

Days Of Old Sumner County

Newsletter No. 30, May 2020

P.O. Box 1871, Gallatin TN 37066

Sumner County Historical Society

www.sctnhs.org

(615) 461-8830

Mary Bledsoe: A Pioneer Of Sumner County

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

One of the first pioneer women to live in Sumner County was the intrepid Mary Ramsey Bledsoe, who arrived here in 1784 or '85. She accompanied her husband Col. Anthony Bledsoe, an Englishman by ancestry who was born in Culpepper, Va., in 1733 and was an officer in the Revolution. They had with them 10 of their children.

Their daughter, Sarah, born in 1768, was about 16 years old and the eldest of the children. The youngest were babies, Abraham and Henry.

Tennessee was then the forefront of the rolling western frontier. White settlement ended at the Mississippi River. Middle Tennessee was the Wild West—a wilderness with dense cedar groves, hunting grounds for ferocious groups of Indians and home to bear, buffalo, elk and other animals--danger at every turn. Despite hardships, settlers came here, slowly at first, after the Revolution.

They were lured by the promise of land—some of which was soldiers' payment from the new American government.

In late 1779 (five years before moving here), Anthony Bledsoe and his brothers, Isaac and Abraham, with a few friends had crossed the Cumberland mountains and explored the Cumberland Valley, noting its herds of

See MARY, Page 10



1st Presbyterian Church

H'ville's Oldest Church: 1st Presbyterian

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

In 1869, only four years after the Civil War and the same year that President Andrew Johnson of Tennessee left office, Hendersonville's First Presbyterian Church opened its doors.

Still located at 172 West Main at the edge of Hendersonville's traditional "downtown", the sanctuary has held services for 150 years, making it the oldest church in the city. Surrounded by an old-fashioned graveyard and flowering trees, the red brick building features green-shuttered, gothic-styled windows and doors and the original well-worn stone steps. Inside, the floors are wide wooden planks and pews run alongside a center aisle to the pulpit. The first service I attended here was on Christmas Eve night in 1970. The sanctuary was dim and candlelit with a crisscross pathway of light down the center aisle created by outdoor spotlights shining through tall side windows.

Before the church was built, Presbyterians living in Hendersonville went by horseback or buggy 13 miles to attend services in Gallatin, but they were eager to open a church of their own in Hendersonville. Seventeen worshipers—including 12 from Gallatin Presbyterian Church--petitioned the Nashville Presbytery to charter the Hendersonville church. They purchased the property on which the church now stands for \$232 from Margaret Branch Donelson of Hendersonville, the wife of Confederate Gen. Daniel Smith Donelson, who died in 1863. Gen. Donelson is one of the 15 Confederate veterans buried in the church cemetery.

According to church records, pastors from other cities came to Hendersonville to preach at the little church. After the Bluegrass Line--the interurban railway—opened in 1913 between Gallatin and

(See CHURCH, Page 7)



This is the Walton Ferry Road intersection of Gallatin Road, circa 1937-1939

Gallatin Road Widened to Four Lanes After WWII

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor, from Vol. 1 of *City by the Lake* by Tim Takacs

In 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor and America's subsequent entry into World War II put a quick stop and a eight year hiatus on Hendersonville's goal to widen Gallatin Road—its Main Street—to four lanes. This goal was finally accomplished in August 1949.

Gallatin Road (U.S. Route 31E), probably following what was once an ancient buffalo trail, has always been the principle road from Nashville to Hendersonville and on to Gallatin. In the 1940s as it does today, Gallatin Road led out of downtown Nashville. It paralleled East Nashville businesses, passed Isaac Litton High School, which opened in 1930; traveled past the shops of Madison, the turn off to Goodlettsville, and acres of farmland on the outskirts of Davidson County into what Nashvillians then called "the country": Sumner County.

Gallatin Road was only a sleepy, two-lane country road at the Davidson-Sumner county line, but it turned treacherous only a couple of miles beyond that. According to the first volume of *The City by the Lake* by Attorney Tim Takacs, "Rockland curve [in Hendersonville] was probably the most hazardous section of Gallatin Road in Sumner County." There was a sharp turn at the hill where motorists approached Rockland Bridge over the tracks of the L&N Railroad. This hazardous curve was what initially prompted the State Highway Department in April 1941 to propose straightening the road, said Takacs.

A state-led committee studied the matter, which included constructing a viaduct over the tracks. Martin R. Curtis, Sr., of Hendersonville, a member of the Sumner County Court since 1936,

was part of the committee, whose work was brought before the Court. On July 6, 1941, the Court voted that \$50,000 in bonds should be sold to buy the rights of way for the Rockland Road.

Before anything could be done, the war intervened. The project stopped; the danger remained. During war maneuvers in Sumner County, six soldiers were injured when their Army truck crashed through a fence at the curve and rolled down the embankment.

