

# First Chronicles of Pigeon

## *A Talk with Belva Delores (Byers) Dykes*

Written by Jackie Layne Partin

“People don’t visit like they used to,” was her first comment to me. We’ve been neighbors for over twenty years, and this may well have been the second visit she has made to my house, and I can only recall going to her back door just once. From time to time we saw each other in the store or at the funeral home, but that was just about all the contact we had. Yet, we had a common interest—“Pigeon.” She lives on Pigeon Springs Road, has close relatives buried at Pigeon Springs Cemetery, and owns land “out Pigeon.” I live on Pigeon Springs Road and own a small piece of land out there also. In a previous story I mentioned that Pigeon is full of stories that have been told and a myriad to be told. My visitor on this day, 04 February 2010, and I will add a few more tales to “The Chronicles of Pigeon.”

**Belva Delores (Byers) Dykes** was born 25 February 1931, at the old Byers place near Raven’s Point Road. Her father was **William Joab Byers**, born 02 September 1903, “somewhere in Grundy County.” Her paternal grandparents were **Joe Lamberth Byers** (1867-1931) and **Aminda “Mindy” Amanda (Tigue) Byers** (1877-1944) who are buried in the Gregg Cemetery in Tracy City.



**Belva Delores  
(Byers) Dykes – 2010**

**Maud Elizabeth (Taylor) Byers**, born 05 June 1909, was Delores' mother. Maud was named after both of her grandmothers, **Maud Melissa (Walker) Fowler**, born May 1870, in Warren County, Tennessee, and **Sarah Elizabeth (Green) Taylor**, born January 1842, also in Warren County. Sarah Elizabeth may have had a son, **Robert Green**, before she met Elias. She was around thirty-years-old when she married **Elias L. Taylor** on Jan. 31, 1869 in Dekalb County, Tennessee, and Holeman (12) was living with them. These are the sides of Delores' family that we will follow because of their relationship with the Pigeon area.



**Left: Jess Taylor, wife Florence with baby Ruby  
Center: Bev B. Taylor, wife Gwinnie Taylor with  
baby Florence  
Right: Unknown Walker boy and Maud Taylor  
(Photo taken ca. 1912 probably in Texas where Jess  
and Florence were living at the time.)**

In 1910 **B. B. Taylor** and his wife **Gwinnie** were living at Pigeon with their baby daughter **Maud**. Delores' maternal grandparents were **Bevley "Bev" B. Taylor** born November 1882, in Tennessee, and **Gwinnie Mae Estella (Fowler) Taylor**, born December 1888, in Texas. Gwinnie and her sister Effie were reared by their uncle and aunt, **Melvin E. and Elizabeth J. (Fowler) Ford**, in Indian Territory, Chickasaw Nation. It appears that Melvin and Elizabeth had no children. Although Gwinnie and Effie were born in Texas, their father, **Titus Fowler** (1868), was born in DeKalb County, Tennessee, and their mother, **Maud (Walker) Fowler** (1870), came out of Warren County, Tennessee. Even the Ford relatives were born in Tennessee. Titus and Maud parted ways after the birth of Effie; he remarried and fathered two sons, **Floyd** and **Marvin Fowler**. Maud Melissa (Walker) Fowler married **Charles Viall** and had a son, **Austin Viall**; then she married **E. T. Poling** in 1900, and they became the parents of two daughters, **Lois** and **Willie Poling**.

According to Delores, her grandfather, **Bev Taylor**, was half Indian. The question is, “Was Bev’s mother, **Sarah Elizabeth**, the full-blood Indian, or was his father, **Elias L. Taylor**, the Indian?” Something Delores said, “My mother remembered seeing her grandfather’s Indian headdress,” seems to imply that the Indian blood came down from the Taylor side of the family. Some researchers record Elias Taylor’s middle name as being “**Frog**” leading me to believe that he was the Indian. *(Ironically, my grandmother, Emma Rose (King) Layne told that her great-grandmother was a full-blood Cherokee who lived to be 103 years of age. In my researching, I have found that that lady’s maiden name was “Taylor,” and she too was reared in or near Warren County. So the surname “Taylor” may have been one used by some Cherokees in the area.)* In 1900, Bev and his sister **Fannie Taylor** were living at Pigeon with their aunt, **Mary Frances “Fannie” (Taylor) Walker** and her husband **Dotson “Dotty” C. Walker**. *(For all you readers who have used the “Dotty Walker Place” as one of your reference points at Pigeon, this is he.)* I have searched and searched for a Dotson C. Walker who fits the profile *(age, birth area, siblings, etc.)* of Pigeon’s Mr. Walker. The only person I found in the Census records is Micajah Dotson Walker, Jr. born 1855 in Warren County, TN. So I have surmised that Dotson C. Walker and Mi“cajah” Dotson Walker, Jr. are one and the same. Dotson “Cajah” Walker, I believe, is where the initials D. C. (Walker) originated. I will stand corrected if proven otherwise.



**D. C. Walker, born May 28, 1855,**

**Died March 20, 1915,**

**59 years, 9 months, 23 days**

**(Jocelyn MacKenzie Partin connects to  
the past.)**

On 06 April 1905, in Grundy County, Tennessee, **Bev Taylor** married “**Guinnie Fawler**.” This says to me that Gwinnie made her way back to her ancestral home in Tennessee and fell in love at an early age. **Bev and Gwinnie** managed to acquire twenty-five

acres of land “out Pigeon.” It is possible that Dotty and Fannie Walker gave them the land to start their own homestead. On 15 January 1906, their first child, **Minnie**, was born. She was named after her aunt, **Minnie Taylor**, sister to Bev. On 22 February 1909, little more than three months before their second daughter Maud was born, three-year-old Minnie died and was buried in the Pigeon Springs Cemetery. For the record, let me hasten to say that this cemetery has been called by many names, Speegle Cemetery, Hargis Cemetery, Anderson Cemetery, Headrick Cemetery and others. It wouldn’t surprise me at all to learn that the Speegle families were the first to use the spot for burials. The words on the big tree and on the Grundy County Historical Society marker read “**Pigeon Springs Cemetery**,” so that’s what we will call it – that way everyone should be happy.

Where **Pigeon** is on this earth, is determined by “to whomever one is speaking.” To me, Pigeon is on out the road a ways from our house, maybe two miles or more, and then all the way out to **Pigeon Point**, *what I call Pigeon Point*, overlooking **Martin Springs** on the right and **Gizzard Cove** on the left, but to the folks in the old days, Pigeon covered many miles up and down the old “**Battle Creek Road**,” as the 1920 Census taker, Lorna Leone Lumley, called it. Rightfully, the road, which has moved some throughout the years, should *now* be called **Pigeon Springs Road** because of the small community that once existed in **Marion County** and maybe a little bit in Grundy County. It extended to the end of the world, but it never left the top of the plateau. One could have been in Martin Springs, Gizzard Cove, Anderson Cove, Hargis Cove, Peach Orchard Cove, Speegle Cove, Birdwell Cove, Polly King Cove or Cave Cove in a reasonable amount of time if one knew which direction to descend the plateau and if one was riding a horse or mule. Howbeit, your “insides” might well have been shaken around quite a bit, and your trusty animal might have suffered an injury. From all appearances, the Peach Orchard Cove Road was the best road to descend the plateau into Hargis Cove. Without a doubt, each cove or point had its own beaten path up and down the plateau, and those paths were mostly logging and foot or wagon trails.

Older maps do not have markings for an actual Stage Coach Road coming up from any of the coves below Pigeon. Some believe that there was a stage road that went off to the left of Speegle Point (I) and down into Hargis Cove. The stage supposedly stopped in the area of the Blind Tiger where there was a spring, Dye Spring, for watering horses and passengers. The Blind Tiger was a small shack with no windows. When one wanted to buy whiskey, he or she would knock on a very small wooden opening and put money inside on a shelf for the amount of alcohol wanted. The liquor was passed with only a hand being seen. I was told that two “Dye” brothers operated from inside the little shack. After stopping for water and no telling what else, the stage continued on down Speegle Point (I) and meandered behind the old Hargis/Speegle family area until it connected up with the Peach Orchard Road and went on off into Hargis Cove. In 1850, young George Hudson was a local stage driver. He lived next household to Thomas and Mary (Gunter) Hargis, so this leads me to

believe there was a stage road in the close area of Pigeon. Researcher, Barbara (Mooney) Myers writes that one stage stop was at her grandparents' big log house on Pigeon Springs Road. Lem and Mattie (Braden) Headrick fed travelers and animals at their farm, but I'll leave that story for her to tell.

On some maps there are markings for two Speegle Points, one to the west of Pigeon Road and another out the road to the southeast overlooking Gizzard/Anderson Cove. I believe that Speegle Point (II) may actually be on a lower level of the plateau and be the original area where the first Speegle pioneers settled. Michael and Sarah (Jarrett) Speegle died 1845 and 1840 respectively and may well have been the first two burials at Pigeon Springs Cemetery. They appear to have been the first Speegles in the area. Their son and daughter-in-law, Phillip and Priscilla (Reed) Speegle, also died in that area in 1848 and 1850 respectively. By 1834, Elizabeth Speegle and her two daughters were living in the area. It is thought that Elizabeth never married but was the mother of Alfred Speegle who was married to sisters, Rebecca Hargis and Melvina (Hargis) Jackson respectively; they were daughters of Thomas and Mary (Gunter) Hargis. As far as I can see and read, there are no markers for any Speegles at Pigeon Springs Cemetery, but there is little doubt that several of them are interred there.



