

NEWS BY TELEPHONE

New Middleton:

An old lady, the widow of Wiley Denny, 86 years old, living at the old Wiley Denny residence, had been visiting a neighbor yesterday, and on her return, undertook to go through the lot where a number of sheep were, one of them being a fighting one. The supposition is that she was exhausted, and either fell or sat down, and was attacked by the sheep, as she was found in a dying condition, with her head bloody, and skull probably broken and blood also on the sheep. The jury of inquest will be held today.

(The Smith County Record. May 5, 1887)

What is doubly interesting here is that the headline on this article was “News by Telephone,” rather than “Old Lady Killed by Sheep.” The telephone lines had just been installed for the first time connecting New Middleton and Carthage.

Add to this, the fact that this lady Clara Enoch Denney was the great-great grandmother of Albert Gore, Jr. and this becomes an interesting story.

First, almost all Tennessee farms raised sheep during the 1800’s. In an area where you grew much of what you ate and wore, sheep were an essential. And although we think of sheep as docile, often rams would be trained to defend the flock, from wild dogs and etc. So she probably became a victim of a ram that was defending its territory. No subsequent article that indicated murder has been found from the newspaper.

The descent from this lady to Vice President Albert Gore, Jr. is -- Wiley and Clara Enoch Denney were the parents of thirteen children including Wiley Brown Denney born on September 19, 1839, and who married Elizabeth Waggenor on September 18, 1864. Brown (as he was known) Denney was a Confederate soldier and was a prominent Primitive Baptist Preacher in Smith County. Their daughter Margie was born on October 23, 1878, and married Allen Gore on May 20, 1869. Their son Albert Gore was born on December 26, 1907. He later served several terms in the United States Senate. He married Pauline LaFon and they were the parents of Vice President Albert Gore, Jr.