

ETOWAH VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

January 1994

P.O. Box 1886, Cartersville, Georgia 30120

BUILDERS ROBERT W. & EUGENE SMITH

Editors Note: This article was reprinted with permission of The Daily Tribune News, and was originally printed in their December 30, 1975 edition. It was written by Clyde Jolly, a very active and valuable member of the Etowah Valley Historical Society. Clyde served as our president in 1979. We have amended the original article to reflect the current owners of many properties.

Take away the buildings erected here by Robert Wesley Smith and his son, Eugene Williamson Smith, and Cartersville would indeed be a snaggle-toothed lady.

Just for starters, imagine the Erwin Street area without the Sam Jones Memorial United Methodist Church (1905), the First Baptist Church (1904), the City Hall (1916-now used by the Cartersville Fire Department) and the First National Bank building (1905-now vacant and owned by Wachovia Bank), and you will begin to get an idea of the industriousness and integrity of the two pioneer Cartersville citizens who built these structures; they also built for the Southern Bell Telephone Co. on North Erwin Street the building now occupied by the City Economic Development Department.

Robert W. Smith and his wife, Sara Lavina Camp Smith, were natives of Walton County and came to Cartersville from Clayton County where Mr. Smith operated a contracting business. He came here as superintendent of the woodworking operations of the Car-



First National Bank in foreground as seen in early part of this century. Main Street looking east. Picture courtesy of Bartow History Center.

tersville Car Factory and Building Association, a flourishing firm that once built railroad cars at their factory on Leake Street where the Southland Ice Company building later stood and which space is now occupied by the Number 3 Leake Street Building.

As early as 1872, the railroad car factory was proudly showing in an ad in the Cartersville Courant and Express a letter from the president of the W. & A. Railroad, former Gov. Joseph E. Brown, which termed 15 new cars delivered by the Cartersville firm to his railroad as being "first rate."

Eugene W. Smith was seven years old when his family moved to Cartersville. A few years later, after an explosion destroyed the car factory, Eugene was old enough to join his father in the construction business which would be continued until Eugene's death in 1953.

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Robert Smith retired in 1916 and died in 1918.

Smith, father, and Smith, son, were huge men. Eugene Smith stood six feet, seven inches and weighed about 260 pounds, and his father was of a similar build. They stood tall mentally and morally, too. Eugene Smith absolutely refused to let any man work for him who cursed, drank or smoked cigarettes (it was all right if they smoked a pipe or dipped snuff.)

Former County Commissioner Griffin Smith, a son of Eugene Smith, recalls that the only whipping his father ever gave him was when he caught him smoking. It must have been a thorough job, because Griffin never smoked again in his father's presence, even though he was 43 years old when the old man died.

Eugene Smith refused to compromise his principles for anyone or any governmental body. When he was building the handsome home for Mr. and Mrs. L. T. McCollum on West Main Street (the house is now owned and occupied by Mr. John W. Dent), he poured the foundation and waited more than a week to continue the building, thus to give the foundation time to settle. In the meantime a young FHA inspector came up to check on the progress of the building and rebuked Mr. Smith for the delay. "Why, you young whippersnapper," said Mr. Smith, "You don't know anything about building. Now you just get on back to Atlanta, where you belong."

Gene Smith was a close friend of Corra Harris, the noted Georgia novelist and resident of the Rydal community. But he could match her tart wit and bullying manner word for word. On one occasion, when she called him and told him she wanted a barn built, he and Griffin went to Rydal to look over the situation. They found on the premises two large barns already built, one with only a scant wagon load of corn in it and the other empty except for a few bundles of fodder in the loft.

"You don't need another barn," Mr. Smith told her.



Mary Munford Memorial Library. Picture courtesy of Bartow History Center.

"But I want a barn," insisted Mrs. Harris. "Well, if that's what you want," said Mr. Smith, "you'll have to get somebody else to build it for you; I'm not going to do it." Mr. Smith built the additions to the Harris log cabin "In the Valley" and the Corra Harris Memorial Chapel.

Besides the public building already mentioned, in the downtown area the Smith team built the Mary Munford Memorial Library (since razed), additions to the Cartersville depot (1902) before it was trimmed down in 1972; and Eugene Smith built the first edition of the Cartersville Bank which was torn down to be succeeded by the C&S Bank of Bartow County (now NationsBank). Mr. Smith built the Bartow County Pauper's Home, later to become the Hickory Log Vocational School and the old gymnasium at the corner of Lee Street and Cherokee Avenue (destroyed by fire). In 1920 he built the back side of the old high school building, and in 1930 he renovated the structure.



Cartersville Bank. Picture courtesy of Bartow History Center.

Perhaps the most spectacular job undertaken by Robert and Eugene Smith was building the lower story of the Sam Jones residence, Roselawn. Another firm jacked up the bottom story and the Smiths built a new ground floor.

The fading of human memories and the passing on of the generations precludes listing all the fine homes that were built in Cartersville by Robert and Eugene Smith and later by Eugene Smith. However, a few of the fine homes built by them in Cartersville are listed here by street location.

On West Main Street in addition to the McCollum-Dent home, the Smiths built for Captain Joe Calhoun the house now owned by J. O. & Susan Alexander; they moved a small house from the Ed Strickland lot and built onto it a large residence for E. D. Cole, now owned by

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Home of Mr. & Mrs. J. O. Alexander.

Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Dobson; for Ed Strickland they built the white columned home that is now the property of Mr. Ray Thacker; and for the Paul Akins they built the Carl Nelson house (now owned and occupied by The Shaw Agency).

On Cherokee Avenue, Smith-constructed houses include the Dr. R. B. Harris home occupied for many years by the Upshaw family and now owned by Mrs. Joyce Murphy; the W. Bradford Barrett home, originally built as the First Baptist Church pastorium; they built in 1906 the large home originally owned by the Clayton Henson family and presently owned by Mr. and Mrs. Tom Welch; and the brick residence of Ms. Angie Nelson was built by them for Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Noble.



Home of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Welch.

Fine homes on Cassville Road built by the Smiths include the Jake Cullens home, originally the P. C. Flemister residence, the Ben C. Gilreath home, now the property of Mrs. and Mrs. Joe Jolly; the Lee Womelsdorf house, presently the home of Mr. and Mrs. Barry Henderson; and the fine home built for Harris Cope which is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Dellinger.

On West Avenue, the Smith-built home for Mr. and Mrs. John Bayless Lewis is now owned by Ms. Joan Rita Fleck; also on West Avenue, they built for the Nat Granger family the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Shaw;

and the home of Dr. and Mrs. Zim Choate, occupied for years by the Dr. McElreath family, was built originally for Will Neel.

The Smiths built several homes on South Avenue; among them were the home built for John P. Lewis, for many years lived in by Mr. and Mrs. Jack J. Hill, and now owned by Mr. and Mr. J. Freeland; the Cliff Dodgen residence now used as an office by Smith and Smith Surveyors; and the Luther Pettit home, now owned by their granddaughter, Mrs. Dennis Mooney. On Tumlin Street they built the fine brick home for Mrs. H. R. Maxwell now owned by The Rothschild Group and occupied as The Colony Apartments; on Church Street they built for Mrs. Gresham the house presently owned by Mrs. Frances Wolf and occupied for years by Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Daniel.

Other building projects of Eugene Smith included installing the first sprinkler system in the city in the old opera house at the corner of Wall and Cherokee. He built the front entrance to the Cartersville Presbyterian Church and added its Sunday School rooms (Sunday School rooms since destroyed by fire and rebuilt). In the late forties he remodeled the building housing the old Dixie Theater and the Greek-American Restaurant for Belk-Gallant Company. This building is now occupied by Badcock Furniture.



Home of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Jolly.

Eugene Smith built for Mr. and Mrs. Hampton Field the frame house on Bartow Street immediately behind the Presbyterian Church (since razed), and this opened the door for Mr. Smith to obtain several large contracts in Monroe, GA. Mrs. Field was a sister of Gov. Clifford Walker, who lived in Monroe, and within a short time Mr. Smith had completed a fine home for Gov. Walker, the First Baptist Church of Monroe, the Monroe High School and a dormitory at the Monroe A & M School.

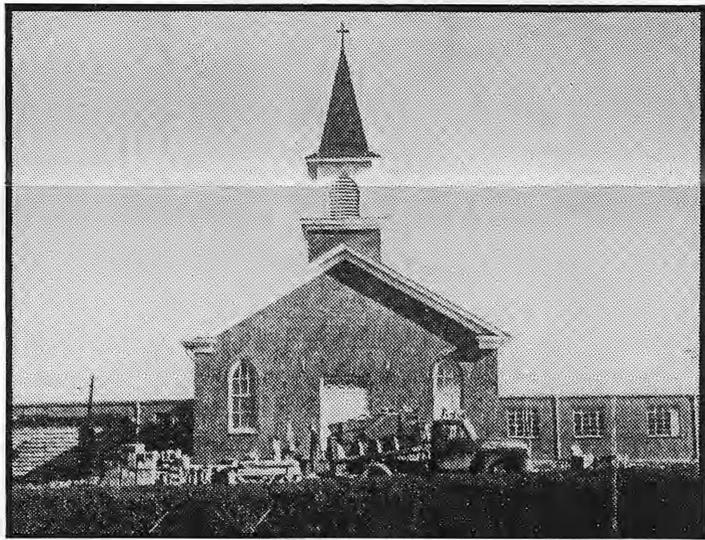
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Builders Robert W. & Eugene Smith Continued

In fact, Eugene Smith built fine edifices all over North Georgia.

There were intangible ways in which Eugene Smith helped in the building of Cartersville, too. A staunch Baptist, he was for many years a deacon in the First Baptist Church and was a deacon emeritus at the time of his death. He was one of the original directors of the Cartersville Building and Loan Association, forerunner of the Cartersville Federal Savings and Loan Association (acquired by and now a branch of The Prudential Savings Bank). He could be called a pioneer in improving race relations in that he was the first contractor in Cartersville to employ black carpenters in his work force.

Mr. Smith's last building project of note was construction of Faith United Methodist Church in the Atco community. His son, Griffin, states that his father seemed to enjoy his work on this building more than he had on any before. Shortly after its completion he died. The last residence he built was for Mr. and Mrs. W. Lewis Brown on Rockmart Road.



Faith United Methodist Church, formerly Atco Methodist Church, under construction. Picture taken from The Wingfoot Clan, March 31, 1953.

Mr. Smith's widow, the former Hattie Griffin, followed him in death in 1954. Besides Griffin Smith, the middle son, the Smiths had two other sons. Eugene Smith, Jr., the oldest of the three died in 1960. Bob Smith, the youngest son, is retired from the athletic department at Clemson University.

The many fine and enduring buildings erected by Eugene Smith and his father are fitting memorials to the dedicated craftsmen they were. To those Cartersvilians now living who remember one or both of them, they were men of integrity and high moral standards whose lofty principals are permanently reflected in the quality of every brick they ever laid, and every plank they ever nailed.

Submitted by DiAnne Smith Monroe

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our annual Christmas party at Roselawn was held Saturday, December 4. The largest crowd ever (97 members) was on hand to enjoy the evening's festivities. Ollene Kordecki entertained us with Christmas selections performed on the piano. A buffet dinner followed.

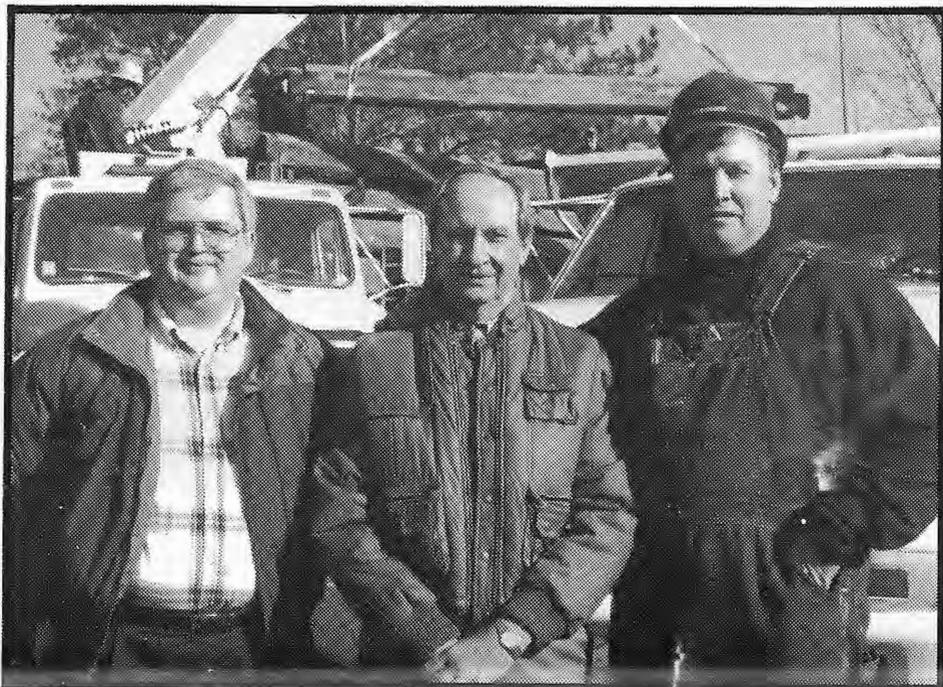
Congratulations and thanks to Vice President and Program Chairman, Lance Barry, and his wife, Anna, for a wonderful evening of fellowship and enjoyment.

Many thanks, also, to Mary Siniard. She does a beautiful job year after year decorating Roselawn for Christmas.



VAUGHAN CABIN

Sherlin Vaughan of Marietta, formerly of Cartersville, has generously donated an 1870's log cabin to the Etowah Valley Historical Society and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources at Red Top Mountain State Park. The cabin is to be placed in the spring of 1994 at a site along the shore of Lake Allatoona, just a few hundred feet from the Red Top Mountain Lodge.



Left to Right: Guy Parmenter, EVHS Board Chairman; Sherlin Vaughan, Cabin Donor; Billy Hanson, Site Manager of Red Top Mountain State Park and EVHS member.

Mr. Vaughan contacted Historical Society Board Chairman Guy Parmenter back in April for ideas about preserving his childhood home. Sherlin's parents had acquired the home in the early 1940's. Mr. Vaughan planned to eventually sell the land and was afraid the house would be torn down. He contacted the Society in hopes that the cabin could be preserved in Bartow County for historical purposes. President J.B. Tate and Guy Parmenter discussed the possibilities, then J.B. mentioned the cabin to Ralph Delgiorno, Services Manager of Red Top Mountain State Park. "The idea of placing a cabin at the lodge in order to help share the history of the area surfaced two years ago and could now become a reality", said Billy Hanson, Site Manager and EVHS member.

Both the Etowah Valley Historical Society and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources put lots of hours in planning before any work on the cabin could begin. The Society was responsible for negotiating with Sherlin Vaughan, handling all legal, appraisal, and in-



insurance matters. Efforts by Society members Warren Akin and Keith Taylor were invaluable as was the support of Commissioner Clarence Brown. Red Top officials, under the direction of Billy Hanson, were responsible for coordinating workers and equipment needed to dismantle and move the cabin. David Grabensteder, Allatoona Reservoir Manager with the Army Corps of Engineers, and his staff, assisted Red Top officials in the selection of a site for the cabin.

The cabin at first appeared to be an old abandoned farm house which was full of hay. Several non-log room additions had been added through the years, which had changed the original look of the cabin tremendously. After peeling back the exterior lap board and shingle siding to peek at the type of construction underneath, the giant pine logs came into view. The old house was indeed a two-room log cabin with a dog trot.

Red Top employees began removing the exterior and interior wall coverings in early November. Within two days the cabin appeared in its entirety, with all coverings removed and the additions torn away. The days that followed involved salvaging brick from the old chimneys, removing the flooring and roofing and continued cleanup of the site. The logs also had to be numbered before being dismantled in order that their exact location in the cabin would be known when erection occurred in the spring of 1994.

Friday, December 17 was the day the log cabin was at last dismantled and moved log by log to a storage facility at Red Top. Georgia Power employees and equipment from the company's Rome District and Plant

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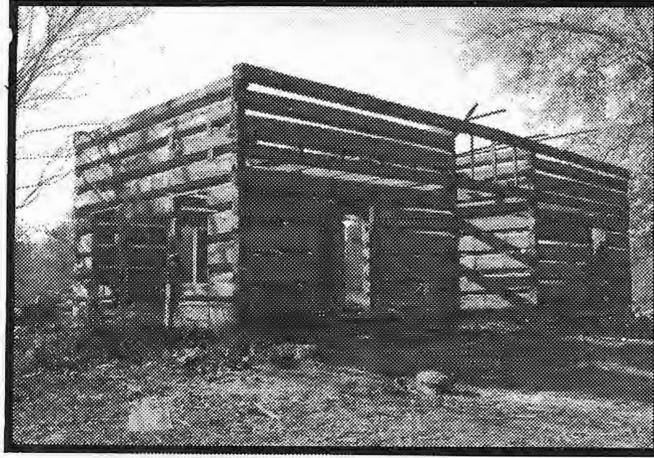
Vaughan Cabin Continued

Bowen were most helpful in assisting to move the logs. Atlanta Gas assisted with employees for this final day of the first stage of this project.

The overall objective of an 1800's homestead for Red Top Mountain State Park was brought into focus through meetings between the Society, Red Top officials and other DNR site managers and historians throughout the state. The cabin will be a wonderful addition to the park and will allow over a million visitors each year an opportunity to experience the Red Top Mountain area as it would have been over a hundred and twenty years ago. The cabin will be finished, but no plans exist at this time to add additional structures on the site. Thanks to Mr. Sherlin Vaughan, a piece of Bartow County's history will be preserved for future generations.

As announced in the September newsletter, we are pledging up to \$2,000 to replace the cabin roof. Members have expressed an interest in donating period furniture for this project. All donation of cash or furnishings are more than welcome. The EVHS name, as well as Sherlin Vaughan's name will be proudly displayed on plaques at the cabin. The enormous volume of visitors to the Red Top Mountain Lodge each year creates a lot of good publicity for the Society.

Guy Parmenter, Project Chairman



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Mr. and Mrs. Stan Bearden
Mr. Pete Brumfield
Mr. and Mrs. David Corriher
Ms. Angela Crocker
Mr. and Mrs. Edsel W. Dean
Dr. Linda Denham
Mr. and Mrs. David Gregory
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Hatley
Mr. and Mrs. Jim Kennedy
Ms. Angie Nelson
Mr. and Mrs. John Newman
Mrs. George Shropshire
Mr. and Mrs. Alex Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Olen Suire

Membership Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 22 at the Cartersville Library. Invitations to be mailed. Alonna Howell will present her fabulous slide collection of historic sites in Bartow County.

LET'S GET INVOLVED!

Many of you have expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the activities of the Historical Society. To give you an idea of the projects underway and in the planning stages, here is a list of all committees and the assigned chairperson.

Each project has a chairman, and a job for you, small or large. To find out more about a particular project,

contact that chairperson.

Upcoming newsletters will continue to update you on all Society projects and involvement. The Board of Directors and officers would like to hear from you.

The Society represents all its members. Your input is truly important. Let's get involved!

CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

Meetings & Programs (Lance Barry, Chairperson, 386-8620 work and 387-1384 home) To provide for all membership meetings and social gatherings to include programs, meals and/or refreshments.

Membership (DiAnne Monroe, Chairperson, 386-2745 home) To be responsible for the organized solicitation of prospective members and for the design of new member packets.

Newsletter (Guy Parmenter and Susan Taylor, Chairpersons, 382-0500 work and 382-5371 home for Guy or 382-6405 home for Susan) To publish a newsletter which will contain articles of historic facts about Bartow County and information to keep the membership abreast of the activities of the Society.

Historic Awareness Signs (Dianne Tate, Chairperson, 386-7944 home) To identify and label homes and commercial buildings of historic and/or architectural interest that are at least fifty years old in Bartow County.

Cemetery (Mary Siniard, Chairperson, 387-5162 work) To continue gathering information for the purpose of updating Volume I and future publication of Volume II. To maintain cemeteries in Bartow County which have been abandoned.

CROSSROADS Television Show (J. B. Tate, Chairperson, 386-7944 home) To inform the viewing audience of Cartersville's Cable Channel 4 about the history of Bartow County.

Republish "A History of Old Cassville, 1833-1864" by Dr. Joe Mahan (J. B. Tate, Chairperson, 386-7944 home) To reintroduce this popular book to Bartow County. This book is to be updated and will be a source of revenue for the Society.

Joe Frank Harris Collection (Carolyn Parmenter, Chairperson, 382-3451 home) to work with former Governor Harris in displaying many of the personal records of his eight year administration.

Vaughan Cabin (Guy Parmenter, Chairperson, 382-0500 work and 382-5371 home) To place this log cabin built by early settlers of Bartow County at Red Top Mountain Lodge where it can be shared by many for educational purposes.

Art Collector Series (Larry Gregory, Chairperson, 382-8565 work and 382-8087 home) To select a subject for painting each year and have prints made to be sold at a profit.

Weekend Rambles (J. B. Tate, Chairperson, 386-7499) To take members on organized field trips to various interesting spots in Bartow County.

Roundtable Discussion (DiAnne Monroe, Chairperson, 386-2745 home) To gather members on an informal basis for the purpose of sharing information.

Civil War (Bob Crowe, Chairperson, 382-4350 home) To promote and preserve the battle routes of the Confederate and Union Armies. To develop information including a driving tour highlighting battle sites, structures and routes of march for both armies.

Speakers Bureau (Guy Parmenter, temporary Chairperson 382-0500 work and 382-5371 home) To provide speakers from the society that can talk to civic and school groups about various topics of Bartow County History.

CROSSROADS

Chairman J. B. Tate reports lots of activity with this ongoing project. CROSSROADS can be viewed every Wednesday night at 9:00 p.m. and every Thursday morning at 9:30 a.m. The first of two shows about the Vaughan Cabin is now being shown. Guy Parmenter and Billy Hanson have done a great job in presenting the history of this 1870's cabin. This show also highlights cabin restoration at New Echota. J. B. has completed a show on the CCC and WPA. Assisting J. B. are Joe Myers, Woodrow Bradley and Olin Tatum. Another show, Black History of Bartow County, features J. B., Robert Benham and Susie Wheeler. Guy, Carl Ethridge and Michele Rodgers are working on an episode about the community of Etowah. This show will span the time period from the early 1800's until the completion of Allatoona Dam. Joe Head and Guy are planning a show about the Great Locomotive Chase in Bartow County. A man who was one of the engineers for the General's

last run in the 1960's has been located and has agreed to participate. Sharing his first-hand experience on the General will certainly add a special touch.

Those members with access to Cartersville's Cable Channel 4 should notice our new promotion aired prior to every CROSSROADS. We are now giving viewers a chance to send in their comments about each episode and a chance to learn more about the Society. Our mailing address is given both verbally and visually on the screen. We would like to get lots of feedback and hopefully new members.

If you have an idea or would like to participate in a show, contact J. B. Tate at 386-7944. All shows that have been aired are available for purchase from Channel 4 at a cost of \$20 each. Call 382-3000 to order your copies. Don't forget to tell them how much you enjoy CROSSROADS.

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