



# Gateway to the West



Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society P. O Box 231 Jonesville, Virginia 24263

July 2015



## President's Report

*By Becky Jones*

Here it is Newsletter time again! Lots of things have been happening at the Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society. We had Ashley Long Seal, Director of Tourism for Lee County, speak our group in January. She asked us to take part in the Crooked Road Mountain of Music Homecoming on June 12 & 13. Since we knew we were going to have "company" on those dates we had to get ready for them. We were busy cleaning and making other preparations to be open for visitors. We had the outside of the Old Church power washed, weed eaten the banks, trimmed bushes and did some landscaping work.

Inside we redid all the show cases and added two sections of pegboard for old pictures and had one wall prepared with old farm tools. One of our members, Jean Martin, demonstrated basket weaving during the two days. Our building really looked nice and we had about 75 visitors during the two day event. We served hot popcorn to our guests.

At our regular meeting on Saturday June 13<sup>th</sup> Patricia Hopkins White spoke to us about growing up around the Hopkins Country Store in the Thompson Settlement area of the County. Read her article in this Newsletter.

Two of our members, Tom and Roberta Herrell, sold our books at the....

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*Mountains of Music Homecoming June 12, 2015*

## George W. Hopkins General Store 1946-1984

### *Where the Golden Rule is Practiced* by Pat Hopkins Smith

If we could step back in time in rural Lee County, we would find many country stores. These were places where people could go any time of day, six days a week, and feel perfectly at home.

The country store would be close enough to their home so that they didn't have to go too far to get there and while they were there they could buy anything they needed and get to socialize with their neighbors all at the same time.

The sense of community permeated the country store. It was the social gathering place as well as a place of trade. It didn't matter whether you were looking for good conversation, or wanted a plug of tobacco, all you had to do was head to the general store. Sometimes you just wanted to get out of the house and find out what the neighbors were doing or what they were talking about.

Once you were on the way to the store, there was a small bit of suspense that made going all the more enjoyable. You never knew who was going to be there or what might be happening that you didn't know about. Maybe they'd be telling stories or maybe some of the people who were cut-ups would be joking around and there'd be a lot of laughter. You just never knew! No matter what, you could pretty much count on it being interesting. You might walk in and hear some conversations that sounded something like the following: "Paper said Powers got shot down over Russia. He's from up in Wise, you know. Wheat's selling high this year! Are the fish biting? Who d'you think's goin' win this election? That man's a good Democrat.....this fellow, he's a good Republican. Did you hear about the flood up in VA? John,

well, he's a smart boy. Hard-worker too! So's his brother! But, now, that other boy - ain't much to him! "

Yes, in all the talk at the country store you also found out what the people in the community were like. Your neighbors at the country store pretty well knew your character. Your reputation was built on how you acted and whether you were honest and kept your word. People knew a lot about you and it was definitely to your advantage to be known as an upstanding citizen.

This was vitally important when it came to the ability to get credit at the country store. A very common term in our store was "set it down" meaning "charge it." My father, a wise storekeeper, was discreet and never disclosed a customer's personal information, yet by necessity he needed to assess the customer's trustworthiness. Back in the early days, no one had heard of a credit score or credit card. If you wanted credit, and many people did, then your character had to be such that you would have credit extended to you. Credit was essential to many small farmers because they depended on tobacco as their cash crop. When their tobacco sold, one of the first bills they paid was to my father. The history of the George W. Hopkins General Store dates back to 1946.

The Hopkins General Store in the Thompson Settlement Community of Jonesville, Virginia stands today as a testament to the long-standing role that the country store played in the local community from its opening in 1946 until its closing after the death of George in 1984.

