



Goodykoontz Homestead
Floyd County, Virginia
Built - Early 1840s
Photo - 1997

William Goodykoontz Holman

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Enclosed you will find a copy or copies of the book on the Goodykoontz family, and connected branches, primarily written by Wells Goodykoontz in the 1920s. It has been a lot of work getting it ready, but I willingly took on the task because of the wonderful people I have gotten to know and call "kin", since I first began researching my connection to this tree.

For those of you who have already chosen to contribute to the project, I send my sincere thanks, and to those who asked me about the costs, the printing and shipping runs about \$10 per book. (If I base my calculations on what I think I am worth per hour, it comes out at about \$150 per book. ;-) I do not want anyone to feel that it is obligatory to share the costs, so please enjoy and share this connection with a wonderful family.

Just recently, I received a note from Jack Goodykoontz, who wrote the forward for the book, enclosing a copy of some pages written by Robert Goodykoontz. This is the same Robert whose comments appear in the back of the book. Jack writes:

"Here is a copy of part of the memoirs of Uncle Bob, my father's younger brother. We have enjoyed it so much. Knowing Uncle Bob - his not having much education, can picture him jotting down his thoughts between "nips". After Aunt Nelle inherited some oil wealth, Bob decided his work days were over - so he clipped coupons and grew roses, beginning at an early age. Hope you enjoy it now that you have seen Floyd County and the family homeplace."

We certainly did, Jack, and reproduce them here, hoping that others will too.

If you have not yet visited Floyd County, put it on your "must do" list. Shortly after these books go out, Marcia & I will climb on the Harley Davidson for the first real ride of spring, and hope to stop in Williamson, West Virginia, to deliver some copies in Wells' adopted home town.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bill Holman".

Printed in the historical review of the Roanoke, Virginia Historical Society about 1973. Before Robert Goodykoontz, a director of the Society, died on Aug. 2, 1970, he had put on paper reflections on 86 years of life, beginning in Floyd County and continuing with his family, working on a railroad and with a hardware (company). Most of his life was spent in Roanoke but his earliest memories of boyhood in Floyd are narrated here in his own words.

"We Boys Had a Lot of Fun" Floyd County in the 1890s

by ROBERT GOODYKOONTZ

I was born in the old Goodykoontz home in Floyd County around midnight, June 6th, 1884. Mother said she heard the clock strike and I was born just after. Dr. Calvin M. Stigleman was my doctor and "Aunt" Sara Palmer, wife of "Uncle Thad," was my "Granny." (Uncle Thad was a slave belonging to my Grandfather David.) Dr. Stigleman was the first captain of my father's Company "A", 24th Virginia Regiment, Longstreet's Corps, Pickett's Division, Kemper's Brigade, C.S.A.

One of the first things I remember was attending the burial of a little boy named Elmer Harman, I think in 1889, in the old Goodykoontz graveyard near home. I told mother he looked very pale.

Later his father, Asa Harman, erected a tombstone with a lamb on top. We had a colored family named Scales who lived under a hill from the graveyard. One of the boys broke the head off the lamb. Mother offered a reward of ten cents if the lamb's head would be returned.

A few days later we found the head on the grave but the reward was never collected. You will notice to this day the stone with a lamb, with its head broken off, in the old graveyard.

A few days, or months, later, probably in October, (we picked up chestnuts on the way) Aunt Nette Kirkner with her son Ed, brother Oakey and I, went up to the mill. Little Henry Spangler had died with "The Worms."

I do not remember too much about this except I had a red pair of mittens (yarn), connected with a string, and felt very much dressed up. (It was cold this day.)

I guess this same winter, 1889, my brothers, Wells, Emmett, Wilmer and Oakey, took me to school one day. (I was only past 5 years old.) Uriah Harman was the teacher (later a dentist in Richmond.) The most I remember was all the girls tried to kiss me. I crawled under the teacher's desk. There was Lillian Phlegar, Addie and Lula Hilton, Mandy Harman and more such. I did not choose kissin'.



Robert Goodykoontz, 7, in 1891.

The next year, 1890, I went to school. My first teacher, for two years, was Ellen Meaden.

"Too Big for My Britches"

My last term in school, under Miss Florence Harman,

I guess I got too big for my britches.

