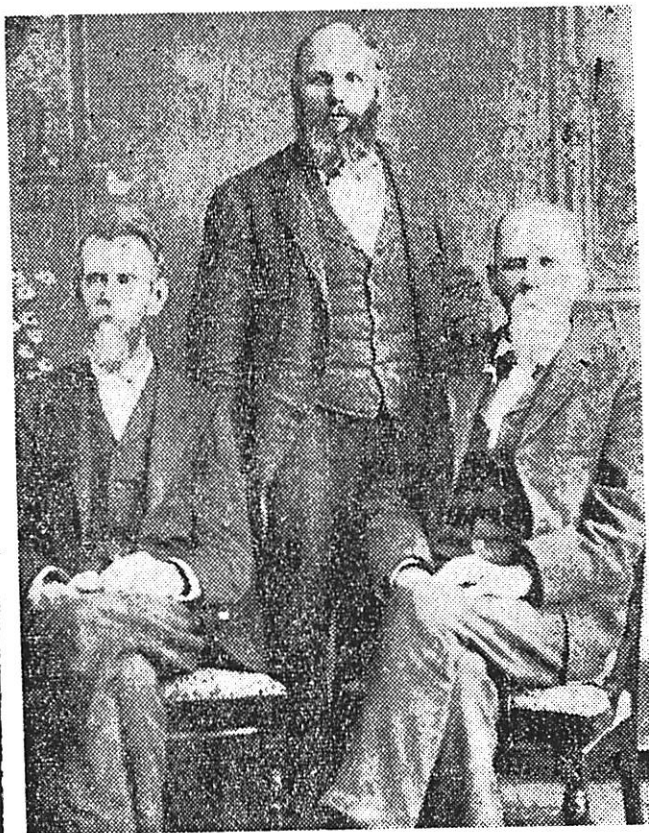


Rye Whisky In Courthouse Cornerstone

By SUSAN NAVES
Journal Staff Writer



THIS PHOTO may be among items which might be found in the old Courthouse cornerstone. Left to right: Andrew J. Caldwell, Joe Howell and Charlie Berry. They comprised the last group known as the county board of commissioners. This photo was made in 1890.

What does the cornerstone at the old County Courthouse contain?

Apparently in the myriad details of getting the new courthouse constructed and occupied, county officials have overlooked the possibility that the old building has a cornerstone.

But Mrs. Bernice Brown, 70, of Landrum is pretty sure that there is one and that it will divulge some interesting facts about the county prior to the turn of the century.

Mrs. Brown, although very young about 1891 when the old courthouse was completed, should know about the cornerstone.

Her father, A. J. Caldwell, served as building superintendent during the construction of the red brick structure which soon fell under the demolition hammer.

Papers left by Mrs. Brown's father revealed that the contract for the old courthouse was let in September 1890 to C. Warmy of Columbia. The courthouse, one of the finest of its day, was built at a cost of \$35,000, according to the contract.

Mr. Caldwell in addition to serving as building supervisor during the construction, was a member of the County Commissioners — the last group of Commissioners for the county.

The cornerstone, Mrs. Brown believes, contains the following items:

Metal plates from the Courthouse which stood in Morgan Square, a couple of gold coins bearing dates of the old Morgan Square Courthouse and the red brick courthouse, and copies of the local newspapers.

Also, a vial — small bottle — of locally manufactured rye whisky, some grains of rye and

wheat, and a number of photographs were sealed in the cornerstone.

All Mrs. Brown knows about the cornerstone is a recollection of conversation of her father. "But I am pretty sure, those things are there," she said.

The photographs sealed in the cornerstone are of Mrs. Brown's father, Andrew J. Caldwell, Joe Howell, and Charlie Berry, County Commissioners, and of John Nichols, sheriff of the county at that time.

Mrs. Brown hopes that County Board members will set a date for opening the cornerstone. She is also hopeful that she and other children of Mr. Caldwell will be invited to the ceremony.

Her interest is unselfish.

She wants whatever is found to be preserved for future generations.

"I would love to see the old courthouse plates, the coins and other contents framed and placed in an appropriate place in the new courthouse as a memorial to the old building and its builders," Mrs. Brown said.

Mrs. Brown was born Oct. 10, 1881. She was about 10-years-old when the Courthouse was under construction.

"I remember that we lived at Inman at the time. My father left home early on Monday morning and returned on Saturday night. Without automobiles, the trip back and forth would have been impossible in those days," she added.

"The courthouse was the finest in the country in those days, but it had bugs too. I can remember my father complaining about the heating system. He was never quite satisfied with it," she recalled. In addition to steam heat, fireplaces were built in the courthouse.

Mrs. Brown said that her father supervised construction because he could read the architect's blueprints and the contractor could not.