

Sept. 12, 1990

Kay Lanham Johnson  
Director of Chamber Operations  
Lebanon/Marion County Chamber of Commerce  
107A West Main St.  
Lebanon, Ky. 40033

Dear Kay,

I do appreciate receiving your letter of August 30, 1990 in which you gave valuable information about the early days of Lebanon. Since arriving back in the Cleveland area, I've spent many hours going through old papers and photographs and have pieced a few more bits of the puzzle into place.

The following is from my father's notes. His name was \_\_\_\_\_  
Jacob George Heckelman, son of Philip Jacob Heckelman and Clara Alice Rowe Heckelman who are both buried in a cemetery in Lebanon along with a sister named Mamie. —

Ryderson Com.  
5.3.28-1855  
8.10-20-1927  
6.9-8-1857  
6.6-28-1945

"My father worked for a flour mill builder company named Pyne in Louisville where we lived until we moved to Lebanon, Ky. where Papa had taken a job where he was in charge of all milling of grain and care for machinery for the "Rolling Fork" distillery owned and operated by Mueller, Wathen and Kobert, all three living in Lebanon, Ky. We lived in a house that was owned and on property owned by the distillery. I understand his salary was \$4.00 per day plus free house rent. The house was located on the Main Street about one-half mile from the town. Lebanon was located on the main line of the L & N Railroad. (On a later visit to Lebanon my parents found that the house was no longer there and the space was occupied by a gasoline station.)

The public school in Lebanon was located about a block off Main Street about a mile from our house and we had to walk there and back in all kinds of weather. The first half of the term was free but a charge was made for each student for the last five months. Because of our lack of money we all attended only the first half. I attended only through the fourth grade and then had to find a job. My first job was working in the distillery barrel factory where I cleaned and oiled the machines and fired the boiler. I worked 8 hours a day 6 days a week. The bookkeeper would occasionally have some one take my place and have me run errands for him and the three owners. Later Wallace Cardwell, the bookkeeper said He would teach me bookkeeping and had me quit the factory and become his assistant.

The distillery owned a large heavy wagon for hauling about 6 or 8 barrels of whisky from warehouses to freight depot and had a large 3 story barn, the home of four Norman horses which were very large and strong.

I first learned to swim in the pond at the distillery. There was a well at one end and it was about 40 ft. deep. The pond was said to be 15 ft. deep. We used to skate in the winter on this same pond. I remember when the Wathen kids went bare footed all winter. We used to go hunting snakes in the creek at the distillery and also over near Sterk's and Cawley's hill. We would go down to the bridge and poke bumble bees out of their nest (under the bridge) and when they tried to sting us, we would bat them away with paddles we had made. Sometimes they got us hot and heavy, and often would chase us to Jimtown, which was the Negro settlement on the hill beyond the bridge.

We used to go sleighing on Cawley's hill. We boys made our own sleighs which were just a wide board on two pieces of wood about one inch by four and nailed with 20 penny nails swiped from the distillery. I remember going blackberrying and being chased by a black snake. Stealing those luscious grapes from the back of the office and getting bawled out by Hans Mueller. Doing the split when trying to ride those Norman horses bareback. Nick Wathen cutting his finger nails on the big chipper in the barrel factory and nipping off the end of his finger. He was showing Pop how it happened and nipped off the end of another finger.

I also remember when I would stay all night with Mr. Kobert when his wife was out of town. We would open bar at 9:00 P.M. sharp. He never drank a drop of anything until 9 P.M. He would then drink until midnight and then lock up the house. Note: I think this man wanted to adopt my father. I remember once he asked me to come in and look at a fine rocking chair in his room. He said his wife bought a carpet for her room as a Christmas gift for him so he bought the chair which he had wanted for some time, to give to her for her Xmas gift. I remember his animal heads and Indian relics. I will never forget the hash his cook would serve when I stayed there. When he found out how much I liked it, he would always ask me to stay with him by saying they were going to have hash for dinner and I seldom refused.

I remember how the boys and girls would sit on the fence in front of Wheatleys and discuss anything that came up. Johnny Martin used to be the chief discussioner. Also when we would form a gang of boys and girls and walk the railroad tracks to Calvary and return. Often we would get wild grapes or swipe fruit along the road. With Arthur Dahringer we used to walk out to the water pumping station and then go up on the knob to see the reservoir which was usually filled with all kinds of debris. It's a wonder everyone in Lebanon did not die of typhoid or something just as horrible. We sure must have been a hardy race. Almost as tough as Jack Johnson, fireman at the still house, better known as Big Six. Once Pop gave him a quart of whiskey to go down in the well in front of the still house which had a stuck valve. He had to dive down about 10 feet into water that had a half inch of ice on it. Also the well was 75 feet deep. He did it.

I do not remember much about the toll house which became the home of the Grahams, nor do I remember much about Bill Dick Roberts or the Richards family who lived in the big house just across from the toll gate. Am I right in thinking that after the Richards family moved, it was said that part of the house was haunted.

I remember when I was office boy at the still house and I used to borrow Cardwells shot gun and hunt rabbits when he was away. The first one was sitting beside a pile of heading. I sneaked up real close and in my excitement pulled both triggers. I got Mr. Rabbit O.K. but when I tried to pick him up, he fell apart."

I hope you have <sup>found</sup> this interesting reading. Perhaps some of the names or places mentioned will be remembered by the old-timers. You may want to xerox this letter and send a copy to Sam Boldrick and Terry Ward.

We certainly plan on visiting Lebanon again now that we know more about it and have a map. Would like to know where the cemetery is located or if there is more than one.

Once again, thank you for responding so promptly. I may very well write the two men you mentioned or they can write me.

*Shirley*

Shirley Heckelman Fisher  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

