

Welcome to the **Murder, Mystery, and Mayhem Driving tour of Stanly County!** The stories that follow are ALL true (though *some* creative liberties may have been taken in descriptions of events). The tour consists of 13 stops throughout the county. The below map gives a general layout of each stop in comparison to the others. There are also directions from one stop to the next in the driving tour itself. A few of these stops are church parking lots or cemeteries. Please show the respect these sites deserve and leave the site as you found it as you embark on this hair raising and heart pounding tour!

New London:

Stop 1: Murder of Francis Talley- gravesite- Bethel United Methodist Church 44118 NC-740, New London

Badin Area:

Stop 2: Disappearance of WWII plane in Badin Lake- Boat Access Area, 293 NC-740, Badin

Stop 3: Murder of Bushrod Lilly- gravesite- Badin Baptist Church- 28 Falls Road, Badin

Stop 4: Shootout in woods-parking lot-Mountain View Baptist Church- 44166 Mountain View Church Road, Albemarle

Stop 5 and Stop 6: Battle of Swift Island Bridge and Legend of Dr. Kron's Gold, Morrow Mountain, 49104 Morrow Mountain Road, Albemarle

Albemarle:

Stop 7: Unknown Confederate Solider grave- Pee Dee Cemetery, Pee Dee Ave, Albemarle

Stop 8: The Lynching of Alec Whitely, Isaiah Snuggs House Museum, 112 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Albemarle

Stop 9: Ghost at the YMCA, Stanly County Family YMCA, 427 N 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Albemarle

Norwood Area:

- Stop 10: One of the Largest illegal Distilleries in NC- Norwood Access Area, 307-A Lakeshore Drive, Norwood
- Stop 11: Murder of Watt Snuggs- parking lot next to 129 N Main Street, Norwood

Oakboro Area:

Stop 12: Murder of Patsy Beasley- Low Water Bridge, State Road 1770, Marshville

Stop 13: The hauntings at Booger Hollar Bridge- Booger Hollar Road, right off Barbees Grove Road



**Stop 1: The Murder of Francis Talley, 1892**  
**Bethel United Methodist Church, 44118 NC-740, New London, NC 28127**

*Francis Talley's mortal remains lay under a gravestone located almost squarely center in the graveyard. To find his stone, stand in front of the Thompson gravestones that are located in the middle of the 2nd row that is closest to Ledbetter Road, then walk straight back to Mattie Crowell's grave, and then diagonally to the right is Francis Talley's gravestone (he is listed as FW Tally on his tombstone and buried next to his wife Jennie Talley).*

Here in Bethel Church Graveyard lies the remains of one Stanly County's most horrific murder victims, Francis Talley. Despite the outrage from the public, the case was never solved. The day began as any other day; 12 year old Fannie Russel hurried along the grass path to her uncle's house that brisk November in 1892, to gather laundry Talley needed to be washed. Talley's wife had passed away some time ago and his sister looked after Talley the best she could. Fannie loved going to see her uncle, as he always had a piece of hard candy to press into her eager hands. In her haste, Fannie did not notice the "intense mooing of the cattle and livestock in the barn and in the pens clustered nearby". The house seemed unusually quiet and still. The wind, whistling around the eaves of the old house, made an eerie sound. A queer feeling tingled through her. The front door stood slightly ajar. She ventured up the steps and pushed the door open wide.

In the murky interior of the house, Francis Talley lay slumped on the floor in a pool of blood, with his pockets turned out. His right eye was mashed in, a deep gash in the back of his neck had nearly severed his head, and numerous cuts and bruises were upon his face. A sharp axe, which belonged to the murdered man, was found nearby, caked in dried blood. Only seconds later, Janie was flying toward home, her terrified screams reverberating across the fields. Her discovery touched off one of the most sensational murder mysteries ever recorded in the annals of Stanly County history. It was said many times in the coming months how Francis Talley was as harmless as a kitten and had no enemies. The accepted motive of the killing must have been for money. Talley was purported to have kept a considerable sum of money around his house. It was known that he had received \$500 from the sale of some gold from the mine he owned, a few days prior to his death. Several men saw him with the money at a store in New London on Saturday before his body was found on the following Wednesday morning.

The clues were few. The strongest of them was a double set of tracks, leading from a wheat field 50 yards from the right of the house. The tracks were between the barn and the granary coming from the field and going around a wood pile and then leading to the house. There it was apparent that the men (for there were two sets of tracks made by two sets of shoes, sizes 7 and 8, respectively) stopped, set the axe on the ground and looked through a window. Then the tracks went to the next window, and again they stopped and again there

was the impression of an ax in the soft earth. However, this was not enough evidence to go on and the case went cold.

Decades went by before there was a break in the case. Gale Hartsell, an oldster of the Red Cross community, let it be known that 38 years prior, Hartsell had escorted a man of the name Jim Morgan out of the area during the dead of night only a couple of days after Talley's murder. Morgan had worked as a pumper at Talley's mine and had known about the money Talley had just come into. Morgan had talked freely during the journey and while Morgan said he had been in the area of Talley's house on the night of the murder, he insisted he had not murdered Talley.

There was enough circumstantial evidence however for the police to request the extradition of Morgan back to Stanly County. Morgan fought it though and soon word came that Morgan had been freed at a hearing in Florida. Supposedly two prominent citizens in Florida came forward and said that Morgan had been living in Florida at the time of Talley's murder, much to the chagrin of Stanly County citizens, who pointed out that Hartsell escorting Morgan out of the state shortly after the murder had been verified beyond a doubt. However the proceedings came to a halt and Talley's murder was gradually forgotten about as years passed. Today nothing remains of the Talley homeplace located about 3 miles from New London. It was torn down years ago, with all that remaining of the life of Francis Talley is this gravestone and his mortal remains lying six feet under.

