

35th Anniversary Edition 1989-2024  
*The Hoover Historical Log*

## Celebrating two anniversaries...

It was a beautiful fall day for the celebration of the 25th Anniversary at the Folklore Center October 23, 2022, remembering the gift of the Stinson Ole Place log cabin to the Hoover Historical Society, the City of Hoover, and the Board of Education.

Dedication of the Stinson Ole Place cabin took place on November 9, 1997, by Rev. Alvin Macon (Mac) Stinson, Jr. He donated the cabin to the HHS to preserve it for history and for use by the school system as a learning experience for students to experience pioneer life as it was in the mid-1800s in Alabama.

John Lyda, President of the Hoover City Council, offered greetings from the City of Hoover and shared an apology from Mayor Frank Brocato who was unable to attend the anniversary celebration. The Mayor and City Council have been supportive of the Folklore Center and contributed both financially and with manpower in the development and ongoing maintenance of the property.

Past HHS president, Jim Langley, gave the invocation. Current president Linda Joseph welcomed visitors and members of the Stinson family—briefly describing the history of how the Folklore Center came to be as a result of their gift. Linda told the story of pennies dated 1817, 1837, and 1839 found beneath the threshold of the cabin. This was a tradition in the 19th century to bring good luck to the household. Some of those pennies were given to the Stinson family and some were framed for preservation by the HHS.



*Vintage photo of the Stinson Ole Place in situ, Columbiana, by photographer Billy McDonough; donated by Toni Waller, 2019.*

Stinson family members told the story of Thanksgiving night, November 28, 1986, when they decided to spend their last night in the cabin before its disassembly. The temperature was below freezing that evening and there was no heat in the cabin other than the fireplace and some kerosene heaters. However, the family members told of their fond memories of that night.

Gene Fuller took over the responsibility for the care and maintenance of the Folklore Center about five years ago, replacing Doug Harkness, and the late Charles Shelby, who had held the position since its beginning. An important part of this position is working with schools, home schools, and other groups; e.g., scheduling tours for first and fourth graders from Bluff Park Elementary. Gene works closely with Jim Langley with plans for the cabin and its outbuildings while Gene's wife, Sandra, became involved with cleanup, decorations for the cabin, and serving as a docent for the groups that visit.

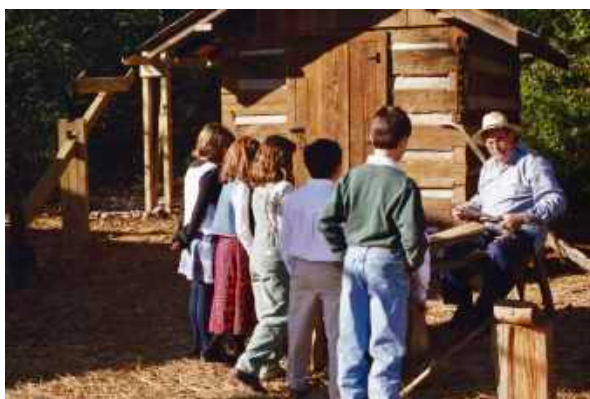
*Left: A Hoover Belle; Mayor Frank Skinner; Ethel Gorman Invocation; Jessie Bean, president HHS; behind post, Jack Crouch; at podium, Jack Farr, Supt. of Schools; at right, Stinson family.*

## A History of The Folklore Center and Jack Crouch, Founder

Jack Crouch had a vision—a log house and a village as a great asset of the Hoover Historical Society. His knowledge and expertise with finding, acquiring, and moving log houses was well-known in Alabama. Before retiring as V-P for Community Relations at Kimberly-Clark Corporation in 1992, he was commissioned to conceive and create an 1800s village of log homes that became known as the Heritage Trail Pioneer Village (and since his passing at age 70, was given to the Alabama College System Environmental Science Consortium and is open by appointment.)

Jack joined the young Hoover Historical Society in 1992 and served as V-P in 1993 and as president for two terms beginning in 1994. Aware that one of the purposes of the society was preservation and sharing knowledge of earlier lifestyles, he began exploring the possibility of establishing a log house for the Society in Hoover. Before locating one, a suitable location where schoolchildren and the public could access had to be determined. Jack met with then-Mayor Frank Skinner and Librarian Linda Andrews in 1996 to discuss the possibility of acquiring a log house as a teaching experience for the schools and community. Both approved the idea. At that time, the Society was housed at the Hoover Lake House and meetings held at the Green Valley Baptist Church on Patton Road. The Society formed a Long-Range Planning Committee to steer the Society's growth and needs.

