# The Voice

of The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society and Cobb Memorial Archives
Speaking about the Past to the Present, for a Better Future

The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society Quarterly Meeting Sunday,

April 17, 2016 3:00 p.m. EDT

The Ianier Room, H. Grady Bradshaw Iibrary,

Valley, Alabama



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# Images from the Past: The West Point Manufacturing Company, it's Communities and their People

**Presenter: Wayne Clark** 

This year, 2016, marks the 150th anniversary of the start of production at the first two textile mills in the Valley, at Langdale and in River View. This milestone marked the beginning of our area's textile legacy. The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society is celebrating this anniversary with a series of programs on this subject.

On Sunday afternoon, January 17th, Eddie Lanier presented the first quarterly program of the year. It was entitled "Five Textile Villages - The Development of the Textile Industry in the Chattahoochee Valley." At 3 p.m. EDT on Sunday afternoon, April17th, news editor Wayne Clark of The Valley Times-News will talk about the Valley's textile workers, mill village life in the heyday of the West Point Manufacturing Company and its successors. "It's our heritage and a topic that needs to be researched and studied before it's forgotten," Wayne says. "Even when one scratches the surface on this, one comes across stories of some truly amazing people and the times they lived in."In a PowerPoint presentation, Wayne will discuss people who gave their lives to the Company, some who worked for more than 60 years in a local mill. There were lots of good times, and some not so good, in the area's five textile villages of Langdale, River View, Lanett, Shawmut and Fairfax. There's one documented incident of labor

trouble in 1902, but many, many Saturday afternoons of enjoying a baseball game and

Sunday afternoons of taking in a concert by the local mill band at the village gazebo.

There was a time when the local mill villages were widely seen as showplace communities and highly desirable places to live, especially to those in the rural areas of east-central Alabama. The appeal of being within easy walking distance to a goodpaying job, a home that was provided for you, neighborhoods with good people, churches, schools and stores attracted families from throughout the region.

Wayne is a native of Lanett, a 1970 graduate of Lanett High School and a graduate of Auburn University. He's also an alumnus of sorts of Lanett Mill and the Bleachery & Dye Works, having worked there in the summers while attending college. "I know that there's no shame in being called a linthead," he says. "It means that you've put in a good day's work for a good day"s pay. I know what it's like to leave the mill after a hot summer's day when your sweat has caked that lint all over your skin. I also know there's many, many people in this Valley who worked much harder than I ever did in the mills. There's a story that needs to be told in their behalf. It's a privilege for me to have an hour to talk about them and how they lived."

Our quarterly meeting will be held Sunday, April 17 at 3 p.m. EDT at Bradshaw Library in Valley. The general public is invited to attend.

## President's Message

On behalf of the CVHS Board of Trustees I would like to let you know how very much we appreciate your membership. Because of you we are able to continue the important work of preserving our collective history. We are now well into the 21st century, but still humbly stand upon the shoulders of those who have led our organization since its founding in 1953.

What an exciting year 2016 is shaping up to be! This year marks the 150th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstones of our area's first textile factories along the Chattahoochee River, two enterprises that would later become known as the Langdale and Riverdale Mills. I hope you had the opportunity to join us at our January meeting and hear a wonderful historical overview of "the company" by Eddie Lanier. Continuing with this theme, our April speaker is Wayne Clark, news editor for the Valley Times-News and CVHS treasurer. For many years, we've looked forward to Wayne's weekly "Days Gone By" pictorial review, and no doubt he'll have another interesting program in store for us. Our final program to culminate this series will be in July.

Our second annual Civil War Bus Trip is almost filled, but we still have a few seats remaining. If you'd like to join us, please contact me personally at (706) 645-6702 before these seats are gone. Last day to register-given space available-is May 1. Check out our website at www.cvhistoricalsociety.com for details on this trip to battlefields and plantations in Mississippi, Tennessee, and North Georgia from June 18-22. Over two-thirds of those registered went with us last year, which speaks to the quality of our program and tour guide, Murphy Wood. Our passengers this year hail not only from Alabama and Georgia, but also from Texas, Ohio, and Indiana! Net proceeds from these trips benefit the Cobb Memorial Archives.

