

MY LIFE AT HICKORY GROVE

BY

LULA WOODHAM GILCHRIST WOODHAM

WRITTEN IN 1981, IN OPP, ALABAMA

## I Remember Hickory Grove

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### Hickory Grove Church

I remember a small, dark log cabin church built on a high wooden block foundation. The entrance was on the side, with two big blocks cut for the door steps; much too high for a child, just six years old, to go into except on hands and knees. Inside there were open-slatted benches (pews). A row was on the right and one on the left. One side was used by the men and boys, the other side for the women and girls. This log cabin church was torn down and another church built near by. I can't remember it being built.

The church belonged to the Northern Methodist District. Occasionally a minister would come to preach. Reverend John Riley, a cousin of my grandparents, preached for us and stayed at our nearby home. We children were taught to call him "cousin John Riley". He was a large man with gray hair and in a strong voice would start the service by leading the singing (no organ) and reading the scriptures. From then on he kept everyone so spell-bound that the good brothers in the "amen corner" didn't get a chance to say "Amen!"

Papa and Mama took all their children to church. I sat with Mama, slinging my legs to keep the circulation going. I knew that she had tea cakes in her satchel (purse) to give me if I would be quiet. I began to think that I had deserved one so I looked up at her and she took out a tea cake. It seemed to me that cousin John Riley was good for another hour. Everybody loved him and was glad to hear his good sermons.

There was no Sunday School at that time. My oldest brother, Ed (not married then), spoke out and said, "Why not? Let us try to organize a Sunday School with what members we have. Many have large families, like ours, and that could make a good attendance". The telephone was used to call all the neighbors to meet at the church the next Sunday. From then on there was Sunday School every Sunday and a minister came once a month. Rev. Joe Johnson, a presiding elder of the church conference, moved to Opp. He was a retired minister and held quarterly conferences. I can remember some of the others who helped in the pulpit; Rev. Arnie Spivey for one, and one of Papa's brothers, Uncle Jim Woodham, was always ready to fill in. His wife, Aunt Kate, was a good church worker and active in the Ladies Aid (now United Methodist Women).

The church and land was sold to the Covington County school system. The church had also been used for a school all these years. Papa was a trustee of the school and said to the church members, "Come across the road and I will freely deed the land for a new church to be used for a religious cause forever and ever to the Methodist conference." This land adjoined

## My Grandparents

John Wesley Woodham and Amanda Ard Woodham came to Covington County from Dale County, Alabama in 1857. They homesteaded many acres of land which had heavy growths of pine, oak, hickory nut and other kinds of trees. This county was almost unsettled then.

Grandpa served in the Civil War, leaving Grandma and four young children in their newly settled home. Grandma took her children to the Log Cabin Church. She prayed for guidance to raise them well. They had 14 children. They were members of the Log Cabin Church, too, and helped build the newer church. The children married and settled in new houses nearby.

I don't remember going to Grandpa's house. My older brothers and sisters spoke of the good times they had with all the cousins gathering there to play with Grandma. She would have leaves and pine needles raked in high piles. Then she would race with them to see who could be the first to fall into the pile. They also played other games with her and she always had plenty for everyone to eat.

Grandpa was a member of the Andalusia Masonic Lodge for twenty years. He stayed among his children after Grandma's death. He spent a lot of his time at our house because he could work in the cemetery, keeping it clear of the grass and leaves that covered it because of the many trees nearby. It was a small cemetery when he died. Eight of his children are buried in Hickory Grove. They are: George and Bama; Jim and Kate; Cage and Julie; Taylor and Texann, and Minnie; Gehugh and Isabelle; Malley and Ida; Nancy and Tilman Short; Ida and John May. Many of his grand-children are buried here also.

In this cemetery, near my parent's plot, is buried a Mr. Simmons, who was a Wizzard, a member of the K.K.K., which was then a new organization out of Birmingham or Montgomery. I believe he was married to one of the Shine girls. His grave is in the Shine's plot.

Five of Grandfather's children are buried in Opp cemetery, including Bill and Queen; Noah and Georgia; Josiah and Gussie; Tob and Genie; Vina and Ambrose Day are buried in Bethel cemetery at Babbie.

sold it a few years ago. Soon after, it became a Congregational Church. It has been remodeled and a new parsonage built. It is a very attractive church building. I still love Hickory Grove Church and I'm glad someone else does too. From all signs there are many enjoying it today.

the cemetery land of which he had been giving free lots for burial purposes. My parents had accumulated many acres of land by buying more from time to time to add to their homesteaded land of 400 acres. Not all of this land was under cultivation. Much of it was in pine trees. The young pines were chipped for turpentine and the older trees were sold for lumber.

