

Days Of Old Sumner County

Newsletter No. 11, July 2015
Sumner County Historical Society

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Following Clues In a 19th Century 'Bastardy' Case

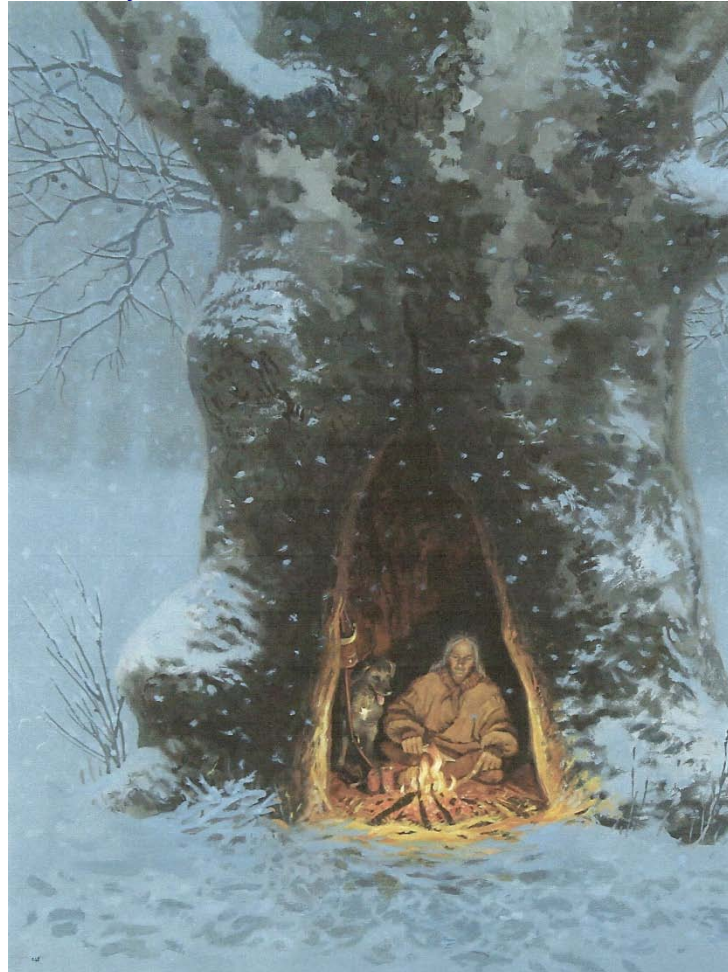
By Shirley Wilson

Author's Note: Reading the old, loose court papers of Sumner County is interesting, but it can also be frustrating for a genealogist such as me. It isn't always easy to determine what happened to a person, and you want to know more. This was the case with Zilpha Stansbury whose name appears in court records in 1827 in what was then referred to as a "bastardy case." Her situation intrigued me, and I searched to learn more about her life.

In early Tennessee, a "bastardy" bond would have been initiated when the court became aware of an unwed mother in the community. A warrant would have been issued and the mother brought to court and pressed to name the father of her child. If the father could be found, he would have been required to post a bond so that the county could be assured that it would not have to support the child. Although the unwed mother and the father would be named in the bond, the child would not. It would not even be identified as a boy or girl, but it would by law carry the mother's surname.

On April 5, 1827, a Sumner woman named Zilpha

(See CLUES, Page 11)



"Nature's Refuge" by David Wright

Painting Brings a Story to Life

"Nature's Refuge" by Gallatin artist H. David Wright was inspired by the story of Thomas Sharp Spencer, a Longhunter and early Cumberland Valley settler who took refuge in the winter of 1778-1779 in a huge tree near Bledsoe lick. From inside the tree, Spencer watched the lick area, spying on game and—on at least one occasion—a group of Indians stalking game all around him.

"In 1823 Ralph E. Earl wrote that he had seen the remains of Spencer's Sycamore tree and the diameter was 12 feet," said Wright. "The ancient sycamore tree I painted is on highway 31E northeast of Gallatin and measures 12-feet in diameter—the same size as Spencer's tree. It shows the relationship of size of the tree to the man and dog. The occupant in my painting could be Spencer."