"As we might expect," Takacs said, "this incident prompted the Hendersonville Civic Club [an organization concerned with the unincorporated town's policies and governance] to revive interest in straightening the curve. At its January 1944 meeting, club president Martin Curtis, newly-elected as Chairman of the County Court [the highest position in the county] appointed a committee to meet with members of other Sumner County organizations with the aim of sending a delegation to Nashville to ask Highway Commissioner C.W. Phillips and Governor Prentice Cooper to rectify the problem. Whether by coincidence or as a result of Civic Club lobbying, early in February the Highway Department dusted off its old plans for Rockland Curve and announced that preliminary surveying and planning for a four-lane concreted highway from Nashville to Gallatin would be started and finished in two months. If everything fell into place—securing rights of way, funding and so forth—the county could expect construction to begin right after the war ended.

"This was welcome news to the Civic Club, but the ink was barely dry on the instruments of

surrender before the club was again agitating for construction to *begin* at Rockland Curve. Harold B. Roney and eight to 10 other Civic Club members visited the Gallatin Chamber of Commerce on July 22, [1945] hoping to muster support for the improvement from that quarter. The Chamber appointed a committee consisting of past Chamber president Woodall Murrey, Ed Garrott and L.M. Ross to help the Civic Club persuade the Highway Department to get going on the project," Takacs said.

Adding even more incentive, an August 1945 story in the *Gallatin Examiner* claimed that 16 people had died trying to make that curve.

That same month, the highway department announced that it would rebuild Gallatin Road from Mansker Creek to Bloodworth's Corner, where Comer and Bloodworth property met, about a mile and two-thirds. "This improvement would smooth out Gallatin Road to the approaches of the bridge over the L&N Railroad," said Takacs.

The day after V-J Day, Curtis and County Attorney Richard Harsh started gathering the rights of way from the 16 property owners along the route, about 30 acres. They hoped to have this done by the time the full Court met in October, but four landowners did not want to sell. "Nonetheless, the County Court approved the Highway Department's proposed plan of construction and authorized Harsh to begin condemnation proceedings in the Circuit Court against five tracts owned by Lucien R. Anderson, Reuben Boone, Henry Tittle and Eugene Washington. Judge Dancey Fort immediately issued orders of condemnation; the County Court thus acquired all rights of way by consent or by compulsion; and C.A. Thompson, Centerville, Tenn., contractor, began work on the L&N grade crossing on Nov. 2, 1945, completing it on Dec. 20, 1946, at a cost of \$270,085.35," said Takacs.

With the work at Rockland nearly finished, a delegation from the Hendersonville Civic Club and the Gallatin Chamber of Commerce met with Gov. Jim McCord to urge the construction of the proposed four-lane concrete highway from Nashville to Gallatin. "A new highway was desperately needed, for not only had the volume of traffic increased exponentially, but the present road, two lanes and more than 20 years old, had been built when traffic speeds seldom exceeded 35 miles per hour," said Takacs.

McCord promised that the highway would be built, but it was not until September of 1947 that Curtis could announce that the General Assembly would consider funding the highway in its next session. Shortly after this, Sumner County Court voted to accept a proposal by the Highway Department to divide the costs of rights of way for the four-lane highway through

Hendersonville equally among the federal government, the state and Sumner County. Rights of way had to be secured from the 57 property owners on either side of Gallatin Road through the heart of town. Thirty-six settled with the county, but the remaining 21 took the matter to Circuit Court. They appeared before Judge Dancey Fort in mid May, and a jury was selected to inspect and assess the condemned properties.

Notable among the property was land and a building, which still exists, owned by Oscar L. and Ona Mai Potts at the intersection of what is now Old Shackle Island and Gallatin Road. "This was by far the most valuable of the properties condemned," said Takacs. "The five men [jury] assessed the value of the land at a thousand dollars and incidental damages at eight thousand. The latter payment was no doubt assessed to compensate the Pottses for the corner of their building that was rounded off. The rebuilt store front gave the appearance of a building wrapped around the corner of the intersection, gracefully curving down the hill toward the railroad tracts."

C.A. Thompson began March 19, 1948, to widen and pave three and a half miles of Gallatin Road from the cut-off at Rockland, which had already been readied with drainage, gravel, etc. in '47, through downtown Hendersonville to Drakes Creek. Thompson's work included laying sidewalks, curbing and guttering through town as well as creating setbacks for several businesses. "Paving began on Dec. 17, 1948, and was completed on Aug. 15, 1949, at a cost in excess of \$500,000. The total cost of the four-lane highway, from the approaches to the Mansker Bridge in the west to beyond Drakes Creek, was approximately \$1 million," reported Takacs.

"Hendersonville now had a 'new look.' The narrow, two-lane, black asphalt road lined from the L&N overpass to Sanders Ferry Road with old houses and maple trees was replaced by a wide, white concrete strip that dominated the eye. The center of town was 'completely modernized,' said the Nashville *Banner* on January 13, 1950, in a photo story captioned 'Hendersonville Pictures Steady Progress.' In a matter of just weeks after the paving was done, envious Gallatin citizens were commenting about 'what a good stretch of road' meant for Hendersonville. They now expected the governor to honor his promise and complete the road to Gallatin the plans for which had been in preparation since 1944," said Takacs.

