

## The Roddy Desperadoes

By Jackie Layne Partin (2017)

**Note:** *Italics depict quotes taken directly from sources.* Regular type shows my comments for the most part. Bold type is for emphasis, especially dates. Now we are going to put ourselves back into the “good old days” connecting with more of Grundy County, Tennessee’s lost history, becoming flies on the wall if you please.

The surname Roddy was connected to wealth. Money doesn’t always buy happiness, for quite often it destroys any possibility of living in harmony with family, friends, neighbors or the law. Andrew Jackson “A. J.” Roddy, son of Daniel and Mary (Fry) Roddy, married Susannah “Susan” Stotts and settled in Warren County where they started their family. Before **1860** their first two children, Thomas Benjamin “T. B. Roddy and Mary Frances Roddy, were running about the house. By **1870** the family had grown with four more children: J. C. “Jay”, John K., Anna B., and Alfred James Law “A. J. L.” Roddy. Later in **1870**, the last child, William H. Roddy was born.

As usual, I feel a long story coming on but one full of action, not boring, shameful, and possibly an unknown part of the history of Grundy County. From the start, let’s just say that T. B. Roddy, for the most part, exhibited good behavior especially in his older years. He was a family man, merchant, and in civil government positions of the county. Let’s give more attention to the lives of sons, Jay Roddy, John K. Roddy, Alfred James Law Roddy and William H. Roddy. T. B. Roddy may get sprinkled around in the mix a few times.

*The Daily American--15 Oct 1887*

*“AT TRACY CITY—Constable Roddy Shot and Badly Wounded by a Desperado – About 10 o’clock this morning Constable B. F. Roddy had to serve a warrant for pistol-carrying on Phil Roberts, a notorious character. Roberts had sworn he would not be arrested by Roddy. The Constable took two Deputies, and attempted Robert’s arrest. When reading the warrant Roberts drew his pistol and fired twice in rapid succession at Roddy, who avoided the first shot by knocking up the pistol. The second shot hit Roddy above the hip, ranging upward, Roddy stooping at the time. Roberts broke and ran, and was fired at about six times by the Deputies and John Roddy, a nephew of the Constable. It is now known that, after making a detour in the woods, misleading his pursuers, he went to his house and procured his Winchester, and is now at large with plenty of money, well armed and desperate. E. H. Roddy, another nephew, and merchant, offered at once \$100 reward for Robert’s apprehension. Several are out hunting him on horseback. The fracas occurred near W. R. Hunt’s Store. Hunt had a narrow escape from*

*being shot. Roberts is somewhat of a miner, but makes his living by gambling. Roddy's wound is considered mortal. He is 44 years old, and has a family."*

Ten days later, we have another account of the story. In this account John Roddy, the nephew, is not mentioned. Later the shoe will be on the other foot when we read that Philip Roberts became a Deputy Marshall. Often those who did crimes in Grundy County later became the law or vice versa; two examples that come to mind in a flash, Jordan Aylor and Verdie Guest—just some memories I have. B. F. Roddy was a brother to Andrew Jackson Roddy. Also, I believe the **E. H. Roddy** in the account above should probably read **W. H. Roddy**.

**25 Oct 1887**

*"The Tracy City News: Our Constable, B. F. Roddy, was shot, and at first thought dangerously wounded, last Friday. The circumstances, we have from an eye-witness, were about these: Mr. Roddy had a warrant against Phil Roberts for pistol-carrying. He deputized E. P. Hobbs and A. J. Wilkerson to assist him since Roberts had made the threat that he would not be arrested. They found Roberts near Mr. W. R. Hunt's store, and under instruction from Roddy, his deputies dropped behind, while Roddy advanced to Roberts and made known his business. Roberts asked for the warrant, and when it was read by Roddy, he drew his pistol and fired rapidly twice; the first shot at Roddy's head, which he avoided by knocking up the pistol. The second shot hit Roddy in the back above the hip and lodged in the hip. Roddy fell and Roberts broke and ran, fired at from six to ten times by Roddy's deputies and others. Some say that Roberts fired back while running, some say not. The excitement ran high for a while. Men took horses and pursued Roberts, but he misled them, went home and procured his Winchester repeating rifle, and at this writing has not been captured. Roddy's wound was found to be far from so serious as at first supposed and the excitement is gone. That an officer should be fired on while doing his sworn duty is an outrage and should meet the severest condemnation. Pistol-carrying is all too common, and we hope every effort will be made by all our peace officers, aided by all good and peace-abiding citizens in our community. We understand Mr. T. B. Roddy offers \$100 reward for Roberts' apprehension. Mr. Hunt came near losing his life from a ball going through his house near where he was standing."*

Now possibly the first bad blood concerning the Roddys and the law started or came to a head in **October 1887** with the previous generation of Roddys as seen in the transcribed news articles above.

When I worked on the Grundy County Cemetery books, I was assigned to survey the Tracy City Cemetery. The unusual grave stone of John K. Roddy caused me to believe that he was a man of means. (Today, Aug. 1, 2017, I may possibly be the only one who can find the grave among all the wild, wandering plant life.) Upon

researching his life, I found that he had married Ida Winton, daughter of George W. and Virginia (Cunningham) Winton, on **October 1, 1895**. Immediately a flag went up; John died on **October 15, 1895**, exactly two weeks after marrying his love. What in the world had happened to him? With a little detective work, I found that he had a shady past. In a January **1887** Tullahoma news article, (via the Tennessean), John had started down the road of crime.

*“Last evening, about 5 o’clock, John Roddy and a friend, from Tracy City, rode into our town on horseback, and after drinking some, went to bed. This morning, about 8 o’clock, Giles Rainey, our Marshall, received a dispatch from the Sheriff of Grundy County, saying: “If John Roddy is in Tullahoma arrest him; tie him down and hold him until I come.” Marshal Rainey immediately sought out Mr. Roddy and immediately placed him under arrest and wired the Sheriff of Grundy County that he held him here. Immediately after this another telegram was received here from the Sheriff of Grundy County, stating that he wanted Roddy tied down and closely guarded until he could get here. The officer left on the south-bound train with his prisoner. A Smith & Wessons self-acting revolver and a razor were found on the prisoner’s person when he was arrested. The manner of his arrest created a sensation here and is the general talk of the town. Roddy is a member of one of the wealthiest families of Grundy County and it is thought that some serious crime is charged to him, the sequel of which caused his arrest today.”*

About seven years later in **June** of **1894**, in *The Daily American* newspaper, another event involving John Roddy made the news.

### **“SHOT BY JOHN RODDY”**

#### ***Deputy Marshall Philip Roberts Badly Wounded at Tracy City***

*Assistant United States District Attorney Lee Brock has received from private correspondence an account of a Saturday night tragedy at Tracy City, in which Deputy United States Marshal Philip Roberts was shot and probably killed.*

*It is said that a lot of beer and whisky came to Tracy City to be used in a “blind tiger” run by the **five** Roddy brothers. Roberts went to the place where the liquor was and was shot by John Roddy. He fell, when Alf, or A. J. L. Roddy, lately convicted in the United States District Court here for sending obscene matter through the mails, saw that he was not dead and called on John to shoot him again and kill him. John then fired two more shots into the body of the prostrate man, who will die. The Roddys are bad characters and if Roberts dies the people are said to be contemplating taking Roddy’s punishment into their own hands. It is not stated whether any arrests were made.”*

Well, maybe I spoke too soon about one of the five Roddy boys being a good ole boy. However, we do know that T. B. Roddy grew into a respected member of the citizenry of Tracy City—eventually. Was all of this left over vending or harassment from the shooting of Uncle Benjamin Franklin Roddy by Philip Roberts? Maybe, maybe not! This is an example of the shoe being on the other foot.

