

HISTORY OF
DEKALB COUNTY
TENNESSEE

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Chapter II. DEKALB COUNTY ESTABLISHED - OFFICIALS-----page 9

Bill to Erect the County - Sundry Changes in the Line - Organization of County, Circuit, and Chancery Courts - Topography - Resources and Leading Crops - Live Stock - Principal Streams - Early Mills - Politics - County Officers - Senators and Representatives.

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Small fortunes have been made in hog-trading. Early traders were Francis Turner, William B. Stokes, Matthew Sellars, **Edward Robinson**, Robin Forrester, William G. Stokes, and others. The last named, a son of Thomas Stokes, of Temperance Hall, disappeared before the war on a trip South and was never heard of again. Buyers after the war were C. W. L. Hale, W. G. Evans, Gips West, Fox Frazier, and others. Hogs handled by the earlier dealers were from two to three years old when fattened. They were driven across country south, mainly to Georgia. Ten drivers could manage one thousand hogs, and one route was through Liberty, up Clear Fork, by McMinnville, over Walden's Ridge, across the Tennessee River, and on to Marietta, Milledgeville, Macon, and various Southern towns. Thirty-five days were allowed to go from Liberty to Georgia. The animals traveled from two and a half to ten miles a day. Dr. Foster imparts the interesting fact that in the "flatwoods" years ago there were many wild or feral hogs, belonging to no one but claimed by many. Descended from domesticated stock, "they developed immense tusks and long, heavy coats of hair."

In the Basin, where there were once large maple groves, maple sirup and sugar became a considerable industry in ante-bellum times, and these articles could be purchased for some years after the war. To hear the old slaves tell of the sugar camps, it would appear that the industry was pleasurable as well as a source of income.

The county is well watered, the principal streams, besides Caney Fork, being Smith Fork, Clear Fork,

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It should be noted that there were no envelopes until a late day. The writer has before him now a letter addressed in 1827 to "Mr. M. S. West, Liberty, Smith Co., Ten." It is a sheet of paper folded and fastened with a small bit of sealing wax, the amount of postage, ten cents, being marked on the outside. It was mailed at Haysboro, Davidson County, Tenn., and shows that postal rates were high.

In an interview with Isaac Whaley several years ago the writer obtained these facts bearing on the old times: "The letter postage was once six cents from Liberty to Alexandria, seven miles; ten cents to Nashville, fifty-six miles; over four hundred miles the postage was twenty-five cents, double that if the letter consisted of two sheets. Like registered letters today, a record of every letter was made on a 'way bill,' each postmaster receipting for it to the postmaster back on the route."

The physicians of Liberty have been numerous. These are recalled: Early, J. R. Dougherty, J. A. Baird, E. Wright, George C. Flowers; Tilman Bethel and Dr. Little, herbists; Horace Sneed, George R. Givan, J. A. Fuson, Thomas Black, J. S. Harrison. Later, A. S. Redman, J. W. Campbell, T. J. Sneed, W. H. Robinson, W. A. Whaley, J. H. Johnson, J. G. Squires, W. A. Barger, Robert Estes, T. O. Bratten, J. R. Hudson, Present, T. J. Jackson, T. J. Bratten, Harrison Adamson.

Dr. Foster mentions the old miller, "Chunky" Joe Hays, whose service was after Adam Dale's time. The Lambersons and Daniel Smith owned the mill still later. W. C. Youngblood and **Edward Robinson** were owners of the steam mill when it was burned by the troops of Gen. John T. Wilder, Federal.

Allan Wright, of Maryland, came to Liberty in 1866 and built a mill on the site of the one which had been burned, the first to be erected in the county after

VII. RELIGIOUS HISTORY-----page 67

Salem Baptist Church - First Ministers, Deacons, and Clerks - Exhorters - Other Baptist Churches - Methodism and Its Two "Wings" - Interesting Personal Mention - Cumberland Presbyterians and Disciples - Memories of Rev. J. W. Collum.

