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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 Mens' 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.

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. This to give the Negroes time to get ready fresh horses, to be hitched to the stagecoach, and to enable the cooks to have dinner ready for the passengers.

One day, along in the 1860's

the horn did not blow, and the stage did not come. After several hours a searching party found the stage coach by the side of the road. The driver was inside with a bullet thru his head. The mail sacks were gone. Evidently robbers held up the coach, killed the driver, and stole the mail sacks containing valuables and money.

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 Micheal, 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.

Magie Motz told her four brothers that Robert Micheal had

seduced 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 Micheal.

Sam Motz, a cousin, was quite intimate with Robert Micheal, 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 Micheal to a certain secluded spot and that there the four brothers could deal with Micheal as they saw fit.

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 Micheal.

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

When the case went to trial (Continued on Page 8, Col. 4)

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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 Micheal), 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.

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, Henry, or Caleb, fired the bullet that killed Sam Motz.

Late 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

fore the Eagles. Lattimore and Boiling Springs split their bill, with the Lattimore quint and the Boiling Springs sextet victorious. Grover's boys fell before the All-Stars 38-20, but the girls conquered the Tyner 18.

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and fired that time after time. Of course many Lincoln county people participated in this celebration.

War With Spain

In February, 1898, the American battleship Maine, while resting in Havana harbor on a friendly visit to Cuba, was blown up with 266 officers and men aboard.

On April 19, 1898 the U. S. A. declared war against Spain. One purpose being to aid the Island of Cuba which had been at war with Spain for three years.

President McKinley called for volunteers. Shelby's Military Company, the Cleveland Guards, volunteered as a unit. They left here for Raleigh on the 2nd of May, with Junius T. Gardner as captain, John K. Wells as 1st Lieut., and J. Frank Roberts as 2nd Lieut. Dr. Ben F. Dixon was Major of the regiment.

The troops were sent to Florida for training. There was a great deal of typhoid fever among the soldiers, and Robert Justice, of the Cleveland County men died.

His body was put in a metallic casket and sent home with military escort. The sergeant in charge did not understand that the family was to be allowed to open the casket when it reached the Justice home near Ross Grove church. And forbade the family to open it.

Mr. David Justice, aged grandfather of Robert, got an axe and said he was going to open the casket and have a look at his grandson. He was dissuaded with difficulty.

Later when Captain Gardner came home on furlough he said the sergeant who accompanied the body home did not understand, because special care had been taken to make the dead boy look as nice as possible that his family might have the consolation of a satisfactory last look.