



Echoes from the Past

*Pleasant Hill Historical Society of the Cumberland, Inc.
PO Box 264 Pleasant Hill TN 38578*

Fall 2019

A big thank you from your president:

Thanks to your generous support, all 72 windows in Pioneer Hall have been replaced with vinyl windows. A new roof has been placed on Pioneer Hall as well as on the bell house. New paint has been applied on the bell house and the exterior third floor. A fire alarm has been installed. All this work has been done in order to protect a treasured landmark. The history of Pleasant Hill Academy, Dr. May's accomplishments and surrounding communities must be kept alive. We must use this history from our past to move forward to the future by telling our children, grandchildren and to welcome newcomers to our community, teaching them of our great history in hopes they will love this area as much as we do.

With all this effort in preserving the artifacts and valuable information we have on paper, in books and photos, we cannot insure that they will be 100% safe. Our Board of Directors are now in the process of storing our valuable information in digitized format. This will enable us to keep this information in a safe place, also enabling us to put it on our website. (Yes, we have gone modern, trying to keep up with the times.) We would like to thank John and Linda Tanner for their encouragement of this effort.

Much landscaping has been accomplished: new trees planted, grass has been sown. Oh yes, there is always more work to be done. Much work has been done on the park, but there is more to be done.

I would like to thank our Board of Directors for their continued support and leadership of the Pleasant Hill Historical Society of the Cumberland: Don Dowdy, vice president; Pat Robbennolt, secretary; Larry Burch, treasurer; Directors Ann Schoup, Beecher Frazier, Jr., Al Dwenger, George Hartz, Ed Schneider, Paula Blalock; Curator, Sharon Weible; Docent Chair, Chris Gulick. And a big thank you to our membership for your continuing support. Together we can keep this National Historic Building and our history alive.



Your Grateful
President,

Jim Blalock

Celebrate the Vote!

The year 2020 will mark the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment that gave women the right to vote. This brings to mind that Abby Crawford Milton, who canvassed this area of Tennessee to organize women to support the Amendment and who became the first president of the League of Women Voters for Tennessee, served on the Uplands Village Board of Directors in the 1930s and 1940s. Abby is one of the five suffragists honored by a statue standing near the Parthenon in Nashville. Thinking about suffrage caused me to wonder if people here had memories of their mothers and grandmothers voting experiences. Here's one.



Abby Crawford Milton



Betty Parker

Betty Parker shared this memory. “ My mother Jane Meadows Parker turned 21 in January 1928 and that year cast her first vote for U.S. President. She was a lifelong Democrat who was born and lived until retirement in Alabama, then part of the solidly Democratic South. The Democrats that year nominated for President Al Smith, a progressive New York Democrat and a Roman Catholic, to run against the Republican moderate, Herbert Hoover. My mother never forgave herself for being influenced by anti-Catholic sentiments in Alabama and deciding to vote for the Republican Herbert Hoover. President Hoover was probably wrongfully blamed for not preventing the Depression and then not creating humane programs to ease its effects. My mother never again voted for a Republican. More important, she never again allowed her choice to be based on religion, race, or national origin. She enthusiastically voted for the first Roman Catholic president John F. Kennedy, and had she lived until 2008, she would definitely have voted for Barack Obama.”

Can you recall any family stories about women voting?

Christmas 1896

Benjamin Dodge gave his daughter a Christmas gift, a book with this inscription inside: “Christmas Present to My Beloved Daughter Emma F. Dodge, December 25, 1896, B. Dodge.” The gift was a copy of Twenty Years of Congress: From Lincoln to Garfield, Vol. 1. The book, a good two inches thick, is missing its cover and shows other signs of heavy use. Emma was 31 years old at the time and teaching at the Academy.

