Coe Ridge was a wilderness when the Coe Negroes moved there in 1866. At that time the entire course of the upper Cumberland between Celina and Burkesville was lined with stands of virgin timber—some of the finest cedar, oak, ash, poplar, beech, walnut, and hickory in the United States were found in that area. Prior to the Civil War very little of this timber had made its way to market; sometime between 1865 and 1870, however, many lumbermen in the area began to cut the virgin hardwood timber near the banks of the Cumberland River and to raft it down to Nashville or to saw the logs into rough lumber to transport by packet. By 1880 the lumber business had increased to a point which is barely comprehendible today.

Logging in the Forests of Coe Ridge

The virgin forests on Coe Ridge were utilized by the Coes in the construction of cabins and log barns for cash. The money was to be used to purchase additional land for the Coe clan. The first markets for the Coe timber were the local sawmills, which utilized the wood in making crossties, ax handles and staves; the sawmills also used the timber as rough lumber for export to Nashville. Pea Ridge was an early milling center specializing in ax handles, and Martinsburg became a rather important local shipping center, having a warehouse built especially for storing ax handles made in the Pea Ridge community of Red Bank. Tim Coe related the following narrative describing an episode centering on a Coe Ridge Negro and the first mate of a steamboat:

The Joe Horton Falls had landed here at Martinsburg, and at that time they was a handle factory out here at Red Banks on Pea Ridge. And all those handles that was made—ax handles, pick handles and so on—was hauled to Martinsburg and shipped down the river on boat. And they had a big warehouse loaded. And this boat stopped there to pick them up. And, course, these lower river boats they, I guess they had as many as thirty deck hands. But on a job like that, they'd hire just anybody they could hire to get the boat loaded. And so they'd hired a whole bunch of extras there at Martinsburg, and Tom [Wilburn] showed up directly, and they hired him, too. Well, Tom was a slow-motion man, I don't guess he'd a-got in a hurry if the house had a-been on fire.

And old Catty Martin, the mate, he placed himself between the boat and warehouse—the road they wuz a-travelin' here made a bend right up here just before they got to the warehouse—well, Catty he got up on the bank, on top the bank where he could see to the boat and to the warehouse. And he actually had 'um a-trottin'. And old Tom he come along—they hired him—and Tom was takin' his time. And old Catty bawled out at him, "Hurry up!" And Tom didn't pay him any mind. And Catty reached down and got him a rock. Said, "I said fer you to trot." Tom said, "Si, by God, I don't trot. I don't trot for myself or nobody else." And old Catty told him to throw that rock down. He told him, said, "You throw yours down or I'll kill ye." Instead of passin' on by him, Tom was goin' towards him all the time. And Catty

Historical events in the life of this Negro colony provide the basis for this book. The Saga of Coe Ridge is not an ordinary reconstruction of local history, however, for only a very few written records pertaining to this settlement remain. The major source materials are the inveterate oral traditions collected from former members of the colony and their white neighbors. 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. One must be prepared to defend a thesis which holds that folk history can complement historical literature. This study proposes such a defense.
dropped his rock. And they all quit trottin' then after Tom settled Catty. Old Catty, he was a cat, too!

Coe Ridge logging activities were clearly divided into two chronological periods. From 1866 to 1885, the ridge economy was geared almost solely to sawmill products; from 1886 to 1910, when the upper Cumberland reached its zenith as a logging area, the Coes turned to the river and rafting for their economic lifeblood.

Two factors sent Zeke and the male members of the Coe settlement scurrying into the forests during the initial phase. First, because cleared land on the ridge was at a premium at that time, they were interested in clearing the trees from the land so that the small patches of "new-ground" could be plowed and cultivated the next spring. There was much need for fields on which to grow a subsistence corn crop, plus fields to grow seed peas which could be sold for cash. Second, the hardwood trees, once they were cut into logs, provided a major source of cash income for the needy Negroes. Cash was essential, for they had borrowed money and charged groceries on the promise to pay with future log sales. Their logging activities were necessarily relegated to late fall and winter; the crude customs of agricultural production dictated that the Coe Negroes spend the growing season plowing and chopping weeds from the crop rows.