A 1914 Snapshot of Rural Fountain Head

Taken from the diaries of a wealthy, educated New Jersey visitor

By Albert Dittes

Lida Funk Scott, heiress to the Funk & Wagnalls fortune, left her comfortable home in Montclair, N.J., and came south to recover from the death of her teenage daughter in July 1914. She visited friends, Herman and Harriet Walen, who operated the Chestnut Hill Farm School about seven miles from the train station. Below are excerpts from Scott's diary of the visit, which provide a fascinating insight into rural Sumner County life a century ago. Additional excerpts will be included in the next SCHS newsletter in October.

"Fountain Head, Tennessee, thought I, as we stepped from the train, and gazed at the tiny station, a single store, unadorned and sun-illuminated," began Scott.

"We started on an eventful and thrilling tour. The buggy strained over boulders, riding 'sidlin'-like' to use a hill phrase, and trembled on the edge of deep gullies and then sped comfortably along the county pike," Scott wrote about the ride to the Walen home. "We passed some of the hill people, known also as the Mountain Whites, driving a mule or a mare, or both, and always with unfailing courtesy they greeted us with a gentle and modest: 'How de!' We passed little log cabins with wide open doors, and wide open eyes peeped shyly out, and bare-footed children, their legs often covered with sores, gazed after the strangers."

Scott described the Chestnut Hill school as a "sudden clearing" on top of a wooded hill with a new barn and bungalow. "The original old leaky cabin had burned mysteriously to the ground a year ago and this cheerful, little home had been veritably carved out of the timber of the farm. The area included sorghum fields surrounding girdled trees, stripped and bare, tobacco and corn growing on the hillside but no houses in view."

She reported that 60 families lived in the area in homes hidden by the trees and that one farm grew enough food to feed about 30 pupils at the school. Among other things, the school taught physiology, which, Scott wrote, "is bearing fruit in improved sanitation that will someday put them on vantage ground with the hookworm and the typhoid germ."

She mentioned visiting people in Simpson's Gap, Dry Slick Creek and Buttermilk Hollow, "driving through dense woods or along the creek beds."

She described the people living there as "simple folk suffering from the peonage system and naturally suspicious. . . They suffered at the hands of both North and South during the Civil War and somehow have a notion that the Negro is to blame for their troubles. Consequently, no

one is allowed in the region. They are all run out of the country. Their lives are in danger. These mountaineers think nothing of killing a man. When they want to get rid of a person, they put a bunch of hickory sticks on the front steps. That means that he must leave the place within about 24 hours or they will burn down his house, take his life or both."

Country Preaching Service

"We took the wagon and the buggy... After traveling over washouts, rocks, loose stones and stumps, and across creeks where in the dark it was difficult to distinguish the road from the creek beds, we discovered in a lonely spot in the woods a meeting house. Wagons and horses were standing by every tree. People had driven over from miles around and the house was crowded.

Several hundred feet away we began to smell the tobacco. As I entered the room where about 300 people were assembled, I prayed that I should be given grace to endure the stench. Only one of the seven windows was open, and every man, woman and child reeked with tobacco, and while they looked outwardly clean, underneath their underclothes were not changed for months.

I felt I could not breathe but managed to listen to the sermon which seemed to me could not bring a ray of light or comfort to a single heart. It was involved and misleading. Yet they listened, many of whom could neither read nor write, and Mrs. Walen says they would be able to tell you months hence almost every word the minister said.

"On going out, I tripped on the uneven step and fell headlong. Many of them snickered. We had caused quite a stir in the meeting when we entered. Following my episode, Mrs. Walen stumbled down the other steps and had a similar tumble. And we had tried to be so inconspicuous!

"But this was not the end of our humiliation before these mountain whites. We soon had a miniature Titanic disaster. We started home seated as we had come, and were leaders in the

(See DIARY, Page 3)

DIARY, Continued from Page 2

procession of horses, carriages, and pedestrians.

We reached a very bad place. The lantern could not be put under the wagon owing to the stumps in the middle of the road. Mrs. Walen carried the lantern in the wagon in front, we following carefully in their track, old Red, the mule being lured by the straw in the rear of their wagon.

Whether misled by a deceptive shadow from the lantern or not, Mr. Walen got too far to the right. We saw his wagon sway then upset, and Mr. Walen and Mrs. Stone were dumped into a pool of water about five feet deep. We pulled them out, groaning and shaking with fright and cold.

No bones were broken, but Mrs. Walen and Mrs. Stone are suffering from bruises.

"Now the people, the whole country for miles around, know that two strangers have arrived at the Chestnut Hill Farm School, and by this time, the whole country have received messages by telephone and otherwise how we have been baptized into the community, for news travels fast in such places.

