



HTMA President's Notes

Ok everyone Happy New Year!!!! Wow it's over all ready. I never got used to writing 2013 and we're in 14. Ok then resolution time for us. I Hope everyone resolves to play more music. You know something? The other day I was reading in the Bible and something came to my mind I had never thought of before (no not that "Christmas was something a little bit more" that was the Grinch who thought that) I noticed that music seems to always precede the visitation of angles, and that singing is something heard from the other side quite often, maybe not every time but a lot of the time. I know of no other art or craft or profession that is mentioned in scripture coming from the other side (not being a Biblical scholar I could be mistaken), but certainly not as often as music and singing. Wow I think music is a very important function in this world for good and evil, I hope we use it for the good of mankind. I think HTMA is a force for good and I am thankful to be part of it with you guys. Anyway, I hope this year will bring good things and joy to you all. I hope we find new ways of spreading the joy of music, and I hope we spend a little more time teaching music to our families and friends. Music is, as are all arts, proactive and keeps our minds in the learning curve of life. Art seems to bring out the things that are hard to communicate in other ways. Everything we do with our art, no matter how small or incidental it seems, is adding to the good of the earth. May we keep expanding our lives through music? AGAIN HAPPY NEW YEAR

Ellery Curtis



Next Meeting
January 19th
2:00 P.M.

Huntsville/Madison Public Library

HTMA COFFEEHOUSE MUSIC SERIES PRESENTS



OLD COUNTRY CHURCH

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January Area Events

New Hope Saturday Night Jam
Every Saturday night in January beginning at 6:00 PM
New Hope Senior Center, New Hope Alabama

Elmcroft Retirement Home
January 4th 3:00 PM
8020 Benaroya Ln. Huntsville, Alabama

Harbor Chase Retirement Home
January 11th 10:30 AM
4801 Whitesport Cr.; Huntsville, Alabama

HTMA Meeting
January 19th 2:00 PM
Huntsville/Madison Public Library, Huntsville AL

HTMA Coffeehouse
January 23rd 7:00 PM
Burrirt on the Mountain Old Country Church, Huntsville, AL

Regency Retirement Village Gig
January 25th 3:15 PM
204 Max Luther Drive; Huntsville, Alabama

Executive Board

President
Ellery Curtis 256.684.3153 ellerycurtis@hotmail.com

Vice President
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Sec/Treasurer
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Performance Chair
!!!Position Available!!!

Public Service Chair
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Webmaster
Brian Curtis 256.975.8484 blcurtis@knology.net

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Position of
Performance Chair

Needs to be filled for 2014

Please contact

Ellery Curtis ellerycurtis@hotmail.com

or

Jerry LeCroy jelecroy@knology.net

if you wish to help the HTMA in a very important position

!!!! NOTICE !!!!

Pay Dues

**Yearly HTMA Membership
renewals are due
January 1, 2014**

Just go to www.huntsvillefolk.org and click

SIGNUP/RENEW

Visit our website

www.huntsvillefolk.org





The Berry Patch TOOK TO LAW

It can be said the Lord had a hand in it and that's the way I come to be a citizen of Mississippi. Now, most folk think I'm a lifelong citizen of Alabama, but most folk don't know everything.

I guess it was about '06, maybe '07. It was the late spring of the year after them flying bugs come thorough and et up all the peas, beans, greens, and sweet corn. That's when I come to be a citizen of Mississippi. It coul'da been '08. Anyhow, I was about twenty-three, maybe four. I was old enough to vote, but never seemed to have the money for the poll tax. I was a business man at the time and had my own business.

I was living in Pickens County, that's in Alabama. Born there, lived there all my life. Had part of my business there, the other part was in Mississippi, across the Tombeckbee River. The Alabama part of my business was the mak'n, the Mississippi part was the sell'n. I had a secret formula, it's still a secret. I may get back in that business again. I made it in Pickens County, poured up a steady measure in a bottle and called it **BLESSING OF THE LORD TONIC**. Now you gott'a admit, that's a good name for a tonic, one that will catch your eye and make you wonder, "If the lord done blessed it, it gott'a be good for you."

If the name don't get you, my tell'n all my tonic would do would do the rest of gett'n your attention. Here's all of the label that I put on every bottle of my tonic. Here it is, exactly. Read it and you'll see what I mean:

***BLESSING OF THE LORD TONIC
SECRET FORMULA KNOWN ONLY BY
JOE BERRY & GOD***

***One big swallow thirty- three times each day
is good for all aches and pains,
red dog mange,
and makes childbirth a pleasure!***

What others say:

Fanny Mae Puckett says, "I was troubled with my stomach for might nigh twenty years. After drinking just one bottle of BLESSING OF THE LORD TONIC, I'll put my belly up against that of the strongest man in Mississippi."

There! That was my revised and last label. Didn't I tell you I had a good tonic? Just read the label and you're ready to buy some. My first label didn't have the testimony of Fanny Mae Puckett. It was after I started adding seventy-five percent genuine corn liquor to my formula and letting Fanny Mae drink a bottle of it that I got her living testimonial and my sell'n part of the business in Mississippi took off like a hornet-chased mule. Yes sir, when the Mississippi ladies with belly trouble learned what my tonic did for Fanny Mae, I was in business, for sure.

