

# FAMILY TIES AND MEMORIES

BY

SANDRA CUNNINGHAM FOSTER

AND

JANIS CUNNINGHAM Mc COY

SUMMER 1977

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*Christmas 1977*

*James D. Cunningham*





## DEDICATION

Pop and Big Mama are special. They are parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and even great-great grandparents. Each of us sees them through different eyes and each of us treasures them for different things. I can only tell about them as they have been to me and dedicate this book to them and the family they have produced.

When I think of Pop, I feel his solid, quiet presence. In my entire lifetime, I have had very few complete conversations with Pop. His contribution is more a sentence or two thrown in at just the right moment. This is especially effective when accompanied by the twinkle in his eye. Even this is extremely quiet and fleeting and easily missed if you are not watching closely.

His was always the lap you could crawl into and listen to the adults jabbering away. And you might even get "snuck" away for a treat, especially when Big Mama wasn't in the store. He has always been the one seeing that things ran smoothly--fixing those unequaled sunny-side-up eggs and red-eye gravy and those delicious rice and biscuit puddings. He was always there to clean it all up and start over again as another crew of us came in.

My most recent discovery about Pop is that he has a temper. This is second-hand knowledge to me, but I am assured thoroughly accurate. I have been told that the few times in his life when he finally said "Gut take it, Myra, Shut Up!" even Big Mama has quieted down.

This, of course, brings me around to her. In my mind, she is constant motion. Sometimes she is vigorous like the time she ran a Highway Patrolman off the road and then told him she would tell his Daddy on him if he dared give her a ticket--which he didn't. Even when she is quiet she is usually "fussing" at Pop for running off to the shop to get out of work and smoke.

She is never more active though than when she is sitting at the piano in her living room beating out a lively gospel tune. One of my earliest memories is marching around and around in her house to the music of "Keep on the Firing Line" played literally all over the keyboard.

She is a "goer" if there ever was one. You mention the word "go" around Big Mama and you'd better be prepared to load up, just be sure you leave room for Pop because he always goes too, and I secretly think he enjoys it as much as she does. Of all the vehicles she has owned, I will always remember that little green Henry-J that carried them so many miles. If ever a vehicle deserved honorable mention in a family history, it does.

She is also much prone to talk about her family but with justifiable pride for she and Pop have produced something unusual--a family whose love, closeness, and support for everyone within its bounds cannot be diminished by miles, generations, years, differences of opinions, or even the few deaths that have come our way. All of us at one time or another have felt this feeling of belonging to something very special.

This history is a very meager effort to represent the family who came before us, the family as it grew, and the family as it is today. I am proud to be a part of this family and dedicate this book to each past, present, and future link in the chain; but most especially to Pop and Big Mama who have contributed so much to all our lives.

--Mrs. Sandra Cunningham Foster



## IN APPRECIATION

There is no way to properly give credit to all whose time and knowledge went into the making of this book. There are a few, however, who must be mentioned.

First and foremost, Mrs. Edna Sanders of Vernon, Alabama, has spent many years researching the Sanders family. Virtually all the genealogical information about the Sanders family contained in this book came from her files. Without her invaluable help, this book would never have gotten off the ground.

Others who submitted graciously to our questioning who need special mention include Mr. Richard Black, the late Mr. Colin Black, Miss Belle Cunningham, and Miss Clema Cunningham of Fayette County, Alabama.

Then of course, we come to our immediate family. We have had varying degrees of reaction from this group all the way from those who accompanied us on some of our jaunts to those who think this is "the craziest thing they ever heard of." We wish to express our sincere appreciation to all of the ones who spent hours answering our questions, writing their life stories, and furnishing us with names, dates, places, suggestions, opinions, and just plain encouragement.

Even within this group there are some who must be singled out. Glenn and Ginney Cunningham are responsible for the publication of this book. They took our typographical errors, our garbled charts, our ridiculous instructions and have turned it into a book that we are proud to offer to you as our work.

And last, but certainly not least, our husbands--Roger Foster and Randy McCoy--certainly deserve honorable mention. They have suffered through hours of baby sitting, hurried-up meals, endless telephone conversations, and worst of all, those lengthy orations that started with "How does this sound?"

To all these people, for all these reasons we wish to say "Thank You" from the bottoms of our hearts. You have truly made this book "a labor of love."

*Mrs. Sandra Cunningham Foster*

*Mrs. Janis Cunningham McCoy*

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## CLIMBING THE FAMILY TREE

*Our first step in writing this history was to gather information. We began with Big Mama, Myra Agatha Sanders, but due to years of work by her sister-in-law, Mrs. Edna Sanders, we were able to copy Edna's files and have all the information we needed. Pop, Thomas Cosby Cunningham, was another story. Since we could find no one in his family who had done research, we were left to our own devices. The following story is about a trip we made to gather some information on Pop's family.*

Finally the day had arrived. We were going to Alabama. The trip had been in the planning stages for months but conditions had never been just right each of the other times it had been planned. Today was different.

My first stop was to pick up my first cousin, Janis. We had been working on a family history for some months and today was to be a very important step. She and I, her Dad and mine, and our Grandparents, Pop and Big Mama, were going to make a trip to their old stomping grounds in Northern Alabama to interview some relatives and look for old graveyards. We had just discovered the thrill of genealogy a few months ago when we embarked on this project to write a book on "our" family. Janis was ready when I got to her house, so we loaded her material in the already packed car and off we went. It was about an hour's drive to where we met the others and we talked over our expectations for the day.

Things were already in a bustle before we arrived and we had only to leave my children with my step-mother and Janis' son with her mother and we were ready. Much to my surprise, we managed to get situated quickly. Dad was driving, Big Mama was going to ride in the middle in the front because she always wants to, and Janis would be up front with them. Pop, Uncle James, and I would ride in the back seat. I was

going to tell Pop what we needed to know, Pop was going to tell us where to go, Uncle James was going to plot this on the map and somehow we were going to relay this information to Dad who was already backing out.

Dad asked, "Which way are we going?"

Uncle James replied, "That depends on who we are going to see. Who are we going to see, girls?"

"While ya'll decide that, I'm gonna' strike out toward Sulligent. I know we need to start from there."

"You'd better wait."

"Well, we gotta' start somewhere."

While all this was going on, I had been talking to Pop. "Pop, we need to get information on your mother's side of the family, the Souths, and we also need to talk to someone about the Blacks on your father's side."

Pop always talks slowly, "Well, the only one who might know something about the Souths is Buddy Ward or his sister. I can't remember his name but they live right there together. I guess the best way would be to go to Guin and turn south to Bluff."