Stands of hardwood timber on the upper Cumberland declined rapidly after 1910. For many years after that date a few logs were annually floated down the Cumberland to Nashville, but revenue from the sale of the logs was never an important factor in the economy of the upper Cumberland. Rafting on the Cumberland, as far as the Coes were concerned, had started to decline already. The prime occupation in this area. The rafting era began with Calvin Coe, Yaller or Old John Coe, Little John Coe, and the sons of Tom and Mary Wilburn. After these Zeke Negroes began this dominant economic activity in 1886, such an imprint was made on the minds of their people that it is even possible at this late date to get an accurate description of rafting activities on the upper Cumberland.

Legends from the Woods. Zeke did not have oxen or horses during the first years of the Coe colony; therefore, before he could get his logs to the mill, it was necessary to hire someone to snake or haul his logs from the woods to the sawmill. In his initial business dealings following freedom, Zeke learned that all white men were not fair and honest like his former master. Zeke was surprised and shocked to learn that his more fortunate white neighbors were quick to take advantage of him, and the first of Zeke's revealing experiences of his neighbors' dishonesty came when he made a verbal contract with a white man to haul some logs for him. It was understood that Zeke would cut his own trees, then section them into logs measuring twelve to fourteen feet in length. After Zeke had fulfilled his task, the white man refused to honor his part of the bargain, and the logs were left in the woods.

Fortunately for the ex-slave and his sons, they were still able to get the logs to market within the year. At the market, however, Zeke was again wronged by a white man, and this time the result was disastrous. Unable to read or write, Zeke trusted the word of the log buyer who gave him one dollar bills in the place of one hundred dollar bills. Zeke sued the log dealer when he learned of the deceit, but he lost the case in a trial rigged by the white man's friends. Zeke was then forced to pay the court costs.

The early logging years on the ridge were dominated, according to tradition, by the exploits of Bill Zeke Coe, an extremely strong man. Bill was a master at cutting logs, specializing in the use of the broad ax and the pole ax. But he also split rails, built houses, made stocks for plows, and sharpened and set cross-cut saws.

During the early years of the Coe Ridge colony when he was helping to clear new ground, Bill's prodigious strength was demonstrated, showing up at the same time some white men who were present:

It was reported that two white men had boasted that they could carry more logs than Bill and Tom, Bill's brother. Bill laughed and said, "I ain't trying to beat nobody, but this race will get more logs moved than any other way." So he and Tom accepted the challenge and the contest was on.

Bill and Tom would take the stick on one side of a log, and two white men on the other side and, in that way, they carried many logs of different weights and lengths. They did not finish and it was agreed to return the next day and complete the work.

On the second day the work began with the same arrangements as on the previous one. In the afternoon it was noticed that one of the white men had begun to weaken, while Bill and Tom were as strong as ever and carrying their loads without faltering.

According to Bill's story, it was the custom to have at least a gallon of whiskey at the logrolling. This they had drunk whiskey he felt like he could move a mountain; so they drank the entire gallon on the first day and had to get another for the second day. Beginning as usual they would place their hand-sticks under the log and complete the work. In the afternoon it was noticed that one of the white men had begun to weaken, while Bill and Tom were as strong as ever and carrying their loads without faltering.

According to Bill's story, it was the custom to have at least a gallon of whiskey at the logrolling. This they had drunk whiskey he felt like he could move a mountain; so they drank the entire gallon on the first day and had to get another for the second day. Beginning as usual they would place their hand-sticks under the log and walk away with it at the time mentioned. When the word was given, this white man failed to raise his end of the stick. Bill laughed at him and said, "Move, all of you, and I'll carry it all by myself." Nobody believed that he could or even that he would try, but while they looked on in amazement, this giant raised one end of the log and carried it and dropped it on the wagon.