Freeing Sumner Slaves No Easy Matter in Early 1800s

From *Old Sumner* by Walter Durham

Editor's Note: The deck was stacked against freeing slaves in the early 1800s in Sumner County and probably the rest of Tennessee. The only legal methods owners could use to free their slaves was by their last will and testament or by a private act of the Legislature. An owner couldn't just sign something saying a slave was free. Walter Durham, the late Tennessee Historian and Gallatin resident, gave examples in his book, *Old Sumner*, of frustrated local residents who tried to buck the system and simply free their slaves. He wrote:

"Labor performed by slaves, most of whom had come to Sumner County with the families of their owners, contributed greatly to the livelihood of the early settlers. While slave ownership was widespread among them, many questioned the institution of slavery. The Methodist Church would not permit its preachers to own slaves.

"Few individual citizens, however, felt as strongly about the question as did Thomas Edward Sumner, son of General Jethro Sumner, for whom the county was named. Living in nearby Williamson County, Sumner had petitioned the Legislature repeatedly but without success to permit him to emancipate his slaves. His sister, Mrs. Mary Sumner Blount, of Tarborough, N.C., exchanged correspondence with him between 1810 and 1819, expressing her interest in freeing her and her brother's slaves. Frustrated by the Legislature, Sumner provided for emancipation of his slaves in his will. When his will was probated in 1820, it was revealed that the bequests of cash and land to his wife and sister were made contingent on their not interfering with emancipating his slaves. He also left a cash gift of \$5,000 to the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.

"Another resident of Sumner County who could not reconcile the practice of slavery with her religious beliefs was Kasper Mansker's widow, Elizabeth, who had married Isaac Walton four years after Kasper's death. In September 1825, Elizabeth Walton signed her last will and

testament...which directed that all her slaves should be emancipated. Her neighbor, Charles L. Byrn, was selected to take charge of the blacks, move them to 'Illinois, Indiana or Ohio,' and set them free. The will provided for the sale of all her personal and real property, with the proceeds to be divided among the slaves. By codicil, she provided for certain slaves to take their regular riding horses with them to freedom. The only white persons mentioned in her will are her husband, for whom no financial provision was made, and Charles L. Byrn. A fee was provided for Byrn's services.

"Another Sumner Countian, Peter Fisher, also sought to free his slaves through his last will and testament. His will, proved after his death in 1827, called for the emancipation of all of his Negroes. Doubtless concerned over the great value of the slaves, Fisher's heirs contested the will 'on the grounds of the imbecilic and deranged state of the old gentleman's mind as well as the fraud practiced in obtaining it.' The heirs succeeded in having a private act passed by the Legislature, giving jurisdiction in this case to the Chancery Court, allegedly for the purpose of negating the will.

"The Legislature was subsequently petitioned by one hundred Sumner Countians seeking repeal of the private act and implementation of Peter Fisher's will. The hundred who believed in the validity of the will included such familiar names as: J.C. Guild, Joel Parrish, Daniel Saffarans, James F. Lauderdale. R. Bell, John Bell, H. Bate, James Franklin, George Smith, John Brackin, A.B. Clindinning, John W. Lauderdale, Charles Morgan, Stokely Vinson, Anthony T. Bledsoe, Henry Head, James Wilson, William Prince, Benjamin Desha, Francis Youree, F. Chenault, George Roberts, James Cartwright, Bushrod Thompson, Isaac Bledsoe, Nelson Parker, James Neely, Bryson Lucilius Winchester, Benjamin Parrish, Thomas B. Bledsoe and others."

Remembering the Old Gallatin Interurban

By John Freed

The late John Freed, a lifelong resident of Hendersonville, was the owner of Freed's Hardware on Main Street in Hendersonville for many years. He died at the age of 95 in May 2009. This is his experience with the Interurban railway, which ran between Gallatin and Nashville from 1913 until 1932. It was written for *Remember When*, a book of stories about old Hendersonville (1900 to 1957) compiled and published in 2009 by Hendersonville High history teacher Jim Lind and his students. The book can be found at Sumner County Archives. Freed said:

"In 1919 my daddy bought a farm just inside the Sumner County line on Gallatin Road. It was on the left hand side of Gallatin Road about where Center Point Road intersects the highway today.

"The interurban tracks were across Gallatin Road from where we lived. The interurban cars ran on a regular schedule from Nashville to Gallatin. I remember a car passed our house at 7:45 a.m. going to Gallatin. There were cars that passed our house going toward Nashville at 7:00, 8:00 and 10:00 in the morning.

"There was a station across the road from our house called Center Point. About a half mile toward Nashville was a station called Arbuthnot, followed by Curtis, Grizzard and Edenwold... Jack's Point Station was a small covered building about 10 feet long with a seat down the middle. The roof was shaped like an inverted 'V' with wooden shingles. Some of the stops did not have a building where you could keep dry in rainy weather.

"The cars traveling from Gallatin connected with the [Nashville] city streetcars at Inglewood and traveled from that point on to Nashville on the city streetcar tracks. The interurban cars did not make any stops to pick up passengers from Inglewood to downtown Nashville. The interurban station in Nashville was separate from the old Nashville Transfer station used by the city streetcars. The interurban station was three or four doors down Second Avenue off the Public Square toward Broadway. The cars entered on Second Avenue and exited on Third Avenue. This station was used by the Gallatin and Franklin interurban cars.