*(Excerpts taken from the Stanly News and Press and the Observer)*

**Directions to next site:** Turn left back onto NC-740 for 5.6 miles and then turn left into the parking lot for Badin Lake Boat Ramp. There is also a picnic and swimming access area a little before this stop as well.

## **Stop 2: The Disappearance of a WWII plane into Badin Lake, 1944 293 NC-740, Badin**

The mood in Badin was jubilant. Allied soldiers had launched an offense and successfully invaded German soil, the operation known as D-Day around the world. However, just two days later, on June 8, 1944 at 12:45 p.m., a PBJ-1H bomber, with twin engines, and the color ocean blue, crashed into Badin Lake, never to be recovered. Why was this plane in Badin and why did it crash? The facts were these:

Piloting the U.S. Navy bomber were 2nd Lt. Charles Merton McDaniel, USMC and Ens. John Earl Withrow, USNR. The pilots were ferrying the new plane from an Ohio factory to Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station. The plane was scheduled to arrive at Cherry Point the previous night, but due to bad weather or engine malfunction the pilots decided to land at Morris Field in Charlotte, NC. McDaniel's hometown of Palmerville was only an hour away and McDaniel was able to spend the night with his family as well as see his bride of 7 months, Mary. Although McDaniel told his family he often flew over their house at night, he had never stopped previously.

McDaniel went back to work early the next morning. Weather on the 8th was clear, with only a few cumulus clouds. In a prearranged signal, McDaniel agreed to circle the little town of Palmerville where his parents, wife and in-laws would be watching before heading on toward his destination. This signal would also let Mary know that he was continuing on his way and not returning to Morris Field and to her for another night. This detour of 15 miles from his approved route would later be used as circumstantial evidence against him during the Navy's inquiry into the crash. The plane reportedly made the circle twice, with no apparent trouble, but on the third circle, the family listened in horror as a sputtering sound was followed by a loud explosion.

Family and friends rushed to the lake-shore to see if they could rescue the men, but found only floating debris. Accounts vary, but items listed by witnesses include a portion of a wing, the forward landing gear, government papers and various other flotsam. A brown sock and a uniform shirtsleeve were all that was recovered from the crew. Years later, it was revealed that a wheel from the plane had been found and been utilized by a farmer for the past couple of decades before it was then donated to the Badin Museum, where visitors can come view it on display. While there have been some theories as to why the plane crashed, the cause remains a mystery. Recovery efforts of the plane have all failed, including the most recent effort in 1999. The shattered plane had come to rest in the underwater forest of Badin lake, its cables and wires dangling from the trees. Recovery was deemed near impossible. The plane and the pilot's bodies still sit at the bottom of this lake.

*(Excerpts taken from the Stanly News and Press and Our State Magazine)*

**Directions to the next site:** Turn left back onto NC-740 for .2 miles, turn left onto Falls Road (also route 1719) and then 387 feet turn left into the parking lot for Badin Baptist Church. The cemetery is on the other side of the church.

### Stop 3: The Murder of Bushrod W. Lilly, 1866 Badin Baptist Church, 28 Falls Road, Badin

*Bushrod Lilly's mortal remains lay in this cemetery under a headstone whose inscription has faded in time. The story of his death however still remains etched in the memory of his kinfolk to this day.*

In 1865, Stanly County was still recovering from the Civil War. Conditions in the county, as in other parts of the South, were chaotic. Crippled Confederate Soldiers were “back home helping to harvest their first crop in five years. Other soldiers hadn’t got back yet. Some would never. There was shifting, restlessness, and edgy nerves as the returned veterans and their families tried to patch together enough substance for survival and to readjust themselves to a land so ravaged by war that often there wasn’t even tools left with which to work”.

Within this backdrop, Bushrod W. Lilly was raising several hogs on his farm, and prized them highly as meat for his family. Most likely, Lilly did not fight in the Civil War, as he was well over 60. His neighbor Al Carter lived about a half mile west of Lilly, the farms joined by an old wagon road. One of Lilly’s hogs went missing one day and Lilly made it known that he believed that one of Carter’s boys had kidnapped and killed the hog. Carter told Lilly 3 months before he murdered him that he would kill him, if he did not stop talking about “his boys”.

According to court records, on the day of the homicide, Carter went to Lilly’s house and after the usual salutations, said, "I understand you accuse my boys of killing a hog." Lilly replied that he did, and "gave his reasons." Thereupon Carter stated he would kill him and raised his gun and shot at him. Lilly then remarked, "Your gun had no load in it," which is when Carter drew his bowie knife, which resembled those "the soldiers had made at the commencement of the war — home-made," and ran towards Lilly, who retreated.

Carter chased Lilly and caught him, stabbing him repeatedly, even driving the knife clear through his body at one point. Carter is said to have “stepped over his victim, glanced widely about him to see if anyone had witnessed the fight and then still gripping his knife, ran along the fence until the woods swallowed him up.” Lilly was able to be carried into his house and laid on his bed before he succumbed to his wounds. It is said that the blood from his wounds dripped onto the floor, staining the floorboards for decades, no matter how hard they were scrubbed. Although a search was mounted, Al Carter seemed to have vanished. Rumors were that he had fled out west to Indian Territory.

More than 20 years passed before a chance encounter of a visiting Albemarle man in Oklahoma revealed that Carter had been living as a farmer in that state for the last 2 decades. Carter offered no resistance and was taken back and tried for the murder of Lilly. He was found guilty and died a few years later while serving out his sentence.

It is said by some that in the dark of October nights, you can still a light bobbing along the fence where Al Carter ran following his dastardly act. Some years after the murder, people searched along the fence and found the murder weapon. The handles were rotted off and the long blade was tarnished with thick rust. The knife is said to be still in existence somewhere.

*(Excerpts taken from the Stanly News and Press)*

**Directions to the next site:** Turn left back onto Falls Road, and then left back on NC-740. After .9 miles turn right onto Mountain View Church Road, then about .4 miles turn left again into the parking lot of Mountain View Church.

