FLORENCE BENNETT NOTES

Received the book material that I had written to you in letters yesterday. I still remember the little Town of Dyer you see I lived there for 70 years. I remember every pig trail, every farm, all the older settlers, and all the new born babies of my time. I helped the doctors deliver 22 babies in the Community: Dr Crigler; Dr. Ayres; Dr. Hunt; Dr. Reeves; Dr. Haney; Dr. Kirksey; Dr Campbell; Dr. Baker; I started very young; I don't know why I always went when I was sent for; I suppose that was why they always sent for me, and I cared for the babies afterwards every morning and even nursed some of the mothers. I don't know how I did and took care of my family too.

My children and grandchildren will appreciate reading the letters that I wrote you, telling about the first generation of people living in Dyer and events that happened there. Artie's family were pioneers of Dallas, Texas. My great-great-great-grandfather was Joseph Loomis—came to New York in 1600 from England. New York was practically a wilderness and full of Indians at that time.

I don't know Bill Renfroe's first wife's name, I never heard her name, he was married to Amanda when he came to Dyer. Bonnie Rhodes might be able to help you.

I am able to still live alone, Inez and Marie do my heavy housework and laundry. I have slowed down a lot this past year. I am now 90 ½. I still do needlework, piece quilts, and crochet. I am expecting three great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild in 1979: that is enough to make one feel old. [Florence is now 97 years old].

January 17, 1977

Dear Lorena: I am sorry that I have been so long in writing you and sending you this picture back, but I have been so terribly busy getting ready for Christmas. I hate to say this but this depot doesn't resemble the Dyer depot as I remember it. There was no board platform around the north side and east front of the Depot. The Depot was flat on the ground and outside the door was chat or gravel around the north and east side and the south side had a platform, started on level ground and was built slanted up all the way on the south side of the Depot and on the west side was high with banisters on the outside. I and others would run up and down this. It also extended around on the north side. There were big or huge oak trees west and south all the way to the Methodist Church.

(Taking this picture and checking it with the station as we remember it they are built alike. I believe this is the earlier Depot that was at the west crossing and moved.)

James (Uncle Billy) Heard owned a lot of land where Mr. Lester lived. Also Dick Heard who married Mary Woods and lived west of Dyer on the Heard Branch which was named for him. Mr. Lester married Ann Heard, the sister of Dick Heard. Bill Heard was the son of Dick and Mary Woods Heard, and Dick was the son of Uncle Billy or James heard.

The Woods owned land west of the Heard Branch on the road to Alma. John Woods was the son of Tom Woods who lived on part of the land on the north side of the road going to Alma. Tom Woods children were: John Woods, Jr; Nan Woods, who wed Mr. Carter; Mary Woods who wed Dick Heard; Jennie Woods, second wife of Bro Storey, a Methodist minister of the Dyer Church. I knew these girls and went to school with some of them in the first school building.

I don't know who was the first baby born in Dyer, or the first wedding, or the first death.

The first Post Office stood where Mack Dyer's house is today (1986). It was one long room facing the railroad tracks (south). Uncle Steve Dyer had his first Post Office in his store and it was run by one of his sons, Walter Dyer.

Mr. James Patton had a store where Terrell Rhodes built the Post office; the post office was in the Tom James store at that time. There was a small Barber Shop on the same lot with the Post office Terrell Rhodes built which was a frame building and separated from the Patton store which Monroe Nelson was the Barber. This burned when the old store burned when Mr. Oxford had a store there. Monroe had his first Barber Shop in the back of John William Moss store which Monroe had bought from Edd Osborn who was the first barber in Dyer. The shop was only opened on Saturdays, there were such a few people to serve. My Daddy went there for shave and haircuts in 1908.

The names that I have sent of pupils who attended the first school at Dyer which was located almost on the spot where Baptist Church is today. In those days pupils attended school until they were 20 years old or older. The children born in the later 90s started to school on the second school on the southeast corner of the school ground. This school was built in 1902 and where many of us also started school which was a four room white frame building but the north room upstairs was used for the Lodge Hall until the two story building was built down town. Marie and Edith, Dude's wife, have taken up crocheting and piecing quilts. I am so glad that my niece, Florence, from New York came by to see you and was glad to hear this direct from you.

