

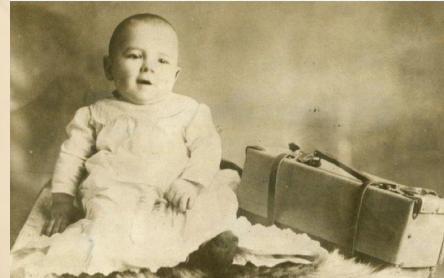
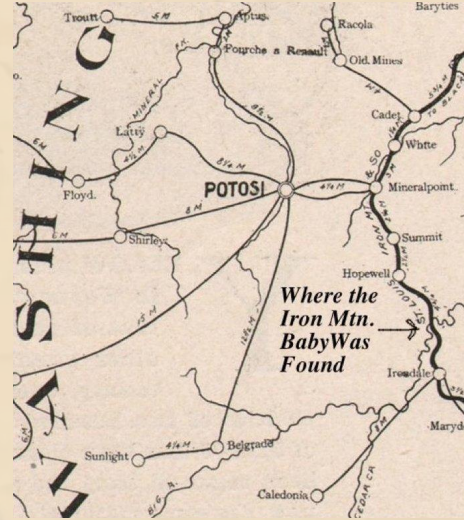
Bright Star Historical Research



Irondale railroad station Mo, 1900s from SHSMO

The Real People Behind Iron Mountain Baby

The story of Bright Star begins with the local legend of the iron mountain baby. On August 14, 1902, between Irondale and Hopeville Missouri, a civil war veteran by the name of William Helms heard a small noise coming from a suitcase below the railroad trestle. When he opened it, there was a baby inside. The baby was heavily injured, but Helm's wife Sarah Jane did her best to nurse it to health. The Helms adopted the baby and named him "William Moses Gould Helms". His parents nor the story behind how he got there were ever found.



A Picture of William, Sarah, and William Gould Helms from the County Advertiser in Farmington, MO

ST. LOUIS, SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 17, 1902.

CAN YOU FURNISH ANY CLEW TO IDENTIFY THIS BABY WHO WAS HURLED FROM A FAST PASSENGER TRAIN IN A VALISE?

The Infant's Life Was Spared Under Conditions Which Indicate That Providence Had Willed He Should Not Die—Farmer Heard a Feeble Cry and Thought It Was a Field Mouse.

INCIDENT NOW A DEEP MYSTERY

William Helms, Who Lives Just North of the Bridge Across Big River, Irondale, Mo., Discovered the Child and Hurried With It to His Wife Who Nursed It Back to Life.

Through the unusual coincidence of a few days ago, a baby was found in a valise which had been hurled from a fast passenger train in a valise. The incident occurred under conditions which indicate that providence had willed the child should not die. The baby was found by a farmer who heard a feeble cry and thought it was a field mouse.

A mystery which only providence can solve. The baby was found by a farmer who heard a feeble cry and thought it was a field mouse. The incident occurred under conditions which indicate that providence had willed the child should not die. The baby was found by a farmer who heard a feeble cry and thought it was a field mouse.

CRY SOUNDED LIKE MICE. I was walking down a road near the bridge across Big River, Irondale, Mo., when I heard a feeble cry which sounded like mice. I went back and found a baby in a valise. I hurried to my wife's house and she nursed the baby back to life. The incident occurred under conditions which indicate that providence had willed the child should not die.

THE BABY WAS FOUND BY A FARMER WHO HEARD A FEEBLE CRY AND THOUGHT IT WAS A FIELD MOUSE. The incident occurred under conditions which indicate that providence had willed the child should not die. The baby was found by a farmer who heard a feeble cry and thought it was a field mouse.

WOMAN WAS HEARTY. The baby was found by a farmer who heard a feeble cry and thought it was a field mouse. The incident occurred under conditions which indicate that providence had willed the child should not die. The baby was found by a farmer who heard a feeble cry and thought it was a field mouse.



LIFE DEPRIVED OF. The baby was found by a farmer who heard a feeble cry and thought it was a field mouse. The incident occurred under conditions which indicate that providence had willed the child should not die. The baby was found by a farmer who heard a feeble cry and thought it was a field mouse.

