



MRS. MARY MASSEY
Awful Anniversary

53 Years Ago

Woman Recalls Seeing 4 Children Die

By SUSAN NAVES

Swirling waters of Pacolet River 53 years ago this month wreaked havoc in the life of Mrs. Mary Massey, now a resident of 486 Gentry Street in Beaumont.

The river on June 6, 1903, swollen and roaring, swept four of Mrs. Massey's children to death before her eyes.

A widow, now past 90, she recalls that awful morning which has haunted her through the years.

She says the flood struck her two-story house at Clifton between 8 and 9 a.m. without any warning after a dam on Pacolet River burst.

Mrs. Massey and four children fled from the first floor of their home to the second story. When the water followed and it was apparent the house was going down, she climbed out a window into a tree with two children in her arms. These, Jessie Mae, five, and Annie, two, were swept from her arms when the tree gave way to the force of the flood.

Two other children, Florence, 11, and Arnold, 8, swirled about the tree clinging to rafts of lumber, but their mother was powerless to help them.

"I never saw my children again. I didn't have the satisfaction of seeing them buried. Their bodies were never recovered."

Mrs. Massey's only living child after the flood had passed, Rosa Lee, 15, stayed in the water all day, clinging to flotsam until rescuers finally floated a bale of cotton to her and hauled her out, she said.

Rosa Lee died 10 years ago.

Four months after the flood, which took at least 65 lives, Mrs. Massey gave birth to another daughter.

This child, Mrs. R. A. Arrowood of Gentry Street, is now looking after her mother who was 90 last September 30. She is Mrs. Massey's only living child.

The little old lady, who now weighs far less than 100 pounds, recalls that the flood followed a heavy rain which fell between midnight and daybreak.

There was no wind and no damage by lightning, but only water, she recalled.

Rivers overflowed their banks and reached heights never known before. Creeks became rivers and small branches became roaring torrents, carrying everything in their course away, she said.

The flood carried Pacolet Mills away with 2,000 bales of cotton and 4,000 bales of goods.

At Clifton, 700 bales of cotton with 300 bales of cloth were washed away, she said. Glendale Mills was damaged by the flood waters and bridges and railroad bridges were swept away, she recalled.

The power and gas plant on Chinquepin Creek was flooded and Spartanburg was without power. Railroad bridges which were washed away halted rail traffic.

At Whitney, damage to mill houses was heavy. Many homes were also lost at Pacolet, then known as Trough.

Lighter damage was reported to mill dams at Inman and at Arkwright, two stores and three bridges gave way to the floor waters.

Spartanburg Herald Article from June 19, 1956.