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*The George Hopkins Family 1957  
Don, George, Bonnie, Ken and Pat*



*George and Bonnie Hopkins with son Don in March 1955.  
Notice the well-stocked shelves in the background.*

**George W. Hopkins General Store 1946-1984** *continued from page 2*

My father was George W. Hopkins, owner of the Geo. W. Hopkins General Store, "Where the Golden Rule is Practiced." The Golden Rule motto always followed the business name and first appeared on Dad's checks in 1950. The Golden Rule was the way my father, a devout Christian and church deacon, lived his life and ran his business. He was held in highest regard by all those who knew him. He has been described to me by others as a man of wisdom, integrity, and highest moral character. He was extremely intelligent with a propensity toward being philosophical. He enjoyed reading poetry, especially Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He was a gifted writer who wrote with a formal style of expression, reminiscent of 19th Century writers. In addition to his moral and academic qualifications, he was a skilled businessman, as evidenced by the 40 years that he and my mother operated the General Store. As they say, behind every successful man is a good woman. This would describe my mom, Bonnie Newman Hopkins. She was industrious, practical, creative, thrifty, and took wonderful care of all of us. When I look back at her responsibilities, I am astounded that she could have done so much. If she had been a late 20th Century woman, she would have been a most successful business woman. She was, however, a woman of her times and as such she took very good care of all of us.

George and Bonnie Hopkins built the store in the early part of 1946 and officially opened it on May 14, 1946. The store was in operation until shortly after George's death in September of 1984. Bonnie officially closed the store at the end of 1984. She passed away in July of 2008.

It was no small feat for a country boy to start his own business in 1946. It required an ambitious, hard-working, risk-taker to conceive the idea and carry through with it. To earn the money to bring his idea to fruition, forward thinking was a necessity. Equally, or perhaps even more important, was having a helpmate who would support all the effort involved in not only starting the business but being involved in its operation for the next 40 years. George's wife, Bonnie, was that helpmate. They had married in 1940. As the years passed they parented three children, Ken, Pat, and Don. The children all took their turn helping out at the store during their growing up years. The influence of having grown-up in the country store created memories of a childhood that can only be described as unique and privileged. Privileged in the sense of being exposed on a daily basis to the sense of community that was the essence of the country store.

Growing up in the country store was truly special. Some of the best times were when children came to the store with their parents. They were our playmates and we'd have a great time playing tag, hide and seek,

marbles, and any other number of games. Sometimes we'd just go in and listen to the older folks tell stories and talk. Their story telling and joking around was entertainment at its best.

If the visiting child's parent bought them a treat, then Mom and Dad permitted us to enjoy one also; that is, if we hadn't already received our one treat for the day. If the other child didn't get a treat, then we had to wait to get ours because we weren't allowed to eat in front of them unless they also had something. If we were in the midst of enjoying a treat when they arrived, we'd have to put it away until they too had something. That's the way Ken, Don, and I were brought up. We were taught to be respectful and thoughtful of others. It was pretty much the Golden Rule being put into practice.

The season of the year had quite a bit to do with the store experience and what you'd do when you got there. If it was winter, you'd probably cozy up to the pot-belly stove. In the summer you'd more than likely be sitting on the porch to catch any passing breeze. No matter what the season, you were in the right place to find almost anything you'd need either at home or on the farm.

It was common that eggs and chickens were brought to trade for items in the store. Here is a sample of the kinds of goods you could have bought in 1947 at the Hopkins General Store: Lard in a bucket, twenty-five pound bags of meal or flour, pinto beans scooped out of bags and weighed by the pound, Prince Albert tobacco, Days Work chewing tobacco, cigars, penny matches, cans of oysters, potted meat, pork and beans, sardines, Banner sausage, hominy, hot sauce, apricots, fruit juices, graham crackers, Ritz crackers, baker's chocolate, notebooks, school bags, pencils, Wild Root hair oil, shaving cream, barber combs, tweezers, mirrors, Black Draught, Carters Liver Pills, castor oil, epon salts, nose drops, non-prescription medical supplies, peroxide, combs, turpentine, shoe polish, shoelaces, lipstick, rouge, nail polish, anklets, overalls, gloves, jackets, belts, cloth, wash pans, wash cloths, zinc buckets, tin buckets, dippers, lamp globes, lamp wicks, cleaning supplies, Duz and other detergents, soaps, dye, lye, paper supplies, mops, brooms, stove pipes, fish hooks and all things related to fishing and hunting, coal-oil, motor oil, axes, files, bolts and nails of all sizes, rat poison, Dr. LeGear animal medicine and treatments, animal feed and salt blocks for cattle. This is only a sample of the items that were for sale in the Hopkins General Store in 1947.

If you got hungry and needed a good sandwich while you were at the store, you could get a thick slice of baloney sliced off the roll and make yourself a sandwich.