The new church was soon built with the help of the entire membership who gave and solicited donations. Papa served on jury duty in Andalusia and on his trips over he would take his note pad to list "all donations by name and amount paid." Some were as small as a dime. I have before me one of his listings, so yellow and faded that all of the names can't be made out. The names familiar to me are: H. J. Brogden, J. J. Fletcher, J. H. Fowler, and J. M. Prestwood. Don't you believe that those Andalusians let him get away with his soliciting. When they had a chance to come to Opp they never failed to stop by to see Papa. He always sent them away with syrup, cane juice, potatoes, you name it. They would sometimes eat a meal with him. He loved to share what he had with all people.

The church prospered a few years and then a storm struck and blew it off its foundation. It was soon rebuilt, one foot smaller all around. This church is still standing. The Northern Methodist and the M. E. Methodist South merged. Hickory Grove Church grew in membership and was a very active church for a long time. The people of Poley also supported this church.

Along with Papa, members of the older church were his brothers Bill, Cage, Jim, Noah, Malley, and sister, Nancy. Other brothers and sisters attended other churches as they had moved away; however, all came back home for the Woodham Reunion every year. Uncle Bill taught "singing school" each summer for a two week session ending with an "all day singing" on the last Sunday. The ladies took lots of good food and spread their table cloths full to share with all for "dinner on the grounds." The way food is served, as well as the times, has changed now.

Uncle Bill had a nice singing voice. While directing the choir at Hickory Grove tears would drip from his eyes. His family group would sometimes come to sing for us. The group included Pearl, the pianist; John, bass; Ollie, Lizzie, and Uncle Bill. T'was a nice treat to hear them.

Uncle Jim was a faithful member and held prayer meeting on Wednesday nights. He was a member of the district conference as a substitute preacher. He never had a charge of his own. He liked to sing also. He loved his home-life with "Miss Kate" and family.

Uncles Noah, Cage, and Malley were very active members on the church board and brought their families to church. Aunt Nancy Short was a good member doing all she could in the Ladies Aid. Her family came with her to church.

Papa could seat more people in the church. It was unbelievable, but if a seat could be found he'd find it; if not, then that person would get a good standing position. Papa allowed no disturbances during the service. Everyone highly respected him.

Papa died a young man of 54 years. He loved this church and his family members continued to support it as long as possible. The church conference

## The Louisville and Nashville Railroad

In the year 1900, the L and N Railroad Company wanted to run a route from Georgiana to Graceville, Florida. Papa, having adjoining land, was asked to help survey this route from Poley to the new town of Opp. The towns included Red Level, River Falls, Andalusia, Poley, Opp, Kinston, Samson, Geneva on to Graceville in Florida. The railroad was built and stations were established by 1905 or 1906. Mark Miller and a Mr. Brent from Brewton built a sawmill on the Lightwood Knot River. The Miller-Brent Lumber Company was soon in operation, buying its pines from the land owners and building the railroad through this area to run trains to haul the felled pines to the mill.

The mill hired many people here and brought others from other towns. A commissary was built facing the small Poley railroad station to hold food supplies and other needs for the people as they came to work.

I remember seeing the pines felled and carried to the new mill to be cut into lumber. Those two huge, high-wheeled log carts, drawn by oxen, used to drag pine logs to the railroad nearby to be loaded on flat box cars. The sight of it all was amazing to me, a child of around seven years old.

Many large and small houses were built for the white and black people. Some of the names I can recall are: Mc Caskill, Fitzgerald, Sheppard, Mc-David, Arrington, Ward, Long, Cook, Brown, Dean, Vaughn, Jones, Harrelson, Edgar, Carnley, Childress, and Jackson.

The L and N Line was very busy for many years. They extended another line, a turn-around section at Duval. The stations to Florida were Onyca, Green Bay, and Florala. In those days there were many trains going through Opp daily. The main highlight, was to meet the passenger train at the depot to see who came to Opp. It seemed to me then that the train engineer would start blowing the whistle when he came to the city limit, and upon leaving, once again at that same high tone, the engineer would race to get out of the way for the next train to come. I really like to hear the train whistles. Now there are freight trains once or twice a week that creep by so quietly and the engineer only taps the whistle as he nears a cross-road.

Opp is a good sized city now and has all the conveniences any other city has - factories, industries, busses and a small airport for traveling, a business college, and the best schools and churches.

## My Parents First Home

The house had two large rooms with a breeze-way between, and a porch extending the length of the house in front. Rooms were added to the back-side when needed. Fireplaces were in each room. The kitchen had a high open fireplace where Mama did her first cooking. She soon bought a stove, before I was born, but the fireplace stayed as it was. I remember her showing how she roasted sweet potatoes in the warm ashes. I never saw her cooking anything else there.

The land had a thick growth of timber, including many pine, hickory nut, walnut, oak, and wild fruit such as crabapple, plum, blackberry, scuppernong, grapes, and pear trees.

