
Greene County Magazine

The Mountain Stores of Greene County



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THE MOUNTAIN STORES OF GREENE COUNTY
And The Communities Around them

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The earliest people to move into and live in the mountains were British - of English, Scotch, Irish or Welsh descent - with such recognizable names as Beazley, Goodall, Kendall, Page and Powell.¹ These men came in patenting or buying enough land to at least establish small plantations. They were accepted and given duties in what was then Orange County.² In the early days, their life could not have been very much different from that of people in the lowlands of the county. At least in the Greene County section, men do not seem to have gotten up into the real Blue Ridge (that part now taken by the Shenandoah National Park) so early. About one third of these residents may have gotten there before the nineteenth century. The names of another third do not show up until Greene County was established in 1838.³ The early men who established plantations would have been raising tobacco, a crop which is terribly work intensive and which quickly depletes the soil. As a result some of these men moved over into the valley; others moved down into the lower parts of the county. As a cash crop, tobacco became less and less dependable. Traveling conditions, difficult throughout the area, were somewhat more difficult in the mountains. But, they were very independent people who enjoyed depending upon their own resources for food, clothing and an active community social life..

One man described the home in which his older brothers and sisters were born at the turn into the twentieth century: "This house was built of logs; the chinks or spaces between the logs

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were daubed with mud. There were four rooms, two rooms making the main part of the house, one upstairs and one downstairs and two sheds with earthen floors. There was a fireplace which burned pieces of wood three feet long or more. It was a good source of heat. The roof was covered with boards about three feet long instead of shingles..."⁴ attached. Though it can be said that "While mountaineers did sometimes inhabit shoddy or dilapidated dwellings, most were solidly built wood-framed or hewn-log structures,"⁵

Likewise, the community events such as making applebutter, husking bees, quilting bees, making molasses, and barn raising,⁶ were done in a way similar to the following description of such activities nearly one hundred years earlier. "Log rollings, house warmings, sugar stirrings, quiltings, 'apple butter bilins,' corn shuckings, house raisins, and the Old Virginia Reel were frolics in which the entire neighborhood took part."⁷

Toward the end of the nineteenth century there came to be a new awareness of these unique mountain people. Some, perhaps out of a sort of nostalgia for the past, began to collect mountain songs, mountain dialect and handcrafts. The mountain residents welcomed Archdeacon Frederick Neve of Ivy, Virginia, who set the Episcopal Church on a mission which from 1900 to 1916 set up 10 schools and a number of chapels in the mountains of Greene County. In 1901 the Brethren Church, which had already had a presence in the mountains for some years, was organized into a congregation.⁹ Within a few years, it began its most notable effort in the establishment of the Church of the Brethren Industrial School under Nellie Wampler.

Before going further we should note that the Methodist Church appeared in the mountains much earlier. The Bingham Methodist Church dates from 1794; and the Mt Vernon Methodist

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completed a sizable list in 1861. In each case there was probably a group of worshipers before a church was established.

Because the mountain residents were not able to grow or make all of their necessities, they looked for stores closeby that they could rely on for food staples such as wheat flour, sugar, salt, and spices, to tools and cloth for clothing. They needed postal service and a place to trade such items as they had raised and/or harvested. Ambitious men saw the need and set up stores around which there often developed a little community life.

In modern terms, all of the storeowners were entrepeneures, setting up a business by which they hoped to profit. Of these John E. Fletcher may have been the biggest, if not the best.¹⁰ In 1859 at the age of 22, he may have had a store for there is record that he bought supplies which seem to have been for a store. There are various records of store business from 1878 on through the years. His daughter, Irma, carried on with the store until at least 1963.

The year 1879 found Fletcher making application to establish a post office "6 miles north of Stanardsville along the Conway River" to be called Rock Cliff Post Office. In fact he finally established Fletcher Post Office in 1884.¹¹ It continued until 1947.

At some point he set up the Fletcher School and became the teacher; but we have little information about this effort.

Fletcher was a farmer; and there are a couple of records of his interest in buying rams and ewes. He was for a time the secretary of the Greene County Cooperating Grange, which included Dundee # 103, Stanardsville # 260 and Liberty # 142.

