

GREENVILLE COUNTY'S "DARK CORNER" IN THE NEWS (1910)

MRS. SHANKLE IMPUGNS GREENVILLE'S "DARK CORNER"

Source: The Greenville (S.C.) Daily News, May 27, 1910, p. 6, col. 4

MRS. SHANKLE WAS SHOT PROOF

Tells of Her Work in "Dark Corner,"

– Teacher of the Squirrel Mountain School Tells of her Trials Trying to Teach Mountaineers –

**"When the Boys at Home Whistle Bullets Over My Head I Just Don't Pay Any Attention to Them,"
She Reports to the Conference of Charities.**

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

When the president of the National Conference of Charities and Correction called for the report of the delegate from South Carolina, a gaunt, but prepossessing woman, with a countrified air, stepped to the front of the platform, and shyly observed the gathering of smart looking men and women that filled the auditorium of the Central High School.

The delegate was Mrs. E.J. Shankle of the Squirrel Mountain school in the "Dark Corner" of South Carolina.

Mistaking her face value for her true worth the gathering immediately started to buzz with conversation. The delegate from South Carolina opened her mouth as though to speak and then, seeming to change her mind, in a flash closed her lips with a snap. Flint sparks of indignation shot out of her blue eyes that had become hard as steel. She only had three minutes in which to make the report for South Carolina, and conversation had arisen to such a tide that it didn't seem possible it would ebb in time for her to be heard.

She turned her back on the audience and waited until almost two minutes of her time was up before she faced them again. This time there came a hush over the gathering and everybody listened attentively while the delegate from South Carolina went on to remark.

"I'm from the 'The Dark Corner' and I want to report that the school at Squirrel Mountain is progressing fine. We have 108 acres of mountain land now, and next year the boys and girls expect to raise six bales of cotton and 400 bushels of corn."

Pays No Attention to Conversation.

The inattention that had preceded and accompanied the beginning of her report on the part of the audience didn't affect the delegate one whit.

"When the boys at home," she said in talking things over afterwards "whistle the bullets over my head when I'm climbing the mountains up to school, I just don't pay any attention to them. Never let them know that I can hear them shooting.

"Every preacher that tries to reach the school is chased. He doesn't see anybody, but there's music of bullets all around his ears and the first thing he knows he's running for dear life down the mountainside. But they don't bother me any more, because they've found out that I can't be chased."

Mrs. Shankle is a strange figure in the assemblage of sociologists who are in St. Louis to discuss ways and means of relieving the ignorance, distress and suffering of the slums of the cities.

From Slums of the Mountains.

She comes from the slums of the mountains and the wild hills. Educated herself in a mission school in the mountains of Tennessee, she has resolved to devote her life to carrying the light of civilization into the fastnesses of the "Dark Corner" of South Carolina. The "Dark Corner" is not far from the thriving city of Asheville, but few seldom venture into it except revenue men, and they

only in large posses and armed to the teeth.

In neighboring regions are the big estates of the Vanderbilts and the resorts of tourists. But these people, Mrs. Shankle says, only laugh at the "Dark Corner" and do nothing to help them.

"The road to the "Dark Corner," says Mrs. Shankle, "is a real life 'Trail of the Lonesome Pines.' If you penetrate to the interior you will meet persons there stranger than any you ever read in fiction. But to get in you mustn't be afraid and you must not be suspicious. Bullets by the hundred will whistle over your head on the way up the mountain, but don't let on you hear them. They are just trying you out.

Boarders Pay \$1 a Week.

A year ago Mrs. Shankle took charge of the Willard Industrial school, otherwise known as the Squirrel Mountain school. Nearby are the Hog Back and Glassy mountains. She now has a thriving school which includes 10 girls. Boarders are taken at the rate of \$1 a week.

Since the first day of it opening the school has made great progress. By wearing shoes and stockings Mrs. Shankle had implanted a desire for those in the minds of her pupils. All the pupils wash their faces, and most of the girls have consented to instruction in the use of the comb. In addition to these innovations, Mrs. Shankle says she is teaching the girls that there is such a thing as an outer skirt as well as an underskirt, and inducing them to wear both, when they go "to meeting" on Sundays.

"I'm not afraid myself," Mrs. Shankle told a *Post-Dispatch* reporter, but I have to keep armed because the pupils don't like to be taken unawares. Almost all of the boys can take me out for a walk and show me the spot where dad was shot, or brother Jim got his, or some near relative taking up the burden of the feud until the children of the dead father could grow up fell lifeless with a bullet in his heart.

Mrs. Shankle says she finds it much easier to get the children to attend the school after she has induced the parents to take instructions. Among her present roster of pupils is Ben Flemming and his three boys. Ben Flemming has a record of 16 pitched battles with revenue officers. He lost every fight but is still among the living.

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MRS. SHANKLE REFUTED ONCE!

Source: Greenville Daily News, Tuesday, May 31, 1910, p. 5, col. 3.

"SHOOTING AT TEACHERS"

Correspondent Resents Utterances of Mrs. Shankle at St. Louis.