I could see, from our yard, men chipping the pine trees for turpentine, attaching little trays to the pines to catch the drippings. They later came in a two wheel ox cart with a big barrel to collect the turpentine and take it to a distillery to be melted down to a liquid. I would listen to the black man sing as he would go from pine to pine gathering and emptying the trays.

This first house became old when I was born the 9th child; four boys and four girls were older, and two boys and two girls were younger. Twelve of Mama's children were born in this house. The 13th child was born dead in the new house.

When I was three or four years old, my eldest brother, Ed, was going to Opp school. Mama would fix his lunch, putting home-made biscuits, sausage or ham, spare ribs with baked sweet potatoes, and sweet cakes (peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were never heard of in those days) in a lunch pail. When I saw him coming home, I ran to meet him saying, "Eddie-Bob, Eddie-Bob, do you have anything left in your pail?" From then on, I was called "Bob" until my first grade year in school. Eddie-Bob always left something for me, not that I was hungry, because there was always something cooking in our stove.

Papa was often asked to substitute for the mail carrier on the route going by our house. He would drive old Ada, the mule, hitched to a buggy. One day he came home wearing a Santa Claus false face. I did not like what I saw! Mama was being hugged and she was laughing and my brothers and sisters were too. I ran to Mama, gathering her long dress skirt to hide myself, crying "Mama, what is wrong with Papa?" The false face frightened me. I could not bear to look at it. Mama soon burned it. All of my life I have never liked false faces.

Another time, in my pre-school days, I was asked to reach in with my small hand where a nut had come loose in the motor of the first automobile I ever saw. In fact, it was the first to be brought to Covington County. A judge in Andalusia had bought the car and was going to Opp to show it to his friends. He stopped the car at our house to let Papa see. When he was ready to leave the car would not start. Papa took me in his arms so I could reach the loose nut. The man gave me 50 cents.

I remember our first phonograph, a table-top model with a huge horn, and the first telephone installed in our old home. The pump organ was there before me. When it wore out another one was bought to replace it. It was still there when Mama died.

Mama's parents, Hugh Edward Richburg and Milbra Helms Richburg, homesteaded the land on the Andalusia road adjoining my parent's land. They had two sons and five daughters; Jake, John, Beckie, Josie, Bama, Celia, and Belle. On this land now new houses have been built replacing the old homes. Grandpa Richburg had a pretty white and green painted house where the Horn Hill road leaves the Andalusia highway. This is now the Opp city limit line. Grandma Richburg visited among her children often at our home. She called me "Miss Prissy".

Uncle Jake lived with his parents and continued to live there after they died. Uncle Jake and Aunt Peg had three sons; Hugh, Jim, and Perry; three daughters; Emma, Julie, and Effie. Lillie Richburg Bean is a member of this family, daughter of the late Hugh Richburg. Eva Brown, who owned a beauty shop on Covington Avenue, is the daughter of the late Emma Richburg Dorsey (Mrs. Charles Dorsey). There may be others but I have lost track of all the kinfolks.

I was eight years old when our new home was being built. It was painted white with green trim. The old home was left standing for awhile. There were two sisters that Papa let live in it. Adaline Cartwright and Rachel C. Woodham, a widow of a cousin of Grandpa Woodham. They would help Mama by doing some of the many chores she had with her large family. We children enjoyed having them there because they would tell funny stories. Also, they both smoked corn-cob pipes and we liked to see them puff, puff away.

My Papa was red-headed. Papa spoke of a black-headed George Woodham who wouldn't buy a home in Opp area because he didn't want to have the same address as his red-headed cousin George. It was quite a joke with Papa. He would tell this and say "black George" went down on the Florida line between Florida and Andalusia and got lost because he (Papa) never heard of him again. (Maybe Robert Earl's and Wilma Woodham's research shows what happened to him!)

Willis and Lum Woodham visited my older brother and sister in our home. They married girls of this area and went to south Florida to live. Harvey Woodham's children came to Hickory Grove for the "all-day singings" and visited at our house. Luna Woodham Gatlin of Opp is a member of this family and so is Lucille Foley, who works at First National Bank. Clem Woodham worked at this bank before his death. Curt Woodham and wife, Elean, sons Jody and Barney, daughters Mary and Dessie Ree Coon all came to Hickory Grove. Curt's sister Vinnie Foley and husband Alex and children, Albert and Lizzie, came too. Many kin lived near us. Their children attended Hickory Grove church and school.

There was hog-killing time but I shall not go into detail about the work it required! Oh, how I'd like today to have some home cured hams and sausage like my parents put in their smoke house. Might not taste as good today as it did then because my taste has changed.

There was once a log-rolling at our house. Papa cleared the land and I have never since seen as much hard work done as those men did lifting those heavy logs. My Mama did all the cooking for those hungry men.

These modern times are best but I can't say that people are happier. Our family was happy and we enjoyed our life together.



## My School Days

Hickory Grove Church was used by the county school district for two term sessions each year; six months in the Winter period and three months in the Summer period as the farmers needed their children to help plant and harvest the crops. This school was first grade to seventh grade with one principal.

My first grade was a three month term. A Mr. Woodruff was the principal. I remember being sent with my class to the log cabin to hear our primers being read by one of the seventh graders. I believe I could have walked under the log cabin if I lowered my head so as not to bump it. The height of the two block steps impresses me to this day.

My second grade teacher was a Mr. Wood. This was my only time to be called the "teacher's pet." I guess it was because his wife and I had the same name of Lula. He always put me on his knee while he taught our class.

My other teachers were Gladys Murphy, Mattie Cox, James Heurtess, and a college student for one 3 month Summer session. Luna Nichols was my fifth, sixth, and seventh grade teacher. She boarded at Uncle Noah Woodham's home during her first year at Hickory Grove school. Later, she moved to Opp with her mother and brother buying the home on Ida Avenue now used by the First United Methodist Church. She willed the house to the Conference to be the home of retired ministers and family.

Miss Luna helped the ladies of Hickory Grove church to organize the Ladies Aid. The next year her brother died and she could not leave her mother alone at night. She was very well-liked by the school board and they didn't want to lose her so Papa would send one of his children each day with our new buggy and Mack, our nice maroon horse, to fetch her and then return her home at night.

We had Miss Luna and her mother in our home many times during the Summer months. Papa always saw that they didn't go away empty handed. They were always given something from our garden or a pound of butter or milk. Those were happy days for our family.

### More About Papa and Mama

Papa was a large, robust man. His hair was dark red and straight and he kept it cut short with no part. He died in 1918, the victim of that dreadful flu epidemic. I remember much about him. He often told me he wanted me to be another Luna Nichold. (She taught for 6 years at Hickory Grove school and was followed by Lula Belle Jones, principal, and Maggie Lee Rainer, teacher.)

Papa loved the church and gave the land for the relocation of Hickory Grove Church, the cemetery and school, from a part of our old homestead. He did not sing but knew and loved church music and encouraged his children to sing and most of us learned to play the pump organ and I suppose we all went to singing school taught by Papa's brother, Uncle Bill.

Papa was a kind man, always ready to help others. He paid the school tuition for many children. He never turned away travelers who wanted a meal or a night's lodging. Sometimes Mama would hesitate as she many times had to fire up the kitchen stove to cook (after having fed the big family) but Papa would remind her that they might be "angels unaware." The more he shared the more we seemed to have. Our table was always well-laden with food.

He was fun loving and he laughed - not a loud laugh - more of a chuckle or giggle, and he shook all over. He played many practical jokes and was the victim of many, but it was clean fun and not harmful.

One thing I learned from him, which remains with me, "In everything, give thanks." I remember how he thanked the Lord for a good bed to sleep on, for cool water to drink, rain for the crops, simple everyday things that we often take for granted.

Our home was home to the visiting preachers and especially the presiding elder who came every three months to hold quarterly conference.

A revival meeting during the summer often became a protracted meeting and lasted four to six weeks. People came from other communities by mules and wagons. Sometimes they stayed over at our house.

Papa saw that the cemetery at Hickory Grove was kept up. He also saw much jury duty. He was also a census taker and I went with him, doing the listing of names and keeping Mack and the buggy while he took time to look at a new cow or hog the family had.

Mama was a good person and a wonderful mother. After Papa died she did not try to take his place in the church, but she attended as long as her health permitted. She was a "matter-of-fact" person but showed much love. To her right was right and she would not "compromise with the devil." She kept the home together and it was a good home. The memory of Papa was always there. One of the few songs I remember Mama sing was "Wayfaring Stranger."

*Netha Woodhau Davis*

Mama died in 1935. Our daughter, Lula Clare, was only a few months old and Mama had just discovered that she was going to be red-headed - her only red-haired grandchild. *THE ONLY RED HEAD IN HER FAMILY*

## More of My Life

Our home was a place where our friends and relatives were always welcome. We, children, were free to ask our friends to come home with us from Hickory Grove church. Our yard was large enough for games. We kids could easily amuse ourselves until time to go back to the Sunday night service.

We enjoyed our own family. We could entertain one another. We enjoyed singing the most. Sometimes our close neighbors would hear us singing and would come to join us. Sometimes we would call them to come for a "sing-along" after supper time.

