

# Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Cornett Celebrate 50th Anniversary

I was born in Harris County, Ga., November 9th 1862. My father and mother were reared in Harris county My grandparents moving there from Virginia when they were young. My mother was a second cousin to the noted Tom Watson of Georgia.

I well remember the first piece of cake I ever tasted. Father, brother and myself were hoeing corn, it was some distance from home to the corn field so we carried our lunch. At noon we went to a Spring close by to eat our lunch while we were there a fine old lady and young man came along and they stopped to have lunch. She gave me a piece of cake. I tasted it and it was so good I wrapped it up and carried it to my mother.

My parents moved to St. Clair county when I was 13 years old. They settled at what is now Riverside, it was then a large plantation belonging to Jim Coleman. Several old slave Negroes were living there at the time

I was reared during Reconstruction days we had trouble with Carpet Baggers and the Yankees. Times were awful hard then. I was reared on butter milk and corn bread. The only time I knew when Sunday came we would have biscuit for breakfast.

When we moved to this country the game was plentiful. The first winter we spent in this county I killed enough wild ducks for mother to make a large feather bed and two large feather pillows from the feathers. Deer and turkey were also plentiful. I killed two large bucks in one day. Mr. Coleman hired my Uncle and furnished him with a gun and

horse to keep the wild geese from eating up his wheat.

We moved from Riverside to Fishing Creek now known as reservoir branch. We ran a water powered Gin there for some time and would gin about 200 bales of cotton a season which was about all the cotton that was raised on this side of the mountain. The law claimed that the back waters was causing chills and fever so we had to do away with the dam. My father bought the land that the cotton mill is now on and built a log house where the old Mill Hospital now stands. We had a fine apple orchard where the mill is now.

In 1882 the Southern railroad was built through here. My father sold the farm and moved to Eden and built a hotel. In 1884 I went to Texas and worked a farm. While there I found and married one of the best girls on earth Lizzie Strickland. We were married 50 years the 18th of this past August and we have never had a fight. Her father moved to Texas in 1881 from Eden. There are 12 children in the family and all are living.

In 1892, wife and I came back to Pell City. The pipe shop was running here then and things were lively, but in 1893 the shop moved to Anniston and everything was dead then. The town grew up in broom sage. Jack Hazlewood and myself had a grocery store, hotel and livery stable, all of this was burned in about a period of six months. This left me broke. I had to buy furniture and horses on time. I opened up a hotel in the old brick building. I had a drove of goats that had been using the old building several years so you can see what a time we had in getting it ready for a hotel. The town was dead, there were only a few families living here at that time Col. Spears, Ned Forsyth, Mrs. Cameron and wife and I

I cultivated all the land I wanted and rented out the houses when I could. I did not have to pay any rent for nobody claimed it. In 1901 Mr. Cogswell came through here on his way to Talladega he had to change trains for

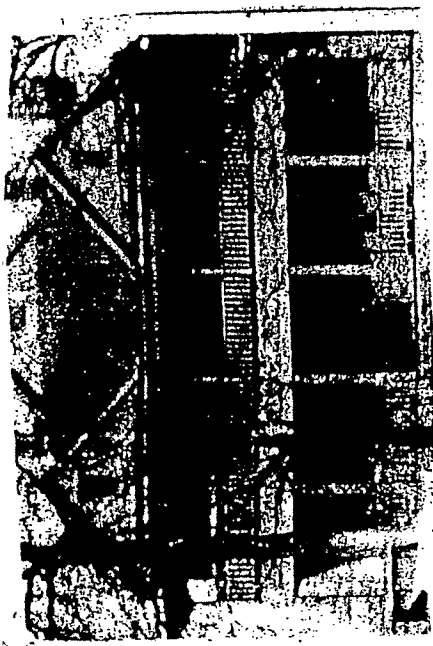
Talladega and while here he decided he could make a town, so he went to work and bought up the land it belonging to northern capitalists. He went to work to bring a cotton mill here and was successful in locating the Pell City Manufacturing Company which was later sold to the Avondale Mills.

Pell City has been growing ever since. Mr. Cogswell is due all the honor for what Pell City is today.

In 1901 we organized a Baptist church here with 17 members and as far as I know my wife and I are all of the Charter members living today. In that same year brother George and myself built the Cornett hotel which burned last year.

In 1904 the Pell City Hardware Company was organized consisting of R. M. Alverson, J. W. Moore, C. B. Alverson, and myself. Since then R. M. Alverson and J W Moore have passed away leaving Claude and myself to carry on. It has been the policy of the Pell City Hardware Company to treat their customers fair and honest.