**Pigeon Springs Cemetery**



**Left side of photo: Old road coming up from Hargis Cove went on from here to meet the main Pigeon Springs Rd.;  
Right side of photo: Hargis Cove Rd. splits and goes up to Pigeon Springs Cemetery.**

Without proof, I do not accept that Pigeon was named after an old Indian man who once lived there. I like that story and would gladly accept it when proven. I tend to believe,

as do most locals, that it was called Pigeon because of the many pigeons that frequented the area in those years. I suspect that the name Pigeon came later than the period when the Indians traversed the southern end of the plateau resting and nesting in the numerous rock houses. The whole of Pigeon was split by the main footpath that had been widened by a few wagons as traffic headed south from the plateau. There were exits on the left and right. One needs to think of the era *before* the **Dixie Highway/Highway 41** that descended the mountain at Monteagle was ever built. Footpaths were the norm. A few wagon roads were rutted out from the rocky terrain, but they were not roads by any stretch of the imagination. Pigeon was the best way to descend the mountain on the south side of the plateau east of what became known as Monteagle. One only needs to read some Civil War annals to get the picture of how difficult it was to cross from the valleys north of the plateau to the valleys to the south. The only sure way to descend the mountain from Tracy City quickly was by the railroad after 1858, but during the war, it too was vulnerable.

Throughout the years, Pigeon was owned, squatted, leased, fought over, disputed, bought for taxes, taken to court, given to lawyers—you name it, and it has been cursed and discussed all its known existence. An individual might paint his line in grey one day, and the very next day find that someone else has painted a red line inside his grey line. I personally could never see what all the fuss was/is about. No city water, no electricity, no gold, no coal that amounts to much, and no whatever causes one to want to own a piece of land can be found out Pigeon; yet, I bet it has been one of the most fought over pieces of property on this mountain. Thankfully, most of the fighting has been done by mouth and not guns. Peter Mark Anderson may have been the first person to acquire a 5000-acre grant to the area, and before him, I assume that God so generously allowed the American Indians the use of the land, but He forgot to write down on parchment that He gave them ownership of it, and that is where all the trouble began.

The Braden surname became a part of Pigeon's history. Across a large ravine from the cemetery, one can see several remnants of house foundations that presumably belonged to Bradens. From all appearances, the foundations seemed to have been from well-established homesteads. When one finds piles of stones around trees or in rows like fences, and the terrain has grown up with pine trees, it becomes obvious that fields had been cleared for planting. I always look for their source of water. About six to eight months of the year, the inhabitants could bet on wet weather streams for water; after that, they depended on springs. A good spring on a piece of land was like finding gold. And then there was the old wooden barrel placed at the corner of the house to catch rainwater from the roof. The Braden families were resourceful and knew how to make things work for their betterment.

One Pigeon story goes that some years back, an elderly Mrs. Braden, who was very ill and near death, was taken "out Pigeon" by Arnold Dove and Ves Headrick and left to fend



for herself. Whether she requested to be turned out to die alone, or her family did not want to care for her, is not clear. But what is clear, is that she and her old mama dog and the pups were loaded onto the back of a wagon and taken "out Pigeon" and left to die. And **that** she did. She was left at an old abandoned house in the vicinity of the cemetery without food or anything to sustain her short time on this earth. Again, I state that these may have been her dying wishes. It is believed that she was buried in the Pigeon Cemetery.



**The remnants of the old cellar of the house where elderly Mrs. Braden was taken to live out the remainder of her life.**

Mike Braden, a young lumberman, died on 18 July 1918 at the age of twenty-one and was buried at Pigeon. He was the son of Isaac and Rachel Braden. When I visit the old cemetery, I try to search for stones that may be covered with debris and search for names for descendants who are wondering where their loved ones are buried. Seeing a large piece of sandstone in a sunken grave caused me to take my glove and gently remove the mud, and it appeared that I had found young Mike's resting place. Since Mike's grave was the third one in a long row of unmarked graves, one would assume that some if not all of that row were Braden burials. Mike's and the first two graves had sunken into the earth badly as had several others in the cemetery. The stone read, (Mik...Bra.....).

Isaac and Rachel Margaret (Anderson) Braden were parents to ten children. Some of them did not live to adulthood while some married along the way and lived on at Pigeon for some years. At one time, a large portion of the land at Pigeon came into the hands of one of their sons, Joe Braden. Joe always wore a long overcoat. He liked to hang out at his little shack that he built with one high window and no door. This was a security measure. He built a portable ladder that was taken from its hiding place when he arrived at his shack. Using the ladder he climbed up and in through the window; then he pulled the ladder in behind him. Some of the men had watched his habits, and decided it was time to have some fun with Joe. They caught a half-grown wild shoat and put it through the window. When Joe came home and entered his window, just as soon as his feet hit the floor, the ruckus

began between Joe and the shoat. The hidden onlookers said that Joe looked like a flying bat as he flew out the window in his long overcoat in his effort to get away from the danger.



**A shack much like Mr. Joe Braden's**



**Grady Ward Partin and his grandchildren study an old pear tree at the old Myers' field.**

The old Myers field was once owned by Miles Benson "Bence" Myers. The two-roomed house had a hallway between the rooms where the family kept their firewood in the dry. The young daughters played house on a large flat outcropping of stone. The old pear tree, still hanging around, is estimated to be at least one-hundred-years old. In spite of the brush and briars that have tried to choke it to death, it fights to survive. To me that is one of the first things I look for to prove that an old homestead was on a certain piece of land—old fruit trees. For certain, if a spring was flowing near, the land was most cherished and inhabited.





### **The everlasting spring at the old Myers Place**

Pigeon certainly wasn't a lonely place in Bev Taylor's day; there were small dwellings and farms everywhere made known by the remnants left behind—the old pear tree at the Myers Field; the numerous piles of stones around trees where fields were cleared for planting; the four cornerstones or foundation stones of houses; the rusted pieces of cast iron skillets; stove pieces; the holes left where cellars once kept food for the winter; old chimney rocks and mantel stones; the English ivy; vinca vines; the cornerstones of the schoolhouse; and a cemetery with at least fifty graves. A thought that came to mind as I listened to the local stories, is that no one ever spoke of a church group or any religious activities of any sort going on in the area. However, on Rev. Thomas Hargis' stone in the Pigeon Springs Cemetery, there is engraved a likeness of a Bible and possibly a hymn book. Kudos to you, Thomas, a good Old School Baptist clergyman! Interestingly, his wife Mary (Gunter) Hargis listed her religion in 1850 as Methodist.



**Rev. Thomas Hargis ( 1804-1871)**

**Left: Jocelyn MacKenzie Partin hugging the Bible**

It is not clear to me whether Thomas and Mary actually lived on the plateau, but it is clear that some of their children did. Their children were William, Jane King, Rebecca, James, John Wesley, Thomas, Mahala Caroline, Melvina, Tabitha and Abraham Dallas. Alfred Speegle married two of the Hargis women, Rachel and Melvina. They seemed to have been the families who initially lived at Speegle Point (I). The old Speegle place was up the hill from the George and Anna French homestead. Suffice to say that the Hargis family loved Pigeon enough for several of them to be buried there. It is thought that Melvina (Hargis, Jackson) Speegle may have been the last interment in the Pigeon Springs Cemetery sometime in the 1920's. Her son, Alfred married Bessie Birdwell, and like many before and after him, a move was made to the valley below. Pigeon was beginning to lose its appeal; access was beyond difficult; basic needs were hard to bring in; loved ones had passed on; in other words, the grass was greener in the valleys below. Some folks did find moving out into the more inhabitable areas of Grundy County more appealing. The mountain had the hearts of some.