In the fall we hope to begin a tradition of an annual Members' Outing, most likely a picnic at one of the area's historical sites. We would love to have your input.

Thank you again for your loyal support. Hope to see you at our April meeting!

#### Malinda Powers

In Memoriam: Our Society lost two good friends and faithful members in recent months. We sincerely appreciate the good work, support of of these two women in preserving and interpreting our local history.

Mrs. Jane Dickson Lanier 1916-2016 Mrs. Grace Whatley Maddux 1929-2016

## **Cobb Memorial Archives Report**

By Robin Brown

"Spring is the time of plans and projects," wrote Leo Tolstoy. That is certainly true for us at Cobb Memorial Archives.

This spring, Cobb Memorial Archives will fulfill its requirements for the grant awarded by the State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) to process collections of local civic clubs. To date, the Archives has processed materials relating to the Kiwanis Club of Valley, the West Point Rotary Club, the Little Boston Club, the West Point Woman's Club, the West Point Pilot Club, and the LaFayette Pilot Club. To make these collections more accessible and available to the public, the Archives will create posts on its Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/ cobbmemorialarchives/) highlighting the history of some of the area's most well-known civic clubs. Please be sure to check out our page to keep up with the latest news and posts from the Archives.

As the Archives' grant project nears completion, other projects are on the horizon. The Archives is currently processing a number of recent donations, including some wonderful photographs from Lillian Cobb Cauble and some unique historical photographs from Henry and Judy Bledsoe. As some of the Archives other projects are finalized, the Archives staff will turn its attention to processing some of the larger donations it has

received, notably, the richly historical items generously given by Stephen Johnson. Another project that colloquially belongs to this time of year is spring cleaning. The Archives is currently rearranging the Collections Room in order to utilize our space as efficiently and effectively as possible. As our collections have increased, and the scope of the area's local history available for research has expanded, space has become a precious commodity. Some duplicate books are currently being offered for sale at the H. Grady Bradshaw Library, and all proceeds directly benefit Cobb Memorial Archives. The Archives also has available for sale a number of books published by local historian, William H. Davidson, and local historical narratives published by the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society. For the historically-inclined, the Archives is certain to have some books that will pique their interest as well as inform their historical perspective. As Cobb Memorial Archives moves forward this spring with its plans and projects, we are grateful for your continued support and interest in the preservation of the area's unique history. We invite you to visit the Archives, whether to work on piecing together a genealogical puzzle, pursuing a historical inquiry, or simply to peruse our research materials. Best wishes and we hope to see you soon!



The Griggs House



The Oliver-Schuessler House



The Fears-Boyd-Trammel-Askew House



The Joe Andrews House



The Frank -lin House



The Adams-Lanier House



The Burton House



The McCarley House



The McLemore House





### Who built Stone and Rock Houses in Chambers County in the 19th Century?

**Background:** We, Don Clark and Horace Holderfield, following inquiries recently about the history of a property and its stone dwelling in Chambers County, thought it would be interesting and instructive to present documentation about that site and the families who lived at that location in the formative years of Chambers County. In order to introduce information about that site it would be helpful to review the most comprehensive documentation of houses in Chambers County by William H. Davidson.

Mr. Davidson in his two publications, *Pine Log and Greek Revival* in 1964 and *Heart Pine Straight* in 1998, produced descriptions of selected homes and their histories with photographic images to accompany the textual information. We are greatly indebted to his persistence in traveling over Chambers, pursuing family stories and acquiring photographs. Many of the structures he documented 50 years ago have been destroyed or simply fallen into the earth. The insects and fungi of our humid climate rapidly devour wooden structures from the bottom and from the top if moisture penetrates the structures. Chambers County, here in New Alabama, has experienced continuous economic, social and demographic change since its organization in 1832. Frontier wars, Indian removal, commodity agriculture, slavery, civil war, famine, agricultural decline, desegregation, one party politics, national and international forces have all influenced and even predetermined the lives of our families here. Families have come and gone. Many noteworthy buildings have vanished. Mr. Davidson's books of years ago recorded a point-in-time existence of houses which can be used as focal points for interpreting the passage of our people through their life times in this once highly productive agricultural region and in this location of a hugely successful multi-generational textile manufacturing industry.