"On returning home I received one more start. At the crossroads were some men on horseback riding like cowboys. They galloped down the road firing a revolver as they went, another reminder that we were among a lawless people."

Despite this episode, the "simple, warmhearted" people of Fountain Head appealed to the rich and cultured Lida Scott as she grieved over her daughter. "You can distinguish possibilities and some fine faces which invite effort," she recorded in her diary.

A Backward Home

Scott's Chestnut Hill hostess took her to see one of the worst characters ("dangerous when drunk") living in one of the worst homes in the neighborhood: outlaw Sunny Whitson, maker of moonshine whiskey.

Scott wrote, "Some of the moonshiners were discovered by the crazy minister who preached in these parts for the sole purpose of spying on the men. They were afterwards visited by the deputies and their stills were blown up or burned up and the moonshiners arrested or fined.

"What a dirty, poverty stricken home this is, way in the heart of a wilderness. We traveled a long way over bad roads winding in and out through the woods over old stumps in order to reach his [Whitson's] home, if home you may call it.

"He had 11 children living," she continued. "One had died in February at the age of seven with tuberculin or cerebro-meningitis. He and his wife

send their children to Mrs. Walen's school. They walk, bare-footed, all that distance, and reach school long before it is time to begin.

"Sunny Whitson greeted us and invited us into his dirty home. It was so open to the weather and the roof so poor that I wondered what they do in the rain. I think of it tonight for it is pouring as I write. They lighted their lamp, just a wick burning without a chimney. There was the usual large fireplace in the room. On the walls were plastered newspapers, others were partly torn off, a most uncomfortable, dirty, dilapidated place."



Lida Scott

Yet something about these underprivileged people impressed Scott.

"Sunny soon became talkative and told us about the little daughter who had died. He said, 'Never again can I lift my hand against one of my children after losing that little child'...he broke down and cried...We talked with them and tried to say words of comfort," Scott wrote.

Sunny begged the visitors to "take supper" with them, saying that the food was all ready. "We scarcely were able to beg off," wrote Scott. "It was darkening...and we were anxious to get out of the woods while we could see our way over the uneven roads.

"It was quite dark before we reached the pike, but we succeeded in keeping the buggy on its four wheels, thanks to our cautious mule. I am beginning to appreciate old Red. He is strong, steady, careful and so sure you are wrong when you are wrong that he will not be persuaded by a whip--so mulish are his ways..."

The Best Kept Secret: Sumner Co. Museum

By Juanita Frazor

The best kept secret in Gallatin—the Sumner County Museum—is no longer such a secret. The news is out!

The museum will move to a new and better location. John and June Garrott are donating their beautiful historical home, built in 1830, to the Museum, as well as the remaining Garrott property, which includes John Garrott's workshop. In addition, the Museum was able to purchase the next door Carriage House, built in 1839, with the help of a fundraiser organized by John Garrott shortly before Christmas. The deed for the Carriage House has been recorded for the Museum in the Registrar of Deeds office.



Woodworking Exhibit

But that's not all. Right now, there are thousands of artifacts to be seen and enjoyed on the three floors of the current building. The exhibits run from Indian artifacts to woodworking tools, a tinsmith shop, blacksmith shop, textiles, a section on Black history in the county, photographic displays, and a very good musical area. And this is just the first floor!



Black History Exhibit

The other floors have military, clothing, telephones, computers, kitchen, bedroom, quilts, cars, trucks, fire engine and farm equipment, as well as the soap box derby car built by Bryan Anderson at age 12 and the space suit he wore when he flew a U-2 spy plane.



Military Exhibit

At the present time, the Museum is open as usual at 183 West Main Street, behind historic Trousdale Place. It will remain at this location until the Carriage House and Garrott properties are ready for its occupancy, from one to two years. That seems a long time, but it will be worth the wait. There will be more space for exhibits and plenty of parking.

The hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Wednesday-Saturday, and Sunday 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. The Museum is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, as well as special holidays. This schedule will continue until Oct. 31, when it closes for the season.

The Museum needs help with its huge moving project. A fundraiser is underway for the renovation of the two buildings, the Carriage House and John Garrott's workshop. All donations are welcome: large, not so large, and small. This renovation is expected to begin in the next few months.

To donate money to this worthy cause, send a check to the Sumner County Museum, P.O. Box 1163, Gallatin, TN 37066.

To donate your time, please call the Museum at 615-451-3738 and volunteer.