"My brothers and sisters rode the Gallatin interurban to school. At that time, none of the children had cars. They either rode the interurban, walked or rode ponies to school. Students could buy a special ticket book which contained 40 tickets. The book cost \$2 for rides to from the Center Point Station to the Hendersonville school.

"The interurban tracks ran along the right side of Gallatin Road going toward Hendersonville and crossed a bridge at Mansker Creek just before it reached the Center Point Station. One of the support columns still stands in Mansker Creek. Today's traveler can still see this sentinel of the past when crossing Mansker Creek on Gallatin Road. It is just a few yards to the right of the present Gallatin Road bridge which crosses Mansker Creek going north to the right of Rockland Road into Hendersonville. There was a maintenance shop that serviced the interurban cars located just north of the First Presbyterian Church [in Hendersonville]. This location is a parking lot and utility station today.

"The interurban was a single electric powered car operated by a motorman at the front of the car. There was also a conductor on the car who opened the door for people getting on and off the car and who took up tickets of took the proper fare for the ride.

"The cars were divided into two sections. The front section had benches on each side and was the smoking section. This section only extended back about 10 feet. The rest of the car had seats facing the front.

"The interurban system operated a freight car from Gallatin to Nashville each morning. It stopped along the route and picked up fresh milk, which had been placed at the various stations by the local farmers. The milk was hauled to the milk processing companies in Nashville. This car usually passed our house at Center Point Station about 8:45 in the morning on the way to Nashville. It returned about 3 o'clock in the afternoon bringing back the empty milk cans. The cars also carried other freight in both directions.

"In about 1928 or 1929, trucks came into use to pick up the milk at the farmer's barns or in front of their houses. They then transported it to the Nashville dairies. About the same time, there were a few more cars as well as jitneys and buses traveling up and down Gallatin Road. The interurban began to be used less and less by the public and for freight purposes. In a few years, it ceased operation, but when the Gallatin Interurban is mentioned it evokes pleasant memories of an interesting and important era in Sumner County history."

More than a Principal: Alden Achieved Wide Recognition

By Albert Dittes

"Brother C. F. Alden and his brother have an interesting school of about 20 students out in the country from Goodlettsville," wrote W. R. Burrow, president of the Tennessee River Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in 1908. "They have a neat school building completed, and are no doubt doing excellent work for that neighborhood. The same will apply to the school that is being taught by Brother Mulford and his wife near Fountain Head, Tenn., except that they have not completed the school building yet and are teaching in one room of their house." (That school is now Highland Academy.)

Founding the Oak Grove Garden School on Bethel Road near Goodlettsville, Alden started a distinguished career that would end as principal of Sumner County High School in Portland. In between, he developed a high school in the Shackle Island area of Hendersonville, pioneered agriculture teaching in Tennessee, taught at Peabody College in Nashville and at the University of Tennessee and headed the department of rural education at Austin Peay Normal in Clarksville.

Charles Franklin Alden was born in Brockwayville, Pa., on Nov. 17, 1877. His family moved to New York during his childhood, and he took advantage of the educational opportunities there, graduating from Cornell University.

In a story about Alden's life, the Dec. 6, 1922, *Madison Survey* said, "Some 20 years ago a young man, superintendent of a public school in New York, attended the summer school for church school teachers at Berrien Springs, Michigan."

The story said that Alden went to Michigan loving city life and hating the country, but the school there on the farm and instruction in the principles of Christian education changed him, and "the Spirit of the Lord wrought a great transformation in his life." Alden struggled and, alone in the woods at Berrien, he prayed, "Lord, I do not love the country; I do love the city and city ways; but you have said that our schools should be on the land, and that the country should be our home, as it was in the beginning. Lord, you will have to make me hate the things I now love, and love the things I now hate."

The story noted that Alden spent a year at the small Seventh-day Adventist college in Michigan, entering "heart and soul" into the industrial features of the college.

When the college president, the legendary Adventist educator Edward A. Sutherland, resigned to start a new model school on a farm

just outside of Madison, Tenn., in 1904, Alden went south with him, becoming a charter student of what became Madison College. (Among his fellow charter students was Braden Mulford, who would later start the Highland Adventist Community.) Alden then married Laura Ashton.



The Madison founders were educational reformers and trained their students to go into the then underprivileged South and start similar schools to teach the people how to make their soil productive. Alden and Mulford were

among the first of many to do this. They started out near Madison buying property for a school on the border of Sumner and Robertson Counties along what is now Bethel Road.

The people there were skeptical about what these newcomer Adventists might have to offer. They thought that nothing could grow on their worn-out land, but Alden and Mulford taught them subsoil plowing and introduced alfalfa and strawberries. They planted and harvested an amazing crop, and the neighbors became their friends.

The community wanted a school, so they started the Oak Grove Garden School. About a year later, Mulford did the same thing in Fountain Head.

Alden Becomes Well Known

Alden's reputation continued to grow. He continued close affiliation with his Madison friends, but Superintendent T.W. Hunter liked his school and made it part of the Sumner County school system. A 1916 picture shows Alden posing with the Beech High School football team, listing him as the first principal, and giving a short talk on the great purpose of education.

