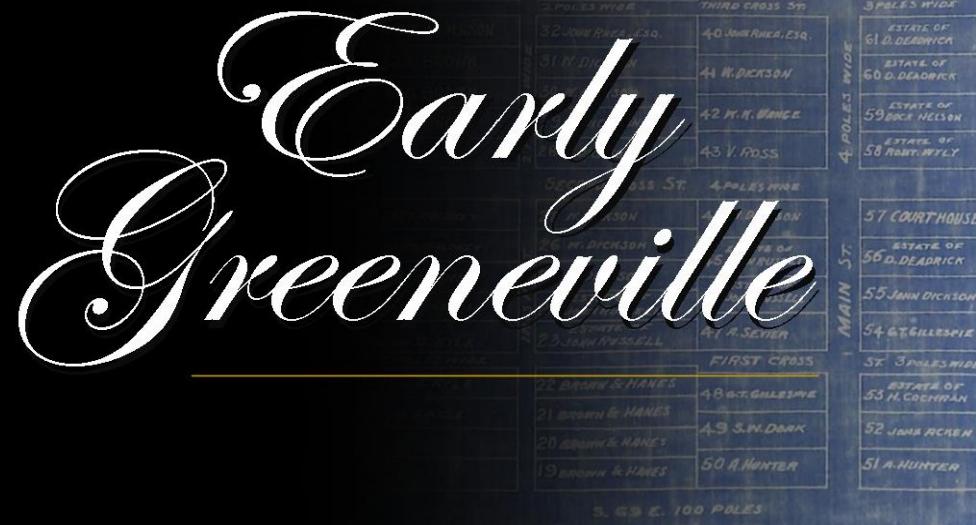




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Fall 2022

# COX QUARTERLY



**229 N.MAIN**

THE HISTORY OF THE  
T. ELMER COX BUILDING

**“DOING DIRT”**

BY BETSY BOWMAN  
RECALLING A  
HALLOWEEN ADVENTURE

**WATERLOO**

GREENEVILLE’S  
CONNECTION TO THE  
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The T. Elmer Cox Genealogical & Historical Library is a branch of the Greeneville/Greene County Public Library

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(As published in *The Greeneville Sun*,  
October 25, 1988)

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## RECOGNITIONS

The Staff of the T. Elmer Cox Genealogical & Historical Library would like to thank the following organizations for their unwavering support:

- \*Greeneville/Greene County Library Board of Trustees.
- \*Friends of The Greeneville/Greene County Public Library
- \*The Town of Greeneville
- \*The Greene County Genealogical Society
- \*All patrons, past, present and future.



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## A LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Recent years have given us countless challenges. In our ongoing quest to stay safe and healthy, we all have changed many of our routines. At the T. Elmer Cox Genealogical & Historical Library, our approach has been to provide ongoing services and cultural enrichment to our patrons as much as possible under the new circumstances. We were happy to announce that on July 28, 2021 we re-opened to the public. We continue to strive for creative ways to keep you informed, engaged and expanding your range of knowledge as it pertains to the history of Greeneville and Greene County.

In 2020, the Cox Library began developing an entirely new archive – one that lives virtually on the web. It is our hope to deliver the history and vital records of Greene County to all who wish to inquire about our rich and diverse past. The virtual archive is in its infancy but still holds interesting and valuable information. Our online offerings currently consist of marriage records dating back to 1780, wills and probate records up to 1830, a genealogical name index of early settlers which will show how individuals are linked, what documents they are linked to in our archives, and a cemetery index showing where they are interred. As time allows, these virtual files will continually be updated, checked for errors, and extensively expanded.

In addition to our online archives, we have extensively upgraded our internal computer systems, converted to digital microfilm machines and use contactless high resolution scanners to ensure the safety and integrity of all our original documents.

We greatly appreciate the support we received while we all adapt to new circumstances and we look forward to welcoming you back to the Cox Library in the very near future.

Stay healthy and informed,  
Christopher D. Gose  
Assistant Director

# 229 N. Main St.

## THE HISTORY OF THE T. ELMER COX BUILDING



Before becoming one of East Tennessee's most respected genealogical and historical research centers, the parcel of land at 229 North Main Street remained mostly residential.

The land has been traced as far back as 1871 to Sarah Jane Morgan, who conveyed the property deed to Sarah E. Haynes. The deed stated "upon which stands a brick house." It is believed that this was later torn down to build the current house.

William Walter Harmon recalled in his memoirs: "Present Location of Laughlin Apartments" There stood a brick building erected by a freeman of color by the name of Henry Wade, a brick mason. I have often seen his initials "HW" on the top course in the north gable. Joshua Lane occupied this house during part time of the Civil War, and I think it was

occupied part of the time by sharp shooters and many wounded men were housed there.

