

Jackson County Historical Society News

VOLUME THIRTEEN, NUMBER ONE

OCTOBER 2005



The Historical Society will Ramble to the Nix/Massey house on 192 Washington Street on October 16, 2005 at 2:30 p.m. The house was built in 1902 by contractor, Robert Sanders Williams, for John Morgan and Ella Bennett Nix. Their children, who grew up in the house were Abit, Lydia, Lurline, Mary, Ernest and Lucile. Today the house is owned by Johnathan and Cindy Finck.

Jackson County Historical Society

P.O. Box 1234, Commerce, Georgia 30529

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Newsletter

The Jackson County Historical Society News is published quarterly and mailed before the next meeting. Back issues can be obtained for \$3.50 each plus postage. Past newsletters can be viewed online at: rootsweb.com/~gajackso/

Queries

Send queries to be published before the next deadline, December 15, 2005. Send requests for information to the address below with a stamped, self addressed envelope.

Dues for 2005–2006 year

Costs for publishing have caused an increase in dues. The dues year runs from July to July. Checks can be mailed to:

Jackson County Historical Society
P. O. Box 1234, Commerce, GA 30529:

Individual –\$15
Family –\$20
LIFE member –\$100

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Revolutionary Pension of Service

Jackson Co, Georgia, January 1827

John Nix, age 65 and resident of Jackson Co., Georgia made an oath according to law that he served in the Revolutionary War. He enlisted in 1776 as a private for a term of 18 months in the County of Charles in the State of South Carolina in Company commanded by Captain David Hopkins of the Regiment commanded by Colonel William Thompson in the South Carolina continental line. He served under Captain Dawkins some months. He then was marched to Eutaw Springs and put under command of Captain Richard Winn and served until taken prisoner at Fort McIntosh by the Tories and British. He was paroled by General Provost of the British Forces and returned home, notwithstanding the parole, he joined the company of Captain Stark and continued until the expiration of time of his enlistment, he then went to Colonel William Thompson's dwelling on the Santee River and he gave him a discharge. In the Battle of Fort McIntosh in Georgia, where and when British General Provost commanded the enemy.

his mark, John Nix

He further states he is a farmer by occupation but unable to pursue, has wife 64 years and unable to work and no way to support my family and myself.

Captain Richard Winn, 3rd Regiment of Colonel Williamson, made oath to the fact and stated due to the British, Indians and Tories he lost all his equipment and his horse which were taken by the enemy on February 18, 1777.

signed, R. Winn, Major General

Superior Court Minute Book, 1818
Jackson Co. Georgia, page 67

Obituaries

October 12, 1864, excerpt from the Southern Banner

Whereas, the inscrutable Providence of God has again called upon us to mourn the loss of our worthy brother, T. T. Nix in whose death the Lodge has lost a worthy member, the Confederate Army a good soldier, and his wife and children a kind and affectionate father and husband.

While this dispensation has shrouded our hearts in mourning, his family are now suffering in grief his

irreparable loss. But a short time ago, he was with us, rejoicing in the vigor and strength of manhood and hopeful in the future.

But alas, he has fallen, with hoste of the bravest and best of our suffering land. Still he died for his country, for those he loved so well and sought to protect. He died at Columbus, Ga., on the ___ August 1864, in the ___ year of his age.

1st Resolved, therefore, that in the death of our brother, T. T. Nix, his children have lost a kind father and this Lodge a worthy member, the community one of its best citizens.

2d. Resolved, That our sympathies are due, and are hereby tendered, to relatives of the deceased; and that these proceedings be spread on the minutes of the Lodge, and that we wear the usual badge of mourning for thirty days.

3d. Resolved. That a copy of these proceedings be furnished to the Athens papers, with the request that they be published.

Resolved, That copy of the above be forwarded to the family of the deceased.

J. E. RANDOLPH

C.C. THOMPSON

WM. GRIFFETH,

A true extract from the Minutes of this Lodge,
September 8th, 1864,

P.F. HINTON, Secretary.

October 6, 1904, excerpt from the Jackson Herald

Captain A. T. Bennett, one of the pioneer citizens of this county, died at his home in Harrisburg district last Saturday morning with paralysis. Previous to this he had suffered two strokes, but had sufficiently recovered from these to visit Commerce and Jefferson, though he was quite feeble when seen here not long since. He had a stroke on Friday, and lived only a few hours after.

He was buried with Masonic honors Sunday at the Morgan burial ground, near the home of Honorable G. D. Bennett. We have seen very few larger crowds at a burial, and the largest crowd of Masons participated in the burial services we ever saw around a grave. Rev. F.I. Ward preached his funeral and the burial service was both appropriate and beautiful.