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The writer recalls a number of ministers of the county who were living during the war and shortly afterwards and pauses to pay them his tribute. One was Rev. Nathaniel Hays, born about 1807, ordained to preach in 1846, preached his first and last sermon at New Hope, and died October 28, 1868. Such was his life that he was not molested by either side during the war, though the antagonisms of that struggle brought something like chaos to the country. One can hardly estimate the good he accomplished after the war. A big man physically, he was strong-souled also, and people had faith in him. Hundreds of ex-soldiers listened to him, forgot heart bitternesses, and took the straight and narrow way. When the writer dreams of real heroes as they appeared to his boyhood eyes, he thinks of Natty Hays, Hall Bethel, Moses Fite, and two or three consecrated Methodists who for more than a generation stood unfalteringly for the cause of God.

New Hope is situated south of Alexandria. Rev. William Dale, who bought the farm known in later years as the Eli Rowland place, began preaching at Thomas Finley's home, but in 1818 established the Church with eighteen members. A building was erected, and the earlier pastors were: William Dale, W. P. Hughes, Archamac Bass, Henry Fite, Nathaniel Hays, T. J. Eastes, J. C. Brien, J. R. Hearn, J. M. Stewart, William Simpson, A. C. Webb, J. F. McNabb, and **Stephen Robinson**.

The Smithville Church was constituted August 25, 1844, with fourteen members, in the Methodist church.

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A house of worship was erected about 1858. The pastors have been: Jesse Allen, 1847-60; Hall Bethel, 1860-70; J. C. Brien, 1870-73; J. R. Bowman, 1873-75; A. J. McNabb, 1875-76; T. J. Eastes, 1876-78; J. J. Martin, 1878-; J. J. Porter, about 1880; J. C. Brien, about 1881-85; J. T. Oakley, about 1885-88; N. R. Sanborn, 1889-90; William Simpson, 1890-91; W. H. Smith, 1891-92; J. H. Grime, 1893-95; J. T. Oakley, 1896-; and A. P. Moore. Clerks to 1902: J. L. Bond, Abner Witt, P. P. Johnson, J. A. Wilson, and L. W. Beckwith.

Indian Creek Church, eight miles north of Smithville, dates back to 1844. First named Caney Fork Church, it was changed to Indian Creek in 1848. Among its pastors were Henry Fite, J. C. Brien, William Simpson, J. M. Stewart, D. C. Taylor, D. W. Taylor, A. J. Waller, and W. E. Wauford.

A noted old log church, known to the present generation only as a Methodist church, was Goshen, on Dismal Creek, north of Liberty. It was constituted a Baptist Church in July, 1821, by Cantrell Bethel and John Fite. Fite was the only pastor it ever had, as not much interest was aroused, and the Church was dissolved in 1837. From then on for years the Methodists controlled the religious sentiment of the community. About 1879 Rev. J. C. Brien began preaching in the neighborhood. As a result Cooper's Chapel was constituted in 1880 with nine members. J. C. Brien was the first pastor. Others have been: J. R. Hearn, J. H. Vickers, William Simpson, W. E. Raikes, A. C. Webb, J. F. McNabb, J. A. McClusky, and

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Stephen Robinson. The Church was named for Isaac Cooper, a Mexican War and Confederate veteran. Though a Methodist (but afterwards uniting with the Baptist congregation), the erection of Cooper's Chapel was due mainly to his efforts.

Mount Zion is situated near Temperance Hall. With fourteen members the Church was instituted June 30, 1851, in an old schoolhouse. Soon after its constitution Nicholas Smith was received by letter. He went to work arousing interest in the need of a church. It was erected and the first services held in it June, 1858. Pastors to 1902: Henry Fite, Nathaniel Hays, J. C. Brien, T. J. Eastes, S. S. Hale, William Simpson, J. M. Steward, A. C. Webb, J. F. McNabb, and W. E. Wauford. Clerks: T. P. Jones, W. M. Crowder, Z. P. Lee, R. W. Mason, A. P. Smith, W. A. Washer, H. A. Hill, S. M. Williams, E. L. Lawrence, T. D. Oakley, and L. C. Martin.

Until recent years the only Churches in Alexandria were the Methodist, Christian, and Cumberland Presbyterian, the first two having been established prior to the War between the States. As the result of a doctrinal debate in the town in January, 1887, between Elder Moody, Baptist, and Dr. T. W. Brents, Christian, the Baptist citizens resolved to organize. This was done during the month of the debate, and in time a neat and commodious church was erected. This was destroyed by lightning some years later, but in 1914 a new and handsome structure was built on the ruins. Some of the pastors have been: J. B. Moody, at one time editor of the Baptist Reflector, N. R. Sanborn,

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W. H. Smith, J. B. Fletcher, Rutherford Brett, T. J. Eastes, and R. L. Bell. Early clerks: J. A. Walker, J. M. Walker, C. E. Bailiff, and C. B. Bailiff. Deacons in the first years: L. E. Jones, Isaac Cooper, Levi Foutch, J. H. Snoddy, H. H. Jones, A. P. Smith, G. A. Measle, Samuel McMillan, J. A. Walker, J. S. Rowland, and James Stark. Livingston Tubb is the present clerk.

Dry Creek Church was organized through the instrumentality of J. M. Stewart and J. H. Vickers "near a straw stack in Dr. J. A. Fuson's lot," says Grime. A neat building was erected, the early pastors having been J. M. Stewart, William Simpson, J. H. Davis, J. H. Grime, and **Stephen Robinson.**

Wharton Springs Baptist Church was constituted three miles south of Smithville in 1889 in the dwelling of E. B. Allen. Among its pastors were William Simpson, J. A. McClusky, J. H. Davis, J. M. Stewart, and J. T. Oakley.

The Snow's Hill Church was instituted in 1897, the following having been early pastors: A. J. Waller and **Stephen Robinson.**

Pastors of the Dowelltown Church, which was organized in 1894, were: J. W. Stewart, J. H. Grime, J. F. McNabb, W. J. Watson, J. H. Whitlock, and W. E. Wauford.

Sycamore Fork Church, having in 1902 the largest membership of any in Salem Association, is on the line between DeKalb and Cannon counties, and was instituted through the efforts of Rev. Henry Bass in 1871. A house of worship was built in 1895. Of the

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Sycamore Fork Church, having in 1902 the largest membership of any in Salem Association, is on the line between DeKalb and Cannon counties, and was instituted through the efforts of Rev. Henry Bass in 1871. A house of worship was built in 1895. Of the pastors, these are recalled: Henry Bass, Hall Bethel, J. R. Hearn, William Simpson, J. H. Grime, G. A. Ogle, **Stephen Robinson**, and W. J. Watson. Of pathetic interest is the fact that one of the young ministers trained in this Church, J. T. Hancock, was called to its care, but died before his first appointment.

Other Churches are Beech Grove, at the mouth of Holm's Creek, established in 1858; Wolf Creek, near Laurel Hill, 1846; and New Union, near Frank's Ferry, southeast of Smithville, 1870.*

The Primitive, or "Hardshell," Baptists have a small membership in the county. Of the two noted Churches, Bildad and New Bildad, both south of Smithville, the latter is the most noted. Among the well-known Primitive Baptist ministers, these are recalled: Revs. Isaac Denton, Terry Snow, L. Pope Potter, and Mr. Byers.

In reply to a letter of inquiry, Rev. G. L. Beale, Secretary of the Tennessee Conference, M. E. Church, South, writes:

The records of the Tennessee Conference are very incomplete. The minutes were not printed prior to 1879, except at rare intervals. The written journals were destroyed by fire in the Publishing House in 1871. In the fall of 1812 the first Conference appears. That same year Stones River Circuit first appears in the minutes. Smith's Fork Circuit first appears in 1823, with William Algood and John Rains as pas-

*At the meeting of the Central Association of the Missionary Baptist Church at Trezevant, Tenn., in September, 1914, reports showed that the membership in the State (white) was, in round numbers, one hundred and ninety-two thousand.

IX. CONCERNING SLAVES AND FREE NEGROES-----page 98

Negro Insurrections - Some Owners of Slaves - Locally Popular Types - A Colored Infidel - Three Notable "Runaways" - A Pathetic Story - Family of Free Negroes - Ante-Bellum Laws - Negroes in the War.

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The old type of darky has almost become extinct. It seems but justice to refer at some length to a number who became well known locally from one cause or another. There were a few who had the instincts of a gentleman, some whose individuality made them favorites with the whites, and many with striking traits that created more or less notice. Not only did the negroes prove the most amiable of savage races, but the writer dares say that he recalls no instances among the whites of anything finer than the humble dignity of Wolsey Givan, the gentle urbanity of Wells Allen, the Chesterfieldian politeness of Dave Sellars, the serene patience of Mary Fuston, or the tireless devotion of Violet Overall to the little babe left to her care by the death of Mrs. Horace L. Hale.

Slaves were numerous in the county. Scores of citizens owned from two to a dozen, while a few held a much larger number. The original stock in most instances was brought from the older States by the pioneers. There was not very much trafficking in this species of property in DeKalb County. Of the slave owners adjacent to Liberty, these are recalled with little effort: James Allen, John Stark, W. G. Bratten, Reuben Evans, Francis Turner, Isaac Turney, Abraham Overall, Ezekiel Bass, **Edward Robinson**, Henry Frazier, Dr. G. C. Flowers, Daniel Smith, Nicholas Smith, Horace Overall, W. B. Stokes, James Tubb, Isaac Turney, Thomas Stokes, John Bethel, Eli Vick, James Fuston, Joseph Clarke, William Vick, William Sellars, Jasper Ruyle, William Avant, Sampson Williams, Thomas Givan, Peter and Jacob Adams, Leonard Lamberson, the Brazwells, Hayses, Groomses, Roys, and Bates.

The Foutches, Sneeds, Wrights, Lawrences, Good-

XIII. SMALLER VILLAGES OF THE COUNTY-----page 139

Temperance Hall - The Stokeses and Other Families - Merchants, Physicians, and Others - Sketch of Dowelltown - The Gray Graveyard - Schools - Laurel Hill - Past and Present History - Forks-of-the-Pike and Keltonsburg.

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HON. J. M. Allen once averred that his father, Jesse Allen, a Virginian, entered the land on Smith Fork Creek from John Corley's farm to Lancaster, one mile on each side of the creek, but sold his rights for \$400, after which he entered a tract in another part of the county that became DeKalb. Lower Smith Fork Valley is one of the most fertile sections in Middle Tennessee, and the wonder is that the pioneers could see no farther ahead.

Dr. R. M. Mason says Samuel Caplinger, a large landholder, built the mill and house which were later owned by Nicholas Smith and which formed the nucleus of Temperance Hall. The late A. P. Smith, son of Nicholas, has stated that the village received its name from the fact that the Sons of Temperance used to hold their meetings on the second floor of his father's residence. It was named then, after 1848, for the elder Smith in that year removed from Wilson County to Temperance Hall, the site being in Smith County. By act of February 1, 1850, the line was changed so as to include in DeKalb County the farms and homes of Smith, Andrew Vantrease, **John Robinson**, and others. By the same act John F. Goodner's farm, near Alexandria, was taken into DeKalb, as has been seen.

The men who located at and around Temperance Hall in the first years of the nineteenth century were,

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many of them, of unusual force of character and a number in affluent circumstances: Samuel Caplinger, Alex Robinson, **Stephen Robinson**, Nicholas Smith, Daniel Ford, John Mason, John Corley, James Simpson, Matthew Simpson, John Lamberson, George Kelley, Jack Reynolds, Peter Reynolds, the Drivers, Bates, Lawrences, Lancasters, Oakleys, Hayeses, Tubbs, Stephens, Kelleys, Fishers, Stokeses, and others.

Owing to the distinction to which two members of the Stokes family reached in the State (William B. and Jordan), it is pertinent to record that their father, Sylvanus, had started from North Carolina to locate on his land, near the present Temperance Hall, when his team ran away, and he was killed. Mrs. Stokes, with her three children, Thomas, William B., and Jordan, and a Mr. Kelly, continued the journey, reaching this country in 1818. Some years later the widow married Mr. Kelly and settled near or in Temperance Hall. To them were born Harry and Rufus Kelly and two daughters, one becoming Mrs. Mike Lancaster and the other Mrs. Thomas Lancaster. Thomas Stokes became a farmer. Of him a reliable citizen, a former neighbor, writes: "He was at one time the richest man in DeKalb County, having at the close of the war of 1861-65 about fifty negroes and large land interests. He was a fire-eating secessionist, as was his brother William at the beginning of the war, though the latter became a Federal. Everything Thomas had that was loose at both ends was taken from him by Federal soldiers. For intelligence and fine mother wit he was the superior of either Colonel Bell or Jor-

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The Southern Methodists have a good church in the hamlet. A Baptist church and Pisgah, the latter belonging to the Northern wing of the Methodists, are located a short distance out. The Disciples also have a congregation at this place.

Dowelltown, on the Lebanon and Sparta Turnpike and two miles north of Liberty, is on land settled some years after 1800. Thomas Dale, of Maryland, seems to have bought up some of the claims of Revolutionary soldiers of North Carolina. At any rate, he held warrants for much of the land around the village.

Levi Gray became possessed of a tract on the south side of the creek, living in the house east of the covered bridge, which was later occupied by Frank Dowell. It belonged to the Grays for years, and their family graveyard was across the turnpike west of the residence. The estate was inherited by Isaac Gray, who married a Miss Dowell. He died and left two children, Harriet and Melvina.

Frank Dowell married the widow Gray, his cousin, and lived on the farm until the close of the War between the States, when he removed to Arkansas. At one time he represented his county in the Arkansas Legislature. Dowelltown was named for him.

Frank Dowell sold the Dowelltown property to Rev. John Hunt, a Baptist minister from East Tennessee. Hunt exchanged it for land belonging to Sanford

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Mann, who came from the North after the war and was the first ferrotype artist of Liberty after peace. Mann sold to Thomas Chapman. The present owner is **John Robinson**, a son of the pioneer, **Edward Robinson**.

The country adjacent to Dowelltown was settled by as high-class men as any mentioned in other sections of the county. Among them were Robin Forrester, William and Samson Williams, Matthew Sellars, Benjamin Avant, David Fite, Alex Robinson, George Barnes, **Edward Robinson**, the Yeargins, the Harts, the Fraziers, the Bankses, the Snows, the Turners, and others.

The first storehouse was erected about 1869 where the Barger Hollow Lane intersects with the Lebanon and Sparta Turnpike, and probably the first merchant was James Ashworth. In the same building the following successively had stocks of merchandise: James Fuson, William Wall, Bratten & Turney, Riley Taylor, Barney Taylor & Co., Thomas Curtis, Less Fuson, and John F. Turner. Other early merchants were Charles Pullen, Thomas Bright, Pat Geraty, and Robert F. Jones.

There are now six stores in the village, the present merchants being John F. Turner, N. R. Robinson, W. T. Robinson, A. R. Meares & Son, G. S. and W. T. Blackburn, and Less Bass.

In 1866 Col. J. H. Blackburn began the erection of a flour mill, which was finished in 1872 by Lieut. Wingate T. Robinson. The Big Spring northwest of town furnishes the power.

Robinson, Edward Jr. – Rev'l War Solider, Pvt. – Service: VA
Served under George Washington.

b. ca.1755/58, or ca. 1760, Little Parish, Cumberland Co., VA –
d. 8 December 1826, Jackson Co., TN, *at 66 years of age.*

Will: 8 December 1826, probated 17 July 1827, nr. Gainesboro, Jackson Co., TN

24 December 1805, Cumberland Co., VA deeded land to John Miller.

**See Will of Edward Robinson Jr. "I Edward Robinson of Jackson Co., TN will perishable property to wife go be sold by wife, Ann Robinson ---son, John, Patsy, Drucilla were mentioned by name only. Edwasr was listed in the 1820 census of Jackson Co., TN. Anne, his widow was listed in the 1830 census of Jackson County: one female between 70 & 80 and two children.*

s/o Edward Robinson Sr. & Judith Southall

md ca. 1783/4, or 30 March 1796, Cumberland Co., VA, **Annah "Any" Meador** –

b. ca. 1758 – d. ca. 1830, Jackson Co., TN – Buried: Hardman Co., TN

d/o Jehu Meador & Sarah Atkinson *of Cumberland, VA.*

Stephen Robinson Sr. – b. ca. 1750, Cumberland, VA –

d. ca. 1835, Smith Co., TN – Auditor's Account Book XVIII -

Richmond, VA - Rev'l War Veteran, VA line, paid 19 April 1784 for 1781.

s/o Edward Robinson Sr. & Judith Southall

md 13 June 1774, Louisa Co., VA, Elizabeth “Betty” Holland –
d/o Dr. George Holland of Louisa County, VA & Sarah Ford
d/o William Ford, and they were married 27 August 1746.

John Field Robinson – b. 27 October 1806, TN – md Nancy Johnson
s/o Edward Robinson Jr. & Annah “Any” Meador
Named in Will of his father, Edward Robinson Jr.

***See Chapters 14 and 15 for more family information.**