

Tales from Dollar

As they say, a Dollar doesn't go as far as it used to. But to get to Dollar, it's as far as it used to be, maybe further. Whether you're going by water, road, or in time, Dollar is remote, even by Coosa County standards. Those of you familiar with Coosa County know that is saying something.

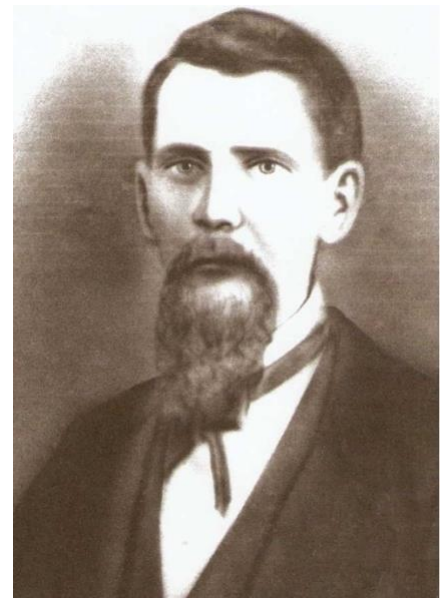
Laura Perkins, originally from Childersburg, will be our tour guide on this journey. Perhaps exploration is a better term because there are a great many discoveries to be made. Semantics aside, prepare yourself for a trip unavailable through any travel agency other than Perkins' Perambulations. Laura grew up in Childersburg but spent a lot of wonderful time with family and friends at Dollar, or at least that portion that wasn't covered by the lake. As you will see, her ancestors were prominent in the community from way back, which is where we're headed now. There may be ruts in the dirt roads and fallen trees to remove, but when you arrive, you will be privy to the way the world used to be a hundred and fifty years ago. So fellas, hold the reins tight and get a good grip on that buckboard. And you ladies better pull those skirts up at the stream crossings because we're off to Dollar!

Hardy Hearts' Creekside Conspiracy: A Dollar Love Story

Enter Robert Hardy who was born in Virginia but raised in South Carolina. He left South Carolina in 1817 and settled in Lowndesboro, Alabama, a town west of Montgomery. As you may know, the Upper Creek Indians, having lost the battle at Horseshoe Bend, signed the Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1814, giving up over 20 million acres to the U.S. government, almost half of which is now Alabama. Meanwhile in Lowndesboro, the swampiness and mosquitos there had many folks ill and dying with malaria. So, in 1837 the Hardy family, including Robert's wife Nancy Browning Hardy and their six children, pulled up stakes and moved to Coosa County onto what was formerly Creek Indian land. This was just far enough north for their compromised health conditions to improve. Soon enough two more sons came; Richard was born within a year and Nathan a few years after.

To Richard Covington Hardy, who was raised around Nixburg, east of Rockford, the bottomland near the Coosa River, and more specifically alongside Weogufka Creek, was perfect for farming. So one day on the west side of the Weogufka and well upstream of the mouth of Fixico Branch he started up a ravine and laid claim to land onto which he built a house and developed a farm.

He brought his wife, Elizabeth Works, two children and a number of other family members to this area known as the Dollar community, but then came the war. A twenty-something year old private in the army of the Confederate States of America, Richard served until the surrender and returned home to Dollar walking with the aid of a cane which he needed for the rest of his life. His younger brother had not been so fortunate. Nathan died at Gettysburg.



Richard Covington Hardy

Richard Hardy's Family

As the seasons came and went, Elizabeth Works Hardy eventually bore Richard a total of six children: three sons and three daughters. A relatively modest family since farms could use many strong hands and backs for all the work that needed to be done. But by 1880, the oldest son had married and moved to Arkansas. Their second son had died as an infant. The oldest daughter, called Sallie, had married Joel Wamick, and together worked their own farm just across and downstream on the east side of Weogufka Creek. Richard's son Sydney Johnston was around eleven and a good worker. Daughters Mary Susan and Martha Taylor were three years apart in age and both still in single digits when in May of that year their mama died.