Bluff Park was considered most appropriate as one of the oldest communities in Hoover. An application for the Shades Crest Road Historical District had been submitted for approval by the state. Also, the School Board had approved the original Bluff Park Elementary School building, built 1923, for use by the Hoover Community Schools and where there were vacant rooms available as a likely office for the HHS.



During November 1996, members of the Long-Range Planning Committee met with Dr. Jack Farr, Mayor Skinner, Council members Barbara McCollum and Brian Skelton, at the Bluff Park Community School. An agreement was reached that the society would use the old library room as its future home. Work began shortly—preparing the space for the office and the Society moved there in January 1997. Also, it was planned that a log house could be placed on the school property between the two playgrounds. At the same time, the Stinson family in Shelby County decided to give their cabin for use as an educational tool—rather than letting it deteriorate or be vandalized.

Furnishings and items were donated by members and friends. Other historically-correct items were purchased. An inventory of the furnishings in the house and donors' names was kept. Peggy Sturdivant and Marie Taylor volunteered to keep the house in readiness for visitation with help from Charles Shelby.

The Stinson Ole Place dedication was held in November 1997 with a large crowd, city officials, and Stinson family members.

Committees were appointed to serve as a liaison with the School Board and City Council in developing a program for visitation by schoolchildren. Jean Watson Wright and Beth Kinsaul served with Peggy and Marie to implement procedures for visitation of children accompanied by their teachers at the Folklore Center. A teacher information book was presented to Dr. Gloria Solomon of the School Board for Bluff Park Elementary School teachers in preparation for visitation by young students.

The first visit of 100 first graders in the morning and fourth graders in the afternoon took place November 12, 1998. The students observed basket weaving, spinning, and storytelling by professionals. This was the beginning of many visits from different schools. Jack Crouch participated by demonstrating how corn was shucked and ground (left, photo of Crouch and the first students.)

Just five days later, Jack died, having seen his dream realized. Such a great loss to so many! Charles Shelby served as Chairman of the Folklore Center. Boy Scout Ian Meyer approached the Society with a plan to plant an herb garden in front of the cabin—earning his Eagle Scout status. Since then, many artisans have demonstrated life in the 1840s. Each year, the program of visitation of school children is developed and hosted by Society members and other experts in their fields providing an excellent opportunity for teaching and learning!



## Donation/Preservation of the Stinson Ole Place

In 1996, the family of Alvin Macon Stinson, Sr. and Dr. Alvin Macon Stinson, Jr., decided to donate their family's log cabin, which had been in the Stinson family since the mid-1800s, to the Hoover Historical Society. The log cabin, referred to as the 'Stinson Ole Place' was donated to the HHS November 9, 1997, for the purpose of educating today's students about life in the 1840s—before electricity and running water were available in rural Alabama.

At least three generations of Stinsons lived there. Sam Stinson, grandfather of Alvin Macon Stinson, Sr., and his son, Alvin Macon Stinson, Jr., were born in the cabin. As the family grew, so did the house. Elijah Stinson made many additions to the cabin that made it quite a large house for its day. Mac Stinson commented that as a boy, he remembered the house with clapboard siding and a 'dog trot' down the middle. There was a kitchen and a dining room added to the back of the house. There were several outbuildings such as a barn and a blacksmith shop as well as a carriage house, cribs, sheds, and of course, the "necessity," or the "out house."



The gathering was a happy reunion for HHS members Edna McWilliams and Amy Lewis (far right) whose cousin, Jon Short, married Glori Stinson (center).

In 1953, a tornado struck the house and destroyed everything but the original log structure. In the early 1960s, Alvin Macon Stinson, Sr. and Margaret L. Stinson Lyon's husband, Raymond Lyon, began a restoration of the old log house and returned it to good condition. The grass was always cut and the house was used for picnics and family events which sometimes included overnight camping.

However, vandals discovered the house and did considerable damage to it, the yard, and the "necessity." Along with natural deterioration, the hard decision to donate the house to the HHS seemed a good way to preserve it for the future generations to see, learn, and enjoy.

On Thanksgiving night, November 28, 1996, Dr. Stinson along with his wife, Glenda, and their youngest daughter, Mary Elizabeth Stinson Skillman and her husband, Chris, and their two children, Macon and Sloan, spent one last 'farewell' night in the Ole Place, Camping on the floor on the unusually cold night (below freezing), they had a fire going all night; however, they enjoyed their stay.