If ever an area needed God's word, it was Pigeon. The word "wild" could not begin to describe the area, and that too is a whole other story. Well, maybe one or more good wild incidents will be just fine at this place in the Chronicles of Pigeon. One form of entertainment at Pigeon was the Saturday night dance. Often a dance was a wonderful excuse for an all out "drunken melee." Well, let's be completely honest here; these memorable melees also happened right in the town of Tracy City on Saturday nights. In its day, Smokey Row in Tracy City was more dangerous than Bagdad, and The Red Robin in Monteagle was known for its shootings and killings. Delores told this story about one dance on a particular night at Pigeon; the dance was at the Dotty Walker place. *(I worked fifteen years with a lady who knew*

*everyone and every place in Grundy County – well almost. Having lived away for so many years, I had gotten behind on my knowledge of the county. Every time I asked her where such and such family lived, she always started with, “Well, you know where Sue’s Package Store is....?” She always used that as the point of origin. So it is, with the Dotty Walker place – that’s a reference point for me when speaking of Pigeon). Other reference points at Pigeon were Big Hill, Bear Wallow Country, the Myers Field, Drip Rock, Eldridge Point, to name a few. Delores’ grandmother, Gwinnie Taylor’s half-brother, Austin Viall was visiting with his Pigeon relatives and attended the dance. (Actually, Austin lived for a time with his aunt, Fannie Walker, so he may have been making Pigeon his home at the time of this story.) Lem Headrick was also at the dance. Now, what in the world do drinking men usually do at a dance? Well, quite often there’s a fight! Over what, one might ask? Answers usually fall in the categories of money, women or whiskey. Delores doesn’t recall the real reason for the trouble, but others think the fight was over a woman. According to Delores, the fight ended with Austin Viall shooting Lem in the face. Looking around later, no one could find poor Lem. They didn’t know if he was alive or dead, but he managed during the darkness to stumble toward a bluff where he fell off into some brush. When he reappeared the next day, he had lost one eye and had a terrible wound on the bridge of his nose, so that’s why he always wore a patch over one eye and a portion of his nose – not because of what Uncle Roy Partin told a group of young boys when one of them asked, “How did Mr. Headrick lose his eye?”*

The answer Uncle Roy gave went like this:

*“Well, when the Headrick family first moved out to Pigeon, they cleared up a little patch of ground and planted it in corn. In a few days the corn began to come up, and the ground was so rich that the stalks grew so fast and so tall that Lem told the workers to chop the corn down and stack it for fodder. Each time Lem chopped a large pile, the stalks kept growing and growing until he could actually see them grow. He, nor his helpers, could keep the corn chopped down fast enough. He swung his corn knife so fast that he eventually dropped it, and one of the ears of corn caught under his belt causing him to go up, up, up toward the sky. By the time the workers got back with the wagon for another load, the stalk of corn holding Lem high above the earth was so tall that they had to shoot doughnuts to him with a high-powered rifle to keep him from starving to death while they worked to get the stalk down without killing him. One of the doughnuts hit Lem in the eye and knocked out his eye.”*

For those of you who remember beloved Roy Partin, you will appreciate that story. In the Bible in *John 21:25*, where it speaks of the “*other things which Jesus did;*” John said, “*He supposed that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written if every one (things or deeds) were recorded.*” So it was with Uncle Roy – the world could not contain the countless books of stories told by him if they were all recorded. Roy and all the Partins loved Pigeon and its people.

Before we leave the Lem Headrick stories, let's tell one about his beloved, hard-working wife, Mattie (Braden) Headrick. One day a man that she knew came walking by her house on his way to the far ends of Pigeon. She asked him if we wanted a lard bucket of souse meat which he happily accepted. After his walk of several miles and upon reaching home, he opened the bucket to only find that it was full of cow manure. What is life, if one can't enjoy pulling a trick on a friend?

Lemuel Headrick's parents were Thomas and Eliza (Anderson) Headrick. Thomas had bought land from two Anderson men, and that land became known as Headrick Point. But long before Lem was born, his grandfather Jacob Headrick (1780-1859) was living at or near Pigeon, and of course, his father, William Henry Headrick made Pigeon his stomping ground. That is what is difficult when writing about families who lived at Pigeon—sometimes they lived in the coves, and sometimes they walked right up a chosen path and moved in with relatives on the top of the plateau. That was true with most families “out Pigeon.” There is a small cove at the head of Hargis Cove called Polly King Cove. Undoubtedly, this is named after Mary Polly Headrick, wife of William Henry Headrick, Sr. and mother of Thomas. Polly married Graham King, a misplaced Canadian, after the death of her husband, making her Polly King. Graham was the only King that I have ever been able to put in the area of Pigeon or the coves directly below. Most researchers believe that Polly lived to be 103 years of age, but the maximum number of years I can squeeze out of Polly King's life is eighty-eight. *(If you want to get excited about age, Jane Cawhorn lived around the area near Pigeon and Summerfield, and she lived to be 112 years of age. She is buried at Summerfield Cemetery.)*

Speaking of Pigeon Springs Road being called Battle Creek Road, reminded me of the White Hotel which was also a part of Pigeon around the 1920's. The story of the *White family, the White Hotel* and the *White Cemetery* can be read on this site: [www.grundycountyhistory.org/](http://www.grundycountyhistory.org/). Make no mistake about this spot on the maps, it buzzed with activity throughout the years. In more recent years, fifty or sixty years ago, local farmers took livestock “out Pigeon” for summer ranging. One of those stories can be read on the same site above; it is titled “*Get 'em Boys! Get 'em!*” Not too many years ago, a human body was found “out Pigeon;” sometimes stolen cars, *(one morning I found a burned out car in our front field behind some tall privy bushes that had been burned the night before)*, marijuana plants, whiskey stills and a Civil War sword and Minie balls” turned up. Another morning as I pulled out of our drive, I looked up and down Pigeon Springs Road, and black bags of garbage had been thrown from one end to the other—I'm speaking of pure, stinky garbage evidently thrown out of the back of a truck or trucks—not those bags of beer and whiskey bottles and fast-food containers that those wonderful men in orange vest pick up for us.

Why, I even found the remains of a weather balloon “out Pigeon” from years past and dropped it right in the mail so the little lost fellow could find its way home. You know, those meteorologists need all the help we can give them about the movements of air currents, so they can predict the weather years down the road. I always look out my window and decide the weather—it just always seemed easier and much more accurate. A school child’s long ago deflated balloon with a note inside, plenty of trash/garbage, wild animals galore, and some of the most beautiful honeysuckles and flame azaleas that God ever created have been found by wanderers along the way to Pigeon. My husband and I once walked several miles from our house “out Pigeon” to a beautiful patch of turnip greens planted right alongside the road, and I picked until I tired—the answer is “No, my husband didn’t help me!” Looking back toward Partin Farm, I thought, “We’ll never make it back home before dark!” No problem, one only needed to be patient until someone, either in a wagon, four-wheeler or old truck, came along to offer a lift. Our Good Samaritan that day was Clifford Dykes.

Speaking of Clifford Dykes, a “resident” of Pigeon for many years, he told the following story with all seriousness:

“I had some hogs out there at my place, and me and an old fellow that was staying out at the cabin with me to help me with my hogs, heard a terrible racket up on the hill. Them hogs was a squealing and a hollering, so I told my helper to go up thar and see what was the matter with them hogs. Well, he had a bad leg, couldn’t get along too fast, but he started on up thar. The squealing was getting’ worse, so I took on after him a hollering “hurry up and go up there and see what that is!” About that time, he got to the top of the hill, turned and hollered, “Why Clifford, it’s a “gariller.” (*Actually the animal was an orangutan.*) Well, I hurried on up there and shore nuff right in the middle of that bunch of hogs, I saw that gariller trying to take their feed away from them. You never seed setch a thang. Them hogs was a squealing and a running, and that gariller was fightin’ them off their feed and eating it. I could tell it was mighty hungry

So I went back down to the little shed down thar by the cabin and got some hog feed in a bucket, and took it back up thar and shook it around a bit. The gariller came over after it. I towed him off down the hill to a little old shed by the cabin, opened the door and pitched that bucket of feed in thar, and that gariller went right in thar after it. I seen that it wasn’t real wild, and in a few days I was able to put a big dog collar on it and lead him around on a chain. After several days, I decided to come out of Pigeon to the house. We had to come out on horses cause we had no truck. I told my helper to git up on his horse, and I set that gariller up thar behind him. But that didn’t turn out too

good. I don't thank the horse nor the gariller liked the situation. Fore I knowed it, my helper and the gariller both wuz on the ground, and by the time we caught the horse, the saddle was hanging under his belly. So I had to lead that gariller alongside the horses as we came out. We's a doing pretty good coming along thar until that gariller jest throwed a fit, scared the horse which nearly dumped me off, and he jest kept puttin' up a fuss. I jest retch and got me a good switch and gave him a good thrashin'; he then settled down, and we moved on.

After while, we stopped to let the gariller rest a while, and we set down there on the bank of the road where there was a bunch of those big old red ants crawling around there. You know that thang went to catching them ants and eatin' them. Ever once in a while, he'd stop and set and look right at me. I knowed what he was thankin' bout. He's thankin about me givin' him that whoopin'. Well, we come on to the house where I tied him under a big old apple tree thar in the yard. I had a pretty long chain on him. Well, word got out about it, and hit wuz worse than a county fair. Thar was people come from all over to see that thang. There's one feller come out to see him, and he kept gittin' closer and closer to him, and I said, "Buddy that thang will hurt you." Well, he jest kept going, that gariller jest laying there looking at him. He'd done learnt how long that chain was. In a blink of an eye that thang jumped up off the ground and hit that feller in the chest with all four feet and knocked him plum' off the bank down on the road in front of the house. We finally took him and locked him up in an old chicken house we didn't use anymore. Wasn't long until two or three of them boys in the community got in thar and was aggravatin' him. The gariller jumped on them, nearly tore their clothes off cut them up pretty bad and ran them out of thar.

