Tinsley Bottom Tennessee: An Historical Reconstruction Utilizing Oral Narrative Traditions

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1979
TINSLEY BOTTOM TENNESSEE: AN HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION
UTILIZING ORAL NARRATIVE TRADITIONS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the
Department of Folk and Intercultural Studies
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Rebecca D. Morse
December 1979
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TINSLEY BOTTOM TENNESSEE: AN HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

UTILIZING ORAL NARRATIVE TRADITIONS

Recommended 14 May 1979

(Director of Thesis)

Camilla A. Collins

Anne M. Sharp

Approved 12-12-1979

(Dean of the Graduate College)
PREFACE

In August of 1976 I first visited the area of Tennessee known as Tinsley Bottom. The aura of the place, the abandoned buildings, obscure cemeteries, the rolling bottomland and the reminiscences of men acquainted with the area made me acutely aware of an important story yet untold concerning this river settlement. I set about gathering information with the intent to tell the story of Tinsley Bottom; the end result was a story told by the people with whom I talked. The story recorded within these pages is theirs, not mine.

Without each of the people who contributed to my research, this history would not be complete. Each of the persons included in the list of informants made a valuable contribution, but I especially wish to thank Sam and Sarah Lynn and Landon Anderson for their willingness to share time, knowledge and personal experience narratives with me. The librarians at the Cumberland County, Kentucky, and Jackson and Clay County, Tennessee, regional libraries supplied me with local writings and names of prospective informants. They are to be commended for their contributions as well.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the members of my thesis committee: Drs. Lynwood Montell, Camilla Collins, and Ann Sharp for their advice and support during
my tenure as a master's candidate. Without their prodding, this thesis would yet be incomplete.

To the many, living and not living, who made the legacy of Tinsley Bottom real so that I might write of its history, and to my parents, who instilled within me a respect for people, traditions, and the past, I dedicate this history.

Goldsboro, North Carolina
March 15, 1979
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Tinsley Bottom, Tennessee: An Historical Reconstruction Utilizing Oral Narrative Traditions

Rebecca D. Morse
May 1979
104 pages

Directed by: W. Lynwood Montell, C. A. Collins, and A.W. Sharp
Center for Intercultural and Folk Studies
Western Kentucky University

Tinsley Bottom lies adjacent to the Cumberland River in Jackson and Clay Counties in north central Tennessee. The rich rolling bottomland totaling approximately two thousand acres on the south bank of the Cumberland River lured several families to purchase land and take residence there in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

The history of Tinsley Bottom is not found in written records or annals of Tennessee history. No person of reknown sprang from the cultural context of this community. Yet tales are told of how Daniel Boone hunted in the Bottom and slept in a cave overlooking the River, and legend has it that Abraham Lincoln's relatives are buried in one of the four cemeteries in the Bottom. Through collection and analysis of historical narratives such as the ones mentioned, a human history emerged. Combined with personal experience narratives supplied by individuals closely associated with life in the Bottom, an oral history developed which provides an interpretative reconstruction of significant historical items at the grass roots level.

This thesis is based primarily upon the historical and personal experience narratives of persons residing in
or formerly associated with Tinsley Bottom. These oral narratives were recorded on cassette tapes and the interviews transcribed and edited. Corroborative materials, such as letters, memoirs, local histories, state and county records and census reports substantiate and supplement oral testimony.

Chapter One of the thesis describes the theoretical and methodological bases of the study. It includes an explanation of the narrative forms embodied in the thesis. Chapter Two portrays the modern culture landscape of the Bottom with reference to geographical topography, vestiges of buildings, and important landmarks including cemeteries. Chapter Three concerns the early history of the Bottom, its initial settlement, occupational bases of the community, and the impact of the Civil War. Chapter Four traces the history of the social institutions of the community. Chapter Five concerns the reasons for the demise of the community and the interpretive and theoretical considerations which are paramount in viewing an historical reconstruction based upon oral accounts.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Study

As the Cumberland River winds its way from Celina to Gainesboro, Tennessee it makes a pronounced horseshoe bend. The land within this horseshoe came to be known by area residents as Tinsley Bottom, named after one of the families which first settled the area. Tinsley Bottom, due in part to its natural boundaries and geographical location, lured several families to its approximate two thousand acres. In time it became a community which fostered an agrarian lifestyle and strong ties to family and land.¹ This thesis attempts a reconstruction of the social, cultural and economic history of the Tinsley Bottom community. It is a reconstruction primarily based on oral narrative traditions, thus it constitutes a living history of a community which no longer exists.

A study based on oral narrative historical traditions collected in the field automatically classifies as an oral history. Oral history, a term coined by Allan Nevins, proponent of elite oral history, is, in the words of Alfred B. Constance McLaughlin Green states that geographic or jurisdictional limits are requisite for a community. See "The Value of Local History," in The Cultural Approach to History, ed. Caroline F. Ware (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1940), p. 275.
Rollins, a contemporary oral historian, "the systematic attempt to enlist significant people into recording their memoirs while they are still able to do so. It is spoken history, recorded accurately on tape, then transcribed and edited by the subject." 2

Much of Nevins' early work in oral history was indicative of Rollins' definition; Nevins centered his research on significant people in prominent positions. 3 If oral history requires that the interviewee be one who has achieved a prominent position, then a problem arises when a researcher wishes to center a study on local history and base that study on tape-recorded interviews. The emphasis must be placed on significant people rather than on prominent position. With this shift in emphasis, oral history methodology then becomes relevant to the needs of both the historian and the folklorist and can be adapted to the individual exigencies of the researcher.

Some few historians, cultural historians among them, hold that historical research can include interviews with members of grass roots level society. Such researchers are, knowingly or not, dabbling in oral history. Constance Green states, "Unlike political history, cultural history is


less a chronicle of deeds and misdeeds than a survey of human feelings and attitudes of mind and interrelationships. Personalities are of its very essence. The interpretation of those demands personal contact."⁴ Jan Vansina, writing in retrospect of his oral history studies in Africa, expresses similar sentiments: "The cultural values of a society are those ideas and feelings which are accepted by the majority of its members as unquestioned assumptions."⁵ It is these values and attitudes which constitute much of the substance of oral history; because they exist and are important aspects of the human condition and community mind, they become the history of a people.

Theodore Blegen observes that a true history of this country entails the utilization of conventional and unconventional sources as well as the documentation of all aspects of life in the United States.⁶ Blegen, with the publication of Grass Roots History in 1947, praised the cultural historians who were, at that time, on the periphery of the domain of sainted scholars.

It was not until 1970 that a publication was released which adapted the theoretical concerns of Blegen and Nevins to the framework of folkloristics. William Lynwood Montell's

⁴Green, "The Value of Local History," in The Cultural Approach to History, ed. Caroline Ware, p. 281.


The *Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study in Oral History* is the first completed case study based on oral history. Montell states in his introduction that "a work of this type is founded on the premise that the story of any local group as viewed by its people, is worthy of being recorded, for it can serve as a historical record in those areas where written accounts have not been preserved."  

Montell utilizes Nevins' concept of the tape-recorded interview as an historical document, Blegen's concept of the common person being an authority on his or her own history, and Vansina and Green's theoretical bases for cultural history. This thesis exemplifies an eclectic theoretical framework somewhat similar to Montell's. It is an oral history in that it uses oral narrative traditions garnered from recorded interviews. It is a folk history in that it centers upon the people who made Tinsley Bottom a community.

This study encompasses two important aspects of history. It is, first of all, a chronological history of the community from its initial settlement to its demise in the 1950s. It traces the in- and out-migration of the prominent families of the Bottom, major real estate transactions, the inception, development and passing of important social institutions such as churches and schools, the impact of war upon the community, and reasons for the demise of the community.

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8Ibid., p. viii.
Woven into a chronological historical framework are the social and cultural history of the Bottom, traditions, customs, and attitudes implicit in the affairs of daily living in the Tinsley Bottom community. Personal conflicts and other social concerns are emphasized when they appear as significant factors in the history of the community. This study, then, emphasizes the essential qualities and characteristics which made Tinsley Bottom the community that it was. In some instances, this means describing the characteristics and values of specific members of the community. This study is not an economic history, except in the sense that economics served as an important element of the cultural history of Tinsley Bottom. This is an oral folk history, a history of those institutions, items and events which were important to the people who resided in the Tinsley Bottom community.

In concluding Grass Roots History, Blegen makes a plea for cultural histories of communities:

Studies that would yield information about the backgrounds and education of settlers and later citizens; cleavages in communities and their various effects upon community institutions; the roles played by church, school, and press; the forces, too little studied, which differentiate one community from another; and the relation of Main Street to the world. 9

Inasmuch as it can be, this historical reconstruction of Tinsley Bottom is an answer to Blegen's request.

Any oral history of merit must include corroborative evidence, in some form, which substantiates the oral testimonies of the informants. This study of the Tinsley Bottom community

9Blegen, Grass Roots History, p. 247.
was completed through the use of unpublished information, published and printed sources, and formal legal documents, as well as oral testimonies. The unpublished information used in this thesis consists of personal letters, brief local histories written by citizens of Celina and Gainesboro, Tennessee, family histories, the memoirs and related writings of former residents of Tinsley Bottom, the genealogical information contained in the Lynn and Tinsley family Bibles, and miscellaneous papers in the possession of Margaret Tinsley Elliott and Landon Anderson of Celina, Helen Lynn Galbraith of Gainesboro, Katherine Cassetty of Whitleyville, Tennessee, Randolph Smith of Burkesville, Kentucky, and Mary Robertson of Springfield, Missouri.

I was able to establish an historical framework for this thesis by searching several Tennessee histories and skimming travel accounts and guidebooks. Other printed materials such as Harriett Arnow's Seedtime on the Cumberland and Flowering of the Cumberland, and Alvin B. Wirt's The Upper Cumberland of Pioneer Times provide historical perspective for this study.10 Several Master's theses completed at universities in Tennessee concern various aspects of life in Jackson and Clay counties in the early twentieth century. Printed reports issued by various government agencies such as the United States Bureau of the Census, United States

Department of Agriculture, Clay and Jackson County Soil Conservation Districts, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District, provide a wealth of highly specific information which greatly enhance the depth of this study.

Other printed sources of note include those concerning the theoretical and methodological bases of a study of this type. These sources include Ware's, *The Cultural Approach to History*; Vansina's, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*; Blegen's *Grass Roots History*; Montell's, *The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study in Oral History*; Dorson's essay, "Folklore and Cultural History" in *Research Opportunities in American Cultural History*; Ives, "A Manual for Fieldworkers" and Goldstein's, *A Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore.*

Bibliographic tools basic to the study of folklore, notably Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, and Ernest Baughman's *Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America* were utilized.11

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Formal legal documents such as real estate transfers, deeds, tax records, and school district reports were of importance in obtaining information specific to the study of Tinsley Bottom.

Most of the historical records, published and unpublished, which directly relate to the study of the Tinsley Bottom community are essentially folk documents, since most of the information contained within them was garnered by means of oral transmission. This is especially true of the local histories and genealogical information. Other information, such as that supplied in census records and the Master's theses, was obtained through questionnaire and personal interview. Consequently this material, too, was initially gathered from the residents of the area and later molded into different forms. Much of the corroborative material used in this study, then, is traceable to oral beginnings.

The field interviews for this thesis were conducted in both conventional and unconventional fashions. A large portion of the interviews was conducted formally. I either called or wrote the informant and we set up an interview appointment. The interviews were nearly always preceded by informal conversations of varying lengths. They ranged from thirty minutes to one hour and forty-five minutes, were recorded on cassette tapes, and later transcribed, edited and typed. All of the interviews involved prior reading and the preparation of relevant
questions. In several cases I found that follow-up interviews were needed. These were, in all instances, shorter and much more detailed than the initial interviews.

Since this study concerns a community which no longer exists, it was imperative that I explore the land that was Tinsley Bottom. Landon Anderson, Celina's local historian, drove with me through the bottom land, pointing out vestiges of buildings and roads and relating the history of them. He directed me to the cemeteries in the Bottom and impressed the significance of these upon my study. He also introduced me to Sam Lynn and Margaret Tinsley Elliott, both former residents of the Bottom, who provided a wealth of material to the substance of this study.

Interviews which were literally conducted in the field were informal. I had no prepared questions, and the interviews were recorded by means of pencil and paper. The notes were later typed and filed with the transcriptions of the tape-recorded interviews.

The oral narrative traditions collected on tape were broken down into segments which correspond with the chapters of this thesis. The information contained in the interviews was then corroborated with printed sources to culminate in this thesis.

Since this study is based primarily upon oral narrative

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traditions it is important to recognize the theoretical concerns pertinent to this genre of folklore. Linda Degh, in her essay "Folk Narrative," gives a broad overview of the various categories of folk narrative. She prefaces her remarks by pointing out the problems readily apparent in any classification system of narrative types:

The form, contents, and function of the stories belonging to different genres are always variable. Identical stories can be found within different genres. . . . What is a tale for one culture may be an origin legend for another. . . . Folk narratives are subject to such essential changes not only when they adjust to different cultures and epochs but also when they follow internal changes within the same culture. 14

Storytelling was an important pastime, especially among men, throughout the history of the Tinsley Bottom community. The stories were indicative of nearly every sub-genre of narrative and included tall tales, jokes, anecdotes, historical legends and personal experience stories. 15 Stories which belong to the folktale genres as classified by Degh are not relevant to an oral folk history. 16 Much more applicable to this study are those narratives which are more historical in nature and classified in the category of legend. Historical legends are told as historical fact and the manner of telling is usually


15 Interview with Sam H. Lynn, Cookeville, Tennessee, 14 August 1977.

16 For Degh's typing of these narratives see "Folk Narrative," pp. 60-72.
conversational. Historical legends, according to Degh, are local accounts based on a segment of national history:

Among the historical legends, two kinds are the most popular: stories about national and social heroes, and stories that affected the life of local communities, such as enemy attack, cruel lords, or the Black Plague. Other kinds include stories about the names of places, rivers, and hills and the origins of prehistoric ruins and mounds.  

