

Albert S. Pendleton Jr., President

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We appreciate the picture of Leonard Fillmore Shaw, father of Roy Shaw. Mr. Shaw was born in Berrien County in 1859 and died in 1900. He was councilman, merchant, farmer and connected with the Wests', Dashers and Ashleys in business.

It is our pleasure to announce that Joey Davis, VSC graduate, will be our program in January. His topic will be "History of the Baptists". Our Baptists here in Lowndes County began in Troupville and the second preacher, Rev. Wm. H. Goldwire was serving when the move to Valdosta occurred. Susie and I have been researching the Goldwires and play to have a surprise for you at the meeting--8:00 this Thursday.

Two articles appear in the January 25, 1879 Valdosta paper concerning the death of Mrs. P. Ellis. "Seventy-nine! What a ripe old age! We never see one of the very old people...with well-spent life behind them..but that we feel like lifting our hat... Mrs. E. has lived to see her children grow old--the Rev. F. R. C. Ellis having lived and labored in the Church...She has gone to rest with her husband--an honored minister of God, who has long since crossed the river, 'Her rest is doubtless sweet'."

The foregoing is the obituary of Mrs. T. W. Ellis (nee, Percie Dixon), wife of Dr. T. W. Ellis, one of the early physicians at old Troupville. Dr. Ellis was the first person buried in the "Valdosta Cemetery"--now called Sunset Hill. Dr. and Mrs. Ellis were the great grandparents of Mrs. Joyce Ellis McKey (Mrs. J. D.). Mrs. Ellis was born April 26, 1800. She is buried beside her husband.

The following is a tribute by one of Mrs. Ellis' children, same date--ninety-three years ago. These articles are found in the treasured scrapbooks of Miss Annabelle Myddelton.

Taken from The Valdosta Times: Jan. 25, 1879: "My Mother, Mrs. P. Ellis, died at the residence of her son-in-law, Mr. T. V. Clem, Valdosta, Ga., Jan 12th 1879, in her 79th year. Mother had been a great sufferer for fourteen months, and during all that time I never heard a murmur escape her lips. Her life has been devoted to her Church and its cause. She was a devoted Christian; was a great Bible reader and prayed a great deal. Her children have a precious treasure left them - her example - which is to them a priceless boon. All that medical aid could do was done for her restoration to health, but death had marked her for its own. She was conscious of her approaching end, and frequently remarked that she was only waiting the will of God to be done.

Thus, peacefully and triumphantly, closed the mortal career of our dear Mother. She sleeps in Jesus. She was found waiting for her Lord. She welcomed the messenger and the call to go. Through grace we believe our dear Mother has washed her robes in the blood of the Lamb. It is through this blood she overcame and now wears a starry crown. Her rest is glorious. Farewell dear Mother!

The city council, at the January meeting have offered us a site at the corner (or the lot behind) of N. Patterson and Roosevelt, provided the property can be used for our purposes. We are most appreciative of the City's interest in our efforts.

We would like to thank the Valdosta Daily Times, Tenny and the entire staff for their encouragement and support. When we see our efforts and hopes and wishes in print, it makes us know more people than we realize, are with us and care.

Often in the microfilm I have read notices that "Blind Tom is due to entertain at one of his performances", or that "Blind Tom played for a large crowd last night". I haven't been able to find out just who Blind Tom was or what he did. I thought of a guitar player singing the blues, making enough to travel from town to town. But in the scrapbooks of Miss Myddelton is an article from possibly a magazine, about "Blind Tom, the Musical Wonder of the World". He was really remarkable. Here are some excerpts of the article:

"Tom was born of Negro slave parents near Columbus, Ga., May 25, 1849. He himself was a slave until he was sixteen...born blind, and the only sign of intelligence he gave during infancy was an interest in music. When he was four years old, he found his way to the piano one night...played pieces that young ladies...had been playing during the day, and reproduced them with such skill as to astonish all who heard him.

"Tom never took lessons. He did not have intelligence enough to be taught anything. He played just as the mocking bird sings, because it is its nature to do so. There is no other instance in the history of music where any one as young as Blind Tom has shown such wonderful power of musical reproduction.

"Tom made his first appearance in New York January 15, 1861, and afterward traveled extensively in the United States and Europe, performing astonishing feats on the piano. ...I had a seat in the lower gallery, just above the stage, where I could see and hear... At length Tom appeared, led by General Bethune, his manager and former owner. Tom was wearing a neat black broadcloth suit; but no dress could make Tom anything but an idiot. As I looked at the vacant, idiotic face and the slouching figure, rolling its head from side to side and humming snatches of songs, I found it hard to believe that I was looking at perhaps the finest pianist in the world...and whose fame had filled the whole civilized world. General Bethune brought Tom forward and in a short address introduced him to the audience. He then led him to the piano.

"As soon as he was seated, a transformation took place. He was no longer an idiot. He held his head erect, squared his shoulders and faced the piano with the air of a master. Then Tom began to play. He played as only those who are taught of God can play. It was the very perfection of music...For perhaps an hour Tom held the audience enchained with the magic of his matchless music. Then General Bethune invited any one to come on the rostrum. A gentleman, evidently a finished musician, came forward and played a long, difficult piece in a masterly manner. Tom was then led to the piano and played the piece from beginning to end exactly as the other had done, only with more sweetness and expression. The gentleman, at General Bethune's request, called the name of every key that had been struck. He then played two pieces at the same time, one with his right hand, the other with his left. Turning his back to the piano, he played with his hands behind him.

"When the concert was over, I went to the stage...He had relapsed into his idiotic state and was swaying about, rolling his head from side to side, humming...and had to be held by the sleeve to keep from straying off. He was evidently born with the usual amount of intelligence but it all went to music, leaving his other mental faculties blank, and furnishing the most remarkable instance on record of one-sided mental developments.

"I do not remember the date of Tom's death, nor do I know where he is buried. A suitable monument should be erected in Memory of this man who, while he lived, was the musical wonder of the world."

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This article was written by Rev. C. M. Verdel who saw Tom at Montgomery, Alabama.

Today, Jan. 20, 1973, we paused to watch the Inauguration of Richard M. Nixon, the band playing, the invocations by the Baptist Minister, the Rabbi, the swearing in of Spiro Theodore Agnew by Chief Justice Warren Burger with Mrs. Agnew standing by. Then another invocation by Archbishop Ikaivas, Greek Orthodox Archbishop of North and South America, the the swearing in of Richard Nixon as President (second term) by Chief Burger, with a stunning Mrs. Nixon standing by holding two family Bibles. There was a smoky 21 gun salute, and by my count was short a few explosions. With a flag in his lapel, Nixon began..."we are on the threshold of a new peace in the world..." We pray he's right. It was a beautiful but cloudy show.

Feb. 28, 1905, "The Times": Misses Susie and Edith Converse and Nora Bryan will leave tomorrow for Washington City to be present during the inauguration of President Roosevelt."

March 7, 1905, "The Times": Three or four Valdosta boys were in the military parade at the Roosevelt inauguration last Saturday. They were with the cadets from the Georgia Military Academy, and were Albert and Fred Pendleton, Dick Fry and "Chip" (Albert) Converse."

See you at the meeting.

Albert Pendleton