They's a feller from up thar at Tracy came to the house and wanted to buy that gariller. I told him that I didn't know whar that thang came from, and I didn't know who he belonged to, and I weren't going to stand good for him, but if he wanted him, he could have him for a hundered and twenty-five dollars. So the feller agreed to take him and come back the next day to get him. When he showed up, he was driving his wife's big fine car. By that time, I'd got to whar I could handle that gariller pretty good, so me and him got in the back seat of the four door car. When we started to Tracy, everything was goin' jest fine, that gariller setting up there jest fine, when all of a sudden that thang reached around and slapped my cap off, made a big loop running around in that car and messed (*expletive*) all over that car. The new owner went to rantin' and a ravin' about that thang messin' in his wife's new car, I told him to "Shut



up, you oughta had more sense than to come down here to get him in this fine car!"

We finally got thar with him, and they's going put him in an old garage building they had thar, but when we commenced trying to get him out of the car, he'd spread his arms and legs out like a big old spider, and we couldn't get him out. Didn't take long for a big crowd to gather. We's still trying to get him out, and when I looked around the county sheriff was standing right behind me trying to help us get him out. I says, "Sheriff get away from here with that pistol, if that gariller gets a hold of that thang, he'll kill a half a dozen before we can get him stopped." We finally got him out of the car and into the garage building and locked him up. I got my money and got back home. About a month later, the man who bought him, called me and said them boys of mine has got that gariller to drankin', and we can't do a thang with him. You're goin' haft to come up here and help us get him settled down. I said, "If that gariller is drunk, I ain't coming up thar. In jest a little while after that, the people down in Martin Springs found out whar their gariller was, and they came to Tracy City wantin' their gariller back. The owner told him that room and board would have to be paid. The owners refused to pay and took it to the Grundy County court. When the trial date come up, I decided I'd go out thar to see what would happen. I set thar nearly all day, and finally, the county judge looked around at the crowd, and said, "Now we will get down to the monkey business." And I thought to myself, this whole day out here ain't been nuttin' but monkey business."

That is where Clifford ended his story. It is known that the orangutan was returned to the owners, but what financial transactions were made is unknown to me at this writing.

Now going back to the story of the people at Pigeon, **Bev and Gwinnie Taylor** had one more daughter, Florence, born ca. 1911. Now young Maud had someone to play with. Around 1912, Bev loaded his little girls and Gwinnie onto a covered wagon for a long journey back to Indian Territory, or Oklahoma, as it became known in 1907. Either on the way to his destination or on the way back home, one of the wagon wheels broke and needed extensive work. Bev was a member of the Woodmen of the World Society. All he had to do was mention that fact to some passersby who were also members, and they took Gwinnie and the girls along with them to their destination. Bev fixed the wagon and followed his family. They probably also visited his brother Jesse Taylor and family in Texas.

Sadness came when thirty-four-year-old Bevley B. Taylor passed away on 20 March 1916, at his home in Pigeon. He had been ill with pellagra, a disease caused from a niacin deficiency. He was interred beside his little daughter at the Pigeon Spring Cemetery. Bev's membership in the Woodmen Society assured him a huge stone resembling a tree trunk, and his family would receive insurance money for other expenses. Hopefully, there would be money from the insurance policy for Gwinnie to use in rearing her daughters. The unusual stone is still today reminding us of one of the young men who pioneered Pigeon.



**Woodmen of the World Memorial Stone for  
Bevley Taylor – born November 14, 1883–  
died March 20, 1916**

Bev, no doubt, had had a hand in building and maybe even attending the one-room schoolhouse that stood near his land. The school was located near the Pigeon spring. The four corner stones can still be seen if one knows where to look. Little is known about the school, but there were several children who attended there. Delores' mother, Maud, attended classes for a little while before Gwinnie decided to leave Pigeon. Surnames of children who may have attended there were Anderson, Braden, Coffelts, Dove, Ellidge, French, Hargis, Headrick, Morgan, Myers, Speegle, Smith, Taylor, Thorp, Walker, Wise, White, Wooten and several other family names.



**Just as hundreds of children had done in the past, Jocelyn and Stokes Partin sat on the big boulder at the head of the spring where the Pigeon Springs School children and many thirsty travelers got their water. The path from the school area to the spring can still faintly be seen.**

From the notes below, we know the school was operating as early as 1910 and probably years before.

**From the notes of Nonie Webb, Marion County researcher, and with identification of teachers and students by me, we can know something at least of the Marion Co., 4<sup>th</sup> District Pigeon Spring School.** *In 1910, J. H. Adams was the teacher; (John H. Adams may have been the husband of Mary and father of Beatrice and Samuel Adams.) In 1927-28 – Ellen Bible taught, and in 1928-29 – Annie Bible was the teacher. (Ellen and Annie were daughters of Christopher C. and Tennessee M. Bible.) During 1930-31, John Adams taught; in 1931-32, Alice Powell taught. (Alice was the wife of Arnold Powell.) The 1933-34 year found Maude McConnell teaching; (Maude was the daughter of William J. and Allie Bell McConnell.) That year her students were Minnie and Myrtle Anderson; Ike and Vinnie Braden (children of Benjamin and Cora Braden); Frank, Kaleb, Rennie and Sarah Belle Coffelt (children of Paul and Bess Coffelt); Georgia and Imogene French; Paul Fultz (son of Elihu and Sarah Fults); Perry, Martin, Rachel Christian; Bernice, and Ruth Sitz (children of William and Clara Sitz); Junior, Laura Katherine and Rosie O'Field Smith; and Annie and Jane Marie White.) Georgia and Imogene French were daughters of George and Anna Mae French who lived at Speegle Point (I). They had a sister named Helen French who became a well-loved citizen of Monteagle known as Helen (French, Thomas) Partin. Helen and her brothers, Arlie and Edd, were probably students there at one time. Ves Headrick's mother packed him a lunch and sent him off to the school, when he was so tall that he had to bend over to step into the small front door. Just as soon as the teacher turned his/her back, out the window went Ves. "School learning" was not his forte. No doubt, some students lived high enough up in the coves, to walk on up to the little school.*



**Grady Ward Partin and his two grandchildren stand on three cornerstones of the little schoolhouse to let the reader have an idea of its size.**

**(GPS N 35° 10.626' W 85° 44.524')**

Speegle Point (I) is just one of numerous points extending off Pigeon Spring Road. The Speegle history on that point started with Alfred Speegle, Sr. who married two of Thomas Hargis' daughters, Rebecca Ann and then Melvina. After Rebecca's death, Alfred married Melvina or "Lavina" as she was better known. Between the two wives, he fathered over ten children. Over a year ago, Mr. Ray Sartain, a Speegle descendant, passed away leaving behind one of the most beautiful, well-kept farms of recent Pigeon. A few years back, I visited with him to talk about that point in particular. No one on this earth ever loved Pigeon more than Ray Sartain, unless it would be Charles Dykes. Ray lived at the spot where the George French homestead was. He showed me the old hand-dug well that had furnished water for generations of Speegles, Frenches, Wisers and several other families. Next to the well, he pointed out the Witness Tree where I could still faintly see the large "X" that had been many years before engraved into the side of the tree. "Before this giant tree, I swear that I did not kill so and so," or "We mark this giant tree, stating that the corners of our boundary lines meet here," or "This tree with its mark means that we will no longer fight

each other in any fashion,” or “Meet me at the Witness Tree, and we will elope!” It has never been decided if the old giant tree was witnessing for those beneath it, or if those beneath were witnessing for the tree’s right to settle the arguments or mark the deeds done. One thing I know for certain is that Billy French Thomas *left his mark* on that old tree when he backed the family car (*an old A-Model with the trundle seat cut off so it could be used as a truck*) into the tree just a little below the big “X.” That scar too, had long healed over, but Billy knows where he put it.

**Witness Tree at  
Speegle Point (1)**



**Community Hand-  
dug well at Speegle  
Point (1)**

The Speegles lived on up the hill from the Frenches, but the only thing left of their homestead is the fireplace mantel, which was moved on to lower ground. Before Mr. Sartain acquired the land, the last inhabitants were the Frenches and the Wise family. By that point in Pigeon history, they were just about the only folks who had not pulled up stakes and left the area for towns or cities. Due to an unfortunate family situation, the Wise family left

Pigeon, leaving George and Anna French alone at Speegle Point (I). Well, not exactly alone; they and some of their extended family hung on. It wasn't that they loved being out in the "God forsaken" area, but they had a knack for making whiskey, and Pigeon was a hard-to-get-to section of the plateau for the revenuers.

If one wants to go to Pigeon, even today, he must first ask, "Will the roads be passable?" Of course, with all the activity of the hunters who lease the land now, the roads are meant to be passable only to four-wheel drive vehicles, but there are those "locked gates." I hate the gates on the main road, but gates on private land are fine and none of my business. Why, I could dress in an all-covering orange outfit, and I still might get shot trying to get to my own little piece of land!" Sometimes a gate gets blown away, and the bickering starts, but the gate usually stays down. Am I the only woman who thinks that that is funny? Some of those hunters are my good friends, but hey, I "ain't" taking any chances with my life. Men will be boys! Then throughout the years, when the companies who owned land for logging did their thing, the roads got better, then a lot worse. Heavy equipment and heavy logging traffic will destroy even the good roads they built for themselves. So after all the destruction of the land and forest is finished, then Pigeon Road generally is *finished*—what was before a large mud hole becomes a pond. I like the concept of logging by helicopter, but even that cost lives at Pigeon.

