

“History of Sheltonville Shakerag Community”

This booklet was created and published by the Sheltonville-Shakerag Community Club in 1962 and contains reminiscences of long-time residents.

Sheltonville’s history goes back to the early-1800s as an active settlement with stores, churches, schools, cotton gins, and taverns centered along McGinnis Ferry at its intersections of today’s Rogers Bridge and Bell roads. The area later became known as Shakerag, a name still used to identify this north-east section of the City of Johns Creek, Georgia.

The Johns Creek Historical Society thanks Beverly Thompson (*a long-time resident of Shakerag and descendent of early settler families Taylor, Bells, and Rogers*) for making her original copy available for digitization and inclusion in the Johns Creek Historical Society’s digital archives.

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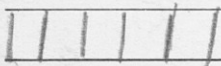
HISTORY of SHELTONVILLE

SHAKERAG
COMMUNITY

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PROCEEDS · GO · TO · SHELTONVILLE · SHAKERAG · COMMUNITY · CLUB



The first bridge across Chattahoochee River on McGinnis Ferry Rd. This bridge was built in 1907 and torn down in 1965.

This school group picture was taken at the Old Sheltonville School about 19 . The school building was located on the Sheltonville, Duluth Road about one quarter of a mile from Sheltonville.

The new bridge across Chattahoochee River on McGinnis Ferry Road. This bridge was opened to the public in June of 1966.

This picture was taken on the porch of the Old Store Building at Sheltonville. They are front row, left to right: Mrs. Ada Bell, Thomas L. Collins, Mrs. Thomas L. Collins and Mrs. Adalia Flowers. Back row left to right: Mrs. Maude Medlock Sam Medlock Mrs. Betty Jinks, Miss Alpha Jinks, Mrs. Dole Young and Mr. Young.

This is the old McGinnis Ferry Road at Sheltonville in the late 1930's. This picture was taken on the east side of Sheltonville looking west.

New Store Building at Sheltonville and the proprietor – Mr. L. B. Wallis.

This picture depicts the good neighbor policy and spirit of helpfulness the people of Sheltonville Community have always shown. These Sheltonville citizens are voluntarily helping a sick neighbor in 1914-15 or 16.

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A REPORT OF THE RECORDS COMMITTEE
ON THE HISTORY OF SHELTONVILLE AND
THE SHELTONVILLE COMMUNITY

Due to lack of previously recorded data, this committee is woefully handicapped in obtaining information concerning its subject. Our information comes almost entirely from word of mouth, legend and lore. We have listened at the oral history, this legend and lore with an attentive ear. We have examined the different stories, have compared the various versions and have striven diligently to sift the fancied from the facts.

We want to state without doubt that some of our facts are distortions and exaggerations. At the same time, we feel with certitude some of our facts are under-emphasized and that lots of Sheltonville history is completely unreported due to its unavailability to us.

Gwinnett County was formed by an act of the Georgia Legislature in the year 1818, possibly before this date, but probably after. A ferry was established on the Chattahoochee River about two miles west of what is now Suwanee. A man by the name of McGinnis, his given name or initials

are unknown, built the ferry boat and operated the ferry. The ferry and the road it served acquired his name, thus the McGinnis Ferry and the McGinnis Ferry Road were born.

The McGinnis Ferry Road originated to the east or south-east of what is now Suwanee, crossing the Chattahoochee at the McGinnis Ferry, continuing in a west-northwest direction to an unknown destination. Evidently this road had considerable length, reaching to some frontier settlement or trading post quite remote from its point of origin.

Shortly before the year 1820 or not long after - as best as can be ascertained - on the McGinnis Ferry Road about two miles west of the Chattahoochee River a settlement sprang up. Among other things in this settlement a store was built, stocked, owned, and operated by one Vardy B. Shelton. The birth of this settlement later proved to be the day of nativity for Sheltonville.

