

MOUNTAIN HERITAGE

The Gilmer County Genealogical Society, Inc.

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Volume 14, Issue 1

Reflections on Mountain Heritage

(Editor's Note: In 2004, the newly organized Gilmer County Genealogical Society published a second book, *Reflections on Mountain Heritage*. The book committee consisted of Sonya and Jim Burleson, Marguerite and Earl Cagle, Jerrie-Marie Crump, June Edeker, Josie Gibson, Gail Weaver Gilbert, Morris Parks, Betty Abernathy Riddle, Shirley Sluder, Estelle Parker Wall, Kathryn Davis Watkins, and Joyce Holt Whitaker. The book's mission and method are explained in its preface as follows:

"Reflections, as it came to be referred to, was originally conceived as a 'recipe book' by Charter Members Estelle Parker Wall, Kathryn Davis Watkins, and Betty Abernathy Riddle. Their concept bespoke of something that would be unique and set this publication apart from others.

The approach to compiling Reflections was somewhat like breaking new ground. We walked around it from different angles and perspectives, trying to determine how best to address the stumps and roots we knew were just below the surface. The primary concert was to give it a pitch that would make it flow yet prevent it from eroding and washing away our fertile ambitions.

As we bent to the task, the brainstorming would wander into 'you remember when?' or 'did y'all ever?' and 'I heard a feller once,' and the response would fan another ember. And so it went, more comments on 'back when,' "folks use to," etc., soon became categories for volunteers and articles for Reflections.

As ideas took form, the call went out, soliciting input from family, friends, acquaintances, or anyone that felt they could make a contribution was welcomed.

The members participated in suggesting a title, but Reflections on Mountain Heritage came as much from the essence of our discussions as any other one thing.

Recognizing that we are descended from people whose heritage is rich in the preservation of ways, means, and recollections, we elected to allow some of their uniqueness to flow into our efforts. By retaining some of their vernacular and giving a nod of approval to composition that was not always grammatically correct, we feel that was accomplished.

We are most appreciative of those that contributed to the content of Reflections and those that voiced their encouragement and appreciation of our undertaking.

In presenting this collection of works to the public, it is our wish that you will find something informative, something beneficial, something entertaining, and finally, something that will give you cause to reflect on your mountain heritage."

In the next several pages of the March 2026 edition of your quarterly newsletter, *Mountain Heritage*, you can get an idea of the exceptional and diverse contents of this wonderful book about North Georgia and Gilmer County. If you would like to read more of *Reflections on Mountain Heritage*, there are a limited number of first edition copies still available for purchase. You can find them at our monthly meetings, The Tabor House Museum, Walls of Books, and via mail order. After skimming through the book for excerpts to publish, I plan to set aside time to read it cover-to-cover, and I highly recommend that y'all do the same!

See *Reflections on Mountain Heritage*, page 2.



**Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-**

**My Easter Dress
Joyce Holt Logan Whitaker**

Do you remember the excitement of Easter? We knew we would get our first new dress of the year. It didn't matter if it was snowing or freezing weather, we put that dress on and certainly didn't want a sweater or coat to cover it. Don't you wish our children could have that kind of excitement about a new dress?



*Joyce Holt
Holt Family Photos*

I remember one particular Easter. Mother went shopping, out of town, to get my dress. She also had a dental appointment that day. So, guess where my new dress spent Easter?

My poor mother, after arriving home late, tired, and with a million things to do, probably had to dye eggs also, got a piece of material she had on hand and cut out a dress and made my dress Saturday night.

There was no mall or Walmart to go to then. I still think of that Easter dress when I see the picture made on that day. Thank God for mothers.

**Nell and Bess
Edith Harper Pinson**

I remember the times, many years ago,
while in the fields to harvest or sow,
it was Dad and me with Nell and Bess.
For them there was such little rest.
The sun was hot; the days were long.
Nell and Bess pulled the plow
until the day was gone.
And Dad stayed behind to guide the team
between the rows of corn and beans
As sweat rolled down his suntanned brow,
Dad worked those horses;
He always knew how.
When he yelled,
"Gette-up, Gee, Haa, or Whoa,"
those horses knew just which way to go.
And they always went
with a gallop and a trot
until Dad's last, "Whoa!"
And then they stopped.



*Bill Harper, Edith Harper, and Nell
Harper Family Photos*



**Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-**

**That Wonderful Sears & Roebuck Catalog
Estelle Parker Wall**

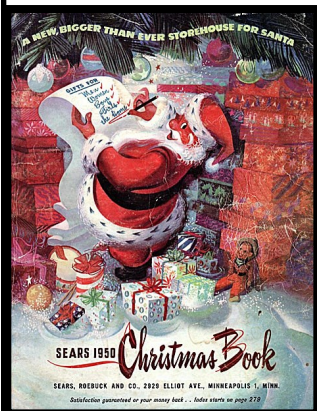


Photo : etsy.com

Once upon a time, every household received a Sears & Roebuck Catalog through the mail. The day the catalogs showed up in the mailbox was more exciting than Christmas morning! Every member of the family took a turn looking at the new book. It was nicknamed the “Wish Book.” Since people did not often go into town, a lot of their shopping was from the catalog.

When a new catalog arrived, the old one became even more useful, used for such things as wallpapering a room, piecing a strip quilt, building a fire, rolling a cigarette, wrapping a sandwich, substituting for toilet paper, and making paper dolls.

Little girls cut pictures from the catalog to use as paper dolls. They would even cut out extra clothing and accessories for their paper dolls. They could cut an entire family of paper dolls from the catalog.

**Nothing Wasted
Betty Abernathy Riddle**

“Everything can be used in some way” is an old saying that our ancestors really believed because there were not many things in their environment that were useless. Many things that looked useless proved to be helpful. Who would have even thought that such things as pine rosin, tallow fat from cattle,) horse-hair, and beeswax might well be useful for something? Our ancestors found ways to use each of those. Pine rosin for fiddle bows, to kindle fires, to doctor bad colds, and to heal chapped hands. Tallow mixed with pine rosin cured sores and was an ingredient in making soap and candles. Hair from a horse’s tail made great fiddle bowstrings. Beeswax softened leather products like mule collars and leather shoestrings, and also made candles.

Squirrel and groundhog hides were tanned and the leather used for making leather shoestrings (or leather strings anywhere they were needed) and hame strings. The hame was one of the two curved pieces in a harness used for heavy draft. The traces fastened to the hames with leather strings.



*Still Life with Violin
and Candle
Andrew Morozov
fineartamerica.com*



**Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-**

**Roasted Opossum with Stuffing
Sonya Burleson**

Dress the Opossum

(The opossum is a very fat animal with a peculiarly flavored meat.)

- 1) To dress, immerse in very hot water, not boiling, for 1 minute.
- 2) Remove and use a dull knife to scrape off hair so that skin is not cut.
- 3) Slit from bottom of throat to hind legs and remove entrails. Save the liver.
- 4) Remove head and tail if desired.
- 5) Wash thoroughly inside and out with hot water.
- 6) Cover with cold water to which has been added 1 cup salt and let stand overnight.
- 7) Drain off the salted water and rinse with clean boiling water. (As with other wild game, it is often recommended to be boiled to ensure safety and improve texture.)



Photo: wisdomlib.org

Stuffing and Roasting the Opossum

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 large onion, minced | 1 sweet red pepper, chopped |
| 1 tablespoon fat | Dash Worcestershire sauce |
| Opossum liver, chopped | 1 hard cooked egg, chopped |
| 1 cup breadcrumbs | Salt |

- 1) Brown the onion in fat.
- 2) Add liver and cook until liver is tender.
- 3) Add breadcrumbs, pepper, Worcestershire sauce, egg, salt, and water to moisten.
- 4) Let stuffing cool, then use a glove to stuff opossum and place in roaster; add 1 tablespoon water and roast in a moderate oven. Baste every 15 minutes with drippings.
- 5) Roast until the opossum has an internal minimum temperature of 165 degrees F or 75 degrees C or higher to ensure it is safe to eat and to prevent foodborne illness.
- 6) Skim fat from pan gravy. Serve gravy separately, with baked yams or sweet potatoes for 10.



**Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-**

**The Sourwood Leaf
Earl Cagle, Sr.**



*Leaving
Collage created by Barbara J. Dover*

Beyond the window, behind the singers, a single bright red sourwood leaf quivers in the gusting wind – tugging to be free of the branch.

The solemnity is broken by the occasional clearing of a throat, the creak of a pew, and the quieting shush of a mother to a child.

Through another window and far into the distance, the gray sky is sullen over the blue-purple Appalachians. Dark charcoal clouds are scudding before the sporadic gusts. A fine mist laces the air and drives the chill a little deeper.

Strains of “Precious Memories,” draws the attention to the occasion at hand. The text of the Good Shepherd begins to drone and the Promise of going ‘to prepare a place’ takes the gaze back to the window. Marble and granite stand on the red clay, stoic and mute, save for the graven names, dates, and verses of faith.

Last respects are paid by drawn faces with red sunken eyes. Three generations bid farewell to this fourth that will take its place among two that lay below the marble and granite...these are my people.

Four score and ten numbered the years. The wit, quick to the end, is stilled -we know the Better Place is even better now.

The recessional begins with handkerchief-muffled sobs and the shuffling of weary feet on the bare wood floor. A quick glance out the window behind the singers, the sourwood branch is bare...

**Fried Poke Salat Stalks
Recipe of Elaine Kelley - Submitted by daughters Jerrie-Marie and Judy**

- 1) Pick small Poke Salat stalks in the Spring. Wash the stalks thoroughly, dry, and cut.
- 2) Parboil three times, draining water after each parboiling. (The washing and parboiling, discarding the water after each time, helps to eliminate the toxins.)
- 3) Add flour, cornmeal, salt, and pepper. Fry in hot grease until real brown.



Photo: foragerchef.com



**Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-**

**Childhood Memory
Josie Gibson**



*Strawberry Ice Cream
Collage created by Barbara J. Dover.*

This is a childhood memory I will never forget. I was about four and one half years old. This young woman, Ventia Lee Ray, who lived close to us and also went to our church (Northcutt Baptist Church) liked me and I liked her. She was married but didn't have any children. She would call me her pretty little girl and I loved to hear that.

One day she asked Mama if I could go to town with her. Mama said it was okay so I put on my Sunday best outfit and was so thrilled to be going only with her. Just us two!

When we got to town, Ventia Lee took me to the drugstore (I can't remember the name) where Starnes Drug Store building is today.

We sat down at a small wrought iron table with wrought iron chairs. She asked me if I would like some ice cream. Now I had never tasted ice cream but it sounded good. Ventia Lee asked me what flavor I would like and I told her I didn't know. (I think she began to suspect that I had never eaten ice cream.) She smiled down at me and said, "I like strawberry; it's my favorite." I smiled and said, "That sounds good to me."

The waitress brought out a tray with two small black plastic containers that had holes in the top where white spiral shaped paper cups held the double dips of ice cream. When I saw that ice cream, my mouth began to water!

I don't think I will taste anything as good as that! I had never tasted anything so cold and creamy. That taste of icy, sweet, fruity, strawberry ice cream will never be forgotten! I couldn't say a word. All I wanted to do was eat bite after bite until it was all gone.

Ventia Lee was watching me, smiling, and I told her that was the first time I had ever tasted ice cream. I hugged her and thanked her for this special treat.

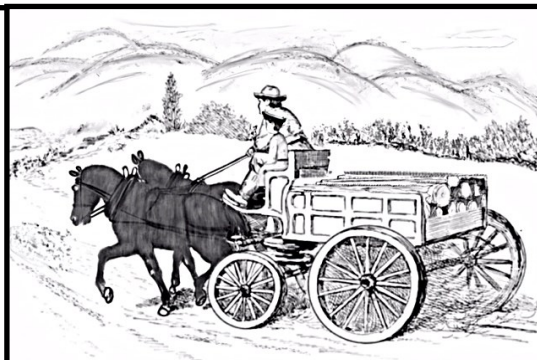
That was one of the highlights of my childhood. Even today, I have a wonderful feeling when I think back on my very first ice cream!



Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-

A Broken Leg
June Parker Edeker

Today's medical procedures and equipment can make a broken bone seem to be little more than an inconvenience. However, that was not the case back in 1910, as experienced by my dad, Homer Parker, who suffered a broken leg.



Traveling
Collage created by Barbara J. Dover.

The accident occurred when my dad, who was seven years old, was accompanying his father to a sawmill with a load of logs on a mule-drawn wagon. The trip was taking them over a mountainous road. When they were a mile and a half from home, the wagon hit a rocky spot and Dad was thrown from the wagon. Before Grandpa could stop the mules, the wagon wheel ran over my dad's leg.

Grandpa suspected the leg was broken, and since there was no house nearby, he picked up Dad and started walking and running toward home. Most of the route was up a mountain. When he reached the top of the mountain, he started screaming for my grandma, hoping she would be outside the house and would hear him. He yelled to her that Dad had broken his leg and asked that she send someone for a doctor. Fortunately, she was outside and did hear him.

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Grandma, upon hearing the alarm, did some screaming herself. Her brother, Uncle Merida Weaver, who lived a half mile farther away, heard her and immediately went to see what was wrong. He then walked and ran about two miles to summon Dr. Goss. (Dr. Goss lived near where Mack Aaron's Apple House is located today.) The doctor, traveling by buggy, reached Grandpa's house in Bucktown about two hours later. He set the leg and splinted it with two pieces of lumber.

Dr. Goss recommended the leg be kept straight and on a rigid surface until it healed. To do that, they took an inside door down and made Dad a pallet on it. He lay on his back on the door, day and night, for six weeks. There was no cast to be autographed by friends and no means of mobility as there would be now for a child with a broken leg.

I don't recall my dad discussing that accident, so apparently the only lasting effect of the broken leg was a lifetime limp and arthritis in his later years. My grandma, who also suffered the lack of medical equipment, related the story. She was paralyzed and bedridden with arthritis throughout the years of my knowing her.



**Reflections on Mountain Heritage
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**White Clay
Earl Cagle, Sr.**



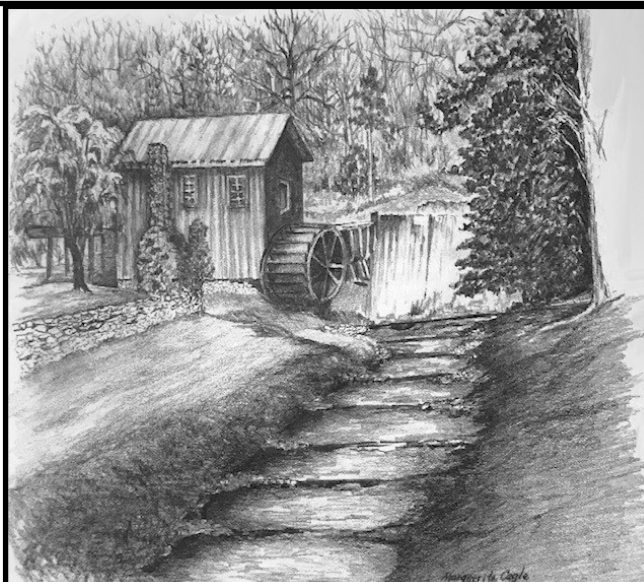
*Brothers, Big Creek, and White Clay
Collage created by Barbara J. Dover.*

“You boys, take this bucket and go up to the clay pit and bring back as much as you can tote.” That was my Grandmother Edmondson giving my brother Bobby and me a work order in the mid-1940’s. We knew the clay pit was in the left bank of the Big Creek Road, in Gilmer County, Georgia, about one hundred and fifty yards from her house. We also knew there was a broken-handled hoe in the pit to use to dig the clay. Our objective was to dig out as much of the white kaolin clay as we could carry between us in the five-gallon bucket back to the unpainted farmhouse.

Grandmother would take the clay and sprinkle it over the bare wood floors of the four-room house. She then took her broomsedge broom, bound with a strip of rubber from an inner tube, and swept the clay across the floor. The clay would collect the dirt and control the dust as it filled the little crevices in the wood grain and cracks between the boards.

That was a country version of a sweeping compound that left the floors with a dust-free fresh aroma and a certain brightness that would last for days.

**The Old Mill
Marguerite Cagle**





Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-

The Traveling Medicine Man
Morris Miller Parks

The Parks Store, Café, and Hotel were located on the corner at the intersection of South Man and River Streets. They were across from what used to be the Dover Chevrolet place owned by Hank, Effie, and Alba Dover. It is now NAPA Auto Parts. The Parks complex was owned and operated by Clement Morris and Edith Miller Parks, my parents. I was old enough to help out at the store and sometimes helped to clean the hotel.

In 1945, when I was about ten years old, a traveling medicine man came through Ellijay about every six months. He called himself "Doc," had gray hair, and was probably in his late fifties. Because I was so young, he seemed older than that to me. He was what was coined as a "gentleman grandfather" and always wore the soft gray hats, popular of that time.

My Dad would let him set up behind our store in the little parking area. Doc would set up merchandise on the back of his automobile. He would lift up the trunk lid and take out a 4X4 platform, banging on a pot with a piece of wood or shaking an old cowbell to get everyone's attention. Sometimes he would sit on a little stool with a dummy and do his ventriloquist act. Doc was very good at throwing his voice. The dummy would say things like, "Land sakes, y'all need to come on up and buy these medicines we are a-selling. Your family and neighbors will appreciate you thinking of them."

It didn't take long for a crowd to gather. The dummy would make fun of Doc, talk about the weather, reminding folks that winter was coming on and they would need some medicine to keep the family well. If it was springtime, he would tell them about the medicines to take to bring back their vitality and strength after a long cold winter. They would always end with a song.

It still amazes me how people can throw their voices to look like someone or something is talking. Then Doc would whip out the smelling salts, the cure-all, or whatever he was peddling that day, stating that every bottle was only a dollar. When it looked like he was losing his crowd, he always stated that since he wouldn't be back for another six months, he would let the people have two bottles of his medicine for a dollar. That usually started someone buying. He would let people sniff a bottle that he guaranteed was sure to open up the sinus. He had several types of medicines for sale. One was for dysentery; another would cure coughs and colds; and lots more that I am unable to remember now.

I don't remember when Doc stopped coming to Ellijay. I went off to college in 1953 and at that time, he had stopped coming.



Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-

A Child's View of an Outdoor Toilet
Estelle Parker Wall

When I was a child, I thought the number of seats in the outhouse determined a family's social status in the community. At one time, my family did not have an outhouse, and I felt socially deprived. One day I came home from school and they had built us an outhouse. It was a round "one-seater," but it looked grand to me. I had never been happier.

One day my brother went visiting, and when he came home, he came with disturbing news. The neighbors had a "two-seater" with square seats. That disturbed my brother because he had never heard of any part of the human anatomy being square! I didn't care how square their butts were; what bothered me was that they were a step ahead of us with their "two-seater." Not long after that, a girl in my class came to school bragging about their new outhouse; it seated four, the holes were oval and made of polished wood with no splinters. The holes even had lids! I turned green with envy. I just knew that we would never catch up with such a magnificent outhouse as that.

I begged Mama to let me stop by the neighbor's house the next day after school to tour the "outhouse of all outhouses." That afternoon as I stood outside the door of this new wonderful work of art, I was as excited as I'd have been if I was about to enter the Empire State Building.

In a year or two, our family finally moved up the social ladder and built a new "two-seater" that was attached to the side of the woodshed. I considered that a plus because when running to the outhouse on a rainy day, I'd dart through the woodshed and be in the dry for a few minutes.

As I grew older, I found out that those outhouses (stepping-stones to higher civilization) were not as comfortable as I had imagined them to be. The many hazards and discomforts I will divide into two categories: summer and winter. In the summer, I entered the outhouse with caution. Hornets liked to build a nest in the corner under the roof. There was usually a wasp nest under one seat, and yellowjackets had a nest near the door. Spiders and snakes were likely to drop by at any time. The wintertime brought different problems. Have you ever rushed to an outhouse on a dark, cold winter night? If you have, you know exactly why we have the old saying, "Cold enough to freeze your butt off." The howling winter wind could almost blow the pages from the Sears-Roebuck catalog. (The catalog was the popular toilet tissue of those days.) Splinters were a hazard the year around, especially if undressed lumber formed the toilet seat.

I am glad that those outdoor toilets are here now only in our memories. I find myself wondering how many seats it has when I see one today.



Photo: pinterest.com



**Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-**

**Tufting and Carpeting
Gail Weaver Gilbert**

Since the early 1900's, tufting has been an important aspect of northern Georgia's economy. Many of the northern Georgia communities contributed to the development of tufted bedspreads and other tufted items, which eventually let to the carpet industries of today. Tufting was a unique regional product and by the end of World War I, the handicraft had become a profitable business for many in north Georgia.

Multitudes of "spread houses" were established. Supplies were carried over the mountain roads of north Georgia to as many as ten thousand home tufters. The tufted spreads were collected and take to the spread houses for boiling, packaging, and shipping.

J & C Bedsread Company in Ellijay was one of several spread factories established by B. J. Bandy. The spread factory in Ellijay was named after Bandy's son-in-law Joe McCutchen and daughter Christine. The McCutchens learned the ropes of the tufting business before relocating to Ellijay to help manage J & C. Mr. Bandy invested in tufting machines capable of producing tufted bedspreads, small rugs, and other small tufted goods.

Mr. Bandy died in 1948, and the McCutchens were the obvious choices to oversee J & C Bedspreads in Ellijay. The company grew with one thousand employees at one time to fill the bedsread orders from Sears Roebuck & Company. This company was certainly an economic benefit for the people of Ellijay.

J & C Bedsread Company later became Universal Carpet, Inc. as the tufting industry progressed into making more and more rugs. Machines were developed to produce larger and larger rugs until carpet was born. Joe McCutchen is credited with numerous inventions and patents on textile machinery.

The carpet industry as we know it today started from the tufting business!



Photo: facebook.com



Chenille
Collage created by Barbara J. Dover.

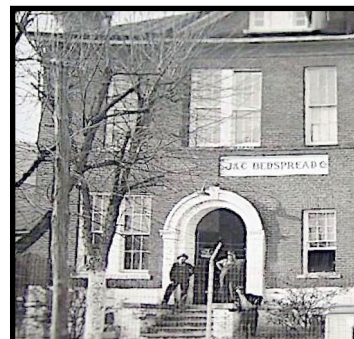


Photo: facebook.com

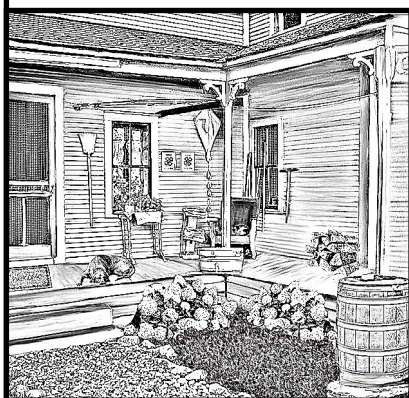


**Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-**

**The Rain Barrel
Shirley Sluder**

The rain barrel sat at the edge of the back porch, perched on several smooth rocks. There it sat all year long, waiting for the rain to fall. The water level depended on when and how much it rained; a rainy season found it full and overflowing onto the neatly swept yard, and a dry spell left it almost empty. It was kept clean and received a sound scrubbing just before a heavy rain was expected. It had to be filled with water from the spring during dry summer months, and ice had to be broken to get water on cold winter mornings. A wooden lid was placed over the barrel to keep out insects, falling leaves, and trash.

The rain barrel was as necessary as any other tool or structure on the farm. The water from the rain barrel was used for washing hands before meals, foot washing at the end of a hard day's work in the field, the hand washing of stockings and hose, and for sponge bathing. On most back porches hung a hand towel, a pan, and a mirror. A shaving mug with a brush and soap were also provided, along with chairs for resting and soaking tired feet.



*Back Porch
Collage created by Barbara J. Dover*

Rainwater was used for scrubbing the floors and porches and for pre-washing the fruit and vegetables before cooking and canning. The porch was the main work area for the housewife and made a storage area for fire wood for the cook stove as well as a resting place for the family cat and the faithful coon dog, who also served the family as an early warning system when friends came calling or strangers passed by.

Sitting and watching the rain fill the rain barrel on a summer afternoon is a memory from another time, a special day long ago.

**Mama Kelley's Field Creases (Or Salat)
Recipe of Elaine Kelley – Submitted by daughters Jerrie-Marie and Judy**

(Creases or wild cress were better when picked tender before they began to flower.)

- 1) Wash greens thoroughly, break into bite-size pieces, drain well, put in frying pan and fry with grease (sometimes bacon grease,) a little water, and chopped boiled eggs.
- 2) At times, a little sugar and vinegar would be added.
- 3) Another way to cook creases: wash thoroughly, drain well, and cook as you would turnip greens.



**Reflections on Mountain Heritage
-continued-**

**Moonshine Whiskey Cake
Kathryn Davis Watkins**

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1/2 cup butter | 1 3/4 cup plain flour |
| 1/2 tsp. baking powder | 1/2 tsp. salt |
| 1/4 tsp. baking soda | 1/4 tsp. nutmeg |
| 1 cup sugar | 3 eggs, beaten |
| 1/4 cup milk | 1/4 cup molasses |
| 1 pound (16 oz.) seedless raisins | 1/4 cup bourbon |
| 2 cups chopped pecans or walnuts | |

- 1) Stir baking soda into molasses and set aside. Stir raisins and nuts with a small amount of flour, not included with the 1 3/4 cup, and set aside.
- 2) Mix remaining dry ingredients together.
- 3) Cream butter and sugar, then add eggs. Stir well. Mix flour into creamed mixture.
- 4) Stir in milk with molasses mixture, then fold in raisins, nuts, and bourbon.
- 5) Pour batter into greased and floured loaf pans.
- 6) Bake at 300 degrees for 2 hours or until they test done.
- 7) Cool, remove from pans, and wrap in foil. Store in refrigerator.

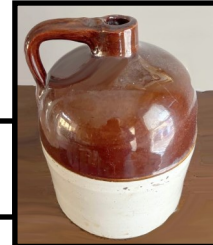


Photo: ebay.com

**I Got My Fill
Ernest Parker**

One afternoon I started out
to see a friend named Bill;
I followed up a new made trail,
and found a moonshine still.

I didn't know the still was there,
and didn't want to stay.
I thought the revenuer might come
and carry me away.

The men in charge and working there
tried to console my fear.
They had me take a gourd they had,
and try a drink of beer.

The sweet mash tasted pretty good.
I drank without a tear.
Three gourds were put beneath my belt.
And then I had NO fear.

I looked about and saw the booze
was flowing hot and free.
I sampled that; it too was good.
I soaked down number three.

I started on with bulging eyes
seeing only in a dream.
I jogged along with tottering steps
until I reached a stream.

My head it whirled; my eyes were dim;
and all my memory fled.
I pitched headlong into the stream.
Ore balanced in my head.

When I woke up, my brain had cleared,
But still it seemed a dream
of what I'd drunk and how I fell
headlong into the stream.

That was my first, has been my last.
I felt I'd had my fill.
I left the rotten stuff to them
that ran the moonshine still.



President's Post

Barbara J. Dover

Can you believe it's already March? This is the month that our hemisphere sees winter change into spring. Looking at the daffodils or March flowers in bloom throughout Gilmer County, we look forward to seeing more change. GCGSI is also looking forward to a great second quarter of this year!

But first, let's recall the past quarter with our fabulous Holiday Luncheon that took place in December of 2025. Planned by our Events Committee Co-Chairpersons Erin Brandy and Lydia Bassetti, the food was yummy, the fellowship convivial, and the door prizes were fun! Great job, Erin and Lydia!



Included during the Holiday Luncheon, Mary Jones facilitated the Installation of the 2026 GCGSI Board with style and grace. This year's GCGSI Board members are listed on our *Bulletin Board* page along with our 2nd Quarter events and the requisite artwork. Thanks to our board members for volunteering to take on leadership roles in our society this year.

Our programs for the January and February meetings were presented by Earl Cagle, Sr. and Christopher Feldt, and both gentlemen shared interesting information with our membership and guests. As a founding member of GCGSI, Mr. Cagle recounted the start of the organization in Gilmer County, then traveled back in time to Scotland with stories of his early ancestors, the Burnett and Edmondson Families. All while wearing a kilt of his Burnett tartan.

