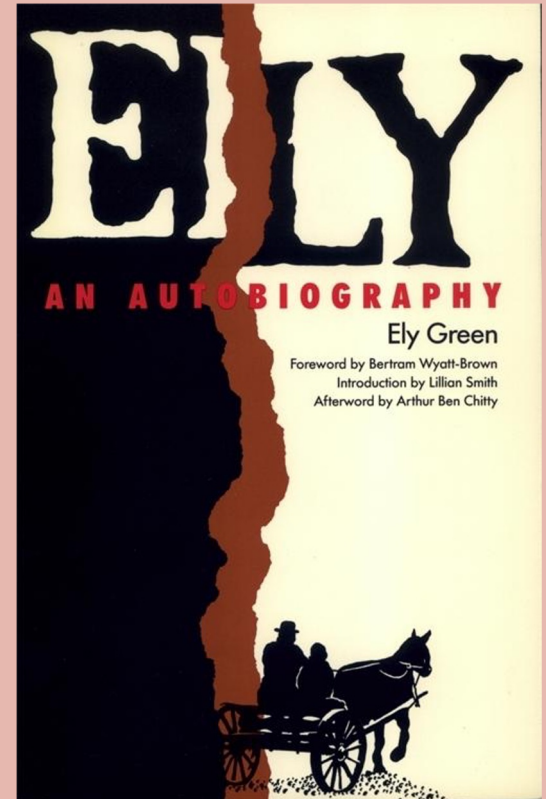


Ely Elisha Green (1893–1968)

By: Frances Barnett, Corbet Darden, Stephen Goetze,
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Question: “In his memoir, Ely Green recalled his activities in Shakerag Hollow and Roark’s Cove in the early 1910s: **‘I skinned everything that had hair from housecats to civet cats. By the first of December I had stripped the two canyons.’** [*Ely*, p. 194] While he was proud of these accomplishments and the money they brought him, these actions also placed Ely Green in danger. How do Green’s activities complicate our understanding of life (for humans, plants, and animals) in and around Shakerag Hollow during this period?”



Sewanee Historical Context

Sewanee during 1910s...

- Life in Sewanee at this time was segregated heavily both by race and by class (St. Marks vs Sewanee and Town vs Gown)
- Sewanee was doing well by most accounts and was finishing up a number of construction projects including buildings still familiar today
- The South as a whole was far behind the nation in many metrics, sewanee seems to stand out as a gathering place of success and wealth



America as a whole is heavily segregated and feeling the effects of Jim Crow



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Who was Ely Green?

- Born in Sewanee in 1893
- His father was white and his mother was black
- He grew up in Sewanee and was well liked among most of the residents due to his good natured wit and intelligence, but still faced incidences of racism
- He was a hard worker and successful, thus making him a target
- He found himself having to leave Sewanee suddenly for his safety, and moved to Texas
- He later fought in WWI
- He provides context for someone experiencing the third path of segregation, being neither white nor black, and his experience not belonging to either group

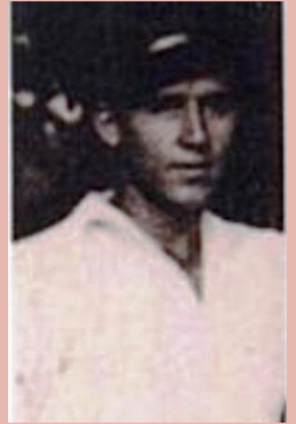


Ely Green in Sewanee...

What complicated his experience? Why?

- Race (mixed, at times is accepted, other times is not)
- Orphan (no guiding parental figure, yet has many older members of Sewanee community looking out for him)
- Relationships with White Elites (provide advice and counseling in his experiences on the mountain in racial situations)
- Poor (during childhood has little economic support, is occasionally given money by Father Eastern)

Are there any other factors that complicate his experience?