#### **Stop 4: Shootout between bootleggers and Stanly County Officers, 1917 Mountain View Baptist Church, 44166 Mountain View Church Road, Albemarle**

It is hard to believe that within a couple of miles inside of these woods, that over 100 years ago, nothing short of an actual battle took place here between 4 Albemarle policemen and 5 bootleggers. Between the 9 of them, it was said that 30 to 75 shots were fired in all. When the smoke cleared, one man lay dead, two injured, and a massive manhunt was begun. The story begins on October 18, 1917, a Friday night, in which gossip had been swirling that the police would be coming to raid an illegal still buried deep within these woods. The still was producing whiskey and brandy and selling it in Badin and Albemarle for the past several months from the price of 6 to 10 dollars a gallon. Tipped off that the police would be staging a raid, the bootleggers decided to stay and fight rather than just cut their losses and hightail it out of there.

The bootleggers were said to have rounded up 50 men in the woods that night to guard the still. According to the *Albemarle Enterprise*, the bootleggers were prepared to give the officers “a warm reception”. In a military fashion, 5 bootleggers at a time would approach the still and retire in one direction to be followed by 5 more in a given time. In this way they expected to thoroughly cover the ground in order not to give the officers a chance to fortify themselves against an attack.

As the sky began to darken, four deputies arrived and placed themselves about 15 yards away from the still in the bushes and waited. The bootleggers came shortly after and slowly the officers began to crawl nearer. However as the bootleggers were on the lookout, they heard the approach of the officers and their leader, who was thought to be a local by the name of Will Smith, gave the command to ready their flashlights and guns. The officers then drew their flashlights upon the bootleggers and commanded them to surrender. Immediately upon this move the bootleggers opened fire and the battle commenced.

Shots fell all around. Three of the bootleggers fell, bloodied, to the ground, and the other two ran away. Since the officers had been lying on the ground during the battle, none were hit. After lying quiet on the ground for some time, the officers quickly left and returned to Albemarle for reinforcements. When they returned, two of the men who had fallen had made their escape, leaving behind traces of blood. The third man was pronounced dead, with four or five bullets found in his body.

Two of the five bootleggers had been recognized, and the police went to the homes of these men, where they were arrested. The suspected leader of the bootleggers had still not been found and a manhunt commenced. The other participants, about 50 in number, were supposedly “not known” and never arrested. It has been said that the gang had been operating out of this location for several months and that the men who were arrested were “desperate characters and have unenviable reputations wherever they have been”. The still was dismantled and the woods cleared out. Later, curiosity seekers venturing in, said the only thing found in evidence of the bloody battle was a man’s cap and a double barreled breech loading shotgun empty shell that showed evidence of having been snapped on but failed to fire.

*(Excerpts taken from the Albemarle Enterprise)*

**Directions to the next site:** The next two stories take place at the same site; Morrow Mountain State Park. Turn right onto Mountain View Church Road and take a right back onto NC-740 for .9 miles, then turn left onto Guard Road for 1.1 miles, turn left onto Morrow Mountain Road and follow road into State Park. For stop 5, the Battle of Swift Island Bridge, follow the signs to the Scenic Vista. Once you reach the top, park in one of the first few parking spots. For stop 6, the Legend of Dr. Kron’s gold, follow the signs for the Office. Once past the Park Office entrance, turn right, following the sign towards camping and Lake Tillery. Turn left at the sign for Dr. Francis Kron Homesite, and follow to the end of the road. Dr. Kron’s homestead is up the wooden staircase.

### **Stop 5: The Battle of Swift Island Bridge, mid 1920s Morrow Mountain State Park, 49104 Morrow Mountain Road, Scenic Vista**

The scenic vista at Morrow Mountain offers a sweeping view of Stanly County. When you reach the top, park in one of the first couple of parking spots. Towards the left, there is the James Garrison Bridge sitting over Lake Tillery. Back in the early 1920s, another bridge known as the Swift Island Bridge was located here. It opened to much fanfare on December 28, 1922, and yet less than 4 year later, it would be demolished. What had happened? In 1926, the

Carolina Power and Light began construction on a hydroelectric plant in Norwood. The dam built in conjunction with the plant created Lake Tillery and Lake Tillery was going to submerge the Swift Island Bridge. A bridge built at a higher elevation was needed.

Rather than see this as a loss, those intrepid engineers decided to make the most of the situation. It was rare to have to tear down a bridge less than a decade old. They decided to do an exhaustive program of experiments in order to see how much weight the bridge could hold. Several huge wooden tanks were built on wheels, filled with water from the lake, and then driven out onto the bridge and left. The floor of the bridge was cut through so that the engineers could watch the changes in the arches based on how much weight was on the bridge. Precise measurements were taken with the goal being that this information would be useful in future projects. The arches did not break during this experiment though.

The demolition of the bridge was then turned over to the war department and what is known as the Battle of Swift Island Bridge commenced. The military first followed what the engineers had tried and loaded the bridge with enormous amounts of weight. When that didn't work, the bridge was bombed by airplanes and artillery. When the smoke cleared, the bridge still stood triumphant. Finally, the military, using 2000 pounds of TNT in landmines, was successful in bringing the bridge down.

In the 1990s, when the water was low in Lake Tillery, two men came across one of the bombs used in in this battle. A bomb squad was called in and it was confirmed it was a pre-WWII bomb from the battle, weighing in at over 650 pounds. The bomb is housed at the Stanly County History Center and is scheduled to go on display by the end of 2020.