Lorena, as you see I am not a good ARTIST OR STORY TELLER but here is a sketch of the first school building built in Dyer, 1885, south of the Baptist Church. It faced the east with one long room wide enough for two rows of long seats on each side (two pupils sat in each desk). The isle was in the middle of the room from front door to back. A pot-bellied stove was situated in the center of the room. Blackboards covered the walls on the west side. The belfry was on top of the building in the front of the school. There were no back doors or windows on the north side of school. There was box built in southwest end where the organ was moved back in and locked when not in use, just large enough and tall enough for the organ. Only one teacher at that time and they taught from the first through the eight grades. I went to school in this room in 1894.My first teacher was Miss Hattie May Rhinehart, and she must have taught for many years, I was told that she taught the first school in Dyer some time between 1885 and 1894.

Another room was added on to the school house on the south side of the building. My mother gave me these dates. My father, Floyd Loomis, added the extra room with one door in the front for pupils to enter and leave and one door in between the rooms. The new room had a few long seats but mostly desk seats.

Sunday School and Church was held here in the front room. Mr. George Dyer was the Sunday School Superintendent. Bro. Davis was the pastor who was a Methodist Minister. Also Bro Martin preached here before the Methodist Church was built in 1893.They are both buried in the Dyer Cemetery. I remember Bro. and Sister Martin; they were in our home a lot to spend the day. They had no children, they owned a little black feisty dog, and Sister Martin cried when it died. They were growing old, and he died when I was 10 years old.

In 1912, Floyd Loomis opened up a street across his forty acres (in town) where the road in front of Baptist Church now runs and back to about the Nelson place and to the fence of John William Moss's place in front of the stores. This was area where Cottrells and the school gym are today located. He sold off acre plots for dwelling houses, the street is named Loomis Street. He let the School Board have the first acre for a play ground, the next acre joining this to Artie and Florence Bennett. We had our first home there bought from my parents, the Floyd Loomis, in 1912.

In the fall of 1917 we sold this home and acre of land to the School Board, and the third and last school house was built on the very spot where our home had been. Florence's home was moved back and faced the west toward the school. I believe this house was sold to Ben Rhodes when his family moved down from the mountain, and then Joe and Fannie Lawrence owned the home, and it was then located in front of D. C. Cottrell's home.

The third school house was built in 1918 in time for school to open in September. It was a two story brick building with six class rooms and a large auditorium and stage at back of auditorium. The two class rooms upstairs had a roll up and down partition that closed it off from classrooms and could be opened to make the auditorium larger when it was needed when plays, and etc was held there.

Artie Bennett worked on the building until finished. His brother, Marset Bennett, was president of the school Board. Thomas William Moss was secretary and Treasurer; T. H. Hurd and Sam Morse were on the school board. Marset Bennett was a business man in Dyer.

In the first school the blackboards were painted black so chalk would show up on them. They were on each side of the door that went into the first rooms built. I went to school in both of these rooms until 1902.

The second school was built on the southeast corner of this plot of land that Steve Dyer donated for a school and a Baptist Church which was built north of the first school. A playground between the church and school among the large oak trees.

The second school was a two story building, two big room upstairs with the one the north being used for the Lodge Hall and two room down stairs with a fire escape on the east side of the building from the top floor. The school faced the west, belfry was on top of the school and the bell was rung for children to come to school. It wasn't called a High School for it only went through the eight grades. The teachers ordered High School books for us. I went in this building for four years. Several of my class mates made teachers but I chose to get married in 1906. My teacher tried to get my Daddy to keep me from getting married. He guaranteed me a diploma to teach, he had become County Superintendent by that time.

The first Church built in Dyer in 1893 was the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. George Dyer was the first Sunday School Superintendent. Bro D. N. Weaver was the first pastor.

George Dyer was blind by this time and his wife and son read the lesson to him and he would memorize it then teach it in the opening service. I remember him very well. The next superintendent was John William Moss. The first stewards were: John Jordan, John William Moss, Floyd Loomis, Bob Anderson, Sr, Tom Davidson. Loomis served as steward until 1908. I don't know dates of the other stewards.

The superintendents were: George Dyer, John William Moss; Thomas William Moss; Charley Moss, Thad Johnson, Wiley Chitwood, Ernest Cottrell, Lark Cowart, Jewel Chitwood, Bryon McDuffey, and Jewel Chitwood.

***Filename: WeRememberDyer post-1986 Book 03, 043-045 ~ Florence Bennett***