Uncle James had been following this on the map. "Okay, Ferrell, we are going to Buddy Ward's. Just head on out the way we are going."

Dad asked, "Who is Buddy Ward?"

Big Mama caught that, "What are we going to see Buddy for? He doesn't know anything."

"No, Big Mama, we are going to see Buddy Ward's wife. She knows all this stuff," I said.

"She doesn't know anything about it. It's his sister that knows it all."

Pop interceded, "That's who we are going to see-- Buddy's sister."

Big Mama would not give up. "The one we really needed to see is Etta."

Dad asked, "Who is Etta?"



"Etta is Buddy Ward's mother."

Dad repeated, "Who is Buddy Ward?"

"Dad, that's Pop's mother's brother's grandson."

"Oh, that's as clear as mud."

With our first destination established, we settled in for the ride. I started showing Pop some old history books of Fayette County hoping he might recognize some names and soon he was covered up in papers and books that Uncle James and I were passing back and forth so that he could hardly see. At this point, Big Mama decided to ask Pop something.

"Pop, hey, Pop."

"He can't hear you, Big Mama. He's reading."

"Well, tell him to stop a minute. I've got something to tell him. Pop, if we are going to Buddy's, why not go down the Sandy Hollow road instead of going all the way into Guin?"

"Now, Mama don't start changing things," Dad was still careening down the highway at breakneck speed.

"I'm not changing things. It's a better way to go. Pop doesn't know where to go. He'll have us all over the place."

Pop replied, "Yeah, I guess that is a better way to go and we can stop by to see Richard Black."

"Who is Richard Black?" Dad asked.

I referred to my notes. "Richard Black is Pop's great-grandmother's brother's son."

"Oh."

I started to get excited. "Boy, if he can only remember his grandfather, it will put us back another generation. You know he might even know where they are all buried."

Shortly we came to a little town. Dad pulled over to a gas tank in front of a small variety store. Janis and Uncle James got out to see if they could find some tracing paper and charcoal to use at the graveyards, I got out because I had to hold the gas lever up on the pump, and Pop got out and stood behind the car to smoke a cigarette which he does on every possible occasion. Big Mama will not let him

smoke around her. He has to sneak them and he does so whenever the opportunity presents itself even if he has just had one.

Eventually we all got back in the car and struck out again. We made the turn off the Sandy Hollow Road and traveled down it for a while, when Dad finally said, "Okay, Pop, you will have to tell us ahead of time where to turn."

"I can't see."

"I'll tell you," Big Mama chimed in.

"You won't tell us 'til we are already past it, Mama."

"Well, if you would slow down and quit slinging us all over the place we might have time to see."

"There it is," Pop said.

Dad slammed on the brakes. "Hey, it looks like a crow's foot with both these roads turning off at once. Which one do we take?"

Relaying the information that Pop was quietly passing on to me, I said, "Take the one to the left."

But Dad was already speeding down the other one.

"Hey, this is somebody's driveway."

Big Mama said, "The man who lived here killed himself."

"Well, let's hope they don't kill us."

Back we went to the other turnoff and after a lot of winding down gravel roads, Big Mama yelled, "There's Ora's house! There's Ora's house!"

"Who is Ora?" Dad asked.

"And there is Richard Black's house across over there."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, that's Richard's house alright."

Dad slowly turned into the driveway and noted the mailbox which read O.S. Brown. "I think we need to go a shade deeper."

Uncle James got out to go up to the door. Janis and I got out to collect our notes, Pop got out to smoke, and



Big Mama and Dad got out to stretch their legs. Uncle James was busy trying to explain who we were and who we were looking for, when Big Mama spotted somebody she knew. She went hurrying up to the woman who was saying, "Myra, land's sake, I haven't seen you in a month of Sunday's. Come on in here and sit down."

Big Mama sat down on the couch on the porch and started talking about her recent operation. Janis, Uncle James, and I were still standing around in the yard feeling very awkward when Richard Black came out. He had been shaving when we arrived. We all pulled up a chair and talked to him for about thirty minutes. We found out not only his grandfather's name but also where he and his father were buried. While Janis and I were busy writing as fast as we could, the others were getting directions to the graveyard which was somewhere out in the woods. Reluctantly, we took our leave. Richard Black was a charming old gentleman and Janis and I could have talked to him all day, especially since he seemed to be enjoying it as much as we were.

When we got back in the car, we set out to find the graveyard. Big Mama directed, "Go down this road 'til you come to the dead-end and take a left."

"No, Mama, a right."

"It was a left."

"It was a right, go past three houses, and then a left."

By this time we had reached the dead-end, we took a right and started counting houses. "There's two, now a little piece down the road there should be another one, then we turn at the next gravel road."

"There's one way back up there but it looks abandoned."

"I guess that counted. Here is the next gravel road, but it sure is close to that house. Hey, this is another driveway."

"We're gonna' get shot yet."

We backed out of the driveway, counted that as the third house, found the gravel road and started looking for the next landmark--an old broken down house. Just past this old house was a road which was just a pair of ruts down thru the woods ending in the graveyard we were looking for. We bailed out again. Pop got a smoke, Big Mama rested in the car, and the rest of us started down the little road like we were going to a fire. There it was. In the middle of the woods, a small clearing with the unmistakable pale gravestones. We began to run back and forth reading the inscriptions and wrote them all down. Presently, we finished and got back in the car.

"Where are we going now?" Dad asked.

"Well, we're going to Etta's, but it is almost dinnertime. I hate to come in on them right at dinnertime. Let's go on back out and go up to that little store at the crossroads and stop for a few minutes," Uncle James said as he consulted his map. We stopped at the store and bought some cheese and crackers, some milk and a candy bar or two. We all went back outside and Janis and I sat down on some pine straw to talk over the morning.

"Hey Jan, something is worrying me. Where are we going now?"

"I don't know," she replied.

About that time Dad walked up and I asked him the same question. "Well, I thought we were going to see Etta, but I just found out that Etta is dead and I'm not so anxious to go see her anymore."

"I thought that's what Pop said a while ago. I guess we are going to see Buddy Ward's sister then."

"As long as it's not Etta. That's carrying this a little too far."

We loaded up again, went a mile or two down the road to the sister's house but nobody was home. We then found Buddy's house, but some people on the side of the road told



us that the old woman was dead and Buddy had moved off, so we were at a dead-end.

Since we had a little extra time and we were "right close," we decided to visit Pop's old homeplace. We were again careening down the road when Dad said "Okay, Pop, tell me where to turn."

