

“Dad, Why Did You Ever Leave Here?”

*A Talk with E. H. Barker, Ernest Gross,
and Ralph Thompson*

Written by Jackie Layne Partin

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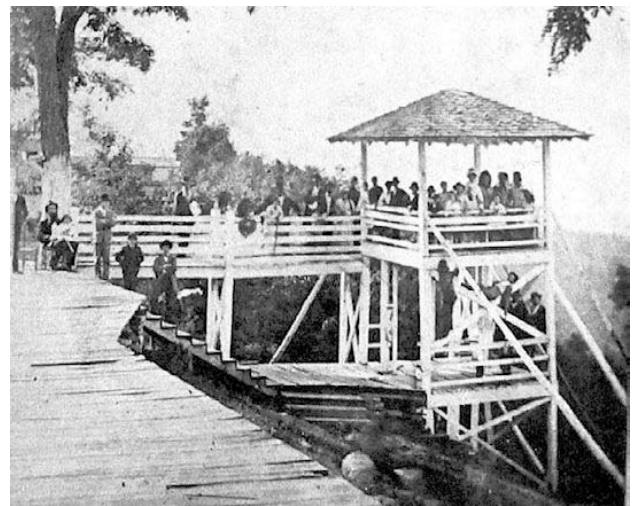
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What a wonderful view was afforded me that day in front of the Beersheba Springs Hotel! Thousands had stopped throughout the years and walked out onto the stone, once wooden, patio to cast their eyes upon the beautiful Tarlton Valley below. To my eyes, the valley looked as though God used His geometric skills and instruments to design the patterns as one would for a stained glass window. On that serene day at the overview, the only thing that disturbed the still life of the valley was the occasional car that crawled through the scene like a tiny insect on its shortest route home. To the right of the view, and left somewhat to the imagination at that vantage point, was “the Gulf” –Savage Gulf to be more precise, but the focal point of the big picture was the green valley below.

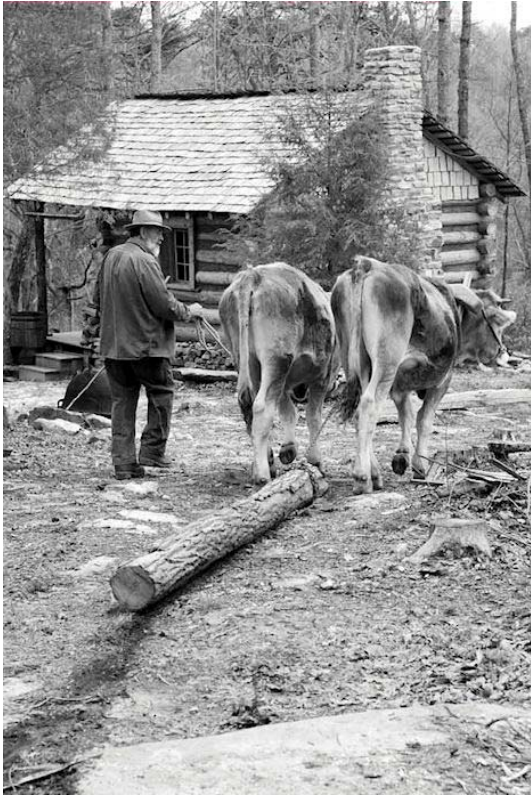


God’s Stained Glass Window!



Old observatory in front of the Beersheba Hotel

It was difficult for me to stand in awe of the basin poured out between the mountain ranges without thinking of how it looked before—before the farms were dug out of the earth, before the roads were cut through the wilderness, before the pioneer families worked their fingers to the bones to build their safe havens. With permission from God, that “Before” was painted by men, women and children who were looking for a better life and were wanting a place of their own, somewhere to belong, somewhere to call home. So without hesitation, we must understand the difficulty involved in bringing forth this masterpiece. The oxen, mules and men who cleared the fields, the women who planted and harvested the crops, and the children who hoed the weeds, carried the water and were the very reason it was all done—all had their part in making the valley what it is today. We must not enjoy the fruits of their labor without first remembering. E. H. Barker recently stated, “Tarlton looks better than it’s ever looked!”



Left: Using oxen to snake logs for the family cabin, smoke house and other outdoor sheds. Above: Walking behind two mules all day while plowing up the forest floor. **Bottom left:** Splitting oak shingles for the roofs of all the buildings in the homestead. **Bottom right:** A one-room, log house, school or place of worship like the ones used by the early Collins River pioneers.



On that particular day 12 August 2008, I was escorted around “that end of the county” by **Ralph Thompson** and his patiently quiet wife, **Susan**; she really had no choice but to be quiet since Ralph, nor I, ever stopped talking. Our destination was to be the summer home of **Mr. E. H. Barker** in McMinnville. He and Ralph had previously driven around the valley and exchanged old stories and history. Ralph then relayed them to me as we traveled along. Having left the plateau and descending into the valley below, we passed the little stone-covered chalybeate spring on the left that was an initial and vibrant part of Beersheba Springs’ history. Over the years it had dried up to a trickle making it a favorite spot for salamanders.



Left: The old spring house which originally covered the Beersheba “spring”: **Above:** The spring today, a “favorite place for salamanders”



“Old Beersheba Road”

The present road does not necessarily stay true to the muddy, rocky, curvy, pike road that was built around 1860; there are two horseshoe bends now, but the old road probably had four. For the most part, it is basically the same thoroughfare to and from Beersheba Springs and Tarlton Valley. Of course, we all know, if we listened at all to our grandparents’ stories, that there were numerous, well-traveled paths and roads descending/ascending this plateau – the logging roads, the moonshiners’ paths, the old Indian traces, stage roads, and the family paths and wagon ruts that led to and from “Grandma’s house.” A friend, Charles Dykes, once said, “There is a path to ‘Everywhere!’”

However, it was on the old McMinnville/Beersheba Pike Road that the Jairus Curtis family traveled Wednesday, 02 March 1870, to get to the top of the Cumberland Plateau when headed for their new home in Grundy County. Their journey had started in a covered wagon February 3rd in Berrien County, Michigan.

The day before, the family had left McMinnville and drove “...up hill and down hill all day, cross several pretty clear streams, some of them nearly up to (their) wagon box,” Jairus’ son, Dennis, wrote in his diary. From McMinnville to Beersheba they encountered two tollgates and drove until they were “...among the mountains,” or should we say in Tarlton Valley? Later in the afternoon in Tarlton, they began to look for a place to stop for the night but could not find one until they got “...up to the foot of the mountain.” There they found the “Widow Dikes” who let them put their horses in her pole barn and allowed them to come in and sit by the fire. The only “Widow Dikes” in that area in 1870 was **Nellie (Dugan) Dykes**, widow of **John Dykes**. Her daughter **Elmira** was still at home with her. Since the daughter, later in 1877, married **William “Wid” Morton**, and they lived in a cabin right up against the mountain, I believe that that was the same house in which the Curtis family spent the night. **Mary Elizabeth Curtis** and her two smaller children, **Ed** and **Emma** were allowed to sleep in the tiny house with Nellie and Elmira while **Jairus** and **Dennis** slept in their covered wagon. Even though the temperature was below freezing, the father, being ill at the time, and his son had a good night’s sleep.

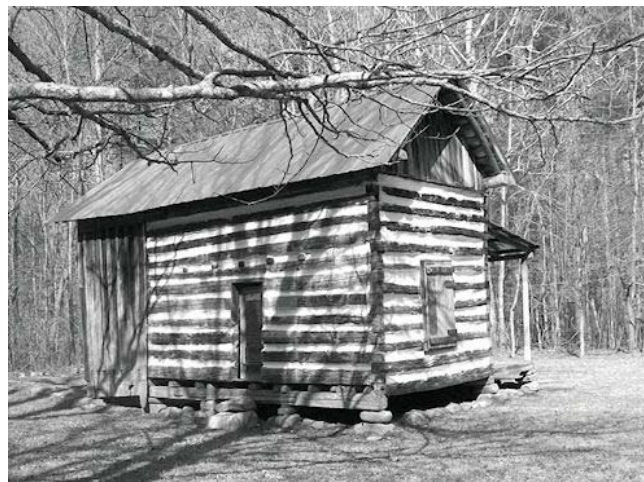
The next morning was cold and chilly, but the family loaded their wagon, had breakfast with the “Widow Dikes” and started their ascension of the plateau. Dennis drove the wagon while his father, mother, brother and sister walked from the Dykes’ home up the mountain to “Barsby Springs.” Their travel up on the old road was a difficult journey unlike the one the Thompsons and I had made coming down the new road; we drove right over the same earth that they had walked 138 years earlier. I couldn’t help but feel their anticipation of a new home and friends. I also felt a little sadness in knowing that some years later, Jairus and his daughter Emma had made that journey back down the mountain to Tarlton where they were eventually buried.