William Lynwood Montell classifies historical narratives into several subtypes: oral traditional recollections, historical legends, migratory legends, local legends, occupational legends, success-story narratives, and genealogically-oriented narratives. Montell's classifications are more applicable to an oral folk history than Degh's in that they are more specifically defined and are easily identifiable in interview situations. The subtypes which follow, together with their definitions, are of special importance in the study of the Tinsley Bottom community.

Oral traditional recollections, according to Montell, are traditional stories usually told by members of a small group. They are stories about people and events of an earlier generation, and are told as truth. Oral traditional recollections comprise most of the reconstruction of the early history of Tinsley Bottom. These narratives, whenever possible, are tested by corroborative written evidence.

17 Ibid., p. 76.


19 Ibid., p. xv.
In nearly every instance the oral narrative is historically accurate.

Historical legends "deal with social heroes and incorporate events that affect the lives of communities and individuals." Stories concerning Daniel Boone and the Lincoln family are examples of historical legends in Tinsley Bottom. They are adapted to the Tinsley Bottom community, and although they appear true, there is no way they can be proven.

Occupational legends, according to Montell, are "highly colored, second-hand accounts which describe rather accurately people, occupations, and working conditions of former times." In reference to Tinsley Bottom, most occupational legends concern farming and the river. Many of Sam Lynn's stories about his grandfather Lynn are examples of this narrative type.

One remaining narrative type of significance in this study is the genealogically-oriented narrative. This narrative type is elicited from family members or close friends of the family, and the information it contains extends to prior generations. Stories told by Margaret Tinsley Elliott and Sam Lynn which are based upon knowledge

21 Ibid., p. xvi.
passed down by previous generations of members of their own families are examples of this type.

Certain problems arise when one attempts to classify legend types into strict categories. Lynn, for example, tells the story of how his grandfather came to Tinsley Bottom as a young boy, apprenticed himself to Nathan Langford and, by the end of his life, had become one of the largest landowners in the Bottom.23 His story could easily be classified as an occupational legend, success-story narrative, or a genealogically-oriented narrative. The importance of this story, however, is not determined by its classification only. Problems of classification are avoided if stress is placed upon the historical content of the narrative instead of the narrative type.

The third type of oral traditional narrative utilized in this study is that which is variously known as the true experience story, personal recollection, or personal experience narrative.24 Whatever the genre is called, the definition is concise in all cases. It is the telling, in an informal conversational manner, of important aspects

23 Sam H. Lynn, 14 August 1977.

of everyday life. Folklorists such as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Vance Randolph have found that personal experience narratives are a part of oral narrative tradition in many groups. In an historical reconstruction the personal experience narrative is essential in dealing with events and personalities of the last two or three generations. For this reason, they comprise the bulk of Tinsley Bottom's twentieth century history as recorded within these pages.

CHAPTER 2

Physical Characteristics of the Present-Day Bottom

Tinsley Bottom was settled when the rich and fertile bottomlands of the Cumberland River were prey to Revolutionary War veterans who were granted large holdings of land in Tennessee, Kentucky and other Western states. The early settlers of the 1780s and 90s found the bottomlands easily accessible by water and soon cleared the land, readying it for the production of crops.

Millions of years earlier, forces of wind and water had combined to make the Cumberland River basin bottomlands productive for the early settlers and their subsequent generations.\(^1\) As erosion occurred certain soil types became dominant in the bottomlands along the Cumberland River. It is the presence of rich soil types that dictates the success or failure of crops. In the Tinsley Bottom region the principal soils are Elk, a well-drained brown silty soil, and Captina, an intermediate-drained grayish-brown soil.\(^2\) Limited amounts

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\(^{1}\)In the Tinsley Bottom region two rivers join the Cumberland. The Obey River flows into the Cumberland at Celina; Roaring River flows into the Cumberland just below Tinsley Bottom at Gainesboro.

of other soil types are present, largely due to the erosional forces of wind and water. Huntington, a well-drained brown soil, and Greenland and Pace, well-drained cherty soils, are found in the Tinsley Bottom area. All of these soil types are well adapted to the farming practices evidenced throughout the modern history of Tinsley Bottom.\textsuperscript{3}

Tennessee Route 53, locally known as the Celina-Gainesboro Road, essentially follows the flow of the Cumberland River through Jackson and Clay Counties. About seven miles south of Celina a small weathered sign points riverward. Its letters identify the one-lane gravel road as "Tinsley Bottom Road." A few buildings line the road into the Bottom, but the average traveler would hardly identify it as an access to what was once a thriving river community.

A visit to Tinsley Bottom immediately reveals a once-prominent and prosperous community, which resulted primarily from the abundance of good crop land in the bottomlands of the Cumberland River. Remnants of buildings, river landings, roads, and fences, as well as fruit orchards and an oil field are evidences of a former community. Four cemeteries located in the Bottom provide genealogical and historical data of significance. (See Appendix A for a map illustrating the vestiges of the Tinsley Bottom community.)

Abandoned buildings reveal much about a community. In Tinsley Bottom the remnants of several architectural types

\textsuperscript{3}William Newell Cherry, "Land Utilization of Clay County, Tennessee" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1952), pp. 11, 12.
aid in understanding the basis of the agricultural economy which existed there after the Civil War.\(^4\) This documentation of dwellings includes only abandoned buildings. The buildings which are currently occupied were constructed since 1945 and are therefore of little value in the reconstruction of the history of a community which began to decline at about that time.

The John Tinsley house is, according to oral tradition, the oldest dwelling which remains in the Bottom.\(^5\) It is a double pen one and one-half story log structure with three front doors, two leading into the pens, and a central door leading up a four-foot wide stairway to the upstairs room over the right pen is reached by an enclosed stairway from the ground floor room. Each of the pens measures eighteen feet by eighteen feet and has a full-size fireplace. The chimneys were originally stone; however, the right chimney has been repaired with brick. A wooden porch fronts the entire length of the house, and a frame structure ten feet wide and forty feet long was added to the rear of the


\(^5\)Interview with Sam Lynn and Landon Anderson, Tinsley Bottom, Tennessee, 10 September 1976. Roger Hammond, a resident of Tinsley Bottom, substantiated this view in conversation, 18 March 1978. Oral tradition has it that the Tinsley house was built around 1806.
original log pens subsequent to the original construction.\textsuperscript{6} The log pens were apparently weatherboarded many years ago, as close investigation reveals sizeable yellow poplar logs in good-to-excellent condition.

The George Lynn house, located on the present Tinsley Bottom Road, was built between 1898 and 1904.\textsuperscript{7} It is a conglomerate of architectural design based on the I-house type, but sprawling into a semi-gothic monstrosity. The front of the one and one-half story house has two asymmetrically positioned gothic peaks; there are three gothic peaks on the long side of the ell of the house. Outside dimensions of the house are included in the following sketch:

This house is undoubtedly the second largest ever to be constructed in the Bottom.\textsuperscript{8} It is weatherboarded, of frame


\textsuperscript{7}Interview with Sam Lynn, Tinsley Bottom, Tennessee, 6 May 1978.

\textsuperscript{8}The Lynn house is the largest remaining house in the Bottom. According to oral testimony, only the Fowler house could have been larger.
construction, and has a tin roof, as does the John Tinsley house.

The Gardenhire house is located on the old Tinsley Bottom Road, which runs parallel to the new Tinsley Bottom Road about a quarter of a mile north of the Jackson-Clay County line. The house stands as a sentinel, symbolic of agrarian prosperity in the Bottom. It was built in the early twentieth century by George Lynn to replace the original log dogtrot house which stood, for many years, directly in back of the new house. It is a central passage I-house, forty-two feet seven inches by sixteen feet four inches, with two brick end chimneys. Instead of a porch, the front of the building is graced by a portico which allows for a small balcony on the second floor. The weatherboarded frame structure has a three room lean-to addition on the rear measuring forty-two feet seven inches by thirteen feet three inches. The Gardenhire farmstead was originally equipped with several outbuildings including a smokehouse and a barn. The remains of a fruit orchard are still evident. The spring, located down a steep incline to the rear of the buildings, was originally roofed and enclosed by stonework. Today, only a crumbling foundation of rock remains.

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9 Interview with Landon Anderson, Celina, Tennessee, 5 May 1978. The date of the construction of the present Gardenhire house is somewhat uncertain. Sam Lynn and Landon Anderson gave the date as 1914 in a visit to the Bottom, 10 September 1976. Girstle Lynn, Jr., in an interview in Tinsley Bottom, 6 May 1978, intimated an earlier date of construction.

10 Sam Lynn and Landon Anderson, 10 September 1976.
One of the houses formerly occupied by members of the Rose family is currently used as a barn. Located in the upper reaches of the Bottom not far from the Fowler Cemetery, the house was originally a one and one-half story double pen frame building with two end chimneys and a two room lean-to addition in the rear. Only one of the stone chimneys remains. The lean-to measures eight feet eight inches in depth and runs the entire thirty foot length of the two pens. Each pen is approximately fifteen by fifteen feet square.

The Rich house, located in the valley between the High Cedars Cemetery and the Lynn Cemetery, is of undetermined origin. A large stone fireplace in the left pen indicates that construction took place before the turn of the present century. A one story, frame board and batten structure, the Rich house is a double pen house measuring thirty feet, four inches by fifteen feet. A nine foot six inch wide lean-to addition on the rear of the building allowed for two additional rooms. The Rich house, like the Rose house, has two front doors, one for each pen.

A house built for Margaret Tinsley Elliott around 1927-29 was undoubtedly the last frame structure to be built in the Bottom. This one story house faces Tinsley Bottom Road and is of the bungalow variety with two rooms in the front and two rooms in the rear on the ground level.

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11 Landon Anderson, 5 May 1978, stated that he recalls two chimneys. A gaping hole in the end of the left pen indicates the presence of a chimney in earlier times.

12 Sam Lynn, 6 May 1978. The houses built subsequent to 1930 are primarily brick.
There are two front doors, a porch along the entire front of the building, and a brick fireplace in the left front pen. The white weatherboarded structure is rapidly falling into disrepair.

Two abandoned white weatherboarded structures face Tennessee Route 53 on the Clay-Jackson line. The one on the Tinsley Bottom side of the road is a one and one-half story double pen house with a porch, central door, and a stone fireplace in the right pen. The frame structure, measuring forty-five feet by sixteen feet, has a lean-to addition running the length of the rear of the building. Adjacent to this house, across Tennessee 53, stands a weatherboarded frame I-house measuring forty by fourteen feet with a central door and no chimneys. This house has a one story addition on the right side. Neither of these houses seems to be of any significance to former residents of Tinsley Bottom.\textsuperscript{13} They are, however, located within the boundaries of the Bottom and therefore must be included in this survey of dwellings.

A single pen one and one-half story log cabin stands in the northern part of the Bottom close to the bluffs on the Cumberland River. The cabin measures eighteen feet eight inches by sixteen feet-six inches and is constructed with poplar logs notched in a half dovetail fashion. The origin of the cabin is uncertain; it is chinked with

\textsuperscript{13}None of my informants alluded to these buildings except to acknowledge their existence.
cement and a porch and an additional pen have been added to the original log structure.\textsuperscript{14}

Two additional sites in Tinsley Bottom are recognizable as former dwelling sites. At the north point of the Bottom stands a lone chimney, reminiscent of the old Rose homestead which formerly stood there. The house was of the dogtrot variety and was last inhabited by Harvey and Margaret Elliott in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{15}

The other recognizable dwelling site is the Fowler house.\textsuperscript{16} All that remains are the foundation rocks, the water pump, and the flowers which graced the front yard. Of all the houses in Tinsley Bottom, this one is mentioned in oral tradition more than any other. The house was a central passage I-house with an open breezeway connecting the ell addition to the main house.\textsuperscript{17} The house is best described in the words of its last inhabitant:

This house was the original family residence of the Fowler family. I guess in its day it was a

\textsuperscript{14}Girstle Lynn, Jr., 6 May 1978, stated that he knows nothing of the history of this building, but he theorized that it may have been moved into the Bottom from another site sometime in the mid-twentieth century. It was used as a hunting camp by Edgar Williams, its former owner.

\textsuperscript{15}Sam Lynn, 6 May 1978.

\textsuperscript{16}The Fowlers, who were prominent in the Bottom during the early and mid 1800s, built this house which long stood as a symbol of the successfulness of the family in agrarian pursuits.

\textsuperscript{17}In a visit to the Bottom, 6 May 1978, Sam Lynn drew a diagram of the house and paced its measurements on the ground where it stood.
mansion because it was on a little hill overlooking the river. It was built entirely of yellow poplar. The floor was pine. The walls, the interior walls, all the sheathing was at least two inches thick. It was a two story and had the old porches on the front, you know, with the little kitchen wing off in back. I remember as a little boy it was painted white and was very attractive, but it weathered away. And the chimneys, there was a big chimney at each end of the house. My grandfather tells me that the brick was made from clay dug around the house. Of course, it was built before his recollection, but he knew the Langfords and the Tinsleys and the Fowlers and he got that information from there. But there were no nails, round nails as you and I know nails. Some nails were square cut, the old square cut nails. The doors were put together with wooden pegs; there were no nails in the doors. . . . When Dad built his new house out on the other end of the farm, he preserved some two or three doors and the thing that he cherished more than anything, an old mantle around one of the fireplaces.  

The remains of two buildings of social significance to the community are yet evident on the Tinsley Bottom culture landscape. The church building, which first housed the Christian Church and later the Church of Christ, was built by members of the community around 1912.  

It is a poplar frame structure measuring twenty-eight feet wide and forty-five and one-half feet long. The stained-glassed windows were transported to Tinsley Bottom from Louisville, Kentucky, where they were procured from an old building. The church was wired for electricity in the late 1930s; it was last used in the late 1950s and has since fallen into

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18 Interview with Sam Lynn, Cookeville, Tennessee, 14 August 1977.

19 Oral sources do not recollect the exact dates of the erection of many of the landmarks in Tinsley Bottom. They are content with approximations based on the birth or death dates of particular members of the community or an event or events significant in the life of the informant.
During the summer of 1978 the white clapboard building collapsed, the stained-glass windows buried beneath the debris.

