

Beersheba Springs Historical Society
Meeting
August 31, 2019
Grace Chapel
4:00pm

Harrison Taylor opened the meeting with introductions. He then thanked the volunteers who staffed the BSHS booth at the Craft Fair, and Sharon Whitman who continues to keep the Beersheba Museum open on Saturdays.

Harrison also mentioned the passing of Joan Almon. David Smith shared two wonderful memories with the group of being in fifty degree water with Joan, always an enthusiastic participant, on the Collins River raft. The thoughts and prayers of all members of the BSHS are now with Clopper Almon.

Harrison reminded all members to **send their dues payment (and any contributions) to Susan Snow at 605 Key Hulse Road, Signal Mountain, TN 37377.**

Sam Baggett recently attended the Governor's Conference and hopes that the Shady Valley Nursery property may be funded in the next budget cycle. Friends of South Cumberland has agreed to create a trail around the lake.

The next Barn Dance is scheduled for September 21, 2019 at 5:30pm.

Steve Blackwell shared that work on Highway 56 will continue this fall with equipment from Highway 50.

Steve also shared that he and Erin Reed took Clopper Almon down to Long's Mill as part of Clopper's Chickamauga Trace research.

John Greeter shared that his great grandfather bought Long's Mill in 1870 and had a water-powered grist mill, and later a sawmill, there.

Richard Savage, the guest speaker for the meeting, then introduced himself. Richard is from Cookeville, TN, taught at Tennessee Tech, enjoys hiking and history, and has ancestors from the Beersheba area who inspired his research on the McMinnville-Chattanooga Stagecoach Road. The Savage family lived in the Savage Gulf where there was a school, and multiple freshwater springs (the best of which, according to Richard, is under Stone Door Point). Clopper Almon is familiar with Richard's research, as was Ralph Thompson who helped with aerial photos of the area.

In the mid-1800's, the railroad system was expanding to include Chattanooga. It was deemed important to connect Nashville, the state capital, to Chattanooga but transportation for the last section from McMinnville to Chattanooga was not available. Hence the road was begun in either the summer of 1850, or February of 1851. The road was a public road in Warren County and Grundy County, then a turnpike over the mountain, then public again in Sequatchie County, then a turnpike again for the final section. The stagecoaches held nine passengers inside, and more on top. It took up to 36 hours to get from McMinnville to Chattanooga.

The old Stagecoach Road included 1.5 miles which are currently inside the park system (hiking trail called Old Stage Coach Road). Some areas are easy to follow for hikers, while others are overgrown. The road is distinguished by rock retaining walls (7-8 feet tall dating from 1850, 15 feet tall dating from 1905). The pro section of the old Stagecoach Road is protected by the National Register of Historic Places, but is also in a State Park so jurisdiction is shared.

The road was originally built as a toll road by Turnpike Company, and did not access Beersheba Springs directly (secondary, private stage coach roads were available for a fare for passengers wishing to arrive in Beersheba). Richard shared that topographical maps show a McMinnville Stage Road which is not actually where the stage coaches drove. For those interested in seeing an additional section of the original road (outside of the park) while on McMinnville Highway, cross the Alf Adams Memorial Bridge, and watch for a large, old abandoned house on the right (slightly visible on a rise, through trees). A section of the original Stagecoach Road ran in front of this house. The Stagecoach Road also crosses Highway 399 near Browns Chapel Cemetery en route to the Sequatchie County line, but it is not the road that is marked Old Stage Road on the sign! (Richard's research has confirmed this)

By May 1853, the railroad reached the Tennessee River which meant that passengers would now use a steamboat to reach the railroad, and the stagecoach service abruptly ended. Stage coaches did, however, regularly run up the mountain beginning in 1853 and continuing for many years. Richard shared a news article about a stage coach accident in 1857 which injured several people. Additional information can be found in Richard Savage's articles for the Grundy County Historical Society in December 2018 and January 2019 (Parts I and II).

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Attendance**

<u>Name</u>	<u>E-mail</u>	<u>Address</u>
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Mandy & William Hogmeister	hofs@comcast.net	
Harrison Taylor		
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Larry Papel Elizabeth Papel	larry.papel@nelsonmullins.com lpapel@comcast.net	Armfield Ave.

Jeremy Thompson
Susan Thompson (Ralph Thompson's relatives)

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