

PHILLIPS COUNTY
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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NOTES

This summer Maurice J. Glorioso presented the Historical Society with a volume that he worked on during the past year. It contains photographs, programs, documents, and other items, and is a complete record of the Marquette-Joliet Tri-Centennial celebration which was held here in July, 1973. There are also pictures and records telling of the placing of the Marquette statue on Oakland Avenue in the 1930s, and some material is even included of the original Marquette-Joliet expedition. This large book has been on display in the Phillips County Library, and is now exhibited in the Museum and available for all to look through. This is a fine piece of work and a great deal of thought went into its making.

The Historical Society received from Mrs. Edwin G. Chambers of Columbus, Ohio, the gift of an upright Hardman piano, made between 1883-1885, of carved rosewood case with panels lined in rose fabric. Mrs. Chambers' grandfather and great-uncle lived in the Helena-Arkansas Post area following the Civil War and the piano was at her mother's home in Pine Bluff. Katherine Hill enlisted the aid of Bill Brothers to bring it to the Museum from there. It took generosity, planning, and effort (ask Katherine and also those who helped move it) to get it here, but the piano is now at the Museum and is a very nice piece.

Mrs. Wanda McKinney, a California member, gave a gift to the Society in memory

of her mother, Mrs. Zoda McGrew Brown, who died in May. With this, a National Geographic Atlas was bought, Phillips County Historical Society imprinted on the cover, and at present it is in the West Helena Library. It is a handsome volume.

George James gave a set of 8 x 10 photographs to the Historical Society, showing Sacred Heart Academy in the process of being torn down to make way for government housing. Several of these show the oldest part of the school, the old Biscoe home, which had already been constructed when a map of New Helena was drawn by Nicholas Rightor in 1836. The plan is to make a permanent display of the pictures in the glass panel stand in the Museum.

One of our charter members, W. C. McEntire, died in August.

MISS BEULAH'S VINEYARD SCHOOL

by

Carolyn R. Cunningham

Joseph Ward Robards, 87, his four sisters and his half-sister, Mildred Martin, went to school in the one-room frame schoolhouse at the location identified as Lower Vineyard, one-fourth mile south of Rehoboth Church, near Tyner Post Office and the Ras Vineyard home. The little building, typical of schools scattered around the countryside, had a door in the front and back. The men in the community met every two years to whitewash it. The tables were handmade, sanded to make them smooth. They measured 2 x 8 x 14. The room was about 20 x 30.

The room was heated by a woodburning stove and the children often sweated by it as they studied spelling, geography, reading, and arithmetic. At Vineyard they never had fall school until all the crops were gathered.

School "took up" at 8:30 and the children dotted the country lanes from all directions as they walked to school swinging their books and lunch buckets. Papa walked about a mile and a half, along with his sisters, picking up neighboring children as they went.

Syrup buckets made great lunch buckets, and carried the food from the table at home, such as vegetables, cornbread, and baked

sweet potatoes. Each pail was packed with a private drinking cup, although there was often a pail of water and communal gourd dipper sitting in the corner.

Papa remembers ball games, mumblety-peg, and base. Aunt Mildred recalls hopscotch, drop the handkerchief, hide and seek, and that source of never ending entertainment, playing house.

Going to Vineyard School about the turn of the century, among others, were, the Sallis children, the Gregorys, McGrews, Bottoriffs, Holtzclaws, Roddens, Pattersons, Vineyards, Cooks, and McClendons. Many of these children, if not "kinfolks," were kin to someone who was kin.

Perhaps the highlight of the school term was the end of school entertainment when every child had a "part."

A note from Mrs. Pauline McClendon Brickell of Marvell added this information about the picture of Vineyard School in the June, 1974 Quarterly. "The little unknown girl on front row was Lillie McClendon sister to the Mary McClendon. Both were my sisters."

JOHN J. BOWIE
1787 - 1859

by

George P. Kelley
Dermott, Arkansas

PREFACE

I have long been interested in the history of John J. Bowie, the eldest brother of Jim Bowie of Bowie knife and Alamo fame, of whom so much has been written that it has made him a legendary hero and familiar to practically everyone. My interest in John is aroused chiefly because he at one time lived at what is known now as the town of Halley, Arkansas, and, I am firmly convinced, is buried in what was formerly known as "Old Bowie" and is presently known as the Halley Cemetery. Both his home site and the cemetery are within two hundred yards of my home.

There was a rather large family of the Bowies but it seems that only John, Rezin, and Jim, who were born in that order were important enough in business and other matters to have received any widespread recognition.

In going thru records of both Chicot and Phillips Counties, I find records of other Bowies who are probably of that same family but I have no knowledge of the connections.

For much of the information concerning the Bowies in Helena and Phillips County,

I am indebted to several members of the Phillips County Historical Society who have been most courteous and helpful and especially Mrs. C. M. T. Kirkman of that organization who has furnished me with considerable data that I would have probably not gotten otherwise.

According to Dr. John L. Ferguson, Director of the Arkansas History Commission, John J. Bowie was the eldest son of Rezin and Elvira Jones Bowie and was born in Burke County, Georgia, about 1787. The family moved to Tennessee where Rezin P. Bowie was born and then to Kentucky which was the birthplace of the famous Jim. There were ten children in all. In 1800, the elder Rezin Bowie moved the family to Missouri. They stayed there two years then moved again, to Rapides Parish in Louisiana.

In 1819, John, Rezin, and Jim, the three brothers, engaged in a slave smuggling business with Jean LaFitte the famous pirate. They managed to either deal with or evade the law enforcement officers for a period of time and when the risk started becoming too great, they quit. John made the statement later that they made a profit of over \$65,000 out of that business.

The earliest record that I have found of any Bowies in Chicot County is a deal whereby John J. Bowie of Catahoula Parish, State of Louisiana, is selling to James Bowie of Rapides Parish in Louisiana, three negro slaves, designated as to name, age, and sex for a consideration of 2,000 arpens of land. No description or loca-

tion is given for this land except "to be conveyed to me this day." This bill of sale was notarized in the Parish of Catahoula by Jos. J. Williams, not. pub., on December 8, 1825. This bill of sale was later recorded in Chicot County.

The first records that I have been able to find of John Bowie's dealings in Arkansas are nine land transactions both to and from John J. Bowie, all recorded "at Villemont, Territory of Arkansas on March 22, 1828." These are followed by two more on March 26, 1828, and one on March 27, 1828. On March 28, 1828, there is recorded a mortgage whereby John J. Bowie of Catahoula Parish in Louisiana is lending \$3,000 to Thomas James of Chicot County payable in three annual installments of \$1,000 each. Evidently this mortgage was foreclosed although I found no record of the foreclosure but on May 5, 1830, there is a record of John J. Bowie selling this same piece of property and identifying it as "the place where I now reside." (This property was in the vicinity of Lakeport on the Mississippi River.) The 1830 census records list John J. Bowie as a resident of Chicot County. On April 22, 1828, an interest in 560 arpens of land was conveyed by Louis Lacostte to John Bowie-- by John Bowie to Hugh White and now by Hugh White back to John Bowie.

After 1830, I find no records of any land transactions in the name of John J. Bowie in Chicot County although thru 1834 I find several sales to Rezin P. Bowie

recorded in which John J. Bowie is a witness. Also on November 16, 1833, there is recorded the sale of "a slave named Daniel, about twenty-five years old" from John J. Bowie, acting as agent for Thomas Barnard of Natchez, Miss. to Leaner Hoskins (female), for \$420,

It would seem, and I am making this assumption from court records, that about this time, both John and Rezin removed to Helena, as in 1835, Rezin P. Bowie and Moses Burnett (I have found transactions between these two persons recorded in Chicot County, prior to this date) bought 640 acres of land which lies adjacent to both Helena and West Helena city limits at this time. A map of Helena drawn in 1836 shows the house of John J. Bowie to be situated at the foot of Phillips Street and at the river's edge. Also, in 1836 issues of the Constitutional Journal, a Helena newspaper, there were large advertisements by John J. Bowie and B. H. Lurty, General Land Agents, offering to furnish services to non-resident land owners such as payment of taxes, furnishing adequate land descriptions and to sell lands for others as well as lands that they had already listed for sale. The tax rolls of Phillips County for the years 1835 and 1837 show both Rezin and John J. Bowie as taxpayers of the county. In 1837, Rezin Bowie and Theodore C. Hornor were listed as one of the largest stores (general mdse.) in Helena with a capital of \$15,000.

On January 13, 1837, there was record-

ed in Phillips County a grant of Power of Attorney by Bowie and Hornor to John J. Bowie empowering him to "make contracts, sign notes, draw or accept drafts for their business."

I am assuming again that sometime in the latter 1850s John Bowie moved back to Chicot County. On June 21, 1857, John J. Bowie purchased from Ransom H. Byrne of the state of Mississippi a considerable amount of land which included the present site of the town of Halley and extending eastward across both Crooked Bayou and Bayou Mason, a distance of approximately two miles. He made a partial payment on this land and the bill of sale was first recorded in Phillips County by a Justice of the Peace. John J. Bowie died on June 22, 1859, and on July 7, 1859, his widow, America A. Bowie, paid Ransom H. Byrne the remaining balance and received a deed as Executrix of the estate of John J. Bowie.

John J. Bowie's last will and testament was dated September 29, 1853. In it he mentions four daughters by a former marriage, all evidently grown and married, along with a minor son of Rezin P. Bowie (deceased); also three children by his present wife America A. Bowie namely, John R. Bowie, James W. Bowie, and a daughter Martha, married to Zachariah Letherman. A peculiar request is included in his will as follows: "I wish to be buried in a plain way and never to have any toom or other marks of respect placed over or about my grave and further, I am in hopes

that none of my family or friends will ever wear moerning for me."

When the will was probated in Chicot County on August 8, 1859, the court speaks of him as John J. Bowie, deceased, and late a citizen of this county.

To digress from this story for a moment, it is the opinion of this writer that John J. Bowie, being the astute business man that he apparently was, had a good reason for buying this particular piece of property.

On January 8, 1851, the Mississippi, Ouachita and Red River Railroad was incorporated. The charter was approved by the legislature on January 22, 1854 (the first railroad charter issued in Arkansas). Another act of the legislature on January 14, 1857, approved a change in route for the railroad. This was only a part of an ambitious project to build a railroad from the Atlantic coast through this section of the country and on much farther westward. The Mississippi, Ouachita and Red River Railroad, Inc., had visions of becoming a part of that system. This last change in route would begin the railroad on the west bank of the Mississippi river at a small settlement called Eunice (long ago caved into the river) and traveling practically due west thru the now existing towns of Dermott, Collins, Monticello and on westward. The right-of-way would pass thru the lands bought by John J. Bowie for a distance of about two miles. The track was eventually completed but it was several years after the Civil War. The stop at what was later

called Halley was first called Bowie Station.

On January 1, 1859, there is recorded in Chicot County, the sale of two negro slaves, aged fourteen and nineteen by John J. Bowie to James W. Bowie for a consideration of \$10 and other consideration such as natural love and attachment.

On November 5, 1860, James W. Bowie appears in court to claim title to several pieces of land that were bought by his brother, John R. Bowie, on Mar. 31, 1858. Stating that said John R. Bowie had died prior to the death of his father, John J. Bowie, which would make John J. Bowie the only legal heir of John R. Bowie, and that because their father, John J. Bowie, had since passed away, the title should now be confirmed in him. The court agreed and confirmed the title.

On the 19 day of November, 1866, an indenture was made and recorded in Chicot County between America A. Bowie, widow of John J. Bowie and her daughter, Martha B. Letherman and her son-in-law, Zachariah Letherman, stating that America A. Bowie had been appointed Administratrix of the estate of John J. Bowie which estate had been willed to herself and their two sons John R. Bowie and James Bowie in equal thirds, her part to continue during her lifetime and at her death, her part to be equally divided between John R. Bowie, James W. Bowie and their daughter, Martha B. Letherman, and that since John R. and James W. Bowie had both died before the administration had been completed, and

the estate divided, this left her as the sole heir. As she wished to retire from the management of the estate she hereby quit-claims forever to Zachariah Letherman and his wife, Martha B. Letherman. all of her claim or interest in the estate of John J. Bowie, with the provision that she be allowed to take certain specified items for her own use and that her daughter and son-in-law furnish her a good and comfortable home for the rest of her natural life, and beginning on January 1 next, pay her the sum of \$400 annually, these payments to be made in advance in semi-annual payments. That if the Lethermans should decide to sell their home and move and the move not be agreeable to her, they would be required to raise the \$400 annual payment to \$600 annually. America A. Bowie retains a lien on all property, both real and personal, to insure the performance of the contract.

This seems to be about as far as I have been able to trace the family of John J. Bowie. There is a record of a suit in chancery court on October 19, 1882, in which three separate individuals are ordered by the court to pay to America A. Bowie a total of \$300 but there is not enough in the record to give the reason for or any details of the suit.

The writer does have a faint recollection of Martha B. Letherman coming back to Halley to get an aged negro, Uncle Dick Hurd, to sign some sort of an affidavit

but as it must have been not later than 1910, I have no memory of any details, even if I ever knew any, which is doubtful. The only memory I have is of a slender, white haired lady clad in a long black dress with a white lace collar that came up under her throat.

I began this research with the idea of proving that John J. Bowie is buried in "Old Bowie," a small iron-fenced plot with no markers whatever, nor have there ever been any within my memory. This plot is just off the edge of Old Highway 65 at Halley and is included in what is now commonly known as the Halley Cemetery. I have never found any proof as to where he was buried but all of the circumstantial evidence -- his home was within two hundred yards of the burial plot which, so far as I can ascertain, was the first use of this location as a burial ground-- points to the likelihood of it. At that time all of this was a part of Chicot County, where his will was probated and after his death, other papers of his immediate family were recorded in Chicot County. All of this, in my opinion, points to this being the place of his burial. The request in his will for no marker to be placed at his grave would account for nothing but the iron fence on the brick foundation and the name "Old Bowie" going far back before the time of my birth.

STEAMBOAT BELLS

Contributed by

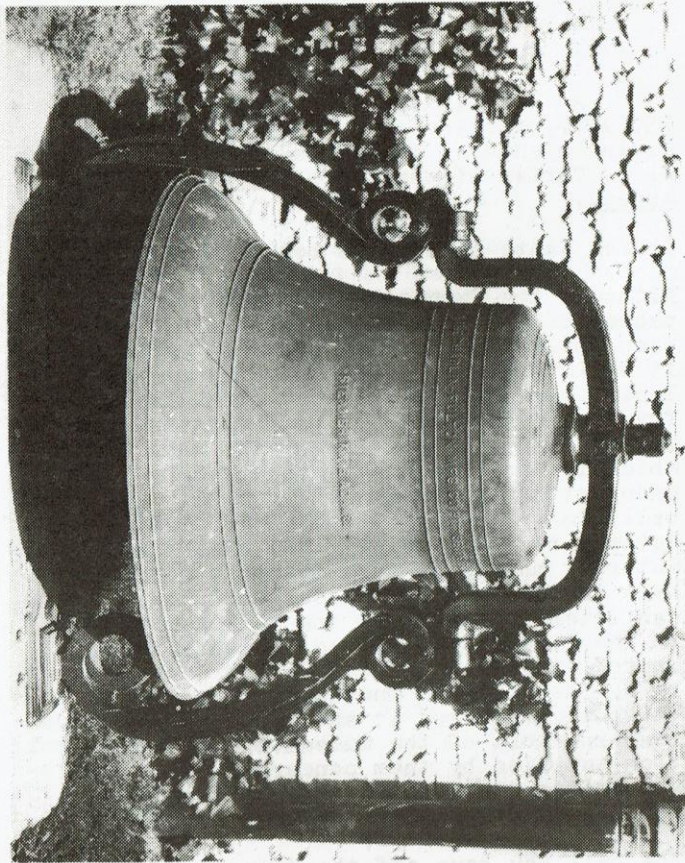
T. E. Tappan

An article appeared in the January 15, 1927, issue of the Waterways Journal giving a summary of several articles by J. H. Curtis of the Memphis Commercial Appeal.

Church Wants to Buy the Bell

Although the famous bell of the romantic packet of the south, the Kate Adams, has been stilled forever as part of the vessel, it again will peal forth, for Memphians at least, for it is to be hung from the belfry of a Memphis church. It remains only for the bid of this church, the name of which is withheld, to be accepted by the underwriters salvaging the vessel. The bell, in which were imbedded 100 silver dollars to improve the tone, came through Saturday morning's fire that destroyed the Kate intact and is in good condition. (It was later learned that the bell was cracked in the fire - this ruined the tone. The church did not get the bell and in June, 1936, The Mariners Museum, Newport News, Virginia, acquired it and placed in on the lawn in front of the museum. The information supplied by them concerning the bell was written by J. H. Curtis of the Commercial Appeal, Memphis, dated May 27, 1938.)

The bell you have off the Kate Adams is not the original bell she had when she was built.



Her first bell was not up to standard in tone, and her owners and her captain, Robert Agnew, agreed to have a new bell cast. This one was made by the Chaplin Fulton Company, Pittsburgh, in 1906 and you will recall the Kate III was built in 1898.

In the summer of 1949 a motorcycle hit this bell and frame, breaking the frame. It was sent to the ship yard for welding and returned to the museum. The bell was sent down 8/31/1949 to have a crack repaired.

OLD STEAMBOAT BELL FOUND IN KANSAS CITY -
From the Commercial Appeal, Date Unknown,
By Joe Curtis.

Every once in a while the history of an old steamboat bell is dug out of the misty past after months of correspondence and research work.

Captain Rees Downs, retired master and pilot of many a Mississippi River packet, has succeeded in finding the whereabouts of the bell that formerly was on the Dean Adams, a famous packet operating between Arkansas City and Vicksburg in the years of good steamboatin'.

The Dean Adams, a side wheeler was built in 1880 for Captain John D. Adams, owner of the Memphis and Arkansas River Packet Co., and of the first and second Kate Adams. Although his residence was in Little Rock, he was a frequent visitor to Memphis when his line of boats ran the Mississippi

and Arkansas Rivers.

The second Kate Adams came out in 1889 and ran from Memphis to Arkansas City, but she proved too large and costly for this trade. She became the property of the late Captain James Rees of Memphis, who changed her name to the Dewey and, after she was operated out of New Orleans several months, she was purchased by Captain Tom Sims of St. Louis and the bell off the Dean Adams went on her.

Captain Sims changed her name to Lotus Sims. She burned at St. Louis on October 29, 1903. Her wreckage was bought by Captain John F. Kline and the bell sold to C. L. Adams of Quincy, Ill., who placed it on a ferry boat named B. B. Then Captain Adams built a new ferry and named her the Warsaw.

This later boat was bought several years ago by the late Captain Peters Lee. He brought it to Memphis and reconstructed her into a short line packet. However, her bell was placed on the Valley Queen.

The Valley Queen was sold to a company at Omaha and converted into an excursion steamer. She burned and her wreckage was sold to the Kansas City Bridge Co. That company built a towboat and used the engines and boilers off the Valley Queen. They gave the bell to the University of Kansas City and it is now on the campus of that college.

Captain Downs says the bell was cast in Cincinnati in 1879 and had one of the most musical tones of any steamboat bell.

In 1885 the Lee Line bought the Dean Adams. She was operating out of Memphis to the Upper Bends when she burned at the Memphis wharf shortly after midnight on July 29, 1886.

BELLS WITH SILVER TONE PRIDE OF OLD STEAM-
BOAT OWNERS, Evening Appeal, April 15, 1927
By J. H. Curtis.

Steamboat owners 70 years ago prided themselves on owning the finest bells that money could buy, and they displayed them on the hurricane roofs of steamers where they tolled the passing hours.

As the steamers lay in port, the black smoke curling up from tall smoke stacks, each fringed on top with oak leaves or grill work that resembled a crown, the captain would start tolling the big bell about an hour before time to depart. It was tolled again half an hour before leaving time and the third time a few minutes before the headlines were unfastened and the boat began slipping out into the river in response to her side wheel.

No boat owner dared come out with a fine steamer unless the bell had a silvery tone and was large enough to be heard a mile from the river.

Probably the most famous bells on the Mississippi River steamers were on the J. M. White, Robert E. Lee, Natchez, Belle Lee, James Lee, Imperial, Pennsylvania, T. P. Leathers, Belle of the Coast, and the Thompson Dean.

The last packet to have a bell of any tone was the Kate Adams.

These bells on famous lower Mississippi River packets before the Civil War were given to the Confederate government and melted into material that went into guns. It was the copper that the south needed and the same results befell many of the northern river boats.

Long ago when these soft-toned bells were in use the most famous bell factory was located in Louisville, Ky., and operated by a man named Kaye. In his small manufacturing plant were moulded bells that served Mississippi River packets for 25 years.

William Kaye it is said, came to the United State from Scotland. He was taught the art of casting bells in that country. He went to Louisville several years before the Civil War and established his factory that made him famous.

He designed all the bells and charged \$1 a pound to mold them. He used a mixture of a material that gave them a fine tone. However, the owner of a bell assisted in defining the tone by putting in several hundred silver dollars, melted in the big pot of copper, brass and other metal that made up the bell.

The average weight of one of these steamboat bells was from 1,500 to 2,500 pounds. Their place on a steamboat was at the farthest point on the hurricane roof, in front of the pilothouse, with a cord extending to pilot so he could signal for sounding the

river channel or by tapping it three times call the captain of the steamer from his quarters. Another cord was dropped to the boiler deck. On the end of this cord was a fancy lot of rope work tied in knots and painted red, white, and blue. It was this cord the captains used in tolling the bell to announce departure.

Those bells that happened to escape the Civil War reappeared again on packets in the lower river. Very often if a boat sank or burned, the bell was sold by the insurance company to some rich sugar planter and placed in service on a plantation.

Many of these bells are still in service, one being on Belle Hellen Plantation, that is said to have been taken from a wrecked steamer more than 70 years ago.

In days of steamboating on the Mississippi it was a great sight to visit the levee at 4 o'clock any afternoon when all the boats were making ready to depart. They usually lay headon into shore, black smoke rising from their stacks as the negro firemen punched up the fuel in the fire box. The pilot sat in the pilothouse ready to announce to the engineer by a jingling of small bells down in the engine room that he was ready to leave port.

Slowly, the great side wheels turned, the steam screamed from the pipes, the negro rousters congregated on the bow of the boiler deck, started singing good-bye to their friends, the passengers crowded the cabin guards and gaily waved handkerchiefs to relatives on shore.

Inside the cabin an orchestra was heard playing a popular air. The steamer, if going down stream, backed to the middle of the river, her bow swung with the current as her wheels paused. Then came a jingling on two bells, the wheels started moving, the steamer went forward gradually, then leaped as the water under her was churned into foam. Soon she was out of sight beyond a bend, with only an occasional puffing of her engines heard and a slight roaring of her wheels as they hit the water.

Those were great days on the Mississippi River - days when the cotton and sugar planters were the nabobs of the south. They were times when the aristocrats in the lower lands traveled by steamboat, the ladies entertaining each other in an elegantly furnished cabin, while the men often lost their plantations, negro slaves and crops of cotton or sugar in a game of poker, usually with a gambler who made it a business to travel the Mississippi.

Captain Frederick Way, Jr. river historian and retired river boat pilot, visited Helena February 22, 1972, when the Delta Queen made its stopover in Helena, on the first overnight steamer trip from Memphis to Little Rock in over 50 years. When he saw the bell on the lawn in front of the Phillips County Museum, he said, "That has to have been a steamboat bell."

He knows the daughter of William Kaye, the man who made the bell, who still lives

in Louisville. He took a picture of it to give her, as she does not have a single picture or any record of the many steamboat bells her father made.

All we know concerning the bell was that it was a part of the works of the Seth Thomas clock in the old Jefferson School on Pecan Street between Porter and Rightor where Safeway is now located, and we listened to its melodious striking for many years. (See "Requiem" by Gordon McCarty in Volume 9, Number 2, March, 1971, Phillips County Historical Quarterly, for further information on the Jefferson School clock.)

Another steamboat bell that ties in with the river history of Helena rests on the parking lot of the Helena National Bank on Cherry Street. The Helena National Bank acquired it from the Illinois Central Railroad. The bell was made at the Buckeye Bell Foundry of the E. W. Vanduzen Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1902 for the steam side-wheel train ferry, the Pelican, also built in 1902.

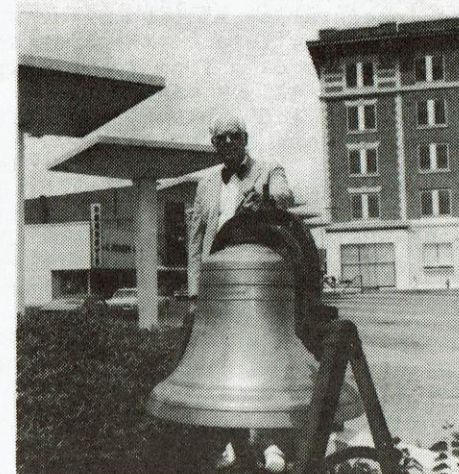
The Pelican had a sister ship named the Albatross, built in 1907 and operated in train ferry service at Vicksburg. When it was replaced by bridges, it was converted into the Admiral, which is now in operation as an excursion boat in St. Louis.

Early this year (1974) the original steam engines and side paddle wheels of the Admiral were replaced by three Caterpillar 900 HP Diesel engines driving "out-board-type" units, one in each wheel housing and one on the stern.

The sister ships are both ending up in St. Louis. The hull of the Pelican has been purchased by a firm in St. Louis and is being remodeled into a floating restaurant modeled on an early French Mississippi Valley village (Ste. Genevieve, Mo.)



Jefferson School bell in Museum yard



Bell of the Pelican

EARLY SETTLERS OF
BARTON
PHILLIPS COUNTY, ARKANSAS

by

James V. Belsha
Phoenix, Arizona

PART ONE of this article was published in Vol. 11, No. 3, June, 1973, and Vol. 11, No. 4, September, 1973, Phillips County Historical Quarterly; PART TWO appeared in Vol. 12, No. 1, December, 1973, PART THREE appeared in Vol. No. 12, No. 2, 1974. They included a discussion of the extent of the community known as Barton, beginning as early as 1850 and how the adjoining communities of North Creek, Lexa, Latour, Lick Creek and Planters, none of which appear ever to have been incorporated towns in those days, were so inter-related as to be almost inseparable; also some facts about the early settlers of the area and where many of them came from to Phillips County, Arkansas, all as disclosed by census records of 1850 through 1880 and other records to and including 1901, together with facts found in family Bibles of several families and records of C. S. Belsha & Co., a partnership composed of Columbus Shackelford Belsha and Amos Green Jarman. A synopsis of the three preceding parts would require too much space here, so reference is made to them for details. The author hereby reserves the right to use all or any part of the material appearing in the four parts of this Article in future publications.

PART FOUR
FAMILIES OF
WILLIAM JACKS AND JOSEPH F. SMITH

Such as is known to us of the family of William Jacks who married Agnes Lane, daughter of Drury H. Lane, or of the family of Joseph F. Smith, who married Julia Jacks, daughter of Agnes Lane and William Jacks, has been told to us by Carrie Mae (Smith) Otis and her sister Julia (Smith) Adkins of West Helena, Arkansas, together with what is disclosed in the 1870 Census of Moro Post Office, Hampton Township, then Monroe County, Arkansas, Household No. 80:

William Jacks aged 33, born Mississippi; Agnes aged 25, born Alabama (should have been Tennessee); Julia aged 3, born Arkansas, Agnes aged 6 months, born Arkansas.

William Jacks died before 1880, when his widow Agnes was listed in the census with the family of C. S. Belsha in Phillips County, Spring Creek Township, as Aggie Jacks and shown properly as born in Tennessee--sister-in-law of C. S. Belsha. We have learned nothing of her daughter Agnes, so presume she died young. Agnes (Lane) Jacks died January 12, 1915, and was buried at Central Cemetery in the last available grave but one in our plot saved for James L. Belsha, next to his first wife Bettie. Upon request for further information, we received the following letter dated January

7, 1973, from cousin Carrie Mae (Smith)
Otis:

West Helena, Arkansas
January 7, 1973

Dear James:-

According to my Grandmother Agnes (Lane) Jacks, Drury Lane, her father died about three months before a government official took his seat in Washington. I cannot recall if it was before or after the Civil War, though she often talked of the hard times they had after his death, living alone with no man in the family for protection.

She said the Bush Whackers came raiding by night stealing and killing their hogs and chickens, then driving the horses and cattle away as they left. The families would put tubs of water and other available things against the doors to awaken the entire family when they would break in the houses. This leads me to think her father died before the Civil War. I do not know where they were living at that time either. Did you ever check the cemeteries of Moro and Blackton?

I do not know anything (more) about grandmother Lane's given name either, but Aunt Bettye was named Elizabeth and my grandmother was Agnes. It seems they were family names and could have been taken from the older Drury Lane grandmother. As you already know, Aunt Bettye was Uncle Jim's first wife and Agnes Lane's sister; Uncle

Lum's wife was a sister, Sallie.

My mother Julia Jacks was the daughter of Agnes Lane Jacks; her father William Jacks died when she was about three years old, then grandmother and mother went back to Barton, or that part of the county, to live with her sisters there until mother was about eight or ten years old when they went to live with Uncle Tom and aunt Julia (Wallace) where she (Julia Jacks, mother of Carrie Mae) was married from the Wallace home at the age of twenty, and Rev. Obenchain (you spoke of) performed the ceremony.

She (her mother) and my father went to live in the Mississippi Delta near Friars Point in Coahoma County, Mississippi; I was born there. Julia (Carrie Mae's sister) was born in Phillips County, Arkansas, which is across the river from our house, as the family doctor had his office there (in Arkansas) and took care of his patients. Both Julia and I spent the greater part of our lives in Phillips County, Arkansas, around and near Helena.

My father Joseph Franklin Smith's family were from Dyersburg, Tennessee--the Smith side--but his mother was an Arkansan. My father's uncle, Joseph A. Smith fought in the battle of Helena, and I have been asked to get up some information on his background for the Magazine, but it is so hard to get about and run all the information down. Julia was graduated from the West Helena School, which I was (graduated) from Little Rock (School) when Uncle Ernest and Aunt Kate (McMurry) lived

there.

I am looking forward to seeing you on your next trip over; maybe I can dig up something else--hope so. Remember Julia and I to all of the family.

Sincerely

Carrie Mae.

Carrie Mae tells us it was always a great treat for them to visit at the home of Uncle Tom and Aunt Julia Wallace at Barton, sitting well back away from the road some distance, surrounded by a beautiful white fence, a short distance back from where the Barton School now stands. She says they always looked forward to the thrill of riding Uncle Tom's fine horses and whatever was going on at the Wallace home and the Barton community.

Children born to the marriage of Joseph F. Smith and Julia Etta Jacks were three sons: Charles Thomas Smith, Walter Owen Smith and Claude King Smith, all now deceased, and four daughters: Carrie Mae (Smith) Otis, Julia (Smith) Adkins, Josephine (Smith) Chambers, and Louise (Smith) Landers the youngest, recently deceased.

McMURRY-SHERROD FAMILIES

The McMurry family were in Lauderdale County, Alabama some time before 1850, when James McMurry aged 70 and Rebecca his wife, aged 65, both born in North Carolina appeared in the census

of that county; also, in the same census were Jonathan McMurry, a Tanner aged 43 and Rachel his wife aged 36, with children Joseph aged 13, Mary aged 9, John aged 8, Sarah Emeline Jane Fras. aged 7, and Patrick aged 2. It is not known whether or not any of this family other than John Davidson McMurry ever came to Arkansas.

Edward Ernest McMurry was born in Lauderdale County, Alabama, January 21, 1869; He was the second son of John Davidson McMurry, born January 31, 1843 in said county and Texas Anna (Sherrod) McMurry born January 19, 1845 in said county; she was daughter of Thomas James Sherrod and Ruth Jenkins (Belsha) Sherrod (widow of Zachariah Belsha and mother of Columbus Shackelford Belsha and James L. Belsha). John Davidson McMurry and family came to Arkansas some time after 1870.

BENJAMIN LAFAYETTE BELSHA

The family of Benjamin Lafayette Belsha, fifth son of Columbus Shackelford Belsha and Sarah Washington (Lane) Belsha has been saved for last, because of those named Belsha in Phillips County, Arkansas, it was the only line which survived in its male line and had births in the Barton area after the turn of the century. He has been shown in some records as B. F. or "Fate Belsha," that being one of the diminutives of Lafayette, the other being "Lafe." He was a contractor and builder of homes, including general painting and decorating most of his early life, except

about four years when he was farming at or near Searcy, White County, Arkansas. Many of the homes at Marvell were built by him; many more were painted or decorated by him.

Our family Bible shows the marriage of "Ben L. Belsha, of Latour, Arkansas, and Annie Browning of Turner, Arkansas, on January 22, 1890, at C. B. Church, by Rev. J. L. Wilson. Witnesses: Dr. L. Hall (Laban Hall) and C. S. Belsha." Her full name was Annie Belle Browning; she was daughter of Thomas Jefferson Browning, a well-known farmer of the Turner Post Office area and one-time postmaster there. The church referred to was Salem Baptist Church, at Cypert, of which the Rev. Wilson was Pastor at that time. Dr. Laban Hall was a well-known physician for many years in the Cypert-Turner Post Office-Indian Bay area. The bride and groom made their home at Latour about two years. Children born to this union were: Bessie Valeria Belsha (Not Valerie) born at Latour; Columbus Shackelford 11, Benjamin Leslie and Sarah Louise, all born at Searcy, Ark., Annie Belle born at Marvell, and James Vachel Terry Belsha, born October 23, 1901 at Barton and Drury Browning Belsha, born December 16, 1904 at Clarendon, Monroe County, Arkansas and died there the following March. The mother died July 24, 1905, at Clarendon.

Benjamin L. Belsha was working on construction of the Cotton Mill at Barton when James V.T. Belsha was born, in one of the little four-room houses built a

short distance north of the stores and depot to house such workers and are now (1968) gradually falling apart, surrounded by a soy bean field. Those houses must have been the original forerunners of the "efficiency apartment" of today. Each room except the kitchen--which also served as dining room and probably sitting room--had an open fireplace; the kitchen of course, had a stove only; there were two chimneys, one for the stove and one for the three fireplaces. There was also a front porch with its roof, now both unhappily fallen down to the ground. The logical allotment of the rooms could only have been mother, father and baby in one front room, the girls in the adjoining front bedroom, and the two older boys in the back bedroom. Our father was called upon when the mill was being demolished to leave his store in Marvell a day or two in 1918 or 1919 to assist in the problem of moving a huge fly-wheel from one of the machines in the mill, therefore he not only helped build the mill, but also helped tear it down.

The foregoing actually ends the Belsha family story, insofar as it affected the Barton community, however, as several persons have asked, it is felt that what happened to the family thereafter should be told here:

Bessie (Elizabeth?) Valeria Belsha married Frank Norman King, son of George W. King of "Kingtown" near Trenton. They had one son, Frank Norton King, Jr., now residing in Zwolle, Louisiana.

Columbus Shackelford Belsha II, born in Searcy, Arkansas, never married and died about the time he reached his majority, so had no issue.

Benjamin Leslie Belsha, born at Searcy; married first Mary Jodie Beeks and had three children: Leslie Beeks Belsha, now with his children and grandchildren living in Virginia; Mary Elizabeth (Belsha) Mitchell, now living in Texas with children and grandchildren.

Ann Louise (Belsha) Glankler now living in East Point, Georgia, with her children.

Benjamin Leslie Belsha married second, Leona A. Bailey; they now live at El Cajon, California, with children and grandchildren living in southern California and North Dakota.

Sarah Louise (Belsha), born at Searcy, married Morton Alfred Reichardt of Marvell, Arkansas. They now live in Phoenix, Arizona, with some of their children and grandchildren, and others in the Los Angeles, California area.

Annie Belle Belsha has never married and now lives in the home of her brother, James V. T. Belsha, at Phoenix, Arizona.

James V. T. Belsha completed his high school education at Marvell, Arkansas, in May, 1920 and in November, 1920, for health reasons of one of the family, the store of B. L. Belsha & Son and the home at Marvell

was sold and the family moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where James V. T. Belsha entered into the land title insurance business with Phoenix Title and Trust Company, later bought out by Transamerica Corporation as their first entry into the title insurance field, and now called Transamerica Title Insurance Company. He retired from that company in November, 1966 after forty years service with those companies, and has been happy to visit the county of his birth each year since, beginning in 1968.

The author of this four part Article is deeply interested in genealogical research and will be happy to hear from anyone who has further knowledge of the people discussed therein, or who wishes further knowledge about them--particularly the Belsha, Browning, Lane, Long, McMurphy and Spain families. All communications will be given full consideration and answers will be forthcoming if at all possible. Comments on the contents of the Article will be appreciated.

T H E E N D

The picture on the next page is of Columbus Shackelford Belsha and Sarah Washington (Lane) Belsha, grandparents of James V. Belsha, about the time of the Civil War.

*



THE 28th WISCONSIN INFANTRY REGIMENT AT
HELENA: III

Letters of Captain Edward S. Redington,
Company D

Helena, Ark., May 6, 1863.

Dear Mary:

I received your welcome letter, accompanied by the box of dainties sent to Major and myself by Mr. Sellers. The things were all in first rate shape, and were just what we wanted to the fraction. Indeed I believe you know better what I want than I do myself. My cotton socks were about gone, and I was talking just before they came of sending to town to buy some. They ask half a dollar for the poorest things you ever saw. The cooking tasted the most like home of anything I have seen since I came South. I should have known you make see them where I would (in MS but does not make sense) and they like to have made me homesick. The shirts are the only thing that I did not care much about, and were the only things damaged. They were rather close to the maple sugar and the flaps look rather yellow. I shall not wear them unless I get sick and I shall not do that, if I can help it.

I had written this much when an order came to take the men and shoot at a target. We did not get back until nearly sundown, and found orders for us to be ready to start at six o'clock tomorrow with six days rations on a scout back in the coun-

try. I have been busy until now and it is nearly twelve o'clock. I do not know how far we shall go. We know there are numerous Guerillas within a few miles. They ambushed a detachment of two hundred Cavalry last week and killed some fifteen or more and took some prisoners, there were twenty-nine missing. They estimated the enemy at from eight to ten hundred; but from their stories there were about three hundred. They must have scared our fellows something awfully, for such a looking set you never saw as were those same boasting fellows that went out in the morning. Full one half had lost their hats - not a few all their arms, and in fact everything loose about them. They were all covered with mud from nose to tail. I saw several that were wounded full one-half were hurt by their horses falling with them. A reinforcement was immediately started out and we were ordered under arms. We took position behind some of the works I had made the day before and the regiment their ground valiantly until night and came back to camp and went to bed. I do not suppose there was a Rebel within ten miles. The Cavalry, about 1500 in all, went out to the battle ground, but the birds had left and from all appearances, in about as much of a hurry as did our boys. They stayed out all night and came back in the morning and so ended that scare. The only hurt I received was that Gen. Gorman sent me another 100 men, and I had to work them until nine o'clock at night.

There is no doubt that there is quite a large force, variously estimated at from ten to fifteen thousand, which force I ex-

pect we are going out to look after. I have not yet learned how many men we shall have along. I only know that nearly all the mounted forces are going, quite a number of pieces of Artillery, the negro regiment, the 43rd Indiana and ours. I have not heard of any more that are going. I should think that we ought to have twice the men we have, we will see in the morning.

Mr. Sellers the man that came down with the stores from Waukesha, got down Saturday night. He brought besides numerous boxes and barrels for individuals, seventy-five barrels of potatoes, onions, etc. that were distributed among the men of the regiment. There were about five barrels of potatoes and a bushel of onions to each company, with a liberal supply to the hospital. A full barrel of currant wine, which some lady in Waukesha, God help her, sent to the hospital, with the expressed understanding that it was for sick soldiers. That barrel of wine would sell here for \$300.00 and is worth twice that to the regiment. Oh dear, I am awful tired and sleepy, and want to write about forty things, which for the life of me I cannot think of. You say you talk of going East, if you can arrange to leave the children to your satisfaction. I think you had better go, it will do you good, and will give you a rest. You did not say when you thought of going or how long you would be away, perhaps you may never have a better time. I should much like to have you make me a visit but do

not suppose it would be advisable, all things considered, for you to come. Give my best regards to Mrs. Williams and thank her several times for the jar of pickels. Tell her I have not opened them, but will as soon as we get back from this Guerilla hunt.

We have not yet had any warm weather although yesterday and today and the day before were full comfortable, but Mr. Sellers says there were two days before he left Wisconsin fully as warm. Tonight it is comfortable sleeping under three blankets. Strawberries are getting ripe (how do yours look this spring?) but they are few and far between. There are ten soldiers waiting every one. We shall have lots of fruit as soon as Vicksburg is taken (which will be shortly, if rumors are true) peaches are more than half grown, but some kinds of trees are not yet in blossom.

Capt. Townsend started for home yesterday, sick, he looked very bad. I am afraid he will never join his regiment again. We hear that Capt. Williams will be back very soon, but no one seems to think that he ever can come. Col. Whitaker's resignation has not yet been heard from, and we do not know whether it will be accepted or not. There has been some figuring for his place, but if Major does not get it there will be one row, you may rely on that. If neither Capt. Williams or Capt. Thomas come back, Capt. Stevens who is a much better man than either of them, will be Major, if they do not fig-

ure him out. In that case I will be the ranking Captain.

Now Good Night my dear one, and may we soon meet and this damnable rebellion be over. Kiss the dear children for me and I remain your dear husband.

Edward.

Copies owned by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin at Madison.

YELLOW FEVER SCARE

The following account is from a book written in 1879 by J. P. Dromgoole, M. D., of Louisville, Kentucky, called Yellow Fever: Heroes, Honors, and Horrors of 1878.

Page 114, Helena, county seat of Phillips County, Ark., on Mississippi River, and terminus of A. C. R. R. Population, 5,000. The first case of yellow fever was a Miss Gertrude Weathers, from Memphis, who landed there August 16th, sickened and died in two days. August 17th J. B. Miller died. No new cases occurred till September 15th, and from that date until October 14th the doctors disagreed as to the disease, and on that day following announcement was made by the Board of Health: "This board believes it now becomes their duty to announce to the citizens that while the prevailing disease may not be strictly yellow fever it certainly is seemingly quite as fatal, and citizens are hereby so advised. There are about 75 cases of sickness in town. 10 new cases and 6 deaths are reported for the 48 hours ending noon to day." Quarantine has been raised. A Howard Association was organized and elected Judge J. Cole Davis as President, and begun work October 17th; the excitement was abating. Six of the seven physicians say the disease was not yellow fever. One member of the Board of Health contends that the disease is yellow fever. The next day there were 3 cases, and the following account was published:

The impression has gone abroad that

yellow fever exists here. There is no yellow fever in Helena. The general health of the city is good. No business houses are closed. 3,000 bales of cotton are awaiting shipment, and there is no destitution that the city is not willing and able to relieve.

D. A. Linthicum, M. D.,
Pres't Physician's Sanitary Com., W. D.
McAlpine, M. D., Secretary, Geo. McAlpine,
M. D., A. A. Hornor, M. D., H. M. Grant,
M. D., T. M. Jacks, M. D. Helena Ark.,
Oct. 18th.

At a large meeting of citizens of Helena, held to-day, it was declared that there was no yellow fever here; that the Board of Health, in declaring the epidemic, did so in opposition to the opinion of the medical profession here, and that all parties can come here with perfect safety.

John Hornor, John E. Burke,
Aaron Meyers, Sec'ys.

The disease rapidly disappeared as frost made its sanitary impression. Total cases, 77; total deaths, 9. Total contributions, from citizens alone, \$1,064; total disbursements, \$1,064.

A letter of unknown date to the Editor of the World from Ben Higgins tells more of the 1878 scare.

Ed: Daily World:

I see from your issue of the 3d inst, that you would like to have some data

on the Howard Association which did such noble service in Helena when the terrible yellow fever epidemic was raging in this and neighboring cities in the year 1878, and as I organized the Howard Association in Helena and am about the only survivor of that association left in Helena to tell the tale, I will endeavor to enlighten you on the subject.

In the first place, let it be understood that only one physician of the whole board residing here at that time, pronounced the malady Yellow fever, the rest of them called it the "Same Thing." Dr. Nash being the one who pronounced it the real "Bronze John," and treated for that and was more successful with his patients than were the others.

Now as to Howards, seeing my fellow citizens dropping out at an alarming rate, and feeling that some organized human effort should be inaugurated to stamp out, if possible, the dreadful scourge, I organized that association in Helena. I took the name from the Howard Association of Memphis, which was doing such heroic work in the Bluff City at that time.

I succeeded, in one day, in securing the services of 19 volunteer nurses to go with me. Among the volunteers were Capt. J. Cole Davis, Frank Robinson, and Theo. Antel, who together with myself held a hurried caucus and assumed the offices of the Association as follows: Capt. J. Cole Davis, president; Ben Higgins, secretary; Frank Robinson, treasurer, and Theo. Antel, visiting committee.

When it became known that we and our volunteer nurses were to handle yellow fever patients, we were refused board and

lodging at our respective boarding houses, so we went before the Board of Health, informing that body that we were organized and ready to enter the field, but had been refused board and lodging at our former residences, and asked them for assistance.

In response to our request, they unanimately welcomed us and commenced immediately to find a suitable location and stocked it with food, cooks, tables, chairs and beds and bedding.

Our business office and lunch room were in the building then known as Miss Sue McGraw's music room, on the northeast corner of Franklin and Porter Streets, and our commissary and sleeping apartments for the nurses was the old Coolidge Hall (or Masonic Temple) located on the southeast corner of Franklin and Perry Streets.

We operated about six weeks, starting somewhere about the 10th of September and winding up in the latter part of October after a few big frosts. During this time we handled about one hundred cases of fever and, as well as I remember, had about 63 deaths in the six weeks.

During the last three weeks of our operations, owing to the fact that so many of our volunteer nurses were stricken with the plague, we were compelled to hire several extra nurses, among these were two women of the Red Light district, who fell victims to the dreadful disease. But out of our little band of volunteers, only two were claimed by death, the rest have scattered, God only knows where, since 1878. Many have died with other diseases, and if there are any of them living besides me, I do not know their address.

Fraternally yours,
Ben Higgins

Ben Higgins was listed in the 1906 Helena City Directory as Editor and Proprietor of the Helena Daily Bulletin and owner of Ben Higgins Printing Co., 221½ Rightor Street. In the 1909 Directory, he was Editor and Proprietor of the Helena Daily News and owner still of Ben Higgins Printing Co., 211 York Street. Sometime after 1910 when C. M. Young bought the Helena World, he worked for Mr. Young. In 1917, the Directory listed him as manager of the Ridge City Printing Co., 518 Walnut Street. It is thought that he and his wife eventually moved to St. Louis.

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The Phillips County Historical Society supplies the QUARTERLY to its members. Membership is open to anyone interested in Phillips County history. Annual membership dues are \$5.00 for a regular membership and \$10.00 for a sustaining membership. Single copies of the QUARTERLY are \$1.25. QUARTERLIES are mailed to members. Dues are payable to Mrs. C. M. T. Kirkman, Treasurer, 806 McDonough St., Helena, Arkansas 72342.

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