"Well, you could have turned right back there." Dad started to hit the brakes. "No, just go on up the road. You can turn at Coon Dillard's house."

"Who is Coon Dillard?" Dad asked.

"He's an old man who loved to go coon hunting."

"We're not looking for him, we're just looking for his house," Janis said.

"Everybody knows where Coon Dillard's house is," Big Mama put in.

"Well, I don't, so Pop, you be sure and tell me way ahead of time this time," Dad reminded.

"It's on up yonder."

"How much further?"

"A little piece." These were all the directions we could get out of Pop.

"Everybody knows where Coon Dillard's is," Big Mama repeated.

All this time, Uncle James had been trying to find a road sign to plot our course on the map. This was important in case some of us wanted to come back sometime without Big Mama and Pop. "Well, I can't find Coon Dillard's on the map. Maybe we ought to write the Alabama Highway Department about that."

Luckily I heard Pop say "It's on top of that hill up there." I relayed this information to Dad who slowed down and made a nice easy turn for a change. We went a couple of miles down this gravel road and came upon the old homeplace which still had one large chimney and some of the walls and floorboards intact. Uncle James, Janis, and I scrambled out of the car; up a steep bank, over the

honeysuckle bushes, briars, and fallen boards to look, touch, and take pictures. Pop got out to smoke, Big Mama and Dad sat talking about the log truck we had parked beside.

We were still climbing around collecting souvenirs when the man who owned the truck came up. He also owned the land we were on. Dad explained who we were and we came down the bank with rocks, and boards just as the man was saying "Take all you want. I think I remember ya'll coming up here before." He had turned back to Big Mama and Pop. "Ya'll were up here on a Sunday afternoon and were eating dinner off the hood of your car."

Big Mama, who has always been blunt, said, "Yeah, and you came staggering out of the woods drunk as a skunk." The man cringed but not as much as we did since we had just been caught red-handed trespassing on his property. He smiled tightly and said, "That must have been someone else."

"No, it was you alright," Big Mama insisted.

Dad was cranking the car as fast as he could and as we started off, the man said, but without much conviction, "Ya'll come back some time."

We visited three more graveyards. At each stop Uncle James, Dad, Janis and I would charge out of the car, roam thru the markers, write until our hands were tired, compare notes, and finally pile back in the car ready for the next stop. Pop always got out to smoke, and sometimes when he had finished that "nasty thing," he and Big Mama would slowly make their way thru the most familiar markers. I caught them remembering Grandma's funeral and talking about the little brothers who had died so young. I wrote this all down, too.

We visited the house where Big Mama and Pop spent their wedding night. It was just as it was in 1916. The house is now 82 years old and still being lived in by relatives. We explored their barns made out of hand-hewn logs and marveled at the old wagon, and other antiques literally strewn all over the place. Big Mama jabbered to Cousin Elora

while Pop smoked. We made a couple more stops and interviewed another cousin of a sort who told us that one of our ancestors was a Moore woman who hung herself in South Carolina and caused the whole family to have to move to Alabama. Janis and I exchanged glances and tried to keep from laughing.

Finally we were on our way home. The front seat was still in a constant state of turmoil with such good natured banter as, "Ferrell you're gonna' hit that car and wreck us yet." "No, Mama, I don't believe I want to." Uncle James was marking the map with Coon Dillard's house, the back-roads, and the different turns we had taken. Pop was quietly resting, and I couldn't help reflecting on what the day had meant to me.

I closed my eyes and could see the weathered face of Richard Black with a bandaid on one side where he had tried to hurry up his shaving. My hand tingled where I had laid it on the gravestone of my great-great-great-great-grandfather. My eyes misted as I saw again Big Mama and Pop standing on the steps of the house where they had started their life together remembering riding in the borrowed buggy down that road. Most of all though, I savored the laughter we all shared in that car which at that very moment was bringing us closer to home and the day to an end. I knew then that this was what a family was all about, all the ancestors we had been ferreting out, all the old places they had lived, all the old stories, but most of all the people who were living now and the bond of blood and love we shared.

The day had indeed finally arrived and was almost over, but it had lived up to every expectation. It had provided Janis and me with a gold mine of information from the memories of others, but even more it had provided us with an unforgettable memory of our own. This was really the "stuff" that family histories are made of.

--Mrs. Sandra Cunningham Foster



## OUR ANCESTORS

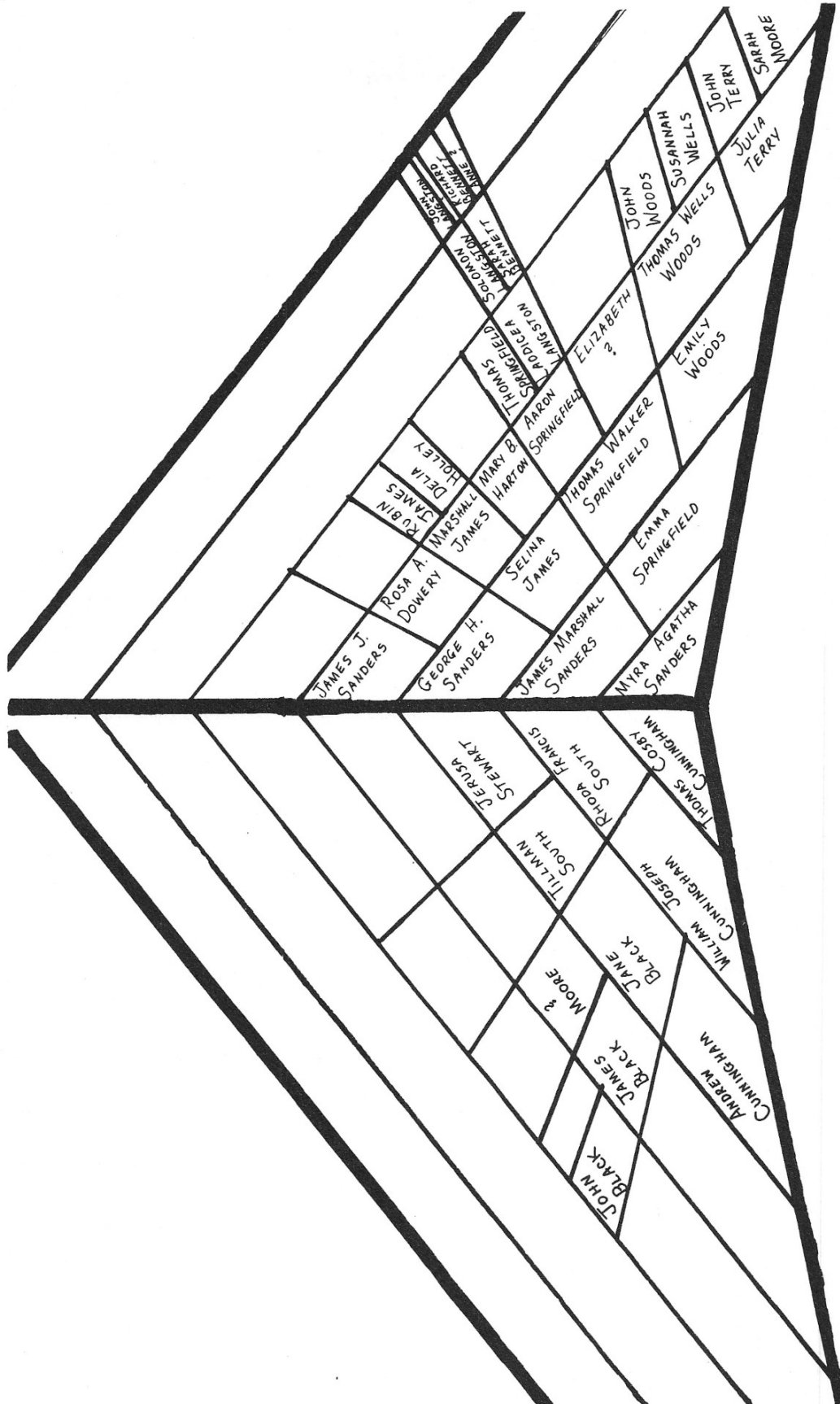
*This section may seem lengthy, but in truth we have only scratched the surface. It seems this is going to turn into a life-time hobby. Since we did not want to wait that long to publish this history, we are going to relate what we have compiled to date.*