In 1893 he bought the mill lot of Abraham Taylor; so one must presume that he also

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became a miller.¹²

However, his greatest interest seems to have been in the possibility of mining copper or other minerals in the area. There are numerous letters from companies in Pittsburgh, New York and Richmond indicating interest in mining rights. One company sent, or was about to send 9 drill men, 3 assistants and 1 blacksmith for a week of exploratory drilling. As early as 1877 he received a report from mining engineers that samples of ore showed that mining here was not feasible; but this did not deter him. Late in 1899 Fletcher was trying to arrange the sale, or lease, of 2000 acres (more or less in Greene County), 709 acres of which he personally owned, for \$27,500. This occurred after he had gotten another letter in 1901 telling him in rather strong language that mining was not feasible in this area.

Fletcher died in 1906. Today various floods of the Conway River have destroyed and carried away most of what was Fletcher, Virginia. Only a small building which may at one time have been the post office remains.

In 1895 Mr. Reuben A. Breeden purchased land near the corner of S.R. 667 and S.R. 642¹³ and soon after built a store. In 1894 James W. Lamb established a Post Office nearby.¹⁴ Charles Deane purchased the store in 1906.¹⁵ In 1908, the post office was renamed Kinderhook in honor of the home town of President Millard Fillmore¹⁶ At least by 1914, it had its place in a corner of the store; and a mountain village, which may have been known as Lamb, has ever since been known as Kinderhook. Charles P. Deane operated the store and post office until his death in 1939. His wife, Iona Worley Deane (d. 1965), and son, Crafton Phillip Deane (d. 1994), commonly known as Teedie or T.D., continued to operate the store for years. Probably no one knows just

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how or when it actually came about; but Kinderhook became a little village. A large house was built on the corner (a few others were not far away); and, reminiscent of the earlier taverns and more recent rooming houses, salesmen who brought their wares to the store often stayed over night, eating the necessary meals there as well. The store served mountain people who brought dried cherries and apples, ginseng root, black walnut meats, eggs, chestnuts, rabbit, quail and oak tree bark to trade for needed products. Besides the absolute necessities for mountain life, the store combined the family orders for Christmas oysters which were ordered, and arrived in barrels from Baltimore, in time for fried, raw or stewed oysters on Christmas Day. If a customer needed change at the end of a transaction, he was given cardboard change, called due bills, printed solely for use in the Kinderhook store. This, of course, encouraged repeated shopping there.



The old store at Kinderhook as it looked in recent times



The Kinderhook store on Route 667 is no longer in business

The store was the community center, a place to gossip or play card games such as Set Back and pitching horseshoes.

Charles was known to serve the living by pulling teeth and the dead by acting as funeral director. A carpenter would assemble coffins in the upper floor of the store using hardware provided by the store. A horse drawn glass sided hearse was available for the funeral.

At the corner of the two roads until the state took over the maintenance was a traffic circle marked out by stones with a flower garden inside. Just to the north on the river side of the road was a still-house (legal in those earlier days). Nearby down stream was a blacksmith shop. Next

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to it was a scale house for weighing wagonloads of bark. Directly below the store was a one-room schoolhouse. Behind the store were a generator house, which provided the first electricity in the area to the house and store, a corn crib and meat house. The Deanes were also farmers who owned acreage on both the Conway and South Rivers.

Somewhere in the area was a Dr. Crafton. Little is now known about him; but his services so impressed Charles Deane that he named his son Crafton Phillip after this doctor. Apparently this little mountain village had a community doctor.¹⁷

It was not a store that started the development of the village of McMullen, but rather a grist mill.¹⁸ When James McMullen (b. 1770-d. 1842) turned from the raising of tobacco to wheat, it must have made the need for a mill obvious. This in itself would have gotten the attention of the neighbors; but through the years he added a sawmill, a cooper's shop, a carding machine; and his son-in-law, Walter Houseworth, was a wagon maker. The mill and the surrounding activities became a place to meet, gossip and play. In 1846 the South River Methodist Church was established no more than a mile east of the mill; and there may have been a church building prior to this time. In 1854 Neal McMullen became postmaster of what was then known as McMullen Mill.¹⁹ In 1886, when Henry W. Moyer built a store here on S.R. 647 just off S.R. 637, the post office was either moved to, or reinstated at, the store the name became simply McMullen, VA.²⁰ One must admit that much of this commercial activity creating a little village occurred much earlier than the turn of the century. But then one must consider that there were at one period 13 or 14 McMullen families in this one small area. These families included farmers, coopers, wagon makers, peddlers and preachers. This is simply an early recognition of the needs of mountain

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people, and in this case the needs of nearby plantations.