A History of Gallatin Newspapers to 1858

Editor's Note: This letter belongs to SCHS President Ken Thomson. It was written by Judge J. White and published many year ago in the News Examiner.

We are indebted to the kindness of an old and respected citizen for the following communication in reference to the newspaper press of Gallatin. The initials will be readily recognized as those of a gentleman whose cultivated taste and opportunities, especially qualify him for its accurate preparation. He has succeeded in putting upon record interesting details connected with the press in our county, which would, in a few more years, have been wholly lost.

It is to be regretted that so little is known in reference to the early history of the "art press relative to all arts" in Tennessee. From an unaccountable neglect of publishers, we doubt whether there are a half dozen complete files of newspapers in the State. The preservation of these would, of course, insure an accurate history of their publication, but this source of information is out of the question, and we are left to rely, chiefly, upon the recollection of those of our citizens who were contemporary with their issue.

It has occurred to us that an interesting and valuable addition might be made to the archives of the State Historical Society by a collection of all the facts connected with the newspaper press in Tennessee. The various publishers throughout the State can readily obtain all that can be known in their respective counties. If not complete, still we had the best secure what we can before those who can furnish the information pass away. What say our brother newspaper men? Let us club together and get up one chapter, at least, for the Historical Society.

The Letter Sent by Judge White

Mr. Editor: You have requested me to furnish you with any information I may have in regards to the establishment of the Newspaper Press in Gallatin, its different editors and proprietors, with which I cheerfully comply, but regret that I can state nothing very definite previous to 1826— From the vast information, however, which I have the first paper published in Gallatin was about 1814 by John G. Barry, and a veteran printer now upon the stage, W.L. Barry, worked in the office. This was a weekly issue as all the other papers have been since established by William McCullough, for about two years. His last issue is believed to have been in 1823; and there was then a further interval in which no paper was published in the town.

The next paper was the "Gallatin Journal." I have one of the 6th of May 1831, in which it appears that it is No. 19 of Vol. 4, whole number 175, and that it was published by Hiram S. Watlington; of course, then this Journal must have been established the latter part of December 1826. I think David M. Sanders, associated with others, established the paper. He was awhile the editor, and after that it was sold on Watlington.

This was succeeded by the "Gallatin Guardian," the first number of which was published on the 7th of January, 1832, by John H. Jackson. This paper was published but a few months.

Its successor was "the Union" and published by H.S. Watlington. The first number must have appeared in August 1832 for its 17th issue, Vol. 1., bears the date of 28th of December 1832. The publication of this paper was probably continued till 1835. Mr. Watlington's successor in the "Union" newspaper was D.C. Gaskill as editor and J.A. Browning, publisher. The 33rd number of this paper, Vol. 1 is dated 20th November 1835. It continued during the years 1836-7-8-9, with no other change except from 1837 J.A. Browning & Co., became the publishers, and in 1839, it was called "The Gallatin Union and Sumner Advertiser."

About the first of the year 1840, Dr. W.P. Rowles became the editor and proprietor of the paper, but the name was soon changed to the "Gallatin Union."

About this time, to wit: the first of January 1840, a Whig paper was established in Gallatin called the "Republican Sentinel and Sumner, Smith and Jackson Intelligencer," of which L. Sharp was the editor and publisher until about the 1st of January, 1841, at which time J.C. Patterson became the editor. This paper was discontinued during that year and the press and materials sold to J.G. Frazer, Esq., of Carthage.

In June 1841, Messrs Gaskill and G.W. Allen became proprietors of Rawls' paper, which was then called "The Union" and was published and edited by them until February 1842, after which it was published and edited by D.C Gaskill alone. This continued until about the 20th of April, 1847.

The successor of "The Union" was "The Tenth Legion" published in 1847 by W.B. Bate, and in 1848-9 by Glover and Crary and then James Glover, during which time it was edited partly by W.B. Bate and in part by Thomas Boyers. In 1850, it was published by James Glover and

See NEWSPAPERS, Page 9



Gallatin Road in downtown Hendersonville in the early 1900s.

No More Tolls, Gallatin Road Becomes Public Highway

By Jan Shuxteau, editor

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

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is part 2 of the story of Gallatin Road (also called Nashville Pike), which began as a buffalo trail more than 200 years ago, became a primitive public road, then a toll road and finally the public highway that we know today.*

Gallatin Road's existence as a toll road drew to an end in April 1912, and Sumner Countians declared that it was about time!

