



ETOWAH VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Promoting and enhancing the awareness and preservation of
the heritage and traditions of Bartow County*



Volume 69, October 2008

P.O. Box 1886, Cartersville, GA 30120

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ANNUAL OBSERVATION OF THE BATTLE OF ALLATOONA PASS

Saturday and Sunday, October 4 and 5, the Etowah Valley Historical Society and Red Top Mountain State Park will host the annual observation of the October 5, 1864 battle which took place at Allatoona Pass. The event includes the dedication of monuments to those soldiers from Illinois and Iowa who participated in the battle, guided tours of the battlefield, tours of the Mooney home (then the Clayton home) which was used as a hospital after the battle, and artillery and rifle demonstrations. Re-enactors will be camped at the battlefield site for the weekend.

Dedication of the new monuments will take place at 11:00 am on Saturday. The new monuments will join those of Missouri, Mississippi and Texas.

RESERVATION DEADLINE FOR ETOWAH VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

The deadline to make your reservations for the Etowah Valley Historical Society's annual dinner meeting will be Wednesday, October 8 at 2 pm. Grand Oaks will be the site of this year's annual dinner meeting of the membership of EVHS, which is scheduled to take place on Saturday evening, October 11 at 7 pm.

Following fellowship and dinner, members will hear the annual report and learn the identity of this year's winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award. Cost for the evening will only be \$15 per person.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

The fiscal year for the Etowah Valley Historical Society runs from October 1 until September 30. Dues for the 2008-09 fiscal year are now being collected. You may pay at the annual dinner or mail your check to the Etowah Valley Historical Society at P.O. Box 1886, Cartersville, GA 30120. Dues remain at \$15 per person, \$20 per family, \$30 for a club or organization, and \$100 for a corporation or patron. New members who recently paid dues are considered as paid for the coming year.

Monies received from the dues are a major source of funds needed to operate EVHS. Even though you may not be able to participate in the activities of our organization, your dues money is needed to insure that we will be able to continue the preservation of the history and traditions of Bartow County.



Etowah Valley Historical Society
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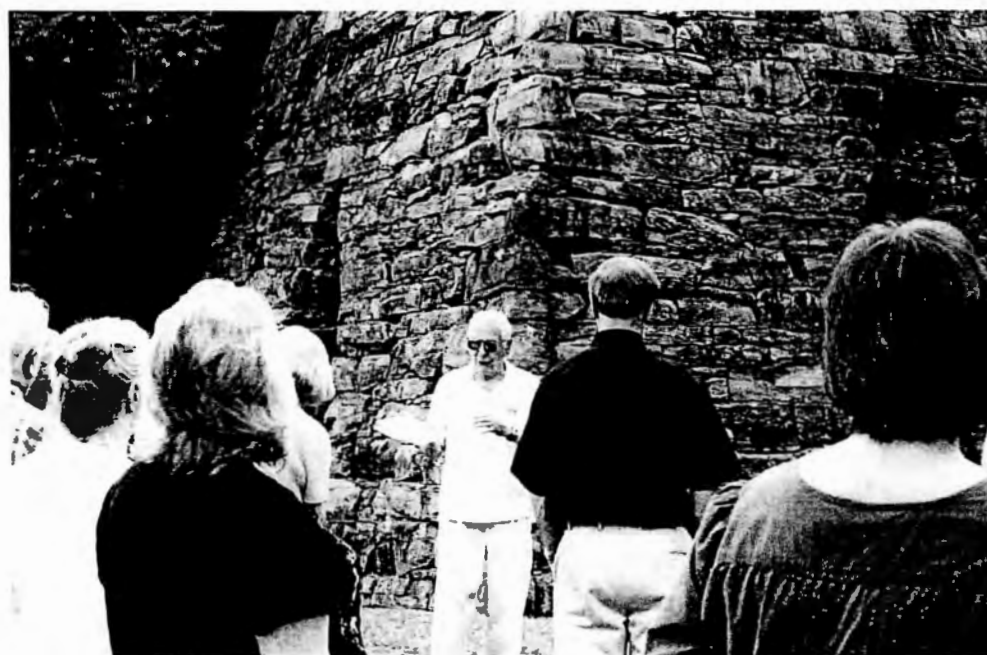
Dianne Tate

PICNIC AT COOPER'S FURNACE



J.B. Tate, a past president of EVHS, discusses the village of Etowah, a prosperous community which flourished along the Etowah River, was burned by Union troops, and whose remnants are now under Allatoona Dam.

Ed Hill, president of EVHS, explains the operation of the River Furnace which was built in 1857 and operated until the town of Etowah was destroyed in May, 1864. Some of the finest iron being manufactured at that time was made at the River Furnace and its sister furnace at Stamp Creek.



TOUR OF HOMES 2009

Our Tour of Homes committee is already busy planning for the 2009 tour of historic Bartow County homes. The always popular tour provides the opportunity to visit with the owners of historic properties and is a significant fundraiser to support the activities of the Etowah Valley Historical Society.

The Tour of Homes will be held the first weekend of November, 2009.

DATING HISTORIC HOMES

Mary Ellen Higgenbotham, associate professor at Georgia State, spoke at the Library on September 16 in an event sponsored by the Etowah Valley Historical Society and the Library. Her subject was dating historic homes by examining the paint, wallpaper and nails. More than 50 attended the event. A workshop with Ms. Higgenbotham is under consideration.

CHRISTMAS PARTY SCHEDULED FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5 AT ROSE LAWN

The board of directors voted to move the date for our annual Christmas Party from the first Saturday in December to the first Friday in December. It is hoped that the change will better fit our members' busy schedules as we enter the joyful Christmas season.

As usual, the event will be held at beautiful, historic Rose Lawn.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

William & Marilyn Devine

Mimi Flynt

Jonathan Michael Knott

Danny & Dorothy Shelby

1865 CASS (BARTOW) SUPERIOR COURT

In what was probably the first meeting following the Union occupation, the minutes show the following:

Chambers, February 18, 1865

Owing to the unsettled state of the country as well as some necessary populations for drawing and summoning jurors, it is ordered that the Superior Court of Bartow County be adjourned from the second to the fourth Monday in March, and that the Superior Court be requested to draw and have summoned Grand and Petit Jurors to attend on the fourth Monday and that the clerk give due notice and enter this order on the minutes.

Dawson A. Walkin, J.S.C.C.C

The March meeting listed 1 murder, 1 robbery, 2 horse stealings, and 12 cases of simple larceny.

IN MEMORIAM

Marian Fisk

Phil Secrist

LYNCHINGS IN BARTOW COUNTY

Ed Bostick

Lynching of American citizens by angry mobs of other Americans has a long history, both honorable and dishonorable. Lynchings and associated extra-legal activities were acceptable and necessary practices in regions where law enforcement and a judicial system did not exist, was ineffective, or was "in cahoots" with criminals. Under such circumstances, it was necessary to establish law and order with a few "necktie parties" carried out by vigilantes. Indeed, western U.S. history, folklore, and even humor are rife with examples of a jolly view of lynchings.

However, the frontier had long since disappeared from the eastern United States during the half-century 1880-1930 (sometimes referred to as the "Age of Lynching"). This was a region and a time period with a well-established and effective legal system. Criminals were diligently apprehended, vigorously prosecuted, and severely punished for their misdeeds. Capital punishment was common. For example, the state of North Carolina executed 108 men in the years 1910-1930. Ninety-three of these men were black; 15 were white.

During this time period, 2,805 people were lynched in eleven southern states. Mississippi lynch mobs killed the most and Georgia was second-ranked. Georgia mobs killed 458 people. Of these victims, 426 (93%) were black men, 20 (4.3%) were white men, 11 (2.4%) were black women, and 1 (0.3%) was a white woman. Their offenses, alleged or proven, included murder, rape, assault, theft, and arson. Others were lynched for offenses such as insolence, acting suspiciously, attempting to vote, testifying against a white person, or even being related to an alleged perpetrator.¹ Among Georgia counties, lynchings were most common in Decatur (13), Early (12), Jasper (11), Oconee (11), and Brooks (10). Seventy-six counties recorded no lynchings during this period (Paulding, Cherokee, Peach, and Charlton, for example).

Majority white spokespersons and the media often justified the lynching of black men for the much-feared offense of rape of a white woman. "As for lynching, I repeat what I have said before; 'Let the good work go on. Lynch 'em! Hang 'em! Shoot 'em! Burn 'em!'"²

Bartow County has been the scene of three lynchings. In all three cases, the lynch victims were black men. Cartersville newspapers reported no feelings of community outrage at the mob actions. Instead, there was an attitude of satisfaction that justice had been carried out on obviously guilty criminals. In none of the cases was any attempt made to identify and prosecute members of the lynch mobs.

1. John Jones, 1 July 1904, accused of assault on a white woman^{3,4}

A black man assaulted Mrs. Oscar Banister, a young white woman and mother of three children, in the community of Bartow in late June 1904. After having broken into her house at about 7:00 PM, he choked her into unconsciousness. Her three children began to scream and the assailant fled the scene. Men gathered from the vicinity of the communities of Bartow, Allatoona, and Emerson and were led in a search party by Sheriff H.R. Maxwell. Local iron mines closed and Cartersville city court was adjourned so that men could join the search. Two packs of hounds were set on the trail but lost it. Several black men were questioned including John Jones, a railroad worker. Jones showed a pass from a railroad overseer and was released. Two men gave unsatisfactory answers and were held in the Cartersville jail. Local citizens demanded that suspects be sent to Allatoona for identification by Mrs. Banister but Judge Fite refused, fearing a lynching. The judge requested Mrs. Banister to come to town for the identification but she was unable. After consultation with the sheriff and deputy, Judge Fite allowed the two suspects to be taken to Allatoona.

1. Tolnay, S.E. and E.M. Beck, 1995. *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Lynchings, 1882-1930*. ISBN # 0-252-06413-5. University of Illinois Press, Urbana/Chicago

2. Smith, Charles Henry, 1902. *Atlanta Constitution*; cited in Parker, David B. 1991. *Alias Bill Arp: Charles Henry Smith and the South's "Goodly Heritage"*. ISBN # 0-8203-1210-6. University of Georgia Press

3. "A Bold Black Fiend"; *The Cartersville News and Courier*; 30 June 1904

4. "Dangled Lead-Dosed"; *The Cartersville News and Courier*; 7 July 1904

Neither suspect was identified by Mrs. Banister and one of the men was alibied by law officers from Marietta, Georgia. Governor Terrell offered a reward for the capture of the assailant.

Meanwhile, John Jones had gone to Calhoun in search of a job but gave evasive answers to questions and, when Allatoona was mentioned, he fled. He was arrested by Gordon County authorities and brought to Cartersville. A lynching was rumored, so Jones was taken back to Calhoun but returned to Cartersville on the next day, after assurances that he would not be molested. Sheriff Maxwell and his deputy transported Jones to Bartow, where Mrs. Banister was staying with friends. She identified Jones as her assailant... "Take him away! He is the one!"

As the officers and their prisoner returned to Cartersville, other vehicles began to follow them toward the jail. At their arrival, more than one hundred men had assembled. Jones was seized by the mob and marched back through Emerson, where there was a "demonstration of exultation" and on through Bartow to the scene of the assault at "41 Crossing".

Jones was taken to a nearby hill and three modes of death were debated: burning, hanging, or shooting. Most members of the mob preferred burning, so Jones was tied to a tree, wood was piled up, and oil poured on. The pile was set on fire but immediately extinguished, apparently as a ploy to extract a confession from Jones. He promised to make a statement if given a drink of water. The water was produced but Jones continued to answer evasively. Mrs. Banister then expressed her wish that Jones should be shot to death. He was hanged in chains from an oak tree and then, "With coolness and care the men ranged themselves on one side in line, and at a given signal fires in to the negro's body, which was finally pierced by over five hundred bullets from Winchesters, pistols, and shotguns. The shooting began at about 6 o'clock. The crowd was extremely orderly, no oaths being sworn or indications of whisky drinking being visible in the talk or actions of the men."

2. Jessie McCorkle (or McCorker), 25 Feb 1916, accused of assault on a white woman ⁵

Jessie McCorkle allegedly broke into a Cartersville home and bedroom occupied by a white woman and her small children. Her husband was away on a business trip. The woman produced a pistol from under her pillow and ordered McCorkle to stop. He continued to advance and she shot him in the wrist. There was a struggle for the pistol. McCorkle seized the gun and fled the scene, leaving his victims slightly bruised. Deputies followed a blood trail from the scene but lost it after a few blocks. Later, McCorkle attempted to contact a local doctor by sending a message through relatives but police intercepted the note and Sheriff W.W. Callaway and his deputy soon arrived at the house where McCorkle was hiding. When questioned, McCorkle gave conflicting accounts about his wound. The room was searched, the pistol was found in a dresser drawer, and McCorkle was arrested and taken to the Cartersville city jail.

An hour later, after the sheriff and deputy had left, a mob of about twenty-five white men overpowered the jailer and took McCorkle from the jail. He was hanged from a tree in front of city hall and his body was riddled with bullets.

"Public sentiment, both among the white and negro races, appears to sanction the summary execution and little was heard of the matter twelve hours after it was over."

A local anecdote is associated with this lynching. The wife of William Weinman (the noted financier and mining developer) was said to be reluctant to move to the South from New York because of the violent social atmosphere, especially that of the lynch mentality. Mr. Weinman, after considerable cajoling, was able to convince her that lynchings were rare and that she would find Cartersville to be a congenial place. During a visit, the couple registered at a hotel on the public square. Mrs. Weinman retired for the night and awoke the next morning to the sight of the dangling corpse of Jesse McCorkle.

3. John William Clark (aka Grady Clark, Dan Brown), 1 Oct 1930, accused of the murder of Cartersville's police chief ^{6,7,8,9}

John William (Willie) Clark was a 22-year-old black male escapee from the Murray County chain gang where he had been serving a sentence for auto theft. At about 1:00 AM during the night of 4-5 September 1930, Clark

5. "A Criminal Quickly Lynched"; *The Bartow Tribune*; 2 March 1916

6. "Slayer of Chief Jenkins Eludes Officers"; *The Cartersville Tribune News*; 11 September 1930

7. "Clark Captured Sunday Morning in Murray County"; *The Cartersville Tribune News*; 18 September 1930

8. "Four Negro Men, Charged With Murder, Will Be Tried Here, Special Term Court"; *The Cartersville Tribune News*; 25 September 1930

9. "Negro Murderer Found Hanging to Telephone Pole Wednesday Morning"; *The Cartersville Tribune News*; 2 October 1930

and his brother were drinking whiskey while parked in a car at the corner of Douglas and Carter streets in Cartersville. Their voices were raised in argument. Coincidentally, they were parked in front of the home of Joe Ben Jenkins, 65 years old and Cartersville's chief of police for the previous twelve years. Chief Jenkins, armed with a pistol and dressed in his nightclothes, approached the vehicle and began to question the occupants. They became argumentative and Chief Jenkins informed them that they were under arrest for investigation. At the same time, Mr. Oscar (Shorty) Green, a local cotton mill employee was driving by on his return from working a late shift. The chief hailed him down, explained the situation, handed Green his pistol, and requested him to hold the suspects until he could return to his home to dress. As Chief Jenkins turned to enter his house, Willie Clark attempted to start his car. Retrieving his pistol from Green, the chief stepped closer to the vehicle and ordered Clark from the car. Clark grabbed the pistol and a struggle began. Clark was jerked out of the car and was struck on the head by a brick thrown by Oscar Green. Clark seemed to go limp from the blow and this apparently caused Chief Jenkins to relax his grip on the pistol. Clark snatched the weapon and fired two shots. The first shot struck Chief Jenkins under the right eye and the bullet penetrated the brain, killing him instantly. The second shot was aimed at Oscar Green and grazed his ear. Green also sustained some severe bites during the struggle. Clark's brother fled the scene and Willie Clark drove away in the stolen Model A Ford with license plates from Cuthbert, Georgia.

Chief Jenkins' son-in-law, Hugh Pettit, rushed out of the house in time to see his father-in-law shot and the car being driven away. Pettit ordered a doctor to be called and then drove to the county jail to seek help from Bartow County Sheriff G.W. Gaddis. A manhunt began, concentrated toward the north, since it was suspected that Clark might flee toward his hometown of Chattanooga. Just before dawn, on South Bartow Street, Hugh Pettit discovered the stolen Ford in which Clark fled the murder scene. Bartow County Commissioner A.V. Neal and Cartersville Mayor Jack Hill offered a reward of \$1000 for the capture of Willie Clark, his prison mug shots were circulated nationwide, and the manhunt continued. Chief Jenkins' pistol was recovered in Chattanooga where it had been sold. The pistol was later returned to the Jenkins family. Meanwhile, Chief Joe Ben Jenkins' funeral was held at Sam Jones Methodist Church and he was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. He was survived by his wife and nine adult children.

Clark was spotted in Chattanooga and then he apparently traveled southward through Alabama and back into Georgia to Cordele, then north to Atlanta, where he was located by Atlanta police detectives on 7 September. Several shots were fired at Clark but he and two companions escaped from the pursuing police in a stolen car. The three men drove from Atlanta to Marietta, then to Canton, and into Murray County at Carter's Quarters. Proceeding north on the "Tennessee Highway" (Old US 411) during the night of 7/8 September, Clark fell asleep at the wheel and drove into a roadside ditch. He and his two companions stole another car from a nearby farmhouse but it ran out of gas immediately. The three men then fled into the woods. The next day, passers-by noted the abandoned vehicle with its telltale bullet holes from Atlanta detectives' pistols. A Bartow/Murray posse (which included Hugh Pettit) was formed and Willie Clark was captured in Murray County on 9 September. He was wounded in the leg during the chase. Upon capture, Clark was taken to Chatsworth where a local physician dressed his wounds and then he was returned to the Cartersville city jail. During the ride to Cartersville, Clark admitted that he had fired the shot that killed Chief Jenkins but claimed that it was an accident.

Crowds began to gather around the jail and a lynching was rumored. Sheriff Gaddis felt that he could keep the location secure. However, several train passengers traveling through Cartersville telephoned Governor Hardeman when they reached Atlanta and informed him of the menacing attitude of the Cartersville crowds. A number of non-residents had gathered at the jail and had demanded the keys from Sheriff Gaddis. After consultation with the sheriff, Georgia National Guard Adjutant General Homer Parker ordered troops to take up positions around the Cartersville jail. Company H from Atlanta and Company I from Marietta guarded the jail until Clark could be transferred to the "Fulton Tower" (Fulton County jail in Atlanta). The transfer was peaceful: the guardsmen were under orders to keep their weapons out of sight so as not to provoke the large crowd of bystanders on the Cartersville public square and at the train depot. Clark's brother and another accomplice accompanied him to Atlanta.

Judge Claude C. Pittman set a trial date for Tuesday 30 September and appointed local attorneys William A. Ingram and Robert F. Whitaker as public defenders for Willie Clark. However, during his incarceration at the

Fulton County jail, Clark was contacted by two Atlanta attorneys, Harold Sheats and Marion Williamson, who agreed to represent him at his trial.

Oddly, Willie Clark's indictment for murder is on a Georgia and Bartow Grand Jury form dealing with "disturbing a divine service." The original misdemeanor specifications were typed over and a murder charge was substituted. The word "misdemeanor" was not typed over... an error that might be significant in more modern times.

On the day of the trial, defense attorneys Sheats and Williamson immediately filed for a change of venue, claiming that Clark could not be given a fair trial in Bartow County. More than a dozen Bartow citizens took the stand to aver that Clark could receive justice. These witnesses included Sheriff Gaddis, County Commissioner Arthur V. Neal, Hugh Pettit, and others. Judge Pittman denied the plea for a venue change. Sheats and Williamson then responded with a "bill of exception" (an appeal to a higher court of the judge's ruling). Pittman was legally bound to sign the petition, thus delaying the trial for two or three weeks or until the higher court ruled on Pittman's denial of venue change. Judge Pittman ordered that Clark be held in the Bartow County jail. Local opinion was that the tactics of the Atlanta attorneys had unnecessarily delayed justice. Sheats and Williamson returned to Atlanta and later claimed that they had been threatened and ordered to leave Cartersville.

Shortly after midnight on the morning of 1 September, about ten vehicles occupied by about fifty men arrived at the jail. Ten unmasked and unarmed men entered the jail and overpowered the three deputies on duty. Sheriff Gaddis was asleep in a back room. Willie Clark was taken from the jail, bundled into the back seat of one of the cars, and the motorcade disappeared into the night. Clark was taken to the area then known as the "Fairgrounds" (now the industrial just south of Cartersville) and hanged from a telephone pole. At dawn, his body was discovered by authorities but was allowed to hang throughout the morning. Hundreds of people visited the scene and, as was the custom, photographs were taken of the dangling body and interested bystanders, some of whom "struck a pose" next to the corpse. At least one of these photos was made into a postcard that was sold door-to-door in Cartersville. Local police reported that Clark had died of strangulation. Clark's body was taken down and, for a while, was destined to be donated to a medical school for dissection. Late in the evening, members of his family arranged for transportation to Chattanooga for burial.

Responding to the defense attorneys' statements that they had been threatened in Cartersville, Bartow County Commissioner Arthur Neal released a statement in defense of the lynching of Willie Clark. The statement read: "Had it not been for the appearance of Atlanta lawyers in this case Tuesday and their actions in filing a bill of exceptions which caused postponement of the trial, there would have been no lynching. The people of Cartersville and Bartow County were a unit in agreeing that Clark should have a fair and impartial trial, feeling sure that the sentence would have been death in the electric chair. However, the action taken by the Atlanta lawyers causing postponement of the hearing for an indefinite period so incensed our people that I believe I am safe in saying the action of the men who took the negro from the jail is not only condoned but has met with practically unanimous approval." The Cartersville Tribune defended Commissioner Neal's statement, concluding that: "The people here are as law-abiding as any other community in the United States, and we are confident that similar action would be taken in any community in the United States, under these circumstances."

On 21 January 1931, Bartow County Solicitor General J.C. Mitchell closed the case on John William Clark by noting on the indictment: "The defendant being dead the within case is hereby *nol prossed*." Willie Clark is buried in an unknown Chattanooga grave; Chief Joe Ben Jenkins rests in Oak Hill Cemetery and is memorialized by a granite bench located in front of the present Cartersville Police station.

Ed Bostick, an EVHS member, is a retired professor of Biology at Kennesaw State University who serves on the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Library.

EVHS SPEAKERS

EVHS Past Presidents, Guy Parmenter and J.B. Tate, and President Ed Hill, have all spoken before local organizations on various local history subjects recently. Linda Cochran, EVHS Secretary, has also been speaking on the subject of Genealogy.

EVHS OFFICER ELECTION

The election for the 2008-09 officers will be held at the Board of Directors' meeting scheduled for Tuesday, October 14.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday & Sunday, October 4 & 5
ANNIVERSARY OF THE
BATTLE OF ALLATOONA PASS
Monument Dedication at 11am, Oct. 4.

Saturday, October 11
EVHS ANNUAL MEETING
Dinner Meeting
Grand Oaks

Friday, December 5
EVHS CHRISTMAS PARTY
Rose Lawn



ETOWAH VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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