It is reported also that Bill once carried a log sixty feet long and eighteen inches in diameter. Again, when a wheel on a log wagon broke, Bill held up the side of the partially loaded wagon while the others made necessary repairs. On one occasion, "a white man who saw Bill holding up the end of the log circulated the report that he had seen him holding up two trees at the same time." Another white man reported that he was going "to whip Old Bill Coe" the first time he saw him, but changed his mind after he heard the report about Bill lifting two trees. One white man did try to whip Bill. Bill "caught the man's finger in his mouth; caught him around the waist and hit him three times in the side; and soon he found him limp in his arms. . . . He soon revived, and when he was able to speak, he said, 'I'm through; I won't ever try to fight Bill Coe again.'" Once Bill picked up a wagon: "Calvin Coe told how his brother Bill carried a wagon around on his shoulders. Several young men had failed to lift it when Old Bill
SAGA OF COE RIDGE: A STUDY IN ORAL HISTORY

...from boards—white oak boards. And Tom and a couple of his boys was going to saw some board timber. It was on a steep hillside, and Tom was sawing on the lower side. And Charlie, one of his boys, laughed and told me about it.

"Told him, "Tom, you'd better be careful down there. The board can roll over you.""

Old Tom says, "Si, no board cut don't roll over Tom."

"Well, now," he said, "this hill is awful steep, and that's big and heavy and it will get you down."

And they went on and sawed it off. And when they sawed it off, Old Tom grabbed it, was going to hold it, and it did get him down! And it rolled right over Old Tom's head. And after they saw it didn't kill him, they got to laughing at him about it. And this boy told me, "Well, Tom, thought you said no board cut couldn't get you down."

"Well," he said, "It didn't! Why," he said, "it rolled over my head, but it didn't roll over me."

Now that's the way that old Nigger argued it—it didn't roll over him.16

Tom Wilburn's son, Charlie, saved the life of a little white Coe boy by lifting up a wagon to allow the wheel to pass over the child without touching its body:

...He was a-driving a log team for my brother—oldest brother, up on Galloway Creek. And he had a little boy, my brother did, four, five, six years old. They thought lots of Charlie. And he was a-riding on this wagon—log wagon, or somewhere close by. You know, if you ever saw a big old log wagon they're heavy. And they, he saw it was a-going to run over him. And it had steers [hitched] to it. He just reached and grabbed that wagon by the hub that way and held it up and walked with that 'til it went over this kid.19

rafting on the river

The timber was gone from Coe Ridge after 1885, but there was still much left near the river in Monroe, Cumberland, and Clay counties. The Coe Negroes then geared their economy to the presence of this abundant growth in those counties: first, by occasionally purchasing a boundary of trees, which they would cut and market;20 second, by cutting a white man's timber "on the shares"; and third, by hiring out as raftsmen and raft pilots on the hundreds of rafts that went down river to Nashville. They worked for the Kyels of Celina, Bill Murley, Ed Scott, and other local log dealers.21

After the logs were cut in the woods, they were snaked along trails or hauled in log wagons to areas on the river bank known as tie-up yards. These yards were located at two places—either at the river landings or at low-bank points. Most of the rafts on the upper Cumberland were constructed in accordance with the number of board feet desired by the purchaser. No logs were cut less than ten feet in length, with the longest being fourteen to sixteen feet. An average raft contained from fifty to 150 logs in a single tier.22 Sizes determined the number of logs in a given raft, for many of the logs were between eight and nine feet in diameter at the butt ends.23 In the event the rafts contained more than one tier of logs, the logs were fastened together by letting the longer logs from each tier

...Bill was in a class to himself when it came to rail splitting:

Old Bill used to laugh and tell an experience in rail splitting with his brother-in-law, Thomas Wilburn. They had a joint contract to finish a large number of rails. They cut down trees, cut the logs and hauled them to a handy place to work.

Bill said, "Well, Tom, if you can make as many rails as I can, we will finish this job Monday."

Tom's reply was, "I can make as many rails as you can or any other damn man can."

"Let's go," was Bill's challenge.

