

Days Of Old Sumner County

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Sumner County Historical Society

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Smithsonian Features Thomson About Ancestor

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

"The Forgotten Story of the 1,000-Mile March," an article by Edward Ball that appears in *Smithsonian* magazine's November 2015 issue features SCHS President Ken Thomson, talking about Sumner County's Isaac Franklin (1789-1846), his indirect ancestor. In the story, Ball tells about an 1834 forced march—called a coffle—of Franklin's slaves from Virginia to Natchez, Miss.

In his day, Franklin was the largest slave trader in the United States. He became super rich, and he built magnificent Fairvue plantation. The house remains today as a jewel in Sumner County, but it and Franklin's immense wealth have long since passed from the family. Franklin's slave trading is well known among local historians, and no one defends it. But it is 175 years in America's past, a different era, and can't be undone.

"You can't judge those people by today's standards—you can't judge anybody by our standards," Thomson said in the article. "It was part of life in those days. Take the Bible. Many things in the Old Testament are pretty barbaric, but they are part of our evolution."

Thomson is the great great great great grandson of James Franklin, Isaac Franklin's oldest

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1959: Above: Spectators watch as Kerley store burns out of control. Below, adjacent Young Drug Co. destroyed too.



Kerley Fire In Archives Collection

By Bonnie Martin, Sumner County Archives

Sumner County Archives photograph collection contains more than 13,000 historical photographs—including these dramatic shots of the 1959 fire at the Kerley store in Portland. In addition, there are many audio

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Grasslands Demise: Great Depression Victim

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

This is Part 2 of the story of Grasslands, founded in October 1929 by six steeplechase/foxhunt enthusiasts (the Southern Grasslands Hunt and Racing Foundation) as an international, English-style venue for foxhunts and steeplechase. The entrepreneurs bought or gained control of 28 square miles of property between Hendersonville and Gallatin for Grasslands—countryside they likened to that of Aintree, home of the English Grand National Steeplechase. It was an extraordinarily ambitious endeavor; no other such private preserve existed in the U.S. prior to this venture. Financed entirely by private funds and lauded worldwide, it became the site of the first truly international steeplechase in U.S. history. But Grasslands' glorious start could not last...

"The time chosen to develop the greatest hunt and racing venture in American history could hardly have been worse," said the late Sumner County historian Walter Durham in his 2010 book, *Grasslands*. However, in 1929, no one knew that the nation's economic downturn would become the Great Depression. Throughout Grasslands' first year (1930), its founders spent money lavishly, anticipating a throng of high society investors who would vie for membership in the exclusive hunt/race club. But months passed, and membership did not keep pace with expectations; the founders grew fearful. They pinned their hopes of boosting membership/capital on their first international steeplechase, staged Dec. 6, 1930—a glittering affair accompanied by fox hunts, glamorous celebrities, worldwide press coverage and a lavish ball at Fairview mansion. (See the October 2015 edition of this newsletter.)

The event was a great success, with glowing tributes such as the *Louisville Courier Journal's* statement, "The first running of the Grasslands International was a sensational success from every angle." But success did not translate into memberships. By December 1930, the writing was on the wall: Grasslands was going down.

Nevertheless, three of the founding members—Joseph Thomas, John Branham and Arnold Hangar—each advanced \$112,500 to Grasslands, and a few other members also added funds in a last ditch effort to save the



Grasslands water tower, which stands where Race Horse Tavern was once located, is the most prominent landmark left by the racing club.

venture. Sumner landowners who had sold property to Grasslands were persuaded to give the founders more time to pay them back. (By that time, real estate values had dropped so low that landowners would have been foolish not to.) This successful negotiation plus Grasslands' so far excellent credit rating enabled the founders to borrow more to keep afloat.

Additionally, the foundation incorporated and restructured. Grasslands' board of directors voted

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A 1931 cartoon in the *Tennessean* illustrated the dismay of English sportsmen who saw Grasslands as a threat to their Grand National Steeplechase at Aintree.

