

Nature claims land as forests thrive where corn grew  
By J B Leftwich

On the hillside where the home of my maternal grandparents stands and to the rear of the house is a forest – a wilderness of trees obscuring a field where crops of corn formerly flourished.



I stood in the road, now paved but gravel surfaced when I lived on the farm, and viewed the forest which had its beginning probably during or immediately after World War II when the way of life changed for the farmers in this and other Putnam County communities.

World War II sounded the death knell of a system of farming, a way of life for generations, in these rural areas when the young men left the farms and never returned. Many of them were tenant farmers or sons of tenants who were locked into a societal structure that vanished as the labor force found more profitable methods of supporting themselves following or during the great war.



In the meantime, young landowners found employment in the professions or in the factories of industrializing Middle Tennessee cities and towns. As a consequence, they became afternoon and weekend farmers, depending less of crops and more on livestock. Fields became pastures. Forests reclaimed many.

The house where I was born and where my mother was born 20 years earlier still stands, a beautiful two-story building, typical of the styles of farm houses during the late Nineteenth Century when it was built. My guess is that it was built about 1890.



This was a fishing pond across the road and down the hill from my grandparents house. Also, across the road from the barn pictured above. I think first on left was my grandmother, Maud Fitzpatrick, middle, Myrtle Draper, Lela's cousin, and the third mother of J. B. Leftwich, Lela Bates Leftwich. Circa: 1917.

Parents of J. B. Leftwich are:  
Lewis Cass & Lela Bates Leftwich

Grandparents:  
George Madison & Ana "Annie" F. Haggard Leftwich  
Joshua Bartlett Bates & Maude Fitzpatrick

Today, it is prettier than ever before, painted a light yellow with white trim and standing as the centerpiece of a neatly mowed lawn. But I do miss the honeysuckles that once covered the bank at the edge of the road.

Across the road from the house there was a cemetery with graves marked by slate or limestone rocks. The only commercial tombstone distinguished the grave of a child. I was unable last month to locate the baby's grave or any other graves. All were obscured by vegetation, a tangle of vines and bushes and briars and trees.

It was almost as if the people buried there never existed. I knew none of them. I am sure no living person knew them. They and the families who grieved for them are gone. They leave no memories.

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