

Days Of Old Sumner County

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Sumner County Historical Society

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At a recent presentation at the Portland library, Jon and Frank Collins are shown with a portrait of their famous uncle, Samuel Collins. They pointed out that we see the results of Collins' work in electronic devices, frozen foods, balloons and airships, Magnetic Resonating Images (MRI), Airborne Oxygen Generators and rocket fuel, among other things.

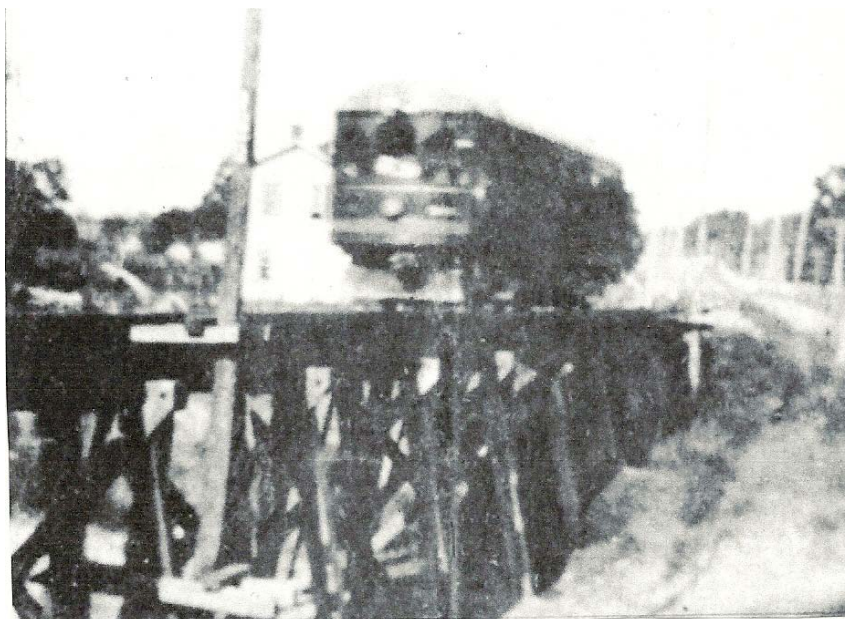
From Farm Boy to Ice Cold Experimenter

By Albert Dittes

The Collins Room in the Portland Public Library honors one of the most distinguished people to grow up in Portland: inventor and professor, Dr. Samuel Collins.

Samuel Collins started teaching in a one-room school in Buck Lodge, Tenn., in 1915 and went on to a storied 30-year career at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. There he invented the Collins Helium Liquefier, bringing low-temperature research within the realm of universities. In addition, he made major contributions to open heart surgery and the preservation and banking of human tissue.

[\(See Collins, Page 8\)](#)



The Interurban train crosses the trestle at Drakes Creek in Hendersonville.

Remembering the Interurban

By Bonnie Martin, Director of Sumner County Archives

Relatives from Minnesota arrive and beg to visit Tootsie's and Printers Alley. With sinking heart, you realize you must make the death defying drive to Nashville. You white knuckle it onto the interstate, mentally repeating "I can do it" as you are squeezed between a concrete barrier and a trailer hauling steel pipe. When your lane abruptly ends and orange barrels threaten survival, you think there must be a better way to travel to Nashville. And in 1913, there was a better way: The Blue Grass Line Interurban Rail Car.

In 1913, Sumner County roads were gravel, one lane affairs, dusty, rutted and rambling. A trip to Nashville was a tiresome journey on foot or by buggy. Few people had automobiles, and those that did had trouble traversing the few available roads in Sumner County. Goods and produce were a local business with a few new seasonal arrivals. Sumner County was for the most part an isolated place.

On March 22, 1913, large crowds gathered at the Gallatin Public Square to witness the last spike being driven in the Interurban Railroad linking Gallatin to Nashville. The Interurban Railroad was granted a charter 11 years prior in 1902, but lack of funding delayed construction.

A movement throughout the United States to electrify street railways

[\(See INTERURBAN, Page 7\)](#)

Opie Read: Writer and Chautaugua Speaker

By Kenneth Thomson, Jr., president SCHS

Neophogen College, once located in Cross Plains, can claim one of the greatest literary figures of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: Opie Read. He authored more than 65 books and scores of short stories and is considered the gallant “last man” of the nation’s rough and tumble literary epoch, which included such writers as Mark Twain, Eugene Field, James Whitcomb Riley and Bill Nye.

Read was born Dec. 22, 1852, in Nashville, the son of Guilford Dudley Read and his wife, Elizabeth Wallace.

Guilford Read was a carriage maker in Nashville. He learned his trade from a freed slave of his father, James Read. At some point, Guilford and his brother, David, moved their factory to Gallatin, then an aristocratic center in the bluegrass section of Middle Tennessee that produced lawyers, preachers and especially race horses of distinction.