Bill started off, working rapidly, and forgot about Tom. When he did come to himself and looked around to see what his helper was doing, he discovered that Tom was standing there looking at him. When asked for an explanation, Tom said, "Why, Bill, I thought I could make rails, but since I see you at it, I concluded that you are in a class by yourself, and I got no business in the woods with you."

Bill could outlift mill workers:

At a sawmill, some men were trying to put a huge log on a carriage but could not succeed. Bill and his brother Tom observed the futile efforts, and the former asked, "Can I help you, boys?" And the foreman readily consented.

This modern Sampson [sic] picked up the hook used to lift logs, clapped it around the log, and braced himself for the effort. His brother Tom called, "Look out, Bill, don't break that pole." The young men laughed! One sneered and said, "You can't do it when four or five of us couldn't." But Bill said, "If this pole don't break, I'll put it on." But the pole broke and splinters flew everywhere.

Laughing, Bill said, "Get me a handstick that won't break and I'll show you what I'll do." They got him another stick; he squatted, raised up and the log tumbled over on the carriage; then Bill and Tom went on their way.18

Bill's logging adventures were not accomplished without accidents detrimental to his health. While he was driving a log wagon, his hand was caught in a pulley and two fingers were broken off. He became an invalid at forty-five, after exhausting his great physical strength in the woods. Bill Zeke died in 1903 at the age of fifty-eight, being cared for during the last thirteen years of his life by his wife and children.17

Like Bill Zeke Coe, Tom Wilburn was a very powerful man who had extremely large arms and hands. Wilburn was so extraordinarily large and strong that Tim Coe was prone to comment, "You might as well have had hold of a grizzly bear." Again he stated, "You could look at his foot, and, golly, it was about sixteen inches of his leg turned up. I never seen such a foot on a man." People knew Wilburn also for his exorbitant bragging and stubbornness:

Oh, he's stout! I laughed at one of his boys a-telling a tale—a joke on Old Tom. They didn't call him daddy, pappy, or nothing. They called him Tom. And back at that time they had lots of good timber. All roofing was made
protrude under the whaling of the others. As a rule, the average raft was manned by a crew of five men and a pilot. Large oars were fastened on the front and back of each raft; each oar required the services of only one man, except during periods of extremely high tides or other dangers. The pilot was totally responsible for the raft and any mishaps. He "knew the turns and eddies," according to Mrs. Edith Williams, and had to anticipate the hazards well in advance in order to tell the others how and when to paddle in order to keep the raft in the main channel. Orders to the helmsmen had to be accurate and instantaneously obeyed. Taking a big raft down the Cumberland on high tide was no easy matter; it took great physical strength to manipulate the sweeping oars and courage to hold onto them in wind and storm. In the words of an eyewitness, "It is one thing to watch with awe and admiration a big raft gracefully swing around the sharp bend of the river, but still another to steer and pilot one on its tortuous course."

Calvin Coe took over one hundred rafts down to Nashville during his lifetime, making his last run after he was over seventy years old. Mrs. Sarah Coe Tooley gave an idea of what he experienced while on the river:

He had it all to a "T." He told everyone [how many] he had took down there, and about all the hard trials and tribulations they'd get into, you know.
One time they done without food and they didn't have no money, you know, and nothing to eat. And so they went out where the old cows eat these punkins, and they got that and cooked it up. And some feller wouldn't eat punkin, but he eat some of that [chuckles].

It took seven days to run a raft on good tide from Burkesville to Nashville, six days from Martinsburg, and five from Celina. In early days the rafts were tied up at night, but later on the more adventurous raftsmen ran straight through, provided the water was at a safe level. Rafting at night was a dangerous business, however, and often resulted in accidents and shakeups, not to mention verbal combats with the packet captains, who were guilty, according to the raftsmen, of "hogging the channel."

Calvin Coe told of the times when he and other pilots fired rifle shots above the packet cabins to make the boat captains share the channel.