Pleasant Hill and the World

It's easy to think that Pleasant Hill, the academy and hospital existed in isolation, apart from the world and all that was happening around the globe. It takes only a moment to realize that events here were very much a part of a larger picture. For instance, the American Missionary Society's sponsorship of an academy here grew out of this organization's pledge to support education for freed slaves, mountain children and American Indians after the Civil War. Edwin Wharton was called as principal of the academy after WWI when declining enrollment and lack of funds had left the campus in poor shape. Dr. May cemented her place here with her unwavering care of influenza patients when that epidemic swept the United States in 1917. The closing of the academy in 1947 was connected to the state having increased funds for teachers and for school buses. These are just a few of the connections to the wider world that docents like to point out when visitors are enjoying the museum's exhibits.

Contribution Form

Contribution Amount

Genealogist \$1000.00+

Name

Historian \$500.00+

Address

Pioneer \$100.00+

Settler \$75.00+

Founder \$50.00+

Email

Ox Cart Driver \$25.00+

Phone

Windows Project

Make Checks Payable to:

PHHS

PO Box 264

Pleasant Hill TN 38578

Contributions are tax deductible.

Membership year May 1-April 30.

The first \$25.00 of each donation will be considered as membership dues and placed into the Heritage Fund.

The remaining amount will be placed into the Operation and Maintenance Fund.

Digitizing

An exciting project is underway that involves making the remarkable collection of documents in Pioneer Hall Museum available to others. As Jim Blalock said in his opening letter, we are digitizing scores of printed materials that then can be made available to the public. This will be an ongoing project over a period of time, but we're making a good start. The first materials to be scanned include Academy and Pleasant Hill High School yearbooks, programs (we have graduation programs that go back to the 1890's) and Dr. May's typed manuscript. Your generous contributions will help us continue this project. We have letters, pamphlets, academy catalogs, a Pleasant Hill post office ledger from the 1880's and boxes of photographs waiting for their turn.

Sharon Weible, Curator

Cows grazing on the road or riding bicycles on the sidewalk is hereby prohibited by T.L.C. [T.L. Cunningham]
From the Highway [Academy Newsletter] 1931

***Pleasant Hill Historical Society
of the Cumberlands, Inc.***

P.O. Box 264
Pleasant Hill, TN 38578

Pleasant Hill to Get a New Highway

“It seems practically assured now that one of the first side roads to be built in Cumberland county from the new one-cent gas tax for that purpose will be built from Pleasant Hill to Mayland. This road will connect two important outlying communities of the county by reducing the highway distance between them from twenty-one to six miles.”

From the Pleasant Hill Academy Newsletter, June 15, 1929

Pioneer Hall Museum

Open

May-October

Sundays 2-5 pm

Wednesdays 10-4 pm

For Special Tours

Call (931) 277-5313 or
(931) 277-5226

www.pioneerhallmuseum.net

Echoes from the Past is a

semi-annual newsletter

produced and published by the

Pleasant Hill Historical Society

of the Cumberland to promote

awareness of our heritage and to
support the museum

of the society.

Sharon Weible, Editor

Officers

Jim Blalock-President

Don Dowdey-Vice President

Pat Robbennolt-Secretary

Larry Burch-Treasurer

Board of Directors

Ed Schneider

Ann Schoup

Beecher Frasier, Jr

Al Dwenger

Paula Blalock

George Hartz

Curator

Sharon Weible

The Reverend Benjamin Dodge and Family Arrive

Eight years after arriving in Pleasant Hill, Father Dodge wrote the following to a Maine newspaper, telling of his family's arrival in 1884.

“Having climbed to the top [top of the Plateau from Sparta in a hired livery in 1884], as it was noon, we stopped an hour to feast our mortal bodies with a lunch, and drink at a pure spring which was leaping from a high rock, and our minds, through our eyes, with scenery easier imagined than described.

From this point to Pleasant Hill is twelve miles, and the road lay through a wilderness of oak and chestnut, broken here and there by a little clearing with a rudely built log cabin in the centre of it. As the darkness of night was gathering, the driver exclaimed, “This is Pleasant Hill.” Although strangers in what we thought a very strange land, we were all glad to come to our journey's end. We knew we were still in the land of the most patriotic flag that floats. Is this wild country to be our field of labor? Born and reared in New England homes, can we say good-bye to hundreds of dear friends, and pass the remnant of life in the wilderness? We would be homesick if we dared; but we had put our hands to the plow and must not “look back.” We went to sleep knowing that God is here.”

Years later, not long before his death, in an article entitled “Life in the Mountains of Tennessee,” he wrote this: “The eleven years and six months past, as I cast my eye backward seem like the kaleidoscope. As I glance into the tube of these eleven years I see two mirrors or reflecting planes, one of faith, the other works.”



More Tom Brown, Polly Page and Helen Bullard Carvings

It's exciting to walk into the Folk Art Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway near Asheville, NC and immediately see carvings by Tom Brown '34 right inside the main door. On the upper level there are more of his work along with carvings by Polly Page '40 and Helen Bullard Krechniak. The archives of the Folk Art Center house many more carvings by these three well-known carvers.



Polly



Helen



Tom



Alice Adshead Speaks

Alice Adshead left us delightful stories and poems about her years nursing folks in the hospital and tuberculosis sanatorium in Pleasant Hill. A collection of her writings was published by Uplands in 1984 in a booklet entitled "Alice Adshead Speaks: Poetry and Prose from a Life of Devotion." Now we have more of her stories, thanks to J. Frank and Ann Meisamer, who recently gave Pioneer Hall Museum a notebook filled with Alice's writings. Here is one of her stories which tells so vividly the efforts the staff made to fight boredom and promote good spirits amongst their patients.

The Trial

Mrs. Meisamer was a patient for awhile and enjoying the care of a nurse from North Carolina. On her bedside table she had a balloon man which the nurse was always teasing her about. One day the nurse stuck a pin in the balloon man and he exploded. Mrs. Meisamer was awfully mad. She accused her friend of killing him. They were having a terrible argument when along came Dr. May who heard the racket. She said, "Well, girls, if this is the way you feel about it, why don't we have a trial and really find out who killed the balloon man." Again, it was that kind of a day when nothing seemed to happen and we were all ready for a little fun.

Quickly we organized. Virginia Phipps was the prosecuting attorney. Dr. May was the Judge, wearing a long black gown, a square hat, carrying a hammer and standing behind the Victrola. She looked the part. We had just paid a visit to the court in Crossville. She knew all the tricks. Dr. Ripley was the accuser in the case. I was the policeman. We all had parts and sure played up to them. But alas! We had no jury – not enough people. Then a knock was heard at the front door. In walked Mr. Lundy who was on our Board, with four other men who he was bringing to see the Hospital.

"Mr. Lundy," said Dr. May, "you see we are in the middle of a trial but we do not have enough to serve as jury. Would you and your friends consent to serve?" Says Mr. Lundy, "Of courses we will, Dr. May." There was never a crack of a smile from these men. They lined up against the wall with solemn faces and the trial went on, hot and heavy. Virginia was a genius at this sort of thing and she made things hum. Mr. Lundy had been chairman of the jury at Crossville, so he also knew his part. The time came for the case to be presented to the jury. Said Dr. May, "Will you please retire into the ward, gentlemen, and consider the case." They turned and solemnly, one by one, went into the ward. There they stayed for 15 minutes. Then as solemnly they walked out, still never a trace of a smile. The Judge said, "What of your verdict, gentlemen." Mr. Lundy said, "Your Honor, we failed to reach a decision." "I'm sorry," said the Judge. "You will have to retire again." They solemnly turned and went into the ward again, this time for twenty minutes and finally came out and gave their verdict, which was Innocence of the Accused. The trial was over. They quickly dispensed, everyone to his own job. Mr. Lundy and his friends went into the office to see Dr. May. Adzie [Alice Adshead] left to pick up the pieces. A very good time was had by all.