## **Stop 6: The Legend of Dr. Kron's missing gold Dr. Kron's homestead, Morrow Mountain State Park**

During the mid-1800s, this homestead at the top of the hill was known as "Attaway Hill" and where Dr Kron lived with his wife and two daughters. To this day they remain here, buried down the dusty path at the back of the hill. Dr. Kron was a well-known and respected physician and was often seen making house calls all over the countryside with his white horse, Hall. Dr. Kron also had a doctor's office built on Attaway Hill and it was the nearest thing to a modern hospital for miles around. By the time he died in 1883, he had established a position of prominence and high regard with the people of the area. After he passed away, his daughters sold off the majority of the land and as time went on, the Kron house began to decay and the land and gardens left untended, grew wild.

Because he had been a very private man, an air of legend followed him. In the midst of

his ruined plantation, a tale of ghost and gold emerged. According to legend, before Dr. Kron died, he put all of his money into an old oaken keg, with iron bands around it, and with the help of a slave, pushed it down a hill. He buried the keg under one of the old slave shacks rotting away near the Ferry Road and the creek. The slave, in passing the tale on, told how the heavy keg rattled and clanked “like it was full of gold”. A few days later, Dr. Kron went back and burned all the old shacks down. The keg was never seen again. From then on, the slave believed that Dr. Kron had left a bunch of ghosts around to guard the keg of gold and scare prowlers away.

The legend is retold in Fred Morgan’s *Ghost Tales of the Uwharries*. Determined to find the gold, a descendant of the slave and two brothers set out to dig it up. Seeking the advice of a local woman, reputed to “conjure up visions and give signs”, the men learn that “Old Doc Kron” did bury the gold where his slave said. But he called “down all the ghosts, witches, spirits, and devil helpers from the meanest places in the world to guard the gold against all the seekers”. The three men decided to try their luck but they too fell victim to “a parade of ghouls and cadavers marching down the mountain, carrying scythes and cudgels that glowed like the moon”. It is said though that those who search for the gold “on the exact anniversary it was buried, between dark and midnight and only when the moon is full and round”, will be safe. Unfortunately no one alive today knows the true story. If Dr. Kron really did leave behind his gold, its location has been lost to the ages.

*(Excerpts taken from Our State Magazine and Fred Morgan’s Ghost Tales of the Uwharries)*

**Directions to the next site:** Head back on Morrow Mountain Road, leaving the State Park. Follow Morrow Mountain Road for 5.6 miles, turn left onto NC-740 for 1.2 miles, keep right to continue onto Badin Road for .7 miles, then slight right onto East Main Street for .4 miles, and then keep right to continue onto Pee Dee Avenue. The cemetery will be on the left. Parking for the cemetery is available along the road in front of the cemetery on Pee Dee Avenue. There is also a lane on the right side of the cemetery that visitors can pull down and park along the fence of the cemetery. The gate on the Pee Dee Avenue entrance is locked but the gate on the right side (where the lane is) is open. When you walk through the entrance on the right side, the gravestone of the confederate soldier will be diagonal on your right a little distance away, facing away, and in front of a large tree. There is a confederate flag in front of the grave.

### **Stop 7: Grave of an unknown Confederate Soldier Albemarle Cemetery, Pee Dee Ave, Albemarle**

Albemarle cemetery was the first public city cemetery in 1885 and contains the mortal remains of many early influential Stanly County Citizen, including Isaiah Snuggs, the 9th sheriff of Stanly County and who is involved in the next story on tour. The person we are here for

today however does not have a name on his tombstone. This is how he came to be here:

For four years, Albemarle, like much of the rest of the South, suffered through the deprivations caused by the Civil War. In those four years, one quarter of Stanly County's population either died from famine and disease or fled the county. Starvation was rampant, and the town granary was mobbed in late 1864 by a group of hungry citizens.

In March or early April of 1865, Confederate General Joseph Wheeler arrived in Albemarle, possibly on his way to assist General Joseph Johnston near Fayetteville who was facing down Union General Sherman's Army from Atlanta. Wheeler halted his cavalry on Second Street, near the site of the present Lutheran Church, and headed across the street to the Marshall Hotel; a two story Georgian building with a large columned porch. Here, the cavalrymen intended to refresh themselves with what food was available and water from the town well, located near the intersection of Main and Second Streets.

As one trooper dismounted and headed across the street, his rifle somehow slipped from its holster alongside the horse's saddle. Either it discharged when it hit the ground, or the horse stepped on it—either way the rifle discharged into the soldier's back and killed him. Wheeler's cavalry left town shortly thereafter, probably unfed but at least watered. If the name of the soldier was taken down, history has forgotten it. He was taken here by the townspeople of Stanly County, and buried. In the years after the war, it began to be reported that a man dressed in gray would wander up the middle of Second Street, from the Church towards the Square. He never made eye contact with anyone, nor ever spoke, but just walked until midway through his journey he would dissipate into the air. It is believed that it is the ghost of this soldier, looking for his missing cavalry troop.

**Directions to the next site:** Head southeast on Pee Dee Ave towards N 5<sup>th</sup> street, take a slight right onto E. Main Street, turn right onto N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, and the Snuggs House Museum will be on your right.

### **Stop 8: The Hanging of Alec Whitley, 1892 Isaiah Snuggs House Museum, 112 North Third Street, Albemarle**

When Albemarle was first formed, the town jail sat where the library now stands, and the sheriff, Isaiah Snuggs, lived across the street in the house still standing at 112 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. It is here, on this site 128 years ago, that Alec Whitley was dragged from this jail, pulled over a tree limb and hanged in Stanly County's only documented hanging. What incited these townspeople to take such a drastic action? For that we have to look back 6 months prior and at

a location 800 miles away.

Alec Whitley was born and bred in Stanly County and grew into a “man of dark and evil reputation whom many people feared”. In 1890, when two of his crimes had caught up with him and officers began to search for him to serve two warrants, he vanished from the county, along with a woman with who “he had been friendly with”. A little later it was learned that they had gone to Arkansas and two years went by before Stanly County was to hear the name of Alec Whitley again.