He developed Beech into a four-year high school, but 1918 was the only year a senior class graduated. By then the United States had

(See ALDEN, Page 7)

(ALDEN, Continued from Page 6)

entered World War I, and the U.S. Army drafted many of the male students. (It went to a two-year high school in 1919-20, then reverted to grades 1-8 in 1930.)

The October 20, 1921, *Madison Survey* listed him as principal of the county high school in Goodlettsville, lecturing on the importance of agriculture. He operated under the National Vocational Education Act of 1917, legislation passed by the U.S. Congress popularly known as the Smith-Hughes act (an act providing federal funds for vocational education in "agriculture, trades, industry and homemaking"). The article described him as "superintending the outside activities, or work projects, of over 175 young people. All are in some phase of crop production and have a keen love for the land and country surroundings."

Alden explained the "project" as "a test not only of the student but of the teacher. It tests the teacher's kind and quality of instruction and the student's ability to listen and comprehend. . . It is better than any written examination to determine the ability of the pupil to separate the wheat from the chaff. The time is here to abandon old schemes of education."

The March 21, 1928, *Madison Survey* reported that he made a speech in Madison and spoke "enthusiastically" of the gospel message it was his privilege to give through agriculture. Alden was quoted, saying, "About the time I was converted, I learned to love other things, and in spite of the mistakes I have made as the years have passed, I have never lost the vision I caught at that time as to the place nature should hold in our education."

Principal of Portland High

Alden resigned as principal of Goodlettsville High School in 1930 after 10 years of service. He then accepted a position in the rural education department at Austin Peay Normal (School). But his real interest lay in high school-level education, and he became principal in Portland in 1932 at the invitation of his friend Watt Hardison, then superintendent of education for Sumner County.

Alden died at his Goodlettsville home on July 6, 1935, of heart disease. His death notice in the Nashville *Tennessean* reflected the kind of career he had had by listing some people attending his funeral. They included: Watt Hardison, later Mayor of Portland; Joseph W. Byrns, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; Tennessee native P.P. Claxton, former U.S. Commissioner of Education under Presidents William Howard Taft,

Woodrow Wilson and Warren G. Harding. Alden's Madison mentor, Dr. E.A. Sutherland, conducted the service at the Goodlettsville Methodist Church.

(Note: Charles and Laura's son, John Alden, married Lenore Hardison and lived in Portland for the rest of his life.)

(CHURCH, Continued from Page 1)

Nashville, they would ride the train to Hendersonville (which ran conveniently alongside the church property), preach a sermon and have a meal with one of the church families before leaving on the "four o'clock special" train back to Nashville.

Church records show that the church's Ladies Auxiliary raised money in its early days to purchase a pump organ and to support other church projects.

Hard Times Come to the Church

Church attendance dropped during the Great Depression and WWI and WWII as it did throughout the United States. The Presbyterians met only once or twice a month. For awhile, members of Hendersonville's Methodist church used the Presbyterian sanctuary on alternate Sundays after lightning destroyed their building. After WWI, with only 15 members remaining, First Presbyterian also opened its doors to a Baptist congregation. A core group of Presbyterians remained loyal to their old home and worshipped with Baptists during that time.

As the City Grew So Did the Church

"Eventually, plans to create Old Hickory Lake and projected population growth rekindled the dream for Hendersonville First Presbyterian Church," says the church website. "In 1951, the church reopened with the help of the First Presbyterian Church in Gallatin, funds from the Home Mission Board and members of the original congregation still in the area. The benches were refinished in a tobacco warehouse, a new floor was laid, other building repairs were made, and the grounds were cleaned up. Williams Alexander, a student from Louisville Seminary, became the pastor of the church beginning June 3, 1951, sharing his time with the Shiloh Presbyterian Church.

"In 1955, after membership had climbed to more than 300, an addition was built to the sanctuary to provide indoor restrooms, a kitchen, classrooms/fellowship hall and a minister's office. In 1958, 89 years after the church's formation, James K.L. McClaine was called as its first fulltime pastor..."

-----Sunnyside School 1900-----



Pictured in this 1900 photograph are the 60-plus students of Gallatin's Sunnyside School and adult neighbors. They are: (front row, l. to r.) Martha Lorelle Frakes, Thomas Stone, Sumner Taylor, Nelson Hill, Claude Penn, Clyde Bell, Rufus Turner, Lizzie Christian, Carrie Gillespie Frakes, Ethel Stiliz, Mary Stone, Stella Rose, Elizabeth Bell. (Second row, l. to r.) Margaret May Frakes, Lucy Hill, Helen Douglass, Bessie Plater Stone, Dacey Stratton, Fannie Baker, Winfield Baker, Walter Franklin Frakes, Willard Taylor, Henry Frakes, Agnes Gilmore, Kleber Bell Dunklin, Jim Hill, Joe Miller, Earl Stiliz, Hermie Bell. (Third row, l. to r.) Mattie Livar, Madge Bloodworth, Armfield Stratton, unknown first name Smith, Beatrice Henrietta Brizendine, Clara Malkerson, Frank Dunklin, Woodson Rose, Blanche Bloodworth, Obie Douglass, Odie Denning, Oscar Stone, Swaney A. Stratton, Oscar Rose, Tom Brown. (Fourth row, l. to r.) Georgia Hill, Capp Bloodworth, Laura Gilmore, Fanny Hill, Willie Agnes Rogers, Frances Beulah Christian, Rolly Rose, Daisy Livar, Helen Miller, Emma Livar, Elsie Brizendine, Prudie Stratton, John Knox Frakes, Barton Brown, Cleve Rose, Harry G. Stiliz. (back row, l. to r.) J. Miller Harris, teacher Jesse Woodall, Barnes Christian, George W. Douglass, William Andrew Frakes