Mr. Davidson sought to document houses, spanning a time period of 90 years, built from the 1830's to the 1920's. In the two volumes he documented 233 homes. Only ten of the houses he identified were built from earth, stones, rocks and mortar. One of these houses had walls built from rammed earth. Both the stone walls and rammed earth wall construction utilized slip forms of wood between which the wall material would be tamped. Obviously most houses he documented were built as stacked logs or hewn or sawed timber. At the time our region of Alabama was being legally settled, the dream of wealth through plantation cotton production was spreading like a fever. As our clusters of fore families rolled into the first few communities in their two-wheel ox carts and mule-ox wagons, they constructed housing by the quickest manner, by building with logs from their forests and at the same time worked to open up the agricultural fields as quickly as labor allowed. Many of these pioneer log rooms and cabins are the interior wall structure of homes in the county today. With time, technology and wealth, individual families would frame and build houses of sawn lumber. With increasing rail transportation throughout the latter years of the nineteenth century, fancy mill work could be imported and applied to enhance the aesthetic appeal and individuality of homes.

If our families have occupied North America for a sufficiently long time, we have histories of living in log cabins and log houses and sitting in front of fireplaces where flames and smoke were streaming up mud and stick chimneys. Although the log cabin embodies a romantic cachet for contemporary Americans, few original settlers seemed to have aspired for the log pen rooms to be a permanent abode. In general, from the pioneer decades most families aspired to more comfortable, warm, clean dwellings built with sawn lumber. Although we have family stories about living in a log house and later seeing the sawmills creating lumber from our trees for us to build our homes, only a small number of folks have family stories about building and living in stone dwellings. We may speculate how we northern Euro-

peans who pioneered in these humid subtopics forgot homeland skills over a couple of generations in the wilderness of how to build with British cob, rammed earth and stone. We also may speculate that stone construction was far too labor intensive for our forefathers who were infected in various degrees with the fever of flush times to rush to occupy the best land, make the best cotton crop, and borrow the resources to follow the boom until the bust. Perhaps home building here was never seen as establishing a multiple generational dwelling for a family. Even before the Civil War and less than thirty years following the establishment of this county, families were leaving Chambers. As the fertility of the eroded land declined and boom/bust cycles were identified, many families having farmed across Georgia simply flowed through Chambers, spending only a few decades or less here and moving on to the promise of yet more fertile lands westward. Motivations for building dwellings may have reflected feelings of a lack of permanency. For whatever reasons only four percent of the houses built by our ancestors and extant at the date of his research were documented by Mr. Davidson of having been built of the long lasting nonorganic materials of earth, stone, rock and mortar.

**<u>Documentation:</u>** In *Pine Log and Greek Revival*, after years of research and interviews, Mr. Davidson described only the following ten dwellings built with earth, stone, rocks, and mortar:

**The Griggs House** of Lanett was built in 1858 by Major Allen G. McCants by using slave labor to incorporate stones, sand and lime into walls twelve inches thick.

The Adams-Lanier House built about 1876 by David Lawrence Adams a West Point merchant. The construction technique for the twelve inch thick walls in the original portion of the house was rammed earth or pise de terre.

**The Oliver-Schuessler House** in LaFayette was built in 1904 by contractor Leroy Blackson for E. M. Oliver. The construction medium was masonry and stucco.

**The Burton House**, two and one half miles south of LaFayette, was built by Thomas P. Burton for his family in 1882. Field rock were picked up by field hands on the 160 acre farm.

