

LUCK & LEGEND

AS THE CROW FLIES

The common crow is known for its intelligence, leading to it being regarded as one of the most ominous of all creatures. Once considered the messenger of the gods and later a familiar of the traditional witch, the crow is now widely viewed as a harbinger of death and disaster. Particularly feared if it alights on your house or taps on your windowpane. A crow settling in a graveyard is likewise deemed an omen that there will be a funeral in the near future.

Have you found a crow feather? Some say it's a sign of good luck. Others say to never pick it up.

Had a crow cross your path recently? Some locals believe that the bird is trying to tell you something. Be open and use your intuition. Others believe that its trying to steal your wits and you should run the other way.

Crows seen flocking early in the day and fly towards the sun are a sign of good weather coming, as is a crow that caws an even number of times. Bad weather is on the way if crows are noisy at dusk or active around water.

Another local legend is if a girl should wish to know from what direction her true love will come from, all she has to do is throw a stone at a crow and note the direction in which it flies off.

One's unlucky,

Two's lucky;

Three is health,

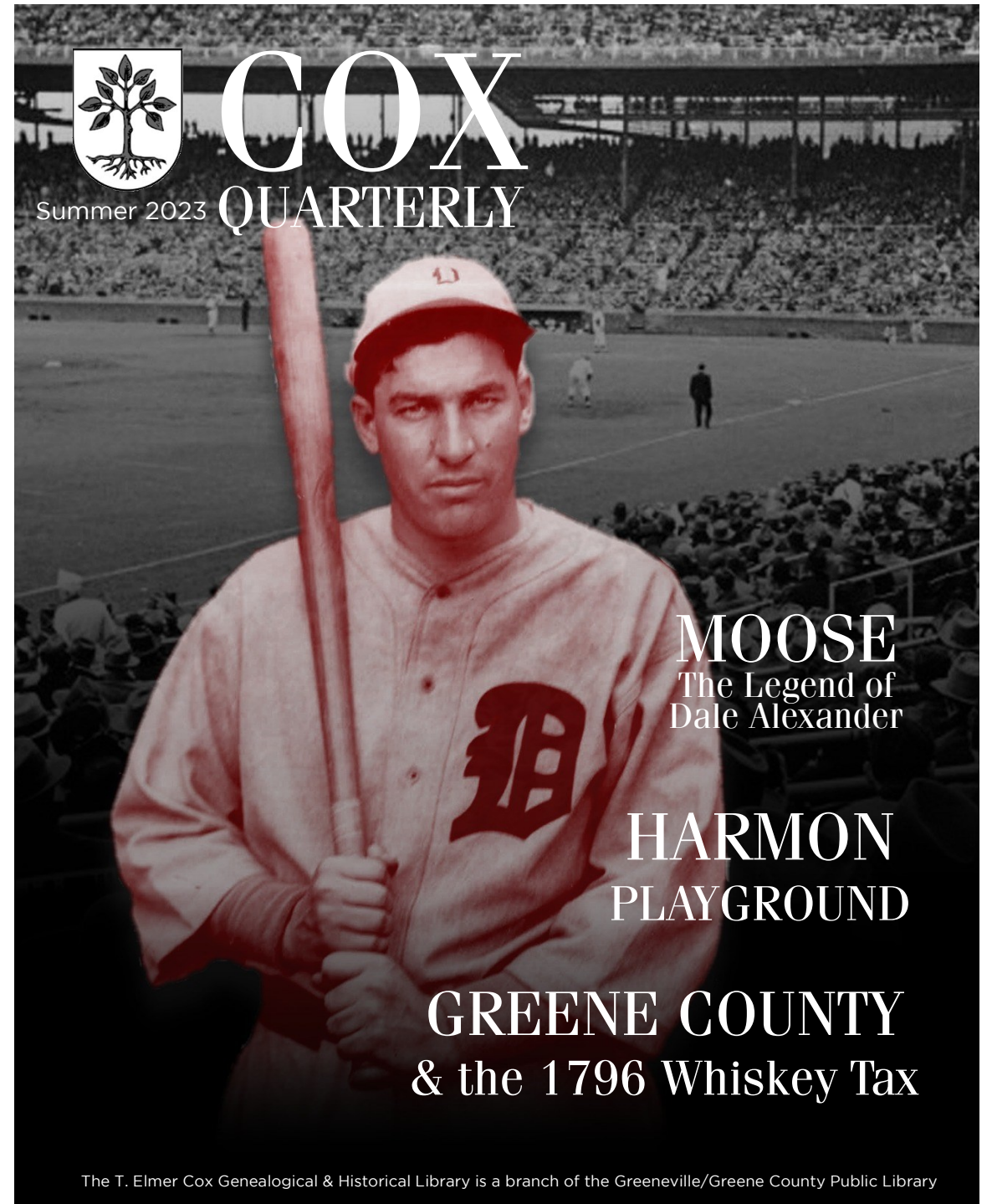
Four is wealth;

Five is sickness

And six is death!



