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Here 1-1949

In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

LONG REMEMBERED EVENTS

In the early 1860's there were two stage coach lines operating through Shelby, carrying mail and passengers. One was from Spartanburg to Morganton, and the other was from Rutherfordton to Lincolnton and Salisbury.

Martin Roberts and his wife, Drusilla, and Mr. and Mrs. Ansel Hardin operated an Inn—or Hostelry—on the corner of Warren and South Washington streets where Loy's Men's Shop now stands. Back of this on the site now occupied by the Royster buildings were the

blacksmith forge and the stables where the horses were kept.

Each of the above mentioned stage coach lines changed horses and waited for their passengers to eat at this Inn.

STAGECOACH ROBBERY

It was the custom of the driver of the stage from Rutherfordton to blow his horn when he reached a certain point between Broad River and Shelby. He gave as many toots on the horn as there were passengers for dinner. This gave the Negro servants time to get ready fresh horses to be hitched to the stage-

coach, and enabled the cooks to have dinner ready for the passengers.

DRIVER MURDERED, MAIL STOLEN

One day, along in the 1860's, the people at the Inn waited in vain for the sound of the horn, and the arrival of the stagecoach.

Several hours later a searching party set out to find what the trouble was. They found the stagecoach on the side of the road. The driver was inside with a bullet through his head. The mail sacks were gone.

LIFE

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Evidently robbers had held up the coach, killed the driver, and stole the mail sacks containing valuables and money.

THE MOTZ MURDER TRIAL

The most sensational murder trial ever held in Cleveland County was that of "The Motz Boys" for the murder of their cousin, Sam Motz, whom they never intended to kill. This trial was held during the Fall term of court, 1891.

The principals in the case were all Lincolnton people—of the most prominent families. There was so much feeling in Lincoln County that it was felt advisable to transfer the case to Cleveland County court.

Robert Michael, a prominent young playboy of Lincolnton, made love to Maggie Motz. The result was a story we are all too familiar with: a baby whose mama had no wedding ring.

Maggie Motz told her four brothers that Robert Michael had betrayed her under promise of marriage. The four young men—of whom John Motz was the eldest—were wrathful over this betrayal of their sister. They determined to kill Michael.

Sam Motz, a cousin, was quite intimate with Robert Michael, and the two rode around together a great deal. From the evidence presented at the trial it appears that the four Motz brothers agreed with their cousin, Sam Motz, that he would drive with Robert Michael to a certain secluded spot and that there the four brothers could deal with Michael as they saw fit.

SHOT THE WRONG MAN

It was late in the afternoon when Sam and Robert reached the side road where the four brothers were awaiting them. Each of "The Motz Boys" fired. Three shots went wild, but one bullet struck and killed their cousin, Sam Motz, instead of the hated Michael.

Later these four young men were placed in Shelby jail—which was then located on the corner of West Warren and South DeKalb streets.

When the case went to trial certain Cleveland citizens wanted the jury to understand that the sympathy of the majority was with the Motz boys. Regardless of ethics (when their honest convictions told them the Motz boys were justified in their attempt to kill Michael), these individuals had no hesitancy in pursuing a course which they felt would convey to the jury their attitude. So, all during the trial—which lasted for more than a week—groups would enter the courtroom, then leave; would come back into the courtroom, then leave.

VERDICT "NOT GUILTY"

The jury reached a verdict of "not guilty." They arrived at this conclusion because they did not know which one of the four brothers, John, Will, Harry, or Caleb, fired the bullet that killed Sam Motz.

Later in the afternoon when the "not guilty" verdict was given there was such a jubilation and celebration as Shelby had never before seen. Bon fires were built at various points around the square and kept burning till late at night. Lacking a cannon, they filled an anvil with gun powder and fired that time after time. Of course many Lincoln county people participated in the celebration.

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