

A CEMETERY WALK NARRATIVE

William E. Tanner – Blacksmith / Woodworker / Merchant **Presented by: Bill Nuss - Grandson**

Hello. My name is William Tanner, better known in these parts as Bill Tanner. For years I've been known as the blacksmith, carpenter and then the general store proprietor.

I was born in Alabama in 1887, to Charles Sanders Tanner and Lecy Cook Tanner, the ninth of their twelve children. Charles Sanders and Lecy were married in early 1868 in Henry County, Georgia. They had Laura Frances in 1869. Two months before Isadora was born in 1871, Laura Frances died. Then two months before Lonnie Sanders was born in 1873, Isadora died. You can imagine the fear and apprehension as it came time for the birth of Taccora in 1875. Then after Taccora, better known as "Tuck" or "Cora" came Mary Tallulla in 1877, then Lolar Ophelia in 1879, Then Lucy Effie in 1882. Between the birth of Effie and Charles Henry the family moved to Alabama. Charlie was the first born here in 1884, then I came along in 1887 followed by Ida Belle in 1889 and then Lucky in 1892. Lucky lived only about a month. Then the last of the family was George Washington born in 1894.

Lonnie married Wyatt Nunnelley and lived up at Hulaco. Tuck married James Brammlette and lived what she called up in the valley in an area around Hartselle then married Will Sabodka and lived near Gold Ridge. Lou married Dan Kirk and ran a store at Simcoe and after Dan died suddenly, she eventually moved to Akron, Ohio. Lolar married Robert Harris and lived at New Hope. Effie Married William Graves, after he died, she married a Mr. Fortner. Effie lived near Hulaco and later in Carrollton, GA. Charlie married Mary Lou "Beuna" Gilley and lived at Center Point. I'm next in the list and married Lila Hammock. Belle married Walter Shoemaker and after he died young she married Newton Nix and when mama died (mama was living with her) they lived on the road not far from here toward Hanceville. George married Etha Foot and they lived up near Decatur at a place called Tanner.

When Mama and Poppa moved in late 1883 to Alabama, they moved their church letter from Flat Shoals P. B. Church in Henry County to a P. B. church at New Hope in Cullman County in June of 1884. They had first moved to an area called Providence near Vinemont but soon moved to what is called Center Point to a farm near where Tanner Bridge was built.

After I got grown I met and married Lila Hammock, the daughter of Marjah Williams Grey Hammock and James Marion Hammock. Lila had an older half-Sister, Eddie Grey Crutchfield that James, better known as Jim, raised as his and Marjie's own. Lila was the oldest of the Hammock children. Eddie's father had been killed in a mill accident prior to her birth and is buried at Conyers Georgia

We had five daughters, no sons and raised four of them to be adults. They were Cora, who married Garfield Burgess; Lessie, who married Foster Campbell; Jewell; who married Ezra "Pete" Nuss; Grace, who married first Hubert Stisher, then Clarence Ray "Perry" Winkle; and last little Ruth Tanner. We lost Ruth buried here beside me when she was about two to an infection the doctors could not cure. Back then it was called **Erysipelas**.

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For years I made my livelihood as a blacksmith in a shop near my house almost in the center of Holly Pond. It was decent location. I would shoe horses, sharpen plows, most things a blacksmith did; and when not doing that I was a carpenter. I made tables, library tables, cabinets, cupboards, all sorts of things including coffins. I did that up to the time Cullman got undertakers and I quit making coffins, probably around 1912 or 13. I did the woodwork and handles, and Lila did the inside with cushion, cloth and soft pillow. Folks always said one of the prettier ones I made was one painted black that had brass handles and a white velvet inside.

I played trombone in the Holly Pond Band. We played on the Fourth of July and other holidays here at Holly Pond and sometimes played in Cullman and other places.

Then tragedy struck when I was out hunting with a friend in the fall of '27. I propped my gun against a fence post. As I went through the barbed wire fence the gun slid off from where I had it propped and went off shooting me in the arm. Doctors did the best they could, but I lost the arm. That ended the blacksmithing' and carpentering'.

I knew I had to do something to make a living, so I turned to running a general store. I opened one up or bought out one on the first floor of the old two-story Masonic Lodge building in Holly Pond within sight of my house. It did really well. We sold all sorts of goods including fertilizer and coal with my sons-in-law helping me with delivery of the coal and fertilizer on the big truck I bought to go with the store.

When the depression hit, I managed to hang on purely because I had been frugal and put back money. Often i traded for eggs or butter or for labor for those that did not have money. I also extended credit, often knowing I would never collect because I could not let people go hungry. For some, I was able to buy up their mortgage from the bank before the bank auctioned their farm off and save their farm for them. I let them pay me as they could, and I used it and what i could get from the store to buy other mortgages and save as many around Holly Pond from the auction block as possible. The depression was a really rough time, most people that did not live through it do not understand. Additionally, Lila and I found the funds to send two daughters to college during that time.

Then Foster and Lessie built a two-story building across the street from the Masonic Lodge building and we moved our store. It had their house on one side and the store on the other side that faced the old Masonic Lodge. The upstairs was living quarters also. It even had room for Lessie and Jewell to run a beauty shop on Saturday.

Then in 1944, I tried to lift the sideboards off of the bed of the truck with my one arm without waiting for Pete or Foster to help me. I was struck with a cerebral hemorrhage. Lila sent for help and Dr. Sandlin did all he could to save me but within 30 minutes I died with Lila at my side.

Thank you all for coming and listening to my story.