

BAILEY SCHOOL

1893(?)—1951

William M. Bailey, who was born in Cherokee County, Alabama in 1859 and died in Blount County, Alabama in 1909, is buried in Wynnville cemetery. His wife, Julie Law Bailey, died in Cherokee County and left him with three very young sons: Porter Lee, Proncey David, and Pinkney Hezekiah. He then followed his parents, Jim Hezekiah and Rachel J. Bailey, and three sisters to Sand Valley with the typical early Americans ever moving westward. William's father, Jim, was one of the first to be buried at Lebanon Church cemetery on Blount County Road 42. One of William's sisters, Eliza, married Pink Amberson who was the son of John D. Amberson, the donor of four acres of land for the cemetery.

All of the land having being settled in the valley, William went up on "The Bluff," which is where one part of Sand Mountain's plains and rolling hills end, to find property for his own family. He then married Ollie McMillian and entered forty acres of land. He deeded one acre on the southwest corner for a school and one adjoining acre to the east for a church on what is today's Blount County Road 36 and New Home Church Number 1 Road.

In order to attend school, William's sons having to walk two miles from their home to the Mount Moriah church, he recognized the need for a school nearer home. So he donated the logs and built a log building for a school.

On that site, the state later built a two-room building (date cannot be verified) with a high-gabled roof and belfry with a sweet-toned bell. The two rooms had coal-fired stoves, a stage for drama and recitations, and blackboards.

The school served students for an area of two square miles from the east down in the valley below Reid's Gap and up a winding trail beside the rocky road, between massive rocks of the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, "Ike's Kitchen" on the north and the "Natural Bridge" to the south which were formed eons ago when the earth stopped shaking. Children then came down hills westward for a mile or more in springtime under a canopy of blossoms surrounded on the ground by nature's own garden of wild Easter lilies, "rooster heads" (violets), blood root, and so forth, which existed before man came. The warm colors of fall and forests of giant, virgin hardwoods and underbrush, some loaded with berries and nuts, gave some protection from winter's harshest winter winds, as they walked, plod or ran until their arrival at school before that

eight o'clock bell rang. There were similar scenes for the children from the northerly and southerly directions.

The third school building, a junior high, was built in 1934. The building was T-shaped with three rooms and served a very bustling community.

This institution served three generations of the founder's descendants and many other of the community's founding fathers. Three of William's grandchildren, Orlene, Elvie, and Gertie Bailey, taught there. These three teachers, along with others from Blount, Calhoun, Etowah, and Marshall counties, guided many little minds toward literacy and character-building principles to enrich their lives.

From pioneering days through The Great Depression, World Wars I & II, our citizens saw it all. When the principal Mrs. Armindie Murphree's husband arrived home from World War I, she jumped into his arms. School let out for a while for the children to rejoice with them. The depression humbled everyone. It was pathetic—families ate just what they were able to grow on farms and in gardens.

Then came World War II. Many boys and men were drafted, and many from the community volunteered to serve the democracy and establish it in some aggressive countries. The community's women fell right in to replace the men in industry, heads of families, and in hospitals, all while those in the homes were knitting socks and sweaters for the men who had gone to war. Again, they willingly went through rationing of sugar, oil, tires, gasoline, coffee and tea so that the military could do the fighting. Artillery, uniforms, ammunition, food, medications and bandages were for the community's men in uniform. From our Atlantic shores on the east to the islands and continent of Europe, they fought. From our western shores on the Pacific to Hawaii, Midway, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, the Philippines, Guam, Okinawa, all the way to Australia, then Japan itself. So many thousands of men were lost. In fact, some of our community's own made the supreme sacrifice. At least one of the school's former students went down on D-Day either in the English Channel or on Normandy beach.

Thus, to honor Bailey School's founder and all other pioneers and those who followed making up this community until consolidation closed the school in 1951, we leave this token of our gratitude at this site.

Long may it stand!

Thanks for the memories!



HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

Mrs. Orlene Bailey Clayton
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March 24, 2003

Mr. Norwood A. Kerr, AHA Marker Committee
State of Alabama
Department of Archives and History
624 Washington Avenue
Post Office Box 300100
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0100

Dear Mr. Kerr and the Alabama Historical Association:

We submit this presentation of facts as recorded, remembered, or lived (some of us now in our nineties). Included are photographs and documents as duly required. We hope it meets with the requirements. If not, please inform us, and we will do our best to comply. Then we will set about raising the money for the marker.

The topography of the land kept the community and school somewhat isolated. We understand. When a paved road facilitated it, more traffic came to the area. The school building's materials were used by a son, William J. Bailey, to replace the original home. We want to place this marker on the site where the Bailey School building stood. The land has always been and still is in the Bailey family, and we can foresee that it should remain in the family for generations yet to come.

We appreciate the opportunity to commemorate Alabama's history.

Sincerely,

Orlene B. Clayton

Herstene B. Tidmore

Johnny Tidmore

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

Bailey School Committee • 237 Tidmore Lane • Oneonta, Alabama 35121

Bailey

SCHOOL

HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

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July 6, 2003

Mr. Norwood A. Kerr, AHA Marker Committee
State of Alabama
Department of Archives and History
624 Washington Avenue
Post Office Box 300100
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0100

Dear Mr. Kerr and the Alabama Historical Association:

Thank you for your patience as we have taken the time to write the text for the marker we have requested to honor the Bailey School in Blount County. My great aunt, Mrs. Orlene Bailey Clayton, and my grandmother, Mrs. Herstene Bailey Tidmore, and I are very excited about this chance to commemorate the site.

The agreed upon text for the marker is as follows:

**Bailey School
1893-1951**

Wm M Bailey b1859 in Cherokee Co. AL d1909 in Blount Co. AL, settled 40 ac. on what is today's Co. Rd 36 on W & New Home Church Rd on E. He deeded one ac. on SW corner for a school and an adjoining ac. on E for a church. He built the first school of logs. He brought three small sons from Cherokee Co. after the death of his wife and their mother, Julie Law Bailey. Wm. met and m. Ollie McMillan in 1887. To this union were born ten more children. The second school-two rooms, high ceilings & roof with a belfry-was built by the state. Third, built in 1934, three rooms, T-shaped, served a bustling community. This institution strived to guide children & youth toward literacy character-building principles to enrich their lives & others. Thus, we mark the site with respect & honor to its founder and followers.

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

Bailey School Committee • 237 Tidmore Lane • Oneonta, Alabama 35121

Please let me know what changes, if any, should be made to the text, and next step in the process.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to commemorate Alabama's history.

Sincerely,



Johnny L. Tidmore, Esq.
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cc: Mrs. Orlene B. Clayton
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