

# **On the Wrong Road to Love, Virginia, 1925**

**By William Paul Hite**

I was twelve years old in 1925 and living with my family at our home near Crabtree Meadows, known as the old Davis Bradley place. My father, George Leonard Hite, came home one evening and said he and I would leave real early in the morning to move a man by the name of George Campbell, who lived over on Shoe Creek, up to Love. He told me to go out and feed the horses early so we could leave at first light. We were to meet a man named Mr. Shelton and together we were to load up Mr. Campbell's belongings on two wagons and take them up to Love, while he and his wife and infant son went on ahead in a horse-drawn buggy.

The next morning, we headed down to the house on Shoe Creek where Mr. Shelton was waiting with a loaded wagon, pulled by a big team of mules. My dad had his horse team hooked to our wagon, which we loaded with Mr. Campbell's things. George Campbell asked my father if he knew where Andy Allen lived and my dad replied, "Yes, he lived up on the North Prong of the Tye River." Mr. Campbell said to go as far as Andy's house that day then we would all spend the night there. I believe his wife was some kind of kin to Andy Allen, perhaps a daughter or granddaughter. He said we would spend the night and then leave early the next morning for Love.

The day we left was beautiful and when we passed our house near Crabtree Meadows, we stopped and ate a bite of dinner. We arrived at Mr. Allen's house about sundown and George and his family were already there. After breakfast the next morning, George gave the men instructions on how to get to the Love destination before leaving with his family in the buggy.

The day was cloudy with a promise of snow in the air. We traveled about two miles down the Tye River until we turned left up a steep mountain trail, as directed by George Campbell. I guess we had gotten about a half a mile before it started raining. The road was getting terrible as the rain, and then the snow, began to get heavy. We could not turn around so we had to keep on going. We got to a point where the road turned slightly to the right and after a little ways, the road went through a cut where the road had washed out like a trough. Keep in mind there was no turning back. My father, by now, was getting upset but Mr. Shelton kept encouraging him by repeating, "Take your time, baby!" He seemed to me, one of the kindest, most patient men I had ever known.

My father was in the front wagon so it was up to him to drive through the cut first. He made it about twenty feet before getting stuck. Mr. Shelton brought his mules through the woods, along with twenty feet of log chain and a doubletree. My father had ten feet of chain of his own which they hooked the mules to and then to the tongue of the wagon. When the mules started pulling, the horses gave a lunge and the wagon moved on to higher ground. We had to repeat the move with Mr. Shelton's wagon before we could get out of the steep part of the cut. In a little ways we came out right on top of a small field on the crest of the mountain. A small barn without a roof was to our right with woods all around it. We stopped our wagons, looking for the road north, which was now covered up by about an inch of snow. We couldn't find the road so my father and

Mr. Shelton decided to walk down a path on the Waynesboro side of the mountain to see if they could find out anything. I stayed with the wagon until they returned.

By now it was sleeting hard and since I had on just a light jacket, I crawled under the wagon to try and keep dry. I must have stayed that way for about an hour and a half before they finally came back. They said they had found a family that said there used to be an old road right close to the barn so we went over and on closer inspection, we could see where Mr. Campbell's buggy had pulled the bark off the bushes. We walked through briars and bushes for a ways and finally got in a big woods where we were able to make out the road.

We returned to the wagons and my father said they would make the trip up to Love but I was to walk back to Andy Allen's house and stay there until they returned. My father gave me some money and told me to get something to eat at the little store at the foot of the mountain before walking all the way to the Allen house.

I was disappointed at not being able to make the final trip to Love, but also looking forward to getting to eat something and warming up at the little store. I was off that mountain in nothing flat!

Down at the store, the couple who ran it wouldn't hear of me buying anything and the lady made me a hot meal before I left for Andy's house.

*(Lynn's Note: The store Mr. Hite is referring to was owned by Hercy Coffey at White Rock. His wife, Burgess, was the lady who fixed W. P. a hot meal before he walked to the Allen house).*

The next day around noon I was about to walk home when I saw my father and Mr. Shelton's wagons coming up the road along the Tye River. The two men looked very tired so Mr. Allen brought them into his home for a bite to eat and I went out to take care of the horses. When they came back outside, we left for home but my father rode with Mr. Shelton so I had to wait until we got home to hear the rest of the story.

Mr. Shelton stayed the night with our family and my stepmother had a good hot supper waiting for us that evening. It was at the dinner table I heard about the trip up to Love.

Soon after the two men had sent me back to Andy Allen's, they encountered large trees blocking the road which had to be chopped out of the way. Three inches of snow had accumulated by now which only made the going rougher. The road all but disappeared before them so the teams were unhooked from the wagons and led by hand up to Love. Large canvases were stretched across George Campbell's furniture on the wagons so it would be safe in the bad weather.

The men and their teams came to an opening in the woods and saw a house in the distance. When they reached it, they knocked on the door and a gentleman who identified himself as the father of the man they were moving answered it. His son was sitting by the fire and said he thought the men had turned around when the bad weather set in. My father said the older couple were kind people and invited them to stay over and fed them both supper and the next morning's breakfast. They also called more men to come with them to unload Mr. Campbell's possessions onto ground-sleds that they could skid up to the house on the snow. As the furniture was unloaded, they bid each other farewell.

The next morning, back at our home, I watched as the kind and patient Mr. Shelton drove his wagon slowly down the road until it was out of sight. I never saw him again after that day. I never

saw Andy Allen again, either, and I never saw the little community of Love until around 1951 or 1952, but I love the place and always pull over to look at it every time I pass that way and wonder where it was that my father and Mr. Shelton spent the night back in 1925. Perhaps some of the Backroads readers can recall the occasion and will let me know who the people were.

## 50 Years Later

The following incident occurred fifty years after the foregoing story, around 1975. I was living here in Shackelfords, Virginia, when I was out walking in my yard one evening. The people next door had a truck for sale and a gentleman approached me asking for information about it. I asked his name and he said it was Campbell. I told him I knew some folks by that name from Montebello. He said he lived there for along time also. I asked his father's name and he told me it was George Campbell but that he lived at Love. When I asked if his father once lived on Shoe Creek, he said it could be... for he had lived many different places in his lifetime. The man was around fifty years old and I believe that he was that infant son in the buggy I had seen all those years before.

*Lynn's Note: Before W. P. Hite sent in this article to the Backroads in August of 1988, he had written me a letter which I published in "The Mailbox" column. Since it coincides with his story, I decided to publish it, too.*

Dear Lynn,

My name is W. P. Hite and my wife, Ruth, and I have been enjoying your Backroads newspaper for about ten months so I decided to write and tell you a little of my family history.

I was born on August 14, 1912, in sight of the Montebello Post Office. You could stand in the back of Mr. Paran Baptist Church and see the house I was born in. It is still standing. Back then the post office was not located where it is today.

My father was George Leonard Hite and my mother was Ida Bell Brogan Hite. My wife's father was James L. Hamilton and her mother was Alice Coffey Hamilton. Ruth was born in Amherst County at Atwood, on March 24, 1919.

I spent lots of my young years at Montebello and know some wonderful stories and happenings from around that area. I went to Peter's Spring School and also a few days at Zink's Mill School. When they closed, I went to Irish Creek and the Montebello School. Have you ever heard of Painter's Mountain School? It has quite a history.

I am sending you a true experience story of mine concerning Love, Virginia. You can publish it if you like.

We always made trips to Montebello and love the mountains but we are getting older so we don't go as often. But we've found a way to visit once a month for less than a dollar; by way of the Backroads! Please find our renewal check enclosed. Best of luck, Lynn, to you and your family.

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