

Headless Woman Haunts Local Bridge

ASHS Column for April 10, 2008

Jerry Simmons

It's funny sometimes how you just happen across something that piques your interest. The column today is the result of a recent happenstance.

In cleaning out some file drawers last week I came across a folder with the name "Sizemore" on it. I'd first heard of Sizemore some years back, when one of the ASHS members told about living in a camp car from the time she was about 4 years old until she was 19. The camp was Alger's Camp 8, and Sizemore was one of its locations before it was finally moved near Flomaton next to Sardine Road.

I opened the folder and discovered a clipping from the Birmingham News dated June, 1997. It contained a story I'd never heard, and I'll venture a guess that many of you haven't either.

To give a little background, I'll take some information from Annie Waters' book, *The History of Escambia County, Alabama*. She said it isn't known exactly where the Sizemore community is. Sizemore Creek begins somewhere near Holman prison and is probably named for a Sizemore family who lived there when the area was still part of Baldwin County before 1868.



From old accounts from people in the area it's said there was a school house built of logs with what's called a puncheon floor. I didn't know what "puncheon" meant, so I looked it up. I'll save you the trouble by telling you what I found. The floor's boards were made by hewing instead of sawing. If a family didn't live near a sawmill they used puncheons for floors in their log buildings. The puncheons were split logs, hewn smooth on the split side only.

The picture accompanying this column is a picture of an Escambia County, Alabama log schoolhouse which I suspect is the very same one described above.

In addition to the floor being roughly made, they used split logs as benches with wooden pegs holding the benches together. Mrs. Waters wrote, "The feet of the smaller children dangled all day, as the benches were all of the same height."

Some other facts related by Mrs. Waters included "One remembered teacher was a Mr. Sherril, and the pupils came from the Thigpen, Palmore, Sanders, Blankenship, Walton, Bette, Boggan, and Steen families. There was a Spanish lawsuit over the land from a point above Canoe to Escambia Bay along Sizemore Creek at an estimated value of fifteen to thirty

million dollars, but the results of the suit could not be ascertained. Jim Travis, a brother of [Alamo] hero William B. Travis, operated a mill on Sizemore Creek at an early date."

Back to the Birmingham News article: it was noted that a bridge on County Road 27 (Robinsonville Road) across Sizemore Creek was renamed in 1997, and the locals wanted to keep the name "Sizemore Creek Bridge." Some 345 citizens signed a petition and presented it to the Escambia County Commission, according to the article. I suppose the name change was halted – I don't know. If someone can tell me, please do.

One of the reasons put forth for the uproar was the bridge name's historical significance. There was also somewhat of a supernatural significance as well. You see, the bridge was haunted by a headless woman!

Over the years, and from generation to generation, the story's been passed down about a female apparition climbing into wagons as they crossed the creek at the bridge, and one instance was related about her jumping onto a motorcycle passing by. There's no word as to whether the motorcycle rider survived the scare or not.

One of the local residents named a participant in this scary scene: "J.B. Graham came across the bridge at night. A headless woman got in the buggy and rode with him until he got to his home at Little Rock, near a church."

I don't know but that I wouldn't have let the lady have the buggy and go on by herself. I think I would rather walk – or run – home.

Let me know if you ever see this lady.

Y'all come.