

# Message in a Bottle

**A Biographical Series on Tyler County Folks**

by Michael G. Maness

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## The Woodville Opera House - Your Hometown Smiling Face Burned down in 1996

*"It has been nearly 17 years, since I wrote this. Still have fond memories of that old place. - Mike Maness*

*Today, Emporium for the Arts is building a new theater in downtown Woodville. For more information, contact Sam Haney (409) 283-3832*

Once in the land of plenty  
Was a wayfarer's place of bounty.  
Not of money, jewels or kingly crowns,  
But of tenderness and smiles--without a frown.

For decades I sat and laughed.  
Your children grew and ran so fast.  
I coddled, cajoled and even cavorted,  
But never have a wayfarer I averted.

The Woodfain Theater--Oh, Opera House,  
I have seen the joining of many a spouse.  
Through my doors so many have come,  
Big and little, far too many to sum.

I watched from the corner a wee small town:  
Suffer, struggle and joy without a frown.  
A Mayberry kind of place, these Woodville lands,  
So filled with trees and home spun bands.

When the courthouse buzzed across the street,  
Coffee would percolate, and I'd offer a treat.  
I gave rest to those who trusted me,  
And offered a diversion for a tourist or three.

Here of late I gave you a star,  
A bright and shining one--without a mar.  
As in my shop she scurried about,  
She never tired--much like an Indian scout.

To wayfarer or friend--Mary Ann was she,  
To hear a struggle or joy, look closer, you'll see.  
No enemy she made as you passed us by,  
Always ready with a fresh piece of pie.

Mary Ann scurried to and fro,  
To give you many a splendid show.  
A place where you could yourself become,  
Far away from the busy and the hum-drum.

What was the Opera House to you?  
A place to kick back, lay off a shoe?  
Maybe just a place for tea and a smile,  
Just a break between that speedy mile.

The Opera House--for you all I stood.  
Your kids grew and struggled, they could.  
A young man learned verse at an early age.  
A girl turned a woman on my stage.

Who am I to you, Oh, little Woodville,  
But a calling card to times gone still.  
Once downtown, I was your hometown face.  
Now gone up in the smoke of a fire place.

No more will the home spun tales be told  
Across my tables so weathered and old.  
No more will I be the center, the outback,  
The place all could go and truly kick back.

No more will Mary Ann scurry to humbly hear  
Every tale, trouble, struggle, or tear.  
No more will she extend her loving hand  
To the small, poor, or rich, and every band.

Gone from the quaint little town, Woodville,  
Gone is the town's very own window sill.  
Gone up in smoke went that little place,  
Where once there were so many a happy face.

Would that a millionaire would come and see,  
Take pity on Woodville and rebuild me.  
For all I ever wanted was to give, give, give,  
And help hometown people live, live, live.

I am now nothing more than a ghost,  
Though once I was so proud to be your host.  
My picture in the Booster, was that me?  
My burned out skeleton--for all to see.

Will you remember, little Woodville,  
All the times that passed by me, still,  
Little Mary Ann in the window sill.

Remember there was a hometown place,  
A Mayberry kind of smiling face,  
A home spun corner meeting place.

If I could but wish a dream  
That plays and music would once more stream,  
That about me people would once more teem.

Remember me, Mayberry kind of whittled pace,  
Your own home spun corner meeting place.  
Remember me, your own hometown smiling face.

With nostalgic affection,  
by M. G. Maness, October 1996