In 1892, the town was rocked by the news that Burt Tucker, a well-liked and respected schoolmaster had been murdered while out in Arkansas. The details of the murder were extremely horrific. Tucker’s body had “been dissected and from the evidence found in the murder house, the officers believed that the murderer cut off Tucker’s feet and compelled the dying man to walk on the bloody stubs of his amputated legs.” The dead man was also robbed. Soon after, word reached Albemarle from Arkansas that, “If Alec Whitely returns, arrest him for the murder of Burt Tucker.”

The townspeople couldn’t believe that Alec would show his face in Stanly County again after committing such a horrific crime on such a well-liked local but sure enough, within months of the murder, Alec Whitely was rumored to have returned to Stanly County out in Big Lick, where some of his kinsman lived. Officers went out and searched all night, but “it was getting on toward daybreak and the old moon was riding high. One of the policemen knelt down on a path and examined the mild June dust. Here he found the prints of high heeled boots. A light was struck. There was the imprint of a heart in the center of the heels. Alec Whitley had always worn this type of boot.”

The officers surrounded the house where the footprints led and waited for daybreak. One officer, by the name of Dan Speight, took up a place at the rear of the dwelling. As others came up the road, the back door opened and Speight stood face to face with Alec Whitley. “Don’t shoot, Dan”, said Whitley, while Speight looked down at the fugitive over the drawn hammers of his shotgun. Whitley was arrested and brought back to Albemarle. Soon, word began to spread around town of Whitley being in the jail. There was relief that he had been found but also worry. Would Whitley manage to escape and evade justice like he had been able to for all his life?

Throughout the day, men kept coming into Albemarle and gathering in little groups and talk. Some of them would come and stand in the street and look at the jail. As night approached, the crowds increased. One could feel an electric expectancy. Then as midnight approached, “a solid body of men that had lost its identity as individuals and moved as one, came into the street and crawled like a primitive thing toward Stanly County jail. It made the

sound in the night like the slap of bare feet astray in a graveyard.” Fearing mob violence, Sheriff Snuggs quickly secreted the other prisoners across the dusty street to his house. From the windows, Snuggs and the prisoners watched as the mob of men tore down the door of the jail and dragged Whitley out onto the street. Whitley remained “calm and cold, as he was placed in a buggy and the mob brought him to Town Creek road to a grove which stands to this day. A rope was thrown across the limb of a red oak street, Whitley was set astride a mule, a noose placed about his neck, and then Alec Whitley was left to dangle in eternity.

And so they left him until the next day when men of the town brought a crude coffin and dug a grave beneath the tree. He slept there peacefully, it is hoped, for he had paid for his crimes, until 1927, when unidentified kinsmen dug up his bones and removed them to a country graveyard where he waits for judgement”.

It is said that on windy June nights, a mournful sound comes from where the red oak once stood. Isaiah’s house still stands today and has become a museum. Over the years, staff have reported a variety of unexplained incidents, leading to at least one volunteer to quit. If you happen to attend a tour at the Snuggs House be sure to be careful; it is possible that the ghost of Alec Whitley still resides there, seeking his revenge from beyond the grave.

*(Excerpts taken from Salisbury Post)*

**Directions to the next site:** Head south on N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street toward E Main Street, turn right onto E Main Street, turn right onto N 1<sup>st</sup> street, and destination will be on the left)

### **Stop 9: Murder of L.W. “Dad” Watkins, 1925, Wiscasset School, now YMCA, 427 North 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Albemarle**

“They Hacked off His Head, Arms, Legs... and then Burned him”.

So screamed the headline of the Stanly News and Press. The vicious murder of LW “Dad” Watkins on Halloween night in 1925 shook the Stanly County community. The details of the case remain murky, with conflicting stories often given. One of the main reasons for this is that the confessed killer changed his story multiple times during the trial, most likely to further the argument of his mental state. Here is what we do know: On October 31, 1925, an old abandoned farmstead, about two miles north of Albemarle caught fire. The fire, which was discovered about 6 pm, burned bright and quick in the already blackness of the night.

A crowd assembled and it soon became apparent that more than dry pine lumber was being consumed by the flames. According to the Salisbury Post, as the object was retrieved, “several people in the group who had gathered became sick and left the scene. The smoldering

mass of flesh was the headless, armless, and footless body of a man". Besides the body, a small charm of a black cat that could be worn on a chain was found. At a loss on how to identify the body, Stanly County coroner, T.F. Morgan suggested that they put the body on display in the funeral home and in the next few days, "several hundred people came to view the pile of charred flesh on the pretext to identify it".

Three days after the discovery, Robert Moss, manager of the ice plant, visited Sheriff R.N. Furr and suggested that the mutilated body was LW "Dad" Watkins, night watchman and janitor at the plant. Dad hadn't been seen recently, as well as missed a pay day, something that never had happened before. It was rumored that as Dad didn't trust banking institutions, he had a hefty sum of money hidden away in this house. According to the newspaper stories of the time, when Furr showed up to search Dad's cabin, the "door was open and the inside ransacked, with a trunk opened and the contents scattered over the floor. There was no sign of any blood though".

Furr asked the county commissioners for permission to hire outside help. The commissioners agreed and Nicholas Phitapoulous, ace private detective of Norfolk, VA came to Albemarle and took on the case. Phitapoulous soon zeroed in on John Gray, a 54 year old textile worker, who was found to have left town the day after the murder.

When the black cat charm was shown to Gray's landlady, she said it resembled the one that Gray wore on his watch chain. She also said that Gray was a peculiar man, who "believes in voodoo and witchcraft".

Gray was soon tracked down in China Grove and there are two versions of what happened next. One is that Phitapoulous disguised himself as a drunk and was jailed in the same cell as Gray. Phitapoulous was able to win his confidence and asked Gray what was troubling him. "You look like a good guy" Gray said at last. "I've got to get something off my mind. If I don't tell somebody then I will go nuts. I helped kill a man". Phitapoulous then jumped to his feet, ripped off the phony beard, revealing his true identity. "The confession will stand up in court" he told Gray. Gray, realizing he was beat, admitted then to the crime. The other story is that Phitapoulous brought Gray back to the farmstead where Dad Watkins was burned on a night where the wind howled and the "trembling prisoner begged to be carried back to the jail and when refused, he confessed."

