

Union County Rich Source Of Family Tree Material

By WILLIAM C. LAKE
UNION, S. C., Aug. 18 — Summer and Spring are the best seasons here for ancestor hunters.

They come to Union Court House from many of the Southern States, but most of them hail from Alabama and Mississippi, and the greatest number are from the first.

The women outnumber the men, and the two groups are divided 50-50 in their purpose for doing research among the old records here. That is to say, about half have made a hobby of the work and the other half are professional genealogists.

Those engaged in the checking for commercial purpose usually have half-a-dozen family names that they wish to straighten out for their clients.

Many of those visitors who have found a delight and pleasure in looking up their ancestors for their own families usually come during their vacation period in the summer. Others, usually elderly men and women, have grandchildren who wish to join the Daughters of the American Revolution and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

As a whole the ancestor worshippers, as they are sometimes referred to, are persons a little beyond middle age. Some have accumulated a goodly store of earthly goods and are traveling about over the native heaths of their ancestors.

They hope to find "a gold nugget" among the hills, transfers of real estate, or on some moss covered tombstone in a country churchyard.

There is hardly a day in the year that an inquiry by mail is not received by one of the county officials. Maybe from a young girl in Texas who wants to enlist under the DAR banner, or affiliate with the UDC. The youth are not alone in their inquiries. Frequently a letter comes from a retired gentleman, say in Louisiana. He is looking for the maiden name of his grandmother on his father's side.

These letters seeking information about people that lived here in 1785, come from practically every state in the union. The west coast of this country sends its share.

Union County has a rich mine of material from which may be obtained useful data for those who like history.

There is a complete record of the minutes of the courts of Union from the first little county court, held Sunday, June 26, 1785, to the present date.

Many applications are on file for soldiers of the American Revolution seeking a pension. These affidavits tell the dates and names of battles in which the applicants participated.

Here, too, are old letters in pen and ink from the War Department,

before the days of the typewriter. And the inventor of the first practical typewriter was born within sight of the court house.

Applications of insolvent debtors; naturalization papers; Confederate War Pension rolls; muster rolls for state troops; reports of free schools, before the days of the present public school system; ancient grand jury reports; reports from the commissioners of the poor; old letters; trials of famous duelers; murder cases and lawsuits of all kinds.

A few years ago a letter turned up here from a Union merchant to his partner in Charleston. It told about the Union merchant's plan to visit Vice President Aaron Burr, who was then living near Philadelphia.

Some of the cases in court were very amusing as well as tragic, according to the evidence. Back in the early days stealing a horse meant losing your head. Those found guilty of mutilating cattle didn't get off with a smile.

Sometimes the defendants used "linen" as money to pay their fines.

A grand jury presentment once cited a judge for being "drunk" the entire court session.

One man, so he said on the stand, didn't have money to support a child born out of wedlock. But he didn't get off with this excuse. He was removed from jail on a sales day and his services as a joiner were sold at public outcry for a certain period.

The judge ordered the money paid to him as wages to be turned over for the care of the child.

A great many of those checking family trees sometime find information helpful to them in the general index in the clerk of court's office.

The first census of the United States made in 1790 at the Carnegie Library here has been of much help. It tells the head of the families living in Union County in 1790.

What is now Union County was once a part of Old Ninety-Six District. The first white settlers began to move into Union District around 1750.

Those who come to Union to do research work in connection with

family history visit here the year round.

But, summer and spring has the greatest influx. They express their gratitude to those who assist them in pointing out the sources. And leave Union with a good taste in their mouths for South Carolina hospitality.

The Charlotte Observer
Friday, Aug. 19, 1955

The Old Country Store

Story and Pictures by Bob Martin
State: June 1, 1958

REMINDEES of the past are evident at the old country store at Cross Keys community in Union County. In conversation with the operators, Wade Wilburn and his son, Wade, Jr., or in looking over a few of the old timey things the folks used to wear, one is reminded of the old days when it was the center of community activity. Here the farmers caught up on all the news of the neighbors, swapped yarns around the pot-bellied stove and made their purchases of a few items they couldn't grow or make on the farm.

