

The Roots of Rockcastle

by: Tonya J. Cook



Introduction to a New Phase

As all things do, they must come to an end or in this case, a pause. For the next few weeks or months I will be writing a new series, "Strange But True?" It will be a series examining strange but supposedly true stories of happenings I find particularly interesting and hope you will, as well.

In the meantime, I will be continuing to collect and compose oral histories of stories from here in the county. I feel there is much yet to be collected, and hopefully the people of the county and former residents will aid me in preserving it.

Now, I would like to give you the first of several "Strange But True?" stories. I find this one particularly relevant. Hope you enjoy the series.

"D.C., The Demon Cat of Washington"

Deep within the bowels, the basements, and long shadowy corridors of the Capitol Building, the White House and even the Mall, lurks a creature seldom seen and spoken of with caution; it is "D.C.", the "Demon Cat" of Washington.

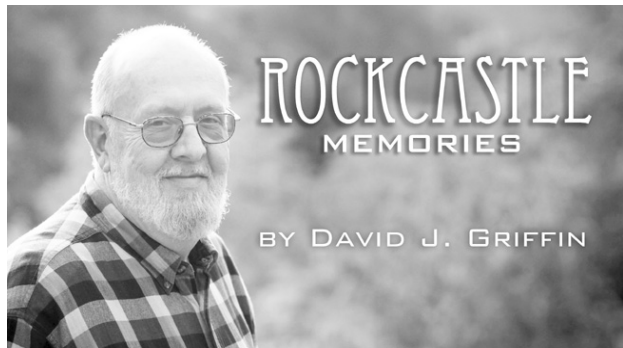
"D.C." is a phantom black cat seen just prior to national disasters, elections, and the transfer of power each four years. He joins many other paranormal sightings of Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson,

Woodrow Wilson, and some several First Ladies whose presence still remains at the White House.

This black phantom black cat usually first appears as a small, helpless kitten, then as one approaches grows in size, becoming tiger-like with red glowing eyes.

The origin is believed to have begun during the birth of the Capitol when the city was only a marsh, and was infested with vermin. Numerous cats were released around the Capitol Building, hoping to control the mice and rat population. The apparition has survived since the early days of Washington. It is said that the cat only appears at night to persons always alone. Through its two-hundred-plus year existence, several security guards and caretakers have reported seeing "D.C.". Most are usually hesitant to speak of it, fearing losing their job, and only speak of their meetings after their retirement. Some security guards have even fired upon the phantom only to have it disappear before their eyes. One source, www.unexplained.net, states that some presidents have seen the phantom. It is said to "live" in the area of the Capitol basement known as "the crypt". "The crypt" was built for the body of

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Hooray, It's A Snow Day!

Many of us remember being children and waking to find several inches of pure white snow blanketing the rolling hills of Kentucky. On those days, we rushed to the radio to see if school was going to be dismissed. As we waited for the disc jockey to announce "no school today," we could hardly wait to bundle up and head out to play in the wonderful snow. In Mt. Vernon, snow days were unusual happenings because students were not transported to school – we had to make our own way to the school house to attend classes.

I remember my dad taking me and my brother to school one day in his taxi when he slid off the gravel road of our driveway. He immediately got so mad that he rolled down his window and threw his gloves out the window into the snow. After maneuvering the car back and forth several times, we were back onto the driveway, and he said to Albert, "Son, get out and get my gloves!"

Usually when we had snow days, my friends and I got on the phone to schedule a sledding party somewhere on old US25. The get-together was often near the Winstead Halfway House so that we could ride our sleds

all the way down to the Mt. Vernon Cemetery. You could actually sled down two miles on that old crooked road. Like so many others before our time, we built a roaring fire at the top of the hill in order to warm up between rides.

When I was very young, the snow party was generally limited to a few of my close friends who lived in our neighborhood. I remember one time when Kenneth Hansel, Earl Benton Cromer, and I built a huge snowman in my grandparents' yard. When we were almost finished, Mommie Katie came out onto the porch equipped with an old hat, a carrot (for the nose), some small pieces of coal for the eyes and mouth, and one of Pop's old cardigan sweaters to complete our snowman. It was a thrill for us boys to see what we had made. That big old snowman lasted for days and days after the snow had melted in the yard.

One Friday night, Charles Shivel spent the night with me, and when we woke up the next morning the entire world was covered in white. He and I sat by the radio until we heard the announcement confirming that there would be no school

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Points East

By Ike Adams



I recently finished and started reading again, the best example of the old saw, "You can't judge a book by its cover", that I've ever had in my hands.

The cover is a beautiful photograph of an old grist mill and the book title, laid over the photo is Eastern Kentucky Short Stories 1760 – 1960. The author's name, Maynard Cornett Adams, is printed at bottom of the photo.

At first glance, I'm thinking that I'm probably looking at another collection of Jack and Bear Tales or perhaps a compilation of Appalachian Kentucky short fiction pieces spanning two centuries because the book feels thick and heavy enough to contain the best of both with room to spare.

Propped up in bed, four hours later, at 2:00 AM, my eyes were bugged out and my mouth dropped open because I was absolutely astounded and unable to lay the book down. It's not fiction at all. It is easily the best and most interesting series of essays on historic events and places in the eastern Kentucky and western Virginia mountains that I've ever had in my hands.

It certainly is not a comprehensive history, nor does it claim to be. It simply contains the authors analysis of numerous, often-tragic, events that helped to shape the values and culture of the high country that we natives of one little section of the hills call home.

Maynard Cornett Adams

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