They disliked paying tolls every time they got on the highway, and they were sick and tired of bickering over repairs with turnpike company men. "Hostility was openly practiced against many turnpikes and turnpike companies [in Tennessee]," noted Takacs.

Nationally and locally, a craze for the newly invented bicycle boosted a free-pike movement even more. In the Gallatin *Examiner*, Sears & Roebuck advertised mail-order 1899 bikes for \$15.95.

Reflecting the mood of the public, the General Assembly enacted the first comprehensive road law in Tennessee in 1889, deeming all lawful roads and their rights-of-way to belong to the public—not the turnpike companies. Then, in 1899, county courts were authorized by state lawmakers to buy the turnpikes and make them free roads.

Sumner's turnpike men continued to fight against selling to the county, prevailing through the election of 1905, and holding on until losing to the county in the election of December 1911. About four months later, April 15, 1912, the county court purchased for \$25,000 the entire length of the

Gallatin Turnpike Company, including the road and right-of-way, bridges, culverts, broken rock, its franchise to take tolls and its contract with the Interurban railway for 27.1 miles from Center Point Road to Bransford Road. On noon April 16, the six tollgates of the old Gallatin Turnpike opened for free traffic. All seven Sumner toll pikes were sold to the county court by May 18, 1912. It was the end of an era.

But the end of Gallatin Turnpike did not mean that Gallatin Road would automatically turn into a model highway. By September 1917, the road was in deplorable shape, according to reports made by County Road Superintendent T.B. Wilson to the county commission. The reason was obvious: automobiles had caught on and were wearing out the road surface. Cars now outnumbered horses and buggies on Gallatin Road. Even more problematic were heavy trucks, especially those of the Interurban Transportation Company, which came out of Nashville. The county tried unsuccessfully (on appeal) to sue the transport company, restricting its usage. Chief Justice Lansden opined that the remedy was not restriction but "to improve and enlarge the highways."

This was easier said than done. Sumner could not afford to hire professional builders to work on the roads. It continued to require road service from every male citizen, ages 18-50, five days a year or a fine of 75-cents per day. Many of these workers were unskilled and virtually unsupervised, and the roads they built fell apart quickly—especially as cars became more and more popular.

See GALLATIN ROAD, Page 7

GALLATIN ROAD, continued from Page 6

Takacs pointed out that nearly 10 million cars were on American roads by 1920, five times more than in 1915.



Gallatin Square circa 1910

Relief from road-building woes came in 1921. Congress enacted the Federal Highway Act, which enormously expanded road building by providing matching federal funds for highways, including Gallatin Road.

“On Jan. 1, 1925, the entire length of Gallatin Road [two lanes] from the Davison County line to Gallatin was paved with rock asphalt,” noted Takacs. “For the first time in the existence of the highway, a motorist could traverse its entire length from Mansker Creek to Gallatin without swerving to avoid a cup or hole or losing an axle in a deep rut on a cold and dark winter night. Truly, the era of King Mud on the foremost highway in Sumner County was ended.”

In 1938, Tennessee Highway Department built a new bridge over Mansker Creek to raise Gallatin Road above flood level.

“Backflooding of the Cumberland River regularly cut off Sumner County from Nashville, especially in the winter and spring rain season,” said Takacs. “Even the Interurban was occasionally turned back by the spreading flood water.”

Finally Four Lanes

In the late 1940s, plans to four-lane Gallatin Road through Hendersonville came to fruition, prompted in part by the number of accidents on the sharp curve at the Rockland Road bridge over L&N tracks.

Designs to both eliminate the curve and widen Gallatin Road had been drawn up in 1941 and then shelved due to the war. But in early 1944 after six soldiers on maneuvers in Hendersonville were injured when their truck crashed on the

Rockland curve, the plans were revived. Hendersonville Civic Club, which acted as a sort

of quasi city government, and Civic Club President Martin Curtis, also newly elected as Chairman of Sumner County Court, garnered approval for the project from the Highway Department in February 1944. A dispute with landowners slowed the Rockland project, which was finally completed in November 1946.

Shortly before Rockland curve was finished, a delegation from the Gallatin Chamber of Commerce and the Hendersonville Civic Club met with Gov. Jim McCord, receiving his promise to four-lane Gallatin Road on into Gallatin.