The shell of the Tinsley Bottom school stands just over the county line in Clay County. Built during the World War Two era, this building exhibits features common to the public buildings of that period. It has a cement foundation and cement steps and was entered through a central door. Within the building are two cloak rooms and a stage area for the teacher. The building is sided with brown random ashlar composition rule siding and exhibits eight large windows on the west side of the building. This school building stands only one building-length away from the side of the previous school building, which was destroyed by fire. 21

Another important cultural institution within a community is the cemetery. Providing genealogical data as well as information pertaining to a community's philosophy of life and death, a cemetery also includes information concerning the child mortality rate in a given community. The cemeteries in Tinsley Bottom provide this information and more. One can ascertain which families

20 Sam Lynn and Landon Anderson in a tour of Tinsley Bottom, 10 September 1976.

21 Interview with Sam Lynn, Cookeville, Tennessee, 23 January 1978. Lynn states that there was a court case concerning the location of the old school; it was positioned on the county line and neither Clay nor Jackson county wanted to assume financial responsibility. The case decision split the financial responsibility between the two.
still reside in the vicinity of the former community simply by observing the maintenance, or lack of maintenance, in each of the five cemeteries in the Bottom. Four of the five cemeteries are discernable on the culture landscape today.

The Fowler Cemetery, located in the northern part of the Bottom and bordering on the old stage road to Tompkinsville, Kentucky, is thought to be the oldest of the five cemeteries. It was here that the Kirkpatricks and Fowlers, two of the three families which first settled the Bottom, were buried. Fowler Cemetery is rapidly falling into disrepair. The entire cemetery is located in a shaded area surrounded by pastureland which is grazed by several head of Angus. Since there is no fence, and cattle are drawn to shady spots, the cemetery receives a considerable amount of abuse. Several stones are worn smooth by cattle rubbing against them. Large branches and tree trunks have fallen upon rows of gravestones, breaking the stones and pinning their faces toward the ground. The only attempt to preserve the cemetery is visible in the small Kirkpatrick plot. This plot, occupying only a small amount of the Fowler Cemetery, is fenced by a substantial iron fence; however, one section on the north side is broken down, thus enabling cattle to enter the fenced area. One of the three Kirkpatrick headstones is broken at its base.

The Fowler Cemetery measures seventy-six feet by eighty feet and contains thirty-five visible gravesites,
several of which are marked with fieldstones. The earliest dates of death recorded in Fowler Cemetery are those of Lydia Fowler and Araminta Tinsley who both died in 1853. It is possible that some of the fieldstone markers indicate earlier use of the Fowler Cemetery. Oral tradition has it that Davis Lincoln, an uncle of Abraham Lincoln, is buried in Fowler Cemetery, his grave indicated with a fieldstone marker. Of the thirty-five discernable gravestones, sixteen are fieldstone. The remainder are commercially carved stones, some of which bear the inscription Pool and Clark, Louisville, Kentucky, or Browne, New Albany, Indiana. All of the commercial stones are marble with the exception of Thomas Holman's, which is a granite stone.

The High Cedars Cemetery, located in the northern portion of the Bottom on land owned by the first Tinsleys, is stately and well-maintained. As the name implies, the cemetery is located within a stand of cedar trees, and is positioned on a high hill overlooking the River and the southern portion of the Bottom. The cemetery measures one hundred-twelve feet by ninety feet and is fenced with a commercial steel mesh fence complete with steel posts.

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22 Landon Anderson and Sam Lynn attest to knowledge of this tradition and on a visit to the Bottom, 10 September 1976, pointed out the possible spot where Davis Lincoln lies. I found no way to substantiate this oral tradition as fact; however, allusions to a Davis Lincoln buried in Tinsley Bottom were made by Miss Jennie Armstrong, Tompkinsville, Kentucky, circa 1958, in conversation with Lynwood Montell. Randolph Smith, 22 September 1978, stated that many persons in Cumberland County, Kentucky attest to belief in this tradition.
and gates. The cemetery appears to have been well-maintained throughout its existence, for the gravestones are in good repair and are all standing in an upright position. Many of the graves have been leveled and fill added to maintain level ground. There is no grass in the cemetery, but rather a thick bed of myrtle covers the entire cemetery grounds. It is of the low and spreading variety and thus retards the growth of weeds and tall grasses. It is within the boundaries of this cemetery that the first Tinsleys known to have died in the Bottom were laid to rest. John Tinsley's gravestone bears the earliest discernable date of death, 1853; however, like the Fowler Cemetery, the High Cedars contains several fieldstones, thirty to be exact, and may have been established at an earlier date. In addition, in the northern portion of the cemetery one grave is marked by a flat stone positioned on a four foot high stone foundation. The stone on top of the grave indicates evidence of carving; however, the carving is indiscernable due to weathering. Oral tradition has it that this stone marks the grave of William Tinsley, father of John Tinsley. ²³ There are thirty-two known graves in High Cedars Cemetery.

The Lynn Cemetery, or the Rich Cemetery as it is variously called, is located a little south of the High Cedars Cemetery and across the Cumberland River from the

²³Landon Anderson, 10 September 1976. Correspondence with Mary Robertson, Springfield, Missouri, 18 February 1978.
mouth of Brimstone Creek. Established in 1900, this cemetery contains genealogical data of twentieth century residents of the Tinsley Bottom community. It is a maintained cemetery, shaded by beech trees and protected by commercial steel mesh fencing, measuring one hundred thirty-two feet by sixty-eight feet. Although the grass is not mowed, the gravestones are in good repair and the cemetery is relatively clear of debris. Unlike the older cemeteries, the Lynn Cemetery contains many granite stones and there is evidence of only two fieldstone markers in the entire cemetery. The Lynn Cemetery contains forty-two markers.

The Tinsley Cemetery is located almost directly across the new Tinsley Bottom Road from the John Tinsley house. It is not shaded, and shows signs of mowing. It is enclosed by a forty-eight by sixty-five foot iron fence complete with an intact gate. The gravestones are all in good repair; they are commercially carved and are predominantly granite and marble. The Tinsley Cemetery is another indicator of twentieth century residents of the Bottom since the earliest date of death recorded in the cemetery is 1905. There are twenty-eight gravesites within the boundaries of the Tinsley Cemetery.

Former residents of Tinsley Bottom and those familiar with oral traditional history state that there is an additional cemetery in the Bottom region. The cemetery is indistinguishable today, but was allegedly comparable in size with those already documented in the Bottom. This
cemetery is known by local persons as the Slave Graveyard, and is located in what is presently pastureland in front of the Gardenhire house. The cemetery had four cedar trees as boundaries, was fenced, and had two gates. It was divided by the old road which led to the original Gardenhire house. The markers were all fieldstone, and many of those buried in this cemetery were slaves to the original Tinsleys.\textsuperscript{24}

The Tinsley Bottom of today is not totally reminiscent of an earlier day; however, the existence of a former community is obvious to the present-day observer of life in the Bottom. The old Tinsley Bottom Road is indistinguishable save for the stone fences which line its boundaries. The river landings, one at the mouth of Brimstone Creek and the other at the site of the early Philomath school, are discernable only to the trained eye. The current road through Tinsley Bottom borders structures both ancient and modern. Cattle graze the pastureland and crops are cultivated in the lower Bottomland. The agricultural economy prevails, but no longer can it sustain an entire community. Only physical vestiges and a memory of the community remain.

\textsuperscript{24}Information concerning the Slave Graveyard furnished by Sam Lynn and Landon Anderson during a visit to the Bottom, 10 September 1976.
CHAPTER 3

An Economic and Political History of the Community

Indians were the first people to inhabit the bottomlands along the Cumberland River in what is the present-day Tinsley Bottom area. The Shawnee Indians reputedly lived along the river banks in early times, but they were eventually uprooted by the Creek, Cherokee and Chickasaw tribes.¹ The land was used for camping and hunting. Many Indian artifacts have been found in the Tinsley Bottom area; shards, tools and bones were found near Flynn's Creek in Jackson County in the mid-nineteenth century.²

According to one oral source, excavation on Penitentary Branch south of Tinsley Bottom has produced many artifacts and remains:

> When that road was constructed, that bridge built, they cut that in there. It was done with mules and slips. Drivers in passing picked up these bones and there were a good five barrel wagon full laying up on the right hand bank coming up the river when they got done.³


³Interview with Landon Anderson, Celina, Tennessee, 5 May 1978.
Oral sources attest to the presence of Indian artifacts in Tinsley Bottom itself; both Sam Lynn and Landon Anderson have found artifacts in the Bottom. Lynn states that he has found artifacts in a cave in the Bottom and suspects that there was once a permanent camp in the Bottom even though there is no indication of an Indian burial ground within the boundaries of the Bottom.

In 1760 the first white explorers came into the Upper Cumberland area, camping and exploring in Kentucky and Tennessee. Between 1761 and 1774 they explored most of the territory along the Cumberland River. These explorers were called Long Hunters and among them were Obediah Terrill for whom the Obey River was named, Robert Crickett, who was killed by Indians on Roaring River, and Daniel Boone. Oral legends maintain that Daniel Boone named the Seven Sisters, Knob Creek, Twin Creeks, and Sugar Creek, all of which are located in the Tinsley Bottom area.

Brimstone Creek, he named it. Turkey Creek above it, he named it. Now on the upper end of Tinsley Bottom, he spent the winter there when he, and I believe it was Squire, named all this stuff exploring. He was on Roaring River and then came up on the Cumberland and he named Roaring River from the roar of the falls, not far from where Crockett's brother was killed. He named Doe Creek and Pigeon Roost and Hurricane. All the timber had been blown down on it. And Turkey Creek Bottom and Turkey Creek where an abundance of turkeys were found. And Brimstone. There was a large

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5 Sam Lynn, 8 November 1977.
sulphur lick on Brimstone Creek and he named the creek for that sulphur lick. 7

Local legend has it that Boone stayed in a cave in Tinsley Bottom during the winter of 1770 while he was exploring the area. The cave is in the bluffs at the Tinsley Bottom end of the Seven Sisters. It is easily accessible, yet difficult to pinpoint if one does not know its exact location. "There's a spring back in it with sinks. Then there's a hole goes out the top of the bluff for smoke." 8

Other stories are told about Boone and the carvings that he and other Long Hunters left in the beech trees for posterity. "According to Judge George H. Morgan, there was a large beech tree near the Bailey Butler homestead on the north side of the River around 1880 that had Boone's name on it." 9 One informant recounts the following related story:

He supposedly killed a bear over there at the forks of Twin Creeks—Doe Creek and Mill Creek. I've heard that all my life. It was on a tree over there for a long time that he killed a bear there. I've heard that all my life. 10

If oral tradition is correct, the Long Hunters did indeed traverse the bottomlands of the Cumberland River in

7 Landon Anderson, 5 May 1978.

8 Ibid. The Seven Sisters are seven hills along the Cumberland River located in and to the north of Tinsley Bottom.


10 Interview with Girstle Lynn, Jr., Tinsley Bottom, Tennessee, 6 May 1978.
what is now known as Tinsley Bottom. Whether or not any of them settled in the immediate area is uncertain. We do know that several of them established residences at other points along the River and traveled to Natchez and New Orleans by boat to sell pelts.

It is difficult to date the initial settlement of Tinsley Bottom since many of the early records were lost or destroyed. It is possible that the initial settlement was made by members of the Lincoln or Mulkey families. Oral sources claim that some of the Lincolns are buried in Tinsley Bottom, although time has obscured the names of those buried there. Two informants state that Abraham Lincoln's uncle is buried there.11 A newspaper article substantiates this claim, but it also states that his grandfather is buried there as well. The article also gives an early settlement date for Tinsley Bottom:

About the year 1785 Hannaniah Lincoln, his wife and seven small children moved from Pennsylvania to Virginia. The section of Virginia in which he was located was very soon cut off into Kentucky and finally became a part of Cumberland County, Kentucky. His home was in what is known as Tinsley's Bottom, and at that time the southern part of Cumberland County, but which has since been cut off into Tennessee and located in Clay County. . . . Only a short time elapsed from the death of Hannaniah's first wife until he married Sarah Jeffries. The records of Nelson County show that this marriage took place in 1787. The Jefferies woman died and was buried on the farm in Tinsley's Bottom in the year 1800.12

11Interview with Sam Lynn, Cookeville, Tennessee, 23 January 1978; Interview with Randolph Smith, Burkesville, Kentucky, 22 September 1978.

No census lists, tax records or land grants substantiate a settlement date as early as 1785. Randolph Smith, a noted local historian of Cumberland County, Kentucky, believes that the Bottom was settled around 1798. In a newspaper article he alludes to the presence of the Lincolns in Tinsley Bottom at about that time.

Hannaniah Lincoln, after becoming sheriff of Cumberland County in 1799, made a trip to Missouri. He did not like it there and returned to the Cumberland area to live in Jackson County, Tennessee, in the Tinsley Bottom area of that county, quite near his old home on Meshack Creek.

Smith goes on to state that descendants claim Hannaniah and Lucy Wilson, whom he married in 1801, are buried in the Bottom.

One other curious story concerning the Lincolns in Tinsley Bottom remains. Again, there is no way to substantiate oral tradition:

John and Moses I., a halfbrother, remained on the Tinsley Bottom farm with their father, Hannaniah Lincoln, until 1814, when they were attacked by Indians. Hannaniah was killed. John and Moses I. escaped. Hannaniah was buried beside his wife and two small children on his farm. As late as 1859 these graves were to be found and were publically known to be those of Hannaniah Lincoln, his wife and two small children. Immediately after the death of Hannaniah Lincoln, John and Moses I. removed to Ohio.