Leaving yesteryears behind, in only minutes, the Thompsons and I were at the base of the mountain; to our right was a road that slowly crawled up through the wilderness into Savage Gulf. I had heard so much about the Savage Gulf, but being from the “other end of the county,” I knew so little about it. The waters that poured down through that vast gulf were the source of the Collins River in Tarlton, and ultimately, the cause of the floods that came about when rainfalls were tremendous on the plateau around Palmer and Collins. I had heard of the families who had lived up in that entrance to the Gulf and also knew of two small cemeteries there. My warnings were, “Don’t go up to that graveyard when the rainfall is plentiful! You’ll need a four-wheel drive vehicle! Watch out for snakes!” When I asked **Ralph**, “What’s up there?” “Nothing!” he responded. Well, I’m a big fan of “nothing;” and I wanted to see “nothing” for myself, so I would just plan a trip up there one day – maybe even before I finished

this story. Some **Coppingers, Hobbs, Knights, Savages** and **Tates** once lived there, so it couldn't have been all that rough, or could it? And Ralph's mother had taught school up in that "Gulf," so there must be something up there—stacked stones from an old house foundation, an old contorted apple tree, a hand-dug well or cellar, lonely forsaken gravesites, stone fences piled while clearing fields for crops, or maybe a few voices whispering in the wind—just "something!"

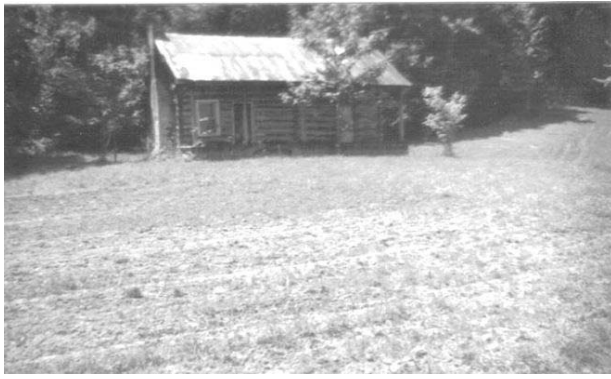


Decatur Savage (son of Samuel Savage) and wife, Fannie with daughters: (left) Barsha and Lou



Remnant of the Decatur Savage Cabin in the Gulf! In 1919, Albert and Bernice Knight spent their honeymoon night in the Savage home.

Immediately on our left was where the old "**Uncle Wid**" and "**Aunt Mittie**" (**Dykes Morton**) home used to be. Spoken of above, this is the land that used to belong to William Dugan before it became his descendants' property. The two-room, log house sat upon higher ground than many of the other homes around Collins River, thus, making it a popular place to be when the river's banks could no longer hold the waters pouring down through the Gulf. In 1941, **Grady Scruggs** came to **E. H. Barker's** house and told him to get his family out of that particular area, for the waters of the river were rising fast and were nearly over the road. "Downtown Tarlton" could quickly become an island during one of those floods, with no one going in or coming out. E. H. had already drained the water from his old car's radiator that evening. He could not afford anti-freeze in those days, so he would fill his radiator with water and empty it according to the weather. Being a young man with a new wife and a small baby, he quickly loaded his family, and off he went to Uncle Wid's house. That old car got so hot, and the water was already up to the running boards, but a "man's gotta do what a man's gotta do," regardless of the consequences.



During a flood, all roads led to Wid and Mittie's house!



A safe haven from the angry Collins River!

Getting to Uncle Wid and Aunt Mittie's house under scary circumstances wasn't the only problem local families encountered that night. "How in the world had Wid and Elmira ever reared their children in that little two-room, log cabin?" It certainly had to have been difficult. With all the thankful neighbors present that night, movement was restricted greatly when E. H. got there with his family. Actually, he was so happy to have a place to go where he felt safe from the raging waters that he wasn't bothered much with the crowd. His baby son was very unhappy though. It seemed that E. H. and his wife had left home so quickly that they forgot the milk for the baby. Uncle Wid had no cow, so in the middle of the night, E. H. had to walk in the cold, hard rain across the muddy cornfield to the **Creighton** house and ask for milk. Tired, wet, cold and muddy, he managed to get back to his family, his friends, his neighbors, and the little log house. In years to come the little house was torn down and carried to the top of the plateau in Beersheba and used in another building. It had served its community well.



The Collins River rolls on behind the little red "Church in the Dale."



A cold, icy and snowy day in 2009 on the Collins River in Tarlton Valley

Highway 56 crossed the Collins River, but as we passed over it, I noticed that the riverbed was dry. I was told that water flowed under the bridge only when the plateau around Gruetli, Palmer and Cagle had tremendous rainfall causing the river to flood. Under normal circumstances the "sinks" in the area carried the water underground causing the riverbed to stay dry. Nearby was a road that went off to the right; it was a remnant of the old McMinnville/Chattanooga Stage Road. Ralph's ancestors lived in that area. His grandfather **John Thompson** was the blacksmith for the area at one time, as were **William Ballard**, **Ambrose Killian**, **Logon Henry Gross** and **John Mansfield** at earlier times. Mr. Thompson had his shop right alongside the stage road where he got plenty of business. Ralph's grandmother **Christine (Daniel) Thompson** reared her six children in the house which was next to the shop. Their fifth child **Elmer Cline Thompson** was Ralph's father. When I asked about the Stage Road, I was reminded that the stage took many routes as it rambled around and upon the plateau. On its way from McMinnville and through Tarlton, as the stage neared the foot of the mountain, it evidently cut away left. From there it climbed up into the Gulf, out along Peak Point (*a scary thought*), and then out onto the plateau near the Barkerstown area. There were other routes forking their way around the plateau and then off toward Chattanooga. My husband's mother **Georgia (Schild) Partin**, being a descendant of the **Schild/Marugg** families, grew up in the old Stagecoach Inn on Colony Road. Remnants of the stage road are visible today around that area. The **John Creighton** family also lived on the old stage road next door to the **Thompsons**. Mr. Creighton also had a little store next to his home. With a boyish grin, **Tom Creighton** fondly remembers his days in Tarlton, but he is being very quiet about them. Maybe someday he'll tell me about his shenanigans as a child reared in the Valley.

One of my sidelines in this venture was to search for the graves of the Curtis family mentioned in the beginning paragraphs. They were ancestors of the **Arthur Curtis** descendants in Coalmont. Ralph had pointed to the right and stated that the **Pleas Rogers'** home was there at one time. After studying the Census records, it appeared to me that after **Terrill Rogers'** death, his son Pleas, his daughter **Elizabeth**, his granddaughter **Maggie** and his great-granddaughter **Mamie** continued to live in the old home. This was in the area of Coyote Lane. The little girl "**Emma**" spoken of above married **Pleasant Rogers** in 1893. She died four years later without having any children as far as I can find out. I wanted to know if anyone knew the burial site for Emma and Pleasant. Also Emma's father, **Jairus Curtis**, died in 1896 and was buried in Tarlton in the area of the Rogers' home. Most people assume that they were buried a little ways down the road in what is now known as the King Cemetery, but there are no marked graves for them. I have been told that the King Cemetery used to be the Rogers Family Cemetery. If that is so, then Jairus Curtis and his daughter Emma (Curtis) Rogers are buried there with other Rogers family members. Since Maggie and Mamie in their older years became wards of the State, they were placed in a home in Altamont. They were buried in the Altamont Cemetery.

Pointing to the left and across the road from the Rogers property, Ralph told of houses that once stood along the way, but one former building in particular was worthy of a story. The Welcome Church of Christ, which had a pretty good number of members at one time, had ceased to function by 1927/28 when **E. H. Barker** walked through the empty building that stood near **Richard's Tate's** store. Some folks in the valley dispute the name for the group and believe that the church was a Community Church. I find it interesting as to how such a large, lively looking group of Christians as shown in the photo below, could just quickly cease to exist. Anyway, in the "flood of 1928," some say 1929, the church building was taken right off its foundation and forced by the mighty rushing floodwaters right down a path parallel to the road, but the little church didn't go quietly. The bell in her belfry announced to the community that she was in trouble. **John McCarver**, son of **Elias and Mary**, had moments earlier taken his wife **Jessie**, his children, at the time, **James, John, Carter and Carlos**, and his mother **Mary** up into the attic because the water was coming into his house. He didn't want to lose his livestock, so he also took his pigs right up the ladder with him. Not knowing that the church building was traveling right along behind his house, when he heard the constant "ding-dong" of the bell, his mind for a moment thought that it was the arrival of the **Lord**—"Doom's Day," the "end of time." His pigs were squealing so loudly that he yelled, "Dad blame it! Stop that squealing! You are interfering with my praying!" The rain, the prayers, the roaring waters and the squealing from the pigs continued as the lovely little church building floated in the raging floodwaters until she came to the next tree line where she broke apart. Thankfully, John and his family, *and let's don't forget the pigs*, were saved from the ravages of the flood that night.



