

INTRODUCTION

This has been the part of this project that I have put off the longest. How to sum up a five-year period of the life of a man I never knew, but somehow feel close to after reading and re-reading his journal many times, is just beyond my ability. This has been a project in the making for several years. I was first encouraged to transcribe John Herschel Kelly's diary six years ago when I met a local writer who was willing to proofread Prospect United Methodist Church Cemetery 1882-2002, a booklet I was working on at the time. I told him about having this journal, and he said that I must do this for the family even if I transcribed only one page a day. I began almost immediately when the other project was completed. A friend, who worked for a printer, photocopied and enlarged the pages to make it easier to transcribe. That also made it possible to not have to handle the original journal. However, it wasn't long before the busyness of life got in the way of the project, and it was set aside. I cannot adequately express the satisfaction of finally having completed this undertaking and the enjoyment I have had doing it.

Many years ago, after Cornelia, John Herschel Kelly's only daughter and my mother-in-law, gave the journal to Robert and me; I went through it with her, asking her about different people and what she remembered about that period of time. Thankfully, I made notes and I used those extensively as I transcribed. I also visited Ruth Kelly Kitchens, who celebrated her 102nd birthday June 20, 2008, a couple of times and asked her questions about different things and people. Robert Herschel Lewis, my husband and John Herschel Kelly's grandson, was able to answer some of my questions about the farm terms. I thought, if I am wondering what "laid by" means and other expressions, I am sure someone else reading this will wonder, too; so, my intent became to include as many notes as necessary in the way of explanations. Recently, when a number of farm terms were left unexplained and some people still a mystery, I went to see Mr. Carroll Hodge, a life-long local resident, who is a marvel at age 95 and has a multitude of stories and recollections right at his fingertips. His help was tremendous; for example, he could explain the differences between "bedding, banking, and hilling" potatoes or some other crop. What a surprise to us both when I read to him about John Herschel attending a Mrs. McClendon's funeral and learning that it was his grandmother!

I discovered many things about John Herschel Kelly while working on this journal. First of all, I was impressed with his literacy during a period when education was not always a priority in the rural areas. His handwriting, typical of the time, was very legible and his use of the language very skilled. My editing was limited to an occasional comma. For the most part, I left everything the same as I found it. As you read, you will notice that his first concern each day was the weather, a necessity for someone whose livelihood depended upon the elements. He was a very busy, hard-working man; and his talents extended to all phases of country living ranging from working the ground and planting all kinds of crops to helping his wife, Georgianna, whom he called Dots, with the wash. As I read and typed along, I was always glad to find an occasional "done nothing all day."

Although you won't find any of his emotions revealed in this journal, you can read between the lines and discover a man who was committed to his immediate and extended family; a man active in his church and community; and, apparently, a man interested and somewhat involved in politics. Perhaps because of limited access to news, he never makes mention of the Great War that was going on at the time or the infamous flu epidemic of 1918. However, we see that his life was touched by both. I was interested to read about his hunting and fishing and his going to the Big Dam and the "long bridge" at Jackson Lake, the "picture show" in Mansfield, the circus, and all the way to Macon for an overnight on one occasion. He often traveled to Mansfield or Monticello and to a number of little stores in the surrounding settlements. You will see from one of the sample pages, that he also ran a store selling grocery items and tobacco on credit to people around him. It is my hope that, with a magnifying glass, you can see some of the names on the 1909 postal map of Jasper County, Georgia. In case you miss it, John Herschel Kelly lived with his family on Clybel Road with at least two other siblings, Aubet and Willie, living nearby. All that area is now a part of the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Reserve. Please note that the genealogy report included in this work, for the sake of brevity, lists only John Herschel Kelly's descendants.

I extend a special thanks to my sister, Joan Hughes Kelly, for proofreading all this several times and making suggestions as to what needed to be explained. She, too, is related to the Kellys by marriage having married Aubet Nathan Kelly's son, Terrell Eugene Kelly. I also want to thank Sybil Kelly Cunard, Ralph Herschel Kelly's daughter, for her tribute to John Herschel Kelly that includes memories from some of his other grandchildren. My grandson, Travis Queen, gave his expert assistance by editing, formatting pictures, converting files, and doing other computer things, the names of which I do not even know! Benny Hawthorne, photo-journalist and historian of Jasper County, supplied the maps and several of the pictures. In addition, I appreciate the family members who brought or sent me pictures. I had a great time when my grandson, Kyle Lewis, drove me to the family cemeteries in his mud-bogging truck. Then, just on the eve of finishing this up, Jessica Manning called me with information about the John Wesley Cook Cemetery. Jessica, her husband James, and I spent Fourth of July morning riding around on dirt roads in order for me to document exactly where the Cook Cemetery is located. Jessica also brought me copies of some of the documents included in this work. My only thanks in preserving this piece of history will be to know that you have read and enjoyed John Herschel Kelly's journal spanning just five years of his life.

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