

Albert S. Pendleton Jr., President

October 24, 1972

VALDOSTA, GEORGIA

VOL. I No. 12

One of the newest gifts among our artifacts are copies of James Dasher's Cantatas, five to be exact. Margaret Dasher, James' sister, has presented these along with a picture of the Valdosta Double male quartette. I don't know of anyone locally who accomplished in music what James did. He was organist, music director and choral director for the First Baptist Church, then the First Christian Church most of his life and writing scores of scores of music. These five are only a few of his accomplishments. These are: The Nativity, Christian 1958, dedicated to Ernestine Rhodes, Joseph in Egypt, Operatta Cantata 1958, dedicated to Margaret Dasher, Bethlehem, A Short Christmas Cantata, The Beatitudes and Lord's Prayer, dedicated to Paul K. Fisher, Triumph of the Cross, Lenten-Easter Cantata. Jim, as we called him, was a teacher of music and was in the double male quartette. Thank you again, Margaret, for this very nice addition to our Museum.

Clyde White's talk on the McKey Family History was very good and we had the largest crowd yet. Elected to serve the following year are: President, Albert Pendleton, Vice-President, James Hall, Secretary, Fredeva Ogletree and Treasurer, Mrs. John Williams. New committees will be announced later. During the meeting James Hall presented the bound copy of the Bass Papers: History of Moody Field. Mrs. Emory Bass was present for the presentation of this impressive great work of Emory P. Bass Sr.

Our monthly meeting is this Thursday at the Museum. We had planned a field trip to Quitman but decided to wait until springtime. But with Quitman on my mind lately prompted me to use the article printed here. Everyone leaving Troupville did not move to Valdosta, many moved to Quitman as did the lady in this story. I am indebted to Frances Thomas McLaughlin, my sister and one of our members, for the information used here. It is really her article.

Grandma Thomas: More Than a Memory

by

Albert S. Pendleton Jr.

One of the most pleasant memories I have is of Grandma Thomas and her home on West Hill Avenue in Valdosta. She had a big old house under giant oaks with delicious grape arbors in the back. We'd visit there almost every Sunday, play on the long half-moon cement walk in front, swing in the swings, talk to Grandma. Actually, she was not my grandmother.

She was the grandmother of my two half sisters, but I knew and loved her, and felt her love for me, just as if she were my own. We'd sit for hours too and listen to her talk. One of my sisters is responsible for all the information that fills this article.

Grandma was called Fannie Elder, but born Susan Frances Elder, on the 25th day of October, 1849 at Watkinsville, Ga. Her father was E. C. Elder and her mother was Susan Hughey. There were two sons, Matt and Joe, born after Fannie.

Fannie's father died in 1854 when she was five years old. Some time after that her mother married a young lawyer, James H. Hunter, and went to Lawrenceville to live. Then the following children were born to Fannie's mother and step-father: Sam, John, Annie (Sweetie), Lizzie and David. The latter two children were not born in Lawrenceville. Jim Hunter was in bad health and needed to go to a different climate. In 1858 he picked up his family and moved to Troupeville in South Georgia. Lizzie was born in 1859 in Troupeville.

A few months after Lizzie was born Fannie went to Winder and visited her grandmother, Susan Thrasher Hughey. She recalled that her grandmother lived in a colonial home in Winder which was never finished on account of the War Between the States.

But, meantime, in 1859, while Fannie was visiting her grandmother, things were happening back home. Troupeville was dividing up. Some of the population were moving to Valdosta and the remainder to Quitman. Fannie's family moved to Quitman in 1860.

Not until 1861 did Fannie go back to South Georgia to Quitman to live with her family. Here she continued her schooling. She had a yankee teacher.

Nevertheless, Fannie was quite good in school, causing her mother to philosophize,

"Fannie's my smart girl, Annie is my sweet girl, and my pretty girl is Lizzie."