**5 September 1895—The Nashville American—“MOONSHINERS ARE SHOT”**

*“Tracy City, Sept. 5—A fight occurred last night between United States Revenue officers and illicit dealer in whiskey near this place, which resulted in the wounding and capture of the malefactors, both of whom are fatally hurt. The officers were unhurt. Deputy United States Marshall J. M. Hall says he has suspected **J. C. Roddy** and Jim Woodlee of running a blind tiger and kept watch on them for some weeks past. He says he heard yesterday that the tiger was out of whisky and that the proprietors would replenish their stock from a wildcat still located somewhere on the Pelham road. He watched his men last night and saw them depart, three in number, in a two horse wagon. He hurriedly made preparations, summoned Charles Meyers as a special deputy and followed. About two miles out the officers halted and secreted themselves on the road side, and about 2 o’clock this morning they heard the men returning. Preceding the wagon was one of the men on foot who carried a gun and seemed to be acting as an advanced guard. He was allowed to pass unmolested. When the wagon, on the seat of which were two men, came up, the officers called out, ordering them to halt; they refused. One of the men commenced whipping the mules, the other grabbing his gun and showing fight. Hall says he ordered the men to halt half a dozen times, then fired, the man in the wagon firing about the same time. Both Hall and his special deputy, Meyers, were armed with shotguns and revolvers. One barrel of Hall’s gun did not fire and he finished the fight with his revolver. Meyers fired two shots with his shotgun.*

*Immediately after the firing the mules ran away and the officers, fearing an ambush from the advance guard remained in the woods until daylight, when they returned to the scene of the fight, near where they found the wagon and a barrel of brandy, but the mules and horses were missing. They found the wounded men in a near-by house, and after they had procured a team, returned to the place. It seems that after the mules ran away, Woodlee fell out of the wagon a short distance from the scene of the trouble. The wagon was stopped soon after, it is supposed, by the advance guard, who, by the way, was missing when the officers returned at daylight. Both wounded men were taken to their homes and guards placed over them, but these were subsequently removed when their condition was learned. An examination of the wounds showed both men to be fatally hurt. Woodlee was struck in the small of the back with a large load of buckshot and is hopelessly hurt. Roddy was shot in the breast with buckshot, one of which passed through his liver, and at last accounts he was sinking the more rapidly of the two. The statement of the wounded men was to the effect that they were allowed to pass the officers before*

*being halted, and that they are first thought them friends trying to scare them, Woodlee saying I give up. One of the officers, whom they say was Meyers, fired two barrels into Woodlee's back. Roddy then raised his gun, and he and Hall fired about the same time. The family of Woodlee and the friends of both parties think that the shooting of Woodlee by Meyers was in revenge. Woodlee and Meyers had a fight a week or so ago, and Meyers was shot in the knee. This fact gives occasion to rumors that Woodlee was unnecessarily shot, especially as he claims that Roddy was armed.*

*Both the wounded men are desperate characters, and the opinion prevailing among the law-abiding element is that the community will be better off if both die. More trouble is expected at any time, as the Roddys and their crowd are not apt to overlook such an incident. The latest reports from the wounded men are that they are sinking."*

J. C. "Jay" Roddy's dad, A. J. "Jack" Roddy, owned a saloon in Tracy City, and Jay worked there as a clerk as early as his teenage years. The following is a small excerpt from a letter written from a Tracy City resident **October 8, 1884** to a close friend in another state, "*Old Jack Roddy and Jim Bailey are trying to see which will kill themselves first on whiskey --they are both drunk all the time.*" Could one suppose that alcohol played a part in the Roddy boys' lives? Jay married Josephine Berry on **Jan. 11, 1884** and fathered children with her. Jay suffered from the wounds received when Deputy U. S. Marshall J. M. Hall exchanged shots with him, but he lingered almost two weeks before his death. His obituary follows.

**September 5, 1895**, in the *Tracy City News*, we read:

*"IN MEMORIAM— Jay C. Roddy, son of the late A. J. and Susan Roddy, was born in Warren County, Tenn., and was raised in Tracy City. On Jan. 18, 1884 he was married to Miss Josie Berry who now with 4 bright interesting children mourn their loss. On the morning of Sept. 5 inst, he was wounded by a gun shot near Tracy City and after lingering and suffering much, he on the 18<sup>th</sup> inst., breathed his last. On Friday before his death Bro. Roddy professed faith in Christ and his heart was filled with heavenly joy. He claimed that he had peace between God and man and that he had in his heart enmity to no one. Before the final hour he took his wife and children and friends by the hand and requested each of them to meet him in heaven. During his sickness he expressed regret that he had not lived in all things as he should, and had not heeded the advice of his good sister Mrs. Annie B. Holt. Bro. Roddy is said to have been a warm hearted and obliging man and neighbor. I am rejoiced to believe that he in his last hours put himself into the hands of the Savior of all – and we have every reason to believe that his soul is happy in the paradise of God. A large company of his friends and relatives attended his funeral services at the C. P. Church, conducted by the writer. May the holy Spirit comfort the hearts of the bereaved." J. O. Blanton"*

Soon Andrew Jackson Roddy and his wife Susan would lose another son in an unbelievable crime. I have transcribed below thirty-two-year-old John K. Roddy's deathbed will.

*"I, J. K. Roddy, of sound and disposing mind and memory realizing the fact that I am suffering with a mortal wound inflicted on me last night, I think it expedient that I should publish this my last will & testament and by it making void all other will or wills by me heretofore made.*

*1<sup>st</sup> I comment my soul to God who gave it.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> After my death as soon as practicable I want my Executor to pay all my just debts.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> My policy No 430997 issued by the Mutual Life Insurance Co. of New York made payable to Alfred James Law Roddy issued the 15<sup>th</sup> of Dec. 1890 I want held in reserve in the hands of my executor for my said brother Alfred James Law Roddy and that my Executor give a good and sufficient bond with surety for the safe keeping of said fund to be applied to his benefit upon his demand, should it legally appear that my said brother should die before calling for said policy money. In that event I want the money to go to my estate.*

*4<sup>th</sup> I want my policy No 258281 issued by the New York Life Insurance Co., issued on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of August 1887 for (\$2000.00) two thousand dollars & its reversionary dividend of 1892 amounting to (\$132.00) One hundred & thirty two dollars to be disposed of in the same way in policy No 430997 the Mutual Life Insurance Co. of New York above referred to in this will clause No 3.*

*5<sup>th</sup> I want my policy No 477335 in the New York Life Insurance Co. of New York on the life of Alfred J. L. Roddy issued on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of Dec 1892 for the sum of (\$4000.00) four thousand dollars the same made payable to me give and bequeath to my brother-in-law W. B. Holt and my sister Annie B. Holt.*

*6<sup>th</sup> I want my brother T. B. Roddy to have a credit of (\$500.00) five hundred dollars out of the amount that he owes me as a bequeath & gift.*

*7<sup>th</sup> I by this instrument authorize my executor to sign my name to any paper or document that it would be necessary for me to sign myself, and especially my Royal Arcanum benefit certificate that I have this day ordered to be changed from Alfred James Law Roddy to my wife Ida Roddy.*

*8<sup>th</sup> I will that out of the proceeds of the sales of my property I want my said brother Alfred James Law Roddy to have (\$2500.00) twenty five hundred dollars; said fund to be cared for and held in the same sacred way as the two policies above referred to for my said brother Alfred J. L. Roddy's benefit.*

*9<sup>th</sup> I will and bequeath to my beloved Uncle B. F. Roddy the sum of (\$250.00) two hundred and fifty dollars to be paid to him of my Executor.*

*10<sup>th</sup> The residue of my property, moneys, notes, judgments, bills, or any evidences of debt including all kinds of property real, personal and mixed, I will and bequeath to my beloved wife Ida Roddy, to be disposed of by her in any manner that she may elect for and during her natural life, and at her death, if any real property should remain in her hands undisposed of belonging to me, then and in that event I desire the same shall revert to my estate, and be divided among my legal heirs.*

*11<sup>th</sup> I by these presents, nominate, constitute & appoint W. B. Holt my Brother-in-law my executor to this my will, and excuse him from the necessity of executing bond, except as to the fund above referred to for the benefit of my brother Alfred James Law Roddy. In witness whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name hereto, on this the **15<sup>th</sup> day of October 1895.***

*John K. Roddy*

*Signed in the presence of the testator & at his request and in the presence of each other as witnesses on this **October 15<sup>th</sup> 1895** – John Scruggs---J. K. P. Pearson”*

I learned something from John K. Roddy’s will. Most Roddy researchers do not list the parents of Andrew Jackson Roddy. However, in item # 9 of John’s will, he spoke of his beloved **Uncle B. F. Roddy** (Benjamin Franklin Roddy) who is listed as the son of Daniel M. and Mary (Fry) Roddy in Census records. This would make Andrew Jackson Roddy a brother to B. F. Roddy. Daniel and Mary had several children before the **1850** Census was recorded. John K. Roddy just about covered everyone in his will except I noticed there was no mention of his youngest brother in the will. Everyone loves his/her youngest brother, I supposed. Often, he becomes the pet of the family. No money for William H. Roddy! Why?

One will see as our story floats downstream that little brother, Will, followed right in his brothers’ footsteps. The reason Will Roddy was not mentioned in John K. Roddy’s will is because it was he who mortally wounded his brother on **October 14, 1895**. They fought with knives, and both ended up losers the next day – one lost his life, the other lost out on an inheritance but gained some awful lacerations at the hands of his brother. While I am writing these words and presenting the news articles of those days, I am constantly shaking my head in disbelief. So this was the **Good Old Days!** A. J. and Susan Roddy had to this point lost two, Jay and John, of their five sons. The story doesn’t end here. Let’s go back a bit and pick up on another brother’s antics.