After the move and reconstruction were complete, the dedication took place with Mayor Frank Skinner; Jack Farr, Superintendent of Schools, and Jack Crouch, who oversaw the project of disassembling the cabin in its original location and moved it its new location next to Bluff Park Elementary School. Jack presented a plaque to each family member and installed a special plaque on the outside wall of the cabin in honor of the 'Stinson Ole Place.'



### Stinsons return to homeplace

Photo takes storied path back to family's log cabin

By WED ABERNATHY  
News and Staff Writer

Elijah and Matilda Stinson could see from their new perch in a photo on the wall of his old log cabin, they'd see that everything — and nothing — has changed in the past 150 years.

The structure is still the same, moved to the campus of Bluff Park Elementary School in 1967 from its original 1840s location in rural Shelby County after the Stinson family donated it to the Hoover Historical Society. But the portrait photo of Elijah and Matilda is the only 19th-century item in the cabin, which is decorated nineteenth-century style with a spinning wheel, wood stove, pottery, quilts and pine lanterns.

The photo has taken a circuitous route to the cabin, and

See *Citizen*, Page 9B



Doug Harkness, left, of the Hoover Historical Society and Dr. J.O. Powell hold a photo of Elijah and Matilda Stinson, who once lived in the log cabin. Powell obtained the photo from the Stinsons' grandson, who is married to Powell's former eighth-grade teacher.

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Wednesday, April 27, 2005

### CABIN: Family photo placed in house

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might never have arrived there this month if a local ophthalmologist had behaved better in eighth grade.

Dr. J.O. Powell, 65, of Birmingham, grew up in Colbert County in northwestern Alabama. He was a good student through grammar school but when he moved to rural Colbert Heights, which went through ninth grade, he turned bad, he said.

"I was, I guess, what you could call a juvenile delinquent," Powell said. "I was a smart-mouthed teenager."

He was especially bad with three teachers, including one Gene Stinson, then in her late 20s. But she didn't give up on him, writing on his report card: "Orlis should do more homework. He could with study make As!"

She was right, and Powell succeeded in high school and went on to earn degrees at the University of Alabama and University of Miami and became a pathologist and ophthalmologist.

### Wanted to apologize

"Over the years, I always wanted to get back and apologize to these three teachers," Powell said. "I was remiss in doing so and over the course of time, two of them had died and I didn't get to apologize. But Stinson was still alive."

He found out through a patient that she was living with her husband in Little Rock, Ark. They began writing back and forth, and last year Powell and his wife went to visit.

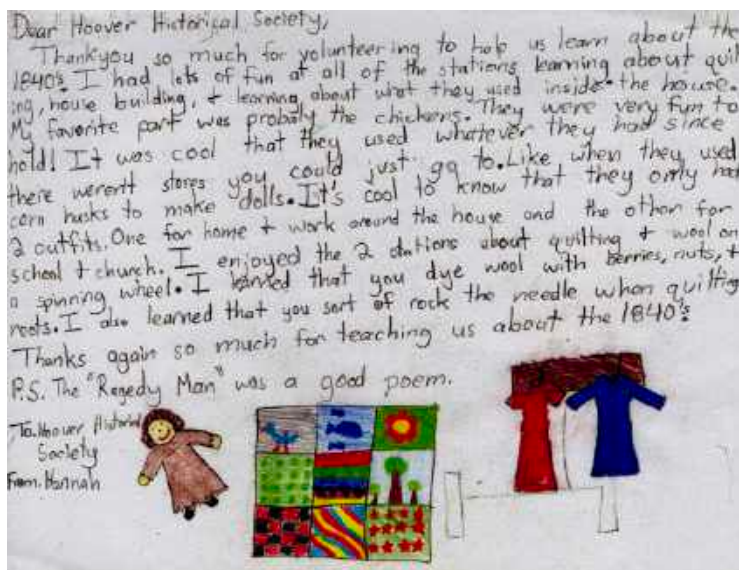
"I got on my knees and said 'Mrs. Stinson, will you forgive me?'" Powell said.

In conversation, Stinson's husband, Handy, mentioned a family log cabin that was somewhere in a park in Hoover. That rang a bell with Powell. The nurse in his office, Lou Harkness, is married to Hoover Historical Society member Doug Harkness, who gives tours at the 'Stinson Ole Place.'