After the War Between the States Fannie's Pa built a home in Quitman. Then he and several other men decided to go to Brazil, South America. They were going for various reasons, Pa for his health. He sold his house to Captain McCall. At the last minute all backed out except one man from Savannah. Then Pa backed out, too. He rented a small house until he could build another. He named his next home, "Brazil", a beautiful house, Virginia style. The porch went all the way across the front of the house. There were four big white columns set off by a pink wall behind them, showing them off handsomely. He also had a balcony hung over the front door, and it was large enough for four people.

After Fannie finished school and was a grown young lady, Judge Speight hired her to come teach his children. She boarded at his house near Blue Springs and he built a little school house nearby for her to use for her classes. Blue Springs is a few miles east of Quitman.

While she was teaching at Judge Speight's there was a big church meeting in Quitman. That was the last Sunday in December 1872. After church that day Fannie and two of her girl friends were walking home together to Ma's house. They noticed a stranger walking home with Pa. Judge R. A. Peeples and his wife were with them. They had come over on the train from Valdosta to the meeting and were having dinner at Ma and Pa's, the stranger too.

Mrs. Peeples left the men to themselves and joined the ladies in preparation of dinner. She knew that Fannie was curious about the stranger. She nudged Fannie and whispered, "Fannie, he's a nice young widower. You should set your cap for him!"

Fannie thought of doing no such thing and it made her rather mad for it to even be suggested. This set things off to a burning start. Fannie tried to stay out of sight.

The young widower's name was Mr. Willie Thomas (William Lang). The dinner table was set for six: Ma and Pa, Judge and Mrs. Peeples, Mr. Thomas and Fannie's Grandma, who wouldn't go because she was deaf. Pa was on his "high horse" that day. He was going to have someone sit at the sixth place. He enjoyed making Mrs. Peeples laugh and set about calling the girls one by one to come fill the vacant place. None would go. Everyone seemed to know he had in mind that Mr. Thomas was eligible. So in exasperation, Fannie went to the table, mainly to make Pa hush. When she sat down, Mrs. Peeples said, "Captain Hunter, Mr. Thomas hasn't met Fannie". Then Pa very curtly said, "Mr. Thomas, this is Fannie." That improper short introduction added fuel to the fire for Fannie. She was furious, but cordial to Mr. Thomas.

After dinner they went into the living room. Mrs. Peeples played the piano and Pa embarrassed Fannie by trying to make her sing while Mrs. Peeples played. Night was coming on and Pa got the lamps to light them. Again he embarrassed Fannie by asking why she hadn't cleaned the chimneys and filled the lamps.

It seemed to Fannie that her patience was really on trial. Pa took off his boots and sat right there on the floor in front of the fire to fix the lamps. Mrs. Peeples, still in a playful mood, said, "Captain Hunter ought to have his behind spanked!" Judge Peeples was right in there helping Pa along with his mischief. And Mr. Thomas was taking it all in.

The following Sunday a buggy rolled up to Fannie's house, pulled by a beautiful dapple grey horse. It was Mr. Thomas! After church services he rode Fannie home. The next time he came, he passed by the school house in Blue Springs where Fannie taught. He saw her in the window of her school, but she wouldn't look at him. He brought a box of oranges for Fannie and the negro cook charged into the yard and called, "Miss Fannie! Miss Fannie! Mr. Thomas done been here!" He was also referred to as the good-looking Mr. Thomas.

The courtship was very short. Four months later on April 2, 1873, they were married. During the courtship, after the wedding date had been set, one evening, Mr. Thomas wanted to kiss Fannie goodnight, but she wouldn't allow this. After they were married she told him the reason she didn't was because the girls were eavesdropping on the balcony over the porch. Willie said, "That was hard."

Fannie didn't want a wedding, a large celebration, but Pa insisted on it. So Pa had the wedding and planned the festivities and invited all his friends. Fannie went merrily on her own way, and when asked something pertaining to the wedding, she would say, "I don't know. Ask Pa, it's his wedding!"

At the wedding when the minister asked if anyone objected to the two being joined in holy wedlock, Tom Key, a former gentleman friend, whispered, "I do", loud enough for Fannie to hear.