Official records on the exact year the house was constructed have not been found, but it is believed to be between 1907 and 1909. The house's brick had been painted tan with dark brown trim. With a stately portico and fanlight windows, the architectural Foursquare style represents symmetry popular during the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The property has changed hands many times throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the Hanyes family to the Trim family to Dr. Cecil Bruce Laughlin in 1948. Dr. Laughlin rented out the upstairs apartments, and in the Greeneville City Directories from the 1950's through the 1970's, the property was known as Laughlin Apartments. After Dr. Laughlin's death in 1973, the property was conveyed to Clarence and Martha Tweed before being purchased by Dr. David Patterson and his wife, Evelyn, by deed of Laughlin Memorial Hospital in 1979. The house became Greeneville Surgical Clinic with Dr. Patterson, Dr. Stephen Flohr and Dr. Walter Mason until 1997 when it was sold to the Greeneville/Greene County Library Board of Trustees.

After the Library Board purchased the house, extensive renovations were made, including painting the exterior a crisp white. The T. Elmer Cox Genealogical and Historical Library went on to officially open its doors in November 2000.

# "DOING DIRT"

## BY BETSY BOWMAN RECALLING A HALLOWEEN ADVENTURE



As originally published in  
The Greeneville Sun  
October 25, 1988.

I will always have a soft spot in my heart for the William H. Piper house. It has just always been there, acting as sort of an anchor for the intersection of North Main and Spencer Streets. Built in 1890, this stately folk Victorian home is solid and dependable. Its crisp white paint and sturdy porch railing, its delicate woodwork across the side and back porches and its proud dark green

"PIPER'S CORNER" NORTH MAIN shutters all reflect a way of life and quality of life that is fast fading from the American scene. The Piper house, in effect, is truly Greenvillian and pure Americana.

The Piper house has always played a minor role in my life. My Grandfather Harmon proudly wheeled me to "Pipers Corner" in my buggy for all

the neighbors to see and coo over, and later, as a child spending the summer with my maternal grandparents, I could skate and ride my bicycle by myself "only as far as Piper's Corner."

As a small child coming from Knoxville to spend Christmas holidays with my grandparents, as I alighted from the creaky Greyhound bus at Gurney Smith's corner, diagonally across the street from the Piper House, the first indication of the holiday season was seeing the sparkling colored lights on the Christmas tree in the Piper's bay window at 301 N. Main St., the bay window where a Christmas tree burned brightly each year for 91 years.

I saw all of my childhood parades from Piper's Corner, and I still do. Somehow, a Greeneville parade is still not a Greeneville parade without seeing it standing in the yard of the Piper house. Back in the 1920's, my great -uncle Judge Dana Harmon, and Mr. Piper built collapsible wooden bleachers which covered most of the front area of the Piper yard. Here, all of North Main Street neighbors and friends gathered to visit and gossip and swap stories and recipes and political opinions while waiting for the colorful parades held each year.

As a young woman and as an adult, with my grandmother, I would often visit Mrs. Piper and her daughters, Kathleen Piper and Mrs. Lucy Piper Ridgway. There, in the soft light of afternoon, we would have tea and cookies and talk about the comings and goings of the town.

Even today, as I round the corner to go

to my own home, I often admire the bright red carnations on the porch railing, the stately maples overhanging the lawn of the handsome bay window facing Spencer Street.

Mr. Piper was a prominent Greeneville attorney and he and his wife, Caroline Brannan Piper, were good friends and neighbors of my grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. William Walter Harmon. Mr. Piper died before I was born but I have many memories of Mrs. Piper who lived until I graduated from college.

It has been 58 years since one of my most vivid and exciting as well as humorous, memories of the Piper house occurred. I had come to Greeneville to spend Halloween with my grandparents. All of the children in the 300 block of North Main were excited and looking forward to "doing dirt" in the neighborhood...nothing destructive, just mischievous.

The custom of "Trick or Treat" was unknown and we did not wear costumes then, but I was decked out in a pair of old overalls for my grandmother knew instinctively that I would be filthy dirty by the time I arrived home from my Halloween pranks.

After ringing a few doorbells and running like blue blazes, and moving some porch furniture to front yards, a group of us youngsters headed for the Piper house. I do not remember all the children but I do remember Angeline Disney and my cousin Dick Doughty.

Mrs. Piper and her daughter, Kathleen,

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had raked all the leaves from their yard

and had piled them neatly at the curb, waiting for the street brush truck. What a great opportunity to "do dirt!"

With great enthusiasm, we immediately filled our arms with leaves and unceremoniously dumped them on the Piper's porch. Then we made a second trip to the street, and then a third. Suddenly, the overhead light on the porch was switched on and rapid footsteps could be heard approaching the front door. "RUN, Dick, RUN, here comes Mrs. Piper," I whispered anxiously. Angeline and I swung gracefully over the porch railing on the Spencer Street side of the house, landing between the porch and the shrubbery. All of the other pranksters scampered to the other side of the porch, but Dick was too close to the front door.