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to increase the number of allowable shareholders from 300 to 20,000. Membership requirements were lowered. Previously, the foundation sought to keep membership elite, demanding an initiation fee of \$10,000, plus \$500 yearly dues. This changed to add a second membership category—no hunting privileges—with “reasonable initiation fees” and dues of \$15. An admissions’ committee was formed that included William du Pont Jr., the richest man in the 20th century du Pont family. Membership had new perks, i.e. eligibility for better class hotel rooms on steeplechase weekends and more invitations (with a charge) to the steeplechase ball.

Restructuring advanced under the skillful handling of Chicago real estate firm Clark and Trainer, and it owed much to the good will of other businesses, banks and members, reported Durham. “Most expenses incurred by Clark and Trainer including the refunding of matured mortgages, payment of deferred interest and back taxes were funded by \$54,430 in cash advances from Col. [Robert] McCormack during 1931.” McCormack, publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, rode in foxhunts at Grasslands and often commuted from Chicago by private plane.

Gallatin editor Edward Albright opined that the restructuring would save Grasslands. He said, “Members of the Grasslands Foundation and the citizens of Sumner County will continue to work

hand in hand for completion of the enterprise, the largest and most prestigious of its kind in America.”

Elaborate Show but Profits Low

The second Grasslands International Steeplechase, Dec. 5, 1931, attracted top flight entries and international press. It drew America’s racing elite—a few arriving by private rail cars—as well as Gov. Henry Horton and other dignitaries. Following the precedent of the previous year, a costume ball (Bal Poudre) and several formal dinners were held on race day eve. More than 400 attended the ball at Fairvue, which was festooned with boxwood and cedar garlands and hand-painted murals. Grasslanders had expected to hold foxhunts for two to three weeks before the steeplechase, but rain reduced hunting to the last week.

The ‘chase was again a great show, “but financial results were truly disappointing,” said Durham. About 3,000 of the 10,000 spectators who watched the race saw it free from places on the Andrew Jackson Highway. This meant gate receipts were low. On top of that, the anticipated membership growth did not occur.

Grasslands Falter, Falls

Rumors that Grasslands was failing began to circulate. Its leadership briefly held off disaster by converting into an incorporated entity more like a country club, and they tried hard to find someone willing to buy up their land holdings. Finally, the shareholders met secretly in Cincinnati on Feb. 13, 1932, to discuss liquidating the corporation to pay its debts.

News of the meeting leaked, and eight of Grasslands’ Gallatin creditors threatened to file suit. Only an eleventh hour agreement kept the matter out of chancery court. As it was, the dream was over. Durham reported, “Details of the final negotiations relative to the petition to place the [Grasslands] Land Company in bankruptcy have escaped record, but it appears that in exchange for proceeding with the case, the creditors agreed to have it moved to federal court. Accordingly, the United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee ruled the Land Company bankrupt on April 9, 1932.”

All of the property of Grasslands such as furniture and other items from Fairvue and Race Horse Tavern were auctioned in October 1932. The real estate was sold beginning in November. In most cases, the former landowners got back their property, cancelling Grasslands’ debt to them.

Bishop McKendree: An Apostle on the American Frontier

By Albert Dittes

After the War of Independence, when moving west of the Appalachian Mountains meant living in isolation on the frontier, the Methodists organized to meet the religious needs of settlers streaming through the Cumberland Gap. One prominent minister was a young Virginian named William McKendree, who called Sumner County's Fountain Head home after his father, sisters (Nancy, Dorothea) and brother, (Dr. James McKendree) and his family moved there in 1812. William McKendree rose through the ranks to become the first American-born bishop of the Methodist Church, and he left a big mark on the frontier.

The bishop never married, devoting his life to constant travel, preaching to believers in scattered homes, churches and camp meetings as well as supervising circuit riding preachers. Along the way, he helped organize the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at a Fountain Head meeting house.

William McKendree was born on July 6, 1757, in King William County Va., to an Anglican family "living in middle class comfort." The Revolutionary War broke out when he was about 20. He witnessed the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown.

His church career started with speaking and prayers. He began to ride an assigned circuit after a 1787 district conference in Petersburg, Va., and was annually appointed to five more Virginia circuits until 1794. The church ordained him a deacon in 1790 and an elder on Dec. 25, 1791.

