

Coffee Springs Once Had Best Baseball Team in The County

John Ogburn, born and reared in Geneva County, and now 83 years old, remembers when the old telephone switch board for Tilton Telephone Company of Geneva was in the Walton Drug Store in Samson, where People's Drug is today. He was working there, he says, when a new board with 100 drops was installed to take the place of the old one which had 100 drops.

Back in the good ole days, Coffee Springs had the best baseball club in the entire area. People still living in Geneva County today can recall the days when there were two fine livery stables in Coffee Springs, which furnished surreys, buggies and teams to carry the crowds to and from the baseball games.

Those same people remember well the baseball whizzes such as Bryan Murdock who pitched for the Coffee Springs team. And there was A.S. (Short) Murdock, his brother, and another brother Henry (Dugan), who played shortstop.

The Coffee Springs team played everybody in the country — in Geneva they met such foes as James Mulkey, a pitcher and third baseman; Dick Ray, catcher; Ralph Draughon; and brothers Rufus and Jake Purvis. The Geneva stars played against Coffee Springs, and then often played with them when they traveled away from home to meet other teams.

But those days came much later in the history of Coffee Springs. First mention of the town came when General John Coffee camped there, probably about 1811, when he and his soldiers were engaged in Indian fighting in the area.

Then in 1841, Coffee County was formed from what is now Dale, Coffee, and Geneva Counties. Coffee County was also named for General Coffee, who also fought in the War of 1812.

Coffee Springs grew up around the springs so admired by General Coffee that he wrote of it to his family.

By 1890, Coffee Springs citizens had built their first church, which was Methodist. But the church served other purposes too — as a community building, Alliance Hall, and school building.

When the building was used for a school — from 1890 through the next several years — J.D. Hall was the school master. He later became a bishop in the Episcopal Church of New York City. All of the early records about Hall say that he was a man who "conscientiously strove to impart knowledge to those ambitious few who attended school during the three month terms held only in the summer."

According to early history, compiled in 1948 by Mrs. H.N. Murdock, it was Captain W.N. Brannon, a veteran officer of the Civil War, who gave the springs their name.

This man erected a building about a quarter of a mile north of the present town site. This building housed the first Coffee Springs post office. It was then that he named his town -- Coffee Springs -- after General John Coffee, a man he greatly admired.

It wasn't until about 1900 that Coffee Springs began to grow, and then because the Central of Georgia built its railroad through Coffee Springs. With the railroad came the cross tie camps, saw mills, turpentine stills, and other businesses that meant new homes and people settling on the land.

Soon after the railroad came, the citizens of the town secured a charter and incorporated the town. They employed a man named Mickle to survey and lay off the town. One of Coffee Springs streets is named for this man.

Street lights were installed soon after this. They were kerosene lamps on posts which were lighted each evening by the town marshal, who also had the job of putting them out every morning.

In 1910, according to Mrs. Murdock's history, Coffee Springs had a bank with a capital of \$25,000, two large hotels, drug stores, restaurants, a meat market, shoe shop, barber shop, pickling plant, Masonic Hall, swimming pool and several department stores which sold everything from coffins to brass tips for the horns of oxen.

Today, Coffee Springs has lost its industry, and its hotels and its bank, but it has plans for the future which include rebuilding much of the town and bringing in new industry.

Attris Thames is mayor of Coffee Springs, and his councilmen are Charles Thames, Herman Johnson, J.P. Anderson, Elton Martin, and Kenneth Snellgrove.