

NELL YEAGER BUMGARNER



Nellie Marie Yeager was born in Lucasville on August 19, 1895, youngest child of Benjamin and Rachel Brant Yeager. She came along late in her parents' lives and was a bit of a surprise. She had four older brothers, Murtaugh “Murt”, Clifton, Leo, and Arthur, the youngest of whom was nearly 13 when she was born. Her father, Benjamin, served with distinction in the Civil War, raising to the rank of Principal Musician of the 1st Ohio Volunteer Heavy Artillery, his instrument being the flute.

Nell grew up in Lucasville & spoke often of her idyllic childhood. She received from both of her parents a love of reading and writing, and of history, nature and music. She was graduated* in the class of 1912, theirs being the first class to graduate from the “new” high school which was located beside Lucasville Cemetery (Nell preferred “was graduated” to “graduated”). Nell was class valedictorian “because no one else wanted to write the speech” she later said.

She then attended Portsmouth Interstate Business College and began a career as a journalist, writing for both the *Lucasville Rural Gazette* and *Portsmouth Morning Sun*. Nell also worked in Brant's Store, owned & operated by her uncle, Joseph Brant. She did bookwork and also designed all the window displays for the store.

When she was 32 years old, Nell was set up on a blind date with Guy Bumgarner. He was born April 4, 1888 in Haverhill, Ohio, and came to the Duck Run area to teach at a small rural school. He was challenged by working with a group of kids who had “run off” several teachers beforehand. But he quickly gained their trust, and the students spoke highly of him. One of those students was Leonard Slye, who would later take the name Roy Rogers.

Guy & Nell quickly fell in love. They were married on August 18, 1928, the day before Nell's 33rd birthday. They had one child, Laura Rachel “LauRachel”, who in her adulthood gained fame on Broadway, stage, screen, and television as “Laurie Franks”.

Following her marriage, Nell traded her career for that of a housewife and mother. But her love of writing, and of the history of the Lucasville area, continued to grow. She wrote many poems throughout her girlhood and womanhood and began to collect what she called “vignettes of old Lucasville.”

When Lucasville held its sesquicentennial in 1969, she helped compile & edit the photo and history book published to mark the event. It is still highly prized & contains hundreds of photos and stories of the Lucasville area.

After the death of her husband, Guy, on January 14, 1976, Nell filled her lonely hours with

writing and collecting the history of her family and of Lucasville. She typed these poems and stories on her 1912 L.C. Smith typewriter, which is now part of the historical society's collection. Nell was instrumental in founding the Lucasville Area Historical Society, its first and earliest meetings being held in her living room on Fairview Avenue.

She helped compile and edit two books done by the historical society, "A Backward Glance" volumes one and two, and she contacted many Lucasville residents, collecting stories, photos, and materials of interest. Much of the society's archive is due to her hard work & dedication.

At age 99, her daughter compiled Nell's poems and vignettes into a book, "Lucasville Lore". Nell died on September 27, 1994, living to see her 100th year.