*We will be adding to this section of the history down through the years and have more information at the present time than is contained in these pages. We welcome any help or additional information.*

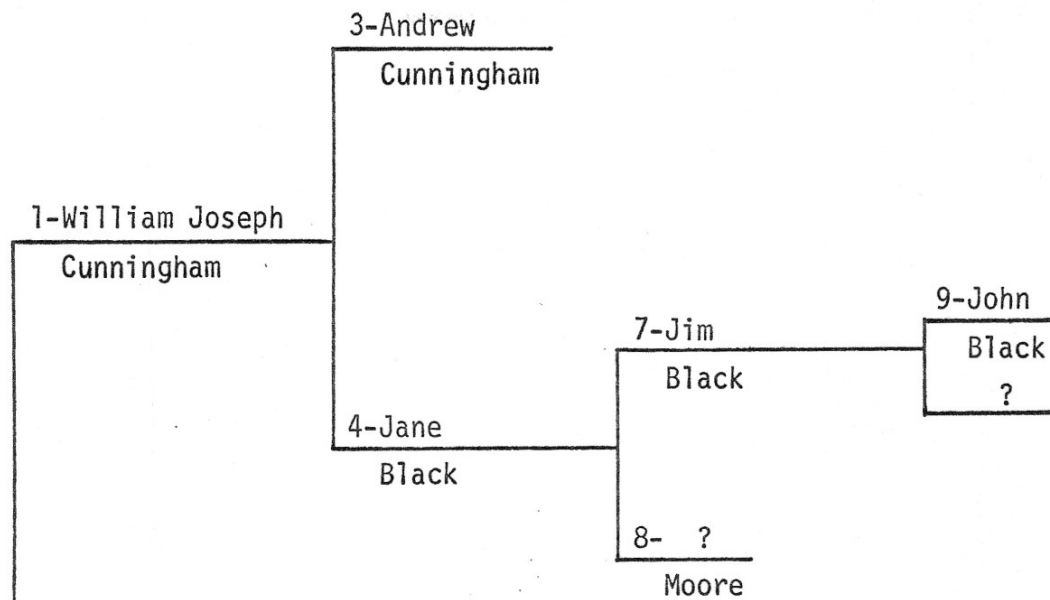
*For simplification, we have divided this section into Pop's family and Big Mama's family. Virtually all the information on Big Mama's family came from Mrs. Edna Sanders of Vernon, Alabama who has spent many years researching the information contained in this book. We wish to thank her for her invaluable help.*

*One branch of our family was extremely colorful and active during the time of the Revolutionary War. Much is written about them. We have condensed the information and are putting it in a special part on the Langstons, even though they are part of Big Mama's family.*

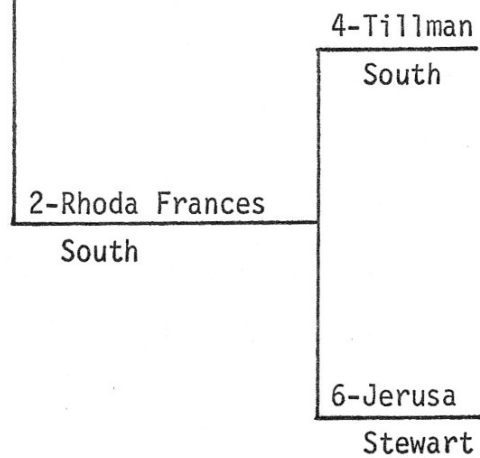
*We hope you enjoy reading a little about those who have gone before us. We have certainly enjoyed researching it.*



# OUR ANCESTORS



## *Thomas Cosby Cunningham*







REVEREND WILLIAM JOSEPH CUNNINGHAM AND LELA RUSSELL CUNNINGHAM  
*(Pop's Father and Step-mother)*

WILLIAM JOSEPH CUNNINGHAM (1)  
*(Pop's Father)*

Born: December 9, 1861, Fayette County, Alabama  
 Died: 1937  
 Married: Rhoda Frances South  
 Lela Russell 1871-1942  
 Father: Andrew L. Cunningham  
 Mother: Jane Black  
 Children: (Rhoda South)  
 Winston (1881)  
 Frank Cortez (1884)  
 \*Thomas Cosby (3/15/1896)  
 (Lela Russell) m. Myra Agatha Sanders 2/16/1916  
 Edna (8/1898)  
 Lowell (10/14/1899-8/21/1900)  
 Joseph Oather (4/12/1901-6/9/1903)  
 Acton  
 Nima  
 Loela (1902-1956)  
 Eunice

William Joseph Cunningham was a Missionary Baptist Preacher who held many revival meetings and used to make the round trip from Bluff to Vernon each month, a distance of twenty miles. He received a salary of \$1.50 a year but when times were hard, he would sometimes take up a collection also.