The Powells returned home and took pictures of the cabin to send to the Stinsons. Handy Stinson responded, saying the photo that was hanging in the cabin was of people he had never seen before. He offered an authentic family photo of Elijah and Matilda Stinson, his grandparents, Powell said.

And so it came to pass that the photo was hung on the log walls. The Hoover Historical Society plans to dedicate it at a meeting May 17.

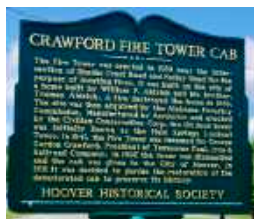
## Read for yourself how much children learn at the Stinson Ole Place:



### Lost & Found...

Our thanks to Colin Conner, City Forester, who helped locate our missing marker...it was removed during the road project on Patton Chapel Road and stored at the Public Safety Center.

—Pam Thompson, V-P HHS



### Markers site history...


One of the goals of an historical society is to mark significant locations/buildings/neighborhoods, etc., for preservation and posterity. The HHS sponsors markers around the city of Hoover; most recently, the South Haven Health and Rehabilitation, LLC. At least one new marker is planned for 2024-25



Before Hoover existed as such, a church and school were founded in the late 1800s. The church, also used as a one-room school, evolved into Valley United Methodist Church. The school eventually became Green Valley School. A visible remnant of the early site is a well dug by the Patton Chapel community in 1872 to provide water for the church and schoolchildren. The restoration of the water well was done by Jack Crouch, founder of the Folklore Center, and the Kimberly-Clark Corporation.

A cemetery was established behind the church dating back to the 1860s. Many of those graves were for victims of a mine explosion according to a church historian in a past newspaper article.



 **The Hoover Historical Log**

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Editors: Edna McWilliams & Deb Burnett

Editors note: we are indebted to the family of Dr. Alvin Macon Stinson, Jr., for the donation of his family's home and to all who play a role in its upkeep and use as this asset has served its intended purpose of educating the public about life in Pioneer Alabama.

## Tom Thumb Weddings—and the Bluff Park Connection

Charles Sherwood Stratton was an American dwarf who began working for the circus impresario P. T. Barnum at the age of four. He was known by his stage name—General Tom Thumb. He was a talented singer, dancer and actor who impersonated Cupid, Napoleon Bonaparte and Hercules. Barnum took him on tour of Europe where he charmed Queen Victoria. In London he was driven about in a toy carriage with miniature horses and became an international celebrity.

In 1862, he fell in love with a pretty dwarf when she began working for Barnum. Her name was Lavinia Warren. Barnum, a peerless promoter, paid for their wedding and made it a spectacular event. Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper called it "The Fairy Wedding: the Marriage Ceremony of Charles S. Stratton (General Tom Thumb) and Miss Lavinia Warren (The Queen of Beauty.)" Lavinia purchased her wedding dress from Madame Demorest, one of the most sought-after fashion designers at the time. She created a diminutive-size wedding gown which was put on display in the window of Lord & Taylor for weeks before the wedding. It created such a stir that the street would be blocked with excited women by 10AM...as if the store "had been burning up or Jeff Davis was addressing the crowd."

They married at the cathedral-like Grace Episcopal Church in New York City. Invited guests included the Hon. W. H. Seward, Hon. E. M. Stanton, General McClellan, General Wool and General Fremont. Governors and dignitaries such as John Jacob Astor, Jr., and Cornelius Vanderbilt attended. In the media and among the public, the wedding was called "a fairy-tale wedding."

A lavish reception was held at the Metropolitan Hotel where the newlyweds stood on top of a grand piano to meet their many well-wishers—most of whom paid \$75 per head to attend. The couple received wedding presents from wealthy



*Alfred Allen and Evelyn Armstrong in a 1901 news article describing "A Wedding of the Flowers" to benefit the Summit School.*

Americans including a miniature horse-drawn carriage fashioned by Tiffany & Co. President Abraham Lincoln hosted a reception for them at the White House a few days later.

Barnum promoted their wedding as the event of a lifetime. The event was covered by the New York Times and Saturday Evening Post. The extensive coverage pushed news of the Civil War off the front pages of the *New York Times* for three full days.

So, what is the connection to Bluff Park? Vadie Honea wrote an article for our Hoover Historical Happenings newsletter in 2002. It mentioned a letter and photograph sent to Carlo Joseph by Eliza Brunson. She was the daughter of Hugh G. Stokes and Marguerite H. Stokes who lived in the Hale-Joseph house starting in 1919.

