

The Sylvania Story

BY BROWNY STEPHENS

Upper mountain's leading trade center of 30s and 40s dwindled after being bypassed two major highways

By BROWNY STEPHENS

The course of history, as far as the life of communities, towns and cities is concerned, is often altered drastically by decisions made on the location of highways and railroads.

Railroads never came to upper Sand Mountain, and prior to the coming of paved highways, towns grew up and prospered mainly because its merchants and business people were enterprising and progressive. When all of the roads were mainly sand or improved by chert, people of the rural areas traded and shopped in a place that offered the kind of services needed.

Usually this was not far away, and trips to the county seat at Fort Payne or Scottsboro were infrequent and took an entire day for a round trip in a wagon. Even when automobiles and trucks came in the 20s and 30s, the condition of the roads on the mountain kept people from making many trips off the mountain to shop. Large general stores, cotton gins, and grist mills supplied nearly all the needs of people who, by necessity, had learned to be nearly self sufficient.

Salesmen, known then as "drummers," traveled to these areas and sold merchandise to the local merchants, and goods were hauled to the various locations by wagons and later trucks by freight companies.

Many large general stores—selling practically everything anyone would need from food to clothes, shoes, livestock feed, fertilizer, and horse harness and even, in some cases, caskets—were scattered about the mountain at crossroads. Stories are told about such stores at Powells Crossroads, Chavies, Tenbroeck, Henagar, Antioch and other locations.

But one town became the leading trading center of upper Sand Mountain. At Sylvania in the early part of this century, a real busy business district emerged. At one time there were three large general merchandise stores, smaller grocery stores, three or four cafes at a time, hotel, cotton gin, three grist mills, a grist mill manufacturer, and a telephone switchboard that served the town and some nearby homes long before the telephone co-op was ever dreamed of.

Fate, however, was at work in the 30s that would eventually lead to the decline of Sylvania as a trade center. Alabama built the first paved highway across the mountain, Hwy. 35, in the late 30s, connecting Scottsboro and Fort Payne. This route, which was destined to be the main thoroughfare between the two county seats, and between the Tennessee River Valley and Lookout Valley, was built about six miles south of Sylvania.

For some years after that, Sylvania continued to flourish. In 1947 a theater was built, the only "picture show" on upper Sand Mountain. Before that, people had to go to Valley Head, Fort Payne or Scottsboro to see a movie.

Many people in the area remember well those days in the late 40s and early 50s when Sylvania was the "place to be" on Sand Mountain on Saturday nights.

Sylvania was known far and wide for its huge Fourth of July celebration, which was held in the park next to the Masonic Hall just south of the business district. The event attracted big crowds, including several governors of Alabama who showed up to be a part of the festivities. George Wallace spoke at two of the Sylvania Fourth of July celebrations, which usually went from morning to late at night.

Some older residents recall that Sylvania overshadowed all other mountain towns in those days. "It was much bigger than Henagar, and in those days Ider was known simply as the Big Woods," one of them said. Rainsville was unheard of.

Progress, which had been the ingredient in building up Sylvania in the 20s and 30s, took a hand in tearing it down soon after World War II. The second major paved highway on Sand Mountain, Hwy. 75, was built north from Albertville to the Georgia line. The construction took place about 1949 through 1952.

This highway was located about a mile east of Sylvania, isolating the business district from any direct highway connection. It did the same thing at Henagar and Ider. In all three towns, the original business districts dwindled in favor of locations along Hwy. 75. Henagar fared better, however, because Hwy. 40, the alternate cross-mountain highway to Hwy. 35, was built right through old Henagar so some businesses have stayed in the original downtown. Hwy. 40 connects Scottsboro with Hammondville and Valley Head.

At Ider, Hwy. 117 was later built to connect Stevenson with Hammondville and Valley Head, and some businesses have remained along it instead of

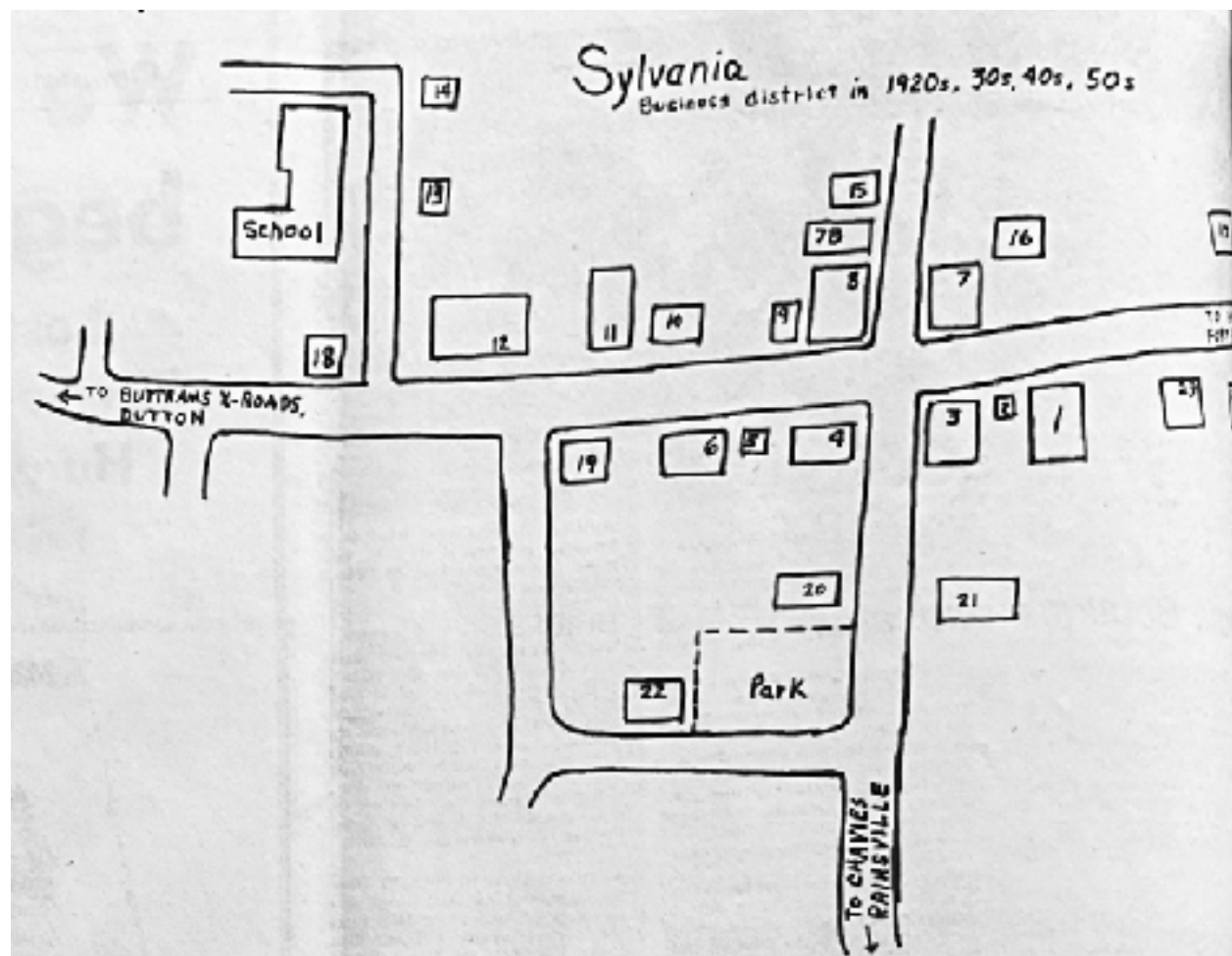
moving to Hwy. 75.

Sylvania's booming business district, however, was left to "wither on the vine," so to speak. The theater closed in the 50s, and one by one the stores and cafes closed or were moved. In the original business district, some of the remaining store buildings are being used for residences. A television repair shop is located in one. The gin, the victim of the decline of cotton production and the building is now used for building trusses for houses. The theater building stands empty, deteriorating, and lonely in contrast to the busy period of the 40s and 50s.

The park has grown up in weeds. The Baptist and Methodist churches that were once on opposite sides have moved to other locations, although both buildings are still being used, one by the Church of God.

Sylvania's school probably helped serve as nucleus for the community as it grew into a busy trading center in the first half of this century. About 1914 a two-story school was built just back from the present school, just north of the old business district. This school burned to the ground in 1945. The present school was opened in 1947 when Sylvania became the first high school in DeKalb County on Sand Mountain north of Fyffe.

The accompanying map of old Sylvania was drawn in an effort to reconstruct the busy years of that town. Not all of the buildings were used at the same time, and some residences are



included when they are pertinent to the telling of the history. Information about the old Sylvania business district has been compiled with interviews with older residents who remember some or a great deal of the years when Sylvania flourished. Many interesting stories about Sylvania have come out in these interviews and some of them will be published in later articles.

The information here is subject to revision but an honest effort is being made to record the history as accurately as possible.

The buildings placed in approximate locations on the map are numbered in order to identify them.

1. Christopher C. Crawford general merchandise store. Crawford was postmaster 1919-33 so the post office was here. This was a large 2-story building and wide range of merchandise was sold. Sold to Kirk and Collier, who operated it for a time. Only front part of building remains and is now a residence.

2. Small building where Thomas King (postmaster 1933-49) had post office for a time. Torn down in 1964.

Location of Sylvania Hotel, which burned about 1925 and threatened to destroy the Crawford Store, too. Present building was built for James Stover about 1936 for a cafe and Gulf gas station. Sold to M. B. Bell, then later to Johnny Garmany, who converted it to a grocery. Sold to Lec Newton and then later to Leon and Cecil Newsome. Mrs. Cecil Newsome was a daughter of Thomas King and he ran the post office in the building for a time.

4. Known as the Baxter House, where Pat H. Baxter, owner of one of three big general merchandist stores, lived. The house, altered a great deal over the years, was once the showplace home and office of Dr. Curtis Johnson early in the century. He was one of four physicians and one "pseudo" doctor who practiced in Sylvania at one time.

5. Small building erected for use as post office when Mrs. Coy (Christine) King was postmaster 1949-53. She was a daughter of Chris Crawford. The building was later moved south of the Masonic Hall and used as a residence.

6. Chris Crawford home, possibly the oldest residential structure in Sylvania,

and hardly changed at all since Crawford moved into it in 1922, obtaining it in a trade with George Keith, who may have built the house. It has been vacant for some years.

7. Large general merchandise store owned by Oscar Culver. It was later moved across the road to just behind the Baxter store and is identified on the map as 7B. It was made into a residence. The Coy Kings lived there when Christine King was postmaster. The building later burned.

8. Large general merchandise store owned by Pat H. Baxter, who sold it about 1941 to Buck Bone and moved to Fort Payne. Later bought by Kirk and Collier. It was torn down and a service station (still standing) was built. Baxter owned and operated the first telephone switchboard in this building in the 20s and 30s.

9. Small building used as a post office by Tom King at one time. This building may have been moved to another location and used as a residence.

10. Jim Henry general store. Though not as large as the Bax, Crawford or Culver stores, Henry operated a store here for many years and he and his wife, Martha, lived in the back of the building. This is now used as a residence.

11. Sylvania Theater was built in 1947 by

SAND MOUNTAIN BOOSTER— JACKSON COUNTY ADVERT



FROM LEFT are Sue Balfour, waitress; Connie Woods, restaurant manager; Tommy and Frankly Glover, and Edith and Jack Glover.

Glovers buy Sylvania Restaurant

Jack Glover and his son Tommy Glover recently purchased the Sylvania Restaurant on Hwy. 75 near the crossroads. They also own Glover Brothers Lumber Co.

Jack was raised in Bryant and has been in the lumber business in this area

for 30 years. He has lived in Sylvania for 21 years. He is married to the former Edith Chandler of Fort Payne.

Tommy is their only child. He is married to the former Frankie Heth of Henagar, who also owns and manages a clothing store in the old Glover Bro-

thers Lumber Yard building in Sylvania. Both families attend the Mt. Olive church.

Bunnie Woods is the manager of the restaurant and says to watch for special dinners.

uence.

11. Sylvia Theater was built in 1947 by Lester Morgan Sr., who now lives in Ider. Before it was finished it was sold to Word Theaters in Scottsboro, which operated it until it closed in the 50s. A cafe was in the front.

12. Cotton gin, operated at times by Sam Igou, Bob Chisenhall, Bill Elliott and Jim Freeman. Elliott, whose wife is Jewel, a daughter of Chris Crawford, now lives in Scottsboro. The building is now used as a truss factory for house construction.

13. A cafe was operated across from the school by Leo Grimes, who is now the DeKalb County tax assessor. Sold to Tom White who operated it for a while.

14. Sam West house. The Wests moved from Georgia to Sylvania about 1902 and this is one of the early houses. Sam and his wife both died in recent years.

15. A blacksmith shop was operated here in the 20s and 30s by a man named Lewis Mitchell.

16. One of the oldest residences in Sylvania, the front part dating to the 1890s, according to a DeKalb legend story. Oscar Culver, the store owner, lived there for a time. Mr. and Mrs. Bill Elliott owned it from about 1932 until 1957. Mrs. Jimmie Newsome, present postmaster since 1954 and a niece of Chris Crawford, operated the post office here until 1977 when the new post office was built on Hwy. 75.

17. House at location of M. B. Bell Granary, owned by Chris Crawford and traded to George Keith for the house closer to the Crawford store.

18. J. W. Wofford grist mill. Wofford also built grist mills in that location and they were sold and shipped all around the world.

19. Cafe was built here about 1948 by Jim McGullion. A number of others owned and operated it, including Paul Lynch, Wendell West, a man named Cifaldis, Charles Biddle and Howard Hall, who closed it in the 60s.

20. Masonic Hall. This building was built in 1936 to replace a Masonic Hall that had burned. A veterinarian, Dr. Windy Cooper, lived in the building in the 20s and kept animals in pens in the



THE OLD SYLVANIA business district near the school once flourished with businesses, but today is nearly deserted except for residences. Included in this view looking west is the front of the old Chris Crawford general merchandise store and post office, a former service station now housing a TV repair show that sits where Sylvania Hotel once was, the Pat Baxter house that once belonged to Dr. Curtis Johnson, and the historic old Crawford house built before the turn of the century.

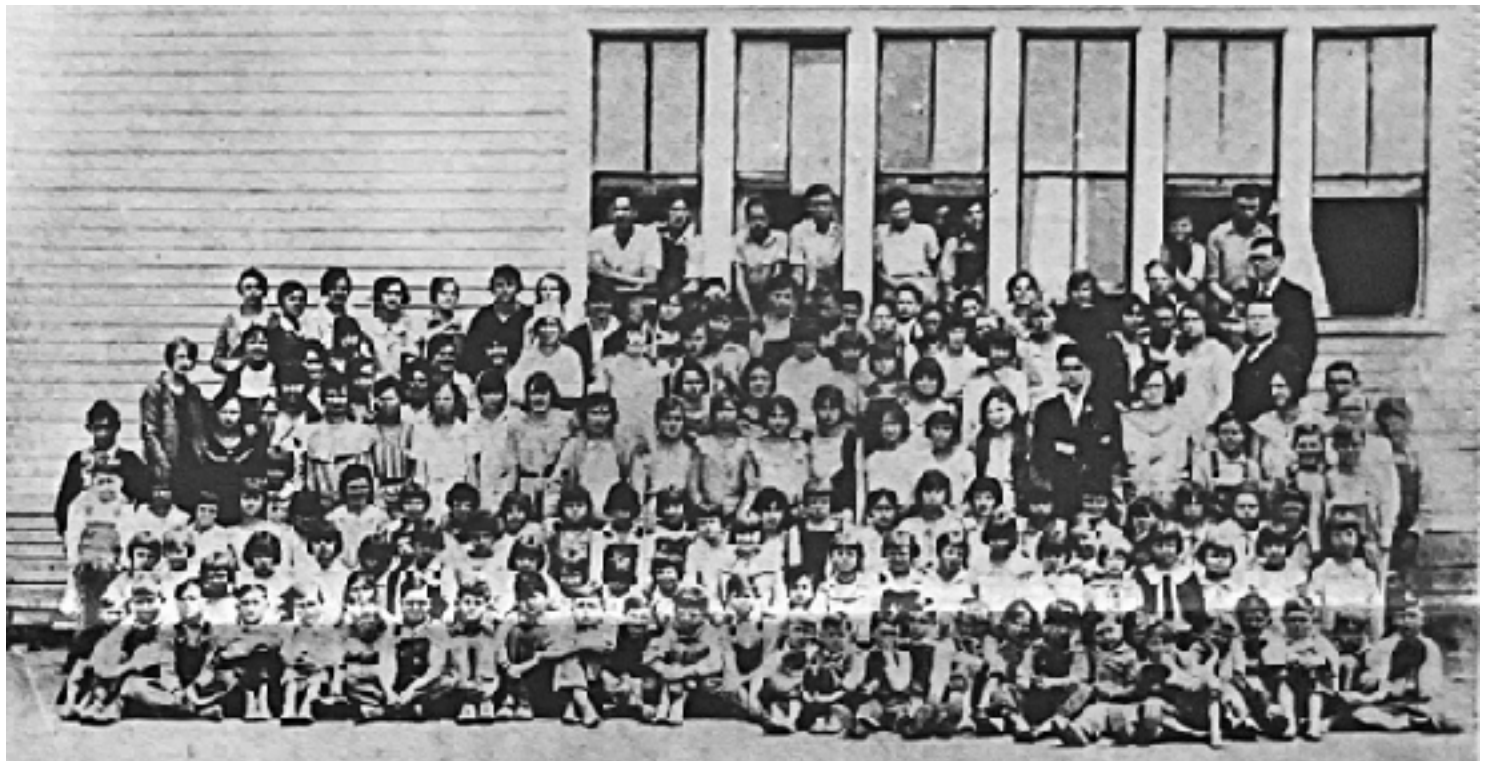
back.

21. Original Sylvania Baptist Church, now moved to near school. It is now the Sylvania Church of God.

22. Original Sylvania Methodist Church. Now used by church as neighborhood center.

23. Bradley White grist mill was located here at foot of hill. White also planned lumber and had the first gasoline station in Sylvania. David Hillian's Sylvania Beauty Shop is located here now.

24. Early Sylvania residence, now home of Mrs. Burnice West, daughter-in-law of the pioneer Sam West (see No. 14). In the rear of the house is a log structure (No. 25) some say was one of Sylvania's earliest post offices, if not THE earliest.



THE SYLVANIA SCHOOL building that burned in 1935, when Sylvania was the biggest trading center on upper Sand Mountain, is pictured here with the students of the year 1929-30. Those in the picture are identified, from left:

Sitting, Freeman Smalley, Lloyd Chamlee, Herman Chamlee, Charles Coleman, Alfred Whiteside, Ralph Baxter, Windell West, Trueheart Smith, R.A. Igou, J.T. George, Curtis Bryson, Dan Fowler, Berlon West, Lowell Jones, Buck Hicks, Jessie Lee Bain, Frank Summernour, James A. Summernour, Iris Newsome, Winston Roden, Floyd George, W.A. Fortson, Alvin Butler, Raymond Baxter, John Mitchell, Sam Jones, Walter Coleman, Rex Rose and Gaston Pope.

Second row, Evelyn Bradley, Mable Whiteside, Irene Ragsdale, Vera Carnes, Hazel Goodrich, Opal Garmany, Bema Smith, Rowin Crawford, Jewel Carnes, Hazel Nell Igou, Gartrell Stone, Ruby Nell Garmany, Elain Stone, Relma Grimes, Elizabeth Glasscock, Thelma Grimes. Audrey Lee Anderson,

Irene Baxter, Alene Clayton, Hazel Goodrich, Catherine Izell, Freda Hardman, Hazel Mitchell, Atha Newsome, Hazel Ragsdale, Etta Carnes, Margaret Crawford.

Third row, unknown, Clinton Goodrich, Rosie Clayton, Audry Stone, Mable Mitchell, Lorene Williams, Lucile Hicks, Ole Mae Izell, Ruby Lee Warren, Doris Rose Hall, Ovie Garmany, Juanita West, Mamie Smalley, Amy Smalley, Burma Smith, Ruby Helms, Nola West, Bessie Garmany, Ila Newton, Ima George, Ila Crawford, Christine Roden, Ina Fortson, Pauline Bell, Irene Benefield, Ronald Grey.

Fourth row, William Teasley, Pauline Bethune, Veva Crawford, Lucile George, Helen Foreman, Eula Smalley, Melvina Bradley, Lucile Kidd, Juanita Pope, Agnes Whiteside, Daisy Brown, Nobie Boosier, Hazel Chamlee, Grace Newsome, Myrtle Newsome, Fay Williams, Bernice Bradley, Lois Pierce (teacher), Lewis Fowler (teacher), Mrs. Bain (teacher), Orlen Stone, Blanch Grey (teacher), Curtis Garmany. Tate Bell, Gorden Whiteside.

Clarence Culver, Ronald Stevens.

Fifth row, Lena Newsome, Cleo Butler, Burnie Brown, Willie Mae Stanley, Opal King, Katie Bell, Lubie Cowart, Dorothy Stone, Ellie Croft, Luna Newton, Newell Garmany, Lorene Whiteside, Margie Johnson, Margaret Ragsdale, Juanita King, Lillian Roden, Edith Carnes, Flora Williams, Thelma Rose, Acie Langston, Cecil King, Worth Williams, Ila Bell, Chester Jones, Jessie Bain (principal).

Sixth row, Mary Bell, Annett Hall, Ella Mae Butler, Bonnie Crawford, Pauline Fortson, Ethelin Hall, Christine Crawford, Melba Perry, Hattie Butler, Raymond Moss, Leo Grimes, Fred Smith, Palmer Brown, Curtis Helms, Bill Fortson, Walter Smith, Erskin Warren, Talmadge Warren, Ruth Fortson, Lenny Perry, Carl Kidd, Exekiel Summerhour (teacher).

In windows, Herbert Hitchcock, W.B. Moss, Floyd Rose, Baudice West, Paul Luynch, J.C. Rose, Willie Young, Bo Hall, Wayne Furgerson.



EARLY SYLVANIA SCHOOL picture of the 5th and 6th grade classes shows Sam West (arrow) when he was teaching school

Date of the picture was not determined by press time, although it had to be the late 20s or very early 30s since

Sam West quit teaching early in the 30s. His family history, which West himself wrote, is included in this issue.

THE SYLVANIA STORY

Early Sylvania settler Sam West wrote a family history

When you delve into the history of this area, some people will tell you that the history of Sand Mountain has never been written. In a sense, this may be true. It has never been researched adequately and compiled into a history as such.

But much of it has been written, here and there, in historical publications of DeKalb County (such as the DeKalb Legend and the Landmarks), and in books like Walter Hammer's *A Pictorial Walk Through High Jackson*. In these county histories, information dealing primarily with the part of Sand Mountain in either particular county has been dealt with, to a small extent. But not with the history of the mountain as a whole. The fact that the DeKalb-Jackson county line divides the mountain does not alter the fact that Sand Mountain is an entity, and its history and stories of the people who settled it, on both sides of the line, are intertwined closely. So closely, in fact, that in the past children attended whatever schools were closest, regardless of whether the school was in the same county where they lived. One school located along the county line was operated jointly for years by the Jackson and DeKalb county school boards. For years school buses from both counties crossed county lines and picked up students from both counties.

In the first part of this series, dealing primarily with the years when Sylvania was a growing town and market center on the upper mountain, we attempted to reconstruct a map locating the business places and several important homes that figured in prominently in the history of the town. More information is becoming available now which should be added to the original map. For instance, one large prominent house (no longer there) on the north side of

the main east-west road is believed to have been the home of two doctors in Sylvania, at different times. We plan to deal with the subject of Sylvania's doctors later.

Also, the first article mentioned that the town had three grist mills, but we listed only the J.W. Wofford and Bradley White grist mills. The third, we have learned, was located on a creek just north of the entrance to Sylvania Lake, at the foot of the hill from the old Mahan log church (now gone) and Mahan Cemetery. It was owned by a family named Culver.

One sentence in the first article gives the impression that the Sylvania school built in 1914 had burned in 1945. This should have been 1935 (and was correctly listed in the picture outline). According to *The History of DeKalb County Schools*, the 1914 school burned March 27, 1935, and the two-story school that replaced it burned May 28, 1945.

As earlier stated, it's probable that much of the history of Sand Mountain has been written, but not compiled into one comprehensive history. Some people have written down histories for the benefit of their own families, and these can be a big help in bringing together the total history some day. One of these family histories, that by Samuel N. West, is being reprinted in this issue with permission of his grandson, Bruce West.

The history of Sand Mountain is of relatively recent times, compared to most of the eastern U.S. Most of the settlement took place after the Civil War and homesteading was taking place even early in this century in some northern parts. The children and grandchildren of many original pioneers are still around, and many can tell us much about the early history of some communities. In Sylvania, there are a number of such people.

In the first part of this series, it was erroneously stated that Sam West's family had come from Georgia in 1902 and settled at Sylvania. Actually, his wife, Tamor V. Anderson West, had told this as being how her family, the

Andersons, arrived here. They came in the winter of 1902 by wagon from the railroad at Valley Head. Bruce West, her grandson, thinks the Andersons lived at one time in a house located where the Glover Brothers planing mill is now. He said he has heard that some of the original walls of their house are enclosed in the building there.

Sam West's own well-written history, however, touches the history of Jackson County, Larkinsville and Scottsboro, in the late 19th century, how a family survived in a remote mountain region, and then traces the West family back through the mountains of Georgia to about 1690 in Virginia.

Here is the history that Mr. West wrote in longhand for his family:

Sam West's history: born near Larkinsville

By SAMUEL WEST

I, Samuel Noal West, was born north of the little town of Larkinsville, Ala., about one-fourth mile west of the road leading to Skyline farms now, in the mouth of Blue Spring Cove, on July 12, 1888. In the spring of 1839 my parents, with their former children and me, moved to a mountain home four or five miles northeast of Larkinsville, where I grew to manhood.

There were no good schools in Lark

There were no good schools in Jackson County at that time, so I came to Sylvania the 8th of November 1908 to attend school. While in school, I met many young men and women, a few of them are living yet, who were very good friends through life. Among these students was a beautiful, sky, dark curly haired, blue-eyed maiden, age 15, who on Nov. 20, 1909 became my bride. We have lived in this community ever since, except for a few months, along when I was teaching in other communities.

To us were born five children: Lula Beatrice, May 11, 1911; Walton Baudice, May 26, 1914; Leta Juanita, Oct. 13, 1921; Wendell Waco, March 9, 1924, and Mary Elouise, Dec. 7, 1930.

I was the 13th child born of my father—12 of his first wife. I am the oldest of his second wife. She had two children by a former marriage, Martha and Isaac Potter. Later there were born to my parents Amanda Caroline, Solomon David, Chaisty and Mimsy Bellzora.

James Sheridin, Thomas Newton and Linda married off first before father and mother married. Milo and an infant had died, also a girl, Sallie. This new mountain home housed my parents, Joh, William, Bettie, Onie, Nancy and Andy of the West children, Martha and Isaac of the Potters, and me.

The mountain home

Our home was built of logs hewn on two sides and notched at the corners. It consisted of two large rooms, each 18 feet wide, 20 feet long with a 12-foot hall between. In the hall was a spinning



SAM WEST (with hat in hand) and his wife Tamor are pictured here at a family reunion at Sylvania in the late

60s. Sam, who moved to Sylvania in 1908 to attend school, has written a history for his family and it is reprinted in this issue.

wheel and loom where cloth was made for all the family.

At the end of the house was a chimney with a fireplace that would take 5-foot wood. There were no glass windows—just holes in the walls with shutters. There was no overhead ceiling. The opening between the logs were closed by nailing boards lengthwise along the logs.

In snowy weather, snow would blow under the roof and through the openings in the walls. It was not uncommon to awake with snow-covered beds and

floor. The walls were 6 or 8 inches thick and two good fires going got the wall hot. We rarely had to keep the doors shut to keep warm.

Our clothing, all wool for winter and cotton for summer, was carded, spun and woven in the home loom. Mother did all the tailoring. Each of us got one pair of shoes a year. When they wore out, we went barefooted till fall. We were glad to get new shoes. I often wonder how Dad managed to take care of us all and see that we had plenty to eat and wear. I remember that he worked hard the year round, farming in summer and some kind of timber work in winters. He was never idle.

His first wife had a niece whose father and mother died. She was about 15 years old. Father fed and clothed her until she married at about 20. Her husband was killed cutting timber.

called the Shelton Mountain, which is about two miles long. At the southern end of Shelton Mountain, it dropped to a lower elevation and led into low ridges with a deep gorge about a mile long, then each ridge rose to higher elevation. The mountain left of the gorge was where we lived. It was rounded to a high pinnacle—very little area on top. Our house was on the east side of the pinnacle, about a half mile from the foot and one-fourth mile from the top. Our cleared land extended south and west of the house and toward the top and about three-fourths around the top. About 25 acres was rich bench soil, no good for cotton but excellent for corn, rye, potatoes, yams, strawberries, beans, and peas. We rented land in the valley below for the rest of our crops.

very beautiful and durable.

Each member of the family had his special chores to look after, feeding hogs, cows, horses, mules, sheep and steers. My job was to feed and water the sheep—about a hundred head. I detested this very much as in winter they had colds or the "rots". It was repulsive when you fed them shelled corn or cotton seed, to see the mucus run from their noses over the feed and sometimes into their mouths.

*The West family lived
on an isolated pinnacle
north of Scottsboro*

Our house was situated on a spur jutting out from the Cumberland Mountain south toward Scottsboro. This spur left the Cumberland in a low rocky ridge, then rose to a higher mountain

*The view from the top
was breath-taking,
even for a young boy*

When at the top of our fields, we had an excellent view of beautiful valleys, mountains and ridges to the north and east.

To the north, one could look down into Maynards Cove, which is about five or six miles wide. Beyond the cove are the Cumberland Mountains, running more or less from east to west for a distance of 20 or 25 miles. In the cove you could spot the farms and houses and see the farmers at work. To the east you had a view of valley and hills of Tennessee River for about 15 miles. One could see the little town of Hollywood and trains moving on the Memphis and Charleston railroad. You could not see the Tennessee River for the river hills, but you could see Sand Mountain and know where the river was. Move around to the west brow and you could see some ridges beyond which lay Boxes Cove and Blue Spring Cove. The same railroad curved through these ridges from Scottsboro, Larkinsville and Limrock and on to Huntsville.

I have spent many hours just drinking in these scenes. Among those scenes, I grew up with my brother and sisters and half brothers and half sisters. We roamed the woodlands and fields together. My half brothers and I were very fond of going into the woods with our dogs, on days when it was too wet to work, hunting squirrels and

rabbits. The two best dogs we had were Kaiser and Dewey. Kaiser was a large fice dog and would tree anything that went into a hole or a tree. Dewey was taller and more agile. He was mule when a squirrel, opossum, coon or any other animal was out of reach. He liked to kill snakes.

We boys strolled through woods and fields while the dogs scented for game. If they jumped a rabbit, we stayed with them until they either caught it or ran it under a rock or into a hollow tree. We would cut a long withe (switch) and twist him out or force smoke into the hole and force him out. We were all pretty good at throwing rocks so when the dogs treed a squirrel, we jolted him with rocks and made him jump out. Dewey kept his eye on the squirrel and often got it before it reached the ground. Some days we would catch five or six in a couple of hours.

We had a swimming hole on the creek about a half mile from the house. One Sunday, I think it was the 13th day of January, 1903, we along with some other boys were strolling along the bank of the creek, trying to stir up a cottontail. When we came to the swimming hole, it was frozen over with ice about an inch thick. We skated a while, then someone in the crowd mentioned a swim and dared the crowd. So we got a fence of rail and mauled the ice into chunks, pulled off all our clothes, and plunged in. I don't need to tell you how long we stayed in that ice water nor how good we felt when we got back into our clothes. For about four years following that, we got together on the 13th of January and took our first bath of the new year.

Early schools were crude, ill-equipped

As I mentioned before, we had no good schools near as I grew up. We had a school every 6 or 8 miles, usually staffed by one teacher, trying to teach all the grades. These schools usually had enough pupils to have kept four teachers busy, so we got little attention as individuals.

The schools were held in very poorly equipped buildings. Sometimes in churches, old store buildings and dwelling houses. The heat was poor, usually a fireplace. These buildings were very cold. If school was held during winter months, the children crowded around the fire and could not do much in the way of studying.

The blackboard consisted of three or four planks, hand planed and painted with lamp black, then nailed to two strips of 2-by-4s and leaned against the wall. For erasers we used old rags and sometimes a piece of sheepskin, tacked to a block. There was little paper, no tablets or writing pads. We had slates framed like a picture frame which we scratched with a piece of carbon which was shaped like a pencil and when new was about four inches long. When we broke one, we kept the pieces and used them as long as we could them between our thumb and fingers. When we did a sum or wrote a sentence, we erased it by rubbing it with our fist, too.

Many boys and girls used the slate in courtship. They would scribble a note or draw a picture and hold it where it could be seen by those for whom it was intended. Then if the teacher or someone else got a glimpse of it, it was quickly erased.

The seats were long benches made of rough lumber without backs. Some-

times they were made of logs split into halves and hewed on the split side. These were supported by logs sawed into short blocks and a block placed under each end. If they had a large auger, they bored holes through the log at each end and inserted legs. Lucky was the pupil that was seated near the wall where they could rest their back. The seats were too high for most boys and girls, so they sat with feet dangling in the air from recess to recess.

Discipline was a problem. I started to school at age 7. There were few books. The main book for all pupils was Webster's "Blue Backer Speller." It had the A, B, C's at the first of the book, then followed the sound of the vowels on pronunciation.

The school was to be at Hollands Chapel Church, about 2½ miles north of our home. The school master was Jim Riddle, a young man, 19 or 20 years old, who was suffering of TB and who was ill-tempered at times. He called the ABC class up and went over the whole alphabet with us, then told us to go back to the seats and study our lessons. I climbed upon my bench, with feet dangling in the air and proceeded to study the ABC's. I did this by wetting my fingers on my lips and rubbing the letters out. By the end of the first day I had completely ruined the letter page in three of the new spelling books. Dad had just bought 4 new books. I had ruined three and didn't know a letter. What was to be done next? Mother studied it out. She clipped the ABC page from the last new spelling book and fastened it firmly on a cardboard cut from a shoe box lid. This was very humiliating to me but proved to be the very trick. I held that cardboard behind me, slipped to my seat and really got busy on those ABC's. By the end of the day, I could name any of them by sight and repeat the whole alphabet in order and believe it or not, I can still do it. This has been a great help to me in using the dictionary.

After Green Academy closed Sam pursued education under Prof. Williams at Sylvania

I attended this type of school from 3 to 6 weeks a year until I was about 16 years old. then went to Green Academy for about four months. made a crop and went back to Green Academy for five months. I really craved to go to school. but as I stated above. there were no good schools near. Green Academy closed. I was looking around for some place to go where I could afford board and tuition when I heard of W. C. Williams. a good teacher at Sylvania. So as above mentioned. I came to Sylvania the first Sunday in November 1908. I found the people very friendly and Prof. Williams a very good instructor—in fact. the best I have ever met.

Williams was of the belief that no child should be held back with the class. so those who wanted to work and advance in their subjects could do so. I had no money and had to advance as possible to prepare to make a support for myself.

The taking of tests to obtain a teachers certificate

There was a young man. Ocia Pruett. who held a third grade teachers certificate in our advanced classes. I discovered I could answer the questions. phrase the words. analyze sentences and do the sums in math as well as he.

So one day along in May I asked Prof. Williams when he thought I might apply for a third grade certificate. He said. "I don't intend that you ever apply for a third grade certificate but in July I want you to apply for a second grade certificate. which I did. But being sick during the two-day test. my grades were a little low so I was issued a third grade certificate. I took another test in December 1909 and made a second grade certificate. I taught and studied

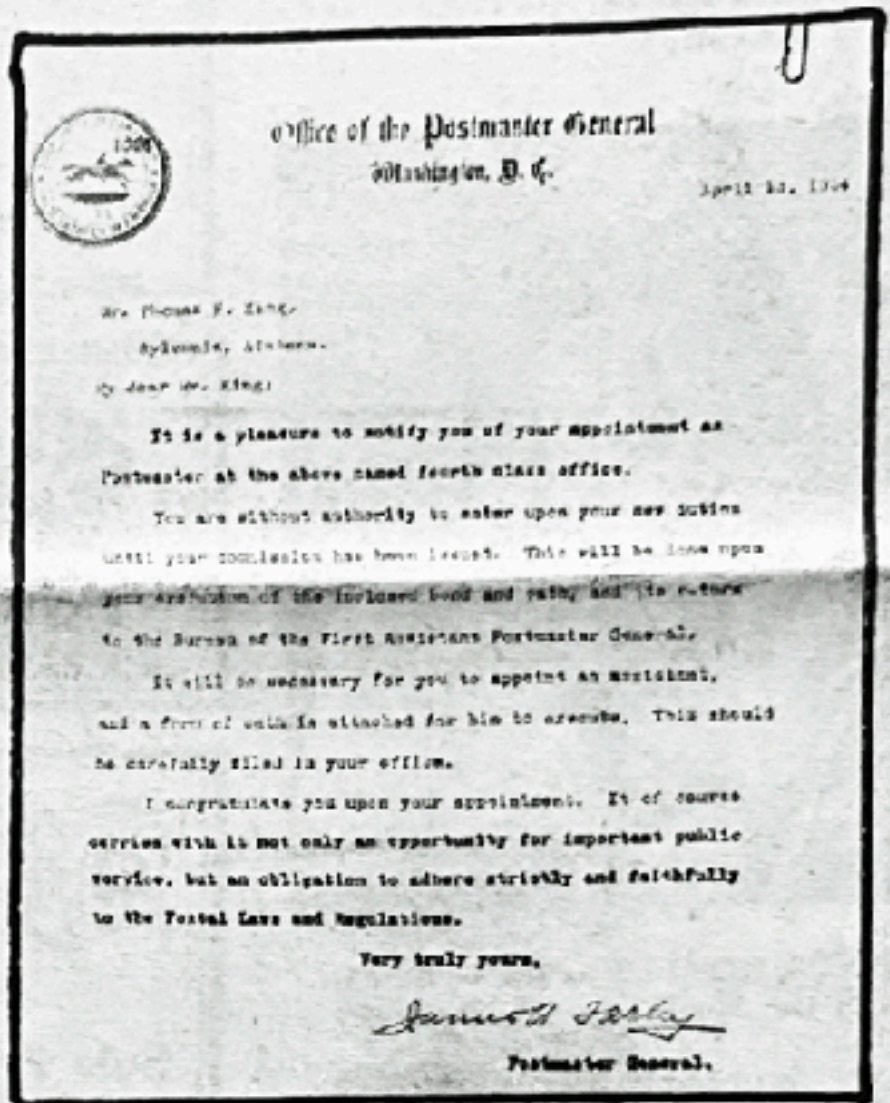


THE SAM WEST home in Sylvania is one of the older existing houses, but has been modified some over the years. It is located in the corner across from the Sylvania High School building, where a school has stood since 1914, except for a period when the buildings burned

in 1935 and 1945. West taught until the early 30s, when he left teaching to devote full time to writing. He died in 1974 but left a written history of his family and forebears, which is printed in this issue.

THE SYLVANIA STORY

*Old
downtown
revolved
around the
changing
locations
of post
office*



WHEN THOMAS KING was appointed postmaster of Sylvania in 1933, he was officially notified by this letter from James A. Farley, postmaster general.

Part 3-A Series

In earlier days of our country, in the life of emerging towns, the post office was usually at the hub of business activity. The business section often developed around the post office.

The arrival of mail was always a highlight of the day, and crowds often gathered around and visited with each other at this time. In places that had train service a crowd often gathered at the train station to await arrival of the train and the mail.

The small town or community had a fourth class post office, which was usually located in a store. The store owner was usually the postmaster. For years there was a practice that the postmaster in each community was changed when a President of a different party was elected.

Sylvania's flourishing business district, which appears to have thrived the most during the first 50 years of this century, built up around the post office locations. In the old town of Sylvania, at least six locations have been identified as post offices.

Sylvania's flourishing business district, which appears to have thrived the most during the first 50 years of this century, built up around the post office locations. In the old town of Sylvania, at least six locations have been identified as post offices.

The present brick post office was dedicated on Hwy. 75, a mile from the old downtown, on May 15, 1977. The location was dictated by the chief north-south highway, 75, which doomed the old Sylvania business district when it bypassed it.

Mrs. Jimmie Crawford Newsome has been the postmaster since 1954. The post office was located for about 13 years in her home—itsself a historical landmark—in the old business section.

The history of post offices and postmasters in Sylvania isn't too hard to trace since 1919, when Christopher C. Crawford was appointed. Since that year, the post master's job has been held by two families, the Crawfords and Kings, and their descendants. The two families are now related by marriage. Mrs. Newsome is a niece of Chris Crawford, who was also a leading Sylvania businessman who earlier had taught school in both Jackson and DeKalb counties.

The list of Sylvania postmasters, and the date of their appointment, is as follows:

Mrs. Elizabeth H. Duncan, Nov. 24,
1893.

John T. Reeves, Nov. 29, 1897.

Noah D. Mason, May 20, 1899.

Benjamin C. Stone, Sept. 7, 1899.

George R. Traylor, April 25, 1902.

Joseph B. Neyman, April 21, 1904.

Joseph J. Talbert, Dec. 30, 1904.

Richard R. Jenkins, May 5, 1906.

Mrs. Sarah N. Nappier, Jan. 22, 1909.

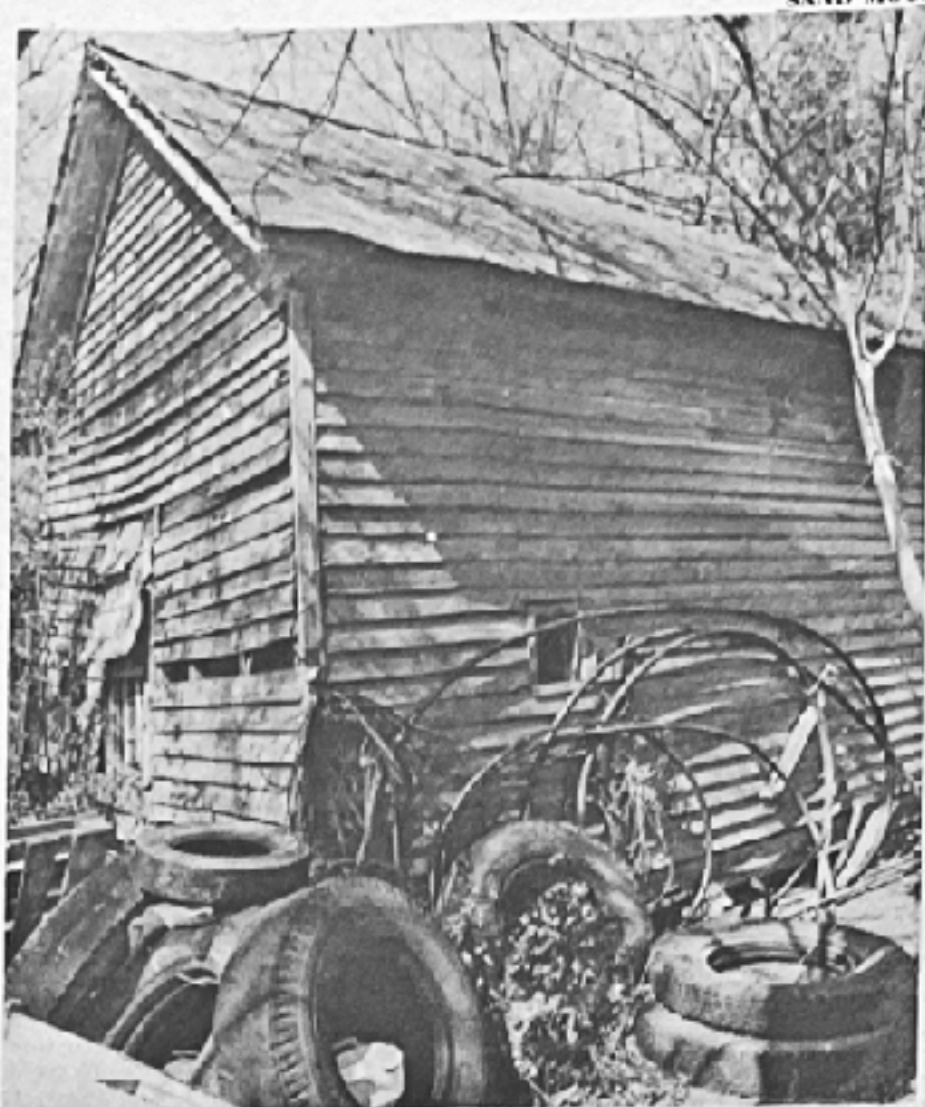
Joseph D. Bethune, Nov. 15, 1917.