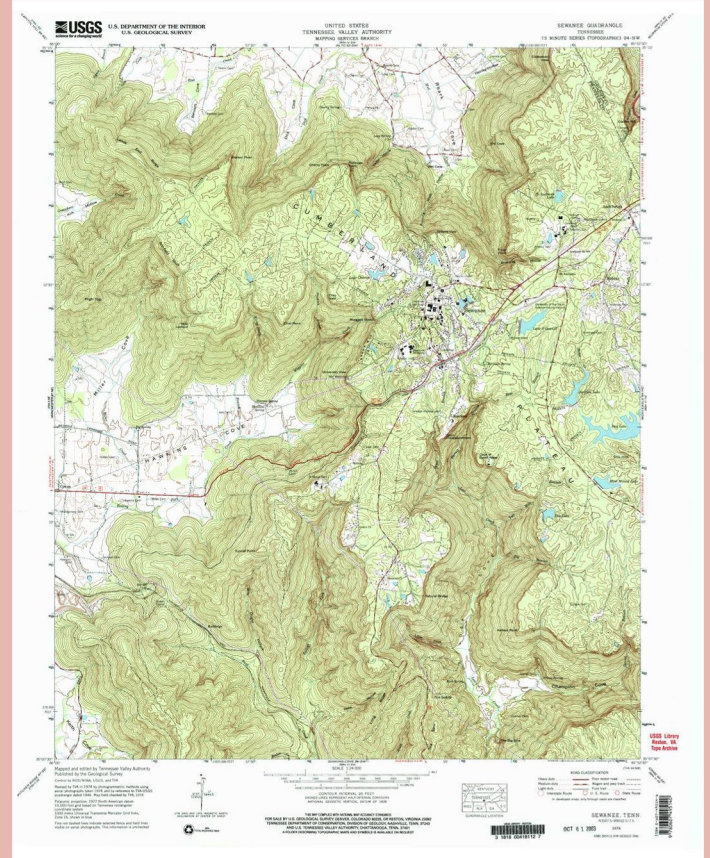


Sewanee Life During 1910s ...

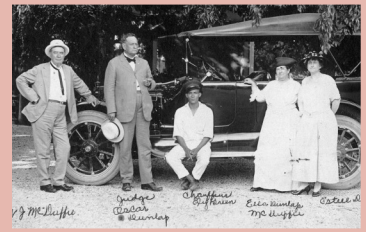
People ... Blacks, Sagers, and Aristocrats

Plants ... Medicine and Food Chain

Animals ... Sustenance, Livelihood, Status



Ely in Danger?



Why did Ely's actions place him in danger?

- For the most part Ely had a pleasant relationship with most of the wealthy white aristocrats in Sewanee, however his role in the community primarily was that of a servant, being mixed race. He was never treated equally.
- His close proximity and inclusion among the aristocrats brought a great deal of hostility from the poor whites, whilst still being poor they still believed themselves to be racially superior.
- Ely also felt estranged from the black community in Sewanee. Due to his mixed race appearance he was perceived as having elevated privilege in his successful relationships with wealthy whites on the mountain.
- Having no real place to fit into the Sewanee community, Ely spent a lot of time in the woods where he could escape the isolating racial tension. With this experience outdoors, Green would become extremely skilled at hunting and trapping animals around the domain. This hobby came with a significant financial incentive as he would make quite a decent amount of money selling furs.
- Not only did Ely's financial success put him at odds with the whites in the community, his hunting abilities would have a significant ecological impact on the local environment. He was so skilled that he was able to strip Shakerag Hollow and Roarks Cove of pretty much all mammal life, leaving almost nothing for the rest of the white trappers in the area.
- The less skill gang of poachers on the mountain were threatened by a lack of animal resources caused by Ely as well as his race. The Tickbush Gang targeted Green, threatening him verbally and physically. Realizing the severity of danger that he faces on the mountain, Ely eventually decides to leave Sewanee.



What can we learn from Ely?

“I want to see that smile on your face again that has made everyone love you. You have been the most happy little fellow I have known. Love everybody now. Your job is making everybody love you.”(Ely, 22)

“I used to have to fight everyday. But don’t fight unless you have to. Try to love everybody.”(Ely, 34)

- The call to love everyone suggests an ideal of unconditional acceptance and compassion.
- The message reinforces the idea that love can be a powerful tool for social change. Ely’s journey exemplifies how love and compassion can challenge systemic issues and foster a more inclusive environment.
- The important people in Ely’s life emphasize the significance of finding community and support through fostering love for others.
- Ely’s interactions reveal how connection and understanding can help overcome isolation and embrace a sense of belonging.

Pictures and Works Cited

<https://digitalelygreen.org/>

<https://ugapress.org/author/ely-green/>

Green, Ely E. *Ely an Autobiography*. University of Georgia Press. 1966.