Welcome Church of Christ—The Bell in her Belfry Rang Out "Dooms Day" in the Valley!

Kings Cemetery soon appeared on the left. Some years ago, the hill, where the cemetery is, was a heavily wooded area, but it is now kept in pristine condition. Henry Clay King, grandson of Stokes King and Frances (Brown) King married into the Tate family and lived near the Savage Gulf at one time. Another grandson Henry B. King lived in Tarlton Valley and reared his family there. Stokes and Frances (Brown) King were the progenitors of most of the Kings in Grundy County and many of those in Warren and Sequatchie Counties. The older generations of "Kings" are probably buried in the King Cemetery in Cagle in Sequatchie County. I can honestly say this, "If there were "Kings" in Tarlton Valley, then there also were "Perrys." They may have been hiding under rocks or something, but rest assured, they were there. The two families were attached at the seams. My own great-grandparents were first cousins; one was a "King;" the other was a "Perry," and both were from the Collins River area. Some "King" names in the King Cemetery are Thomas King, Henry King, Elijah King, Leroy Stokes King and Oscar King. Other surnames in the cemetery are Rubley, Tate, Fults, Green, Roberts, Creighton, McCarver, Basham, Perry and Womack.

"Downtown Tarlton," what a misnomer! Well, I suppose every little community has its own downtown. Here we were at this dot in the road looking at "Downtown Tarlton," or at least, where it used to be. By the way, no one knows where the name Tarlton originated. I've tried my best to conjure up an origin, but failed. The quaint, little, red brick, church building—originally a log building, was erected in 1888. It is a familiar landmark for the valley and tells the traveler that he or she is now in town. The charter members who built the church were **Sarah (Dykes) Hobbs, Bob Dykes, Zebedee Bain, John Morton, John Dugan and Taylor Dugan**. They made their pledges of money with Taylor Dugan pledging five dollars. The logs and lumber for the building were ordered from **Schwoons** of the "Gulf." Deep in Savage Gulf is a spring named for the Schwoon family, who came over from Germany. In later years, **Ernest Gross** worked for the Julius and Kassler Logging Company, which cut timber under the Stone Door area. They used a unique cable system to get the logs up and over the bluffs. A similar system may have been used by the Schwoons to move their timber. At first, the church benches were also made of logs. Some of us might just cringe at the idea of going to our church meetings and sitting on logs for one to two hours. Some of my own personal and most private moments with **God** came about while resting on a partially rotten log in the woods. Of course, that log made a more comfortable seat than the dry, hewn ones inside the little Tarlton Church.

When **John Morton** was collecting the cash money for the project, **Taylor Dugan** didn't have the cash, so he gave his calf for the debt. Those were the days when a man's word was his bond. The building was originally built of logs and later covered with brick; it was solely meant for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a forerunner of the United Methodist Church, in its effort to spread the good news of Christ around the Valley. On either side are graves of its faithful members and others. **Morton, Thompson, Creighton, Green, Dugan and Dykes** are some of the surnames on the stones. Eventually, the little church building and the land on which it stands were deeded to the community. Where is the original charter that was framed

and hung on the wall of the church building not too many years ago? Probably taken by someone who was not “a man of his word.” Wouldn’t it be nice if it could miraculously appear once again on the wall for all present and former citizens of the valley to appreciate?



The “Little Red Church in the Dale” as viewed from the King Cemetery.



The silent dead remind us of the sacrifices they made to make the valley what it is today.

One might wonder why so few folks were interred in the Methodist Episcopal Cemetery in Tarlton. One only needs to walk to the back of the building and look down upon the dry river bed to notice just how many close calls the building and graveyard have had throughout its existence. The foundation has had its number of cracks from close calls. The county came in at one time and did extensive work while the river bed was dry, and it did help the situation somewhat, but many people just didn’t want to think about their loved ones’ bodies floating out of their graves. That is the general consensus as to why so many Tarlton Valley citizens were buried at Philadelphia Cemetery.

The old Tarlton school building was the next point of interest in “downtown.” It sat on the right just past the M. E. Church. **E. H. Barker’s** parents, **Henry and Edna** were both teachers at that school. Since they were important citizens of Tarlton, let’s give a little of the Barker history before they came to Tarlton to live and work. The Barker ancestors came from England. **John Barker** was the name of the original ancestor who came over to America around 1732; then several more generations of “John” Barkers descended from him. Coming on down the chart toward E. H. Barker, we find **Howell Barker** who lived in Sequatchie Valley. Around 1852, there was a health scare from milk fever, so, for his family’s protection, Howell moved his large family over into an area of Grundy County that would soon become known as “Barkers’ Cove.” Howell’s son **John Gilliam Barker** was around two-years-old when the move was made. Howell bought his land from the **Smith** family who lived in a large log house near the junction. John Gilliam was the youngest child and lived on with his parents in the old home until their death. Howell and his wife **Elizabeth** are buried in the Browns Chapel Cemetery.

John Gilliam Barker's son Henry married **Edna Wimberly** of Warren County, Tennessee. The couple had met each other while attending Burritt College in Spencer, Tennessee, which was started in 1848 by local citizens looking for some way to give the local children a better education. E. H. Barker is one of their sons, and in his younger years he went to school in Tatesville. He walked about two miles to school following the old Stage Road until it connected to the road that went from Tatesville to Daus Mt. Road. The Barker family kept landholdings down in Sequatchie Valley near Daus where they grew corn then brought it back up the rough, winding road to their farm at Barkers' Cove.

Henry Barker's oldest sister married **Joe Walling**, and they lived over at Piney, which was fairly close to Spencer. They had tried to live at Barker's Cove, but Joe was too homesick for Piney. They moved back and reared their family there. Generally in the fall of the year, Henry would take his family in a wagon, pulled by two big black Belgium horses, to visit his sister. The trip would take all day, so about halfway, there was a spring where the family would stop to eat the lunch Edna had packed. Of course, hay for the horses was kept in the wagon. Upon arrival, the whole family had such a happy time playing, making molasses, hunting and just catching up on family happenings. They would stay nearly a week; then the goodbyes were said, and the trip back home began.

E. H. Barker's grandparents had a little "weaning house" at the top of the lane from where the family lived. When one of the eight children married, he/she would move up to the weaning house for about a year to settle into marriage, get their feet on the ground and make decisions on their future lives together. Then the young couple moved on, and the next Barker child would marry and move into the little house. What a neat set-up! By 1915, Henry and Edna were married and bought the old Sherman place, which had a wonderful apple orchard. It also had an old log house where their daughter, **Ruth**, was born. Soon they hired **Henry Brown, Margaret Coppinger's** dad, to build the family a new house where they lived until 1927. E. H. was born in the new house. His parents had a telephone—one of those old phones that had different rings for different parties with only about three other parties along the line. A Grundy County Board of Education member in Tarlton knew Edna, who had been reared in the Collins River area, so he called to ask if she would come to Tarlton to teach. She accepted the job, and Henry moved her and the children in a wagon to their new home. They came down the old rocky Peak Road, or Stage Road, that meandered down through Savage Gulf to Tarlton.

Grundy County decided to build the Tarlton Valley children a bigger, better school. The old log schoolhouses were becoming extinct and framed buildings were coming in style. Moving into the new, nicely-painted, white building left the old log one empty, so Edna and her children moved into the "little school" which was probably built before the turn of the century and was originally used as a church building. Henry went to the store and picked up some apple and orange crates for his family to use as furniture. Sheets were hung to separate the one long room into different rooms. Edna was worried about whether her family could stay warm

in that old place, but it was needless concern. Surprisingly, the building was warm and cozy for her family—warmer than the frame house she left in Barker’s Cove. She and the children settled into valley life and immersed themselves in the community around them. **Henry Barker** stayed over on the plateau with his older brother **John Barker** and continued his teaching position at Palmer.

John Barker was property superintendent for the Tennessee Consolidated Coal Company. They furnished him a house to live in and a big black horse to ride; he also had an office close to the Company. John was in charge of all the buildings that the miners lived in and for the timber used for props in all the mines. A lot of timber went into shoring up the roofs of the mines as the coal was taken out.