Lydia, Virginia extended from a store on the northeast corner of U.S. 33 and S.R. 634 run by "Jack" Dean, then by Edward Shifflett, and a store about a mile and a quarter west in the edge of what is now the Shenandoah National Park run by Joseph Shifflett.²¹ Lydia Post Office was established in 1896;²² but there was much more. Of course a gasoline pump was added to the first store when automobile traffic became predominant. Up the mountain behind the store, the Weaver family provided for a school, which was the second school in the area. Across the road there was the Mountain View Tea Room with tourist cabins and even a "dance hall." Down below in the upper end of Mutton Hollow beside the Swift Run River was "Jack" Dean's sassafras mill.²³ Half a mile west was the Temple Hill Methodist Church, remembered today as the Mennonite Church which bought the property in 1938.²⁴ A mile west was the Golden Horseshoe Restaurant and Motel.²⁵ Somewhat behind it were the St. James Mission, school and hospital. The Tea Room and the Golden Horseshoe Restaurant were obviously designed for travelers along U.S. 33; but the rest of Lydia belonged to the mountain community.

On March 11, 1904 S.S. Geer bought one acre of land just north of the Mt. Vernon Methodist Church on S.R. 810 near S.R. 646. Here he built a store and established a post office.²⁶ Mr. Geer sold the store and post office within a year;²⁷ but both continued together probably until the end of 1926. On March 22, 1927, W.F. Morris bought the store and subsequently moved it across the road and perhaps a hundred yards north.²⁸ As was usual with these stores, the proprietor often made trips up into the mountains to serve his customers. Dried apples seem to have been the product of the mountains most often brought in to this store for trade by the

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mountain people. A baseball diamond was created and used in season; but night after night through the year, men gathered in the store just to talk.²⁹ The store continued, on a gradually reduced basis, until about 1978.

Georgia's Store³⁰ was in Haneytown rather far up S.R. 631. She probably died before her husband, Elijah Shifflett. In 1924, after Elijah died leaving no will, other children of Elijah, sold their interest in his property to Leonard L. Shifflett.³¹ We know very little about the store he continued to run there until 1930 when he moved it out of the community onto S. R 810.³² In this case the Post Office, established by Rhoda Haney in 1906,³³ was not a part of the store. It was about half a mile from the eastern end of Haneytown road; and it closed after four years. There was also an Episcopal Church and school (All Saints Mission),³⁴ and a Church of the Brethren Industrial School (CBIS) should probably be included here. Obviously there were a number of people stretched along several miles of this road who considered themselves living in Haneytown.

On January 17, 1930, L.L. Shifflett bought 1/4 acre of land on S.R.810 directly opposite the Mt. Vernon Methodist Church³⁵ and moved the store building, which he had previously owned in Haneytown, to this site.³⁶ By this time the state had taken over the county roads. The roads were improving; and it may be that Mr. Shifflett established his store primarily as a gas station. The store probably closed early in 1971 when Mr. Shifflett sold the property.³⁷

We know that the Huckstep store was in existence in 1908.³⁸ It was on the corner of S.R. 810 and S.R. 615. Apparently the store was successful; and its long time proprietor was Jesse Shifflett; and E.Y. Vernon, the community's funeral director, kept his supplies here including a horse drawn hearse.³⁹ Unfortunately we know little more about it.

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On August 18, 1908⁴⁰ Charles A. Pirkey purchased two acres "on the road from Stanardsville to Nortonsville" (This was the road now known as S.R. 810.) and "Plunket Mill Road" (this is now known as S.R. 612) "two hundred yards south of the Huckstep grocery." Here he built a store building and started a post office.⁴¹ Pirkey sold his store to Clarence Snow and Edward S. Morris within several years;⁴² and it was Morris who leased space for the Texaco Oil company in 1930.⁴³ When E. Y. Vernon purchased this store in 1942,⁴⁴ he may have moved his supplies here.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to get a clear picture of the stores and post offices in Bacon Hollow. Clyde Knight tells that his parents had a store in their home,⁴⁵ apparently while he was still a young boy, and that later his mother became a postmistress. However, he writes of an earlier store in the hollow. This may have been the Pirkey store and post office, purchased and established by Charles A. Pirkey in 1906.⁴⁶ Mrs. Lee Anna Knight, Clyde's mother, was postmistress at the Nimrod Post office from 1919 to 1925.⁴⁷ Bacon Hollow must have been a remarkable community. At various times there were two stores (possibly more) and two post offices, the Mountain Grove Chapel, Nimrod Shifflett's grist mill, a grade school.⁴⁸ And, from 1908 the Blue Ridge Industrial School which became the first high school in Greene County.⁴⁹