I did not study much, but made spit balls and stuck 'em to the ceiling; made funny faces at the kids; put a mouse in Miss Florence's desk drawers; also put a pin in the seat of her chair. In general I raised hell. Miss Florence said she would whip me if I was as big as Buffalo Mountain (she didn't). Also, she said she would have me expelled. However, I stuck it out and graduated at the age of 16, under Miss Florence.

We had it pretty tough going to this country school, which was more than a mile away. Sometimes the snow would be two feet deep and then there would be the rainy and sleety days. We boys had to cut the wood for the pot bellied stove and carry it in and keep the fires up.

We had no buses, street cars or cafeterias. We carried a cold lunch basket. Mother would give us sausage, spare ribs, ham, apple butter—all with cold biscuits. We would also have some kind of pie and sometimes cakes or cookies, and always about a dozen apples and chestnuts. We lived good and were healthy.

Around Thanksgiving and after Christmas, we would have cold turkey or chicken with our biscuits. We got along fine. We boys had a lot of fun. We played "Auntie Over," that is the crowd would divide, half boys and girls. We would throw a ball over the school house, and the one catching the ball would chase around the corner and try to pop some fat gal in the rump. We used a soft ball for this, but I carried a hard baseball in my pocket, and sometimes I used it on fat Mary Jones' rump.

Johnny Houses and "God's Biscuits"

We also had a double johnnie house, one half for the boys and one half for the girls. We boys would go first and when the girls went in we would toss "God's biscuits" (rocks) against the johnnie house. The gals would come out screaming. The school marm could never prove who tossed the "God's biscuits."

Around Christmas there was a store about a half mile from school which sold firecrackers, which were "strictly forbidden" but somehow would slip in. We boys would tie fuses four or five feet long to about five or six cannon crackers and place them under the floor and light them when the bell rang. We were all inside when "BOOM" went the crackers. We boys were all innocent and never squealed.

After starting to school I had various chores to perform, among them was carrying water up the hill from the spring, carrying in wood, keeping the fires up, and going after the cows. On frosty mornings, I, barefooted, would kick the cows up and stand on their warm spots to warm my feet.

Then I had to help milk and later would have to churn butter. Oakey, my brother, and I would have to dash 100 times each for about 2 hours. Mother would not give us hot water to warm the milk because she said it made the butter pale in color and not firm.

I also had other duties to perform. On Monday mornings, when the weather was good, I had to start a fire under two 20 or 30 gallon iron pots, fill them with water and have the water hot when the washer woman came.

However, Oakey and I changed jobs every other week. I would slop and feed the hogs, feed and curry the horses and harness them up, all before breakfast.

Then we would go to the fields. We had an old cow horn that mother or daddy would blow about 11:30. We would come in and not go to work until 1 o'clock.

It is true we did not have too hard a time. There were 1100 acres on the farm and when I was a small boy, up to about 10 or 12 years old, father had two or three tenants on the farm and they had large families. They did most of the work except around the home, such as the garden, yard, milling, churning, etc.

When I was 10 or 12 years old, I was permitted to use a gun. I would go hunting, killed rabbits, squirrels, quail, etc. I had a bunch of steel traps and caught muskrats, mink, pole cats, possums, rabbits.

Foot Washing and Camp Meetings

We were right religious these days and attended Sunday School, revivals and camp meetings. They were usually held in the woods on slab benches and everyone took their dinners.

Also, the old time Dunkards had kitchens built on to the church with big iron pots in them. They would cook a whole beef and have soup, beef, apple butter and bread and would set a regular meal, wash one another's feet, take the sacrament with homemade blackberry wine, usually four or five gallons. The men, all wearing long beards, would kiss one another and the women would do the same.

The Iron Side Baptists also took sacrament but washed only one foot. They did not have beards and the men did not kiss. They held their association once a year, usually in August.

There were such large crowds the church would not hold them and they preached outdoors in a grove or woods, with a stand and slab benches. We boys and girls would do considerable courting. We would make new paths through the woods and bushes. We did considerable kissin' and huggin' and the gals that would not kiss and hug, we boys would not go with them anymore. We would soon bring them to our terms. Lots of fun.

Around the turn of the century, everybody helped the other fellow. We would have barn raisings, threshing, corn shuckings and hog killings.