*The Tennessean--April 26, 1894*

*"A. J. L. Roddy was yesterday placed on trial in the United States Circuit Court, charged with violations of the postal laws by sending indecent communications through the mails. Back of this offense lie charges of darker deeds. The case against Roddy arose from half a dozen letters sent little Julia Pocus, a girl of 13 years, the letters showing that he had seduced her, and making the most indecent references to the intimacy between them. The parties live near Tracy City, and the intimacy had been suspected by an older sister of the child, who thereupon gave directions for having her little sister's letters and her own sent to a neighbor before being delivered to them. This lady opened them at her request, and the contents were most shocking. They not only allude to former misdoings, but suggested new meetings. Thence arose the prosecution for sending the obscene letters through the mails. No prosecution under the "age of consent" law has yet been begun. Little Julia Pocus told, on the stand yesterday, the story of her ruin by Roddy, detailing their relations in a straight forward manner that was impressive on both jury and spectators by its plainness. She said she received other such letters from Roddy, and that their intimacy continued until a year ago last March when the discovery was made by the intercepted letters. Letters were also introduced showing that Roddy had been trying to induce her not to testify against him, promising to "do a heap for her" if she did not give him away. Little Julia is a beautiful child, and too young, seemingly, to realize the disgrace that has come upon her. She, her sister and her aunty were in the court-room during the trial, which was unfinished when court closed last evening."*

**27 Apr 1894**

### **"PRONOUNCED GUILTY**

*A. J. L. Roddy Convicted in the Federal Court--Noah W. Cooper, Special Judge, Hears an Important Case*

*In the Federal Court yesterday A. J. L. Roddy was convicted of violation of the postal laws in sending obscene letters through the mails. He will probably be sentenced this morning. Roddy is the man who debauched little Julia Pocus, and the letters on which the prosecution was based were written to her."*

**29 Apr 1894**

### **"RODDY GETS THREE**

*"Judge Key Sentences Him to Kings County Prison*

*The Story of a Home Ruined by the Drink Habit*

*Judge Key yesterday overruled the motion for a new trial in the case of A. J. L. Roddy, convicted of sending indecent matter through the mails and sentence Roddy to three years' imprisonment*



*in the Kings County penitentiary at Brooklyn. Roddy took an appeal. When sentence was passed Roddy broke down and wept like a child.*

*A case against Roddy for intimidating a Government witness was dismissed."*

### **16 May 1894 – Roddy's Motion Overruled**

*"Judge Key has refused to grant the writ of habeas corpus in the case of A. J. L. Roddy, under sentence for violating the postal laws. Roddy, it will be remembered, filed the application, basing it on the ground that one of the jury that convicted him was an alien. On argument yesterday morning Judge Key overruled this application and Roddy's counsel took an appeal to the Supreme Court."*

### **TRACY CITY TRAGEDY**

**July 6, 1894**

*The American – "Deputy Marshal Smith Slain by A. J. L. Roddy*

*The Latter is Reported Desperately Wounded*

*Marshal McKenzie, Special Attorney Lee Brock and a Force of Deputies Go to the Scene*

*There was a bloody sequel to the Roddy troubles at Tracy City yesterday early in the afternoon, in which one man lost his life and Alf, or A. J. L. Roddy, was badly wounded. The trouble dates back to the trial and conviction here of A. J. L. Roddy for sending obscene matter through the mails. It will be remembered that he had seduced a mere child, and after more than a year's illicit relations with her the family intercepted his letters, and they not only established the unlawful relation existing between the man and the child, but were so filthy that they caused his indictment for sending them by mail. The case was appealed to the United States Supreme Court on a technicality an unnaturalized citizen of foreign birth being on the jury that convicted him. Pending the appeal, Judge Key fixed Roddy's bail at \$3000.00 .*

*Just after the trouble at John Roddy's place in Tracy City where Deputy United States Marshal Roberts was shot Judge Key, for some cause, presumably because Alf Roddy was said to be implicated in the trouble that culminated in the shooting, ordered Alf Roddy to be re-arrested, and Deputy Marshall T. B. Ballou went from this city to arrest him. Roddy made his escape, and ...Ballou had to content himself with fixing up a plan for Roddy's subsequent arrest. This arrest was attempted...yesterday and resulted in the shooting affray.*

*Early in the afternoon, The American, received a telegram from Tracy City, saying briefly that Special Deputy Marshal John Smith had been shot and killed by A. J. L. Roddy while attempting to arrest Roddy. An American reporter went at once to the custom-house to see if any additional*

information had been received about the affair, and found Marshal McKenzie opening the following telegram from Commissioner M. H. McDowell:

*'Special Deputy Marshal John Smith was shot and killed by Alf Roddy today while attempting to arrest Roddy. Roddy was badly wounded also. Others were implicated in the shooting. I have put Roddy under guard. Send man or wire instructions. Must I give Roddy to the State authorities?'*

*Marshal McKenzie answered not to surrender Roddy to the State authorities and he would send men at once.*

*Preparations were instantly made and three men left on the afternoon train, Marshal McKenzie, Deputy Marshal T. B. Ballou and Special Assistant District Attorney Lee Brock. At Murfreesboro they were ordered to be joined by Deputy Marshals J. W. DeJarnett and R. W. Farris, who were telegraphed to meet the train and go to Tracy City with the party. The orders were to bring Roddy to Nashville, and as the dispatch indicated that there had been more parties involved, it was thought best to be prepared for any emergencies that might arise."*

### ***The Daily American (Tennessean) — 7 Jul 1894***

#### ***"A DESPERATE BATTLE***

#### ***How Alf Roddy Murdered Deputy Marshall Smith***

#### ***Shot Him as He Came Around the Corner***

#### ***Marshall McKenzie's Firmness and Forethought all That Prevented Four Prisoners Being Lynched Forthwith.***

*The fight at Tracy City Thursday, in which **Deputy Marshal John E. Smith** lost his life and **A. J. L. Roddy** was wounded, proves to have been a desperate and deadly combat.*

*United States District Attorney Tully M. Brown yesterday noon received a letter from Special Assistant Lee Brock, giving the following details of the killing:*

*Are here and find Alf Roddy in bed, shot nine times with buckshot, seven of which have entered his body, and the doctor has failed to locate them thus far. Cannot say as yet whether they will prove fatal or not. Will bring him to Nashville if he is able to be moved. Smith was almost instantly killed. Have Will Roddy, Polete Smith and Claib Irwin charged with aiding and abetting Alf in the murder of the Deputy Marshal."*

#### **HOW THE KILLING OCCURRED**

*"The killing occurred as follows: The Deputy Marshal deputized three men to accompany him to make the arrest and they surrounded the house and store of Alf Roddy and the deputy called on him to surrender, which he refused to do and started to run away. The officer followed urging him to surrender. The officer then fired on Roddy and missed him. One of the deputies then fired on Roddy and hit him in the hip. Shortly thereafter Roddy fired on the officer, twice shooting him in the face and then through the heart. After the officer was shot he again shot at Roddy, bursting Roddy's pistol handle and told Roddy: "I am a deputy marshal and I am going to arrest you." As he said this he fell dead. Roddy then ran off and one of the deputies shot him with a shotgun, several of the shots taking effect in his back. Only one shot is serious, that being near the spine.*

*Have charged the deputies not to allow Roddy to be lynched. Will remove him to Nashville as soon as we can move him.*

*Later in the day a telegram was received from Marshal McKenzie, saying that they would reach Nashville at 7:20 p. m. with the four prisoners, and they came in on time. Alf Roddy was taken to the City Hospital, his injuries requiring constant medical attention, and the three well prisoners were taken to jail."*

#### **"MARSHAL M'KENZIE'S STORY**

*An **American** reporter saw Marshal McKenzie at the depot, and from him learned that the letter given above conveys a good idea of the combat. When the deputies, Smith and the men he asked to assist him in the arrest went to the house where Alf Roddy was and called on him to surrender he refused and ran. Coming to a building down the street Roddy ran behind it, and Smith called on the other men to follow him, while he himself ran the other way to cut Roddy off. As Smith turned the corner back of the house he saw that Roddy had stopped and had a heavy pistol pointed directly in his face. Smith dodged and as he turned Roddy fired, the ball going through Smith's face."*

#### **"THE FATAL SHOT**

*Roddy then shot again without delay, and the ball went in Smith's right shoulder, ranging downward and lodging in or near the heart on the left side. Then Smith fired at Roddy and wounded him, and as he still said he would make the arrest, fell dead.*

*Meantime the deputies had followed Roddy around the house, and when Roddy had killed Smith and started to run, fired on him, and one deputy with a gun fired a load of buckshot into Roddy's back. Roddy had turned to run towards the woods which were some distance back of the store."*

