

# Hattiesburg Area Historical Society

**HAHS MUSEUM**  
Hattiesburg Cultural Center  
723 Main Street  
Mailing: P.O. Box 1573  
Hattiesburg, MS 39403-1773  
Web Site: [www.hahsmuseum.org](http://www.hahsmuseum.org)  
E-mail:  
[hahsmuseum@megagate.com](mailto:hahsmuseum@megagate.com)

## Saving a Family's Heritage Provides a Look at Early Hattiesburg

The Arnold-Meador Cabin, a unique piece of area history, stands beside Highway 49 just north of the I59 interchange. The double pen dog-trot cabin is supported by twenty heart pine joists that measure 33 feet in length. The roof of hand split cedar shank shingles still protects the memories of seven generations of the Meador family. The exterior walls bear the "juggling" marks created while shaping beams by hand. Giant cedar trees on the property mark the trail wagons traveled, and the original water well stands in the yard.

Dean Meador Smith, a fifth generation Hattiesburg Meador and the current owner of the family cabin, has recently restored the cabin to its original design. Except for the addition of electricity and gas for lighting and heating, the cabin now looks as it did in 1885. Original furnishings in the two rooms provide a look at the family's daily life from 1885-1932. Dean has also constructed a modern kitchen and bath house beside the cabin using wood from the old family barn.

Much of the Hattiesburg Area history and the family's heritage is contained in the cabin's story. If walls could talk—and with Dean's help these do—the logs would tell visitors a complicated tale about itself and the family's involvement in this community:

In 1883 John Thomas and Cynthia Jane (Jennie) Davis Arnold and their eight children came to the Hattiesburg area from Alabama with loggers. Their wagon train, consisting of the entire logging company including equipment and families, was such a spectacle that the New Augusta schools were dismissed to watch them parade past the town.

F. M. "Pompey" Jones and William J. Mixon each bought 40 acres of land from the U.S. Government in 1884, the year of Hattiesburg's incorporation. Pompey built the "Cadillac" of cabins—a dogtrot with a wood, rather than dirt, floor. It was



Jennie Arnold (Lena's mother) and Levi Ma (W. P.'s mother) stand in front of the Arnold-Meador cabin in 1913. Walton Price Meador leans against the porch post in the background. The photograph was taken by his wife, Lena Arnold Meador.



The newly restored Arnold-Meador Cabin stands ready to receive visitors in April 2010. Reservations for a visit may be made by contacting Dean and Eddie Smith at [dean@simplyteavine.com](mailto:dean@simplyteavine.com)



constructed of square hewn pine logs, chinked with mud daub (twigs and clay), and had fan-shaped dove-tailed corners. Unfortunately, it was constructed in the wrong place and was on Mixon's land. To correct the error, the cabin was dismantled and moved to the land where it still stands today. In front of the house ran the original cedar tree lined wagon trail that connected Gordonville and the area now called Hattiesburg with the communities to the north.

The Arnold family bought the land and cabin in 1887. Ten people lived in the little two-pen dog-trot. Chores and dining were done on the wide breeze way between the two rooms. John Arnold traveled widely with his work, and his children matured and married. Finally, only his wife Jennie and daughter Mary Celina (Miss Lena) remained in the home.

In the meanwhile, the Meador family arrived in Hattiesburg. In 1895, Walton Price (W. P.) and Mary Eugenia Traylor Meador and their three children, including four year old C.G. (Gowers), established a home and dairy on Hardy Street about two miles west of downtown. By 1902 W. P. and Mary Eugenia were the parents of five.

W. P.'s parents, Levi Parks (Levi Pa) and Salina E. Sigrest (Levi Ma) Meador, homesteaded south of Hattiesburg near the Dixie community. Reverend Meador was an early circuit rider for the Mississippi Methodist Conference, and W. P. followed in his footsteps preaching throughout south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana. The Rev. L. P. Meador and his son, Brother W. P. Meador, were kept busy preaching and farming. In 1904, they were instrumental in the founding of Broad Street (now Heritage) Methodist Church.

Mary Eugenia died the year before Gowers graduated from Hattiesburg High School in 1912. In 1913 Gowers enrolled at Mississippi Normal College and played on the first football team for the school destined to become U.S.M. Gowers, who had done well in his high school studies of Latin, shorthand, typing, and the classics, served as secretary for the first president Cook. He became the first of many family members, including three others named C. G. Meador, to attend classes at USM.

By 1913 the widowed W. P. Meador married Lena Arnold and moved to the Arnold cabin. He renovated the front room by raising the ceiling for better air circulation, but the kitchen and privy remained separate from the house. Still a circuit rider, W. P. often married couples on the cabin steps. The family farm included chickens, cows, and a sugar cane mill. Dairy products, chickens, eggs, and sugar cane were sold in town. The two mothers-in-law (Lena's mother, Jennie, and W.P.'s mother, Levi Ma) lived in the cabin with them along with Rab, the youngest of W. P.'s children.

During WWI, Gowers served as secretary for Senator John Sharp Williams at the Navy Department in Washington, D.C. In 1917, he married Annie Dean Thatch. After the war they moved to Mississippi. Their sons, C.G. (Pete), Jr. and Dean Price lived with them in Jackson, Mississippi, before moving to Hattiesburg.

Although W. P. had bought the cabin and land in 1913, it is not until Jennie Arnold's death in 1925 that he put the land into his own name. In 1928 Gowers heard that his father planned to sell the land, so Gowers bought it himself. With Annie Dean, Pete, and Price he moved into the renovated (newly electrified, with inside kitchen and bath) cabin in 1932. Together they worked the farm which they called Hard Luck Plantation.

During the depression others helped work the land, as Gowers traveled for the Department of Labor. In the 1930's Annie Dean borrowed \$30 and partnered with Ed Davis to start Crescent Laundry and Meador Linen Supply in the growing town of Hattiesburg. With the increased activity of WWII at Camp Shelby, Dean vied for and won the Shelby business.

Sadly, as WWII came to an end, Dean died at the age of 47. Gowers planted camellias and azaleas to deal with his grief. His sons soon married. Pete married Frances Augusta Turner and continued to run the laundry. Their sons are C.G. (Joe) III. and John Charles. Price married Elizabeth Claire Steadman and became an insurance agent. Their daughters are Nancy Anne and Elizabeth Dean. Price and his family first lived in a house where Highway 49 is now.

When Gowers married Jessie Green Mason in 1955, he renovated the cabin again. The area continued to grow; the original wagon trail was enlarged and improved. By 1958 Gowers had sold land to the highway department to make Highway 49 two lanes. The Price Meadors moved out of the roadway and built a house closer to the cabin. Granddaughter Dean visited Gowers daily. **(continued on page 4 – page 3 not included in Website version)**

In 1979 Gowers deeded the cabin to granddaughter Dean with the wish that it be preserved for future generations. In 2009 his wish came true. The fully restored cabin now hosts the fifth, sixth, and seventh generations of the Meador family. For those who wish to see one of the area's oldest cabins, this dog-trot is available for school and group tours.

The Meador Homestead Cabin is privately owned and open **BY RESERVATION ONLY** for tours, afternoon teas and lunches, and an overnight stay in the 1856 bed made by Dean's great, great grandfather Willis R. Traylor as a wedding present for his bride Emily Dear. Those interested in a visit and tour may contact Dean and Eddie Smith by phone (601)268-3236 or (601)549-3626 or send an email to: [dean@simplyteavine.com](mailto:dean@simplyteavine.com).