Gray named two accomplices and admitted the motive had been money. He got Dad Watkins drunk and then struck the fatal blow with a rusty hatchet. Watkins was dismembered as an attempt to prevent identification. What became of the Watkin's head, arms, and legs remains a mystery but according to one of Gray's accomplices, they were taken to the Wiscasset Mill School, where one of the suspects was a janitor, and burned in the furnace. Gray

was found guilty of first degree murder and sentenced to die in the electric chair. However, on the day before he was to be killed, his sentence was commuted to life in prison, which is where he died years later.

The Wiscasset School was torn down years later to make way for the Family YMCA that now stands here today. Over the years, staff have reported strange occurrences happening, including phones ringing with no one there, lights flicking on and off, and elevators moving up and down on their own. Rather than be scared, staff instead say that it is just Dad Watkins making himself known, "He is our watchman now".

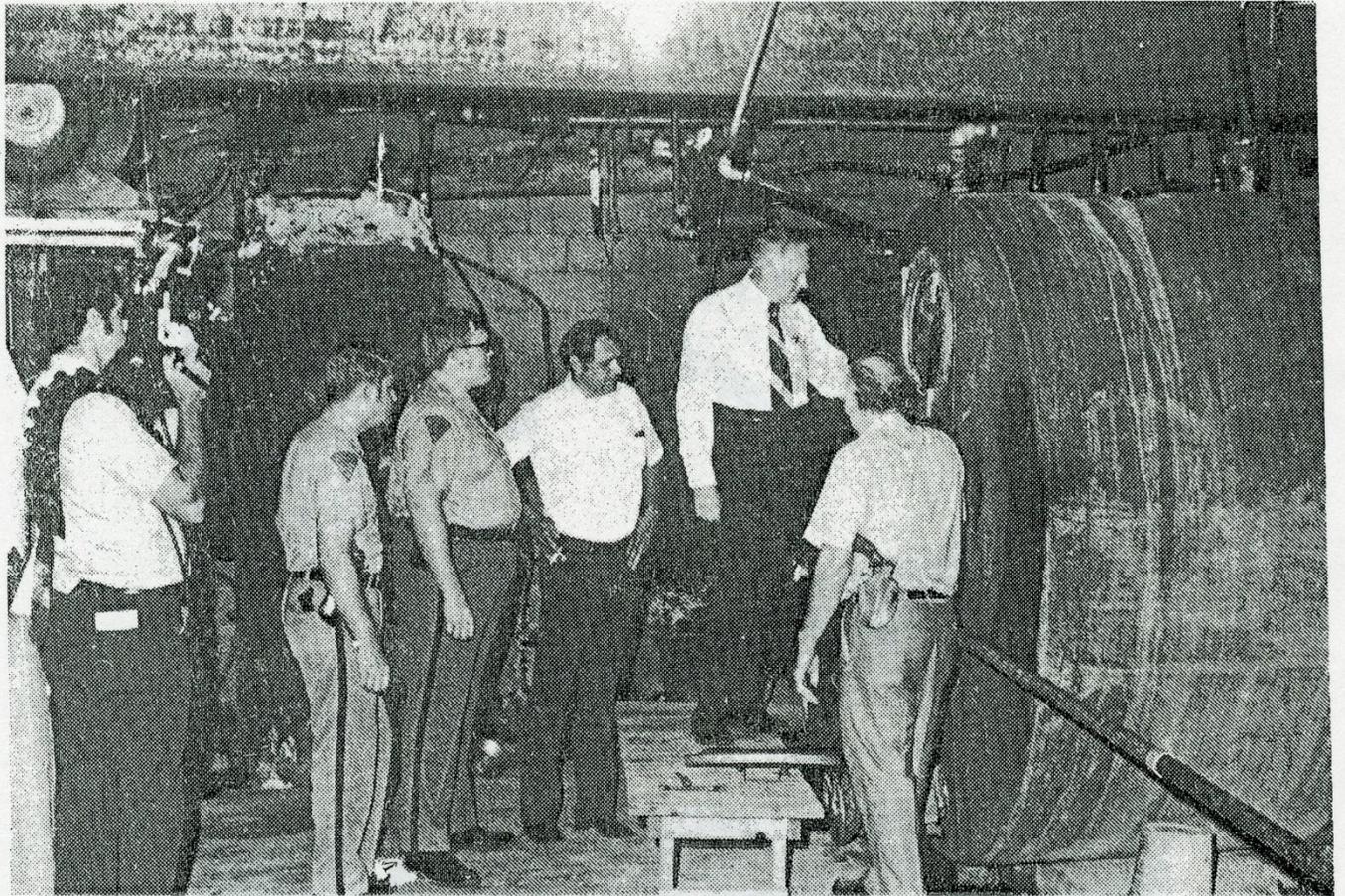
*(Excerpts taken from the Stanly News and Press and the Salisbury Observer)*

**Directions to next stop:** Take 52-S to Bowers Road for 8.7 miles, turn left onto Bowers Road 2 miles, turn right onto Indian Mound Road for one mile, turn left onto Lakeshore Drive for .5 miles, destination will be on the left. There are picnic tables at this stop.