#### **"THREATS OF LYNCHING**

*When the Nashville party reached there Thursday evening they found everything in the wildest state of excitement. United States Commissioner M. H. McDowell had bound Roddy over to appear at Nashville, and had had three others arrested for trial, or preliminary examination, yesterday morning. There was a great deal of talk and threats were reported of rescuing Roddy, and also of lynching him. Roddy was at his home guarded by Marshal McKenzie, three deputies and half a dozen guards to prevent either rescue or lynching. The three other prisoners were at the hotel guarded by deputies and guards. The threat of lynching was reported to Marshal McKenzie, and he at once answered them that they might take prisoners from State officers and lynch them, but it would not do for them to attempt it with Government officials."*

### **"EVERY PRECAUTION TAKEN**

*To assure against any violence he had three deputies and eleven or twelve guards. The excitement was so high, however, that it was not deemed prudent to have the examining trials yesterday at Tracy City, but the prisoners were all brought to Nashville and the hearing will be had before United States Commissioner H. M. Doak July 20. All were committed to the Nashville jail for safe-keeping. The three other prisoners, Will Roddy, Polete Smith and J. C. Irwin, were arrested by Deputy T. F. Carrick and others. It is charged that when the shooting was going on Will Roddy came out with a shotgun, and running down where the trouble occurred, fired one volley, but at whom is not known.*

*Had the trials occurred yesterday it is certain there would have been trouble, as a mob would undoubtedly have tried to get at Alf Roddy, and threats were made to hang the entire party under arrest."*

### **"THE BURIAL OF SMITH**

*Smith was buried yesterday down in the valley, and the people were very angry. Some of the Roddy boys have long been troublesome customers about there. Smith was a man who was highly respected, and had but a few months since lost his wife. He leaves seven little dependent children without father or mother.*

*When Smith shot Roddy, Roddy was preparing to shoot again, and had his pistol presented. It was a large one, which required both hands to hold it steady, and when Smith fired, he hit Roddy's hands and shattered the handles of the pistol he was grasping. The physicians yesterday cut out the ball that had lodged in Roddy's spinal column, and found it less serious than had been expected. Roddy will probably recover.*

*The charge under which Will Roddy, Polete Smith and J. C. (Claib) Irwin are held is aiding and abetting in the murder of Smith and resisting arrest."*

### **"PREMEDIATED MURDER**

### ***This Was the Verdict of the Coroner's Jury***

*Tracy City, July 6 – The Coroner's jury brought in a verdict this morning to the effect that John E. Smith had come to his death from a pistol shot at the hands of A. J. L. Roddy: that the killing was premeditated and without cause, and that Will Roddy was an accessory to the deed. Last night Marshal J. N. McKenzie with two deputies and Lee Brock, formerly United States Assistant District Attorney, came up from Nashville. At 9 o'clock this morning the preliminary trial was called before United States Commissioner McDowell. The counsel for the defense asked for a change of venue, alleging undue prejudice against them in the community. By agreement, July 20 was set for the date of the trial, to be held before Commissioner Doak, in Nashville.*

*The prisoners, Irwin, Smith and Will Roddy, were taken to jail at Nashville this afternoon. A. J. L. Roddy, who is seriously but not dangerously wounded, was also taken to the hospital there. This action was deemed best in view of a belief that he might be rescued if left here and spirited away by his friends. Deputy Marshal Smith was buried today, the remains being taken to his old home in the valley, six miles from Monteagle. His orphan family are left in bad circumstances, and the utmost sympathy is felt for them.*

*Intense feeling has been aroused here by the action of the court in releasing A. J. L. Roddy and allowing him to return to continue his evil doing. Roddy was sentenced to a term of three years imprisonment in May. Notwithstanding the many strong and earnest petitions from the good citizens of Tracy City to prevent his release, Judge Key released him on bond and promises of good behavior, but owing to his being connected with the shooting of Deputy Marshall Phil Roberts a short time ago the bench warrant for his rearrest was issued by Judge Key. A man was sent here in June to investigate Roddy's past and obtain the general sentiment as to his probable behavior if released. He assured many citizens that on his return to Nashville he would strongly urge that Roddy be kept in jail. A few days after his return Roddy was concerned in a shooting scrape June 16, in which Deputy Marshal Roberts was badly wounded, and on July 5 shot and killed one of the quietest citizens of the town."*

For some years local folks have discussed the tombstone in the Laxson Cemetery with the inscription, “ **Killed—He lived an upright life & died for law and order.**”

The man interred was **John Elijah M. Smith (May 31, 1851 – Jul 5, 1894)**. We can now read the story behind the inscription. John Smith’s wife Nancy Catherine (Bradshaw) Smith had died just three months before his murder.



**14 July 1894—“ALF RODDY IN JAIL—** A. J. L. Roddy, who was wounded in a fight at Tracy City recently while endeavoring to escape from the United States Deputy Marshal, was yesterday transferred from the City Hospital, whither he was carried on his arrival at Nashville to the Davidson County jail. Roddy suffered considerable yesterday evening from his wounds, especially from the wound in his back, and did not rest easy last night. He had grown enough better, however, to warrant his removal. He occupies an upstairs cell, and will remain in jail till his examination.”

**24 Jul 1894**

**“ALF RODDY STILL ILL**

***Will Roddy Bound Over for Trial at Next Term of Court***

***Irwin and Smith, the Alleged Accomplices, Released***

*The cases of J. C. Erwin, Poleet Smith and Will Roddy, charged with complicity in the attempted escape of Alf Roddy from the United States officers at Tracy City recently, came up before*

*United States Commissioner H. M. Doak yesterday at noon. The Government was represented by Assistant United States Attorney Lee Brock, and the defense by W. T. Ownby. Alf Roddy is still suffering from his wounds and malarial fever, and is thought to be worse. He could not come out for trial yesterday, and the case against him went over. A number of witnesses came down on the morning train from Tracy City and were examined. Full argument followed, and at its conclusion Commissioner Doak discharged Erwin and Smith and bound Will Roddy over in the sum of \$5,000 to appear for trial at the next term of court. Roddy gave the bond, and the Tracy City party left for that place last night."*

## **12 Jan 1895--THE NASHVILLE AMERICAN**

### **"WAS THIS ALF RODDY?"**

#### ***A Mysterious Tramp Fed in South Nashville Wednesday***

*There is a good ground for believing that Alf Roddy has not left the city, unless he left within the last forty-eight hours. There are two families in South Nashville that are willing to make affidavit that if they did not see him they saw some one who was exactly like the picture published in **The American**, and who answered the description to the letter. The picture was printed in *The American* of Thursday morning.*

*Wednesday evening about dark a tramp, or a man who looked as if he were in hard luck, stopped at a residence on South Market street and asked for something to eat, which was given him. It was noticed at the time that he had his right hand tied up and that the little finger was divided at the end. *The American* of the next morning had the picture as that of the man who had asked for food. The description was printed in *The American* of yesterday, and this, too, applied in every way to the man. Meantime the same man had gone up the street to another house where there were only women at home, and demanded the right to sleep in the stable, saying that he was going to sleep there and did not want to be interfered with.*

*The head of this house was a drummer and was away from home, so that the women said nothing about it till the next day. When they saw the picture they knew at once, they said, that it was Roddy who had demanded shelter. There is a great deal of excitement in that neighborhood and while the two families will not say that it was Roddy they repeat that the man answered the description in every respect. The names of the families are withheld at their own specific request, made before giving the information to **THE AMERICAN**."*

The photo on the right was used in the newspaper *The American* as the search went on around Nashville for Alfred James Law Roddy.

(Jan 10, 1895)



#### *The Nashville American* – 15 Feb 1896

“...The trial, which may last several days promises to be extremely interesting, as it deals exclusively with what was a very exciting incident in Nashville’s criminal history. It was last winter that Alf Roddy and three other men escaped from the county jail while Moran was night watchman, and the circumstances were such that suspicion fell on Moran as being implicated in the escape. Roddy was a desperate criminal who had killed a Federal officer and who was only captured after great trouble, and this fact, perhaps, intensified the feeling against Moran, who was relieved of his charge at the jail and indicted for fraudulently allowing the prisoners to escape....”