It Was Slow Finishing

“Paving began on Dec. 17, 1948, and was completed on Aug. 15, 1949 at a cost in excess of \$500,000,” said Takacs. “The total cost of the four-lane highway, from the approaches to Mansker Bridge in the west to beyond Drakes Creek, was approximately \$1 million.”

Citizens of Gallatin pressed for the road to be widened on into Gallatin, and rights-of-way were slowly purchased, sometimes following land condemnation, during the next three years.

“Early in 1952, almost five years after the magistrates first appropriated the money for it, the State Highway Department began construction of the four-lane concrete highway. Around Christmas 1955, the work was done,” said Takacs. “In the spring of 1957, the Highway Department completed the widening of the bridge over Mansker Creek. Gallatin and Hendersonville now enjoyed a decent highway to Nashville.”



Hendersonville at the Walton Ferry Intersection in the 1930s

Eyewitness Account of the Battle of New Orleans

Provided by Judith Morgan

Author's Note: Almost anyone familiar with Sumner County history knows the story of Eliza Allen and Sam Houston. Long before Eliza's unfortunate marriage and even more unfortunate dissolution of that marriage, though, the Allen family was prominent in Sumner County affairs. Eliza's father John ran a store in Gallatin in the early 1800s and owned the Allendale plantation that stood where today stands the Gallatin Steam Plant. Her mother was Laetitia Sanders, daughter of Col. James Sanders, a founder of Hendersonville. Her uncles Robert and William were well known in what is now Smith County, where Robert, in particular, was important to the early history of Carthage. There were other Allen brothers, though, and one of them was named George. It was George who fought in the War of 1812.

George's account of the Battle of New Orleans in a letter to his brother John was printed in both Louisiana and Nashville newspapers a hundred years after the battle. (An unattributed clipping is among the treasures hidden away in the Tennessee State Library and Archives.) It was described as "the best short account of the famous battle of New Orleans we have ever seen." The letter is now printed again, with original spelling and grammar intact, after the passage of another 100 years:

*Camp 5 Miles Below New Orleans
10th February, 1815*

Sir—In my last letter I informed you that the enemy was at hand. They have paid us a visit, the result of which you no doubt saw in the paper. I think I hear you say, why have you not wrote sooner? Excuse the delay, it was not neglect. The duties I had to perform and my situation would admit of no earlier communication. At present it is hardly worth my while to enter into detail on the subject of our campaign, but I think I can give you a more correct account than any you have saw in the papers.

On the 23d December (in the evening) we were called to arms and marched to this place. About 9 o'clock that night we attacked the enemy in this camp. We were about 1500 in number; they near 5000 strong. The engagement lasted near two hours; ceased without any apparent advantage on either side, except in the number killed and wounded. We had not more than 30 killed and as

many more wounded; 30 or 40 were made prisoners. Their loss was stated to have been 250 killed, perhaps double that number wounded, and we got the prisoners. A few hours after the engagement we were re-enforced by General Carroll and the Tennessee Militia. Before daylight we fell back about a mile and threw up a breastwork across the plain from the river to the swamp. Our numbers daily increased, and we are at present in this quarter 12,000 strong.

The next morning after the battle the enemy received a re-enforcement of 2000 men, and in the course of that day and night augmented to about 10,000. On the 28th they attempted storming our works. They commenced by throwing congrave rockets, balls and bombshells, which was returned from out batteries with such effect as to keep them out of reach of our small army. A heavy cannonading lasted from sunrise until about 3 o'clock in the evening of that day. We only lost 3 killed and 2 or 3 wounded. Their loss must have been considerable.

A scattering fire was kept up from both armies until the morning of the 1st of January. On that morning they made another attempt more vigorous, but equally unsuccessful with the first, and more fatal to themselves. A cannonading was kept up from both sides until the 8th. On that morning they were determined to go to Orleans in spite of all opposition. A quarter of an hour before daylight a rocket was thrown from right to left of the enemy's camp. This was the signal to move forward. We were prepared to receive them and they advanced like desperadoes under the most destructive fire from 18 pieces of artillery, until they came within musket shot. The action then became general from right to left, and for one hour and forty minutes every object appeared enveloped in blaze, and nothing was heard but the peal of thunder. Notwithstanding they advanced to our breastworks and many were kil'd in the act of getting over here. Lord Wellington's best troops, the pride of Great Britain, was forced for the first time in their lives to retreat, leaving the field covered with their dead. They returned to their fortifications from whence a heavy cannoning was kept up and returned from our side until about 12 o'clock. A flag of truce was then sent up and all hostility was ordered to cease to 3 o'clock the next day.