### **Stop 10: One of the largest moonshine distilleries ever found in North Carolina, 1975, Norwood Access area, 307-A Lakeshore Dr, Norwood, NC**

Forty five years ago, less than 3 miles from this site, mash and other liquid discharge was pumped out from a small brick house from an underground line and then emptied into this lake. Three men were arrested and more warrants were issued. The distillery had a mash capacity of 10,000 gallons and an estimated booze output of about 1600 gallons a week. Found in the basement with the distillery were over 1000 gallons of distilled moonshine whiskey, most of it in one gallon plastic white jugs. Officials said the basement portion of the house appeared to have been specifically designed to accommodate the large scale distilling operation. Massive I-beams supported the overhead to eliminate support posts. Concrete foundations were poured in the floor for all the installations. There was even a switch hidden under a cabinet that would set off a secret alarm system in the basement. One of the most jaw dropping pieces of the distillery were the two twin 5000 gallon capacity metal tanks, similar to the type used by service stations for underground gasoline storage.

Also in the basement was an upright high pressure boiler, fired by fuel oil, which provided the head for huge mash containers. An intricate system of plumbing, plastic, and metal pipes, connected the boiler and mash vats with the doubler, the condenser, a filtering device, the proofing vats, and an overhead container from which the finished moonshine was piped into the jugs with a hand hose and nozzle. So impressive was this massive steam operated moonshine distillery, government officials from Washington, DC made a trip to see it! Below is a picture from the Stanly News and Press, reporting on the amazing find.



Inspecting huge mash containers, left to right, TV cameraman Cullen Ferguson, Deputies Paul Whitley and

Steve Eudy, ATF agent Tommy Chapman, Stanly Sheriff Ralph L. McSwain and ATF leader Bob Martin. —Staff Photos

**Directions to next site:** turn right onto Lakeshore Drive, left onto Lehue Parker Road, left onto Indian Mound Road, right onto South Main Street, and then left onto Bennett Street, where the parking lot is located

### **Stop 11: The Murder of Watt G. Snuggs, 1917 Downtown Main Street, parking lot next to 129 N Main Street, Norwood, NC**

A lot has changed in downtown Norwood since the killing of Policeman Watt G. Snuggs but the buildings that still stand on Main Street are some of the same buildings that dotted this streetscape over 100 years ago when Snuggs was gunned down by the Furr brothers. Watt Snuggs and the Furr brothers, Carl, Kirk, and Keithan, had a contentious relationship, dating back to when they were young and Snuggs caught them in some mischief and reprimanded them. Most recently, in the summer of 1916, Officer Snuggs had arrested Kirk for being drunk. While Snuggs was locking him in the Norwood calaboose, Kirk slugged Snuggs on the head with a whiskey bottle and escaped. The three Furr brothers often bragged that they were “going to git” Snuggs and were known as being “wild and mean as rattlesnakes when they were liquored up, which was their usual condition”.

On this Monday, January 22, 1917, the brothers made good on their promise. There was “little activity on the main street of Norwood. A raw wind whipped at the scattering of mules and saddle horses hitched along the street and dashed away the white smoke trickling out the chimney tops of the few weather roughened buildings hugging the street front. Sunlight glinted from tin roofs and bathed with its unfelt warmth the slushy mud holes in the street.” Snuggs and another gentleman were down the road, shoveling cinders into one of the largest of these mud holes. A fight broke out down the street between two of the Furr brothers, Carl and Keithan, though it has been argued that the fight was merely a ruse to lure Snuggs. A man by the name of Church Duke later testified in court that the Furr brothers had come into the Thompson– Wright general store that morning and flipped coins to see which one would get the honor of shooting Snuggs. Kirk apparently “won that honor”, for it was he who ran out of the café with his gun in his hand and shot the officer twice, as Snuggs was attempting to separate the other quarreling Furr brothers. Carl and Keithan were arrested but Kirk fled.

Snuggs was rushed to the train yard in order to be taken to the Wadesboro hospital, as there was no hospital in Stanly County at the time. The southbound train however was two hours late, and Snuggs passed away during the ride. The townspeople were incensed over the murder of such a well-liked officer of the force and began talking of a “lynching party, which made Carl and Keithan break out into nervous jitters and beg for mercy”. “Days passed and no new word came of Kirk’s whereabouts despite the fact that the Stanly sheriff alerted law

officers over a wide territory to be on the lookout for the desperado. Soon however the sheriff was informed of a break in the case; letters came to the Norwood post office addressed to Kirk's family mailed from Belleville, GA. Two officers were sent to GA and tracked down Kirk, who was working as a farmhand about a mile and a half out of town from Belleville.

Captured and returned, Kirk and both of his brothers went on trial for the murder of Snuggs. Arguments in the case consumed the better part of the two days and it was hotly contested on both sides. However, a compromise was soon struck; Keithan and Carl would plead guilty to manslaughter and sentenced to prison for 7 years. Kirk would plead guilty to murder and sentenced to hard labor in Central Prison for a term of 20 years. Keithan was the only brother however to serve out his sentence. Carl became ill with consumption and died shortly after conviction. Kirk was able to escape the prison work camp and was never seen or heard of in these parts again. According to the story, Kirk was out doing manual labor at a railroad track and as a train came up next to the group, Kirk dashed across the tracks in front of it and by the time the slow moving train passed for the cops in order to give chase, Kirk was long gone. Grapevine and word of mouth have said that he fled to England. Regardless, he was never seen or heard of in Stanly County again. A monument in the heart of downtown Albemarle stands in Courtyard Square as a tribute to Watt Snuggs, as a reminder of what the Furr brothers did in taking the life of a "most esteemed" police man.

*(Excerpts taken from the Stanly News and Press)*

**Directions to the next site:** turn left onto Main Street for .7 miles, slight left onto South Stanly School Road for 5.6 miles, turn left onto NC 138 S for 3.3 miles, turn left onto Hills-View Road, then turn left onto Hillford Road for 1.6 miles. There are pull-offs for Low Water Bridge. The road can flood when it rains heavily so plan accordingly.

## **Stop 12: The Murder of Martha (Patsy) Beasley, 1844, Low Water Bridge, State Rd 1770, Marshville (this stop is a little outside of county lines)**

Less than half a mile from here, along the same sandy shore, Martha Patsy Beasley was found "shot, stoned, and stomped". According to residents, the story goes as followed, "Patsy Beasley had one small child, about a year and a half old, which she left at the house while she went down to the spring to do the family washing. Several days later, her body was found brutally murdered. Some say her child was crawling around her while others believe the child was asleep in its bed". Because of the terrible nature of the crime, public opinion was that "hanging was too good for the man who killed Patsy Beasley". Legend says the child "was taken in by a well to do family, was reared, and became a very useful citizen".

According to the story, the murderer was supposedly exposed by a Primitive Baptist minister during his Sunday sermon, where he took the Patsy Beasley murder for his topic. Before opening his bible for his text, he laid a rather large flint rock on the pulpit. As he denounced the foul murder, he suddenly seized the rock and said "The man who killed Patsy is in this church house and I am going to smash his head with this rock." He picked up the stone and drew back his arm as if to hurl it. It was August and the windows were open. Young Tom Nash jumped through an open window and ran like a jack rabbit. Of course the officers soon picked him up. He denied his guilt. His rifle was found however and the stock was bloody.

It was rumored that Tom and Patsy were carrying on an affair which resulted in the young woman expecting another child. Tom, however, had decided he wanted to marry another woman, Mary Whitley. Mary, however, refused him, based on his known association with Patsy. It was said that Tom coldly decided he could fix this problem by murdering Patsy. He was arraigned and charged with murder. A newspaper description from the time, described Patsy's wounds as "shot through the left arm but the ball did not penetrate the body, as to be mortal; her head was crushed with a stone that is said to have weighed 24 pounds."

It would take over 3 years however for Tom to finally be tried for his crimes. Tom was able to continuously delay his trial by asking 3 different times to have it removed and tried in a different county. His trial was first to take place in Anson County, then to Albemarle, then Union, and finally to Montgomery. He argued that in Albemarle it would be impossible for him to receive a fair trial as that it was known locals were saying that "hanging was too good for him and that he should be burned at the stake". Once it was decided where the trial would finally take place, more problems arose. Two of the defense's witnesses, Edith and Lovey Nash, "were detained at their home in Union County because of severe illness". At the next hearing, there was another postponement, this time for the prosecution. Mary Whitley, the woman who had spurned Tom's advances and allegedly drove him to commit murder was a star witness against him. Whitley had been at the prior court sessions, but was now "in a state of pregnancy so far advanced as to render it very unsafe for her to attend the present term of court". When the trial came again, there was another delay as a material witness for the defense, who would swear that "the prisoner was not within two miles of the place where the murder took place", was not able to attend.

Finally, in 1847, Nash finally came to trial. Judgement was swift. According to newspapers, the jury deliberated only for an hour and ten minutes before handing down the judgment of guilty. The "prisoner... at the rendering of the verdict was very little affected; he however hung his head and shed a few tears when a sentence of death was pronounced on him". On October 8, 1847, between the hours of 10 and 2 (the same alleged hours in which Patsy was murdered), Tom Nash was executed. According to legend, Nash is buried in an

unmarked grave along route 2. Where Patsy Beasley rests in eternal slumber has been lost to the ages.

*(Excerpts taken from the Stanly News and Press)*

**Directions to next site:** Do a U-turn and travel back on Hillford Road, Hill Ford turns into Hazard Road, turn right onto Barbees Grove Road for .8 miles, turn left onto Booger Hollar Road, bridge is about 1.5 miles ahead. There are pull-offs for parking. The bridge can flood in heavy rain so plan your visit accordingly.

### **Stop 13: Booger Hollar Bridge (Located on Booger Hollar Road, which connects to Barbees Grove Road, Oakboro)**

Booger Hollar Bridge has had many stories told about it over the years and is one of the most well-known haunted locations in Stanly County. This story is in part from the Oakboro Regional Museum of History. Over a hundred years ago, there was a fugitive who escaped from jail. As he made his way across the countryside, he came along an abandoned house not far from Booger Hollar Bridge. The house was sparsely furnished and had a fireplace. The fugitive decided to claim the house for himself. However, local hunters knew about the house and would occasionally use the house as their base. The fugitive had discovered a hidden passage in the walls of the house and would quickly hide when he would hear the hunters approaching. A large photograph hung over the fireplace and the fugitive thought himself mighty clever when he cut out the eyes from the painting, allowing him to be able to watch the visitors.

Soon, stories began circulating about the house. The hunters would hear weird sounds at night, objects that they left one place were found somewhere else, and sometimes never found at all. The house began to be used less and less frequently until one night when two hunters stayed out longer than planned and were forced to spend the night in the house. The fugitive was waiting, hiding behind the walls. He had heard the stories about the supposed hauntings and was beginning to enjoy himself a little too much in torturing those who would stay there. He quietly crept up to the picture and watched as the hunters unpacked their gear, eyeing what he could steal. Suddenly one of the hunters whipped around. He had seen the eyes in the painting moving back and forth and fired his gun directly at the painting. A loud thud followed. The hunters saw blood begin to leak out from behind the wall. Searching, the hunters soon found the hidden passage and the fugitive now dead within it.

It is said that the fugitive now comes back to haunt Booger Hollar Bridge, looking for more victims to rob. More than one person has reported strange things happening when they were driving on the road. When they came to the bridge, they stop for just a minute to watch the water rushing over the rocks. When they tried to leave, something would hold them on the

bridge, almost as if the brakes were engaged. There have also been reports of handprints pressed up against the windows of the car as well. The “thing” doesn’t hold cars too long, just long enough for the ghost of the fugitive to quickly case the car and deem if there is anything worth stealing.

**Congratulations! You have survived the *Murder, Mystery, and Mayhem Driving tour of Stanly County!* If you continue on Booger Hollar Road, take a right onto Saint Martin Road, this will eventually take you into Albemarle.**