How Circuit Riding Began

Methodist circuit riding was an offshoot of John Wesley's plan begun in England of following up on religious revivals with by organizing churches. In 1769, Wesley started dispatching missionaries to the colonies. Among the first was Frances Asbury, who became a bishop and one of the leading religious figures in America.

In 1776—while the Second Continental Congress was debating independence in Philadelphia—a Methodist revival in Southern Virginia resulted in congregations swelling into the thousands. Methodist preachers organized the congregations into societies and kept up with them.

Methodists Come from Virginia

James Robertson and John Donelson founded what became Nashville in 1779, and multitudes of people followed them westward, including many from southern and western Virginia where the soil had been depleted from too much tobacco growing. Middle Tennessee offered plenty of rich farmland.

Only two years later, William McKendree became presiding elder of the Methodist Western Conference, embracing Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, western Virginia and part of Illinois. It was a growth period for the Methodists in Tennessee. The mid state area had 1,033 members in 1803; 1,477 in 1804; and 7,684 by 1812. New meeting houses sprang up, and camp meetings replaced cabin-by-cabin services. A campground opened at Fountain Head.

During this time, McKendree traveled constantly through the wilderness, sharing the gospel and supervising the preachers. He went to a General Conference in Baltimore in 1808 where he was elected bishop. He was propelled into the office by a sermon he gave at the Light Street Church. It is said that he walked into the session dressed in the common, unpretentious itinerant preaching clothes he had worn in the West. At first unimpressed, the audience was captivated by his message. Asbury predicted that it would make him a bishop, and it did.

Asbury and McKendree, now both bishops, traveled extensively together after the Baltimore convene, promoting camp meetings in Tennessee and Kentucky and in states carved from the Northwest Territory.

McKendree and a friend, Jesse Walker, held

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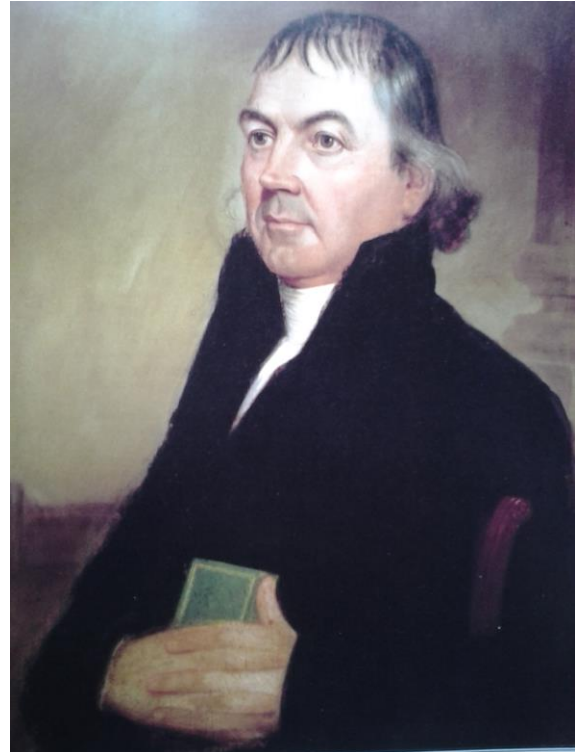
a camp meeting at Fountain Head on Aug. 26, 1808, near the home of pioneer James Gwin. It was the first time a Methodist bishop had extensively preached in the West. While many people were disappointed at the bishop possessing none of the pomp and riches of a prelate, they still came in large numbers to hear him preach.

"McKendree did not have much formal education, but he became a great preacher and ecclesiastical statesman," reports *The Encyclopedia Of World Methodism, Vol. 2*. "By his popular talents in the pulpit and his faithful attention to every part of his work, he became widely known and most highly esteemed...He was a man of great energy and genius, and was deeply pious and modest almost to timidity. His mind was clear and logical, his knowledge varied and extensive, his imagination lively but well regulated, and his eloquence was usually powerful. He was careful in the administration of discipline, and introduced system into all the operations of the church."

Revivals attracted especially large crowds to camp meetings in 1811 and '12 during the remarkable coincidence of Haley's Comet, the visible Aurora borealis in Middle Tennessee and earthquake tremors along the New Madrid fault. Frightened frontier dwellers expected an imminent Judgment Day and crowded into camp meetings.