The **Fears-Boyd-Trammell-Askew** House six miles north of Lanett and south of Fredonia was built by James D. Trammell about 1875.

**The McCarley House** located near Lebanon Presbyterian Church east of Buffalo was built in 1888-89 by Amaziah Luther McCarley. He and his field hands did most of the construction.

**The Joe Andrews Rock House** located two and one half miles west of LaFayette was build by Joe Andrews in 1892.

**The McLemore House** in LaFayette was built about 1850-1855 and was the dwelling of the McNamee and Kinsey families. In 1936 this house was one of three homes in LaFayette documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey in the 1930's.

Mr. Davidson documented in *Heart Pine Straight* two more stone houses.

The Franklin Yarborough House when built was in Chambers County but in 1964 was located in Lee County. The stone house was built to replace a home destroyed by fire in 1840-1850. **The Denney-Reaves House** in Milltown was built before 1860 and purchased by the John Denny family in following the tornado in that community in 1892.

Antebellum Plantation: The property and house we wish to investigate in some detail is the Fears-Boyd-Trammell-Askew House. When Mr. Davidson pursued the research for his first book, he interviewed many older citizens to identify information from oral histories retold within families. He also sourced government records and other historical print materials but he did not footnote sources in his publications. Mr. Davidson claimed that Samuel Fears and his family were among the earliest settlers of Cham-

bers County where Fears had established a plantation of 640 acres by 1850. Although Fears is not listed as an original purchaser of land in the Chambers County Alabama Tract Book by Ruth Royal Crump, the family was established on its plantation prior to the Federal Census of 1840. Samuel Fears (1791-1864) was born in Virginia and married Mary Ballard (1800-1864) in 1817. Mary "Polly" Ballard was born in Georgia. Family research has identified both her mother's Barksdale line and her father's Ballard line leading back to early 17th colonial America. The couple had ten children of which three died before adulthood and one died in Confederate Army service. Samuel and Mary Fears lived out their lives on their plantation in the log dwelling which they built upon occupying their land. Through hard work and good management they prospered. Samuel Fears appears in the 1830 Jasper County, Georgia Federal Census as head of household of six free persons and ten slaves. He is listed in the 1840 Federal Census for Chambers County with a household of ten free white persons and eighteen slaves. Of the twenty-eight free and enslaved persons listed in the household, ten were listed as employed in the occupation of agriculture. One might assume that this number reflected mature males in the household. Seventeen households, farms and plantations, were listed as slave owners out of the twenty-nine households listed on the same page of the 1840 Census as the Fears household in that particular area of the county. A most interesting item was written in the records of Sharon Primitive Church which recorded that "Brother Lewis (a man of color) the property of sister (Mary) Fears presented a letter & was received."

The Fears Plantation was located on productive red land six miles north of Lanett and south of Fredonia. In the 1860 Census Samuel Fears, sixty-nine years old, owned \$8,000 of real property and \$33,000 in personal property which included the reported value of his thirty-two slaves. In 1860 the value of the dollars summed to the total value of the Fears family holdings was \$41,000. There are many ways to compute

historical value of money. There is not a single correct comparison. The 1860 dollar value of the Fears plantation, using a Consumer Price Index computation, would equal \$45,510,000 in 2010 dollars according to MeasuringWorth.com. Another simpler assessment by my kindred.com of value would consider the 1860 dollar to have twenty-four times the value of the 2010 dollar. Given this second computation the Fears Plantation in 1860 was worth \$984,000. There are other approaches to computing the historical value of money but these two computations illustrate that the family had acquired and accumulated considerable wealth for old folks living in a log house in Chambers County.

Samuel and Mary (Polly) pictured in the ambrotype (source is findagrave.com) made about 1858 appear to be a prosperous couple. In June of 1864 the pair, after 47 years of marriage, would die within four days of each other. One might assume one of the many communicable diseases of the day was moving through the settlements and households claiming the old, the weak and the young. Their graves are found in the Old Sharon Primitive Baptist Cemetery west of their home.

**Estate Value**: On August 4, 1864, the Court appointed appraisers (William Fuller, A. H. Finley, W.A. Johnson, Jesse Mosley and William L. Potts) for the



Samuel Fears estate. The appraisers made their report, six pages of inventory, presented it under oath to John Appleby Judge of Probate and who approved and recorded it as of August 26, 1864. The inventory

provides insight into the values and labors of an affluent planter class family in the last days of the old order of plantation/slavery cotton production.

In examining the estate inventory to understand the value, we referred to research by the Economics Department at San Jose State University on hyperinflation in the economy of the Confederates States of America. The value of Confederate paper money fluctuated as a function of the Confederate government policy of printing excessive amounts of paper money. "Southerners therefore suffered from hyperinflation, with prices rising by 2,675 percent from 1860 to 1865, compared with 90.5 percent in the North," states Dr. Jeffery Hummel (Chapman Law Review, 1979). By August 1864, the month following the deaths of the Samuel and Polly, twenty-one Confederate dollars were required to purchase items of value which could be purchased by one Federal dollar redeemable in gold.

Given the hyperinflation in the local economy in 1864 and all of the conceivable instabilities induced by the stress of that particular war time, it is difficult to fully understand the Confederate dollar values assigned to all of the items listed in the estate inventory. The simplest analysis is to compare the assigned values among the items, i. e. a yoke of oxen was valued equal to one bay horse mule. Considering that one Federal gold dollar was equal to 21 Confederate dollars, would one dollar in gold really have purchased the yoke of oxen plus the bay horse mule listed in the inventory? The values assigned to the livestock seem to be low for some reason, deflated and not hyper-inflated as we would expect. The Ohio State Board of Agriculture reported that a yoke of heavy oxen sold from \$91 to \$100 in July sale in 1864. More study is required to fully understand the local agricultural impact upon the Fears plantation of the hyperinflation in the Confederate economy. Following are listed the items exactly as they are spelled, presented in estate inventory:

1 yoke of oxen \$12.00 1 yellow bull \$5.00 1 muley brindle cow & calf \$4.00 1 yellow muley cow & calf \$2.50 1 white muley cow & calf \$4.00 1 done sided cow & calf \$3.50 1 black cow & calf \$3.50 1 rided cow & calf \$3.00 1 rided cow & calf \$3.50 1 red cow \$3.00 1 red ided steer \$2.50 1 red bull \$1.25 1 yellow heifer \$1.25 3 yearlings \$3.00 1 lot of hogs, 25 in No. \$39.00 1 lot of hogs, 25 in No. \$9.37 4 sows & 19 pigs \$7.00 13 shoats \$6.00 2 sows & 1 black hog \$4.50 1 white horse mule \$4.00 1 mouse collared mule \$10.00 1 brown mare mule \$6.50

3 pares of plow hames \$6.00 6 pares of plow gear \$1.00 5 pares of wagon gear \$10.00

1 bay horse mule \$12.00

1 brawn mule \$4.00

1 waggon saddle \$.50 or 50.00(unclear) 1 lot of best chains \$5.00

1 four horse waggon \$800.00 1 two horse waggon \$400.00 1 ox waggon \$200.00 8 plow stocks & singletrees \$50.00 1 lot of club axes \$120.00 2 saws \$10.00 2 broad axes \$ 12.00

3 mattocks \$ 6.00 1 lot of weeding hoes \$15.00 1 lot of loose hoes \$25.00 7 scooter plows \$25.00 8 shovel plows \$16.00 1 lot of scrapers \$30.00 1 lot of wagon boxes \$5.00 1 log chain \$20.00 4 iron wedges \$16.00 1 cross cut saw \$10.00 1 lot of old iron \$5.00 1 set of blacksmith tools \$400.00 2 grind stones \$75.00 1 straw cutter \$2.00

1 corn sheller \$100.00 1 cotton gin 45 saws \$40.00 1 thrash & fan \$150.00 6 bales of cotton \$1620.00 1 buggy and harness \$500.00 4 scythes & cradles \$100.00 5 spinning wheales \$125.00 1 clock reale \$20.00 1 lot jug ware \$30.00