Christopher C. Crawford, May 12,
1919.

Thomas F. King, Dec. 1, 1933.

Mrs. Mary C. King, Jan. 1, 1949.

Leon Newsome, July 15, 1953.



THIS 19TH CENTURY building, which sits behind the home of Mrs. Bernice West in Sylvania, is believed to have been one of the first post offices. Notice

the small side window that may have been used to hand mail to people in wagons.



THIS OLD POST OFFICE FRONT that includes the window, boxes and mail slot, was used as far back as anyone can remember in Sylvania. Christine Crawford King says she remembers selling the structure to present postmaster Jimmie Crawford Newsome in 1954 for \$2.50. The sign on top was painted for Mrs. Newsome about 15 years ago at the old location.

REUP of the old insigna that is on the window on the old Sylvania office front.



MISS THOMAS KING, wife of Sylvania
postmaster from 1933 to 1949, is seen
here with their children. Girls in
background from left are: Hazel Butler,
of Chattanooga; Opal Hall, now of
Sylvania, and the boy in her lap is Coy

King, who lives in Sylvania with his
wife, Christine, who also served as
postmaster. The boys, Emory, left, and
Earnest, are now deceased. This
picture is believed to have been made
about 1914-15.



REV. JOE BETHUNE, left, served as Sylvania postmaster from 1917 to 1919. This family portrait includes his wife, Eda, sister of Sylvania blacksmith Lewis Mitchell, and their children,

Daisy (top) and Roy. The picture was taken about 1917. The Bethunes left Sylvania when he was called to another church.

SYLVANIA STORY

Merchant Pat Baxter was a grandson of early pioneer

One of the prominent Sylvania merchants in the early part of this century was Patrick Henry "Pat" Baxter. He operated one of the large general merchandise stores from early in the century (before World War I) until 1941 when he sold out and moved to Fort Payne and ran a hardware there.

Pat Baxter also owned and operated (from his Sylvania home) the first telephone switchboard on the upper part of the mountain.

Baxter's big general merchandise store on the main road in Sylvania was first housed in a building next to (just east of) the Chris Crawford general merchandise store. Later the Baxter store was moved to a large two-story building on the northwest corner where a service station was built later, and still stands. Neither of Baxter's store buildings are still standing.

Baxter, Crawford, Oscar Culver, Jim Henry and Bart Garmany were among the early businessmen who built Sylvania into a leading trade center from the 1890s until the decline of the 1950s that was brought on when Sylvania was bypassed by the mountain's two major highways.

In researching early Sylvania history, we have had the opportunity to talk with a daughter of Pat Baxter, Lena (Mrs. Hobert) Shirey of Fort Payne, and a granddaughter, Mrs. Jess Moore (formerly Audrey Anderson), who now lives between Ider and Henagar.

Through the loan of some material from Audrey Moore, we have learned that the Baxters were among the first pioneers to settle in DeKalb County and on Sand Mountain, some of them moving in when this was still part of the Cherokee nation. Duncan Baxter of

Atlanta has done extensive research on the Baxter family history and about 20 years ago that, to the knowledge of our sources, has never been published.

This history is well researched and written and took 2½ years to prepare. Duncan Baxter wrote that he researched records in the DeKalb County courthouse, Alabama State Department of Archives and History, old files of the Fort Payne Journal, visits to cemeteries all over the area, and more than 100 personal interviews. Much of this article will be based on this family history, since it involves the settlement of the mountain, and both DeKalb and Jackson County.

The history begins with Jesse Baxter, who was born in 1777 in North Carolina, during the Revolutionary War. They moved to Tennessee and raised a large family. Among them were two boys, Willis, born in 1806, and James, born in 1812, and a daughter, Martha, born in 1811. Some time from 1815 to 1820, Jesse Baxter moved his family from Tennessee into Paint Rock Valley in western Jackson County.

At this time all of this territory, including a large part of north Georgia,



THE PAT BAXTERS stand in the yard of their home on the corner in downtown Sylvania, probably in the 30s. Their daughter, Lena Shirey, thinks the tree in the background is now the large oak that stands in the yard of the house, which has since been changed a great deal through remodeling.



PAT BAXTER

was part of the Cherokee Indian nation. The Cherokee capital was at New Echota, near Calhoun, Ga. Settlement of Jackson County began from the west from Huntsville, into Paint Rock Valley near Woodville first, and a few whites moved into the extreme north end around Bridgeport. But the Cherokees viewed the land and whites were not supposed to settle in it except by permission from the Indians. Some early whites married Indians and got a head start on settling the land.

But the discovery of gold near Dahlonega, Ga., in the middle of Indian country, and the start of this nation's first gold rush about 1818, signaled the beginning of the end for the Cherokee nation. The period of the Cherokee removal to Arkansas and Oklahoma continued through about 1840. The Cherokees tried to resist losing their lands, and there were pockets where they hid out from soldiers and managed to stay on in this country. The Cherokee reservation in North Carolina resulted from those who managed to avoid the removal to the west. Another area where the Indians held out to the last was upper Sand Mountain, and many families in this area trace their ancestry to these Cherokees. Their numbers are surprising, and when Jackson County began organizing an Indian Heritage educational program, more than 700 students were found to claim Indian ancestry. Most of these are on upper Sand Mountain.

The two Baxter brothers, Willis and James, were among those early adventurers who moved into Indian territory while the Cherokees still owned it. Duncan Baxter writes that Willis and James left Paint Rock Valley and went east, crossing the Tennessee river and climbing Sand Mountain. "They came into a beautiful valley where they found an abundance of game, including deer, wild turkeys, bears, panthers and other wild animals. This valley was inhabited by the Cherokee Indians who had a few patches of cleared ground on which they were growing corn, tobacco and a few other things."

He writes that they "decided to settle along the fine creek which flowed through this valley. They planted a few small patches but lived for the most part off the game that was so plentiful."

This obviously meant that they crossed eastward across Sand Mountain and into Lookout Valley, and the creek is probably now known as Willis Creek, which flows southward from Valley Head.

The Baxter brothers had trouble with the Indians

The two brothers and the Indians soon had trouble. Duncan Baxter wrote that the Cherokees attacked in order to drive them away and there was "a rather fierce skirmish" in which some Indians were wounded at a place along Willis Creek now known as "Burt Swimming Home." The two Baxters escaped, Willis heading south and James going north, neither knowing if his brother had been killed or not.

Duncan continues the story:

"Willis wandered south to the Choccolocco Valley not far from the present location of Anniston. There he met and married Miss Sarah Ann "Sallie" Frazier." James had fled across Lookout Mountain and down into McLemore's Cove (where Mountain Cove Farms is now), which is now in Walker County, Georgia. "There he came upon a small settlement of Dutch. He married one, Miss Susan Lucinda Satterfield."

In a few years white settlers in larger numbers were moving into Lookout Valley, despite the Indians, and both brothers wanted to return to that area. Willis and his wife, and several members of her family, decided to move. "Among these were Sallie's parents, James F. and Dorcas Mullen Frazier, and her brother, John Bain Frazier, and James brought his bride back across the mountain to Willis Creek.

The history continues: "Willis and James were surprised to meet again. Each thought the other had probably met death at the hands of the Cherokees. They set about establishing homes in what was later to become DeKalb County."

Their return and settlement was

probably in 1828 or 1829, although the history account does not list it. Both brothers settled near the Log Cabin School that was built later. Willis settled a half-mile south of the site on 260 acres, "now a part of the farm of Mr. Shake Killian", Duncan Baxter wrote. His first child—later the father of Pat Baxter—James J. Baxter was born Sept. 17, 1829, seven years before DeKalb County was formed. James built his house east of the school site "on what is now Otis Burt's place. His first child, Francis Marion Baxter, was born Aug. 8, 1831," the family history says.

Back in these early days there were no stores in this part of the country. Willis and his family, along with the others, had to go to Bellefonte in Jackson County on the Tennessee River to secure provisions.

Bellefonte, where the TVA nuclear plant is now being built, was one of the biggest early settlements in Jackson County and it was said that its promoters said it was destined to become the big city of the new territory. The noted Caldwell family of Scottsboro has in its own family journals the fact that their ancestors moved to Bellefonte from Ohio, after having to make a decision between Bellefonte or Chicago, Ill., as the small village most likely to grow.

The Baxter brothers then went to Paint Rock Valley in Jackson County and moved their parents, Jesse and Temperance Baxter, back to DeKalb County with them. The chronicle continues:

"After coming to DeKalb County, Jesse and Temperance Baxter adopted a son and raised him. His name was George Washington Baxter. The county records indicate that Jesse Baxter woned much land up and down Wills Creek, selling some of it for as little as one dollar per acre. Jesse passed away in 1868. Temperance (had died earlier) about 1862. They were buried at Shiloh."

Pioneer Willis Baxter, of course, was the grandfather of Pat Baxter. Willis and Sallie, daughter of James F. and Corcas Mullen Frazier, who was born in 1805 in South Carolina, had eight children. The eldest, James J., was Pat's father.

Duncan Baxter writes: "Willis was a blacksmith, notary public and justice of the peace. The county records reveal that he married many couples in the early years of the count. He served on the Grand Jury during the spring term of Circuit Court in 1840.

"The census of 1870 revealed that Willis had 110 acres with 50 improved, and that he possessed one horse, 3 milk cows, 4 other cattle, 27 sheep, 7 swine, 95 bushels Indian corn, 50 bushels oats, 50 lbs. tobacco, 60 lbs. wool, 12 bushels Irish potatoes, 40 bushels sweet potatoes, 150 lbs. butter and 20 gallons molasses. In his later years he was the justice of the peace at what is now known as Tenbroeck. It was then known as the "Court Ground" because of Willis' famous open air court held there."

Willis died in 1881 at Tenbroeck and Sallie died a few years later. Both are buried at Shiloh.

Serving in the Civil War on both sides

Pat Baxter's father led an interesting life. Like many others during the Civil War, he served on both sides. Many southerners from the hill country were pressed into Confederate service, but later — often after being captured — decided to support the union because they felt they had little in common with the aristocratic planters who owned slaves and were in leadership in the South.

According to Duncan Baxter's account:

"James J. Baxter was born Sept. 17, 1829. He served in the Confederate Army under Capt. Hammack. He also served in the Union Army from Feb. 10,

1864 until June 16, 1864 in Co. B, First Regiment, Alabama and Tennessee Independent Vidette Cavalry, under the command of Capt. George F. Allen.

“On Sept. 8, 1864, he married Martha Ann Penelope Brown, who was one-half Cherokee Indian. Martha was born Dec. 20, 1844, the daughter of John L.A. Brown, pioneer school teacher, and his full blooded Cherokee Indian wife, Luquilla.

“James J. and Martha Ann were blessed with five children, Frances Elizabeth, John Willis, Mary Jane, Robert Greenberry and Patrick Henry.

James J. Baxter was a blacksmith and justice of the peace and was postmaster at Tenbroeck from 1883 to 1898. He died Aug. 17, 1909, and the Fort Payne Journal reported that his last rites were witnessed by the largest crowd to attend a funeral in that section of the country. He was buried at Black Oak.

The history records that a son of Willis Baxter, Jesse W., born Sept. 23, 1832, “served as a lieutenant in the Confederate Cavalry under Capt. Dan Clayton. He was noted as a great teamster, owning a pair of excellent horses, Tige and Clinker.” He died in 1909 and his wife, Eliza J. Burt, died in 1901, and they were buried at Shiloh.

Another son of Willis, John Patrick

Baxter, born Sept. 8, 1834, served in the Confederate Army under Capt. R.W. Higgins in Co. E, 12th regiment, the first company to go to war from DeKalb County. “He later served as a lieutenant in Co. K, 40th Tennessee. In June 1861 his company was captured while he was in the hospital at Island No. 10. Pat reenlisted as a first lieutenant in

Mont Davenport's Home Guard Company."

Duncan Baxter's family history also goes into detail about the family and descendents of the other brother, James "Jimbo" Baxter, which may be printed in a later article.



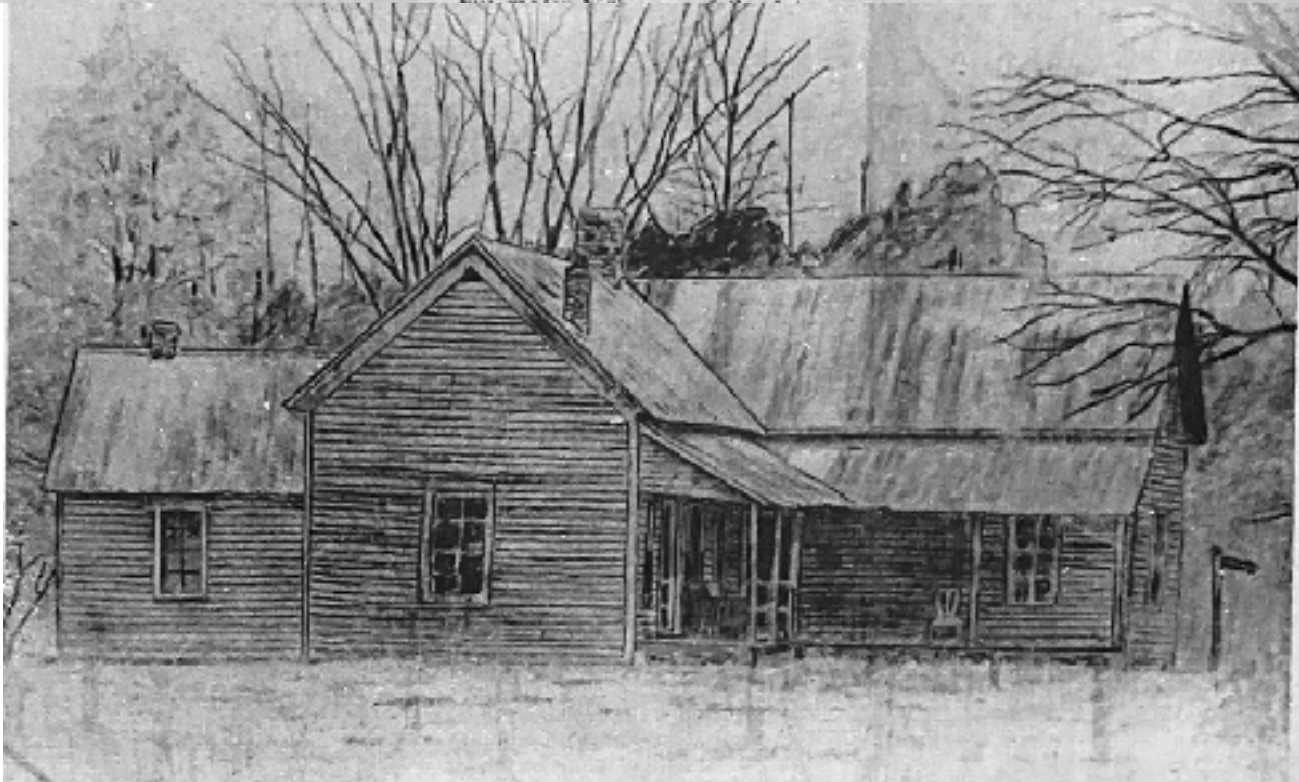
SAND MOUNTAIN CHAMPS— Winning tradition in girls basketball at Sylvania began long ago, as evidenced by this picture of the Sylvania girls team, with the ball in foreground stating "Sand Mountain Champs 1931."

Lena Baster Shirey has this picture and identified the girls as: from left, sitting, — — Perry, Ethlyn Hall, Ella Mae Butler (Shirey), Yashti Mitchell; standing, Opal King, Bonnie Crawford (Carter Sizemore), Cleo Butler (Sam

Wright), Pauline Fortson, Annette Hall (Ernie Traylor) and the coach, Jessie Bain. The Hall girls were daughters of Dr. J.D. Hall. The married names are in parenthesis, when known.

SYLVANIA STORY

Recalling the fiery night that Sylvania almost burned down



THIS HOUSE, in what was once downtown Sylvania, is known as the Chris Crawford house. It is among the earliest houses in the Sylvania area still standing. Crawford, who grew up along the deep creek ravine north of Sylvania, returned to Sylvania after a number of

years as a school teacher. He went into business with Sam Igo in 1917 in a building that had formerly been Hicks, Stone and Igo. Crawford was postmaster from 1919 until 1932. In the early 20s he traded the M. B. Bell home to

George Keith for this house. Rev. Joe Belhune, postmaster 1917-19, once lived in the house. It has not been determined who built the house and when, although it is believed to date back to the 1880s or 90s.

Pencil sketch by Brown Stephens

It was election night on the first Tuesday in November, 1930. The election has been held in a room of the Sylvania Hotel that sat at the corner of the main east-west street (now county road 59) leading to Fort Payne and Henagar to the east and north, and Dutton to the west, and the road that ran south past the Masonic Lodge toward Chavies.

(Chavies was the main settlement to the south, being located on Town Creek near the brow of the mountain on the Fort Payne road. It would be a year before E. E. McCurdy would build his home—which is now the Front Page Deli—at what he felt would be where

two major highways of the future, 35 and 75, would cross. This house is recognized as the start of Rainsville, now the largest city on the mountain north of Albertville.)

The Sylvania Hotel was a large building (later a service station was built there, which now is occupied by a TV repair shop). At the north end it had two stories with several rooms upstairs and downstairs for roomers and boarders. A one-floor section connected onto the two-story part, making it a "T" at that end, and connected to a one-story part on the south end, creating an "L." There were also rooms in the middle, connecting sections. A porch ran the length between the two end sections. A guest at the hotel had to walk down the porch from his room to the south-end

section, which housed the dining room, kitchen and living quarters for the manager and family, M. J. Anderson (brother to Mrs. Sam West), and his wife Leatha Francis Baxter Anderson.

Drummers (traveling salesmen of the period) stayed at the hotel, as well as teachers at Sylvania School. Also, teachers who attended the summer "Normal School" in order to get teaching certificates often roomed there. Many took meals in the dining room.

Audrey Lee Anderson (now Mrs. Jess Moore, who lives between Henagar and Ider) provided the description of the hotel. Her parents ran the hotel and she remembers that her mother cooked meals and Audrey ("I was the only girl then") set the tables. Although she was

small at the time, she recalls those days and will never forget that election night in November 1930.

That was the night the hotel burned and for a time threatened to destroy downtown Sylvania, which was a major shopping area until the 50s.

"I was on the porch with my mother that night after the counting of the ballots was over and everyone had left. The porch ran all across that end of the hotel (south end as well as the east side of the dining room section). I heard a commotion and jumped off the porch and ran around the corner. I could see smoke pouring from the downstairs room next to Crawford's store." She thinks that is where the election was held.

"I ran around and shouted to Mother that the hotel was on fire."

The fire spread so fast through the frame structure that the Andersons had no time to save anything. Audrey, who was getting ready for bed, was wearing only her nightgown. She remembers that someone had to push her mother off the high back porch to make her leave when the flames got close.

"I laid down on the ground and watched it burn," Mrs. Moore recalls. "It was the most horrible thing I had seen in my life."

There was no fire department then, and no water except from wells. A big well was on the back porch of the Pat Baxter (her grandfather) house on the southwest corner from the hotel. No doubt this supplied some water for bucket brigades that were formed.

"We thought granddaddy's house was going to burn, too. People climbed on the roof and poured buckets of water on the roof and walls, which were very hot," Mrs. Moore said.

There was danger, too, that the C. C. Crawford general merchandise store might burn, too. A daughter of Chris C. Crawford, Christine (now Mrs. Coy

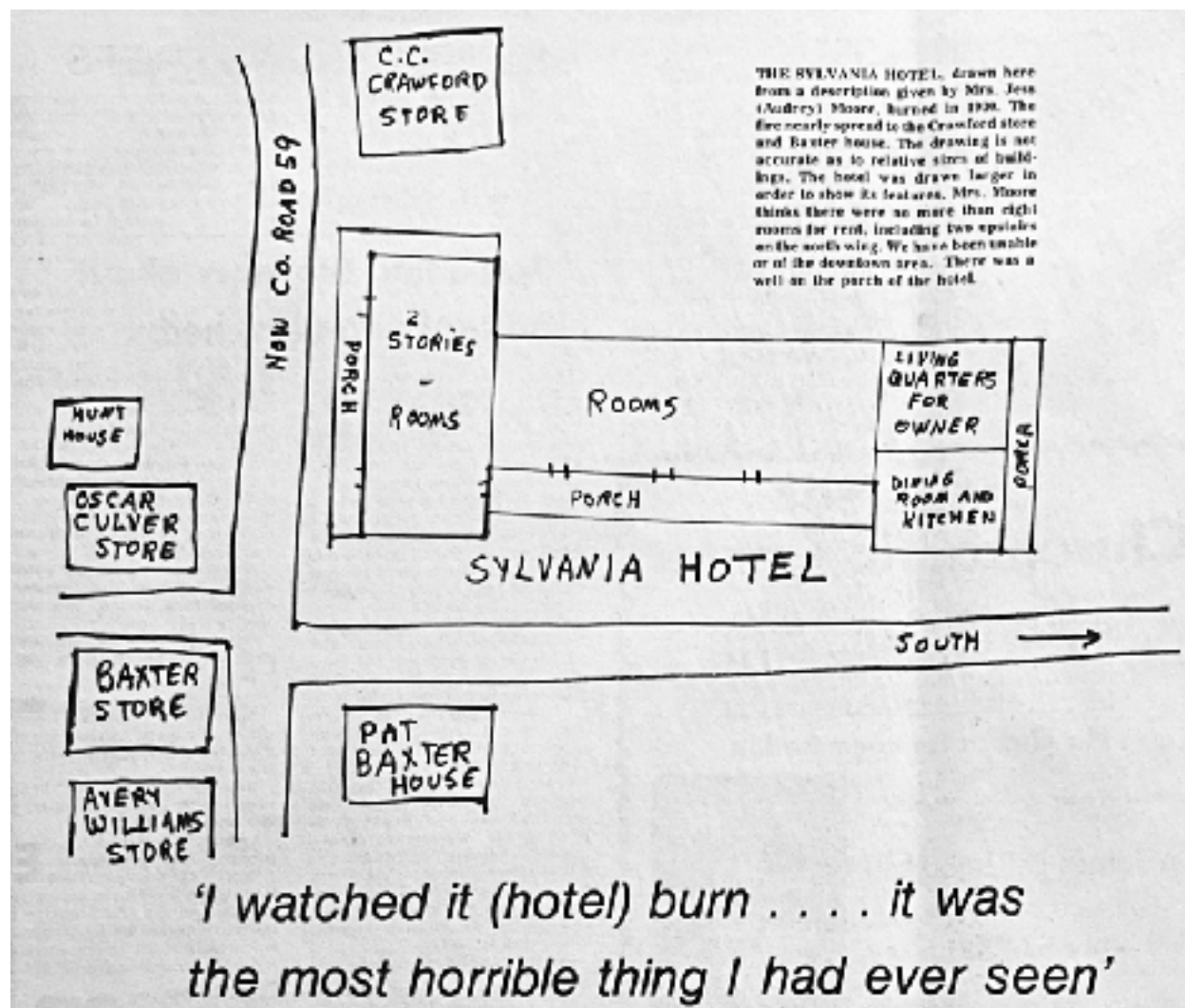
King) remembers that fiery night.

"I don't know how the fire did not take Daddy's store," she said. "The walls and the roof got so hot they were smoking. We all thought it would burn. I remember seeing Daddy sit down and cry when it appeared there was no hope."

People climbed on the roof of the two-story Crawford building, too, hoisting up buckets of water to try to cool down the timber. Christine remembers how her step-mother, Emma Colvard



THE WELL on the back porch of the Pat Baxter house in Sylvania used to be behind this wooden trellis. Michael Shirey, son of Hobert and Lena Baxter Shirey, is pictured standing next to the well sometime in the 30s.



Crawford, who had a small baby at the time, climbed up on the roof and "worked harder than anyone, pouring water and doing everything she could."

When the wind blew toward the east, it fanned the hotel's flames and heat into the Crawford store. When it blew west, it did the same thing to the Baxter home. Apparently the wind did not blow toward the north because no one remembers water being poured on Oscar Culver's or Pat Baxter's general merchandise stores across the street, or the large dry goods store next door owned by Avery Williams. But these buildings fell victim to changing times in later years and all are now gone. An old service station building stands where Baxter's store was and a small postoffice building that Tom King had in the 30s for the postoffice replaced the Williams building. King's building has also disappeared.

After the fire Mrs. Moore

After the fire, Mrs. Moore remembers that Lena Baxter (now Mrs. Hobert Shirey of Fort Payne) came over and took her and her four brothers to the Baxter house, where they stayed that night. She said a county commissioner named Frank Whiteside "bought us kids some clothes the next day because we had lost everything."

Audrey Moore has a letter of recommendation dated August 15, 1918, signed by "A. C. Kirby, sheriff" that states that her father, M. J. Anderson, served as "deputy sheriff the past 12 months" and was "sober, industrious and trustworthy."

She remembers a drummer who stayed often at the hotel was "old man Buckles."

Christine remembers that Hugh and Hanna Gilbreath owned the hotel before the Andersons. Mrs. Gilbreath ran it, doing the cooking and serving of meals and housekeeping. "She was a big woman and a hard worker. Mr. Gilbreath was a little man who never seemed to work much. He was a very religious man and used to light the candles down at the church. They had a lot of children." A daughter, Mrs. Arnold (Beatrice) Smith lives at Fort Payne now.

Christine and Coy King (he's a son of Sylvania postmaster Tom King) presently live across the road from the building where her father, Chris Crawford, had his store. The back part, which had two stories, is now missing. The front part is now a residence.

As she stood in her yard looking across the street recently, Christine recalled that several more store buildings once stood east of the Crawford building. Pat Baxter had his first general store in a building next to the Crawford store. He later moved to the corner across the road from the hotel. A small building next to the Baxter store was where Gordon White operated an auto parts and repair shop. Just to the east of that Gordon's father, Bradley White, had his grist mill (where David Hillian's Beauty Shop now stands), and

had a gasoline station there, the first in Sylvania.

The first Baxter store building and Gordon White's building did not appear on the map of downtown Sylvania of the 1910-50 era that was printed in an earlier issue. Also, the Avery Williams dry goods store was not on the map. Christine King thinks a man named Bart Garmany also sold dry goods, and his store may have been in the same building as Williams. Bart Garmany could neither read nor write, she says, but was a good businessman and made money.

To Be Continued

SYLVANIA STORY

Country doctors were leading citizens of yesteryear communities

BROWNY STEEL
In the days before paved roads, automobiles, and large city hospitals, physicians lived in rural areas among the people they served. They usually maintained a small office but spent a good deal of their working hours traveling by horse or buggy to doctor people in their homes. These "country doctors" were based in small towns like Sylvania and rural areas like Sand Mountain.
In the 20s, most of these country doctors changed from horse power to automobiles which they drove on dusty or muddy roads to deliver babies and relieve suffering for people who were many hours away from the nearest hospital.

These doctors usually were the best citizens of their communities because they delivered the babies and usually touched the lives of every family in their area. Many stories were told about these doctors and their families because most people kept up with their activities.

Though there may have been earlier doctors in the Sylvania area before and around the turn of the century, the earliest doctor recalled by those I have contacted was Dr. Olney W. Clayton, who practiced in the Sylvania area from shortly after 1900 to the 1920s when he moved to Fort Payne and opened up a clinic that for years was the city's only hospital.

Dr. Clayton built a large two-story house just east of the Sylvania business



MAY BE the first girls basketball team at Sylvania School. Printed on the cover of "S.I.S. 1934". Jewell Elliott of Sylvania, who said "they will probably tell me for letting you publish this picture," said a brother or boyfriend of one of the girls was home on leave from the army and they borrowed some of his gear for the picture. Game

were played outdoors at that time. Mrs. Elliott identified the players, from left, as: Beulah Allen (now Stephens of Fort Payne), Otella Butler (now Bethune of Sylvania), Hettie Glasscock, Essie Adams (later Benefield), Agnes Igu (now Ricketts of Fort Payne) and Winnie Glasscock.

district, and at least two later doctors owned it after he left. The home, which was a mountain landmark, was torn down about 20 years ago. His first wife, the former Florence Cothran, died in 1918. Later he married Pauline Wheeler of Pisgah. She now lives in Fort Payne and is Mrs. Pauline Roach.

Their marriage was one of the "big" events on the mountain, according to Christine King. She said it was held on the lawn of the large home and people came from all around to party with them after the wedding. She said they had never seen so many people dressed up so much.

For a time Dr. Clayton's younger brother, Archie, who was also a doctor, practiced with him in Sylvania for a short period.

Dr. Olney Clayton delivered Lena Baxter, who is now Mrs. Hobert Shirey in Fort Payne, and one of our sources for this history. He was said to be the first person on the mountain to buy a Ford car.

Second doctor in Sylvania was Dr. Curtis Johnson, a brilliant but moody and ill-tempered man who lived for some years in the corner house later owned by Pat Baxter for many years. He practiced in Sylvania and around the mountain during the World War I period and in the 1920s. Dr. J. D. Hall, who later practiced in Sylvania, had his office at Chavies earlier, and the two doctors apparently helped take care of the other's patients. Chavies and Sylvania were two of the most prominent

towns on the mountain from 1900 to after World War II, when both were bypassed by the first paved highways (35 and 75) and declined.

Ada Everett Crawford, wife of merchant-postmaster Chris C. Crawford and mother of two of our informants, Christine King and Jewel Elliott, died in 1917 from complications after she had lost a baby. The Crawfords lived in Chavies then, where Ada's family lived. Dr. Johnson was summoned when she became sick and examined her and said he did not think it was too serious.

Christine King said when her mother became worse, they sent someone after Dr. Johnson, who had left to attend a picnic or dinner somewhere. They couldn't locate Dr. Johnson so someone went after Dr. Hall. They finally found him but when he reached the Crawford house, Ada had died.

"I think Dr. Johnson felt guilty about that," Christine King said, "and he always seemed to go out of the way to do things for my daddy and all of us kids." The Crawfords moved to Sylvania shortly after Mrs. Crawford died and in the early 20s moved into what is now known as the Old Crawford house. Dr. Johnson lived next door and the Crawford and Johnson children grew up together.

Christine King said she remembers some of Dr. Johnson's fits of temper. One night she was spending the night with the Johnson children and she was awakened to his screaming and shouting and throwing things around the house. She remembers seeing him get mad one time and throw everything out of the kitchen into the back yard.

Another time a neighbor's chickens strayed into his yard one time too many. "Dr. Johnson came out of the house with a shotgun and shot the chickens and then threw them over the

fence where their owner lived," Christine King remembers.

Jewel Elliott remembers that she was afraid of Dr. Johnson, and apparently no one was willing to face him when he was angry. Coy King remembers one time when some men were having a fight in the street and some of them ran into Oscar Culver's store. The others stood outside and threatened to go in after them. Dr. Johnson strode into the crowd on the street and told them to disperse and stop the fighting or else they would have to answer to him.

"Nobody said a thing; they just shut up and left and that ended the fight," Coy King said.

Christine King remembers that her father used to sit up late at night in his store helping Dr. Johnson make out bills he would mail. Some doctors, like

Dr. Hall and Dr. D. C. Haggard who came later, never sent out bills. People all over the mountain owed them money which they never collected. But Dr. Johnson was different.

"Dr. Johnson would whip you if you didn't pay him," Coy King says. He remembers several occasions when men refused to pay him and Dr. Johnson beat them up and left with his money.

Dr. Johnson had two children, Lela and Murray, by his first wife. His second wife, the former Ina Caston, gave birth to two children, Bo and Jessie.

The terrible temper and anger of the doctor caused a tragic ending to the family. Dr. Johnson, who had moved to the Dr. Clayton home, sold out at an auction handled by Coy's father, Tho-

mas King. The story of what happened after that is not clear but Jewel Elliot says the family moved to Meltonsville, which was near Guntersville. Some say they remember that Mrs. Johnson left her husband and moved back with her parents near there.

One night in about 1925 or 1926, Dr. Johnson went into a rage and went to the house and shot and killed his wife and her sister, and either shot or killed her parents and some of his children. One of the children hid in the yard outside while this was going on, and was said to have seen her father then put the gun to his head, cry out something about being sorry for what he had done, and kill himself.

A Dr. Rowan (no one has remembered his first name) moved from Gadsden to Sylvania in the late 20s, and he

probably lived in the Clayton house. Christine King says his wife wore the most stylish clothes anyone in Sylvania had ever seen. But she was "a city girl" and didn't like "living in the sticks" so the Rowans did not stay long and moved back to Gadsden.

Dr. Hall practiced in Sylvania during this period, too, and over a long time. He delivered Kevin King, a son of Coy and Christine, in 1935. Christine remembers the charge was \$15 "which we paid him in cash."

Another of their sons, Jerry King, who now works at Patrick Lumber Co. in Scottsboro, was delivered by Dr. D. C. Haggard in 1946.

Another doctor who practiced in Sylvania during the Depression 30s was a Dr. Ford, who turned out not to be a doctor after all. For a time he and his wife, who was said to be a registered nurse, rented space in the Pat Baxter house on the corner. After the Fords moved to Florida a story came out that he was exposed as being a fake, never having had medical training. Jewel Elliott thinks the story may have been that his wife was a fake, too, but her sister Christine King has the impression that the wife really was an RN and had most of the medical know-how. Christine said once Ford prescribed treatment for her when she was ill; then when Mrs. Ford arrived she heard him tell his wife what he had prescribed and asked her, "Is that right?"

Christine remembers thinking it was strange for a doctor to be asking a nurse if he had given the right treatment.

Jewel Elliott, however, remembers that the Fords did a lot of good for people in the area, even if they were fakes. "In one real bad winter people were awful sick of flu and pneumonia and Dr. Ford worked hard to help them. He saved a lot of lives."

The last doctor to practice in Sylvania was Dr. D. C. Haggard. According to his son, Kenneth Haggard, who lives on the north end of the mountain near Big Sandy Country Club (Rt. 2, Trenton, Ga.), Dr. Haggard married a woman from Texas in 1948 and they moved from Sylvania to Fyffe, where he practiced medicine for a year or two before he retired and they moved to Fort Worth, Texas, where he died in 1960.

1900.

He said his father was born in 1880 and served 16 months as a doctor with the Army in France during World War I. He moved to Bridgeport and practiced for several years in the 1920s. He moved back to Chattanooga in 1926 where he had a medical practice until he moved to Sylvania in 1932 or 1933, Kenneth said. One of the doctor's sons, Charles, lived with Dr. Haggard in Sylvania, where they rented space in the Sam West home. Charles attended DeKalb County High School in Fort Payne and later graduated at Jackson County High School in Scottsboro.

Kenneth said his father lived for years in the West home, but he moved his practice to Dutton at one time, and "practiced all down the mountain." Charles died in 1964 and Vernon, an

older son, lived in Sylvania for many years. He worked at Redstone Arsenal and later at Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Kenneth said when Dr. Haggard moved to Sylvania "roads were terrible and none of them were paved at that time." Dr. Haggard drove an old 1927 Ford roadster. Later he owned a '36 and a '38 Chevrolet, but he was best known in later years for driving a 1941 Hudson all during the early 40s. The Hudson was considered a classy automobile then.

Since Dr. Haggard's departure in 1948, a chiropractor named Miss Bennett had a practice there. She later married Clifford Anderson. And no medical history of medical practice in Sylvania would be complete without mention of Mrs. Annie Shankles, who worked as a mid-wife and delivered babies or helped in deliveries all over the mountain for many, many years.



ADA EVERETT CRAWFORD, wife of Chris Crawford, posed in fashion of the day in this picture taken before they were married in 1898. She is the mother of two people who supplied much of the material for this historical series, Jewel Elliott of Scottsboro and Christine King of Sylvania. She died in 1917 while the family was living at Chavies.



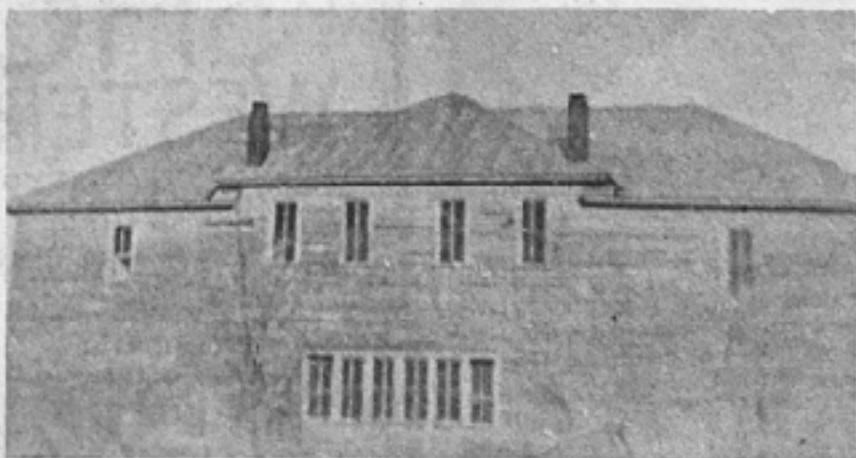
PICTURES WERE CAREFULLY POSED at one time, as seen here in a photo that Mrs. Jewel Elliott owns. She can identify her mother, Ada Everett, as on the right on the second row, and the others as her brothers and sisters. This was before any of them were married so had to be before 1898, when her mother and daddy married. The Everett family lived at Chavies. After Ada married Chris Crawford, they both taught school at Langston, where Jewel was born, and at Chavies, where Crawford also operated a store. After Ada died of childbirth complications in 1917, the Crawfords moved to Sylvania where Crawford operated a large general merchandise store for many years and was postmaster 1919-1933.



THE SYLVANIA SCHOOL, built about 1914 that burned in 1935, can be seen in these two views that show the students posing for a picture in the front about 1927, and a snapshot that shows the rear of the building, below. Jewel Elliott, who owns the picture, identified the teaching staff standing on the back row in front of the doors, from left: the principal Sherman Bryant, Mrs. Sherman Bryant, Miss Beulah Allen (now Mrs. Beulah Stephens of Fort Payne), Zeke Sammeroar and Sam West. The others are students, most of whom Mrs. Elliott can identify. Mrs. Elliott is on the second row from the top, second from the right. Lena Baxter (Mrs. Hobert Shirey of Fort Payne, another source of this history) is at far right on the top row. Audrey Anderson (Mrs. Jess Moore of Henagar), another history source, is on the second row from the top, 10th from the right.

In the center of the picture, on rows three and four, just below the front door, are members of the Sylvania basketball team (one is holding a basketball), which Mrs. Elliott said was one of the best teams around in those

days. She identified them as: Russell Mitchell, Elmer Tedder, Pete Hicks, Raymond Hendricks, Harvey Jackson, Roy Butler, Hoyt Butler, Lem Warren and Haskell Fulgan.



SYLVANIA STORY

Settlement of upper mountain came late

Part 7—A Series

By BROWNY STEPHENS

It is hard for most of us to visualize today how it was on upper Sand Mountain just 50 years ago, before paved roads, electricity, water systems, and the automobile combined to produce today's modern farming, business and residential community. Most of the big changes have taken place during the lifetime of many people still living.

Although a few early pioneers began trickling into the upper Sand Mountain area even while it belonged to the Cherokee nation (before 1840), they were few and far between and left little being for historians to record. When the Indians were forcibly removed to the West, settlers poured in from Georgia and Tennessee, mainly, but nearly all of them settled in the Tennessee River Valley to the north and west (Jackson County) and in Lookout Valley to the east and south (DeKalb County, Ala. and Dade County, Ga.)

A few hardy pioneers moved to the mountains—Raccoon (now called Sand Mountain), Lookout and Cumberland. But the sandy soil was not considered suitable for farming, and so the area was last to fill up with people. Bruce

West of Sylvania says he was told by his grandfather, Sam West, that only after the use of fertilizer became common did the mountain soil begin producing good crops. Now, of course, Sand Mountain is known widely as a prime area for the production of truck crops and potatoes.

Sand Mountain seems to have been settled from the south. Areas around Crossville and Geraldine filled up first. Far to the north, the area around Ider, Flat Rock, Bryant, Higdon and Avans (in Georgia), was known as the "Big Woods," and was the last to be settled. We have printed stories about families homesteading land in the "Big Woods" in this century.

Flat Rock, Rosalie and Henagar were some communities that grew up on the upper mountain from the Civil War era until the 1890s. But until paved roads were built, these communities were isolated from the outside. It took a day's ride by horseback or wagon to reach early market places, like Valley Head, Bellefonte or Trenton, Ga., from some of these areas. A trip to a city like Chattanooga, Gadsden or Huntsville was an overnight one. The coming of

Continued on page 8



THIS PENNY POSTCARD with the picture here on the back was mailed from Chavies to Mrs. E. J. Baxter in Sylvania on Oct. 17, 1916. Mrs. Hobert (Lena Baxter) Shirey of Fort Payne, who has the card, says it was sent by the woman pictured here, who was either a Mrs. Ida Teague, the telephone switchboard operator at Chavies, or a Mrs. Crumley. The Crumleys owned the Chavies telephone system and the Baxters owned a similar system in Sylvania. These two and one at Whiton provided phone service for the mountain at that time.



NORMAL SCHOOL—In the 1920s, when this picture was taken, normal schools were held during the summer at which students studied in order to obtain teaching certificates. This interesting study taken by available light inside Sylvania School shows a group that was

studying under teacher Chester Allen, seated at left front. Sitting next to him is Bill Elliott, now of Scottsboro. Fifth from the left on that same front row is R. A. Igou, now a physician in Fort Payne.

stor

The peddling trucks took merchandise to the doorstep

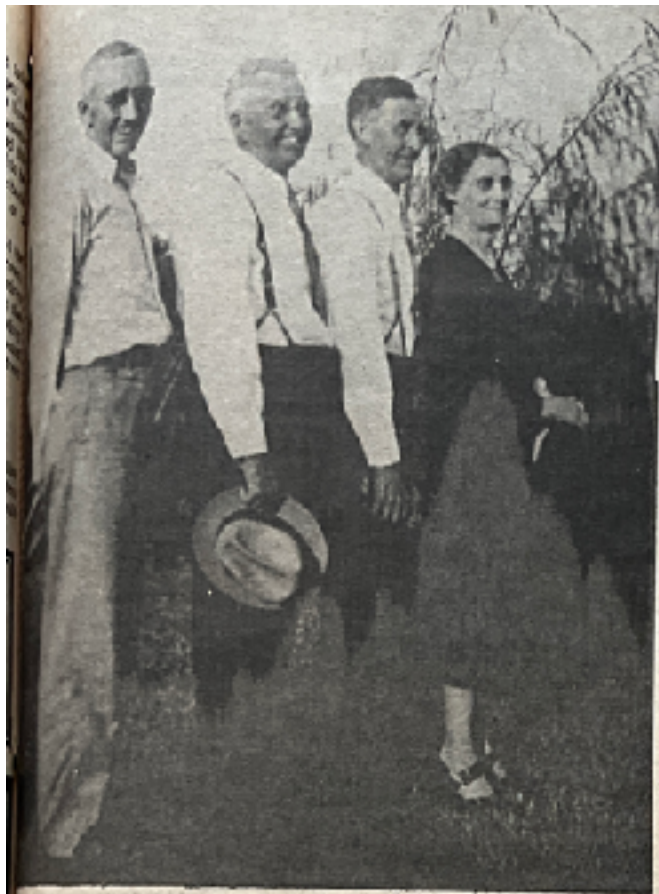
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homemade drink box, lined with dust. They also kept milk in it. Large blocks of ice were delivered, usually twice a week, most likely from an icehouse that was located at Key Head. In the first years it usually came on a wagon, and later by truck. Christine (Crawford King, whose father Chris Crawford, ran a big store next to Baxter, remembers that her father did not sell these bottled drinks and her sisters would go next door to Baxter's store to get them. It was some kind of a treat then. Baxter moved to a larger building on the northwest corner in the middle of town, which many people remember as the Baxter building. Jess Moore of Sylvania said that his great-grandfather Benjamin Stone operated a general store in the same building, or probably next door to the Baxter build-

ing, as early as 1900. He ran it only a short time and afterwards his son Mart operated it.

Hobert Shirey, who died in Fort Payne this year, married Pat Baxter's daughter, Lena. In the Depression 1930s, he bought a model-A truck and started a traveling store business, carrying merchandise all over the mountain. This was not an uncommon business in those days. Lena remembers that they would stop at crossroads and houses and "we would grind coffee and sell it in a sack. People would trade us eggs and chickens for what we had to sell." They also stocked clothes and socks, etc.

Lena says that Hobert also drove the first school bus in Sylvania, sometime in the 1920s, which was converted from an old power company truck. Students sat on benches on both sides facing each



THE CRAWFORDS of Sylvania are shown in their later years, about 1910. On left are Leonard Crawford, who was Port Payne attorney (his widow, Mrs. Payne, still lives there; Sylvania mer-

chant and postmaster Chris Crawford, James M. Crawford of Sylvania, and their sister, Oecia, who became Mrs. R.F. Sheek and moved to Seombsboro.

other.

Coy King remembers when Roy and Winford Wilks, who were one of the later merchants who were in the Baxter building after he sold out, operating a "peddling truck" too. They were, in a way, forerunners of modern discount stores and started a price by cutting prices on many items. "They were selling baking soda for 3 cents a box, and chewing tobacco for 4 cents," King said.

The Wilks brothers were in business there in the mid to late 1940s. Baxter had sold out to Buck Bone and King remembers that Leo Grimes, present DeKalb tax assessor, was in business with Bone at one time. Kirk & Collier also owned it later. The building was torn down and replaced by a service station which still stands, but not as a service station.

Oldtimers still talk about gin explosion

The historic Crawford, sketched in and published two weeks ago, has had many owners, apparently. One of them was a Mr. Allen, who lived there at the time he was killed in a boiler explosion at the gin. Two other men died in the blast, Anderson Elrod and a Mr. Wiggins. Ollie Murdock was crippled. Sam Igou and Jim Igou ran the gin at times.

Date of the blast has been hard to pin down, but oldtimers of the Sylvania area usually mention it as one of the big happenings. Sam West, the school teacher-farmer who moved to Sylvania from Cumberland Mountain in 1906, often was heard to say that he was the first person to reach the gin after the explosion. His house (across from the present Sylvania High School) was right behind the gin (now used by a company that builds trusses for hou-

He taught music after crops were laid by

Mrs. Hobert (Lena Baxter) Shirey, however, remembers hearing the explosion while she was playing outside in her yard near the old Methodist Church. "I heard my mother scream that my daddy was up at the gin." Her father, merchant Pat Baxter, was at the gin but was not hurt when the boiler exploded. Mrs. Shirey said. Therefore he was the first person at the scene after the blast, she claims.

Mrs. Bill (Jewell Crawford) Elliott of Scottsboro thinks the gin explosion may have been in 1917. She thinks that the Crawfords had moved back from Chavies, following the death of her mother, the former Ida Everett, just before it happened. That would make it 1917.

Sylvania's Music Man: King on horseback

Thomas King, who served as Sylvania postmaster from 1933 to 1949, sang in a quartet in his younger days and later taught music at many schools and conducted singings and music

schools. He also was an auctioneer.

His son, Coy King, remembers that his father also ran a store in downtown Sylvania some of the years he was postmaster. He also had the postoffice inside other stores, such as Pat Baxter's, and in separate buildings on both the north and south side of the main street (County Road 59).

Coy King remembers his father sold flour and animal feeds in bags. He says he supposedly taught music in 102 different schools. Before World War II there were small schools at nearly every major crossroads. He often taught music in summer schools "after the crops were laid by," according to Mrs. Coy (Christine Crawford) King. In early years King would ride a horse to the music schools and singings.

Also, when he was a young man he sang in a quartet that traveled around to perform. Coy thinks some of the other members of the quartet, from time to time, included Pat Baxter, Tom Culver, Amos Dewberry and Gordon White.

King was also a choir director at the Sylvania Methodist Church. "His choir won a music contest held at Tenbroeck," said Christine King. "He was a perfectionist in music. He made us practice over and over until we got a song right. He always said that he would rather sing one song right than sing 100 songs and miss them."

The Kings lived about halfway between Sylvania and Powells and moved into Sylvania about 1925. Thomas King's father, Bob King, was a Civil War veteran.

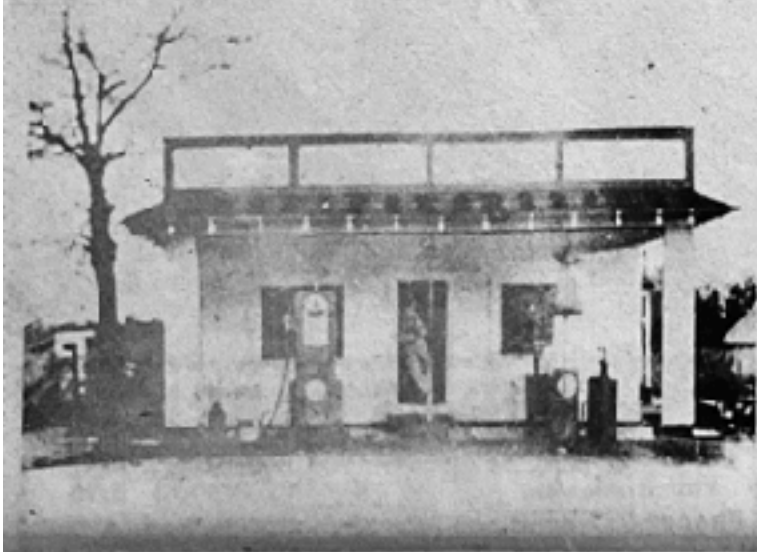


THE PAT BAXTER STORE was in the heart of Sylvania during the 20s and 30s when Sylvania was a busy trading community with four or five general stores at one time. This composite

picture was pieced together with parts of two separate pictures that were taken, apparently one right after the other, with neither picture showing the entire store front. The pictures belong

to Audrey Moore of Henagar, Baxter's granddaughter, and provide the first view of the old Sylvania business district we have been able to find. Note the large building at right background, which is yet to be identified. The pickup truck and Chevrolet car seen here are probably 1931 or 1938 models. Some retouching was done in order to blend the parts and tones of the separate pictures together.

Old Sylvania scenes



THIS SERVICE STATION was built about 1906 by James Stoner, and used also as a cafe for a time. It is still standing, now used as a TV repair shop, and sits across the road from where the Pat Baxter store, in other picture, stood. This is the lot where the Sylvania

Hotel stood before it burned, about 1933. Notice the small building at left background, which looks like an outhouse — or "outdoor john". This is another picture of Sylvania which Audrey Moore of Henagar found among her family pictures.

HISTORY

Continued from Page 1

events that took place along that Sylvania-Chavies road in the first few years of this century. He saw his first funeral procession coming slowing up the road one day. He asked his mother what was in the big box. "A man," she said. The man, Lee remembers, was a Joe D. Kennedy. It was the first funeral procession he had ever seen. He says the first person buried in the Burnt Church cemetery was a Miss Mary Rhodes, probably about 1890.

First car that came up road was sold to Dr. Clayton

Lee remembers seeing the first automobile to ever come up that road, perhaps about 1906 or 1907. It was driven by a man named Ben Jones who owned Crossville Milling Co. and had his picture on sacks of feed. He drove the car to Sylvania and sold it to Dr. Olney W. Clayton. Lee remembers that the car had a chain drive and did not have a steering wheel. It was guided by

a long shaft, much like a wagon. Until 1906, they had to go the two miles to Sylvania to get mail. Sylvania had a post office starting in 1893, but there were only about two stores there before the turn of the century and it did not grow much until the "big railroad boom" of 1910.

That was when a railroad was supposed to be built north from Boaz, through Sylvania and on to Chattanooga. Lee remembers seeing the survey crews crossing their farm, laying out the right-of-way. The "boss man rode a big bay horse" and Lee would run down to the fields and talk with him.

Lots were sold but railroad never came

The railroad promoters laid out streets and sold lots in Sylvania, which was to be one of the most important stops along the route. They had a sign across from the cotton gin saying that was where the depot would be built.

Lee said his father never did think that a railroad would be built up the mountain. "He said it was just some fellers using that to sell the land lots."

Lee remembers attending the sales where the lots were sold. It is likely that these are the lots that are listed in the old ledger now owned by Mrs. Jess (Audrey Anderson) Moore at Henagar. A list of the names beside lot numbers, and prices, was published in an early story about Sylvania.

The main intersection in Sylvania was at the corner where the main east-west road (County Road 59) inter-

sects with the road going south by the Masonic Hall and town park, and north one block to a dead end. He thinks that the first big store in Sylvania was on the northwest corner where Pat Baxter had a store years later. It was the Traylor General Merchandise store in Lee's early days. He has an old songbook, titled "The 20th Century Songbook", that apparently was published about 1900. It has dates of 1896 and 1900 in it. The big advertisement on the back is for: "G. R. Traylor, General Merchandise, Sylvania, Ala."

He also has another old songbook, the "Cardui Song Book." One of the advertisements says it is "Sponsored by Powell & Co., General Merchandise, Sylvania." A 1912 date is in it. Lee says that a Mr. Allen operated the store for Doc Powell, who had the biggest store on the mountain in the teens and 20s at Powell's Crossroads. The Sylvania store was apparently a branch store set up at the railroad "boom town".

He also remembers that a Moss Turkey had one of the earlier stores. Oscar Culver's store, on the northeast corner of the intersection, was another early one. Bill Ferguson ran a store and later Sam Igea, on the southwest corner. This store building was later purchased by Dr. Curtis Johnson, who made it into a residence and doctors office. This is now used as a residence.

First Sylvania settler was a Yankee captain named Shepherd

Going back beyond the turn of the century, Lee says he was told that the first settler in Sylvania was a "Yankee captain named Shepherd." He lived at the end of the dead-end street to the north of the intersection by a spring. Other early settlers were also from the north. The Hurts came from South Dakota and built the home on the northeast corner, later owned by Bill Elliott, and even later used as the post office by Mrs. Jimmie Newsome, present postmaster, until 1977. Other first settlers were the Kaisers from North Dakota, a German family. Their home was on the northeast side of the present road to DeKalb Lake where it turns north off the main road. The house is no longer there.

The Kaisers had bells and harness on their horses and you could hear them coming down the road, jingling. Lee remembers.

More early recollections of Sylvania and the mountain area from Lee Carlyle will be published next week.)

To be continued

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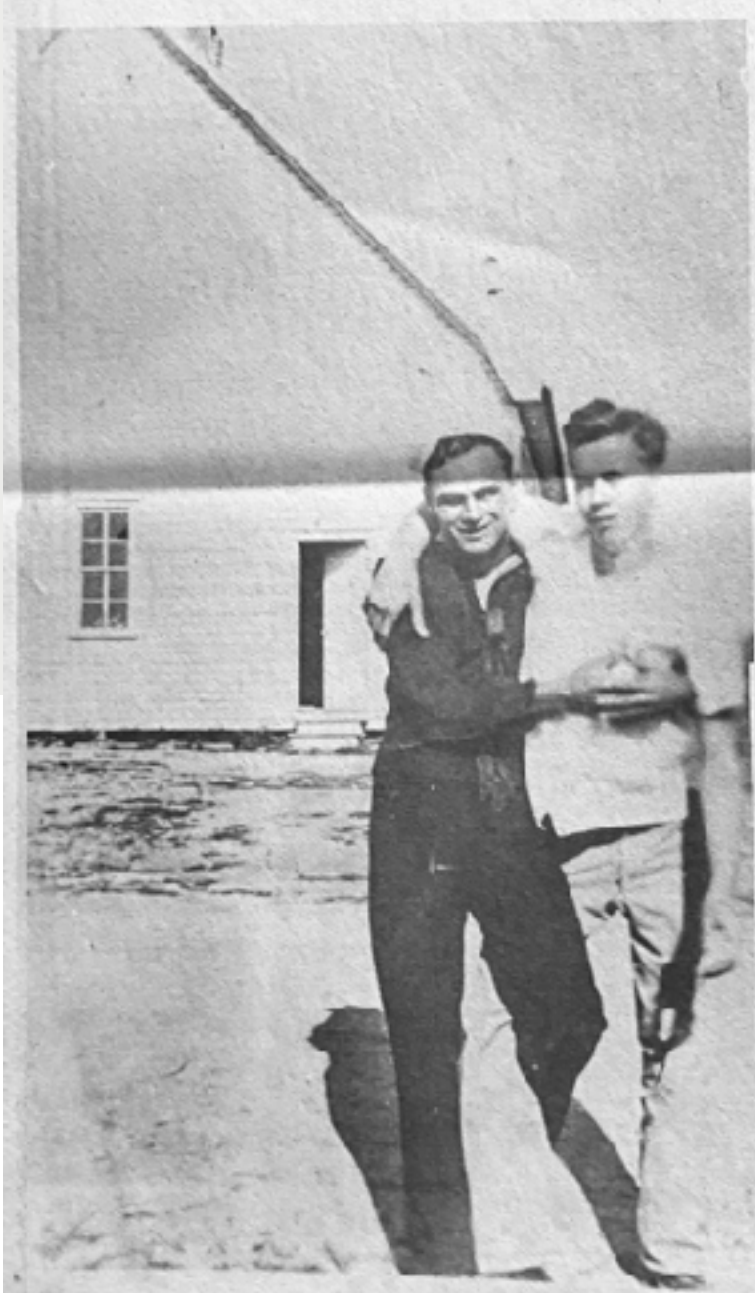
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OLD SYLVANIA SCENE, probably taken during World War II, shows Lester Morgan Jr., now president of Michael Dwain furniture company at Ider, and his sister, Margaret Wright, now an Ider school teacher.



Old Sylvania scene

CLOWNING in front of the old Sylvania Baptist Church, now the Church of God, in the early 40s are Johnny L. Godwin, left, and Hubert Murlock. Godwin later was manager of the Sylvia Theater built in 1917 and closed sometime in the mid 50s.



AN OLD VIEW of the front doors of the old Masonic Lodge in Sylvania, which burned sometime in the late 30s, shows

Buck Stone, Auble Dean and Claude Callahan. The lodge is located next to the Sylvania town park.