But when the Frenches stayed put "out Pigeon," they could make gallons and gallons of whiskey down under those bluffs near a spring or creek. Billy French Thomas lived with his grandparents, George and Anna French, at Speegle Point (I) from time to time throughout his youth. For Christmas when he was still five-years-old, he was given a rifle. It was nothing for him to take off to the woods alone at that age and kill a full bag of squirrels that was so heavy that he had to drag it home at dark. As a teenager, Billy French Thomas drove that old homemade designed A-Model over to town and backed up to Flury's Store where every two weeks, he loaded it down with ten, one hundred pound bags of sugar; folks, that is 1000 pounds of sugar. According to Billy, "They always had sugar **for their oatmeal.**" Seriously, he stated, "It was the only way to make a living!"

Distilling and bootlegging whiskey were not without their hazards. Billy's grandfather and uncle went to jail for making whiskey—one year and a day. The Revenue men tried their best to catch ten-year-old Billy also, but he out ran them and jumped off a cliff right into the middle of a cedar tree. Remembering, Billy said, "I can still hear them laughing. I was skinned all over!" As one older Grundy County gentleman told me, a big mistake was made when some bootleggers poured their mash out on the ground and the wild hogs came to fill their bellies with the intoxicating matter. The revenuers listened, as they went through the wilderness looking for stills, for wild hogs bellowing crazy squeals. The drunken pigs sometimes gave away the position of a great whiskey operation. Billy says



that he made enough of the stuff that he could still turn out some mighty good stuff, if he chose to do so. Dear reader, please go to the afore mentioned site and read the story, "*The Saga of Billy French Thomas.*"



**Remnants of a  
Whiskey Still  
at Braden  
Spring near  
the cemetery.**

**The stills  
were  
constructed  
on or near a  
creek; access  
to water was a  
necessity.**

Bootlegging was a larger part of Grundy County's history than one might imagine. I rarely speak to an older person without the subject of making whiskey coming up in the conversation. Many of those ladies who wore those mink skins around their shoulders and walked with an "air" about themselves, got those little fellows when their men folks dealt in bootleg whiskey or gambling. Don't talk with older folks if you want to believe that God created some folks to be better than others. All of a sudden, one might become proud that he or she was born and lived in poverty. In bygone years, poverty on this mountain might have said two things to onlookers, "I don't make moonshine whiskey, or I drink too much moonshine whiskey."

It is hard to decide if moonshining, bootlegging or logging was the main industry at Pigeon. I suppose logging was because at least the law wasn't always chasing the loggers unless they were brewing on the side. Thomas Headrick logged his land way out on what I call Pigeon Point. He made a living, enough to support, two sets of children by his two wives, Elizabeth Anderson and Fannie (Clepper, Morgan) Headrick (Anderson). He had two sets of children and from photos seemed to do well with his logging business. However, it was the logs that had the last word when he supposedly was killed by being crushed with logs that fell upon him. Some question his death as being possibly murder, but an accident

was the official decision. Even as late as a couple or three years ago, I saw loads of logs coming out Pigeon Springs Road. Those of us who owned land out that way, always wondered if it had been cleared, so this was another excuse to make a trip to Pigeon, but every trip was enjoyed.

There is this story: Arnold Dove and Ves Headrick loaded the body of someone in the Coffelt family, who had died at Pigeon, onto their wagon for transport to Pigeon Cemetery. The men were drinking, and by the time they got to the cemetery, they realized that their cargo was missing. The wagon was turned around, and the men began their search for the body. It was found some ways back down the road and finally taken back for burial. I have concluded that my list of people buried in the old cemetery needs to be revised.

Soon after **Bev Taylor** died, his wife Gwinnie married Thomas M. Thorp, and many years later sold her land at Pigeon to Clifford Dykes. Gwinnie gave the insurance money she got from the Woodmen of the World Society to her new husband to build a store. She always said that the only thing she got out of her first husband's death was the few pieces of candy that she was able to steal from her second husband's store. Thomas moved his family to Cowan, Tennessee. While there, he and Gwinnie had two children, May and Max. Later they moved to Hatton, Alabama where two more children, Annie Lou and Wallace were born.

Meanwhile back in Tracy City, Tennessee, Gwinnie's daughter, Maud Taylor, married John Wayne Byers on 08 May 1923. Maud was not quite fourteen, and within three years she was the mother of two daughters, Byrtle born 29 March 1924 and Verna born 10 October 1926. Baby Verna was six months old when her father died, leaving young Maud a widow with two babies to care for.

On 29 October 1927, Maud Byers married her brother-in-law, William Joab Byers. Wayne and William's parents were Joe Lamberth and Aminda "Mindy" Amanda (Tigue) Byers. Maud's first son, Floyd, was born 08 February 1929; Belva Delores came along 25 February 1931; then another son, Don, was born 11 May, 1933; Audrey was born 25 November 1935, and the last child, Mary, was born 22 July 1942. Delores was completely surrounded by siblings. Her first memory as a child came early while the family was living in Pattie's Valley, a little low place at the end of Frank Layne Road off Lankford Town Road. Later Mack and Molly McCormick lived in that valley, and even later, Maurice and Julia Davis. There was a little branch running through the property.

It was on the back porch of their home in the little valley where Delores was bitten by a puppy whose mother was rabid. Her father killed the pup then took his daughter to "*the mad stone.*" Her mother had been ill for some time after baby Don was born and could not

go with her, but her father was very attentive. Being so young, Delores could not remember where they went or who took them. The person with “the mad stone” stuck it to the wound and it stayed put. When it fell off, the stone was placed in milk, which turned green. This was done over and over until the stone would no longer stick. Delores has vivid memories of the milk turning green and of the small stone. Her father told her that he too, at one time, had been taken to “the mad stone.” He also told his family about an O’Neal girl who had been mauled by a rapid dog; she was taken to “the mad stone,” but failure to cover all her many wounds with the stone resulted in her death. According to Delores, folks knew where “the mad stone” was and went to it just like they would go to a hospital. The stone was believed to have come from the head of a whitetail deer. This was not the only remedy believed to thwart rabies before the shots were readily available to all. Don’t ballyhoo too loudly – Delores says that she is living proof that “the mad stone” worked.

In the early thirties on Pigeon Spring Road, many acres of the land (*later called Partins’ Diary Farm*) were owned by the Woods family. The family lived in a small house and started building a large log house. When everything but the roof was finished, they stretched something like a big tarp over it and moved in. They brought all kinds of animals with them. They had Angora goats, all kinds of chickens, ducks, turkeys, and other animals. They built pens and cages for their animals and settled in for the duration. They tried to mine coal from a bluff seam “out Pigeon,” down below what older people called the “Bear Wallow Country.” Apparently, being during the depths of the Great Depression, the family was unable to hold out for more than a couple of years, and “they starved out.” They opened the animal cages and turned everything out. They had two old coal trucks and loaded one with their belongings and left the other sitting on the side of the road with a load of coal on it. After the Woods family left, some of the locals found the goats tangled in briars and caught them for themselves. The Partin families who later owned the land always called it the “Goat Ranch.” It was in the area where Emily Partin and Curt and Sherry Partin now live. When Curt first moved to the land, he found parts of the old chimney and house foundation.

In 1937, Ernest C. Norvell, a local undertaker, owned land and rental property on Pigeon Spring Road. He rented out a small house, which had been rented to Carl and Edna Roberts when they were first married, to the Byers family. That little house set back further from the road than the future house built in 1942 by Walter Tolbert and his wife, Cecil, who had bought out the Norvells. Part of the Tolbert home is still in existence incorporated inside the house that once belonged to Grady Edward Partin and later “Bright Eyes Crisp.” The little house rented by the Byers family was a two-room house with a steep roof. Mr. Byers went upstairs and sealed the attic so that a large and a small bed could be placed there for the children. He placed a ladder flat against one of the downstairs walls to allow the little ones to climb up at bedtime.

Closer to the road was a small rock house where Mr. Tidman and his daughter lived. The daughter caught the eyes of a Cagle man who came "a courtin'". However, the father was steadfastly opposed to there being any kind of a relationship between the two, so he ran off the man telling him not to come back. Mr. Tidman's demand evidently was not heeded because Mr. Cagle was caught hanging around Miss Tidman again. Her father yanked him up and placed his body across a chopping block and was just about to chop him asunder when young Alfred Dykes came along and took the ax away saving the man's life.

