

# REFLECTIONS OF FALCON

by Nancy Wardlow Kennedy

Going down the hill and across the railroad all you see is a couple of houses, a corn field and woods. Nothing remains to even remind us that once a bustling little town with doctors, lawyers, stores and saloons was nestled between the hills and lined the railroad. On the hill was a hotel overlooking this vibrating town. It's all gone. For almost a hundred years now. Even those that remembered are gone. Only the railroad remains and that too could be obsolete soon. All that is left of Falcon is a reflection.

Falcon was one of the first towns to be established after the Mobile & Ohio railroad was built in 1858. It was then the first railroad stop after leaving Bethel Springs station, being seven miles south of that station. In the early days, after the railroad was built, stations were McNairy, Bethel Springs, Falcon, Ramer and Guys.

What is now Selmer was then an old field and between what is now Selmer and Falcon was an old watermill. The old mill, located on Cypress Creek, was then known as the Brooks mill and it was one of those famous, old, water mills common on our streams a century ago. There was the old race and the big pond and the crude machinery, the power for which was found in rushing water onto the wooden wheels. The neighborhood for miles and miles gathered there on Saturday afternoon and many stayed all day, fishing in the waters above the mill and below it. In the deep and shady place in the turn of Cypress Creek and east of the long trestle was where the boys of the neighborhood would gather for a swim. The road leading from the east went to that old mill under a long trestle that has long since been filled and the old road abandoned soon after the turn of the century.

In the early 1870's the town of Falcon was ushered in as a little, village town. Oral traditions has it that it was named for a man named Falcon. A man by the name of Ben Person had a switch put in and a depot was built and a survey made. Streets and 54 lots were laid off and a little village began to grow.

The business houses fronted the railroad, on the east side, and there was a wide space or street, about 200 feet, between these business houses and the railroad. Beautiful mulberry trees grew along this front which adorned the street and provided ample shade in the summer.

There was not much business done there until Rev. Bob Young moved his store to Falcon. Rev. Young and his son had operated a store about one to two miles east of Falcon. They moved the building and the goods to Falcon. An old oak tree stood near that store. When Bob Young began the mercantile business at Falcon in 1871 there was nothing of what afterwards was a beautiful little village.

Soon C. M. Jeans opened up a store and after awhile the following business houses were established. Starting at the south and running north were: W Rossen, a saloon; W. A. Tedford, a saloon; Smith & Peoples, general merchandise; D. Horn & Co, a general merchandise and grain store.

Old man Halcomb ran a good hotel in the 1880's on the south end of the row of buildings. Later Mrs. E. E. Warren ran a good hotel on the hill overlooking the town. Aaron Gage had a Buggy and Wagon Shop.

The early doctors were H. L. C. Prather, Jasper Jones, W. E. Atkins and J. L. Smith. The drug store was operated by Polk Browder. Huse Freeman also ran a drug store.

Rev. Bob Young was one of the preachers then. Jo Williams, Sam McCullar, Richard

Patrick and C. C. Taylor were depot agents and J. A. A. Coleman was for a long time the station agent. P. Halcomb had the first cotton gin and W. H. Stone was postmaster.

Blacksmiths were M. L. Carman (called Uncle Billie) and Aaron Gage, Josh Mitchell and Dan Callicut, the two latter, being black. At one time a Jew by the name of Mendall came from Corinth and operated a saloon.

Other businesses at one time or the other: H. C. Gooch, W. E. Atkins, G. W. McCullar, P. J. Howard, W. A. Gooch, Tid Jones, F. P. Browder, R. Young and Son, Erwin Brothers, Null, G. W. Farris, J. L. Smith, Phil Halcomb. Cicero Jeans' house was occupied by Maxedon and Hunter and later by Shytles and Newman.

The school in the 1880' and 1890' stood on a hill were a new one stood in 1924. The only church which was erected by the Methodists was just across the branch on the south side of town, on the right of the road as you went out toward the Si Jeans place. All denominations used it. Within its walls, fallen now for almost a century, Revs. W. J. Williams, Sullivan, R. P. Meeks, T. G. Pettigrew and Robert Lee Harris preached strong and forceful sermons.

Hostetter mill, half a mile below Falcon and the McCullar mill, half a mile above was two very busy places.

Silas Jeans was the money king of Falcon. He died in 1892. His estate was valued at \$42,000 in coins and currency and \$13,000 in government bonds. Miss Susan said the rest he gave to her for her part.

About a mile east of Falcon, the old graveyard was laid off and is the resting place for many of the old citizens of Falcon. Little Lela Smith, infant daughter of Dr. and Mrs. J. L. Smith, was the first to be buried there in 1885.

The first newspaper published in the town was the Falcon Worker by M. R. Abernathy. C. C. Lewter published another newspaper later.

Some of the lawyers who practiced in Falcon were A. W. Stovall, M. H. Meeks, W. M. Ingle, Israel Huddleston, James W. Pace, A. W. Campbell, S. D. Hayes and Col E. L. Russell.

On the front of the J. M. Nelson store was written in pencil, "first bale of cotton brought in by Charlie Hill and sold to J. M. Nelson, Sept 23, 1886 at 9 cents." The Charlie Hill referred to was the father of J. H. Hill and the grandfather of Mrs. O. S. Abernathy. In another place it says, "first bale of cotton, Geo Perry, Sept 13, 1887."

The J. Moss Nelson store was elevated several feet in front and was approached from the street up a flight of steps. Inside this building, one hundred years ago, the shelves and counters were laden with all sorts of merchandise. Sugar, potatoes, flour, lard, tobacco, snuff, candy, toys, perfume, and a thousand other articles. In the side room was stored thousands of pounds of meat, lard, sugar and coffee and hundreds of barrels of flour.

Some of the early teachers of the old town were Professors H. O. Norman, Fronabarger, Kirkpatrick, and M. R. Abernathy. The latter taught there in 1880 and 1881. Among the list of the old students, those attending school in those latter years were: Henry Horn, J. D. A. Coleman, J. L. Swain, Pink Harris, Pierce Winningham, John Bassinger, David Surratt, John R. Thrasher, James M. Jones, Steve Dickey and sisters, Andrew Layton, Samuel and Josie Hostetter, Lee and Frank Nethery, Minnie Nelson, Clint and Ed Stone, C. C. Taylor, B. T. Baker, Ben Bassinger, Mary and Rosa Hostetter, Maxie Phales, Frank Locke, John Rossen and sisters, Terry, W. K. and Florence Abernathy, Jim Warren, Nora Jeans, Mose and Davy Horn, the Carmen boys, John, Callie, Lee and Dave Halcomb, Oliver Gooch, Charlie McCullar, Ed and Callie Smith, Tonie, Eulah, Due and Ed McAfee, Dave and Willy Mitchell, Bettie Brooks, Frank

Hugginbottom, Fayette Fisher, Mattie Warren, Emma and Etta Jones, Jim and Lucinda Dunaway, Rachel Roten, Will, Ben and Annie Boatman and many others.

In 1884, the county seat was moved from Purdy to Falcon and courts were held there for a few months before the removal question was settled by a Supreme Court decision.

At the July 1884 session of the County Court a group of citizens of Falcon approached the Court and agreed to build and donate a 60 X 40 foot, two story courthouse at Falcon with four rooms on the first floor and walls two brick thick. These citizens consisted of L. J. M. Nelson, John Ray, J. J. Horn, Prather and Simpson (merchants), W. E. Darby, Erwin & Bros (merchants) F. P. Browder, H. C. Gooch, Josiah Jeans, W. H. Stone and W. E. Tedford.

The election that took the county seat to Falcon was held August 23, 1884. There was cast 1921 votes for removal and 560 against. On October 6, 1884, the County Court met and canvassed the vote and declared that the constitutional two-thirds majority had voted for removal. The committee appointed to remove records and secure building in Falcon was J. L. Smith, W. H. Stone, W. J. Darby, John F. Gilmer and W. E. Atkins.

There is nothing recorded in the minutes of the McNairy County Court from October 1884 through April 1885. From May 1885 to May 1886 court was held at Falcon.

Immediately, those opposing the removal obtained an injunction. Chancellor Nixon heard the case and his decision was in favor of Purdy. The case was settled by a Supreme Court decision also in favor of Purdy. Short lived was the county seat at Falcon. In June 1886 the county was back at Purdy.

The lawyers in that important litigation were Pitts and Hayes for Purdy and A. W. Campbell and W. M. Ingle for Falcon. The Circuit Judge who presided over courts at Falcon was J. B. Bateman and Attorney General M. H. Meeks. T. F. Dalbey was Circuit Court Clerk, J. R. Adams was County Court Clerk, J. H. Curry was Register. W. D. Jopling was Sheriff, J. L. Littlefield was Trustee, J. T. Barnhill was County Representative. R. E. McKinney was Clerk and Master and Jo William was the railroad agent.

Some of the Falcon business men and citizens: W. Rossen, W. E. Tedford, Dr J. L. Smith, Benton Peoples, D. Horn, Josiah Horn, William Horn, Henry Horn, John Taylor, Dr A. L. Sanders, Albert Adams, N. D. Erwin, N. A. Erwin, Arlie and Edgar Prather, G. W. Farris, J. D. Null, W. J. Null, H. C. Gooch, P. J. Howard, E. Jeans, F. P. Browder, J. M. Nelson, Frank Locke, W. R. Coln, Ed Stubblefield, John Carter, William Carman, J. W. Prather, J. W. Simpson, R. H. Freeman, Dr Bud Shytles, Dr Tom Shytles, Dr Frank Young, Dr L. C. Prather, Dr. W. E. Atkins, A. W. Stovall, Attorney Christopher, James Pace, Dr. John Smith, Dr Ernest Smith, John W. Hooch, John Deaton, L. C. Roten, Dock Locke, Mrs. Edith Warren boarding house, William Chatman, G. W. Alexander, U. S. Alexander, Hostetters, Robert Browder, Rev. W. H. Williams, Rev. Dickey, James Brown, Robert Gray, W. H. Stone, Clint Stone, Edgar Stone, George Carman, Nat Carman, Henry Carman, Prof Norman, Richard Wise, Peck Busby, Brown Ahearn, Carroll McCullar, Bob Emmons, Charlie Lewter, W. E. Grimes, John Brooks, Wilson Moore, Robert Bell Sr, J. A. A. Coleman, J. F. Williams, Sam McCullar, Richard Patrick, C. C. Taylor.

For two decades Falcon was a thriving little town by the railroad but after Selmer bid and won the county seat in 1890 Falcon began to go down. Time changes everything and the old town that once populated with prosperous and contented citizen is no more. And verily "None are left to greet us, Tom, and none are left to know - who played with us upon the green one hundred years ago."

Sources: History of Falcon by Joe Alexander, Dec, 9, 1949  
Visit to Old Falcon May 1934  
Years Ago at Falcon, Jan 18, 1924  
All printed in the McNairy County Independent.  
Documentation of McNairy County 1890-1899 by Nancy Kennedy.