

## Altizers go way back

Before the Revolutionary War, German and Scotch-Irish people migrated south to Montgomery County. Among them were the ancestors of Ruby Altizer Roberts, author of "The Way It Was" and the forthcoming "The Way It Is," among many other books.

"My ancestors came to Montgomery County over 200 years ago and settled on both sides of the Little River," said Roberts. "Now there are hundreds and hundreds of descendants who live all over the country. Once a year in July we have a reunion, and they all come from everywhere."

Roberts also figures that every family that has been in the area for at least 50 years is kin to the Altizers by either blood or marriage. Although there are thousands of Altizer descendants and relatives now, the first Altizer to come to this country, according to Roberts, was Emera V. Altizer.

"The original little Altizer, Emera, was kidnapped from Germany as a bound boy, who was then sent to work for different people to pay for his passage. When the Revolutionary War started, he enlisted and was there when Lord Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown in 1781. We have his papers and everything that show this."

Roberts adds that this same Emera Altizer sold the 400 acres

that is Hans Meadows to Thomas Lewis, of "last duel" fame. A rifle duel between Lewis and John McHenry in 1808, which killed both of them, led to the passage of law in 1810 outlawing dueling in Virginia.

In 1926, Lawrence "Lonnie" Roberts brought his company, Roberts Contracting Co., to Christiansburg from Pulaski County to finish Lee Highway. The next year he married Ruby Altizer.

Roberts also built the Roberts Motel on Roanoke Street.

"One of our first guests when we opened in 1941 was Margaret Mitchell, author of 'Gone With the Wind.' She was just traveling through and stopped to spend the night."

Today Roberts, in the middle of her eighth decade, spends some of her time talking with grade-school children about the history of their town and about the one-room schoolhouse out in the county that played such a key role in her life. She is also helping with the bicentennial "in every way I can think of."

"I love this town: it's in my blood and in my bones. I'm so excited to have lived long enough to be a part of the bicentennial."

<sup>1</sup>Article written by Roberta Green in the New River Valley Current section of *The Roanoke Times & World-News* June 14, 1992