Adult Neighbors Get in the Photo with Students

By Ken Thomson, President of SCHS

This photo (above on page 8) was made in 1900 at Sunnyside School, which stood on the southwest corner of Saint Blaise Road and Longhollow Pike, four miles west of Gallatin.

It was one of many public elementary schools established in Sumner County after the Civil War.

When group pictures were scheduled to be taken, it was not uncommon for adults from the neighborhood to be included.

Here we see a local Justice of the Peace, Miller Harris (back row), from nearby Harris Lane.

Also pictured are Lucy (second row) and Georgia Hill (fourth row), adult siblings of Fannie, Jim and Nelson Hill. Fannie (fourth row) married Ervin Jones Sain, who founded a jewelry company, located in Nashville's Green Hills community. Today it is operated by their granddaughter.

Jim (second row) and Nelson Hill (front row) established the Hill grocery company in Alabama, following in the footsteps of their father, George Hill, a grocer.

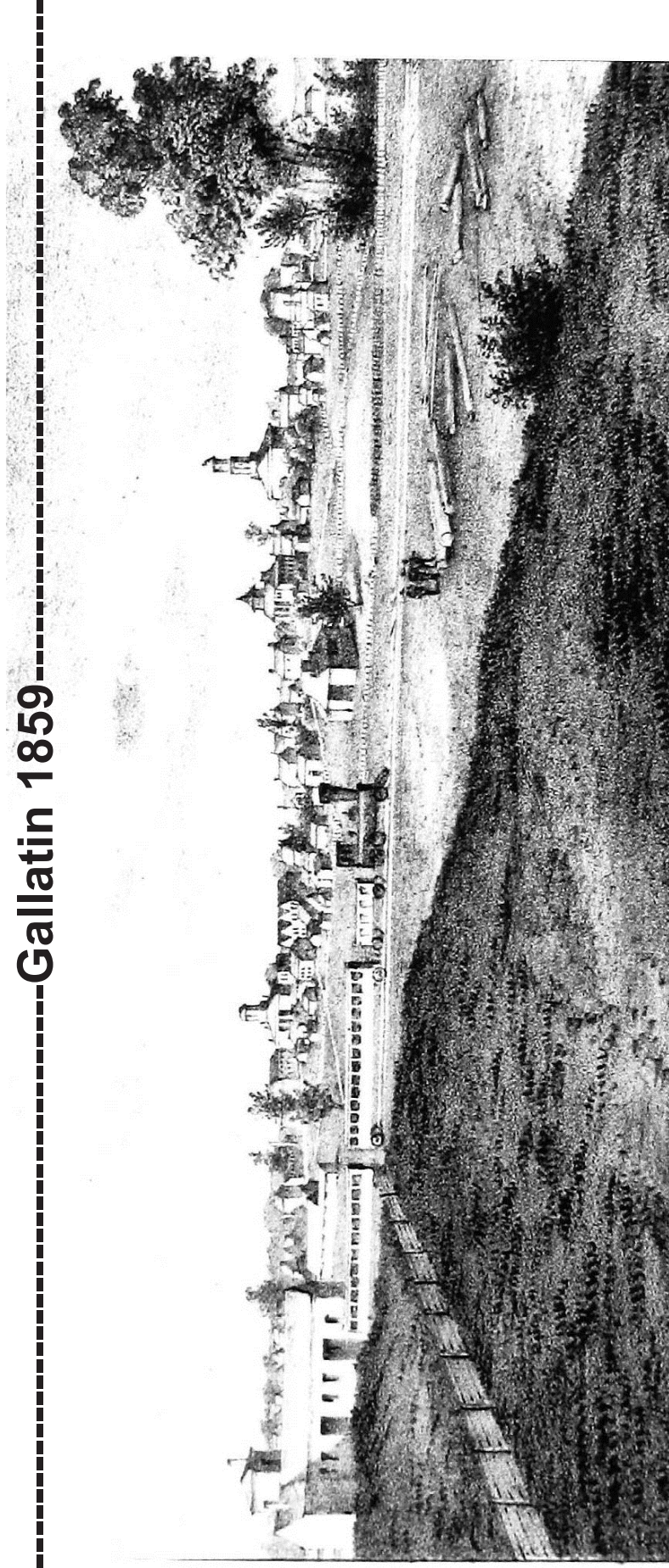
George's eldest child, Horace Greeley Hill, succeeded his father in the Tennessee grocery business by establishing a chain of H.G. Hill stores.