COX
Summer 2023 QUARTERLY



MOOSE
The Legend of
Dale Alexander

HARMON
PLAYGROUND

GREENE COUNTY
& the 1796 Whiskey Tax

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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, Greene County Government, and all patrons, past, present and future.



A LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Some of the most frequently fielded questions we receive at the Cox Library pertain to the caring and storing of old photographs. We have a wide variety of photographs to manage and the preservation methods vary, but the basic care is similar for managing your personal collection at home.

Storage

The best way to store old photographs is in a cool, dry place, preferably off the floor. Avoid storing or exposing them to direct sunlight or areas with high humidity. You can store your photographs in a box, but make sure to use acid-free materials if at all possible. Keeping your collection in your living space instead of in an unfinished basement or attic is the best choice.

Labeling

Writing directly on the back of a photograph can damage it, due to pressure from the tip of your writing utensil. Ink deteriorates and sometimes reacts with the picture itself. If you must write on the back of a photograph, it's still a good idea to use a pencil instead of a pen. It may come as a surprise, but we (archivists) actually favor pencils over pens for durability. Write lightly around the edges to avoid damaging the focus of the photograph at the center. Once you are finished writing, avoid touching the pencil marks. Although lead is less likely to fade, it's not impervious to being smudged away.

Another alternative is to use a separate slip of paper. You can create your own index cards with important information like places for the names and dates or subject of each photograph. Slip them between images or keep a master index card at the beginning or the end.

Handling

Handle the photographs around the edges and try to avoid bending or folding them in any manner. Consider using cotton gloves if you want to completely avoid accumulating fingerprints.

Cleaning

If necessary, use a dry, lint free cloth to gently wipe away any residue, smudges or fingerprints.

Donating

If you no longer have the space or the resources to care for your old photographs, you may want to consider giving them to a family member who has the means to preserve them. You can also consider donating them to the Cox Library to add to our collection. We're always looking to expand our documentation of Greeneville and Greene County for generations to come.

Christopher D. Gose
Assistant Director

HARMON PLAYGROUND

As Published in The Greeneville Sun, September 13, 1988. Written by Betsy Bowman.



*"C.P. Picnic at Harmon Playground in the 1920's. In the pool are George and Willie Doughty."
Courtesy of the Richard Doughty Estate.*

Greeneville has always been far ahead of other towns in offering recreational opportunities to its people. One of the earliest parks, and one still remembered by older generations, was Harmon's Playground on North Main Street. Harmon's Playground began originally as the private garden of

Circuit Judge and Mrs. Dana Harmon, two acres of tree-shaded lawn surrounding the Harmons spacious home.

In 1912, Judge and Mrs. Harmon conceived the idea of turning this space into a playground for small children. As they had no children of their own, Judge and Mrs.

Harmon eventually "adopted" the children of Greeneville, and Harmon's Playground soon was known by the boys and girls and men and women of Greeneville as "our playground."

One day, Judge Harmon was driving home from holding court in Blountville when he saw four of his nephews, Bill and Russell Harmon and Jim and Bill Doughty, swimming in what was known as "the round pond" on the Ridge Road which is now a part of North Main Street. That evening, Judge Harmon visited his brother, Dr. W. W. Harmon, next door. "Will, I saw Bill and Russell and Jim and Bill Doughty swimming in the round pond today." Dr. Harmon gently reminded his brother that the nearest swimming hole was the friends and relatives, but the pool proved to be such a source of pleasure to them that Judge and Mrs. Harmon extended the invitation to all of the people of Greeneville. Many of the youngsters coming to the pool could not swim and Easter Cannon was employed to act as nurse for the very small children, and to ride herd on the pool. Running, ducking and horseplay around the pool would not be tolerated and if anyone made a nuisance of himself, Easter Cannon would rather firmly invite him to go home until he could behave and play as he should.

Swimming pool filters were unknown, so the judge required everyone, no exception, to take an Octagon soap shower before entering the pool.

The judge, never one to mince words, had warning signs printed at the Snapp Printing Company and posted in each dressing room so his rules were crystal clear to every man, woman and child: "SWIMMERS

TAKE NOTE. The owners are doing all in their power to keep the pool clean and sanitary but this cannot be done without your assistance. The girls are to go into Room 11 and the boys into Room 2, take off their street clothing, take a naked shower bath, put on their bathing suits, then put their street clothes in one of the dressing rooms, then go into the pool. If this is done, then the pool will be clean and fit to go into. If you wish the pool to be kept open this summer, the above rules must be STRICTLY FOLLOWED, otherwise it will be closed to the public. We want you to enjoy our pool, but you MUST do your part. This is for your benefit, not ours." And just to underline these rules, the judge had large placards also printed which were tacked to the outside of the dressing room building.

There was a row of dressing rooms, six for men and six for women. One room on each end was for undressing and the other five were for storing clothing while in the pool. And you can bet that Ester Cannon was there making sure that everyone enjoyed an Octagon soap shower before enjoying a swim. And she had no compunction about checking on the men, either!

The pool was open to the public from 3 p.m. until it was closed at 5:30 p.m. but it could stay open for parties, special occasions, holidays and the like at night.

Since there was no filtration system, the pool was drained every Saturday afternoon after closing, was immediately scrubbed by a crew of workmen and re-filling began immediately. The two large water pipes allowed the pool to fill by Sunday night so the pool was ready for swimmers on Monday afternoon. Judge Harmon made arrangements with the city to drain the pool weekly, the water being without charge as all of the sewers in the North

Main Street area were thoroughly flushed each week.

On one side of the pool was a small pavilion where parents, relatives and friends could watch the swimmers. To the rear of the dressing room building was a tennis court and at the far end of the playground were a croquet court, horizontal bars, a trapeze and picnic tables and benches. Judge Harmon loved golf so he developed a three-hole golf putting course in the corner of the far end of the playground.

In the center of the playground was a shallow pool with a fountain from which water was consistently recirculated. Eventually, under the shade trees, half hidden by shrubbery, see-saws, swings, and a merry-go-round were installed. There were numerous flower beds throughout the playground area, all carefully designed by Mrs. Harmon and tended by a crew of six workmen.

Every day, between 150 and 200 youngsters and adults from all parts of Greeneville came to the playground to swim, play on the equipment, or bring their lunches spending the day at the park. There was scarcely a day or evening during the summer months when there were not several picnics on the grounds.

Soon, people and groups began coming from the county and neighboring towns to enjoy the playground and each year, several groups came from as far away as Knoxville.

The playground was lighted at night and young people came to the pavilion to dance. Harmon's Playground looked like a fairyland in the darkness with lights strung through the trees, with wa-

ter playing in the fountain and reflections dancing from the swimming pool. Occasionally, a group would use balloons or Japanese lanterns to decorate the white-framed dance pavilion, adding clusters of red and green, orange and blue to the fairyland scene.

The pavilion was also used for card parties and small meetings such as Boy Scout troop meetings.



Judge Dana Harmon died on April 18, 1934, and Harmon's Playground was closed to the public for all time. During the years Judge and Mrs. Harmon's Playground, literally thousands of children and adults learned to swim and dive, spent many happy hours on the play equipment and enjoyed many social occasions with their friends and family.



FEDERAL DISTILLING TAX

and the women of Greene County who paid it



John Overton was the collector in Tennessee of the first Federal excise tax, the so-called Whiskey Tax. The entries from his ledgers list distillers in Tennessee by county. The record details those who distilled spirits, the number of pots or stills, their annual production of distilled spirits in gallons, and the amount of tax owed. The earliest volume, 1796-1801, includes entries for Andrew Jackson and his whiskey operations at Hunter's Hill outside Nashville, his residence before purchasing the Hermitage property.