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Excerpts of The St Louis Post Dispatch

In the St Louis Post Dispatch issue from August 17, 1902, it covered the story:

"The Infant's life was spared under conditions which indicate that providence had willed he should not die—A farmer heard a feeble cry and thought it was a field mouse"

Some firsthand quote from William Helms:

"I was not afraid of a valise with a noise in it—I have seen hundreds of men die on the battlefield... I picked up the valise and carried it to the top of the bank. There I opened it. And inside was a baby"

"But a baby in the home is worth all the trouble he makes and so I guess we are the gainers after all"

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE IRON MOUNTAIN BABY?

Do you know of a baby five or six days old who is missing? Do you know of anyone in your vicinity who has a baby of that age that was taken away from home last Thursday?

Do you know anyone who has a friend who has a baby missing? Do you know anyone who has a friend who has a baby missing?

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William Moses Gould Helms led to live a relatively normal life, dying in 1953. Below are is his marriage license, photos as an adult, and the Helms' names in the 1910 Census

A black and white portrait of a young man with dark hair, looking slightly to the left. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark bow tie. A small, light-colored object, possibly a pen or a small bottle, is tucked into his jacket pocket. The background is a plain, light color.

Census records found at [familysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org)

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The Precursors to Bright Star

The tale of the Iron Mountain baby was quickly turned into a folk song by local minister John Barton. Soon the story became known across the country.

Edie Brickell upon hearing this story, composed "Sarah Jane and the Iron Mountain Baby". This was the beginning of what would eventually become "Bright Star".



"A Mother unkind, a Father untrue
And yet, I'm bound to say
It must have grieved that Mothers heart
To cast her baby away"



Picnics

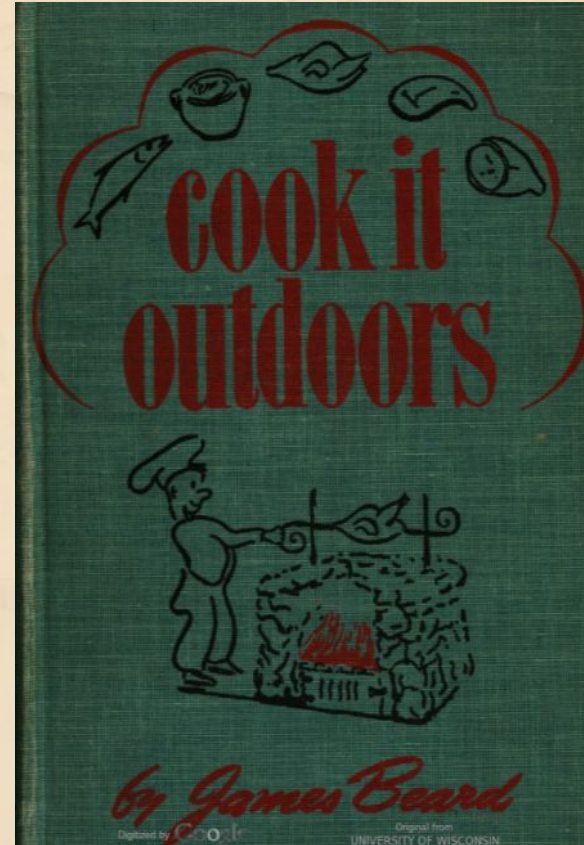
Picnics could be important community social events and even fundraisers. Here's an account of one that took place in 1948, retold by Larry Scheckel in 2013: "Every mother who had children in Oak Grove School prepared a lunch; sandwiches, fruit, brownies, cookies, and put them in a paper bag, picnic basket or box and brought them to school on the night of the Basket Social." Children would sell tickets for raffles to auction off the boxed lunches. There was dancing, music, and the building of community. Bids could be used to raise funding for churches or schools.