By now a prominent person in the area, Old Man Hardy, as he was respectfully known though he was only in his forties, was in need of help on the farm. That help came from four miles up the Weogufka on another farm, that of Arch and Betty Mehearg at Horse Stomp.

Isaiah - Kid turned Farm Hand

A young relative of Betty's had come to the Meheargs a hand-full of years earlier. Isaiah was very sick when he arrived, but with Betty's loving care he'd become a strong and healthy young teenager, albeit bald from his illness. Isaiah was eager to be a man as opposed to a sickly, abandoned child, so he was happy to live and work on the Hardy farm as a hired hand. The arrangement worked well for years. Isaiah was valued by Old Man Hardy, looked up to by his younger children, and built himself a reputation in the Dollar community as a smart, reliable young man.

Fondness Flourishing

As Isaiah would later tell the story to his grandchildren, Old Man Hardy's middle daughter, Mary Susan, really took a shine to Isaiah. She convinced her older sister Sallie to help hatch their plan to elope. It wasn't clear to future generations if Isaiah considered asking Mr. Hardy for his consent to marry his daughter, or exactly how swept up in the relationship he was; nevertheless, his mind would be made up for him. The plan: One evening after supper Mary Susan and Isaiah would slip out and go to sister Sallie and Joel's for the night. Sallie would meet them at the creek, lest the bateaux used to cross the Weogufka be on the wrong side. Leaving in the early morning hours the next day and using Joel's wagon, they would go to Rockford and get married. At least that **was** the plan.

When the day arrived, Mary Susan tied up a few belongings as a kerchief bundle in preparation for the evening departure. However, she mostly noticed how slowly time seemed to pass regardless of how much work she accomplished. Finally, after supper and all remaining chores were done, Mary Susan and Isaiah, on opposite ends of their teenage years, struck out toward the creek.

A Tale to Tell

With no hint whatsoever that she'd caught wind of what was happening, Martha Taylor, the tattling youngest sister, went to get her papa.



Meanwhile, Mary Susan and Isaiah negotiated the ravine and upon reaching the water's edge saw Sallie was across the creek on the east side, just according to plan. And the bateaux was on their side, which was a good sign. Before they could climb in the boat however, all three heard Old Man Hardy's angry, indecipherable bellowing being carried down the ravine. After a moments shock, Sallie called out and motioned, "**Bring'er on, Isaiah!**" as Mary Susan and Isaiah got in the bateaux and shoved off.

Daughter Thievin'

Papa Hardy barreled out of the woods flailing and pointing his cane, "**Don't you know daughter thievin' is worse than chicken thievin'? Bring'er BACK, Isaiah!**" To which Sallie cried out, "**Papa, you leave them be! These chirren in L o v e! Bring'er on, Isaiah!**" This certainly wasn't in the plan, and it was about to get worse.

Old Man Hardy, still shouting at Isaiah, growled indignantly "**Daughter thievin' is worse than chicken thievin'; you can FORGET havin' a job!**" and he continued straight into the creek without hesitation. Well into the water he roared "**You can forget Sunday meetin's, too! You're out!!**" So, in this short time span Isaiah had been found out, lost his job, and had been kicked out of the church. And the old man kept moving and hollering. "**By gum, daughter thievin' is worse than horse thievin', and that's a hangin' crime!**"

By now, having closed the distance on the little boat, Hardy reached out and hooked his cane over the gunwale (or "gunnel" to you mates that are up on your nautical terms). Whether he pulled himself to the boat, pulled it towards him, or a combination of the two, Old Man Hardy then freed one arm to grab Mary Susan and heave her out of the boat. With daughter in tow, he waded back to the shore whence he came and dragged her home.

Isaiah, flummoxed by the turn of events, wisely decided not to follow, and made landfall on the opposite shore where Sallie was. Feeling hog-tied, he stared at Mary Susan's kerchief bundle, still in the bottom of the boat, while Sallie convinced him to come on home with her. Isaiah took up residence with Sallie and Joel for a spell, until he could get on his feet and move out on his own. But not only did he get on his feet, he did right well for himself..., despite being unwelcome at church.

Keep an eye out for the next newsletter notice because you'll never guess what Isaiah got up to next.