The fourth adult visitor is Margaret M. Frakes (second row) seen here with her little one-year-old niece, Martha Lorelle Frakes, who later married Harold Hix and was my grandmother.

Carrie Gillespie Frakes (front row), my great aunt, was but six years old and in the first grade when this photo was taken. Amazingly, decades later in the winter of her life, she identified everyone in this photo for me.

Note: It is so vital to identify your photos for future generations, but most people do not have the forethought to do so, thus, much of history is lost.

-----Gallatin 1859-----



This photo from the Allen Haynes collection shows a view of Gallatin in 1859. It was published for A.W. Putnam by A.A. Stitt, Nashville, Tenn.

(MARY, Continued from Page 1)

buffalo, rich soil and mild weather. A plan to settle here took root.

In 1779 while Anthony was exploring, Mary was home caring for little Bledsoes—probably Sarah, Elizabeth, Susannah, Rachel, Thomas, Isaac and Anthony Jr.—as well as continuing the daily chores of a pioneer woman. She was quite literally “holding down the fort,” and she was pregnant with Polly, who was born in April 1780.

What we think we know about Mary’s life comes from records—sometimes sketchy—as well as assumptions based on facts and family tradition. Her children’s birthdays, for example, are sketchy, listed in various accounts as occurring “about” certain years—nothing definite. The “Bledsoe Family in America,” papers based on interviews with family members and now held by the Sumner County Archives, give two different lists of the children’s dates. Mary, herself, was born in 1734, according to James Guy Cisco’s, *Historic Sumner County*, but there is some indication that she may have been born as much as 10 years later

Elizabeth Fries Ellet wrote about Mary in the 1853 book, *Pioneer Women of the West*, reporting that “In person she was attractive, being neither tall nor large until advanced in life. Her hair was brown, her eyes gray, and her complexion fair. The “Bledsoe Family in America,” said Anthony was six feet tall with blue eyes and black hair, balding. He wore a wig.

When the couple married (probably) in 1767 (but possibly 1760), Anthony, 34, was in the mercantile business in Fort Chiswell, Va., which was an outpost during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). He had had two years of schooling as a boy. Following that, he had been placed as a clerk in the Culpepper mercantile establishment of a Mr. McDaniel, with whom he remained for seven years, learning the business. He was also a seasoned fighter by 1767, having fought in the French and Indian War.

By 1769, the Bledsoes—including brother Isaac—and a few others moved from Fort Chiswell to Sullivan County on the banks of the Holston River in Virginia/North Carolina, later East Tennessee. Anthony, reputed an excellent surveyor, was appointed clerk to the commission that ran the line dividing Virginia and North Carolina. During the course of his life, he was also a state senator, a justice of the peace and chairman of the Sumner County Court in 1787.

Life was no picnic for the family in Sullivan County. It was a raw settlement, first inhabited by pioneers in 1765. The Bledsoes were among the early families. Settlers were under frequent attack by Cherokees. Mary and Anthony were often apart. She was responsible for the children’s

education and for the chores typical of a harsh frontier life. Ellet wrote, “During this time of peril and watchfulness, little attention could have been given to books even had the pioneers possessed them; but the Bible, the Confession of Faith, and a few such works as Baxter’s Call, Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, etc., were generally to be found...”

During the Revolution, Anthony was chosen in 1776 to command a militia. In 1779, he was made colonel. “After taking up the cause of independence, he commanded the patriots at Fort Patrick Henry on the Long Island of the Holston in 1776. He served as lieutenant colonel commandant of Sullivan County in 1781, Davidson County in 1783 and Sumner County in 1787,” according to State Historian Walter Durham.

Shortly after the Revolution, the family decided to push onward to the land Anthony and Isaac had explored in 1779. They went some 230 miles as part of a group of 50 or so. Ellet wrote, “In 1784, Anthony Bledsoe removed with his family to the new settlement of which he had thus been one of the founders. His brother, Col. Isaac Bledsoe, had gone the year before. They...established a fort or station at ‘Bledsoe’s Lick’—now known as the Castalian Springs...the station became a rallying point for an extensive district surrounding it. The Bledsoes were used to fighting with the Indians; they were men of well known energy and courage, and their fort was the place to which the settlers looked for protection—the colonels being the acknowledged leaders of the pioneers in their neighborhood, and terror, far and near, of the savage marauders...”

“From 1780 to 1795, a continual warfare was kept up by the Creeks and Cherokees against the inhabitants of the valley. The history of this time would be a fateful record of scenes of bloody strife and atrocious barbarity. Several hundred persons fell victims to the ruthless foe, who spared neither age nor sex; and many women and children were carried far from their friends into hopeless captivity. The settlers were frequently robbed and their negro slaves taken away; in the course of a few years two thousand horses were stolen; their cattle and hogs were destroyed, their houses and barns burned, and their plantations laid waste. In consequence of these incursions, many of the inhabitants gathered together in the stations on the frontier, and established themselves under military rule for the protection of the interior settlements. During this desperate period, the pursuits of the farmer could not be abandoned; lands were to be surveyed and marked, and fields cleared and cultivated by men who could not venture beyond their own doors without arms in their hands. The labors of those active and vigilant leaders, the

Bledsoes, in supporting and defending the colony, were indefatigable.”