#### 11 Mar 1896

#### **“DESPERADO ASKS PARDON – ALF RODDY’S FRIENDS SEEK IMMUNITY FOR HIM**

*President Cleveland Besought to Release Him From His Three-Years Sentence That He May Come in and Stand His Trial Upon the Indictment for Murder – Appealing to Congressmen.*



*The friends of Alf Roddy are petitioning President Cleveland to pardon him from the sentence of three years in the United States penitentiary, now resting upon him for sending an obscene letter to a young girl through the mails. They are also endeavoring to secure the efforts of Tennessee Congressmen in his behalf as an applicant for executive clemency. Roddy's friends apply for the pardon with the proviso that if it is granted him, he will surrender himself to the Government authorities in Nashville for trial. It will be remembered that Alf Roddy is under indictment in the Federal Court of this district for the murder of a United States Deputy Marshal, whom he killed at Tracy City as that official was trying to arrest him. Roddy was out on bail pending an appeal from the three-years' sentence at the time of the murder. He was captured after the deed was committed and brought to Nashville, where he was lodged in jail. Some time after this, in company with three other prisoners, he made his escape from the Nashville jail and has been a fugitive from justice ever since.*

*A reward of \$1,000 for the capture of Alf Roddy is now outstanding, offered by the Government and Sheriff Sharpe, of Davidson County. His friends, who are desirous of securing his pardon, know where he is now located, and the general opinion is that he is near his old haunts, protected by his old-time comrades.*

*As surely as nature's laws prove true, the Biblical assertion, "whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap." The Roddy gang can swear, too, to its biting truthfulness. There were several of the Roddy brothers, unlawful, rough and desperate fellows, bullying and intimidating the people of Grundy and adjoining counties. Today two of them are living, one, Alf, a fugitive and a murderer, and the other, Will Roddy, just recovering from a terrible cutting scrape, in which he was carved into little bits. Will Roddy killed his own brother, John Roddy, in a fight, and another one of them was slain."*

#### **THE NASHVILLE AMERICAN—20 August 1896**

##### **"ALF RODDY TAKEN IN**

##### **FREEDOM OF THE MURDERER IS BROUGHT TO AN END**

##### **CAPTURED UNDER THE FLOOR OF A RELATIVE'S RESIDENCE**

***Deputy Sheriff Borum's Long Hunt for the Noted Criminal—Roddy Brought to Nashville.***

*Alf Roddy, the noted fugitive from justice was captured in Tracy City about 7 o'clock yesterday morning by Deputy Sheriffs Sam H. Borum, Sam McGuire, Alex Barthell and J. E. Renshaw. The arrest was made at the house of G. W. Winton, the father-in-law of John K. Roddy. "*

**Note:** Remember that John K. Roddy married Ida Winton and by the end of the second week of the marriage, John was dead. She and her dead husband's brother, Alf Roddy, became really good friends.

*"Borum had been in Tracy City searching for Roddy at intervals during the past eight months, and had always suspected that Roddy was being harbored by Winton. The house had been searched twelve times previous to yesterday, but without success. Deputy Sheriff Borum had reason to believe that Roddy was somewhere under the rooms occupied by Mrs. Winton and her daughter, Ida Winton, the wife of the late John K. Roddy, but when he made application to search these rooms he was always put off with excuses that the ladies were ill, dressing or some other plea. His suspicions became so strong that Roddy was concealed about these rooms that he decided to search them at all hazards. He accordingly telegraphed Tuesday to Sheriff Sharp for assistance, and Deputy Sheriffs Barthell and McGuire left for Tracy City Tuesday afternoon. On their arrival at 9 o'clock, they went together with Borum and Renshaw and guarded the house, which is situated on the corner of a public street, two squares from the business part of the town, all night. They entered the house at 5 o'clock yesterday morning and began their search. On taking up the carpet in Widow Roddy's room a loose space was found in the flooring, which, although fitted in nicely, was loose, and at once attracted the attention of the officers. The flooring was taken out and Roddy found hid in between the joists. He was ordered to come out and surrender himself, which well cared for while hiding out. The news of the capture created considerable excitement at Tracy City, and a large number of citizens called to see the prisoner."*

The following telegram announced the welcome news to Sheriff Sharp: "John D. Sharp, Sheriff Davidson County – Caught Alf Roddy this morning at Winton's; will be home tonight. Sam"

*'The telegram was received at the jail by Deputy Sheriff Vernon Sharp. Sheriff Sharp was greatly elated when he heard the news, as he and Borum had worked hard to effect Roddy's recapture.*

*Roddy was arrested and sentenced to three years in the penitentiary for sending and obscene letter through the mail to a young girl. The case was appealed, and while waiting its hearing he shot and killed Deputy United States Marshal John E. Smith at Tracy City. The killing was committed while Smith was attempting to arrest Roddy on a bench warrant for complicity in a difficulty which John Roddy had with United States Deputy Marshall Phil Roberts, and in which the latter was wounded. It is claimed, however, that Roddy was not in the neighborhood at the time of the shooting, although his arrest was ordered by the Government. Smith was deputized by Deputy Marshal Ballow, of this city, to make the arrest.*

*Roddy was afterwards captured, and was in jail here awaiting trial when he broke jail and made his escape, together with three other murderers. The escape of the four men created intense*

*excitement, and was, in fact, the most notorious jail delivery ever effected in Tennessee. Sheriff Sharp was severely criticized for the affair, but has since spent a large sum of money and been untiring in his efforts to apprehend the men. Roddy was the last of the four to be captured.*

*The escape was made a year ago last New Year's night. The men were Alf Roddy, Andrew Winters, George Alexander and C. D. Kiger, all four awaiting trial on charges of murder. Andrew Winters was inside turnkey, or, in other words, he was entrusted with the keys to the iron cage in which are located the cells. He kept the keys during the day, and turned them over to the night jailer when locking up time came. The night planned for the escape the inside door was left unlocked, and after all the other prisoners had dropped asleep the men stole out into the corridor and made their way to the rear door. The iron bolt had previously been sawed nearly in two, and was easily severed. They then passed into the jail yard overlooking the river. A rope which had been secreted by them was brought out, and after securing one end of it to the high picket fence, the men slid down one by one to the ground at the edge of the river and escaped.*

*They had secured several hours' start before their escape was discovered next morning, and, although a great hue and cry was raised and rewards offered, nothing was heard of some of them for some time. The first to be recaptured was Alexander, who was caught in Nashville the next day while drunk. Kiger was next caught in Coffee County. Winters was traced to Missouri by Deputy Sheriff Sam Borum, and after a chase of six months he was finally captured. Roddy was the man most wanted, but he eluded his pursuers and made his way to Tracy City, where he has numerous relatives and many friends. Sheriff Sharp had received intimation of Roddy's presence about his old haunts, and sent Deputy Sheriff Sam Borum up there last December. Borum conducted his search under the name of Sam M. Taylor, solicitor for a picture enlarging house. Although he repeatedly heard of Roddy, the nearest he came to the man was capturing his clothing. After working as Taylor for several months his identity was disclosed by some moonshiners who had been confined in the Nashville jail, and on their return to Tracy City, recognized Borum. He, nevertheless, remained in the neighborhood and prosecuted the search.*

*Deputy Sheriff Borum was in the city last week, and in a conference with Sheriff Sharp stated that he was positive that Roddy was secreted in Winton's house. He was accordingly instructed by the Sheriff to return and make a thorough investigation. Roddy's arrest followed as stated.*

*Alf Roddy was given a hearty reception on his arrival in the city on the 7:20 o'clock train last night from Tracy City. He was in custody of Deputy Sheriffs Borum, Renshaw, McGuire and Barthell.*

*Long before the arrival of the train crowds of men and boys began flocking to the depot, and at the time it steamed into the shed the crowd numbered at least 250. All pushed, shoved and strained their eyes for a glimpse of the prisoner. The officers, however, were expecting the crowd, and as the train pulled in they alighted with their prisoner at the Church street crossing. The*

news that the officers had jumped from the train with Roddy was passed into the shed, and the crowd simultaneously made a break for Church street. The officers had gained a considerable start, but they were overtaken by the leaders of the crowd, before they had reached McLemore street. Others followed, overflowing the sidewalk and extending across the street. Smaller crowds were in waiting at every electric light, where they jostled and fought with the larger crowd to see the prisoner as he passed. The officers could only make slow progress on account of the throng. They were beginning to tire of fighting their way along when they were met at Vine street by Sheriff Sharp in a buggy. The prisoner was hustled in and rapidly driven to the jail. A large crowd was also in waiting at the jail, but no one was allowed to enter except officers and attaches of the jail.

An "American" reporter called at the jail and requested to see Roddy, which was refused by Jailor Matlock, the representative of Sheriff Sharp. The only reason given for the refusal was that Roddy had been locked up for the night."

### **"ALF RODDY'S RETRIBUTION**

#### **WILL CONSIST OF THREE YEARS IN KING'S COUNTY PRISON**

#### **JUDGE CLARK OVERRULES HIS MOTION FOR AN APPEAL**

#### ***Cold Case in Which He was Charged With Sending Obscene Matter Through the Mails—Notorious Character***

Alf J. L. Roddy, one of the most celebrated characters that the Federal authorities ever got mixed up with in Tennessee, will leave in a few days in custody of a Deputy Marshall for Albany, N. Y., to serve out a sentence of three years in the United States prison for sending obscene matter through the mails.