Methodism grew so fast that in 1812 the General Conference decreed that the Western circuit should be divided in two. The 23,284 Methodists in the Ohio Conference were drawn from Ohio and northeastern Kentucky. The Tennessee Conference, organized at Fountain Head in 1812, included 22,699 members in Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and corners of Georgia and Virginia. Asbury, frail with age, attended this conference, but McKendree presided over it. They convened in the 10 by 12 feet old Fountain Head meeting house near Portland.

McKendree and Asbury attended their final conference together at the Asbury Babb House near Lebanon in 1815. Asbury's prestige made the meeting important.



Bishop William McKendree

McKendree handled the details of evaluation and assigning preachers, who attended from all over the Southeast. Asbury died the following year before he could reach a General Conference session slated for Baltimore.

McKendree's Final Years

In 1830, McKendree permitted the Board of Trustees to change the name of a pioneer college in Lebanon, Ill., to McKendree College. He later deeded to it 480 acres of rich land in Shiloh Valley, Ill., to help support the school, now McKendree University.

McKendree died in 1834 in Fountain Head at the home of his brother. His remains were later moved to the campus of Vanderbilt University when it was a Methodist college.

During Asbury's leadership years in America, the Methodist Societies and then the Methodist Episcopal Church, grew from 600 members and six preachers in 1771 to more than 200,000 members and 700 preachers in 1816. Asbury is considered the father of American Methodism, and William McKendree, who worked closely with him until 1816, contributed mightily to his success.



Evergreen: The home of the Green Berry Williams' family

Williams: The Best of Sumner Turf Men

By Ken Thomson, SCHS President

Col. Green Berry Williams ranked at the top of Tennessee's turf men for almost seven decades. Throughout the thoroughbred racing world, he was known for his ability to breed winners, and his record today still gets rave reviews.

Williams surpassed his contemporaries in longevity, living into his ninety-sixth year, an unusual accomplishment for 1874. The year before his death, he was interviewed in detail by the noted turfman Balie Payton, and Williams' responses revealed a still-keen mind.

Williams was born in 1778 on Briar Creek in Burk County, Ga., the third son of Charles Williams and his wife Celia Wall. They were natives of Virginia from near the Roanoke River in Brunswick Co. Williams, who was known as Berry once he began to ride, started his career while still a boy, riding in quarter races. He was soon recognized as one of the best in his field. His love of horses was inherited from his family, and in a few years he became one of the most successful trainers in America.

Williams' first position as a trainer was for Hugh Wylie of Charlotte Co., Va. His next was in 1806

when he was invited to live and work in Hartsville, Tenn., at the home of Capt. William Alexander, a hero of the Revolution and a thoroughbred fancier. Williams brought with him thoroughbred horses: Post Boy by Saltram and Dragan and Henrietta, both sired by the imported Dare Devil.

In 1806, turf racing came to Tennessee, with the first race coming off at Gallatin that fall. It was won by Dr. Redmond Dillon Barry's horse, Polly Medley. She beat Andrew Jackson's Indian Queen in the race.

Everybody who was anybody attended this and other races in the years to come. In addition to the future president of the United States and his wife, another future general and governor, William Hall, and his bride, Mary, were present.

The very first thoroughbred stallion brought to Tennessee was purchased by Dr. Redmond Dillon Barry in 1800. His first season was at the home of William Donelson, son of Nashville's co-founder Col. John Donelson.

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Berry Williams had three winning thoroughbreds in 1806: Henrietta, Sallie Friar and Post Boy. The next year, Williams raced his horse, Henrietta, against Andrew Jackson's Bibb's mare. Racing at Clover Bottom, Henrietta fell behind Bibb's mare early and lost. Berry was crushed.

Riding Haynie's Maria

He did not fully recover from this loss until he started a long successful career with Capt. Jesse Haynie of Sumner County and his horse, Maria. She was usually ridden by the jockey Monkey Simon. Col. George Elliott once said of Monkey Simon, "He was the coolest, wisest rider I ever saw mount a horse." Simon was a native African, brought with his parents to South Carolina as a child. He was a hunchback, standing four feet six inches and weighing 100 pounds with a short body and very long limbs. He was thought to have been a prince in his native country.