Opie Read recalled in later life that in his childhood his family feared he was heading for perdition. Once a visiting preacher asked if he liked Sunday School, and Opie replied that he’d rather go down to the town creek and watch the minnows.

“What! Don’t you know that you can’t go to heaven unless you go to Sunday School?” said the preacher.

“I don’t want to go to heaven,” the young Opie replied. “Everybody says that Cal Branham went to hell, and I want to go where Cal is.”

Living Through the Civil War

At age nine, Read encountered the meaning of war—the great Civil War. His father was a strong Unionist and was threatened for his political views. His eldest brother, William, went the other way, joining the Confederate Calvary.

When news of a Confederate victory came, church bells were rung with gusto. Years later, Read recalled that Joseph Bertrand, almost a centenarian, robbed a town cow of her bell and tottered up and down the streets of Gallatin ringing the cow bell. This venerable old gentleman was the twin brother of Marshal Henri Gratain Bertrand, a trusted aid of Napoleon.

In the battle of Gallatin, Read impertuned a half-



drunken bugler who let him ride on his horse behind him into battle. There the bugler was mortally wounded.

Soon after the initial invasion, the Union Army of Occupation, under the command of Gen. Eleazer Paine, moved into Gallatin. Eleazer was detested. In Read’s autobiography, Read recalled Paine’s ruthlessness. Paine would stop men on the street at random and accuse them of a crime created in his imagination. He tried them on the spot and sentenced them to incarceration or, on more than one occasion, to execution. Paine was later transferred to a command in Tullahoma, Tenn., and later to Paducah, Ky., where he was court-martialed.

At a young age, Read aspired to be a printer. He was

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trained by H.Y. Bradt of Schenectady, N.Y., who had come to Franklin, Ky., as foreman of *The Patriot* newspaper. Under Bradt's instruction, Read became an accomplished compositor on a Washington hand press.

A Strange Academic Experience

Read also desired to become a man of letters. He answered an ad and was hired to be a typesetter for the Neophogen College magazine, *The Pen*. This position paid tuition and board to the college. For spending money, Read also worked as a typesetter at the *Gallatin Examiner* for \$2 a week. Col. Thomas Boyers was the editor.

Neophogen College was founded in Cross Plains, Tenn., by Professor John Martin Walton and was one of the first coeducational colleges in the nation. It burned in 1874. Walton leased the campus of Howard Female College in Gallatin to house Neophogen for four years until he could move it back to Cross Plains.

According to Read, Walton did not live in modern America but preferred ancient Greece. He told his students, "This athenaeum is not to enable you to earn a vulgar living but to make cultured ladies and gentlemen of you."

Read recalled that students would ask Walton questions to which he would reply with quotes from Socrates. Once a classmate, George Mann, cried out, "Damn Socrates, I want to know what *you* think!" He was instantly expelled.

Mark Twain came and lectured to the student body. He was well received by everyone except Walton who thought him of uncouth expression. Read and his friends met with Twain that afternoon in his room. He remembered Twain saying, "I once saw a mighty elephant seeking to doze off, to dream doubtless of his monstrous ancestors, but a fly kept him awake." Read reported, "Oh, how much wiser was he than our book-fundered president."

The most unusual feature of Neophogen was its "Hall of Ideas," where anytime day or night one could ring a big bell to summon an audience to hear his or her latest thoughts.

Its most noble feature was its extensive library. This is where Read broadened his horizons and laid the foundation for his life's work of entertaining people.

He translated the humor and pathos of life into anecdotes.

It was said that Read possessed the potential genius of a great actor, having been endowed with a magnetic voice and a natural gift for dramatic pauses. He was a verbal painter of memorable scenes and characters—Neophogen College's most notable graduate and one of Sumner County's greatest literary figures.

Shakespeare was Read's favorite writer, and he read his works unendingly. "Reading Shakespeare," he once observed, "is like looking at a mountain. Every time you read it, you find something new."

After graduating from college, Read worked for the *Little Rock Gazette* and the *Cleveland Leader*. In 1883, he and Philo Benham, a brother of his wife, Anna, began publishing the *Arkansas Traveler*. They later moved their operation to Chicago, where Read centered his life around books, music, philosophy, poker, fun, a hearty drink and a good dinner.

In later life, Read trouped as a Chautauqua speaker all over the United States, earning a reputation as one of the world's great platform entertainers. Once he visited Gallatin, staying with his niece, Elizabeth Butler Brown. When he arose from his chair to depart for the lecture hall, Elizabeth suggested that he comb his hair. He responded, "Niece, they are interested in what's *in* my head, not what's on top of it."

Read died at age 87. According to his obituary, "He was a bulky raconteur, standing 6 feet 3 inches, who told in salty idioms of his associations with Mark Twain, Clarence Darrow and several presidents of the United States."

Let the Sumner Archives Scan Your Historic Photographs!

