

WPA Alabama Writers Project  
LIFE HISTORIES/STORIES  
Cherokee County 2

Tol Shropshire:

Tolbert H. Shropshire --

from History of Alabama and Her People --

in Cherokee Vol. II - P. 453 - 453.

It has been said of Tolbert H. Shropshire, publisher and editor of the Coosa River News at Centre, that he is more than an individual, that he is an institution. Certain it is that both personally and through the columns of his newspaper, he has impressed his personality upon the people of Cherokee County, and that he wields a definite influence in the shaping of public opinion. Identified with the country newspaper business for forty-three years, he knows it from every angle, and his lively, entertaining publication continues to attract and retain new followers and supporters each year.

Mr. Shropshire, who is universally known as "Tol," was born at Centre, Alabama, August 24, 1872, and is a son of William Henry and Mary (Vinson) Shropshire.....

His father launched the first issue of the Coosa River News on March 28, 1878, with a partner, the firm style being Smith and Shropshire.

From 1880 until his death in 1893 Mr. Shropshire (the father of Tol) was the sole owner of the paper.

Tolbert H. Shropshire received his education in the common schools and at the age of ten years began to receive his newspaper lessons at the case. At the time of his father's death, he had just reached his majority, and he and his brother, Charles, took over the newspaper, under the style of Shropshire Brothers. While Charles Shropshire died March 29, 1920, the

paper is still conducted under the same name, the firm consisting of Tolbert H. Shropshire, the C. D. Shropshire Estate, and J. B. Shropshire. Tol Shropshire is something of a character in Cherokee County. Irrepressible in spirits, but wholly likable in manner, he is absolutely independent of influence or connections and does as he likes in the way of criticising individual or institution in the columns of his paper. At the same time, both he and his paper are ardent supporters of law and order, religion, prohibition, and good roads, and it is Mr. Shropshire's belief that much of the good of the olden days be retained instead of so much of the so-called "jazz" spirit of the present.

(Then follows a glowing tribute from the Birmingham News to the Coosa River News on a story recently published)

With others, Mr. Shropshire is interested in the development of Rock City into a resort. This is one of the most picturesque spots in Alabama, situated in the Lookout Mountain district nine miles from Centre. Mr. Shropshire is an unreconstructed democrat and for twenty years has been secretary of the Cherokee County Democratic Committee. From 1902 until 1912 he served as registrar of voters of Cherokee County, and in various ways has been prominent in civic and public affairs. Having joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in boyhood, he has not missed a single Sunday service in nearly twenty years.

Mr. Shropshire married Miss Bertha Florence Wells of Boston, Massachusetts, who, as Bertha Wells, is known all over the United States as a musician and reader with Chautauqua.

Hannah Elliott

## JOURNALISM, ALABAMA

March 28, 1939.

(Heading) Press Tol. Shropshire.

The Coosa River News is one of the more engaging phenomena of Alabama Journalism, not noted for its news and stories, many of which it lifts bodily (with credit line) from other papers, or for its features (it still carries a weekly posthumous blurb ~~by~~ by Will Rogers and a full column of ancient items captioned "10, 20, 30, 40, 48, 60 years ago"), its style is so ridiculously individual, its comment so salty and its many asides so impertinent that most other Alabama editors grab it upon arrival from among their stocks of exchanges. Couple of weeks ago they grabbed themselves a bid to come over and help the news celebrate its 60th anniversary--"in a manner different from that which usually <sup>attends</sup> the anxiety and <sup>grounding</sup> of producing anniversary editions.

Instead of trying to show sixty of "The News immense pages" ~~Whittling~~ tobacco-chewing editor Tol H. Shropshire rambled on "We shall be content with turning the Epoch (to us) into an entirely social occasion, letting business ride in or out as it may."

The news was founded as the Cherokee Advertiser in March, 1878, by Fort Payne's old Thomas H. Smith and the late William H. Shropshire. It was destroyed by fire in June 1882.

Re-established with the old press on which Georgia's famed Henry Grady printed his Rome Commercial for 21 years, it has kept that ancient piece of equipment grinding week after week while Shropshire sons and grandsons continued to keep the quaint paper in the family and no linotype has come along to limit its multivaried hands-set type faces. Typical Shropshire crack. "When we <sup>go</sup> begin to run for some public job, we <sup>low</sup> to as many split ? <sup>infrimities</sup> as a midget mind might conjure. Yes, if we do."

indite