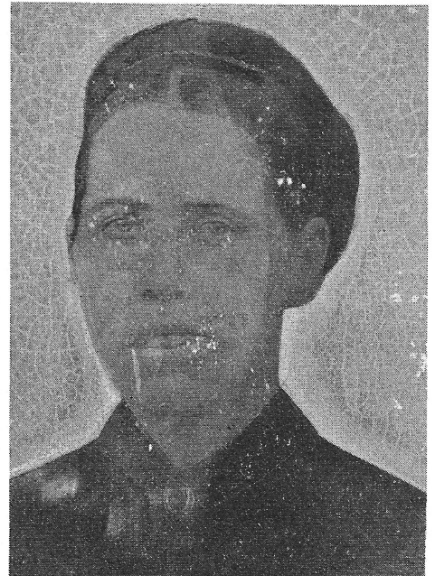
He was a farmer who always got up at 4 o'clock every morning and had his breakfast no later than 5 o'clock. Even in much later years when he was too old to farm he always got up early.

RHODA FRANCES SOUTH (2)  
(Pop's Mother)

Born: July 1, 1861  
 Died: July 1, 1897  
 Buried:  
 Married: William Joseph Cunningham  
 Father: Tillman South  
 Mother: Jerusa Stewart

Rhoda Frances South was the mother of Pop and the first wife of William Joseph Cunningham. She died of a tumor which had been operated on in Memphis, Tennessee. This was the only time she left home in her entire life and the furthestmost she ever traveled.

A few minutes before her death, she requested that her husband marry her cousin Lela Russell, which he did within 3 1/2 months after her death. Lela was a distant cousin.



Rhoda was born and died on the same day of the year within 30 minutes of the same time and within a mile of where she was born. Her father had deeded the couple some of his land at the time of their marriage and they had built their house on it.

TILLMAN SOUTH AND JERUSA STEWART (5 and 6)  
(Pop's Grandparents)

Children: Marcellus  
 Fenton - teacher (7/18/1866-1/20/1941)  
 Sylvester (12/2/1868-2/16/1939)  
 Rhoda Frances (7/1/1861-7/1/1897)

Little is known about this side of the family because of the death of Rhoda when Pop was still an infant. He does not remember these grandparents at all.

Tillman and Jerusa are buried in the Stewart Cemetery in Fayette County, Alabama but their graves are unmarked.



ANDREW L. CUNNINGHAM (3)  
(Pop's Grandfather)

Born: , Fayette County, Alabama  
 Died: August, 1861, Atlanta, Georgia  
 Married: Jane Black  
 Children: James Benjamin (9/2/1857-4/15/1942)  
           Thomas  
           \*William Joseph

Andrew L. Cunningham was Pop's grandfather. He served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. He joined in Atlanta after driving a team of steers with a wagonload of clothing and other supplies. He contracted a case of pneumonia and was sent home on sick furlough, but to avoid being captured by Union Calvary, who were raiding close by looking for prisoners, Andrew decided to take his chances on getting back to Atlanta, even though he was still deathly ill. He did make it back to Atlanta but died soon afterward and is buried there in a mass grave.

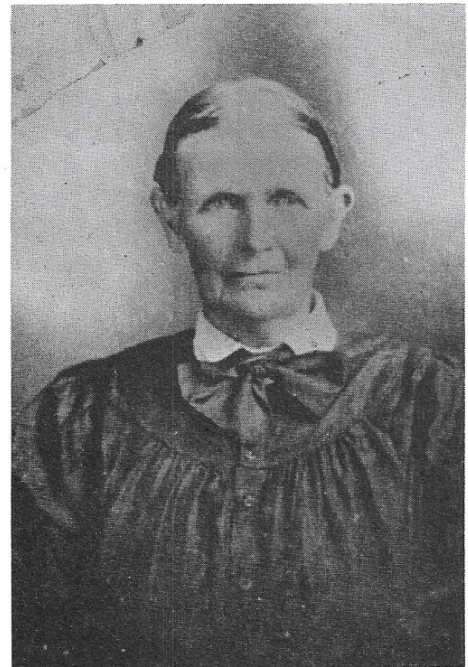
Pop's father never knew his own father because Andrew died in August before his son was born in December.

This branch of the Cunningham family originally came out of North Carolina.

JANE BLACK (4)  
(Pop's Grandmother)

Born: March 16, 1837  
       Chester County,  
       South Carolina  
 Died: March 4, 1918  
 Buried: Springfield Church  
       Fayette County, Ala.  
 Father: Jim Black  
 Mother: Moore

After the death of her husband in the Civil War, Jane lived a quiet life in a house way back off the road with very little contact with any one, including her family.



JANE BLACK



## JIM BLACK (7)

*(Pop's Great Grandfather)*

Born: August 21, 1813, Chester County, South Carolina  
 Died: September 7, 1891  
 Buried: Sizemore Cemetery, Fayette County, Alabama  
 Father: John Black  
 Married: ? Moore (8)  
           ? Dolster  
           Isabelle Miller