1 lot tine ware \$100.00

1 sausage grinder \$25.00 1 lot of bottles \$5.00 1 lot of crockery \$100.00 2 stacks dishes \$20.00 3 dishes \$25.00 1 lot crockery \$75.00 1 set knives & forks \$35.00 1 lot of geares \$100. 2 jin bands \$200.00 1 box shoe tools \$75.00 2 saddles 1pr. saddle bags \$100.00 2 steel traps \$4.00 4 horse collars \$4.00

2 cow bells \$5.00 1 lot of augers \$ 18.00 1 lot of chisels \$15.00 1 brase & bits \$50.00 2 sets match planes \$20.00 2 pares foot adds \$20.00 2 hand saws \$16.00

1 chop ax \$10.00

4 pares steelyards \$20.00

1 draw knife & square \$15.00 1 masons trowel \$5.00 1 lot iron \$160.00 2 coffee mills \$5.00 1 safe \$20.00 1 table \$20.00 1 loom and harness \$100.00

1 table \$2.00

1 set smoothing irons \$5.00

1 lot casting \$30.00 1 lot casting \$60.00 1 lot casting \$20.00 5 wash and dinner pots \$15.00 1 lot wash tubs \$20.00 2 pot racks \$20.00 2 bread trays & sifters \$20.00 1 lot water vessels \$15.00 1 lot wood boxes \$30.00 1 double barrel shot gun \$100.00 1 fancy rocking chair \$75.00 1 clock \$100.00 1 pare of looking glasses \$40.00 1 bureau \$150.00 1 set of chairs \$30.00 1 lot of chairs \$30.00 1 rocking chair \$25.00 2 wooden chests \$30.00 3 pairs andirons \$ 20.00 1 shovel & tongs \$5.00 1 lounge \$10.00 1 trundle bed & sted \$30.00 1 bed & sted & furniture \$400.00 1 bed & sted & contents \$500.00 1 bed & sted & furnature \$400.00 1 mattress & sted \$50.00 1 table \$2.50 1 folding table \$10.00 1 sopha \$150.00 1 carpet \$360.00

1 pair of flower vases \$2.00 1 wash bowl & stand \$25.00 1 wash bowl & stand \$5.00 1 trunk \$1.00 1 wardrobe \$100.00 1 table \$5.00 1 lot of find bed quilts \$1200.00 1 lot of sheets and table cloths \$1200.00 10 white counterpins \$1000.00 3 coverlids \$60.00 1 lot of bed covers \$1000.00 1 lot of glassware \$150.00 2 sets silver tea spoons \$150.00 1 lot books \$150.00 1 lot books \$100.00 2 bunches feathers \$10.00 1 negroe woman Hanah \$200.00 1 negroe woman Patsy \$200.00 1 negroe man Mose \$800.00 1 negroe man Lee \$3000.00 1 negroe man Warren \$3000.00 1 negroe man gust \$3500.00 1 negroe man Jim \$3500.00 1 negroe man West \$1250.00 1 negroe man Aron \$400.00 1 negroe man John \$3500.00 1 negroe man Antoney \$3500.00 1 negroe man Henry \$3000.00 1 negroe boy Lloyd \$2500.00

1 negroe boy Matison \$2500.00 1 negroe boy Aack(?) \$2000.00 1 negroe boy Anderson \$2000.00 1 negroe boy Manso \$1500.00 1 negroe boy Jasper \$1250.00 1 negroe woman Caroline & 2 children \$5000.00 1 negroe woman Saran & child \$3500.00 1 negroe woman Ann & 3 children \$4000.00 1 negroe boy Israel \$1250.00 1 negroe woman Julia & 3 children \$4500.00 1 negroe woman Amanda & 1 child \$3000.00 1 negroe girl Aby \$2000.00 1 negroe girl Measy \$2000.00 1 negroe girl Susan \$1500.00

1 Note on William Boyd, \$200.00 given January 9, 1863 1 Note on J. G. Stephenson, \$8.86 given February 11, 1864

Money on hand \$266.00 In interest paying bonds \$800.00 Certificate for bonds \$1100.00

The very complete inventory of portable property listed above can be studied and interpreted from many different perspectives of various disciplines. The agricultural tools are informative from the perspective of the technology used on this successful plantation. Note the high value of blacksmith tools and the lots of iron which would have been used on the farm forge to create tools. Also note the inventory of items relating to ginning cotton: one cotton gin with 45 saws, one lot of gears, and two gin bands. The assessed value of the cotton gin with 45 saws (45 components stripping lint from seeds arrayed on a turning shaft) of \$45.00. The Fears plantation like most larger southern plantations owned and maintained their own cotton gin, a little machine a little larger than a modern chest freezer, which would have been powered by slaves turning a hand crank. The social and economic historian would note the listing of the 27 slaves by name and their values at this late date in the War. Persons conducting family research rejoice at finding the names of the African Americans in estate records since they are rarely named on the Federal Slave Census. The high value placed upon the bed linens and blankets is mystifying. The family enjoyed expensive beds which could have been status items of that era. Much more analysis and interpretation can be made from this estate inventory to create a most complete picture of a class of affluent planter in antebellum Chambers County.

The Family Antebellum: In the 1870 Census a daughter of the Fears family is listed as the head of household residing in the old log plantation house. Mary Rebecca Fears (1830-1895) married William Wilson Boyd (1821-1864) on December 14, 1847. William died in Confederate military service, killed at Orange Court House Virginia as a lieutenant in Company F, 61st Alabama Regiment Infantry. Mary was left with responsibly for three young persons in her household. It is assumed that she inherited the family home and some acreage when the estate was settled. The value of her property in 1870 was \$800. She belonged to Sharon Primitive Church but was buried in Pinewood Cemetery in West Point, Georgia.

Stone House Built: In 1870 Mary Boyd's daughter Mary Susan Rebecca Boyd (1852-1914) married James D. Trammell (1849-1880) the son of Elisha Trammell, a pioneer in the industrial development of Chambers County along the Chattahoochee River Valley. James D. Trammell was enumerated in the 1880 Census as head of household at the home place of the pioneer Fears family. It was James D. Trammell who had the inspiration and creativity to build a rock, stone and mortar dwelling in 1875. The young Trammell couple was childless in 1880, having experienced the death of four children during a decade of marriage.

Quoting Mr. Davidson, "The log house, in which the Fears lived until they died served as kitchen and dining room for the rock house for many years, but is now torn away. The rock house was built of field stones and mortar, mixed with clay and hog hair for strengthening the joints. The four outside stack chimneys of the house are an integral part of the outside walls up to the level of the eaves, then are topped with brick. The house has four large rooms and a wide central hallway. The interior walls of this hallway are of rock about 12" to 14" thick. There are double doors and side lights with transom panes at each end of the hall. Interior woodwork is plain., with trim and wainscoting in rather earlier style, and the present front porch is not original."



Image above is from Collection of Don Clark and is on <a href="findagrave.com">findagrave.com</a>; image below is from Pine Log and Greek Revival.

The 1870's were socially, economically and politically transitional years in Chambers County.

Given the significant Civil War war losses in the region of men, draft animals and investments, it would take the greatest initiative and exertion and luck for voung families to achieve the wealth and thereby the social position enjoyed by their parents and grandparents before 1860. James Dawson Trammell demonstrated an optimism about the future as he planned and worked to build in a



manner that had characterized the labors of his father. After their marriage James and Mary continued to occupy the old Fears' home site and a portion of the once most productive plantation.