If this story is factual the Indian attack on Hannaniah

13 Randolph Smith, 22 September 1978.
15 Ibid.
16 "Many Facts Indicate that Lincoln Was Born in Monroe."
Lincoln occurred after several more families had moved to the Tinsley Bottom area. Jackson County tax records indicate that Hannaniah paid taxes on property there from 1804-11.\textsuperscript{17} Since the 1810 census reports for that portion of Tennessee are not available and no Lincolns appear on the 1820 census, there is little reason to doubt the authenticity of the story.\textsuperscript{18}

Another family which purportedly settled in Tinsley Bottom and for which there is little factual evidence is that of the Mulkeys. John and Philip Mulkey established a church on Mill Creek in Monroe County in 1798. They had migrated from East Tennessee with a band of followers:

"Jonathan assumed his father's position of leadership over the traveling church and led the members across the hills and plateaus of Tennessee, until they crossed the Cumberland River into Monroe County. . . .\textsuperscript{19} The Mulkeys could have traveled through Tinsley Bottom on their way to Mill Creek, as Tinsley Bottom is in a direct route to where the Mill Creek Church was established. Philip may have stopped in Tinsley Bottom, secured land and settled at that time, but

\textsuperscript{17}Tennessee Tax Lists 1804-11, p. 123. Housed at the Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

\textsuperscript{18}Landon Anderson maintains that there are portions of the 1810 census in existence which prove the Lincolns lived in Tinsley Bottom on that date. These records, however, are not available at the Tennessee State Archives, and Anderson could not locate his copy.

more than likely he accompanied John to Monroe County and later returned to Tinsley Bottom. The latter hypothesis is the more probable as Philip is included in the Jackson County tax lists for 1804-1811.\(^{20}\) Early records of the Mill Creek Church indicate that he was clerk in 1799.\(^{21}\) After Philip moved to Jackson County he was a preacher and farmer; it is possible that he established Brimstone Church just across the Cumberland River from Tinsley Bottom. It was at Brimstone that he preached.\(^{22}\) The Mulkeys did indeed live in Tinsley Bottom, although the exact date of their settlement there is not known; the family became connected with the Tinsley family through two marriages.

No one is certain of the exact date the Tinsley family migrated to the Cumberland River bottomland which later took the family name. Tax lists through 1811 do not indicate the presence of the Tinsley family, although it is quite certain that some members of the family arrived, or at least owned land in the Bottom, at a much earlier date. Oral tradition has it that William Tinsley was the original Tinsley to settle in the Bottom. "I have learned that my great-grandfather Tinsley was a Revolutionary soldier. He came to Tinsley's Bottom when that place was a woods and canebreak. I have been told that he killed himself clearing


\(^{21}\)Montell, Monroe County History, p. 50.

\(^{22}\)Correspondence with Mary Robertson, Springfield, Missouri, 18 February 1978.
up those big fields and his wife left a widow with a family."²³

Mary Bertha Tinsley Bennett expands this oral tradition in a history of her family:

Family tradition has it that our earliest known ancestor was a William Tinsley who served in the Revolution. A special effort has been made to identify him. This tradition, handed down from generation to generation, says that on or about 1781 he was rewarded for his military service by a grant of one thousand acres of land in Jackson County Tennessee, along the Cumberland River near Butler's Landing. It is told that he migrated there in a wagon drawn by oxen and was the first white man to cross the 'Big Hill' into the region which was this hostile Indian country. . . . The site of William's settlement was in a wide bend of the Cumberland which became known as Tinsley Bottom and still carries that name today.²⁴

Letters written in 1925 by Mrs. Emma Tinsley Williams attest that William Tinsley was the first Tinsley in the area, and the D.A.R. files of Minnie Tinsley Elliott, great-grand daughter of John Tinsley, substantiate the claim. The D.A.R. files, however, bring to light the fact that William Tinsley was not a Revolutionary soldier, but rather his father was.²⁵ Mrs. Williams states that there are no dates on the gravestones of William Tinsley and his wife, and one would suspect that the large flat gravestone beside John Tinsley's stone in the High Cedars Cemetery marks the graves of William and his wife.²⁶

The date of William's entry into the Cumberland River


²⁵Bennett, pp. 70, 71.

²⁶Bennett, p. 69.
bottomland is lost to the pages of time. The earliest
documented date of the Tinsley's presence in the Bottom is
1810. An ancestor writes:

I am interested in the information about the first
man to come there. His name was William Tinsley and
his wife was Elizabeth. He bought land (fifteen
acres) from Roddom Holm or Home, a North Carolina
soldier, July, 1810, which adjoined land he already
owned there. This purchase from Roddam was recorded
December 24, 1812. 27

If oral sources are correct that Tinsley already owned land
in the Bottom, and that the date 1806, which is often
attributed to the Tinsley homestead, is fairly accurate,
it is likely that the Tinsleys migrated to the area prior
to 1810. 28

William Tinsley, according to oral tradition, built
the log house which stands in Tinsley Bottom today. From
the description given by one of his descendants, we can be
certain of this:

The old homesite was situated by an unfailing spring,
the flow of which filled a chiseled basin from a solid
rock of the streamlet, over which was constructed
a log springhouse covered with cedar shingles. The
garden and sweet potato patch were along the path
that led to the springhouse--the orchard was opposite
and led toward 'Rich Hill' where there was a great
grove of sugar maples. 29

It was here that William Tinsley, his wife, Elizabeth, and
their eight children made their home.

27Mary Robertson in correspondence with Helen Galbraith,
Springfield, Missouri, 10 October 1977.

28Interview with Landon Anderson, Tinsley Bottom,
Tennessee, 10 September 1976.

29Copied from the writings of T. X. Tinsley and included
in Mary Robertson's letter to Helen Galbraith.
By 1820 the population of Tinsley Bottom had increased tremendously. William Tinsley had died and left Elizabeth with two sons and one daughter at home. Their oldest son, John, in 1816, married Alice Mulkey, daughter of Philip, the pastor of Brimstone church. By 1820 they had two sons, one daughter and three slaves in their household. William Tinsley III and his wife had three daughters and three slaves; Philip Mulkey and his wife had seven children and six slaves, and Polly Fowler had five children. It is probable that other people also lived in the Bottom at that time. In 1808 Silvanus Fowler had purchased three hundred acres of land in Tinsley Bottom whichbordered on William Tinsley's land. It is likely that Polly was not the only Fowler residing in the Bottom in 1820.

According to the 1830 census, John and Alice Tinsley had five more children. William and his wife added three children to their family, and James and Gloreannar Fowler Tinsley had three children. John Fowler's household is included in the 1830 census and is recorded with two males. John Mulkey, his wife and two children, and Philip Mulkey, his wife and four children also resided in the Bottom. It is possible that some members of the Holman family lived in or near Tinsley Bottom at that time. John Fowler's wife, Lydia, was a Holman, and "Holman and Fowler families were

30Tennessee Census (1820).

31Listed in Tennessee Land Grants file, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. Also, a John is listed in Tennessee Tax List for 1802, p. 4.
among the very early people in the area." 32

The pre-Civil War years in Tinsley Bottom saw substantial gains in population and the beginnings of social institutions which were responsible in contributing to the self-sufficiency of the community. The Bottom had, from the days of its initial settlement, been economically based on agriculture. The early settlers cleared the land and began raising crops which were successful due to the soil which surrounded the river. Cattle and hogs grazed in the pastureland, and the settlers grew affluent. 33 It was common for families to employ slave labor in most of the bottomlands, and Tinsley Bottom was no exception. The 1820 census recorded the presence of seventeen slaves belonging to the residents of Tinsley Bottom. We can assume that the number of slaves increased as more people migrated to the area. 34

The census of 1850 indicates nine heads of households in Tinsley Bottom and a total of sixty-five people present at the time the census was taken. The years between 1850 and 1862 were prosperous years in the Bottom. By 1850 river traffic on the Cumberland was heavy. In addition to flatboats, keelboats and rafts, the steamboat traversed the waters of the Upper Cumberland. About twelve steamboats

32 Mary Robertson, 18 February 1978.
34 Subsequent censuses do not contain information on slaves.
arrived and departed from Nashville in a typical week in 1850. They carried produce to market and supplies back up river to communities and settlements in the hinterland. The steamboat was a passenger boat as well, for residents along the upper reaches of the river had to travel to Nashville to connect with trains which carried them to other places.

It was during the years before the Civil War that Thaddeus Tinsley married Julia Fowler and subsequently established the Philomath church and school. Thaddeus was both preacher and teacher, as well as a successful farmer. Through the writings of their daughter, traditions of their time remain intact. Through the following narrative we understand how oral traditions were incorporated with written reminiscences. We also have vivid recollections of activities in the Bottom before the Civil War:

I have a faint remembrance of hearing her tell about a very big fish her pappy caught some way. As I remember the big trap had been set in the river at night to catch the huge catfish. Also I heard how they would stand in the canoe and spear or shoot fish. The big river was just full of them. Anyway, this fish was so big some of the older boys put a rail fence through its gills and its tail almost touched the ground. Proud and excited, she traipsed along father and the boys up the path to the house. The sides of the fish were like great slabs of bacon, and made her pappy's family and black folks a fine big mess.

35 Knight, Wonderful Overton, p. 70.
36 Bennett, p. 19.
Her high-spirited young husband she had known all her life, since they were born on adjoining farms. Perhaps he picked her out because of her calm, composed, but independent self. His blue eyes saw beauty in her brown ones and heavy suit of auburn hair. Courting was done in a hurry in those days. . . .

Her pappy had given his Julie Ann quite a big wedding. Kin folks were as thick as hair on a dog's back there in Tinsley's Bottom; then there were oodles of neighbors and old friends invited. Long tables out in the yard were loaded with the richest, best food of that plentiful land. All kinds of meat and fowl, stacks of pies and frosted cakes. She said something about some big balls of golden butter -- something I never did understand. The colored girls stepping and prancing about waiting on the white folks. Old Aunt Coatney had most cooked her lights out for days, now bossing the darkies about to her heart's content.38

The Tinsley Bottom community was prosperous in 1861 when the Civil War broke out. Steamboats plied the river, stopping at Philomath and Brimstone landings which were located at the upper and lower ends of the Bottom respectively. The school and the church flourished, and crops were plentiful.

At about the time of the Civil War, Thaddeus Sobieski Tinsley and his wife, Julia Ann Fowler, and their four children moved across Turkey Creek to take care of his widowed mother at the old family homestead in Tinsley Bottom. He was the third generation of Tinsleys to occupy the original two-story log home established by his grandfather William.39

Referring to this time period, William Kirkpatrick writes:

I grew up with the generation who lived there before I did. I would say that it was at its highest glory in 1861 when the Civil War started. At that time it was sliced up into several farms owned by those who lived on them -- mostly Fowlers and Tinsleys -- thrifty,


38Ibid., p. 2.

39Bennett, p. 19.
frugal, industrious people. They had well tended fields of corn and wheat, livestock, well-filled cribs and smokehouses, all manner of fruit trees, bees and poultry. They had Philomath Academy which was a wonderful institution; they had an M.D. (Dr. Jordan) who resided across the river on what we remember as the Crabtree farm.\textsuperscript{40}

Most river communities in middle Tennessee were prosperous agrarian centers at the onset of the Civil War. The rich soil and abundant yet inexpensive land perpetuated large landholdings on plantations along the rivers. Most landowners also owned slaves who worked their land. It is not surprising, then, that the river bottom communities, with few exceptions, allied with the South, while farmers in the adjacent mountain communities who owned smaller amounts of land and few, if any, slaves, allied with the North.\textsuperscript{41}

Tinsley Bottom, it seems, was an exception to the rule. William Tinsley served in the Union army, while Caleb and some of the younger sons of John Tinsley fought on the side of the Confederacy. Captains Frank and Henry Fowler, brothers of Julia Fowler Tinsley, were also Confederates, and both were wounded in the War. Thaddeus Tinsley refused to ally himself with either cause, although his sentiments were probably with the South. He stayed in the Bottom, attending to the families there and protecting

\textsuperscript{40}William Kirkpatrick in correspondence with Margaret Tinsley Elliott, Landover Hills, Maryland, 16 July 1965.

the land in whatever way he could. Accounts of war activity in the Bottom itself remind us that the lives of residents were in constant danger. This traditional recollection provides insight into life in the Bottom during the War:

Feeding both armies, they were just about eaten out of house and home. The only way they could keep any bedding, maple sugar, or any extra thing was to bury them in the ground. Old Fran, the faithful family horse, would be hurriedly tied down in a holler out of sight. . . .

Our mother's brother fought on the Southern side and when they came home for a visit they had exciting times keeping them from being prisoners. One day when the Union soldiers were near the front of the house they slipped out the back way to the river. With Uncle Henry lying in the bottom of the boat she paddled fast across the river. Bullets whizzed by, but undaunted she kept on and they were soon hidden by the brush and he got safely away. . . .

The battle of Murfreesboro was fought so near, or the skirmishing lines were so close, they were almost in the battle. Some of the wounded soldiers on the hills could be heard groaning. One man could be heard for a long time.

Perhaps the most vivid recollection of Civil War activities in Tinsley Bottom is the firsthand account by Kibbie Gardenhire as preserved in her memoirs. Because it is firsthand information for which no corroborative oral material exists, her statement appears in its entirety.

When the War Between the States broke out, there was a fine citizenship in Tinsley's Bottom. They were all in prosperous circumstances; owned good homes, Negroes and much fine stock. They all had fine stock. They all had fine orchards, rows of bee stands in their yards, and fowls of different sorts and raised fine gardens, fine crops of corn and wheat.

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42 Bennett, p. 21.

They had a Christian Church and all attended church on Sunday and were planning on building fine homes, but the War came and freed the Negroes, took their stock and most everything except the lands and children. However, the Negroes were not free until the War was over.

I was seven years old when the War broke out. I can remember seeing and hearing of many sad things that happened. I stood on the porch, saw the first steamboat load of Confederate Volunteers go down the Cumberland River. The flags were waving in the breeze; the women were in tears. My brother, Pembroke, was but sixteen when he volunteered. They made him a lieutenant. They said he made a fine soldier. He was wounded once. He served all through the War and came home at its close.

I remember being with my father and mother and saw the Yankees drive out fifteen head of fine mules and horses. Mother had a fine gray mare named 'Jenny Lind'; she cried and said she saw her switch her tail as she went out of sight. My father never said a word. One morning there was a company of Yankees came for breakfast. They said they were going to rob those bees. Father stepped to the door and said, 'Don't rob my bees, I will give you honey for breakfast.' They did not rob the bees.

