

OVERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MARKS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

By **LIZ ENGEL**

Herald-Citizen Staff

OVERTON COUNTY -- It was near the end of the Civil War in April of 1865 when the unthinkable happened in Overton County -- a band of Confederate guerillas from Kentucky came through and burned the old Courthouse to the ground, nearly destroying all the county's historic records.

But through some quick thinking by James Richardson, some of those records were saved. Richardson had hidden the county deed books in the cellar of his home.

"It is the biggest misconception when people study the history of the county that all the records were burned in the war," said Overton County Historian Ronald Dishman. "But we have original deeds and other court records -- court minutes and circuit court records from 1815-24."

Dishman, who has been collecting history in the Upper Cumberland for 31 years now, is also the president of the Overton County Historical Society -- a group, much like Richardson back in 1865, interested in preserving the history of the Overton County area.

And for 40 years now, the historical society has been doing just that. On Thursday, the society will celebrate those 40 years with an anniversary event at the Millard Oakley Library meeting room.

The historical society was started in 1967 and officially chartered a year later. Dishman has been there for most of that time after joining at the age of 12.

"My saying is to preserve the past, protect the current and promote the rich history we have," Dishman said.

Since the society started in '67, its membership has fluctuated over the years. There are currently more than 100 members and several people are still devoted preserving the county history.

And in those 40 years, the society has gathered a wealth of information. Perhaps the biggest accomplishment of the society has been finding a place to hold that information, with the opening of the Overton County Historical Museum in 2002. Since that opening, the museum has expanded its displays to include items from the Civil War, World War I and WWII, as well as old medical equipment, farm implements and home items from the Depression era. And on Thursday, the society will be able to share part of that collection and the stories that come with it with everyone else.

"This is just a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the historical society," Dishman said. "Overton County just celebrated its 200th year, and we're just promoting the rich history we have."

The anniversary celebration will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Millard Oakley Library, located in Livingston at 107 E. Main St. The public is invited to attend, and cake and punch will be available.

For more information about the event, contact Dishman at (931) 823-5297.

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COUNTY CELEBRATES 200 YEARS

By AMY DAVIS
Herald-Citizen Staff

In the northern part of this state, hovering between the majestic Cumberland Mountains, which overlook it on the east, lies the county of Overton. One hundred years ago, when our fathers were signing the Declaration of Independence, the foot of civilized man had never pressed its generous soil. It was the home of the wild beast and the hunting ground of the savage Indian. It yielded spontaneously and bountifully the finest vegetation. Its mountains and hills were clothed with majestic forests, and its coves and valleys were covered with a rich and luxuriant growth of cane and grass...

When Albert V. Goodpasture spoke these words on July 4, 1876, to the people of Overton County, he called these early days of the county's history "romantic and adventurous times."

At that time, the county he spoke so fondly of was 30 years shy of its 100th birthday. But this weekend, citizens of Overton will be observing an even bigger milestone their county's bicentennial.

The celebration includes a full slate of activities beginning Friday on the Town Square in Livingston. Festivities will conclude Sept. 11 the actual date of the county's inception in 1806. There will even be a large birthday cake to properly mark the occasion, followed by a fireworks display.

It's taken more than two years of planning to give the momentous affair its proper due including research and preparation for a slew of historical skits highlighting key events in the county's history and organizers are eager to see the fruits of their labor unfold.

"The Bicentennial Committee has been working diligently on making this a celebration to remember," said Gene Medley, president of the Livingston-Overton County Chamber of Commerce.

Admission is free, and lots of food will be available. Following is a schedule of events. All activities at will take place at the Livingston Town Square unless otherwise listed.

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OVERTON HISTORY LIVES THROUGH 'GRANNY LINDY'

Jill Thomas
Herald-Citizen Staff

Many histories come from documents. But the history of 'Granny Lindy' in Overton County was passed down through a family tradition of storytelling. Now those stories have been collected in a 140-page oversized volume that goes on sale tomorrow at the Overton Heritage Museum in Livingston in a book signing that will include one author, Sally Lee, and the daughter of co-author Margaret Killiffer Harris, Susan Pangle of Cookeville.

It's a book that is written for both history fans and for readers of literature.

Granny Lindy was born sometime in the mid-1800s. She never knew the exact date of her birth. She never learned to read or write. She lived much of her life in a one-room house and supported a sister who was "slow in the head" by running the family grist mill single-handedly.

For history buffs, the book is a treasure trove of details about life in rural America in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

On medicine:

"Onion poultices put on the feet will draw out fever.

"Roast an onion, take out the little heart, and put it in the ear for an earache."

"Grease the bottom of children's feet if they have a cold.

"No one in Lindy's own house died with the flu. She doctored her people with poultices. Even the doctors then used poultices of fried onions in a cloth. They kept in the heat and that's what the old people wanted anyway."

On clothes:

"They raised their own cotton. They would warm it by the fire and all picked the seeds out. Then Granny carded it into bats for her quilts and spun it into cloth.

"The shoe man would come around once a year ... to make shoes for everybody. He made them to fit on either foot, and they would wear them alternately so as not to run them down too much. For months before he came, the men would whittle out little pegs of hard maple and the cobbler would put the shoes together with them. When the little pegs stuck up inside and hurt too much to walk on, then they would take a stone and wear them down."

On tobacco:

"Granny smoked a clay pipe ... She raised her tobacco herself in the garden. It was not burley but old red tobacco. She made twists of it and hung it from the ceiling. When she needed some, she broke off a piece as long as your thumb and rubbed it between her hands till it was all crushed. She kept the crumbs in the apron pocket where she also kept her pipe."

In the 1960s Granny Lindy's grandson, a rehabilitation officer for the state, Luther Harris, was living in Cookeville with his wife, Margaret Killiffer Harris. One summer they played host to Sally Lee, a friend of their daughter, Susan, now Susan Pangle.

Miss Sally kept a notebook of their stories and memories.

The book that goes on sale tomorrow is a posthumous collaboration between Margaret Harris and Sally Lee.

The book has three sections -- each one different in style, covering different aspects of the same true stories.

First, Miss Margaret writes a personal recollection of Granny Lindy and her visits to her grandmother-in-law in the back country, including a detailed account of a hog killing and how, and how much, of the meat was preserved, as well as a description of cold and hot soap-making and suggestions for child rearing (which the modern Miss Margaret in the 1940s chose not to follow).

The second section of the book is a series of first person reminiscences by the people in Granny Lindy's life. These are character studies that Sally Lee has created from the notes she took in the Harris household in 1961 and from later conversations with the family.

The stories put a narrative background behind the details of life in Overton County in the late 1800s. And from these character sketches the reader also forms a view of Granny Lindy.

Finally, the third section of the book contains the collected notes that Lee copied over the years from conversations with those who knew Granny Lindy.

"People have told me that those who don't like to read will read the notes at the back of the book and those who like to read will enjoy the stories at the front of the book," Sally Lee said laughing.

The book costs \$20 and the book signing is from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. The museum will mail out copies for a \$2 fee.

The museum is located just off the Courthouse Square in Livingston at 318 West Broad. For more information about the Overton Heritage Museum, call (931) 403-0909.

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MUSEUM-IN-THE-MAKING

By AMY G. DAVIS
Herald-Citizen Staff

To tell the story of Overton County -- that's their mission.

And they -- members of the Overton County Historical Society -- plan to accomplish that mission with the creation of a museum, some sections of which are close to completion.

But there's still much work to be done before the Overton County Heritage Museum, as they're calling it, can be opened in its entirety for the public to enjoy.

Speaking about the front part of the museum, Claudine Bilbrey, chairman of the museum committee, said, "We're on the verge of finishing it up."

Fellow committee member Paula Stover said, "This front part is pretty much done. It just lacks a little bit. Just little stuff."

Arriving to that point didn't come easily, though.

Museum committee members began their labors with the old Overton County Jail building, which was leased to them by the county in July 2001. Much-needed renovations began right away.

Margie Lewis, also of the committee, said they were thrilled about getting the building -- until they walked in the door.

"It was so nasty!" she said.

Committee member Paula Stover said, "It just about had to be gutted and started over."

Bilbrey said, "When we got into working -- I mean, it took a lot of work to get where we are."

And where they are is closer to seeing a dream come true -- a dream of the Overton County Historical Society that's been in the plans at least three years.

"We planned for a long time what we wanted," Bilbrey said.

The committee members said they had envisioned a place where the citizens of Overton County and other interested individuals could go to learn about the county's heritage -- early home life, schools, the mining days, trains, religion, medicine, military heroes and much more.

"Overton County has an outstanding military history," said James Hunter of the museum committee.

Though far from overall completion, it took a lot of Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays to get where they are -- all of it volunteer work.

"And we've raised all the money with various fund-raisers, bake sales and yard sales," Stover said. "We had the country store at the fair. We've had donations from businesses and individuals."

Also, the city of Livingston is helping out by providing water utilities, and the county has fixed the roof and is providing phone services.

"And the city has come and cut out cells," Lewis said.

Community service workers have helped in the effort as well.

But the need still exists for more volunteers and funding.

While the front part of the building has been drastically improved -- walls rebuilt and painted, wood flooring refinished or tiled, a heating and cooling system installed, ceiling repaired, new windows and more -- the back part, where the jail cells are, and the basement are still in crude shape.

Changing that condition is a matter of getting people to donate their time.

"It's very hard to get somebody to volunteer their labor," Lewis said.

Committee members say they're hoping to have the front area open to the public by spring of 2003.

As for the rest of the building, "It depends on how many volunteers we have," Hunter said.

Lewis added, "We're so dependent on volunteers and fund-raisers."

Stover said, "We need skilled volunteers. We need people to do concrete, carpenters..."

Lewis continued, "Electricians, plumbers -- if we could get people to volunteer, we could get it ready."

Stover said, "If we could get a group that would volunteer *one day*, we could get it done!"

Getting the museum in shape has been a lot of hard, draining work, they said.

"You have to love Overton County," Hunter said.

Bilbrey said, "We have to get ourselves renewed every once in a while."

While all physical work and materials for the museum are provided by museum committee members and volunteers, funding for interpretive exhibits is through a grant from the Tennessee Humanities Council. The

grant is providing the museum with assistance from Tennessee Tech University history professor Michael Birdwell and the University of Tennessee's Sam Yates.

Planned for the front part of the museum are temporary exhibits -- exhibits that may change every quarter. It will include such things as quilt shows and photos of community leaders. They may even showcase a monthly "outstanding citizen."

Also in the plans are a gift shop and a room for quilting and craft classes.

In the back and in the basement will be permanent exhibits, possibly beginning in the 1700s.

"The permanent exhibits will start with the longhunters to tell the story of Overton County," Stover said. "Maybe even prehistoric times if we could get things like that."

Also, one of the jail cells will remain intact and appear as if it were still in use to preserve that part of the Overton County Jail's history.

In order to represent each community in Overton County, committee members are urging individuals to donate photos and artifacts for display in the museum.

"The clothing, uniforms, documents, everyday tools and other household or farm-related items will illustrate the daily lives of our heritage during war, work or play," they said.

They stressed that a monitored security system is being installed.

Also in the works is an ongoing veteran history project. Forms in which veterans can write their bios are available at the Overton County Library, the VFW Hall or can be obtained by contacting a member of the museum committee.

"We urge the veterans to come in and get those forms," Hunter said.

To find out more about the veteran history project or to volunteer labor or artifacts, call Claudine Bilbrey at (931)823-7636.

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FASHIONS OF DAYS GONE BY

By AMY GOODPASTURE DAVIS
Herald-Citizen Staff

Down the wooden staircase they gracefully made their entrance into the front room of Overton County's historic Mofield House.

Cameras flashed as the polished models strode daintily across the hardwood floors, flaunting fashions of days gone by to spectators who'd come to watch them on June 15.

It was as if they had stepped into the old house, previously a bed and breakfast in Livingston, from another time -- another world -- to give viewers of the vintage fashion show a sense of the ever-changing world of fashion from the Victorian era on up to the 1970s women's liberation movement.

Showing fashions from the past, it was a fitting fundraiser for the county's soon-to-be historical museum.

The Overton County Heritage Museum, as it is to be called, is expected to be completed around the end of the year, according to Margie Lewis of the Overton County Historical Society, who is on the museum committee and was head of the fashion show fundraising project. It will be in the old Overton County Jail building.

Some of the vintage apparel, such as the dress worn by the first model of the show, Kelli Ray, will be displayed in the museum.

Announcer of the event Robbie Melton explained to viewers that Ray, who was dressed in an 1860s black cotton dress with pleated ruffle trim, represented a time when women mourned for deceased loved ones in style -- a trend started by Queen Victoria with the 1861 deaths of her mother and husband.

"The queen became obsessed with her mourning, and it generated the popular fashion of black jewelry and clothing," Melton said during the show.

Before it became stylish to dress in black, widows would wear only plain, black dresses the duration of their mourning period, which was a little over a year.

"If a poor woman didn't have a black dress, she would dye one she already had," Melton said. "The only jewelry or decorations allowed were plain black or beads made of jet."

The mourning period for a man, on the other hand, was three days, during which time he would wear a black arm band. And he was encouraged to remarry soon if he had children, Melton explained.

The dress that Ray wore had belonged to Livingston's Conway Lea whose fiance, Lee Keisling, died during WWI. She mourned him the rest of her life. Wilma Myers donated this dress and other items from the Lea estate to be exhibited in the museum.

Ray and the other models of the vintage fashion show, Amy Lewis, Michelle Stringer, Jenny Moran, Kayln Conner, Morgan Robichaud and Rachel Tyre, treated viewers to a wide variety of fashions through the years, each with unique background stories.

As they wowed the audience with their attire, they also acted the part -- used props if necessary, too.

Jenny Moran carried a decorative fan that came from the estate of Nina Gore while wearing a white Victorian cotton skirt with eyelet ruffles at the bottom and a delicate white lace full bodice blouse. Melton explained that "fans were a must" during this time period because of no air conditioning or deodorant.

Michelle Stringer made her entrance wearing another dress from the Lea estate, a blue calico with small roses that a school teacher might have worn around the turn of the century. To look the part, Stringer wore a white straw hat and carried some old school books and a small hand-held bell.

Later on in the show, Stringer modeled a 1930s black crepe dress, accented with stripes on the side, that came from the estate of Lori Rachel Johnson. She represented the 1920s and 1930s, when women "glittered with glamour," Melton said. "Women bobbed their hair, did the 'Charleston' and smoked in public. Fashions were less restrictive and became short and straight. Women had the right to vote and were moving into the work force." The turban hat with rhinestones Stringer wore with the dress was the "rage in Hollywood," Melton said.

Stringer also showed off a red and black house dress from the 1940s that came from the estate of Anna V. Carr.

Amy Lewis was dressed to go out for the evening in the 1950s, wearing an elegant black dress with black flowers. Over her dress she wore a curly lamb swing coat with a mink collar. Her muff was also of black lamb. The muffs were popular in the 1940s and 1950s.

Also showing a look from that time period was Ray, who modeled a yellow cotton dress with brown trim. It was another of the dresses from the Carr estate.

Another look was shown off by Moran -- an elegant blue crepe dress with a lace bodice. The outfit was completed with a hat of blue feathers.

A look from the 1960s Woodstock generation was represented by Stringer, who entered the room as a "flower child," barefooted and wearing a long purple dress with heavy lace trim. She carried some yellow flowers. Melton explained that garments of this time period reflected a "total rejection of all fashion" and that fashion hasn't quite recovered from it.

Moran, the last model of the show, modeled a neon orange pantsuit from the 1970s that came from the Bill and Elma Lee Bussell estate. She was wearing platform shoes and "looking for a party." Melton ended the show by saying, "When styles come around again, let's hope the 1970s get left out!"

Many other outfits were modeled during the approximate hour-long show, and the five lead models kept busy, having to change outfits quickly to keep up with the flow.

Previous owners of some of the other outfits in the show that were modeled or on display were Mary Lee Bussell, Matilda Bussell, Lois Qualls Warren, Zelma Huffines, Nola May Needham, Mable Springs, Lucinda Tompkins, Van Hooser, Carol Ledbetter Coleman and Jenny Goosby. Many of the outfits belong to Margie Lewis.

Some more names behind the scenes at the vintage fashion show, besides Lewis, include Claudine Bilbrey, Shirley Key, Darlene Martin, Paula Stover and Lisa Tyre.

The experience was an enjoyable one for Ray, a first-time model.

"I really enjoyed it," she said. "It was fun to see all the different styles that they had years ago. I really had fun."

Her favorite outfit was a red sleeveless slip dress from the 1960s.

Elaine Puckett Duewer, a spectator at the event, had this to say: "I enjoyed it very much. They talked about people I knew when I lived here 35 years ago. I grew up in Livingston, and I enjoyed seeing the clothing."

The vintage fashion show is one of many attempts by the museum committee to raise money.

A grant is being given to the museum by the Tennessee Humanities Council for interpretive exhibits and the assistance of Knoxville consultants Brent Cantrell and Sam Yates. But funds still need to be raised for building renovations, utilities and other expenses, Lewis and Bilbrey said.

Upcoming fundraisers include the following: country store at the Overton County Fair sponsored by the Overton County Historical Society; fried apple pie demonstration at the Overton County Library with the FCE Club at 1 p.m. on Sept. 12; rummage sale in September; and gospel singing sponsored by the museum committee at the First United Methodist Church family life center at 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 7; a "trash and treasure sale"; and a bake sale. A quilt with pictures of Overton County veterans in the center, hand-quilted by the Allons Quilt Club, will also be given away soon to raise money.

* The Overton County Heritage Museum committee is looking for items to go in the museum, to be located in the old Overton County Jail Building. If you have artifacts, photos or other items you would like to loan or donate to the museum, call Claudine Bilbrey, museum committee chairperson, at (931)823-7636. Comments and suggestions are also appreciated. Also wanted are pictures, diaries, artifacts and other items from veterans that were brought home after their time in the service. The items will be put in the veterans section of the museum.

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SERVICES HONOR SIX CONFEDERATES SLAIN BY UNION SOLDIERS

Surprised while eating breakfast at the William Officer home in Overton County

Dale Welch

Special to the Herald-Citizen

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The corn still grows across the wagon road that leads to the Conley Cemetery, located in a remote area appropriately called 'Peaceful Valley,' near the Overton and Putnam County lines off Highway 84. Last Sunday, members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy along with relatives paid their respects in a memorial service for the Confederate soldiers buried there so long ago.

By DALE WELCH

Rain fell that day across 'Peaceful Valley' as though to also mourn those who died in service to the Confederacy. A prayer was said, kind words spoken and then a final 21-gun salute marked the occasion.

Among those Confederate dead in the cemetery lie four Texas cavalymen, a Texas Ranger and an Alabama cavalryman who were murdered by Federal forces at the William and Cynthia Officer home which still stands on the Rock Springs Road, though now in poor condition.

On March 12, 1864, the six soldiers 2nd Lt. Robert S. Davis (8th Texas Cavalry, Co. D), Coxswain John P. York (8th Texas Cavalry), Oliver Shipp (8th Texas Cavalry, Co. S), Samuel Garrett (Texas Cavalry, Co. G), W.M. Slaughter (1st Regiment Texas Rangers) and W.A Lipscomb (3rd Regiment Alabama Cavalry) along with a young boy, Johnny King, who was from Manchester, Tenn., and who was traveling with the group had stopped at the Officer home.

Officer's son, John Holford Officer, also a Confederate soldier, was at home on leave. The Officer family and the soldiers were seated around the dining room table eating breakfast when Yankee forces under the command of William B. Stokes rode up. The Officer's son, John, ran into the kitchen when he saw the soldiers ride up, and hid in the loft and was further concealed by "Uncle Abraham" Officer, a slave on the Officer farm.

The other soldiers had no time to go for their guns, which were stacked in the hallway.



Re-enactors from the Jackson County Chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans last Sunday fire their rifles a ceremonial 21 times over the graves of six Confederates slain by Union soldiers in a surprise raid in Overton County on March 12, 1864. From left are Henry A. Ford, brigadier general of the Tennessee Division of the SCV, his sword lifted; First Sgt. Gerald Site; Pvt. Clay Thomas; Second Sgt. Buddy Roberts; Pvt. John Ford; and First Lt. Ronnie Cassidy. * H-C Photo/Dale Welch

When the Yankees rushed the house, they killed York, Shipp, Garrett, Slaughter and Lipscomb in the house. As Shipp ran through the house, he grabbed Mrs. Officer's hand. With bullets flying from Yankee guns, Mrs. Officer was hit in the shoulder. According to a later account by "Uncle Abe," Mrs. Officer slowly recovered.

Some of the Yankees had by that time found Johnny King, the young lad, hiding in a corner. "Uncle Abe" persuaded the Yankees that King was just a young orphan boy going from house to house for support. The argument saved King's life.

There was no mercy for Lt. Davis, who was already wounded. The Yankees took him out to a gate post in front of the house and riddled his body with bullets. Before they fired the finishing shots, Davis cried out, "You ought not to do this. I have never done anything but my sworn duty."

The Yankees set fire to the Officer house, but Mr. Officer kicked it out. He was told that he would be shot if he did it again. "Every time you try to burn my house, I will surely put it out," Officer replied.

Unknown to the Yankees, Officer's son was still hiding in the house. The Yankees finally relented and rode off when reminded by Officer that they had already done much damage to his family and his guests.

The bodies of the slain soldiers were taken by ox cart and buried in a common grave, but not before one of the Officer family cut locks of their hair. A portion of the fence post where Lt. Davis was executed is now in the Overton County Library.

Another Confederate soldier buried in the Conley Cemetery is James Forester Parrott. As a lad, Parrott was traveling with his family along the Old Walton Road westward. He came down with the measles and was left by his mother who was traveling in a wagon train in the care of the George Thompson family.

Parrott's mother and six other children continued on their journey, never to return.

Parrott became a Confederate soldier in Nov. 1862 when he joined Company H of the 28th Tennessee Infantry. At Franklin, Tenn., the then-Sgt. Parrott was captured after he was wounded in the ankle. He was admitted to the US Army hospital in Nashville where his right leg was amputated near the knee.

After serving time as a prisoner-of-war, Sgt. Parrott was released on June 16, 1865, and walked home with a wooden leg to his wife and two sons.

Parrott died a few years after the war, in 1868. Some of his descendants tell that he was on horseback just a little way from home when he was ambushed. Always, when he was on horseback, always tied his wooden leg around the saddle horn to keep from losing it.

After he was shot, his horse returned home, the leg still tied to the saddle horn, and his family went out looking for him. They found him too late.

Members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans' Jackson County Reenacting Club (4th Tennessee Cavalry and 4th Tennessee Infantry, Company E) and the Sally Tompkins Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy participated in the event. Both groups are part of national organizations which promote the memory of their ancestors who fought in the Confederate service.

Dale Welch writes 'Chimney Corner Tales' from Monterey.

OVERTON'S JOHN MADISON LEE SPENT YEARS IN UNION PRISON

By **DALE WELCH**

Special to the Herald-Citizen

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John Madison Lee, born in 1837, was the son of Henry Lee, a prominent distiller in the Copeland Cove area of Overton County, Tenn., and Virginia Copeland Lee.



John Madison Lee and his wife, Polly

In 1856, John married Polly Swallows. The couple raised five children, Martha, Fred, I.B., Andrew Forrest and Jacob McMinnis, in the Oak Hill community, also in Overton County.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, in 1861, Lee, along with other Southern patriots, joined Capt. Richardson Copeland's company of the 25th Tennessee Infantry. Later, he joined Col. George Dibrell's 8th Tennessee Cavalry where he attained the rank of sergeant.

Lee participated in battles that included Fishing Creek, Ky., and Neely's Bend as well as several skirmishes along the way. Little did he know of life he was soon to endure in as a prisoner of war in the dreaded Union prison at Ft. Delaware, Del.

On a withdrawal to Sparta from one of the skirmishes, the men of the 8th were furloughed for five days since they were so close to home. Lee, along with a group of his fellow Confederates, road through the Calfkiller River Valley at night to avoid any Union patrols. At daybreak, the soldiers awoke to find themselves surrounded by Union guerrillas.

The Union commanding officer told the Confederates that they would be released if they agreed to an oath of allegiance, join and fight in the Union Army. To their captors' dismay, none of the men of the 8th Cavalry stepped forward.

The guerrillas seized one of Lee's fellow soldiers, bound him and placed him in front of a firing squad to make an example of him. Just as the order to "Fire!" was given, one of the men from the 8th Cavalry yelled to the Yankees that the man they were about to murder was a Mason and a Christian and that to kill this man would be an unforgivable sin.

To the dismay of the commanding officer, the firing squad refused to shoot. The squad was dismissed and the captured men were ordered taken to Chattanooga where they were later transported to prison camps.

John Lee was eventually taken to the dreaded Union prison camp at Ft. Delaware. Other Confederate soldiers became what they termed "Galvanized Yankees" because they took the oath of allegiance.

Ft. Delaware was located on Pea Patch Island, just out of Delaware City. The island was in the middle of the Delaware River, which is the dividing line between Delaware and New Jersey. Originally built in 1813, it became the largest modern fort of its time when Congress appropriated \$2 million to complete it in 1859, just before the start of the Civil War.

Its walls of granite and brick were 32-feet high and a 30-foot moat encompassed the fort, crossed only by a drawbridge.

The fort was not made to be a prison, but was ordered to start receiving prisoners-of-war during the Civil War. At first, sheds were constructed on the parade grounds. But the demand for prison space became so great that barracks were constructed outside the walls to house 2,000 prisoners.

By June 1863, there were 8,000 prisoners at the camp. In August 1863 there were 12,500 prisoners, even though the fort had been upgraded to house only 10,000.

During its time as a prison, Ft. Delaware housed over 40,000 Confederate, federal and

political prisoners. Approximately 2,700 died as prisoners-of-war, and 2,400 of those were buried in a national cemetery just across the river in New Jersey.

Once at Ft. Delaware, John Lee was stripped of all his belongings and given a set of clothes, a "cheap" overcoat and issued one blanket, which hardly kept the cold and dampness of the marshy prison away.

The barracks were heated by coal-burning stoves which were badly placed to heat approximately 200 prisoners per stove. Some of the older and weaker prisoners who required more heating and food could not survive. Boat loads of dead bodies increased each day across the Delaware River to the cemetery.

Disease was rampant at the fort. The malnourished prisoners contracted measles, smallpox and other diseases. There was also an abundance of lice. During his stay at the prison, John Lee made five extended stays in the hospital.

At the prison hospital, prisoners were stripped of their clothing and given "a shirt and drawers of course texture, belonging to the hospital which probably had been frequently used before," noted one prisoner.

If one was healthy enough, there could be an escape attempt. The official federal account of escapes totaled 273. Prisoner accounts were somewhere between 500 and 1,000. With survival first on his mind and being too weak for the attempt, Lee remained at the prison until his release in March 1865.

Upon his release, he was transported by boat to New Orleans and, even though in ill health, had to walk home.

On the homefront, survival was also of the utmost importance. Lee's wife, Polly, took care of the then-three children. She plowed fields with an ox and harvested wheat and corn, also killing hogs and wild animals to provide food for the table.

Late in the war, the Lee farm was visited by Yankees. Polly's father, Isaac Swallows, was staying with the family and was on the porch rocking in his chair when the soldiers rode up. They bound the elderly man and began pulling his hair out.

A former slave from the Oak Hill area pleaded with the soldiers to stop beating the old man. The black man told the Yankees that Mr. Swallows was a good old man and not to bother him again. The soldiers let the Swallowses go and began their plunder of the property.

One of the plunderers took a basket of eggs and began to place them in his saddle bags. Polly told him to allow her to place them in the bags "for they would surely break everyone." She began placing them in the bags carefully and, unknown to anyone, Polly took the money that she had hid in the bottom of the egg basket and secretly hid it once more.

Before leaving, the soldiers took a British saber that had been taken at the Battle of New Orleans. The Lees were thankful that their lives had not been taken and that Isaac Swallows had survived the inhuman beating, thanks to a former slave.

Returning to his Oak Hill home, John Lee was nursed back to health and spent the rest of his life farming the land that he loved and fought for. Disabled because of his war years, he still served as a mail carrier for a time and served on the Overton County Board of Equalization. He and his wife are buried in the Carr Cemetery in the Copeland Cove of Overton County.

* Fort Delaware is now a Delaware State Park. Boat transportation to the island is available summer weekends and holidays from Delaware City. The Fort Delaware Society, PO Box 553, Delaware City, DE, 19706, is eagerly seeking copies of letters/diaries and photos of the men who were there for their research files and exhibits. Their Internet homepage is located at <http://www.del.net/org/fort>.

* Do you have an interesting family story that you would like to see in print? Contact Dale Welch at 303 Taves Ave., Monterey, TN 38574. His phone number is (931) 839-2949.; or you can e-mail him at dawelch@usit.net.

OLD UNION - ONE OF THE OLDEST PLACES OF WORSHIP IN THE UPPER CUMBERLAND

By J. D. ELDRIDGE

Special to the Herald-Citizen

In the year of 1786, a trio of three fearless hunters ? a Crockett (not David), Mansico and Drake ? wandered into what is now the Oak Hill area of Overton County, hunting bear, deer and buffalo.

These men they were not seeking homes were attacked by a party of hostile Indians, and Crockett was killed; he is buried somewhere in the vicinity of Oak Hill. Drake and Mansico went on into Kentucky and never returned to this area.

Barring these hunters in 1786, no white man set foot on Overton County soil until 1799. In the very early spring of 1799, Col. Stephen Copeland, accompanied by his son, who was later known as Big Jo, arrived in what is now Overton County.

Col. Copeland was a member of a prominent Jefferson County, N. C., family. They had followed a winding (Standing Stone) Cherokee trail across the Cumberland Mountains into a beautiful cove a few miles from Livingston on Roaring River/Mathews Creek, where they planted the first crop of corn to be grown in Overton County before returning to North Carolina to bring the rest of Col. Copeland's family to the new land.

It was, however, only days or weeks on the heels of Col. Copeland that John Goodpasture and several others followed the same trail over the mountains to a point a few miles farther along the trail to what is the Old Union vicinity, situated about two miles southeast of Hilham.

My parents, grandfather Masters and other people who were old when I was young said their parents had said Goodpasture was accompanied by others whose names were Murphy, Hall, Nolen, Know, Wright and probably another or two. These, too, after establishing temporary homes later that same year (1799), also brought their families and possessions to the wild, new, beautiful country.

Foremost in the minds and lives of these hardy pioneers was their devotion to their Christian heritage. A first matter at hand was the building of churches as well as homes. Thus in 1799-1800, led by John Goodpasture, the first Old Union log church was built on the site where the present building stands.

Old Union's location was so situated that it was a somewhat central location where Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians for miles around would assemble to worship. The site was for years one of the most widely known places of worship in the Upper Cumberland country.

It was not until in 1806 that, in joint petitions, Dr. Moses Fisk founded the village of Hilham (Hilham means a hamlet or village on a hill) and in the same year built the first female college Fisk Femademy that was the first college for women south of the River Ohio. In the same year, Fisk Academy had its borning.

Fisk Female Academy was completely destroyed by fire only a year after its construction. Fisk Academy would become subsequently a four year high school.

A fine school of more than 60 pupils was being taught at Old Union by 1801. This was before the County of Overton was set up.

By 1830, the exploding immigration and local increase in population had brought about time for anticipation and planning of Old Union's spiritual expansion. The Methodists, who were more highly concentrated in the area southeast of Old Union, built a new church named Mt. Gilead a distance of some 1 1/2 miles away on Flat Creek.

The Presbyterians already had camp revival cottages where members living at great distances could come and live through two or three week-long meetings. They retained the name "Camp Ground" and it remains thus. Camp Ground is located about a mile south, slightly southwest, of Old Union, just off Highway 136. Old Union is still a Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian-owned facility, but in recent years regular services have been dropped.

The second building on the site, when destroyed by fire, was replaced by the present one.

The logs in this old church were end/corner notched by William Dillard Eldridge and Ebeneazor Wright, residents of the Old Union vicinity, both skilled in the use of adze and broad axe. These men notched many a log for house and barn-raising throughout their community.

Old Union, facing east on the old Standing Stone trail, is in all probability the first place of worship in Overton and a large area of surrounding counties.

Several years ago, I attended a pre-funeral visitation at the Old Union Church. It was the deceased's wish that this be done. The "setting-up with the corpse" lasted all night like used-to-be the case many years earlier when I was a child.

I, the writer of this brief account of Old Union, J.D. Eldridge, recollect many stories that reached me through the years about happenings and goings on at the old church and cemetery, and some of the tales did have a bit of hair-raising in them if I was passing Old Union in the nighttime.

It's a pretty picture to paint Old Union.

It can be reached from Cookeville by going north about 18 miles on Highway 136, and turning right (east) on Old Union Road for one mile. From Livingston, go west on Highway 85 Livingston-Hilham Road and go six miles. Immediately after crossing Flat Creek Bridge, turn left on Old Union Road. Go a mile west on Old Union Road.

J. D. Eldridge writes from Livingston. He is the former publisher of the Overton County News.

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