File Schools ~~[illegible]~~ KLONDIKE Elementary School

DEKALB HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES

Old Decatur....Revisited

by Sherle Cheek

Each new year brings a flurry of backward glances and there are many who find the parade of bygones difficult to recall accurately without a calendar.

In his 88 years of hale and hearty living, Lovick T. Cobb has had many backward glances but he doesn't need a calendar to revitalize his memory. He not only remembers events, places and dates meticulously, but he has also played an important role in building many of the structures that still stand as reminders of his past. Perhaps this is why he cherishes history, especially DeKalb County history.

Looking steadily forward to his 89th birthday (which will be in July), Mr. Cobb retired only three years ago from his firm, Cobb and Cobb, Inc. "However, I'm still the president and postman," he jokingly admits. He likes to refer to himself as the postman when he handles the mail for his two sons, Thomas and Ralph with whom he resides and who are still carrying on the family enterprise of building.

For the elder Mr. Cobb, a ride throughout DeKalb County is somewhat like thumbing through an old photo album of people and places visited. Although most of his building activity was confined to residential dwellings, Mr. Cobb is noted for building the Wesley Chapel Elementary School and the Klondike Elementary School in Lithonia.

He also has the distinction of being the builder of the first service station in Decatur. "Most of my buildings are still standing," chuckles the proud contractor. The service station isn't but the alert Mr. Cobb refers to this as "merely succumbing to progress." He built the station in 1920 on Clairmont Avenue at Ponce de Leon.

Mr. Cobb built the homes of many prominent DeKalb Countians, one of which was the home of the late E.E. Treadwell, former Superintendent of Decatur Public Schools. He even remembers attending Mr. Treadwell's 85th birthday.

Other Cobb built homes were those of the late Dr. Andrew Sledd, theology professor at Emory and one for

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Decatur lawyer, Carl Hudgens.

"It's well-nigh impossible to remember the number of houses I've built but the most expensive one was $65,000," says the tall, slender builder. "I built it for Mrs. Ramsey over in Smokerise."

Mr. Cobb says about the most distinct differences in residential structures today, other than the architecture, are the size of baseboards and casings. "They're smaller," he says, "but they are still needed.

"Picture moldings are not used today either," said Mr. Cobb, explaining that the molds were narrow wood strips six to eight inches from the ceiling. The strips encircled the rooms and were used to hang pictures. He believes the footings and foundations on most buildings are much better today. As for materials, much of it is not as good, but if selected and treated properly, it will last.

The history-minded Mr. Cobb speaks with revered authenticity about the era he remembers of woodhaulers and peddlers. "A woodhauler," he explained "did just that. He hauled stove and firewood." In contrast, "the peddlers hauled foodstuffs like meat, produce, anything edible."

On certain days of the week the seven roads leading into Decatur would be a traffic jam of horses and wagons. "The woodhaulers and peddlers were enroute to Atlanta to sell their wares."

Mr. Cobb himself was known as the youngest woodhauler of his day. "Only 14 at the time," he says proudly. At that time the seven dirt throughfares into Decatur were Flat Shoals Road (now called Columbia Drive), Covington Road, Redan Road, Rockbridge, the Decatur-Stone Mountain Road, Lawrenceville Road and Shallowford Road (now called Clairmont).

"During these woodhauling and peddling days, there were only three stores in Decatur," recalls the former woodhauler. "I remember selling my last load of watermelons in 1899 to Bates Store which was just off the square on Church Street. Sold the melons for eight cents apiece around," he mused.

According to Mr. Cobb, the other stores at that time were Josey's located where the square now stands, and Crockett's, situated at the corner of McDonough and the present Old Courthouse Square. The post office was established in a small 12 by 12 building which also served as home for the postmistress and her husband.

"Church Street," states Mr. Cobb, "was so named because of the churches that were built there." And, likewise, Sycamore Street derived its name from the once bountiful and beautiful Sycamore trees lining its dirt road.

One of the most exciting events of Mr. Cobb's young life was riding the streetcar from Decatur to Atlanta. The year was 1895 and Lovick Cobb's destination was the Southern States Cotton Exposition held in Piedmont Park at its present location. The streetcar line that year did not run directly to the park nor was a transfer possible. Hence, young Cobb got off at Jackson Street and walked three miles which was considered a "nice walk" back then. The streetcar line was owned and operated by The Atlanta Traction Company.

A native of Decatur, Lovick Cobb is proud of his heritage. The son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Cobb, he spent "some mighty wonderful years of his boyhood on the old Cobb Place just five miles from Decatur on the Old Flat Shoals Road, now known as Snapfinger Road." The 200 acre farm belonged to his grandparents, the late Mr. and Mrs.

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LOVICK T. COBB . . . remembers The DeKalb New Era as the fi[illegible] ever read.