Sumner County Archives has a treasure house of old photographs, thanks to the generosity of county residents like you who have allowed the archives to scan their old pictures of businesses, families, celebrations. If you have old photographs of Sumner historic events, places or people, the archives will gratefully make scanned copies for its files or accept original photos. Please don't throw those old local pictures away! Call the archives at 452-0037 for information.

Document: Runaway Slaves Sought

By Bonnie Martin, Director Sumner County Archives

Cleaning dirt from early Sumner County court documents is often like being a prospector: You never know when you will find a gold nugget. Such a “nugget” was discovered in a court case between Beverly Stubblefield vs Loftain Cage regarding a debt. The front side of the document offers a reward for two runaway slaves while the actual law suit begins on the reverse side.

Reading the reward document provides a sense of the overall attitude toward slavery in Sumner County at that time and the indignity to which slaves were subjected. Nevertheless, revealed between the transcribed lines is a remarkable desire of the human spirit to be free.

Two Hundred Dollars Reward!

Runaways from the plantation of the Subscriber in Sumner County, Tennessee, about the 25th of August last two slaves, a negro fellow and a mulatto boy.

The fellow named John about 30 years old, five feet six or seven inches high, his color of the deepest shade of African Negroes, his visage narrower and nose more prominent than is common to Negro's, walks brisk and leans a little forward, has an effeminate voice, affects great humility and makes high professions of religion when in reality he is destitute of everything like true religion and is very impudent for a slave – after a short acquaintance is very talkative and his language and conversation better than Negroes generally make use of, upon the whole he may be considered an artful cunning fellow of his kind, and for his misconduct has had his back well scarred with whipping...

The boy named Elleck, about thirteen or fourteen years old, well grown and stout made his colour that of a bright mulatto. Though his hair indicates him to be more than half negro, [he] has grey or hazel coloured eyes. When he walks, his toes or forepart of his feet rather turn inward, has a large mouth and when he laughs his countenance rather bespeaks innocence,

has little or no capacity and seldom tells the truth on any occasion. It is believed he has a small scar or two on the side or back of his head and also a mark on the outside of one of his thighs from the colour being lighter than the surrounding parts. He can play tolerably well on the fife, had one when he went off a while, about half worn.

It is believed they are together and from reports have procured a pass from some base person purporting them to be free. It is suspected they have attempted and perhaps before this reached some state on the northwest of the Ohio where slavery is not tolerated, with a view of obtaining their freedom. I think it highly probable to find their escape may have attached themselves to some travelers who were traveling whether to the Missouri Territory or some state on the northwest of the Ohio.

No certain intelligence of them has been received since they run away. Information was had in the last month of two such together with a white boy crossing the Ohio at Flynn's ferry and that they were unable to pay their ferries. The above reward will be given to any person who will apprehend return said slaves so that I can get them, or one-half of said reward for them [to] get them, same half of said reward for them.

Dec. 6, 1819, David Shelby Clerk and Master

In 1819 at the time the reward was offered, Middle Tennessee Underground Railroads for runaway slaves had not been organized. Underground Railroads were formed, often by Quakers, in the sympathetic eastern Tennessee counties. Although there were abolitionists in Middle Tennessee, they received little support from plantation owners dependent on slave labor.

The 1793 Fugitive Slave Act of the United States outlawed any efforts to obstruct the capture of runaway slaves.

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It should be noted that not all slaves were badly treated by their owners, who provided shelter, food and clothing as befitted the times. After all, slaves were property and valuable assets. And some owners had great affection for their slaves, occasionally setting them free or providing a better quality of life.

For runaway slaves fleeing north in 1819, there were few settlements to obtain food or shelter and fewer sympathetic individuals. Only scattered dirt roads led the way north, and bounty hunters traveled them frequently pursuing runaway slaves. In later years, sympathizers would mark the way by leaving a quilt on the fence. Also, an old song "*Follow the Drinking Gourd*" referred to following the Big Dipper north to freedom.

How did the Sumner County runaways survive the 160 mile journey to the Ohio River, traveling on foot, perhaps without adequate shoes and only the clothes on their backs? What desperation drove these two men to leave behind the only life and family they had ever known to pursue freedom they had only heard of in stories?

Perhaps the description of slave John's "well scarred back" answers that question. John and Elleek's flight to freedom may have been successful due to their intelligence, resourcefulness, and overwhelming desire for self-determination. The slave owner described these characteristics as human flaws.

No one knows what became of John and Elleek after crossing the Ohio River. No one knows who the white boy they traveled with was or who supplied them with a pass. Did John and Elleek begin a new life in the free states or Canada? They may have changed their names, but perhaps somewhere there is a family history of the escape and the conclusion to John and Elleek's journey.

The story of slavery is an old one, and many do not want to recount its dreadfulness. Others believe slavery should not be forgotten but examined for its historical significance. The reward for runaways, John and Elleek, is part of America's history.

'49ers' Gold Rush!