1884  
20  
1924  
1896  
50  
(1926)



Hotel built in 1902 by Hardy & G. P. Cornett

*The Pell City Centennial*  
**Hardy Cornett**  
*A Pioneer Citizen*

BY: GEORGE WILLIAMS

Hundreds of interesting stories could be written about the early beginnings of Pell City, but none could be more fascinating than were the actual characters who comprised this City's earliest population.

Hardy Cornett was the epitome of the adventurous entrepreneur of the late eighteen hundreds who helped to lead this nation into the nineteenth century. Solomon D. Kilgroe was a "man for all seasons" who combined his many talents to become a farmer, merchant, politician, school teacher, railroad agent, bank director, cotton broker, church

knew when Sunday came because that was the only day of the week when the family had biscuits for breakfast.

It was fortunate for many St. Clair residents, in that day and time, that wild game was plentiful during those difficult years. The food supply of man families depended upon the marksmanship of the hunter. During the family's first winter in Riverside, Hardy killed enough wild duck and geese to enable his mother to make and fill a large feather bed and two pillows. An abundant deer population also enabled him to kill two large bucks on one morning's hunt. His uncle was hired by Jim Coleman to protect his wheat crop from the geese. He not only paid him for his marksmanship, but also furnished a horse, gun and an ample supply of shotgun shells to accomplish the task. It can be assumed that everyone in Riverside ate wild geese during the winter of 1862.

Hardy's family moved to Seddon, after having lived at Riverside for a number of years, and his

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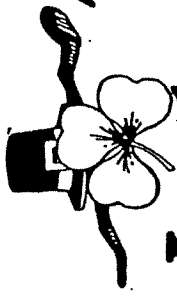
and civic leader and ultimately, an elder statesman of local history. Sumter Cogswell was very fortunate, indeed, to have had the able assistance, sheer determination and abundant resourcefulness of individuals such as those two in helping to assure the success of his new city.

Hardy's family moved from Harris County, Georgia in 1862 to settle on the Jim Coleman plantation at Riverside. He was only thirteen at the time, but in later life could vividly recall the difficult years of reconstruction after the Civil War. Almost seventy five years later he would recall the war years, Carpet Baggers, hard times, and especially would he remember the lack of food that was so prevalent. He stated that he was "raised" on buttermilk and cornbread and always

father operated a water powdered cotton gin that had been constructed on Fishing Creek. The family ginned an estimated two hundred bales of cotton per season, and his father's financial prospects were vastly improved, but the unexpected happened. The authorities decided that the impounded water behind the dam was the cause of an outbreak of chills and fever and required that it be destroyed. Ironically, the old mill and dam site have long been covered by the backwaters of a much larger dam. Today, even though the dam and mill cannot be located, the foundation of the old Seddon Baptist Church that was nearby can be seen on the bottom of Fishing Creek slough during the low water level of winter pool.

Hardy's father then purchased the land now

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# The Luck of the Irish Is Now Yours!

the first floor of the building is occupied by Discount Shoes, The Insurance Center and Pell City Pet Shop. In 1901, Tom Coleman paid a handsome \$10.00 per month for "good grub and a fine room" while living in the Cornett-Hazlewood Hotel.

Not one to waste golden opportunities that were presented, Hardy cultivated many acres of land and rented out vacant houses and other buildings while paying no rent himself. Since nobody claimed the property, Hardy became the self appointed caretaker for the bankrupt town and was doing quite well for himself until Cogswell decided to buy the property in 1901 and resurrect the city. It is not known what kind of a rental agreement was ultimately worked out between Cornett and Cogswell, but it must have been satisfactory to both parties.

Hardy would become a leading citizen of Pell City who would help to organize the First Baptist

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Church. He and his brother, George, would build

any  
**GREEN** garment  
cleaned  
for...

# 1/2 PRICE

**Now Thru  
Saint Patrick's Day**



**PELL CITY**  
CLEANERS

1904 formed a partnership with R.M. and G. B. Alverson and J. W. Moore to establish the Pell City Hardware Company. The Company's policy was to treat every customer with "fairness and honesty", and the result was that a business was founded that still exist today under the present ownership of William "Bill" Gossett.

An account of Solomon D. Kilgroe's contribution to the growth and prosperity of the infant Pell City, and his association with the Willingham family of Cropwell will be left to another story. His life and times are as fascinating as were those of Hardy Cornett. Those two remarkable gentlemen of yesteryear occupied vital and key positions in the early history of Pell City, and it is certain that they were held in high esteem by Sumter Cogswell.