During the service, Rev. Joe J. Bennett announced that it was his father's request that Mr. S. C. Potts, who was once a near neighbor of Capt. Bennett, lead in prayer at

his grave. Mr. Potts invoked the Divine blessings on all the children, and the prayer was fervent and touching.

Capt. Bennett had been a prominent figure in Jackson county for more than a half century. He was born October 20, 1828, near Harmony Grove and reared in the county. In 1849, he moved to California, where he spent three years during the "gold excitement." Upon his return, he was elected deputy sheriff, in which capacity he served until the tochain of war sounded, when he answered the summons and raised a company of soldiers. He was elected captain of Company E, 34th Georgia Regiment, and for four years engaged in that bloody strife between the states. He was kind, gentle and tender with his men, yet he was as brave as a Spartan hero. It was said of Capt. Bennett that he was one of the best soldiers that ever donned a gray uniform.

Just after the war, he was a candidate for one of the judges of the inferior court, and was elected by large majority. In 1868, he was elected to the legislature, again in 1876, and for several years represented Jackson county in the lower house. He was not a great orator, but was a splendid business man, and was one of the faithful committee men of the house. He was blessed with plenty of good sound sense, and a splendid judgment.

After serving several years in the legislature, he retired from politics, so far as running for office, but he was a potent factor in the politics of the county. He has friends in every part of the county, who always responded to every call he made on them.

He was married three times. The first wife was Miss Morgan, and seven children blessed their union, five of whom survive him; they are Messrs. George D., Jesse C., T. J., J. J. and Mrs. J. M. Nix. His second wife was Miss Tolbert, and three children were born to them; they are Mrs. D. L. Merk, Mrs. Scott of Montgomery, and Miss Mary Bennett. His marriage to Miss Crump, of Franklin county, who survives him, was also a very happy union, and to them seven children were born, five of whom, Miss Alva, Sam Memory, Hoyt and Morgan, are living.

There are no brighter, cleverer or handsomer children in this county than Capt. Bennett's. In school, they stand at the very head of their classes; in business, on the farm, in the pulpit, in the schoolroom, his children stand at the very top.

One sister, Mrs. Rose Ann Brooks, of Center, and one brother, Mr. Hosea A. Bennett, of Benton, Ark., also survive him.

He made a will several years prior to his death, naming Hon. George D. and Dr. Jesse C. Bennett executors of his will. The estate is in splendid shape, and no doubt will be wound up this year.

Capt. Bennett was 75 years old. He was not a member of any church, but was a loyal Mason, and it was very fitting, indeed, for some sixty members of the order he loved so well to participate in the burial obsequies.

All the members of his family have our sincere and profound sympathy.

January 1933, excerpt from the Commerce News

Mr. John W. Massey, 87 years old Civil War Veteran and honored and loved citizen of Jackson County, died at his home near Nicholson last Saturday afternoon. He had been ill for several months. Funeral services were conducted from Antioch church Monday morning, Jan. 16th., Rev. G. H. Collins of Commerce officiated.

Interment was made in the Murray(Stapler) cemetery.

The deceased is survived by three brothers, Tom Massey of Commerce, Crawford Massey of Greenville, S. C., and Joel Massey of Madison County; his wife; four children, J. W. Massey of Chattanooga, Tenn., Rufus Massey of Nicholson, D. E. Massey of Greenville, S. C., and Joe Massey of Madison County, and several grandchildren. One granddaughter is the wife of Rev. Hugh Boswell, Presbyterian minister of Elberton, Georgia.

Mr. Massey was a member of the Cabin Creek church where he had been a faithful worker for many long years. He was honored and respected by all who knew him. It is said by his acquaintances that no better man has ever lived. He was a faithful husband, a stern but understanding father, and a citizen in whom everybody had complete confidence. His life was saintly, and was pointed to as a model.



left to right: Morgan Nix, Ella Loudora Nix, Mary, Ernest, Lucile, Lurleen, and Lydia

June 8, 1950, excerpt from Jackson Herald

Prominent Citizen Succumbs in Athens Hospital

J. Morgan Nix, prominent resident of Commerce, died in an Athens hospital Friday afternoon, following an illness of five weeks.

Funeral services were conducted Sunday afternoon from the First Baptist Church of Commerce, and interment was in the family burial lot at Apple Valley, Rec. C. C. Took, assisted by Rev. T. C. Hardman, conducted the service. The pall bearers were four grandsons, Dyar Massey, Jr., John Massey, Abit Massey, and Claud Williams, Jr., and two nephews, Robert Nix and Harry Merk.

An honorary escort included members of the Board of Directors of the First National Bank of Commerce.

Surviving the deceased are five children, Mrs. D. E. Massey, Sr., of Athens, Mrs. Claud Williams of Gainesville, Miss Lucile Nix of Decatur, Abit Nix of Athens and Ernest M. Nix of Jacksonville, Fla; a half brother, Luke L. Davis of Commerce; twelve grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren.

Mr. Nix was 88 years of age, a son of the late Thomas and Lydia Vaughter Nix. He was born on a farm near Apple Valley and grew to manhood in that section of Jackson County. He was a graduate of North Georgia Agricultural College in the class of 1882. On November 15, 1885 he was married to Miss Ella Loudora Bennett, daughter of the late Captain A. T. and Mrs. Sarah Morgan Bennett. She preceded him to the grave by 12 years.

Mr. Nix was one of Northeast Georgia's most prominent citizen and business men. He was a man of keen perspective, had an analytical mind and accurate judgment. Greatly beloved by a host of friends, a large concourse of citizens attended the funeral services to pay tribute of love, friendship and respect to a good and noble man.

Mr. Nix was a former Mayor of Commerce and served as State Senator in the Georgia General Assembly from his senatorial district. He also served as County Commissioner for Jackson county. He was the oldest living charter member of the Board of Directors of Commerce First National Bank and was a member of the Knights of Pythias and of the Masons.

Mr. Nix was a member of Commerce First Baptist Church and over a long span of years was one of years was one of its most active workers, contributing

generously of his time and material resources to his church.

Successful both as a businessman and a farm operator, Mr. Nix was to be found in the forefront of every civic movement looking to the betterment of his community, section and state.

Well versed in the science of politics, Mr. Nix wielded much influence in his section, and was a most effective member of the State Senate.

excerpts from: "This is My Story This is My Song" by Lydia Nix Massey

By this time Papa had persuaded Mama that it would be all right to live in town. She had opposed the very idea, because she thought the world too horrible a place to raise children anywhere but in the country. After all, the population of Harmony Grove was already well over 1,000 people, and it was growing so fast that it would soon change its name to Commerce. But Papa prevailed, and he bought five acres of land at the end of Washington Street on the edge of town. He hired Robert Sanders Williams, a building contractor in nearby Maysville, to build the house. He was the father of Claude Williams Sr., who later married my sister Mary. All of the wood that went into that house came from the farm at Apple Valley, which was covered in hugh heart pine trees. Papa had these cut, sawed, planed, and hauled into town. Originally the house had no indoor plumbing, except for a pump on the back porch, and the staircase was located where the downstairs bathroom is now. And, of course, there were no gas heaters or electricity. Otherwise, the house today is pretty much like it was on the evening of December 1, 1902, when we loaded the last of our furniture and other belongings into Papa's two big two-horse wagons. I sat in a rocking chair in the very back of the last wagon that went over and held tightly to my cat and an oil lamp. It was getting nearly dark, and I wanted to carry the lamp so we could light it if darkness fell before we arrived at No. 29 Washington Street.

Children of John Morgan and Ella Bennett Nix

Ernest graduated from the University of Georgia in 1922 with a degree in agriculture. He worked as an agriculture traffic agent for Seaboard Air Line Railroad for 42 yrs. He married Willie Jo Powers in 1923 and became president of the Railway Development Association in 1958.

Lydia graduated from Georgia Normal & Industrial College in 1909 and taught school at Commerce before marrying Ed Massey in 1915. Ed and Lydia lived in Greenville, S.C. for 24 years where he worked as a contractor. In 1939, they moved back to Georgia to Athens. Ed bought a restaurant on Lumpkin Street across from the girls dormitories, called the Co-ed which they ran during the war years.

Abit married Eunice Theresa Little in 1913. He was a member of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and a trustee of Lucy Cobb Institute, Georgia State Teachers College, and Mercer University. In 1949, he was elected to membership in Phi Beta Kappa associates, a select group of the 200 top-ranking Phi Beta Kappas. He was president of the Alumni Society of the University of Georgia.

Both a Scottish and York Rite Mason, Abit was a Potentate of the Yaarab Temple in Atlanta, Grand Master of Georgia Masons, and for 17 years Yaarab's representa-

tive to the Imperial Council. He also served as the Exalted Ruler of the Athens Elk Club. Abit joined the Young Men's Christian Association in 1906 and remained active throughout his life, serving 12 years as chairman of the state YMCA board.