Life on a raft was a world unto itself. The shanty was the center of social life on the trip. There the hardy Coe raftsmen slept on straw and ate their meals which were usually well prepared even though cooked on a small rock grate above a hearth of mud and clay. Lucy Robert Coe described one incident which depicts the life on a raft:

[They'd] have a little shack they'd call, a little place fixed up—put straw in thar. They'd crawl back up in thar and have a quilt there to pull over them.
And said one night they wuz gon' down the river and they run over a big old snag—the river had rose and they didn't know it was there. The pilot (Uncle Calvin used to be what they called a pilot to run these rafts and guide 'um, you know) run over there and scattered that straw, said, all from under 'um. Said talk about pullin' and gettin' out of there!
They finally got up, though, got it back together; went on down somewhere else to someone's straw stack and got 'um some more straw the next day and fixed their shack back.50

With sympathy in her voice, Mrs. Edith Williams described how the Coes faced the elements: "They had shanties and slickers. And just mostly took it if you want to know, just mostly took the rain. My husband used to have a store at this place. And they'd pull in here and, you know, be at the store and warm and dry and stay here."51

Mrs. Susie Taylor Moore further described living conditions on the rafts, and gave a pathetic account of a death back home that could not be imparted to the kin on the river:

They had scaffolds built up over them. They just built scaffolds on them rafts and had it big enough that they could lay down in there and sleep, you know, when they tied up. And had it big enough that they cooked in there and everything. They'd take cooking vessels, and they meat and everything to cook, with them.
And if one died while they's gone, they wudn't gettin them no word at all, you know; they'd be on the river. They wudn't know nothing about it 'til they come back home.
One of my aunt's little boys died while her husband was gone on a raft to Nashville, and she das had to bury the little thing. They wouldn't no gettin' him no word, you know.

The Coe Negroes earned a reputation of honesty and fair play from their white employers and the people who lived along the river banks. It is claimed that Calvin Coe was able at anytime to borrow a canoe down river on the merit of his reputation, although the lender did not personally know Cal.52 The lumbermen trusted their personal credit at the various stores en route to Nashville to the Coe clansmen who were in their employ. The Negroes were instructed simply to obtain a receipt for the purchases.

The following humorous story was told about the purchase of a big fat hen by some of the Coe raftsmen:

They said they'd go out sometimes and buy 'um hens and pick 'um, clean 'um, maybe put them on [to cook] at night. Some of them would lay down. And while they was asleep, some would slip up and eat the chicken left, you know [chuckle].
Said they would have a lot of fun like that when one would get above the packet cabins to make the boat captains share the channel.

. . . Robert said one night they went out and bought a great fat hen and picked her and put her on to cook. They was all aimin' to set up, you know, and watch her to keep ones (i.e., each other) from gettin' it.
Robert said he went on to bed like he wouldn' aimin' to bother the chicken. Said he went to bed, and they got this chicken done. Said they eased up, and Jesse Coe, eased up and went and got forks. Said they got that chicken out and they eat the chicken. Eat it all but this old saddle piece you know, left it in the pot [laughed]. And crawled back in bed.
Said one of them got up and said, "By God, somebody has eat all this chicken up." "By God, Robert, that 'uz you." "Jess, it was you."
Said they all just snored like they was asleep. "By God, you ain't asleep. You all jest got that chicken up [laughed]." Kep going on; kеп fussin' around. [Robert] waked up and stretched. Said, "What are you talking about? Are you all a-eatin' that chicken?"
By God, some of you all done eat that chicken.

Said, "We haven't ... we've been asleep."

Said, "I went to bed 'fore you all did. You all dist slipped that chicken and eat it up."

[Robert] said him and Jess eat the chicken. Oh, the rest of them rared and scoffed about the chicken. Said, "By God, the next chicken we get, I'm gonna set up—see if it's eat—to help eat it."

Well, said they went on down again a little piece somewhere, and they went out again and bought them another big hen.