Papa liked to sit on the porch. It pleased him for Mama to come sit by him. When friends or relatives would come by he would tease and joke with them. He could not laugh loud like some of his brothers. He giggled mostly. He was very fond of Rev. Tisdale (Bernice Wise's father), who preached at Bethel Primitive Baptist Church. Rev. Tisdale would ask Papa to come to his church "like your good older brother, Josiah". Papa went one time and let me go along. That was one of the "Foot Washing Days". I had read in the Bible of Jesus' washing his disciple's feet but I had never seen a "foot washing service". Mr. and Mrs. John Ward, (father and mother-in-law of my oldest brother Ed) had their feet washed. That was my first and last time to see it done in church.

When our new house was first built, the road was a crooked, country road. Drummers, later called traveling salesmen, would hire a driver with a horse and buggy to take them from town to town. Some would have their own horse and wagon and they soon learned about Papa never turning away a stranger. They would stop by for a night's lodging and show their wares before leaving the next morning. Mama would buy material to sew into dresses for us girls. There would be drifters or wayfarers who would ask for a place to sleep. Papa would bring him in to the warm fire, give him food and a good bed. Some would slip away before any of us awoke, but others would stay for breakfast. Mama said to Papa, "Aren't you taking a chance by allowing so many strangers to come in?" Papa answered, "Now, now, God, will take care of us".

The county soon began surveying the road in front of our house. It wasn't long before workers began straightening the curves, lowering the hills, and covering the road with clay. A few people had automobiles by then. However, this road (now Highway 84W) was always well-traveled whether by car or horse and buggy. There have been many improvements over the years. Another great improvement is presently underway on this route bringing Andalusia closer to Opp.

The old Bembo farm, also known as the Jim Shine's home, was torn down and beautiful apartments have been built across the highway on part of this farm. This land adjoined my grandparents plantation. I can't remember grandpa's house. Many, many homes were sold and torn down during my lifetime.

A Mr. Bill Taylor built a large house near by. He had several sons and two daughters. Mrs. Dude Childre was one of the daughters.

Rupert Childre of Opp is a member of the Taylor family. The house had a round room on the front with an open porch all around it. Mr. Tom Spear, the first Mayor of Opp, bought it and lived there. He ran a small country store across the road from it. He later moved to Laurel Hill, Florida. My uncle, Malley Woodham, bought the home. In this house Cupidean Woodham Dubose first saw light. The house was torn down just last year. That was just one of the many homes on this highway in which the Woodham brothers lived. Cage Woodham's house is still standing, only it has been turned to face the street going in to the Country Club; the side of the house is now along the highway.

At one time, on Railroad Avenue in Opp, six of the Woodham brothers lived facing each other. Aunt Nancy was near by on Jackson Street. This was a very close knit family.

## Making Cane Syrup

Papa had a cane mill using a 100 gallon kettle to boil the cane juice down to syrup. He could cook only two kettles full a day. I have forgotten how many gallons of syrup he could make from the 100 gallons of juice. There was lots of work to do. The furnace was so big it took many oak logs to get it hot enough to boil the juice. The hot juice had to be closely watched to keep the skimmings removed and it keep it from boiling over. Papa would pull the hot grate out from under the kettle as the syrup came to the right doneness. There would be four persons with long handled gallon dippers who dipped the hot syrup from the kettle. This had to be done fast before it overcooked. A large barrel was placed on each side so the dippers could dip without having a dipper collision causing the hot syrup to spill. As soon as the syrup cooled it was put into cans. Papa never had any failures. He made real syrup for people who liked thick, clear syrup.

Mama didn't eat syrup but enjoyed the rock candy that was formed on the sides of the cans.

With as many kids as we had in our family there was always someone peeling a stalk of sugar cane to chew. We would take a peeling over to Papa at the kettle. He would rake the peeling around the kettle edge to collect the hot foam. He would then hand it to us to eat. He never allowed us to be near the hot kettle.

The cane mill consisted of a large shelter to cover the furnace and a storage room to keep the canned syrup. A pen for the hogs was at the side. The skimmings were fed to the hogs. They would be fat enough to butcher when syrup-making time ended. The cane mill had two large steel rollers set side by side, apart just enough so that when the cane came in contact with the wheels it would draw it through to be crushed. The juice went into a net covered barrel. A curved pole was attached on top of the mill at the lowest end. A mule was fastened by his harness to the pole and hitched to lead him around the mill in a circle.

Many farmers brought their sugar cane for Papa to make into syrup. I have known him to work on it for four or five weeks. It was a tiresome job. My brothers Jake, Bill, Perry, and Ben tended to the mill along with a hired black man, who also helped on the farm. I can't remember not having a black man to help with the farm work. The black man would stay in the house until bed time. He had a bed in the corn crib. He ate in our kitchen. My brothers loved to stay in the kitchen by the fire with him, and in the warm weather we would all be out on the porches and in the yards. He had black friends in Poley that he visited. They would come to our house to buy syrup or juice. The black people were hired at hog killing and cotton picking time.