In 1937 Maud Byers had to go to Alabama to care for her sick mother. She took Don and Audrey with her and had to leave the other children at home with their father who was still working in the Palmer mines. Their father got home as the children left for school, and he was gone to work when they came home. He walked to Tracy, caught the train to Palmer, worked for six dollars a day, caught the train back to Tracy, walked home to Pigeon Road and did what he could to help while the children were at school. Basically, the children stayed at home alone for weeks while their mother was gone. The children did all the cooking, cleaning, washing, or whatever it took to keep things normal. They never missed a day of school. Delores also spoke of another instance where she and her siblings were responsible for nieces and nephews, and no adults were there to help. *(Now, I will **not** ask for forgiveness for what I am about to say, but my Father in Heaven knows that many of the children of this generation, would have rotted into the upholstery on the couch from starvation and immobility if they had had to live like those children did. I **will** go ahead and ask my Father in Heaven to forgive all us parents for rearing a bunch of babies. Wow! I can already feel the rotten eggs hitting my face, but I feel so much better. JP)*

Speaking of eggs, when Delores was asked if she knew any old method to preserve eggs, she told this story. *Her brother Floyd married a lady from Germany. That lady remembered that her mother had a huge crock in a cool place wherein a jello-like substance was placed. When eggs were on sale or plentiful, her mother bought up several dozen and layered them in the thick matter in the crock. The eggs kept all winter without ruining.*

Delores and her siblings walked from their home up to the railroad tracks then walked to Tracy City where they attended Shook School. Unlike today (2010), school was not called off for bad weather. The children walked in rain, storms, snow and bitter cold, but when they got to the school, it was always warm. The huge radiators would be covered with coats, sweaters and socks drying for the trip back home that afternoon. The heat was generated in the basement of the school by a coal-fired furnace, which heated a large sealed, iron container/boiler filled with water. As the water boiled, it produced steam that was piped out of the boiler under pressure throughout the building. The steam went through each radiator keeping the classrooms cozy. If a room became too warm, a door or window was opened.

Ruth Flynn was Delores' third grade teacher at Shook School and one of her favorite. Miss Franklin Abernathy, Ethel Martin, Nellie Jossi, and the principal, John A. Anderson, who later married Nellie Jossi, were other names she recalled. Doug Goforth later took the principal's position. Some of the girl's who were Delores' playmates were Joyce Gross, Mary Jo Elliott, Ann Thomas, Billie Ruth Payne, Doris London and Ruth Parmley. When Delores was in the eighth grade, Miss Martin had heard that some of the girls had been making fun of Delores' clothes. When Miss Martin asked her if the girls had been bothering her, she said, "No, if they had, you could tell by looking at their faces!" Delores admitted that she was probably a "crackerjack in school," but she stood up for anyone who was being mistreated and didn't take anything off those who had nothing better to do than harass less fortunate children.

On the way back home, the Byers children stopped at the Haynes Crossing to pick apples from the lone tree probably planted by some of the E. M. Haynes family when they lived in what is generally called by the present owners "the railroad lot." Formerly, the Haynes Station was next to the railroad there, but Delores says that it was long gone by the time she moved down in the area. When Mr. Tolbert realized that one of Delores' brothers and her Uncle Wallace were eating the apples, he told them to leave them along. The brother told Mr. Tolbert that he did not own the Haynes field, so the boys continued to get apples whenever they wanted them. *(This reminded me of a guava tree in a small field near our home in the Fiji Islands. The neighbor children and our two sons climbed the tree and ate all the guavas they could consume. The Australian lady, who lived in the house next to the field, came out and gave the children a good tongue-lashing and ran them off. They came to me with the story of how she treated them, and anyone who knows me, knows that I had to fix the problem one way or the other. I combed my hair and put on my nice face, and up the hill I went to visit the lady whom I had never met before. After being served a glass of pineapple juice and exchanging stories in "our native tongues," (she with her Aussie accent and me with my southern, mountain dialect), we became friends. Before the visit was over, she realized that her landlord did not own the property and, "Of course, it was alright for the boys to eat the guavas.")*

When the Tolberts came, the Byers family moved up to the "walnut trees" as we all identify that section of land. The Tolberts were truck farmers, and they planted acres and acres of corn, Irish potatoes, green beans and sweet potatoes, which were peddled in Winchester and other places. With all this farming going on, the Tolberts were happy to hire the Byers family to help in the planting, cultivating and harvesting of the crops. Delores said their workday started at seven o'clock and quitting time was five o'clock. Her brother Floyd was about fourteen and needed a suit for eighth grade graduation, and Mr. Tolbert paid for him to have one; then Floyd worked off the cost of the suit on the Tolbert farm. Joe and Maud Byers were each paid three dollars a day for a ten-hour day, and the older children, Floyd, Delores and Don were each paid two dollars a day. Audrey made one dollar a day,

and little Mary didn't work, but Mr. Tolbert always gave her fifty cents. Delores smilingly stated, "That was a lot of money." Mr. Tolbert worked right along beside the Byers family.

One thing he planted was green pole beans, which he called "improved Kentucky Wonders," but Delores said they were actually White McCaslan beans. When it time came to pick the massive plantings of beans, Delores got on one side of the teepee-type, pole structure that held the beans; Floyd got on the other side, and smaller Don crawled through the center of the teepees where it was shady and picked those cool, beautiful, long ones that hung straight down underneath the plants. One particular day, they were assigned to pick forty bushels of beans, and that they did between 7:00 and 11:00 that morning. Mr. Tolbert and Mr. Byars put the picked beans into bags and put them on the truck. After that morning of hard work, the family caught a bus and went to Alabama to visit Delores' grandmother, Gwinnie Thorp.

The potatoes were dug with the help of a mule, and the Byers children fell right into the rows and picked up the potatoes being careful not to bruise or abuse the tender skins. The tomatoes were picked with the greener ones being placed on the bottom of the bushel; then the half-ripe ones were layered next until the top ones were a ripe red color just inviting someone to eat. This way the tomatoes ripened as the bushel was sold pound by pound from the top. It also kept them from being crushed by the weight from the top. Sweet potatoes were dug later and taken off to market. Mr. Tolbert allowed the Byers family to glean the fields so that they did not have to put time into growing a garden of their own. The work on the Tolbert farm was hard, but there was still time for play.

Every day in the summer the Byers children went to the Fiery Gizzard Creek to cool off. Their father and mother could both swim, so the children were taken to the Haynes Hole below the Tolbert farm. They walked the old foot log that I and many other people walked throughout the years, to cross the Gizzard and get to the swimming hole. When Delores was much older, she was the only woman in the Dykes family who could swim, so she was the designated lifeguard for the gang of children she took to the Haynes Hole. At times her gang consisted of Elton, Allen, Robin, Rick, Ron, Lewis, Keith, Kim, and Diane Dykes, plus Bobby and Daniel Nunley. Off she went across the Partin farm down to the foot log with her gang following behind for a wonderful swim in the Gizzard. But there was one frightful day that she remembers all too clearly. She was working at the shirt factory when someone came in and announced that Grady Edward Partin, (*my father-in-law*), had been killed by the farm bull in the very pasture that she had walked across many times with all those children. A cold chill came over her body while recalling a certain day when the same bull came toward them, and Ronnie Dykes, who was big in stature, picked up a big piece of stump and hit the bull in the head. Delores, a little, short lady, stated that had the bull charged the children, she would have died protecting all of them.



Walter Tolbert raised white rabbits. According to Delores, Mrs. Tolbert could fry up the best rabbit that she ever had the privilege of eating. Sometimes the Byers family was served meals by Mrs. Tolbert. The secret to serving good rabbit meat for supper is to start with young, tender rabbits. When the Partins, Willie, Grady Edward, Douglas and Roy, bought the Tolbert farm, they found that a large shed in the back was left full of rabbits suggesting that the Tolberts made a quick decision to leave Pigeon Road. Delores remembers that they bought a store in Chattanooga because for a period of time, her father worked for them in that store. The Partin families kept right on growing the same crops as the Tolberts until they decided to turn the approximately two hundred fifty acres into a dairy farm.

Pigeon Spring Road was not in the exact spot in front of the Tolbert house back then as it is now. It was up toward the Tolbert house more, and there was no bridge, so the road was worn down to the flat rock by the wagons and few vehicles that chance to cross that way. The creek ran across the roadbed at all times, and in the winter ice formed on the flat rock making it dangerous for wagons and pedestrians. The Byers children had a foot log up the creek so they could avoid walking through the creek at the road. One cold, icy day, the children were outside playing. *(Don't you find it interesting that the children were playing outside on an icy, cold day? That's what children did in the "old days." And they loved it!)*

Old man Benjamin A. Wooten tried to cross the creek at the road and had fallen off into the little icy cold falls that dropped off toward the Gizzard Creek breaking his leg and injuring his back. He yelled for help, and the Byers children heard his cries and got their father who went to his aid. Someone was sent to the Wooten house to bring help. Mr. Ben Wooten, or "Pap," as I fondly called him when I was a child, was a grandson of the Ben Wooten who owned Tracy City before it was even known as Tracy City. The elder Ben Wooten acquired much acreage down Battle Creek/Pigeon Spring Road from Mr. Thomas Pack back before the mid 1800's. "Pap" Wooten had a house full of strong sons and daughters. His own father, Thomas Benton Wooten, lived at the old homestead before him, and possibly his grandfather, the elder Ben Wooten before that. Pap was an only son in a houseful of girls, so I assume that is why he inherited the old Wooten place. Eventually, Pap had to leave Pigeon, and he moved right next door to my parents on King Street in Monteagle. He was old and stooped from damage caused from the fall into the creek years before.