By Jan Shuxteau, Editor

"The magnetic attraction of California gold pulled at Tennesseans as nothing had before," wrote the late Gallatin historian Walter Durham in his 1997 book, *Volunteer Forty-Niners*. Durham examined the role Tennesseans, including many Sumner Countians, played in the rush to gold and in creating the new state of California.

Some 1,500 to 2,000 Tennesseans made the difficult journey to California in 1849 and '50, traveling by land or by sea, on fire with enthusiasm after reading news stories of amazing riches. There are various accounts by locals—mainly just bits and pieces—including the account of the Maj. Richard B. Alexander Company of 28 Sumner Countians, who embarked from Gallatin March 27, 1849.

Durham picks up their story, "*Although accounts of the early part of their journey are lacking, Alexander's company was 120 miles past Independence at the upper crossing of the Kansas River on June 1, hoping that they were beyond the range of cholera, the malady still prevalent in cities behind them.*

"Hartsvillian Thomas P. Duffy was enchanted by the rolling prairie, even though those who had passed before them had 'used up the grass and dry wood convenient to water.' Duffy said that while traveling over the prairie with no defining features on the horizon, they were 'as the boys expressed it...very frequently out of sight of land.' During the first 120 miles, Duffy and his associates worked six mules to each wagon, and the men walked, and they expected to continue in that manner for the next 200 miles unless the roads improved.

"From time to time, the Sumner Company met small groups of emigrants who had turned back. They justified their course by telling 'terrible tales' of the likelihood of travelers facing starvation or having their throats cut by Indians..."

"The company followed the California Trail through the South Pass and along the Mormon Trail to 'the Mormon city of the Great Salt Lake' Picking up the headwaters of the Humboldt, they followed the river downstream to Lassen's Meadows...they left the river there and proceeded by way of Lassen's Cutoff. Surviving the desert, They crossed the main ridge of the Warner Range on Sept. 26. The men pushed ahead for three weeks and reached Lassen's ranch, the easternmost settlement in the Sacramento Valley on Oct. 19, 1849, 206 days after leaving Gallatin."

Sumner's Boundary Line Disputed for Decades

By Jack Masters

A dispute raged over Sumner County's boundary line with Kentucky until 1820 when Kentucky finally agreed to accept what is known as the Walker Line.

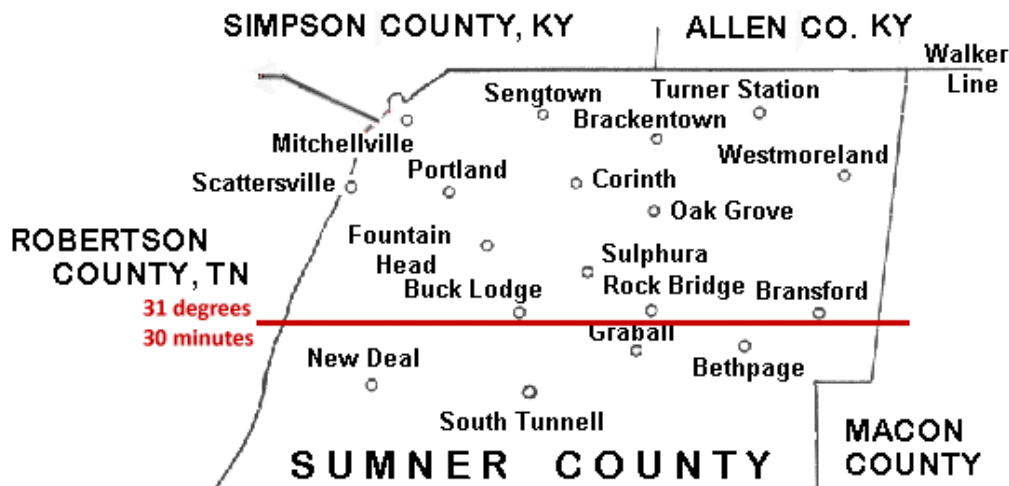
What Led to the Dispute?

The parallel latitude $36^{\circ} 30''$ north was the originally intended boundary line between the colonies of Virginia and North Carolina. That latitude when projected westward was also to become the line dividing what is now Kentucky and Tennessee. Various factors contributed to the line being shifted to the north for the entire line projected from the Tennessee River eastward.

Designated commissioners from Virginia and North Carolina appointed Daniel Smith of Rock Castle in Hendersonville and Dr. Thomas Walker of Virginia, among others, to survey the line in late 1779 since there was no natural boundary such as a river. After they commenced establishing the line, problems arose. Severe weather and terrain presented the surveyors with major obstacles in laying the line. Periods of cloudy weather made astronomical observations impossible with the preferred sextant. The surveyors were forced to use the magnetic compass, but pronounced areas of iron ore deflected the compass—further complicating the process. Variations in the line can be easily seen in today's boundary line, especially at Sumner County's western border.

What Were the Effects?

