

A View Of Local Events During The 1800's

The Meredith Murder

Many gravestones in the Mt. Zion Cemetery tell a story. Near the woods is a four foot tall marble monument that marks the grave of David A. Meredith (born Nov. 10, 1866-died Feb. 14, 1897). By his side is the grave of his infant son born 5 months after his father's death. David A. Meredith was 30 years old when he met his untimely death in this manner: Also living in this community was Wm. H. Alford, known as "Wild Bill Alford" and greatly feared by the local residents. The story is told that "Wild Bill" carried his gun with him everywhere he went. On the butt of the gun were carved notches for each man he had killed. Meredith and Alford had an argument. Some say it was about a horse, others remember it being said it was over a tobacco crop. Meredith went to Alford's house and the discussion was held in the yard. As Meredith was leaving, Alford stepped inside his house, reached over the door where his gun was kept and shot Meredith in the back killing him.

Earlier records show a grave in the cemetery for Tennessee Meredith, wife of L.B. Meredith, however that grave could not be located until about 2 years ago when the clearing was done beside the cemetery and the gravestone for Tennessee was uncovered not far from the grave of David. Tennessee and L.B. Meredith may be the parents of David. We do know David A. Meredith was the great-grandfather of our Carolyn Basham.

"Aunt Rhody"

One of the more colorful characters associated with Mt. Zion concerns "Aunt Rhody". Rhoda Edens was born in Carter Co., Tenn. in 1824 and migrated to Warren Co., Ky. in the mid 1840s with other family members. She married Joseph Upton in 1845. They lived in a log cabin at the edge of the bottom on Barren River on land now owned by David Eadens. The homesite can be located by the broken pieces of pottery.

Joe Upton preceded Rhoda in death and was buried at Mt. Zion Cemetery. Rhoda wished to notify relatives at Glenmore of the death. She had no horse, but had a steer named "Star-Bawldy" that she rode about the country. She closed up the cabins so the cats couldn't get in and rode "Star-Bawldy" to Glenmore, a distance of at least eight miles.

The neighbors considered "Aunt Rhody" to be crazy as she rode "Star-Bawldy"

wherever she wished to go and frequently stayed around the church and cemetery sleeping on her husband's grave at night.

On one occasion, Dr. John Taylor was making a medical call late at night and was caught in a bad storm. The road to Greencastle passed right beside Mt. Zion Church building where he took shelter and was standing in the doorway holding the reins of his horse. Hearing a noise behind him, he turned just as a bright flash of lightning showed Aunt Rhody standing directly behind him with a huge butcher knife drawn back.

"Is that you, Dr. John?" she called out, lowering the knife.

We can be sure Dr. John left as soon as weather permitted.

Like many other graves in the cemetery, Joe and Rhoda Upton's graves were once marked by fieldstones, but cannot now be located so the death dates are unknown. Joseph Upton's name last appears on the census of 1860, Rhoda's in 1870.

Aunt Rhody is the great-great-great aunt of David Eadens. The spelling of the name "Edens" to "Eadens" was changed over 100 years ago.

Taylor's Ghost

On property now owned by Paul and Joyce DeVore, just at the top of the hill after leaving Mt. Zion Church, is the site where a house once stood. It is at this area where Rube McClung, negro and ex-slave, lived soon after the Civil War. Sam Taylor had married McClung's daughter, but she had left him and returned to her father's home. She claimed her husband had mistreated her.

Knowing Taylor would pass that way on his way home from working at Greencastle, McClung hid in the bushes at the first turn of the road just below the cemetery. McClung, using a straight razor, slit Taylor's throat and he fell backwards over the bluff. McClung went to Bowling Green that night, caught a train and was never heard from again.

Another version of the story differs in some details: McClung and Taylor were brothers-in-law. McClung believed Taylor was seeing McClung's wife and was jealous, waylaid Taylor and shot him.

Dick McClung was born in 1832 and died in 1899. He was known to have been a slave and is buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery along side his wife, Francis, but it is not presently known how he was connected to Rube.