Since 1876 the building and the business have stood the elements, the wars, the "booms" and the depressions. Mr. Wilburn, now 81 years of age, was

born the year the store was opened. As soon as he was big enough to help his father, the original owner, he's been there with the store. Now his son, Wade, Jr., is helping him carry on with the same traditions of the past plus some modern ideas. They still have their records of invoices dating back to 1876.

In stock are such items as dress shields, stiff collars for men and ladies, dress staves and skirt protectors, harness and even shoe pegs. Not long ago one fellow came into the place and jokingly asked for a quarter's worth of shoe pegs. The order was forthcoming. An old die case tells the story of cloth being colored at home. But now the shelves and counters are

arranged more like the supermarkets. However, there is still that feeling of the store of the old days when you get inside.

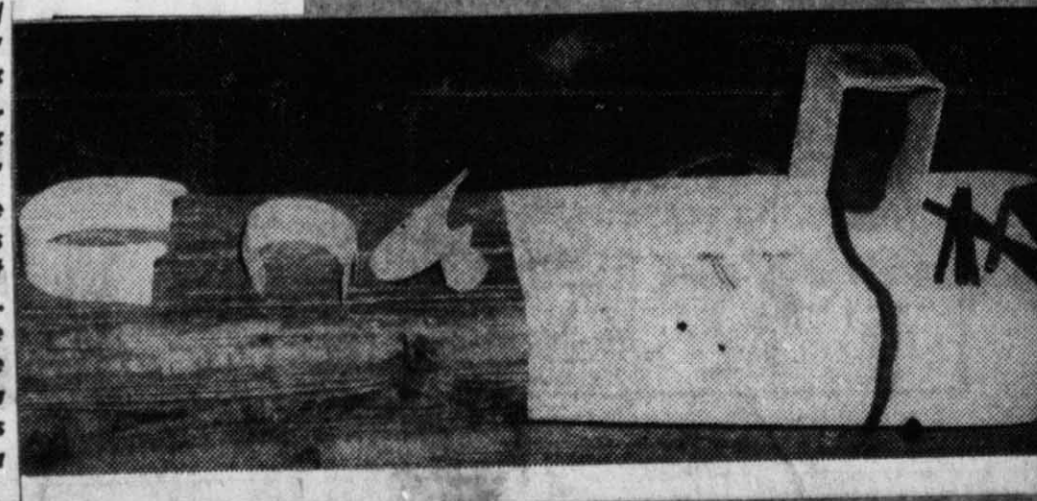
The second floor of the building was used years ago as a lodge hall. The officers stations are still intact. Tales about the initiations still made good conservation.

Wade, Sr., is still active in operating the old establishment. Wade, Jr., is active in many organizations of the community and county. He is a district director of the Elks and secretary of the County Farm Bureau as well as other civic affairs of this rural community that is changing to a part-time farming basis. Much of the land is idle around Cross Keys now. Some is in the Soil Bank, but most of it is not tended because the people work in local industries. However, agriculture is still a big source of income with the change from row crops to pastures, cattle and trees.



Above: The old telephone that's hung on the wall for so many years is now used for communication back and forth from the home to the store. Here, Wade, Jr., left, demonstrates a conversation from yesteryear while his father shows how they used to "listen in" on the party line.

Right: Reminders of the past are these articles of wearing apparel still on hand at the "old country store." Left to right are: a special kind of stiff collar for men; a real high stiff collar for formal dress for men; a ladies' stiff collar, size 12 and one-half; a ladies' dress shield for wearing under the arms; several types of ladies' and men's cuff links; a roll of braid called "skirt protectors" and metal dress staves. The skirt protectors had a brand name of "Amazon" and was priced at five cents a yard. The ladies' collar was a "Josephine" make, the men's collars "Hallmark," and the dress stay was a "Fashion" brand.





This is the 81 year old country store at Cross Keys in Union County operated by the Wilburns—Wade Sr. and Wade, Jr. The second floor used to be the Lodge Hall with the stairs on the side leading to the old meeting place.
State: June 1, 1958

GUERARD WAS GOVERNOR

Union Marks 173rd Birthday; Early Days as County Traced

By WILLIAM C. LAKE
Special to The State

UNION — Union County's birthday fell on June 26. It will be 173 years old.

June of 1785 was a busy ploughing time for the farmers in this District and they didn't feel like they could leave their fields during the week days to set up their county government.

So on Sunday, June 26, they met by appointment and "according to law" at the house of Alexander McDougal, held the first county court and set up the county government.

The seven Justices of the Quorum, Zachary Bullock, John Henderson, William Kennedy, Charles Sims, James Harrison, Thomas Brandon and John Birdsong, comprised the "Worshipful Court of Union."

They "proceeded to business," said the Minutes as recorded by John Haile, Clerk of Court.

This event took place while Benjamin Guerard was governor of South Carolina, and George Washington was yet to be elected President of the United States.

Only four years before Cornwallis had surrendered to General Washington while the British

Army band played "The World Turned Upside Down."

The Constitutional Convention did not meet at Philadelphia to frame the Constitution of the United States until two years after establishment of the Union County Government.

Union County was formed from a part of Ninety-Six District.

In the early 1750's, the first white settlers began to move into what is now Union County and

settled along the rivers and small streams. Among the first to come in were families from Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The Union Court named Col. William Farr, an officer in the American Revolution, as sheriff. Constables were also appointed along with a group of road overseers. William Kennedy, who also fought in the Revolutionary War, was elected Coroner.

To prevent overcharging the court established price ceilings. These covered meals and drinks at taverns, also lodgings and stabling of horses.

James Yancey was the first attorney admitted to practice before the Union Court. Among the first cases heard were defendants charged with bastardy, debt, slander, swearing and using profanity,

horse stealing and theft of hogs.

Major John Birdsong was commissioned to build the first court house, "a log house with a rough cabin 24 by 17 feet, a rough plank floor with doors, windows, etc" at a cost of 253 pounds, six shillings, and 11 pence to the taxpayers.

Two Revolutionary War officers, Col. Thomas Brandon and Capt. Thomas Blassinghame, were appointed by the court to run the dividing line between Union and Spartanburg Counties.

The founding fathers called their county Union and the county seat Union, after a church by that name.

John McCool was awarded contract by the court to build the stocks and pillory. The contract price was seven pounds. The states, were still without a monetary system and were using the English medium of exchange.

The pillory was also used as the public "whipping post." As late as 1789, offenders were given lashes on the "bare back" at the whipping post.

Now and then, when law breakers were not able to pay the fines imposed on the court the court ordered that they be given a certain amount of "lashes on their bare back" or "stand in the

pillory" a certain length of time.

Benjamin Thompson was authorized to build the county's first goal (jail). He said that he would take the job for 99 pounds.

The state law required that each county seat have a plot of two acres upon which to erect public buildings for the county. Col. Thomas Brandon gave the county two acres to use for their jail and courthouse.

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NONE YET

Woman Just Missed Being Hanged in Union County

By WILLIAM C. LAKE
Special to The State
UNION, Feb. 28 — A woman

has never been hanged in Union County—but one came very near to it in 1836, according to records in the clerk of court's office.

Elizabeth Green was tried and convicted in the fall 1836 term of court at Union before Judge John Belton O'Neal of Newberry for the murder of her husband, Henry Green, and was sentenced to be hanged.

This old entry in a volume of a register of mesne conveyance was discovered by accident by Mrs. Mary Electa Estes Farr, deputy clerk of court.

Mrs. Green was indicted, the record says, "as accessory before the fact to the murder of Henry Green, her husband. Found guilty by the jury and sentenced by the court to be hanged."

On the 9th of January 1837, almost a year after she was sentenced to be hung "until her body was dead and the Lord have mercy on her soul," she was pardoned by Governor Pierce N. Butler. "For diary good causes and considerations."

MARCH 1, 1958

The State: