

GEORGIA'S PIONEER AVIATOR
MICAJAH CLARK DYER

Sylvia Dyer Turnage

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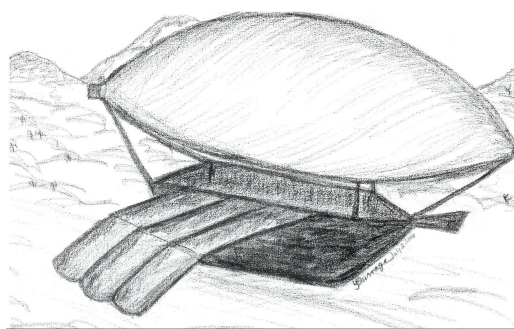
They shall mount up
with wings as eagles
Isaiah 40:31

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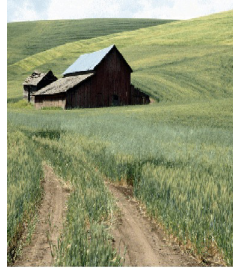
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Drawing by Yee Yee Turnage, © 2006



In the days before cameras and newspapers were present in this mountain area, an important piece of history was made, passed by without much notice, and was nearly lost in the passage of time.

My hope is that this accumulation of information about the man and his invention will inform many more people about the significance of Micajah Clark Dyer's remarkable feats carried out here in Union County, Georgia, in the 1800's.

Sylvia Dyer Turnage

Don't worry when
you are not recognized,
but strive to be
worthy of recognition.
-Abraham Lincoln-



Clark Dyer, Mountain Farmer and Family Man

Micajah Clark Dyer was born on July 13, 1822, in Pendleton District, S.C. His family moved to Habersham County, Georgia in 1826, to a farm near Yonah Mountain in an area that later became White County. They moved to the Choestoe District of Union County in 1833, just after the county was formed from part of Cherokee County during the Georgia Land Lottery of 1832. Choestoe Valley was originally occupied by the Cherokee Indians, among other tribes. They traded with the English settlers and taught them many of their trades and crafts. The Indians continued living in the area until the Indian Removal in 1838.

The Georgia portion of the Cherokee Nation that was acquired by treaty with the Indians was surveyed and plotted by land lots, which eligible persons drew in a lottery. To be entitled to draw in the lottery, a person had to be a U.S. citizen at least 18 years old and a Georgia resident for at least three years. Only one successful lot drawing was permitted to each person.

Those who drew the land deeds in the lottery faced a difficult challenge in tilling the soil and eking out a living from their meager resources. They had to be practical and work with what they had. The rough, steep terrain prevented development and modernization until long after it had come to the flatland.

Clark, as he was called, showed remarkable skill even as a youngster in making toys for the other children in the household. He made whirligigs, whistles, sleds, tops, and other toys for their amusement. The only schools available to him and the other children in the neighborhood was a little one-room school that went to the seventh grade, and the parents' need for help in the fields often prevented children from attending school even when it was in session. However, it appears that the Dyer family took advantage of every opportunity to acquire books, newspapers and magazines for the family to read, and the letters and writings that have been preserved reveal a very literate family.

Clark married Morena Elizabeth Ownbey on July 23, 1842, shortly after his twentieth birthday. Morena, born December 24, 1819, in Rutherford,

N.C., was the daughter of Robert H. and Matilda Ownbey, who had also moved their family to Union County in 1833.

Though the area where Clark and Morena made their home was very mountainous and remote, quite cut off from the rest of the world, they were successful in making a good living. The 1860 Agriculture Schedule for Union County shows that Clark had 90 acres of improved land; 310 acres of unimproved land; \$600 value of farm; \$10 value of farm machinery; six horses; two mules; three milk cows; three working oxen; four other cattle; eight sheep; 31 swine; \$500 value of livestock; 15 bushels of wheat; five bushels of rye; 400 bushels of Indian corn; 100 bushels of oats; 40 pounds of tobacco; five pounds of wool; five bushels of peas and beans; three bushels of Irish potatoes; 50 bushels of sweet potatoes; 20 pounds of butter; 50 pounds of flax; two bushels of flax seed; three pounds of beeswax; 50 pounds of honey; \$5 value of homemade manufactures; and \$100 value of animals slaughtered. The report stated that he did not have any slaves.



This map shows where Choestoe Community is located in Union County. It is southeast of Blairsville, Ga. on U.S. Hwy. 19/129 in a valley lying between Blood Mountain and Brasstown Bald Mountain, Georgia's two highest peaks. GA Hwy. 180 E. runs through it. The name of the valley, Choestoe, comes from a Cherokee word meaning "Place of the Dancing Rabbits."

Clark built his two-story home and smokehouse from logs that he hewed so perfectly there was no need for caulking. He piped water into his house from a bold spring using hollow logs and the force of gravity. He was the first man in Union County known to have running water in his house. He also ran water from the spring through his smokehouse to keep milk and