In the engagement the enemy lost their

(See LETTER, Page 9)

-----Please Let Us Use Your WWI Pictures, Memorabilia-----



This 1917 photo, owned by SCHS President Ken Thomson, is of Sumner men lined up in Gallatin Square preparing to leave to fight in WWI. Notice the former courthouse in the background. If you have letters, pictures or other memorabilia that could be borrowed for a new book, "Sumner County in the Great War," please contact Ken Thomson at 615-461-8830 or the SC Archives at 615-452-0037. SCHS hopes to publish the book on the 100th anniversary of America's involvement in WWI. Please help us!

LETTER, Continued from Page 8

Commander-in Chief, Lord Packingham, Maj. Gen'l Gibbs & 500 men (including a number of other officers kil'd. Maj. Gen'l Kean was mortally wounded, 150 were taken prisoners, about 200 were taken off the ground wounded, a number of which have since died. The number of wounded which they got off is not known, but it must have been great. It is said that their loss on that day was upwards of 2000 kil'd, wounded and taken, and strange to tell we only lost six men kil'd and eight wounded. The loss of the enemy is estimated at 3000 men since they landed. Ours cannot be more than 70.

I could say much more on the subject but will keep the balance for another communication, lest the enemy should not furnish fresh matter. They have disappeared for the present. I will only add that I never had my clothes off from the 23d December to the 25th January, and very seldom off my feet during that time day or night.

Remember my love to sister Laetitia and remember me kindly to all my friends, and for yourself accept the best wishes of
Your brother,
GEO. C. ALLEN

1. JOHN ALLEN

Excuse errors. I have not time to correct them. I am in a smoaky tent.
ALLEN

NEWSPAPERS, Continued from Page 5

edited by B.F. Allen—in 1851 by James Glover & Co., and edited by N.O. Blake—in 1852 published and edited by N.O. Blake—in 1853 published and edited by A.A. Lewis and M.V. Haile, and in 1854 by Lewis & Haile.

Its successor was "The Sumner Flag," first published in 1855 by W.H. Blackmore and A.A. Lewis, and edited by them, and afterward by Blackmore & Lewis and W.A. Bush.

The successor of "The Sumner Flag," I need hardly add is "The Examiner," commenced in March 1857—Gray and Boyers publishers and Thomas Boyers editor.

The foregoing is believed to be substantially accurate, although it may be imperfect in some of its details.

If you think this will interest any of your readers, you are welcome to use it.

Ola Mae Roberson: First African-American Woman College Grad

By Eva Jane Johnson

Ola Mae Roberson was born to Charles and Nora (Turner) Bate on June 10, 1903. Her history follows a pattern set by her grandfather, Mark Bate, a slave of the family of Gov. William Brimmage Bate, with whom he kept lifelong ties of friendship. Highly influential, William Bate also served as a U.S. Senator and as a general in the Confederate Army. Mark Bate managed the Bate farm during the Civil War and continued working there after the war even though he was free.

Mark Bate eventually bought land on Canoe Branch Road and moved his family there. He remained close to Gov. Bate, who promised to help Mark's son, Charles, attend college. Gov. Bate kept his word. Charles Bate graduated from Roger Williams University—a rare accomplishment for the son of slave.

Charles Bate was the first African-American man from Sumner County to win a college degree, and he taught school here for 40 years. His wife, Nora, who harbored a similar appreciation for education, was also a teacher here and received a college degree. They instilled a love of learning in their three children, and Ola Mae and her two brothers also became college graduates.

All of her life, Ola Mae was influenced by her mother's advice about selflessness. As a child, she grew tired of hearing her mother say, "I want you to train for service," but she understood her mother's wish that she have a good life through service to others.

Ola Mae was determined to gain a college degree of her own—an ambition almost unheard of for an African-American woman in the early 1900s. She understood the need to work to accomplish this goal. Her family was not rich, but they also worked hard for her to attain her wish.

Indeed, Ola Mae did get to college. She used to tell the story of how, once a month, she would receive a crisp, one dollar bill from the family. This would give her a quarter a week for spending money. In 1926, she was awarded her bachelor's degree from Tennessee State College, repeating what her father had started. She was the first African-American young woman from Sumner County to receive a college degree.

