

COFFEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



July 2024

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Officers and Directors:

President Larry McIntosh
Vice President David Welborn
Treasurer Butch Niederhauser
Assistant Treasurer Frances Simmons
Officer Manager Beverly Vetter
Recording Secretary Patricia Anderson
Museum Curator Bonnie Gamble
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Society News

The Coffee County Historical Society will hold the annual membership picnic on Saturday, July 13, 2024, from 1:00pm-3:00pm at the Community Room in the Coffee County Administrative Plaza, 1335 McArthur Street, Manchester Tennessee. Come and enjoy some great food, fellowship, and listen to our speaker Mr. Shawn Chapman from AEDC. He will present information on latest documentation of cemeteries on the land owned by AEDC.

Website Upgrade: Yes, it is time we updated our website that was first created in 2014! We request your patience as this is done and we provide updated information and resources on the website. If you do not see on the website what you need, please email us at cchs1969@att.net and we will help you.

New Members: Welcome to our new members. Your membership fees enable us to provide information, photographs, a museum, and assistance to everyone desiring to know more about the history and heritage of Coffee County.

Lauren Jernigan Linda Rollins Priscilla Norman Bobby Trail
Monica Trail

Donna Toney Elaine McKelvey Michael Carl Medford Syble Thorneberry

D...L...W...

Volunteers Needed

The work of the Coffee County Historical Society is only possible through the efforts of our volunteers. These volunteers keep the office and museum open, conduct research, scan photographic negatives, index resources, and give assistance in family research. We can always use additional help. Please contact us if you are interested. Thank you to our newest volunteers Olivia Howell and Hudson Clutter.



Volunteer Lifeguards Manchester City Pool 1980
The pool was located at Fred Deadman Park at the current skatepark location.

The Joanna Lewis Museum for Coffee County History

The museum just completed our Memorial Day exhibit honoring the fallen heroes of Coffee County. Our next exhibit starting the first of August is “Celebrations in Coffee County.” This exhibit will highlight the 4th of August Celebration, the Coffee County Fair, Old Timers Day, and the Guinness Book of Records Pajama Party! Come enjoy the exhibit and view are unique photographs and stories of these celebrations. The exhibit will be open until October 15, 2024. Our museum is free no admission fee.

4th of AUGUST CELEBRATION ~ EMANCIPATION DAY

MANCHESTER, TENNESSEE

Written by Sandra McMullin Bennett, CCHS Museum Volunteer

The 4th of August Emancipation Day Celebration, also known as the “Black Celebration” or “Black Independence Day” was an annual event held in what was called the “Black Village”, centered around Emerson and Rye Streets in Manchester.

Extensive historical research done by Mrs. Beatrice Riche, a retired black schoolteacher, documented that Mr. Lindsay Brewer, a former slave brought to live in Manchester by Dr. J.E. Rodes in 1850 and later owned by Captain C.C. Brewer, was the man responsible for the 4th of August Celebration. Mrs. Riche shared her historical account in an article published in the Manchester Times on July 8, 1976 (on Page 72). Mrs. Riche’s research indicated that Mr. Brewer was the first vendor of ice cream in Manchester. At one point, he was told he couldn’t sell ice cream from his restaurant at the corner of East Main and North Spring Street on July 4th as “whites intended to sell ice cream on the courthouse lawn”. *“All right, I’ll just sell mine on the Fourth of August.”* The 4th of August celebration became a tradition lasting over 100 years. Descendants of the families who lived in the black community near Emerson and Rye Streets agree that the celebration had roots that went well back over 100 years to the 1880s.

Manchester newspapers throughout the years 1920 – 1994 published snippets about the 4th of August and from information gleaned from the descendants of the families who first initiated the 4th of August Celebration, the celebration changed and grew each year. It went from a neighborhood fish fry to lots of food stands offering up fish dinners, barbequed goat and more. The food was what drew people to the celebration from other areas of the county, including many white people.

The first reference found in the Manchester Times was August 5, 1926. It was just a small blurb saying: *“August 4th was celebrated by the colored people as usual this year with a picnic celebration and barn dance “.* In the July 24, 1930, Manchester Times, it reported *“An all-day dance at the Knights of Pythias Hall and two baseball games will feature the celebration of colored people planned for August 4h and 5th at Manchester. It has long been a custom for the colored folks from far and near to gather at Manchester for a big day on the 4th. This year they will have two days of merrymaking. The entertainment is sponsored by the Court of Calanthus, which promises good order and an abundance of good things to eat.”* An August 8, 1935, report by the Manchester Times indicates the *“Celebration attracted a large number of out-of-town colored people to Manchester for the celebration of Emancipation Day. No disorder of any kind was reported, and the jollification went on uninterrupted until the early morning hours.”*

The August 7, 1953, article in the Manchester Times mentions the 4th of August *“was a general picnic, with feasting and games, followed by programs of music and dancing until late into the night”*. It also mentions the exceptional hot-fish sandwiches that were cooked and that *“White friends also like to get in line for these*

fish sandwiches, as only colored chefs know how to make them.” In 1966, Sam Nevels (owner of Sam’s Place on Emerson Street), along with Jean Cooley and Ruby Norman, took over the reins for the 4th of August Celebration. The Celebration continued to draw people from near and far and stayed vibrant under their supervision with support from the local black community.