Abit was a famous Rotarian. He was a charter member and president of the Athens Rotary Club, an international director, and the youngest Georgian to serve as district governor when elected in 1927. He was in great demand as a public speaker and was known as "Apple Valley" Nix in Rotary circles.

Abit belonged to both the Georgia and American Bar Associations and to the Athens Chamber of Commerce, which he served as president and board member. In business, he was a director of Citizens and Southern National Bank, Progressive Life Insurance Company, Climax Hosiery Mills, and Athens Manufacturing Company. In 1932 he was made general chairman of the Atlanta World Trade Council, which promoted import-



Lydia Nix Massey with her family at her home in Commerce, Georgia

export trade through the state docks at Savannah. He was also a director and vice-president of the board of St. Mary's Hospital in Athens.

These many honors he received included the Distinguished Service Award from the University of Georgia and induction into the Order of Constantine of the Sigma Chi Fraternity. He was also a member of the Newcomen Society of America.

A deacon of the First Baptist Church of Athens, Abit served as president of the Georgia Sunday School Asso.

Abit was active in politics, ran for governor of Georgia in 1932 and 1940, and was a 1940 delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Papa was his campaign manager in the 1932 race, in which both Abit and Eugene Talmadge were running for governor for the first time.

Lurline graduated from Georgia Normal and Industrial College in 1915 and taught school near Nicholson.

Mary majored in Music at Shorter College. She married Claude Williams in 1919. She sang duets on the radio in the 1930's, operated a snack shop and catering service near Brenau College and was editor of the food page in the Gainesville News.

Lucile graduated from the Women's College of Furman University and the Emory Library School. She received the Distinguished Service Award from Georgia College at Milledgeville, and in the same year she received the Joseph W. Lippincott Award for distinguished library service, the highest honor bestowed by the American Library Association.

When my family moved from Apple Valley in 1902, Mama wasn't altogether sure that Commerce, with all of its hurrying people and questionable goings-on, was a proper place for a Christian woman to live and raise a family. She loved the country and knew she was going to miss the valley farm, so she brought pieces of it with her--bulbs, shrubs, seedlings, and the like. Her favorite, and mine too, was the lilac bush, because its purple flowers hang in clusters like grapes, and its fragrance is just as fresh and sweet as anything God put on this earth. It was transplanted to a spot underneath the dining room window, and its presence there was a constant satisfaction to my mother, as it was to me 50 years after she planted it, when Ed and I made our last move, and I came home again.

My father died at St. Mary's Hospital in Athens on June 2, 1950. He left his house to my sister Lucile, who lived in Atlanta, and she rented it for two years before Ed and I felt ready to live there ourselves. We moved back to Jackson county in January 1953.

Thirty-seven years had passed since the day Ed and I were married in front of the fireplace, and even though the children and I visited Commerce a good bit during that time, I was mighty glad to get back home.

It would be impossible to say which of our 52 years together were the happiest, but the 14 years Ed and I were together in Commerce was a joyful time. All six of our children had grown up to lead exemplary Christian lives in their chosen fields and activities, and our grandchildren made our days even more blessed. Those were busy years. In the summertime we practically ran a summer camp for the grandchildren, and winters we spent in Florida with our daughter Sara and her family.

In 1956 the children helped us celebrate our Golden Wedding Anniversary. In the spring of 1967, even though his health was leaving him, Ed was the cheerful man he always was. When we returned from Florida in late March, he had to go into the hospital in Gainesville, and there he talked of rolling around the front porch in a wheelchair during the summer. It was April 17 when he died. In four days he would have been 90. There was nothing that could have prepared me for losing him--nothing, I don't guess, except trusting in God and believing that we will be reunited in a far better place.

photographs in this publication are courtesy of the Lydia Nix Massey book "This is My Song This is My Story"

The Jackson County Historical Society will Ramble to the Nix/Massey house, the home of Jonathan and Cindy Finck, at 192 Washington Street in Commerce, Georgia.

Sunday, October 16, at 2:30. This Ramble is open to Historical Society members only. Membership is:

\$15. Individual, \$20. Family, \$100. Life

Directions: Take Highway 98 north of Commerce to Washington Street, where Highway 98 crosses the railroad track and continues north to Maysville. The house will be on the right before Washington Street ends at Highway 15.



Lydia Nix Massey



Ed Massey

Jackson County Historical Society

P.O. Box 1234 Commerce, Georgia 30529