I guess it was about '03 or '04 when Fanny Mae tried my new mix of tonic, may have been '02. It was the year that Homer Nance was shot, but not killed, when he got cornered in Buster Harlow's house in Pickensville, you'll likely remember that. Fanny Mae had told Betty Jo Harlow, that's Buster's wife, about my tonic just three weeks earlier. Seems like Homer had carried Betty Jo a bottle of my tonic, maybe two bottles, and Betty Jo be overcome with romance while Homer be there, fore Buster got home. That's what led to the shooting. It was about that time, I'm not too good on the

dates of things, but it was two or three years after Fanny Mae endorsed my tonic that I was took to law and become a citizen of Mississippi. You may be interested in how it happened.

With my adding the liquor to my tonic and gett'n Fanny Mae's word on it, my tonic sell'n business in Mississippi blossomed. I mean it took root and grew like kudzu. I got me a buggy and the best buggy mule that could be had. That new buggy and mule could have me from Carrollton, that's where I did my tonic mak'n, to Pickensville in forty-five minutes. If the ferry was on the Alabama side of the Tombeckbee when me and my mule got there, another thirty minutes would have me and my buggy carrying four dozen bottles of *BLESSING OF THE LORD TONIC* over to the Mississippi side. If the ferry was on the Mississippi side when me and the mule got to Pickensville, I had to ring the number three bell and Ned Crumrine would bring the ferry over for me. It was Ned that took me to law and made a Mississippi citizen out'a me. I'll tell you how it happened.

Like I said, it was '06 or '07, it could've been '08, when I was took to law by Ned. Ned was the one what owned the ferry, he set the price for ride'n the ferry cross the Tombeckbee. Ned's charges depended on what be ride'n the ferry. I'll jest give you what Ned charge for a buggy, a mule, and a man, that was all what was involved in gett'n me made a citizen of Mississippi. Well, there was a twister-storm involved, I'll tell about that later. First, understand Ned's charges for a mule, buggy, and man to cross, one-way, the Tombeckbee. It be \$1.00 if the sun ain't set. It be \$2.00 if the sun be down but it ain't full dark. That be a little tricky to tell about, but I think you get my drift.

The day it started, I was on the Mississippi side of the Tombeckbee, coming home. I done spread the *BLESSING OF THE LORD TONIC* over most of the Sapps Community, that be south of Columbus, and was headed back to Alabama. When I got to the ferry, Ned had it on the Alabama side and I had to ring the number three bell and wait. When Ned got over, the sun was still more than a half-hour high, I could still see the backside of Pickensville on the Alabama side. I paid Ned my \$1.00, me, the mule, and my buggy all got on together. I mean we were all on the ferry. I was in the buggy seat, I just "clucked" the mule and he pull the buggy on right smart-like. He was a good a buggy-mule as ever was, I called him "Dan-tucker." That mule was a dandy. Anyhow, my \$1.00 for the ride to Alabama was paid, me, the mule, and the buggy, with me sitting the buggy pretty as you please, was on the way to Alabama. We were half-way there when it come up. I never seen one come up so quick like, it was on us fore we knowed it. Whoosh, and here it come.

That twister picked the whole ferry up, I mean clean out of the water. It took the mule, the buggy, and me with it. It spin that ferry round like a top, the mule and me spinning with it. The buggy too. That mule hold steady, he didn't tempt to kick out of the traces. He hold steady as a rock, best damn buggy mule I ever saw. Buggy hold steady, too. Me, I pissed all over myself, I mean I let it fly. I bet I raised the water level of the Tombeckbee a foot.

That twister carried us flying to the Alabama side, then it run us to the north, then back to the Mississippi side, then down toward Meridian, then back to Alabama. I don't know how many times we went to Alabama, back to Mississippi, and back to Alabama again. I didn't count, I was busy pissing. Ned was on the ferry, too. He was guiding the ferry until that twister relieved him of the job. Later, Ned would claim he was counting the trips back and forth across the Tombeckbee. Truth be knowed, I'll bet Ned was busy pissing, and didn't have time to count.

It's hard to believe, but that twister, when it got done twisting all it could grab hold of, set the ferry down smack-dab in the middle of the Tombeckbee, leaving us sailing to the east and the Alabama side. We glided up to the bank as pretty as you please and Dan-Tucker pulled the buggy and me up the bank, through Pickensville and on to Carrollton just like we had been on a Sunday ride. Dan-tucker was a dandy. But that twister trip is what took me to law and changed my citizenship.

Ned claimed I owed him for 17 trips across the Tombeckbee and calculated the bill to be \$28.00. I didn't understand Ned's calculations, refused to pay, and Ned took me to law. Shore did. Ned come to Carrollton, went to see the Justice of the Peace, and took me to law for \$28.00, all claims coming from the twister ride.

