

# Brakes in Buckhannon

1875 - 1950

The following is extracted from "*Our Neighbors*" by French Morgan who was born in French Creek in 1867, moved to Buckhannon in 1880, and died some time after writing this book in 1955. The Brake Family is just one of several he features in the book.

The first Brake I remember seeing in Buckhannon was lawyer John Brake, who, I believe, never married. He was admitted to the bar in 1881 when I was one-year old. He must have died prior to 1902 for Albert Zickefoose does not list him as a lawyer practicing when he took office in that year. I remember him as a tall, slender man. He was said to have been a heavy drinker. He had a tapeworm the doctors could not compete with and in the long-run, I suppose it was that which took him away.

Dad had a very gruesome experience to tell about the last days of John Brake. Dad went to see him a few days before his death, and to dad's inquiry, Brake said he was very low, and would not live long. He knew it because on the previous evening the devil and his crew were hovering about, waiting to get him once he stopped breathing. Dad told him to hush and not talk that way, since it was only delirium. To this John said it was no dream. He knew he was a wicked man and was just as sure of landing in hell as he was sure he would die. And that was the way he went. It made a tremendous impression on me, one I never forgot.

The next Brake I knew was Marcellus Brake, or something that sounded like that. He was the father of A. K. Brake with whom I went to school at the Seminary, though he graduated a year earlier than I did. Arthur was an insurance man with an office on Main Street. The last time I saw him was in the early 1950s when I attended a meeting of the Rotary Club and he lead the singing.

Albert Rust Brake, a brother of Lawyer John, described above, was born on Brushy Fork in February, 1848, but moved to Gilmer County for a time, and did not return until 1924. I was away from town at that time and had no opportunity to know him. He married Josephine Snodgrass who died in 1937. They were the parents of ten children,

eight of whom left the city. I did not meet his son Hugh Brake until after I had sold him dad's house and acreage in Morgan Addition. At this writing, he is a member of Upshur County Court.

The only time I met Albert R. Brake was in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court where I went to see what was going on when on a visit to the town. Brake, then in his gas, was in the office. Engaging him in conversation, he told me about his family and how he now lived in sight of the spot where he had been born so many years ago. The following will give an idea of his brand of wit. We fell to swapping recollections, as old people will, when he recounted the occasion of his birth,

When the time came in the dead of night, and his father went for the doctor, he was delayed by cold weather until, by the time he returned home, his son had been born. Brake said he knew it was night and that it was very cold with a heavy snow covering the ground, because when his dad and the doctor opened the door, he felt the cold draft, could see the snow and the planet Jupiter shining as brightly as he ever saw it, and seeing the star indicated it was night.

That was my introduction to Albert R. Brake, who was born February 27, 1847, and died November 17, 1948, in his 102nd year.

Hyre Brake, born April 16, 1839, son of John and Sophia Sexton Brake, married Narcissus Bailey (another connection with that family), in 1857, and had among other children, Ella, who married George R. Whitescarver shortly after he came to Buckhannon in 1892 and opened a furniture store, which was completely destroyed by fire in the big blaze of 1894.

Then he dealt in timber and cattle for a time until joining his brother B.F. Whitescarver in the furniture business. How long he was associated with B. F. the record does not show, but in 1903 B. F. Whitescarver was manager and B. F. Whitescarver advertised as the only licensed embalmer in Upshur County.

The firm operates today under the name of Whitescarver Rundio Funeral Home, located in the former residence of Senator U.G. Young, furniture not being currently handled by an undertaking establishment as in the old days.

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