When we had a corn shucking, there was placed somewhere in the middle of the pile of un-shucked corn a jug of apple brandy. Everybody shucked like hell to find the jug. Then everyone would take a "swig." After that if one found a speckled ear of corn he would be allowed to smell the jug stopper. If he shucked a red ear, he was allowed a good sized drink and if he shucked a "Sque Ball," an ear of corn with solid patches of red, which were seldom found, then the finder or shucker was permitted to take two drinks.

P. S. I carried a "Sque Ball" ear in my pocket.

The Great Temperance Movement

During the 1880s and 1890s there was a Great Temperance Movement, mostly by the women folks and preachers. Temperance societies were organized and lodges established, mostly in churches and school houses. I remember one in the Falling Branch Schoolhouse. There would be prayer, songs and a mumbo jumbo initiation. The joiner was given a red cloth collar to hang around his neck. The big Mogul, presiding, had a crown with tinsel on it. His collar had

glittering stars and he also had a scepter with a battle axe at the top.

All new members took an oath "Never to take another drink of liquor." They would sing Temperance songs such as "Where is My Wandering Boy Tonight?"

One of the biggest moonshiners in Floyd County (I will call him Albert) joined, took the oath and was elected the big Mogul (I do not remember his correct title). All the while Albert was making hundreds of gallons of moonshine whiskey. But finally the revenue agents caught poor Albert red handed. This was the last of the Temperance Society at Falling Branch.

Floyd "Not as Large Now"

Floyd, Virginia (Court House) is not as large now as when I was a boy. There were three hotels, the Jacksonville, run by Jordan Lee, the Central, run by Howard Spencer and the Jett House, run by Joe Jett. All three had bars and the Central had a pool room.

Also there were one or two other bars or saloons. One, I remember, was run by Bill Russell. These were all licensed places.

About 1893 or 1894 there was a big fire which wiped out everything around the Court House except the Jett House. None of the buildings that burned and were replaced were as good or substantial as the ones that burned. Some have never been replaced.

During the 1880's and 1890's the population of Floyd County must have been almost double what it is now. They sold out and moved to Western States by the hundreds. At one time good land sold for three to five dollars per acre.

"Afterthoughts and Things I Forgot To Put In"

We boys had snow ball battles and I remember one winter when snow stayed on the ground for months, wild turkeys in the foot hills of Wills Ridge near the school got so poor and weak they could not fly. We would run them down in the snow and turn them over to Nathan Hylton, who lived near the schoolhouse, he put them in a rail pen, fattened them up, killed and cooked them and would bring hot turkey to school for our lunch.

Father kept a good many cattle, hogs and sheep. I remember he sold his cattle at only 3 cents per pound in the early 1890's ("Hard Times"). We put up lots of hay for the livestock. We put up over 100 stacks one year. I remember we cut and put up hay from June to Sept. My job was driving the hay rake.

Another hard job was taking care of the lambs usually in Feb., snow on the ground, we built a big fire in an old log barn with dirt floor, along with a little brandy. Would make trips all over the sheep lot with lanterns and when we found a lamb that could not get up after being born, we would take the lamb to the barn and thaw it out, pour some warm milk down it and return it to its Mother, they always lived.

Another hard job was shearing sheep. We had over 100 head one year, as we did not have electric clippers, it was all done with hand sheep shears, and our hands got good and greasy, the smart boys now call this sheep grease "lanolin."

We did the usual tricks of boys, Halloween, we set Uncle John Weddle's wagon on top of his barn.

We dragged Uncle Peter Harman's plow up in the top of a big Black Heart Cherry Tree. Uncle Pete did some tall "cussin." We also built fences across roads and lanes. Folks did not like this. The damned Goodykoontz boys were blamed whether we did it or not. Most of the time we did.

We had other fun, there was threshing, log rollings, barn or house raisings, corn huskings, hog killings, apple butter stirrings, most everyone helped one another and we had fun doing it, especially when we had a nice, fat girl to hug etc.

We also attended Wakes, where someone died, the young folks with a few elders would spend the night. We would do some singing, a lotta courting, etc. Usually hot coffee was served along with some kind of sandwiches, during the long night.

