

A Step Back in Time By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas

Early Days Of Crosslin Supply Company

When old photographs surface, old memories also emerge. This certainly happened recently when an old photograph was given to a member of the Crosslin family. The only known picture of one of the peddling wagons that was operated by the Crosslin Supply Company brought back memories, not only to family members, but to area residents, who have memories of those days, gone by.

Many of the "new comers" to Eagleville probably never heard of Crosslin Supply Company ever been affiliated with any business other than the lumber and building supplies. Mr. Frank Crosslin, the proprietor of Crosslin Supply Company, was a business man who opened up opportunities for many area residents. His foresight in the business aspect of Eagleville was certainly an asset to this community as well as surrounding communities.

When Reverend R. C. Crosslin, arrived in Eagleville as the new Eagleville Methodist Church Pastor, no one envisioned the impact this family would have on the Eagleville Community. Arriving in the Spring of 1931, with Reverend Crosslin, was his wife, Sudie and six of their eight children; Cecile Maxine, Sudie Ione, Ethel Margaret, Vera Lee, Lillian Mozelle and Richard Claude. His two eldest sons, Frank E. and Joseph were working for their uncles, hauling chickens and eggs to Florida and returning to Tennessee with citrus fruits to sell at local markets. But later, they too, settled in Eagleville, raised their family and became successful businessmen of the area. After seven years, Reverend and Mrs. Crosslin left the Eagleville Church for another appointment. After the death of her husband, Mama Sudie, as she was affectionately called, returned and made her home in Eagleville.

In 1933, soon after Frank E Crosslin married his sweetheart of six months, Mary Esther Taliaferro, he opened a small store, Eagleville Produce Company, on the south end of Eagleville, near the present Lamp Shop. As their business grew, they moved up the street to the old two-story Sullivan Store building on the south-east corner of Highway 99 and Main Street where they continued to sell groceries, bought and sold chickens and eggs.

In July 1939, Frank Crosslin and wife, Mary Esther purchased a little more than an acre of property located on the east side of Main Street, between the Alfred Elmore property and Church Street, from Mrs. Myrtle McRae Boso. This property was previously owned by Mrs. Boso, John Redmon, J. D. Smith and E. L. McGown who purchased it from J. W. Mitchell in 1891.

Soon the Crosslin family moved into the house located on this property. To allow the construction of a new store building, on this newly acquired property, the house was moved to another location on the lot, facing Church Street. Nancy Crosslin Davis remembers their home being moved very slowly while the family continued to live in it. (The house has been torn down and storage buildings built on the location.)

In 1940 Frank Crosslin started construction on a building to house his grocery, feed, seed and produce business. A portion of this construction was done with labor from

prisoners who were housed at Camp Forest in Tullahoma Tennessee. Many of these prisoners were civilian detainees who were arrested at the outbreak of the war under a program called "Alien Enemy Control". Many of these internees were incarcerated without legal process. Government documents indicate that over 25,000 Alien Enemies were held at various locations throughout the United States at this time. Camp Forest's population was over 700. While detained, these prisoners became laborers in hospitals, businesses, farms and often transported to other locations in the state. Mary Esther Crosslin would often prepare meals for the laborers while they were working on this building. Local farmers in the area also benefited from the prisoner labor, planting and harvesting crops. At one time, Mr. John Bowling was in charge for the transportation of the prisoners.

After the completion of the building, it has housed several different businesses in addition to a grocery store, feed and seed, lumber and building supplies operated by the Crosslins. Listed below are only a few of the businesses that operated in this location.

Ethel Margaret, sister to Mr. Frank and husband Troy Estes opened a restaurant in the south end of this building, which was in operation for several years. In 1949, Sue Puckett and Mary Lou Crosslin had a gift shop in a section on the north end of the building. Also the north corner was used by Bud Walker as a barber shop and after the fire in 1952 that destroyed the Eagleville post office, as well as other businesses; the post office was located there until a new one could be built.

A section of this building was also the first home to the Eagleville, Rutherford County Co-op which opened in 1956 with Edward Lee Manier as manager. Some of the early workers were Herman Leverette, Fred Taylor, Mutt Scott, Fred Comstalk, Jerry Giles and Herman Tucker. The Co-op moved to its present location in 1967.

During World War II, when building products were hard to obtain, Mr. Frank saw the need to add lumber and building



Nancy Sue & Frank Jr. Crosslin in front of the Sullivan Store Building

materials to his company inventory. This was the beginning of Crosslin Supply Company as a lumber and building supply company in addition to the grocery and produce business which was housed in approximately the middle section of the building.

Crosslin added three rolling stores, which were called "Peddling Wagons". They traveled around the country roads, selling grocery items such as coffee, sugar, fresh fruits and other items in exchange for cash, chicken, eggs and other locally produced items. Many country residents depended on this service for obtaining needed items for daily living. The drivers would often take orders for needed items from their customers, and deliver them on their return trip which was usually the next week. The first peddling wagons were driven by Powell Taliaferro, Joe and Frank Crosslin.

Nancy Crosslin Davis remembers her job relating to the peddling wagons, was to replenish the supplies, when they returned to the store after their daily run. She would weigh and sack up sugar, flour, meal and other items to be loaded on the peddling wagon for the next day.

Growing up in Eagleville, one of my most vivid memories of the Crosslin Grocery was the Saturday night drawings. During the

week, customers buying groceries, would sign their name on pieces of paper and drop them into a large container. On Saturday night, a drawing was held and baskets of groceries and/or cash were given to the lucky winners whose names were drawn out. During this time, Eagleville would be a very busy place. One could hardly find a parking place on either side of the street. Not only hoping to be a winner, but this was also a great time for friends and neighbors to gather and visit. Although the Crosslin Supply Company, no longer exist in Eagleville, the building still brings back a lot of memories.

I want to thank the children of Frank and Mary Esther; Nancy Sue, Martha Kay and Esther for sharing this part of Eagleville history with the Eagleville Times. (Frank Jr., their brother, is deceased.) As you see, one photograph can bring back many memories of the past. If anyone would like to share photographs and/or any knowledge of early Eagleville history, please contact Bobbie Lonas at 615-274-6282.

The History of Eagleville published in 2006 is still available. If interested, please contact Don McCord at 615-274-2859. The book consists of 524 pages with approximately 300 pictures.



Crosslin Supply Company Peddling Wagon