We all had work to do but we were allowed to play. Papa kept some of his cane juice in the yard to use for selling if someone wanted to buy a gallon or more. He always had plenty of juice to drink free at the mill. He would tell my older sisters to invite friends to a candy making party (syrup candy pulling). They had fun and the guests did too.

## Our Neighbors

When I was still a child, Mr. Bob Rainer moved his family from Oakley Street to the Rembo farm. Papa and Mr. Rainer became good friends. Mr. Rainer farmed land for Mr. Jim Shines for one year but he (Rainer) wanted land of his own. He asked Papa for land large enough for a "two mule farm". Our old house, which was still standing, was torn down and the old lumber was used along with some new lumber (bought from Miller-Brent Mill at Poley) to build a house for Rainer on the corner of our land near the new Hickory Grove church. Papa gave him land under cultivation, enough for a "two-mule farm". Papa had new land in front of our house but he wanted to clear it for his own use and add it to one of the smaller farms on the road leading from our home into Poley. Papa and Mr. Rainer went to Jake and John Benton's stable in Opp to buy mules, in fact four new mules. Papa usually traded mules every two years. Sam, a son of Mr. Rainer, and my brother Jake had fun breaking those mules and plowing the land. They worked together, sometimes swapped work so it was more interesting to them. Soon, however, they were both called into the Army and trained at Ft. Oglethorpe, Ga. Jake, after 3 months training, got a disabled discharge because of poor health. Sam was sent over seas, a member of the Rainbow Division during the First World War.

The Rainer family included Trudy, Maggie Lee, Edyth, Kate, Sam and Ray. Four of the children attended Hickory Grove school. Ray Rainer and my brother were chums in school. Ray would come to our house every chance he had. We could hear him singing at the top of his strong voice as he passed the church down the road. Sometimes he'd sing "My Dog Has Fleas" and then "Nearer My God to Thee".

After the Sunday church service five pals would come to go with Perry to our pasture to play in the small streams running through it. They would catch minnows and crawfish and pull off their clothes to swim, if there was a hole deep enough. Ray Rainer, Perry, and three cousins, Willie Woodham, J. D. Woodham, and Dewey Short had lots of fun together. Sometimes they would allow younger brother Ben to take two other cousins, Tommy Short and A. P. Woodham along. There were red and yellow plum trees, chinquapins, hickory nuts, and blackberries to satisfy their appetites. Also there was a large scuppernong arbor to share with friends.

## My Brothers and Sisters

As the years went by my oldest brother, Ed, was the first to marry. He married Jessie Ward. Papa built him a house and gave him land to plant what he needed, but Ed was a carpenter and didn't farm much. His father-in-law gve them some land and Ed built their house. They had three children, Myrtle, Trammel, and George Ed.

Laura was next to marry. She married Walter Gay. They first lived in a little house where Walter was a sawmill foreman. They also lived in Geneva and later, Blountstown, Florida. They had four children Ethel Mae, Arrington, Comer, and a baby who died.

Victoria married Henry Day. They lived with his parents, the late Byrd Days. They had one daughter Wathon. Victoria died in 1918.

Belle married Colet Barnette. They lived in Opp and later moved to Pensacola, Florida where Colet was an insurance agent. They had five sons, Nix, George Colet, Jake, Joel, and James.

Bill went to Montgomery to work when he was 17 years old. Papa realized that Bill wasn't interested in farming. He was inclined to be a mechanic so Papa let him go with Charley Stewart to work in an automobile shop in Montgomery. Bill got a job with the L. and N. Railroad and made good working on those large train engines. He became a master mechanic and was often sent out to train wrecks to repair the large engines. He later became the roundhouse foreman. On his first visit back home in 1917 he met Hortense Coursons. The Coursons were from near Troy and had bought Uncle Noah Woodham's farm. It was love at first sight. He came home to marry her and took her to Montgomery to live. They soon bought a home on Cloverdale Road in Montgomery. They had one daughter, Billie Joyce. Bill died at age 56. Hortense still lives on Cloverdale Road and has several grandchildren.

Jake and Ben were roommates. (Jake's nickname for Ben was "Dock"). One morning as we were having breakfast we heard a loud gun shot. Jake quickly ran to his room knowing that he had left his newly bought rifle standing in the corner of his room. He met Ben coming out of the room with both hands covering his ears, frightened and crying. No one could scold him because he had the hole in the floor to remind him to leave the gun alone. He was 5 or 6 years old. I don't recall seeing him ever holding a gun in all his life. There was a gun on the wall of Papa and Mama's room but we were told not to play with it.