For three years **Henry Barker** visited his family on the weekends. He had a car, so he came around the old dirt, later slate, road and down the mountain to Tarlton. Henry used that road when only one house could be seen on the drive from Palmer to the 108 Junction. An old lady by the name of **Annie Bell** lived there. E. H. remembered the day his family was riding in an opened T-Model car when it started to rain “cats and dogs.” The family was allowed to shelter themselves in Annie’s house. Later at Tarlton, when a need for an additional teacher came about, **Edna** quickly spoke up for her husband to have the position. He got the job, and once again the family was together. An addition had been built onto the school since the population of children in the valley had grown. Henry and Edna used baling wire to hang sheets in order to separate the upper grade children from the lower grades.



1934 Tarlton School;
Teachers Isabel Scruggs
and
Edna Barker



1936 Tarlton School;
Teachers Henry Barker
and
Isabel Scruggs



Old Savage Gulf School closed its doors in 1941.



Bench Mark for the Savage Gulf School and its teachers.

Just a “hop, skip and a jump” across the road from the school was the Morton Brothers’ Store, the big store in the center of town. **E. J. and Wash Morton** owned and operated the mercantile store much like **Mrs. Olsen** did in Laura Ingalls’ books about Walnut Grove. If you needed it, wanted it, and it was available, then Morton Brothers Store (*later Morton and Scruggs Store, and even later, Scruggs Store*) was the place to shop. “Just put it on my ticket,” one might say. (*Last week I called the Ben Lomand Telephone Company and asked them to come and see why my phone was dead. The nice man fixed it by putting in a new jack. As he walked toward the door to leave, I jokingly said, “Just put it on my ticket!”*) Those wonderful people up in Gross’ Cove were so important to the Morton business and the rest of “downtown” that the Grundy County road system built a swinging bridge for them to cross the river. Pronto! All those descendants of **John Thomas** and **Sarah Sallie (Killian) Gross** up in the cove had a shortcut to the center of town by walking around the footpath at the base of the foothills and crossing the swinging bridge. **Ernest Gross**, one of those descendants, remembers his daily walk to school across that bridge. On one occasion, someone had taken one of the planks from the floor of the bridge and unaware of the danger, his sister, Becky, fell through the hole. She was hanging thirty to forty feet above the dry riverbed grasping tightly with her hands. Ernest quickly went to help her, and with all the strength he could muster, he pulled her straight up out of the hole. It frightened him so much that he shook like a leaf for some time. To this day, he has no idea how he could have done it without help. (*Ernest’s extended family were not able to get their Gross family photos to me for this story, but Ernest was so helpful in filling me in on many stories of the Valley and Cove.*) **Tom Creighton** still speaks of his walks on the bridge. The Grosses and other families in the cove arrived in town just in time to hear all the valley gossip, names of new settlers, new births and recent deaths, marriages, political arguments, and if time permitted, to play a good game of checkers. Mostly, they came to stock up on staple goods and gaze with wishful eyes upon all the new items offered by the **Mortons**.



Morton Brothers Store in "Downtown Tarlton"

E. H. Barker worked at the store just about every Saturday from the time he was old enough to make change. The miners up in Palmer would come down and load up their vehicles with merchandise. Prices at the Morton Brothers Store were so much cheaper than those at the "Company Stores" owned by the Tennessee Consolidated Coal Company. There were times when the miners were paid in scrip forcing them to buy at the Company Store. It doesn't take a genius to figure out why scrip was used! "I owe my soul to the company store!" sang **Tennessee Ernie Ford**. Evidently, the Mortons were fair with the miners. They helped those hard-working souls and still made a good living.

When Grady Scruggs later operated the store, he served lunches. He emptied all of the sardine and pork 'n' bean cans while fixing lunch for those who came by hungry, and the cans ended up in a garbage heap across the road from the store. There were no dumpsters or garbage pickups in those days. Ernest Gross recalled that his family had no money for toys, so they went to the heap and dug out the sardine cans. A hole was punched in both ends of the cans and string was threaded through the holes connecting one can to the other until the little boys had built a train. The train was then pulled along to a sand heap and loaded with sand or dirt and down the "make-believe railroad tracks" the little sardine trains would go. The pork 'n' bean cans were stomped so that they wrapped the boys' shoes enough to hang onto the bottom of the foot. Off the boys went down the road with the "clang, clang, clang," noise made by the cans on their shoes. Slingshots were the weapon of choice by the boys in Gross' Cove. Every boy walked around with his slingshot in one pocket and the other pocket full of pebbles. Seams out of worn out overalls were used in the construction of good slingshots. Ernest Gross certainly would like to know where to find some real rubber; I think at the age of eighty-four, he wants to make him a "Gross' Cove" type slingshot—a really good one. Some boys were good enough with their shots that rabbits, squirrels and birds could be killed. I assume that maybe one or two boys bore the brunt of a few pebbles too. Buttons on strings, metal monkeys on wires, paper wad shooters—these were several more toys the boys learned to make from the

free materials of the Lord's creation and Grady Scruggs' garbage dump. *(Some toys were patterned after the parents' work habits. A friend of my family once told that when he was a boy, he caught a pair of fence rail lizards, kept them in a matchbox barn, made harnesses and driving lines for them out of thread, took them out, hooked them to sticks and drove them around like his father pulled logs with a team of mules.)*

The Morton family, who lived next door to the store, became nervous when the water during the 1928/29 flood, came up into their home. They went up to the old **John Morton** place next to the spring at the foot of the mountain and hired **Frank Creighton** to build a new house for them. When Henry Barker moved down from Palmer, he moved his family into the vacant Morton house, which was right next to the store. There was a concrete walk that came out of the house and led to the store. There also was a big community, hand-dug well on the property where everyone within walking distance came to get water. **Ernest Gross** often carried water from that well to the other school children. The house and the well house can be seen in the photo above.

An interesting study of the 1880 Grundy County Census record shows that there were approximately five hundred people in Tarlton Valley. In that Census taken by H. W. Brown, between June 1st and 5th, it was stated whether or not the family member was sick or well. Amazingly, most folks were well and going about their daily routine. A small number of folks were sick, and they were: Zedekiah Walker, Elizabeth Dykes and her daughter Julia, Thomas Brown, Nancy Brown, Silas Lankford, and John Hobbs. Little six-year-old Mary Tate had recently died. For the most part, the valley was kind to the Tarlton citizens that year.

Isham Dykes, a grandson of **Isham** and **Prudence Choate Dykes**, and his wife **Nannie (Nunley) Dykes** lived in the little log cabin on the right of Highway 56. Nannie's father **Jim Nunley** built that cabin, and **David Hillis** has kept it in immaculate condition for folks like me and everyone else to enjoy.



The Jim Nunley Cabin where Isham and Nannie (Nunley) Dykes reared their family



Grady Ward Partin, a true mountain man, inspects the "chinking and dobbing" between the logs.

I don't know exactly how well Mr. Hillis watches the little garden planted at the old homestead, but one day, I personally saw a couple of tomatoes disappear, but all should be forgiven, for the deliciously red fruits were facing inevitable "frost annihilation" that night.

Robert and Clara Nunley had built a cabin across the creek behind his brother Jim's cabin. The cabin was handed down to their son **Jessie B. (J. B.) Nunley** and his wife **Stella (Patrick) Nunley**. Stella and her son **Robert** lived in the cabin until her second husband, **Charles G. Scruggs**, built the little white frame house for them. Stella was a hard worker. She raised a big garden each year for her family and friends to enjoy throughout the long winters. One day, while she cured some hams, my husband, Grady Ward Partin, watched her as she tended her little metal buckets full of smoldering wood. Charley, Stella and her son Robert have all passed away. Crossing the little bridge, which gives access to the Nunley/Scruggs home, isn't the same anymore. There's a deafening quietness about the area broken only by the rushing waters of the creek when the river is on a rampage. The old log cabin has since been removed to another resting place.



The Robert (Uncle Bob) and Clara Nunley Cabin



The creek beneath Stella Scruggs Rd. where Isabel Scruggs played as a child

The **Scruggs** family members were well known in the valley. **Carter and Lucinda (Kilgore) Scruggs** had a son named **James Edward**, "Jim" for short, who was a well-read man and a politician. His father, Carter, moved to Grundy County in the late 1840's and was instrumental in all kinds of county affairs. This opened doors for Jim to understand the workings of local government. Jim had vivid memories of the Civil War; he remembered seeing the Yankee's coming up through Peppers Hollow that lay east of Tarlton Valley. As a young boy, **E. H. Barker** liked the old man and talked with him regularly since they both were lovers of history. At the young age of nine, E. H. was reading a newspaper a day, which helped keep him up with what was going on in the world around him. According to **Ralph Thompson**, his grandfather, **Jim Scruggs**, was "a farmer and philosopher of sorts, who sold produce to the Beersheba

Springs Hotel and summer residents because he had to, and read and argued politics because he loved to.”

Jim Scruggs had a relationship with the Swiss Colony folks probably because he bought produce for the Hotel from them. On one occasion, Jim was lent a horse to go to the Colony, but while there, he visited just a little too long. Back then, one would not think of refusing the bits of cheese and glasses of wine offered by the Swiss families; it wasn't polite. Jim just overdid it and got drunk. He fell off his horse on the way back to the Hotel causing concern for his whereabouts when the horse showed up without him. Jim served the Episcopal Methodist Church-South and was an original trustee of Brown's Chapel Church. Over a period of forty years, he managed to marry three wives, two of whom were from the Swiss Colony, leading one to believe that Jim was doing more than buying produce from the Swiss. He fathered twelve children, but he would probably tell you that his greatest accomplishment was being and staying a true Democrat. He died 05 May 1941 and was buried in the Altamont Cemetery with his three wives interred around him. Hey, there's a good story in there – somewhere!

Do you remember the **Hatfield** and **McCoy** feud that supposedly started over a member of one family falling in love with a member of the other? Well, whatever they were fighting over, be it a pig or be it love, it caused utter chaos ending up with murders and hangings, etc. Well, in Tarlton Valley there was a longstanding feud going on between the handful of Republicans and hordes of Democrats, but the main players were the Thompsons and the Scruggs – more specifically, **John Thompson**, a republican, and **Jim Scruggs**, a democrat, who just happened to be Ralph's paternal and maternal grandfathers, respectively. Poor Ralph! One time, Jim Scruggs bought some firecrackers at the Morton Store. When his daughter Isabel saw them, she asked him what he was going to do with them. He said, “I'm going to have them here to scare the Thompsons' mules.” Jim Scruggs' first wife was **Sarah Thompson**, so I couldn't help but wonder how they got along with each other when a political discussion came up. Was it ever safe to have a Scruggs and a Thompson in the same house?

Henry Barker, a Republican, and **Willis Carroll**, a Democrat, had many political discussions. Often E. H. Barker would take Willis' side in the discussions against his father's views. **Jim Scruggs** was a strong, “yellow dog” Democrat in that he'd rather vote for a yellow dog as to vote for a Republican. Since the Thompsons were Republicans, Jim Scruggs did not like Ralph's grandfather at all. **Henry Barker** had only a few folks that he could discuss politics with in the valley – the Mortons and John Thompson. Well, just like the Hatfield and McCoy's incident of love, Jim Scruggs' daughter **Isabel** fell in love with John Thompson's son, **Elmer**, and secretly married. Neither father knew about it, because each went back to his/her own home as though nothing had happened. Isabel stayed on and took care of her father Jim until his death. He died never knowing that his daughter had married the son of a republican.

E. H. Barker and his bride-to-be, **Imogene Gross**, had gone with **Isabel** and **Elmer** to Dalton, Georgia, where the two couples got married. A wedding had just taken place in the church where there was money on both sides, so the building was expensively and extensively decorated. The Tarlton couples enjoyed immensely the use of the church in all its glory. The two young married couples spent their honeymoon night in one of those little cabins that preceded the modern motel. They went out to eat and then took in a movie. E. H. was teaching school at the time in Savage Gulf, but because of lack of funds, he had borrowed ten dollars from Isabel in order to have enough money to buy the ring for his bride-to-be. No one knew about the marriage because E. H. and his wife were not talking to anyone about it. That was in October of 1940, and **Jim Scruggs** died in March of 1941. If one had a good strong arm, he could have almost thrown a rock from where **Elmer** lived with his sister **Irene**, and **Isabel** lived with her father, and it was still a secret. Elmer was thirty, and Isabel was twenty-eight, so they were old enough to pull off the caper.

Teeters Lane, probably named for the **Gordon Teeters** family, came up on the right of Highway 56. Sequatchie, Marion and Warren Counties had many Teeters families in them, but not many of them drifted over into Grundy County. Dykes Road veered to the right from Teeters Lane. Down in Dykes Hollow, which is up against a mountain fittingly called Dykes Mountain, lived some—you guessed it—Dykes folks! This area and many points beyond were filled with descendants from **Isom/Isham Dykes, Sr. and Prudence (Choate) Dykes**. According to researchers, Isham came into this area soon after the turn of the century (1800) with **Henry John Alexander Hill** and twenty-eight other men, including two with the “**Savage**” surname. (*To learn about my ideas on the Hills and Savages, please read another story I wrote called, “Can These Bones Live?” – A Talk With Albert Hugh “Hooty” Knight.*) The land probably was still Indian Land or in the process of becoming Smith County. Henry settled over in what became Irving College in Warren County, but Isham stayed put on a hill at the foot of the mountain and hollow that bear his name. Along the top of Dykes Mountain was Hills Trace, aka the Wire Road, remnants of which can still be seen today. The Trace went up from the Hills Creek area and over nearly to the Cagle area. **Isaac Hill, Sr.** and several other people are buried at the site of the Old Hills Tavern. I once visited the site to get a feel for the area, and I guess, just to see some more “nothing.” I found it quite interesting to be at the actual site of the Tavern and the gravesites. Hills Trace was a shortcut over to Cagle Mountain, and this enabled the Dykes’ families to meet up with the Kings and Perrys of Sequatchie County. Some of these families found their way down into the Tarlton and Irving College areas bringing about some of my own heritage groups.



This is the hill on Dykes Road where the elder Isom/Isham Dykes (1773-1871) lived and reared his large family. He came to the valley around 1800 while it was still probably part of the Indian Lands and would have in 1803, become part of Smith County, then later part of White, then Warren, then finally Grundy County.



Prudence (Choate) Dykes
(1782-1862) wife of Isom Dykes

Oscar Dykes reared a family in Dykes Hollow causing me to believe that the land has always been in the Dykes family. One of his sons was given the name Isom/Isham for a middle name. (*I visited with "that son" at his nursery office. I had not seen him in nearly fifty years, so my first question for him when I saw him was, "You used to be so handsome! What in the world happened to you?"*) That son doesn't want to be quoted on any of his stories, but he wanted to make it clear, that the name Isom/Isham would not be passed on any more, at least by him. I can fully understand what he is saying when I look at all the Prudies, Prudences, Isoms and Ishams that have been named after their Dykes' progenitors. Well, I don't really, fully understand, since I have a grandson, **Stokes**, named after his ancestor, **Stokes King**. I believe it would be so comforting to my soul if I found out that the very spot were I was born and reared had been owned by my ancestors from the time they wandered over from Virginia and into the new state of Tennessee. Before we leave our discussion on the name "Isom," we need to ponder the little "Isom Creek" near the head of Gross' Cove. Now who on earth named that little fellow? It just had to have something to do with old man Isom/Isham Dykes, didn't it?

Since in 1870 **John Thomas Gross and Isham Dykes, Sr.** had so much in common, it must have been a wonderful experience for any Tarlton resident to sit on the front porch with the two of them. In their old age, they were close neighbors. "Drag you up a chair," they would say, "and sit a spell." What better way to pass the evening than leaning backward in an old straight-back chair, snuff tucked down between the lower teeth and lip, or better yet with a corncob pipe in hand, and listening to these two old gentleman speak about their lives in their

home states of North Carolina and Virginia, but particularly of their years in that beautiful Tarlton Valley. They both had lost their helpmates earlier; **Sarah Gross** had died just two years before, and **Prudence Dykes** died in 1862. These two husbands had buried their wives in the Philadelphia Cemetery not too far from home. And look at their ages in 1870; **John** was eighty-eight and **Isham, Sr.** was ninety-six; what present day local historian would not have been thrilled to have sat on that porch with those two “Methuselahs?” Why, I have never smoked or “dipped” anything in my life, but I would have shared some “snuff,” or even a “twist of tobacco,” with either of them, just for the privilege of hearing them talk of their “olden days.” **Isham Dykes** died 01 August 1871 being ninety-eight plus years of age. His neighbor **John Gross** died 25 June 1874 at the age of ninety-four; each was buried beside his wife in the Philadelphia Cemetery. Many descendants of each filled the valley and points beyond. As long as Gross’ Cove and Dykes Mountain remain, these two men will be researched and remembered.

Two Walker brothers and their sister, **James, Jeremiah,** and **Martha Walker Bond** came to this area in about 1805. They were followed in 1810 by a third brother, **John Jones Walker**. John came for the purpose of starting a school. Now if the date is correct, then it is obvious that there were children in the area as the new century rolled in, or else, why would John Walker need a school? He went up into the entrance of what became known as Gross’ Cove, and on the first big hill or bluff on the left amongst the cedars growing there, he built his one-teacher-school. The school was known from then on as Cedar Bluff School. John was extremely intelligent, especially in mathematics, but when he got to the Valley, he had no books. Not to worry, John just sat down, wrote and compiled his own math book, which is still in existence today. Many years later that very book was taken up to Altamont to “**Prof**” **Rollins**, a math whiz and father of Adolphus and Rachel Rollings, teachers in the county. He was to offer an educated opinion of the content and accuracy of Walker’s book. After studying and poring over the book, Mr. Rollins stated that there were no errors in it; he declared it to be good, solid math.

