

Byrant Douglas

"I Remember"

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I wish to write about Bryant Douglas, who was a neighbor in North Carolina of my great-great grandfather, John Bolen, and who settled in what is now the Bargerton area in Henderson County, Tennessee, about the year 1825. I have thought that Bryant Douglas was the progenitor of the Douglas family in Henderson County, Tennessee. Bryant Douglas owned a large plantation in his new-found land, which included all of what was known as the Fred Seller's farm. A neighbor of Douglas', John Mangun, back in North Carolina, had invented a system of terracing, and Mr. Douglas employed the plan on his own land in Henderson County. Bryant Douglas did not use slaves, but employed young men who had reached their majority and who wanted to hire out to do farm work. He had a large commissary, which years later became the Barger store.

The Bargers and Carringtons lived about a mile from Pleasant Exchange, and it was to the Carrington home that my great-grandfather, Reeves Bolen, went on coming to Tennessee, in 1836, as it was Duriney Carrington who was his childhood sweetheart back in North Carolina before the Carrington family migrated to Tennessee. Reeves Bolen and Steve Barger soon set out to pay a visit to the Bryant Douglas plantation, where they both secured farm work. Two years later Bolen married and Barger operated the big store. After some years, and when a post office was established here, the community was name Bargerton. Bryant Douglas must have been a very astute person, for Reeves Bolen, who worked for him and lived neighbor to him North Carolina, once remarked that wherever he went success always followed him. I used to talk with John Douglas, who lived in the Poplar Corner community, and he seemed to be very proud of his heritage. I asked him where Bryant Douglas was buried, and he thought his body must have been interred in an old family cemetery, but another member of the Douglas family thought he might have been buried in the Waller Cemetery.

A son of Bryant's lived in the Rock Springs neighborhood, and was reputed to be quite wealthy, having sacks of money sewed to his body clothing. While feeding his hogs, and seated on the hog pen fence, he was shot on July 2, 1901. A neighbor by the name of Joe Coffman was charged with the crime, with only circumstantial evidence being that Coffman was known to be spending money quite freely the next day following Douglas' murder. A preliminary hearing was held at Wildersville the latter part of July, 1901; and Coffman was bound over to Circuit Court and later convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary. This episode, though, ended the original Douglas family that came to Henderson County, Tennessee, in 1823, and gave us one of the most noted families in the annals of the county's history.

I have noted in this sketch an account of Steve Barger, who was a brother of James Barger, and who without schools became educated. James was an inventor and photographer, and who for fifty years went all over the county taking pictures and tinkering with everything mechanical. He left the county for Texas in 1910, and lived to be 100 years old. The Reeves Bolen mentioned in this sketch, too, married the daughter of Sion Carrington, in 1838, lived in the Carrington home until he acquired land adjoining the Carrington land, which also adjoined the Barger farm. He built the only home he ever had in Henderson County, Tennessee, where he reared his family, and both are buried in the garden area of the Sion Carrington home, which is still owned by members of the family. The Bargers were buried in the garden of their home, just north of the old Barger house, one half mile from the Carrington home. I remember a large white oak tree stood in the yard of the Bolen home, and which was blown down in the 1930's. The house stood about half way between Wildersville hill and the Wildersville Cemetery, on the old Trenton road.

All references are merely incidental except the one about Bryant Douglas, for his part in Henderson County's history is one that does not allow us to dismiss lightly. The Douglas family has made great contributions to the advancement of the county almost from the beginning. It is interesting, though, to note that the Bolens, Carringtons, Bargers, and Douglasses came from Orange County, North Carolina, where they were neighbors. It might be noted, too, that the Reeves Bolen's father and his eldest son bought the Carrington farm in North Carolina when the Carringtons came to Tennessee.