

The Way We Were in 1896

There seems to have been little happening during January in 1896; the month ended with the marriage of Jack Dowdle and Cicely Littlejohn by Bullock's Creek Justice Blair, on the 29th. In February Tony Flenniken of Hickory Grove died at the age of 85. He was born in Abbeville County on Long Cane Creek as a slave of the Pressley family. As a youth he was baptized into the Associate Presbyterian Church and after the Civil War he moved to York County and united with the Smyrna church. Upon his death, Mrs. Jane Torbit of Winnsboro, a former mistress said of Tony: "He was always hones. I never knew him to be called to account for anything that was entrusted to his care.

Lumber to complete the Lockhart Mill had been shipped down the Broad River all of the previous summer thanks to W. S. Wilkerson of Hickory Grove who was credited for making the river passable. In February the Fowler Brothers shipped 19 bales of cotton to the mill, which was the first load to be sent down the river. Wilkerson and several others had formed a company to clear a channel in the river with plans to operate a packet line on the river and had signed a contract with Lockhart Mill to transfer its goods from the mill to the rail station in Hickory Grove. Wilkerson went to Cincinnati to study the small boats used there on the Sandy River. In April he and a partner, Lumpkin, went to Wilmington, North Carolina to purchase a boat and returned in May reporting they had purchased a boat. However more clearing in the river had to be done and Wilkerson immediately set a task force in motion immediately. Progress must not have gone forward since Wilkerson reorganized his crew.

Members of the Wilkerson family continued to make the news during 1896. In March, Mrs. W. S. Wilkerson gave birth to a "fine bouncing baby boy." Willie Wilkerson was labeled as the "Champion Crow Killer" performing the almost impossible of shooting a crow in flight. Mason Wilkerson sustained a gunshot wound in September while hunting rabbits with his brother John. John accidentally discharged his gun grazing Mason's head, removing part of the scalp. The Wilkersons were not the only ones who suffered from an accident. On their way to church in Hickory Grove, the family of W. M. Whitesides was thrown from a run-away buggy when a hog in the road frightened the horse. Mr. Whitesides was knocked senseless, his wife and one child suffered a broken arm and two others were badly bruised, but the baby escaped injury.

Confederate veteran Henderson “Hence” Broome became seriously ill with cancer in February. He had been the color bearer for the 17th South Carolina Regiment. He died at his son’s home in Hickory Grove on July 1. General Lewis Merrill who had gain infamy during Reconstruction in South Carolina died in February in a Presbyterian hospital in Philadelphia. He was Post Commandant during the Ku Klux era, holding the rank of Major while in York. Governor Scott paid him a \$200 reward for each capture and conviction of suspected Klansmen. It is said he collected \$20,000 (equivalent to \$200,000 today) of state money. Another Confederate veteran, Rev. Joseph Wilson, was serving as pastor of Beersheba Presbyterian Church.

In March the Sharon Associate Presbyterian Church placed a call to Rev. J. S. Grier of Georgia. In April the young bachelor preached to the Sharon congregation, but would not say whether he would accept the call or not. Eventually he decided to accept and was installed on July 24. While work is being done on the manse Mr. Grier boarded with J. H. B. Jenkins. Soon after Grier’s arrival Dr. Joseph Saye sold his residence to the A.R.P. Church with plans to build a much larger home on the adjoining lot. In December Rev. Grier presented his new bride to the congregation, the former Julia Cain of Georgia.