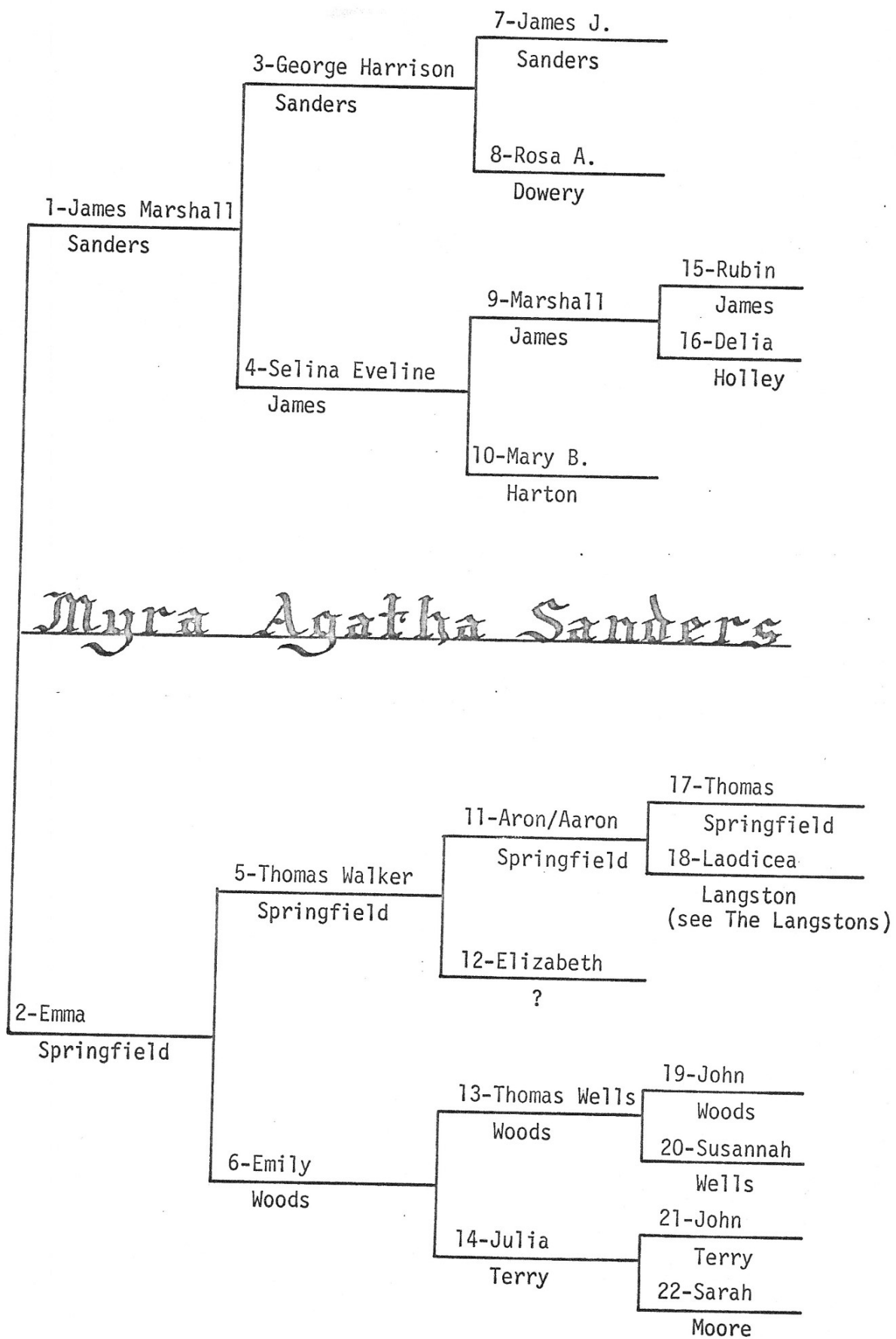
Jim Black was an extremely colorful member of our family. Jane Black, Pop's grandmother, was Jim's oldest daughter by a Moore woman. This Moore woman hung herself in South Carolina. There was some question of foul play in the matter, some of it implementing Jim's second wife, a Dolster woman. Because of the scandal the whole family packed up and moved to Alabama, including Jim's father, three brothers, one sister, and the Dolster woman.

In his later years, he was baldheaded and eventually settled down to being a farmer.

## JOHN BLACK (9)

*(Pop's Great-Great Grandfather)*

Born: June 1, 1787, Chester County, South Carolina  
 Died: 1854  
 Buried: Sizemore Cemetery, Fayette County, Alabama  
 Children: \*Jim Black (8/21/1813-9/7/1891)  
           John Black (12/8/1820-1/18/1869)  
           Wife: Jane C. Black (8/5/1846-7/27/1860)  
           Joseph Black (4/2/1825-11/3/1896)  
           Wife: Mary E. (12/23/1828-2/3/1876)





THE JAMES MARSHALL SANDERS FAMILY  
(Clara, James, Myra, Emma, Kent, and Lessie--Taken in 1899)

JAMES MARSHALL SANDERS (1)  
(Big Mama's Father)

Born: May 22, 1868, Lamar County, Alabama  
Died: March 26, 1939  
Buried: Sanders Cemetery, Lamar County, Alabama  
Married: Emma Springfield, December 23, 1888  
Father: George Harrison Sanders  
Mother: Selina Eveline James  
Children: (See Emma Springfield)

The first time James Marshall Sanders saw his future wife was when they were both quite young and lived on adjoining hills. He decided at that time that he was going to marry her someday and he eventually did.

He was completely uneducated until his marriage when Emma taught him to read and write a very good hand. He eventually went on to become a businessman, assistant mail carrier, president of the school board, and at all times a farmer.

At one time while he was plowing, his family was burning off some terraces. Myra was quite young and caught her dress on fire. He leaped through the terraces and grabbed her to him to smother out the flames. This is one of Big Mama's first memories of him.

In later years he became a heavy set man and picking cotton was hard for him so he designed a four-wheel low-set wagon that he sat on and pushed backward while he picked cotton. He also owned two sets of tools--one which he loaned out and one which he kept just for himself.

He became very interested in singings and went each Sunday with his family in tow somewhere to conduct a singing. He went on to become a singing teacher and also an undenominational preacher, who in later life, built his own tabernacle near Vernon, Alabama.



## EMMA SPRINGFIELD (2)

(Big Mama's Mother)

Born: December 28, 1866, Lamar County, Alabama  
 Died: October 27, 1947  
 Buried: Sanders Cemetery, Lamar County, Alabama  
 Married: James Marshall Sanders, December 23, 1888  
 Father: Thomas Walker Springfield  
 Mother: Emily Caloway Woods  
 Children: Born in Vernon, Alabama  
           Clara (4/28/1891-1/22/1973)  
               m. John Wesley Perkins 6/9/1912  
           Lessie (3/13/1893-12/19/1975)  
               m. Asa Boyd McCarver 1/14/1914  
           \*Myra Agatha (2/9/1895)  
               m. Thomas Cosby Cunningham 2/16/1916  
           Gaston Kent (9/3/1897)  
               m. Eunice Adeline Turner 5/16/1920  
           Kelley Gray (4/21/1900-11/30/1961)  
           Reginald (11/6/1902-8/31/1906)  
           Prentice (7/19/1906) m. Edna Earle Boman 1/2/1927

Emma Springfield was a well educated woman. She taught school in the community. In addition she wrote many poems and songs. One of her poems was put to music and published.

Emma was a very religious person with very strong convictions. The following letter is a testimonial toward these convictions. It is believed this is one of her last letters. She died just three months after it had been written.

July 31, 1947

Dear Glenna:

The youngest one of the

W. L. C. family,

I surely was glad and

very much surprised too

to get your letter yesterday

from far away Tex. and

you in the Army.

However, I appreciate your

letting me know where you

are. I enjoyed your letter

so much, read over and over.

Every thing here about as usual.

Just and family all except

Charles (who is in school at

## EMMA SPRINGFIELD (continued)

"2"

The University in Tuscaloosa,  
 Well, working in Memphis)  
 left early last Sun. A.M. for  
 an extended visit in Kansas,  
 a card yesterday saying they  
 were OK, and having a  
 wonderful trip.

Glenn, be a good, sweet, boy,  
 please don't drift into any bad  
 habits, always remember that  
 your daily record is being  
 safely kept for eternity and  
 you will surely be called to  
 face that record at the end  
 of life's journey, which may

3

be nearer than we think,  
 who can tell?  
 Abstain from all appearance  
 of evil. Glad you enjoyed  
 the Church service, go regularly  
 and I hope it will prove a  
 blessing to all you men and  
 boys.

I am not strong, real poorly  
 but so thankful that I can  
 be up and do my little bit.  
 I'll keep you on my prayer  
 list at all times.

Bundles of love and a hearty  
 God bless and keep you ever,  
 Just the same old G. mother.



## GEORGE HARRISON SANDERS (3)

*(Big Mama's Grandfather)*

Born: March 8, 1845, Fayette County, Alabama  
 Died: December 4, 1910  
 Buried: Sanders Cemetery, Lamar County, Alabama  
 Married: Selina Eveline James  
 Father: James J. Sanders  
 Mother: Rosa A. Dowery  
 Children: Annie Belle (6/25/1866-5/25/1937) m. William C. Morton  
           \*James Marshall (5/22/1868-3/26/1939)  
                     m. Emma Springfield 12/23/1888  
                     Cornelia E. (5/19/1876-10/24-1949) m. Darling Belk  
                     Ledora Adeline (Dodie) (12/22/1878-?)  
                             m. Willie Strawbridge  
                     Aurora Velulie (3/6/1881-9/1/1929)  
                             m. John Adams, Mike Trimm  
                     Garland B. (3/12/1884-8/6/1887)  
                     George Harvey (9/13/1886-3/17/1965)  
                             m. Tennie Mattison, Mary M.  
                     Donie Charlotte (6/21/1889-9/23/1909)

George Harrison Sanders was Big Mama's grandfather. She remembers him vividly as a very proud man. He was a horse trader from Vernon and his horses were his pride and joy. He would not let anyone pass his horses on the road and only kept the ones who could outrun other horses. He had a crippled hand from an injury when a mule kicked him and he had a habit of rubbing this hand all the time.

He joined the Confederate Army at the age of 16 and served in Company G, 41 Alabama INF C.S.A. He fought in the Battle of Shiloh among other battles. He and six of his brothers went to war and all but one returned.

## SELINA EVELINE JAMES (4)

*(Big Mama's Grandmother)*

Born: June 10, 1848, Fayette Co. ,  
 Died: April 11, 1932 Alabama  
 Buried: Sanders Cemetery  
 Father: Marshall James  
 Mother: Mary B. Harton

Memories of Selina James indicate she had a strong character. In her later years she chewed tobacco and dipped snuff. Her people originally came out of North Carolina and had traces of Cherokee Indian Blood.

It has long been rumored in the family that her line can be traced back to James of England but there is at the present time no proof of this.







REVEREND THOMAS WALKER SPRINGFIELD AND EMILY WOODS SPRINGFIELD

THOMAS WALKER SPRINGFIELD (5)

(Big Mama's Grandfather)

Born: June 6, 1825, Greenville, South Carolina  
 Died: August 26, 1903, Ensley, Alabama  
 Buried: Oakland Cemetery, Ensley, Alabama  
 Married: Emily Caloway Woods, November 25, 1847  
 Father: Aaron Springfield  
 Mother: Elizabeth ?  
 Children: Born in Lamar County, Alabama  
           Thomas J. (1/26/1849-11/3/1926) m. Susie Stewart  
           Martha Susan (9/24/1850-7/19/1926)  
               m. Rev. George B. Taylor, Child: Hattie  
           William James (9/15/1852-7/6/1883)  
               m. Lolly Montez Denman, Ch: Mert, Claude, Donie.  
           Woods (3/11/1854?) m. Margret Guin  
           Green Bulger (1/15/1856-3/13/1926)  
           Elizabeth Frances (4/14/1858-?)  
           Hattie Hemmings (6/18/1860-9/24/1888)  
           Mary Alice (12/10/1862-6/28/1933)  
               m. McNeil, Buggins (Went blind)  
           \*Emma (12/28/1866-10/27/1947)  
               m. James Marshall Sanders, 12/23/1888  
           Bulah (6/11/1870-8/11/1945) M. John Tate Huffstutler  
           Lulah (6/11/1870-8/1954) never married  
               (Milliner in New York)  
           George Walter (2/20/1873-?) Baptist Minister

Tom came to Alabama with his parents in 1825. He became a well educated man. He was the Postmaster of Vernon and also founded the Freewill Baptist Church in Vernon which is now Furnace Hill Church. His picture is still hanging in the church.

EMILY CALOWAY WOODS (6)

(Big Mama's Grandmother)

Born: October 12, 1830, Lamar County, Alabama  
 Died: May 3, 1918  
 Buried: Oakland Cemetery, Ensley, Alabama  
 Father: Thomas Wells Woods  
 Mother: Julia (Judy) Terry

## JAMES J. SANDERS (7)

*(Big Mama's Great-Grandfather)*

Born: August 4, 1808, South Carolina  
 Died: September 25, 1865, Fayette County, Alabama  
 Buried: Sanders Cemetery, Lamar County, Alabama  
 Married: Rosa A. Dowery  
 Children: Mary A. (6/3/1830 in S.C.) m. Asa Hollinger  
           James E. (9/13/1833 in S.C.)  
           Merbe M. (8/14/1835 in S.C.)  
           James Wm/Wesley (9/18/1837 in S.C.)  
               m. Mary E. Richardson 11/6/1864  
           Sarah E. (12/14/1839-?) m. Fennley Sherrill  
           Harvy (Harry) Monroe (12/4/1841-?)  
               m. Matilda Jane Parker. Served in Co. G 41  
               Ala. INF C.S.A.  
           William A. (5/9/1843-?) m. Martha Parker  
               Killed in Civil War near Atlanta, Georgia  
 \*George Harrison (3/8/1845, Fayette Co.-12/4/1910)  
           m. Selina James  
           Andrew Jackson (Albert J.) (5/5/1847-1/15/1907)  
               m. Mary Susan Bankston. Served in Co. G 41  
               Ala. INF C.S.A. Killed by a horse  
           Jefferson Greenberry (9/13/1849-7/16/1920)  
               m. Melina Pennington, Sarah Frances  
           Rosa Ann Martha (3/22/1851-?) m. David Clanton  
           James Asbury (8/26/1853-?) m. Sara Livingston  
           John Thomas (4/18/1836 in S.C.-9/3/1910).  
               m. Sarah Coats. Served in Co. B 8 Ala. CAV C.S.A.