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*Ken Roddenberry, our February speaker, enjoying popcorn at the Mountain of Music Homecoming*



*Patricia Hopkins White at our June meeting.*

***President's Report*** from page 1

Cumberland Gap Genealogy Jamboree the weekend of June 12-13.

There were several activities going on in the County for the Mountain of Music Homecoming. Cumberland Bowl Park in Jonesville, Wilderness Road State Park, the Bates Family Farm, and Cumberland Gap all had activities planned.

Ken Roddenberry of Jonesville has been researching "Pridemore Camp" here in Lee County. Pridemore Camp was a group of Confederate Veterans started in 1896 and named after Albert Lorenzo Pridemore. There were camps all over Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia and collectively they were called the "Grand Army of the Republic." They had meetings, paid dues, had officers and kept minutes and rosters of their members. The Society has photos of some of their reunions. The last Unit member died in 1956.

Our March meeting was cancelled due to the funeral of one of our members and former Sheriff of Lee County, Curtis Flanary.

At our regular meeting in April we had a short program about the soft drink "Mountain Dew" and how it got started.

Our Treasurer, Greg Edwards, is a history buff and always comes through when we need him to present a program. At our May meeting he presented a program on Campbell Bascom Slep from the Turkey Cove area of Lee County and the expensive Political Battle of 1910.

The purpose of the Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society is to bring together those persons interested in the history of Lee County and its' preservation. We need your help to document and preserve our history and heritage. We need your family lineage, books, articles, stories and pictures of Lee County.

Our meetings are held on the second Saturday of the month at 2:00 p.m. at 554 Old Friendship Church Road, Jonesville, Virginia. You can reach us at P. O. Box 231, Jonesville, Va. 24263 or call Becky (276) 346-2010; Judy (276) 346-2335; Ada (276) 346-2464; Libby (276) 346-3562 or Jean (276) 546-3924. Our email address is leecovahistsoc@hotmail.com.

Dues are \$10.00 per year or Lifetime Membership is \$100.00



*Greg Edwards*



*Roberta and Tom Herrell at the Cumberland Gap Genealogy Jamboree*

**George W. Hopkins General Store 1946-1984** *continued from page 3*

For snacks you could always count on nickel cakes, peanuts, cheese crackers, candy bars, chips, and cokes. Children enjoyed looking at the variety of penny candy in the long glass showcase that sat on the counter. It would usually take a while before they could make a decision on which candy to buy with their penny. My personal preference was Kits. You got four delicious individually wrapped pieces in every pack — and all for a penny. A real bargain!

Dad was a meticulous record keeper. This was an important trait since much of a merchant's job involved customer credit, invoices, inventory, and money management. Additionally, he had to keep a finger on the trends and needs of the customers. From store records that have been left behind, it is clear that George was a master of record keeping. Records from May of 1946 show that in the first eleven days of business he made 315 sales. That was a lot of sales in a short amount of time for a small store. In 1947 total yearly sales were \$6,757.00 which, adjusted for inflation, is the 2015 equivalent of \$71,000.00. For a small country store, this was an impressive amount.

To achieve this kind of success it is apparent that

George was able to identify the needs of his customers and provide the inventory that kept them coming back. Running a country store was not, however, just a matter of identifying the wants and needs of customers and keeping in stock the merchandise that they wanted. That is more of a 21st century business model. Running a country store meant that you had to be able to create an environment that was welcoming and trustworthy as well as being conducive to trade.

The store was open 6 days a week, from early morning until late evening, often until 8 or 9 o'clock, or whenever the last customer left. George opened and closed the store and Bonnie would fill in for him during the day when he had other business to attend to or needed to be away from the store for any reason. The Hopkins family was a busy one. Until 1959, the family's living quarters were attached to the store. This allowed Bonnie to attend to household duties and child rearing while also attending to the store if George was, by necessity, attending to other matters. In 1959, George and Bonnie built a house that set on the same acreage as the store.