Bill and Perry were roommates on the opposite side of the house in a room next to the long hallway. When they would hear Mama tell me to fetch her something from the dining room they would deliverately stand by the door to scare me. There were three doors I had to go through and they would make sounds like a dog or a screech owl to scare me at each door! Now tell me why I had to be dorn between these two boys? ! My older sisters thought I was too small to be bothered with and the two younger ones, Ben and Retha, were babies - Ben on Papa's knee and Retha in Mama's lap. When Belle married, Florence was the only sister left at home so she took me in to be her roommate. She would play the organ and asked those two brothers (Bill and Perry) to come and join us for singing. Papa and Mama would sit in their room and enjoy our singing. Bill had a nice bass voice. Perry and I did pretty good with our young voices. Florence had had more practice. We all had attended Uncle Bill's singing school.



During the young adult years of Belle, Jake, and Florence (while they were still at home) the following friends and cousins came often to visit: Sam and Trudy Rainer; Pearl Jones; Ida Sellars; Dee Benton; Will Holloway and sisters Beth and Lucille; Lula and Bernice Tisdale. Woodham Cousins Lee, John Will, Carley, Arnold, Pearl, Lizzie, and many more. Other members of our family had friends that came that I could name but it would be too lengthy. I do want to mention Lula Belle Jones, and the Barnes (Mig Lou), Fannie Lou, Ocie, and Pearl. The Barnes home is still standing at Perry Store Road and Maloy Street. It is now owned by John and Nora Ashton. Pat and Dorris Woodham live there with the Ashtons. Also, I should mention other regular visitors to the Hickory Grove community: the Dorseys, the Hardages, the Waldings, and the Taylor Woodhams.

The year 1918 changed our lives in many ways. Florence married Angus Simmons and he went to the Army. The end of World War I was October 11, 1918. Jake contracted the dreadful contagious disease, influenza, which became an epidemic and killed many people. The doctors didn't know how to treat the patients. Jake took to his bed that October and other family members did too. Papa took to his bed on Armistice Day. Jake died first and Papa died five days later. Victoria died eight days after Papa, leaving her husband Henry Day and a 1½ year old daughter, Wathon. The memory of this sickness has lingered with me all my life. Mama was so grieved. As time passed on she began taking the in-laws on the farm to help he and to help them. Taking the granddaughter, Wathon, to raise was a comfort to her and helped he overcome her grief.

Ang Simmons came home from the Army. He and Florence moved to the little family house to farm. They had three children, Dorothy married to Lloyd Mashborn of Unadilla, Ga. and Sarah, married Terry Keogh of Harrisburg, Pa. and Evans married and lives in Tampa, Florida.

I was the next to marry. I married Clarence M. Gilchrist on October 21, 1919, son of the late Frank and Maggie Gilchrist of Opp. He had one brother, Edmond, and three sisters, Kate, Carrie, and Erin. All are deceased except Erin, who is married to Everett Wilson of Hart Avenue in Opp. We have one daughter, Lula Clare. Clarence was a druggist. He worked at Whaley's Drug Store (now Clemon's) for 15 years. The store was sold during the 1930 depression. We left Opp in 1935 and lived in Flomaton, Crestview, and Robertsedale, Alabama. In 1946 we moved to Pensacola, Fla. Lula Clare was 10 years old. She attended N.B. Cook Elementary, Clubbs Jr. High, and Pensacola High Schools. She was a member of Gadsden St. Methodist Church. She is a graduate of Florida State University in Tallahassee. She taught 13 years at Pensacola High School. In 1969 she moved to Red Hill, Pa. She teaches at North Penn Junior High School in Lansdale, Pa. She loves the State of Pennsylvania. I love to visit her there. There are many good people in Pa. as well as all over the world.

Clarence retired at age 70 but still did relief work until he became sick. He was the happiest when he could "roll pills". He would refer to himself as the "pill roller". We had just had our 47th wedding anniversary when he died on December 16, 1966. He was 74 years old.

In April of 1969, I married Albert Woodham at Charleston, S. C. (Pimlico). He died 3½ years later in October of 1972. He was the son of Malley and Ida Woodham of Opp.

I returned to my home town of Opp on December 25, 1972.

Papa knew that Perry would never be a farmer so when he finished the 7th grade at Hickory Grove school, Mr. Martin, the agent at the Opp depot, suggested to Papa that Perry might like to learn telegraphy. There was an opening in Andalusia so W. A. (Arnie) Woodham, who lived in Andalusia, was contacted to see if he would let Perry live with him. Everything worked out fine. Perry became active in the Methodist Church in Andalusia and was given a scholarship to Birmingham-Southern College. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree in 1927 and his Masters Degree in business administration in 1930. Perry and Louise Kelly of Birmingham were married in 1927. They had one daughter, Elizabeth Louise. During his lifetime he worked as a bursar at Birmingham Southern College, business manager of Central College in Missouri, assistant division accountant of Pan-Am World Airways in Oakland, and business manager of an electric company which he later owned in Santa Monica, California. He died suddenly of a heart attack in Tokyo, Japan in October of 1969 while on a business/pleasure trip. Louise still lives in Santa Monica near her daughter and three grandchildren.

Ben was the only son left at home when Papa died. He was a teenager but did pretty well with the farming. Mama encouraged him as much as she knew how since she had never supervised the farm. He and Retha had their friends and seemed to enjoy life at Hickory Grove. Poley was still a thriving little town, and when the cotton mill came to Opp more activity was added to the area. Probably the biggest boost to the territory was the addition of Micolas Cotton Mill.

When Mr. Kimbro from Florala purchased the Opp newspaper, Ben met his daughter, Lucille. They soon fell in love, married, and when they moved out to make a home of their own I saw my Mama in tears again. She was happy for them but giving up her last son was hard for her. I put my arms around her and teased her by saying, "Mama, you didn't cry when your daughters got married." She never saw any of us being married. I'm sure there were tears for all of us, but we didn't see them.

Ben and Lucille with their two sons, Dudley and Larry, moved to Florala because Lucille's Uncle, Ham Heath, asked that they come and help him with his newspaper. Mr. Heath lived with them for many years and when he retired he sold the Florala News to them. Lucille knew the newspaper business as she had grown up helping her father with his newspaper. She helped Ben manage the shop every day she could. She always enjoyed life and laughed alot. She was a good mother to the boys. Their first son died at age 12. Larry went to college for one year. Then he and Merle were married. He served in the Air Force, and when he got out he began working at the Florala News. Larry and Merle have one son, Gary and three daughters.

Ben died at age 54, the same age our Papa died. Lucille and Larry continued with the newspaper business. At one time they owned the Elba paper and the De Funiak Springs paper in addition to the Florala News. Lucille later married a Mr. Mc Rae. He died a few years ago. Lucille remains busy, keeping the home looking pretty, enjoying her many hobbies, and occasionally writing a column for the newspaper.

My sister Retha was the only child left at home with Mama after Ben married. Wathon, Mama's grandchild, was also at home.

A young man, Ester Davis, was hired to tend the farm for Mama and stay with them. Also, Mama took the teachers from Hickory Grove school to board in her home. It wasn't long before Retha fell in love and married Ester. They stayed with Mama until her death in 1935. They then moved to a smaller farm. They had two daughters, Dora who was born before Mama died, and Betsy who was born when they lived on the small farm. Ester was in the Army in the 1940's and when he was discharged they moved to Auburndale, Florida. They lived there for about 22 years until Disney World crowded them out. They left Florida and moved to Sargent, Nebraska. They have seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

### The Hickory Tree

On our plantation, not far from the cemetery, is a large hickory nut tree standing so gracefully alone in memory of all others that have fallen before. It made the nicest large nuts. We would gather a basket full to keep on the porch to crack and to take the tedious task of picking out enough of the meat to use in baking pound cakes. The hickory nuts gave the cakes a special taste that other nuts didn't have. This tree, I'm sure, is over 100 years old. It was a good size tree when I was 11 or 12 years old and I am now 81. Papa built the cane mill near it.

There are also two oaks on the land where our house used to stand. These were planted in 1909 after our new house was built in 1908. Ray Rainer became owner of the last portion of the estate a few years ago before he died. I hope his family will cherish these three trees.

In Hickory Grove cemetery there are two other trees that I have asked to be removed because they endanger the graves nearby. My parent's plot is close and I don't want the trees to fall on the markers of the five graves in this plot. I have asked the Mayor of Opp to have these two trees removed. My parents gave this land to be used for burial purposes. Now the land has been incorporated in the Opp city limits.

The heirs sold our homestead a few years after Mama's death. She had disposed of the smaller farms and houses, but kept the Rainer home and ours. Now both of these houses have been torn down. Mama lived for 17 years after Papa died. She raised 11 of her 13 children, and one granddaughter. She was a good mother.

There are <sup>two</sup> ~~two~~ members of this family still living; Retha W. Davis lives in Nebraska; and myself, Lula W. Gilchrist Woodham of Opp, Alabama.

Also living in Opp is James Orvis Simmons, son of Cecil and Myrtle Woodham Simmons. James' mother, Myrtle, was the first grandchild of my parents, daughter of Ed and Jessie Woodham. Myrtle died in 1977.

Other descendants live throughout Alabama and Florida. While some are located in Georgia, Mississippi, Nebraska, California, Pennsylvania and other states.

To conclude, I thank the Lord for my family and the good home I had to live in.

*Lula W. Gilchrist Woodham*