Several families moved in and out of the old Wooten place from time to time. Jesse and Lillie Harris lived there. Robert Lee Trussell familiarly known as "Bob" (1881-1954) also lived there. Bob had lost his first two wives, Lucy Partin and Cassie Howard, at early ages. Cassie had bore him two children Wesley and Vina before her death. His third wife Ella Johnson also bore him several children. Bob was found dead at the Wooten place at his

woodpile; he had died from an apparent heart attack while splitting wood. He was buried at the Partin/Dotson Cemetery near Alto where his first two wives were interred. Bob was the type of man who would pick up walnuts as he walked in the woods and then plant them near his home. When asked if he thought he would ever in his lifetime get to eat a nut from one of those trees, he replied, "No, I won't, but maybe your grandchildren or mine might reap the benefits." Ben A. Wooten left the homestead to all his children equally. They bought out each other's part until one child, Hughie Wooten, who operated a saw mill there for years, owned it. He held onto the homestead for his family to enjoy until someone burned him out. The old Wooten property is now owned by Daryl Street and after years of being called the "old Ben Wooten place," it is now known as "Rock of Ages" because of all the rock boulders used in the landscaping.

Mr. George Wimberly was living with Wash and Ella Anderson at the walnut trees before Mr. Tolbert bought the land, and when he died, friends carried his body in some kind of a large basket out the road toward town. Water was too high over the road to cross with a wagon. There just wasn't a good road; on foot was the best way at times to leave the area. Delores remembered that when they lived in the house at the walnut trees, the same house that Wash had lived in, that there was a pretty big shed out back that her mother used as a kitchen. There were so many in the Byers family, that Maud improvised her living space—mothers know how to do that. When Bee and Bessaline Sweeton lived there, my husband, Grady Ward went up to the house to see a litter of puppies "that the old dog had dug up." When I came into the Partin family in 1960, Franklin Delano and Dorothy (Meeks) Nunley were living in the house. Franklin was one of the best "storytellers" around. He came many years later to visit us, and he hadn't changed a bit. With respect, we want to remember that Wash and Ella Anderson buried a stillborn baby on the "walnut tree" place somewhere above where we now have a pond (2010).

Delores remembers that her family also lived for a while on the old White Hotel property. The hotel had burned not too many years before, but some small sheds were left standing. I have always noticed a big hole in the huge above ground cistern that the hotel used in its heyday, and Delores said that when they lived there, John Meadows cut that big hole in the concrete blocks so that the family could get wash water without carrying it from under the bluff at the White Spring. It was here one morning that Mr. Byers sent Floyd, Delores and Don out into the woods where the animals were allowed to wander about to catch the old mule and two mares. The mule was much bigger than the mares, and far more contrary. The youngsters rounded up the three animals, and each mounted one to make the trip back home. While Don rode the large mule, Floyd and Delores rode on the two mares. Somewhere along the way, they came up with the idea of seeing who could ride his or her animal through the smallest gap between two trees. To do this, they had to place their feet and legs up in front of them on the animals' necks. That way they could avoid crushing their

legs and also get the animals through a narrower place. Floyd and Delores on their mares got through the narrow gap just fine. Now please remember that a mule loves a horse or mare and will follow either anywhere. So along came Don on the big mule, which followed the mares right through the gap. The mule and Don came out the other side, but the mule dropped dead, “And never even kicked,” exclaimed Delores. The animal apparently was crushed to death. “Now, how do you like them apples?” – *an old saying used by us mountain people*. How were the children going to explain what they had just done to the family mule! Well, they were quick with their story when their father asked if they had found the old mule. Knowing that the night before there had been an electrical storm, they quickly told him, “Yes, we found him, but he’s lying over there in the woods – dead. The only thing we could figure is that the lightning must have struck him last night?” Mr. Byers never went to look at the mule, and the children never told him anything different.

Mr. Byers raised and killed hogs for the family to eat during the winter months. Most of the time, they salted down the pork for storage. Occasionally, if a beef was killed, Mrs. Byers fried the meat and canned it by pouring the grease over the meat in the jar and sealing it with a lid. I’ve seen my mother do homemade pork sausage that way, but I’ve never seen beef canned in the same manner. Delores helped her mother string “shuck beans” for drying; she quickly said, “They were good, too.” They were simply cooked like any dried bean, soaked in water and cooked – without a doubt having a big chunk of salt pork thrown in the pot with them. Her mother also dried apples. Once fresh apples were sliced thinly, they were placed on a clean cloth and placed outdoors in the hot sun. If it started sprinkling rain, they were quickly brought inside so as not to hydrate again. The pieces had to be turned over so that they dried evenly.

The family made lye soap. Delores declared that rainwater and lye soap was the best thing to use for shampoo. Stump water was good to remove freckles. Mrs. Byers didn’t talk about her ability to remove warts, but she had a knack for doing such. She gently rubbed her hands over the wart, and in a couple of days, the wart would be gone.

When I asked Delores if they ever got whippings, she said, “Yes, Mama whipped us with a switch. And we had better not run!” Once Floyd ran and climbed upon the house to get away from his mother when she was going to “switch” him. Mrs. Byers picked up a good size throwing stone and aimed for her son on the roof. Her aim was sure. Floyd decided to come down and take his whipping. I told Delores that sometimes my mother used to make me pick my own cherry or apple tree limb and told me that it had better be a good one. In her case, her mother did her own choosing. Strangely enough, neither of us have one ounce of bitterness toward our mothers for punishing us with a “switch.” However, I did have a dislike for those fruit trees in our backyard.

When asked about being sick, Delores said the family never went to a doctor. If they had a sprained ankle, they soaked a brown paper bad in vinegar and wrapped the sprain. Butterfly root was used for a kidney infection. If a baby was born with yellow jaundice, sage grass roots were boiled to form a tea, which was then spoon fed to the baby. For burns, soda and vinegar were used. Ella Trussell, wife of Bob Trussell, used to go under the mountain at the old Ben Wooten place where they were living at the time and dig alum root to use as a remedy for diarrhea; if the sick one was not old enough to chew on the root, then a tea was made and given to the child. Delores' grandmother made her own camphor out of camphor gum and whiskey.

The family moved over to a rental house on the Lutmans' "chicken farm" near what became known as Ingman Farm Road. The Lutmans were parents of Mrs. Grace Ingman. Mr. Byers did not work for the Lutmans. He logged for a living. Moving there added even more distance for the children to walk to Shook School. When it was so very cold, the children just couldn't make the walk. Delores' father was sick, but he moved his family to the Jump-off area where he was able to cut "slick wood." She didn't lack much finishing the eighth grade at Shook, so she entered school at Jump-Off. A Mr. Martin was the teacher at the one-room school, and one of the smartest teachers that Delores had ever met. He had previously been a professor at St. Andrews, but because of a personal problem he had, he started teaching at Jump-Off School. He taught all eight grades, but Delores said she did most of the teaching of the younger children. She and Doris Yokley were the only eighth grade students that year.

The next move for the family was to Summerfield in a house near where Minnie Lockhart lives. By that time, Delores was in high school, but her younger siblings went to school at Summerfield. Some of her favorite teachers were Anna Mary Parker, her English teacher, Ms. Schullen, her biology teacher, and Lou Henley, her civics teacher. Mr. Rudolph Schild was her first year algebra teacher, but he died that same year (April 1948), and another man came to take his place.

When the children were growing up, their parents never attended any worship services, but their mother sent them to the Methodist Church ever Sunday when they lived in or near Tracy City. When they moved to Summerfield, they were sent to the Methodist Church that once stood on the Summerfield Cemetery property. That original church was started by Mr. Bazille Summers, the man for whom Summerfield got its name. Hence Layne was a long time preacher there. Delores was thankful when Roy Partin came out at 2:00 every Sunday afternoon and "had church." (*She is now a faithful member of the First Baptist Church in Tracy City, Tennessee.*)

"Delores, did you get to graduate from high school?" I asked. "I quit and got married! Stupid, the stupidest thing I ever did in my life!" she said with a serious face. "The biggest mistake I ever made in my life was when Daddy fixed it for me to go to St. Mary's school when we lived at Jump-Off." She was to clean rooms, which would pay her tuition. She told her father that if she had to go to St. Mary's that she would just quit school altogether. The reason she refused was, "I felt like I was being shipped off!" Her older brother Floyd was left in Tracy City to live with someone else so that he could stay in school there. It seemed to Delores that the family was being scattered. She realized in later years that she would have gotten a good education and that she had made a bad mistake.