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*George Hopkins on the porch of the Hopkins General Store 1954*

***George W. Hopkins General Store 1946-1984*** *continued from page 5*

Since the attached living quarters were no longer being used, George decided to enlarge the store. The walls that separated the living area from the store were removed. This meant that the traditional ceiling-high shelves that had lined the walls located behind the counter came down. Up until this time customers would tell the storekeeper what they wanted and the storekeeper would take the items from the shelves and place them on the counter. Following the renovation of the store in the 1960's a more modern version of the Hopkins General Store was in the making. The customer could now walk through the aisles and pick out their own goods. Interestingly enough, many folks kept to the old-fashioned way and continued to let the store clerk go around and pick up the requested items.

The expansion of the store was complete by the time the boom years of coal mining occurred in the 1970's. It was during these years that the country store reached its

peak earning power. While the boom years were good for the people and the economy, drastic change was coming for the country stores. People had more money and became more mobile. Farmers were having a difficult time making ends meet and, by necessity, they were taking day jobs that took them out of the immediate area. The customers and farm people that had frequented the country store were now employed elsewhere and were working away from the local community.

People no longer had time for lingering at the country store. They were mobile and could go to the more modern supermarkets. The country store in America had lost its relevance in modern day society. For those lucky enough to have been around in the heyday of the country stores, there is nostalgia for the time and place that few other memories can match.

***Historical Society Loses Two Members***

Our Society wishes to express our sincere condolences to the families of members who have recently passed away.

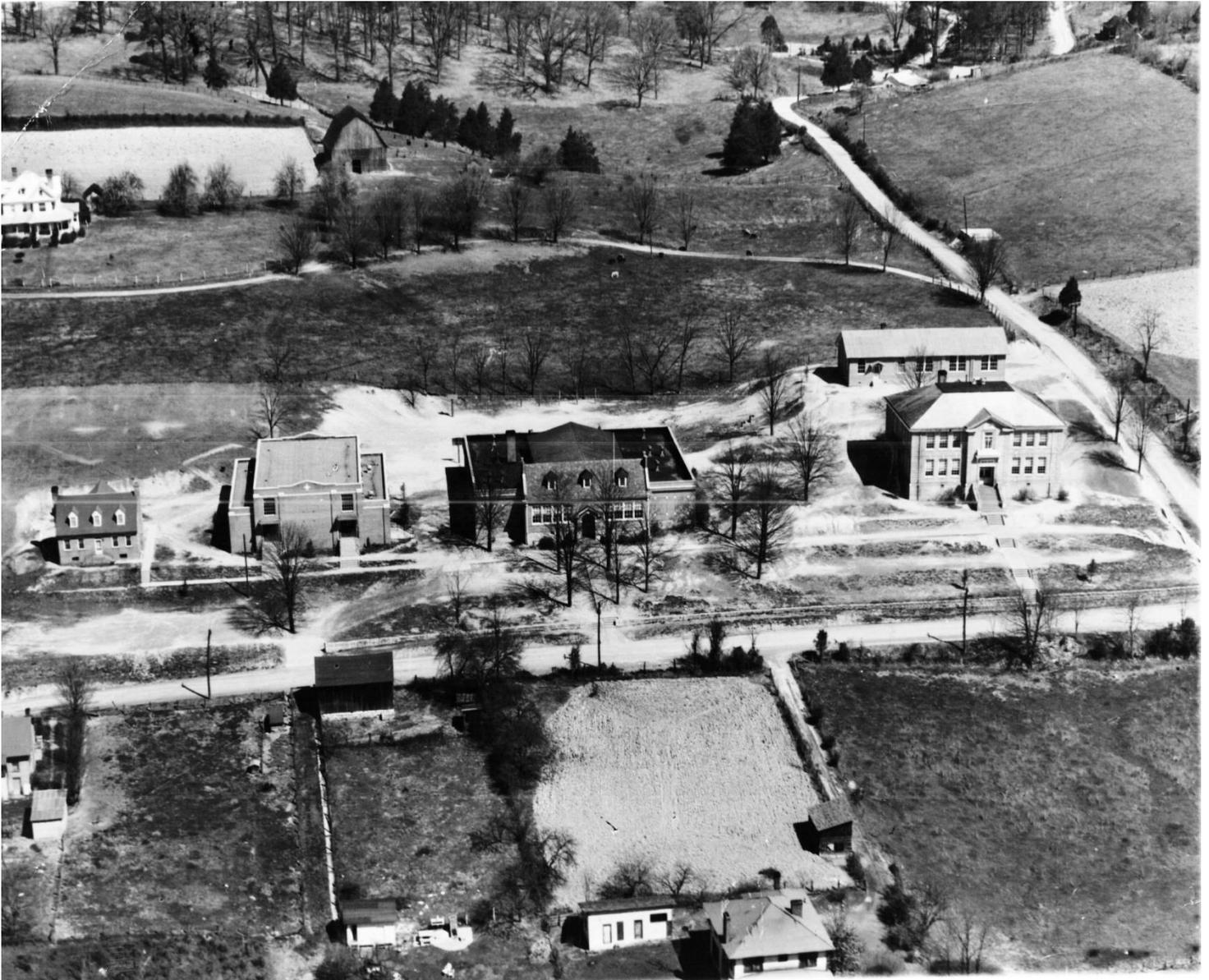
CURTIS FLANARY, a native of Jonesville, passed away on March 19, 2015; He was a dairy farmer for years and had been named Virginia Farmer of the Year. He served as Sheriff of Lee County in the 1970's and was a Charter Member of Cedar Hill Country Club. He served as a professional reader to Federal Judge Glen Williams. He was a life member of the Lee County Historical Society. He was preceded in death by his first wife Nell Rose and parents W. G. and Ollie Flanary; two brothers and two sisters. He is survived by his wife Betty, three daughters, one son and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