The door opened and there stood Mrs. Piper. She was a rather small woman but this Halloween Eve, she literally loomed in the doorway. "Dick Doughty," she admonished, "aren't you ashamed of yourself, dirtying up my clean porch!" Dick shuffled his feet and looked down at the floor. "Yes, mam," he mumbled in a low voice. Mrs. Piper ushered Dick into the hall and a minute later, Cousin Willis Doughty, Dick's father, came bounding down the street. He entered the house and Angeline and I, from our dark hideout, could hear muffled voices. Then the door opened and we saw from under the porch railing, an assortment of feet... Mrs. Piper's feet, Cousin Willis' feet... and Dick's tiny feet. This was followed by a swish, swish, swish and we could

see a busy broom working on the scattered leaves.

Angeline and I held our hands over our mouths. Uncontrolled giggles were on the surface, ready to spill out into the Halloween night air. We looked at each other with tears of laughter running down our cheeks and somehow we managed to suppress our giggles.

We could hear Mrs. Piper's and Cousin Willis' muffled conversation in the parlor. They were joined by Mrs. Piper's daughter, Kathleen. There was frequent laughter. Mrs. Piper was unruffled and all was well. Mrs. Piper, Cousin Willis and Kathleen saw humor in the situation, but poor Dick, swishing away on the porch and carrying leaves back to the curb did not share their view of the incident. I am sure he must have gritted his teeth, knowing that all of us were hiding in the shrubbery and letting him take the rap.

After a spic and span job of cleaning off the Piper porch, Dick and Cousin Willis made their way back to 309 North Main. The light on the Piper porch went out and all of the children scattered to their respective homes. Our "doing dirt" on this Halloween Eve was at an end.

And when the goblins come out and this year and the witches ride their brooms across the dark night sky, I might just get a bag of leaves and "do dirt" once more....



# GREENEVILLE'S CONNECTION TO THE FAMOUS BATTLE OF WATERLOO



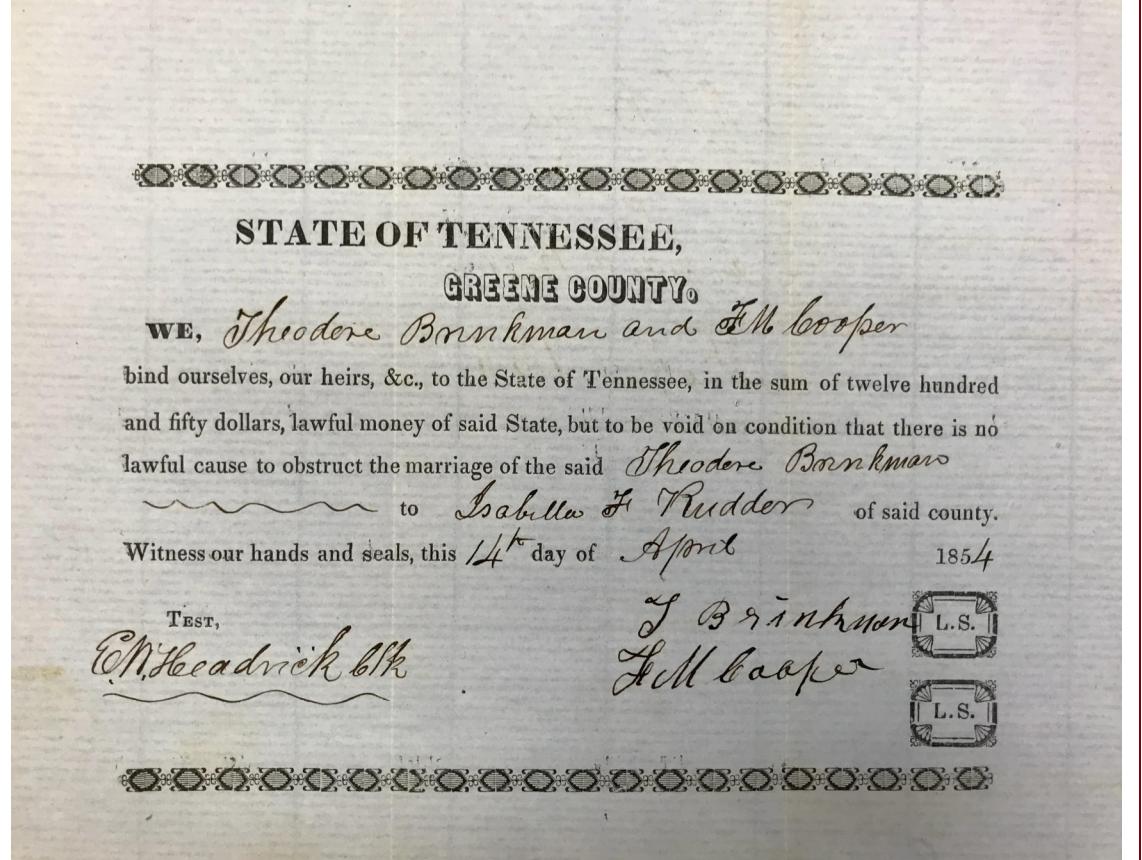
Theodore Brinkman (also seen as Brinkerman in our archives) would have been 22 years old when he was at the battle of Waterloo. On June 18, 1815 he was one of the 45,000 Prussians under the command of Gebhart Lebrecht von Blücher who came to the aid of Wellington during the last phase of the battle. It's unclear at this point which of the four Prussian Corps he was assigned to but we do know he was a bugler. He would have been responsible for conveying command signals to the troops for movement and order. To do so required him to stand tall and play the instrument with great force so all could hear over the confusion of battle.