Anthony and Mary settled about half a dozen miles northeast of the Lick and called their fortified residence Greenfield. But, according to “The Bledsoe Family in America, “Indian troubles in 1788 induced Col. Bledsoe to abandon his station at Greenfield and remove to his brother’s near the Lick, which the stock frequented, and near there was Winchester’s Mill—both considerations of no small moment in those times of peril and alarms... One evening about nine o’clock of a bright moonlit night, hearing the dogs bark and expecting Maj. George Winchester over, Col. Bledsoe went into the passage (connecting two parts of the house), followed by Samuel Campbell—a single gun fired and he [Bledsoe] was shot through the breast, the same ball passing into Campbell.”

Both men died. The murders may have been by Indians—this was the first thought—but settlers eventually believed it more likely that the murders were by one of the soldiers sent to protect the colony, trying to steal Bledsoe horses and desert. Nothing could be proven, but James Clendening, Bledsoe’s son-in-law, staying in a nearby cabin claimed that he looked out the cabin’s window and saw a soldier run from the site. At the time of Anthony’s death, Mary was pregnant with her 11th child, Prudence or Polly, who was born in 1789.

Ellet wrote, “Mrs. Bledsoe was obliged alone to undertake, not only the charge of her husband’s estate, but the care of the children, and their education and settlement in life. These duties were discharged with unwavering energy and Christian patience.”

In the early 1790s, Mary, with Thomas Sharp Spencer and Robert Jones, rode out of Greenfield to visit her daughter and son-in-law, Sarah and David Shelby, on Station Camp Road, 10 miles away. They were ambushed by Indians. Jones was shot but managed to stay in the saddle, and he and Mary went rapidly ahead. According to the “Bledsoe Family in America,” “Spencer covered their retreat, every now and then raising his rifle to his face which would momentarily check the approach of the Indians and give his friends a chance to gain a short distance, then Spencer would gallop on a piece, again turn on the pursuing foe, and threateningly keep then at bay...thus they went two and half miles when they reached Maj. David Wilson’s station, as they entered the land, Jones fell dead from his horse. Spencer remained and protected his friend from being scalped, while Mrs. Bledsoe hastened into the station, gave the alarm, and the intrepid and gallant Spencer was saved.”

In April 1794, Spencer was killed by a party of Indians on the road from Nashville to Knoxville.

According to family tradition, he and Mary had at one time been engaged to be married.

Still, on Dec. 4, 1791, Mary Bledsoe married a widower, Nathaniel Parker of Sumner County, according to records compiled by genealogist Shirley Wilson. As Mary’s husband, Parker served as executor of Col. Bledsoe’s estate. According to “The Bledsoe Family in America,” Mary gave birth to Nancy, her 12th child in 1792.

The Bledsoe-Parker marriage was not happy and was either annulled or ended in divorce. “It is not certain precisely when Nathaniel and Mary’s marriage began to disintegrate,” said Wilson. “On. Nov. 6, 1794, Nathaniel published a disclaimer in the *Knox Gazette* that his wife, Mary, had left his bed and board...warning all persons that he would not be responsible for her debts or contracts.”

Earlier in 1794 with her marriage in disarray, Mary’s life was beset by even greater tragedies. Her sons, Anthony and Thomas and her nephew, Isaac’s son Anthony, were murdered by Indians. “The Bledsoe Family in America,” said that in April the two cousins, the 16-year-old Anthony Bledsoe son of Anthony, Sr. and 12-year-old Anthony, son of Isaac, “determined on visiting Mrs. David Shelby, the sister of the one, and cousin of the other, residing on Station Camp, [They] started first for Gen. [Daniel] Smith’s quarry for one of them to see about getting a horse—and before reaching there were waylaid—the Indians gave them chase, soon caught the youngest, and pursued them over three-fourths of a mile and overtook him in Drake’s Creek. Both were killed and both were buried in one grave...”

About six months later [probably Oct. 24, 1794], Mary’s oldest son, Thomas, went out of his Uncle Isaac’s fort to butcher a cow. Half a mile from the fort, he was waylaid by Indians, wounded and chased two or three hundred yards before being overtaken, killed and scalped. He was 20 years old and engaged to be married.”

By that time, Mary’s brother-in-law, Isaac, was also dead—shot and scalped in April 1793. Mary’s brothers—William, Henry and Isaac—were also killed by Indians.

Nothing much is known about Mary’s life after she left Parker. She died in 1808 and is buried in the Bledsoe cemetery.

There is some mystery concerning Nancy. Wilson explained that Nathaniel Parker bequeathed property and money to all of his children by his first wife, but he did not leave property to Nancy. In his will, registered in Sumner County on Feb. 25, 1811, he called her ‘my second wife’s daughter Nancy Parker,’ causing some historians to wonder if he questioned her legitimacy.

Sumner County Historical Society

Post Office Box 1871
Gallatin, TN 37066

To: