

# LIM ROCK, ALABAMA

Jackson County  
(1930-1945)

*A COMMUNITY AS REMEMBERED 50 YEARS LATER*



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October 1992

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This paper is written based upon impressions of experiences of half a century ago. Little effort was made to verify dates or correct spelling of family names. It is only how things are remembered.

Historical groups or the Jackson County Commission may have the official names of caves, coves, cemeteries, and the like. My reference is based upon what local people called them. Each one can be referenced by the unscaled informal map.

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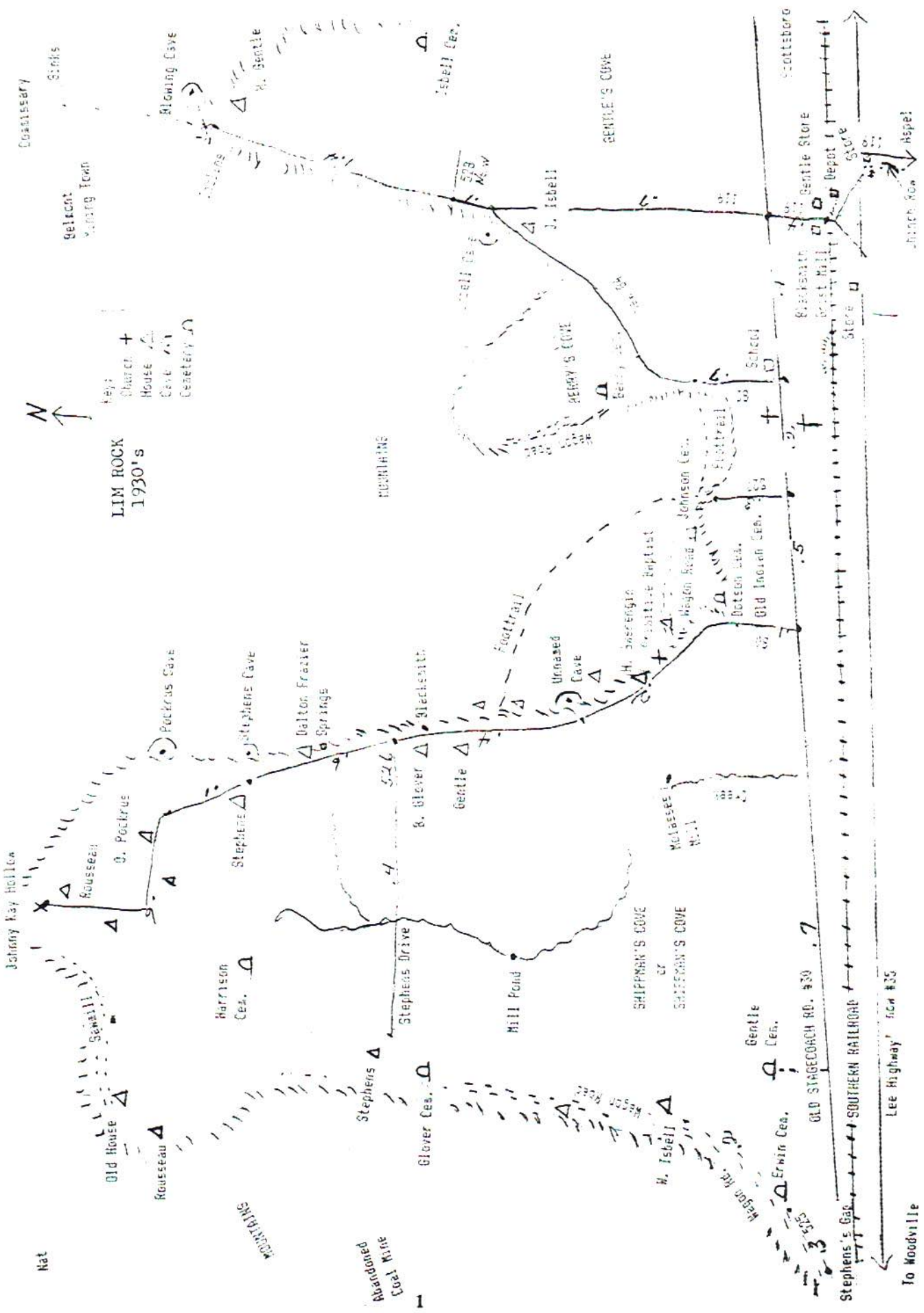
*Marlin D. Tucker*  
*Jera P. Tucker*

October 1992

*This article is dedicated to the memory of Norman B. Tucker whose untimely death occurred on September 11, 1992 during the writing of the article. He supplied much of the information and the feeling involved in telling the stories.*

**LIM ROCK  
1930's**

KEY:  
 Church +  
 House Δ  
 Cave ○  
 Cemetery ▽



To Moodville





## ***LIM ROCK***

### ***SURVIVING AND GROWING UP IN THE "GOOD OLD DAYS"***

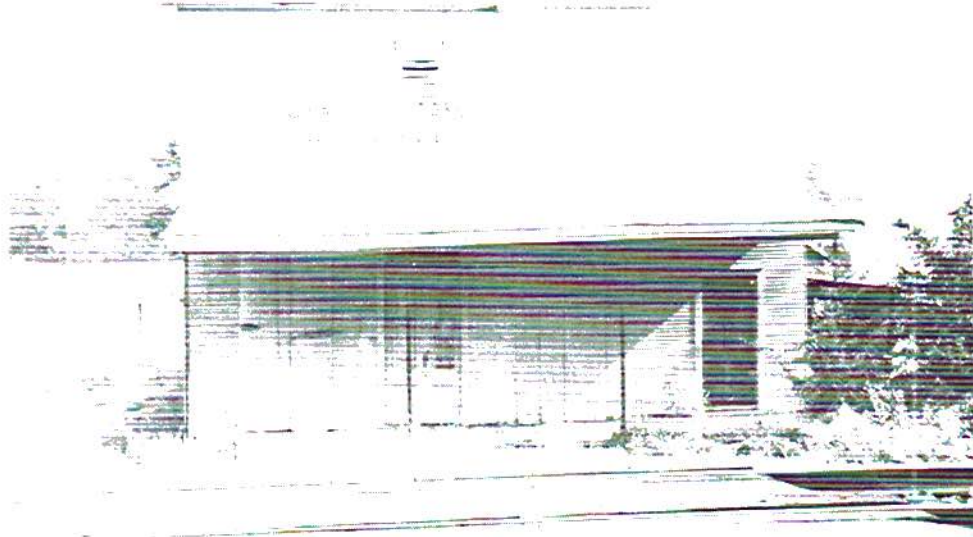
Times were lean and making a living was a struggle for families during the "Great Depression." In the isolated community of Lim Rock, making a living was especially tough on the breadwinners of each family. Money was scarce and jobs were almost nonexistent. People who did not own real estate property had to depend upon the good will of those who did. Sharecropping or day labor were the two main sources of food and/or money.

Landowners survived in fair style during the growing season. In the winter they, too, had problems. They had to feed their animals with a constant outflow of money with very little income. They had not secured enough cash for their limited crops to last until the next harvest. Horses and mules had to be "shod". Milk cows had to be fed, and there was no way to market the milk. Neighbors had no cash to buy the extra milk. There was no refrigeration to keep it more than a day or two. Each meal had to be prepared fresh and generally could not be kept for long.

Lim Rock was an isolated community until the mid 1940's. There were no telephones, no electricity, no farm tractors, and only two or three cars. Roads and paths were built for wagons or walking. All people walked. Some children and youth walked 2-3 miles to the only school. They, and others, walked 3-4 miles to the nearest store, the Gentle General Merchandise Store, in the commercial center of the community.



## THE COMMERCIAL CENTER OF THE COMMUNITY



During the “heyday” of the community of the 1920's and 1930's Lim Rock had the one general merchandise store and two other gasoline and convenience stores. John Rousseau ran a barbershop located within the Clyde Gentle store. Also, the post office was located in the Gentle General Merchandise Store. Most of the route mail was delivered from the Woodville Post Office.





There was a train depot located across the street from the general store. The depot was a very active place. Mail was picked up and sent out from the depot. If there was no passenger to be let off or picked up, huge mail sacks were ever so precisely hung from the mail post. The train had a long mechanical arm that extended to grab the mail as it hung from the post as the train sped along at full speed. Many times this mail pickup became a source of entertainment as the residents stood by to watch as the depot manager hung the mail and as the train sped by and, like a great monster, grabbed the mail bag. It is understood that the mail was sorted while the train was en route.

Many times the children who were bold and curious would go and peer through the depot's windows to watch the depot manager do his chores including operating his code machine, preparing to receive and send mail, and preparing passengers to board the trains. This observing was one of the few ways youth had a chance to interact with the outside world. These observers would also check out how Emmett Pockrus would spin his magic in his shoe-repair shop located within the depot. They knew there was something beyond Lim Rock, but they did not know what.

Sometimes people would walk for miles out of the nearby coves to the train station to board for trips to Scottsboro or west to Woodville or Huntsville. Lim Rock residents looked forward with great enthusiasm to go en masse to Scottsboro for its First Monday activities. Dozens of people would be waiting to board the train that had extra cars with hundreds of other people on their way to Scottsboro for this great outing. Commerce was brisk on these days. Some of the youth had their first experiences with indoor toilets and other "citified" things on these trips. Of course, some of these youths, and others too, probably had to "hold it" until they got back home before they felt they could gracefully use a facility.

Between the station and the store was a sidetrack that was used by the railroad to load and unload boxcars or flatcars depending upon the type of cargo. Oftentimes the empty cars would remain parked for days until cedar posts or other wood products could be brought out of the mountains and loaded onto the cars. All of the loading was done by hand. This kind of work made for some strong muscles as the men worked inside of metal cars that were heated up by the fierce summer sun.

Men would load the flatcars the same way with timber for building lumber or staves or ax handles. Some of the men were expert in wood classification. These experts would mark the logs with given colored marker to indicate the condition of the logs for the sawmill people when the logs got to their destination. Some of the logging and hauling timber was hard work for the people who were lucky enough to be employed.

Sometimes boys with bold spirits would climb on these huge cars and spend hours playing and experimenting. It was known that on more than a few occasions one boy would climb on top of the car, get hold of the control wheel, and unlock the brakes while 2 or 3 boys would do some pushing until the car got to rolling. The boys would panic, but somehow the one at the control would turn the wheel to its braking position after it had rolled a few feet. It may have been fun to



some, but it must have surely driven the railroad personnel and parents crazy. No one ever thought of suing anyone. Somehow it was generally felt that each person was responsible for his own actions. If a person got hurt because of an accident it was generally felt that the injured party was responsible, not someone else.

West of the General Store was a sidetrack extending 1-2 miles. This sidetrack was used by trains to park so other trains could pass. Freight trains often used this track to permit a fast-moving passenger train to pass. This activity was also a source of amusement as residents would watch a person get off the train to trip the switch so a train could move from the main track to the sidetrack. Torpedoes were often used to put on the track to signal the engineer of the approaching train. Of course, now with modern means of communication such methods of communication are probably not used.

Lim Rock was destined for change or to vanish as an isolated self-sufficient community when Lee Highway 72 (now Highway 35) was completed in about 1933. Scottsboro and Huntsville became easily accessible. Trucking became common place. Buses had good routes to follow. Coal, as a heating fuel, was replaced by electricity. Coal mines closed and their service railroad lines were closed and removed. Soon nothing was left of the lines except roads and newcomers began to call them old railbed roads. Gradually, newcomers to the community did not know why such names existed. The histories of once thriving communities were lost as the old folks died and youth never appreciated the stories to the fullest.

The once main highway (now County Road 30) was left only to local traffic. This road, known as the Old Stagecoach Road in Woodville, was the original road as Woodville punched east joining its commerce with Scottsboro. As time passed, the once thriving Lim Rock School that was located on this road was closed. The building was torn down and the land was secured by local people to have mobile homes installed with the meaningful history of a community fading.

Every store, the depot, the post office, the blacksmith shop, and all evidence of a central place of commerce of a community have long since closed. The rock quarry and road going from Lim Rock to Aspel have long since closed and the new County Road 119 was built a few hundred feet to the east.

After Highway 72 or Lee Highway was built, two small gas stations and convenience stores were built to compete with the Gentle General Merchandise Store. One was built across the highway in front of the depot and the other on the west edge of the settlement on the north side of Lee Highway. These stores tried to pick up the small-item business and the filling station business of the new traffic. The Gentle General Merchandise Store outlasted them and is marked today as an important footnote in the history of the community.

The Clyde Gentle General Merchandise Store was the center of commercial life of Lim Rock and much of the social gatherings during the 1930's and a few years beyond. It was the place where men and boys came to share their stories with each other. The store had its own sitting area

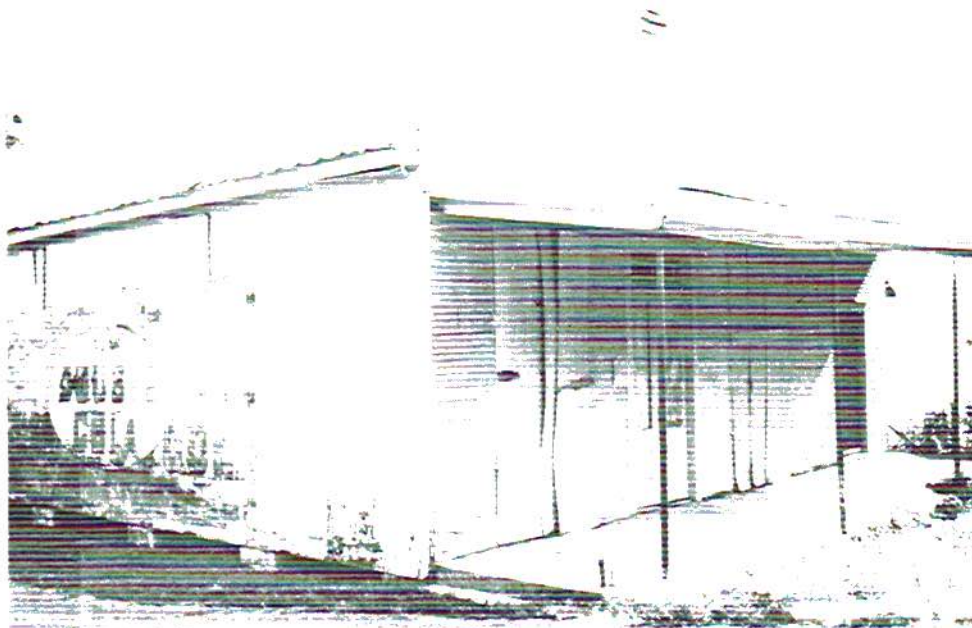


around a heater where customers and possible customers could sit, play checkers, and chew and smoke their tobacco or dip their snuff.

Every once in a while a small tanker truck would deliver a supply of gasoline to place in an underground tank. When a customer purchased some gasoline, the clerk would hand pump the gasoline into a glass container at the top of the pump station. Balls inside the glass would dance as the gasoline was pumped into the container which was marked to show how much had been pumped. When the requested amount had been pumped, that amount was dumped into the car's tank.

Almost anything needed in those days could be purchased such as shoes, clothing, ammunition, gasoline, coal oil or kerosene, and foodstuff including live chickens. Chickens were kept in crates beside the store and were bought and sold as any other product. Customers could bring their chickens and eggs and trade for store items. Much of the limited Christmas shopping was done here. Most Christmas shopping was very practical.

A small section of the store was secured for postal needs. All mail services were conducted. Even live chicks were sent through the mail in those days to be picked up by the customers at this post office. Day-old chicks could be received in special boxes. Postal customers understood that business had to be conducted during the daytime when the store was open. The mail was brought to the post office from the train station located close to the store.



The store had a front porch with two long benches. This porch served as a meeting place for those who wished to visit and share good fellowship. Those who had a spare 5c could buy a soft drink to enjoy as a checker game progressed. Oftentimes the drink companies had contests to

encourage sales. Inside the cap were numbers to indicate a prize such as 1c, 5c, or sometimes a \$1.00. These could be traded for cash or a reduction on the next purchase.

These storytellers made checkerboards on the store's cardboard boxes. Checkers were the caps of soft-drink bottles. One player would have the tops in one direction. The other player had his checkers turned the opposite direction. Anyone who came to visit was welcome to talk and/or to play. Every person was known by all others for miles around. This kind of interaction let others know of new births, deaths, or sicknesses.



Immediately across the railroad from this store were some limestone boulders and a drilled well with an installed hand pump. These boulders looked like they were hand hewed to fit the human anatomy. Sometimes a dozen men would sit or lie on the rocks and talk for hours.

The well invited the thirsty to linger a while. It was drilled in long bygone days, probably when the railroad was used by the local coal mine. Families in the community felt free to come and pump water to fill their buckets for their family uses. Of course, the pump was a hand pump and gave children much pleasure to pump and see the water miraculously come up. Some times the pump lost its prime and had to be reprimed by pouring from a can full of water sitting nearby. It seemed that the users of this well knew and respected the necessary custom of keeping plenty of prime water in the container.





About 150 feet behind this rock formation was a limestone rock quarry and crusher that were used in the early 1930's to secure foundation stone for the new construction of Lee Highway or Highway 72 (now Highway 35). Rails were installed inside the quarry and handcars of 2-3 yard capacity were used to transport the rocks to loading areas. Sometimes children would go into the quarry when all work had stopped and ride the cars down the slight incline. They would push the cars back up the grade and repeat, oftentimes to the consternation of their parents when they learned of the play. Today it is wondered how many companies and how many parents would permit such chances for learning and playing.

Oftentimes when members of the community were visiting near the well and rock formations, they would hear "fire in the hole" coming from workers in the quarry. These people, in good fun, would run for their lives to hide behind the Gentle's Store to watch as rock flew for hundreds of feet in all directions. It was generally understood that each person took care of himself and should have enough sense to stay out of harm's way.

Across the road (now County Road 119) was the community's major blacksmith shop and grist mill. Jeremiah Gentle ran one of the community's most thriving businesses. On some days his parking lot had 8-10 teams of horses and wagons waiting for services. The wagons might need new tires or the horses needed new shoes. Farmers came to "town" for such services or to trade at the Gentle's Store and/or to have their corn ground into meal.

Anyone could bring in any amount of corn to be ground to the customer's specification from coarse to fine. There was no cash money required. The owner had a small toll bucket that was used to get his share for the cost of grinding. He kept paper sacks of various sizes to be filled with his toll. Anyone could purchase meal to their liking.

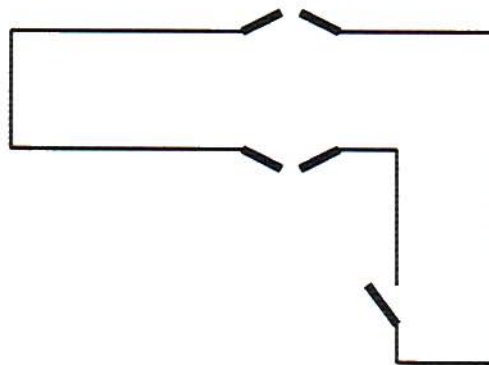


The customer's corn was poured into a hopper. A chute ran from the hopper between the two millstones. These two stones were adjusted to control the distance between them for grinding the corn according to the customer's wishes from fine to coarse. The meal ran from the stones into a container to be sacked by the miller. The miller dipped his toll from this container.

A belt ran for about 25 feet from a shaft running the millstones to a gasoline or kerosene-driven engine and around the engine's shaft. The belt was a foot wide and about 1/4 inch thick. It was a great amusement to watch the miller fire up the engine and put the belt in motion. The belt appeared to move in slow motion yet pulling the millstones in high gear as the meal came flowing into its container. There was always a fine white mist of meal in the air and a film in all places.

The stones were about 3-4 inches thick and about 2-3 feet in diameter. They had grooves across them to grind the corn into the meal. These stones had to be periodically sharpened. Young people often watched as the two stones were dismantled and sharpened. This was done by skilled men who took metal chisels and ever so precisely chiseled deeper grooves.

Jeremiah Gentle served as a blacksmith and a miller. While the corn was being ground, he would be in the blacksmith shop doing blacksmith work. He might be making a horseshoe or making one to fit the horse or mule. He would take his tools after lifting the foot of the horse and scrape the stuff out of the hoof and then file the hoof and fit the shoe to the hoof. Do you wonder what today's Health Department and its standards might say if a blacksmith left this job and went back to sack up the finished meal?



### Jeremiah Gentle's Shop

The shop had double doors to enter the shop and double doors directly across to exit in case a team of horses had to pull a wagon in or in case of rain. Looking back, it is amazing at the

skill exhibited in the one-man operation from fixing motors, to all types of blacksmith work and to sharpening mill stones. Could all these skills be wrapped up in one person today?

Up the hill and east of the blacksmith shop was a gas station and small-item store. The store was built after Lee Highway (72) was built. The highway was somewhat like today's bypasses. The business flowed to it until the bigger towns killed the little settlement of Lim Rock and all businesses closed.

This store is remembered by some as the one that got the Gulf Oil Company's comic books. Reading material was scarce. Some of the youth who wanted to read and lacked materials would walk 2-3 miles every other week when gasoline and comics were delivered. These comics were a prize to keep up with the characters Curly and Wash-N-Easy and other interesting things and ideas. So few adults really realized that this was a way for youth to satisfy a curiosity to learn. Most adults missed the great opportunity to help and encourage a lifetime of learning.

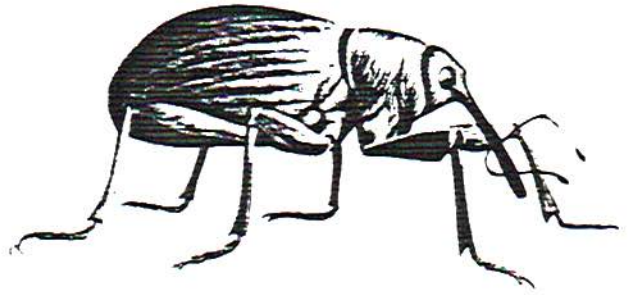
Another such store with the same intention of drawing business from the Gentle Store was built a few hundred feet west of the Gulf Station. The unique feature of this store was to serve as a minor market for a few furs that were delivered out of the mountains during November, December and January. Furs furnished income to a few people, but most of these were sold in Scottsboro.

A road ran between the Gulf station and the rock quarry to Aspel. This road was a busy road serving the traffic between Lim Rock and Aspel. The backwater at Aspel was a favorite fishing place. Also, the Saltpetre Cave was a popular attraction. Salt petre had once been mined there but the cave was a business in the 1930's like a small convenience store and boat rental. Children and youth came from the Aspel community to the school at Lim Rock.





Bedbug.  
Enlarged.



## THE CHINCH ROW

Just south of the Gulf station on the road was a company community with 12-15 shotgun houses. These houses had 3 rooms built in the same shotgun style. The houses were built within a few feet of each other. Originally they were probably built to serve employees of a company like the coal mining industry. But by the late 1930's anyone could rent the houses. Workers on the new Lee Highway and the quarries did live there.

The houses were cheaply constructed with only the studs and one outside board. There was no ceiling and no inside board; therefore, the occupants had only about 3/4 inch of wood board between them and the elements.

These row houses were known locally as Chinch Row. When anyone today asks why such a name was given they get an embarrassed answer. Those who lived there will say because all the houses were infested with the bedbug. There were few sprays to take care of such pests in the 1930's. Residents said that they used gasoline-soaked rags and washed the whole house to get rid of them but, like the boll weevil, they kept coming back.

The bedbug, known as the chinch, was a fierce pest. It would get into the coil springs of beds or in the bed clothing or anywhere else it wished. It was a small flat "bug" that would come out at night and suck the blood of the sleeping person. It was a great embarrassment for anyone to tell anyone else of his plight. Such a conversation would "plague a body." In case one followed a person to work or to school, especially school, and showed up in the presence of someone else the transporter was one "plagued" person. If the carrier happened to "mash" the pest an odor radiated that would make a skunk appear to smell like Evening in Paris.

One of the techniques that was used to fight the bedbug was for all occupants of the house to take all beds, perhaps all clothing too, out of the house on a cold winter day a distance from the house. All clothing was thoroughly checked. Mattresses were turned and checked and beaten with brooms until they were free of bugs and eggs. The bedsprings were also checked and beaten. In some cases they were held over open flames. The house could be sprayed in case a pesticide was available. After a full day of battle, the house was probably secured.



## A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY AND SOME TIDBITS

If one would observe the wagon roads of the 1930's and the situations of houses of that time, it would appear that the first settlers followed the foothills of the mountains seeking their homesteads. Some of those roads have been lost to time. Others have been altered slightly and improved to keep up with the times.

Stephen's Gap was a natural low place between the mountains as Woodville moved east. All roads west went through the gap. Southern Railroad dug a gap about 25 feet deep and about 1/2 mile long to level its tracks. The Old Stagecoach Road (30) connecting Woodville and Lim Rock ran along the mountain ledge. Later Lee Highway 72 (now 35) was built on the south side of the gap.

Many years of construction were devoted to building these thoroughfares. A rock quarry was nearby. Most of the work done before 1930 was done by hand using sledge hammers, picks, and shovels. Of course, animal power was the muscle.

A convict camp was nearby and the prisoners were used for the road work. This practice of using convicts caused concerns locally and nationally. It was common for the local people to hear the guards' bloodhounds on the trail of escaped prisoners. They ran the bench rows of the mountains. Adults would unintentionally frighten children when the dogs were baying on the trail. A few adult men would take their guns to lookouts to actively seek confrontation with convicts without being requested by authorities. These men had no idea of the convicts and their records, yet they were willing to shoot someone as though he was an animal. Parents were creating very unhealthy mental health in their children without being aware that attitudes were being formed by the show of vigilante justice.

## FUNERALS AND CEMETERIES

Cemeteries are located at the foothills just as the mountains begin to show some elevation. Most of them carry family names and are on private property. One had been forgotten by the mid 1930's and no one remembered anyone being interred there. The adults passed along to the children the name "The Old Indian Cemetery." It is not an Indian cemetery. Gravestones and their markings in the 30's indicate otherwise. The cemetery today is so grown over it looks like the rest of the mountains. Travelers just passing by would have no idea that the overgrowth is a cemetery that is many decades old, perhaps as old as Lim Rock.

Of course, death was a family tragedy in the 1930's as it is today. The community seemed to share in the hurt of sickness and death and the ritual following death until after the burial. People, even strangers, came to sit up with the sick and dying. Grave digging was done by volunteers from all over. Wood caskets were made by friends and neighbors and others who felt a need to help. Some of these people helped with plans. They came in wagons or walked. The body, in the wood box, was carried in a wagon or on the shoulders of those who felt compelled. The bureaucracy of funeral homes with embalming was not always involved; just friends helping friends in distress. When the body was lowered into its resting place, unassigned volunteers filled the grave. This kind of feeling of benevolence was so instilled in the local people that many would go to the cemetery even for unknown people to hear the service and file by to see the deceased for the last time. Genuine despair for human suffering was evident.

## HOMES

Next to the last house at the upper end of Shippman's Cove, on the west side of the valley, on the Stephens' place, was a house representing an architectural form of early America. It was a fairly large and tall one-room house. The kitchen was about 40 feet from the house with the two parts of the house connected by a board walk. There was also a large porch connected only to the main house. Of course, the idea was for safety. The kitchen fires were considered too dangerous to the main house. All of the eggs were not in one basket. The main house had its own fireplace. Since the house was very old in 1930, it may have been one of the first built in Shippman's Cove.

Another feature of the homes was long and high porches. Dave and Mamie Stephens' home on the west side of the cove (526) had a wrap-around porch all the way around the house. These features gave some writers material to write about when they discuss Alabama: One Big Front Porch when families sit and talk and tell stories. Ice-cream suppers and neighborhood entertainment were commonplace at the Stephens' home. People long remember such experiences as they look back and reminisce.



The "dogtrot" was another common feature of the homes as shown by the Jeremiah Gentle home. Such homes usually had 3 rooms. The master room or "the front room" was where most activities took place. It had the fireplace, the radio, and one or two double beds. The parents claimed this room. They shared it with others sometimes. There were usually several chairs around the fireplace and close to the radio. When visitors came to visit or listen to the radio, they all sat in a semicircle around the fireplace and close to the radio.

Adjoining the "front room" was the kitchen and dining area. All food was prepared on a wood cookstove and served in the same room. Usually there was one table close to the wall. Benches that could seat several were attached to the wall; thereby, forcing the table to remain in the same position so the children could sit on the benches and be better controlled. Eating did not take place while company was present unless they ate, too. It was embarrassing to eat in the presence of company. Children often waited until adults had finished with their meal even if there was room at the table. Such unexplained and illogical behavior led to shyness and lack of self-confidence in children. They saw no logic in such behavior and felt it was something about them that was lacking.

Across the open, unenclosed hallway or dogtrot was a bedroom for children or visitors. This room was usually unheated and often served as a courting room for any unmarried females in the family. If there were 2-3 unmarried girls and their beaux came to call on a Sunday afternoon, they all sat in the room with all doors open. The parents and any other visitor sat on the front porch while the neighbor kids played on the clean yard.

The house had a front porch connected by the dogtrot. The back porch also connected with the dogtrot. This method of design permitted people to go from any part of the house or from the outside directly to the kitchen without going to the front room. A little privacy was given even for a big family in a small house.

Some of the houses were logs covered with lumber on the outside. These homes provided some comfort in the winter when they used their fireplace with an ample supply of wood.

Other houses had only one board between the elements and the occupant. They were on the style of cabins in settling the West. These homes usually had a fireplace or a woodburning heater that did not nearly make the homes comfortable in winter. They had tin roofs that made summer living equally unpleasant.

Practically all homes had a gunrack above the main outside door. It was understood by all why the gun was there. It served as a protection and a means of delivering food for the table. No one questioned the purpose or the need for this gun and others, also. Most people accepted the concept that each member of the home bore a responsibility to protect that home and each other. It never crossed the mind of a household to call the sheriff. He was too far away and was not considered a protector of the home. It was passed along to children that each individual had space and each home had its space to be protected by the head of the household and to be respected by



others. The descendants of those hearty people probably still respect individuals and territory. It is so different today when good economic conditions have conditioned each of us to be dependent upon the law enforcement and the courts. Both have been overburdened with this giving up of individual and group responsibility to protect oneself and others. Many people in our society have gained a big foothold to positions to deny the ownership of guns and other means of personal and community protection.

Most of the homes were built on the side of the mountain. The lower side of the house had to be elevated high enough to be level with the high side. There were no machines to level the house site. This condition often caused the front part of the house, usually the porch, to be many feet high, sometimes high enough for animals to stay under the porch. In a few instances this happened. Oftentimes the family dog made his home under the house. The dog that had him a high house to shelter him was lucky.



Outhouses were hard to come by for people. People sometimes had to find a tree or a boulder to hide behind when they had to “be excused to go outdoors.” Chamber pots or slop jars were kept within the homes for nighttime use by all family members. The next day a place was found to empty it in as safe a place as could be found. Family and community health were

concerns. Most homes had some shallow pits nearby housed in by a small building resembling the present-day porta johns.

## WELLS

Without electricity, there could be no running water, no indoor plumbing, and no refrigeration. Most of the older homes were built near a source of water, usually springs. Nearly every spring close to a road had a house. Other people away from a spring area had to get water from these springs or dig wells. There were a few drilled wells, but most wells were hand dug.

Digging and cleaning out wells was a profession for a small number of men. Their skills and reputation were known and they would be sought out when their services were needed. Usually two or more men worked as a team to dig, clean out, or to repair well walls. They had picks and shovels, and other selected tools. After the well was a few feet deep a tripod was mounted above the hole. A windlass with buckets was attached to the scaffoldings. Buckets were lowered as the person down in the well dug and filled them. The person topside would draw the full bucket to the top and carry the contents several feet away to dump. This slow process would continue for days or weeks until good and ample supply of water was reached. Sometimes the digging teams would line the well with rocks to protect the water and walls of the well. Above ground had to be secured with a well top.

After the well had aged for a few years, sediment and the side of the well caved in and created a need to clean it out. This process was conducted in the same process that was followed when digging a new well.

People got water from the dug wells by mounting a windlass on scaffolding above the well top. A rope attached to a bucket was attached to the windlass. The bucket was lowered into the well and let it fill. When it filled, a crank was used to draw the full bucket to the top.

Drilled wells had the same elements involved except they had a 3-4 foot bucket that had a valve in the bottom. The bucket was lowered to be filled. The valve opened to fill the bucket and then closed. The bucket was raised and held over the container to be used to carry the water to the house. A trigger in the top of the bucket was pulled and the water emptied into the container. Some of the drilled wells had hand pumps that worked beautifully until the pump lost its prime or until a part became faulty.



## WORK

Everyone worked. Both sexes worked on the same jobs except men were somewhat skittish about housework. There was very little feeling of sexism as women claim today. Women plowed, using the heavy two-horse turning plow that would break most of our backs today. They harvested the crops, picked the cotton, and cut and hauled wood or hay. No work was too demanding. Some hunted and fished to help out at home. It was not unusual for a woman to take her 410 shotgun to go out early some morning to bag some squirrels and rabbits. It is odd how this concept was lost along the way when men began to be perceived as sexist as they tried to be protective of women. Now women are raising Cain to give up the protective attitude and return to the equality of the 1930's.

Renters would sometimes lease land from the landowner on "thirds and fourths." The renter would give the landowner a third of the corn and a fourth of the cotton produced. Cost of the fertilizer would be shared on the same ratio. Tools and horsepower would usually be furnished by the landowner and all labor furnished by the tenant.

Children were taken to the fields. If they were too young to pick cotton, they rode on the picksacks of their parents. They might be left at the end of a cotton row where their mother had hung a quilt or sheet to keep off the burning sun while an older sibling looked on and took care. About 10:30 in the morning the mother would gather the children to go home to prepare lunch for all others. After lunch was served, she and the children returned to the field to resume work. Who is it that still yearns for the good old days?

Cotton picking was one of the most difficult jobs, especially for women. Pickers were independent contractors. They were paid by how much they produced. The price was about 50c per hundred pounds. Good pickers could pick 300 pounds in a day. Most people picked about 150 pounds. A day was as long as one could see.

Pickers bought their own sacks, usually in 8,10, or 12 foot lengths. Sacks were made of tough broadcloth and some had a 3- foot section of tar on the bottom to help to make the sack last longer. The sack fit around the shoulders and was pulled until the weight get uncomfortable with 40-50 pounds. All workers went to wagons or weighing stations at the same time. The owner weighed each sack and kept a tally for each worker for use at payday, usually on Friday.

The two-horse wagon stayed parked in the field until about 1200 pounds of cotton was loaded, then it was taken to the gin in Woodville. To hold 1200 pounds, the wagon had to have sideboards about 4 feet tall with the cotton packed tight. The cotton was packed at each weigh-in by people walking around on top, stepping heavily around the edges. The 1200 pound load ginned a bale of about 500 pounds.

Workers could make a little money, about 75c a day, with the first and second pickings. It



was slim pickings after that. Sometimes the farmer could not make enough money to employ pickers after the second or third pickings and consequently gave the fourth picking away if someone wanted the pickings. The scrap pickings or scratch pickings were no fun. The dewy morning on a cold November day could cause hands to bleed. If these pickers had a place to store the crop and if they could get the small amount to the gin, the worker might earn 50c for 10-15 hours of hard, cold labor. Usually the worker could not earn enough for patches for the sack that would not last a season.

Gleaning of the corn was more comfortable. A person could go over the fields after the corn had been gathered and get a few bushels of corn. Of course, this corn could be taken to the grist mill and the service paid for with a toll; thus, cash was not a necessity.

Cotton was the chief crop to infuse the local economy with outside money. Corn and wood products, including cedar posts and logs for lumber or crossties, also brought in some money. Some isolated individuals secured income through day labor or minor crops such as sorghum cane. Nearly everyone who owned land had gardens and truck-farm crops for their own use. Potatoes, beans and okra and other such garden crops were plentiful until about November. Most people had a few apple, peach, or pear trees that supplied the family needs. Many people picked blackberries and gathered walnuts and hickory nuts to store for winter use. During a cold winter night as the family sat around the open fire in the fireplace, time was consumed eating the collected nuts. One person would place a smoothing iron between their knees and crush the nuts on the iron with a hammer. Often, while the nut feast was going on someone might take a shovel, lift some hot ashes, place some sweet potatoes in and cover them with hot ashes. In a few minutes someone would have a tasty potato.

Blackberry picking became an occasion. Several people, in holiday spirits, would together take buckets to the berry patches to spend the day. They would pick gallons to bring home to begin the next day to can and make jams and jellies. Winters were made easier by having this supply of food.

At times there was a market for timber. Oak was sold for lumber or shingles. Sometimes shingles would be split on the place of cutting and sold. A skilled person would use a froe and mallet and split the oak ever so so.

Logs for lumber or cedar posts were "snaked" by trained mules to collecting points at the foot of the mountains. Wagons would later collect the logs to transport to the freight cars at Lim Rock.

Often some of the logs were hewed into crossties. One experienced crosstie hewer could hew 12-15 ties in a day. He would also use special tools for this job. Usually the job required a broadax in addition to the normal tools. The broadax was used to slice off the logs to form square sides according to the railroad's specifications.

Stave boles were sometimes supplied when a market could be found. Oak logs, about four



feet long, were quartered. The split logs were sold to make barrels. The mountains were often too steep for people or mules. In such instances metal cables were strung from a tree on the hill to a tree at the foot of the hill. It was about chest high at the top and about five feet high at the foot of the hill. It needed a little height at the foot to make sure the bole fell from the cable. A mule was used to tighten up and secure the cable and then the cable was secured to the tree. The cable needed considerable slope to be effective. At the top of the hill a worker would put a bent nail at each end of the log. These nails were hung over the cable and the log zinged at great speed down the hill and struck the anchor tree and fell to the ground. A worker could then load them on a wagon to take to the train station.

Hickory, sometimes ash, was used to make handles for hammers, axes, and other tools. Individuals would look until they found a hickory that passed the test. Two men would man a cross cut saw to fell the trees. The hickory was cut to ax handle lengths and split with an hammer and wedges. Evenings were spent with drawknives and pocketknives shaping the select pieces. Broken glass was also used to finely shape the wood as it approached its final step. Some men became skilled at whittling and using tools. The carver might accumulate 10-15 handles to sell as the need arose for 25c for a hammer handle and 50c for an ax handle. The shavings would be collected to use to start the next fire.

This kind of work would take place before the fireplace with a kerosene lamp in the darker part of the room. Kerosene was the source of light. This poor lighting made detailed work difficult and school work almost impossible. Later when the school and one or two homes got the Aladdin Lamp the community almost thought miracles were happening. Miracles really did happen when electricity was brought to all the homes. Good things of quality began. Life has been made much more pleasant with the things made possible with electricity.

## RECYCLING

No one ever thought of such a word in those days. It was a standard practice and not a concept. The concept was verbalized only after our society became an affluent, throw-away society. During the hard times, goods were used and used and used again. After these many uses, the item was passed along to another member of the family as a hand-me-down. If the hand-me-down was an item of clothing, after it was worn out, the good parts were cut up for patches or to make quilts. The strings could be used to hold up beans on their poles or tomatoes to their stakes.

Any table scrap was fed to the dog or the pigs. Nothing was wasted. Garbage collection was something for a future need. A few tin cans from the purchase of "Possum Sardines" or beans or salmon did accumulate. They were taken to a sinkhole where they were returned to the earth. If a crosscut saw broke, the pieces could be ground down and made into handsaws.



There were very few paper products. Newspapers were a luxury that only a few people could afford. Some of the thoughtful people who could afford newspapers shared them with their neighbors. Even old news was read. The "funnies" were prized by those people who followed the exploits of Dick Tracy and Joe Palooka. Dick Tracy, as he is today, was the major crime fighter of the day. Joe Palooka was the heavy-weight champion of the comic strips. He struggled to hold on to his title as he prepared for war. He entered World War II and continued with his hero status.

All paper products were valued and used to exhaustion. Paper sacks could be taken back to the store to help return the purchases back home or they could be used to store foodstuff at home.

Catalogs from Sears, Roebuck; Spiegel; and Montgomery Ward came to the mailboxes. After they became outdated and after the boys got through with ogling the half-nude models (by today's standards the models would look like nuns) the catalogs were relegated to the outhouse. Here they met their final scratchy use. These outhouses made Sears, Roebuck famous.

## CUSTOMS AND HABITS

Of course, the people of Lim Rock, like people since time began, adjusted their lives according to conditions and what fate had dealt them. They made do with what they had and tempered their daily lives accordingly. Much of each person's and each family's time was spent on survival things.

Rocks and wild plants dominated the landscape close in to the home. Power lawn mowers were in the future. Lawn grasses and lawn upkeep were things to only think about. Because conditions dominate patterns of thinking and habits, some yards were leveled by hand and stripped of every blade of grass and weeds. The yards would be scraped with a hoe every few days to keep them free of all growing things. These yards were the prime place for children to come to play.

Some of the favorite games of children were various games of marbles, dodgeball, mumbletypeg, "Auntie Over," and horseshoes. Mumbletypeg was played with a knife that had two blades open perpendicular to each other. It was tossed to the ground. Points were assigned as to how the blades stuck in the ground.

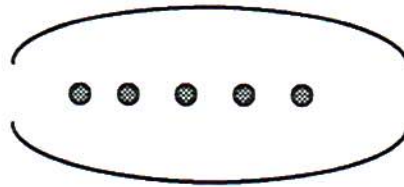
"Auntie Over" had two teams of people with one on each side of a house, preferably a tall house. A rubber ball was tossed over the house and if someone caught the ball the whole team went to the other side to hit a member of the opposite team with the ball. The one hit was out. Sometimes the team that caught the ball split to go around the house in both directions to confuse the opponents. This activity would go on until all members of a team were out.





### Rolly-Holey

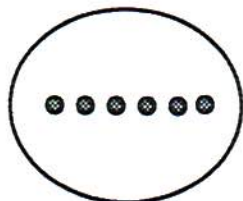
**Marbles, Game 1: Rolly-Holey**--Any number could play. Dig 5-6 holes 2-3 inches deep and about 2 inches across and about 3 feet apart. Somewhat like golf today. Begin at the upright pin and shoot for hole one. Then the next player shoots until the marble goes into the hole. Do this until the last hole, the granny hole, is made and a return trip is also successful. When one returns to the first hole he must successfully shoot the peg down to be declared the winner. Sometimes to make some pain for the last one to finish the course, the number one winner would strike a peg into the ground with a hammer and the last one would have to dig the peg out of the ground with his teeth. To reduce the risk of pain, the one who used the hammer was often blindfolded before he struck at the peg.



### Marbles - Game 2

**Marbles, Game 2:** An egg-shaped enclosure is drawn in the dust. About 10 feet away a line is drawn. Each player places a set number of marbles in the enclosure. Then, each one stands behind the enclosure and tosses his favorite "taw" to the line. The one who lands the closest to the line gets the first shot and the next closest gets the next shot. Each player places his shooting hand's knuckle on the line and shoots at the marbles in the enclosure until he fails to knock one

out of the enclosure. Then the next player shoots. After all had shot from the line they would continue shooting in the same order from where each marble landed until the enclosure was cleared of marbles. Some times the game was for "keeps."



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### Marbles - Game 3

**Marbles, Game 3:** A circle, perhaps 8-10 feet across, would be drawn. A line to determine the order of shooting was drawn about 10 feet away. Each player placed a determined number of marbles in a line in the center of the circle. Then each player would take his favorite shooter and stand behind the circle and toss to the shooting-order line. The order of shooting was determined by the closeness to the line. The first shot was taken by placing the knuckle of the shooter's hand on the line and firing at the marbles. Sometimes the first shot for each player was from the circle line. If a marble was knocked out of the circle, firing continued until there was a failure to knock a marble out. At this time the taw stayed where it stopped and the next player took his turn shooting until the circle was cleared of marbles. Later when machinery came to town with their ball bearings, marble shooting took on a new twist when these steel balls found their way into the marble circle.

Many boys got their rear ends adjusted with a paddle at school when some busybody girl told the principal that someone was playing for keeps. Gambling or any hint of it was one of the cardinal sins at school. The principal told the walkers that they must first get home before they could return to the marble fields. The distant walkers had little chance to join the fun for those who lived within the first mile of the school. Later school buses and other modern things killed the games.

Another game was played by children who liked to duel. They would break off a long limb of the "Polecat Berry Bush." The Beauty Berry Bush was known locally by that name. All the leaves were stripped from the limb leaving dozens of berries. The duelers would snap the limbs with a wrist action that sent the berries hurling at the opponent like shotgun pellets. Those who were hit broadside would remember the encounter.



## RADIOS

Older youth and adults also had their moments. Some were lucky enough to have their AM radios. Of course, 1930's predated FM and other advances in broadcasting. Stations like those from Nashville, Atlanta, and St. Louis dominated the airwaves. The clearest signals late at night came from the super-powerful stations in Mexico located along the Rio Grande River. Some stations were clear channels operating with 100,000 watts or more. These stations were blessings in remote areas to keep these areas connected to the rest of the world.

Radios were scarce. They were powered by expensive batteries. Sometimes the heavy batteries of automobiles were used. It was difficult to keep the batteries charged up and going. There were no chargers and no service station to supply such service. Usually the batteries had to be ordered from a mail-order catalog. Of course being AM, the signal was often heavy with static. Even so, listeners considered such interference as minor indeed.

Some families who owned radios were kind enough to permit visitors to come on a regular basis to listen with them. Their homes were the "Grand Central Stations" of the day. Certain programs were "musts" for some people. The homeowner adjusted the home life to accommodate. WSM of Nashville and its Grand Ole Opry was a must. "I Love a Mystery," "Stella Dallas," "Inner Sanctum," "Lum and Abner," and Joe Lewis' prize fights were programs that eager listeners would hurt feelings to hear. Some of these stations, especially the border radio stations, advertised what seemed to be strange products to a sheltered people. Stations in New Orleans, Cincinnati, and Des Moines were loud and clear with their early morning country music broadcasts.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Even with their quality, these broadcasts did not keep the local people from their efforts to entertain. They had their dances with local talent fiddling and picking. Most of those in attendance sat around a room, cleared except for chairs around the walls, and grinned at each other across the room. Most of the "sparking" teenagers stayed in the yard or on the porch, too shy and embarrassed to go in with the "old folks." Memories were made of this.

Like today, inconsistencies confused children. Adults would have their dances, card games, play dice, or take their nips of moonshine and home-brew. They might even hold hands in the yards and on the porch during the dances or ice-cream suppers. Then they would come back from a church service with messages to the children that all of those behaviors were sins. Children might have problems learning even with games like Rook because of the conflicting messages of those told and those practiced. The adults probably did not realize that the conflicts created ambivalence in behavior and problems in learning.

It was difficult for the excessively shy with an excessive inferiority complex to meet



people, to share ideas or to recite at school or church. New experiences were painful for one who blushed and turned pink even with their thoughts when they were around other people. Growth in personal achievement was inhibited until such thinking could be unlearned.

### DATING

It was all right for it to be known that a boy was interested in a particular girl. They could "court" or "spark" provided the boy came to the girl's house and sat in the courting parlor when the parents were at home. He could walk her home from church in a group. Sometimes on a Sunday afternoon a group could go for walks on the bench rows of the mountains. During these outings they might gather hickory nuts or get gum from the sweet gum tree for chewing gum. Certain trees had to be notched early in the season so that gum would form as the trees made an effort to heal themselves. Wednesday nights and Sunday afternoons were the set asides for courting purposes.

It was just too bad if the boy needed food or to "be excused to go outdoors." Both of those needs had better be taken care of before getting to the girl's home. Girls were too shy to share food and to eat while visitors were present. There were no indoor facilities, and it was too embarrassing to go to the outhouse while people were gawking. Courting sessions might have to be cut short for the suitor to hit the road and perhaps steal a stalk of sorghum cane or a "rosen" ear of corn to kill the hunger pangs until he got home.

### LIFE ON THE CREEK

Nearly all springs had houses next to them. Of course, these springs fed the creeks. At the head of Shippman's Cove was a well-known landmark, which was an old home that took advantage of its surroundings and was occupied by Uncle Dave Rousseau. The owner had gone high into the mountain and tapped a spring and funneled its cool water down the mountain with open hewed wooden troughs. The water came to a covered part of the house to empty into a 100-200 gallon container. Pipes were installed before the water reached the house and were curved to bow over the container. This water ran constantly and always left a cool, enjoyable atmosphere. This home did have running water to it for all household needs. Milk was kept in the open container and was a treat at mealtime. Keeping milk in the spring, or sometimes spring house, was a common practice.

These springs always kept the creek fresh for fish and wildlife. People used these resources for their survival. At one time a grist mill was run by the creek. Muskrats and mink were trapped in the wintertime for their furs. Ground hogs, rabbits, and squirrels were taken for food. Boys learned to swim and skinny dip in the deeper holes. Fish including bream, cats, and red-horse suckers were caught and used for food.



## THE RED-HORSE SUCKER RUN

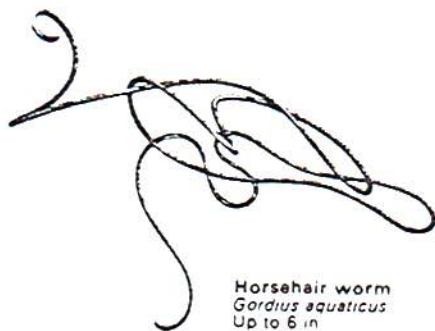
The run of the red-horse sucker was an exciting time for those who enjoyed fishing and eating fish. Each year in May or June the red-horse returned to its birthplace to spawn. It would cause a frenzy, in the boys who liked fishing, to watch as the suckers fought to get through the shallows on their way to deeper water. It was not unusual for a boy to catch 15-20 suckers of about 1 1/2 pounds each with a cane pole and worms. These catches saved the day for excitement and for a food supply during the few days the fish were in town.

## OTHER WAYS TO CATCH FISH

After the spawning season was over "toe sack" seines were made to run the creek for more catches. Sometimes a slough could be found that still had water in it from the winter overflow of the creek where fish had been stranded. Several people would enter the shallow pond and cause a commotion of stirring up the silt. When the water got so muddy that fish would come to the top to breathe they could be caught and put in the toe sack that was attached to the belt or held by a second party. This way of catching fish furnished the real danger of being bitten by water moccasins or cottonmouth snakes. Even getting to these sloughs could get one involved with a rattlesnake or copperhead. Nevertheless, one takes chances and adjusts as life dictates.

## OTHER LIFE FORMS

The creek yielded some strange life forms for those who stayed on the banks or in the water most of the warm season. Mud puppies, scaly cats, mussels, and horsehair snakes were some of them. Nature observers learned that the mussels left a track on the sand and they traveled a few feet before burying in sand. When they buried themselves they left a small indentation in the sand. The observers would follow the track and scoop the little fellow from its burrow. Mussels would live for days in a pail of sand and water and would furnish excellent bait for fishing.



Horsehair worm  
*Gordius aquaticus*  
Up to 6 in

The horsehair snake was a real rarity and much misunderstood and misrepresented by the senior population. The seniors vowed and declared that these creatures were formed from the hairs of the tail of horses. Some of the naive youth believed the tale and tried to see this miracle as they would pull hairs from the horse and put them in water troughs to form life. They observed for months and years but the miracle did not happen. Tales were passed along that had no foundation of truth. There is a life form resembling the above description but certainly it did not form from a hair of a horse.

### WASH DAY

Wash day at the creek was another day that was very involved. The wife gathered up the children and the items to be washed and prepared them to spend the day at the creek keeping the fire going, gathering wood, stirring the clothes in the boiling metal washpot and rubbing on the hand rubboard in the number 2 washtub. Items to be washed were placed on sheets. The diagonal corners of the sheet were drawn and tied, thus the sheet served as a carrying basket. The washpot had been set on its three legs on three rocks to elevate the pot a few inches above the ground. Wood was placed under the pot and up along its side. The wood was lighted and soon the pot was boiling with the clothing inside. This procedure certainly killed anything that was alive on the laundry. As the washing was completed it was hung on lines and fences until it dried. After hours of labor, the laundry was ready to be returned home and readied for the woman to spend the next day ironing with irons heated in another open flame.

These wash days were infrequent, usually when wash water was scarce. Most of the time water could be drawn from a well or secured at a spring. Some homes had gutters open at the ends with 55-gallon drums or barrels under them to catch rain water for any home use except drinking. Drinking water was kept in a drinking bucket with a dipper for the whole family to share.

### BAPTIZING HOLE

Another important function of the creek was the baptizing hole. A 4-5 foot deep hole had been chosen for this purpose. All of the local churches used it. It had a sycamore tree directly over it. The tree had several low, strong branches. These branches were used by the boys to jump from when swimming took place. On the day of baptism these limbs were used by the boys to watch the ceremony.

Word spread when there was to be a baptism. People watched as those who were to be baptized walked the cove roads from their homes, in their long dresses, to the baptizing hole. It always seemed that only women were scheduled for the honor. It was a community more' that those who could, should go to watch. Even strangers went and stood by to watch the preacher lead the honorees to the middle of the creek and put them under.



## CHURCHES AND REFLECTIONS ON THEIR TEACHINGS

It appears that when life is tough on a people their churches reflect this despair and gloom. Lim Rock had the Methodists, Baptists, and the Primitive Baptists. Most of the people may have reflected the austerity of the Primitive Baptists. The people, especially the committed churchgoers, seemed to preach with fear as the basis of life rather than love as the basis. Personal confrontation rather than demonstration of love was commonplace.

The Primitive Baptist Church located in Shippman's Cove was built with the lower side of the church high off the ground. The church often had community dinner-on-the-ground. If it rained, shelter could be taken under the church floor without having to stoop. These outings were well attended. The services had foot washings and other old-time carryovers. It appeared that genuine humility was being taught. But, as is the case much of the time, this teaching did not translate into life after leaving the church-house.

Preachers were often not book educated but preached from what had conditioned them to think as they did. It was difficult to be kind and gentle in spirit after spending six days picking cotton in the hot August sun or the cold November weather.

One of the tales shared in the community was one preacher's favorite line from the pulpit that if the members did not do this or that, they would "go to hell as slick as a possum's tail." This kind of teaching sounded awful to many who tried to learn. They could identify with the content as being something they rejected on their dinner plates.

But they feared. In fact, they trembled and are still hurting 50 years later from the method of teaching of a woman of the church as she yelled at the girl who failed to attend the service the woman attended. "Your beauty is scorched and your soul will burn in hell."

Hard teaching! Fire and brimstone! A hard life brought on hard teachings. Some people wondered how could hell be worse than for a woman to have to use a two-horse turning plow for twelve hours straight?

Going to church could be interesting at times. Wagons would load up with people from all over and go to the churches close to the school. Dozens of wagons would fill the parking lots during revival times. It was a great time for "sparkling couples" to get to see each other.

Some people went to the revival to see the feature story of an elderly lady who dominated the service with her shouting. As the preacher got fired up, members of the audience watched as the lady began to perk. When she got primed, she jumped to the floor "in the spirit" and all in attendance got the "heebie-jeebies." When the shouting ended, everyone in attendance knew they had been to church. No one scoffed then or now. It was serious business. The wagon ride back home or the crowds walking had a good visit as they returned back into the coves to their respective homes.



Brush Arbor meetings were frequent, especially on the road near Aspel. The local people would spend days gathering bushes to cover a frame and make a makeshift church. People came from near and far to experience spirited services of this form of improvisation for church services

## ISOLATION AND LANGUAGE RESTRICTIONS

Youth often felt anxious and afraid. Spin-offs from the teachings of the church solidified the conservative feelings of adults, thereby creating personal fears. Parents told their children that the "booger" man would get them if they did this or that or even felt a given way. "Haints" haunted some by days but especially at night. Fears prevailed. Youth often felt that as they traveled the roads, especially by the coves, or the mountain road, a "bushwhacker" would rise up out of the ground or from behind a boulder and then "man done gone."

Taboos were strong. No one dared talk about, sex even the word sex, like what sex is the new baby--too ugly, too dirty. Women or animals "found babies" not "have babies." If a youth asked his parents why the little donkey was led down the road to be set free with a mare he was met with stammering and blushing. No one was uninhibited enough to tell the young that was how you got all those mules in the area.

Girls could not wear shorts or pants. Something implied, and never explained, seemed to be a way of saying this practice was unacceptable. Dancing, card playing, or playing dice were no, no's, yet most men did them all. It was bad luck to open an umbrella in the house. Words like male and female could not be used in mixed company. The words boy or girl had to suffice. Parents giggled when boys got to showing facial hair; thus, they often were embarrassed to shave in their parents' presence. Girls came under similar expressions when they began to mature. Often, both boys and girls felt ill at ease with their evidence of maturation.

It was too crude to use the word "toilet." People had to "excuse" themselves. Students had to ask "to be excused." They needed to go "outdoors." Those words became words to use shyly with a blush. Polite people could not explain any body functions or body parts. Nicknames were assigned to each concept as though such were nicer to use. It might be all right to nervously use the word "tinkle," but only the crude would dare use the word "urinate." The adults probably did not know the newfangled word, but they knew it was surely something ugly.

## BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ROOTED IN FOLKLORE

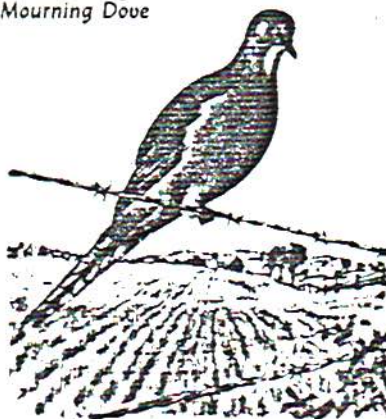
Many of our beliefs and practices are passed from generation to generation and accepted without judgment, especially in isolated pockets uncontaminated by the greater world. Lim Rock was no exception.



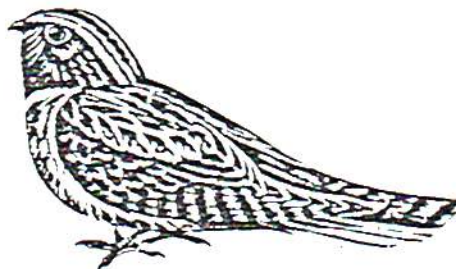
Mothers declared that their children needed spring cleansing with spring tonics, including certain herbs. Sulfur and sulfur water were supposed to be good for a person. Even though a body was working like a Cadillac it needed a dose of Castor Oil or Black Draught.

It was genuinely felt that horses, and sometimes people, should be bled. If a horse or a person had blood vessels that were very visible and protruded some, a blood drawing must be in order. The actual practice could not be verified, but it was rumored strongly that the blacksmith in Shippman's Cove would perform the practice on horses.

Mourning Dove



No one dared to kill a cat. Bad luck would surely come. Doves brought out some type of vague Bible references. Few knew the reference but they felt a hex should one be killed. Consequently no one harvested doves as a food.



Fears were unintentionally instilled in children when adults told them that when a screech owl screeched or a whippoorwill called, someone was going to die. In order to help block the hex a person could get up and tie a knot in the corner of the sheet on which they were sleeping. This act was supposed to stop the owl from screeching and it would move on out of the neighborhood.



When a person died, especially those who had been sick for a long time, their loved ones could tell about their final journey. If their pillow had a small knotted clump, such as a balled up wad of feathers in the feather pillow, the deceased had already gone to Heaven. This thing was known locally as a crown or a crown in the pillow. It must have been tough on the loved ones of the deceased who had no feather pillow or who left no sign as to where they had gone.

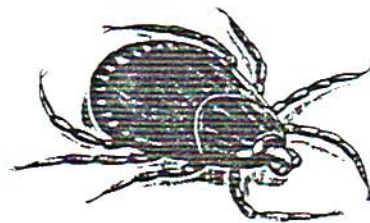
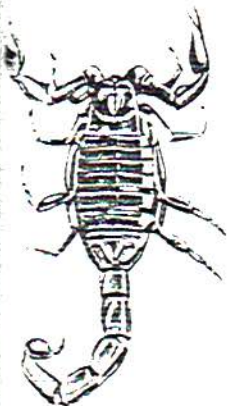
In May or June honeybees swarmed, looking for new homes in hollow trees such as the gum trees. Thus, the name "gum" was assigned to new homes even though the gum was a box made by a local beekeeper. Oftentimes, these months saw people in the fields hoeing cotton or corn. Swarms of bees might come, by the thousands, just over the heads of the workers as the bees sought new homes. Some local people vowed and declared that the swarming bees could be enticed to settle if they were chased by persons ringing cowbells. Or they could be made to settle by throwing dust in their midst. No one ever saw such a happening, but the rumor was passed along.

It was a fact that honey was a part of the diet. Several people kept bee yards on the edge of the mountains in areas that could not be cultivated. These beekeepers prized a good strong swarm of bees when they found one that had swarmed and settled on a low branch ready to move to a newly found home. Some people accepted, in some cases even the owner of the trees, an "X" on a newly found bee tree as being a mark of ownership by the person who had discovered it. Some men would sometimes go to the mountains looking for bee trees. If some could be found each one was marked with an "X" with an ax. It was commonly accepted that this tree would be cut later by the discoverer and the honey harvested.

These bee tree hunters sometimes carried cans of water, or even cans of urine, high up in dry parts of the mountains. Bees would be attracted to these watering holes. The men would return to watch as the bees left in a straight-line path to their gum, thus, leading the hunters to the hives.

An umbrella must not be opened indoors. If a person opened one, bad luck would surely follow. Men just did not wear their hats indoors.

When a baby was born, the midwife instructed the mother to stay in bed for a couple of weeks and to keep a bellyband on the baby for that long. The band was 3-4 inches wide and extended all the way around the baby's body around the navel until the umbilical cord had completely mended. The mother's resting and the securing of the umbilical area of the baby seemed to be standard medical practice a few years ago.





## LIFE BEFORE STOCK LAWS, METAL FENCE POSTS, AND PESTICIDES

Each of these events made a difference in how we lived. Before stock laws were enacted and enforced in the 1930's, owners of animals were at liberty to let them run free. Livestock was fenced out, not in. Homeowners were responsible for their own protection from livestock and the livestock owners were free to permit their livestock to graze wherever they found food. Livestock and pigs roamed the mountains but seemed somehow to find their way back home at nighttime.

Farmers would call their cows home. The lead cow often wore a bell so the animals could find each other but also so that the owner could find his animals. Herds of pigs lived off the nuts and other forage of the mountains. Chickens, too, found their own food, but roosted near home in tall cedar trees. Even if a hen hatched her brood a distance from home she led her biddies back home after they hatched. These animals made new trails but often followed the natural trails along mountain benches. People also used these trails to hunt or to walk to school by using short cuts.

Horses and mules seemed especially trained to know where they belonged. They could go for miles yet return home unassisted and go to each one's assigned stall in the barn. Some were trained for different tasks depending upon individual temperament and learning ability.

Some mules were absolute experts at snaking or dragging logs out of the mountains. They could be attached to one, two or three, or four logs and navigate the drag trail by a gentle call from the worker. The man would call out a "yea" for a right turn or a "haw" for a left turn. The mule knew and obeyed. Often the mule knew to back up and pull left or right to dislodge a stuck log he was dragging, without a command from the hauler. After a few circuits from the top to the bottom with the hauler, the mule could bring a load alone to deposit it at the foot of the mountain where another man would unhitch and point the mule back up the mountain. Sometimes these trained animals could be turned loose miles from home at the end of a work day and they would return home without supervision.

During corn gathering a team of horses would pull a wagon downing two rows of corn. Two men would walk behind the wagon, one on each side. Each man would pull two standing rows and one downed row of corn and pitch the ears with their shucks into the high-sideboarded wagon. Trained horses knew to go about twenty feet and stop until the men caught up and told them to move forward again. Well-trained animals knew not to eat the corn. Muzzles and blinders were sometimes used if the team showed obstinateness in doing what they were told.

A team of horses could pull a turning plow, with one staying in the furrow. Some knew how to plow a small garden plot without eating or trampling the crops. They were trained to maneuver in close places without doing damage to crops. When the sorghum mill was in operation, the farmers knew which animal could stand walking in a circle all day pulling the presses of the mill. Sometimes one animal could do all of these tasks and was a prize to the owner.



A good dog was also a prize for a family. They, too, ran free, but they knew where they belonged. This was the day before stock laws and animal control. Today even your inside housedog or a dog that might never leave your personal property is contained by the laws. Now, laws and the Humane Society say that you must license your dog. You must neuter him and on and on with restrictions. The dogs of Lim Rock knew their places and their jobs.

By day, some gifted mixed-breeds would hunt squirrels in the woods or rabbits in the open land with equal finesse. They knew that they had to work and they had to produce. If a squirrel was not caught, there would be no squirrel and dumplings on that day.

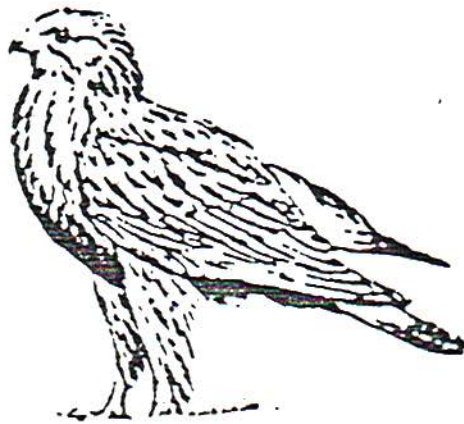
At night they would go to the mountains with their owners and tree the opossum or raccoon or chase a skunk or fox to its den and hold forth with fierce barking until the hunter got there. The hunter could tell the difference in the bark when a chase was underway to that when the hunted was "treed" in a hole under a rock or in a tree. The rapport of the dog and his owner was near perfect.



Before metal fence posts, when wood posts furnished cavities for the bluebird, the bluebird was in huge numbers. Now bird boxes have to be put up in the effort to bring the bluebird back from near extinction. The goldfinches could be seen, by the dozens, as they foraged on the wild coffee beans. They, too, are seldom seen now unless a supply of sunflowers can be kept in the gardens.

Robins and blackbirds came, by the thousands, during the fall months to feed on the dogwood berries and the cedar berries. Robins were especially fond of the cedar tree berry. Some people would use these birds for food. Hunters could take a shotgun and bag several birds in a single blast. Also, a form of slingshot, called the flip, could be used with some accuracy. The flip was a forked stick with two rubber bands mounted. A seat made of an old shoe tongue was used to hold a rock. The rubber bands were pulled back and the rock was hurled with deadly force.



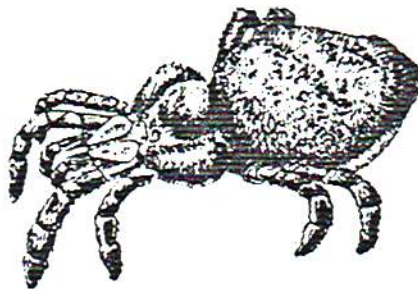


Hawks were numerous, and too many people felt that they should be destroyed. They stole chickens and other food supply of people. Even the state of Alabama paid a bounty to have them killed. Some people would place steel traps on boards mounted on 20-25 foot poles. When the hawk came to perch to look for a chicken, he was caught and killed. Steel leg-traps were also used by many people to catch game for food and fur.

On any day, buzzards could be seen circling lazily overhead looking for a meal of some abandoned animal carcass or a dead snake. Snakes were often killed and left on fences for other people to see the kill. Of course, the buzzard liked this practice and would come in and fly off with the snake dangling high in the air as a safe place to feast was sought. Boys with size 22 rifles would sometimes lie on their backs and shoot at the buzzards as they circled high overhead. No kill was ever known, but the near-missed buzzard would sometimes flap vigorously as a bullet whizzed by. Fox, in numbers, could be heard barking along the mountain benches.

A large black and red cricket, as large as a small cup, could be seen among the rocks. They are only seen in isolated places in Alabama today.

A large red ant was often seen as it traveled alone. Locally it was called the "cow ant" and would make a piercing sound when attacked and held down with a stick.



Chiggers were fierce pests during blackberry picking time. Occasionally a panther or bobcat could be seen or heard.

Laws, destruction of habitats, and use of pesticides have long since changed such a way of life.

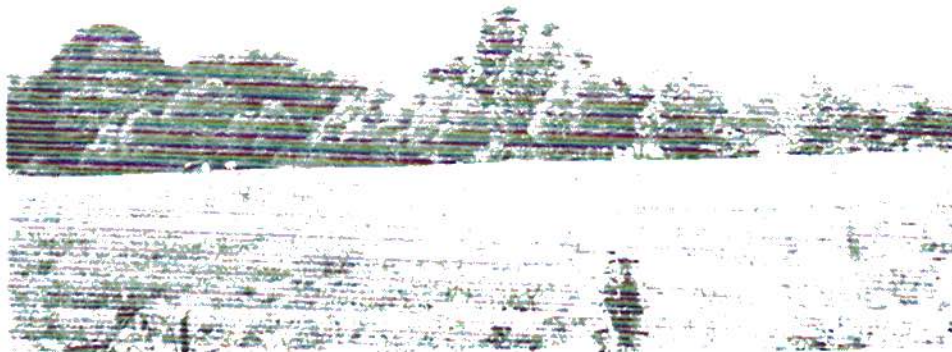


## NEIGHBORHOODS THAT CONSIDERED THEMSELVES AS PART OF LIM ROCK

Lim Rock was never incorporated. Most of the businesses from the west and north of the town tended to gravitate toward the depot and post office. Residents from the west to Stephens' Gap were a part of the town. Aspel was to the south and Larkinsville to the east. Larkinsville had a school and the two communities were great competitors in baseball. Lim Rock extended to the north to the mountain to include its school and all the coves called Shippman's, Berry's, and Gentle's coves. Those coves still carry these names.

The Stephens' Gap residents also identified with Woodville. Cotton gins and several stores were in Woodville. The notorious convict camps were just to the west of the gap. Also, a rock quarry was there.

## COVES



### SHIPPMAN'S COVE

Shippman's Cove as it was, and still is, called by most of its residents was also known by some others outside the cove as Shiffman's Cove (Kennamer's, The Story of Woodville) or Schiffman Cove (TVA map 1947). It was mostly an agricultural community populated by a few landowners who had intermarried over the past 100 years. Most of the farms included much mountain land. There was one minor coal mine high in the mountain west of the cove. It had not



been very productive and was closed before 1935.

Wagon roads, as shown on the map, probably indicated the early efforts to locate places to settle. Most of them had already been closed by 1930 but did show travel in earlier times. The old cemeteries that were only remembered in 1930 indicate a central place of burial by perhaps the first white settlers to the coves.

Some of the families were the Glover, Rousseau, Stephens, Pockrus, and the Gentle families. There were other families also. Some of them were not attached to the land, so they were free to move with the jobs.

There were a few cabins located high in the mountains that were accessible only by foot or horseback. These people who had settled there probably preferred this style of living either because they could afford only this style of living or because others did not offer competition for the land. In these instances, the children had no opportunity to go to school or to interact with other families.

The Rousseau family lived at the head of the cove near the almost impassable exit, known locally as Johnny Kay Hollow. These people had to walk 2-3 miles to Lim Rock School and 3-4 miles to their work or to shop at Lim Rock. Jeremiah Gentle and John Rousseau, the blacksmith and the barber, walked this distance every day to their respective businesses.

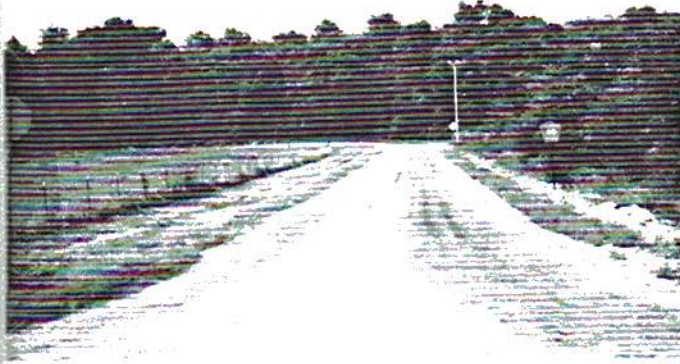
One unimproved road, now County Road 80, that ran along the eastern side of the cove was the only road into the cove. All of the homes, with two or three exceptions, were built along this road. The old wagon road along the foothill of the western mountain served these 2-3 homes.

Johnny Kay Hollow Road was also an old wagon road. This wagon road was used some during the middle 1930's by a postman on horseback, sometimes by buggy, to deliver mail from Woodville up through Paint Rock Valley and through the mountain gap to Shippman's Cove. This wagon road has since been closed. During the latter part of the 1930's the mail was delivered by car that turned around at the end of the cove and backtracked to the Old Stagecoach Road.

The Stephens family built a road from their home on the west side to the mail route on the east side. That road is still used today. (526) Dave Stephens' daughter, Bernice, married Hershaw Rousseau and they occupy the home today.

At one time, before about 1932 when Lim Rock School burned, the children of the cove walked up the western side of the mountain and across the steep mountain by way of footpaths to Nat School in the community of Nat.





The main road curved with the mountain terrain, passing several springs and three caves. Homes were built around these landmarks. One of these is still unnamed, and perhaps lost to newcomers. The cave, located on the Stephens' place, was well- known and was the home of thousands of bats. Most of the bats in all of the caves have disappeared. It was a popular place to explore and to hold picnics. It was also often used during storms. It had a nice stream of water running across it about 40 feet from the entrance. In the early 1960's it was improved and fixed for and designated as a fallout shelter during the threat of nuclear war.

The Parcus Cave was used mostly by the Parcus family for the family needs. Milk, watermelons or other things could be kept cool. It was also explored by local people using their carbide lamps, kerosene lanterns, and flashlights. It did not seem to offer a great deal of attraction and it flooded during heavy rains; thereby, presenting some danger to the ones who took chances.

Indian arrowheads were often found along the streams and caves and on the mountains. The Indians were forced to give up their land, homes, and farms and leave the area in the early 1800's.

Also, an occasional minnieball (rifle ball) was found from the Civil War era. Much talk was still prevalent about the war years. Fears had been passed along to the children. Most of the tales and the related fears were based upon untrue stories that were enhanced with each telling. Some tales suggested that some Union soldiers still lived in the mountains and were "bushwhackers" that might do grave damage to anyone. A natural stone formation was known as the "Bushwhacker Den." It was located on the main road into Shippman's Cove. Children played around the unique feature with much enthusiasm and imagination, ever alert for a bushwhacker.



The natural structure had 7-foot walls and a perfectly-laid top with an entrance and exit. People would sometimes seek shelter there during a thunderstorm if they happened to be near when there was unsettled weather. Later, when the county improved the nearby road, this formation was destroyed.

The cove also showed signs of future progress. There were several strands of telephone lines hanging from poles running east and west through the cove and over both mountains. These lines were in the middle of the cove. Electric lines ran in the same direction at the head of the cove at Johnny Kay Hollow. During severe electrical storms, these lines showed a great display of lightning strikes and fire flew great distances from the poles on the high mountain sides. Scars of both the telephone lines and the electric lines still show with their gaps across the mountain sides.

In the days before people expected the government to play the dominant role in their lives, they were self-reliant and self-sufficient. They built and repaired their own roads. When a washout came they rebuilt their own bridges or had the stream banks sloped so that they could be forded. Many adults of the early 1930's furnished their own wagons and mules when they went to haul rocks to build or repair the neighborhood road. Such was the case with the Shippman's Cove Road. The present improved road follows the same roadbed.

There were footlogs across the springs at Dalton Frasier's Springs and at Pockrus Cave. These areas also drained much of the run-off from the mountains and became dangerous after a downpour. There was also a wooden bridge at the Pockrus place, but it washed out often. When the washout occurred, all travelers, including school children, had to walk the slippery footlogs on their way to work or school.

The first school bus or truck had to ford the creek at the Frasier place to get to John Rousseau's place. There were mountain homes high into Johnny Kay Hollow, but the children of these homes got to school the best way they could. Later, in about 1938, bridges were built to make travel much safer. County Road 80 today makes for "uptown" living in Shippman's Cove. Every nook and cranny has a house and some of them are as modern as next week.

The small blacksmith shop of Billy Glover, across the road from his home, provided an income for his family and a service to a small number of people. It was interesting to see him working under the high hickory trees that shaded his shop.

One of the popular churches of the coves was the Primitive Baptist Church located just south of Henry Swerengin's place. All-day singings and dinner-on-the-ground days brought people from far and wide to worship and to visit. Today there is only a vague sign that a church occupied the hillside.

Across the road, in the pasture of the Swerengin place was a sorghum mill. This was an interesting place when the mill was fired up in the summer to press the cane for its juice to make molasses. Before the crop arrived, the mill owner had hauled in a firewood supply, dug the fire and skimmings waste pits, and set up the cooking vat. He also carved steps down to the creek



where water could be brought up with buckets at the proper time. Wagons brought the crops and stacked them to wait processing.

When the molasses making began, a hot fire was sustained in the pit below the vat. A mule walked in a circle pulling the poles connected to the presses as a man fed sorghum cane, that had been stripped of all leaves, between the two metal roller presses. Water was brought up the steps from the creek in buckets, by hand, when the cooking began. The juice ran into a pail. When the pail was full it was replaced by a second one while the juice was taken to put into the cooking vat.

A cooker, always alert to the conditions, manned the vat. He skimmed off the foam and poured the skimmings in a waste pit. After cooking with the right timing the finished product, molasses, was dipped into gallon buckets. These buckets of molasses were used at home or placed on the market.

The people who lived in the distant coves depended upon the rolling store. This rolling store or peddler came from Scottsboro and delivered many goods to people who had problems getting to stores. As the store entered the cove, the driver sounded his horn to alert his customers of his presence. Some times 3-4 families came to a waiting area, but the merchant was prepared to stop at any home or to be flagged down by any passer-by. As he parked, he lowered a counter across the doorway for customers to place orders. These stores carried groceries, dry goods, and even live chickens. They had their regular routes and came about every two weeks. They generally stocked what the customers needed and requested. These merchants served a real need for the day.

### **BERRY'S COVE**

Berry's Cove did not offer as much to as many people as some of the other coves. The Berry family farmed the few acres that were cultivatable. The main road went to the Berry home and forked to have two wagon roads run along the two mountainsides. A few decaying cabins dotted the almost impassable wagon roads. They are now gone and the roads have returned to the wilderness. The main road has been extended and a new road (84) constructed to connect Berry and Gentle Coves. School children often walked across the foothills from Shippman's Cove through the short-cut to Berry's Cove to the school which was located at the mouth of Berry's Cove on Old Stagecoach Road.

### **GENTLE'S COVE**

Gentle's Cove was once a thriving commercial community. It was winding down as an economic force in the early 1930's as the coal mines closed and workers moved. The cove was left to the local people to farm and log.



At the head of the cove a community developed around the incline. The scars of the incline still show at the end of the road into the cove. Deep, eroded valleys now show where the incline used to be. The roadway is still the same except improved and numbered. This road extended on into the mountain in the 1930's but is now closed to automobile traffic near the incline. People can still use the road by walking or using special vehicles to get to the sinks high into the mountain. Trucks and wagons took supplies to the top of the mountain and brought coal back on the return trips. Several homes were along this now restricted road. Springs had been tapped and pipes brought water to places along the roadway resembling artesian wells. These pipes flowed with great gusto and the roadway stops offered welcome centers for persons who happened to be traveling.

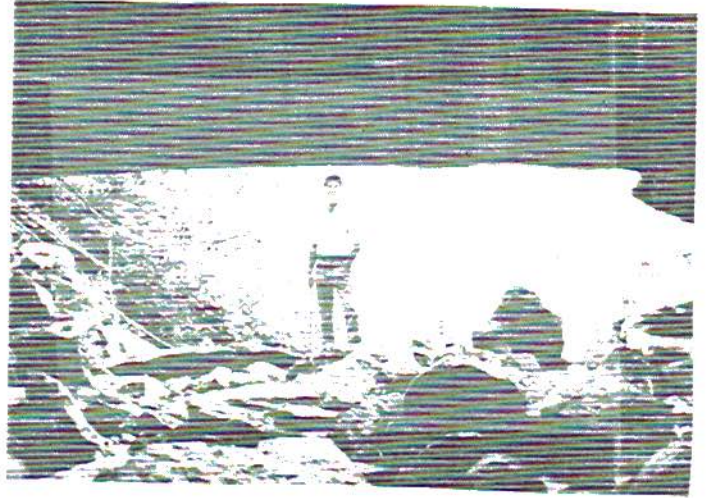
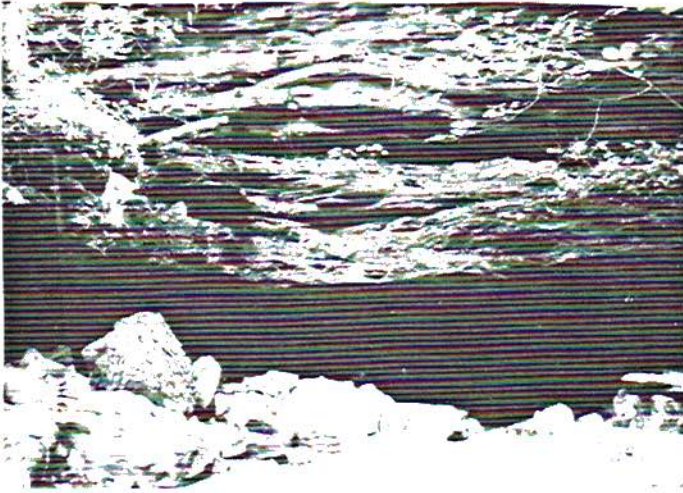
At the top of the mountain, called "The Tipple" by local people, was a commissary for the business community. Coal was mined and shipped down the incline to the community around Blowing Cave. There were several homes at the top of the mountain and at the foot of the mountain to serve the workers.

A railroad track was built up the incline to lower coal from the top using special mechanical means. The coal was unloaded at the bottom onto trucks and other train cars. A service track was built from Lim Rock to the incline to service the mining industry. These cars were taken to the railroad at Lim Rock for shipment.

The incline and all rails to Lim Rock were dismantled before 1935 and all the metal was sold for scrap. During the late 1930's, when World War II was in the making, local people foraged for metal from the top of the mountain to the bottom and in all the fields for bits of metal to sell to the scrap-iron dealer who came to all communities to buy metal. Even some of the special railroad cars used for the incline were cut up and sold, as were the metal pipes that ran into the Blowing Cave.



## CAVES



### BLOWING CAVE

Blowing Cave, even today, holds much interest to locals and visitors alike. During the thriving days of the coal industry the cave was much used. It has a generous waterfall several hundred feet inside that was tapped with pipes that ran to wooden barrels. These barrels had pipes that brought water to the outside and for a considerable distance from the mouth. These waterfalls and the overflowing barrels were awesome to visit. Ice-cold water sprayed the areas for many feet. It was freezing cold in the area, but what a thrill it was to drink from this great water source. Sometimes water did flood from the cave and caused the cave to be unsafe. Conditions inside the cave caused the temperature in the cave to remain fairly constant, thereby, causing a breeze to flow at all times; thus, Blowing Cave became its local name.

People did, and still, enjoy exploring the cave going through miles and miles of tunnels. In the 1930's, sometimes 15- 20 people would spend all day going for miles, only to come home and realize that they had not even touched the surface in exploring all of the possibilities.





### **ISBELL CAVE**

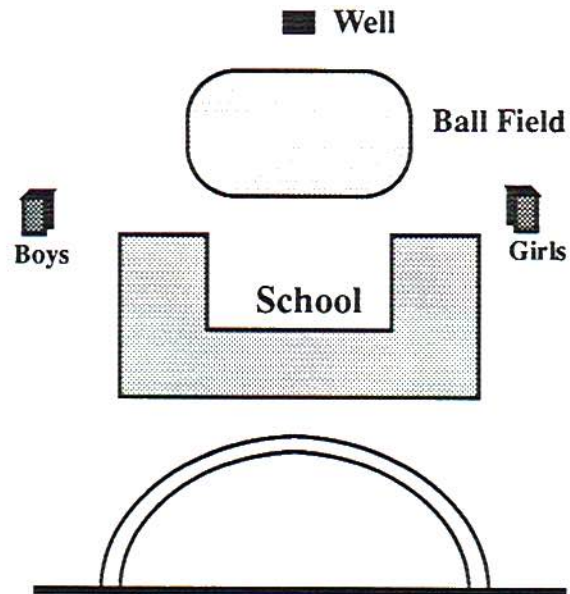
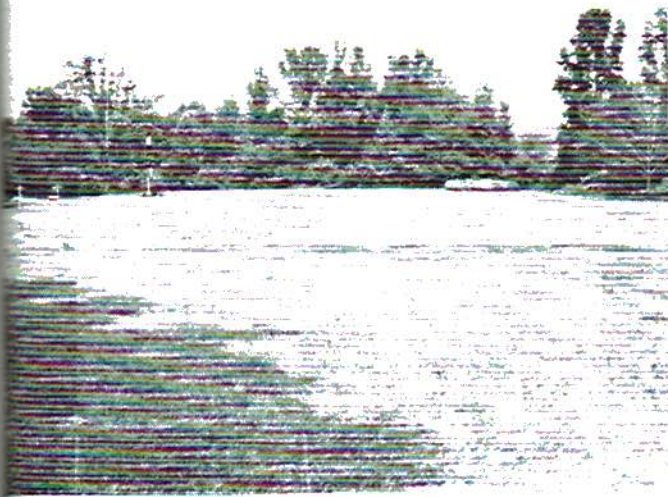
Another cave in Gentle's Cove is the Isbell Cave, as it was known in the 1930's. It is located where County Road 119 meets County Road 84. It was located on the Jess Isbell place and was used for community gatherings for years. A beautiful stream of water always flowed, and still does, from its mouth. Footlogs were installed and were used almost every day by visitors. A clear area of about an acre was used by these gatherings.

School children from Lim Rock were often rewarded with a day at the cave. Several classes and their teachers would walk County Road 30 to County Road 119 to get to the cave. The whole day was spent playing and picnicking before walking back, either in groups or singularly, to the schoolhouse. Some people, even fifty years later, say that these days were some of the highlights of the school days at Lim Rock.

### **THE LIM ROCK SCHOOL AND SOME INTERESTING STORIES**

By today's standards and laws, it is doubtful if some of the teachers' activities and building conditions of the Lim Rock School would be approved. After this building was replaced in the mid-1930's, it began to serve only grades 1-6. Older students were then bused to Woodville. Many had to get to Woodville the best way they could. The drop-out rate had to be high. The school year was short. Individuals had no private transportation and economic conditions were poor. Individuals could not afford to purchase books and personal supplies.





The school was located at the corner of Berry's Cove Road and Main Pike Road. It was situated on several acres of land with its own hand-dug well. The latest schoolhouse was built on a "U" shape with a main entrance and one entrance to each hall. Different grade levels used different halls.

Each room had a potbelly coal stove and the traditional 5 rows of desks facing a "blackboard". There were practically no supplies. Most teacher-presented material came from the "Little Red Hen" or other such books and the teacher's own blackboard work. Students were called to stand or to come to the front of the room to read and recite. When the enrollment declined, combination classes were organized. Perhaps the 4th grade and the 5th grades were in the same room. Bright 4th graders might get to learn 5th grade material before they were in the 5th by paying attention when the 5th graders' turn came to listen to the teacher.

All students, at the same time, had unsupervised recess. They, on their own, organized games. Some of the games like wrestling or pop-the-whip got rough and dangerous. Even baseball got nasty when some older boys hit the ball into a crowd or when others tried to catch the baseballs with bare hands.

When recess or the play period ended, students were signaled to return to the books. The principal or some appointed, lucky student would call to assembly by hand ringing a brass handbell that always rested on the window sill in the main hallway. Grades 1,2,and 3 lined up to enter the west wing. Older students lined up on the east wing.

The principal stood on one of the porches and called out his announcements to the near and far students. Another one of the unique features was that each student was required to present



a piece of paper that he had picked up on the campus as a ticket to re-enter the schoolhouse. This step was used to keep the campus free of paper, but also to serve as a means to teach the anti-litter idea that is so popular today.

As is often the case, some students beat the system. The system was short-circuited in this case by having paper folded and stored in their pockets to be used in any given situation. They kept folded papers from their tablet for sundry purposes. A page might be needed for the "trash attack" assembly. One might be needed for a drinking cup at the well or to impress someone by supplying one for them. Anytime a person went to the outhouse, they had to supply their own paper product.

There was no lunchroom. The late 1930's predated the lunchroom, as a common thing, by a decade. Students brought their own food to school or did without. No one had sandwich bread. Food that would not spoil was hard to furnish. Usually leftovers from breakfast were used. Buttered biscuits or half-moon apple pies or the like were taken to school in a paper bag or in a tin molasses bucket. Lunch was eaten from one's desk or sometimes they were excused to go outside to eat. This eating time and the food brought to school were sources of embarrassment. Eating time often produced shyness and inhibitions with some youth.

There were times when the well went dry. It was a 3-4 foot well which was about 25 feet deep. It was enclosed at the top with a wood frame with a smaller door that could be lifted by anyone to check on the water depth or to draw a bucket of water if the need arose. It presented dangerous problems. Students ran the risk of falling in or having to use contaminated water. Sometimes local characters would throw in small dead animals, thus polluting the water supply.

When the pump was working properly, students would gang up around the water flow to catch a cup of water. Most of the time students had folded a sheet of paper from their "tablets" to form a cup. This was a rather improvised way to catch water. Sometimes these cups were left on the campus, thereby littering. The teachers developed ways to correct this practice by requiring a picked-up piece of paper as a pass to re-enter the building.

When the well was dry, or when the water was noticeably polluted, each student was responsible for his own water supply. The bold and the smart would bring a quart fruit jar full of water, attached to their belts. When they got to school the jar was stored under their desk. Sometimes after a grueling play time at recess that water supply was a bargaining chip. Everyone wanted the water even though they may have been too shy or too sophisticated to bring it from home.

Also, at times the outhouses became too dangerous to use. Time had run out for summer repairs and the county workers did not have time to repair the dangerous, unsatisfactory condition. In such times life was tough at school. The boys' facility was located on the west side of the campus and the girls' on the east side. About 5 holes were dug to about ten feet deep. These holes were then walled up with seats attached. Sometimes these casings became dangerous to



approach and at all times unsanitary to use. Young students ran a real risk of falling into the pits. Boys learned to minimize the risks by aiming from a distance.

When enough danger was evident the toilets were closed until repairs could be made. Beginning the school term early to make time for the "cotton picking vacation" made repairs difficult to schedule. If the school was open while the facility was closed, boys were instructed to use the woods on the west side of campus and the girls used the grown-up area north of the campus.

The school year ended in May or June, only to get geared up for an early beginning for the next year. Children would be home to help with planting and cultivating the crops or earning money as they helped others. The new year would begin in mid-July for a six to eight week session. The school would then close until after the crops were harvested in October. This recess was often dubbed as "the cotton picking vacation." It served its purpose in that day and time.

All people walked from faraway places like the head of Shippman's Cove to the business of Lim Rock. Students walked to school. Some would begin from the head of the coves and gather friends along the way to school. The Shippman's Cove students would enter the short cuts of foottrails of the mountains near the Gentle farm and come out over the mountain to re-enter another mountain and come out in Berry's Cove. They came down Berry's Cove to the school. It was easy to get to know people with these long walks to and from school.

### **SCHOOL BUS DAYS**

In the mid 1930's a private truck was furnished to get students to school. Dave Rousseau furnished his personal flat-bed truck. This first truck was an open 3/4 ton truck. It was later enclosed and covered with canvas. It had a tire mounted on the back to serve as a step for children to get aboard. This was some cold ride, but not nearly as prolonged as the walks through rain or shine. Later a regular bus was furnished. Progress was on its way. Students began to be bused to Woodville, and the Lim Rock school began to diminish in importance.

### **MATTRESS MAKING**

As today, the community school served as a gathering place for the community. It was the most important community meeting place. Adult ball teams used the field like school ball teams did. When President Franklin Roosevelt's programs were being implemented the school was a common meeting place. Community projects like mattress making took place. The government furnished material and local people met under the campus trees to make mattresses for those who wished to participate. Friends and neighbors joined together, in festive fashion, to help each other sew these mattresses. This program was one of many that helped to get the United States out of the depression.



## VACCINATION TIME

Vaccination time was a time to remember. Staff from the Health Department would come to school and set up shop inside the main hallway. They would have heated needles soaking in alcohol to give typhoid and smallpox shots. These needles were used repeatedly on different students. The smell of this procedure, heating alcohol, filled the whole building. All students knew what was happening, and they trembled with fright. Nevertheless, each room of students was lined up--parents were not consulted nor involved-- and taken by the nurse to get the shots. Smallpox vaccinations were dreaded. Each one knew that a scar would be left on the arm after the sore healed in two weeks. Much sickness and throwing up followed the typhoid shots, with much embarrassment to both teachers and students.

The typhoid shots were a series of three; therefore, the second and third doses came while school was on vacation. Adults and young people again walked long distances in community groups to get these shots. Young people who refused to go were subjects of ridicule for their being "chicken." To be a part of the group, the reluctant went, only to be sorry a few hours later when severe sickness and nausea began. Taking shots became a community ceremony that proved one's courage.

## INSIDE THE SCHOOL

Inside the classroom and school were other events that a person has a way of remembering. Switches were common and were often used on students who did not do well and on those who "misbehaved." They were sometimes used on boys who had played certain games like "keeps" in marbles miles from school if those boys had not first reported to home.

The coal heaters had an indented top to hold water. Someone had to get to school early to fire up the heaters. Older students sometime did this service, and it was always an honor for a boy to get to go outside to get a scuttle of coal or to get to feed the fire during school time. A few times an early arrival, who wanted a mid-morning laugh, might get a can of urine and pour it into the indented water holder. About 10 A.M. The room and school would be filled with the stench of boiling urine. It was one arresting atmosphere!

It may have never been understood, until possibly years later when some thought was given, why some things were taught at school. One of those thoughts was why would a teacher say that a window should be left open for fresh air. Of course, that expression was in the book written by someone in the city with a tight home. Students would fail to see the point but they would conclude something magical happened if the window was open even though most of the homes had holes in the walls or roofs.

Teachers would say let the lamplight come from your left side. Why? It took some more brainpower to figure out that the right hand would make a shadow should the limited light come



over the right shoulder.

It took this same quality of brainpower to conclude that "excuse" meant more than going to the bushes or going outdoors. Going outdoors, going to the bushes, or being excused became terms to blush about or to cause one to giggle.

To use a toilet or to build a toilet were too coarse to even speak about. Later when indoor plumbing was becoming a reality, some of the old folks who were so conditioned could not bear to have someone doing anything like that inside their home. Indoor plumbing was an outcast. Something to ridicule.

Sometimes the undergrowth on the mountain would catch on fire. It was some more sight to see a mountain on fire. The principal sometimes would dismiss students, some of them barefooted, to go fight the fires. No parent was consulted. There was no way to communicate. Could you imagine today what kind of uproar it would create if school children as young as 9-10 years old went to fight a forest fire? The children felt obligated to go. The young were hardy and independent and were accustomed to doing dangerous things to survive.

## HEALTH CARE

There were few public medical services during the depression years and for the recovery years. Individuals could afford only the minimal care or none at all.

Public health service furnished a staff to the community for a few vaccinations. Sometimes the staff gave vision checks with no follow-up. Parents could not afford follow-up for vision or dental concerns. Baby teeth were pulled by the parents or children. Adults often pulled their own troubled teeth with wire pliers. Sometimes toothpaste companies would bring free samples of the paste and brushes to distribute at school. Most of the time families improvised their dental hygiene with sweet-gum-limb brushes and baking soda and salt as a cleanser.

"Stone bruises" were a common foot problem for the children who went barefoot. These serious infections would last for weeks with adults using straight razors to lance the infected areas to drain out the core.

Spring tonics were used even for healthy people. Castor Oil, Black Draught, and other laxatives were used even if the patient had the opposite problem. Children would ask to be "be excused because my bowels are running off." Teachers understood the local language.

Without refrigeration, leftover food may have furnished much of the source for health problems. Food could not be kept over for long without risks. Drinking water was taken from the open pool areas of springs. Wells were often near outhouses or barns and people were careless where they used the bathroom.

Family members and visitors used the same hand towels. Drinking water was kept in a



common bucket with one dipper for all to use. Baking soda was the main antiacid. Each family and each person survived by luck and their own wits.

## CONCLUSIONS

It was no special honor to own land, nor a dishonor not to own land. Some people felt it was a drag for them to own land. They were free to move and adjust to changing conditions.

By the late 1930's the United States economy was picking up. Rumbles of war were heard. Industry began to hire. The WPA, PWA, and other such programs had given employment to some people. Lee Highway and such projects were underway. Some money was to be had and purchasing power improved.

The war efforts brought on rationing to even include shoes and sugar. At the early stages, this rationing did not hurt the Lim Rock people. They did not have money to buy more than the rationed items. Ration books were issued to each individual and these books along with their allotted stamps had to be submitted to the merchant before any rationed item could be purchased. Tokens became a part of the monetary system. Each token was worth one mill, and these were used to pay sales taxes. The strong still survived and some thrived.

Young men went to the military. The families who had no real attachment to the land moved to Huntsville and other places to be near their new jobs. The make-up of Lim Rock was changing.

The air was full of war planes. Telephones crept into some homes. Electricity came to town. Lee Highway had been built serving as a bypass. Trucks and cars were being purchased. Shopping could be done in Scottsboro or Huntsville in their supermarkets.

All of these changes diminished the need for small isolated towns. Isolation was destroyed and each person reached out to join a bigger world. The school burned, and there was no need for it to be rebuilt. The post office and the stores closed. The railroad found the station at Lim Rock and the sidetrack unprofitable and so they were closed and removed.

By the mid-1940's Lim Rock was no longer a town with its own identity with its place on the map. It became a residential community as a part of the larger community of Jackson County to be remembered by many as home. It served its purpose in its own unique way.





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OF AMERICA



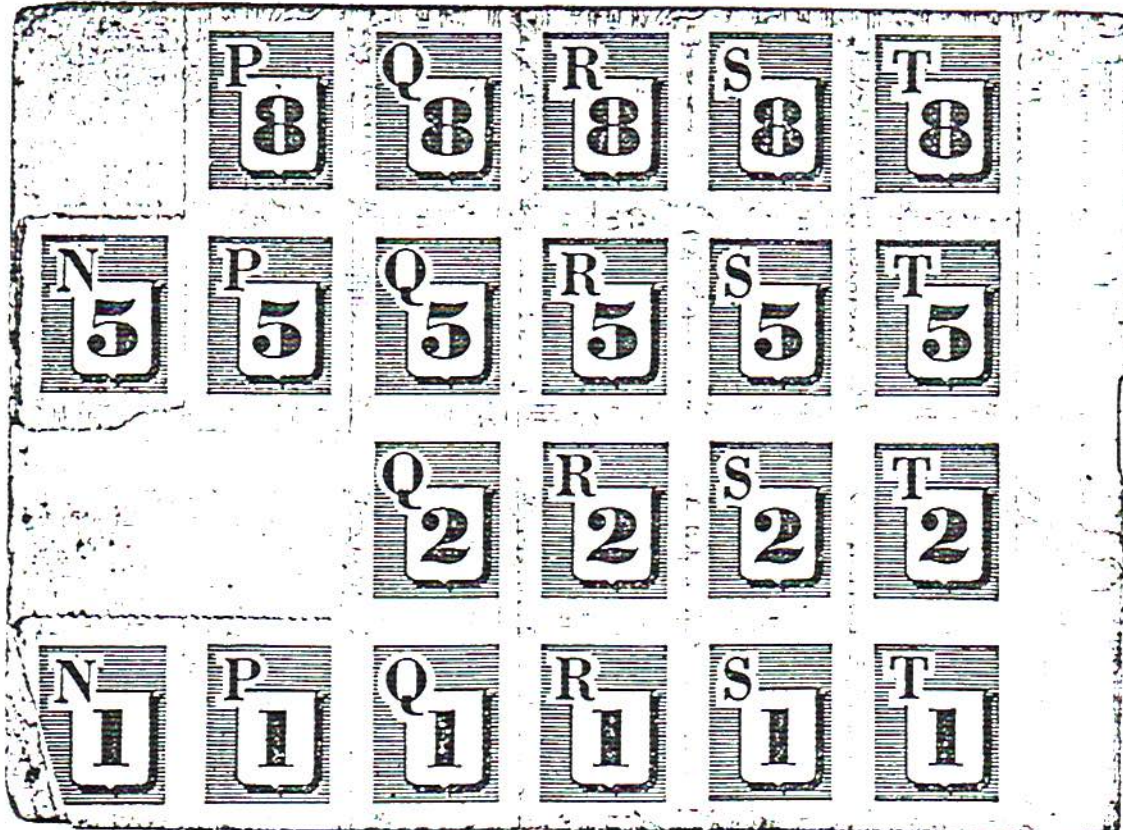
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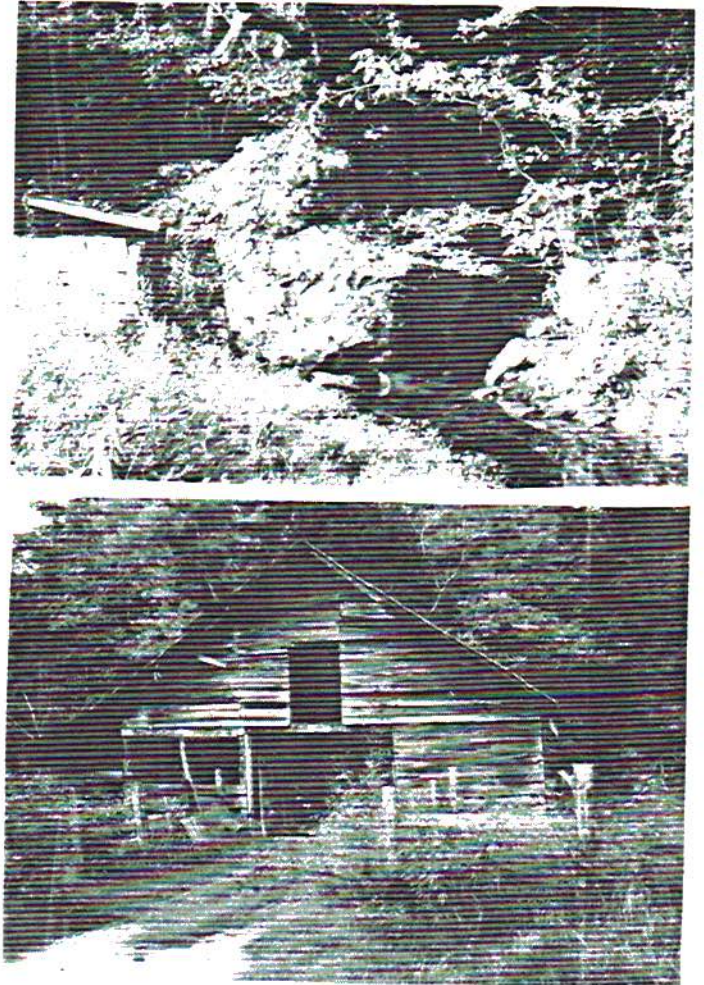
OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION





Is this progress or what? This article is being written by using a computer within this writer's home. In a few days it will be printed on a laser printer. We've come a long way, Babe, since 1930!





Sanford Gentle stands in front of the Dalton Frazier home in September 1992. The Frazier place was known for its beautiful spring. The spring ran between the house and barn and was forded by a footlog bridge. The spring was/and is used for the house and for the livestock.

Sanford, age 65, tells the story in September 1992 of what it was like to grow up in the 1930's as one of 12 children of Jeremiah (1891-1952) and Ester Gentle (1890-1972). All of the children farmed and logged the 120-acre Gentle estate as youths at home. As was the custom of the day, all children side-by-side did the family work. Jeremiah also owned and operated the blacksmith shop and grist mill at Lim Rock.

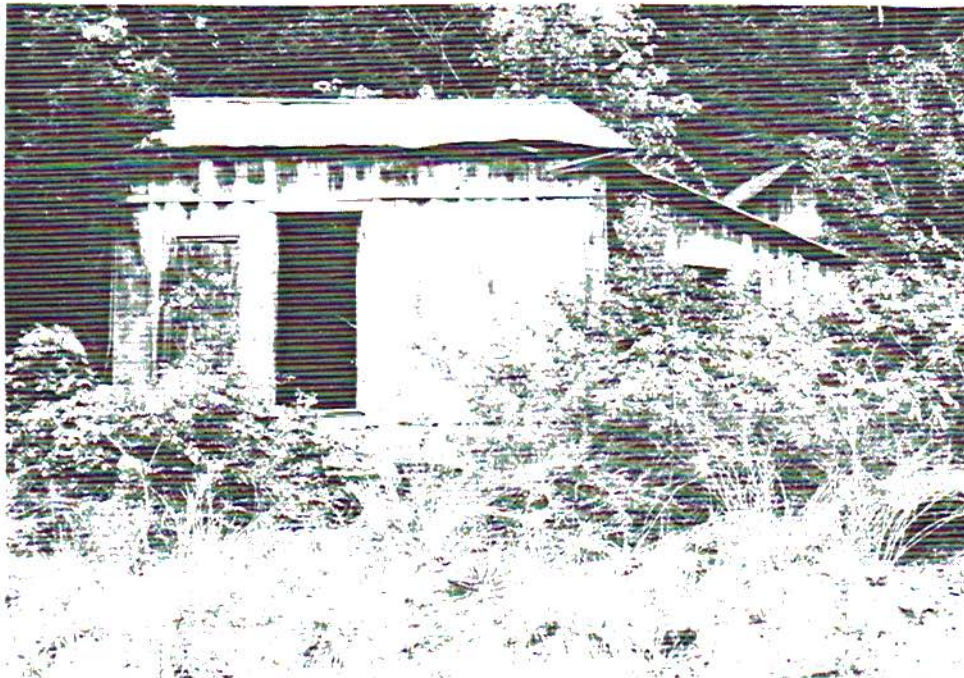
Sanford has followed several lines of work as an adult, including carpentry and helping to run the family grist mill. He also worked at the sawmill near Johnny Kay Hollow. It was a two-man operation with Sanford being the "dust doodler" (one who removes the sawdust from the dust pit), slab remover, getting logs to the saw, and ten other things with each being enough to keep one man busy. Hard work was the name of the game during the 1930's and the 1940's.





This house was the main house of the Albert Chambless family at the end of County Road 527.

#### A CUDJA' HOUSE



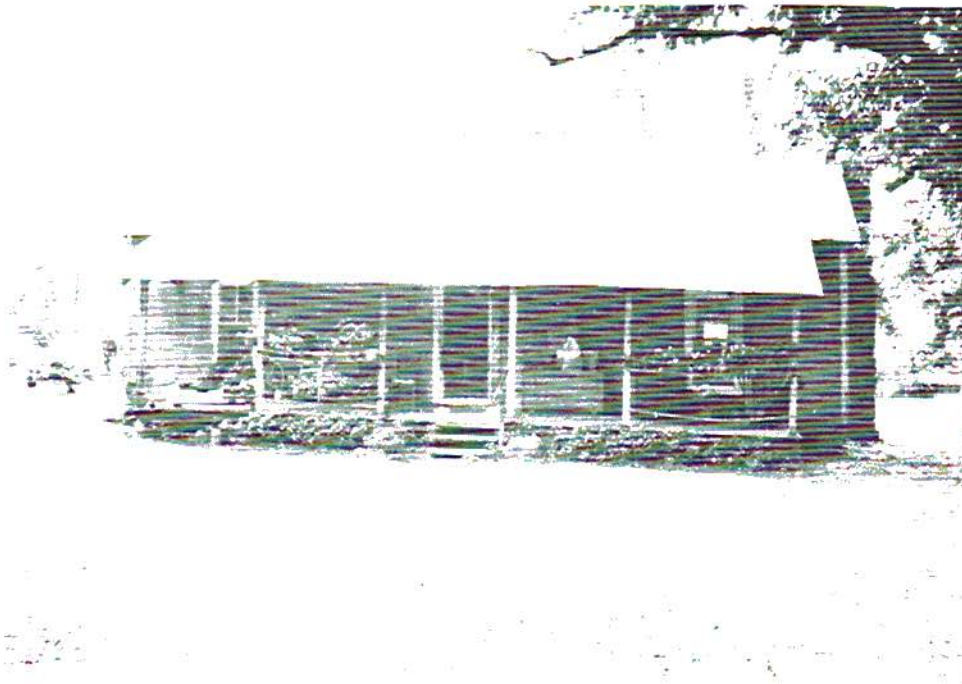
This Chambless rental of the 1930's is still standing. This house has most of the features of homes of settlers. It has one room with a fireplace and a shed add-on for the kitchen eating area. At the back, separate from the house, is a shed used for a smokehouse. The front porch was used



as a sitting area and as a place where visitors would stop for a chat. Most often the receiving room was where the fireplace was situated and was called the "front room."

As this story was being developed, a former teacher of Woodville--where she and her future husband met and taught school--told this story.

As she and her beau drove past a house near Lim Rock, like this one, he made a remark that for the first time convinced her that marriage might be a part of their future. He asked her, "Cudja" marry me if I lived in a house like that?" Her answer was yes. After that near proposal of marriage, all such houses near Lim Rock were known by those two people as the Cudja' houses. Forty years later, with her husband deceased, she remembers with great fondness the "Cudja" house. From this marriage came three bright, professional young adults, that include doctors and nurses.



This home is near the Stephens' Cave in Shippman's Cove. It is occupied today by some of the Pockrus-Gentle family and gives a feeling of nostalgia as the wisps of smoke come from the fireplace chimney.





This home was the Will Isbell home on the west side of Shippman's Cove.

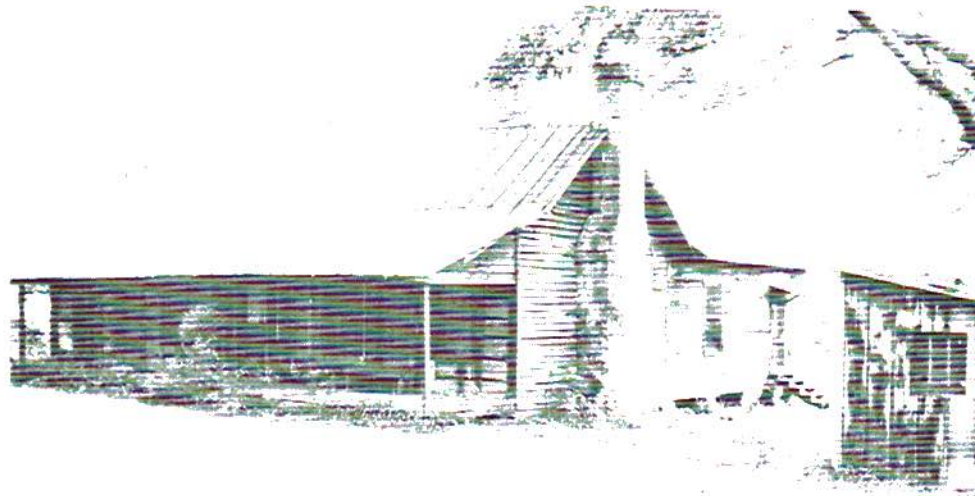


This home was occupied by Polly Higginbotham. It was perched high above Lee Highway in downtown Lim Rock. The pictured steps were the main entrance to the house. It is still used today. Note the TV antenna.





This home was one the homes of envy in Shippman's Cove. It was the Dave Stephens home. It featured a wrap-around porch with two entrances from the front. The probable reason for the two entrances was that the home featured a double fireplace from a single chimney. Two "front rooms" were heated by the fireplace. Later, much of the back and side porches was enclosed for living space, but the home is still a beauty.



This home, in Shippman's Cove, was the home of Billy and Tish Glover and their daughter Myrtle. It is a log house with three rooms. The logs were covered by boards on the outside and today is in good living condition.



## FOOTNOTES

### I. From--The Story of Woodville

John R. Kennamer, Sr.

Published by East Alabama Publishing Co., Inc.

Lanette, Alabama

(1950)

1. Also wrote Jackson County History
2. Willism H. Stephens settled Stephens' Gap.
3. Michael Hauk settled in Shiffman's Cove in 1830 and lived there until his death.
4. Later Lydia Ann Hauk married Rubin Rousseau.
5. Dr. Hezzie Martin (DOB 1848) of Woodville practiced medicine at the Belmont Coal Mines of Lim Rock.
6. Butler's Grist Mill on the Paint Rock River was built in 1800's and was destroyed in 1939 by a tornado.
7. In October 1901 the Pike Road from Woodville to Lim Rock was completed.
8. In the fall of 1933 Lee Highway to Lim Rock was completed for \$150,000.

### II. Some family names of Shippman's Cove of the 1930's

1. Will Isbell lived on the west side of the cove.
2. Dave and Mamie Stephens lived on the west side of the cove near the center.
3. "Uncle" Will Dave Rousseau lived near the head of the cove on the west side.
4. John and Julina Rousseau lived at the head of the cove near Johnny Kay Hollow.
5. Henry Swerengin lived on the east side near the mouth.
6. Jeremiah and Ester Gentle lived near the center on the east side.
7. Billy and Tish Glover owned the blacksmith shop and farm near the center.
8. Dalton Frazier owned the farm at the Frazier Springs.
9. The Stephens owned the farm around the cave.
10. "Offie" Pockrus owned the farm near the Pockrus Cave at the big bend of the main road.

### III. Some other names:

1. Walter and Pansy Berry owned much of the land in Berry's Cove.
2. Jess Isbell owned the farm around Isbell Cave in Gentle's Cove.
3. Harvey and Martha Gentle owned the land around the Blowing Cave in Gentle's Cove.