Her career in service began as a teacher. She



Ola Mae Robertson

taught in Memphis, then in high school and college in North Carolina. Because of The Great Depression, Ola Mae returned to Gallatin, where she met and married, Idyle Roberson, a farmer. They supported each other throughout long lives.

Recognized as an outstanding teacher, Ola Mae was also involved in other community activities. She was active in her church and wrote a series of Primary Sunday School Lessons for the Baptist Sunday School Publishing Board, a branch of the National Baptist Convention, USA. She began teaching in Gallatin at the elementary level but became the math teacher at Union High School in 1942 and remained there until she retired in 1968.

At her retirement, she began her second life of service—perhaps she still heard her mother's advice ringing in her ears. She worked in the hospital in Gallatin, now Sumner Regional Medical Center, where she was its first African-American volunteer. She was a charter member of the auxiliary and one of the first "Gray Ladies."

In 1990, Ola Mae was named Citizen of the Year in Sumner County. She also received the NAACP's Freedom Fund Award. But the accomplishment that would have made her mother most proud was when Ola Mae, then 92, won the Mary Catherine Strobel Award in Nashville. The Mary Catherine Strobel Award luncheon is the largest event in Middle Tennessee to honor those who have led a life of community service, and the award itself is named for the person who best exemplified selfless work with the disadvantaged, the poor, the sick, and the homeless in Nashville.

CLUES, Continued from Page 1

Stansbury was brought to court. She named Roderick Cummins (also referred to as Cummings in other documents) as the father of her "recently begotten" child. He agreed to post a bond of \$200, a lot of money in those days.

Time passed...the 1840 census of Sumner County revealed that Zilpha Stansbury was head of a household. She was 40 to 50 years old, and she had three children, two daughters and a son, five to 10 years old. The oldest daughter, born in 1827, was Roderick's. Her name was Lucinda "Lucy," and she married Eli Kincade on Dec. 23, 1843, in Sumner County. Zilpha's younger daughter, Nancy Ann, was born about 1834.

In 1850, census records show that Zilpha was still head of a household at age 50 when Nancy was 16. The son, who would have been 15 to 20 in 1850, had vanished. Zilpha and Nancy lived in Civil District 18 on the ridge in northwestern Sumner County. Nancy married Edmund B. Jones on Dec. 8, 1856, in Sumner County.

Zilpha's daughter Lucy and son-in-law Eli Kincade lived near her with their two children, Hanna and Permelia.

In the 1860 census, Zilpha, who said she was 65 and born in Tennessee, was living in the household of John Shoecraft in Civil District 18.

Reading between the lines, records show that Zilpha lived on in Sumner County after her bastardy case and had more children. Her daughters married and gave her grandchildren. Her life must have been good for a while. But it did not continue that way. In 1860 neither of her daughters lived in Sumner County. And according to the 1870 Sumner County census, Zilpha, 78, lived in the county poorhouse.

And what of Lucy's father, Roderick Cummins, who was named in the bastardy suit?

He was identified as the son of a lady named Margaret Cummins when she deeded him 116 acres on a fork of Station Camp Creek in March of 1824. He was taxed on 116 acres as R. R. Cummings in 1831, but no record was found of the sale of his land in the Sumner County Deed Book 10:439.

---Awards Presented at SCHS Meeting---



At its annual dinner meeting April 23, the Sumner County Historical Society honored former SCHS president and Gallatin businessman John Garrott for his contributions to preserve and protect the county's historical heritage and homes. Garrott donated his historic Main Street home to the Sumner County Museum and helped museum officials purchase the adjoining Carriage House, which he is also helping renovate. He is the former president of SCHS and co-founder of the Sumner County Museum. Pictured is current SCHS President Kenneth Thomson (left) presenting a plaque to Garrott.



At the dinner, Velma Brinkley (left) presented the slate of officers for the SCHS for 2015-2016. Bill Puryear (right) of Gallatin received a certificate of appreciation for service as a member of the SCHS and as co-author of historical books about early Sumner County: *Founding of the Cumberland Settlements: The First Atlas 1779-1804, Thoroughfare for Freedom, The Second Atlas of the Cumberland Settlements 1779-1804 and The First Southwest: The Third Atlas of the Cumberland and Duck River Settlements*.



SCHS President Ken Thomson presented certificates of appreciation to Hendersonville SCHS board members Rebecca Lunsford (left), retired teacher, and Shirley Wilson (right), genealogist and archivist to Sumner County and the State of Tennessee.

Sumner County Historical Society

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To: