



Echoes from the Past

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

Spring 2016

Dear Friends,

I wonder what it was like here on the Cumberland Plateau 35,000 years ago! Was the bluff behind where Pioneer Hall stands today, with the spring running out of the ground? Was the coal underneath us finished and just waiting for people to come and mine it? Had the salt lick begun to grow to the southeast of where Pleasant Hill is now in an area called Big Lick? I love history, geology and most of all, learning about people. In the last few issues (and this one, too) you will find a variety of stories about the people living here in our area. Where did we all come from, how did we get here? What were our families like? What was “downtown” Pleasant Hill like? The Board of the Pleasant Hill Historical Society has asked Jym Mitchell to interview and record stories of some of the people whose ancestors came here over the years. Won't that be wonderful! Jym will begin in the summer and has already lined up people who want to tell him stories. Are you one of them? Call Jym at 931-277-3427 to let him know you want to talk to him about your family in Pleasant Hill.

Speaking of stories, you will be interested in our Easter story concerning Arizona Wightman also learn about E. Howard Elam, principal of the Academy from 1924 – 1930, read the tale of the John Nelson Haggard family, and reminisce with Margaret Campbell.

The Annual Meeting of PHHS will meet again this year at the Community House on Sunday, May 15 at 2 pm. Our speaker, Mike Smathers who himself has a great history, will be talking about his father, the Rev. Eugene Smathers and his life and how it intertwined with the life of Dr. May Wharton. Together they made a good team to try to rid poverty from the Plateau and give the people a good start. You won't want to miss this talk.

Of course, this will be preceded by the business meeting and installation of officers for the 2016-2017 year. The Nominating Committee is asking for a one-time-change in the Bylaws. Please read about this change and come to help us with this decision.

We mourn the loss of our members of the Alumni Association and our volunteers. Hal Schoup was our “landscape artist” for many years. He was always mowing, planting, weeding until the grounds of Pioneer Hall had a pristine look. Last year it seemed to be prettier than ever. We will miss him. The board has asked Shannon Blaylock Graham to mow for us and Johnny Flynn will take care of the planting and trimming. We hope we can keep Hal's legacy alive.

Speaking of keeping legacies alive – during some of our heavy wind and rain storms, numerous tiles from the roof landed on the ground. Someone will have to come to give Pioneer Hall an examination. It will be a sad day for us if we find we need a new roof. Keep your donations and memberships coming!

We are getting ready to open our doors on Sunday, May 1. We've been working over the winter and promise to have a special exhibit ready by opening day. Please come visit us any Sunday or Wednesday until October 30. Or call for a tour if you are in town at a different time. Sharon at 931-277-5226 or Jeanne at 931-277-3111.

Enjoy the rest of the newsletter and we'll see you soon.

Jeanne Chappell-Kingsbury
President

The Amazing Easter Hunt

Easter was on April 15th in 1906. The people of Pleasant Hill will never forget that weekend, not because it was a time to search for Easter eggs, but to search for a toddler. The story began on Saturday, April 14, when the little daughter of Robert and Lee Ann Wightman was last seen around 2 o'clock. Her mother was caring for their new baby, only several days old, when she last saw their daughter, Arizona.

She remembered that "Zona," not quite 2 ½ years old, had told her mother that she wanted to go to Pleasant Hill to see her grandma. Her grandparents, Amos and Helen Wightman, were early settlers of Pleasant Hill. Their son, Robert and family, lived about 6 miles from town in a heavily forested area.

By late afternoon, search parties were formed. 25 young men from Pleasant Hill Academy and a number of men from the community, armed with lanterns, began scouring the countryside looking for the lost toddler. Part of the group returned about 2:30 a.m. and the rest arrived back by daylight. By this time, there were about 100 men involved in the search, and as dawn broke, new parties were formed to keep on looking for Zona.