In 1902, Alpalonia E. Bickers established a post office in her home about half a mile below the corner of S.R. 810 and S.R. 627.⁵⁰ In 1921, B.G. Snow took over the post office, probably locating it at his mill located on the Roach River beside S.R. 810. By 1930, the mill badly needed repairs; and Mr. Snow moved the post office and the mill, which could now be run by engine power, down to the corner of the two roads. From that start Mr. Snow established a store,

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gasoline station and post office which continue this day. Mr. Snow also ran a saw mill and supplied much of the lumber needed to build the first building, and probably others, at Blue Ridge Industrial School.⁵¹ Apparently the Scourgeabout School was also near Dyke for Mrs. Snow taught there.⁵²

Events in the first half of the 1900s began to work against the mountain stores. World War I undoubtedly took many of the young men out into other parts of the country and often into Europe. If they returned, they soon found that roads were improving, as the state took over county roads in the 1920s; and cars were becoming available to ordinary people. The United States fell into a depression in 1929, but the mountain residents who were used to fending for themselves managed better than most until the 1930's, when the Shenandoah National Park's creation included forcing many mountain residents to leave their homes and farms, which still leaves a bitterness in the descendants of those who were forcible removed. These people's way of living was changed dramatically; and many of them lost all of what they had worked so hard to build up and accumulate- their homes and farms, as well as their independent lifestyle that they cherished. World War II came in 1942.

Stores in Stanardsville, Charlottesville and even larger towns and were now easy to reach on good roads. The day of the little mountain store was past. Most of them existed for years longer, supplying a pack of cigarettes, a bottle of milk, a loaf of bread; but they could no longer compete with the larger stores available within reach of nearly all the people. By some time in the 1970's all but one or two had closed. The store in Dyke remains the only one in business to this day. It's location on the major road into and out of southwest Greene County probably accounts for its

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survival.

NOTE: Recently Greene County adopted the E-911 program for calling local authorities in case of emergency. As a result roads now have both a number and a name. However, the use of both name and number to identify a road when writing may well be confusing to the reader; and it does nothing to further the purpose of the article. Below is a chart giving both number and name of those roads mentioned in this article.

U.S. 33.....	Spottswood Trail
S.R. 612.....	March Road
S.R. 615.....	Evergreen Church Road
S.R. 627.....	Bacon Hollow Road
S.R. 631.....	Haneytown Road
S.R. 634.....	Turkey Ridge Road
S.R. 637.....	South River Road
S.R. 642.....	Taylor Mountain Road.
S.R. 646.....	Garth Road
S.R. 647.....	McMullen Mill Road
S.R. 667.....	Middle River Road
S.R. 810.....	Dyke Road

End Notes

1. Lambert, Darwin, The Undying Past of Shenandoah National Park, (Roberts Rinehard, Inc. Boulder, Colorado, 1989), p. 171.
2. Miller, Ann Brush, Orange county Road Orders 1734-1850, (Virginia Transportation Research Council, Charlottesville, VA, 1989). See many pages.
3. An examination of Orange County Deed books suggests the truth of this statement.