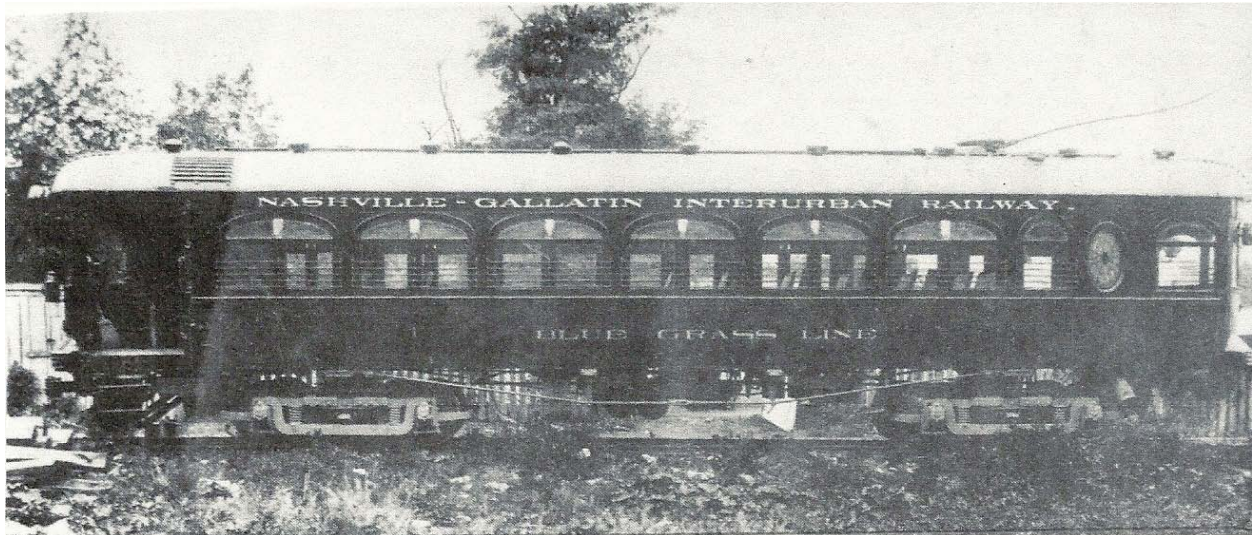
It was determined that the surveyor's line was inaccurate. It was actually north of the $36^{\circ} 30''$ latitude line, ranging from eight to nine miles in Sumner County and as much as 12 miles north at the Tennessee River. This geographical area amounted to more than 2,500 square miles in total. The map below reveals just how much of Sumner County could have been impacted, with Mitchellville, Portland and Westmoreland along with other towns and communities cast into the area which could have easily been in Kentucky today.



Upon Tennessee's statehood in 1796, the Walker Line was adopted as the northern boundary by Tennessee, but it was opposed by Kentucky. After many ploys by each state, the Walker Line was reluctantly agreed to in 1820 by Kentucky. One of the conditions of the agreement was the ability by Kentucky to issue land grants in the area known as "South of Walkers Line" and North of $36^{\circ} 30''$. In the years 1825-1923, Kentucky issued 4,583 such grants.

It is important for researchers to note that this category of grants is called "*Land Grant Surveys South of Walker's Line*" and maintained by the state of Kentucky. James W. Sames III's book, *Four Steps West*, is an excellent source of information for anyone interested in learning more about the current boundary between Kentucky and Tennessee.

Additional details on this subject and others may be seen at: www.cumberlandpioneers.com



This is the old Blue Grass Line Interurban that ran daily between Gallatin and Nashville from 1913 until 1932.

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was the motivation to provide transportation between the rural hamlets of Gallatin and Hendersonville to "town"—the big city of Nashville. When completed, the Interurban ran quietly at 50 miles per hour on an electrified rail system powered by hydro-electricity transmitted from the Ocoee River to Nashville then transmitted to Sumner County. The power substation and dispatch depot were located in Hendersonville near Drakes Creek.

The Interurban made 66 stops along the way, starting in Gallatin to Hendersonville and arriving at Second and Union Avenues in Nashville. The trip took an hour and a half in first class style. Passenger cars were equipped with 36 non-smoking and 16 smoking seats, but the train could hold up to 80 passengers. Passengers had access to a bathroom, water cooler and a heater in the winter. Train cars were lined in mahogany with oval opalescent glass windows and large clear viewing windows.

Trains left Gallatin on the hour from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., again at noon and almost on an hourly basis until 9 p.m. From Nashville, the last train left at 11:30 p.m., affording riders the luxury of shopping or a movie in Nashville. Traveling on the Interurban connected rural families, while neighbors exchanged news or played cards, and children rode the Interurban to school. It was a golden time of rail transportation

The Blue Grass Line Interurban Railroad transformed Sumner County commercially and culturally. It introduced Sumner County not only to Nashville's urban delights but also expanded commerce of Sumner County goods and agriculture. Freight cars loaded with Sumner County produce could now supply the bigger markets of Nashville and other connected cities. Interurban Railroads bridged the era from horse and buggy to automobiles and trucks.

As automobiles and buses became the norm, the Interurban steadily lost ridership, and in 1932 the Blue Grass Interurban Railroad line closed altogether. The rails were pulled up and stations torn down.

Progress put the Interurban out of business. However, has progress changed transportation for the better? On your next Nashville drive while dodging construction equipment and trucks, recall the enjoyable ride of the Interurban Railroad and then decide which constitutes progress.



This is the Interurban Dispatching Building that was located near the Hendersonville Presbyterian Church.

Historical Society Web Site Here!

You are invited to check out the Sumner County Historical Society's new Web Site: sctnhs.org. After you set a password, you, as a SCHS member, will be able to go online to look at all editions of the historical society's newsletter and other things. We will continue to provide the newsletter by mail to those who prefer to receive it the same way as always.

COLLINS, Continued from Page 1

Collins was born in Democrat, Letcher Co., Ky., in 1898. According to Jon Collins, a nephew who now lives in Portland, the Collins family moved to Portland when Samuel was seven years old. "His father became a successful farmer," said Jon Collins. "Samuel's interest in cold things developed in his early days on a southern farm. He thought there must be a better way to keep cool than using a fan."

Samuel Collins once told an interviewer about the hot summers of his youth. "It was unusual just to have ice cold watermelon," he said.

After graduating from Sumner County (now Portland) High School in 1916, Collins earned bachelors and masters degrees in agriculture. "I had always planned to return to farming with my father," he said in the interview. "It was a reasonably good living and an interesting life. But prices for farm products fell badly after World War I, and times were hard."

So he gave up plans to farm and went back to school, earning a doctorate in physical chemistry at the University of North Carolina in 1927. He'd had an interest in coolants since being an undergraduate at the University of Tennessee. He built his first refrigerator using hydrated calcium chloride as a coolant after his freshman year.

Collins taught physics and chemistry at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and in 1929 he met and married one of his students, Lena Masterson. At about that same time, Collins' career took another turn. He had written to MIT suggesting the feasibility of a type of ship resembling today's Hovercraft. They told him "it was a lousy idea," but they were impressed enough to offer him a research associate position in their physical chemistry department in 1930. He became an MIT associate professor in 1943 and a full time professor of mechanical engineering in 1949.

Collins' interest in low-temperature physics came alive at MIT, and he started out building some refrigerating devices in an attic lab he developed himself. When WWII broke out, he took a leave of absence to apply his expertise in handling gases to the war effort. Working as a technical aide to the National Defense Research Council at Wright Field in Ohio, he supervised development of a low-pressure, lightweight oxygen generator for American bombers. Weighing about 10 percent as much as conventional

machines of the time, this generator was later made automatic in operation and could run in transit.

He also developed a reversing exchange for the manufacture of pure oxygen for efficient combustion and breathing at high altitudes, and pure nitrogen for low-level refrigeration. This exchanger helped make possible high-altitude bombing in the war and had great value in the peacetime industrial world as well.

After the war, Collins returned to MIT and finished developing a helium cryostat in 1946, the culmination of 20 years of effort. This machine produces liquid helium at -452 degrees Fahrenheit by compressing gaseous helium, then cooling the oncoming stream in a series of heat exchangers.

"The first liquefier of helium to operate without the aid of external refrigerants, the cryostat, like all of Dr. Collins' inventions, is marked by simplicity of design and economy of operation," said a news account at the time. "It is of special value to science because of the phenomena that can be observed at such low temperature—molecules and molecular particles move more slowly, and certain metals lose their electrical resistance...Prior to the cryostat invention, fewer than 10 laboratories in the world had devices for liquefying helium, and the construction of such a device was a time consuming and often prohibitively expensive undertaking."

The scientific world considered this cryostat to be the most important contribution to cryogenics since the original liquefaction of helium in 1908. MIT described Collins as "the creator of the best refrigerator in the world." One of the original Collins Cryostats was presented to the Smithsonian Institute in 1963.

His Contribution to Medicine

In the medical field, Collins devised a new pump-oxygenator—or heart-lung machine—for open-heart surgery. Again demonstrating his devotion to simplicity and economy, the pump-oxygenator was driven by the power of the same oxygen that oxygenates the blood flowing through it, thereby eliminating electrical problems common to existing machines and making it operable in transit. The size of a suitcase and weighing only about 50 pounds, the working section of the pump-oxygenator could be sterilized as a piece on a standard hospital autoclave.

Collins also conducted a number of studies on

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the preservation of human tissue by combining partial dehydration and cooling, an outgrowth of his work in refrigeration. The Glycerine Foundation honored him for his success in this area. "As medical science continues to solve problems inherent in transplanting tissues, the preservation of other tissues in banks will assume the same importance that blood banks and eye banks now have," said a news release about the invention.

