cumberland River changed Sumner County's boundaries, towns and farms. Formation of Old Hickory Lake in the 1950's spurred the growth of Hendersonville and provided Sumner County with a new source of recreational enjoyment. Cheaper electricity generated by the Cumberland River's hydro-electric plants benefited Tennessee and other southern states.

Until 2010, Sumner County residents felt confident the Army Corp of Engineers had tamed the mighty Cumberland River. However Sumner County's devastation from the May 2010 flood revealed that even engineering expertise cannot harness nature.

## H'ville, Continued from Page 1

other areas and bring people into the city against their will. Cole claimed that incorporating a small portion of a well-populated community—fewer than 200 people out of 14,000—was not the intention of the statute that allowed municipal incorporations in Tennessee.

After Cole won an initial ruling, the suit made its way to the Tennessee Supreme Court, which ruled three-to-two in favor of a city. The decision allowed the three men who had been elected commissioners to swear their oaths the following day, June 26, 1969.

The 13-month delay between the decision to form a city and the oaths of office gave Hendersonville a dual birthday. It had an impact three years later.

The commissioners met again three days after being sworn in. They elected Newman the first mayor and Sisco the first vice-mayor. Both were largely ceremonial offices. The city's executive head was an appointed city manager. For that job, commissioners chose retired Army Lt. Col. Sam Walton.

Using sales tax revenue the state had held in escrow for 13 months, Walton and the three commissioners embarked on efforts to serve while bringing in more residents just as Cole had predicted. Through annexation in 1970 and 1971 the city grew in geographic size and added a couple of thousand people.

Much of the annexed areas were commercial properties that generated more sales tax for the city. Of the handful of residents annexed, most opposed being part of a city, but nobody challenged the action in court.

Trying to keep judges out of the decision making, the city commissioners took their greatest leap quietly, an "overnight" annexation of 12,000 people. With the local newspaper keeping silent, the commissioners introduced and passed first reading of 14 ordinances on January 13, 1972, to annex 10 square miles. The city was at 3.63 square miles at the time.

Two weeks later, the commission approved a second reading, and one day after that they approved the final reading. The *Star News* ran no coverage of the annexation proceedings until March 2, four days after a midnight deadline to challenge the annexations in court.

The impact of the delay was the feeling among new residents that they had been forced into the city while they slept. The only concession offered by the commissioners was a willingness to add two more commissioners to the city's governing board.

Even though they elected two new commissioners in June 1972, several of the new residents circulated a

petition to change the form of government. It was a move to throw out the original three commissioners and the two new ones in exchange for a government with an elected mayor and 10 districts having one alderman each.

In September 1972, voters chose that new aldermanic government, 1,697 to 1,159. But the city commissioners turned toward the legal system. Knowing that a city charter could not be changed during a city's first four years of existence, the original commissioners asked a judge what the birthday of the city really was. Was the city born in 1968 or 1969? More to the point, when the referendum was held, was the city three years old or four?

Commissioners claimed that the city did not exist because the commission had not been sworn in. Others noted that the state had collected sales tax for the city a year before the commissioners took office.

Chancellor Edwin Turner issued a decision on February 2, 1973, stating that the "fair trial period" of four years had not been met. Proponents of a new charter appealed the decision to the Tennessee Supreme Court, where the commission won again.

In April Judge Chester C. Chatten wrote, "...The people of a community... should have four years to evaluate and determine the advantages and disadvantages of such a government..."

Ironically, that decision, which favored the city, relied on the 1968 suit by the city's biggest opponent, Bill Cole.

Cole's utility district would continue to challenge many movements by the city. The city rarely gave in to those challenges or others. The Sumner County Quarterly Court, the Sumner County Planning Commission and the City of Gallatin would pose roadblocks as well. Sometimes Hendersonville won; often the fight was delayed or judged by a court.

Newman remained mayor for another year and a commissioner until 1975. Cole remained the manager of the utility district and later became a city commissioner. The city's form of government faced another referendum in 1973 but survived.

Newman and Cole passed away after long lives. The original city charter survived only until 1986, being exchanged for a new one at the age of 25 or 26, depending on who you ask.

**Jamie Clary is the author of *The City by the Lake; A History of Hendersonville from 1968 until 1988.***