A Picnic at Kerr State Recreation Area, NC,
1950 from the North Carolina Division of
Parks and Recreation on NCpedia

The Food

The classic American picnic had a lot of staples we see today such as sandwiches, deli meats, fruits, and sometimes cocktails and barbecue. The book "Cook it Outdoors" by James Beard published in 1941 highlights this with its various recipes. Some of these include ones for a mint julep, clam chowder, prime ribs, clambake, and more. He even notes "Let us not for a minute forget the two old standards of picnic-potato salad and coleslaw" (188)



The front cover of "Cook it Outdoors" by James Beard on Google ebooks

Average Income and Costs

1920s- (year used: 1923)

Average industry worker's income~

Lowest: \$372 for agriculture

Highest: \$2,014 for coal mining

Communications: \$1,199

1940s- (year used: 1945)

Average industry worker's income~

Lowest: \$1,125 for agriculture

Highest: \$3,583 for water transportation

Communications: \$2,246

1920s

Mortgage: \$4,000-6,000

Food costs: flour was 5 cents per pound,

Bread was 9 cents per pound

Medical care: ~\$25 at the lowest

1940s

Mortgage: \$2,000-8,000

Food costs: flour was 6 cents per pound,

bread was bread was 9 cents per pound

Medical care: ~\$50

Asheville 1920s



The Thomas Wolfe Cabin Just
outside of town, 1924 from the
Preservation Society of
Asheville Buncombe



Downtown
Asheville, 1920s
found in the North
Carolina State
Archives on
NCpedia

Asheville, 1928
from the
Asheville
Citizen Times



Asheville 1940s



End of WWII Celebration in Downtown Asheville, 1945 from the Asheville Citizen Times



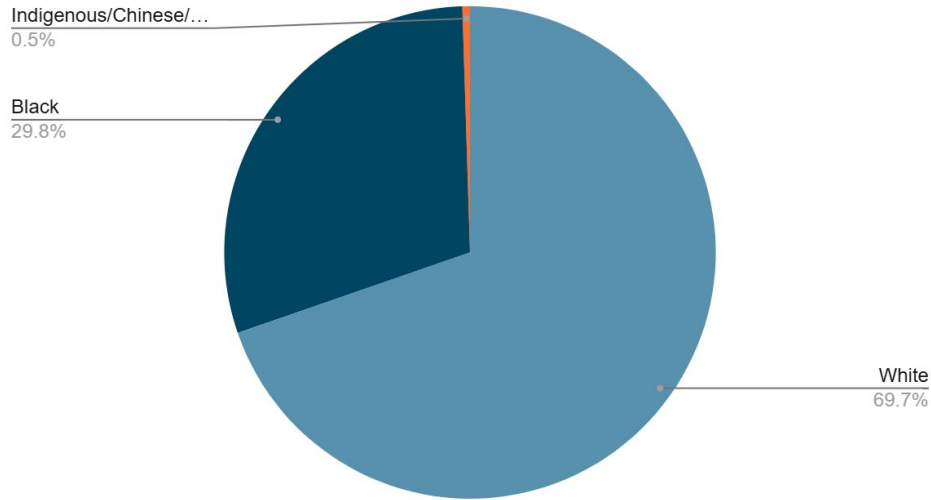
Postcard of Asheville, 1942 from the NC Cooperative Extension



