

Annesta's Attempt to Cleanse Summerfield

Compiled by Jackie Layne Partin

Transcribed verbatim from *Mrs. Grundy*, Jan. 1, 1920, we read below:

"Bloody Murder at Summerfield: Jud Aylor Shoots Jim Clepper About Nine Times. One of the bloodiest murders which has ever occurred in Grundy County happened at Summerfield last Friday afternoon in the lane which run from the public road to the home of a Mr. Garner at Summerfield when Jim Clipper was shot down in the public road and instantly killed by Jud Aylor. From the facts obtained of the shooting it seems like Clepper and Aylor had been at outs for some times, and Aylor held a grudge against Clepper, so when Aylor got a chance, he in company with a brother of his shot Clepper some nine or ten times. Aylor who only recently was appointed a Deputy U. S. Marshall, and before that has been in trouble several times in the court of this place once being tried for an assault with a knife, and another time for shooting the two Meeks boys from ambush, coming clear of the latter case, and the other case still pending in the higher courts. Aylor is considered a bad man, and since he has been appointed Deputy U. S. Marshall, he has had the people of Summerfield terrorized so that some of them have been forced to carry shot guns to protect themselves with, so it is alleged. Aylor shot Clipper from behind a tree, Clipper falling to the ground and tried to crawl away, then Aylor shot him twice more with a shot gun and then went up to the body of Clepper and emptied his pistol into him. Clepper's body was riddled with bullets and blood poured from all portions of his body.

Clepper only recently came here from Alabama, and seemed to be a perfect gentleman. He was at one time a resident of South Pittsburg and engaged in the mercantile business at that place. His brother from South Pittsburg came up after the body and he will be buried at that place.

Aylor has been arrested and is awaiting his preliminary hearing."

James S. "Jim" Clepper was born Mar. 20, 1867, probably in Marion County, and died Dec. 26, 1919, at the age of 52 in Grundy County. He was the son of Thomas W. & Mary Jane (Gilliam) Clepper, and a brother to "Aunt Beck Clepper" as genealogists know her. At the age of 42, he had no occupation according to the 1910 Census record. He is buried in the Gilliam Cemetery in Kimball, TN.

I am very familiar with the “lane” where the shooting took place. I drove down that lane many times during the 1960’s. In 1920, the house at the end was owned by moonshiners and bootleggers. It stood behind a small church building and a public school. Those at the end of the road were not the kind one would want to befriend. The problems came when two intoxicated men or women showed up at the same time to buy more liquor and fighting broke out. No one was safe, not the seller, not the buyers, not the folks who lived near. When a Deputy U. S. Marshall showed up, then there most certainly would be trouble in the form of gunfire.

As many of you know, in the past I wrote a story called, *Pewter Garner – The Way It Was*. Please consider this present short story as an offshoot of that story, but one that is completely relevant to the nature of what was going on in the little vicinity of Summerfield way back then. Jim Clepper’s name is mentioned in that story also. Without the courage of newcomers, mostly women, who supported the local people in that area during the time of prohibition, before and beyond, the little community may have been wiped off the map. Monteagle to the west had its stories; Tracy City to the east had its stories, but that little blink-and-miss-it spot in the road between the two afore mentioned towns also had its stories, good and bad.

Who was Jud Aylor, aka Jerd Aylor? What I know about Jerd, I learned while researching the Monteagle Cemetery for a Grundy County Cemetery book and from reading old newspaper accounts that included his name. Jordan D. “Jerd” Aylor, born April 27, 1896, and died July 29, 1923, was a son of Anthony and Rebecca (Howland) Aylor. His siblings were Ella, Bertha, Mattie, Novella, Myrtle, Ester and Lester (the twins), and Stonewall. He first married Louise Campbell, April 27, 1918, but she passed away a little over a year later. On Sep 20, 1920, he married Myrtle McFarland with I. H. Layne going along for support. I. H. Layne probably was Isaac Henderson “Hence” Layne a well-known preacher in the area.

Jerd Aylor died at the young age of twenty-seven. In his short journey he made a name for himself in Summerfield, his hometown, and communities nearby. The problem is that there was confusion as to what kind of name he made. After reading the above newspaper article one would believe he was a bully, so let’s add another viewpoint.

In *Mrs. Grundy*, Jan 15, 1920, we read:

Mrs. Glovier Makes Statement: *Summerfield Dec. 10, 1919, To the Editor of Mrs. Grundy Tracy City Tenn.* (There seems to be a discrepancy in dates, but these are typed as is in the article. This letter appears to have been written before the article above was published. —jackie)

“Will you please be kind enough to publish the following letter to the public: I have just finished reading an article published in Mrs. Grundy of Jan. 1, entitled “Bloody Murder at Summerfield.” We have lived in Summerfield for more than six years, during that time we have grown to love the community, and to feel very much at home. With only a few exceptions we have been most kindly and courteously treated by the entire neighborhood. People who have visited us from other parts of the country have been astonished that we leave our windows open and doors unlocked, and that all leave home with no fear of finding anything disturbed when we return.

