

CCHGA BYTES

The Newsletter of the Cheatham County Historical & Genealogical Association

Please renew your membership, don't let this be your last newsletter!

**CCHGA Phone #
615.792.3623**

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.

Over \$1,200.00 was raised at the Hollerin' for History Auction and Bake Sale to benefit CCHGA.

2016 in Review

- CCHGA had 152 members from 12 states, 1 foreign country
- History Center had over 659 visitors
- CCHGA conducted 8 business meeting, hosted 3 program meetings.
- Members worked over 1,365 hours in the History Center and participated in several community events.

2017 Business Meetings 6:30 Cheatham County Public Library

- January 12
- February 9
- March 9
- May 11
- June 8
- August 10
- September 14
- November 9

2017 Program Meetings 6:30 Cheatham County Public Library

- April 13
- July 13
- October 12

The Finding of Bellfield Nall

The Nashville Tennessean Magazine, July 7, 1946

Neither snow nor sleet, fire more flood, shall keep the couriers of the *Magazine* from the swift completion of their appointed rounds, we always used to say in emulation of the post office boys. But that was before the fording of Brush Creek and the Finding of Bellfield Nall.

Bellfield Nall lives as far up the Cheatham County hollows as you can go and jut over the next hill. The labyrinthine roads between his Brush Creek farm and the village of Kingston Springs were no surprise - the natives at every half-mile stop warned us that it was "hard to git to" - but we hadn't taken that ford into account. And the ford was our undoing.

We stated out to track down the Nall homestead on fine late-spring afternoon, spurred by a report that Nall was a combination barber-black-smith-carpenter-farmer and interested in viewing a display of his talents at close range. At Kingston - Cheathamese omits the "Springs" when referring to the village - we made the routine stop at the general store, where we engaged the mail carrier in conversation.



Article written by Josephine
Murphy

Now the rural representatives of the post office department are given up to be the only infallible source of directions to the out-of-the-way spots, but our off-handed "Can you tell us how to find Bellfield Nall?" threw this one completely.

"I can tell you how to get part of the way and you'll have to ask directions from there," he finally told us, after a hasty conference with several of the local citizenry had provoked much scratching of heads and mutterings of "I just don't know how you'd get there from here."

Following the carrier's directions to turn right and then left and then right and then ask somebody else, we set out again, feeling very much as if we couldn't "get there from here" at all. But the proprietor of the next store was a bit more explicit. He outlined the remaining twists and turns Nall-ward and ended with a sobering bit of advice.

"You'll cross a creek just before you get there, but you'd better examine that ford before you drive into it, neighbor." We assured him that we would.

But we didn't. Because it didn't look deep enough to be "examined" and because we thought the treacherous crossing must be farther along, we drove briskly into the middle of Brush Creek, where the automobile emitted a couple of feeble blubbers and expired.

Now Brush Creek is pretty far gone into the direction of nowhere, and when the water started coming up through the floorboard of the car, we decided it was time to take action. Taking action in this case meant taking off our shoes and stockings (socks in the case of the photographer), hoisting our garments above the knee and wading to the bank.

Our interest in the Cheatham County jack-of-all-trades somewhat tempered by our greater interest in getting the car out of the creek and onto firmer ground, we were preparing to put our wet feet into our shoes when salvation appeared on the far bank in the person of one Harold Wofford.

Wofford, whom we hailed as Damos must have Pythias after a 10-year absence, brought cheerful tidings. Bellfield Nall lived just a few hundred yards up the hill in front of us, and more important at the moment, he, Wofford, had a tractor which to extricate us from the creek.

“If I pull you out in the direction you’re going, I’ll have to come back and pull you through again when you start home, because you’d never get back across this ford,” he advised us. So we hitched chains to the car, deposited icon dry ground, waded back across to the side on which Nall lived, shod ourselves and started on foot toward the weatherbeaten clapboard house in the distance, having wrung the hand of Harold Wofford and called him friend.