The article in *The News* under the head, "Where They Shoot at Teachers", Mrs. Shankle "Tells of Work in the "Dark Corner," etc., manifestly deserves a little attention.

Either the "gaunt, but prepossessing woman" who made the report from South Carolina to the National Conference of Charities and Correction was both hysterical and morbid, or else some callow reporter, probably just "off the bat." thought the "gaunt" woman a fit subject for unlimited romance and made the story all yellow. Such untruthful, and, indeed, utterly impossible tales as this should be looked into and the guilty perpetrator muzzled. They do much harm, not only to communities, and the individuals going out from the community so slandered, but the State and the whole South suffer much, both socially and financially, because of such constant misrepresentation.

As a matter of fact this "Dark Corner" which lies principally in Greenville County, S.C., counts among its citizens many of the very best and most progressive men in that county, sustains one of the very best, and largest high schools in the State, a Baptist institution known as North Greenville High School, and agriculturally, that section of the county stands high. All this within two or three miles of Glassy Mountain, and near Squirrel Mountain, where "bullet by the hundred will

whistle over your head on the way up the mountain,” where the teacher “has to keep armed because the pupils don’t like to be taken unawares.” Where the teacher by wearing shoes and stockings has implanted a desire for these articles in the minds of her pupils,” and “most of the girls have consented to instruction in the use of the comb,” etc, etc.

Now Zach McGhee discovered a “Dark Corner” somewhere near the middle of the State and certainly worked it for all it was worth, but Zach seemed to have some humanitarian or uplifting motive in mind and at heart, rather than mere sensationalism, and we can forgive the very evident license of fact, but this mountain “Dark Corner” drivel can do no one good, and necessarily must do harm.

The writer has spent many years teaching young people from the mountain country, has lived among them, and desires to say that such conditions as are set forth in the article referred to cannot be found in South Carolina’s upper “Dark Corner,” and that the very finest boys and girls, brains and morals, both considered, can be found in the mountain section named. They lived far from railroads, and unfortunately some of them do make up their corn into fire-water with which to appease the strenuous thirst of us more favored ones, but they pay their debts, support their own poor, and certainly are too frugal to waste good lead on teachers and preachers after the lavish fashion described.

Instead of maligning our good State, by sections in this way, let us all be working for stronger and better schools, not only in the dark corners, but at all the corners.

J. S. Jennings, Cokesbury Conference
School.

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MRS. SHANKLE REFUTED TWICE!!

Source: Greenville Daily News, Tuesday, May 31, 1910, p. 5, col. 4 & 5.

DARK CORNER

The “Dark Corner” misrepresented at the National Conference of Charities by the delegate from North Carolina, Mrs. E.J. Shankle of Squirrel Mountain School.

In this report which came out in the *Greenville Daily News* on May 27th, she said: “When the boys at home whistle the bullets over my head when I am climbing the mountain up to the school, I just don’t pay any attention to them. Never let them know that I can hear them shooting. Every preacher who tries to reach the school is chased. He doesn’t see anybody, but there’s music of bullets all around his ears and the first thing he knows he’s running for dear life down the mountainside. But they don’t bother me any more, because they’ve found out that I can’t be chased.”

The above report is false. If ever there was any bullets whistled over Mrs. Shankle’s head no one has ever heard of it. Furthermore there has never been a preacher chased by any of those people. I am a native of “Dark Corner” and I know this statement is false.

She continued to say that: “The road to the “Dark Corner” is a real life trail of the lonesome pines. If you penetrate to the interior you will meet persons stranger than you ever read of in fiction. But to get in you musn’t be afraid and you must not be suspicious. Bullets by the hundreds will whistle over your head on the way up the mountain, but don’t let on you hear them. They are just trying you out.” This statement is also untrue. The people who live under the shadow of Hogback and Glassy Mountain are the finest types of the Anglo-Saxon race.

In regard to those people wearing shoes and stockings, they did this before Miss Shankle ever came to that community. This was implanted in their minds around the firesides of their homes. They always washed their faces and that too in the purest water that ever came forth from the bosom of the earth. I have lived in the “Dark Corner” a quarter of a century and I have never

seen a girl at home or out at “meeting” without their hair being combed and they had sufficient dress. I have been over the State, or in several counties, and I have not found any people more intelligently dressed than those people of the “Dark Corner.” Every man, woman and child who has ever been through that country knows this to be a fact.

If there is any such man as Ben Fleming at the Squirrel Mountain with his three boys, I have never heard tell of them, nor that he had 16 pitched battles with the revenues. If so, I do not know where, nor when.

This report of Miss Shankle is a reflection upon the inhabitants of this community and especially on the women. Some women as good as South Carolina has ever produced have looked old Glassy Rock in the face all of their lives and drank the pure water which runs down her cheeks.

It is true that there has been some whiskey made in the old caves and hollows, but that day is past and the minds of those people have turned upon higher and nobler things. The women have always fought the liquor business. They are the salt of our country and they have never been so ignorant that they did not know how to appear in public and act in such a manner as is becoming to women.

“READER”