Author and Consultant

An author or co-author of more than 50 articles and papers covering his research, Collins created the Cryogenic Laboratory where much of the MIT research carries on his work. He was chairman of the Cryogenic Engineering Conference, held at MIT in 1958, in which some 500 engineers from the United States and Europe participated.

In addition to his work at MIT, Collins served as a research fellow at Harvard and the Harvard-MIT Cambridge Electron Accelerator, a consultant to the Boston Veterans Administration Hospital and to Arthur D. Little, Inc., on the pump-oxygenator and other subjects.

He was honored with a Degree of Doctor of Laws at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

The Laureation Address said, *"Our present rulers constantly urge the need for cooperation between research scientists and industry. We could have no better exemplar of the fruitfulness of such collaboration than Professor Collins, a man who 'to the benefit of mankind,' has wedded the speculative insight of the pure scientist to the practical facility of the technician.*

"His life's preoccupation has been with the production of extremely low temperatures and their application to a variety of scientific needs. The element that is indispensable for this work is helium, which in liquid form can produce the equivalent of 490 degrees Fahrenheit of frosts. In co-operation with a firm of scientific equipment makers in Cambridge, he engineered a machine of the most remarkable efficiency for the production of liquid helium. Today more than 300 of them are at work throughout the world. . .

"As well as being used in an infinite variety of laboratory experiments, liquid helium is indispensable in many scientific processes. Perhaps the most

notable of these at the present day is space research. Without liquid helium to cool the receivers and avoid thermal interference, radio signals from satellites could not be received nor the pictures of the Moon and Mars, nor the weak signals that form the remotest stars. In the satellite boosters, it is used to supply the correct pressure in the fuel tanks. Its lightness carries balloon-borne telescopes into the clearness of the stratosphere."



Dr. Samuel Collins

Dr. Collins acquired more than 60 patents in such diverse areas as cryogenics, ship design and medical technology. He authored or co-authored more than 50 articles regarding his research for professional scientific journals.

After retiring from MIT, Collins worked at Arthur D. Little, Inc., until 1971, and then, at the age of 83, he invented a new, oil-free compressor providing low-temperature compressed gas free from contamination at the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) in Washington, D.C.

He died on June 19, 1984, at the age of 85.

Books for Sale at Archives

The Sumner County Historical Society has reprinted some historical books now on sale at the Sumner County Archives, 365 N. Belvedere, Gallatin. They are: *The Great Leap Westward*, Walter Durham: \$40. *Old Sumner*, Walter Durham: \$50. *Sumner County Cemetery Records*: \$50. *The Lost World of Langley Hall*, Judith Morgan: \$20.

Knox Doss: The Man Behind the Name

By John Creasy

One of Sumner County's best known educators is the late Knox Doss, for whom Knox Doss school in Hendersonville was named.

Born on July 6, 1895, Doss was the second child of Weldon Marshall and Adelia Gregory Doss. His place of birth was the family farm first settled by his great-great uncle, Dance Brown, some 60 years earlier. Like so many of the Doss family, Knox was small in stature, but his contributions to Sumner County education make him a giant in the county's recent history.

Doss began his career in education in the one-room schoolhouse that sat just down the hill from his birthplace. For a salary of \$40 a month, he taught at the Garrett's Creek School. The first year teacher was given the task of leading 72 students, single-handedly out of the wilderness of ignorance and into the promised land of knowledge. There were eight grades, and Doss often split the student body up, teaching the smaller children in the morning while the older children had recess outside. In the afternoon, the two groups switched places. All the while, Doss perched on an open window sill, affording him the opportunity to both teach inside while monitoring behavior outside. On days of inclement weather, all remained inside.

Fighting in WWI

In the fall of 1917, Doss began a brief tenure at Pleasant Grove School that was interrupted by war. Exhibiting the strong sense of duty to community and country that would mark his entire life, Doss enlisted in the U. S. Army on Oct. 18, 1917. He was a private first class in the 105th Regiment of Engineers and saw combat many times in France and Belgium. He emerged from the war physically unscathed except for a deep knife wound to the hand, suffered while cutting a slice of a pear. Due to the nature of the laceration, he was treated at a field hospital. He was later told that a Wounded-In-Action report had been filed and he would receive a medal. Doss quickly reported to his superiors the nature of the injury and avoided receiving what he felt to be an unwarranted award.

He had many memories of the war. One that he found most moving took place before his unit shipped overseas. The 105th was encamped and training in

South Carolina. While there, a fellow engineer was accidentally killed. Knox was asked to serve as a part of the burial detail, escorting the body to the nearby depot in Taylor, S.C. He recalled hearing the mournful sound of taps being played by a lone bugler standing in the doorway of the depot as the deceased soldier was placed on the train. The sound of the bugler, the sight of the flag-draped casket and thoughts of a mother and father distraught over the death of a son overwhelmed Doss and other members of the honor guard. It was a scene that brought tears to all involved.