Once the rafts were delivered to the Nashville sawmills, the Coes were faced with the problem of returning to Coe Ridge. Sometimes, when they did not want to spend their hard-earned money for steamboat fare, they walked, arriving home footsore and weary after three days on the road and two nights of sleeping in cornfields. The usual route was via Gallatin, Tennessee, and Scottsville and Tompkinsville, Kentucky. Occasionally, the Coes took a train from Nashville to Bowling Green, Kentucky, and walked home from there via Glasgow and Tompkinsville. For the most part, however, the Negroes rode a steamboat up the river to Martinsburg. The cost varied from one to three dollars for deck passage, and cabin passage started at five dollars. Most of the homebound raftsmen preferred the former since steamboat fare would take most of their earnings.

Death on The River

Billy Wilburn Drowns. Billy Wilburn, in his mid-twenties, was the first of the Coe clan to die on the river. With some other men from Coe Ridge, Billy was assembling a raft up river at the Biggerstaff Bar, located just above the mouth of Mud Camp Creek. Billy was in a skiff occupied with his work when he was suddenly seized with some kind of spell, probably epileptic. He pitched backwards into the river and drowned before his kinsmen could rescue him.

Sherman Wilburn Is Shot to Death. Sherman Wilburn was a very unruly member of the younger generation of Coes. Once he tried to kill his teacher after being corrected for misbehavior at school. He then ran away from home when his father severely punished him for his actions. A decade or so later, in 1900, hot-headed Sherman was killed in a gun fight at Martinsburg Landing.

As the story goes, Sherman consented to take a raft to Nashville for Ed Scott, a local timber dealer, but before the trip began, Scott sold the raft to another local dealer, Vince Vaughn. With this negotiation, Sherman's services were no longer needed, for in the words of Tim Coe, "Usually a man that follows running a raft, buying logs ... has his own pilot, don't you see. And so that knocked Sherman out of piloting that raft to Nashville." Vaughn had nothing personal against Sherman, nor did he doubt the latter's ability as a raft pilot, but Sherman still took the loss of the job as a personal insult. A few days later Vaughn sent word to Sherman that the pilot's job was his after all. Half-drunk, Sherman went to Martinsburg and stood on a bluff where he could see Vaughn at work below on a raft tied up at the landing. Price Kirkpatrick, who placed all the blame on Sherman, claimed that Sherman commenced cursing and abusing Vaughn verbally and then shot him in the shoulder. Vaughn then fired at Sherman, who "pitched over towards the water, a dead Nigger." Hascal Haile, whose father witnessed the shooting, told the story this way:

Vince Vaughn was rigging up a raft to go to Nashville, you know. And this colored feller had gone a time or two before with him. And they couldn't agree about a pipe or something, and they got in a big fuss at the store. My daddy happened to be there to see it. And he said that the colored feller was up on top of the bluff and Mr. Vaughn was down on the raft. They began cursing one another and abusing one another, and finally the Coe Nigger got so mad that he took his pistol out and shot at him. And I guess all that saved Mr. Vaughn's life is that he was smoking a pipe. So he shot him in the shoulder—broke a collar bone and knocked the old man down. And daddy said he thought he never was going to get his pistol out—known it was a big .44. And he got it out and shot him twice right through the breast and it went through this house where old man Johnny Coe lived there. Aunt Hun, Johnny's wife, was a settin' before the fireplace, and one of the bullets went right by her. It's in the wall down there today. It's in there today. You can see it.

Sherman lived for two days. After the shooting, he was taken to the home of Aunt Nellie Halsell, who lived in the log cabin once occupied by Aunt Mimi Coe on the old Coe plantation. It was there that Sherman died.

When asked how the onlookers reacted to the shooting, Bill Pindexter, himself an eyewitness, replied: "Never done nothing—only dist stood thar—and looked at it. One of [Wilburn's] brothers was thar—Garfield—and some of them asked him, 'Don't you aim to do nothing?' He says, 'What can I do?' He says, 'If I was to do anything, he'd kill me.' And he says, 'That ain't nothing I can do about it.'"

Vaughn had killed Sherman in self-defense, but fearing the vengeance of the Coes, he left the community. In their usual Coe colony custom, the Negroes held council and considered the facts of the case. The Negroes were convinced that Vaughn had shot Sherman in self-defense and that they would have done the same thing under such circumstances. After the decision of the Coes, Vaughn came out of hiding and returned to his home without ever being molested.

Shirley Wilburn Drowns in the Swirling Eddies. Shirley, another of the Wilburn brothers, fully intended to kill Vince Vaughn but could never come upon him at an opportune time. Shirley, still carrying a gun for Vaughn, met his death two years later in the spring of 1902 when some of the Coes were taking a raft down river to Nashville. One night two skiffs were tied to the raft; one skiff was in good condition and the other, which had been drunk, Sherman went to

Martinburg and stood on a bluff where he could see Vaughn at work below

The story continues...
approached an eddy in the river, the skiff was again sighted. Shirley grabbed the old leaky skiff and yelled for someone to get in with him. Robert Coe flatly refused, and even Calvin cautioned everyone not to be so foolhardy. Yet, George Williams was persuaded by Shirley, so the two got into the old skiff and headed toward the good one which was now dangerously near the swirling eddies. They did not get far until their boat was swamped by the eddies and began to sink. Williams was able to swim back to the raft. In the words of Lucy Coe, wife of Robert:

George swum, and they said it was the coldest time ever was—George swum to the bank. And somebody held a pole or something another out and he got hold of it and they pulled him out. But he like to have froze to death.

They took him to some spring and wrapped him in yam blankets and walled him in the spring I don't know how long and thawed him up.

Shirley was a good swimmer, but he must have been overcome by cramps in the icy water. In addition, his body was burdened by the .45 caliber pistol that he carried, plus an extremely heavy overcoat which pulled him under after it became thoroughly soaked. His body was never recovered:

Never did find him. They searched about nine days for his body, but they never did find it. And his mother hired somebody to sit on the bank for nine days, and I just forgot now what she paid them, though, for sitin' that. You know they say at sun up the ninth morning they'll rise. The gall will bust and they will float up. But they won't stay up long. And she had him a-watchin' on the bank there; him and some of his boys watched on that bank fer him fer nine days and nine mornings..."

This final blow was more than Mary Wilburn could endure. For years she had bravely stood the sorrows that life had brought, but she died soon after the death of her fourth son.

NOTES

1. Douglas' Steamboatin' on the Cumberland, 233–34, et passim, contains statistics of the lumber volume from the upper Cumberland. At the close of 1882, for example, it was estimated that the Nashville mills had handled lumber from this area valued at $3,727,000.

2. The intent to use log and lumber money for purchasing additional land was mentioned in the statements made by Mr. and Mrs. Ray Anders, and by Ruthie Coe Anders, who claimed that the Coes received between five and six hundred dollars for a raft of logs.

3. The sawmilling period contains a cycle of narratives revolving around Bill Zeke, Old Zeke and Patsy Ann's son, who had returned from bondage in Texas to live with his people in the Coe Ridge settlement. The Coe Ridge logging stories, in extolling Bill's tremendous physical strength, single out the giant trees, the loaded log wagons, and the sawmills. Never once is the rafting industry mentioned in them; evidently at that time the Coes had not turned to the river as a means of transportation.

4. Statements to this effect were made by Mrs. Edith Williams and Ray Anders.

5. This rafting period of the Coe logging era is rich in tradition when compared to the period from 1866 to 1885. Depicted in the narratives are such seemingly unimportant aspects of the Coe economy as raft construction, yet the accounts
I personally saw some rotted stumps on Coe Ridge that were in excess of six feet in diameter.

24. For a description of raft construction, see Douglas, Steamboatin' on the Cumberland, 236. In the mechanical construction of a raft, according to Mrs. Edith Williams and Tim Coe, it was necessary to have on hand a supply of hand-sharpened wooden pins made from seasoned hickory. Stacked up on the river bank was a pile of whaling, which is made from hickory saplings about four inches in diameter and in varying lengths up to several feet. Through 5/8-inch auger holes drilled through the whaling, wooden pins were driven into each log, thus anchoring each log in position.

