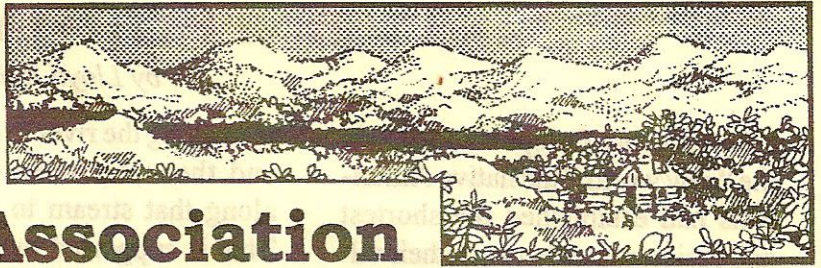


ESTATOE

Quarterly Newsletter

Yancey History Association



Volume XV, No. 2

Preserving Our Appalachian Heritage

Spring 2001

The History of Transportation in Yancey County

By mid summer a new permanent exhibit that has been in the works for over two years will finally become a reality. With the cooperation of Yancey County Government, the patience of the Yancey County Chamber of Commerce and Federal funding administered by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the History Association will unveil " The History of Yancey County Transportation " The Transportation exhibit will be housed in a glass enclosure under the existing portico at the Visitor Center.

The development of a Transportation Exhibit has been part of the Visitor Center plan since it's inception, however the lack of funds and the need to get the Chamber of Commerce into the facility put the project on the back burner. The project came back to life a few years ago when Dr. Lloyd Bailey found the location of what we believe to have been the first car that was owned and operated in Yancey County. In the early 1920's Dr. Carson McCourry bought a Dodge Roadster to improve his ability to make house calls and to travel between his home in Daybook and the lumber mills in Pensacola. Following the great flood of 1916 perhaps all of the bridges in Yancey County were washed away lending substance to the story that Dr. McCourry drove to Pensacola on the train track rather than using the road that forded the Cane River seven times.

The centerpiece of the exhibit will be a 1920's Dodge Roadster replicating Dr. McCourry's car in every way possible. The information exhibit will create a time line progression from Yancey County's early use of old "Indian " trails, to horse and wagon roads, to the development of the railroad system, to early paved roads that now lead us to the oncoming Highway 19 improvement Project. You can preview some of the information that will be included in the exhibit inside this issue of the Estatee.

Yancey History Association to feature Civil Rights Program

The Yancey History Association will present a program with Bill Whiteside as the featured speaker on Thursday June 14th at 7:00 PM at the Museum of Yancey County History. Mr. Whiteside will share the experiences he had while traveling on the Civil Rights Heritage Tour this past April. Some of the sites visited included; the Historic Tuskee Institute and the Booker T Washington Monument, in Montgomery, Ala. The tour also included the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama and the Home of Martin Luther King in Atlanta, Ga.

History Association members may remember Bill Whiteside's moving portrayal of Daniel McFee from the YHA Readers Theater presentation of Charles Price's "Freedom's Alter " Future History Association members may better know Bill as the former minister at Griffith Chapel AME Zion. Both members and future members are invited and encouraged to attend.

New Museum Operating Schedule

May - September

Tuesday & Wednesday 10:00 - 4:00 PM

Saturday 12:00 - 5 PM & Sunday 1:00 - 5:00 PM

Special Thanks to:

Drs. Carolyn and David Cort for the Beautiful Landscaping of our parking lot and Mary Whiteside with the Community Garden Project for developing the Jim Ray Memorial Garden.

AN ANCIENT PATH IN YANCEY COUNTY

by Lloyd Bailey

Long before Europeans settled in the "new world," the native Americans had established the shortest and easiest routes between their village or other points of interest. Such paths were often heavily traveled and were easily visible to the eye.

Thus, they were immediately used by the early European settlers, then widened to accommodate horse and wagon, and finally (perhaps with some slight modification in route) thrown open by the "iron horse" and the automobile. The following is an account of the development of one such route in Yancey County.

In the year 1778, one hundred acres of land were granted by the State of North Carolina to John McKnitte Alexander and William Sharpe, in what was then Burke County. The grant reads, in part: "...on the north side of Toe River, on the old Indian path which crosses below the mouth of Rock Creek, including a small cane brake opposite to an island." Presumably, this is the island that is still visible just below the mouth of Big Rock Creek.

In the year 1791, two hundred acres of land were surveyed for John Edwards in what was then Buncombe County (formerly Burke). The survey reads, in part: "...beginning...on the north side of Caney River....including the head of Jacks Creek and the path from Caney River to the Toe River for compliment..." It is logical to assume, although it is not demonstrable, that the Indian path down Rock Creek crossed the Toe River,

then along the river to Jacks Creek, and then continued up the path along that stream to Cane River. This is supported by the fact that the Minutes of the Yancey Court for the fall 1844, mention "*the ford of Toe River near Jacks Creek.*" Both creeks empty into the Toe River very near each other.

The route was little more than a path when my ancestor, George Byrd {see Vol. I, Article No. 82}, settled on Jacks Creek in 1796. Family tradition has it that upon thereafter he was riding down the path, with wife Annie (Hudson) astride the horse behind him, when she happened to glance backward and sighted an Indian crouched on a tree limb under which they had just passed!

One of the first acts of the County Court after Yancey was formed in 1833 was to provide for the creation and widening of roads. Thus, at the first session, in 1834, Charles Byrd was appointed to oversee the road work "*from Samuel Byrd's on Jacks Creek to Thomas Ray's field,*" with "*all hands from the mill to the gap at the head of the Creek*" mandated to assist. {For Samuel Byrd, who lived on Guilders Creek, see Vol. I, Article No. 229; his nephew Charles, (son of William Kimsey Byrd, for whom see Vol. I, Article No. 230), lived on the present Byrd Branch; Thomas Ray lived on Phipps Creek, about where the modern road crosses it (for him, see Vol. I, Article No. 580). His field would have extended to the river, and the old path from Jacks Creek would have reached it by

going down beside Mack McIntosh's dairy.}

By October 1835, the Court decreed that the path should be widened down Jacks Creek to the mouth: it is to be "cut-out" from Toe River up to the mouth of the Mine Fork tributary, with Dobson Deyton {Vol. I, Article No. 259} as Overseer. Thus a wagon-road would extend all the way from the Toe River to the Asheville-Burnsville Road at Thomas Ray's. It, as with all other county roads, was to be "*sixteen feet in the clear, and twelve feet clear of stumps*" (Court of February 1837).

Such a route was a bit out-of-the-way if one wanted to visit Burnsville, and thus the 1835 court decreed that a road be "*cut out from Lewis Briggs*" across Green Mountain to Burnsville," with Charles Byrd as overseer. (That route, I presume, would have been up Star Branch, across the mountain, and down to west Burnsville.) In anticipation of heavier use, the Court decreed (June 1837) that the road be improved "*from Sam Byrds mill up to Star Branch,*" with Samuel Honeycutt as overseer. (An alternative route across the mountain was soon worked out for people who lived further down Jacks Creek: from Day Book, up Mine Fork, and down to east Burnsville, the route of the present paved road.)

By the spring of 1843, the County had conceived of a grand extension of the ancient path: from Burnsville, across Green Mtn., down Jacks

Creek, downstream along Toe River, and across Indian Grave Gap to what is now Unicoi Co., TN. Thus, by the spring of 1846, Hiram Bailey is overseer of that segment from "Joe Tucker's (at the mouth of Jacks Creek) down to John Bailey's." (This is the well-known "Yellow Jacket" John Bailey, who lived at Bee Branch.) The road apparently crossed the river at Julius' Ford (near the junction of Cane and Toe Rivers).

By the spring of 1849, the Court can speak of a road from Asheville to Tennessee, which passed up California Creek (now in Madison Co.), across Paint Spring Gap, down Prices Creek, to Burnsville, than as outlined previously.

Certain landmarks on Jacks Creek are mentioned, now of uncertain location: "the arbor" (April and July 1860 Minutes), and the "new meeting house...at the mouth of Moses Peterson Branch" (January 1848 Minutes).

A list of the relevant references, in the Minutes of the Yancey Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, is as follows:

1st Session 1834: Charles Byrd to oversee the road from Samuel Byrds on Jacks Creek to Thomas Ray's field. All hands from the mill to the gap at the head of the Creek are responsible to assist.

October 1835: Road from mouth of Jacks Creek to mouth of Mine Fork to be cut out; Dobson Deyton, Overseer. Charles Byrd to cut out road from Lewis Briggs' across Green Mountain to Burnsville. All

hands above Samuel Byrds' mill to assist.

February 1837: All roads shall be "16' in the clear, and 12' clear of stumps."

June 1837: Samuel Honeycutt to oversee the road from Samuel Byrds' mill to Star Branch.

February 1839: George Byrd to oversee road from mouth of Mine Fork up Jacks Creek to Charles Byrd Branch. Lewis Briggs to oversee road from Charles Byrd Branch to forks of road above Edward Wilson's place.

Spring 1843: George Byrd to oversee the Jacks Creek contingent of workers on the road from Indian Grave Gap to Burnsville.

Fall 1844: James Bailey to oversee road from Gutradge Garland's to ford of Toe River near Jacks Creek.

Spring 1846: Wade Hampton to oversee road from Mine Fork to Charley's (Byrd) Branch. Hiram Bailey to oversee road from John Bailey's to ford of Jacks Creek below Joseph Tucker's.

Spring 1848: Discussion of "road from Benjamin Cooper's by way of Julius Ford to the new meeting house on Jacks Creek at the mouth of Moses Peterson Branch."

Fall 1849: Peter Honeycutt {Jacks Creek} to oversee a portion of the road from Asheville to the TN line {to Burnsville, across Green Mtn., down Jacks Creek, across ford of Toe River, and across

Indian Grave Gap}. A.F. {Alfred?} Keith to oversee the Rock Creek hands.

January 1851: John Rannolph to oversee road from mouth of Jacks Creek to mouth of Mine Fork.

Fall 1851: John Byrd to oversee road from Charles Byrd Branch to Henry Ray's mill and the State Road.

Spring 1852: James Bailey appointed road overseer from mouth of Jacks Creek to the forks of the road above the Jacks Creek meeting house.

Spring 1853: J.C. Bailey to oversee road along Toe River, beginning at Jacks Creek.

Spring 1854: Swinfield Howell to superintend road on lower Jacks Creek.

April 1860: Road order on Jacks Creek mentions the Arbor as a well known landmark. (Also mentioned in July, 1860)

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Estatooe (es-to-toe-e)

Estootowie in early records. A Cherokee place name, shortened to Estatoe/Estatoah, from which the name Towe or Toe River is derived.

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Officers of the Association

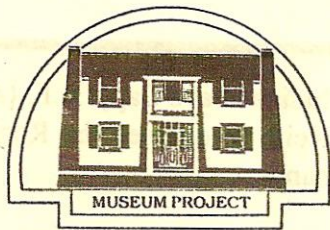
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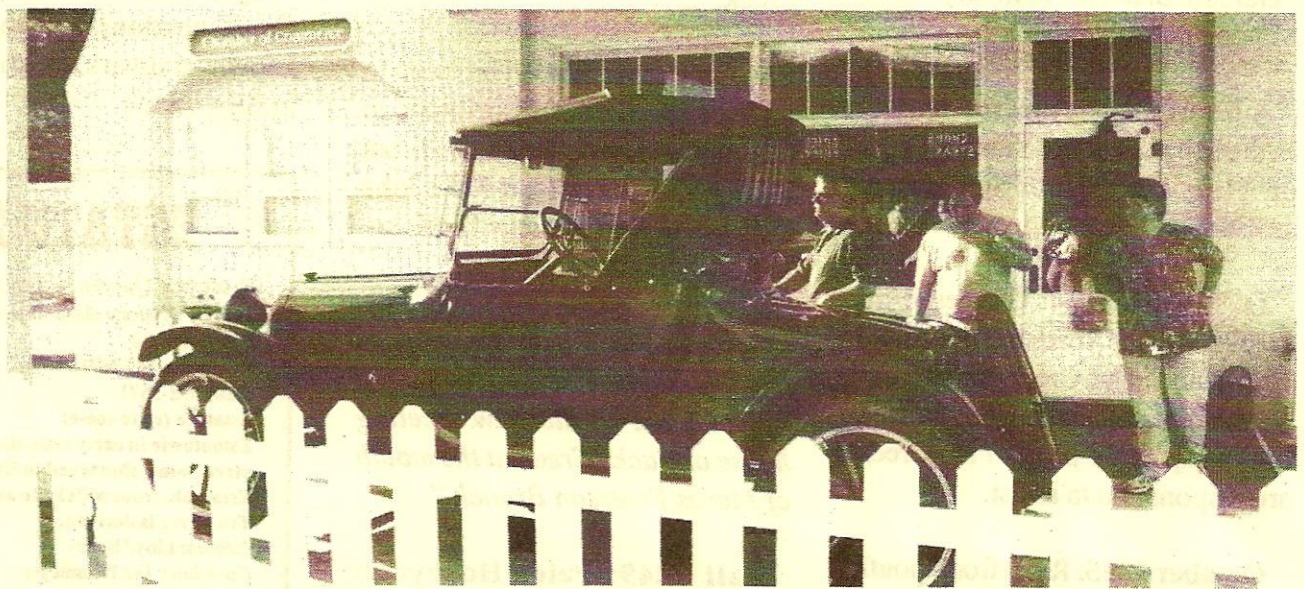
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Yancey History Association

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Yancey History Association Directors Jason Robinson and Denise Young inspect the Museum's newest acquisition, while Jim Priesmeyer checks to see how the car will fit in the soon to be constructed glass enclosure. The roadster is being made possible by display sponsors (\$500.00) that currently include Earl and Betty Young, CraftPride Gallery, John and Denise Young, Carolina Collision. Mountain Air Country Club has pledged to become a parade sponsor (\$1,000.00). YHA is currently seeking additional sponsors.