In years past, the story was often repeated and many people walked across the McGinnis field to avoid passing the place where Taylor was murdered because some claimed to have seen his ghost there.

The First Communion Set

The tallest gravestone in Mt. Zion cemetery commemorates the life and death of Alfred Taylor, his wife Caroline Matilda Davenport Taylor and their son Elihue Green Taylor. There was once an iron fence surrounding these graves, also atop

the granite monument was a large granite ball.

Alfred and Caroline were married Feb. 24, 1843, were charter members of Mt. Zion and were considered to be one of the more affluent families. Their names are on the early membership rolls and Alfred served Mt. Zion as an elder.

It must have been 100 years or more ago they donated a communion set to Mt. Zion Church. It consisted of 2 plates, 2 goblets and a pitcher. These items were solid silver and very heavy. They were elaborately engraved with grapes, grape leaves and vines. The bottom of the plates were engraved with the date and that they were presented to Mt. Zion Church by Alfred and Caroline Taylor.

The silver plates held the unleavened bread and the grape juice was ceremoniously poured from the pitcher into the two goblets and then passed to the congregation. During the 1930s, people became more aware of hygiene and communion trays with individual glasses were purchased.

The silver items were stored in a locked wooden box which was firmly nailed to a seat, however the lock was broken and the goblets were stolen.

Paul Taylor, a descendant of the Taylor's living in California, wished to buy the silver pitcher. The records show it was sent to him August 1949. He paid \$25.00 for it. He later asked for the plates and they were sent to him August 1953. He paid \$10.00 for the plates.

Left Behind

The "Lum" Eadens family attended Mt. Zion with their family of 8 sons and 2 daughters. They frequently kept preachers in their home overnight. The preachers came from Bowling Green once a month by buggy or horseback and night services would be held Saturday night. After Sunday morning service, a bountiful Sunday dinner was served and the preacher would depart on his return trip to Bowling Green. There is not a complete list of preachers in the old record book, but one well liked was Bro. Little who was doing the preaching in 1902 and was a frequent visitor in the Eadens home. This was the year Silas was born and he was named Silas Little Eadens.

The Eadens' usually went to church in a wagon pulled by horses or mules. Smaller families used buggies or horseback. One night when John was a small boy, he fell asleep in the back of the church while services were in progress and later the wagon was loaded and the family left without missing him. There were shovels and picks stored in the back of the building used for grave digging, also ropes for lowering the casket into the grave. When John awoke and found he was alone in the dark, he started stumbling over the tools and became entangled in the ropes, adding to his terror.

John was a good story teller and when he described the details of his terrifying experience, the listener could almost feel the fright he felt that night. He always said he never stopped running until he reached home although it was in the dark and over a mile away.

Around the start of the 20th Century, a musical instrument was purchased for the church house. The pioneer preachers of the day taught against using music in the worship service. This was a period of unrest and disagreement among members. Stories are told of men bringing their guns to church service. A popular rumor claimed that the organ was pushed in to the river. However older members say that a court order was secured to remove the musical instrument. Those wishing to use musical instruments in the worship service left the Mt. Zion congregation. On Nov. 10, 1917, an entry in the Mt. Zion record book said, "Be it known that since the division of our organization has occurred, we are willing in a Christ-like spirit to do all in our power to establish unity again by sacrifice or any means consistent with the teaching of our Lord."

During the early 1900s, daily life continued to be of a simpler style and the river still played an important part. The river boats carried passengers on excursions. "The Chaperone" made regular trips on Sunday afternoon from Greencastle to Woodbury. It was a popular entertainment for "courting couples" from Mt. Zion and the surrounding area. The round trip cost seventy five cents. Newlyweds could take a honeymoon trip to Evansville for a cost of \$20.00. That price included the trip, a stateroom and meals. It also included a side trip up the Green River to visit Mammoth Cave which was advertised as one of the Wonders of the World. Author Helen B. Crocker tells about river travel in her book "Green River Country."

