

CCHGA BYTES

The Newsletter of the Cheatham County Historical & Genealogical Association

Cheatham County History Center Hours

Tuesday 12:00 - 4:00

Wednesday 10:00 - 2:00

Saturday 10:00 - 12:00

Call the CCHGA office 615.792.3623
or email

cheathamcountyhistory@gmail.com

CCHGA newsletters are snail mailed or emailed to membership in March, June, September and December. If you would like your newsletter sent to you in an email, notify us by sending an email to cchga007@bellsouth.net.

2018 CCHGA Officers

Gary Chance
President

Patrick Smith
Vice President

May Lingner
Secretary

Rosemary Klein
Assistant Secretary

Lisa Walker
Treasurer

Gary Chance
Assistant Treasurer

Ashland City Turns Out for 100th Birthday Party

June 28, 1959 - The Tennessean

Ashland City and Cheatham County residents turned out en masse yesterday to help celebrate the 100th birthday of this, their county seat.

A 40-unit parade, featuring relics from the town's early days and floats to emphasize its 20th century progress, highlighted the program.

Last night, several hundred persons jammed the city square around the courthouse for a dance which officially ended the celebration. Merchants had displays in their windows throughout the week, showing Ashland City's progress.

One of its proudest achievements is a new sewer system now under construction. Natural gas lines also are being installed.

Firms Entered Floats

Construction companies working on the projects entered floats in the parade yesterday afternoon.

The celebration was sponsored by the Ashland City Chamber of Commerce.

Participating merchants awarded more than \$500.00 in prizes after the parade yesterday afternoon.

The grand prize, a Shetland pony, went to Mrs. Charles Chockley, Ashland City.

Cheatham County held its centennial three years ago.

**The first CCHGA meeting of 2019 will be Thursday
January 10 at the Cheatham County Public Library!**

**Continued from September 2018: The Memoirs of Ralph Spangler -
Reminiscing About Yesterday
Interviewer: Gary Pace, Transcribed in 2010 by Betty Harris**

Even in basketball, I called Coach Ruff one day. Being a single man I could just go and all I had to worry about was getting money to go. Time was no measure with me. I call Coach Ruff and told him the same story I had told Coach Wilkerson, that I wanted to come up and learn some of the plays in basketball. They also treated me like I had a start player they wanted to recruit. I remember Coach told me he was sending me to the film room after we talked and he wanted me to watch that film three times. He said they were drills that used every day and then incorporate in their game plan. He said, "We just don't go out there on the floor and do a drill just to take up time. But that drill helps us to win a game." So I watched that film three times and then the players came out on the floor to warm up. I watched them warm up and I remember I asked Coach Ruff, "Coach, I noticed that when your boys come out they don't say a word. They just run the plays and I noticed that they shoot from the same location they would shoot from in a game. Something else I observed, you would blow the whistle and they would team up into buddies and then they would go to different places on the floor and shoot and that buddy would be in front of them with their hands up. What is your reason for using that?"

He said, "That's right. Tell you what, when you go back home, you get one of your assistant coaches keep track; you will see that each team will shoot about an equal number of times. Do you spend more time on defense or offense?"

I said, "I guess I spend more time on offense."

He said, "When you keep track you will see that each team has the ball about an equal amount of time. That being so, why don't you spend an equal amount of time training your defense?" From that right there, whenever I would have my practices, I'd spend the same amount of time on defense as I did offense.

These are little things that over the years I picked up.

We talked about the fact that you are not a lot smarter than your opponent, so you have to out work him. But you can find ways you get the edge.

The first year I was at CCCHS, we didn't win but one ball game. You would have thought we had gone undefeated because we won that one ball game. We beat McEwen and everybody in the stands and on the floor carried on so! We beat them here at home and I remember we had a party afterwards. It was a great night.

I also will never forget that we played Waverly and they just trounced us. They scored when they got ready, they didn't hold back anything. They just kept putting the points on the score board. But anyway, I can't remember if it was 55-0 or 65-0 but it didn't make any difference. It was just bad! I remember walking across the field and said, "Coach, you have a fine football team and I'm sorry you had to play someone as poorly coached as we were. But I certainly wish you luck the rest of the season."

As I turned and as I walked away (I never will forget this) I said to myself, "Coach, I'll beat you if it's the last thing I ever do." It took me two years, but we finally got it. That game was one of the many reasons that I came back to Ashland City because if I'd left after that season I'd been in worse shape than before I came to Ashland City. Nobody wanted a coach who had just won one ball game all season. That was something I wanted to do and it took me two years to do it but I did finally beat them.

When I was in high school, and since I was a child, my life has been invested in ball. My father supported me, though I was never a fine athlete. It was something that just intrigued me. I decided that I didn't know what you had to do to be like Coach Akin. When I graduated and went on to college, I learned more of what you had to do to be a coach. They said your major had to be physical education. That is what I majored in and I have never

regretted it. My parents wanted me to be a doctor, my grandfather being a doctor. But I couldn't pass biology. But I did what I wanted to do and I've never regretted it.

People ask me if I had my life to live over what would I change. I would not change anything. I've gotten up every morning looking forward to going to work. I never looked at a watch to see what time it was to come home and really, when you think about it, when you have that type days, you never really go to work. You take up the time but there is no work problem because you enjoy what you're doing. It's not work, it's a pleasure. If I had to start all over again, there would be a few minor changes, but most would be the same. Every day has been a holiday and I've enjoyed it.



August 3, 1959~The Tennessean

Diary Reveals How Gospel Carried Down the River

The Tennessean - June 25, 1986

Ann Moss Betts

Gray bluffs looked down on the Rev. Gideon Lowe as he and his partner, the Rev. Melkijah Vaughan, pushed their new boat, the Bethel, onto the rising waters of the Cumberland.

The two were Cumberland Presbyterian ministers, setting out as missionaries to the largely unchristianized territories to the west.

Also aboard was Edmund W. Vaughan, “an old river-man” brought along by the enthusiastic young missionaries for his knowledge of boating and rivers, despite Lowe’s careful note that the older man was a Baptist.

It was Friday, December 10, 1847, a cold morning with the smell of rain. The little boat bobbed eagerly on the Cumberland, ready to carry them – and the gospel – for hundreds of miles, over three major rivers, to places where preaching had never been heard. It was a dangerous mission, for the river towns on the Cumberland, Ohio, and Mississippi were notoriously licentious and lawless.

In 114 pages of ornate, spidery handwriting, Lowe recorded their journey, in an unpublished journal made available to this column by Williamson County’s business and civic leader John Sloan, a direct descendant of Lowe.

Lowe began with a lovingly detailed description of the snug little Bethel, which was “32 feet in length, 12 feet wide, and seven feet high; with a brick chimney and two fireplaces, a partition making a parlor of 16 feet by 12 feet wide.” As a symbol of their mission, the preachers hung from the boat’s 18-foot high flagpole “a beautiful flag with “Bethel” in large characters inscribed upon it.”

The Cumberland “was rising fast” as they turned the bow upstream. Behind them lay their homes, families, and congregations. The territory that lay ahead was, in those days, more to be feared than the wilderness; a succession of half-tamed river towns inhabited by hard-drinking dice-throwing ruffians. Never having played host to a preacher, they could hardly be expected to welcome the Bethel with open arms. For Lowe and Vaughan, it was a voyage into another world.

They floated 18 miles the first day, 20 the second, although driftwood pushed by rising water made navigation “somewhat difficult. Disappointed at being unable to reach Canton, where we expected to preach on Saturday.”

On the 14th, it began to snow heavily, and dangerous river conditions continued to plague the Bethel, preventing Lowe from reaching Canton until Thursday, December 16. In the meantime, they docked at a small landing, and endeavored to sell some of their religious tracts to an old man.

At first they were encouraged, when the gentleman spoke of “of his great love for reading.” But their enthusiasm turned to disbelief as he continued.

“He said he had the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, and that he received much moral instruction from reading them. We proposed to change the character of his reading,” Lowe wrote dryly. “Read to him the tract *Do you Want a Friend?*”

While Lowe and Vaughan succeeded in selling the old fellow a number of tracts, and felt that he was “much affected” by their talk, the journal does not reveal whether he gave up his Arabian Knights.

By the morning of the 16th, the snow had stopped but “river yet rising” Lowe wrote. “The Inhabitants on the river (re)moving their families to the high lands.”

The Cumberland had overflowed its banks, alarming townspeople. Floating debris included fence rails, steamboat wood, corn, fodder, and “a large house.”

According to Lowe, the Canton of that era was “famed for intemperance and all manner of dissipation. Two of its principal citizens are Infidels.” It was just the sort of unenlightened town the missionaries were looking for, and they immediately set out selling religious books and tracts, and spreading the word that there would be preaching the next day.

A “deep concern among the unconverted” brought on by the threatening flood contributed significantly to the great success of the services, Lowe acknowledged. Another of the ministers’ projects was to establish Temperance Societies in each town they visited, and Canton offered a promising beginning. “Got eight petitioners for a charter,” Lowe wrote jubilantly.

As they traveled, Lowe and Vaughan sometimes preached on the riverbank, and sometimes a home was offered. But often as not, they invited the riverside's colorful population on board the Bethel itself, and held impromptu meetings there. More than one visitor approached the boat in a mistaken attempt to buy liquor, and showed sharp disappointment on discovering the little boat's actual cargo. Near the mouth of the Cumberland, at Smithlands, Ky, "four men evidently intoxicated came aboard the Bethel, one of whom immediately proposed to play cards, and commenced cussing and swearing."

Vaughan and Lowe "gave them a serious talk on the subject of Religion...until they were seriously affected." Chastened, the ruffians bought some books and left, "promising to try to mend their course."

There is unconscious humor – and probably a great deal left unsaid – in Lowe's description on the time "three boatsmen came on board in search of whiskey. With difficulty we prevailed on them to remain until morning prayer." Christmas on the river was an unforgettable experience. Lowe was "greatly annoyed through the whole of last night, by the noise and uproar of the giddy, vain, and wicked crowd who thronged the lone and very narrow street of Smithland in pretence of commemorating the birth of the Saviour of the World."

And yet, amid the revelry, the Bethel rocked on its moorings undisturbed, "a sacred place in their view, for no one offered any indignity to its inmates."

The ministers stayed in Smithland until the fourth of January, then moved on to Paducah, "a considerable town at the mouth of the Tennessee River, with Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches." But even there, the missionaries weren't exactly welcomed with open arms.

"Some infidels and Sceptics said we could not sell books in Town without a license," Lowe wrote indignantly. But official permission was quickly obtained, and they "sold near 60 volumes today. We fell that we are engaged in the work of the Lord, therefore we fear no evil."

After Paducah, they were on the broad Mississippi. In Illinois, their stops ranged from small, recently settled spots like Massac and Hillaman, to larger towns like Metropolis and Cairo. As before, they preached where they could to whomever

would listen. In Hillaman, the crowds “paid the most strict attention, and seemed to be rather astonished, many of them doubtless had not heard preaching for years.” The snug little Bethel must have looked slightly out of place at Cairo’s wharf, among the “great many trading boats and three large wharf boats. This is quite a business point, but no point on the river is more noted for vice and dissipation of every description than is Cairo.”

Rising to the challenge, Lowe and Vaughan visited “from house to house with our baskets of books, finding very few who make any pretensions to Religion.” Lowe’s flowing handwriting showed signs of fatigue at the end of that day, but he proudly recorded that they had “visited 18 families, 12 flatboats and five steamboats, and distributed 80 volumes and many tracts.”

And so went the winter of 1848. Docking at one little hamlet after another, working and preaching, praying through the night with dockhands and women of ill repute. Life on the river was harsh, and eventually, prolonged exposure to the elements proved that even missionaries were mortal. Despite his evangelistic dedication, Vaughan became so ill he could not continue, and another Cumberland Presbyterian minister was sent to replace him.

And then, on March 6, 1848, the Bethel’s voyage came to an unexpected end. “The river was falling fast, and the Bethel was lying in the mouth of a bayou. The corner caught on the shore, which caused the opposite side to sink. The boat having been made with green timbers and having dried, the calking had come out. The seams were opened, and the Bethel practically filled with water.”

Their boat was beyond repair, but the ministers’ first concern was for their precious texts. “The greatest part of our books were considerably injured,” Lowe wrote sadly. The remaining tracts were turned over to a local minister for distribution. Lowe took passage on a steamboat bound for Cincinnati, and was soon back home in Middle Tennessee. On the way, he visited several towns where he and Vaughan had preached, and rejoiced that gambling, drinking and swearing there appeared to be much reduced.

“By the assistance of our Heavenly Father, we have been instrumental in effecting great and lasting good among the destitute and perishing thousands,” he wrote. “Long after our frail bodies shall have moldered to death, the seed which we have

scattered in that waste howling wilderness will still be springing up and bearing precious fruit.”

Gideon Lowe lived to old age in Ashland City, preaching for many years in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. His home still stands there, Sloan said. But it seems likely the voyage of the Bethel must have remained a highpoint in Gideon Lowe’s memory forever after.

Note: Gideon Harris Lowe was born January 9, 1803 and died July 30, 1853 at his home.

**The CCHGA Bake Sale was a success!
Thanks to all who baked and bought and donated!**

Photo L to R: CCHGA members Sarah Andrews, Adrian Johnson,
Marie Barnett, Mayor Kerry McCarver



**website: [https://
cheathamcountyhistory.weebly.com/](https://cheathamcountyhistory.weebly.com/)**

**Cheatham County Historical and Genealogical Association
P. O. Box 703
Ashland City, TN 37015**