One time there was a regiment of Yankees across the Cumberland River at the mouth of Brimstone Creek; they formed a line of battle and came marching across those broad fields with their guns glittering in the sun. One Rebel soldier, riding a grey horse went up the lane as hard as he could to get near the Yankees. He shot three times, turned, shot back over his shoulder and came back as fast as his horse could carry him. Mother said she had a big apple for the man that did that. A soldier came and claimed it. The Yankees marched on; part of the line passed through our yard. They took my father prisoner and took him to the big road. While he was there, one of the soldiers came down from a house and said, 'Somebody shot at us from that house. We got to burn it up -- we ought to burn up this whole country.' The Captain said, 'You are mad now, that course won't do.' He asked my father some questions, then said, 'I see you are truthful. Go home and keep your family in to keep them from being shot.' We were glad to see him coming for we did not know if we would ever see him alive again or not.

We did not know one day what would happen the next. One morning we children were out in the pasture. Three Rebel soldiers passed us riding as fast as they could -- one of their hats flew off and he didn't stop to get it. In a few minutes, the Yankees came pouring over the hill. Those three made their escape, but they went up on in the Bottom. Another soldier saw them and ran back. The Yankees got after him and he plunged into the river.
When he was almost across he slid off his horse into the water and floated down to where he could make his escape to the woods. They (the Yankees) got his horse, led it dripping wet through father's yard, and said they had killed a red-headed man off it. They came on back to our house, said, 'Set your Negroes to cooking and get us something to eat.' They plundered the house; they even went into our Negroes' house, took some of the Negro boys' clothes. Emarine, our head cook, jerked the boys' clothes away and said, 'You will ketch it before you get out of here.' They even had Old Sorrell haltered up with a pile of corn and fodder before her -- she stood and looked at us. When they were through with dinner, they started down the bluff road. There was a Texas Ranger on top of the bluff with a gun that shot sixteen times. He fired into them, killed two men and seven horses. Old Sorrell broke for home. We saw her running at full speed and the worst scared thing I have ever seen. We were sure glad to have her back. My father managed to have good crops made every year. He had a yoke of oxen and two blind horses and the soldiers would leave horses that were broken down and when they were fattened up they would come and get them.  

No matter how they were treated, the residents of Tinsley Bottom displayed courtesy and kindness to soldiers on both sides. "When they would say the Yankees were coming we would not know what to expect, whether someone would be killed, the house burned or what would happen, but there was one sure thing, they had to be fed." It is obvious through traditional accounts that the residents of the Bottom were sympathetic to the cause of the South, even though some of them chose to fight for the Union.

The traditional accounts of the ravages of war in Tinsley Bottom reveal benevolence as well as hatred on the part of the Union soldiers. They were often cruel, but there were times when the soldiers were dignified and

45 Ibid., p. 11.
humane in their dealings with Tinsley Bottom residents.

As previously noted by Gardenhire, the Civil War left Tinsley Bottom with little except land and children. Much of the stock was stolen or killed, valuable crops destroyed, and buildings burned and plundered. Men who had gone to War were killed in battle or returned home wounded and battle-worn. The slaves were freed, and thus much of the labor force of the Bottom was free to choose its destiny, to stay with former owners or to leave and seek fortune elsewhere. Many did choose to remain, but the War nonetheless brought about economic changes which altered the course of Tinsley Bottom history.\textsuperscript{46} Due to unresolved conflicts and other factors, several people sold land and moved west. Another important change in the Bottom was the institutions of the tenant farming system which replaced slave labor of pre-Civil War times.

It was not long after the War that Henry Fowler moved his family to Missouri. In 1873 Thaddeus Tinsley moved his family to Buffalo, Missouri, about four miles away from the Fowler homestead.\textsuperscript{47} The migration of these families allowed for the sale of large portions of land in the Bottom. By 1890 William K. Tinsley was the largest landowner of the Tinsley family remaining in the Bottom. Much of the Fowler land was purchased by Francis Langford, and outside families

\textsuperscript{46}Bennett, p. 22; William Kirkpatrick, 16 July 1965; Interview with Landon Anderson, Celina, Tennessee, 24 January 1978.

\textsuperscript{47}Bennett, p. 22.
purchased smaller amounts of land.

The tenant farming system arose in Tinsley Bottom immediately after the Civil War. Large holdings of land were owned by the Tinsley and Fowler families. Phillip, Thaddeus and Amos Tinsley all owned much acreage in the Bottom as did John Fowler and his sons. Landowners needed help in raising and harvesting crops and maintaining stock; therefore, they each hired several tenant families to work their land. Many of the freed slaves became tenants on the properties in the Bottom and lived out their lives there. According to oral sources, the tenant system in the Bottom was essentially the same from its initial days until tenants began moving out around 1918. Wages may have varied as economic trends changed, but the institution of tenant farming was essentially a tradition in the Bottom. A landowner provided the tenant family with a house; in turn, each of the family members was expected to work. Adult males were paid a bushel of corn or ten pounds of meat for a day's wages. In addition:

... the family had a cow, they had a garden, and they had their own hogs. And some of them made a whole crop and they'd use that or they'd get corn for their work. Chickens and eggs were a big factor. The eggs, year around, they bought the necessities they couldn't grow, soda and sugar. They used honey and molasses for sweetener, and coffee and salt. And in the fall all the children picked peas. That was common practice, landowners and all, and they bought their winter clothes with that. And the boys would trap and hunt all summer for furs and they was ready money.

48 Jackson County Warranty Deeds, Index Book A, Jackson County Registrar's Office, Courthouse, Gainesboro, Tennessee.
The many aspects of farming were the livelihood of all Tinsley Bottom residents throughout its history. Life did not differ for a member of a landowning family. Everyone in the Bottom did his/her fair share of work. Women of the Bottom tended the garden, canned, cleaned the house, made soap, and did the laundry. The following is an account of Monday washday:

They had wash kettles. There was one where I was raised big enough to scald a hog in, a big enormous kettle. They put a fire under the kettle and got the water hot. And they had tubs and washboards and they used the washboards. Rinse them through two waters and boil them, took them and run them through another water and rinsed them, boiled them, and they was clean.50

The men of Tinsley Bottom were concerned with the occupation of raising crops. During the early part of the twentieth century farmers concentrated their efforts on corn and hogs.51

We didn't do a whole lot of small grain cropping. They would grow a few oats, a little wheat for bread, but corn was the chief crop and the one that they knew how to grow and had the equipment to grow. Consequently the best way to market corn in those days was through livestock, and hogs were the easiest form to handle. Everybody had a few cows in the area, but most had hogs and corn. . . .

Everything was done by hand. There was very little machinery when I was a little fellow. I have seen mules, teams of mules in the field, as many as eight or ten teams of mules plowing corn, breaking the ground in the wintertime. We'd plow everyday in the wintertime that it was not raining or frozen. . . . On our farm we'd put out, oh, two to three hundred acres of corn and that's a pretty good job with modern day machinery. But when you think of doing it all with mules and

50 Landon Anderson, 5 May 1978.

51 Interview with Margaret Tinsley Elliott, Celina, Tennessee, 5 May 1978.
Dark Documents
-May not film Well-
Filmed as Received
turning plows, double shovels, and then having to harvest it all by hand you'd have to have a lot of help. Help is what we had plenty of, with kids, tenant farmers. In grand-dad's later years he had as many as six, seven, eight families living on the place.52

Several of the men and boys of the Tinsley Bottom community supplemented their incomes through pearling at Green Bar and Turkey Creek Island.

They'd sell the shells, but they'd get enough pearls out of them to pay them. When they hit, they hit good. What they sold the shells for, that was profit for their labor. . . . Those pearlers, they didn't boil the shells out, but the shell diggers -- everybody dug shells who were able to -- they boiled these out and had them ready for the boats to come. When a shell buyer came along, they'd buy them, put them up on the bank there. But those that dug pearls claimed the heat might hurt them.53

A visit to Tinsley Bottom cannot help but elicit curiosity about the rusty oil tanks which stand in two areas of pastureland. The tanks serve as a reminder of a non-agrarian economic pursuit in the Bottom. The following narrative concerning George Lynn puts the oil story in its proper perspective. George Lynn owned the land where the drilling sites were established.

He came to work for an old gentleman named Frances Langford. . . . He started out just as any other young fellow would -- living with a family and working for them. I guess they kind of took a liking to him because they encouraged him. He married my grandmother while they were living there and moved into a little house and started a family. . . . When he got a little money he'd buy a little piece of land; Mr. Langford would sell him a few acres at a time. To

52 Interview with Sam Lynn, Cookeville, Tennessee, 14 August 1977.
53 Ibid.
make a long story short, seventy or eighty years later, Grand-dad owned it all. 54

George Lynn was a prosperous farmer, and had built a home in the Bottom around the turn of the century. In the early twenties while drilling for water, Lynn noticed an unusual odor. Drilling for oil began shortly thereafter:

My grandmother always said that the gusher and I came into the world at about the same time, so this must have been the fall of 1922 because she said that she was afraid to take me down there to see it. . . . When they brought this oil well in, they had no tanks, they weren't ready for it, they didn't know that they'd even find any oil, but they hit this flowing well and it flowed for days before they could even begin to dig ponds to catch the oil in. It flowed into the Cumberland River, so far away as Carthage -- the River was oily; it had a film of oil on it. . . .

In the beginning the oil was shipped by boat down river. Then they couldn't handle the flow of oil quite fast enough, and a pipeline was laid from Tinsley Bottom to the nearest railroad which has long disappeared. I believe it went from near Cookeville to Livingston, through Hilham, and the pipeline was laid from Tinsley Bottom to Hilham to connect with a shipping point there. 55

The first oil well was the most productive well of the lot. There were seven or eight wells on the Lynn property, and one or more of them produced through the 1930s and 1940s. At that time the price for oil was so low that the wells were not profitable. Consequently they were shut down at a production level of about twenty-five barrels a day. 56

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54 Landon Anderson, 5 May 1978. Also Girstle Lynn, Jr., 5 May 1978.
55 Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.
56 Ibid.
The beginnings of the Tinsley Bottom community are important in terms of historical perspective. The brief sketch given within this chapter details the influence of the Civil War upon the community and the resulting changes in the economic system. The social institutions of the community together with their accompanying traditions play a more vital part in an oral folk history; the chapter which follows is evidence of this fact.
OIL TANKS
FORDING THE RIVER
CHAPTER 4

A Social and Cultural History
of the Tinsley Bottom Community

A settlement becomes a community only after it takes on the responsibility of building and maintaining social institutions. The values of an individual community are evidenced by its social institutions based upon recreational, educational, and religious activities. The church, school and store, along with the recreational activities associated with each institution, serve as the nuclei of social interaction in a community.

During the initial settlement and early period of population growth in Tinsley Bottom the seeds were planted for the establishment of institutions such as the church and school. AliceMulkey, daughter of PhilipMulkey and wife of JohnTinsley, descended from a long line of preachers. Philip and his brother John had migrated to Kentucky and settled along the banks of Mill Creek, about three miles southeast of present-day Tompkinsville. John organized the Mulkey Congregation in about 1798, and it is probable that Philip aided in the establishment of the church.

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The Mulkey Church, originally Baptist, was reorganized as a Christian Church in 1809 when John Mulkey became convinced that his Baptist teachings were wrong. It is out of the Christian Church tradition, then, that the churches in the Tinsley Bottom area arose.

During the first half of the nineteenth century Tinsley Bottom was dependent upon surrounding communities for education and spiritual nourishment. It was in Big Bottom, across the river from Tinsley Bottom and south of Brimstone Creek, that the first Christian Church in the area was located. According to oral tradition it was established soon after permanent settlers came into the area and was called Old Bethel. Between 1835 and 1845 it had one of the largest congregations in the region. "Several large and prominent families from up and down the river comprised the congregation, namely the Kirkpatricks, Roberts, Harrises, Halls, McGlassons, Tinsleys, Fowlers, Butters, Scanlands and others." In her memoirs Kibbie Tinsley Williams Gardenhire states that her grandfather and two

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5Landon B. Anderson, "Old Bethel Church," Celina, Tennessee, n.d. (Typewritten.)
uncles attended church there together with their families and were later buried in the church cemetery. Gardenhire, writing in 1938, remarks upon the church building and the stories traditionally told pertaining to it:

The name of the church was Bethel, it has long since fallen to decay. I remember seeing it one time -- I looked on it with reverence and felt that I was standing on sacred ground because my people had worshipped there. My mother told me at one time they had a big meeting there and forty young men, my father being one of the number, went into the Cumberland River hand in hand and were baptised.6

Judging from her father's birth date, December 7, 1821, this baptism occurred prior to 1840, and is indicative of the influence and appeal of the church at that time. On September 18, 1845, a visitor to Bethel learned that between May and September the church had lost seven of its members as a result of an epidemic of fever.7 The account of his visit reveals a closeness of community sentiment, especially in reference to the life and death of Scott McGlasson, one of the members of the church and community.

He used the whole of his time in conversation, exhortation and prayer. He appeared to pour out his soul in exhortation to his family and friends, and prayed for them. He took his servant woman by the hand and told her he wished her to become a Christian. She and all his children over twelve years old have since been immersed. He requested the brethren to continue their weekly meeting and the reading of the scriptures in the congregation and the keeping of the ordinances. He told Brother James Kirkpatrick that he wanted him to sing "The Angels that Watched Around the


Tomb" and pray at the grave. Brother Kirkpatrick did so. He requested Brother John Rose to tell the church the next Lord's Day to persevere in all things relative to personal and congregational duty. This was done. This worthy brother finished his course in time and fell asleep in Jesus August 10, 1845.8

The history of Bethel Church is uncertain for the fifteen years following Reverend Reneau's visit to Big Bottom. Oral sources and written accounts are silent. Perhaps the majority of the church members resided in communities other than Big Bottom. The church body may have decided that a new building was needed, and members of the Tinsley Bottom community donated land. Whatever the case, Bethel ceased to be used around 1860 when the Philomath church and school were completed in Tinsley Bottom.9 Oral traditions are scant concerning the early history of Philomath, but a newspaper article, likely drawn from oral sources, illuminates the early history to some extent: "About the year of 1858 or 1859 this noted building was erected principally by the Tinsleys and Fowlers for church and educational purposes."10 Philomath church and school were established largely through the efforts of Thaddeus Tinsley, son of John Tinsley. He presided over the academy through the Civil War up until 1873 when he moved with his family to Missouri. The Reverend

8Ibid., p. 1.