Haynie's Maria was probably the greatest nag of her day. She was bred in 1808 by Bennett Goodman of Virginia, who later moved to Tennessee. In 1809, he sold her to Capt. Jesse Haynie of Sumner County. Maria was a dark chestnut, 15 hands high and was considered the perfect model of a racehorse.

Andrew Jackson's competitive spirit was aroused by Maria's presence, and he swore "by the eternal" that he would beat her if a horse could be found in the United States able to do it. But he was never able to find that horse. Maria's speed was unsurpassed. Jackson may have conquered the Indians, defeated Gen. Pakenham, beaten John Q. Adams and Henry Clay and crushed the National Bank, but he was unable to find a horse to beat Maria.

Some visiting Virginians declared that there were horses in their state that could beat Maria. Her owner, Capt. Haynie, offered to match her against any horse in the world, from one-mile to four-mile heats, for \$5,000. Hearing about Haynie's offer, Jackson said, "Make the race for \$50,000 and consider me in with you. She can beat any animal in God's whole creation."

In his later years, Williams was asked how he thought Maria would compare with the best horses of that time, and he replied, "If I were 40 and Maria four years of age, I would not want a greater fortune than I could win with her at Fordham and Saratoga."

Williams' War, Marriage, Family

Williams volunteered for the Creek War under Capt. William Edwards and later was in Capt. John W. Byrnes' light horse company in Col. John Allcorn's regiment, Gen. John Coffee's brigade. He served out his term under Gen. Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812.

At the age of 48, Williams married Maria K. Phipps on June 6, 1826. They were the parents of four children.

Their eldest, Green Berry Williams Jr., died of disease in 1863 in an army hospital in Atlanta, Ga., while serving as a second sergeant in Company I, 2nd Tennessee Infantry under Gen. William B. Bate, CSA.

Laura, their second child, was born in 1843 and recorded in a detailed letter about the Yankee invasion of Gallatin in February 1862. She first married Lemuel Adams and had one son, Berry. Her second marriage was to John W. Newton. They had no children. Laura died in 1906.

In 1907, remaining Williams' family members moved to Heflin, Ala. Laura's son, Berry Adams, was Williams' only grandchild. No records of his death or property have been found, but in the 1930s he was in his 50s and living on Angel Island in California. He never married and had no children, so the Green Berry Williams family ended with him.

Green Berry William's third child, Zachary Taylor, was born in 1846 and was mentally challenged. After his parents' deaths, he was cared for by his two sisters and their husbands.

Williams' youngest child was Eudocia, called "Docia," born in 1849. She first married William T. Turner, a railroad engineer from Georgia who died in 1877. She then married William R. Newton, a brother of Laura's husband, John.

Williams lived the life of a successful turf man. He purchased a beautiful brick home called "Evergreen" from Walter B. Morris. Here, he and his wife lived for the rest of their lives. Their children eventually inherited the house and sold it to the trustees of the Gallatin Male Seminary. In the first quarter of the 20th century, the house was razed, and for a few years the land was used as a fair ground.

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brother. Isaac, who was only married about seven years before his death, had four children who all died before reaching adulthood. The Franklin descendants still living in this area all come from Isaac's three brothers.

The Slaves' Forced March

Ball came across a mention of the forced march while reading old letters at the library of the University of North Carolina. He found a note dated April 16, 1834, from James Franklin to his brother's slave trading company, Franklin & Armfield, stating that if the company purchased "a good lot [of slaves] for walking," he could march them south that summer.

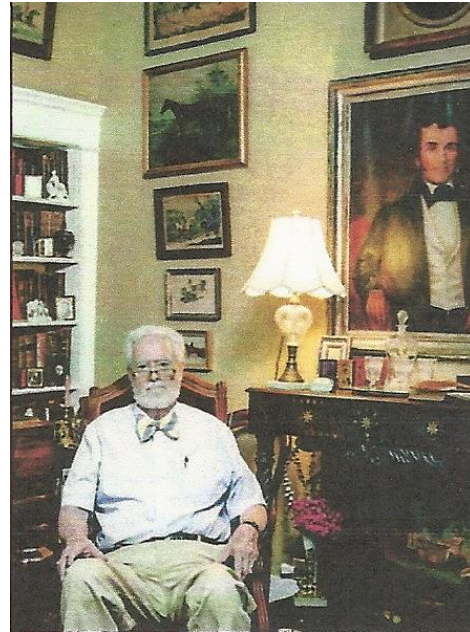
"The letter was the first sign that I might be able to trace the route of one of the Franklin & Armfield caravans," said Ball.