It has been a matter of pride to us that we have had such neighbors. Last year when our little community was in the midst of the fearful epidemic which took the lives of some of our dearest ones, I being a trained nurse felt it only plain duty to do what was possible to help those who were working so heroically to (any who suffers – illegible).

Some of us walked until our feet were blistered; some risked their lives going day and night to get medicines and necessities. We could not carry enough supplies to do much good without a conveyance. I drove a farm wagon, knowing that if only we could get around faster more lives could be saved.

The situation was heart breaking and desperate. Little helpless babies were starving for the care which their parents were too ill to give them. Just when the situation seemed hopeless: There came to me a boy who said, “Mrs. Glovier somethin’s got to be done in a hurry or half our community will die. I can drive a car if you’ll get someone to donate one I’ll drive you around and carry things to the sick.”

I said, “that would be fine but remember son you are just over the flu yourself and it will probably give you pneumonia as you will be out most of the night, and in all kind of weather. The young man said, “never mind about that, get the car, I’ll drive it. Within an hour a generous citizen of Tracy City had

loaned us his car. During the days that followed and often nearly all night that young man drove that car and often over roads which no car has ever been over, before or since. I am absolutely sure that some of our people who lived would have been in their graves today had it not been for that young man's services so faithfully and unselfishly rendered. Mr. Albert Thomas who helped with our relief work can testify to the truth of this.

That young man's name was Jord Aylor. Shall we call him a bad man? Some weeks ago the little house in which lived the feeble aged parents of that young man (Anthony & Rebecca Howland Aylor—jackie) was fired into at night, frightening the helpless old couple. I heard someone say, "Oh well, they were drinking."

About the same time, the house of a highly respected lady, our next door neighbor was shot into while a school business meeting was being conducted in her home, again I heard the same comment, " Well, they wouldn't have done it, but they must have been drinking."

On Christmas day the home of an elderly widow and little daughter who live near the place where Mr. Clepper made his headquarters was fired into. The little girl was struck on the arm again I heard the comment, "Well, you see, it's Christmas, and they must have been drinking, of course, they didn't mean to do it."

Now all of those things I have just told are plain, hard, cold facts. I make no accusations. I am sitting in judgment upon no one but merely as said, stating facts. I ask you law abiding citizens of our county to answer these questions.

What would you do if someone out in the dark fired into the house of your feeble aged parents?

What would you do if your sister lived all alone and was doing everything one human being could do to help in educating the children of the community and someone in the public road in the darkness of night fired bullets into her home?

What would you do if your little girl was struck in the arm by shots fired from your neighbor's yard, and no apologies made. Think it over honestly and fairly.

And a few more questions. If you knew something was being made and sold in your community which would slowly and surely undermine the welfare of your children and destroy the peace of the community, and bring death and

disgrace to some of our men and women, would you sit quietly by and not interfere?

If your government employed a man to see that the law was not violated and to help make your house a safer place to live, if that man shot a man who had a gun aimed at his young brother, (possible Vester or Stonewall Aylor—jackie), would you call that man a bad character?

Do you advocate the open defiance of the law? Uncle Sam has names for those who do this. Anarchist is one, Bolsheviks is another. I do not advocate murder, neither do I advocate threatening the lives of those who attempt to enforce law, neither do I advocate the manufacture of intoxicants.

There were eye witnesses to the killing of Mr. Clepper, I did not see it therefore will not say how it was done. That will be told in court by the proper person. I have nothing to say in regard to Mr. Clepper's character as I did not know him personally, and not wishing to say hard things of the dead, I will not repeat the things told me by people who knew him.

As to Mr. Aylor, it is true that he has been in court. Is he guilty because of this? Are you guilty because you have had cases in court? As to his terrorizing the neighborhood, I know of no peaceful law abiding citizen who has ever at any time needed to carry a shotgun to protect him from Jord Aylor. Do you? Mr. Aylor when in our home conducts himself as a gentleman; so have all others of our community.

I have never in all the years of residence in Summerfield heard Mr. Aylor referred to as a "bad man" or a "dangerous character". I have no personal malice toward anyone in Summerfield; those who are breaking the law will have to account for it to their county and their God in due time. I am not their judges and do not wish to be. I am praying that their eyes may be opened before it is too late. I am writing this knowing that I will be criticized; in fact, I am pretty sure of the source from where the criticism will come.

... because I have a keen sense of justice, I cannot be silent and live up to the best that is in me. We would like to bring up our children in Summerfield. It is our home and we love the place, and with the help of God we expect to work for everything which will make it a better place and against everything which will make it a worse one and during the years of my life spent in hospitals, I saw absolutely nothing which made me believe that it was (good—jackie) to drink

liquors and I saw a thousand evils which grew out of the use of it; this made me know that the use of it was wrong.

I have not seen liquor make better husbands and sons. I have not seen the use of liquor add to life, liberty or real happiness, or to anything upon which the foundation of civilization is built.

Tell me, have you?"

(Signed) Mrs. Mont Glovier (aka Annesta Glovier wife of Mont Glovier – jackie)

Meanwhile, let's see what was happening to Jordan Aylor. In the same newspaper on the same day, we read:

Bound Over To Court: *Jud Aylor who shot and instantly killed Jim Clepper at Summerfield during the holidays was bound over to court at his preliminary hearing last Friday before Esq. Arbuckle. A large crowd was present at the hearing of Aylor. The State Attorney was T.(Thomas – jackie) J. King, and Lockhart and Abernathy were the defendant's attorneys. The trial consumed nearly two days.*

Another article on that same day reads:

Arrest State Witnesses: *Immediately after the closing of the trial of Jud Aylor charged with the murder of Jim Clepper, Federal officers Hughes, Tyler, Scruggs, and Lefever, arrested two of the State's main witnesses, V. M. Guest, and Glover Sanders for conspiracy against a Federal officer, also three other prominent citizens of this place and Summerfield were arrested as follows, Sam McBee, Deputy Sheriff of Grundy County and Bill Scrugg and Edgar Garner. All were carried to Tullahoma on the evening train and their trial set for next Saturday at Tullahoma before Commissioner Davidson.*

What interesting names we read in the above newspaper article! Verdie M. Guest, Glover Sanders (probably Grover Sanders – brother-in-law to Perry Egbert "Pewter" Garner), Sam McBee, Bill Scrugg, and Edgar Garner (probably Perry Egbert "Pewter" Garner). It is not the intention of this story to decide what all the conspiracy was about, but to direct the reader to the mountain that Annesta Glovier was attempting to climb and cleanse. Summerfield was under siege from two fronts, the prohibitionists, *the Elliott Ness-like characters*, and the not-so-secret gang of thugs who flew in the face of those who set about enforcing the law. Ness himself probably

stopped on several occasions in the small village of Monteagle, swinging by Summerfield, during his perpetual chase for Al Capone. In some instances we have the law doing its duty, and in other instances, we have the law being arrested.

I wish I had known Mrs. Glovier, Ann Esther "Annesta" (Abernathy) Glovier. What a wonderful citizen for Summerfield to have inherited. She was probably born in Franklin County, TN, to Jesse and Sarah (Howard) Abernathy. Her mother, Sarah is buried in the Monteagle Cemetery along with other members of the family. In 1910, Annesta and Mont were living in Norfolk, VA. By 1920, they had settled in Summerfield, TN, a place where they seemed to want to make a permanent home. Annesta and her children were still in Summerfield in 1930. So it appears obvious that she stood her ground with the trouble makers.

Annesta fearlessly did what she could. She had a husband and two small children at home during the period she stood up against the moonshine-bootleg-mentality of some people in Summerfield. Not many people would have been brave enough to speak out against such odds to save the good people of her village. After her letter appeared in January 1920, a "Grundy County Law and Order League" with a branch in Summerfield and other towns was formed. Meetings were held in schools and churches. Attendance was high. This showed the concern of the majority of the citizenry.

By 1940, she and Mont were living in Shawneehaw, NC. Her occupation in the Census records was given as a house mother and nurse at a private school. Annesta died in 1975 at the ripe old age of 94 while living in North Carolina. It seems only fitting and proper that we remember strong characters whose influence helped shape Grundy County's history. Here is a belated "Thank You" to Annesta (Abernathy) Glovier from the folks of Summerfield and Grundy County. Maybe one of her descendants will read this and be filled with pride.

Note: It took a while to find one soul still living who actually remembered Annesta Abernathy Glovier. Lenora (Johnson) Layne as a young child was plagued with ear infections. On occasions her older sister Bertha Johnson took Leonora to see Nurse Annesta. She blew medicines into her ear and gave her drops for soothing and healing. This was a time when actual doctors were hard to find since there was so much sickness. I find it refreshing that help was near as a good neighbor. Annesta was loved by all except the evil ones.