10"Phylomath Church Burned," Jackson County (Tennessee) Sentinel, 10 March 1904. From the files of Katherine Cassetty, Whitleyville, Tennessee.
T. S. Tinsley writes picturesquely of Philomath at that time:

The chapel was used for worship and preaching on the Sabbaths. It was in the midst of a fine beech and poplar grove of many acres and on a high bank of the Cumberland River where the boats made a popular landing. In the horseback times the grove would be filled with the fine steeds of the day. . . . The stile-block was under a spreading beech where the ladies dismounted and mounted again when services were over.\textsuperscript{11}

The Philomath church and school continued to be an institution in the Bottom until 1904 when the building housing their activities burned.\textsuperscript{12} The Philomath building was large, with a peaked bellfrey and a central door on the gable end. It faced the road to the river landing and was situated high on the bank just off the river. A dogtrot log house faced the school on the opposite side of the road.\textsuperscript{13} Oral sources recount the early days of Philomath with pride, for many important people in the community and state were connected with this institution. Among those who attended Philomath were Benton McMillan, George Morgan, M. G. Butler, and D. B. Plumlee, who were politicians, and S. R. Fowler, who was a local physician.\textsuperscript{14}

It is uncertain where church services were held in the ensuing years between the burning of Philomath and the erection of the Tinsley Bottom Church. It is conceivable

\textsuperscript{12}"Phylomath Church Burned," Jackson County Sentinel.
\textsuperscript{13}Interview with Sam Lynn, Tinsley Bottom, Tennessee, 6 May 1978.
\textsuperscript{14}"Phylomath Church Burned," Jackson County Sentinel.
that services were held in the school building which was erected immediately after the academy burned; however, there is no recorded evidence of such actions. According to one oral source, there was a brief period of time when there was no church in Tinsley Bottom.\textsuperscript{15} It was not until about 1912 that the Tinsley Bottom Church was constituted on a hill far away from the River. The church was constructed entirely through the efforts of the community members.

The church was built there and made possible by Uncle Billy Tinsley and Mr. George Lynn and Edgar Williams. They put in more money than anybody else in the Bottom, but everybody put in money or work and Cousin Fowler Bradbury from Nashville sent the bell and Aunt Ada Tinsley's brother Merve gave the stove. Cousin Thad Tinsley had the windows sent and the organ.\textsuperscript{16}

The Tinsley Bottom Church was constituted as a Christian Church. In the early days of the existence of the new building there was music; in fact Margaret Elliott, informant, was one of the organists.\textsuperscript{17} By the late teens, however, the church became associated with the Church of Christ: "There's a preacher, old Brother Marion Harris, that lived in Sugar Creek. He came up there and convinced the people that they were wrong and they changed it to the Church of Christ."\textsuperscript{18} The doctrines of the Christian Church and the Church of Christ differ slightly; the most obvious difference is the absence of musical instruments in the

\textsuperscript{15}Conversation with Landon B. Anderson, Celina, Tennessee, 12 September 1976.

\textsuperscript{16}Interview with Margaret Tinsley Elliott, Celina, Tennessee, 5 May 1978.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid. \textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
Church of Christ worship service.19

The Tinsley Bottom Church did not have a regular weekly minister; he preached in the community once each month. On the Sundays when the minister was absent, church was conducted by one of the elected officials of the church body. The members read scripture, prayed, and partook of communion during the worship service.20

The Tinsley Bottom Church, like most rural churches of the time, engaged in customs and traditions which involved the entire church community in fellowship as well as worship. Dinner-on-the-grounds was common during the summer and early fall. Tables were set up under the trees in the church yard and the women of the community shared in the preparation and serving of the meal.21 Dinner was served immediately after the morning service, affording an opportunity for socializing and relaxation.

Another long-standing tradition of the church was the revival. It is best described by an informant who attended:

The church revival, or the big meeting as we always called it, would always be held about the second week of July. This was about the time that everybody would get their corn laid by. For a couple of weeks nobody did anything. We'd go to church . . . and we'd fish. The community would fish. We'd put out trout lines all up and down the Cumberland River and during those days fishing was excellent . . .

They'd have two services a day during meeting; in the morning service nobody went much except for the women

19 For more information on doctrine, see Appendix C.

20 Interview with Sam Lynn, Cookeville, Tennessee, 23 January 1978.

21 Interview with Dee Martin, Celina, Tennessee, 5 May 1978.
folk and the older men. The young folks, the young kids and those that didn't have to go with Mama, that Dad had the influence over, would stay and we'd dig fish bait or scan creeks for minnows and crawfish and we'd bait the trout lines of an afternoon and then everybody would go to meeting at night, nobody would stay home.

The old church building that's still standing -- it's about gone, would be full. There'd be people sitting in the windows, people sitting outside; then when the meeting was over everybody would head for the river to run the trout lines and we'd have the big fish fry. . . . If fishing was good we'd have a fish fry right then because there wouldn't be a whole lot of eating supper the week of the meeting. But we'd have these late night fish frys. Make coffee in a lard can, boil it with river water; just dip a lard can down in the river, pull it up, pour coffee in it, stir it with a willow stick. You fried fish in an old wash kettle. Just pour hog fat in there and dip your fish in there. ②

For many years after the church membership declined and fewer services were held at the Tinsley Bottom Church, the community still hosted a homecoming, an all-day affair, with preaching and dinner-on-the-grounds. Church services ceased in the early 1950s; however, homecomings continued to be held until 1956 or 1957. ③ The Tinsley Bottom Church died, with the remaining church community transferring membership to

②Interview with Sam Lynn, Cookeville, Tennessee, 14 August 1977. Margaret Elliott and Dee Martin in an interview on May 5, 1978 both attested to the presence of church revivals in Tinsley Bottom. Neither woman recall community fish frys. It is possible that the fish frys were more male-oriented than female-oriented. It is also possible that the community fish fry was a short-lived pastime in the Bottom, and that they occurred during the time that the Elliotts lived across the Cumberland River at Butler's Landing.

③Dee Martin and Margaret Tinsley Elliott, 5 May 1978. In an interview conducted in Tinsley Bottom on May 6, 1978, Girstle Lynn, Jr. stated that church services ceased in the 1950s.
Sugar Creek; its history is indicative of the strong sense of community which Tinsley Bottom had.

Oral sources are silent concerning the history of education in the Bottom prior to Philomath. 24 With the establishment of Philomath came a recognition of strict standards for education. The academy sought good teachers, many of whom were Tinsleys, Sewells, and Kuyendalls, both teachers and preachers, and it attracted students from many communities. 25 Students not living in the Bottom boarded at Philomath, and the school prospered throughout its existence. The accuracy of oral tradition concerning the Philomath school is colored somewhat by pride in the institution. Some sources claim that Philomath was furnished with manufactured desks; however, it is more likely that the school utilized traditional wooden benches or straight chairs and handmade tables. 26

Education in Tinsley Bottom was centered at Philomath until 1904 when the building burned. Work was immediately begun on a new building, located on the present Tinsley Bottom Road on the Clay-Jackson County line. Oral sources indicate that the newer building was a small one-room

24 In an August 14, 1977 interview, Sam Lynn stated that Philomath was the first school in Tinsley Bottom.


26 William Curtis Stone, Sr., in "History of Clay County, Tennessee," Celina, Tennessee, 1962. (Typewritten.), states that the school was equipped with manufactured desks. Landon Anderson, who conversed with the last teacher at the school, Mrs. Flora Tardy, stated that she recalled handmade benches, in a May 5, 1978 interview.
schoolhouse with crude equipment: "It was just a little box schoolhouse with homemade benches in it with two blackboards at one end." 27 From the following description we can understand how education was attained in the one-room school:

They started me to school at five and I remember the little old building. It wasn't much bigger than this room, about fifteen by twenty and had a big pot-bellied stove right in the middle. And there were no desks, just benches. There were eight grades, and there was one teacher. You can imagine how hectic it was. Some of the kids were as old as the teacher was. I remember there was one boy there particularly, the meanest kid I ever saw, and he kept things in an uproar. Believe it or not, we did learn; I don't know how. I don't know how the teacher was able to get anything across to us. The building in the wintertime, you'd almost freeze to death. The nearest water was carried from a spring I guess a good quarter of a mile from the school-building. The big boys got the privilege of going to the spring and they did this rather frequently during the day. They carried the water in a wooden bucket, a cedar bucket. Everybody drank out of the same gourd. We used to kid the girls after everybody got up a little older that they'd drink out of the left side of the gourd and the boys the right. Who could tell which side was which? 28

There were few frills to the curriculum of a rural one-room school. There was no music or art, but those who were exposed to basic education speak highly of it: "We had arithmetic and spelling, reading and civics. I guess it was the best education there was because I learned more listening to the ones above me, sitting, listening, than I did in my own lesson." 29

There were two school events that involved the entire Tinsley Bottom community, the pie supper and the spelling bee. The pie supper was a common institution in the South, but a

27 Interview with Margaret Tinsley Elliott, Celina, Tennessee, 6 October 1976.

28 Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.

29 Girstle Lynn, Jr., 6 May 1978.
community spelling bee was quite unique. There is no indication that any other community school opened its Friday spelling bee to anyone other than the students. In Tinsley Bottom, however, the entire community was invited:

Everyone would come that thought he could spell, you would have a crowd. Sometimes we'd have to have elimination, like under twenty-one and over twenty-one. But most of the time they'd try to intermingle the old ones and the little ones and the young ones. And they'd just choose up sides like a baseball team. One team would line up this side of the house and the other on this side of the house and they'd go at it. There'd maybe be some kid standing by his grandmother. . . .

You have funny little things that happened to people. It would be right embarrassing. Somebody would spell a word with syllables and they'd get a letter wrong and everybody would giggle.

The pie supper was an important social event for the community as members of surrounding communities attended as well as those from home. The money from pie suppers was badly needed by the rural schools since they were not allotted money for supplies and other necessities by the County School Board.

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30 The pie supper or box supper was a common method of raising money for local schools. Girls baked a pie or prepared a box lunch, wrapped it in a hand-decorated box, and it was auctioned off to the highest bidder at the supper.


The pie supper was looked forward to. It was usually held on the Saturday night before big meeting at church. It would always be close to the beginning of the school year and this would give the teacher a little money and this would buy supplies like an extra box of chalk or poster paper or something like that. But that was quite an affair and people came from all around and other communities. Sometimes the rough crowd would come to the pie supper, there would be a little bit of drinking. And if some guy would have his girlfriend's box bid a little high on him, he'd get mad and think they were ganging up on him. More than one fight has broken out because four or five guys would get together and pool their resources and make somebody pay a little bit more for their girlfriend's box supper. 33

Margaret Elliott describes the technicalities of the pie supper a little more clearly: "Each girl would fix a box with a band, good things to eat. And your boy friend would bid on your box and if he was lucky, he'd get it. And if not, somebody else would get it; the highest bidder always got the box." 34

The school in Tinsley Bottom had its limitations as an educational institution, but it lacked little in its involvement with the community. This active exchange between school and community has all but vanished in public education today. It is alive only in personal experience narratives like the ones printed above. Education in Tinsley Bottom continued in much the same manner through the 1940s as it did through the teens, twenties and thirties.

At the onset of World War Two there were close to fifty children attending school in the Bottom. 35 According to oral

33 Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.
34 Margaret Tinsley Elliott, 6 October 1976.
35 Girstle Lynn, Jr., 6 May 1978.
sources it was about this time that the old schoolbuilding burned and the one presently standing in the Bottom was erected. The structure and facilities were more modern than the former ones. There was an outdoor privy, a dug well with a pump, and the school building was larger and more conducive to learning with its large windows and individual desks. This building was not used long, however, for by the early 1950s the school population had dwindled; after there were fewer than twenty-five students the County School Board closed the school and instituted busing. 36 Thus another social institution which played an important part in the Tinsley Bottom community passed into obscurity.

Like the church and the school, the general store in Tinsley Bottom was a social institution in and of itself. The store stocked anything which community members deemed of value. In addition, the store served as a meeting place where banter was exchanged as well as goods. The first store in Tinsley Bottom was located on State Road 53 on the hill just north of Goolsby's Texaco station. According to one oral source, a four-crib barn was included in the original store buildings. 37 Sammy Lynn built a new store building during the late teens, and he and his wife ran the store. Margaret Elliott, who was associated with the store from 1919 through the 1930s, states that the store was a place for the men of the community to gather and talk. "We had a big heating stove down there. [They'd] sit around and talk. And

36 Ibid.

37 Landon Anderson, 5 May 1978.
Saturday afternoon in the summertime they'd be around and sit on the store porch. "38 "Every man in the neighborhood came down there on Saturday afternoon."39

In addition to swapping knives and horses at the store, the men and boys engaged in recreational activities. Marbles, horseshoes, and baseball were common outdoor summer activities at the store, while checkers and rook were played inside by the stove during winter months and bad weather.40

A typical Saturday afternoon at the store involved several games. Marbles, horseshoes and softball were common during the summer months:

I know many Saturday afternoons and Sunday afternoons out at the country store, we'd have a marble yard and a horseshoe area, side-by-side. And when your team would get beat in a marble game, you'd go over and get in a horseshoe game. And I remember I could always beat my father at horseshoes. And Dad was a sore loser. And I'd never play partners with him in horseshoes, we'd always be on opposite sides, and I could beat him. . . . But that's the only thing that I excelled in in my youth was pitching horseshoes. Now I didn't have strong enough hands to play marbles. The guys that were the marble players were the guys that had the little short stubby fingers and power in their thumbs. I played, but I was never very good at marbles. I'd always stay in the horseshoe game.

We had a community softball team. We had baseball, but not everybody could afford a glove and we played softball because a softball couldn't hurt your hands like a baseball would and it didn't take as much equipment, so we quit playing baseball. In my Dad's youth they had a baseball team, but later on we played softball and Dad was kind of manager of the community team and they played on Sunday afternoon in the summertime. We wouldn't start our softball seasons until the crops were laid by because you couldn't play softball all afternoon on

38 Margaret Tinsley Elliott, 5 May 1978.
39 Dee Martin, 5 May 1978.
40 Margaret Tinsley Elliott, 5 May 1978; also, Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.
Sunday and get up Monday morning and go to plowing 'cause you'd be so sore and stiff you wouldn't feel like it. But usually from the last half of July and month of August were the ball playing seasons.  