During the 50 years before the Civil War, millions of black people were similarly moved in some way—many more people were involved in these forced moves than with any other migration in North America before 1900. "I think of it as the Slave Trail of Tears," Ball wrote.

John Armfield (Isaac's partner) commissioned "headhunters" to visit plantations in Virginia, checking to see if they had slaves to sell. The headhunters also checked Franklin & Armfield's slave pens in Alexandria for seamstresses, nurses, valets, field hands, hostlers, carpenters, cooks, houseboys, coachmen, laundresses and boatmen, as well as "fancy girls," mainly used as concubines," and children.

"By August [1834], Armfield had more than 300 ready for the march. Around the 20th of that month, the caravan began to assemble in front of the company's offices in Alexandria, at 1315 Duke Street," Ball wrote.

"Armfield sat on his horse in front of the procession, armed with a gun and a whip. Other white men, similarly armed, were arrayed behind him. They were guarding 200 men and boys lined up in twos, their wrists handcuffed together, a chain running the length of 100 pairs of hands," Ball continued. "Behind the men were the women and girls, another hundred. They were not handcuffed, although they may have been tied with rope. Some carried small children. After the women, came the big wagons—six or seven in all. These carried food, plus children too small to walk 10 hours a day. Later the same wagons hauled those who had collapsed and could not be roused with a whip. Then the coffle, like a giant serpent, uncoiled onto Duke Street and marched west, out of town..."



Ken Thomson with Franklin portrait

Armfield's coffle traveled out of Alexandria via today's U.S. Route 50, then the Little River Turnpike. "The coffle moved along at three miles an hour. Caravans like Armfield's covered about 20 miles a day. People sang. Sometimes they were forced to. Slave traders brought a banjo or two and demanded music..." Ball wrote.

The group traveled 40 miles onto the Aldie and Ashby's Gap Turnpike, then went 40 miles further to Winchester. "Every few miles, Armfield and his chained-up gang came to a toll station. He would stop the gang in its tracks, pull out his purse and pay the man. The tollkeeper would lift the bar, and the coffle would march under it," Ball wrote.

They headed down the Great Wagon Road out of Pennsylvania, which is today's U.S. Route 11, passing other slave gangs and construction crews. Ball reported that on one September night, George Featherstonhaugh, a traveler, saw the lights of the slave camp, stopped to talk and later wrote, "Numerous fires were gleaming through the forest; it was the bivouac of the gang. The female slaves were warming themselves. The children were asleep in some tents, and the males, in chains were lying on the ground, in groups of about a dozen each...meanwhile, the white men...were standing about with whips..."

Featherstonhaugh described Armfield as a "raw man in nice clothes," including a big white hat, striped pants and a long dark coat. He said Armfield was "sordid, illiterate and vulgar." He watched as the march started up the next

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morning. "I had never seen so revolting a sight before," Featherstonhaugh said. Armfield and his men made jokes, standing near, laughing and smoking cigars."

On Sept. 6, the coffe reached the New River about 50 miles southwest of Roanoke. It was 400 feet wide and usually crossed by ferry boat. "Armfield did not want to pay for passage, not with his hundreds," Ball wrote. "So one of his men picked a shallow place and tested it by sending over a wagon and four horses. Armfield then ordered the men in irons to get in the water.

"This was dangerous. If any man lost his footing, everyone could be washed downstream, yanked one after another by the chain. Armfield watched and smoked. Men and boys sold, on average, for about \$700. Multiply that by 200. That comes to \$140,000, or about \$3.5 million today... The men made it across. Next came wagons with young children and those who could no longer walk. Last came the women and girls. Armfield crossed them on flatboats."