PAT BAXTER
GEN. MERCH. STORE
SYLVANIA, ALA. 1938

B. Stephens

*is store building was a landmark
before turn of the century*

PICTURES of early business
of land Mountain communities
apparently, as it has been next to
possible to find any since the Booster
its history series.
old school classes, standing in
of schools, are fairly plentiful.
back to the turn of the century.
Anderson) Moore of
found two tiny views of the old

Pat Baxter Store building that stood at
the main corner of the Sylvania busi-
ness district (where you turn south off
County Road 59 toward the old town
park). From these old views, Brown
Stephens has reconstructed the old
store building in pen and ink to rep-
resent what it looked like when those
pictures were taken, in the late thirties.
This building was probably one of the

earliest store buildings in Sylvania. Lee
Carlyle, who is 83, remembers it when
he was small, and he thinks it was the
C.R. Traylor General Merchandise
Store then. He has an old Cardui
songbook with Traylor advertisements
in it, dated 1898 and 1900. Jess Moore
thinks that his great-grandfather, Ben-
jamin Store, may have operated a store
there at one time. Pat Baxter, Mrs.
Moore's grandfather, probably had his
first store in Sylvania just east of the
old Chris Crawford General Merchan-
dise Store building, the front of which is
still standing and is used as a residence.
Crawford's daughter, Mrs. Christine
King, says she remembers the Baxter
store as being next door to her father's
store before Baxter bought the building
shown here. Pat Baxter had a store in
Sylvania from about 1911 or 1912 until
nearly 1910. The building was torn

down and replaced by an auto garage,
and that building is on this corner now.
The building probably changed very
little from the 1890s, when Traylor had
his store there, until the late 30s, except
that gasoline pumps were added out
front and the store carried supplies for
cars, instead of catering to horses,
wagons and buggies.
This view does not show the old home
built about 1850 by the Hunts. This
house, later owned for many years by
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Elliott, and now
belongs to Mrs. Jimmie Newsome,
Sylvania postmaster. She ran the post
office in that house until 1971. Mrs.
Elliott (the former Jewell Crawford,
another daughter of Chris Crawford,
lives in Scottsboro now. That house is
probably out of sight behind the store in
the pictures from which this scene was
sketched

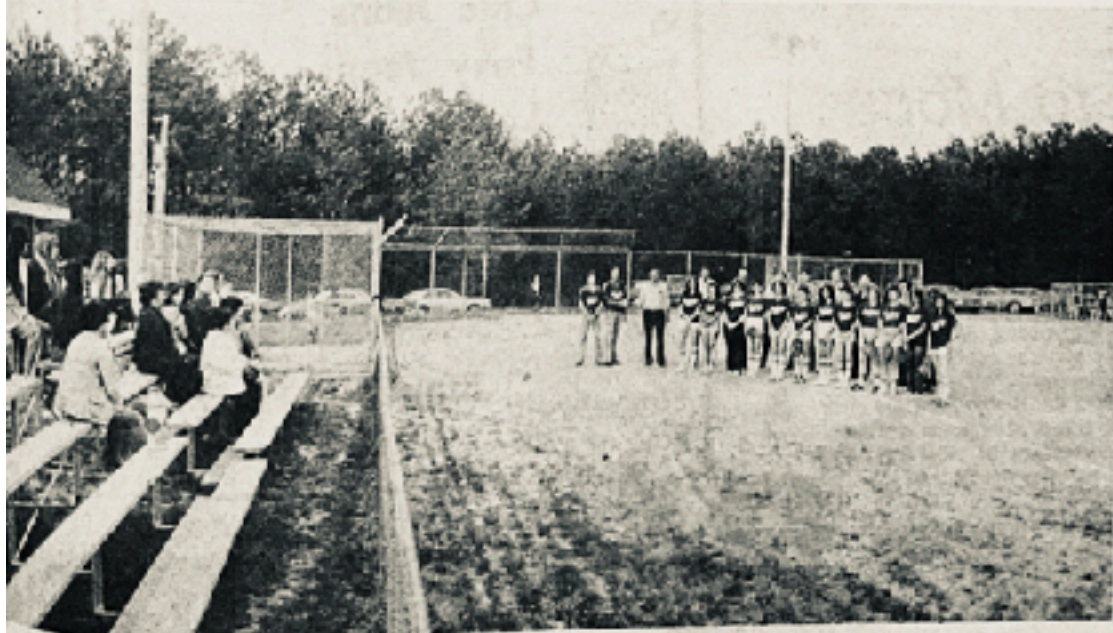


Sylvania dedicates new park

SYLVANIA TOWN PARK was dedicated last Thursday evening prior to the first game played on the field, a softball contest between Sylvania and Geradine. Above, Mayor H.D. Newsome holds the dedication plaque in front of the restrooms building. Town

councilmen in the background from left are: Hugh Bell, Claude Cullham, Walter Gilbreath, Bruce West, G.C. Smith and town clerk Rhonda Jackson. The first phase of the park which has been completed includes a ballfield, two tennis courts and a basketball court — all lighted for night use, and the restrooms. The community staged various fund-raising campaigns in order to match a federal recreation grant, obtained through the Alabama Department

of Natural Resources. The park was begun two years ago on 17 acres leased from the state, adjacent to the state-owned DeKalb Lake recreation and fishing area. Mayor Newsome said the second phase would begin soon and would include three pavilions, picnic tables and a children's playground. In the photo below, town council members and ballplayers and coaches stand on the field for a dedication ceremony just before the first game began.



SYLVANIA — 1947

Establishment of a high school made it possible for hundreds to earn a diploma without travelling far from home



FIRST senior class of Sylvania graduated in 1948.

High schools, like paved roads, used to be scarce items around north Sand Mountain. Around the end of World War II, anyone living north of Hwy. 35 had to put forth a special effort to obtain a high school education. Some of the older residents had managed to graduate from high school by attending the church-supported Flat Rock Academy, which opened classes before the turn of the century. It was a boarding school because in those days the distances to travel on unpaved roads was too much to make daily for anyone who didn't live close to Flat Rock. However, the Academy closed in the 1920s, leaving a wide area without high schools.

Over in Jackson County was Pisgah High School, and boys and girls who could manage to reach Pisgah often attended Pisgah, even if they lived on the DeKalb County side of the mountain. Many in the Sylvania area rode a school bus to Fort Payne. Those who lived around Rainsville or west around Powells went to Fyffe High School, which was started in the midst of the Depression in 1936.

An unaccredited high school did exist on the extreme northeast end of Sand Mountain in the late 40s, but it was Davis High School in Georgia, a mile or so from the Alabama line. Some Alabama students from nearby communities did, however, attend Davis School. Those in Higdon and Bryant communi-

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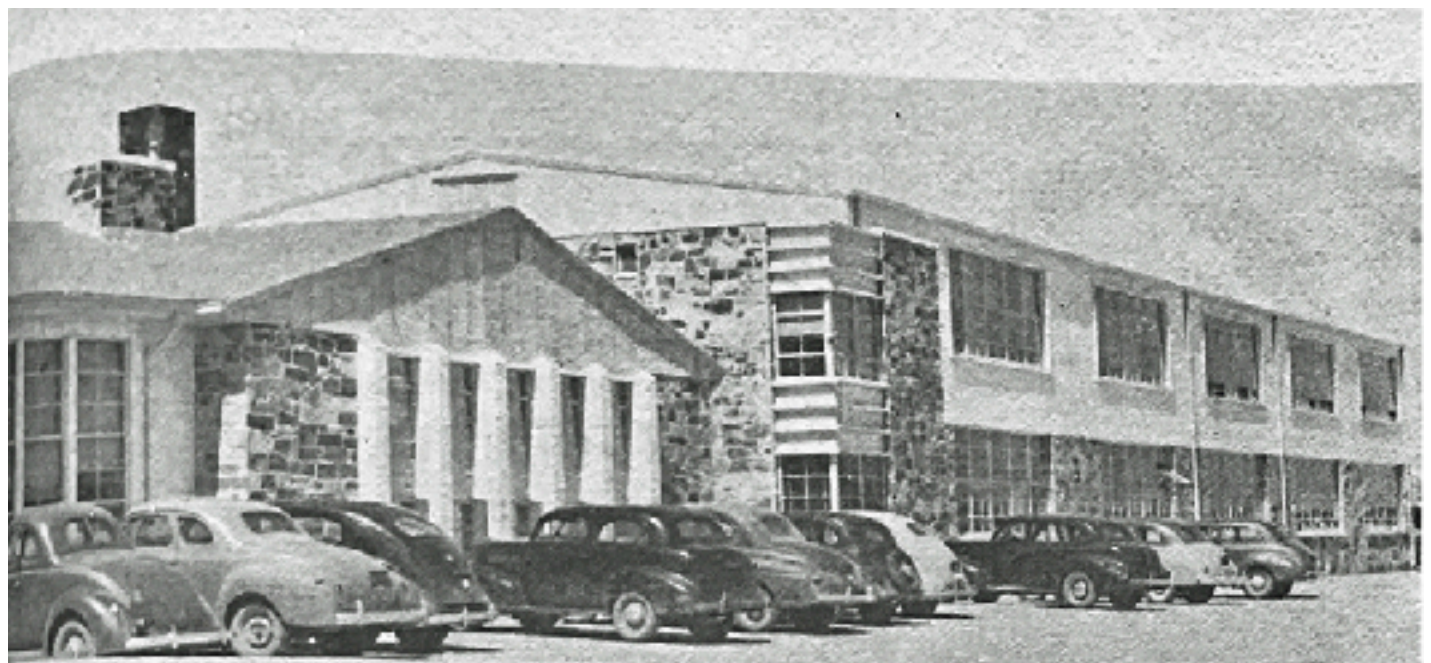


FIRST football game held at Sylvania School was played against Auburn Hope in the fall of 47.

principal of the school, is seated in the middle of the front row, next to his wife, Daisy.



AUBURN HOPE



SYLVANIA HIGH SCHOOL when it was brand new in 1947.

BIRTH OF A HIGH SCHOOL

Continued from page 1

of Jackson County could ride a bus to Pisgah High School, but the roads in those days it was a longer trip than it was as a Sylvania student who rode the DeKalb bus to Payne. Davis no longer has a school. It and Dade County High School in Trenton, Ga., were consolidated several years ago into Northwest Georgia High School, located at the exit on Interstate 59. Most communities on the DeKalb side had local groups working to establish a high school. Sylvania efforts paid off after the junior elementary school burned about 1940. Auburn Hope, now a resident of Sylvania, had become principal at a junior high in 1944 and he led efforts to establish a high school. The old wood structure was completely destroyed, some supplies were salvaged. Classes were then held in different buildings, including churches and stores, in the Town of Sylvania.

The present Sylvania School was rebuilt on the site of the old building. This time it was constructed of stone.

The new school was finished in 1946. When the school opened for the 1947-48 school year, it included a high school, and a big gap was filled for students who needed to attend a high school nearer home. That same year the school won accreditation.

Though some state funds were used in rebuilding the school, the community raised a lot of the money needed.

Hope is credited with helping convince the DeKalb County Board of Education that a high school was badly needed at Sylvania. Students had to get up in the dark in order to catch a school bus to Fort Payne, and it was a long ride on rough, rutted, dusty or muddy roads. These students returned home after dark.

When the high school opened, the Sylvania school enrolled 700 students, 250 of whom were in the upper grades.

The first Sylvania graduating class received diplomas in 1949.

G.M. Butler, vocational agriculture teacher at Sylvania, came to the school in 1951, only three years after it became a high school. Butler, from Huntsville, was fresh out of college and had "never heard of Sylvania before I took the job."

He moved to Sylvania, expecting to be there only a couple of years, and has stayed 27 years so far.

In 1954, Hope left Sylvania School and became principal of West Limestone School from 1956 to 1963. He returned to the area in 1963 as principal of Henagar Junior High School, a job he kept until he retired in 1973. He had 37 years of service in education.

Ironically, Hope took over at Henagar, a community that for 20 years at least worked to turn that school into a high school. Henagar is the largest community north of Rainsville. How-



JUNIOR HIGH students at Sylvania school in 1947. The teacher in the foreground is Mrs. Ovelle Benefield.

Sylvania High School filled void on Sand Mountain

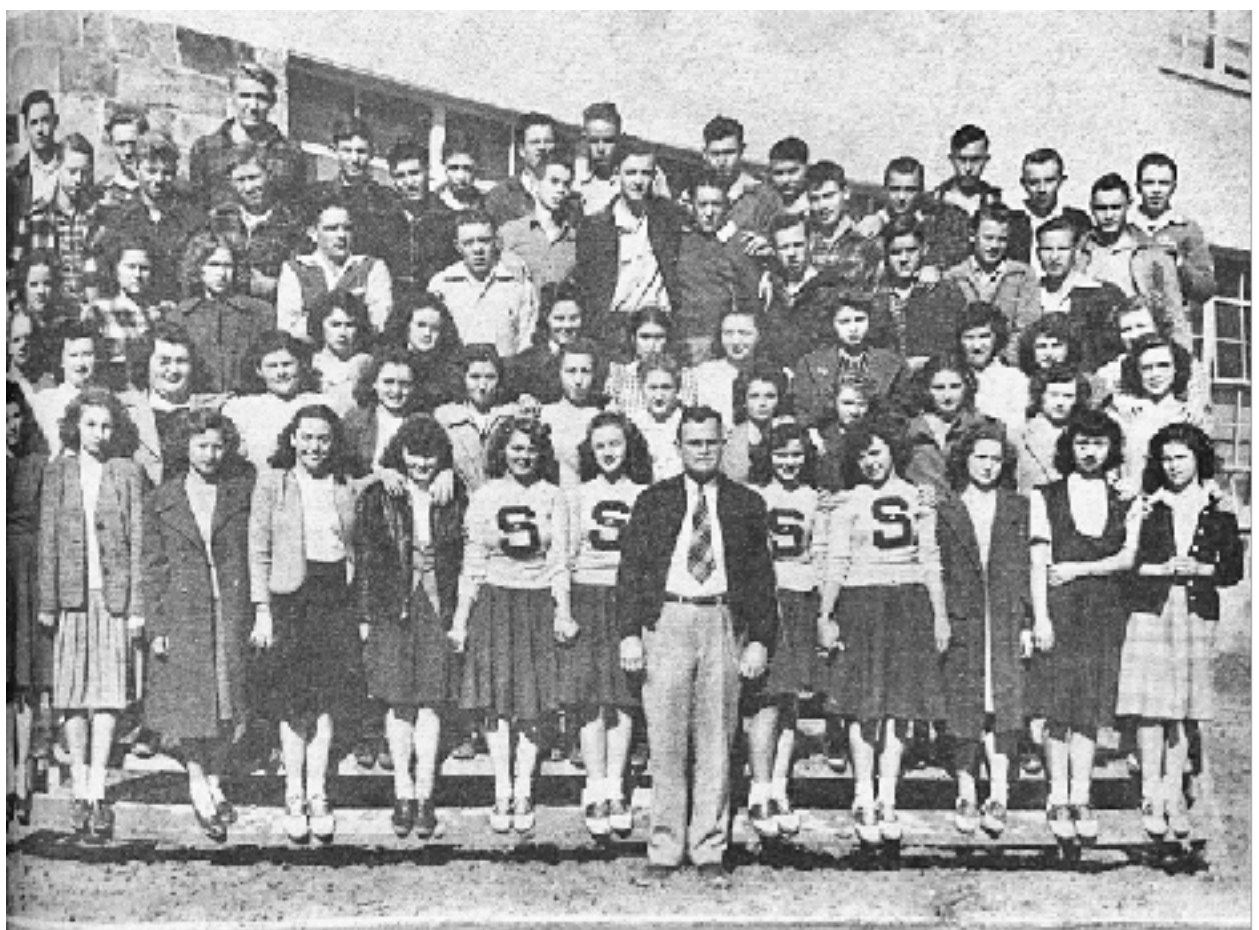
ever, mainly because it is sandwiched between the Sylvania High School that Hope helped establish, and Ider, which in the meantime had obtained a high school, Henagar was destined not to have a high school.

Hope and his wife Daisy enjoy working in the garden, fishing, travelling, reading and raising animals. They have a son who lives in Nevada.



RST football game held at School was played against the fall of 47. Auburn Hupe,

principal of the school, is seated in the middle of the front row, next to his wife, Daisy.



COACH TRUMAN WILSON was coach for Sylvania's first football team. He is in the foreground. Behind are the cheerleaders, pep squad and football players.



FIRST senior class of Sylvania graduated in 1948.



THE PEEK TRIPLETS were among the first students at the new Sylvania High School.



THIS PHOTO shows a scene at the Junior-Senior Banquet at the school.