The search became better organized and daylight made the hunt easier. 75 horsemen joined the nearly 150 men on foot. The hilly terrain and dense underbrush, streams and the Caney Fork River added to the fears for Zona's safety. Saturday night had been chilly and Zona had been croupy on Friday night, then too knowing how many wild hogs and snakes roamed the countryside, fear reached a fever pitch.

Zona's mother fell into a short sleep from exhaustion Saturday night but she was awakened by a dream. She saw Zona in a deserted house, and two boys responded to her frantic urging to find the house. They found the house and tiny foot prints, but no child.

A telegram was sent to Rockwood requesting bloodhounds to help in the massive hunt, but was cancelled when shots rang out alerting the searchers that the hunt was over. Zona was found alive and well around 1 p.m. Easter afternoon.

Jay Stanley and John Cook returned to an area that had been searched earlier. It was about 3 miles from the Wightman home and near the bend in the Caney Fork. They were rewarded when they heard a tiny cry, "Mammy, Mammy" and they spotted a pink gown. Little Zona was walking toward the river when they caught up with her and asked if she wanted to go home. The tot reached up her bruised and scratched arms, and Mr. Stanley picked her up as Mr. Cook wrapped his coat around her. She had spent over 24 hours alone where she had never been before. The men marveled at how she was able to pass over this rough ground when they found it hard to traverse. Few doubted she had been watched over by her guardian angel. Her brother Reuben often told this story. He recalled that Zona told him she slept by something warm and furry. The thought popped into my head that maybe it was the Easter Bunny taking time from delivering Easter eggs to save a precious life. Whatever protected Zona from the cold that Easter of 1906 touched everyone with a better understanding of the first Easter. They were able to shout with joy, "she lives" just as those who visited the open tomb rejoiced knowing "He lives!"

Published March 27, 2002 by Dorothy Copus Brush who was a Crossville Chronicle staffwriter.



"Almost daily we are asked, 'Has the war affected your student body?' The answer is, of course, 'Yes.' Quite a number of students have already left this year. Some failed to return in the fall, having enlisted. Almost all families here have at least one member in the service. One freshman girl has five brothers in the Navy. Receiving mail from Iceland, Hawaii and Australia, in addition to every corner of the United States, is a daily occurrence on this campus."

~Victor Obenhaus, PHA Principal, January 1943



Remembering the Elams

Last November Frances Elam Neidhardt wrote Jeanne Kingsbury a lovely letter in response to our fall newsletter. Her father, E. Howard Elam, served as principal of Pleasant Hill Academy from 1924-1930. In 1928 Dr. May Wharton delivered Frances in the principal's home where she joined an older brother and sister, Edgar and Emma Jo. Emma was named for Emma Dodge who resided in a wing of the principal's house and was a family favorite.

In 1924 her father wrote to alumni and friends of the Academy about recent improvements on the campus. A new lighting plant, steam heat, and a new water system were major accomplishments. No more oil lamps or wood stoves! Filtered water to drink plus fire protection! And the old buildings were renovated and painted. It surely was an exciting time. Frances remembers her family talking of the "joyful and endlessly meaningful" years in Pleasant Hill.