Through a gate in the yard fence, part wire, part rail, part board - we entered mecca, the front yard of Bellfield Nall. We found Mrs. Nall on the front porch and asked her how she did.

“I’m not a bit well,” she told us. “I’ve been nearly past going for quite a spell now but I don’t give up.” Feeling that we found a kindred spirit - we hadn’t given up, either - we inquired for her husband.

“Bellfield’s down on the creek, burning brush. I’ll send Grover to get him,” she offered, ad sat us down on the porch to wait while Grover Columbus, elder of the Nall’s eight children, went to find his father.

We sat and wiggled our wet toes in the spring sunshine and discussed chickens and gardens and nervous ailments with Mrs. Nall, who assured us that “Most everybody who comes here has to be pulled out of the creek.” Pretty soon the object of our search made his way through the three bicycles and four assorted dogs in the front yard to the porch.

Nall, 52 years old, and obviously pleased with every year of it, admitted that he had a good many talents.

“I’ve been barbering since I was 10 years old,” he told us. “All of this is just a gift to me, blacksmithing too. I can do any kind of work anybody else can.”



All said he laughed a lot, but his wife said she never could

He never had a lesson in his life, either in hair-cutting, blacksmithing or carpentering, all of which he does with equal facility. He cuts the hair of Cheathamites for an area of 20 miles, but has no set time for receiving customers.

“I just cut hair whenever people come, all through the week, and the same with blacksmithing. They just come and hunt me up. I did have a big shop - ran a shop several different places - and when I quit that I moved my tools up here,” he said.

Nall does his barbering in a split bottomed straight chair in his front yard. “There’s one thing about this barbering,” he explained, “as long as you don’t have a regular chair, you don’t have to pay no taxes.” So he uses a chair from his own house, puts one of his wife’s towels around the customer’s neck and proceeds licenseless.



Bell field Nall’s blacksmithing tools are in the yard under a shade tree

“They all say I’m the best barber there is in the country, but I don’t know about that,” he told us modestly. “They gang in here sometimes on Sundays.”

He cares 15 cents for a haircut, says he doesn’t do it for the money. “It’s as much of a hobby as anything else. I cut the hair of rich and poor alike.”

His blacksmithing tools are under the shade of a big tee just outside the yard fence, and there, too, he does carpentry work for many of his neighbors. “I repair wagons, buggies and all kind farm tools,” he declared.

We wondered how a man could farm 279 acres and still have time for so many extra-curricular activities, but Nall had the answer for that one.

“I’ve got six boys and all of them at home but one. See those two plows going down there in the field?” he asked, pointing down the hill toward the creek. “You can get a lot done when you’ve got six boys.”

Born and reared on the farm he now owns, Nall bought it from his father after his mother’s death, has lived there all of his life with the exception of about six months just after his marriage to Maudie Bains in 1916.

He warned us about making his picture, “You might catch me a-laughing cause I laugh about half the time.”

“I never could laugh much,” his wife said apologetically.

Taking our leave of Mrs. Nall and her merry husband, we made our way back to the creek, waded back across and lifted our eyes to heaven in supplication. The car started. Our record was unbroken. Where the mail goes, there we go.

A Desperate Scoundrel – Fearful Encounter – His Death
The Louisville Daily Journal (1850 – 1865); October 27, 1864; page 3

The notorious bushwhacker and guerrilla leader Buck Holmes, whose name is associated with many outrageous proceedings and acts of horror, met with his death at the hands of James Skiles, a United States scout, on Tuesday night of last week, at the house of Wm. Demunbra, near Ashland Cheatham County, Tennessee. This bold outlaw scoundrel sailed under a number of names, and he was noted for his better hate toward all mankind, his utter depravity of heart, and his blood-thirsty revenge. Whether assuming the alias of Buck Holmes, Hodges, Dick Thompson, Zavonia, or Delfal Iligo, he was the same murdering scoundrel and robber fiend, and to the people was the evil spirit of the border of the Cumberland.

In the affray with Skiles, Holmes fought with desperation, and did not yield until eighteen pistol bolts had pierced his body. With disordered costume, strained eyes, his form stained with the warm blood flowing from his many wounds, and with a wild look of despair, he sunk to the earth completely exhausted. He was raised from his prostrate condition, carried into the house, lingered a brief hour in agony, when the breast ceased to heave, and the guilty spirit passed from time to eternity. Before he died he made a confession of his many crimes of highway robbery, and acknowledged that he had murdered twenty-one Federal soldiers, (eight white and thirteen colored) and four citizens. Even in the hour of death his thirst for blood and revenge did not desert him. His only regret was that he had not lived long enough to take the life of another man, D. D. Holman of Springfield, for whom he had formed a bitter hatred. The thoughts of the past and future did not appall him, and he died as he had lived, a hardened criminal, a revengeful monster, and a blood-thirsty scoundrel. He was well armed. On his person was found four six-shooting revolvers, three hundred dollars in greenbacks, one hundred and twenty-five dollars in Tennessee money, and about thirty dollars in confederate scrip.

Strange to say, Mr. Skiles was not wounded in the affray. Holmes was much excited, and his aim was wild and erring. The robber, outlaw, and murderer now sleeps in a rude grave with a startling record of crime and villainy to hand his name down to posterity. Mr. Skiles deserves the thanks of the people for ridding the world of such a monster.

The **PALS Chapter** will hold its first meeting of 2017 on Saturday, **January 14** at 11 a.m. at the Harvest Fields Baptist Church on Sams Creek Road. Election of officers, the book of flood stories in Cheatham County and plans for the year are on the agenda. Light lunch food will be brought to share and anyone interested in the history of the area is invited to join us and also become a member of CCHGA and the PALS Chapter.



The PALS Chapter of CCHGA received recognition at the December 2016 Cheatham County Commission meeting.

The Beginnings of the Church at Dog Creek, and later, Shacklett.

Contributed by CCHGA member DJ Hutcherson

At the Cheatham County Register of Deeds Office in Ashland City, many historic land deeds, property records, and various other documents dating back to the founding of Cheatham County in 1856 have been digitally photographed and can be viewed on one of the computers made available for public research. Using this searchable database, I have been able to find several pieces of a large puzzle containing plots of land along Dog Creek and the names of those who have owned a particular parcel of land throughout the years. Going back to the original land grants to the first settlers of this area by the state of North Carolina in the 1780s and 90's, (Tennessee was once part of North Carolina until it became a separate state in 1796) I started trying to put together a general sketch of how the land was divided in this part of Cheatham County. I was recently able to put at least two pieces of this puzzle together, and in the process, I discovered a rather significant historical document concerning the Dog Creek and Shacklett communities.

The following describes only a few of the first people to settle this area of South Cheatham County, but the ones mentioned are key to this story.

Masterson Ussery (usually spelled Mastin in the records) was born in 1800 in North Carolina, and was one of the first pioneers to settle on the waters of Dog Creek sometime around the year 1817. The lands he bought were a part of those granted to veteran soldiers of the Continental Army who had fought in the Revolutionary war, who had received these grants for their service by the state of North Carolina. Although the land Ussery purchased had been under ownership for over 30 years, no one had settled the area as of yet.

Soon after Mastin Ussery came here to make his home, "iron master" Montgomery Bell began work on his tunnel at the Narrows in the year 1818. Along with the estimated 100 or more slaves Bell used to build his tunnel, he also brought with him Samuel Adkisson of Virginia, a well trained and highly skilled stone cutter, engineer, and turnpike builder. Adkisson also made Dog Creek his home, which was located only a couple of miles from the site of his major project at the Narrows. The land Adkisson bought bordered Mastin Ussery's lands on the East.

The following is a rough transcription of a property in which Mastin Ussery, who was in the later years of his life at the time this deed was written, donated a part of his lands on Dog Creek to the community for the purpose of constructing a school house and cemetery. Also in this document, Samuel Adkisson gives his approval for the use of a spring on his property, and free passage through his tollgate on the Charlotte Pike for those whose business concerns the two items granted in Ussery's deed. This is the property where Dog Creek Cemetery is located today, and where the

original Shacklett Church of Christ once stood. This document outlines the beginning of what is today Shacklett Church of Christ.

Tennessee, 13th February 1858 for the purpose of educating the young promoting the piece and happiness... and putting away the dead, I Mastin Ussery, have this day given, granted and conveyed the title of the above plan and piece of ground containing 121 poles for the use and benefit of my family and neighbors (on condition) ...poles for a school house, preaching, and the like, free for different denominations so as not to conflict with each other, to be negotiated by a majority of the subscribers to build the house or their assigns, albeit in no event as is to be used for private use dissipation or vice if so as retains to me, my heir or assigns, and if any one big or little should damage the timber house or stones there on they forfeit their interest and leave the school or church subject to damage and punishment as the law of the state directs. B No2, 8 poles a grave yard for my family and relations. CNo3 70 poles a grave yard for the neighbors and no other use and it is to be kept open and free for them to make grave so as not to interfere with others graves on the timber. the boundary of the land is thus: Beginning on Adkisson line on the north side of the road and hence north with his line to his corner 8 poles then north 32 degrees west 2 1/3 poles to a beech then north 6 poles to a black locus, then east 4 poles to a branch then south 45 degrees east 13 poles to Dog Creek then down the creek and the road to the beginning, 14 poles containing 121 poles be the same more or less and I bind my self, heir or assigns to comply with the above agreement and condition as witness my hand and seal
Mastin Ussery.

February 13th 1858 I, S.W. Adkisson have this day agreed for the benefit of a school and the neighbors to give them the use of my spring for the school or church as above named and to pass my tale gate to and from free of tole on condition they are not to damage the spring or other things on my land, with these conditions I bind myself, heirs or assigns to comply with the above agreement w my hand and seal

S.W. Adkisson
Cheatham County Deed Book B, Pages 179-80

I would like to thank Patrick Smith, Cheatham County Register of Deeds, for his assistance (and patience)! Whenever I am there doing research, and for helping me find these priceless historic records. I couldn't have done it without him.

**First CCHGA meeting of the year is January 12, 2017 @
6:30 at the Cheatham County Public Library**

The Memoirs of Ralph Spangler

Interviewer: Gary Pace, Transcribed in 2010 by Betty Harris

As I said, my father had a restaurant there in Manchester, and I went to the elementary school there. In those days, you went the first grade and stayed in that same school through the eighth grade. There were no middle schools back then. One day the headmaster of BGA, George Briggs, came through Manchester and stopped at my father’s restaurant. He asked one of the gentleman there about Justin Ewell and said that he went to school at BGA and he lived in Manchester. They told him he was with the First National Bank. Mr. Briggs went up to the bank and saw Justin, and then came down to the restaurant for lunch. My father came in and Mr. Ewell introduced Mr. Briggs to my father and the more conversation they had and Mr. Briggs found how much I liked sports and he really became interested. Before they got through eating, he made my father promise to bring me over to Franklin to Battle Ground Academy in the summer to look at the school and talk with the school officials. So my father said he would do that.

To be continued in the next March 2017 CCHGA Bytes.

Binkley Cemetery Clean Up Dates for 2017, the second weekend every month until October	
14. Contact: Charmaine Jamieson -cjbthere@aol.com	
JAN 14.	JUN 10
FEB 11.	JUL 8
MAR 11.	AUG 12
APR 8	SEP 9
MAY 1	OCT 7 (FIRST SATURDAY)

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