Christopher Feldt, our speaker for February, explained the early beginning of potter's fields in the 1500's and their continuing use through the centuries. He shared information about the poorhouses which were often located near the potter's fields, and how the forced work schedule of the residents discouraged them from an extended stay.

Our meetings' programs for this quarter will continue to provide diverse topics sure to interest everyone. At the March 21 meeting, Dr. Kathleen Thompson will talk about the Georgia government's discussions and procedures leading up to the Civil War. Judy Piette, descendant of several early Gilmer County families, will tell stories about her Gudger, Crawford, Waddell, and Seay ancestors at our April 18 meeting. And in honor of Mother's Day, our May 17 meeting will have a "show and tell" presentation with you, our members, sharing "*Memories of Our Mothers.*" Family stories, heirlooms, recipes with samples, and more will be featured in this popular program, so start planning what you will share.

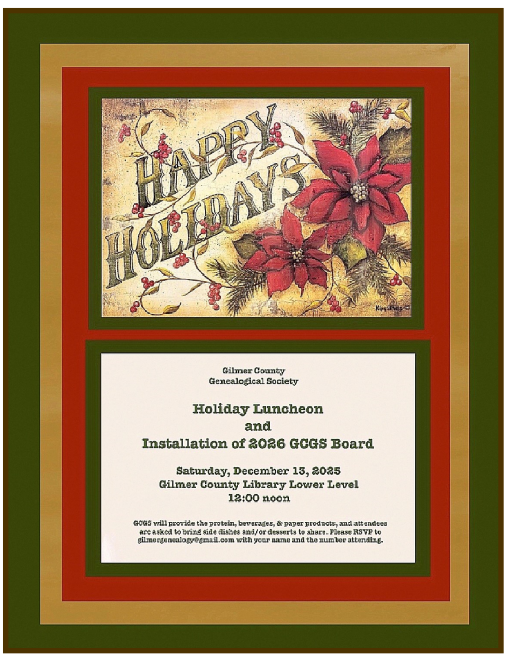
Throughout the remainder of this year, we will continue to plan more activities and purchase more books for donation to the library. As always, if you have submissions for our newsletter; suggestions for activities and books for the research room; and/or would like to volunteer for our society, please notify me or any board member. We thank you for your support!





First Quarter Highlights 2026

December 2025



Photos submitted by Barbara J. Dover and Joyce Dover Mulazzi.



Enjoying their delicious meals at the GCGSI Holiday Luncheon were: (Clockwise from left to right) 1) Lydia Bassetti & Erin Brandy; 2) Mary Jones & Willard Jones; 3) Lynne Dover Lawson & Walt Lawson; 4) Mary Allen, Debbie Wilcox, & Rebecca Burrell; 5) Brenda Cochran, Carla Weaver, & Tim Weaver; 6) Connie Kidd & Linda Wolfe.



See First Quarter Highlights 2026, page 16



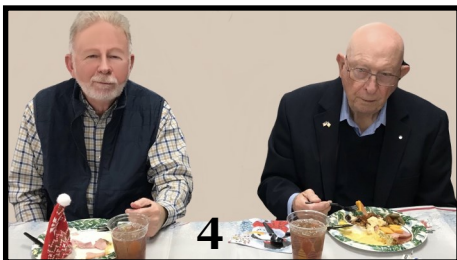
First Quarter Highlights 2026

-continued-

December, 2025
-continued-



Also attending the GCGSI Holiday Luncheon and Installation of 2026 Board were: (Counterclockwise from right to left:) 1) Joyce Dover Mulazzi & Barbara Dover; 2) Steve Brown & Debby Logan Brown; 3) Laurel Watson & Lennie Watson-Trefry; 4) T. W. Davis & Joe Davis; 5) Joyce Dover Mulazzi, Janice Dover Watson; & Patricia Hyatt Henson.




2026 GCGSI Officers & Committee Chairpersons
(from left to right)

Barbara J. Dover ~ President, Publications Committee Chairperson, Publicity Committee Co- Chairperson
Debbie Wilcox ~ Vice-President, Program Committee Chairperson, Publicity Committee Co-Chairperson
Erin Brandy ~ Recording Secretary, Events Committee Co-Chairperson
Rebecca Burrell ~ Corresponding Secretary, Historian
Susan Noles ~ Treasurer, Membership Committee Chairperson
Patricia Henson ~ First Families of Gilmer County Committee Co-Chairperson
Beverly Hill ~ First Families of Gilmer County Committee Co-Chairperson
Lydia Bassetti ~ Events Committee Co- Chairperson



First Quarter Highlights 2026
-continued-

January, 2026



Gilmer County Genealogical Society

**The Burnetts,
from Scotland to
Gilmer County**

Earl Cagle, Sr.
GCGSI Founding Member

Saturday, January 17, 2026
Gilmer County Library
2:00 p.m.

At the GCGSI meeting on January 17, 2026, the speaker stood before the group dressed in his kilt of the Burnett tartan and shared information about the Society and his ancestors. Former President and founding member of the Gilmer County Genealogical Society, Inc., Earl Cagle, Sr. began his talk with a brief recap of the Society's history which started with the Gilmer County Heritage Book Committee.

Mr. Cagle then shifted to discuss The Burnett Family, his Scottish ancestors. Included within his talk was Earl's mother Merle Leila Edmondson whose kin could be found in eight Gilmer County families, with several tracing back to the Revolutionary War. The Edmondson line, also from Scotland, arrived in the United States in the early 1700's.

Earl Cagle, Sr. belongs to the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) and the Capt. John Collins Chapter where he has served in several positions, including two terms as President.



See **First Quarter Highlights 2026**, page 18.




First Quarter Highlights 2026
-continued-

February, 2026

Gilmer County Genealogical Society

**Potter's Fields
and
Poorhouses**

Christopher Feldt,
speaker



Saturday, February 21, 2026
Gilmer County Library
2:00 p.m.


The February meeting of GCGSI was held on Saturday, February 21, 2026, and speaker Christopher Feldt presented the program "Potter's Fields and Poorhouses." Mr. Feldt discussed potter's fields, pieces of ground reserved as a burying place for friendless paupers, unknown persons, and criminals. In many cases, poorhouses were located by these graveyards.

He shared that potter's fields date back to Biblical times, and that poorhouses were thinly disguised as workhouses with the residents forced to work around eighteen hours daily as a passive form of eviction. Both potter's fields and poorhouses have been researched in Georgia and the push by local history lovers and the invention of Ground Penetrating Radar have recently resulted in the finding of many unmarked graves.

Mr. Feldt is a veteran, artist, writer, researcher, poet, composer, and history buff. He is the author of three books: *The Old Paths Remain*; *Tools of the Time Traveler*; and *Tragedy and Triumph: A North Georgia History Compendium*.



**Poorhouses
In Georgia**



Atlanta's First Poorhouse
(1860-1864)

Destroyed in the Battle of Ezra Church



What Is a Potter's Field?

- A place where the poor, homeless, and disreputable were buried.
- *Potter's field* "piece of ground reserved as a burying place for friendless paupers, unknown persons, and criminals" (1520; early 14c. as *potter's place*) is Biblical (Matthew xxvii. 7), a ground where clay suitable for pottery was dug, later purchased by high priests of Jerusalem as a burying ground for strangers, criminals, and the poor. [Purchased with the coins paid to Judas for betraying Jesus; these being considered blood money it was then known in Aramaic as *Akeldama*, "field of blood."]



Bulletin Board

March 2026

- Sunday, March 8 - Daylight Saving Time Begins
- Tuesday, March 17 - St. Patrick's Day
- Friday, March 20 - First Day of Spring
- **Saturday, March 21—GCGSI Monthly Meeting**
Civil War Comes to Gilmer County and the North Georgia Mountains
Speaker: Dr. Kathleen Thompson, writer
Gilmer County Library Lower Level - 2:00 p.m.

April 2026

- Sunday April 1 - April Fools' Day
- Sunday, April 5 - Happy Easter!
- **Saturday, April 18 - GCGSI Monthly Meeting**
Deep Gilmer County Roots: Stories from My Grandparents: Gudger, Crawford, Waddell, and Seay
Speaker: Judy Piette, GCHS Secretary and First Families of Gilmer County Member
Gilmer County Library Lower Level - 2:00 p.m.
- **National Library Week - "Find Your Joy" - April 19-25, 2026**
Library Staff Appreciation Luncheon - Tuesday, April 21/12:00 noon
Gilmer County Library Upper Level Community Room
- Wednesday, April 22 - Earth Day

May 2026

- Tuesday, May 5 - Cinco de Mayo
- Sunday, May 10—Mother's Day
- **Saturday, May 16 - GCGSI Monthly Meeting**
Memories of our Mothers: Members share Memories, Heirlooms, Recipes, and Family Stories
Speakers: GCGSI Members in a "Show and Tell" Program
Gilmer County Library Lower Level - 2:00 p.m.
- Monday, May 25 - Memorial Day



Apple Blossoms (1930, Oil on Canvas)
Georgia O'Keeffe. American (1887-1986)



Mountain Heritage Newsletter
Published by Barbara J. Dover
Gilmer County Genealogical Society, Inc.
President, Publications Committee Chairperson,
Publicity Committees' Co-Chairperson

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The Gilmer County Genealogical Society, Inc.
P. O. Box 919
Ellijay, GA 30540



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P. O. Box 919
Ellijay, GA 30540

We're online!

www.gcgsi.org



Contact email: gilmergenealogy@gmail.com.

WHAT IS AVAILABLE ONLINE?

- GCGSI Membership
- First Families Application
- Genealogical Links
- Officers and Chairpersons



- Book Order Forms
- 1834 and 1840 Census
- Contact Information
- GCGSI Newsletters