The 4th of August Celebration became part of the Sesquicentennial Celebration for Manchester and Coffee County’s 150th birthday in August of 1986. The 4th of August celebration was advertised as part of the Homecoming ’86 and many in the black community worked alongside their white neighbors to ensure that the Sesquicentennial and the 4th of August Celebration were both a huge success. The 4th of August Celebration continued to grow and at times the attendees swelled to over 5,000. Those in attendance included a very diverse culture of people. Mrs. Mildren Norman acknowledged in the Independent Newspaper on July 30th, 1994, that the Celebration has “*all kinds of people here, Japanese, Chinese, French, African, and White*”. All were welcome and all enjoyed a festive and joyful time.

The last 4th of August Celebration sadly took place in Manchester in 1994. The reason was that visitors from other areas of the state who came to the Celebration that year became violent, disrupting the event late in the evening, shooting guns and throwing liquor bottles at the police. There had never been any significant issues at the Celebration prior to this but the extent of the damage present that night led Sam Nevels, at the request of Manchester Police Chief Ross Simmons, to cancel the 4th of August Celebration for 1995. In an interview in the Coffee County News Ledger on August 2, 1995, Mr. Nevels said “*I don’t know if I’ll ever fool with it again*”, adding “*but I know I couldn’t live with myself if someone was killed*”. The 4th of August Celebration in Manchester was never revived after 1994.

The descendants of the families who lived and worked in around the “black village” during the days of the 4th of August Celebrations now plan family reunions in August to reconnect and celebrate Emancipation Day. When these reunions are held in Manchester, the families return to Emerson and Rye streets where they now have a beautiful park, named in honor of former Manchester Mayor Lonnie Norman. The reunions are not the same as the 4th of August Celebrations of the past, but it provides them with memories of the families and friends who left their mark on this area and a chance to share the stories of past 4th of August Celebrations.

The 1944 Raines Family Murder by Olivia Howell

Thursday, February 17, 1944, on a farm two and a half miles north of Manchester on Route 2, a murder occurred. Siblings Thomas Franklin Raines and Irma Dean Shelton had found their father, Jim Raines, murdered in the barn located on their father's property. When the police arrived to investigate, they found that not all things were as they appeared.



Above: A snapshot of the barn Jim Raines was found in taken a few days after the murder.

At the time of the murder both Thomas and Irma Dean lived with their father. Irma Dean was married and had two small children that lived with them as well. Thomas was eighteen and Irma Dean was twenty-seven.

During the trial multiple witnesses claimed that Jim Raines had been an abusive and cruel husband and father for years. The trouble came to a head on February 10 when Jim and his wife Arlevia got into a massive argument that ended in Jim slapping and cursing his wife. A few days later Arlevia left to go live with her brother in Alabama. As she was leaving Thomas told her that if his father started something he would do something about it.

On the 16th Thomas went to a party while Irma Dean stayed home with her children and father. Throughout the day and night her father asked her about the location of his guns. Unbeknownst to him, Arlevia had told Thomas when she left to remove all the guns from the house and give them to a neighbor to keep. Thomas returned around midnight and Jim let him in the house and asked him where the guns were. Thomas did not answer and went to bed.

In the morning Jim got up first and lit the fires in the house and then sat down in the front room. Irma Dean went into the kitchen and began making breakfast. Thomas got up at about 7:15 and got ready for the day. He had decided that he would go into the front room and hit his father. Thomas went outside and grabbed an old ax handle that they used for washing. He went into the front room, crept behind his father's chair, and hit him on the head with the handle. Jim fell over and Thomas hit him twice more. Eventually Jim fell to the floor

and Thomas choked him until he died. Irma Dean walked in while Thomas was choking his father and made no effort to stop him.

The siblings quickly cleaned up the blood from the murder scene and Thomas changed his clothes. Thomas grabbed Jim's shoulders while Irma Dean grabbed his feet and together they carried him to the barn. When they put his body down, they went through his pockets and Thomas took the watch, pocketbook, and roll of money (about \$650, which is the equivalent of about \$11,500 today) while Irma Dean took some papers. They went back to the house and Thomas gave Irma Dean the money and the pocketbook. They took some of their father's effects and placed them near the body. They kicked up the dirt and trash around the body to make it seem like there had been a scuffle.

Irma went out to the barn as if she was going to milk the cows and "found" her father's body. Thomas and Irma ran to a neighbor's house and told them that they had found their father murdered in the barn. The neighbors called the sheriff and the police arrived shortly after. When they began investigating, they noticed that while the ground was covered in mud, Jim's shoes were clean and his clothes were dry. They also noticed that while Thomas had removed his bloody outer clothes, his undershirt had some blood spots on it. Most importantly they found that the chair in the front room had blood stains.



Above: Irma Dean Shelton and Thomas Franklin Raines soon after their arrest.

The pair were quickly arrested and they confessed to the crime almost immediately. They were both charged with murder and robbery. When they went to court, they did not deny that they committed the crimes, they only said that they did it because their father was a cruel and abusive man. Their mother was the only witness for the defense. Apparently the simple defense was enough because Irma Dean was acquitted of her charges and Thomas was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and would serve for less than ten years.

“Raines Killing”- Doak Negative Collection held by Coffee County Historical Society

**Testimony of Thomas Raines and Irma Dean Shelton- Held at the Coffee County Archives
Box-”State VS 1940-1949 P-Q-R-S”**

**Manchester Times- “Pair held for father’s death, grand jury may be recalled” Friday morning,
February 25, 1944**

**Manchester Times- “Woman Freed, Boy to Prison, in Murder Case” Friday morning, April 28,
1944**