James built the stone residence in 1875 and also established a steam powered cotton gin and saw mill. He reported in the 1880 Federal Agricultural Census that the farm contained 35 acres woodland and 105 acres of arable land which he stated produced \$330 in crops in 1879. He reported owning one horse and one mule. The Industrial Census did not indicate his ownership of the cotton gin and sawmill for

1879. The report may be incomplete. Sadly all of his efforts tragically ended on October 6, 1880.

From an 1880 West Point, GA or LaFayette, AL newspaper clipping: "We have learned more of the tragic death of Mr. James D. Trammell than we knew last week. The circumstances were most heart-rending. Mr. Trammell had a saw mill and a gin, both which were moved by the same engine. While he was giving orders to the negro fireman to change the belting from the mill to the gin wheel, the explosion occurred. Mr. Trammell's head was cleft by its force, and his body blown into the upper part of the building. He was mangled beyond recognition. His wife reached him first, and the sight of her agony – holding his torn head and stained with his blood – was indescribably affecting. We learn that Mrs. Trammell is very ill from the shock. The negro was blown some distance and one of his arms wrenched from his body. The remains of Mr. Trammell were buried at Sharon Church. He was a valuable citizen and his untimely death is lamented by all."

The childless widow Mary Rebecca Boyd Trammell married widower John Lewis Askew (1848-1910) in 1888. The 1900 Federal Census shows the Askew Family living on Bridge Street in West Point, Georgia where John Lewis was a druggist. The household contained three Askew children, the youngest of which Mary W. was born after the marriage of the couple. Mary Willie Askew inherited and owned the remnants of the Fears' plantation with the stone house in 1964, at the time Mr. Davidson completed his first book where he described the Fears-Boyd-Trammel-Askew stone house.

What have we Learned? We have learned how few stone houses were built in Chamber County in the first 90 years of the County. We have some comprehension of a construction technique which produced a limited number of houses some of which are still in use today but in other cases are in ruins. We traced a families' ownership of a unit of land and observed the developments at their home site for more than a half of century. We learned about a pioneer family that prospered antebellum to experience, as most families families experienced locally, postbellum extreme economic decline. We were fortunate to find and review excellent source material documented in an estate inventory, in **findagrave.com**, in Federal Census Schedules, in resources of **ancestry.com** and in the works of William H. Davidson.

Looking beyond any interpretation from the information revealed by this limited study, we must once again confront the tragic fate of our families, our communities and bear witness to the great loss of wealth from the earth we abused and from the investments of our labors in this southern region prior to 1865. This study does not examine local practices of slave ownership but we must bear honest witness that such a boom time of international commodity cotton agriculture producing the wealth we have described in this article could not have occurred without human bondage and all of its history of documented abuses.

We also must recognize how quickly the prospects of an agricultural family could change in this era when the 32 year old husband died, especially when the husband had been reared in a family with technical knowledge and had invested to establish basic industrial processing of timber and cotton in our County. James D. Trammell had great prospects. In a scenario drawn from the "land that will never be" it would have been possible had he lived and contributed his creativity to our local culture, to see his family inhabiting the yet standing stone house stucco white, with pyramidal roof, four chimneys integrated with the exterior walls, with interior white stucco walls and heart pine trim. A southern fenced flower garden would lie before the front porch and a fenced kitchen garden with fruit trees would lie beyond the well house in the back yard. That dream was not to be.

#### **Editors Comments:**

Yet to write lines for this space.

### **NNUAL DUES**

The annual dues of the Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society are due each year on the first of January. Dues are

\$20.00 per individual and \$5.00 for each additional member of the same household, and \$5.00 for any student who is still in school and is under 21 years of age. Other membership levels include Benefactor-\$250; Patron-\$100; and Friend-\$50. For any NEW member who subscribes after September 1, their membership will be for the remainder of the current year and also the following year. In becoming a member you will receive a quarterly newsletter *The Voice* that will inform you of quarterly meetings, new publications, articles of historical interest in the tri-county coverage area and upcoming events.



Grave of Chambers County Original Settler Samuel Fears 1791-1864 (see article inside

Please make checks payable to CVHS and mail with your name and full address to The Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, Inc., 3419 20th Ave., Valley, AL. 36854



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