The coffe continued on, traveling down the Valley Turnpike on the Blue Ridge toward Tennessee, where Armfield handed over his coffe in Gallatin, somewhere near Fairvue, to James Franklin. "Records of this part of the journey do not survive, nor do records about the individual slaves in the coffe," wrote Ball. "Like other Franklin gangs, the 300 probably got on flatboats in the Cumberland River and floated three days down to the Ohio River, and then drifted down another day to reach the Mississippi. A flatboat could float down the Mississippi to Natchez in two weeks."

Edward Ball Comes to Call

Ball noted that he visited Sumner County, driving through Fairvue and ringing the doorbell (unanswered) at the mansion. At this point, he consulted a museum and was put in touch with Ken Thomson, who was able to tell him Franklin family history, beginning when the Franklin brothers were young. "They packed flatboats with whiskey, tobacco, cotton and hogs, floated them down to New Orleans, sold the goods on the levee, and then sold the boat," Thomson told him. "So my ancestor James [eight years older than Isaac] was dabbling in some slave dealing on these trips—a small amount, nothing big. He showed young Isaac how it was done, apprenticed him."

Thomson related that more than 50 years ago his great grandfather (born in 1874) told him that Isaac came back from the War of 1812 greatly enthused over slave trading. He told Thomson that after Isaac died in 1846 an inventory of his belongings ran to 900 pages. He had six plantations and 650 slaves.

Ball asked what it would have been like to be in the room with Isaac Franklin, and Thomson replied. "He [Isaac] knew what manners and culture were. He knew how to be a gentleman. Most slave traders at that time were considered common and uncouth, with no social graces. Uncle Isaac was different. He had the equivalent of an eighth grade education. He was not ignorant. He could write a letter."

However, as Thomson said, that did not mean Franklin behaved well. He, like many other slave masters, had black mistresses. "You know they took advantage of the black women, and there were no repercussions there. Before he married, Isaac had companions, some willing, some unwilling. That was just part of life... Isaac had a child by a black woman before he married [at age 50 in 1839] but this daughter of his left the state of Tennessee, and nobody knows what happened to her. Actually, Uncle Isaac sent her off because he didn't want her around after he married."

Thomson Comments on the Story

Thomson noted that the *Smithsonian* story is a good read, but he takes issue with the tone in some parts. In his opinion, the writer wanted him to make a personal apology for having a slave trader ancestor. "There is no defense for slavery," said Thomson. "Everyone agrees that it was a terrible thing, but I can't apologize for something that happened before I was born. No one can do that. I told Mr. Ball that I couldn't be responsible for things my parents did, much less ancestors who lived 175 years ago."

Thomson also pointed out that many women, not just the black women mentioned by Ball, were treated harshly in that era. It wasn't just racial. "If you talk about the way some white men treated black women, you need to remember that they treated their wives the same way. In Sumner and many other counties, there are court records about abused wives, especially among the uneducated. And in estate settlements, you find that a wife got only a 'wife dower' and sometimes had to use it to buy her own possessions back."

Thomson related that the land migrations Ball described were rare, not just forgotten. "It was easier, cheaper and faster to move slaves and goods by ships, which they had. Not that that made selling South any better, but it does explain why you don't see much written about it," he said.

Editor's Note: The writer's implication that the present owner of Fairvue is hostile to anyone talking about its history of slavery is the writer's own imagination. He knocked on the door. No one was expecting him, and no one answered.

Bradford-Berry House: Can It Be Saved?

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

The French Lick Chapter of the DAR is hoping this year to re-ignite an effort to save Hendersonville's Bradford-Berry house. The 200-year-old house, located on Gallatin Road within a few hundred yards of City Hall, is looking its age, and DAR members as well as other history-minded Sumner County residents fear that it is simply going to fall apart—much like historic Halfway House in the 1990s.

"Rock Castle, Hazel Path mansion and the Bradford-Berry House are Hendersonville's triple crown of historic homes," said Hendersonvillian Jane Reynolds, regent of the French Lick Chapter. "They are all fairly close together, and all were owned at times by Daniel Smith or his descendants."

The Bradford-Berry House was built in the late 1700s by Revolutionary War Major Henry Bradford, who is buried in the adjacent cemetery. One of Tennessee's earliest settlers, Bradford came "west" in 1784, buying this property, which was then adjacent to Daniel Smith's plantation, Rock Castle. The house was nearly a hundred years old when it came into the Berry family, who were Smith's descendants. It was purchased by Horatio Berry in 1886 on the day of his daughter Sarah Berry's birth.

The house is of red brick made on site by slaves that Bradford borrowed from his stepfather William Nash of Virginia. It is in the Federalist style with windows across the original portion, double front doors and no windows on the sides. The brick walls are two feet thick. Native stone was used for the foundation and basement.

The old house first became a concern for Hendersonville leaders in 2003 when Wal-Mart considered opening its super store on the property. At that time, the house and land were owned by a developer named Jack May, who had apparently bought them sight unseen and was unaware that the house had historic value. Fearing that the house would be demolished, city officials created an ordinance to prevent developers from tearing down historic sites. Wal-Mart chose a different location. After a few years, May, who currently lives in Columbia, dropped off

Hendersonville's radar. However, his name is still linked with major developments in Tennessee. He sold a large tract of Bradford-Berry property to Aladdin Temp-rite about a decade ago, but he still owns the old house and some acreage. Hendersonville's historic site ordinance does not require him to repair or maintain the house.



Bradford-Berry House, January 2016

"We're afraid the house will simply rot if something is not done," said Reynolds. "We hope the people of Sumner County will prevent that from happening."

The DAR chapter, which has about 80 members, most in Sumner County, was instrumental in marking Bradford's grave near the house and takes a special interest in its well being. They recently contacted city hall when it was noticed that the windows had been broken out, and the house was boarded up. "Right now, we're taking baby steps, trying to join with other organizations to save one of the oldest homes in the county."

Formerly used as home to Hendersonville Arts Council, the house had some remodeling before that in the 1960s. Because of changes made to both the interior and exterior of the house over the years, it does not qualify for historic registries.

Editor's Note: A story detailing the history of Bradford-Berry House and some of its owners will be provided in the next newsletter.



Portland residents watch as the J.E. Kerley store comes down in October 1959.

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interviews relating to Sumner County. The collection is comprised of the Thomas Photograph Collection, donated by Dr. James Thomas, and the Allen Haynes Photograph Collection, donated by Allen Haynes. The collection is available for viewing on a dedicated computer and large screen monitor.

About the Fire

The J.E. Kerley store fire started Friday, October 16, 1959. Photographs illustrate the complete destruction of the Portland business and the subsequent loss of the adjacent Young Drug Store. They capture images of the burning building, fire men fighting the blaze and the shocked faces of the crowd. Photos of smoldering rubble picture a significant loss to Portland's business community.

The fire was discovered around 4:30 a.m., and fueled by an inventory of furniture, paint, oil and dynamite caps, the fire raged out of control. Fire units from Franklin, Ky.; Gallatin, Westmoreland, Goodlettsville, Inglewood and Madison fought the blaze until the 150,000 gallon city water tank ran dry. Trucks from Franklin and Gallatin hauled water to the firefighters, and water was pumped from nearby Gregory's lake. The fire was so intense the brick building collapsed and fell on the adjacent Young Drug Store, destroying that building. The sidewalk and street were covered by brick debris and smoking timbers. State and

city police held the crowd back for fear of injury. Eventually, the fire was extinguished with more than 600,000 gallons of water. However, five days after the fire, the ruins continued to smoke and shoot sparks.

No one was injured in the blaze, but many irreplaceable items were destroyed, including parts for a 1909 Maxwell Automobile and items no longer in stock or manufactured. Furnishings for a new Kerley residence were also stored in the business and were a complete loss. After the fire, J.E. Kerley & Sons and Young Drug Company resumed business at new locations and continued to serve Portland's citizens.

The Sumner Archives Kerley fire photographs are a portion of the many interesting historical photos available for viewing. Photos of family groups, people, farm work, homes, business, schools, sports and daily life are included. The extensive photograph collection offers a glimpse of Sumner County life and events long past but preserved on film for future generations.

If you or someone you know has old photos of Sumner County, the archives will gladly scan them and add them to its photo collection. The original photos can be returned to you.

Sumner County Historical Society

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To: