

# Pulaski County Historical Society

304 South Main Street

Somerset, Kentucky 42502-0036

Hours: Monday Through Saturday 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

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Pres. Jerri Brown V. P. Wanda Bullock Sec. Joyce Mize Treas. Fayrene Gilliland

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## Staff:

Vivian Abbott	Wanda Bullock	Larry Martin	Kay Spillman
Bulah Baugh	Wanda Harper	Kathy Martin	Jan Stricklin
Ethel Bradley	Babe Hughes	Joyce Mize	Nancy Weaver
Jerri Brown	Melvin Hurst	Louanna Purcell	

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## Board of Directors

Vivian Abbott	Jerri Brown	Fayrene Gilliland	Wanda Harper	Jeff Renner
Dexter Alexander	Wanda Bullock	Joyce Hargis	Joyce Mize	Bruce Singleton

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Don and Susan Elmore came to Somerset in 1972. He taught history at Somerset High School for 27 years, retiring in 1999. Don graduated from Campbellsville College and received his 5th year at EKU.

Susan has been a substitute teacher for the Somerset School system for many years. Both are very interested in the History of the Pulaski Co., Somerset area. Don helped with the Mill Springs Battlefield until 2006.

Don and Susan attend meetings, go to schools and other organizations to teach the history of the area.

Don was awarded the Community Service Award (locally) for the DAR this year and was honored to come in 3rd for the Kentucky Service Award.

Don and Susan built a diorama showing the 6 hours of the battle of Mill Springs at Nancy, Kentucky. It has more than 800 soldiers depicting the more than 8,000 that actually fought on the cold day in Jan. 1862. They also made a diorama covering the 200 years of the history of the "Old Mill Area" of Wayne Co. Both are on display in the Wm. C. Kennedy museum in Monticello, KY.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmore will be speaking on the Civil War and do a short demonstration showing some of their artifacts. Sounds very interesting. Come on out and live a part of the past.

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The society is a non-profit organization. The officers and staff are volunteers. The primary goal is to collect and preserve the records of Pulaski County and materials relating to its history.

A newsletter is mailed to current members in May and November. Any member can submit a query of 50 words or less. Notices of family reunions are also welcome. Dues are \$3.00 per year, January through December. Enclose SASE if membership card is needed.

CHECK MAILING LABEL FOR DATE DUES EXPIRE. It is very important to get your dues in if you expect to receive the newsletter.

The staff does not do in depth research. A basic fee of \$5.00 each family is required for a search of family books and files. Photo copies of original marriage bonds and consent forms for years 1799 - 1871 will be duplicated and certified by the staff for \$1.00 each.

### PRESIDENTS LETTER BY JERRI BROWN

Can you believe it, another year has gone by so quickly. Before you know it the snow will be flying here in Pulaski County, Kentucky. It is so beautiful looking across the land scape in the country of the rolling hills and trees. But it is hard to forget how so cold it is out side.

First off I want to apologize to Mr. Doyle Cottongim for incorrectly thanking the wrong person for the donation of his ancestors wedding party. I put Jim Cottongim instead of Doyle. I have no idea where Jim came from but I deeply regret it.

I am still begging you guys to get some queries in here. They are very scarce. People enjoy reading them. You can submit one and ask for help in locating a long lost relative or ancestor.

Donation of books keep coming in. Keeping me busy adding them to our shelves.

Joyce Hargis is our newly elected board member. Joyce was at one time a volunteer with the society for many years. She retired due to illness in the family. We hope to get her back volunteering with us again. She has been working with Wanda Bullock on the Post offices. So she is getting the fever again. Welcome aboard Joyce.

The bronze statue that the society donated to the library has finally been set in its place on the front porch of the library. The security camera is directly on it so hopefully vandals will not vandalize it. It is of a grandfather and grandson sitting on a bench reading a book together. Very nice. Those in our area need to come by and take a look.

The library requested that any mail addressed to the society be sent to 304 South Main Street, Somerset, KY 42503.

If anyone has any high school year books from Pulaski County, Nancy, Shopville, Ferguson, and Eubank that they want to find a good home for them, remember the historical society. We have lots from Somerset High. We would certainly appreciate any. We have so many people coming in to look through them.. Thanks to you guys that have donated them.

The society is still working on compiling a book on the old post offices, and post masters/mistresses. We need information on the post masters and the office itself. Plus pictures of any of the post office buildings and the post master/mistress. If you have any family that was one, please share that information plus pictures that you would share with us to be used in the book, we certainly need your help to do this book. We have had marvelous help so far but there are many more that we need. Thanks to those that has participated.

The Rexroats were up from Florida this Summer and brought the oranges and chocolates for the staff to enjoy. Believe me they enjoyed them. The chocolates were gone in at couple weeks. Thank You.

David Doss is still sending obituaries of Pulaski County people that have moved to Illinois and passed away. We appreciate him remembering us.

Thanks to Barbara Allen and Ms. Wainscoat for their donations.

Our thanks to the St. Patrick Episcopal Church for the donation of an enlargement picture of the old Pulaski County Court House.

Thanks to Jack Edwards for his donation of photos of the old Pitman Creek Bridge. Beverly Harber donated 2 postcards of Burnside's headquarters & boat dock . Thank you.

Betty Doss isn't well and hasn't been with us for quite a long time. We certainly miss her and wish her well.

## BOOKS ADDED TO THE SHELF

Eastes families of Indiana Compiled by LeRoy F. Eastes, Jr. Donated by: Carol Warren

Eastes Genealogies 1097 - 1893 Compiled by Charles Estes. Donated by Carol Warren

Union College 1879 - 1979 Donated by Charlotte Keeney

Early Days In Danville Donated by Charlotte Keeney

Women In The Military Donated by Edwin Swan

Stephens - Stevens Donated by Vivian Abbott

Cline Family

Ancestors and Descendants of William Mercer and Lucinda Hays Donated by Lyman Foster Reynolds.

Colonial Families of The United States of America Donated by George Norbury McKenzie

Harmon Ancestors of Lawrence B. Harmon Donated by Louanna Purcell

Civil Government of The United States Donated by Ethel Bradley

200<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of The Cumberland River Association of Baptist Churches Donated by Ethel Bradley

Everyday Classic Second Reader Donated by Bonnie Denny Family

Original Intent and A Year In Kentucky Basketball Rick Pitino Donated by Joyce Mize

Images of America Floyd County, Kentucky Donated by Ruby Henson

Julius Caesar, Shakespeare, Shakespeare's Macbeth, Emerson's American Scholars. Essays on Addison and Milton, (8 little books) Donated by The Cooper Family

Taylor Family Donated by Harvey Wallace

Somerset Year Books 1915 and 1916 Donated by Jane Gregory

Beale Papers Donated by J. Robinette

Pictures in 1950's of the old Pitman Creek Bridge over Lake Cumberland on South Hwy 27 and the old railroad trestle

Keeney Family Donated by Ronald Laugherty

Reynolds Family Donated by Ruth Johnson

Old Burnside Memories, A Pictorial Journey Down Memory Lane Purchased

Dunbar School , Somerset, Preserving Our Dunbar Heritage 1900 - 1964 Donated by Vivian Owsley

The Town of Grundy  
on the Salt Works Road

It was along a well paved buffalo road which explorers of 1669 and 1670 and the Long Hunters of the 1760s trekked to reach Cumberland River as well as the road which settlers traveled when entering the region that the Town of Grundy emerged around 1850. The Town of Grundy on the Salt Works Road became a flourishing yet short-lived economic center of Pulaski County in the nineteenth century.

In 1802, an Act of the Legislature directed that a road should be opened and kept in repair from the courthouse in Pulaski County to the Goose Creek Salt Works in Clay County for salt-packers to transport salt, the essential mineral for preservation of foods, hence the name Salt Works Road. This was a tributary road northeast toward the Wilderness Road in Rockcastle County then southeast to London in Laurel County.

Further, an Act of 1816 illustrates the significance of the road when the Legislature appropriated state turnpike money to keep the road opened and maintained. According to Elizabeth Davidson Dykes, salt-packers often stopped in the Town of Grundy for rest and to ask directions to the Salt Works.

As the economy of Pulaski grew, trade and travel increased on the Salt Works Road and tavern houses emerged to accommodate the travelers. Between the years 1819 and 1822, three proprietors opened inns within a distance of seven miles northward toward the Wilderness Road. At Rocky Gap just north of the land which became the Town of Grundy, Thomas Floyd, earlier in 1818, was operating an inn at the dwelling of Squire James Raney. The inns were indicators of growth within the county.

The State regulated rates which innkeepers could charge and the Court determined to whom a license could be issued. In granting a license, the Court stated that the innkeeper must have ". . . Rooms, Stabling, pastures, etc., as well as a sufficiency of food and forage for man and beast." More important, however, the proprietor had to be a person of high moral character and to be bonded to the State for \$1,000.00.

In the 1820s, an innkeeper could charge the guest for

Breakfast	\$.25	Corn or oats per gallon	\$.12 ½
Dinner	\$.25	Hay fodder	\$.25
Supper	\$.25	Peach or Apple Brandy ½ pint	\$.12½
Lodging	\$.12 ½	Cyder per quart	\$.08 1/3

By the decades of 1850 and 1860, the rates had increased to twice the amount; and wines and brandies could be sold by the drink for \$.10.

Almost four decades after the State opened the Salt Works Road, the Court in 1836 opened a nearer and better route due east by way of Dallas and Line Creek to reach London and the Salt Works. Then the route became the Somerset-London Road and remained the main route of travel to and from the Town of Somerset until the first part of the twentieth century.

Early innkeepers were the forerunners of the economic center of Grundy. Some time before 1837, Stephen Hunt became an innkeeper, and, in 1838, the Court renewed his bond stating that ". . . leave is given the said Hunt to keep a Tavern at his dwelling House of the Salt Works Road . . . Hunt having taken oath against letting slaves have spiritous

liquors as reg'd by Law." In March of 1839, Robert Graves began a second inn at his dwelling. By this time, the area west of Rocky Gap was moving toward a commercial center of various enterprises.

The several taverns, or inns, accommodating travelers during the decades of 1850 and 1860 depict the scale of economic activity in the Town of Grundy: during the peak year of 1855 there were four different innkeepers; during the years of the Civil War two; and from 1866 to 1870 only one.

In December of 1851, the Court gave a license to Robert Graves for \$10.00, another to James Light, and still another to David M. Stephenson. During the last months of 1855, four proprietors, Robert Graves, Albert M. Helton, Heywood Simpson, and Peter Waddle, received tavern licenses. During the Civil War years, that is 1864 and 1865, James Nunnelly was an innkeeper at the old tavern stand of Robert Graves.

A family operation under Heywood Simpson and his son, Benjamin, was an enterprise which they operated continuously from 1853 to 1870. In November of 1853, Heywood Simpson received a license and operated a tavern until 1864; thereafter his son, Benjamin, and his wife, Elizabeth, were the proprietors lasting until 1870.

During the decade of 1840, the Federal Government established three post offices along the new Somerset-London Road, to name Grundy, Dallas, and Line Creek. In 1847, Robert Graves became the postmaster designate of the Grundy post office, and the land which Graves owned became the Town of Grundy. At sometime before 1848, Daniel F. James laid out the town in lots 214 by 65 feet. Those instrumental in forming the new town aptly named it Gravesville. In the year 1858, however, the Court incorporated the town and officially named it Grundy. At the time, residents of the town numbered one hundred.

Various enterprising investors bought the lots. Graves sold the first lot No. 7 to Benjamin and Heywood Simpson for \$200.00. In March of 1849, James Light, an early merchant in the town, purchased Lots 1, 2, and 3; in June of 1850, Anderson B. Nunnelly of Fayette County bought Lot No. 6.

By October of 1852, transfer of lots and other land near Grundy began in earnest when Graves sold four acres to James H. Gilgore who within a few months sold several lots from the four acres to Charles C. Ellis. By 1855, the intensity of buying and selling of the preferred lots reached a peak. The transactions still continued on an elevated scale until the time of the Civil War, but with the war and its aftermath buying and selling of lots ended.

Different enterprisers of the day brought commercial activity to the Town of Grundy. During this time of progression, the townspeople boasted a stageline operation, four merchandise stores, livery stables, furniture making shops, a wainwright shop, a shoemaking shop, two meeting houses of the Baptist Faith, and a resident physician.

J.P. Nunnelly owned and operated the first of the enterprises, the stageline. For the stageline, Nunnelly utilized at least two light stages and perhaps others. The light stage, or the two-horse variety, carried four passengers. In addition to travel into the Town of Somerset, two of the stage routes were the Somerset-London Road east to London and the Whitley Road southeast to Rockcastle Springs Resort. It is most probable that Nunnelly functioned as a mail carrier on his runs.

During the decade of 1850 there were four merchants in the town: James Light and William S. Graves were partners in a general merchandise enterprise; Daniel F. James was a storekeeper in the new town; and J.P. and J.W. Colyer were partners in a merchandise enterprise. Also, Heywood Simpson and his family managed a store.

In addition to being a merchandiser, James Light owned and operated a steam-powered carding factory. In time, Light transferred the factory to Andrew M. Helton but remained as the wool carder. In 1858 at which time he removed to Indiana, Helton sold the carding factory to R. M. Bradley and A. J. James. Earlier, Helton had sold a house and lot to John P. Ridings of Lee County, Virginia, a newcomer to Pulaski, for \$1,100.00.

There were two furniture making shops in the Town of Grundy owned and operated by James M. Griffin and Isaac Snodgrass. The woods which Griffin made into furniture were cherry, mahogany, and poplar. Snodgrass, on the other hand, was a cabinetmaker, a craftsman who did joiner's work and made fine articles of furniture.

Another enterprise vital to residents of the Town of Grundy as well as to the county overall was that of barrel making. John Taylor, a man of color, was a cooper who operated a workshop in the town. The industry was a thriving one as Taylor had staves and material to make three hundred barrels which John B. Curd, merchant in the Town of Somerset, ordered from him.

Other industries either in the town or north of the town were vital to the economy. The firms of James & Light and Heywood Simpson & Son each operated a livery stable, and E.L. Salyer was the wainwright in the Town of Grundy. On the north side of Rocky Gap on a branch of Flat Lick Creek, James Gover operated a tanyard, an industry essential for making leather products. Earlier in 1838, John and Joseph Burkhardt purchased land farther north on the Somerset-London Road where they operated a wainwright shop making both wagons and carriages.

The fast growth of the new town spurred other trades there. In 1852, William Bobbitt, a stonemason, built two chimneys in the Town of Grundy. In a letter to his brother, Greenberry Bobbitt, in Virginia, the stonemason tells about his labor: "I built two chimneys in 15 days for \$25.00 about three miles from home in a little town called Grundy." Further, Bobbitt writes about crops and stock during the season: "Some grain in this country was very good and corn crops was light. Stock is very high. Hogs were \$4.00 per hundred."

During this time, James Bates of Grundy was a dealer in livestock, and Berry Smith a drover who took stock to the Southern Market in South Carolina. In the 1850s, however, drovers began to experience a market nearer than the South.

In 1858, the Court opened a short road, already an established route, from the Town of Grundy passing the Daniel F. James mansion and connecting to the upper Flat Lick Creek area and the Crab Orchard Road. Drovers used the new road to move hogs to Crab Orchard and toward Lebanon Junction terminus of the L&N Railroad, hence the name Hog Road.

An important aspect of the Town of Grundy was a house of worship established years earlier. Around 1812 when the Flat Lick Meeting House, the parent church of the Baptist Faith, was sending members to colonize in outlying communities trustees founded Rock Lick Meeting

House. A land transfer of 1814 from Jesse Richardson to Lucy Thurman, a daughter, reveals the meeting house as ongoing while an order of February 1819 for the Colonel Modrel Road gives the new church as a reference point.

In the year 1822, the United Baptist Church of Christ at Rock Lick presented to the Court a document appointing ". . . Trustees John Hunt, Robert McAlister, and Moses Kenny to obtain a Deed to a lot of ground including the Meeting House and a part of the Spring adjoining said lot ". . . ." Jesse Richardson had donated four acres of land for the church. It is most probable that Rock Lick had a considerable membership early on as there were numerous settlers on the land northward along the Somerset-Mount Vernon Road.

Later on, yet before 1848, residents of Grundy established a second house of worship of the Baptist Faith. In October of 1848, James Light transferred one acre of land to the Trustees of the United Baptist Church of Bethel with the description ". . . where the Meeting House now stands. . . ." indicating that the members had been holding meetings for a period of time. James Light, Fountain C. Graves, William Graves, and Thomas P. Graves were the trustees. At the time, Dr. John W. Adams was the resident physician of the town.

Perhaps the determinant factor for the development of the Town of Grundy was the location on the main artery. The Court issued numerous orders for road improvement on the Somerset-London Road during the period of 1850 through 1879 as the route was crucial to all travelers. There were several orders for the section from the Town of Somerset to the Upper Ford of Pitman Creek, several for the Pitman Hill, twenty-five for the section through the Town of Grundy, several for Rocky Gap, and sixteen for the distance from Flat Lick Creek to Dallas.

At the beginning of the county, road building and maintenance of roads was performed entirely by all men ages sixteen and over as roads had to be opened regardless of any other factor; however, by 1822, an Act exempted all men fifty and over. The men were required by law to work six days each year within their boundary and to provide their own tools, that is hoe and mattock and shovel.

An Act of the Legislature in 1831 appropriated the first expenditures for work on all roads directing the surveyor ". . . to employ team and plows for plowing roads in their precincts." Within Pulaski, the appropriation for the work came from sale of land at \$5.00 per hundred acres.

To illustrate the expenditures: in November of 1854, the Court allowed Lucy Thurman \$1.00 for use of wagon and team; Joseph Thurman \$1.50 for wagon and yoke of oxen; and David Langdon \$.50 for hauling and putting rock in Roper Ford on Flat Lick Creek. By the 1850s, scrapers and blasting powder came into use. There was some outlay for wooden bridges but the Court did not finance an iron bridge at Pitman Hill until 1904.

The Town of Grundy began to fade after the Civil War, but, for the most part, descendants of these early enterprisers remained in the general area. Still in the 1870s at the time of the CNO&TP Railroad, the Nunnelly family removed to the ridgeland of Rockcastle River where they operated a merchandise center and a mineral springs reportedly shipping bottled mineral water by rail to outside markets throughout the country.

Additionally, the Nunnelly Springs hotel provided lodging for investors and workers in the timber industry which was beginning on the ridgeland.

The Nunnelly enterprises, in actuality, was the nucleus of an emerging, self-contained community, the Village of Mount Victory. To further substantiate: at the turn of the century the Nunnelly family donated land where they built an education structure and a tabernacle which became an outstanding institution, the only one of its kind in Pulaski—the Mount Victory Academy.

Years following the founding of the Town of Grundy, residents of eastern Pulaski continued to travel the Somerset-London Road to Somerset. During 1920 and 1930, travelers on horseback stopped at Davidson's Spring for drinking water and for rest. When riding from Burdine Valley to Somerset, Wade Harper always rested at the spring. C. H. McAlister who lived at Conrard near Line Creek stopped at the spring to water and rest his horse from the trip.

More than a century after the Legislature opened the Salt Works Road as the main route of travel to the Town of Somerset, the State effected an entirely different road which connected the Barren Lands of western Kentucky to the mountains of eastern Kentucky. In 1930, an innovative project, Highway 80, began to make way for the motorized vehicle.

For the new highway, asphalt replaced gravel as the road surface and concrete bridges replaced iron bridges and fords of streams. The bridge locations complemented by a modern day store building and post office centralized the communities of Shopville and Stab which became economic centers lasting for years; and Line Creek as well which lasted for a time.