Later, I found the actual photo she sent in our files. The photo featured Evelyn Armstrong and Alfred Allen of Bluff Park who participated in a Tom Thumb wedding at the Bluff Park Hotel. Evelyn had a "Mary Pickford" curly hairstyle. They were dressed as bride and groom.

—Researched and written by Carolyn Kolar



## Memories of the Stinson Cabin in the Woods

Submitted March 17, 2024, by Margaret Sharon (Sherry) Lyon White (1944- ) to the Hoover Historical Society with appreciation for my memories of more modern visits to the Stinson Cabin (the Ole Place) which was relocated to the grounds of Bluff Park Elementary where it welcomes our family, Bluff Park citizens, school children, and visitors as a 19th century Alabama History learning center.

The Stinson Cabin was once in the woods off Alabama State Route 25 between Wilsonville and Columbiana, at Cate's railroad crossing. I am the great-granddaughter of Elijah Stinson and Matilda Anderson. Eliza Walton, his first wife, died in 1875 after three years of marriage. Elijah and Matilda lived in the cabin in the mid-to-late 1800s and early 1900s. The cabin may have been occupied or built by Eliza's father, Hugh Acey Mack Stinson and his wife, Elizabeth Farr, before Elijah and his wife lived there.

I am the granddaughter of Elijah's son, Sam Elijah Stinson (1881-1964—Sambo to me) and his wife, Annie Kate McGhee Stinson (1894-1974—Mimmie to me) who had one daughter, Margaret Louise (Stinson) Lyon (1924-2015), my mother.

Sam had a son, Alvin Macon Stinson, Sr., (1909-1993) with his first wife, Elizabeth McGiboney (1889-1912), who died when Alvin was two years old. My grandfather took his child home to his mother to the cabin in the woods where Alvin's grandmother cared for him until my grandfather, Sam, married his second wife, Annie Kate. My grandparents and my Uncle Alvin left the cabin in the woods and ended up—when my mother was five and Alvin was 20—in Columbiana in the house on West Sterrett Street that I remember as Sambo and Mimmie's house.

Years later, I purchased and lived in that house with my husband, Byron Wallace White (1941-2011) when he retired after 20 years in the U.S. Army. He shared some of my memories of the cabin and helped my family with its upkeep. We went to the cabin and its 100 acres to practice firearm safety together. It was there my retired Army officer husband learned I could shoot a handgun as well as he!

Mother and Daddy and my family along with my brother Ray's family, celebrated one Thanksgiving at the cabin. Mother remembered that her grandmother used cloth napkins and that every diner had his or her own napkin and designated nail in the wall near the table. These nails were for each diner's napkin to be used again at each meal until washday. We retrieved and hung our cloth napkins on designated nails. We were cold that Thanksgiving with only the fireplace, our celebration and the good food to warm us. My children remember that event, too. Perhaps it is frozen in their memories!



Another memory shared by my three youngest children occurred when my father, Raymond Carl Lyon (1924-2013) took them out to the cabin to do some repairs. They had to cross Cate's dairy farm pastures as we all

did to visit the cabin and its 100 acres) and we all knew to carefully close gates and stay away from the dairy barns, cows, and equipment. The children were young and soon tired of 'helping' and as their grandfather was not paying them much attention, they went across the pasture back toward the barns. They soon discovered a haystack where all three climbed up and began jumping on the hay, scattering it.

One child saw Granddaddy approaching and left the haystack as he was known for spanking disobedient children. When he asked who had been on the haystack, two were still on it and could not deny it. The third child, whose name will not be mentioned, denied the act and escaped the spanking. Her two brothers remember her duplicity to this day!

While still a child, I would visit the cabin with Mother and Granddaddy Sambo. Mother loved the spring on the property and when she and her brother, Alvin, had the land surveyed and divided into 50 acres for each of them.

Mother took the 50 acres of woodlands with her favorite spring and wanted Alvin to have the 50 acres surrounding the cabin where he had lived as a child. Later, she gave my brothers, Raymond Carl Lyon Jr. (1950- ), and Sam Martin Lyon (1952-2021) and me 10 acres each but retained the 20 acres with the spring. I loved visiting the spring because it was her favorite spot.



Over the years, both our families—Mother's and Alvin's—made repairs on the cabin. Ray loved wood-working and repaired the well house roof with cedar shakes that he made himself. My other brother, Sam, lived in Florida and escaped repairing duties. But once, when we were all at the cabin, the men were cutting

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*Hoover Historical Society:***Celebrating 35 years of archiving Hoover's history!**

An organizational meeting was held at the home of Vadie Honea on March 8, 1989, and two weeks later the first regular meeting of the HHS was held at Green Valley Baptist Church, with Mayor Frank Skinner issuing a Proclamation. The group was formed to promote knowledge of Hoover's history and began with 110 charter members. Committees were formed to work on specific goals set by the group such as fundraising, newsletters featuring speakers and programs, columns in the local newspapers, and furnishing the Stinson Ole Place cabin for educational purposes. Charter member Linda Wurstner recalls:

"Back in the late 1980s, much of Hoover's history was being made, and forgotten. Green Valley had already merged with Hoover, and Bluff Park was bursting with historic homes and landmarks. One resident had a vision to gather this history, apply for historic building and site designations, and install historic markers to inform others about the history of their area. Vadie Honea, of Oriole Drive near Star Lake, was the visionary for creating the Hoover Historical Society.

Her enthusiasm brought in several of her neighbors around Star Lake, including Aline Anderson, future HHS president. Vadie was able to get the city of Hoover to recognize the need of having a historical society and even secured modest funding. The society was officially announced to the community and held its first public meeting in the Fellowship Hall of Green Valley Baptist Church in 1989. Regular meetings were held there and in the lower floor of the education building for many years.



Left: Founder Vadie Honea; right, Linda Wurstner, President Helena Historical Society; right, a 2001 trip to Huntsville by the HHS.



Vadie was a talented artist and provided the society with drawings of the historic sites around Hoover which were turned into notecards to help raise funds for various projects of the society. Money was spent on our first historical marker. A plaque was incorporated into the recreated 1872 Patton Community Well, located at what is today Hoover First United Methodist Church.

It was exciting to have our first public marker dedication and to have a visible sign that we were actively acknowledging our history! Soon other markers followed as behind the scenes more and more homes and neighborhoods were being added to the rolls of the Alabama Historical Commission.

During this time, society members were clipping articles from local papers mentioning Hoover and filing away for future research. Garden clubs, cemetery research, scrapbooks—anything about Hoover residents—was gathered. It wasn't until the city made the elementary school in Bluff Park available to us that we finally had room for all our data and collections!

One of the first goals was to publish a history of the city and surrounding areas with Marilyn "Madge" Davis Barefield, a local genealogist and historian known for her research and publishing of cemetery and land records, selected to write it. The City gave the group \$10,000 for its publication and more money was earned with auctions, pencil-drawn notecards, fashion shows, and donations by local businesses. The goal was accomplished by 1992 with the publication of *A History of Hoover, Alabama and Its People*—just in time to mark the 25th anniversary of the incorporation of Hoover, in 1992.

Now, 35 years later, the society is an integral part of Hoover and looking forward to being a tool for its residents for many more years to come!"



brush away from the road and working on the cabin when Sam, newly married and visiting with his young wife, Karen, was driving a tractor pulling a Gravely which is like a large, powerful lawnmower. His wife and my older daughter were walking behind the tractor far enough to be safe. I was driving behind the tractor and the walking girls with my three younger children and Mother in my car.

Mother was really enjoying the day. Suddenly Mother exclaimed, "Look at those girls! They are singing and dancing! They are enjoying being out here!" Alas, the tractor followed by the Gravely had stirred up a ground bee's nest and the bees were stinging Karen and my daughter! Welcome to the cabin in the woods, Karen!

As time passed, the cabin was damaged by a tornado and used by hunters and hoboes for shelter. All that remained were a porch and a downstairs room with a fireplace and a narrow stairway to the room above. I remember a spinning wheel upstairs. Mother took the spinning wheel to her house for safekeeping and decorated it with Christmas lights each holiday. When my cousin,



*Margaret Stinson Lyon standing next to the spinning wheel which was in the loft of the log cabin and relocated downstairs.*

Dr. Alvin Macon Stinson, Jr. (1936-2021), and his family decided to donate the cabin for removal to a safer place, Mother returned the spinning wheel to the cabin. The cabin was dismantled log by log and all parts carefully marked for moving and for reassembly. Pieces not needed for reassembly were marked and cut into blocks of cedar and other woods original to the cabin and given to members of both families.

Mine is safely stored away, but this walk down memory lane makes me want to hold that block of wood again.

*The Hoover Historical Society*

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