I knowed the Justice of the Peace, a fellow name Ed Simmons, but Ed weren't no particular friend of mine. Ed was strong again whiskey, and strong for the teaching of the Lord. Ed knowed I was lacing *BLESSING OF THE LORD TONIC* with whiskey, but he did not know it was 75%. Ed did not approve of Fanny Mae tell'n folks my tonic fortified her to the point she would but her belly up again the belly of the strongest man in Mississippi. But Ed was the Justice of the Peace and he would have to decide who won in Ned's claim. Ned had took me to law.

Ned raised his hand and swore to the Lord he would tell the truth. I could not afford a lawyer, so I had no one to help me handle what Ned had to say. No sooner had Ned made the agreement about truth with the Lord and Ed Simmons say:

"Ned, you made this claim for \$28.00, now tell me how you claim what you claim."

Ned answer, "My ferry take Joe Berry, his mule, and his buggy cross the Tombeckbee 17 times. Six times before the sun went down, that be a \$1.00 for each trip, a total of \$6.00. You got that, Ed?"

Ed say, "I got it. That's \$6.00, where the other \$22.00?"

Ned say, "I ain't finished. My ferry carry Joe, his buggy, and his mule across the Tombeckbee eleven more times after the sun set. That be at \$2.00 for each trip. \$22.00 for the after sunset trips, \$6.00 for the daylight trips. Total of \$28.00 for all 17 trips."

Ed say, "Ned, why didn't you collect for each trip on the day of each trip? Why you wait so long to take Joe to law?"

"Ed, they all happened on the same day?"

"Ned, I've got to be fair with Joe. I know you would charge \$2.00 for a man, buggy, and mule to ride your ferry after sunset, but before dark. But there is no way Joe, his buggy and mule could ride your ferry eleven times after sunset but before complete darkness on the same day. It would take 30 minutes for each ride."

"Ed, if you be ride'n a ferry what is carried by a twister, it can happen. I seen it. I was ride'n the same ferry, it was picked up and carried to Allabama eight times. The twister carried us back to Mississippi nine times. That's 17 trips. Six of those trips took place before the sunset. That twister brought darkness, just like a sunset, and the last eleven trips were just like they would have been after sunset. Ed, I was counting, we made 17 trips across the river, eight going to Allabama, nine to Mississippi."

"Ned, did Joe pay you for the first trip, the one what got sucked up in the twister?"

"Well, come to think of it, he did pay for that trip. It was one of the six daylight trips, so I need to knock a \$1.00 off my claim. I clean forgot about his paying for the first ride."

"That's all right Ned. Man, unlike God, makes mistakes. Your claim now stands at \$27.00. Let's see what Joe has to say."

Turning to me, Ed Simmons say, "Joe, do you want to be sworn so you can offer your side of this?"

I say, "Ed, fore I make agreement with the Lord about tell'n thu truth, can I ask you a question?"

"Yes."

"Ed do I understand that you can make your call, but your call can only be made on what is said in this court?"

"Yes, Joe. I can only decide this matter based on what is shown in court and what is known by me to be acts of Gods. I am ruled by those standards. Ned has told me what happened. Now you have the opportunity to tell me, under oath, your side of the story. I will take those things proven to be and make a fair decision. What is your wish?"

"Ned, I'll jest play thu hand I got."

"What you mean?"

"I'll stand pat."

"What you mean?"

"Ned, I think I'll leave things just as they are. Don't deal me no more cards, I'll jest play thu ones I got."

"You do not wish to offer your side?"

"No, I'll just take Ned's words and what I know to be acts of God. I'll just count on that."

"All right, I'll ask if Ned has anything further to say"

Ned answered, "Ed, I've told you the truth. Joe ain't denied any of it; I'm entitled to \$27.00. Make Joe pay it."

I say, "Not so fast Ned. I want to remind Ed of what the proof in this case be."

Then I turned to Ed Simmons, the proclaimed servant of the Lord and Justice of the Peace:

"Ed, you, better than anyone, know that a twister is an act of the Lord. As far as the proof in this case goes, I'm not in Alabama, I'm in Mississippi. That's where Ned say the twister and the Lord put me.

That's where Ned says I am. Ned say the twister brought me to Alabama eight times and carried me to Mississippi nine times. I'm not here, I'm over there. You are Justice of Peace only on Pickens County, Allabama you can't reach over the Tombeckbee to Mississippi and do a damned thing to me."

"Joe. Explain what you mean. I see you standing right in front of me, what do you mean about being in Mississippi?"

"Ed, Ned say the ferry was going to Alabama when it was sucked up. That's the first of eight trips to Alabama. Ned said the twister carried me, my buggy and mule, back to Mississippi nine times. That leaves me in Mississippi. The twister was an act of the Lord, it put me there. Ned has proven I was left there. Your eyes may suggest that I'm here, but the act of the Lord is stronger than your eyes. I'm in Mississippi as far as this being took to the law is concerned. I'm across the river with my mule and buggy and there ain't a damn thing you can do about it."

Ed turned to Ned for an answer. Ned had none. Being took to law made me a citizen of Mississippi and, until someone proves something different to Ed Simmons, I'll so be for the rest of my life.

Joe