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In Cleveland County's Early Days

BY MAMIE JONES

"WE ARE DEBTORS BOTH TO THE WISE . . . AND TO THE UNWISE."

Recently a newcomer to Cleveland County remarked that he found good influences to predominate in this community. He added that these were due — not to the present generation, but to our forebears.

Through sacrifice, hardship, and foresighted planning they have left us a marvelous heritage: an example of the highest type of patriotism; good schools, good churches; a stable City and County government; a beautifully laid off town; and a countryside dotted with prosperous villages.

Deer were playing on what are now the streets of Shelby when in 1841 the committee appointed by the Legislature decided to locate the town where it is; to lay off our present public square; build a courthouse thereon; lay off streets one-fourth of a mile in length; and name those streets for heroes of the Revolutionary War.

Philadelphia Plat

When I was a little girl I was told that Shelby was laid off after a plat of the city of Philadelphia; and (I have read) Philadelphia is laid off "a city four-square," like the New Jerusalem.

In a story written by Mrs. Madge Webb Riley, she says that her great grandfather, James Love who procured the 150 acres of land for Shelby thru a Grant, and who worked with the committee appointed to lay off the town, had just been to Washington and had seen the wide streets there, and wanted wide streets for Shelby.

Mrs. Riley says further that Mr. Love, the planning committee, and the surveyors, namely John R. Logan and Samuel Gidney, were severely criticized for wasting so much good land in wide streets "for useless purposes."

The town is 980 to 1,000 feet above sea level.

Fish Skeleton

Is it possible that this section

was at one time under water? When digging the Seaboard Air Line Railroad cut in 1886 workmen found the skeleton of a huge fish 20 feet long. Maybe there was once a river where the town now stands.

Conditions change with time! A hundred years ago when Cleveland county had its beginnings, France and Italy were sending missionaries over here to the States. True, they worked in the West among the new settlers there, but they probably thought that we, on the Atlantic seaboard, were not much more than ignorant peasants.

After the little town was chartered in 1843 it grew apace. Quite a number of homes had been built within the first two years of the county's life. That Fall (1843) John R. Logan, surveyor, was instructed to determine just what would be prison bounds for those serving sentences in jail.

Six Acres

We find the names of eight families living east of the center of the courthouse, and quite near the Square. Prison bounds begun at Nowel's hotel sign on South Washington street, then along the streets by the residences of A. R. Homsley, C. C. Durham, Joseph Carroll, N. A. Jackson, Dr. Thomas Williams, T. N. Herndon, T. Cooper, Brown's dwelling house, running thru the eastern portion of the public square and out the jail, covering six acres.

The records of the town commissioners show that up to 1846 the sale of the approximately 200 acres of land given the town had brought in \$1,561.00.

James Love lived very near where the Duke Power sub-station now stands, just off South

LaFayette street. He has the highest monument in Zoar cemetery.

For the service Mr. Love rendered the town I think a street should be named in his honor. I think a street should be named for William Forbes, the first to give land to the town of Shelby. William Forbes lived not far from what we used to call the "old Chapel Hendrick place" where Earl Meacham now lives. The Forbes family intermarried with the Wilson family.

John R. Logan was one of the real builders of Shelby and Cleveland County. He was a man of broad vision, varied capacities, and of very high moral calibre. He was a Justice of the Peace and a member of the County Court. He was the County's first Superintendent of Education, serving under Calvin Wiley from 1852 until 1865. He was the author of "Sketches of the Kings Mountain and Broad River Baptist Associations." One of his grandsons is H. A. Logan, present sheriff, and a great-grandson is Will Arey, editor of the Times.

Mrs. John F. Stephens, deceased, grandmother of Mamie Hardin and Kate Crowder, told them many interesting stories of the early days. When she was a little girl a hundred years ago, she lived near Buffalo Creek, and at sun down watched the herd of buffalo as they came to drink from the waters of the creek.

Robinson's Circus

Mrs. Stephens recalled that when J. R. Robinson's Circus came to Shelby for the first time, they came from the East (had probably been showing at Lincoln); that the elephant refused to cross the makeshift bridge over Buffalo, broke away from its keeper and found a place up-stream where it swam across, and several hours later joined the other animals at the circus tent.

The tax records show that J. R. Robinson & Co. circus paid \$30.00 tax in September 1847.