The case for which Roddy will do time compared to some of the achievements of his checkered career, is hardly what a side-show is to a big circus. He has been a prominent figure in several shooting scrapes, his ready revolver having gotten in its work with more or less accuracy and effect in all of these.

The case in which he finally goes over is one of rather long standing, and circumstances connected with it furnished still further opportunity for Roddy to distinguish himself as a desperado. Three years ago he was convicted in the Federal Court of sending obscene matter through the United States mails, letters to a certain young woman furnishing the evidence in the case. One of the jurors was taken sick during the trial and the verdict was rendered by the other eleven. It was three years in the penitentiary.

*An appeal was asked for, pending which Roddy was released on bond, conditional upon good behavior. He returned to his old home and haunts at Tracy City and soon afterward shot and killed Deputy United States Marshall Smith, who was attempting to arrest him for internal revenue law violations.*

*Roddy was then rearrested and jailed here. His subsequent sensational escape in a general delivery from the jail is pretty well remembered. George Alexander, Andrew Winters and a man named Kiger, all charged with murder, gained their liberty at the same time.*

*Roddy was the last of the quartette to be retaken, his capture having been effected only a few months ago. In the fastnesses about his home, helped by his many friends, he evaded the officers for a long while, but was finally found hidden under the floor of a relative's house. He was brought back and jailed.*

*Yesterday the old case against him came up on an appeal from the verdict of three years in the pen. Judge Clark overruled the motion on the ground that Roddy had failed to perfect his appeal in the proper time, and thereupon ordered an enforcement of the three-years'sentence. Roddy was remanded to jail, pending his removal to the penitentiary in Albany within the next few days.*

*Thus for a time, at least, is a cessation put to the deeds and crimes of one of the nerviest men who ever added to the trials of revenue agents and Deputy Marshals in Tennessee. Outlaw though he is, Roddy is a man of much personal magnetism and drew about him in times past a following of men whose loyalty was as lasting and whose friendship was as fast as is over seen among men in the more enlightened walks of life.*

*When his three years at Albany are out, Roddy will be brought back to Nashville to answer for the murder of Marshal Smith."*

### **Alf Roddy's Other Life** (jackie partin)

Alfred James Law Roddy had an illicit affair with Eliza Baker and never married her. To have had a nine-year-old daughter at home in **1900**, Eliza was probably around 16 when she got pregnant with her first child. Alf was the father of Myrtle, Rush, Lona and George—all Roddy surnames although Eliza gave them her maiden name and later gave her son, George, the Oliver surname. Alf acknowledged them as his children. When Alf got out of prison, he went back to Ida, and Eliza went on to marry James "Jim" Oliver on **Nov 1, 1901** in Grundy County. But now let's read up on the troubles of Ida (Winton) Roddy Roddy.

**Apr 8, 1897**

*“Dr. J. L. Sutton and W. B. Pattie arrived in the city Monday from Tracy City, having in charge the stomach of Alf Roddy’s child, who died under suspicious circumstances recently. A careful search for traces of poison will be made, as the child’s aunt, Mrs. John K. Roddy, is under arrest on suspicion of putting the child out of the way.”*

**15 Sep 1898**

**“VERDICT NOT GUILTY**

**MRS. IDA RODDY, CHARGED WITH THE MURDER OF MYRTLE BAKER, RELEASED**

*M’Minncville, Sept. 14 – The case of the State of Tennessee vs. Ida E. Roddy, for the murder of Myrtle Baker, by poison, which has been in progress at McMinnville since the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> inst., was concluded yesterday at noon and passed into the hands of the jury. The little girl was the daughter of Alf Roddy and Eliza Baker, and was taken by Mrs. Roddy to raise. Mrs. Roddy, the defendant, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Winton, of Tracy City, who stand high in the estimation of the people of Grundy County.*

*There were more than a hundred witnesses in the case, and nine days have been consumed in the trial. Dr. J. C. Wharton, of Nashville, was brought to the stand and he testified that the presence of morphine was only probable, after a thorough chemical analysis of the contents of the stomach. At 4 o’clock Tuesday evening the jury returned with the verdict, whereupon the defendant was brought to the bar and silently awaited the long hoped for verdict of “not guilty,” as it earnestly came from the foreman of the jury. The large court-room was full of attentive listeners, who had been almost as regular in attendance as the jury, and there was not heard a dissenting voice to the verdict.*

*In an interview after the trial Mrs. Roddy said: “I want to thank the good people of McMinnville and Warren County who have been so kind to me. They have shown me every kindness that I could ask and they will always be remembered by me. I have made many acquaintances, and by my association, though very unpleasant my surroundings, I have made many friends who will never be forgotten. I want to thank the good people of Tracy City, and of Grundy and Coffee counties, for the unfailing and untiring efforts they have so earnestly and effectively put forth in my behalf. I appreciate from the depths of my heart, though it has often been crushed and saddened, the acts of kindness done, and will ever love them. I want to thank Drs. Key and Hayes, of Tracy, and Dr. Slocum, of Knoxville.”*

**22 Nov 1898**

*"...Winter's escape from the county jail with **Alf Roddy** and another prisoner was not his only attempt to gain his liberty by stealth..."*

### **28 Feb. 1899 – The Nashville American**

*"The case of United States vs. A. J. L. Roddy, in the United States Circuit Court, was terminated by an order of Judge C. D. Clark entered yesterday retiring the case and releasing Roddy without bail. The defendant is not to be rearrested or tried as long as he remains away from Grundy County.*

*It will be remembered that at the April term, 1894, of the United States Court, Roddy was convicted of violating the postal laws and sentenced by Judge Key to three years imprisonment in the penitentiary. He appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States, and pending his appeal was released on bond. One of his brothers became involved in a difficulty with a Deputy United States Marshal and shot him. It was erroneously reported to the office of the District Attorney that it was A. J. L. Roddy who had resisted and shot the Deputy Marshal.*

*Thereupon Judge Key issued a bench warrant ordering the rearrest of A. J. L. Roddy, who was then at Tracy City. In attempting to execute the warrant Deputy Marshal John L. Smith was shot and killed. Roddy was, however, finally arrested by the Marshal's posse and placed in jail at Nashville and indicted for murder in carrying out a conspiracy against a citizen while enjoying a right guaranteed to him by the laws of the United States.*

*Roddy, in company with several other prisoners, broke jail and escaped on the night of **Dec. 31, 1894**, climbing down the river bank. After being at liberty for nearly two years, he was finally, in August, 1896, captured by Deputy Sheriff Sam Borum and a posse, while in hiding at Tracy City, and again placed in jail.*

*In December, 1896, he withdrew his appeal in the postal case, and accepted the term of imprisonment of three years, which expired yesterday, with his allowance for good time. Owing to the death of the principal witness of the Government and the serious legal questions involved, which made it well nigh impossible to secure conviction in the pending case, and because of the punishment already inflicted, the Government officials consented to have the case retired. This disposition of the case was arranged between A. M. Tillman, District Attorney, and Albert D. Marks, attorney for Roddy. Roddy was accordingly released yesterday from the Government prison at Albany, N. Y.*

### **Aug 2, 1899**

**"ALF RODDY HERE**

**Noted Moonshiner Completes Sentence and is Here for Treatment**

*Alf Roddy, the noted moonshiner, who was sentenced to imprisonment in the Federal prison at Sing Sing, has completed his term, and is back in Nashville, where he is being treated for a nasal trouble. The time which he spent here in jail was allowed on his sentence by the Government. He has changed somewhat, and but few of his acquaintances in this city would be able to recognize him on the streets."*

**Mar 7, 1900**

**"SUES FOR PARDON THOUGH AT LIBERTY**

**ALF RODDY ASKS FOR PRESIDENTIAL CLEMENCY AFTER SERVING SENTENCE**

*Alf Roddy, who in past years, has achieved considerable notoriety in the criminal affairs of the State, is suing the President for a pardon after serving his sentences.*

*Roddy was tried on **April 27, 1894** on the charge of sending obscene matter through the mail and finally sentenced to three years in the prison at Albany, N. Y. His term expired last autumn. There was another case against him on the books of the Federal Court, conspiracy in bringing about the murder of Deputy Marshal John Smith. An important witness for the Government in this case died, and it was subsequently retired on the agreement that Roddy should not return to Grundy County and take a hand in the affairs there, as he had done before. Roddy is now in Coffee County.*

*His petition states that he has married since serving his sentence and is living a quiet and sober life, and his friends desire that he be reinstated in the rights of a freeman, which can be accomplished by a presidential pardon. It is thought that Roddy may also be endeavoring by the move to have the conspiracy charge against him closed and the agreement as to remaining out of Grundy County nullified. The papers in the case arrived yesterday from the Department of Justice, but no action has been taken upon them locally."*

**June 8, 1900 – Coffee County Census**

Roddy, Alfred J. L. (Head) m. 1 yr.

Roddy, Ida (wife) m. 1 yr.

Winton, George W. (father-in-law)

**June 21, 1900; Grundy County Census**

Baker, Eliza



**Baker, Myrtle**

Baker, Rush

Baker, Lona

Baker, George

(NOTE: Ida Winton Roddy was tried for the poisoning death of Alf Roddy's daughter Myrtle on **Sep 15, 1898**, but a quick look at the Census records show Myrtle Baker still alive in **1900**. Since Eliza had lost one child before **1900**, it is possible that she named two children Myrtle or the court system got the name wrong. jackie partin)

**THE NASHVILLE AMERICAN—4 Dec 1900**

**MANCHESTER, Dec. 3, 1900**

*"News of the killing of Alf Roddy by John Goode, near Hillsboro, this county, at an early hour this morning has reached here. Roddy has lately occupied the farm now owned by Goode, it having belonged to Mrs. Winton, Roddy's mother-in-law, until recently purchased by Goode. Roddy refused to give possession and there has been ill-feeling for some time.*

*Roddy was known all over the State as a very desperate man. Only a few months ago he completed a term in the penitentiary at Brooklyn, N. Y. for sending obscene literature through the mails.*

*He will be remembered as one of five prisoners that broke the jail at Nashville several years ago and was for some months concealed in the house of his sister-in-law, Ida Winton Roddy, widow of one of Alf's brothers, who was killed by another brother. When he was recaptured at Tracy City, he left an illegitimate child in the care of the woman who had so long concealed him, and all of his money and property, amounting to several thousand dollars. The child was poisoned and the woman was tried several times for its murder. The case, by change of venue, was finally tried at McMinnville and she was acquitted.*

*On Alf's release from confinement he returned to Tennessee and married her. She is today made the widow Roddy for the second time, both husbands, who were own brothers, having met violent deaths.*

*Alf Roddy several years ago killed a Deputy Marshal named Smith, and is said to have killed two other men. He was until aroused, a quiet, gentlemanly mannered man, but when angered he was absolutely devoid of fear and a very dangerous man.*

*John Goode is one of the best citizens in his community and this is the first trouble he was ever in. He will doubtless give himself up."*

### **ANOTHER ACCOUNT**

#### **HILLSBORO, Tenn. Dec. 3**

*"Very early this morning Alf Roddy, who lived within two miles of this place, was shot and killed in his corn field. He is one of the Tracy City Roddys, and has two men dead to his credit.*

*He has for some time been in trouble with John Goode, to whom he sold a farm, and it seems that there was a field, a part of which had been sown in wheat by Mr. Goode, on which Roddy wanted to pasture cattle, but was forbidden by Mr. Goode. No one knows the details of what led to the shooting.*

*Roddy is the second of two brothers who married a Miss Winton, who was born and reared on the farm on which the shooting took place."*

#### **The Nashville American**

**Jan 24, 1901**

*"MANCHESTER--The grand jury refused to indict John E. Goode for the killing of Alf Roddy."*

William H. "Will" Roddy moved to Hamilton County to live with his sister Anna (Roddy) Holt and her husband, William B. Holt. In 1910, Will was working in a mattress factory; later he took a job as a night watchman. He died on **April 10, 1932** and was buried at the Chattanooga Memorial Cemetery.

***"Dec 1, 1895—THE RODDY FAMILY—Another of Them Proves Himself a Killer at a Negro Festival in Coffee County.***

*Manchester, Nov. 30—News reached here this evening that Jack Roddy shot and killed Bill Neville, colored, near Hillsboro, a small village in this Coffee County, eight miles from here. The facts as learned are very meager, but so far as could be gathered it seems that the negroes had what they called a 'festible' at Alex. Patton's and Roddy and some three or four other white men went there. Roddy was standing in the door and the negro asked him to either come in or go out so that he could shut the door and Roddy told him that he wouldn't do it. Then the negro cursed Roddy and Roddy pulled his pistol and shot the negro in the forehead, killing him almost instantly.*

*Roddy has not yet been apprehended. The negro was considered a very dangerous character, he having figured here in the criminal courts for many years past. Roddy is the brother of Lewis*

*Roddy, who was killed in Arkansas some two or three months since, and is a cousin of Alf Roddy, who killed United States Deputy Marshal Smith at Tracy City about eighteen months ago and escaped the Nashville jail last winter... Jack Roddy is young man about 22 years of age."*

**Aug 11, 1901** – "ANOTHER RODDY KILLED – Oscar Pendergrass Shoots John Roddy at Prairie Plains. MANCHESTER, Tenn., Aug. 10

*Jack Roddy and Oscar Pendergrass, of Prairie Plains, in this county, engaged in a pistol duel yesterday afternoon, and as a result Roddy was killed and Pendergrass seriously wounded.*

*Roddy was a cousin of Alf Roddy, who was killed last fall by John E. Good. While a very companionable man ordinarily, he was known to be a very desperate man when aroused and has in time killed his man. Pendergrass is only about 18 years of age."*

### **ANOTHER ACCOUNT**

*"TULLAHOME, Tenn., Aug. 10 – In an altercation yesterday afternoon, at Prairie Plains, Coffee County, Oscar Pendergrass shot and instantly killed Jack Roddy. Pendergrass was shot twice, a bullet striking him in each hip. Roddy was shot through the heart. It is stated that Pendergrass is fatally wounded. The difficulty, it is stated, arose over some remarks which had been made in regard to a lady in the neighborhood. The matter had gotten into the church, where an investigation had been made and the lady was acquitted. Pendergrass is a young man about 25 years of age."*

Jack Roddy was the son of Joseph G. Roddy and the grandson of Daniel M. and Mary Fry Roddy. Cousins parroting cousins in bad behavior. It would take someone who is really searching for clues to their Roddy ancestry or a truly "murder mystery lover" to read and comprehend the antics of these young men. But there are two more Roddy stories I must add because they too are almost unbelievable and also sad.

### **Louisa (Pearson) McFadden Roddy Commits Suicide Or Did She?**

By Jackie Layne Partin

This sad story came to me from Catherine (Kilgore) Flury some years ago. She was helping me with some of my husband's Goodman ancestors, Lee Houston and Julia Ann (**Roddy**) Goodman. This couple owned a small café next to the Henry Flury Store in Tracy City. I knew enough about Lee Houston Goodman to get his place in history in my mind, but I knew nothing at the time about Aunt Julie Ann Goodman, as my husband's Aunt Lottie (Partin) Bell called her.

On **October 1, 1863**, in Grundy County, TN, Albert D. Roddy, brother to Andrew Jackson Roddy, married Louisa (Pearson) McFadden. Her first husband was John

McFadden. To the union of the Roddy couple were born three children, James Robert Roddy (1864), Julia Ann Roddy (1866) and Emma Louisa Roddy (1869). On **Aug. 2, 1858**, Tracy City, **Marion County**, Leslie Kennedy and railroad friend, Garrett Smith Backus, sold J. McFadden two lots in the Backus Addition of town. It is my view now, (subject to change any time), that on one of those lots John McFadden built a house on the corner of Colyar and Coke Streets which was known as the Old Leslie Kennedy House and Lot. Leslie was the true front man on the coal and railroad business. Admittedly, there is still to this day confusion about that corner lot in Tracy City.

If handed-down history can at times be reliable, then Louisa may well have lived in the same house with Union officers since they used that particular house for their headquarters in late **January 1864**. Regardless of who built the house, it was at that place that Louisa Roddy lost her life according to Mrs. Flury. It seems that for whatever reason, in **June 1869**, she decided to jump into the large cistern at the home which appeared to have come down to her and her husband, Albert. Many, if not all, of the Roddy families lived all over that section of the town. I've spent years pondering why Louisa with three sweet little babies in her care would kill herself. Her burial stone had etched on it: *"Farewell Vain World I have had enough of thee: I value not what thou cans't say of me."* My source for this epitaph, or should we say "suicide note," was Catherine Flury. Louisa's stone is no longer in the Tracy City Cemetery.

Now a few questions: 1) Was Louisa's problem, postpartum depression? 2) Was she still missing her first husband John McFadden? 3) Did Albert's Confederate sympathies wear her down or worry her? 4) Was she murdered and her body thrown into the cistern? 5) What purpose did it serve to etch a burial stone with a suicide note? 6) Was her death simply because she married a Roddy? I am open for input on Louisa's death.