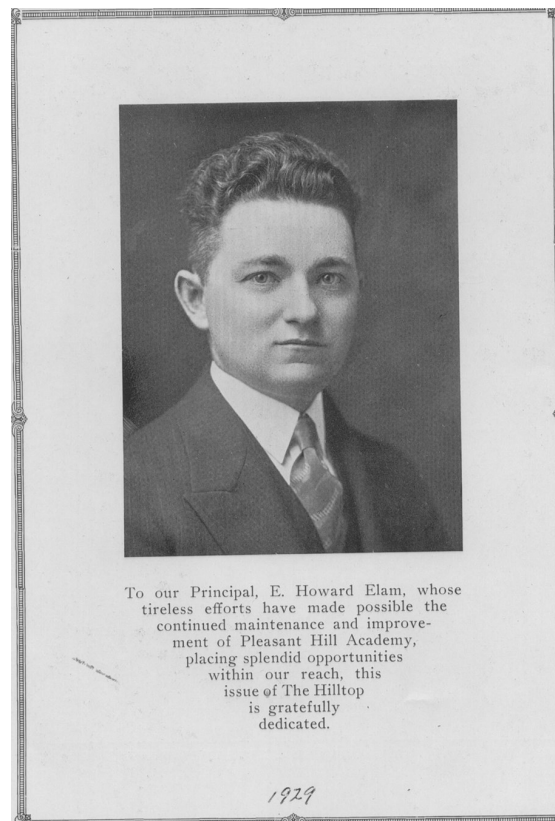
Margaret Campbell notes in Iris Webb Glebe's book, Thy Loving Children Still, that Mr. Elam was a blessing to the school and that Mrs. Gertrude Elam was a gracious hostess, a good friend and a hard worker. Margaret said that Mr. Elam insisted on no smoking, no gun-carrying and no shirking work.

The 1929 Hilltop yearbook was dedicated to Mr. Elam with these words: "To our Principal, E. Howard Elam, whose tireless efforts have made possible the continued maintenance and improvement of Pleasant Hill Academy, placing splendid opportunity within our reach, this issue of the Hilltop is gratefully dedicated."

Frances wrote that her father left PHA for Nashville where he served as state supervisor of adult education. From there he went to Washington, D.C. to help design the GI bill. He served as President of Martin College in Pulaski, TN from 1944-1950.

We're grateful to Frances for sharing her memories and for encouraging us to keep PHA memories alive.

Sharon Weible



Leaving a Legacy

The Pleasant Hill Historical Society is funded by donations from individuals who have an interest in Pleasant Hill, the Pleasant Hill Academy and Uplands Village. You can share your concern for maintaining the history of this area by leaving a bequest for the Pleasant Hill Historical Society in your will or trust. By remembering the Society in your will or trust, you will help to continue the work of preserving the history of Pleasant Hill, Tennessee. If you have questions about how to provide for the museum, please contact the Pleasant Hill Historical Society.

Grit and Courage

The hard luck story of John Nelson Haggard was probably not that unusual on the plateau in the mid 1800s. When his wife died, he left his eight children with family and friends, headed for Kentucky, and never returned. John's oldest daughter, Anna Frances, married George Madison. They had eight children plus two of Anna's youngest siblings. Their oldest child, Virginia, born in 1887, attended Pleasant Hill Academy.

Anna's grandson J.B. Leftwich later wrote that "On Feb. 2, 1905, Virginia reported to her job in the academy kitchen and dropped dead. Sick with grippe (influenza) and stunned by grief, George arose from bed, walked three miles to the railroad station, rode a train to Mayland, and returned with Virginia's body. Anna Frances, with 7-month-old Dallas in her arms, later said she almost fainted when her daughter's body was unloaded from the train, but she restrained her grief and kept her head clear. George never recovered from the exposure to the February weather and from the grief of losing his beloved daughter. Fifteen months later he died, leaving Anna Frances with seven children, age two to 17."

Unlike her father under similar circumstances, she kept her family together, worked her farm, and saw to it that the other children attended the Academy. Her efforts were heroic and "her grit and courage became a legend...to family and friends."

Thanks to Ann Cunningham Meisamer for sharing the 2/6/86 Tennessean column by J.B. Leftwich.

Sharon Weible

Do you have family stories to share? Write us
at PHHS, PO Box 264, Pleasant Hill, TN 38578

Nominating Committee Presents Slate of Officers

Action For President To Continue In Office:

The Board of Directors recommends that Jeanne Chappell-Kingsbury be elected to serve another term as President. This action requires the membership gathered at the Annual Meeting to vote to set aside the term limits of the By-Laws.

Those to be voted into office will have an * beside their name.