Fannie had often thought of how nice it would be when she married some day and to have just the two of them to cook for and keep house, but she never realized that dream. She married a widower with three small boys, aged about five, three and one. They were Will, Ed and

Walter. The three boys' mother was Lizzie Jones. After she died her mother kept the children and Willie until he married Fannie.

Willie and Fannie had nine children of their own. One died at birth, Wiley. Two boys never married, five boys did. At the present writing of this, the oldest child, Frank, passed away last year, 1971. He was born Jan. 2, 1876. And the youngest is still living. She is Clyde Thomas Pendleton (Mrs. W. F.), born July 2, 1891. She was the ninth child.

Fannie and Willie's seventh child, Wylie, at the age of six, stayed home from school one day with the ground itch. He often played with the older boys' guns after they had unloaded them. But this particular day the boys had hurried off to school after hunting and didn't take time to unload one gun. Little four year old Blanche, the eighth child, was in the room with Wylie while he was playing with the gun. It went off and shot Blanche through the left shoulder. She ran to Fannie crying, "Mama, Bubber shot me!" And she died in Fannie's arms. She is buried in Sunset Hill in the family lot.

After Fannie and Willie's first child, Frank, was born, they built a house at 710 West Hill Avenue. All the rest of their children were born in the same room in that house. It was added onto and remodeled, but they lived in that same house as long as they lived. The house is now occupied by the Crouch family. And my mother and father were married there.

One night in December 1911, Fannie got up near midnight to go to the bathroom. When she returned to the bed she felt Willie's face to see if he was all right, and his face was covered with a cold sweat. She called Frank and Joe, both doctors now, to come quickly to their Papa, but it was too late. He was dead. His heart had stopped while asleep.

When Fannie was 93 and too feeble to get out of her bedroom she made the following remark: "I never thought I would live in a privy! I turn to one side of my bed and there 's my privy, and to the other side and there's my dining-room, living-room, all in one!"

Fannie seemed to think everybody was waiting for her to die so she would be out of the way, but said, "I'm not going to die to p leaseure ANYBODY!" She wondered why she was kept here on earth, and supposed it was to try everybody's patience. In the last years she usually had a companion stay with her. One she had was Mrs. Budd. She said Mrs. Budd was like an old bachelor, so polite.

Fannie was hard of hearing but always had a quick comeback or witty remark to brighten the day, and some good advice worth taking. She used to like to tell the story about her yankee school teacher. One day they had a spelling bee. The teacher asked Fannie to spell, "calf". Fannie responded "C-O-F-F, coff". After many repeated tries, she wasn't able to spell it correctly and was finally sent to the principal for not behaving. She quickly explained to the principal that the teacher had told her to spell, "COFF", and so she spelled, "COFF"!

During her entire life there was no cursing allowed in Fannie's family. Her father didn't do it, and neither did her grandfather. "Plague take it", was the only one Fannie ever used. And her Ma said that was a bad one!

Life during the War Between the States or just prior to it was probably best summed up in her remark when she was asked how she happened to get from North Georgia to South Georgia. Fannie replied: "You know, insects crawl!"

She was "Miss Fannie" to many, "Aunt Fannie" to some, and "Mother Fannie" to others. She was "Mama" and "Grandma" to her own. She was loved by all who knew her.

These words, written by Temple Bailey, are the most fitting for Fannie, a devoted wife and mother, and a grandmother we love and remember: "We cannot see her, but she is with us still. A mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a Living Presence."

From microfilm of "The Valdosta Times" -- July 26, 1898. "There will be a party at Loch Laurel Tuesday attended by a large crowd of little folks and if the weather permits they are going to have a fine time. The party is to be given in honor of the birthday of Master M. J. Paine and a score or more of little p eople are expected to be on hand, with a good number of older ones to see that the day passes pleasantly for the little folks."

July 30, 1898. "Misses Pearl and Caro Lewis gave a bicycle party to a number of their friends last Thursday afternoon. After a ride over the city, the young people returned to the residence of Mr. John F. Lewis where a delightful spread of ices, cakes were served."

See you at the meeting Thursday, Oct. 26th.

Albert Pendleton