Some prominent names among the more plantation type farm owners were **Cain, Hill** and **Walker**. As we traveled the northern end of Tarlton Valley, we came to the old farm that once belonged to **Virgil Hill**, one of **Henry John Alexander Hill’s** grandsons and son of **Hugh Lawson White Hill** and **Virginia (Dearing) Hill**. His wife **Emma** was a daughter of **George Washington** and **Rebecca (Stone) Cain** who owned a great deal of land around the area. Virgil and Emma decided to make the beautiful valley their home. Part of the old rock fence that held back their front lawn is still visible. Every morning Virgil would go out on his faithful horse and survey his livestock and hundreds of acres of land. Someone on the farm would walk his horse parallel to the rock fence close enough for Virgil to make an effortless step-over into the saddle. At the back of the house and fields, the Collins River ran somewhat year round. There were several big springs feeding the river along this area whereas back at the foot of the Cumberland Mountain, rain rushing down from the plateau was the principle source.



Virgil Hill and his old horse ready for a morning ride



A portion of the fence where Virgil mounted his horse each morning

Virgil traveled the whole valley on his old horse, and one day he rode over to **E. J. Morton's** house.

After he hitched his horse, he found E. J. in the woodshed where he kept more than the winter wood. E. J. was in the process of taking a nip of whiskey. Now E. J.'s wife **Rosie** was a teetotaler and kept an ever-watchful eye on her husband. He asked Virgil if he wanted a drink, and Virgil said, "Don't mind if I do!" Just about the time E. J. handed the bottle to Virgil and at the moment that both men had their hands on the bottle, in walked Rosie. E. J. was quick on his feet and brain. He quickly said, "No thanks, Virgil, I never touch it anymore!"



Virgil and Emma Cain Hill with son George Lawson and daughters, Rebecca and Jessie

At the second bridge off to the right is a dead-end cove called Cove Creek. Beyond the Cove Creek community, there is a saddle in the mountain ridges that allowed the folks over in the Hills Creek area to visit or come courting over in Tarlton Valley. I wondered how the Irving College, Hills Creek and Tarlton Valley folks seemed to intertwine so easily; the saddle would have made a complete circle of the three vicinities possible without having to climb up and down the steep mountainsides. You know, those old mules, and horses always favored "the easy way." Years ago, the Cove Creek area was home to the **Patrick, Killian, Nunley, Wanamaker** and **Cathcart** families with only a sprinkling of said families left today. The area

now is home to a religious group who call themselves, “The People of the Living God.” The group is quite active in farming, education and religion in the surrounding communities. Like most, if not all religious based groups, they are spoken of with different opinions. Some are appreciative to have them as neighbors, and others call them, “just another one of those communes.”

Not too far down the road on the left, **Ralph, Susan** and **I** came to Gross’ Cove Road. Some speak of an old wagon road at the head of the cove that came out on top of the plateau somewhere in the area of Utah, or Middle Ridge Road, in Beersheba Springs. Also there was a road near “Big Spring” that came out on top in the Backbone Road area. Ernest Gross spoke of the Booger Hole Cave and the stone crusher near the spring. The cave wasn’t big, but to a child it was interesting. He was warned not to crawl inside for fear of snakes. And then there was the Jumping Branch Gold Mine up near the top of the cove on the western side. It sounds like there were a lot of interesting things going on in Gross’ Cove in those days. “Big Spring” helped feed the Collins River as it ran behind **Virgil Hill’s** house, and during dry weather many families had to go there for water. There are two Indian mounds in that area of the cove—a reasonable thought because of the availability of water. These Indians were known as mound builders and predated the Cherokee Indians. Some years ago, **Elda Scott** excavated the mound that was on the George Clendenon land, and it showed the layering pattern used in the construction. There was a layer of soil followed by a layer of river rock; this pattern was repeated over and over. Bones were found and respectfully covered again. The other mound on the **Thompson** land was left unscathed by its owner.



Big Spring in Gross’ Cove



Indian Relic from Gross’ Cove

According to **Ernest Gross**, his father, **Beecher Gross**, attended a little one room school on up in the cove from where Ernest grew up. We’ll call it Gross’ Cove School since he could not remember the name. Beecher’s father, John, damaged his eyesight while hammering a nail that

came back and blinded him in one eye. The family had a very hard life financially; there was no money for anything – not one cent. Around the age of eleven, Beecher was being whipped by a teacher who accused him of doing something he denied doing. Little Beecher took out his pocketknife and stuck it in the leg of the teacher. So at that young age, Beecher was expelled from school and went to work to help the family. Years later, Ernest also had to quit school at eleven years of age and help with the income. This was true in many families.

Logging was going on just about everywhere around Tarlton Valley, and it was no different in Gross' Cove. Ernest remembers the first black men he ever saw; they came to the cove from the McMinnville area to work in timber. He admits that he was afraid of them since he had never before seen anyone of a different race. Two of the black men put up a tent not far from the Gross home, and they did their cooking at the tent each evening when they came in from work. The men's names were **Hardy Cope** and **Stumpy**. Hardy always waved at the children and spoke to them as he went home to his tent. Slowly, the children warmed up to the kindness shown by Hardy. It wasn't long until Hardy asked them to come eat some supper with him and Stumpy. Ernest said, "We were poor enough to be hungry a lot of the time, so we went and ate with them." From then on they were all trusting friends.

Someone in the Gross family has done research that caused them to come to the conclusion that **Adrian Northcutt** owned most of the cove and probably some of the valley at one time. One of the early Gross pioneers to the area used to work for Mr. Northcutt, who later gave him eight hundred acres of land which became known as Gross' Cove. I don't doubt the story, understanding the immense acreage that Mr. Northcutt owned, but I haven't researched any in that area. Ernest Gross says the land has slowly left the hands of the Grosses throughout the years until now there are only sixteen acres left in the family name. Thanks to Ernest, the cove will be remembered through this little story and his wonderful willingness to aid me in sharing his heritage with all you readers. He is a man whose heart is tied forever to the cove where he was born and grew up. Every inch of its terrain is etched in his memory.

Coming up next on our trip was the Mt. Olive community. The old church building on the right was empty and displayed years of neglect, rendering it gray and looking much like an old, gray mare whose back had swayed from years of carrying burdensome loads. Around 1940, a **Walker** family was instrumental in organizing a congregation of the Church of Christ in the area. They met in their homes at first, but later built this building. **Betty (Sitz) Cyr**, granddaughter of **Isaac Floyd Perry**, remembered the day in 1948 when she came down to the little church building to the funeral of one of Grundy County's best-known math teachers, **Rudolph Henry Schild**, son of **John and Barbara (Marugg) Schild**. She came with Mr. **E. J. Cunningham**, who was superintendent of schools at the time, and her Aunt **Esther Sitz**. Mr. Schild had married **Virginia Cain** in 1932 tying him forever to Tarlton Valley. They are buried in the Philadelphia Cemetery among other Cain family members.



The abandoned Mt. Olive Church of Christ
(2009)



John and Barbara (Marugg) Schild with son,
Rudolph H. Schild, 2nd from the right

Across the side road from that building is the old Philadelphia/Mt. Olive School building which is now used by a group called "The People of the Living God." Edna (Wimberly) Barker went to school, and at one time taught, at the old Philadelphia School. On the hill above this area, we came to the Philadelphia Cemetery filled with Tarlton pioneers, many in my own family lines. Jeremiah Walker donated the land for the cemetery. This is the place where **Isham and Prudence Dykes** are buried. Their daughter **Malinda "Linnie" (Dykes) Perry** is buried beside them. She is one of my gg-grandmothers. **Linnie** married **John Houston Perry, Sr.** Evidently, Linnie and John died at odds. The family story is that they told their children not to bury them in the same cemetery, so Linnie was buried at Philadelphia, and her beloved (*or not so beloved*) John was buried at Hills Creek Cemetery. This makes one wonder if Heaven or Hell, whichever is applicable, comes with separate departments for those who can't stand each other on earth.