Asheville in the winter of 1945 from the Asheville Citizen Times

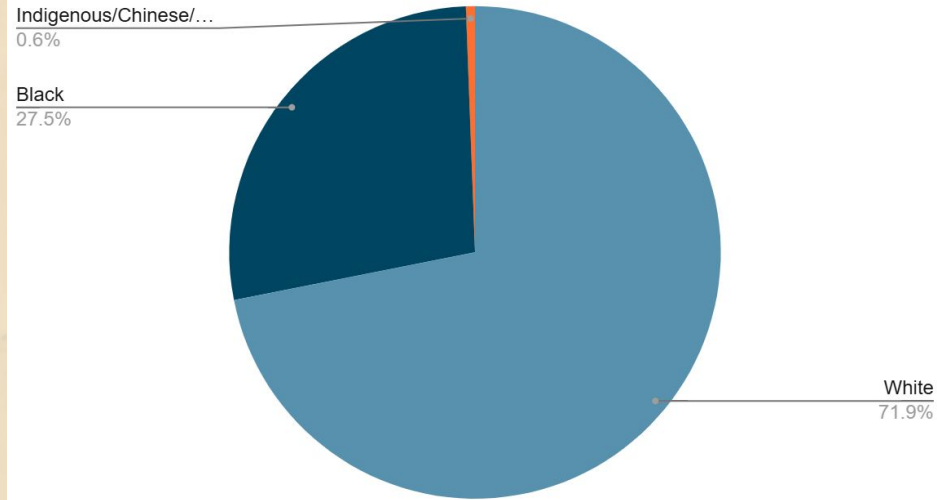
Racial Demographics

Racial Demographics of 1920s NC



Total population: 2,559,123
Urban population: 490,370
Rural Nonfarm population: 568,807
Rural Farm population: 1,499,946

Racial Demographics of 1940s NC



Total population: 3,571,623
Urban population: 974,175
Rural Nonfarm population: 940,947
Rural farm population: 1,656,501

Immigration and POC

Racial tensions were high during this era (as they are in all eras of American history). During this period, there was high migration out of the south, especially in the 1940s and 50s due to Jim Crow laws and searches for better employment. Many sharecroppers were also evicted in the 1930s, and people of color were heavily targeted in this transitions due to to discrimination. There was also prejudice in the job market, as better paying opportunities were often reserved for white people.



A protest for equal pay at the Piedmont Tobacco company in 1946, found at NCpedia

Reproductive Rights

It wasn't until the 19th century that abortion was officially criminalized in America, and prior to this time midwives and other women knew of herbal remedies or minor surgeries to induce the termination of pregnancy. Some forms of contraception at this time included rubber caps, injections, rubber condoms, and diaphragms.

In the 1920s, many forms of reproductive care went "underground" to hide from law enforcement, since it was heavily criminalized and considered immoral. Around Women such as Margaret Sanger (who opened an abortion clinic and was one of the first to pioneer "the pill") and her associates opened clinics (1916) and traveled around various cities (1920s), teaching women about contraceptives and safe practices. In other areas, abortion methods could be crude and unsanitary. It could cause septic infection, damage to the uterine lining, and internal bleeding. Care for these practices had to be spread by word of mouth. Since Alice lived in the country, she would have had no or very little access to these things.



A photo of Margaret Sanger
from the National Library of
Congress, 1916

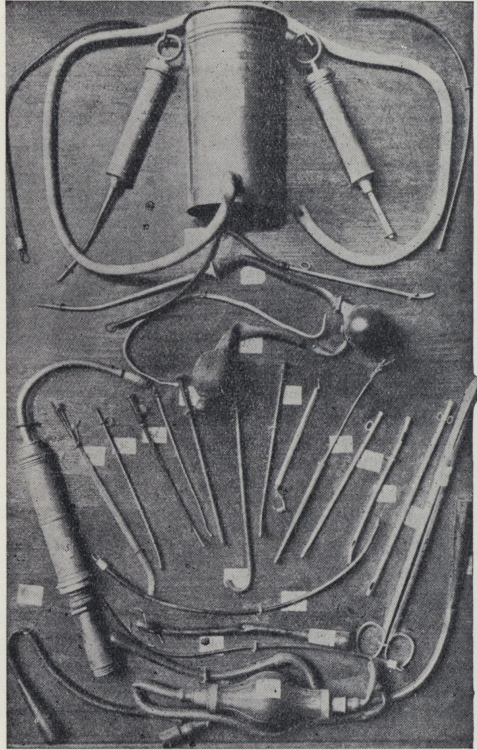


FIG. 668.—Instruments used in criminal abortion. (After Wulffen.)

A picture of illegal abortion instruments
from *Woman, An Historical,
Gynaecological and Anthropological
Compendium*,



An ad c. 1870-1900 of “pennyroyal pills” an herbal remedy that could be
used to terminate pregnancy from the New York Historical Society



A rubber cap from the 1920s found at
the London Science Museum

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