This tax volume is a product of the earliest federal tax in the United States, an excise on all distilled spirits

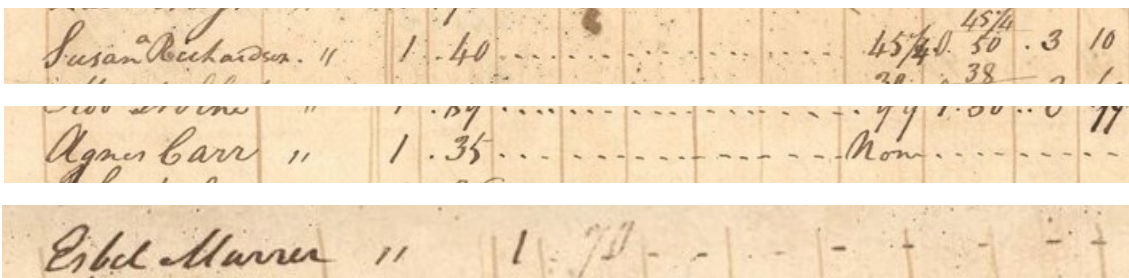
produced in the United States. This tax was the revenue-generating part of Washington's Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's grand plan to repay the bonded debt owed from the Revolutionary War and to establish the fiscal standing of the national government. Because it was done on the backs of farmers, many of whom distilled their corn into value-added whiskey, the excise was widely unpopular in rural areas; it sparked the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania and discontent generally. Distilling was a staple rural industry in frontier America, and particularly in this largely Scot-Irish state, where many Tennesseans distilled whiskey to sell, imbibe, and as a

dietary and medicinal supplement.

There are few tax records during the period of Tennessee history covering the years between 1795 and 1801. The men and women listed here provide us with a type of census. Though many of these people can be found in extant land grants, deeds, marriage records and court records, some of them will not have left those kinds of records. They may have rented their farms, left no marriage record or never had to appear in court. So the following list is rare and somewhat unique to Greene County.

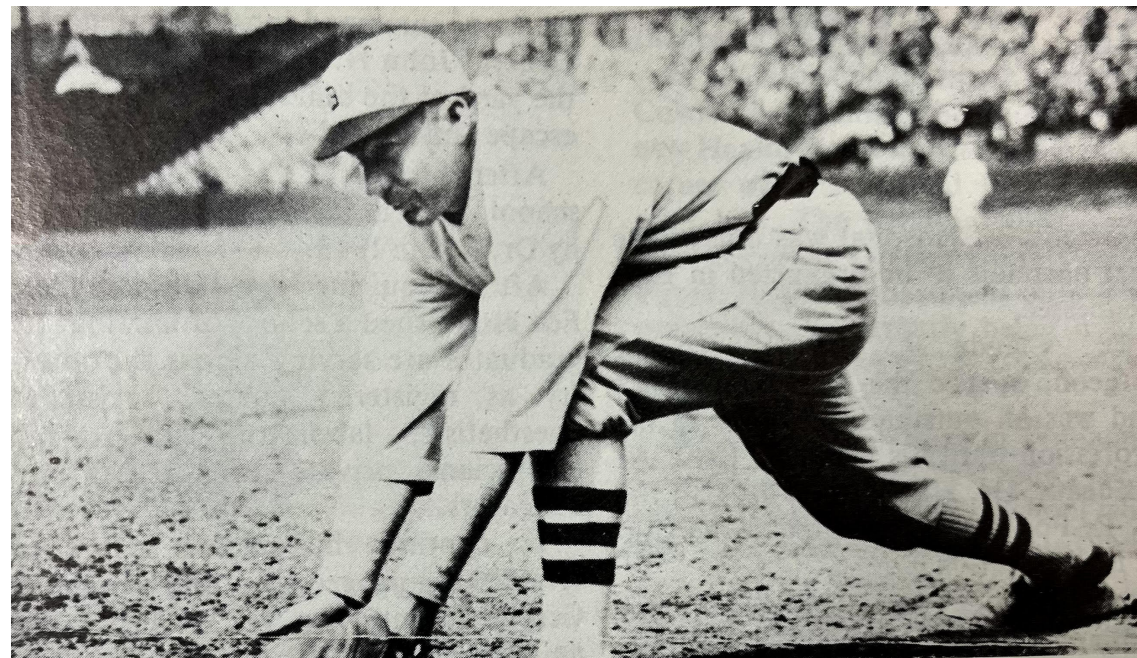
By 1797, Tennessee had grown to 14 counties and Greene County women were at the top of the list: Susannah Richardson, Agnes Carr, and Isabel Marres. All competing with men and making their mark as businesswomen.