"About the Birds & the Bees"

There was a belled buzzard that flew over Floyd County for two or three years, everyone said the bell was gold, one could hear the bell tinkle and see it glitter in the sunshine, most everyone in Floyd County shot at this Poor Buzzard. I did many times but never heard of anyone killing it. (I guess the bell was brass.)

There was a whippoorwill that used to light on the ash hopper, about every night, he would start to "Whip Poor Will," just as he lighted, he kept Daddy awake. One evening just before dusk, Daddy took some hot ashes from the cook stove and poured them on top the ash hopper, Mr. Whip Poor Will lighted and said "Whip Poor" he did not get the "Will" out, his feet were scorched, this was the last of Mr. Whip Poor Will.

Court Days

On court days we would sell lemonade, at first 5 cents per glass, later 2 glasses for a nickle and winding up at 1 cent per glass. I sometime would make as much as \$1.00. Melon time, I would take both water and musk melons to Floyd on Saturday afternoons in the buggy on court days. In the Spring of the year there would be a lot of auction sales, people going West. I would sell apples at those sales, 5 cents per dozen, I managed to have a little change most of the time.

The Road to Christiansburg

Back in the 1880's and the 1890's, Floyd County was in a bad shape, from Floyd Court House to Christiansburg was 21 miles over a dirt road. Up hill, down hill and in the winter time, mud up to the axles of wagons and buggies. There was a hack line that carried the mail and three or four passengers daily, except in winter time, then the mail had to be carried horseback, part of the time.

From the old homeplace we had a near cut to Christiansburg, we could go through the Low Gap of Wills Ridge, mostly by horseback or light buggy, and I do not think it was more than 17 miles, but it was too steep to take a wagon over it, except in dry weather. We would take the light, empty wagon over and bring back the load by Floyd Court House, which was about 7 or 8 miles further, then we would camp at the foot of Pilot Mt., a few miles from Christiansburg, on what I remember as Ellett's Creek. There were always as many as a half doz. wagons, sometimes more, there would be a camp fire, and would fry our bacon, ham or dried sausage and with homemade apple butter, etc. So, we lived well. (We always made coffee.) One could smell this cooking and coffee a mile before one reached the campground.

There was always a gallon or so of corn lickor or brandy in the crowd, also a (banger) banjo and fiddle. We would carouse all night, no place to sleep, also card games and a fight occasionally. We would holler, fight fair, fist and skull, no rocks?

(Robert Goodykoontz grew up in a time of great industrial change. In conclusion, he gave his first impression of inventions now taken for granted.)

The 19th and 20th Centuries

We of my generation have seen more changes in the last half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, than have occurred since the days of Adam and Eve.

Within my lifetime, I have almost seen the beginning, or the complete utilization of the following: the refrigerator, automobile, the aeroplane, the radio and television, moving and talking pictures, the atomic age, and thousands of modern inventions such as deluxe trains, ocean steamers, giant ships and carriers, big guns, trucks, buses, wonderful farm machinery and tractors, electric heating and air conditioning. I could go on and on.

I remember the first telephone, (about 1890 or 92). It was a big thing that hung on the wall with a big box below holding jars of battery acid to create electricity. One had to holler loud to talk to Christiansburg 21 miles away.

The first phonograph had rubber tubes which one would place in each ear and hear a squeaky voice. I paid five cents to hear William Jennings Bryan speak in 1896.

I paid 25 cents to see the first automobile in a tent at the Radford Fair. It had high wheels like a buggy.

The first flying machine I saw was at the Roanoke Fair. It was a gas bag with a propeller, the operator hung in a basket under the bag and he went as high as Mill Mountain. We paid 25 cents to inspect this machine in a tent.

The first street car I saw was in Radford around 1890. It was a little doodlebug that would carry 12 or 15 passengers.

The first silent movie I saw was in Chicago around 1903. It was a pale blue flickering French film called The Path'e. It would run for about five minutes at the end of Vaudeville, and usually show a cop chasing some one who could run into a fruit peddler's cart and turn it over. A train would come rushing at you and you would almost jump out of your seat.

The first radio was a squally, squeaky thing that gradually improved. Television was just as bad at first. It would flick on and off, howl screech, etc. It, too, gradually improved.

The Atomic Age I do not know much about but I do know it is the most powerful force every invented by man.