When the Prussians reached Waterloo, their heavy pressure on Napole-

on's right flank coupled with an advance by Wellington's Allied forces finally routed the French Army. Napoleon's renewed bid for empire ended in crushing defeat.

We're unsure when Theodore actually came to the United States and found his way to Greeneville but his impact was an artful and creative one. (A single record shows a T. Brinkman: German, listed on a passenger list from "foreign ports" arriving in Baltimore, Maryland, September, 1837.)

County records archived at the Cox Library show he was married on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1854 to Isabella F. Rudden by James Davis, Justice of the Peace. Together they had two daughters, Sarah and Catherine.



THEODORE BRINKMAN'S SIGNATURE ON HIS MARRIAGE BOND ARCHIVED AT THE T. ELMER COX LIBRARY.

Theodore was employed by William Dickson and can take credit for managing the beautiful and elaborate landscaping that reached from Irish Street to Main Street. As mentioned in Richard Doughty's book, "Greeneville: One Hundred Year Portrait 1775-1875" he states "The gardens were tend-

ed by Theodore H. Brinkerman who was born in Germany in 1792. He supervised a retinue of slaves to keep the gardens in pristine condition. There were vineyards on the Depot St. side and a row of servant houses beginning at the main house led to the corner, where there was an icehouse."

Brinkman Theodore 97 M W Boarder	Bordener
Isabel 40 F W Keeping house.	
Catharine 15 F W " "	
Varale 10 F W " "	"

THE 1870 CENSUS LISTS THE BRINKMAN FAMILY  
LIVING AT DWELLING #85, DOWNTOWN GREENEVILLE.

During this time he and his family are in the 1870 Census residing at dwelling number 85, downtown Greeneville, occupation gardener.

While employed by Dickson, Brinkman also stayed in touch with his musical background. He was the director of Greeneville's first brass band as recalled by William Harmon, "While the director, Theodore had given an old boxwood clarinet to his uncle, Robert Dixon Maloney which was passed down to William. The bands bass drum was constructed of staves like a barrel. Mr. Brinkman had painted the edges a prominent red."

Theodore Brinkman passed away quietly at the age of 94 and was laid to rest in Oak Grove Cemetery.



The T. Elmer Cox Genealogical & Historical Library is unique in bringing together the stories and people of Greeneville and Greene County under one roof. Your donation will enable people from across the globe to explore stories such as Theodore Brinkman's and allow us to continue to research, preserve, archive and present records to the people of Greeneville and Greene County. Your gift matters.

# LUCK & LEGEND

An old English superstition finds its way to Greeneville:

## THE WITCH JAR

In 2017, when renovating a front porch in the vicinity of downtown Greeneville, an old mason jar was found with a zinc lid. It contained numerous kinds of rusted nails and pins submerged in a cloudy liquid. The workers casually set it aside and continued their tasks. Hours later, two workers were injured when a beam fell on them. They escaped with minor scrapes and cuts. The next day, a portion of the stairs that had just been replaced collapsed under another worker. The workers suggested the homeowner rebury the jar where they'd found it as they didn't want to touch it. The owner did so, and the construction proceeded without incident and was completed ahead of schedule.

-Name and location respectfully withheld.

"Papaw would always tap a horseshoe in the garage with a lucky penny when he was goin' to the stockyard. He never lost money."

-G.C., Greeneville

"A neighbor lost a 2lb sledge hammer off the back of his tractor. While a bunch of us were all out in the field looking for it, we found his

niece's gold locket she'd lost a few days earlier while playing. It was layin' there right next to the hammer that fell off the tractor, just like someone put it there. I usually don't believe in luck or fate but I can't explain this one."

-R.B., Afton