Back when Delores lived "out Pigeon," Andy and Hallie (Sanders) Dykes were rearing a large family of boys and a couple of girls in the area. She got to know that family quite well. One of the Dykes boys, Bennie, became special to Delores. She said, "I've known him all my life;" well, she had known him since she was about ten. He was the person who made her do that stupid thing, quit school. They were in love, and the years they have remained together speak for the commitment the two made.

Since Delores had lived in Summerfield, I wondered if she had had any connection with the Highlander Folk School. She immediately and adamantly said, "I'm going to tell you something about Highlander Folk School. You can't get me to say anything bad about them! They fed us; they clothed us; they gave Mary and Mama work when they couldn't make it any other way. They did not push colored people on them; they didn't push anything. Myles Horton—you couldn't find a better person. "When her father had to go to Nashville to a doctor, it was the people at Highlander who took him. Delores said that the school gave them the opportunity to do things that they might never have gotten to do. They wove baskets, attended square dances, and went swimming and fishing in the pond that was near the school. Mary Byers, the youngest child, met Eleanor Roosevelt and Martin Luther King at the school. The District Attorney came to Delores' mother's house to question her about the goings on at the school, and he made the mistake of implying that she was lying when she answered his questions. Young Mary went on the defensive and told the D. A. to get out of their house because, "My mother doesn't lie." Young Mary went on to ask the man, "Where were you when I was fourteen-years-old, and Myles Horton was teaching me how to keep books so that I might be able to help feed the family?" She continued to ask, "Where were you? We had no money, and Myles Horton was giving us work."

Living on a tiny little block of land in Monteagle, and being rather excluded from all the goings on around town and "up the road," I was not aware of the Highlander Folk School. What I can remember, (*and I think it was fall of 1956 my freshman year*), was hearing talk on the bus that a man named Myles Horton was going to bring some black students to enter Grundy County High School; trouble was expected. I was scared to death to start my

first day of high school anyway, so when the bus pulled into the parking lot, and I saw a burning effigy hanging in front of the gymnasium, I didn't understand, and when someone tried to explain to me what it all meant, I still didn't understand the hatred.

I had always thought that black people were treated badly. As a child growing up in Monteagle, I saw black women pushing baby carriages around with white babies in them; I wondered, "Why didn't the white mothers enjoy pushing their own children?" Often I helped my mother clean the houses of the Monteagle Assembly patrons where some houses had a room that was "different from the rest of the house." I could not understand the dark, damp, gloomy rooms off the back porches or in the basements that contained one old chair with a broken cane bottom, one rusty bedstead with an old cast-away, smelly, spoiled ticking-covered mattress, and a small table. I hated crickets, and those little rooms had plenty of crickets. Mama told me that that was where the Negro maids stayed. She always took special pains to make those rooms more homely although there was not much one could do, but we scrubbed harder, cleaned deeper, and if we could find a piece of bright fabric or flowers to brighten the rooms, we used them.

Delores recalled helping the Hortons publish a community newspaper on an old mimeograph machine. Some local families would not let their children go to the Highlander School or work there, but many families in Summerfield were so appreciative of the work and positive community activities that were offered to all. Delores stated that Myles Horton kept a watchful eye over everything that went on to be certain that nothing was done that would openly offend any of the local people. Obviously, when Sheriff Elston Clay padlocked the school, and the trial against the school began in Tracy City, many of the local people were saddened and angered, especially the Byers family.

When Delores and Bennie were newly weds, they stayed a while with her in-laws. Hallie and Delores walked to town, a good distance from where they lived, and brought the groceries back in a "pillow slip." It was not unusual for the two women to carry a twenty-five pound bag of flour on their shoulders along with other items. When they started doing business at Rudy Church's store, they could only deliver the groceries so far out Pigeon Road. Hallie "Mommie" Dykes and Delores had a little cart and horse that they took up the road to pick up their groceries that had been put out at another house. Andy, or "Gig" as he was fondly called, always warned his wife and daughter-in-law, "Don't you run that horse." They promised not to, but when they rounded the curve where they could not be seen by "Gig," the two ladies laughed and put that old horse in a run—so much for the obedient housewife. *(In another country, I once saw a relative of a young woman beat her mercilessly without remorse. I wonder how well that behavior would have worked on some of these tough, determined, hard-working mountain women of Grundy County.)*

Bennie and Delores Dykes became the parents of four children: Linda, Diane, Keith, and Kimball. When Keith was grown, he lost his life in a traffic accident; that loss was devastating to Delores. While her children were young, she stayed at home on Hobbs Hill with them until the shirt factory in Altamont was opened. Her son Keith was eighteen-months-old. Marie Cooper drove a bus each day to the factory, and for a small fee, one could ride to Altamont to work. I had always heard how hard the work was in the shirt factory, but Delores described it as “not so hard, but just tormenting.” By that, she spoke of always being pressed to make “production.” She was paid eighty cents an hour until she made production, then she was given one dollar an hour. The problem always came when the “production numbers” rose right along with the pay. That brought pressure and continuous stress on the workers. The head over the factory was Mr. Freeman; he came to Delores one day and told her she was not doing her job right. Delores said, “Show me how to do it.” He made no fuss or argument and sat down to show her the proper way. She picked up on it immediately and all went well.

When the factory bought collar pressers, Delores said she really got into the hard work—operating three pedals with her feet all day long. For eighteen years, she did her job in order to feed her family, and her pay never rose above minimum wage. When a lady complained to Delores one time about leaving her children to work away from home, she told her, “Let me tell you something, when you have a family to feed, **you do what you have to do!**”

Delores still lives on Pigeon Road with her husband Bennie. She has five grandchildren whom she adores. Her daughter Linda married James “Butch” Goodman, and they became parents to Allison, Amanda and Russell. Diane married Harold Schlageter; they have two daughters Monica and Meredith. Keith and Kimball, her sons, never married. And then there are those wonderful great-granddaughters: Catherine, Olivia and Carley Abigail. Life hasn’t always been easy for Delores, but she hasn’t let the hard times damper her enthusiasm for life. She and I laughed together about our Pigeon stories and doing the best with what we had or as some say, “Playing the hand of cards that we were dealt.”

Many years ago, my husband, Grady Ward, and our eldest son, Stan, were “out Pigeon” in the summer collecting ferns. One was on one side of a shallow hollow with full foliage on the trees, and the other was on the other side. They were approximately fifty yards apart. Stan heard what he thought was a jet fighter engine sound coming down the gulf. When he looked up, he expected to see a military fighter plane come over his head. There happened to be a hole in the canopy of the trees, and Stan looked up and the sound came closer and closer, and he looked up toward the hole, and there “it” was. He had his back to his dad. Stan saw a “duck” with outstretched wings that were not moving. If the wings had been flapping, it would have obviously been a mallard duck. The “duck” was



moving on very fast. He turned and looked at his dad who had a bewildered look. He asked his dad, "Did you see that?" "Yes, I did," he answered. "What did it look like to you?" Stan asked. His dad said, "It looked like a duck to me!" They agreed it was a "duck," and they decided not to tell anyone, but they couldn't keep from telling me when they got home. Some time later, Grady Ward heard about the experimental "drone" program, and finally, he and Stan realized what they saw was a low flying spy drone. Now please understand that there are no secrets at Pigeon.

In the past twenty plus years while living on Pigeon Springs Road, at times when I worked my garden with a tiller or hoe until the sweat moistened my hairline and ran down my back, a small airplane or sometimes a small helicopter buzzed my position on this old farm. Often I was circled, over and over, but I kept right on hoeing those peppers and tomatoes. I figured the guys in the air could not decide whether this old woman was hoeing vegetables or marijuana; I shirked it off to the County, State or the Federal Government wanting to see if my husband had added a little side room to his pigpen or maybe had finished that old smokehouse he started years ago – you know, they do that to us, so they can make more money so that they can have bigger bonuses. When I worked for the county school system, I was an expert at cutting out block letters, free handed, for any project needed. Those old empty white feed sacks entered my mind from time to time during those buzzings. I thought, "I need to quickly cut out some large letters and place around the farm saying 'NO MARIJUANA PLANTS,'" or maybe I could cut out some letters saying "NEW OUTHOUSE ON BACK OF FARM." That way they could go on their way and save me and other taxpayers some money.

I've decided, "Pigeon is not a place. Pigeon is a frame of mind!" When the local people need to get away from the real world, they go "out Pigeon" and wander the many logging roads, not going anywhere, but enjoying the distance from reality. They pick a handful of blackberries along the way, or check on the muscadines to see if they are ready for harvesting. They pick a bouquet of honeysuckles for the loved ones back home. Some go to cut a load of wood or to watch logging done by helicopters. Others walk to the edge of a bluff to imagine life below in the lush valleys. I go to visit the past while always watching out for those hunters of the present. Now admittedly, sprinkled in amongst those wonderful reasons for going "out Pigeon" are a few not-so-wonderful reasons. Like I said before, "It's all according to what frame of mine one is in."

**NOTE: This is a history of Delores (Byers) Dykes family embedded amongst stories of one interesting section of Grundy County/Marion County's past. If there are any corrections to be made, please send them to me at [jackiepartin@blomand.net](mailto:jackiepartin@blomand.net) .**