

Under the Lake

BY MARGARET HOBBS
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(McMinnville, Tennessee)

The book "Under the Lake," written by Carol Williams, Judy Fuson and Ria Baker, was a labor of love that took over four years to complete.

The book chronicles years of research and numerous interviews with families affected by the Federal Flood Control Act of 1938. The act authorized the construction of a dam on the Caney Fork River to provide electricity and flood control to the area.

The 250-foot dam closed its gates on Nov. 27, 1948, with the waters of the Caney Fork covering 18,000 acres of land where farmhouses, barns, schoolhouses and church buildings stood.

Stories in the book tell of the removal of homes, cemeteries, churches and schools to make way for Center Hill Lake.

It is filled with almost 6,000 photographs, some documenting family life as it was at that time, and others of the actual building of the dam provided by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

"There are lots of families represented in the book," said Baker. "We decided to take on this project because my co-authors had families involved, and I wanted this part of history to live on and let others

learn about the sacrifices made."

The authors were in attendance at a recent meeting of the Warren County Genealogical Association, answering questions about the historic event, many focusing on families involved. Baker estimated over 5,000 graves were moved during the project, with some families still trying to locate the graves of their ancestors.

Local resident Arminta Carter Woods, 84, remembers that time, as she lived with her parents, L.H. and Addie Parsley

Carter, in the area called Love Bottom near Hurricane Boat Dock.

Her parents were store owners, operated a grist mill and had over 200 acres of farm land they would lose.

Woods was 12 years old at the time of removal. Some of her family members' graves, including her grandfather, Owen Parsley, and some of his children were moved to a point on Coconut Ridge.

"I didn't realize how traumatic it was going to be until we started packing everything up," said Woods. "We left some items in the home, and when we came back to get them later, they were all gone, stolen by someone."

Her daughters, Starr Woods Farless and Melody Woods, just recently learned about the book and it has made them more aware of the impact of the event and has sparked an interest for further research. They attended the meeting to learn more about the historical event and to obtain a copy of the book.

"The book is full of information, and has lots of family records," said Melody. "I found my grandparents names, and it gives me a connection to them."

This vintage postcard shows the newly completed Center Hill Dam.

Farless told of her grandfather, L.H. Carter, operating a grist mill, with the stone used in the mill on display in Fairfield Village at the fairgrounds.

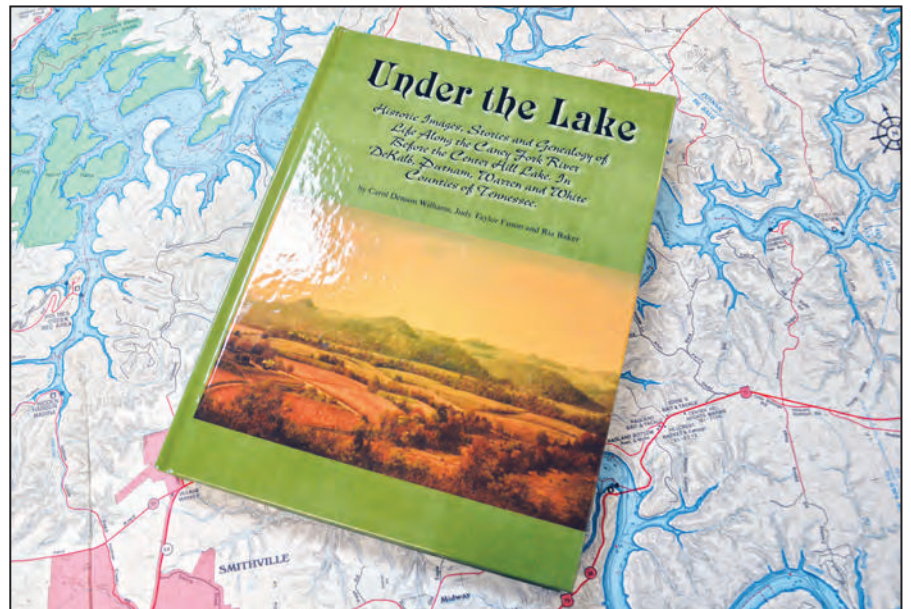
"I have known for years that several family members (Medleys, Carters, Parsleys, Loves and Walkers) moved to Warren County and settled within miles of each other, but didn't understand the significance until attending this meeting," said Farless.

The Warren County Genealogical Association meets the second Saturday of each month at 2 p.m. at the rear of the Warren County Administrative Building. Cheryl Watson Mingle is the current president.

Mingle says the books are limited for purchase, but copies are available for research purposes at the genealogical office and at Magness Library.



Main Street McMinnville executive director Katie Kemezis, left, purchases a copy of the book "Under the Lake" from one of the authors, Judy Fuson, at the close of the Warren County Genealogical meeting.



Margaret Hobbs photo

Several years of research went into the book "Under the Lake." Authors, back row, from left, Carol Williams, Judy Fuson and Ria Baker, share information with people attending the genealogical meeting. Arminta Carter Woods, center, lived with her parents in the area during the time of construction of Center Hill Dam. Joining her are daughters, Melody Woods and Starr Woods Farless.