

MUSEUM A SYMBOL OF BREVARD'S HISTORY

By Linda Anders

Histories of a county, a town, and two prominent families come together and are symbolized by the Transylvania Heritage Museum in its new location at 189 West Jordan Street, Brevard, in what is locally known as the Harry Patton house.

Before the formation of Transylvania County, Alexander England, Jr. and Albert Allen England were living in the area, then part of Henderson County. Alexander, Jr. (1822-1896) and Albert (1831-1873) were sons of Alexander and Abigail Wilson England.

Albert and Mary E. Erwin (1835-1905) were married on 6 March 1851 and their first child, Thomas Douthitt England, was born 1 January 1853. While Thomas, known as "De", was just a child two major events took place.

A bill was passed on 15 February 1861 by the North Carolina Assembly establishing a new county from parts of Henderson and Jackson Counties called Transylvania. The bill also provided for a new town to be the county seat.

The first official meeting of the Transylvania County court was held 20 May 1861 in a small country store called the "Valley Store" in Oak Grove. Alexander England, Jr., Leander S. Gash, and Braxton C. Lankford jointly donated 50 acres for a town site. Brevard was chosen as the name for the new town as a tribute to Ephraim Brevard, a surgeon and colonel in the Revolutionary Army.

On the same day, May 20, North Carolina seceded from the Union and entered the Confederate States of America.

When the town fathers laid out streets in Brevard, the England family owned a large space on the western edge of Brevard. After the Civil War, Thomas D. England, listed as a house carpenter on the 1880 Transylvania County census, began to build on that land. At some point, he also operated a planing mill on Kings Creek.

The Henning Inn was built in the 1870's and was used as a stage coach stop and boarding house. The name of Henning was given to the building because Mr. and Mrs. Henning operated it. Mrs. Henning's maiden name was Mary M. England (1857-1918), a daughter of Alexander and Martha Wilson England. The Henning Inn stood at the corner of Jordan Street and England Avenue, near the rear of the current Brevard Post Office. This landmark burned down in the 1960's.

According to his obituary, "Mr. England was actively engaged and connected in the mercantile business in Brevard for 42 years." The business continued to be operated by several generations of the England family, including the Trantham branch of the family who changed the name to Trantham's Department Store.

In 1898, he was elected and served as a member of the Board of County Commissioners, and in 1919, he was elected and served as a member of the Board of City Aldermen for Town of Brevard. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Brevard Banking Company for many years.

Thomas “De” had married Mary Ann Charlotte King (born 7 Feb 1859) on his twenty-ninth birthday, 1 Jan 1882 in Brevard. They had three daughters: Ethel E. married Walter Hume Harris, Bertha I. married Beverly W. Trantham, and Edith L. married Harry Heiss Patton.

About 1900, Thomas “De” built what is now known as the Harry Patton house. The next article will continue with the story of Harry and Edith Patton.

The Museum needs the support of both residents and visitors. Opportunities to help are: become members of Transylvania Heritage Coalition, Inc., visit and volunteer, take part in the programs, and purchase items in the **Heritage Gifts** shop. Admission is free; donations are appreciated. For more information, call 884-2347, visit the web site at www.transylvaniaheritage.org, or drop by 189 West Main Street, Wednesday through Saturday, 11am – 6 pm, and 4th Fridays, 6-9 pm.



Harry Heiss Patton as a young man. Harry and his wife, Edith England, owned the house at 189 West Main St., Brevard, where the Transylvania Heritage Museum is located. The Museum is now open and looking forward to a busy summer.