In the early 1800's, **James Walker** started the Baptist Church on the hill near the Philadelphia Cemetery. When **E. H. Barker** was a little boy, **Burl Killian, Glen Killian's** father, was preaching at the old Philadelphia Church. He recalled a story about one of their revivals although he cannot prove if it is true. During a big revival some of the boys from the **Clendenons, Christians, Massengills, Panters** and other families at Hills Creek came over to the meeting one night. The crowd was overflowing, and the Hills Creek boys stood in the back of the building. There were certain women in the church who would flow in and out of the crowd asking the folks if they wanted to be saved, or if they wanted to go to the mourners' bench. E. H. remembered, as a child, being scared when the women came toward him, so he would try to hide. One woman asked one of the Hills Creek boys if he was a **Christian**. He told her, "No, ma'am. I'm a **Massengill!**"

A quick little jaunt out the road across Highway 56 from the old Mt. Olive Church of Christ brought us to the area where Gilbert Coppinger (b. 1882-d. 1968) lived, worked and reared his family. Gilbert was a versatile man; he was a blacksmith, shoe cobbler, operator of a gristmill

and even did a short stint as a county deputy. Folks said of him, "There wasn't anything he couldn't do or fix!" He was the son of William and Eveline (Nunley) Coppinger. He was married to Martha Arminda Bell (Hobbs) Coppinger. One of their daughters, Zada Bell married Sidney Jacob Wanamaker. Zada was a schoolteacher and taught at the Tarlton School for a period. Zada's mother also taught for a while in the Savage Gulf School. I spent an evening with Jacine (Wanamaker) Denton, a daughter of Zada and Sidney, talking about that end of Grundy County. She is a sweet, humble person who enjoys learning about her ancestry and sharing with others.



Gilbert and Martha Coppinger with their family

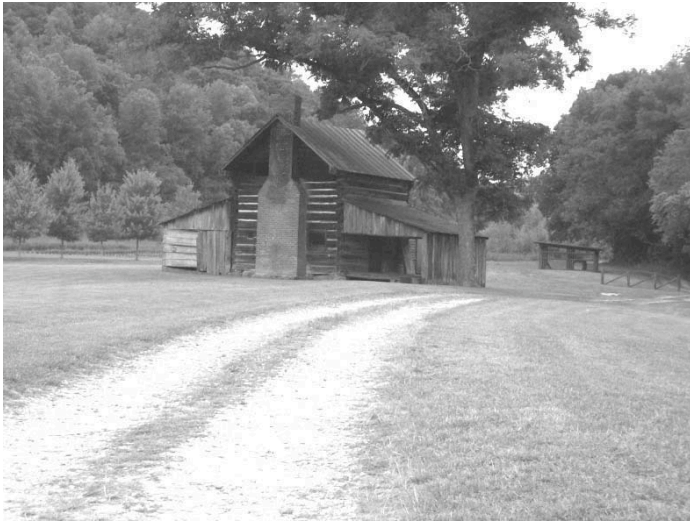


Gilbert and Martha (Hobbs) Coppinger at home

The same road led us to a magnificent, historical, log cabin on Bost's Creek. What a beautiful, well-kept piece of the valley's history. The creek is on the left of the photo below. It is nothing short of beautiful. The **Wanamaker** families have done a superb job in keeping the area serene and well groomed. **John and Alice Bost** came to the area around 1808 and built the cabin about 1815 on at least one hundred acres of land. The perpetual spring at the creek gave them the water supply to maintain their household and farm. *(I was told recently that the "powers that be," and it wasn't God, have named the creek "Savage Cove Creek." If that is true, we'll just ignore the name change and continue to call it "Bost's Creek.")*

The couple had several children one of whom was named **Noah Bost**; however a legal paper called him a son-in-law. Probably between 1830-1840, the elder **John Bost** died, and his son/son-in-law Noah and his family were living at the old home site with **Alice** who in 1850 was around seventy-six years of age. At some point after her husband's death, Alice transferred the old homestead to Noah with the conditions that he support and care for her during the remaining years of her life. Several of Noah's children were still at home, but no wife was present. However, on 05 October 1855, Noah being about forty-five years of age married **Abigail Moffitt**, who was about twenty-one. They had three children, **Caldonia, Thomas and Rachel** during the first five years of marriage. Alice being up in years was unhappy with the

“*bad and immoral conduct...going on in (her) presence and hearing...*” so she moved out of the house and asked that Noah keep his word and take care of her. By September 1859, he evidently was not doing his part, so Alice took him to court and won her case against him. Noah was ordered to take care of her no matter where she lived.



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Bost Cabin on Bost's Creek

The perpetual spring coming from under the bluff with forceful waters flowing toward the Collins River



I can find no Census account for **Alice** being alive in 1860, so she may have died never going back to her beloved cabin on the creek. **Noah** went off to fight for the Confederacy, and on 03 February 1862, he died for the cause. Less than a year later on 10 January 1863, **Abigail** married **William Coppinger**. I found a note stating that William acquired the old Bost homestead from the estate and reared his family there. On 02 March 1874, William married his second wife **Mary Eveline Nunley** and fathered more children. What strange twists life can throw at us! The old house with the beautiful creek, tripping over stones so quietly, was quickly thrown into the hands of others. I, for one, am so thankful that the **Wanamakers**, who now own the property, have taken such good care of the homestead for folks like **Ralph, Susan, E. H. Barker** and myself to enjoy. On a different day, I stopped and spoke with **Verbile Wanamaker** at the barn where he was working just around the corner from the old Bost cabin. His wife decorates their old log house and the edge of the creek with each change of season and holidays. Even the large barn sported a wreath of greenery and red ribbon.

This brought us very near the Warren/Grundy County line that was unsettled for a hundred years because of the old rule that any one place in the county should be no further than twenty miles from the county seat of said county. Thus, undesirable land between the two counties was never an issue until recent years when the line was actually formally decided. Our next important stop, (*lunch was good but not important*), was at the home of Mr. **E. H. Barker**.



E. H. was a gracious host. He is an articulate, intelligent man whose memory at the age of ninety was far better than mine at the age of sixty-six. He retold some of the stories that Ralph had told me as we rode through the valley, and added more flavor by painting vivid mental pictures for us. It wasn't long until Ralph and I started in with our questions and comments.

When I asked Mr. Barker how the folks in the valley got their mail, he said that a postal substation at Irving College was located in the Crossroads Store that he and his father operated for about ten years. They rented out one of the small rooms for fifteen dollars a month to the federal government for the purpose of distributing the mail. A mail carrier came out from McMinnville and with **Mr. Brashsear's** help, it was sorted in the back room. Then old man Brashear started his journey toward Grundy County in his little horse drawn buggy; down the valley toward the mountain he went with his valuable cargo. He carried the mail through rain, sleet, hail, and cold of winters and heat of summers, to the scattered families in the valley. Some got their mail at the stores along the way and others got mail in boxes along the road. **Herman Hobb's** house was the last mail service from Irving College, so the **Tates and Knights** who lived in Savage Gulf picked up their mail at his house.

One of **Isaac Floyd Perry's** daughters, Callie Elizabeth, or **Lizzie** as she was better known, had come over to Barker's Cove to live with the **Henry Barker** family. She was in the home aiding the doctor when E. H. was born; however, the doctor never filed a birth certificate. Years later, after E. H. moved to California and applied for a teaching position, he needed a birth certificate. He came back to Tennessee to reconstruct his birth, but he needed a non-family member who was present at his birth to testify that he was born on a certain date. Lizzie, who by that time had married **Morgan Creighton**, was the one who helped him.

I've always liked to hear stories about school—you know, those that go something like, "We walked two miles to school barefooted in the rain and snow! We got lice from the hogs that slept under the school floor! Our lunch was whatever was left from breakfast and placed on a biscuit—or the biscuit alone was great!" Sadly, all of these statements were true for many children; on the other hand, the sadness comes when present day students don't want to listen to stories like these.



Callie Elizabeth
"Lizzie"
(Perry) Creighton



This was the first Grundy County High School built around 1929. It burned 07 March 1935. When the bus rolled in from Tarlton Valley, the children were surprised to see that the school was gone. They were quickly told that classes would resume in the Shook School where higher education had been offered before this school was built.

E. H. sparked my interest again when he said that it was always dark when the school bus gathered the Tarlton children and started its climb up the graveled, mountain road. Dawn was generally breaking as the busload of half-asleep students rolled into Altamont on its way to Tracy City. E. H. remembered that one of the drivers was a University student, and at other times, **Jones'** Garage in Tracy City sent its mechanics to pick up the students. Since there were no heaters on the buses, in the winters it was always so, so cold. In the beginning the load of students from Tarlton was a good size, but one by one the youth dropped out of school until the **Barkers** and **Isabel Scruggs**, Ralph Thompson's mother, were the only ones left. **J. B. Hill** and the Tate sisters, **Naomi and Hazel**, joined the group in Beersheba. There was a lot of singing done on that long trip to Tracy City. E. H.'s sister **Ruth** even wrote a silly little poem around 1930 about all the boys and girls and their love lives. **Isabel Scruggs, Ruth Barker, Dola Schild**, from over in Gruetli, and **Lenora Burnette** from Pelham were in the 1933 graduating class that was the first group of graduates who had been all four years at the new school. The four of them went off to college together. On 07 March 1935, when E. H. was a senior, the bus rolled onto the High School compound only to find that the school had burned during the night. The students were aloud with "Hurrah's," but the jubilant voices were quickly soured when they found out that classes were to be completed at Shook. The joking talk of the day was, since the records of failure or promotion were all destroyed in the fire, no one had proof of who completed his or her credits and who did not; thus, every senior graduated that year.

