



Pearl Webb Cemetery Newsletter

Designed by Paul Sullivan

Issue VII Winter 2008

History & Facts

By: June Burks

John W. Weller

Canmer's First

Undertaker & Embalmer

July 11, 1868 - May 7, 1940

Three members of the Nelson County Weller family decided to relocate in the mid 1800's. They chose Hart County for their new location - 1840's-1850's. They were children of Mr. & Mrs. George S. Weller. Mr. Weller was born in Maryland and migrated to Nelson County in the early part of the 1800's. These three members were Sarah Ann Elizabeth, Samuel Carpenter, and George David.

The daughter, Sarah Ann Elizabeth Weller, was born in 1820 at Bardstown (d. 1888 at Rio). She had married Rufus K. Lane in Nelson County and soon after moved to Rio. The brothers were younger than Elizabeth. They came to visit their sister often at Rio. Seeing there were opportunities here, as soon as they were old enough, they also moved to Hart County (around 1850 - Sarah Elizabeth and Rufus Lane, possibly came in the 1840's).

The Lane's began building a community just North of Canmer and the Green River. They soon had a complete village. A school, church, mill, hotel, a new bridge over Green River, store, and homes were finished.

The two brothers, Samuel

(who would become the father of John Weller) and George David, each moved near Canmer. Early on, they became known as the best carpenters in this area. George David began building his home on the Canmer Defries Road - a large two story home in later years known as the Ivan Vance home.

The Canmer community was in it's developing stage. The need for churches and schools was recognized, so the citizens of the area soon began addressing these needs. The decision was made to build the Hopewell Presbyterian Church. This church was located a short distance down the road from Mr. George David Weller's home. After finishing this church in 1859, the carpenters never took their tools off their wagons. They came on out to the Jackson Highway and began building Gilead Church, just south of Canmer. This was a union Church. The two Weller brothers, Samuel and George David, were considered two of the leading carpenters of this group that were building the churches. Gilead Church was finished in 1860. Samuel then went to Canmer to build his home on the 162 acre farm he had just purchased. Samuel was to become the father of John W. Weller in 1868, our future undertaker.

In the early history of Canmer, it seems that the very industrious newcomers saw that every need was met. So as these early citizens of this rural village began dying, a place on a hill southwest of the center of the

village was chosen as a burial place. This cemetery, soon became known as, the Pearl Webb Cemetery - being named after a small child who was buried there in July 1878. Some have thought she was the first to be buried there, but dates on the early stones reveal otherwise. It is known that four of the early citizens of this community were buried there prior to the child's burial. J.V.C. Cowherd, 1867; W.W. Watkins, 1870; S.L.C. Cowherd, 1871; Lizzie Cowherd, 1877; and possibly others with unmarked stones were buried prior to the burial of the child.

In 1878, it was recognized that a real need had arisen to establish and organize a public local cemetery. So, a group of men met for this purpose. Included in the group were Henry Lafferty, Ira Webb, Harvey Bowling Lane, J.R. Armour, and Samuel Carpenter Weller.

Samuel Weller had already bought a 162 acre farm, which lay on both sides of the road (now Boyds Knob Road). These few graves had already been located on his land on the south side of the road and across from his newly built home. Mr. Weller donated more land and at their meeting it was decided to buy more from Mr. & Mrs. B.F. Pedigo and others. This was now declared a public burial ground.

After coming to Canmer, Mr. Samuel Weller had married Miss Martha Watkins. They had started a family in their new home. One of their children was a son, John W., who was born



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July 11, 1868. The need for a local embalmer and undertaker had been recognized. It was decided that as soon as John became old enough he would be sent away to school to be educated and trained for this purpose. So, at a very early age, John Weller became Canmer's first undertaker. Perhaps, he was being encouraged by his grandfather back in Bardstown. He (George S. Weller) was already known as a fine carpenter there and was making fine coffins of walnut and cherry for the more moneyed citizens of Bardstown. When, Mr. George S. Weller, came to Bardstown, he married Miss Judith S. Hubbard. They lived there until their death and are buried there at Mill Creek Baptist Cemetery in Bardstown.

Mr. John Weller became a very respected member of the Canmer community. His services were used by all the local folks and for many miles around. He served his community very well until a sickness overtook him. His death came May 7, 1940. He had served his community for some 50 years.

In talking to several of the older people of this community, several had memories of Mr. Weller and his family. Mrs. Alta (Sis) Russell well remembers of being friends of the Weller children. Her family, the Davis family was a neighboring family.

Alta tells of the storage barn that was built between the Weller house and the road. Mr. Weller kept his horse drawn hearse here. Also some coffins and other supplies were kept in this barn. Alta and Martha, Mr. Weller's

daughter, could be found playing in this building often - sitting and playing in the hearse, which was the first known hearse in this area. There was also a small barn built behind this building. This was where the family cow was brought up to be fed and milked. This was Mrs. Weller's job - providing milk and butter for her family.

Other children of the Weller's remembered by Alta Russell are Grace, Nell, Mary, George, and Jim Bowling. Grace became quite prominent in the field of education. Alta also remembers a cousin of Samuel's children (Emma). She worked in the Canmer Deposit Bank for several years. She was a daughter of George David Weller.

