

Excerpts from Bob Edmonds' books

As the population of the Back Country expanded the lack of government created serious problems. While there was no innate contempt between the Back Country and the Low Country, there existed very fundamental differences between the two regions of South Carolina. The Back Country was a young land that lacked the prosperity and social development prevalent in the tidewater region. The two regions were settled and populated totally differently.



Bob Edmonds

Crown restrictions on the General Assembly deprived the Back Country of the civil and religious benefits enjoyed in the Low Country parishes, as well as its fair share of seats in the Assembly. The Assembly refused to create new parishes, the units of representation. Even though most Back Countrymen met the voting requirement of ownership of fifty acres, the King's restriction limited the Back Country representation in the Assembly to members from the one parish Saint Mark.

In the Back Country there was no urban life. There were few schools of any kind. With the population expanding after the Cherokee War, these deficiencies were sorely felt.

In 1766 outlaws and vicious gangs launched a crime spree that tested the very fiber of Back Countrymen. Along with this population boom came an unexpected and unwanted element – outlaws organized in vicious gangs, who maintained illicit ties with criminals and horse thieves in other colonies. Congregating in communities, they presented a resolute challenge to the Back Country. Beginning in the summer of 1766, they launched an unparalleled campaign of arson, torture, robbery, murder, and contempt for basic order against the respectable element across the Back Country of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia. The South Carolina Back Country was assailed with dozens of atrocities.

One of the firsts to suffer was John (Ready Money) Scott, a Scots-Irish merchant, justice of the peace, and deputy surveyor of Stevens Creek settlement. Scott's son Samuel Scott operated Scott's Ferry on Savannah River near present-day Clarks Hill.

Four outlaws, George Burns, Thomas Gray, Jeremiah Fulsom, and Nathaniel Foster – laid a plot to rob Scott, who was quite prosperous and known for his practice to pay in cash, and to keep on hand large sums of money. The rogues struck on the night of July 29, 1766, crossing the river from the Georgia side. Foster stood guard while Gray went in and pretended friendliness to Scott and his wife. Then Fulsom and Burns, who had blacked their faces, rushed into the house. Burns grabbed Mrs. Scott and threw snuff in her eyes. When her husband ran toward the door, Fulsom stopped him with a blow from a lightwood knot club, dragged him back, and bound and blindfolded him. Meanwhile, Gray, pretending to be frightened, bolted from the house yelling, "Murder!" Fulsom tortured Scott with a red-hot iron until he disclosed the whereabouts of his money. The robbers retreated across Savannah River to Georgia, where they divided up the loot of £1450 in gold, silver, and paper money.

On July 26th James Tyrrel, John Anderson, James and Silvester Stokes, and "one Cornelius" invaded the home of James Miller on Turkey Creek. The robbers stole all Miller's clothes, £45 in cash, and a pack of deerskins.

The next day the same gang accosted Conrad Alder and his family driving in a wagon toward their residence in the Long Canes. The villains robbed Alder of his watch and £140 in cash and ripped his wife's silver buckles out of her shoes, "vowing vengeance against every person that durst oppose them."

The crime wave produced a crisis in the Back Country. In South Carolina the regular judicial procedures of the province were no help. Governor Montagu, who had been in office less than a year, expressed his desire to begin his regime with "Acts of Clemency." Sentences for criminals were systematically suspended.

Driven by desperation from the lawlessness and unprotected by the provincial court, Back Countrymen rose up "in mass" and formed a vigilante organization that, by November of 1766, was known throughout the province as "the Regulators." This was first Regulator movement in the nation.

As many as 5,000 Regulators in South Carolina took oaths and signed papers to support one another regardless of the consequences. Respectable small planters and leaders joined the new movement to scourge the land of the criminals, and to establish discipline, stability, and an orderly society. The Regulators were at once masters of the region.

Burns and Gray were caught and hanged for torturing John Scott. Regulators plied whips and burned houses across the Back Country. The Regulators did not restrict their activities to South Carolina. Relentlessly they trailed outlaws into North Carolina and Virginia and executed many outlaws in the field.

In that the Regulators were assuming the powers of government, they resolved "to prevent the service of any writ or warrant from Charlestown," thereby denying "the jurisdiction of the courts holden in Charlestown over those parts of the province that ought to be by right out of it." They believed that if the process was to proceed free of misguided and legalistic interference from the outside, it was necessary to erect a barrier between the Back Country and the capital.

In Charles Town the authorities condemned the Regulators. Governor Montague issued a proclamation on October 6, 1767, ordering the arrest of "the perpetrators of backwoods justice", and ordering the Regulators to disperse.

But Lieutenant Governor William Bull dissented, "They are not idle vagabonds, the canaille, the mere dregs of mankind," Bull told Montague, "They are mostly tenants of his Majesty's landholders, though poor." The Governor's order was to no avail. Eventually the provincial authorities accepted Regulator rule in the Back Country until the crisis was over, thus avoiding civil war.

The vigilante movement was a great success. By the end of 1769, rough and tough, these Regulators had broken up the crime wave, ridded their homeland of outlaws and ruffraff, and brought peace and order to the Back Country of South Carolina.

The Regulators did eradicate the outlaws, but as usual happens in extralegal movements some of their leaders grew insolent, and these tenants of his Majesty's lands also dispersed justice without mercy. In September 1769, Daniel Robinson and a posse found a horse they suspected was stolen in the stable of John Harvey, a settler on Noble Creek in the Long Canes. Robinson, on the spot, sentenced Harvey to five hundred lashes. Then to their great merriment, the Regulators "whipped the suspected horse thief to the rhythm of a dance tune played on a drum and a screeching fiddle." Harvey sued and was awarded £50 as recompense for the five hundred lashes.

From *The Making of McCormick County*.



John de la Howe silo, Highway 81. -Tom Poland photo

Across the Savannah

From savior to survivor

By Tom Poland
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Four relics remind me of how things used to be: fire towers, windmills, chimneys, and silos. I've written about fire towers, windmills, and chimneys but never silos. I described where a rock chimney stands, its quartz glistening in sunlight like a polished headstone. And I wrote about an old windmill covered in kudzu. Green it was and "green" were the people who used windmills. And I remember a day when blinding bursts of sunlight filtered through a forest only to open up on an iconic fire tower where life was lonely at the top.

But, I've never written about silos, which seem lonely to me. Thus I devoted two days to searching for silos, and I found several. My quest took me into western South Carolina and eastern Georgia, the land I call Georgialina. It's a land where old farms, collapsing barns, dead churches, and lonely chimneys mourn the passing of the past. And so do I.

I set out, a seeker of the past, camera in hand. I knew where several silos stood, those stalwart sentinels of yesteryear. There's the farm come late summer with twin silos, Black Angus, and gold-burnished bales of hay. It's as pretty as a picture, as pretty as an old vintage postcard. I felt a twinge of remorse, however, when I saw a forlorn silo long empty of ensilage, that five-dollar word for silage. Silos allowed silage to ferment to a point where acidification, a ten-dollar word, preserved it.

Why silos in the first place? Let's go back to a headline in the November 12, 1916 *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*: "Modern Silo Solves Problems of Dairies and Stock Farms." Innovation had arrived to solve a problem. The problem down South was and is winter. As grass goes dormant, it renders grazing most difficult. Farmers could store corn stalks, alfalfa, and grasses in silos for later use. Silos helped keep the oxygen level low, assuring the silage was edible. Thanks to silage, cattle rocked on for a long time, but nothing remains the same. Long white bags were coming.

Eighty-six years later, the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* described how Alpharetta purchased three silos to save a part of its past. Other silos nearby had been torn down to make way for a shopping mall. The silos had once been a vital part of a 1,000-acre farm of the 1940s and '50s. Where cattle once grazed, where silage fermented, kids aimlessly walk tile floors seeking amusement. They grab a Coke and chicken sandwich and play video games and buy practical jokes, like a fake roach on a string. Progress. Here, we see why some silos became relics.

Fodder. That's what silos held, and silo would enter the business lexicon. A good while back I wrote about such fodder. Business types toss "silo" around as a way of describing organizations unlikely to share important information. "We've got to break down silos." Such pointy-head assignments brought Dylan's lyrics to mind. "Yes, I wish that for just one time you could stand inside my shoes. You'd know what a drag it is to see you." But let's move on.

The sun was setting along Highway 81. There stood a silo with dying light shooting through its broken sides. The silo seemed to hold embers. The sun was literally setting on the silo. Earlier I had driven by a cluster of silos with buzzards atop them as if the silos time to pass had arrived. And there was a silo that appeared to have a tree growing out of it. I wasn't able to get close enough to verify things, but I knew one thing for sure. It no longer held silage.

Pay attention to the silos you see. They're tangible reminders of the past. Monuments to a way of life that's dying. Once they were hailed as saviors. Now, they're doing their best to be survivors.

Kitty's Korner

By Kitty Craig - Jackson

I've never been a big fan of allowing other people to put limits on me simply with their words. To me, someone saying that I can't do something is always more of a challenge than it is anything else. Unless it's something ridiculous, like going out and running a four-minute mile without any training, I know that pretty much anything I put my mind to is well within my capability of accomplishing, even if it does take longer than I think it might or be more difficult than I anticipated.

Why do we allow others to get inside our heads with their talk of limitations and impossibilities? How can they possibly even imagine what our limits are, what our capabilities may allow us to do? The fact is that no one – not even we ourselves – know just what we're capable of until we actually put ourselves out there and make an attempt to accomplish whatever it is that we wish to accomplish. And someone who says you can't do something isn't doing so just to state a fact – they want to be able to say, "I told you so" later, or they want to convince you not to push yourself to your limits and expand your world, for whatever selfish reasons they may have.

In my experience, it's been a wonderful feeling accomplishing something that someone else has said I can't do. It's allowed me to keep in mind that I'm not limited by other people's thoughts, ideas, or words – that I am me, and what someone else says I can or cannot do truly doesn't matter. If I set my mind to something realistically achievable, I can do it. Knowing that makes a huge difference in my life every day, not just when I'm trying to do what people say I can't.

Life is full of examples of people who have done the "impossible," who have persevered against the odds and who have done what people have said they couldn't. Even on a smaller scale in our lives, there's much gratification to be had if we tune out the nay-sayers and tune into our own potential, giving all that we have in order to accomplish what we wish to accomplish.

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