Sumner County Educator Knox Doss

Upon his discharge, Knox Doss became teacher, principal, and basketball coach at Mt. Vernon School. It was a two-room school with Doss's first wife, Marietta Williams Doss, teaching English while Knox taught math and history. Six years later, Doss became the principal of the comparatively larger Bethpage Elementary School, a position he held until 1933 when he was appointed the principal of Gallatin's Howard Elementary.

He Is Elected Superintendent

In the summer of 1937, Knox Doss announced his candidacy for the office of Superintendent of the Sumner County Schools, declaring, "I feel that that position will be a larger field for the work in which I am deeply interested." He further stated the position "should be a leader of the educational forces of the county, and, if I am elected, I shall devote my entire

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time to the school work of the county...and to do all within my power to make our schools progressive and efficient." He served three terms as the county's Superintendent—from 1938 until 1943.

Home Front Efforts in WWII

As the school system's director during World War II, Doss was often called on to lead the system in sacrifice for the war effort. An example of such extraordinary efforts is contained in a letter addressed to school principals dated Jan. 19, 1942. In the letter, Superintendent Doss directed principals to open their doors for classes on Saturdays *"to enable the schools to get out on regular time in the spring so that the farmers can have their children to help with farm work...to help the farmers who have been asked to raise more food in the present emergency and they cannot unless they have the help of their boys."* Recognizing the need for collective sacrifice in this effort, Doss concluded by saying, *"Teachers have helped out in emergencies before without complaint, and I know our present corps of teachers will in this call."*

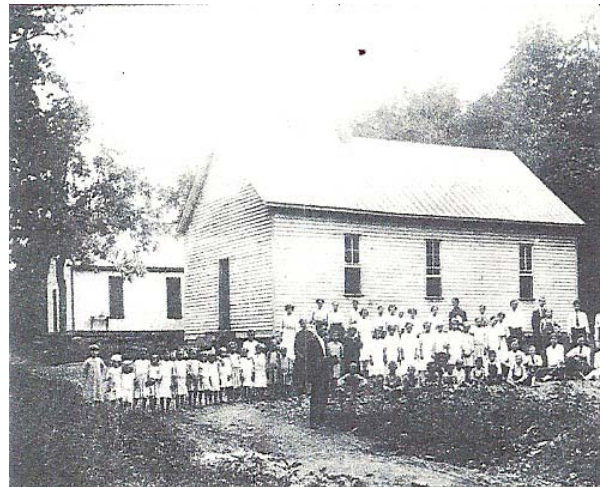
Popular, genial, and certainly electable for a fourth term, Knox Doss grew weary of the Superintendent's position, saying "it took me away from the children," and he chose not to seek reelection. Returning as principal at Howard, he remained there until 1948 when he became principal at Vena Stuart Elementary, a position he would hold until his retirement in 1962. Doss had given 44 years of his life to the schoolchildren of Sumner County, and at the age of 67 he thought he was ready for retirement.

There Was Still Work to Be Done

However, retirement would prove restless for this devoted civic-minded educator. Appointed by the Sumner County Quarterly Court to fill an unexpired term on the Sumner County Board of Education in 1966, Doss finished that term and then was elected twice more to serve 12 years on the board, during which time he never missed a regularly scheduled meeting. He served as the board's chairman for four of the 12 years. He finally passed on the torch of leadership in September 1978.

Shortly thereafter, the accolades began to come: the Distinguished Service Award from the Tennessee State Board of Education; a proclamation declaring

October 29, 1978, as "Knox Doss Day" in Sumner County; the junior high school in Hendersonville soon became "Knox Doss Junior High School" and so on.



Knox Doss stands with his students in front of the Garrett's Creek School, north of Westmoreland. He is in a suit, teaching from a book, in the foreground.

Malcolm Parker, a Sumner County native and former pupil of Doss wrote the following in the *Gallatin Examiner* in the fall of 1981: "Sumner County has furnished more than its share of men and women in the field of education. The work of many has been outstanding, but if ever there should in time be a monument of marble or bronze erected to their memory the name Knox Doss, like unto that of Abou Ben Adhem, would 'lead all the rest.'"

Doss spent his later years attending school reunions and, like all educators, savored the moments spent with former students and colleagues, taking pride in their accomplishments and stories of success.

He passed away at the age of 95 on June 14, 1991, and was buried at the Pleasant Grove Cemetery, north of Westmoreland.

Certainly, it should be said, any school bearing the name "Knox Doss" as part of its title should be honored to have the opportunity to stand testament to such a fine educational legacy.

Author's Note: I knew Knox Doss since childhood. To me, he was "Cousin Knox," as my grandmother would say. I particularly enjoyed a fall evening with him at the old Pleasant Grove schoolhouse in 1989, when he was kind enough to share with me some of his memories and experiences.

Sumner County Historical Society

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