Mr. & Mrs. W.O. Buckner shared some of their memories with me. Mr. & Mrs. Buckner's first born was still born on 1936. They called upon Mr. Weller for help. They well remember the tiny coffin, Mr. Weller, brought to their home and his help in getting them through this difficult time. Also, Mrs. Buckner tells of her mother, Mrs. Mary Alice Dangerfield passing away in 1935.

When, Mr. Wm. Henry Burks, Sr. also passed away in 1935 the services of John Weller were requested for Mr. Burks. Mr. George Weller, of the Maxey Knob area, told me he remembered the death of Mr. Burks and that he was the first person in this area to be buried in a steel vault. Mr. John Weller made a special trip to Louisville to buy this vault.

Jean Hedgepeth has found, while researching her records, that Mr. Weller was named on many of the copies of death certificates she

has in her files. Mr. Weller was used as the undertaker for these services. Some of these are as follows: 1915 Annie Mary Watkins, 1915 J.R. Armour, 1924 Wm. Goble Hedgepeth, 1926 Morgan Hedgepeth, 1916 Mattie Hedgepeth, 1927 Dan Witt, 1931 Josephine Witt, 1914 J.C. Davis, 1911 DeWitt C. Davis.

Mr. John Weller is remembered for his kindness, sensitivity, and professionalism. He was active until a brief time before his death, May 7, 1940 at the age of 72. His widow, Mrs. Belle J. Weller, remained in the home for many years. Her death came June 8, 1964.

The old Weller home remained vacant for a while until Mr. V.R. Carver purchased it. Mr. D.L. Carver bought this house from his father in 1966 at which time he began the restoration of it. The house now was over 100 years old and was in great need of repair. It soon became a nice home for the Carver family. But, the house was not without problems! The Carver children began reporting strange sightings, noises, and happenings. One of the sons, finally refused to stay overnight in this house, because of his frightening experiences. The Carver's began researching the history of this house. They found that a baby had died suddenly in it's bed - now it would be known as crib death. This was Martha's baby - a grandchild of John Weller. Then, the Carver's were told that Mr. Weller brought many corpses into a back room of the house for embalming,



dressing, and preparing the body to be placed in the coffin for burial. The body (in the coffin) then would be taken back to the home to lay in state until time for the funeral.



The Weller House in Canmer. D.L. Carver's son, Gene Carver now lives in the home.

A few of John W. Weller descendants still live in the community - Mr. Bill Blakey being one of them. Mr. John Weller is Bill Blakey's great grandfather. Mr. Weller's daughter, Mary Elizabeth Weller is Mr. Burke Blakey's mother and Bill's grandmother.

Again, Mr. John Weller is remembered as one who served his community very well for some 50 years - working in a profession that few people would care to choose.



Left to Right: Mary Elizabeth Weller Blakey, Charles Weller, Ruth Blakey LaPoint, Alex LaPoint, and Wm. Bill Blakey - photo was taken in the yard of the old Blakey homeplace, now home to Bill & Mary Blakey.

Photo provided by: Bill & Mary Blakey

Note: I am indebted to the following people for sharing both their history, genealogies, and memories of Mr. John Weller with me. This supplied me with many names and dates. Special thanks to Billy and Wanda Weller for sharing a wealth of information with me, and to Mr. and Mrs. W.O. Buckner for their recollections. Also, thanks to Mrs. Alta (Sis) Russell for her childhood memories and to Jean Hedgepeth for sharing information from her wealth of records. Thanks also goes to the D.L. Carver children for sharing their many stories and personal experiences and to many others who took time to talk to me even though they had no specific knowledge or memories.

From the Treasurer's Desk

By: Brenda Dudderar

The annual meeting for Pearl Webb Cemetery will be **Tuesday, March 10, 2009** at 7:00 p.m. at the Hardyville Union Church. Our mowing contract has expired and will be renewed at this meeting.

Larry Jagers, the president of the Pearl Webb Cemetery Board, was involved in an accident in November and was severely burned. He is at the Southern Kentucky Rehabilitation Hospital in Bowling Green, Kentucky. He has undergone surgery and may require more. We all certainly wish Mr. Jagers a speedy recovery.

Once again, we would like to thank everyone for their

generous donations. We only had 17 mowings this year. More than last year, but down from previous years.

Those who have been buried at Pearl Webb, since the last newsletter:

- Lillian Lindsey
- Sue Buckner
- Claude Allen Melvin
- Veola Jagers
- Jean Buckner



Pearl Webb Cemetery Board

- Larry Jagers, President
- Brenda Dudderar, Treasurer
- Peggy Sue Avery, Secretary
- James E. Chaney
- Paul Sullivan
- Jean Hedgepeth
- Wyonia Devore
- Junior Priddy
- Erik Priddy
- Billy Vance
- Roy Avery
- Larry Rogers



Anyone desiring to contribute to the cemetery can do so by sending your tax deductible donation to:

Pearl Webb Cemetery
c/o Brenda Dudderar
1945 N. Jackson Hwy
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Also, anyone wishing to be added to our mailing list, please drop us a note. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you to keep the Pearl Webb Cemetery looking beautiful for future generations.



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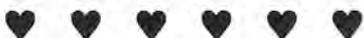
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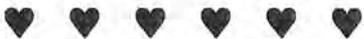
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