With Greeneville's direct ties to Scotland, it's no wonder that women whisky makers are also occasionally mentioned in the records of the town councils of Glasgow and Edinburgh around the same time. Whisky-making and retailing was particularly popular with those (often widows) who kept inns, hotels and lodging-houses. The same was true for Greene County.



THE LEGEND OF GREENEVILLE'S DALE ALEXANDER

Published in Society of American Baseball Research. Article by Bill Nowlan



Dale Alexander, the hard-hitting first baseman who was Boston's first American League batting champion, began and ended his playing career in his hometown of Greeneville, Tennessee. David Dale Alexander was born and raised on a 117-acre farm in Greene County on April 26, 1903. The land has been in the Alexander family from before 1796, when Tennessee became a state.

corn and tobacco, and was a catcher with the local Greeneville team, "an old bare-handed catcher in the Appalachian League," according to his namesake grandson. His son Dale was big enough to earn the nickname Moose and stood 6 feet 3, with a playing weight of 215 pounds. The right-handed hitter was born and died in Greeneville.

Dale's father, Don Alexander, raised

Alexander stayed in school and graduated from Milligan College, where he

starred in football and basketball as well as baseball. He also played baseball for Tusculum College, and was inducted into the Tusculum Hall of Fame in 1984. It was at Tusculum that his grandson Steve Jr. starred at baseball, earning MVP status in 1990 and 1991. Steve joined his grandfather in the Tusculum Hall of Fame in 2001.

Dale Alexander was spotted and signed by Frank Moffett and Billy Doyle of the Detroit Tigers organization. His first season in pro ball was 1924, with Greeneville in the Class D Appalachian League. He played first base, as he did throughout his career with the exception of a bit of outfield work with New-

ark in 1934. Dale hit .332 with Greeneville in 389 at-bats over 114 games. The Charlotte team paid \$500 to buy his contract, and in 1925 and 1926, he played in the South Atlantic League and maintained a similar average each year (.331 and .323) while showing additional power — 20 home runs and a league-leading 44 doubles in 1925, Charlotte sold his contract to Toronto for \$5,000.

Alexander played in 1927 and 1928 with Toronto in the International League, batting .338 the first year and driving in 97 runs. Opposing manager George Stallings dubbed him "The Ox." His second year with Toronto,



1928, was a tremendous season, as Alexander won the Triple Crown, leading the league with a .380 average, 31 home runs, and 144 RBIs. His 236 hits, 400 total bases, and 49 doubles were all league-leading categories as well. He'd earned a promotion to major-league baseball and prepared to play for the Tigers beginning in 1929.

Dale was a durable star for Detroit. In his first two seasons, 1929 and 1930, he played in every game for the Tigers, and he played exceptionally well. His .343 average ranked him ninth in 1929; his 137 RBIs placed him third in the league and set a rookie record at the time. (The current record was set in 1939 by Ted Williams, with 145 RBIs.) Alexander was fifth in home runs with 25. He had 363 total bases, second in the American League. His 215 base hits led the league; he was the first rookie in the league to amass more than 200 since Joe Jackson in 1911. Had there been a Rookie of the Year award in 1929, Moose would have been a prime candidate. Baseball Digest in November 1975 named Alexander as the all-time rookie at the first-base position.

Alexander's first game in a Red Sox uniform came on June 15, 1932. He was 2-for-3 and drove in a run. On June 19, he had a 6-for-8 day in a doubleheader. By July 4, he was leading the team with a .367 average. Though he was a right-handed hitter, most of his hits were to the opposite

field. "I'm a right-field hitter, you know," he told the *New York Times*. He hit the ball hard, too. None other than Babe Ruth declared, "He sure bruises the ball." He maintained his average, hitting .356 at the end of July.

In terms of recognition, Dale Alexander remained a forgotten bat king. The Red Sox could hardly have been a lower-profile team, perennial tail-enders for a decade. He never received a plaque or trophy of any kind. "Not a thing," said son Don, but that was OK with Dale. "He was a private person. He never bragged about anything. You could have ridden from here to California with my dad and never know he'd played baseball." Don said that half of what he learned about his dad came from scouts or other folks who filled him in.

During the 1970s, Don Alexander said, his father scouted for both the Braves and, to some extent, for the Red Sox, passing tips to scout George Digby. Digby was the only person on the Sox that Dale had contact with. He never held any grudges, however, and followed the fortunes of the Red Sox, rooting for them in the 1975 World Series.

In 1970 Dale Alexander was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He battled it for nine years before his death on March 2, 1979.