Although the country was working itself out of a miserable depression period, the students at Grundy County High School who were able to stay in school were happy and always ready to have an adventurous school trip. In 1931 a group of FFA officers and **Professor O. R. Holley**, the vocational/agricultural teacher, journeyed to Nashville to participate in the FFA Convention. Previously, some of the boys had grouped themselves into a little band of musicians; **Homer Kunz** played the French harp; **James Myers** played the fiddle; **Aubrey King** played the guitar, Paul Thomas from Summerfield played the Jew's Harp, and **E. H. Barker** played the guitar and sang. Mr. Holly had planned for the boys to be on the radio at the Grand Ole Opry, which at that time was still in the National Life and Accident Insurance Company building in Studio C. The Opry was only in its sixth year having been formed in 1925.



Aubrey King; Homer Kunz, Paul Thomas, James Myers and E. H. Barker

That night on the way to the Opry, the weather was awful—lightning, loud thunder and heavy rain. Back home in Tarlton, **Aubrey King's** father had his ear pressed to the radio; he could hardly wait for his son's Opry debut. Since there were no radios in Tarlton at that time, the **Barkers** had driven fifteen miles to a home where there was one. They were truly excited about their son's opportunity to perform on the show. The Grundy boys were to play and sing for thirty minutes; **Deford Bailey** and **Uncle Dave Macon** were also scheduled. The fact that the older, mellowed, experienced Dave Macon was sitting right near the microphone didn't

fluster the boys at all. They went on with the task before them; even at one point, **E. H. Barker** stood and sang one of Macon's most popular songs "Watermelon Smiling on the Vine." What a night for those young musicians and their parents listening at home!

I would like to tell the readers that all mothers and fathers happily and proudly heard their sons on the Grand Ole Opry that night, but that's not the way the story goes. The storm outside the studio was so bad, that constant popping, wheezing and cracking static was the norm over the airways. Every now and then, a loved one might hear a word or two that would enable recognition of a child's voice, but for the most part, it was a disaster, and so much so, that **Aubrey King's** father, who had a temper, picked up his radio and threw it through a big glass window. Way to go Mr. King! You really showed them your disgust? E. H. told this story with a chuckle.

E. H. Barker had a passion for baseball. When he first moved to the Valley, everyone was talking about **Tom Scruggs** and his ability to pitch well on the old Tarlton team. The Tarlton boys had a baseball diamond between where the big, blue bluff is and where the Welcome Church of Christ used to be. Once there was an old apple orchard where the Tarlton diamond was, and a few of the old, diseased, apple trees were still standing when E. H. played ball there. His team was playing Philadelphia when a rabid dog came through the baseball area causing E. H. to climb one of the old apple trees. He found himself on a dead limb and was in fear that he might just find himself on the ground near the mad dog, but all ended well.

Ernest Rubley taught E. H. how to play baseball. In the past there had been an old Tarlton team where Ernest may have learned to play so well. The older team played Beersheba, Philadelphia, and other teams. Ralph's dad, **Elmer Thompson**, played on the new team as the catcher. E. H. played first base; his brother, **Junior Barker**, played second base; Ernest played shortstop; and **Red King** and others played third base. **Herbert Savage** (pitcher), **Fred Gross** (outfielder) and **Eston Brown** (pitcher) were on the team. Neither Eston, nor Herbert, had good speed in their pitching, but they had some good curves. **Jasper Tate** couldn't throw a curve, but he had fairly, good control; he had speed with his pitching, "just like a bullet." Old timers who sat around discussing his speed, figured he could throw a ball at least ninety miles per hour. E. H. managed the team, and he had to take Jasper out when the other teams got used to him. There was a Collins River team and an Irving College team. **Elmer Thompson** (catcher) played at both Collins River and Beersheba before his knees began to give him trouble. **Bunk Hobbs** (end fielder) was a good batter and a good fielder if he could ever get to the ball; he was slow, but when he got there, he always caught it. The problem with Bunk was that "he ran too long in the same place."



One of those exciting games!

Dear Reader, with permission from the Ranger in charge, and with two polite, helpful and well-informed Hobbs and Knight descendants, on 13 March 2009, I made my journey into Savage Gulf in search of “*nothing*.” In spite of the thirteen-degree morning temperature, and in spite of the rocky (*really, really, rocky*) terrain, I found the “*nothing*” that my friend Ralph spoke of in the beginning of this story. Some of my photos are sprinkled throughout our story. While in the Gulf, I was talking with the two young men about years gone by in an effort to let my mind go back to those times and get a feel for the “old days.” Immediately, a low-flying, deafening, military jet swooped down above our heads as though someone was saying to me, “It doesn’t matter; look forward, not backwards!” I quickly recalled a lesson taught me many years ago that we study history not only to keep from repeating the same mistakes, but also to benefit from the wisdom and intelligence that our ancestors possessed. Many of them had no formal education, but they found ways to do what had to be done with almost nothing with which to work. For example, the picture below is the chimney left standing when the Joe and Susie Hobb’s house in Savage Gulf fell down. My husband crawled into the opening so he could see how chimneys were built in those days. He was happy to see the arched rock at the top of the firebox. He had used the same design in a chimney he had built in an old cabin a few years back. He saw that there was no cement used in the mortar. They made do with what they had, and look how the chimney is still standing. Those pioneers brought so much more than themselves to the new State of Tennessee. There are so many lessons we can learn from them if we are only willing to search and ask questions.

Before my husband and I parted company with the two young men, I asked a question of the group, “Why did the people come into this rocky, remote area to live, so far from civilization?” I was reminded that the stagecoaches went right near these peoples’ homesteads, so they weren’t that far from civilization. One might say, that the world passed them every day, going and coming. I also want to remind the reader, that this is a story, not a historical document. I researched when I could, but I mainly listened – well, I also did my share of the talking.



Joe and Susie Hobb’s Chimney in Savage Gulf



Savage Creek flows to the Collins River –
Photo taken off Hwy 399 in Savage Gulf

I know of no one who contributes more time and energy to the preservation of the history of Grundy County, especially that of Beersheba Springs and Tarlton Valley, than **Ralph and Susan (Simpson) Thompson**. I thoroughly enjoy going on “wild goose chases” with them. Often we catch the goose. If you live in or around Beersheba or Tarlton, and photos or stories are out there in your closet or attics, you might just as well dig them up, for Ralph will find them. The Grundy County Historical Society is blessed to have this couple working with it. Also I would like to thank Ernest Gross, Jacine Denton, Powell Dykes, Eveline Roberts, Verbile Wanamaker, E. H. Barker, Ralph Thompson, Tom Creighton, Joyce Scott, Marcus Hill, Carl White and others I may have overlooked, for putting up with me while I dug for the history of Tarlton. If at any time you want to tell me more about your love for the Valley and your life in the Valley, please email me at jackiepartin@blomand.net . I am open for corrections and additions. Two more stories that tie into the Tarlton story, or at least the Savage Gulf section, are written about Albert Hugh “Hooty” Knight and Norma Mae (Sitz) Stocker. You can read them soon on the following site: www.grundycountyhistory.org .

In 1941/42 **E. H. Barker** took a job in Tracy City working for the Department of Agriculture. His title was "Chief AAA Clerk." His office was in the old County Extension/Health Department building behind the Dixie Theatre. The train would pull into the Depot with carloads of lime, fertilizer and seeds for the local farmers. It was E. H.'s job to keep the books on all the incoming supplies and which farmers received them. Eventually, he returned to follow in his parents' footsteps and settled into the teaching profession. His first teaching position was in the Savage Gulf School; then he moved west to Mt. Olive, then to the Warren County system, finally becoming Principal at Centertown, before moving on to California. It is there today that he and one of his sons own and operate a successful real estate firm. He has never forgotten Grundy County and particularly the beautiful Tarlton Valley. The love he harbors in his heart for this area is obvious when one speaks to him about its history. He recently took one of his sons up to the observatory in front of the Beersheba Springs Hotel and looking out over the peaceful Tarlton Valley below, his son asked, "**Dad, why did you ever leave here?**"