The church continued to be a strong influence into the 1920s. A revival meeting was held in 1922 by R.B. Thompson. Twenty eight people were baptized. What a glorious sight that must have been! Also during the 1920s, repair work was done to the building. The women's committee took subscriptions (donations) to pay for the interior repairs. They purchased 67 yards of carpet from Sears Roebuck & Co. for \$56.95. A Bible cost \$9.25. When their project was complete, they had \$5.68 left. That money was given to the men's committee which had not yet completed its work on the building.

Mrs. Eadens tells that church membership and attendance declined during the depression years. The reconstruction of the locks and dam at Greencastle, one of President Roosevelt's work programs, benefited the community and many local people sought employment there. The men were sometimes required to work Sundays. Attendance at Mt. Zion reached an all time low. On a few occasions no male members were present and the worship services were conducted by a few faithful women.

Gradually, as the highway system was established, river traffic faded away. By the early 1930s, the steamboat was less frequent on Barren River. Still, sometimes, on a Sunday morning, a boat would be passing and if it was going up river, the whistle would blow just below the church and again as it approached the locks and dam. The whistle was so long and so loud that the preacher would have to pause while it sounded.

Mrs. Eadens remembers one Saturday night during a Gospel Meeting when a Showboat docked at Greencastle. All during the worship service, they could hear music playing from the boat. After the service dismissed, her father took the family to see the show. The black actors told jokes and played musical instruments. Since professional entertainment was rare in those days, she was delighted with the show.

Mrs. Eadens also remembers the final trip of the steamboat "The Evansville". She was helping her mother pick beans on the afternoon of July 25, 1931 at their Benleo home when they heard the boat whistle blow as it neared Sally's Rock. The music that day was the tune "Ole Black Joe". The captain was William Williams. One of the boatmen, Eugene Lunn, was said to be able to manipulate the whistle to make music. He would play "Dixie" or "Old Folks at Home" to serenade his mother who lived at Morgantown and to let her know he was on the boat. The Evansville reached Bowling Green that fateful day but burned shortly after landing.

Gene Duckett remembered seeing the showboats on the river. Betty DeVore Duckett, who grew up on Young's Ferry Road, never saw the big boats, but was able to hear the whistle. Her grandfather would say rain must be coming if the whistle sound carried loudly across the fields.

Sybil Duckett Klovski remembers walking to church with her sisters. Her parents Tom and Lottie didn't go often because it was too far for them to walk. During Brother Taylor's Gospel Meeting in 1933, Sybil, her sister Ethel, and 5 others were baptized. During 1937, twelve were baptized including Sybil's sisters Gladys and Lillie Mae and her brother Lester.

The Mt. Zion Church record book tells that the congregation received a letter from Potter Orphan Home stating the condition of the home and asking for a donation. It was decided that the collection on Nov. 21, 1937 would be set apart for a donation from this congregation.

In January 1940, Marion Eadens took over the duties of church treasurer. The amount brought forward in the treasury was one penny.

Church records show that James Davis was preaching for Mt. Zion in 1948. He was a student at David Lipscomb College in Nashville, TN. he and his wife Virginia drove from Nashville each Sunday to worship with the Mt. Zion congregation. Bro. Davis was paid \$25.00 a week. The elders were E.E. Moates, C.R. Miller and A.K. Whalin. J.C. Whalin was the clerk. The records of Marion Eadens, Church Treasurer, show that the largest contribution for the year was \$101.54 and the smallest was \$20.68. The Rural Electric Cooperative had just installed electric lines and Mt. Zion's bill was \$1.35 for one month. Coal was still being used to heat the building and Bob Duckett was paid fifty cents weekly to arrive at the church building early and build fires in the two coal stoves. Gene Duckett had a turn at that job too. James Duckett says he was paid a quarter to light the fire and his Mama made him put it back in the collection basket each Sunday.

Also in the year 1948, Arther Sandidge, grandfather of Charles Sandidge, left the Mt. Zion Church \$100.00 in his will.