The marble game that was most commonly played at the Tinsley Bottom store was a regional game called roily holey.  

The game is complex and requires great skill:  

You had three holes and you'd start the game and you'd have to get in every hole; you had three rounds. And you played partners and your partner would stand in front of you and he'd keep the rest of them away. You'd catch up with him and then you'd stay and try to keep them away. And the best shot that could keep him away would be the winner. And they made their marbles, they were flint. There used to be a Gibson boy could make them. He had him a rock and he'd jack up his daddy's old car; he had an old A-model. And he'd put it in gear and make the wheels go, hold that rock up there and it ground them off. He made awful pretty ones. They used to find some pretty red flint around here. He was extra good at making them.  

Much of Tinsley Bottom history is colored by narratives told about people or on people who were neighbors and friends. Occasionally community members told stories on themselves, embellishing facts to produce an interesting tale. Story-telling  

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41 Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.  
42 For more information on roily holey, see Becky Morse, "Rolly Holey: A Regional Marble Game," Kentucky Folklore Record 23 (April-June 1977): 41-44.  
43 The partner does not physically attempt to keep the players away; he attempts to avoid the possibility of the opponents' marble hitting his or his partner's and knocking it off course.  
44 Girstle Lynn, Jr., 6 May 1978. Lynwood Montell, who grew up in Monroe County, Kentucky, recalls making marbles in this fashion. In an interview conducted by Lynwood Montell on March 13, 1976, E. Ray Gaskin of Wartburg, Tennessee, recalled making marbles and playing roily holey as a boy in Russell County, Kentucky.
was seldom a prearranged activity in Tinsley Bottom; it was spontaneous and was as likely to occur on the road, at the boat landing, a church social, or around the dinner table as it was at the country store. Sam Lynn puts story-telling in the perspective it took at the country store:

I remember one time when I was a little fellow and we went coon hunting and we were in the holler below this fellow's house and the dogs treed and right up on the limb, up overhead, the coon, sitting up there, swinging his tail and big rings around it and we had a little old .22 rifle and Dad was going to shoot it out. He shot a couple of times and missed it and one of the boys that lived on the farm decided he could shoot it out. So he shot it out when it hit the ground it was the fellow's house cat! This caused a big lawsuit at the community or country store. It was a kangaroo-type lawsuit, you know, Kangaroo Court. It lasted for two weeks. They bled that little incident for everything it was worth because this particular cat had quite a sentimental value to the farmer. They were always doing something like that. Always telling stories about a fellow's coon dog or about his mule or about his horse. Some of them had merit and some didn't.

I remember one time at this particular store there were a couple of community characters there and we were all getting ready to go home and the fellow had cleared the store out to go to meeting that night because the meeting was going on in Tinsley's Bottom and across the river in Big Bottom. And these two guys were sitting there in the store building trying to decide which way to go, where to go to meeting. They couldn't reach a decision. And finally they decided that if one of them would take the other one out the front door he'd go where ever he wanted or if the other one could take this guy out the back door they'd go to his place of choice and they got into a fight right in the middle of that freshly oiled floor. And by the time they got out the door you couldn't tell whether they were human beings and they went on to meeting. Now I saw that; I remember that... Things like that went on all the time.

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46 Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.
Ghost stories were told in the Tinsley Bottom community although they were not as popular, at least in the twentieth century, as personal experience narratives. Examples of supernatural narratives follow:

There used to be an old man here by the name of Daddy Stone. He wanted to move into the old Fowler house once so he went up to look . . . it'd been sitting empty for about a year . . . and he claimed he saw a woman coming down the stairs with her head off. So he left his mule, had to go back later and get Bessie, his mule. But we moved down there and everyone of us was raised there and we never did see anything.

There was a ghost story told at the old Tinsley home. I heard it (the ghost) once, but I guess it was a dog sneaked in somewhere. Me and my sister come home from Aunt Kibbie's one day and we heard it. We looked all over the house and we couldn't find a thing. And the story went that when they was building that house a man got killed and that was his ghost.

We used to kind of dodge that place near Cedars Cemetery if it were possible, we'd walk around it. We always heard that there was somebody seen Mrs. Alled up there rocking her baby. She died of childbirth. Someone saw her up there one night supposedly rocking the baby. Her boy used to run with us, Billy, and we'd kind of dodge it hunting and walk around it.

One narrative mentioned by all of my informants concerns Nathan Dale and Bill Tyler. The story is based on fact, according to all informants; however, each version is unique:

47 Most of my informants were very hesitant to tell ghost stories. Without exception they stated that ghost stories were told in the community, but that they did not believe in ghosts and could remember little concerning individual stories. The avoidance of belief in superstition is understandable in an educated middle-class society today. Yet, if all the narratives within this thesis are analyzed, a pervading acknowledgement of superstition exists.


49 Margaret Tinsley Elliott, 5 May 1978. Motif #334, Ghost Haunts Scene of Former Misfortune, Crime of Tragedy.

50 Girstle Lynn, Jr., 5 May 1978. The narrative is perhaps related to Motif E323.5, Mother Returns to Search for Dead Child.
Grandmother had a relative, and I don't recall how close he was to my grandmother, but he was killed by a revenuer. Really, an old time revenuer shot him. And all the community, and my Granddad was the leader, they put them up a still on the farm and they invited the revenuer down to break it up. And they had fellows that lived on the farm and some that didn't live on the farm posted at various locations and they were going to shoot him. The revenue agent's name was Bill Tyler. Granddad used to tell this, this was before my time, of course, but I've heard the story told by him and some people that lived in the community that they meant to get Tyler, you know. They operated this little illegal still right out there in the open, hoping he would come and they'd have an opportunity for revenge. Supposedly my grandmother's relative wasn't doing anything. They still don't know why he was killed other than the fact at the revenuer was afraid of him. He was quite a rounder, you know, and he carried a gun all the time. But he was shot off his horse there in Tinsley's Bottom and the trap was set for him, but he didn't come, he didn't bother them.51

The story goes that this man was riding down the road on his horse, not bothering nobody or nothing. And this revenuer officer came along in a car and shot him and killed him.52

Nathan Dale was killed; Tyler shot him in cold blood. The road run down the creek, I showed you where the spring was, and there's a mill set there. The road went up the bank about that high. And Tyler -- they run up on Nathan and blew the horn, one of those claxton horns, you know how they howl and his mule jumped up on the bank.53 And he, in grabbing for the saddlehorn to stay on, Tyler thought he was as harmless as he could be. And he shot him right there. And I remember Jim Washborn arming a bunch of men, setting them out by the courthouse at Gainesboro waiting for Tyler. But they always thought somebody called Joe warned Tyler and Tyler never did come.54

51 Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.

52 Margaret Tinsley Elliott, 5 May 1978.

53 A claxton horn was standard equipment on T-model and A-model cars and trucks. The horn produced a loud noise, clearly distinctive to the claxton, which sounded something like "oogah, oogah."

54 Landon Anderson, 5 May 1978.
A younger informant claims that the story of Bill Tyler and Nathan Dale was embellished by supernatural characteristics. After Nathan Dale's death a headless ghost could be seen walking in the Bottom.55

Many of the narratives told were about the river. Some of these were personal experience narratives:

Some of them /stories/ would leak out at the country store on Saturday afternoon. Stories that they came back with, stealing chickens along the river for food, and the things they did and saw after they reached the terminal in Nashville. I'm sure they got distorted a bit.

A lot of these old timers would build their homes along the river banks. They'd /the raftsmen/ would raid the chicken house -- that's all there was to it! And more than once I've heard some of the old timers tell about picking up a couple of small pigs and roasting. Once in awhile they'd get shot at. I've heard them tell those and once in awhile they'd have to pay off or they'd get caught before they could get back to the raft. Sometimes they'd be going around the bend and rather than tie up the raft so they could keep it moving, they'd let somebody off. He could cut across and pick up a chicken or two and they wouldn't have to stop.56

Cordell Hull was raised at Celina. Now he was born up at Byrdstown, but he was raised in Celina and my grandfather knew him quite well and they did alot of things together. Cordell Hull was an exceptionally good poker player and more than one time they have gone down on the steamboat with no money to speak of, but they'd get a poker game going and Judge Hull would win enough money and they'd stay down there maybe an extra week on his poker earnings. But he said Judge Hull would win enough to keep them down there several days and I guess they enjoyed the stay. They always had the excuse coming back, the boat didn't run or the tide wasn't right.57


56 Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.

57 Ibid.
In addition to stories told about rafting and steamboating and the men connected with the river, Tinsley Bottom residents told stories, personal experience and otherwise, concerning people who lived in the Bottom itself. The following three narratives refer to Uncle Bill Tinsley, last of the large landowning Tinsleys, husband of Ada Tinsley and uncle of Margaret Elliott. The community view of Bill Tinsley is an important element in the following narratives:

Uncle Bill give my little brother and me, we was nearly the same age, a quarter a day to drop peas in the big long river bottom. I'd drop some and he'd stay in the shade and he'd drop some and I'd stay in the shade. Well, we got tired of it and we dug a big hole and put our peas in it. We told Uncle Bill we'd planted them and we had; we'd put them in the ground! And he'd get on his horse and ride around the crops to see how they looked. And he found our peas; they'd come up. We hadn't thought about them coming up. He thought it was real funny; he laughed about it! He ought to have whipped us, but he didn't. He never hit me but once in his life and that like to have killed me. He slapped me one time; he was eavesdropping on the telephone and I was begging him for a nickel! He kept telling me to hush and I wouldn't; finally he slapped me. I fell over on the bed and cried. He give me a dollar to stop crying!58

Uncle Bill had a habit and he usually came back on whatever boat would take the most stock to Nashville. Cousin Tom Armstrong, that was the son of L. T. Armstrong, he'd put him off down at the Walker Ferry in chain bars and two deck hands would carry him to the house and they'd keep on up the Bottom and catch the boat there at Turkey Creek Island. . . . And one time, Uncle Bill wore a moustache, and Champ Williams shaved him on the boat -- he /Bill/ was drunk -- cut it off! And he got home and got up the next morning, washed his face and he looked in the glass. /He called Aunt Ada "Woman."/ He says, 'Come here, Woman, Champ's put the wrong man off for you!'59

58 Margaret Tinsley Elliott, 5 May 1978
59 Landon Anderson, 5 May 1978.
He [Uncle Bill] went to Celina and he drank a whole lot and had to go to the bathroom so he just went beside the courthouse. And they got him and fined him a dollar. He just paid them two, said he might want to go again before he went home, so he paid them two dollars!60

Community members were often the central characters of the stories told in the Bottom. The Tinsley Bottom Church was constructed entirely by community members and the following story is told about the men who raised the bell:

This is a story and I can't vouch for its authenticity. It came time to raise the bell and they all got drunk building the church building. Granddad said they got into an argument about whose team was going to pull; they had a series of ropes and pulleys to hoist this huge bell up into the bell tower. Everybody was proud of his own team and they got into a friendly discussion about whose team was the best because they didn't want to start up with the bell and have this team to balk, you know, and have the bell come back down. The argument ensued and they started passing around the bottle and everybody got high at the bell raising!61

In addition to the recreational activities found at the store and school, community members often entertained themselves at play parties during the winter months:

In the wintertime when people were confined closely to home they'd get together on Saturday night for a square dance or party, as we called it. Whoever had the biggest house, that's where everybody would gang up at. There would be a little fiddling and banjo picking and a little drinking. Usually at the parties the crowds were well behaved; they respected people back then. Nothing was said in front of the ladies that would embarrass them in any way, but if you were real careful you could get a little whiff of corn squeezing on somebody's breath. But they weren't out of line. Just good old honest clean fun.62

60 Girstle Lynn, Jr., 5 May 1978.
61 Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.
If oral sources are correct in their assessment of the social and cultural institutions evidenced in the Tinsley Bottom community, we can conclude that the church, school, and store were the centers of community life. Tinsley Bottom was a religious community, not altogether righteous, but nonetheless a community where emphasis was placed upon church activities. Tinsley Bottom was also a community proud of its reputation as a perpetrator of quality education in the county and state. The store was not only a place for purchasing necessities, but also it was a center for trading horses, marbles, gossip, news, tall tales, and humor. It was a recreation site as well. The social institutions of church, school and store in Tinsley Bottom provided the community with those elements necessary for physical, mental, and spiritual growth and livelihood. With the demise of these came the demise of the community itself.
CHAPTER 5

In Retrospect: Today's Thoughts on a Former Community

A history which largely depends upon oral sources for its substance must also include thoughts and philosophical concerns of those interviewed in order to obtain a complete history. Informants without exception stated that Tinsley Bottom was a community because of its self-sufficiency and unified spirit. The presence of a church, store, school and mill was deemed important in the recognition of Tinsley Bottom as a community. The following excerpts from interviews are typical:

Morse: In your opinion, what made Tinsley Bottom a community?

Lynn: Well, at one time this was the biggest church around. And we had a big store out here and we used to run a grist mill... And there were several families lived in here.¹

Morse: What do you think made Tinsley Bottom a community?

Elliott: Well, I think these men that owned it and built tenant houses and moved people in there... It was a community long before my time when the Tinsleys first moved in and settled there. The Tinsleys and the Fowlers were the community. They had a church there -- Philomath -- and they all went to church there. It was a community then.²

Just as several factors contributed to the establishment

¹Interview with Girstle Lynn, Jr., Tinsley Bottom, Tennessee, 6 May 1978.

²Interview with Margaret Tinsley Elliott, Celina, Tennessee, 5 May 1978.
and growth of the Tinsley Bottom community, many factors also contributed to its demise. When questioned about the death of the community, informants gave varied explanations. The fact that those familiar with the area cannot come to a consensus is important in light of sociological concerns. It is easy to point to events and activities which contributed to the formation of a community; it is difficult to state specific reasons for its deterioration.

The Tinsley Bottom community was described by an informant as an isolated community, tucked away from the main thoroughfares of life, accessible largely by water transportation. It was self-sufficient and serene in those days; little in the outside world could disturb it. When cars became popular and the young people of Tinsley Bottom learned to drive, fathers told their children, "Drive, but don't go over the Big Hill." 3 Chapter Three revealed, however, that the outside world did change the course of Tinsley Bottom history. The Civil War was largely responsible for the first major change, the rise of the tenant farming system. The development of modern farming equipment and the building of good roads also changed the history of the Bottom. These developments, combined with the effects of World War Two, were largely responsible for the death of the Tinsley Bottom community.

3 Interview with Sam Lynn, Cookeville, Tennessee, 24 January 1978. Apparently there was truth in the statement that Tinsley Bottom was isolated from main thoroughfares. On May 5, 1978 Sam Lynn told me that in the early years of motor transportation the hill toward Celina was so steep that drivers had to back their cars over the brow of the hill. The incline of the hill was such that gasoline could not reach the carburetor and the car would stop if the engine was pointed toward the brow of the hill.
Oral sources suggest several reasons for the demise of the Tinsley Bottom community. It is probable that most of the causes cited by oral sources had some effect on the community and each contributed in its own way to the deterioration of the community. The following excerpts from interviews give several viewpoints in the words of the informants:

After the mid 1930s, '37 or '38, everything changed. Farms were mechanized. The little farmers quit and sold out to the big farmers. Moved to town or moved away. The change, you could almost see it. When I started to high school in 1939, it was like living in two different times altogether. We had a car, we could go to town in a few minutes. . . . Small farmers couldn't afford the equipment and they could get the help, economical help. . . . Those that were not fortunate couldn't keep tenants at those little places and they couldn't keep help and they couldn't afford tractors.4

See the reason it deteriorated tractors. People used to have help. My granddad used to have at least ten families on this place, where after we got tractors we done it ourselves. They migrated north and worked in factories.5

World War Two gave young men a view of the larger world. At the end of the war many returned home only to move with their families to northern cities: "A lot of people went to Detroit and around and started working there."6

The object of this thesis was to collect and record data from oral sources to culminate in an oral folk history of the community. The thesis is evidence of the success of this

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4Interview with Sam Lynn, Cookeville, Tennessee, 14 August 1977.

5Girstle Lynn, Jr., 6 May 1978.

6Interview with Dee Martin, Celina, Tennessee, 5 May 1978. Similarly stated by Girstle Lynn, Jr., 6 May 1978.
venture. Although much of the material within these pages represents a traditional historical account, it also includes narratives and explanations of pastimes which do not grace the pages of traditional history. Likewise, the sources utilized in this study were living persons associated with the area or written sources drawn from personal experience or recollection.

Throughout my research, I was intrigued by the idea of uniqueness within a given community. I wondered if Tinsley Bottom was a typical river community, or if there were characteristics which set it apart and made it unique. My questions are, in part, answered through my research; however, comparative study is necessary in determining the extent of the uniqueness of Tinsley Bottom.

Three observations lead me to believe Tinsley Bottom was unique in some respects. Of the major families who lived and owned land in the Bottom during the course of its history, family histories exist for the Tinsley, Fowler, and Kirkpatrick families. The only family of historical importance in the Bottom but who does not claim a written history is the Lynn family. As my research progressed, I realized that many of the former residents of the Bottom left written accounts of their experiences and stories handed down to them from previous generations. It seems that the community members were eager to preserve their traditions and memories.

The Tinsley Bottom community was possibly unique in its position during the Civil War. Like most Upper Cumberland
river communities, its sentiments were with the South, yet there were members of the community who allied with the North, and T. S. Tinsley's extreme pacifism was undoubtedly unprecedented in the area.

The community spirit in Tinsley Bottom appears to have been very strong. Evidence of this is apparent in the community members' participation in school spelling bees. The tenacity of local traditions is evidenced in the annual church homecoming, which was held each year for many years after the church ceased operation.

Tinsley Bottom residents say that the community was indeed unique; whether or not it was much different from neighboring Big Bottom or Sugar Creek can be determined only through further study. The question of uniqueness is not one of extreme importance. It is by far more important that a human history of Tinsley Bottom as a community is recorded while firsthand accounts are yet available. This sentiment, expressed in the following narrative, was echoed by all with whom I spoke while conducting my field research:

I was talking with a fellow down in Tinsley Bottom the other day that has a little service station down there. He and I are about the same age. I reminded him of this and it was a rather rude awakening to him. I told him, I said, 'Malcolm, you and I are the old people of Tinsley Bottom now.' And he stopped and thought and he said, 'By God, you're right.' You see, it never dawned on him. . . . We are the old people now. It kind of shakes you up. If we don't pass along even a little bit of information to those that are coming along -- the lore, the folklore of the community and other communities dies.  

7Sam Lynn, 14 August 1977.
APPENDIX A

MAP OF TINSLEY BOTTOM

Modeled after a map included in Bennett's, "A Tinsley Family: 1735-1963."
## APPENDIX B

### CEMETERY DOCUMENTATION

**Fowler Cemetery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
<th>Death Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lydia, wife of John Fowler</td>
<td>Aug 7, 1813</td>
<td>May 20, 1853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Fowler</td>
<td>Mar 29, 1806</td>
<td>May 6, 1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas C. Holman</td>
<td></td>
<td>1860-1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnathan Roberts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sep 5, 1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Roberts, wife of J. Roberts</td>
<td>Nov 9, 1802</td>
<td>Dec 10, 1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Araminta, wife of A. K. Tinsley</td>
<td>Oct 15, 1822</td>
<td>Mar 26, 1853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucya, daughter of John Fowler</td>
<td></td>
<td>May 15, 1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. W. Mitchell</td>
<td></td>
<td>May 25, 1883</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisa E., wife of P. D. Staggs</td>
<td>Jan 20, 1829</td>
<td>May 13, 1879</td>
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<td>Sallie G., wife of S. E. Kirkpatrick</td>
<td>Mar 19, 1830</td>
<td>Mar 5, 1905</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. E. Kirkpatrick</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 12, 1824</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. M. Kirkpatrick</td>
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<td>Aug 16, 1829</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lou M., wife of V. M. Fowler</td>
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<td>Aug 12, 1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mollie A. Eads</td>
<td></td>
<td>May 28, 1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillie V. Moss</td>
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<td>Dec 27, 1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jul 16, 1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 31, 1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Birth Date</td>
<td>Death Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillian G. Moss</td>
<td>October 16, 1895</td>
<td>August 9, 1896</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lottie B. Moss</td>
<td>August 19, 1893</td>
<td>February 8, 1898</td>
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<tr>
<td>W. F. Stone</td>
<td>July 21, 1869</td>
<td>January 5, 1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha T. Stone</td>
<td>February 22, 1834</td>
<td>August 28, 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Tinsley</td>
<td>February 29, 1790</td>
<td>April 15, 1853</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alice M. Tinsley</td>
<td>April 19, 1797</td>
<td>January 16, 1874</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mary M. Tinsley</td>
<td>February 13, 1827</td>
<td>August 7, 1897</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philip M. Tinsley</td>
<td>September 5, 1818</td>
<td>March 28, 1889</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serah R., daughter of Philip Tinsley</td>
<td>August 12, 1854</td>
<td>June 15, 1883</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. B. Tinsley</td>
<td>March 10, 1863</td>
<td>December 2, 1884</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Jane Hix</td>
<td>February 8, 1869</td>
<td>May 31, 1938</td>
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<tr>
<td>Felix Ormel Hix</td>
<td>July 13, 1858</td>
<td>September 30, 1943</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inez L. Elliot</td>
<td>May 26, 1920</td>
<td>May 26, 1920</td>
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<tr>
<td>Molly Lynn</td>
<td>February 12, 1902</td>
<td>June 30, 1936</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbara June, daughter of Arlie Warden</td>
<td>March 24, 1940</td>
<td>March 31, 1940</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martha Ellis</td>
<td>(dates illegible)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Felix Gilpatrick</td>
<td>1846-1908</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy Gilpatrick</td>
<td>1841-1924</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Gilpatrick</td>
<td>1838-1899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lynn Cemetery

G. Hamp Lynn
Born September 20, 1869
Died February 27, 1959

D. Stone Lynn
Born July 22, 1873
Died February 27, 1960

Sammie Lee Lynn
Born May 24, 1897
Died August 17, 1925

Ruffian Johnson, son
of G. H. & Dee Lynn
Born April 24, 1894
Died September 17, 1904

Lucy Ann Stone
Born December 28, 1851
Died January 2, 1929

Nathan J. Stone
Born December 16, 1874
Died March 20, 1916

Durward E. Hollows
Born April 24, 1918
Died November 12, 1960

Nannie Hollows
Born June 1, 1884
Died October 2, 1955

Ronield Wayne Hollows
Born October 19, 1942
Died November 27, 1942

Walter Hollows
Born August 16, 1916
Died December 7, 1940

Annie Lee, daughter of
N. J. & L. E. Stone
Born November 27, 1903
Died January 13, 1919

Harvey W. Elliott
Born November 21, 1855
Died November 19, 1939

Drucial Elliott
Born March 15, 1867
Died August 15, 1934

Nathan Thomas, son of
A. J. & Martha Dale
Born January 30, 1885
Died November 19, 1916

Mary Rose
1852-1931

John Rose
Born September 12, 1847
Died April 3, 1907

Hettie Rose
Born September 21, 1886
Died September 22, 1902

W. C. Rich
Born June 27, 1886
Died December 27, 1902
Verda C. Rich
Born October 10, 1889
Died December 27, 1902

V. F., son of
Zibe & M. B. Rich
Born January 19, 1883
Died June 21, 1900

Hettie Reese
Born September 21, 1886
Died December 27, 1902

John M. Reese
Born September 12, 1847
Died April 3, 1907

W. H. Goolsby
Born October 15, 1905
Died May 5, 1957

Claudene, daughter of
W. H. & L. P. Lynn
Born February 12, 1924
Died July 21, 1926

Jennie C., daughter of
W. H. & L. P. Lynn
Born August 29, 1916
Died April 4, 1918

Lydia P. Lynn
Born August 23, 1883
Died November 14, 1959

Veachel L. Norris
Born April 7, 1920
Died April 6, 1926

Albert Lynn
1903-1977

Vema L. Lynn
Born April 15, 1919
Died April 15, 1969

W. Harve Lynn
Born August 7, 1882
Died October 5, 1969

Illar Goolsby
Born March 23, 1906
Died November 6, 1965

W. Porter Kinnard
Born April 7, 1873
Died March 20, 1934

Della Kinnard
Born June 7, 1889
Died July 19, 1955

Mamie E. Kinnard
Born September 25, 1925
Died December 22, 1937

George T. Lynn
Born January 22, 1930
Died October 26, 1966

Ben Hollars
1914-1969

Girstle H. Lynn
Born November 18, 1898
Died January 31, 1975
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Flynn Lynn</td>
<td>Born January 23, 1900 Died October 20, 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Hollows</td>
<td>1951-1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinsley Cemetery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella Loftis</td>
<td>Born September 5, 1888 Died January 14, 1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina Loftis</td>
<td>Born October 9, 1868 Died December 17, 1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Lee Williams</td>
<td>Born February 26, 1904 Died January 28, 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus L. Gardenhire</td>
<td>Born November 12, 1815 Died March 29, 1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kibbie G. Gardenhire</td>
<td>Born May 22, 1851 (no death date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda E. Williams</td>
<td>Born May 31, 1884 Died January 19, 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse B. Williams</td>
<td>Born July 31, 1849 Died March 14, 1888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Tinsley</td>
<td>Born May 13, 1832 Died May 7, 1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amos K. Tinsley</td>
<td>Born December 7, 1821 Died July 1, 1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake Tinsley</td>
<td>Born December 5, 1821 Died March 19, 1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ada Anderson, wife of W. K. Tinsley</td>
<td>Born December 24, 1860 Died March 19, 1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William K. Tinsley</td>
<td>Born December 25, 1855 Died February 6, 1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Barlow</td>
<td>Born December 2, 1880 Died December 7, 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maud Tinsley, wife of Sam Barlow</td>
<td>Born February 8, 1896 Died April 29, 1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessie D. Williams</td>
<td>Born January 4, 1902 Died August 16, 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Robert Meadows</td>
<td>Born July 21, 1896 Died September 9, 1943</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Earl Anderson Williams
Infant son of Edgar & Pearl Williams
Infant son of James & Rosalee Meadows
Marguerite Virginia Meadows
Estel Young
Gertrude Rose Young and infant son
Rosalee Tinsley Meadows
Harvey B. Elliott
Charles Y. Goad
Alta Belle Smith
Amos S. Smith

Born March 6, 1918
Died January 10, 1919

Born July 9, 1911
Died July 9, 1911

Born December 23, 1917
Died December 23, 1917

Born September 27, 1918
Died September 28, 1918

Born December 28, 1910
Died October 2, 1913

1916-1939

Born June 15, 1894
Died April 19, 1965

Born October 20, 1896
Died March 22, 1971

1902-1929

Born October 26, 1883
Died October 8, 1947

Born February 9, 1883
Died May 22, 1953
APPENDIX C

CHURCH DOCTRINE


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Independent Christian Church</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church government</td>
<td>Local autonomy, not subject to any higher body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>By immersion only; no other forms recognized as valid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblies</td>
<td>Mass undelegated assembly for fellowship and preaching only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct of work</td>
<td>By direct congregational support; few organized boards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>Considered as all-sufficient Revelation of God's will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Liturgical forms shunned; weekly communion open to all believers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Restoration of early church primary as far as consistent with current conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecumenical</td>
<td>Occasional cooperation with denominations on local level; largely reject higher alignments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Churches of Christ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church government</td>
<td>Full local autonomy; no connectional framework among churches; or with any general body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>By immersion only; no other forms recognized as valid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblies</td>
<td>No conventions; lectureships encouraged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct of Work</td>
<td>No organized general boards; direct congregational support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>Considered as all-sufficient Revelation of God's will, its silences as well as its speech to be observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Simplicity stressed; no instrumental music; weekly communion to which unimmersed believers are neither invited nor excluded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Restoration of early church in all its practices and forms, as only means of uniting Christian world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecumenical</td>
<td>No formal cooperation with other religious bodies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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________. Celina, Tennessee. Interview, 5 May 1978.


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Lynn, Sam. Tinsley Bottom, Tennessee. Interview, 10 September 1976.


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________. Tinsley Bottom, Tennessee. Interview, 6 May 1978.