*President – Jeanne Chappell-Kingsbury

*Vice-President – Ed Schneider

Secretary – Pat Robbennolt

Treasurer – Rich Nelson

Curator – Sharon Weible

Board of Directors: Class of 2019 - *Al Dwenger, *Jym Mitchell

Class of 2018 - *Beecher Frazier, Jr. - *Ann Schoup

Class of 2017 – Dorothy Faunce, Anne Hurley

Thank you,

Nominating Committee: Dorothy Faunce, Ed Schneider

Margaret Campbell's Diary



Margaret Campbell's Self Portrait

Margaret Campbell came to Pleasant Hill in 1922 to teach art at Pleasant Hill Academy. In 1926 she journeyed across the Atlantic and sketched the people and scenes she enjoyed on board the ship. She was on her way to study art in France. The sketches fill the first few pages of a 1926 diary. The next pages, however, are blank and it isn't until April 13, 1965 that she begins daily diary entries. The disappointment at not reading about her life in 1926 was soon replaced by the pleasure of sharing her days in 1965.

The entries provide a glimpse into a very busy daily life at age 70. She filled days with yard work and gardening, housework, cooking, baking and ironing. She volunteered at the craft shop and at Pleasant Hill Community Church. Her daily rounds took her to the post office, to Flossye Clark's for eggs, to her neighbors for tea. She went to the beauty shop, to Crossville to shop and occasionally to Knoxville for shopping. Many neighbors benefited from her help. Nature's beauty was a constant source of pleasure and its bounty kept her busy canning and freezing. Her circle of friends was quite large and she entertained frequently. She tells of outings

to the Cumberland County Playhouse and to Fall Creek Falls. In fact, she's so busy that it's not surprising that she fell asleep during the sermon one Sunday in September!

Margaret, in addition to her active life in Pleasant Hill, was attuned to events in the world. She attended programs on Communist China, on Japan and on South America. She notes Adlai Stevenson's death, trouble in the Dominican Republic and the results of World Series baseball games.

A major excursion in April was a 12-day bus trip to New York City where she visited with family and friends and got a new eye. She was wearing an eye patch because of a roughened prosthesis. She reports on May 7 that "Mr. Greinir did a good job and eye seemed comfortable."

On August 16 Margaret comments that Earl Clark came by to tell her that the craft school was going to Gatlinburg the next day. She says "he seemed to dread the trip." Two days later Earl had a heart attack and he died on August 19. Here is Margaret's poignant entry on August 21:

"Earl was buried today. Strange to see him white and dead in the casket. But the shop brought tears to my eyes. Impossible to realize he would never be there again. Somehow it was easier to think him absent from his home than from the shop, built by him and his headquarters for 15 years. A large crowd came to the funeral. Earl had remarked many times, 'I don't have a friend in the Village.' The crowd did not bear that out. The church was full & overflowing." Margaret notes that the craft shop closed for good that October.

To read Margaret's diary and see the names of all her friends and acquaintances and her busy schedule, stop by Pioneer Hall Museum and look for a copy of the diary in the Arts and Crafts room.

Sharon Weible

"Age is opportunity no less than youth, though in another dress."

~Benjamin Dodge as quoted in *Emma Dodge's History of Pleasant Hill*

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- Settler \$75.00+
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Name

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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.

Make Checks Payable to:

PHHS

PO Box 264

Pleasant Hill TN 38578

Memorials

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Volunteers Needed

Do any of you have a few hours of free time to share at the museum? We need docents, artisans, handymen or women, exhibit builders, computer people, etc.

Please volunteer by calling us.

Leave a message if a real voice doesn't answer.

Pioneer Hall Museum

Open
May-October
Sundays 2-5 pm
Wednesdays 10-4 pm
Or other times with reservations.
Call (931) 277-5313,
(931) 277-3111 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.

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Sharon Weible

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Ed Schneider-Vice President
Pat Robbennolt-Secretary
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