MARY Lee Cook of Pennington Gap passed away May 12, 2015. She was preceded in death by her husband of 61 years, Doyle, and a sister Elizabeth Carpenter. She was a member of the Lee County Historical Society, Union Christian Church and had taught at Mountain Empire Community College. She is survived by two sons, a daughter and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

***Inquiries:***

Brenda Gilpatrick is seeking information about the Reedy Family in Jonesville. Her Great-grandmother was Laura Ellen Reedy who married Robert Lee Suttle. She was born 22 May 1873 and died 14 September 1960. Anyone with any information please contact Brenda by email at: [bgilpatrick@yourfantasticplas](mailto:bgilpatrick@yourfantasticplas)

We have a request from a descendent of Larkin Morris, Lee County, Virginia, on June 10, 1828, who was the son of Joseph Morris who was born c.1787 in North Carolina. No information on either of the mothers. He is looking for information on the mothers of Larkin and Joseph and any other information on Larkins. Email: [ernest@irvineonline.net](mailto:ernest@irvineonline.net).



## School Street in Jonesville *by Barlow Newman, Jr.*

This is an aerial view of what is now called School Street in Jonesville. In the middle of the picture from left to right: first is the house that was provided for the school principal and family; second, is the school gymnasium; third and fourth are the school buildings. The school building at the extreme right was built in 1911 and named "The Jonesville Institute". Behind the 1911 School is the Agricultural building. While studying this photograph, you can see the road leading to Cumberland Bowl Park. In the extreme left is a small portion of the two-story white house that Ruth and Ben Davidson lived in for many years. I believe the Rupert family lives there now. I am unsure of the date of this photograph and I am looking for clues to determine when it was taken. Can you help?

I started school on this campus starting 1957. I attended classes in both buildings, played in the gymnasium, and took agricultural classes in the building behind the school. In addition, I played hooky during the first grade by hiding out in the barn that can be spotted in this picture across the road from the gymnasium. This barn was owned by the Sewell's and was used to store hay. I managed to get away with this for about six weeks until my teacher sent a note home to my parents by one of my siblings. My family lived on Main Street next to the Baptist Church and we walked to school.

Dr. Tom Jones recalls that they had lunch under the Home Economics Cottage at Jonesville High School. The menu was soup beans, mashed potatoes and cole slaw, with a glass of milk and a piece of cornbread. If you wanted extra milk or corn bread it cost a nickel. At recess they could buy a peanut butter and cracker for a nickel. A bologna sandwich cost a dime. Zoni and Mary Miles were the cooks and each afternoon you could see them pulling their little wagon through town on their way home on town branch. Tom said they were the best soup beans and cornbread he has ever eaten.



