

CCHGA BYTES

The Newsletter of the Cheatham County Historical & Genealogical Association

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The PALS Chapter is collecting stories of floods in Cheatham County and will publish them if enough people have stories. Call Dreama Davidson at 615-870-9003 or e-mail her at Dreamcast@bellsouth.net

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CCHGA Phone

615.792.3623

Cheatham County History Center Hours

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Tuesday	12:00 - 4:00
Wednesday	10:00 - 2:00
Friday	10:00 - 12:00
Saturday	10:00 - 12:00

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Call the CCHGA office 615.792.3623 or email cheathamcountyhistory@gmail.com

Black Patch War

Dr. Rick Gregory

July 14, 2016

Cheatham County Public Library, 6:30 pm

Did you know the longest and most violent conflict between the end of the Civil War and the civil rights struggles of the mid '60s happened right here in Northern Tennessee and Southwestern Kentucky in the early 1900s?

During the first decade of the twentieth century, violence erupted in the tobacco belt of western Kentucky and northern Middle Tennessee as farmers tried to ease their economic distress. Much of the violence was directed at the American Tobacco Company and other tobacco companies and farmers who refused to join the Dark Tobacco Growers Association. Collectively, these acts of violence became known as the Black Patch War. **Cheatham County** found itself involved in this conflict.

Join noted historian **Dr. Rick Gregory** who will discuss how the Black Patch War came about, what happened from 1904-1914, how the war ended, and results.

This CCHGA sponsored presentation will be given on **July 14, 2016**, at the **Cheatham County Public Library** at **6:30**. Refreshments will be served.

Rufus Hunter - Killed in Cold Blood by Midnight Assassins

The following was researched and written by Frances Hunter Seay, in the memory of her father, Cullom Hunter, son of Rufus and Callie Frey Hunter.

The murder of Rufus Hunter on June 7, 1908, was denounced as one of the most dastardly and unprovoked crimes ever committed in Montgomery County, Tennessee. After mortally wounding the prominent District 14 farmer, the murderers riddled the lower part of his home with buckshot. His family fortunately escaped injury.

The crime, the dastardly character and heinousness of which shocked Montgomery County from center to circumference, was committed between midnight Saturday and 1 o'clock Sunday morning. Hunter was aroused from sleep by a loud summons from the public highway, ordering him to come out of the house. On being thus roughly and ominously commanded to appear, he proceeded to the front porch of his home. Seeing the forms of men in the road, he hesitated to go further. Hunter had been ill and pleaded that he feared the night air and could not come out to the gate. The spokesman for the group insisted that Hunter should do as he was bidden or they would make him come out. Hunter then invited the men to come into the house and state their business with him. This suggestion was answered by a fusillade of shots. Hunter fell to the floor mortally wounded. Shots continued until the house was fairly riddled by buckshot. All of the glass in the front windows of the house was shot out; even one window sash was shot to pieces.

The one and one-half story house was situated within forty-five feet of the public highway. The Hunter children occupied the upper portion of the house, a fact to which they doubtless owed their lives. There were no windows in the front upper story, light and air being supplied by windows from either end of the house which did not face the road. Had there been such windows, the bullets would have found their way to Mrs. Hunter and the six children. The half story front of the house was bullet riddled. Fortunately none of the missiles penetrated into the sleeping rooms of the family. In the lower rooms, bullets pierced articles of furniture, the piano, walls, etc. The number of volleys fired was shown by the number of empty shells and pistol cartridges found on the spot.

Montgomery County Sheriff Staton heard of the tragedy about 9:30 o'clock Sunday morning, through street rumor, no one having notified him officially. He immediately went to the Hunter home, which was located near the Cheatham County line on the road that leads to Oak Plains and Henrietta. The house was in sight of the Montgomery County Poor House. The sheriff spent four or five hours on the grounds.

Sheriff Staton talked to Mr. Hunter for an hour just preceding Hunter's death which occurred at 2:30 o'clock Sunday afternoon. The sheriff was holding the dying man's hand when he died. Although Hunter suffered great agony, he remained conscious until the last, discussing the matter with the sheriff and occasionally uttering a prayer on behalf of the man who so cruelly shot him.

Only one shot had struck Hunter, and from all indications it must have been a pistol ball. It entered the abdomen on the right side below the breast bone, and passed entirely through the body, coming out above the hip line on the left side. Absolutely no clue was given by the dying man as to the identity of his

assassins. The sheriff tried to get him to suggest some motive for the terrible deed, but Hunter replied that he knew none, nor would he offer any suggestion as to the probable participants in the bloody deed. He said that he did not suppose he had enemies who would commit the foul deed.

A large number of sympathizing friends attended Mr. Hunter's funeral which took place on Monday, June 8, 1908, at 2:30 P. M., at the Hunter Cemetery near Oak Plains.

Rufus Hunter stood high in his community. He was formerly a magistrate, having served as a member of the court for six years. He was a deacon in the Baptist Church. He was said to have been a loyal member of the Planters Association since its organization.

Sheriff Staton said he believed that the case afforded better opportunities for the detection and apprehension of the guilty men than any preceding case of lawlessness in Montgomery County. William and Edmond Hunter, brothers of the deceased man, and both residents of the community, would take the lead in ferreting out the assassins. It was believed that they were in a position to bring about the apprehension of their brother's murderers, backed of course by the machinery of the law.

Excerpts from the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle Concerning the Assassination of Rufus Hunter

Although Hunter, it is said, made no reference to it subsequent to the shooting, it is known that within the past six months he had received threatening anonymous letters related to his circulating a petition seeking financial aid for a Mrs. Nichols, whose property had been destroyed by Night Riders. Mrs. Nichols was an aunt of Rufe Hunter. The latter ignored the first of these warning letters and continued his efforts on behalf of his elderly aunt. It is said that he succeeds in raising a substantial some for her benefit. Hunter received a second warning to discontinue his solicitation. It is said that he was greatly worried that an enemy was thus hounding him in disguise. He is said to have gotten up in church on one occasion and requested permission to make a public statement. In the course of his statement he read the threatening letter which he had received. He said that he was not conscious of having done anyone an injury, nor had he done anything that would justify any man to threaten him in this manner. He disavowed all enmity to anyone and hoped to put a stop to these threatening letters by publicly referring to the circumstances.

The trial of Marcellus Rinehart, James Davis, Will and Jesse Nicholson was commenced in Criminal Court on June 24, 1909. Many people from all over the country, and a large crowd from the home district, were present to witness what may be one of the most famous criminal trials in the history of Montgomery County. A venire of over 250 names were exhausted before 12 jurors were selected. Most of the people had formed an opinion and were therefore incompetent to serve. The following jurors and alternates were accepted: A. M. Harris, J. L. Gilbert, B. D. Skinner, Hunt Cooper, Sam Mimms, Robert L. Ussery, J. L. Fambrough, R. M. Easley, Oscar Swift, Andy McEwens, Thomas W. Bryant, Frank Dodd., W. L. Willard, and Chester Hiter.

October 13, 2016 CCHGA Meeting - Presentation by
CCHGA member Clayton Walden

Mr. Walden will give a presentation highlighting some of the men and women who have served in the Armed Forces from Cheatham County since before the county was formed until present day. Attendees are invited to bring a photo of a family veteran or other memorabilia to share.

Mrs. Callie Hunter, Edna Hunter and Cullom Hunter (wife, daughter and one of Rufe Hunter) were the only family members called as witnesses.

Miss Edna Hunter testified that the Hunter family lived on the road between Oak Plains and Henrietta, and had lived there for seventeen years. There were six children: Edna, 18 years; Buna, 16 years; Cullom, 14 years; Lula, 12 years; Vera, 10 years; and W. B., 8 years old. She said that on the night of the shooting she and the other children were asleep upstairs when her mother aroused them. Her father called them and said he was shot. They found him getting into the bed. He told them that he was bound to die. There was no light in the room and she could not tell where he was shot. The first thing she did was to go out and ring the farm bell. She then returned to her father and bathed his face. He was suffering a great deal. She did not see where he was shot, but saw blood on his night clothes.

She further testified that Charlie Batson, a Negro who lived on her father's farm, came in response to the ringing of the bell. He went there in less than half an hour after the shooting. She instructed Batson to go for Dr. Walton. The doctor arrived an hour and a half after the shooting and stayed until the next morning. Dr. J. W. Brandau came from Clarksville the next morning, as did several neighbors.

Mrs. Callie Hunter testified that she was 43 years old and that her husband was 44 years old when he died. His health was poor just before he was shot. He had been suffering from risings and had had pneumonia. He was rather tall, about the same height as his brother Edmond. He was a farmer and a member of the Dark Tobacco Growers Association and sold his tobacco through the association. He had no enemies so far as she knew; never heard him say anything against the association, or anything to indicate he had any ill will toward anyone. He was a member of the Baptist Church, superintendent of the Sunday school, and a deacon of the church. He was not a member of any secret order. He supported his family well and looked after his business well.

She further testified that Marcellus Rinehart and Charles Batson lived on the Hunter farm. Marcellus Rinehart lived with his father, Joel, a short distance from the Hunter home. The shooting took place about midnight. She and her husband had been asleep and were aroused by someone hollering. Her husband got up in his night clothes, opened the door, and someone asked him to come out. He replied he was sick, and they said he had better come out. The shooting then commenced, and Mrs. Hunter left her bed. She then went to where the children were asleep, aroused them, and they got up. They remained upstairs for some time. Her husband called to them that he was shot. Charles Batson was the first person to come after the shooting. He brought his family to the house and then went for the doctor. She still had the shirt her husband was wearing when he was shot and brought it to Clarksville.

On re-examination by the State, Mrs. Hunter stated that she saw Michael Savage, M. G. Lyle, Austin Peay, Dancy Fort and Joe Abbott at her home on Sunday after the shooting.

Cullom Hunter testified that he was asleep when the parties who did the shooting came but was awakened. He found ten or fifteen shells; all but two or three were pistol cartridges. He went up in the

<http://www.facebook.com/cheathamcountyhistory/>

OFFENSE OF NIGHT RIDING

Charged Against Ed Nicholson, of
Cheatham County—Experience.

ASHLAND CITY, Tenn., March 20.—(Special.)—Ed Nicholson, who lives at Neptune, this county, has been arrested on a bench warrant issued by Judge C. W. Tyler, of the Montgomery County Criminal Court. Nicholson is charged, under the white cap act, with having engaged in a conspiracy in Montgomery County with others to commit the offense of night riding. He was taken to Clarksville, and from there to Nashville, under a pretext of appearing before the State Fire Marshal, for what purpose nobody seems to know. He executed bond in the sum of \$3,000 for his appearance at Clarksville in the conspiracy case, and was finally released and is now at home with his family.

Publication title: The Nashville American
(1894-1910)

trees in front of the house and found signs of shot case (and saw it there before it was taken out). He stayed at home the day of the shooting. He knew all the defendants but did not see the Nicholson boys, Davis, Rinehart or Lem Adkins there the day after the shooting.

In the cross-examination by attorney Tyler, this witness said Rinehart lived a mile from the Hunter home at the time of the shooting and that the defendants were not in the habit of visiting that home.

Edmond and William Hunter, brothers of Rufe Hunter, heard of the shooting the next morning. They went at once and found their brother in bad condition. He told them, "The night riders have shot me, and I am going to die." He said that they called him to come to the gate, but he told them to come in and he would talk with them, then they shot him down with the first shot. He also said he did not recognize any of the crowd that shot.

A sensation was caused by the arrest of Lem Adkins in the court room, after court had opened, as an accessory to the murder of Rufe Hunter. Adkins, a prominent merchant and citizen of Fredonia, had come to town and gone to the court room as a spectator, not for a moment suspecting that he was to be taken into custody. State's attorney Michael Savage proposed to proceed with the case on the theory that a conspiracy existed in the section where Rufe Hunter was killed; that a band of guerrillas was armed, paid and directed by Lem Adkins and that he profited by their crimes. He said further, "We are going to show that the defendant, Marcellus Rinehart, confessed to killing Rufe Hunter with the same pistol with which he killed Alf Fielder and that he killed Fielder for what he knew about the band."

No case in the history of Montgomery County ever attracted so much interest, or involved so much, as the case against Marcellus Rinehart, James Davis, Will and Jesse Nicholson for the assassination of Rufe Hunter. After a trial lasting more than four weeks, the jury reported a verdict of murder in the first degree against Marcellus Rinehart, and a verdict of not guilty against the other defendants.

In the Criminal Court, on August 23, 1909, Judge Tyler overruled the motion for a new trial in the case against Marcellus Rinehart, who was convicted of the murder of Rufe Hunter at the June term of court, and sentenced the defendant to be hung on Friday morning, September 24, at 7 A.M.

Following the overruling of the motion for a new trial the defendant's attorneys moved for an arrest of judgment, which was overruled. Rinehart stood up before the court while the death penalty was being passed upon him and displayed the same unconcerned look which characterized him throughout the trial. The case will be appealed to the Supreme Court which will prevent the sentence of the court being carried out on the date set for the execution.

December 24, 1930 - Marcellus Rinehart, whose activities in Montgomery County a quarter of a century ago during the night riding troubles ended in his being given a life sentence in prison for the first degree murder of Rufus Hunter, a farmer, has been arrested for bootlegging in Cheatham County. He pleaded guilty to the charge.

Rinehart served fifteen years of the life sentence and was released under a conditional pardon granted by the late Governor Austin Peay. The pardon provided that Rinehart should stay out of Tennessee, and that upon his violation of that provision the pardon would be revoked.

It seems that Rinehart is headed to prison again, for either the pardon provision or possessing Christmas spirits.



Back Side of the Cheatham County Courthouse in December 1968, courtesy of George Pitt.

Attending the Cheatham County 160th Anniversary Celebration on May 5th, 87 year old Jim Lenox from Florida sat in the same courtroom where his great grandfather J. J. Lenox practiced law.



CCHGA members Mary Powers Glasgow and husband Mike Glasgow were among the many people who enjoyed hearing presentations given by Harold Lovell and Anita Lunn at the April 2016 CCHGA meeting.



African American Neptune School Marker Dedication
 May 5, 2016
 Charlie Teasley, Sue Wilson and Mrs. Helen Teasley were 3 students who attended the school.

Shacklett News - submitted by CCHGA member D. J. Hutcherson

Having been a resident of the Shacklett community for 56 years this year, Mr. Wayne Umstead, who is originally from Carroll County Tennessee, moved to the heart of the Dog Creek Community in 1960, when, as he says "there were only three other houses besides ours" on Dog Creek Rd.

The home Mr. Umstead currently lives in was built on the same ground where a general store once stood over a century ago. This store was run by a Mr. Joe Dunn, and a photograph exists of Mr. Dunn standing next to his store in the 1930s. The General Store also served as the post office for this area when Dog Creek Road was a part of the Nashville - Charlotte Turnpike.

When I began my research into the history of Shacklett, I was told by the neighbors in this community that Mr. Umstead was a person I should definitely talk to. And they were correct. My first visit to Mr. Umstead was just for that purpose: to gather historical information. However, after hearing him talk about the history he had learned from long time residents of Dog Creek when he first moved here, as well as his own stories about the way Dog Creek used to be all those many years ago, I began visiting him regularly. Since then, we have become good friends, and I cherish every moment I get to spend with him.

Mr. Umstead now lives alone, in a newly built house across the road from the house he and his wife had lived in for 50 years before the flood of 2010 destroyed it. He and his wife, Era, were married for 47 years. She passed away in 2013.



D. J. Hutcherson and Wayne Umstead



Chatter from the Past - 1937, Tennessean Newspaper

There is a legend about Old Sidney, a story of tragic romance. A man and a maiden loved, dreamed and were happy. But the man found it necessary to go away toward Nashville. One morning a boat headed up the Cumberland. From top of Old Sidney a girl watched every splash of the oar and ripple of the water as her lover went farther away with each end of the back.

On the spot where she peered at the retreating boat until it was blurred then blotted, the girl built a camp to wait for her lover to come back.

The boat was one that never returned and no report came from the departed lover.

One day a slim figure poised above the water's edge, poised but for a moment, then plunged.

Her name was Sidney

- Four fires in the last decade left marks on Ashland City, but the marks have been covered by new brick and stone buildings that make the town almost new from one end of the business district to the other.

Cheatham County Historical and Genealogical Association

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