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4. Knight, Clyde, Paths to Remember, (Skyline Services, Inc. Madison, VA), pp 13-14.
5. Haney, Gina, "Spreading the Gospel of Domestic Order, Episcopal Missions in the Mountains of Virginia", The Greene County Magazine, Vol. 13, 1996. p. 3.
6. Knight, pp. 66 to 127.
7. Bean, R. Bennett, The Peopling of Virginia, Crescendo Publishing Co., Boston, 1938), p. 41
8. Haney, p.2.
9. Knight, p. 33.
10. Information was obtained from collections of papers concerning John E. Fletcher and a few other family members (#7473 & #7696) in the Alderman Library Special Collections Room. Further information was obtained in an interview with Laura Breeden, Catherine Shifflett and Mary Taylor, ladies who had lived in the Fletcher area all their lives.
11. Morris, Nancy H., "Greene County Postmasters - 1832-1984", The Greene County Magazine, Vol. 1, pp. 33 & 34
12. Greene County Deed Book 7, p. 239; December 10, 1893.
13. G.C.D.B. 10, p. 211; August 20, 1905.
14. Morris, p. 35.
15. G.C.D.B. 14, p. 406; December 31, 1906.
16. Morris, p. 35.
17. Much of this information has come from Carol and Ellen Deane. Carol was a grandson of Charles Deane and nephew of "Tedie" Deane. More information was obtained from paragraphs written by Greg Deane, son of Cheryl and Kemper Deane, when he was a senior at William Monroe High School.
18. Much of the information in the McMullen section is taken from the draft of an unpublished article, "James who stayed Behind (The Roots of McMullen, VA)" and other writings by Emily McMullen Williams. Also valuable were articles by Woodie Parrott...
19. Morris, p. 36

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20. Ibid., p. 36.
21. Considerable information about Lydia was obtained in an interview with Otti Dean and his son, David.
22. Morris, p. 35.
23. Information in a letter from Ruby B. Parrott, grand daughter of "Jack" Dean.
24. Kennon, Harry G., "History of the Greene County Methodist Charge," The Greene County Magazine, Vol. 9, pp. 62-80
25. G.C.D.B. 40, p. 56; august 4, 1967.
G.C.D.B. 36, p. 308; September 5, 1963.
26. Morris, p. 34 and
G.C.D.B. 14, p. 81; March 11, 1904.
27. G.C.D.B. 14, p. 132; June 25, 1905.
28. G.C.D.B. 21, p. 39; March 22, 1927.
29. Information about this store was obtained from Galen Morris, who owned the store for a number of years.
30. This name for the store comes from an interview with Alice Allen, whose mother, Lissia Shifflett, lived in Haneytown for many years.
31. G.C.D.B. 20, p. 347; June 8, 1924.
32. From an interview with Galen Morris, who knows the area intimately.
33. Morris, P. 34.
34. G.C.D.B. 32, p. 415; January 4, 1957.
In this deed, which records a transfer of several properties, All Saints Mission is placed on 1 1/2 acres at Haneytown.
35. G.C.D.B. 21, pl 410; January 17, 1930.
36. From an interview with Galen Morris.

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37. G.C.D.B. 52, p. 256; May 5, 1971.
38. G.C.D.B. 15, p. 224; August 18, 1908. This deed mentions the Huckstep Grocery located 200 yards north of the property being purchased in the deed - the site of the March Store.
39. Information from an interview with Galen Morris, a long time resident of the area. Information that E. Y. Vernon was a funeral director also from Knight.
40. G.C.D.B. 15, p. 224; august 18, 1908.
41. Morris, p. 39.
42. G.C.D.B. 16, p. 117; November 21, 1910.
43. G.C.D.B. 22, p. 154; December 10, 1930.
44. G.C.D.B. 27, p. 199; December 14, 1943.
45. Knight, pp. 141-143.
46. G.C.D.B. 14, p. 443; February 28, 1906 and Morris, p. 39.
47. Morris, p. 37.
48. Clyde Knight writes about all of these in Pathways to Remember. Unfortunately he does not often include dates.
49. Norfleet, Elizabeth Copeland, Blue Ridge School: Samaritans of the Mountains, (Green Publishers, Inc., Orange, VA), p. 16.
50. Morris, p. 32.
51. Norfleet, p. 17
52. Norfleet, p. 15.
Eugenia Adams, a daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Snow, also confirms the name of the school, though she has no idea how the school came to have this name.

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Map of Mountain Stores of Greene County

Key to Map of the Mountain Stores of Greene County

- 1. Fletcher Store**
- 2. Kinderhook Store**
- 3. McMullen Store**
- 4. Lydia Store ("Jack" Dean; Edward Shifflett)**
- 5. Lydia Store (Joseph Shifflett)**
- 6. Geer Store**
- 7. L.L. Shifflett Store**
- 8. Haneytown Store (Georgia's Store)**
- 9. March Store**
- 10. Pirkey Store**
- 11. Nimrod Shifflett Store**
- 12. Dyke Store**