

# The Historic Huntsville Quarterly

---

Volume 21 | Number 3

Article 3

---

9-22-1995

## Letter to the Editor

William Janey

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly>



Part of the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#), and the [History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Janey, William (1995) "Letter to the Editor," *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly*. Vol. 21: No. 3, Article 3.  
Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/historic-huntsville-quarterly/vol21/iss3/3>

This Letter to the Editor is brought to you for free and open access by LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Historic Huntsville Quarterly by an authorized editor of LOUIS.

June 8, 1995

William Janey  
5 Falls Mill Road  
Belvidere, Tennessee 37306  
1-615-469-7849 (Home)  
1-615-469-7161 (Mill)

Dear Elise H. Stephens,

Thank you for this opportunity to share what I can about Inns and Taverns. I have had this golden opportunity to listen to stories from the older folks who visit the mill, including some who have a keen sense of history.

I do a lot of custom grinding for people in the late fall and early winter. I hope some day I can write or help someone write about the experiences these folks had going to the many mills which no longer exist. I spent last summer on Duck River locating the many mills I have researched just on Duck River alone.

In Franklin County, Tennessee, I have researched at least fifty water mills which have operated at one time or another. Many older mills have been torn down for newer ones to be built on the same site.

I have read microfilm at the Tennessee State Library and Archives. Looking for information about mills sometimes led to other sources of information.

Adrian Gonsolin has helped me a lot. Especially on the topic of the old stage houses. He was the miller at the Boiling Fork Mill since 1937, a very close friend of mine.

Sara Moore, owner of the antebellum home where the owners of Falls Mill live, is about the age of ninety. She located us the Rocky Springs Stage Coach Inn we are restoring. She has a real keen sense of history, too.

Anyhow, in the early part of the last century many settlers, including David Crockett, came to this part of the country after the Cherokee Chief Double Head signed away the land here in the year 1806.

Long hunters, surveyors, and prospectors came into this region previously. Jesse Bean was the first permanent white settler who lived near a cave just over the hill from here. Indians took their toll on some Tacker children near the Bean homestead in 1812. I found their graves at the head of Larkin Creek near here.

David Crockett and his wife Polly got a family started here. Soon after he returned from the Battle of Tohopeaka in the Alabama territory, she took ill and died. Her grave is near the foot of the mountain. He soon married Elizabeth Patton near the Bean Creek community and moved to the head of Rattle Smoke Branch the other side of Old Salem. The place was marked by a well dug near a spring. I found a wrought iron horse shoe, without caulks, that could have belonged to David Crockett at his site.

Many settlers poured into Alabama from this region soon afterwards. Old Salem began to prosper very rapidly. With so many people passing through the area, stage houses began to prosper. I know the location of two right in Old Salem. A third one was there also. People confuse the old Simmons home as being one, but it was the home of an ancestor of Sara Moores'. She can tell an interesting story of her grandmother saving a Confederate officer from being shot by a Yankee patrol at the Simmons home.

A very old but intelligent lady by the name of Vanzant was born at the Rippling Water Plantation Stage Coach house up the creek from here. She said it was a very stately home. During a ball held there, an officer went into the bedroom and shot himself. When Mrs. Vanzant was a little girl and her parents had guests over, she had to sleep in her parents' bedroom. She would fret because of a blood stain under the bed.

The *Franklin County Historical Quarterly* has an interesting article of a Mrs. Cowan who ran the Old Salem Stage Coach Inn for years. It was located in front of the Jernigan Home. Bricks from the place partially filled a ditch. I discovered them putting up a Falls Mill sign there.

Listening to my grandfather, I learned about the many transition stations through the mountains. One such place was run off Petty Point. Andrew Jackson was supposed to have spent many a night there. Mr. Petty was in the Robertson Expedition at the Indian massacres of Nickajack. He is buried today behind this home. The house once belonged to a great-aunt and uncle of mine. I spent the night there on several occasions. A miller by the name of Bell lived there once, also. The Bell's mill site is near by there.

My great-aunt Hattie "Bell" Sanders was named for the Bell family. They had a reputation as being really nice people.

My grandfather knew of a black woman, a slave at the time, who witnessed Rosecran's massive army pass by the house for three days and nights, on the way to Chattanooga and their defeat at Chickamauga. She said they had the appearance of a large, blue worm from the mountain as she saw them approaching from the distance.

Many Confederates in previous times went off the mountain at the head of Sweeden's Cove. There was an Inn where horses were changed. This area was called Jump Off and is so to this day. But, the Inn was burned and later became known as the Burned Stand Inn.

My grandfather went to length talking about robberies, buried gold, etc. about the Burned Stand. I can't remember the details and would not wish to fabricate anything. I hope someday to locate this site. I know others who know.

Along the escarpments of the Cumberland Mountains were stations where one would have a team of hot-blooded horses to bring the stage up the mountain. Places like Petty Point, Breakfield Point, Turn Pike Spring, Coldwater Spring, Burn Stand, etc.

When I was fourteen or fifteen, I was floating the Elk River from Lockmiller Bridge to Mansford Bridge. Tims Ford Dam was proposed. I was with Adrian Gonsolin. We wanted to say good-bye forever to old Elk River. As we floated past Coperas Cave, I noticed some ancient pier timbers sticking through the shoals of the river. Adrian said that was one of many stations along the river where cotton was flat-boated downstream. I supposed flat-boats did tie off and stay at these stations during the night. One of the recent *Franklin County Historical Quarterly's* had some interesting stories about flat-boating on the Elk.

There was even supposed to be some stations on Beans Creek. Beans flowed from some rich agricultural farms and plantations. As I mentioned, Estill Springs, Winchester Springs, Keith Springs at Rowe Gap, etc. became mountain retreats and so called health spas of the antebellum period.

Winchester Springs was very popular. Union soldiers stayed there and sent an escort to invite the Bells of Mary Sharpe to a grand ball there.

Travelers Rest was a popular place in Sewanee. It is there today. Forest, Morgan and Rosecrans; Wheeler and Walker were some Union and Confederate generals who stayed there. Five Confederate generals are buried in the nearby University cemetery.

Beersheba on the escarpment of the mountain north of Sewanee has inns where some Confederate guerrilla generals spent their peaceful moments. One of these places is a Methodist seminary today.

Today there is the Assembly Grounds in Monteagle with the Adam Edgeworth Inn and a number of Victorian vintage homes, and an Episcopal Convalescence Center.

Sewanee also has St. Mary's Retreat. All these places have a good degree of history about them. Winchester had to Montmillers (?) or Saint Claire Inn that was notorious in its day. There was a famous duel there.

I can't remember if I stated earlier that between 1854–1874, there was a newspaper called the *Winchester Home Journal*. I used to read them on microfilm at the State Library and Archives in Nashville. There would be statesmen, etc. that would visit the county and stay at some fabulous inn. The antebellum period in Franklin County was a luxurious time if you were a free, wealthy individual. There were many resorts centering on springs or the mountain atmosphere. There also was the University of the South, Mary Sharpe, Clark Reading, Winchester Normal, etc. So education took center stage too.

As I traveled down High Street with Adrian one day, he was pointing out these fine, old homes called Valentine Square, Raven's Nest, etc. It would be nice for future generations to remember the names these homes had.

Well anyway, pardon my spelling and grammar. I just drank some coffee and give it to you in a nut shell. But, if you have any specific questions, let me know. My job doesn't allow me the time for researching. My nose is to the grind-stone, so it's hard to keep my chin up.

Take care,

*William*