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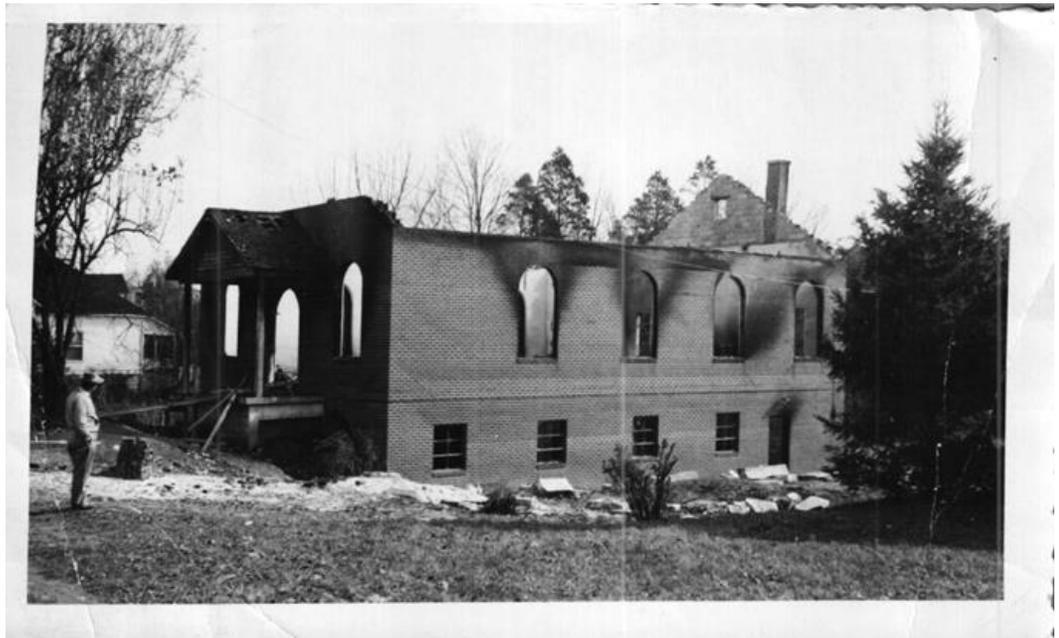
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## Jonesville Baptist Church Destroyed by Fire – 1950

*By Nell Newman and Virginia Spence*

This is a picture that was brought to my attention by Virginia Spence. The church in the picture has obviously been burnt, but we were unsure of what church this was. Hugh Boyd is the man pictured in the right of the picture. Following Rev. Boyd's graduation from Louisville Baptist Seminary, he was assigned by the Virginia Baptist Home Mission board as a missionary to the coalfields of Lee County in 1944. Through his mission work, the Darby Baptist Church was established and the Goodwill Center in Virginia Lee Coal Camp was founded. He married Helen Sue Williams, aunt to Virginia Spence, in 1941 at Thompson Settlement Church. After serving in Lee County for 8 years, he was assigned to the coalfields of Wise County, followed by service in the First Baptist Church of Clintwood. He left the Home Mission Board when he was called to the Jonesboro Baptist Church in Roseland, Nelson County, Virginia, where he served for nearly 50 years until his death.

While trying to solve the mystery Allen Miner was asked for his opinion. Mr. Miner, who is 88, stated that he believed it to be the Baptist Church in Jonesville and that the date of the fire was in the fall of 1951 or 1952. Armed with this information, I went to the Lee County Public Library at Pennington. The Powell Valley News has been archived on microfilm and I needed to do some research.

With little effort I found an article appearing in the November, 1950 edition. This news article was titled "FIRE DESTROYS Loss Jonesville Baptist, Rose Hill Methodist". The article states that the NEW First Baptist Church was almost completely destroyed by fire on Sunday morning, November 12, 1950. The blaze started in the furnace room after the fire was started for the morning service. Both the Jonesville and Pennington fire departments worked to extinguish the fire, but what is seen in this picture is all that remained. It seems that this building was constructed during the previous year and the first services were held there beginning July, 1950. C. D. Walton, Church Clerk, determined the loss to be around \$20,000, not accounting for the piano and fixtures.

The same news article stated that Morgan Memorial Methodist Church in Rose Hill was destroyed the following Monday afternoon, November 13, by a fire of unknown origin. The Pastor, Rev. R. R. Haynes, estimated the loss of this church at \$35,000.

*Photograph contributed by Virginia Spence.*