After 1934, the Somerset-London Road as the main route of travel to Somerset came to an end, and the way through the community of Grundy became the Grundy Road.

Excerpts from Book II, Chapter IX, Dawning of the Cumberland ,  
la riviere Chaowanon

Notations:

The tavern is not a saloon per se rather a place of lodging for travelers which the Court licensed to sell spirituous liquors.

Rocky Gap is the steep hill separating Grundy from Shopville.

3. Davidson's Spring is located a mile northeast of Grundy at the John Sam Stewart place.

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Charlene Phelps has been compiling and writing a book on different places, people and things of the old pioneers. She has permitted us to use some of the articles for our news letter in the past. They are very interesting articles.

She has again given us an article to use. It is certainly appreciated. I know you readers enjoy it as much as I have. We will keep you posted to when it will be up for sale.

Glenda Adams has been so kind as to type the article for our newsletter. The spelling, punctuation, nor anything has been changed from the original writings by Charlene. I want to thank Glenda for doing this for me. I certainly appreciate it.

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PULASKI COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KENTUCKY  
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING MINUTES

The organization meeting was held by interested persons at the home of Mrs. Linzie Carter in Somerset on September, 30, 1966. Mr. Leonard Hislope, State Representative, acted as temporary chairman.

The following officers were elected:

- |                                       |                       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| President                             | William. J. Moore     |
| Vice president                        | Mrs. Linzie Carter    |
| Secretary                             | Mrs. B. R. Hollis     |
| Treasurer                             | Mrs. James F. Prather |
| General Director, Mr. Leonard Hislope | (Executive Director)  |

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Members of Steering Committee:

- Mrs. V. D. Roberts
- Mr. John P. Hill
- Mrs. O. G. Peterson
- Mrs. Henry Hail
- Mrs. Starling Evins

REPRESENTATIVE IN CHARGE OF PRESERVATION AND BEAUTIFICATION OF HISTORICAL PLACES IN SOMERSET AND PULASKI COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Mrs. Lee Waddell Hay

CURATORS

- Miss Mary Vance Day
- Mr. Jerry Booher

(The above compose the BOARD OF DIRECTORS. Six of the ten, being present, compose a quorum

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PULASKI COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KENTUCKY

CHARTER MEMBERS

- |                                |                                       |                                  |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Allen, Woodrow                 | Allen, Mrs. Woodrow (Verna)           | Baisley, Mrs. Ellis (Brunice)    |
| Barnett, Matt H.               | Blackburn, Mrs. Viley (Carolyn)       | Booher, Jerry                    |
| Bridges, Mrs. S. R. ( Gladys)  | Burton, Mason E.                      | Carter, Mrs. Linzie ( Maye)      |
| Claunch, Miss Margaret         | Cooper, Mrs. John S. (Lorraine)       | Cooper, Senator John Sherman     |
| Cooper, Don                    | Coffey, Mrs. Shelby ( Nancy)          | Coffey, Shelby                   |
| Cundiff, Mrs. Niles ( Tellie)  | Day, Mrs. Mary Vance                  | Denton, Mrs. Dillard D. (Glenna) |
| Evins, Mrs. Starling (Sophia)  | Frank, Beecher                        | Garner, John                     |
| Garner, Mrs. John (Berenice)   | Girdler, Miss Maude                   | Hail, Mrs. Henry (Jennie)        |
| Hardin, Mrs. Miles (Katie)     | Hay, Mrs. Lee Waddell (Bennie Lee)    | Hill, John P.                    |
| Hislope, Leonard               | Hollis, Mrs. B. R. (Ethelberta)       | McAlpin, Mrs. J. D.              |
| McCartt, Mrs. Dock (Ernestine) | McClure, Mrs. Joe (Anna Russell)      | McQueary, H. C.                  |
| Nixon, Clay                    | Nixon, Mrs. Hubert (Thelma)           | Noe, Mrs. H. D. (Margaret)       |
| Oatts, Mrs. Charles (Mary)     | Owens, Mrs. Cabbell, Sr. (Sue)        | Patton, Mrs. E. H. (Margaret)    |
| Peck, Mrs. Thomas (Sarah)      | Peterson, Mrs. O. G. (Estella)        | Pitts, Mrs. Howard (Mabel)       |
| Prather, James, Jr.            | Prather, Mrs. James, Jr. (Maxine)     | Prather, John                    |
| Prather, Mrs. John (Jean)      | Reid, Thomas                          | Reid, Mrs. Thomas (Lois)         |
| Ramsey, Mrs. Barton (Allene)   | Ramsey, Mrs. William, Sr. ( Marry E.) | Roberts, Mrs. V. D. (May)        |
| Rollison, Mrs. B. L. ( Ruth)   | Ross, Carter                          | Ross, Mrs. Carter (Jessie)       |
| Scott, Miss Nancy              | Shearer, Mrs. John ( Evelyn)          | Stigall, Mrs. Harry (Mary)       |
| Tandy, Mrs. Ernest (Mae)       | Tarter, Judge Roscoe                  | Todd, Mrs. Jarett P. ( Mary)     |
| Wesley, Mrs. Howard (Madge)    | Williams, Gen. J. J. B.               | Wilson, Mrs. Cornelia Reid       |

## FROM OUR PAST

### OLD COUNTY POORHOUSE

From our past is a weekly historical column compiled by Sharon Dodson, Commonwealth Journal staff writer. May 1979

Before Medicare or Medicaid, there was the poorhouse.

Pulaski County's poorhouse was located on North 1247. The poorhouse served as an "isolated" boarding house where indigent persons cultivated the land for their room and board. When these persons died, they were buried in a little cemetery on the grounds.

On April 21, the Somerset Board of Realtors discovered the old poorhouse cemetery. Hidden by a cluster of trees and scattered debris, two small headstones could vaguely be seen in the underbrush, marking the cemetery's existence. Located on Dr. Ben Hieronymus' farm, the local Realtors organization is now in the process of restoring the cemetery for Memorial Day.

Generally speaking, however, it would be a fair assumption that mostly elderly people in the days of the poorhouse feared of being shuffled off to the facility to await death. Even a song with the predominant phrase "over the hill to the poorhouse", was written about the stigma of being sent to the poorhouse.

Fred Phelps, a former county magistrate, last year brought an impressive brown ledger listing the names of poorhouse occupants into the newspaper office.

Listed in the ledger were the "names of paupers, "when admitted, age, color, sex, nativity, when discharged, by whose orders discharged and remarks."

The apparent superintendent of the poorhouse was John Stogsdill. His signature is recorded to the book along with the statement that the ledger was delivered to him September 20, 1890.

The first recognizable date in the book is 1889, when a note was made about the death of a resident. Although records in the book were apparently made sporadically, the largest number of residents were listed on September 20, 1891, when 42 occupants were recorded.

One of the most plaintive statements recorded in the ledger was the transcription of a nearly illegible letter written by a woman in the poorhouse to her husband.

The letter, dated June 4, 1911, is as follows:

"My dear husband, I will write you a few lines to let you know how we are. We are well and hope you are well. Well, dear, I didn't get your letter till Tuesday, but I went to my post office and it wasn't my fault.

"Well, I guess I will be looking for you to send the money for me to come on Friday night. If you send it Wednesday night, and I guess you will if you want to see us bad as you write you will start it so I will get it Friday.

"But if I don't I will know you are just trying to green me. But I don't care to green so if that is all you are trying you just as well cut it out now. But I hope you mean every word and I kindly think maybe you do, but you can't tell what a man will till they as soon tell a lie as the truth so you can't believe every word so I don't.

"Dear, I have went to Sunday School every Sunday but one and I am going to the Decoration Sunday and Sunday School and wish you were here to go with me.

I guess I would enjoy myself much better if you was but I am earning to enjoy myself just the same and I want you to know and I know you do.

Well, I am going to close for this time so write when you get ready."

Signed "goodbye, goodbye."

I can't imagine a lady in the poor house can punctuate a letter as she did or the columnist didn't write it as written.