

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CLAY CO., TN.

By Landon B. Anderson

(Date written - unknown; probably between 1933 and 1944)

(Italicized parenthetical notes added by person unknown, initials E.R.G., perhaps Edith Gunn).

The Old Town of Celina, in Jackson County, was located on the south bank of the Cumberland River, at its junction with Obed River, many years prior to the start of the Civil War (1861). Prominent families living in the town before the war and for some time after the close were W.C. Willis, L.B. Peterman, R.P. Brown, Captain Hughes, Dr. Jonathan Davis (*grandson of Leonard Davis*), John J. Brown, Joseph Roberts and James Roberts (*grandsons of Hugh Roberts and his wife Sarah Davis and children of Jefferson Roberts and his wife, Baskie Stone*), Landon Oglesby (*uncle of O.B. Maxey*), L.T. Armstrong and Mrs. Nancy Rich, the mother of Rial, Joseph and Albert Rich. The former (*Rial?*) operated a blacksmith shop for two score years, and in his declining years moved to Missouri where he lived until his death. Joseph served four years in the Confederate Army and soon after his return home, he married the widow Catherine Poindexter, daughter of A.P. Green, and with the exception of a short time in New Mexico, lived in or near Celina until his death. Albert married Miss May Maxey of Tompkinsville, KY., and soon after marriage moved to Webb City, MO., where they lived until their death.

Other families living near the town (within its present corporate limits) prior to the war, were Isaac Davis (*son of Leonard Davis*), who lived in a log house east of the public square which was torn down several years ago by M.F. Green who built a new cabin now owned by Mrs. M.M. Smith. John H. Stone lived in a log house about one mile south of the public square. Part of the house is still standing and belongs to H.S. Williamson.

Mrs. Sallie Gearheart lived East of where Martin and J.P. Dale now live, on the West side of the old road leading along the hillside to the Gates ferry. The house in which she lived has long since been destroyed. Mrs. Gearheart's family, at that time, consisted of four daughters: Sarah, Mary, Ruth and Martha, and three sons: Hugh, Ben and Abe. Sarah married John H. Stone, Mary married James Terry (or Perry), Ruth married T.J. Hudspeth, and Martha married William Campbell Burrus. The latter three, with their husbands, moved to Texas soon after the close of the war (1871). Hugh Gearheart married Miss Katherine Burrus in about 1856, served in the Confederate Army four years, lived near the town of Celina until 1877, when he left here to join his mother and brother, Ben, who had preceded him and located on two farms adjoining each other near Celina, Texas, where they lived until they died. Abe Gearheart was killed by Sib Williams on New Year's night (1867) in the street in front of the store house now owned by Mrs. Ollie Rich.

(Insertion here of a letter from J.A. (Abe) Gearheart, Celina, TX., dated 14 October, 1970:

"My father was Benoni Franklin Gearheart, born 2 August, 1852 in or near Celina, TN. His brother Abe was born 10 March, 1846 (for whom I was named) and was old enough to serve in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Abe Gearheart served under the command of Capt. Bill Hull, father of Cordell Hull. At the close of the war, a party was given in a vacant store building in Celina, TN., and just after the celebration had begun, my uncle

Abe was called to the door and was shot dead by Sib Williams, upon which provocation, Capt. Bill Hull told his family good-bye saying that he would return when he had killed Abe Gearheart's slayer, Sib Williams. I remember when I was a small boy Capt. Bill Hull visited us in our home here in Celina, TX. And he told us that it had taken him almost 7 years to catch up with Sib in the Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) where he killed him, then returned to his Tennessee home."

"My father, Benoni Franklin Gearheart and his mother Sarah (Sallie) Roberts Gearheart (Hugh's daughter), widow of Wm. Jeff. Gearheart, left Celina, TN. in 1867. Three married couples, which were daughters and sons-in-law of Sarah Gearheart, were with them. They spent nearly 2 years near Independence, MO. After this sojourn, they moved into Grayson Co, TX., arriving at Old Farmington in 1869. After one year there, they moved to the little town of Murphy in s.e. Collin Co.; then on to Celina, TX. In 1871."

"My father and mother (Benoni Franklin Gearheart and Alice O'Brien) were married in November, 1879 and settled on the farm 1 mile East of Old Celina. Here all of their children were born, and where they resided the remainder of their lives. Their children were: W.J. (Bill), born 2 January, 1881; Sallie, born 19 January, 1883; Hugh Richard, born 29 June, 1886; Addie, born 13 November, 1888; Ben F., Jr., born 27 May, 1891; Abe, born 9 February, 1893; and Perry, born 9 August, 1895."

Dr. William Shields and family lived about one mile East of the public square, adjoining the Fitzgerald farm, known as the Shields farm. (A part of the house is still standing.)

East of the Shields place was owned by Richard Stone, father of William Stone, Judge J.R. (Jim Dick) and a daughter, Emily. *(Parenthetical notes along the margin indicate that "Richard Stone was Papa Stone's greatgrandfather; other children were Susan Ver Peterman; Ida Davis' mother, Aunt Liz Dales' grandmother. I think there are more children according to the census." Another note above "Jim Dick's" name says 'Abbie's father'.)* The latter (Emily) married James Perdieu, who was killed by Hilary Smith just after the close of the war, in the house in which D.W. Cullom later lived for several years, located where Guy B. Johnson and his sister, Daisy, now live. The Stone farm is now owned by G.B. Gates and J.W. Arms.

In the year 1857 Isaiah Fitzgerald married Miss Ann Gearheart (*daughter of Valentine Gearheart, Jr.*) *(Another note says 'Valentine Gearheart, son of Exona Parkinson's(?); Valentine, Jr. married _____ South; Ann married Isaiah Fitzgerald in 1857.')* They lived in Monroe Co., KY., until 1857(?) when they moved to the farm East of the public square adjoining the Shields farm. They raised an interesting family, five boys and as many girls; Lee; Tol; Walker; Clyde and Isaiah; Mattie; Loretta; Maude; Lucy and Allie. The Fitzgerald family have been closely identified with the history of Celina since the war, especially in educational growth. All of them have been teachers in the schools in and near the town. (Miss Maude is teaching now). Isaiah, Sr., was a great advocate of good schools. He was one of the six who furnished the funds to build Mont Vale Academy and served as Secretary to the Board of Education for several years, which required a good deal of labor which he did without compensation. He was Deputy Clerk and Master for many years, performing all the duties of the office faithfully and honestly and without criticism. His wife (*Ann Gearheart Fitzgerald*) was an exceptional intelligent and lovable woman of the highest type, and was loved and respected by all who knew her. The family are all dead now save Maude, Clyde, Isaiah and Lucy, the first three now living in Celina, the latter living in Celina, Texas.

The Old town of Celina had one main street (Union) beginning at the top of the river bank and running South East for a distance of approximately 350 yards, and three streets, Water, Walnut and Spring, running westwardly and

terminating in the public road leading from the top of the river bank south east to and over the low gap to Livingston and Gainesboro. Water Street, on top of the river bank, has long since been washed away.

There were two general stores, one occupied by L.T. Armstrong and other by Bennett Stone and Oglesby (the latter an uncle of O.B. Maxey), one grocery and drug store combined, one hardware, one saddle shop, one blacksmith shop and two saloons. There were other buildings of less importance. L.B. Peterman's hotel was located on the north east corner of Union Street. *(Parenthetical note: 'related to the Stones that intermarried with my Roberts and Gearhearts, Bennett Stone was guardian to Joseph B. and James B. Roberts, minors, in 1854. These were grandchildren of Hugh Roberts and his wife Martha Davis, probably the sons of Jefferson Roberts and his wife, Baskie Stone; Jefferson Roberts aged 53 in 1860 census; that Baskie Stone is deceased in 1854 and her brother Bennett Stone was named guardian to sons Joseph B. and James B. Jefferson Roberts was deceased in 1860. Baskie Stone was sister of great grandma Francis Gates; and Bennett being a wealthy man had building burned, destroyed by Union soldiers, committed suicide soon after. He had no children but reared some. I have some documents showing his brain work. Bennett Stone was very important man in his time. Bennett lived at Kyle Farm.')*

Prior to, and for some time after the war, the only means of travel was on foot or horseback. There were no manufacturing industries, not even a saw mill, in the county. The log and timber business were unknown. The lumber used for building purposes was sawed and dressed by hand with drawing knives and planes. The only means of transporting the different products to market was by flat boats.

All of the town and dwellings were burned down in 1863 by a small company of Yankee guerrillas (and the people robbed of most everything) except the dwelling houses of R.P. Brown, Mrs. Nancy Rich, a log house South of Mrs. Rich *(owned by Capt. John B. Anderson)* (which was torn down by V.B. Spear several years ago) and a small log house owned by Dr. Jonathan Davis and now owned by Miss Ella Hamilton. It would perhaps be of interest to some people, now living, to know something about the farms adjacent to the Old Town and the people who owned them prior to and sometime after the war. The farm on the North Side of the Cumberland River, opposite the town of Celina, was owned by Varney Andrews, on which he lived for many years and sold to Bennett Stone in 1855 *(brother of greatgrandmother Francis Gates)*. Sometime near the year 1870 it was purchased by A.P. Green *(greatgrandfather of G.B. Stone; J.R. Stone married first, Nancy Green.)* from Mrs. Patsy Stone, widow of Bennett Stone, who lived on it for a few years and sold it to Dr. B.S. Plumlee. H.H. Kyle later bought it from Plumlee and it is now owned by Fred Maxey and Dr. Eagle Bushong. (The dwelling built by Andrews is still standing, over 100 years old). The farm adjoining, bordering on Cumberland River, was bought by J.H. Stone in 1866 or in 1867 from James Stone, Administrator, and it later developed from some cause that the sale was illegal and Stone had to pay for it again. (But he never recovered the money paid to James Stone). He lived on the farm until about 1880-81, then sold out to A.P. Green and moved to a farm near Celina, Texas. Green gave the Stone farm to his daughter, Catherine, wife of Joseph Rich. Several years after her death, Rich sold to A.T. Poindexter *(Catherine's son by her first marriage)* who later sold to Kyle Brothers, and now owned by Turner Roberts.

As the Stone families, especially the older ones, were closely identified with development of the county in its earlier days, a brief biography of some of them might be of interest to some people now living.

John H. Stone was born in 1834. *(Parenthetical note: 'He married my grandmother's sister Sarah.')* *(Another note states that John Henry Stone,*

born 1834, was the son of James Stone, 1800-1838, and his wife Nancy Peterman. James Stone was the son of George Washington Stone and his wife, Mrs. Martha "Patsy" Hunter. Widow Patsy Hunter had one child, a daughter, when she married Geo. W. Stone and by her second marriage she had 9 sons, namely Johnnie, Frank, Micajah (Cage), Eusebius (Sib), Billie, Richard, Archibald, James and George. John Henry Stone, Sr. married Sarah Ann Gearheart, born 10 January, 1838, died 1879. Sarah Ann Gearheart was a sister of my grandmother, Ruth Gearheart Hudspeth. Curtis Stone of Nashville, TN. is a descendant of this couple. Several of James Stone and Nancy Peterman's children were Kate Coe, George Washington Stone, Lewis Stone, Sinah, Martha Ann, Margaret, Rebecca, Elizabeth and John Henry Stone, Jr.) Note: See discussion at the end of this article of the accuracy of the above information. (He (J.H. Stone) remembered when a great portion of this part of the county was almost a primeval forest, infested with all kinds of wild game and deer; the cane brakes on the banks of the rivers were so dense that they were almost impenetrable). He was married to Miss Sarah Gearheart in about 1856, and lived as heretofore stated, in a log house one mile South of Celina until the beginning of the Civil War (1861). He volunteered and served in the Confederate Army for four years. As a result of their union there were born two daughters, Sallie and Mollie; (the former is now living in Texas and the latter is dead); six boys: Hugh, William, James, Ben, Thomas and John. Hugh now lives near Celina, Texas; John near Sparta, TN.; Thomas two miles SW of Celina, TN., with William, James and Ben having been dead several years. After his return from Texas he located on the farm he bought from Vanus Fowler, formerly owned by Rion Brothers, and later, by Henry Eagle. In a short time, he married Mrs. Nannie Roberts, widow of William Roberts and the daughter of Amos Tinsley. From this union were born two girls, Daisy and Alice; five sons, George, Amos, Columbus, Claude and Lee. Alice died when very young; George moved to Texas when a young man and died there several years ago; Amos married Miss Gladys Smith, a lovable daughter of C.F. Smith, and owns and lives on the farm he bought from W.L. Stone. He is an enterprising farmer, a splendid citizen and has the confidence and respect of all who know him. Lee married Miss Della Smith, an admirable daughter of C.F. Smith, and died a few years after his marriage. Columbus married a daughter of W.T. Cook and now lives near Moss, TN. Claude died some years ago. Daisy married A. Tommy Arms, one of the best and most enterprising farmers in the county, loved and respected by all his neighbors. They have a lovable and intelligent family and now live three miles from Celina, TN. on the Gainesboro highway. (Note: Alice Overstreet, Helen Wells, Laura Lee, Amos Arms, Edith Bilbrey and Walter Arms). John H. Stone lived on his farm until his death, the farm now being owned by C.F. Smith and Arthur Nevins. G.W. Stone, an elder brother, was also one of the pioneers of this part of the county. He was born in about 1830. He bought, long before the beginning of the war, a farm three miles West of Cumberland River, on the North side of Big Proctor Creek. He lived there for about a half century, and then moved to a farm on Cumberland River formerly owned by his mother, Mrs. Nancy Stone, where he lived until his death. He was twice married, the writer not being informed as to the name of his first wife, but his last wife was Miss Kate Coe. As a result of their union there were born two sons, Hayden and William L. Stone; two daughters, Bird and Mary Belle; the latter married Parish Marshall, and Bird married Pleas Amonette. Both families moved on farms near Van Alstyne, Texas, where they now live. (Their husbands have been dead several years). Hayden married Miss Abbie Eagle, a lovable daughter of Henry Eagle of Tompkinsville, KY. (sister of John H. Eagle and half sister of Joe H. Eagle, who represented the Houston, Texas district of Congress for many years). Two or three years after their marriage, they bought a part of the farm formerly owned by Capt. Geo. W. Stephens, near Liberty Hill, on which they lived for some time and then sold out and moved to a farm near Celina, Texas. From their union there were born two daughters, Katherine and Lula; five boys, Robert, Edward, Charles, Hugh and Bert. Hade now lives near Celina, Texas. His family are all dead except two sons. William L. Stone was born in 1860, was raised on the farm heretofore

mentioned, married Miss Evaline Williams in December, 1893, lived on the farm with his father until the latter's death, and then moved to the Old town of Celina where he lived four years. As a result of their union there were born three daughters, Kate, Ollie and Ruby; one son (the latter lived only two years and one month). They moved to a farm near Celina, Texas where they lived for two and one half years, then sold the farm and came back and bought the place originally owned by V.B. Smith and Samuel Weaver, where they lived until they died. (W.L. Stone died October 6, 1928; Mrs. Stone, August 15, 1935.) Kate married T.B. Maxey; Ollie married Fred Maxey and Ruby married S.B. Denton; all are now living in Celina, TN.

W.L. Stone was one of the best known men in Clay County; was twice elected to the office of Trustee; had a lovable disposition and was a man of the highest order integrity and honor and was loved and respected by all who knew him.

The farm North of the John H. Stone place, now owned by Turner Roberts, was owned before the war by William Hamilton, father of George W. and Ferd Hamilton. (*George W. was Claud Hamilton's father*). It was later owned by A.P. Green and was divided into two tracts. Green sold his tract bordering on the Cumberland River to H.R. Gearheart, who sold to B.G. Johnson and it was transferred by Johnson to Allen Skipworth and from Skipworth to Evan Arms.

The tract bounded on the West by Little Proctor Creek was sold by Green to John J. Brown, on which he lived for several years and sold to Evan Arms, now owned by John H. Arms, Poindexter Bros., and W.H. Stone. The farm North of the Andrews place, bounded on the North by Big Proctor Creek, on the East by Little Proctor Creek, was known as the Biggerstaff place. At the close of the Civil War it was owned by William Griffith, and then successively by J.C. Hibbeth, Vanus Fowler, Watt Comer, Palo Conkin and now by M.G. Hayes.

The next West was the J.J. Amonette farm, which was sold several years after the war to A.P. Green, who sold to Newton Plumlee and now owned by Plumlee heirs. The farm North West side of the Cumberland river and South West of the Andrews place, was owned by William Walker for many years before the beginning of the war. (His family were all grown up before the war). He was twice married. (The writer is not informed as to the name of his first wife). His second wife was a widow whose name was McLerran, and from this union one son was born, J.C. Walker; six daughters, Fannie, Elizabeth, Polly, Martha, Ann and Doub. Fannie married John J. Maxey, and from their union two sons were born, Thomas and John; three daughters, Hix, Ann and Lucy.

Soon after the war he bought the Walker farm where he lived for many years. He was Chairman of the County Court from the time Clay County was organized until he sold out and moved to Cleburn, Texas. The farm, or parts of it, has been successively owned by Isaac Johnson, W.M. Savage, Hugh Plumlee, M.F. Green (*only son of A.P. Green who died about 1897, only 41 yrs. old*) T.J. Waddle, and now owned by C.F. Smith, T.C. Roberts and Mrs. Lizzie Nevins, widow of J.D. Nevins. Elizabeth married Greenberry Maxey, brother of J.L. Maxey, and he too moved to Cleburn, Texas. Doub married Mr. Leek of Nashville. Martha married Major L.T. Armstrong and soon after marriage moved to Nashville where they lived until their death. Polly married W.W. Shields, a prominent physician in his time. (*Note: 'Grandma Alice Shields Gates Stone was surely named for him as he was a neighbor and doctor. Uncle Barton has his name also.'*) Ann's first husband was Mark Lowery, who was killed in the battle of Seven Pines, with burial taking place in the Confederate Cemetery near Richmond, VA. W.C. Lowery, their only son, was born in about 1860. Soon after the close of the war she married A.J. Maxey, and as a result, one son, Rice Maxey, was born; also two daughters,

Mary and Olivia. Rice married Kate Weaver and after living near Celina for several years, moved to near Columbus, in Mississippi. Mary married B.S. Minor, a popular and successful traveling salesman for many years. (He has been dead for some time.) Olivia married Robert Cullom and after living in and near Celina for some time, they moved to Hartsville, TN., where they spent several years and finally located near Columbus, Mississippi, where they now live. W.C. Lowery has been married twice, the first time in about 1882 to Florence, the only daughter of Willette and Elizabeth Martin. As a result of their union one son, Mark Lowery, was born; also three daughters, Willette, Ann and Nardie. (The latter died when young.) Mark went with his father to Mississippi and later married Miss Haynie Owen, daughter of R.C. Owen and now lives near Gallatin, TN. Willette married Luke W. Brown, who died October, 18, 1932. Ann married W.A. Marcom and they now live on a farm one mile South West of Celina in the house built by B. Gist in about 1872. Several years after the death of his first wife, Florence, he (W.C. Lowery) married Mallie Smith, daughter of M.M. Smith, and there were born to them a son, Matthew, and two daughters, Evelyn and Lockie; the father and children now living in Columbus, Mississippi. W.C. Lowery lived for many years on the farm his first wife, Florence, inherited from her father's estate. He was closely identified with the development of the farming interest and was perhaps the most enterprising farmer in this part of the country. He was a good citizen with a high sense of honor and integrity. Some time after the death of his last wife he moved to Muldon, Mississippi, and now lives in Columbus. Mrs. Martin, mother of his first wife, was before her marriage to Willette Martin, the widow Fowler, daughter of Adam Hamilton, Sr., and the mother of two sons, Dr. B.S. and E.C. Fowler; three daughters, Fannie, Mattie and Avo (Tump). Dr. B.S. Fowler was a physician and surgeon, was a resident of Gainesboro, TN. for many years, and in his declining days sold out and moved to Hendersonville, TN. where he died some time ago. E.C. Fowler was one of the best known and most popular citizens of his day. He was twice elected Trustee by the people of Clay County. He was a man of ideal personality, lovable disposition, with a high sense of honor and integrity. Fannie married M.M. Smith; Mattie married Elisha Chastin; and Avo (Tump) married J. Fay Brown (*two daughters*).

South West of the Walker farm was the Mike Kirk place, now owned by Thomas Stone and W.S. Waddle. South of the A.J. Walker tract, which has been successively owned by B. Gist, Hall Holman, Thomas minor, P.A. Dalton, R.S. Dalton and now owned by L.B. Anderson heirs. Next adjoining South was the Gates tract, (Gates was the father of Jacob Gates) (*Parenthetical note: father of grandmother Alice Stone*) and has been successively owned by Thomas Weaver, Randolph Langford, Paul Pyron, T.J. Mabry and now owned by Mabry heirs. Next South was the farms owned by Wilson and J.T. McColgan, who were prominent physicians of their time, and now owned by O.W. Cherry, Lester Brown and W.T. Cherry heirs. South of the McColgan place was the Irvin Langford farm. Langford married Parmelia, sister of Jacob Gates, and from their union were born three sons, Palo, Randolph, and Farlow; also five daughters, Belle, Mattie, Florintha, Beuena and Dappie. Palo married Miss Allie Allen of Sumner County, lived on a farm for a few years and moved to Sumner County where he lived until his death. He was a splendid citizen, a high class gentleman with a lovable disposition and was the father of Judge Frank Langford, who has been for several years a prominent and efficient judge of one of the courts in Nashville, TN., respected by all high class people who know him. Randolph married Miss Susie Allen of Trousdale County, lived on a farm located near Bennett's Ferry and moved to Trousdale County where he lived with his interesting family until his death. Barlow was a prominent figure in Celina for many years before going to Nashville where he lived for a time with his sister, Dappie McMillin, before going to Trousdale County where he died a number of years ago. Belle married a man by the name of Smith; Mattie married a Mr. Stone; Florintha married Joseph Roberts (*son of Baskie Stone and Jefferson Roberts*), all moving soon after their marriage to a Western state; Buena married Mr. Noak

of Lebanon, where she is now living; Dappie married Joe McMillin, (brother of Ex-Governor Benton McMillin) who lived only a few years after his marriage. They had one daughter, Joe, named after her father. Dappie, after the death of her husband, moved to Nashville and ran successfully a boarding house for several years. Her daughter, Joe, married C.H. Litterer, a gentleman of high order of honor and integrity, who was for many years prominent in the banking business and held other positions of trust and honor. Dappie and Joe are exceptionally fine women of the highest type of womanhood. They all live together in Nashville. They are an interesting, intelligent and lovable family.

There was not a house of any kind before the war on the large farm South West of the public square road running from the river to the Low gap (it was all in one farm) except the tract now owned by Brack Willis. In about 1871 Willett Martin sold the farm to B. Gist for \$6,000 and bought the old Adam Hamilton farm, the largest tract in one body owned by one man in the county. It has been divided into several farms and is now owned by W.A. Marcom, A.T. Arms, Roy Maynard and others. Martin was heard to remark "he came to this part of the country a poor young man, worked for Adam Hamilton for twenty-five cents per day, and lived long enough to own his large farm and marry one of his daughters".

The first dwellings in the town after the close of the war were built by W.C. Willis, W.M. Savage, Lafayette Barlow and I.T. Armstrong. The Willis house was located on the bank of Obey River, East of Union Street, later owned by H.H. Lyle in which he lived for several years, and now owned by Alyne Kyle. Savage built the house on the West end of Walnut Street, now owned and occupied by Mrs. Ollie Rich. (The house has been enlarged.) Harlan(?) built the house on the North side of Walnut Street, later owned by Rial Rich. E. Kirkpatrick and now owned and occupied by Mrs. J.W. Mayfield. Harlan married Miss Sibbie Oglesby, sister of Landon Oglesby. He operated a saw mill located on the bank of Obey River, near where the old Grider house now stands. He later moved his mill to two miles this side of Moss, only to be later destroyed by fire.

Oglesby was a brother of Pent Maxey's wife, mother of O.B. Maxi. He left Celina soon after the close of the war and went to Plano, Texas. L.T. Armstrong was Major of a company in the Confederate Army for four years, and at the close of the war he married Miss Martha Walker, his second wife. (They had no children.) His first wife was Lucetta Butler, sister (*first cousin*) of Tuck Butler, and from their union were born two sons, Bailey and Thomas Harvey; two daughters, Sarah Ann and Kirk. After the close of the war he built a log house on the south side of Walnut Street, about 50 yards West of Dr. Davis' house, in which he lived for a short time before it was burned. He moved to Nashville where he was actively engaged in the wholesale dry goods business for many years. He was likewise interested in the steamboat business, owning the steamboat *L.T. Armstrong* which plied the Cumberland River from Nashville to Burnside, KY. Bailey, his oldest son, married a lady in Nashville and died a few years afterward. His widow, Mrs. Mary Armstrong, was a teacher in the public schools of the city for many years. (She died about two years ago.) Thomas Harvey married Miss Mollie Fisher of Carthage. Many people will remember him as Captain of many steamboats, being considered one of the best navigators on the Cumberland River. He was of a genial disposition and strong personality and loved by all who knew him. Kirk married Frank Flemming of Nashville, who was a prominent, popular and courteous wholesale dry goods salesman until his death.

Sarah Ann married Jack Walker when very young and was the mother of two boys, Sam Belle and Luke T. Walker. Soon after her husband's death, she moved, with her father, to Nashville, where she ran a boarding house for over one half a century. She was one of the organizers of the Ladies Hermitage Association and of the Daughters of 1812, and was honorary lifetime President of the W.C.T.U. She was also a member of the United Daughters of

the Confederacy. She was married twice after she left Celina, the first time to a Mr. Bailey and the last time to Dr. J.W. McAllister, who died soon after their marriage. She lived an active life and died at the age of 89.

There was a box building built at the close of the war, located on the East side of Union Street where Guy T. Johnson's Hotel now stands. (*The house where Mert and the boys lived a long time.*) (The writer has forgotten who built and first occupied it.) It was, perhaps, used as a saloon. There is where Hilary Smith, brother of V.P. Smith, killed James Perdieu, father of James Perdieu, Jr., who now lives on Pine Branch. It was later occupied by A.J. Maxey, and later by D.W. Cullom, who enlarged it and ran a hotel for several years.

W.C. Johnson built the building now owned by Mrs. W.P. Windle.

The first one that engaged in the mercantile business after the close of the war was A.A. Morris. He had a small box house located on the East side of Union Street on a lot where the old store house belonging to Mrs. Rich now stands. In 1866 Arch Green and Savage built a store house on the East side of Union Street in which they sold goods for about two years, and then Savage sold his interest to Green and moved to a part of the John L. Maxey farm (where C.F. Smith now lives) where he lived for a few years, and then sold out and moved on a farm near Carthage. Green continued in the business for some time and then sold to W.C. Johnson, who sold goods in the same house for 15 years, then sold out and moved to Vernon, Texas, where he lived until his death. The store house was later occupied by Ernest Willis as a drug store and later a grocery store. The building has recently been moved by Brack Willis to the street East of Celina High School building. (The building moved is about 74 years old.)

In 1867 John Frame built a store house on the East side of Union Street on the lot where Mrs. Ollie Rich's (*Selma Mayfield's mother*) old store house now stands, and later sold to Isaac Johnson. It was successively owned and operated for a general store by Russell and Brown, M.F. Green, W.G. Parker and E. Kirkpatrick, being torn down by the latter, sold to W.L. Brown and the lumber used to build the store house now occupied by E.M. Dale. In the same year (1867) Hibbitt and Maxey built a store house on the West side of Union Street in which they ran a general mercantile business for some time. It was later bought by A.P. Green and used by his son, M.F. Green as a general store. In 1883 Green sold it to W.L. Brown and it was used for the same purpose until 1896, then was torn down and the lumber used to build the Bank of Celina. It has recently been moved and is located on the North West side of the public square. In the year 1868 W.C. Willis built a small store house North of the Savage and Green house. And then there were two saloons, one on the North East corner of Union Street, North of Hibbitt and Maxey's store house. The saloon on North East Union Street and the Willis store house were moved several years later on the opposite side of the street and used by W.C. Willis and later by G.B. Grider for a grocery store. In 1869-70 there was a shoe shop and a saddlery shop and blacksmith shop built. There was a small box house on the west side of Union Street, South of Hibbitt and Maxey store house in which R.P. Brown kept the post office for many years. In 1895 W.L. Brown built a store house on south east corner of Union and Walnut Street in which he did a general mercantile business and which is now owned by Mrs. Robert Irvin, now of Memphis.

Some years later Carter and Emmons built a store house on West side of Union Street, nearly opposite the Savage and Green house, which they sold to W.C. Johnson, who sold to Samuel Weaver. About two years later Weaver sold to M.F. Green and Green to E. Kirkpatrick who moved it to its present location and now owned by Mrs. Ollie Rich. In 1869 A.P. green built the house now owned by Charlie Haile and sold it Milton McMillin, uncle of Benton McMillin and John McMillin. It was owned by M.C. Sidwell at the time of his death and now belongs to H.S. Williamson heirs. (*Remember the*

Hugh Williamson house that used to be on the square, then moved up the road across from Clifford Bow's.)

Clay County, named for Henry Clay, a distinguished United States Senator for Kentucky, was taken from Macon, Jackson and Overton counties, surveyed and boundary lines marked by William Gore, a resident of Jackson county, TN.

The New town (containing 10 acres bought from A.P. Green) was laid off and lots sold at auction in the spring of 1870. (Richard Brooks of Jackson County was auctioneer.)

Contract to build the courthouse was awarded to Mr. Dow of Cookeville for the sum of \$9,999.00. *(Could A.P. Green be son-in-law of Susannah R. Davis?)* Contract for the old log jail to Mr. Watts, a resident of Oak Grove, TN. for the sum of \$2,200. The brick used for the courthouse building was moulded from clay taken from the public square and the lumber dressed by hand. Among the carpenters that assisted Mr. Dow were David Buchanan, F.M. Buchanan and W.C. Garrett.

The first county officers elected were as follows: County Court Clerk, John J. Brown who served from the time the county was organized, with four years intermission, until his death, or 24 years; Circuit Court Clerk, W.H. Hawkins; Sheriff, Adam Thresher; Clerk and Master, Tim S. McHenry; Trustee, H.G. Tinsley; Register, Isaac Miller; Chairman of the county court, John L. Maxey.

The first court held in Clay county was at Butler's Landing. Afterwards the courts were held in a box school house near where E.M. Dale now lives, where Mont Vale College stood until the courthouse was completed.

The first building started in the New town was a hotel run by Coe and Martin, (the latter was the father of P.A. Martin, a justice of the peace for Clay County) located on the north east corner of Church and Martin streets where J.A. Howard Hardware store now stands. It was used by them and others as a hotel for some time and was sold to A.J. Maxey, who kept a first class hotel for many years. E.S. Dalton owned it when it was burned down several years ago.

G.W. Stephens built the house located on south west corner of Martin Street which has been owned successively by Joe S. Thompson, W.F. Brown, C.M. Anderson and now by J.A. Howard. He also built a small house located where a grocery store belonging to J.B. Walker now stands. It was used for many years as a lawyers and doctors office and some time ago moved and located on the south west corner of Church and green streets. A.P. Green built the store house on the west side of Green Street, opposite the courthouse, in which he sold goods for several years and later used by him for a dwelling. He lived there until his death. Later it was bought by H.S. Williamson who remodeled it and lived there until his death.

Savage and Stephens built the store house on the south east corner of Green and Low Streets, now owned by Guy Stephens. There was a livery stable that stood on the South West corner of Green and low Streets (where the Mayfield Garage now stands) owned and operated by J.R. Gist for some time and later by A.J. Maxey. Robert Hibbitt built a box house on the north east corner of Hawkins Street and public road, north of the dwelling house now owned and occupied by Mrs. W.E. Mayfield in which he lived and kept a boarding house for several years. Later, John Monroe, his son-in-law, owned and lived in it for a long time. Adjoining the Hibbitt house on the south was a box house in which W.H. Hawkins (grandfather of Mrs. Bell Gist) lived for a while.

Capt. J.K. P. Davis built a small box house on the south west corner of Low and Martin streets in which he ran a saloon several years. It was later bought

by W.T. Monroe and used by him for a post office as long as he was postmaster. Later, he sold it to W.C. Monroe who removed it and built on the same lot the store house now owned by T.F. Kirkpatrick.

W.C. Willis built a house on the south east corner of Low and Martin streets to be used for a grocery store but it was later remodeled and converted into a dwelling house, first occupied by his son-in-law, Mr. S.F. Crabtree, and later by J.J. Marlin, L.S. Brown and sold by the heirs of L.S. Brown in 1906 to W.L. Brown. It has been occupied for several years by Celina Telephone Company. It has recently been moved to the west side of the lot. Benton and John H. Macmillan built a store house and law office on west side of Martin Street, midway between Church and Low Streets (opposite the courthouse). The upper story was used by them as a law office and the lower part for a store house. It was first occupied for a short time by a stock company as a general store and then sold to Smith Cunningham, who continued in the same business for about one year, before selling to Gist and Harris and they converted the store into a drug store which they ran for several years. Later, John McMillin sold the house to L.S. Brown, who used it as a general store until his death (May 18, 1902). After his death it was taken over by his widow, Mrs. Hattie Brown and by W.F. Brown, and the business continued until Christmas night the same year when it was burned down. Soon after, another store house was built on the same lot now owned by E.M. Dale.

Joshua Haile built a small house east of the W.C. Willis house on west side of Martin Street and used as a law office by him and his brother, George. The same was moved by M.C. Sidwell and located on another lot east of where it formerly stood. The names of the resident doctors at that time were as follows: Jonathan Davis, J.W. Chowning, W.W. Shields, John Wade, Nelly Hembree, B.S. Plumlee and Monroe Anderson. The names of the resident lawyers were as follows: Benton and John McMillin, Joshua and George B. Haile, B.B. Plumlee, M.A. Turner and A.P. Green, the latter being one of the most prominent and outstanding figures of his day, more closely identified with interests and development of the different enterprises of the town and county than any other man of his time. He was not a lawyer by profession and never attended any law school. Uneducated, but a man of unusual native ability and deeply impressed with the idea that principles of law was, or ought to be, founded upon right and justice. He perhaps kept more people out of law suits than he represented before the courts. He would frankly tell all who consulted him whether or not in his judgment they had any chance to win their suits. He was elected trustee of Clay County for one term and declined to run for a second term. He represented the people of the Tenth senatorial district in the upper branch of the legislature. He told the writer that the report was circulated during his race for the senate he had stolen a steamboat, and jestingly remarked, that if he had run again, it would have been proven. He was for some time interested in the steamboat business. He was the father of five daughters and one son. He gave each of them a good farm. M.F. Green, his only son, was a prominent citizen and favorably known all over the country. He was a merchant for many years and accommodated and helped more people that needed help than any other man in this part of the country, in his day and time. He served as president of the Bank of Celina from its organization in 1894 until his death. He was elected trustee of Clay County and declined to run for the second term. He served one term as county court clerk and also declined to run for a second term. He married Miss Belle McMillin, cousin of Ex.-Gov. Benton McMillin. There were born to them one son, Robert, and one daughter, Bessie. The former died when about 18 years old. Bessie married Paul Mansfield of Glasgow, KY., where she now lives. M.F. Green was a man of honor and integrity, honest and fair in all his dealings with his fellowman. He died in the prime of life well beloved by all who knew him.

George W. Stephens taught the first school in Celina after the close of the war, in a box house near the residence where E.M. Dale now lives. Later, there

were schools taught by Mrs. Emma Colson, Miss Martha Maxey, J.Fay Brown and others. It appears that the people of that time had about lost interest in education. There was not a good school in the county. Some of the citizens were interested in the cause of education and the growth of the town and surrounding country. The citizens got together and proposed to establish a first class school, but the first difficulty that confronted them was a larger, better equipped school building. They were determined to accomplish their purpose and the difficulty was finally overcome by six men as follows: Isaiah Fitzgerald, A.P. Green, John H. McMillin, J.H. Stephens, V.P. Smith and William Love; they furnished the money necessary to build Mont Vale College. J.S. McMillin (brother of Benton and John H. McMillin), a graduate of Burrett College, was elected to take charge of the school, which he conducted successfully for several years. He was one of the most efficient and thorough teachers the town and county ever had. There has been a wonderful change and progress in the sciences and arts since the days of McMillin, but many of the older people will not admit that there has been any progress in the mode of teaching and conducting schools in the last 60 years. Evidently, the instruction received and the knowledge obtained by pupils was more thorough then than now and that they learned more in the different branches they studied in one year than students, with few exceptions, now learn in two years. One cause for this difference, perhaps, is because parents manifested more personal interest in the intellectual development of their children than they do now. During the administration of McMillin, which covered a period of about 10 years, all pupils over 10 years old were required every Friday evening to participate in the exercises according to their age and qualifications. The older boys (had) to declaim, which they had committed to memory, and the older girls (had) to read pieces of their own composition or read or recite some lines of the different poets. (This was compulsory). Many parents would show their children they were interested in their progress by their presence which was an inspiration to them to be more studious.

McMillin was a master of the art of elocution and personally trained his pupils and it was a wonderful treat to hear the young ladies read their own essays and the young men declaim. Those present could imagine they were listening to Megulus before the Roman Senate and Webster, Calhoun and Clay in the Senate Chamber of the United States. Another reason they were more thorough then was all examinations were oral and thorough in their different studies. So they would be qualified and ready for the examination. In addition to the foregoing, debating societies were organized that met once every week and discoursed different topics, mostly historical questions and to intelligently debate them it was necessary to read and study histories. All these things, which no doubt created interest among the students and parents, have been abandoned and the minds of the children, encouraged by teachers and many parents, diverted and centered on the different games and sports instead of their intellectual development.

Some of the McMillin students made lawyers, doctors, judges and many were school teachers. One (was a) representative in the Tennessee legislature, later a member of Congress for years, afterward a U.S. Senator and now Secretary of State whose name is known all over the civilized world (Cordell Hull). Some of the teachers at Mont Vale Academy, who followed McMillin, were R.L. Fitzgerald, Luther Moore, Douglass Woods, Hill Edwards, O.B. Maxey, Rubelt, Scott Smith and others. In about 1900 when interest in school had abated, the old board of trustees, who had served in former years, had died or moved away, and some of the people were having to send their children to schools away from home, the citizens awoke to the necessity of having a first class school that would accommodate the people of the town and the surrounding country. A new board of trustees was selected as follows: M.M. Smith, W.C. Lowery, S.B. Anderson and L.S. Brown, who employed W.B. Boyd, a young mountain boy to come and take charge of the school.

Boyd began his work under the most favorable circumstances and conditions. He had the hearty cooperation of the trustees and the people of the town and he manifested such zeal and determination that his labors were successful from the beginning. He was a young man of pleasing appearance and lovable disposition and he soon had the confidence and respect of the people of the town and the community. The school grew in numbers and popularity so that at the beginning of the second year it became necessary to provide a larger building. About three thousand dollars was raised by private subscription and Mont Vale Academy was enlarged and remodeled and then became Mont Vale College. The school continued to grow in numbers and favor until the daily attendance was about 200, more than twice as many as any of his predecessors had.

Boyd's administration covered a period of about seven years, and he left Celina with the confidence and the respect of all the people. Since then public schools have taken the place of private schools.

The growth in population of the town and county has been slow, owing to the lack of any manufacturing industries. The Old Town where most all the business was conducted for three score years, had been abandoned, and the New Town, in the last ten years, had grown both in population and good substantial buildings. The progress of public schools for many years was slow, and yet the transition in the last 60 years has been great. If the school children of this age could roll back the tide of time for three score years and see the kind of houses where schools were taught they would be very much surprised and more fully appreciate the conditions and opportunities that surround them at this time. Then there were not more than three comfortable school buildings in the county; the balance were crude log houses with rough floors, and seats made out of round logs, split in the center and one side hewn smooth with a broad axe, supported at each end by legs of round limbs of trees. They were about ten inches wide, with no backs and so high that the smaller children's feet could not touch the floor. In many of the houses a log cut out, about 6 feet in length in the center of the house, answered for a window.

Then teachers received as compensation for their services \$20 per month for a term of three or four months. Twenty-five dollars per month was the highest any teacher received for several years. Some teachers had as many as 70 in attendance, all sizes and ages from six to twenty years old, until fodder pulling and molasses making time.

Then the Superintendent of Schools, elected by the county court, would visit all the schools (horseback only means of reaching the schools) at least once each term and investigate and learn the kind of discipline and mode of instruction adopted by each teacher, and of course, to make a speech at each school house. And this was done in the presence of a house crowded with the parents of the children. For their services they received \$75 per annum, appropriated by the county court, and \$2 for examination and certificate issued to applicants, which each teacher was requested to pay. If an applicant failed to pass the examination, the superintendent, under the law, was permitted to issue a license, provided the patrons of the school in the community where the applicant proposed to teach would give a written endorsement.

Perhaps the greatest factor that has contributed to the improved conditions of schools, is good roads. The need for good roads began to be talked by a few people about the year 1916, and many of them do not know and some have forgotten that there is one man now living in the town of Celina that was more closely identified with the inauguration of a system of good roads in Clay County (and who) did more to crystallize the sentiment of the people and divert their minds to the importance of a system of good roads than any dozen men in the county. He prepared the bill, passed by the legislature authorizing

the county to vote a bond issue and was uniting in his efforts to have a favorable vote registered by the people. All lovers of good roads, and especially the school children in Clay County, owe a debt of gratitude to George W. Barksdale that they can never pay.

(This is the close of the article, but here is a parenthetical insert, added by E.R.G.)

Excerpts from a letter written by my mother, Jennie Hudspeth Ratliff Allen to her sister Allie Hudspeth Pace of Valley View (Cooke Co.), TX., dated 1 November, 1950:

"Dear Allie, On our trip we were in Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and across Texas from SE to NW. I had a particular thrill at the little old town of our birth, Celina, TN. I felt very sad as we approached the quaint little town. I suspect it has remained as it was several generations ago. Just outside the village, I remarked to Walter that it was improbable that even one person was still living who had know our parents (Thomas Jefferson Hudspeth and Ruth Gearhart, married 10 January, 1867). As we entered the town, Walter suggested that we stop and make inquiry at a big, old home that we were passing. A woman answered our knock on the door and we told her of our mission. She invited us in to talk with her father who was in his 90's. I asked him if he had ever known our father well- also, many other of our relatives- the Stones, Sims, Fitzgeralds, Gearharts, etc. He said that Maude Fitzgerald was still living there in the old ancestral home. We drove down around the square and saw an elderly, white-haired lady on the street and as I was thinking to myself- perhaps that is Maude- Walter said, 'Maybe that lady is your cousin.' I went into a store to inquire where we might locate Maude Fitzgerald and the woman said that she had seen her pass by the store only a few minutes before. She volunteered to go with me to find Maude. She really was the woman we had seen a few minutes earlier. She (Maude) came with us and we drove around the little town and she pointed out things that might interest me. We drove to the old home of our great-grandfather, Hugh Roberts, where our grandmother, Sarah (Sallie) Gearhart was born. Only half of it is still standing and it has long since fallen into a state of disrepair. Maude told us how to find the old Roberts cemetery where our little sister, Ida Hudspeth, is buried. We had much trouble finding the old graveyard. We climbed a very steep hill- having to stop to catch our breaths every few minutes. After long searching, we spied a little gravestone amid the dense growth of weeds, vines and briars and when we reached it we could make out dim lettering—'Ida, daughter of T.J. and Ruth Hudspeth' with dates of birth and death. The little stone was broken off its base and was leaning against a post.

Maude then took us to another old family cemetery of the Gearharts and Fitzgeralds. It was a little less difficult to move around in but was rather densely covered with growth of vegetation throughout several generations. We found the grave of our great-grandfather, Valentine Gearhart, Sr.- the one who wrote the old will (1825). His monument was standing firmly and I was able to read the dates of birth and death (1775-1835).

We took Maude home and we went into the old house to visit a few minutes. It was where our mother's cousin, Ann Gearhart Fitzgerald had lived and her parents before her (Valentine Gearhart, Jr. and _____ Smith). Maude's grandfather was the Valentine, Jr. mentioned in the old will. Maude is the only living daughter of her family. She was next to the youngest of the girls. Allie, who was the youngest, is deceased. Maude is still teaching music. As we were leaving, she said she wanted to give me something to remember her by and she took a little piece off a shelf and gave it to me-(a little white milk glass covered dish shaped like a hen on a nest. E.R.G.) Signed, Jennie.

Addendum

Some discussion is warranted here, as to the ancestor of the Stones as set forth in this article. The author of this article is only repeating the common lore of the area in stating that George Washington Stone (and some have said, Uriah Stone) is the ancestor of the Stones in Overton County. Various Overton Co., TN. deeds are in existence which prove that the ancestor is Micajah Stone, rather than either of the above mentioned men. Micajah Stone came to Overton Co., TN. from Henry Co., Va. and his marriage to Martha Cesterson took place there in 1783. After Micajah Stone's death, his wife Martha and two sons were administrators of his estate (late 1820's, early 1830's). Later, at the death of one of his sons, other deeds exist which give the names of all seven sons of Micajah and Martha Stone. These may deeds be found in Overton Co., TN. also. The seven sons are: John; Eusebius; Micajah; William; Richard; James; and Jeremiah Stone.

The late W.C. Stone, in his book on the Stone and Plumlee families of this area, took the position that the ancestor was George Washington Stone. Later he wrote a letter to the Clay Co. newspaper, asking all who had copies of his book to correct them, giving Micajah Stone as the ancestor.

While not proven, the following information may give some insight into the research of the background of Micajah Stone's wife, Martha: Family lore says that Micajah's wife was a widow, Patsy Hunter, and she had one daughter at the time she and Micajah married. In my personal research of the Hunter family, I ran across, in the hands of an elderly relative, the unrecorded will of William Hunter, Sr. of the same area of Virginia as the Stones. As the elderly Mr. Hunter had later deeded his property to his daughter Jane who married William Turner, Sr. (son of Shadrach Turner) in exchange for her caring for him for his lifetime, there was no need for the will to be recorded at his death. The will was passed along in the succeeding generations of Mr. Hunter's son, John, down to the present generation, a lady in her eighties. I have seen the will but was not allowed to copy it. In this will, Mr. Hunter refers to land he has given his daughter, Martha Stone, and says that it adjoins his land. The land of Micajah Stone was near Mr. Hunter's land, so it would be reasonable to think that Mr. Hunter's daughter Martha could first have married a Cesterson (there was a John Cesterson in Henry Co., VA. in that time period). Perhaps her first husband died or was killed in the Revolution, leaving her with one daughter. Then she could have married Micajah Stone in 1783. That would reconcile the rumor with facts. William Hunter, Sr., died about 1814, and that is about the time the Stones left Henry Co., VA. for Overton Co., TN., along with or at the same time as William Turner, Jr. and James Turner, who would have been first cousins of the seven sons of Micajah and Martha Stone, if my reasoning is correct.

This document was retyped from a copy of the original typescript.

It was sent to me by a fellow researcher.

MSS, 26 Apr 1999

[Home](#)