According to information available, and it could have been quite a long time after this-to-be Sheltonville community was formed, a Mrs. Campbell who with her family lived on top of the hill just beyond and slightly northwest of where Tom Bell now resides, went to the edge of

her yard to empty some ashes. In doing this errand she saw a yellow object gleaming on the ground. She picked the object up, but did not know what it was. Before long someone identified it as a nugget of gold of considerable value. When the news of this nugget being found became known, it created lots of excitement. People who knew about gold and mining came and investigated. It was decided that opening a mine there was justified from the indications of surface evidence. Consequently, several shafts of considerable diameter were dug to depths of numerous feet. Gold bearing ore was extracted from these shafts - in what quantities we do not know. However, a stamp mill was set up on the Cauley Creek about one half mile from the shafts and the ore was hauled there and crushed. Evidently it paid or those oldtimers would not have gone to all that trouble.

The gold mining activities shifted from the deep or shaft mining to the surface or placer mining. This type of mining is cheap and easily done, and offers an opportunity to more people to engage in it. There are to this day evidence of extensive placer mining on both Cauley Creek and Cowpen Branch. The lure of gold attracted a

great many people to the Sheltonville community. Some stayed to become permanent citizens, others soon migrated in search of greener pastures.

In connection with mining in this community is the opportune time to relate the story of how the name of "Shakerag" had its origin. As the story goes, two miners whose fortune apparently had not been all that could be desired were in the store at what is now Sheltonville one day, and became engaged in a row that progressed to a personal encounter. These two miner's clothing was in a much used and ragged condition. In the action of their fight their clothes waved and flapped in a grotesque manner. The owner of the store or one of the other respected and substantial citizens of the community separated the belligerents and quelled their row in a rather vigorous manner. As a parting admonition he told them, "Get out of here shaking your rags!" So, the name "Shakerag" came into being.

If our sources of information are correct, Sheltonville attained its greatest size in the days of the gold mining era. It was said in this period Sheltonville was laid off in town lots, it had twelve business establishments and

a blacksmith shop of such size, with a business of such volume that five men were kept busy at the anvil and the forge. However, it is admitted that a good percentage of the business houses were mere shacks wherein whiskey was dispensed at a few cents a sip. This committee does not vouch for the facts relative to a Sheltonville of such magnitude as indicated above. It is merely reciting word-of-mouth history handed down through several generations.

It might be of interest to note that during the period of Sheltonville history just related this area was Forsyth County. Milton County which was bounded on the east and northeast by the McGinnis Ferry Road was not yet formed.

We are, we think, more reliably informed after the gold mining era that Sheltonville was of considerable size. There was a man named E. C. Mitchener who made masonic regalia in quantities that gave employment or part-time employment to some of the Sheltonville ladies. Perhaps somewhat later in Sheltonville history there were two general merchandise stores, a gin, a sawmill, a wood shop, a grist mill and a shop that made and repaired shoes. All these places supposedly in operation at the

same time.

A post office was established October 27, 1848 and continued until May 31, 1907, with the following postmasters and postmistresses: V. B. Shelton, George W. Rogers, John H. Campbell, John M. Green, Thomas Collins, Hiram Mathis, Charleton Collins, Green Collins, Thomas L. Collins, James W. Pierce, W. J. Roach, Lou A. Allen and Ida Burton.

We feel we should not proceed farther in recounting Sheltonville's past without mentioning some of her pioneer families. The following are the families whose names have been brought to our attention. They are - the Sheltons, The McGinnises, the Terrys, the Stricklands, the Collins, the Rogers, the Lowes, the Littles, the Webbs, the Austins, the Andersons, the Bells, and we are sure there are numerous others whose names we have no way of knowing.

Lest we become tedious and tiring, and in fear we will commit injustices by mentioning some and not others, we are going to refrain from trying to name any of the families of the community's past except the pioneer group

already referred to. Suffice it to say, we are sure most of the families from the pioneer to the present who have lived in this community have made contributions to its welfare, and have left footprints of varying sizes and shapes in the shifting sands of Sheltonville history.

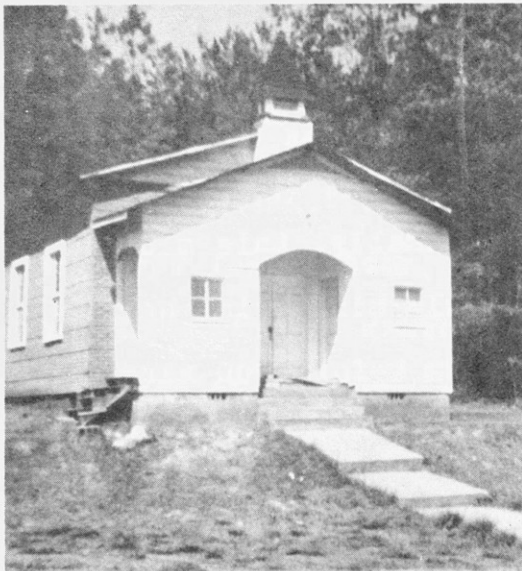
Probably the most spectacular and exciting episode in Sheltonville history occurred in 1864 when a group of Yankee soldiers came through Sheltonville and this community. These soldiers were a band of raiders from General Sherman's army which were fighting the Confederate army around Marietta and Kennesaw. These raiders came down the McGinnis Ferry Road and went as far as the Tommy Little place where Mr. & Mrs. Cliff Garmon now live. When these Yankees came down the road, up at the John Lowe place where Mr. & Mrs. H. E. Bell now reside, six or eight Confederate soldiers were a hundred or a little more yards down the road to Mt. Zion Church at an old gin eating dinner, and letting their horses eat. These Confederate soldiers were members of the Eighth Texas Rangers. When the Yankee raiders saw and recognized them they began to shoot. The Texans jumped up from their meal trying to get their horses so they could get away. Two of them were

hit. One named Street was killed, the other named Zempleman was severely wounded, being shot through the chest. Mr. Street was buried in the Shady Grove Church Cemetery. Years later, Mr. John Lowe of Duluth put a tombstone at this grave. The wounded man, Mr. Zempleman, was taken to the home of Henry and Louisa Rogers at what is now known as the R. N. Medlock place. After weeks of constant care and skilled nursing, Mr. Zempleman recovered from his wound. When he became fully able to travel, he bade his benefactors a grateful and fond farewell, and departed for Texas and home, and presumably forever out of the Roger's lives. But, this was not quite the case.

At the time this Texan lay wounded in the Roger's home, among the other Rogers children was a six or eight year old daughter named Kinney. Years later Mrs. Louisa Rogers died and not too long after her death, Henry Rogers and the members of his family who were still at home moved to the Indian Territory which is now part of the state of Oklahoma. This daughter, Kinney, moved with her father to their new home and soon married. Still years later when she become quite elderly herself, she went down in Texas to a Confederate reunion. She said there were

numerous old veterans at this reunion and that in talking with them, and moving about among them she noticed one old fellow who watched her constantly and listened at her talk with close attention. Finally, this old veteran asked, "Who are you?" She told him giving her married name. He asked, "Who were you before you married?" She told him she was a Rogers from Georgia. He again asked, "Are you the daughter of Henry and Louisa Rogers of Sheltonville, Georgia?" She replied that she was their daughter Kinney. The old man jumped up and hugged and kissed her and wept with joy on her shoulder, and told her he was the wounded man they nursed back to health and that as a little girl she brought him food and water, and helped care for and make him comfortable. He told her he recognized the resemblance of her mother and father in her, and that is what attracted his attention. This is related merely to show how an unhappy and unfortunate incident in Sheltonville history brought about a joyous meeting more than fifty years later, and a thousand miles away.

On the McGinnis Ferry Road about a quarter of a mile east of Sheltonville across the road from the home of



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C. M. Jones there once stood a big corral. This corral was used to hold mules and horses overnight, or for short periods of time. The late W. L. Bell said as a boy in the early 1870's he had seen as many as 150 to 200 mules and horses impounded in this corral at one time. These animals were driven from Kentucky by drovers who were taking them to the southeast toward Augusta where farming was carried on much more extensively to be sold as farm work stock.

About the year 1880 the Sheltonville community had a rather unusual and unique experience in the form of two personages who walked in and made this area their place of habitation for a period of several years. The unique thing about these two people was they were full blooded Cherokee Indians. They were George Axe, the father, and John Axe, the son. These Indians came from the Indian Reservation up in North Carolina. We must remember the Indians had been moved from this country since 1838, and a full blooded Indian here in 1880 was as much a rarity then as one would be here now. It was said George had killed a man and was fleeing either the tribal justice of his people or the civil authorities of North Carolina.

Be that as it may, these Indians lived here quite a few years. They lived in different shacks in the community spending most of their time hunting and fishing. They did weave some baskets and made blowguns and bow and arrows. People of the community gave them most of their living. They would take some of the boys hunting with them. These boys said it was remarkable how they could kill game with their arrows. George and John would go to Sheltonville on Saturday afternoons. Generally, a sizeable crowd would be gathered there and they would want George to show them his skill with the bow and arrow. Most of the time old George could not perform with much proficiency, and as an inducement to try harder some of the boys would split sticks, place coins in the split and set them up as targets, giving George the coin if he hit it. It was said when old George began to shoot at money, the money becoming his when he hit it, his marksmanship improved miraculously and it was astounding how far he could hit a coin. After having lived here for a year or two a kinsman of theirs, Sweeney Axe, visited them. It was thought Sweeney brought George news of his standing with the law or with his tribe at that time. If

this were true, George surely must have still been in disfavor for Sweeney soon left and George and John stayed. The last part of their sojourn in this area was spent up in the Sharon neighborhood. George developed dropsy and was sick for several months, spending the last few weeks of his life having to sit up all the time in an old rocking chair someone had given him. The sands of time soon ran out on him and he went the way of all things living. It was said he died in the morning and that John got some help to dig a grave and buried George about noontime. That afternoon John left. They came here together, they departed here almost together, George for the happy hunting grounds of his fathers, John for his tribe and the solitudes of his native haunts.

It is our understanding that in the year 1872 Milton County was made. This county was made from territory from the counties of Forsyth, Cherokee and Cobb, but mostly from Forsyth and Cherokee. The McGinnis Ferry Road was the boundary of the new county in this area. The part of the Sheltonville community lying on the south and southwest side of the road became a part of Milton County. In the year 1932 Milton County merged or united

with Fulton County. The Milton part of the Sheltonville community then became a part of Fulton County, making the third county of which this area has been a part.

Doctors being public servants whose services are ever in demand and health being a subject which is forever creating problems, we feel that the doctors who have lived and labored in this community should have some attention. Sometimes now it is rather difficult to get a doctor to come to your home. This makes us prone to think how hard it must have been to get medical attention years ago. Thinking like this could be grossly in error for there have been quite a number of doctors that have lived and worked here. We want to give the names that have been given us of these men who strove to heal the ailing and cure the sick and suffering of this community. The following doctors have lived and practiced medicine in Sheltonville and this area. They were: Doctors Maxey, Garmony, Rogers, Ellis, Little, Allen, Bell, Smith, Jones, McElwreath, Pierce and Gilstrap. Four of the named doctors lived in this community while attending medical school and at the time they received their medical degrees. They were: Doctors Little, Bell, Pierce and Gilstrap. All of these men have passed away, but we are pleased to note

they live on in honored memory. We are constrained to believe this community owes them a debt of gratitude for the efforts they made in its behalf.

In the year 1906, a bridge was built across the river about one fourth of a mile above the McGinnis Ferry. This bridge did away with the necessity for a ferry. So, the McGinnis Ferry was abandoned after having rendered continuing and necessary service to the people of this area for surely, eighty or more years.

The post office at Sheltonville was discontinued in 1907. In this year the rural free delivery mail routes were inaugurated and began their service to the people.

It might be well to state here that in 1911 or 1912, a bridge was built across the Chattahoochee at the old Rogers Ferry site, giving its blessings of safety and convenience to the people of the community.

The Sheltonville community is proud of its churches. They are four in number. Three white and one colored. Of the white churches, one is the Assembly of God faith, one is the Missionary Baptist faith, the other is of the Methodist faith. The colored church also subscribes to

the Methodist doctrine. The Assembly of God Church is rather new, having been established only a few years ago. The Shady Grove Baptist Church is 124 year old, having been established in 1838. The original building was used until 1907 when the present church was erected. The Mt. Zion Methodist Church is the oldest of the group being founded in 1828. Mt. Zion Church was first built on the site now occupied by the barn at the Mrs. Louvenia Bell place. It was then moved to its present site and the building now in use is the second one at that location. We do not know when the colored church began its operations, but understand that it is rather old. The present building is the second one, the first being destroyed by fire about the year 1912. These churches, especially the old one, have had pastors far too numerous to name. It is this committee's considered opinion that an overwhelming majority of the preachers who have served these churches have been consecrated men who dedicated their best efforts toward the mark of their high calling. With the exception of the Assembly of God Church which is new and did not need it, all the other churches have recently been renovated. All of them are nice rural churches which are assets to and reflect credit upon the community.

These churches are held in high regard by their members, and the entire population, whether members or not, look on them with joy and justified pride.

So far as this committee is able to determine, the first building built strictly for school purposes was located on the right side of the old road just south of where it crosses the upper end of the Harley Bell lake. This school house probably was built in the 1830's. We do not know how long school was taught at this place. The next school must have been at Mt. Zion Church when it was across the road from the Louvenia Bell home. We are told one school being taught at this place had almost one hundred pupils enrolled. Some of them coming from as far away as the Henry and Issac Strickland homes over on old Peachtree Road. The old Shady Grove Church was used as a school house. Both of the Mt. Zion Church buildings at its present site were used for schools. How long school was taught in these churches, we do not know, perhaps for quite a long time. Sometime before the year 1900, probably in the 1880's and in the early 1890's, there was a school of local renown located on the McGinnis Ferry Road about a quarter of a mile beyond the Joe Taylor home

site. This school was known as Forrest Academy. The school had a large enrollment of pupils and we are informed school was carried on in an able and efficient manner, its teachers being people of considerable academic attainment who were held in high respect and regard by both pupils and patrons. In the year 1901 or 1902, the people of this community built a school house on the Sheltonville-Duluth Road less than a quarter mile from Sheltonville. This school was called the Sheltonville School. In 1924 this school house was worked over and converted into a two-story building. A Junior Order Lodge was organized at this time and a little later the W.O.W. Lodge was also established there. The upstairs part of this building was used as a school room as well as a lodge hall. School was taught at this building continuously from the time it was built until the spring of 1933. At this time old Milton County had become a part of Fulton and a consolidated school had been built at Warsaw. A consolidated school also had been built by Forsyth County at Sharon. When the fall term of school began in 1933, the children of the Forsyth part of the community went by bus to Sharon and those in the Fulton part of the area went to Warsaw.

This change in school procedure brought to an end the era of local school activities and endeavors.

In conclusion, as the recorders of Sheltonville's past, this committee wishes to drop the role of the historian and assume the prerogatives of the prophet. We feel with surety, that position alone, is a factor that will contribute greatly to a bigger, brighter and better Sheltonville.

With two paved roads already here and probably ere long another one, and with Atlanta nearby to our southwest, whose teeming thousands are literally bursting the city at every seam and spilling over in all directions; plus Lake Lanier nearby to our northeast, whose gleaming waters act as a beacon light to attract sportsmen, pleasure seekers, and those interested in profit and engaged in the marts of trade, Sheltonville is sure to move forward. We feel with highest expectations that Sheltonville's star has risen and that at long last she is on the way to meet her destiny - a destiny filled with happy promise.

Submitted by Records Committee, April 20, 1962.

This group is a Singing School. The picture was taken in front of the Shady Grove Baptist Church in the year 1917-18.

First Sheltonville Community Club House.

New Sheltonville Community Club House.

Old Time "corn shucking." The corn husking was at the premises of A. M. Bell.

This is Sheltonville's most senior citizen - Mr. Charlton Green who has celebrated his Ninety-second birthday.

Mr. Thomas "Squire" Collins.

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas L. Collins.

Photographs submitted by 1967 Officers of the Community Club.

For additional copies, call 4

Steve

SUBMITTED BY _____
RECORDS COMMITTEE

