

A Sampler
[examples of material in *An Illustrated History*]

An Illustrated History is divided into materials from each of twelve communities in Northeast Shelby County and South Central Tipton County. The material is varied and includes personal recollections, letters and journals spanning over 100 years, tax records, draft records, church records, subdivision plats from the 1830s to the 1920s, cemetery records, playbills, newspaper articles, and detailed accounts of rural cotton gins, country stores, banks, and other enterprises. The importance of churches, schools, and post offices (almost every small town had one by 1900) is reflected in the text. The construction of the Memphis and Paducah Railroad (later the Illinois Central), the history of road and highway construction, and the financing and construction of the Big Creek Drainage Canal are all portrayed in this volume.

Below is a very brief glimpse of some of the stories that are told (and as to which you can find more information) within *An Illustrated History*.

In the Salem section, you can learn about the exploits of Erskine Caldwell, later to be better known as the best selling author of books such as *Tobacco Road*. Caldwell, in his book *With All My Might*, described his early years in the Salem community. He is recalled by Bill Lucado, a contributor to the book:

There are a number of Erskine Caldwell stories. One, which my father told, is of Erskine crawling under the Salem schoolhouse and waiting for Mr. Jim Tom Fee, the teacher to stand above a knot hole in the floor with his right shoe which also had a hole from wear. Erskine lit a match to set fire to Mr. Fee's sock. At p. 19; also see p. 28, note 58.

Salem is the home of the oldest cemetery in the area and *An Illustrated History* contains the story of James Graham, a veteran of the American Revolution, who is buried at Salem plus the story of Salem's Medal of Honor winner – Joseph Bernard Adkison. Adkison received the Medal of Honor for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity...in action with the enemy near Bellicourt, France, September 29, 1918." [p. 68]. You will also learn the legend of the "Little Drummer Boy," a wounded Union drummer boy named Platt Stout Lane from an Illinois regiment, who was taken in by an elderly Portersville couple who cared for him until his death. The story, contributed by Bob Fleming, explains that "Sometime afterwards, his parents, J. and C.S. Lane, travelled to the Salem Cemetery and had a tombstone erected for their son. The top of the stone is comprised of two shaking hands – one of the cuffs was originally painted blue and the other cuff grey." [p. 53].

The tombstone itself, which is pictured in the book, contains part of one of Abraham Lincoln's favorite devotionals.

In the Kerrville section you can learn about the circus that visited Kerrville, the fairgrounds that were erected there, the hotel that burned in 1925, and the bank that was "cashed out" with the Great Depression. The story about Kerrville's mercantile activities includes the following quote from *The Evening Appeal*:

The village of Kerrville has no chain stores, no dry goods stores, or grocery stores, as such. All its mercantile establishments are "general stores" that sell everything from plows to harnesses to baking powder and babies' shoes.

The book adds the following details:

The number of stores in Kerrville may have numbered eight or more at one time or another – Aycock, Wright, Matthews & Nelson, Beaver, Roberts, Laxton, Tucker, Yancy, Kelley, Shippey, Preston, Bryant – all were businesses in the downtown area. [p. 98].

Also recounted in Kerrville are the cotton gin, the Bluebird Bus Line, the powder plant, and the Kerrville Post Office which was the last in the small towns in the Northeast Shelby, South Central Tipton to close.

In the stories on Armourtown, the risks of working in a gin are reflected under "Businesses" where it is recounted "Mr. Johnson ran the gin with an 'iron hand' – since he had lost a hand in an accident and had an artificial limb." [p. 156]. The Armourtown Post Office is recalled – "Effective July 20, 1896, Samuel T. Armour was designated Postmaster. On April 11, 1898, Robert B. Armour became Postmaster, serving until October 31, 1902, when service was consolidated at Kerrville." [p. 156].

The Bethel community is remembered with a list of students in Bethel School from 1923 to 1926 [p. 224] and records the travelling exploits of Buck West as told by Lillian Laverne West:

Buck farmed for a short time and then decided to teach school. ... His first teaching job was on Island 35 across the Mississippi River in Tipton County. He would ride his horse to Richardson's Landing. Sometimes the bridges and creek bottoms would be covered with water, and Buck would have to make his horse swim across the creek before he could get there. When he arrived he would catch a ferry, ride across the river, and be met by Horace P. Cash. [p. 222].

The accompanying illustration shows Island 35 and the route that Mr. West traveled.

The Mudville section explains the history of the community's name and recounts the wartime service of a number of its residents including James Armstrong, a member of the 506 Military Police Battalion attached to the Third Army in World War II. As an MP in Germany, Mr. Armstrong would go on "town patrol:"

MP's were authorized to arrest military personnel who violated local and/or military laws. While on duty in Germany, James served as a guard for German war prisoners and for allied military tribunals trying Germans charged with war crimes. [p. 238].

In the Mudville section there are also records of Stewartville High School including the tuition charges and names of students and parents. [p. 254]. There is the story of Greenwood A.M.E. Church, founded as a brush arbor in the 1870s. John Everett Strong, Jr. tells of growing up and attending Anthony School and then being the first in his family to go on to college:

When I first started to college, I would go to college five days a week and come home and pick cotton on Saturday...and it was understood that if I graduated and was successful, I would see that my sister went to school. And it was understood by her that if she graduated, she would help the others. [p. 259].

In the Macedonia section, Annabel Covey Thompson tells community stories, including about Robert Kirk's dog. After Mr. Kirk died, he was buried at the Macedonia Cemetery and

I went out there one day and that dog was lying on the grave. He was lying out there on the grave and that wouldn't be the first time that he had done that. [p. 291].

It was something she would never forget.

Charts in *An Illustrated History* include the chart of the average annual salaries of teachers in Shelby County from the school year 1935-36 through 1946-47. At the time, the chart reflects, salaries were divided by gender and race. An added portion of the chart brings the wages up through 1958. The accompanying history of Barret's Chapel School includes:

In 1922 additional land was purchased and an eight room building with an auditorium was built to accommodate twelve grades. The name of the school was changed to Barret's Chapel in recognition of J.H. Barret for his leadership in establishing the high school.[p. 316].

Previously the school had been known as Hays Grove in honor of the donor of the land, Mrs. Jane Hays.

The Barretville section describes the economic activity of the town with a detailed description of cotton ginning. Mr. Scott, the town blacksmith, is remembered by Ernie Worley:

I remember Mr. Scott, the blacksmith in Barretville. I was five or six years old and, to me, he was a monster of a man. It would scare you to death just to look at him. He had that big hammer and the anvil and forge and he would bang that thing. [p. 333].

The Rosemark section has the history of the Rosemark Bank and Trust Company, just as the Barretville section has the history of Barretville Bank and Trust Company. An extensive appendix by Paul Matthews [p. 552] provides even more detailed information on Barretville Bank's first thirty-six years. The Rosemark section also recounts the history of the two early churches – Big Creek Presbyterian (now First Presbyterian) and Richland Associate Reformed Presbyterian, plus the history of Rosemark High School, Rosemark Elementary School, the Rosemark Telephone Company, Thompson's Store, Moore Brothers' Store, Cole's Store, Big Creek Drainage Canal, and Austin-Peay Highway. The Rosemark section begins with the naming of the town:

Richland changed its name to Rosemark in 1890 when it was determined that it could not become a post office because there was already a Richland post office in Tennessee. New names were proposed at a community gathering at Thompson's Store, placed in a hat, and the name Rosemark, submitted by Mr. Tarkington, was drawn. [p. 355].

There are letters in various sections of the book. The Rosemark section includes a letter from Robert Matthews Williams sent from Romorantin, France on July 13, 1918. Mr. Williams, who would later become the postman for the area, wrote his mother:

I wish now that I had taken up flying as it is a great life, and believe me when we get all our Liberty planes lined up we will make the Kaiser throw up the flag. The Liberty plane is a wonder and is far ahead of anything over here.... [p. 465].

In addition to the articles, maps, historic documents, extensive illustrations, family

stories, cemetery information, and documents reflecting the economy, the book also has detailed appendix information including unique maps (and access to additional maps), voter information, census data from 1900 and the 1962 Rosemark section of the Millington telephone directory. The index of individuals' names appearing in the text has almost 7,000 names. This, along with a 16 page table of contents with detailed subheadings allows the reader to easily navigate this extensive volume.

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