25. The pilot and raftsmen, also called helmsmen, received different salaries, depending on the period of history in which they labored and the economy of the time. "Old time helmsmen were paid fifty cents a day and upkeep. An expert pilot received $1.50 per day and food," according to Douglas, Steamboatin' on the Cumberland, 236. None of the oral accounts placed the figure that low, however, because they were mainly concerned with the years after the turn of the century. Even the oral traditions varied considerably, due perhaps to the different years represented. Some claimed that the pilots were paid between $15.00 and $20.00, while their helpers received about $12.00 for the trip. Still others said the helpers received $25.00, while the pilot received between $40.00 and $50.00.

28. Tim Coe, Dec. 8, 1953. Douglas, Steamboatin' on the Cumberland, 236, offers very similar comments. Additional comments concerning points covered in this paragraph were offered by Lucy Robert Coe and Mrs. Edith Williams.
29. The term "shanty" was used by Judge J. W. Wells and by Mrs. Edith Williams to denote the raft cabin.
30. The description of the rock grate was provided by Mrs. Coe, Aug. 14, 1963.
31. Mrs. Sarah Coe Tooley also stated that the rafts were pulled into a river landing in the event of bad weather.
32. Mrs. Sarah Coe Tooley.
33. Lucy Robert Coe.
34. Lucy Robert Coe.
35. Mrs. Sarah Coe Tooley and Lucy Robert Coe.
36. Mrs. Edith Williams and Lucy Robert Coe.
37. Sparse details of the drowning were related by Mrs. Etta Short and Mrs. Ray Anders. The Chronicles, 99, states that Billy drowned in 1896.
38. There is little doubt among the informants that the only shooting occurred at Martinsburg, Monroe County. The only dissension was expressed by Tim Coe who specified Vernon, located across the river from Martinsburg, as the scene of the murder. The Chronicles, 93, states specifically that Sherman was killed in 1900. Two oral informants, Price Kirkpatrick and Charlie Coe, figure that the event took place in 1900 or close thereto.
39. Tim Coe.
40. Mr. Kirkpatrick personally listened to Vaughn describe the incident: Vaughn "went on down to Nashville [after the shooting]. And I was going on a raft to Nashville at that time myself, and I met up with him in Nashville. And he told me about how it come around. And I've heard the other fellows tell it, too."
41. Charlie Coe also testified that the bullet in Sherman's gun was of improper size. Bill Poiindexter claimed that it was a .38 pistol with a .32 bullet.
42. Charlie Coe and Lucy Robert Coe also claimed that one of the bullets is still in the wood by the fireplace.
43. Bill Poiindexter claimed that Wilburn died the same night he was shot.
44. The Chronicles, 94, states that Vaughn was tried, but found not guilty. Both Lucy Robert Coe and Price Kirkpatrick stated that Vaughn never came to trial for the crime. Monroe County court records for the years 1888 to 1904 make no mention of Vince Vaughn. Sherman Wilburn was tried once during this same period for a misdemeanor not worthy of mention in this connection.
45. The Chronicles, 98, claims it was called King's Eddies; Bill Poiindexter called it White's Eddies; and Tim Coe referred to it as Cane's Eddies.
46. The account of Shirley's drowning was given in remarkably similar details by Lucy Robert Coe, Tim Coe, Mrs. Mattie Davidson, and Mrs. Etta Short. Their accounts are corroborated by the Chronicles, 98–102.
47. Lucy Robert Coe. The Chronicles, 101–2, claims that Thomas E. Coe and Garfield Wilburn, who was the youngest son of Tom and Mary Wilburn, went to search for the body. There is no recorded parallel in folk belief which claims that the body will surface at the end of the ninth day, but Mrs. Janet Simpson reported in J. 967 that in Lewis County, Ky., this belief has been reiterated by the Ohio River valley residents. In Harry M. Hyatt, Folk-Lore from Adams County, Illinois (New York, 1955), item 10282, p. 589, it is stated that if a person's bladder bursts, the cadaver will surface.