### **The Murder of Lydia Sue (Woodlee) Roddy**

By Jackie Layne Partin

On **Dec 22, 1866**, Reason O. Kitts married Susannah "Susan" Layne, daughter of Isaac and Mary Polly (Steele) Layne. Reason and Susan had a daughter named Belle Kitts. Belle never married but stayed with her mother and sisters, Laura and Myrtle Kitts. They all worked as "washer women." Susan (Layne) Kitts later married James Tate on Mar. 3, **1881**; James was the ex-husband of Martha Tennessee "Teney" (Layne) Tate, one of Susan's cousins. Belle continued to live with her mother, step-father and siblings. The Tates added to the family a girl, Margaret "Maggie," and a son, Joseph "Joe." Susan (Layne) Kitts Tate, her daughter Belle Kitts, and her son Joe Tate lived together in **1920**.

In **Nov. 7, 1925**, Werner Albert Roddy married Lydia Sue Woodlee, born **June 16, 1908**. Werner was a son of James Robert and Sarah "Sallie" (Stubblefield) Roddy of Tracy City, and a grandson of Albert Cad Roddy. Lydia Sue was a daughter of Harris Bradford and Maggie (Tate) Woodlee, also of Tracy City. Harris and Maggie operated a restaurant in the building where the Annex Café is now (**2017**) in Tracy City or near the Annex. To this family were born three children, Margaret Sue (**1929**), Bobby (**1931**) and Nancy (**1934**). The family lived in the area of Shook St. in Tracy City.

On **July 17, 1937**, at 10:30 P. M., Werner Albert Roddy walked up to the house where his wife and children were living, and through an open window, he took aim and shot Lydia in her left side and chest causing her to go into shock and bleed out at home. She was sitting in her rocking chair resting and reading after she had put her children to bed. The cause of death was listed by Dr. William A. Brewer of Monteagle, at the time, as being homicide, and he also noted the husband as being the shooter, but added a question mark after that statement. Remember there were no eye witnesses to this heinous crime.

One news article from *Murder, Mayhem and More Vol. 2*, a collection of articles by Euline Harris taken from the Sequatchie News, informs us: *"Tracy City – Werner Roddy went to his estranged wife's home Sunday night and fatally shot her as she sat reading a newspaper. She died on the way to a Chattanooga hospital. Roddy fled after the shooting and had not been captured Tuesday. He used a shotgun. Three children of the couple were sleeping peacefully in the home where the shooting occurred. There were no witnesses, Sheriff J. L. McGovern, of Grundy County, stated. The sheriff said that before "taking to the woods" Roddy told one person that he had shot his wife. Mrs. Roddy brought peace bond proceedings against her husband sometime ago and he was placed in jail. Later the case was compromised upon his promise to pay a certain amount for the support of the children. Sheriff McGovern stated that Roddy failed to meet his payments and Mrs. Roddy last week filed another suit against him. Roddy was employed by the State as a maintenance man. The couple married in 1925."*

Another account came from the genealogical research of Mrs. Catherine (Kilgore) Flury, now deceased, and they contain extra information.

*"Mrs. Sue Roddy, 29, was shot and killed Sunday night while she sat listening to a radio program after putting her three small children to bed. Her husband, Werner Roddy, from who she has been separated for some time, is sought for the fatal shooting. Officers were told he went to the house in an intoxicated condition and attempted to enter. The doors and screen were locked and a blast from the shotgun was fired through one of the screens, the charge striking Mrs. Roddy in the side.*

*Sheriff J. L. McGovern, who was called to the house immediately after the shooting, forced an entrance. He reported that he found Mrs. Roddy still alive and summoned an E. C. Norvell ambulance, which took her to the Newell Sanitarium in Chattanooga in 1 hour and 5 minutes. She was pronounced dead on arrival, however, and the body was returned to this city."*

*Mrs. Edwin Newton, sister of Roddy, is said to have told officers that her brother came to her home earlier in the evening in an intoxicated condition and told her that he was going to kill Mrs. Roddy. Mrs. Newton said she pleaded with him, but that he grabbed a shotgun and started for the house of his estranged wife. His sister, it is said, followed him, but arrived at the Roddy home after Mrs. Roddy had been shot, and neighbors, aroused by the shooting had gathered."*

*"Raymond Martin, a neighbor, it is said, reported to officers that Roddy came to his place after the shooting and said: 'I killed my wife.'...Sheriff McGovern and other county officers are searching for Roddy, who, they say, has apparently escaped in the forest."*

The sister who tried to stop Werner was Gladys Irene (Roddy) Newton. What a heart breaking experience for her. Werner disappeared as fast as he appeared that night. The story of who helped him escape follows at the end of this paper.

Susannah (Layne) Kitts Tate died in Tracy City in **1938** at the age of 102 years, (*death certificate – Census record will not substantiate this – jackie partin*), but not until she was able to hold all three of her great-grandchildren in her arms. Her single daughter Belle Kitts took the Roddy children into the home which still stands on the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Thompson Streets. She was as kind and helpful to the children as a "mother" would be. Belle passed away in **1959** and is buried in the Tracy City Cemetery amongst family members.

Margaret Sue (Roddy) Lawson (**1999**), Nancy Charlene (Roddy) Thomas (**2012**) and Robert Bradford "Bobby" Roddy (**2012**) have joined their mother in rest.

Now is the time that the reader may ask, "Whatever happened to Lydia's husband Albert Werner Roddy? Werner's mother Sallie Stubblefield Roddy had a sister named Mae (Stubblefield) Sain. It was the Sain relatives who helped Werner escape. The following story gives us the final words on Werner and his disappearance forever from his Grundy County families.

## **THE DEATH OF LYDIA SUE WOODLEE RODDY**

**By Charles H. Sain, P.E.**

One late Sunday night or early Monday morning in Hubbard's Cove, I woke up to hear a car's motor running and to hear some men talking. I could not understand anything being said but realized nothing was normal. I heard the car drive off but could hear my father talking to someone. The next thing I heard was my father coming back into the house and telling my mother, "I put him in the straw barn." I was 15 years old at the time and slept upstairs at our home in Hubbard's Cove. The date was Sunday night, July 18, 1938, with Werner Roddy shooting his wife, Lydia Sue Woodlee Roddy, in their Tracy City house. Werner Roddy was my father's first cousin. Werner's mother was my father's aunt. Werner and his wife were separated and had been for some time. It was told that Sue Roddy was shot and killed while she was listening to a radio after putting her three small children to bed. It was reported that Werner went to the house in a drunken condition and tried to enter. Since doors and windows were locked he fired a shotgun through a screen and struck Sue in the side. When Sheriff J.L. McGovern came to the house and forced an entrance Sue was still alive. The sheriff summoned an ambulance and sent Sue to the Newell Sanitarium in Chattanooga. She was determined to be dead upon arrival, and then her body was returned to Tracy City.

The three small children were raised by "Aunt" Bell Kitts, who was of no relationship to them, in her declining years. (*Actually, Lydia's mother, Margaret "Maggie" Tate was a half-sister to Belle Kitts. They had the same mother but different fathers; thus Belle and Lydia were related.*—Jackie Layne Partin). The children were Nancy, Marqaritte, and Bobby. These children were determined to be the most deserving case supported by the Orphan Fund. I have talked with Bobby Roddy on, I think, two occasions. He was a coal miner and a lay preacher. He did not know that my father kept Werner for three (3) or four (4) nights. Bobby did think a brother of Werner's took him to Hubbard's Cove. Bobby had not heard anything from his father and had no idea where he was. While Werner was at our house in Hubbard's Cove in the straw barn, my father would take him food. One afternoon Werner went to a field some distance behind the straw barn and was picking and eating blackberries. Florence Hall, an African-American wife of Tom Hall, a tenant, was also in the field picking blackberries. She practically ran into Werner and became very scared and ran to my mother in our house to inform her. My mother got Florence calmed down and when my father and I came in from working in the field, she told him he had to get rid of Werner. My father told my mother that he agreed to keep Werner for three (3) or four (4) nights. Late that night, or early the next morning, a car came and got Werner. I never knew who came. We had no telephone or any other means of communication so whoever picked Werner up had to have planned it before hand. Sometime afterwards, the FBI came and talked to my father concerning Werner. The agents reported they had traced Werner to my father's farm and wanted

to know who picked him up. My father told them he did not know, but he got rid of Werner as soon as he could. We never heard anything afterwards.

### **Summary of the Roddy Family Tragedies by Jackie Layne Partin**

Only the written page can open the door into this tragic story of family failures. The question foremost in my mind as I compiled this material was "Why would a family so blessed with material needs have so much turmoil in its life?" I'm going to take a stab in the dark and answer that question, "Alcohol, excessive drinking thereof!"