## ROSA A. DOWERY (8)

*(Big Mama's Great-Grandmother)*

Born: February 2, 1810, South Carolina  
 Died: August 8, 1865  
 Buried: Sanders Cemetery, Lamar County, Alabama

## MARSHALL JAMES (9)

*(Big Mama's Great-Grandfather)*

Born: February 21, 1809, Henson County, North Carolina  
 Died: July 21, 1871, Monroe County, Arkansas  
 Buried: Clarendon Cemetery, Monroe County, Arkansas  
 Married: Mary B. Harton, about 1832.  
 Father: Rubin James (15)  
 Mother: Delia Holley (16)  
 Children: Thomas H. (10/10/1834, Henson Co., N.C.-6/6/1892)  
           Buried in Zion Cemetery, Pickins County, Alabama  
           m. Martha J.  
           Martha M. (9/11/1836, Henson Co., N.C.-7/3/1868)  
           Mary Adaline Cornelia (3/20/1838 in N.C.-9/8/1889)  
           m. Mike Otts, John Smith Hankins  
           Delila C. (6/10/1841-Fayette Co.-?)  
           Rubin N. (5/19/1843-Fayette Co.-9/13/1844)  
           John H. (10/22/1845-?) m. Sarah ?  
           \*Selina Eveline (6/10/1848-4/11/1932)  
           m. George Harrison Sanders  
           James V. (6/3/1850, Fayette Co.-9/6/1868)  
           Green H. (6/11/1854, Fayette Co.-10/1/1882)  
           Jorden Bedford (12/13/1858-6/11/1939)  
           m. Regina Edwards 1900

## MARY B. HARTON (10)

*(Big Mama's Great-Grandmother)*

Born: June 24, 1814, Henson County, North Carolina  
 Died: October 1, 1873  
 Buried: Clarendon Cemetery, Monroe County, Arkansas



## ARON/AARON SPRINGFIELD (11)

*(Big Mama's Great-Grandfather)*

Born: May 25, 1786  
 Died: April 15, 1872, Monroe County, Mississippi  
 Married: Elizabeth ?, August 28, 1806  
 Father: Thomas Springfield  
 Mother: Laodicea Langston  
 Children: James K. (6/2/1808-8/22/1833)  
           m. Elizabeth or Rebecca 10/19/1828  
           Moses (Rev.) (2/4/1810-10/24/1866)  
           m. Frances 11/15/1831  
           Anna W. (8/16/1811-?) m. James Lockhart 12/19/1839  
           George W. (11/28/1812-7/28/1844)  
           m. Elizabeth ? 9/4/1834  
           Deliah H. (11/7/1814) m. Calvin Cheatham  
           Willis (10/19/1816-9/16/1867)  
           m. Margaret (Peggy) Blair 12/19/1844  
           Elizabeth R. (8/21/1818)  
           Laodicea (5/27/1820-?)  
           m. William Kuykendall 10/13/1836  
           A.J. (12/12/1822-?) m. Martha  
 \*Thomas Walker (6/6/1825-8/26/1903) m. Emily Caloway Woods  
           Aaron Samuel (10/9/1827-?)  
           m. Mary Thomasson 5/25/1849  
           Evaline B. (8/18/1831-9/25/1852)  
           m. James Thomas Hill 2/24/1848

## ELIZABETH ? (12)

*(Big Mama's Great-Grandmother)*

Born: June 30, 1787  
 Died: February 20, 1864  
 Married: Aaron Springfield, August 28, 1806

THOMAS WELLS WOODS (13)  
*(Big Mama's Great-Grandfather)*

Born: December 30, 1806, probably Tennessee  
 Died: February 10, 1882  
 Buried: Shiloh Cemetery, Lamar County, Alabama  
 Married: Julia (Judy) Terry  
 Father: John Woods (19)  
     Born: 1786-probably in England, served in  
     War of 1812  
 Mother: Susannah Wells (20)  
     Born: 1790-Virginia  
 Children: Green W. (1/18/1829-12/14/1915)  
     m. Sarah Ann Lollar  
     John Burton (3/21/1834-10/20/1880)  
     m. Mary E. Armstrong  
     Jim ?  
     Thomas Monroe/Moore (12/10/1844-4/25/1927)  
     m. Hannah Mansfield Nolen 1838-1929  
     Served Co. K. 16th Inf. 1861-1865  
     \*Emily Caloway (10/12/1830-5/3/1918)  
     m. Thomas W. Springfield  
     Martha C. (1/21/1827-1/1904) m. Henry Hill  
     Margret Lucinda (2/19/1838-8/15/1887)  
     m. Hankins, Henry Sizemore  
     Susan A. (4/7/1836-11/13/1913)  
     m. Lige McDaniel, John Hankins  
     Sarah Angeline (10/3/1832-4/21/1870)  
     m. John Frank Hankins, Bailey  
     Eliza Ann (4/9/1860-11/14/1913) m. Thompson Gilmer  
     Mary A. (4/10/1840-8/30/1881)  
     m. John Nolen/Posey/Dupree  
     Frances (Frankie) (8/3/1842-2/17/1870)  
     m. Thompson Gilmer

JULIA (JUDY) TERRY (14)  
*(Big Mama's Great-Grandmother)*

Born: September 26, 1805  
 Died: August 27, 1889  
 Married: Thomas Wells Woods  
 Father: John Terry  
 Mother: Sarah Moore

(15) and (16) See (9) MARSHALL JAMES

(17) and (18) See THE LANGSTONS

(19) and (20) See (13) THOMAS WELLS WOODS

## JOHN TERRY (21)

*(Big Mama's Great-Great-Grandfather)*

Born: 1774, North Carolina  
 Died: 1855  
 Buried: Lamar County, Alabama  
 Wife: Sarah (Sally) Moore  
 Children: \*Julia (Judy) (9/26/1805-8/27/1889)  
           m. Thomas Wells Woods  
           Martha ? m. Alan Burrow  
           Gideon (11/26/1799)  
           Nancy (8/21/1801)  
           Peggy (8/6/1803)  
           Polly (10/12/1807) m. Marchbanks  
           Thomas (3/16/1812--Tennessee) m. Rasbury  
           Elizabeth (6/1/1814)  
           Richard Henderson (9/9/1816) m. Becky Strawbridge  
           Lucinda (7/18/1819)  
           Eliza (9/24/1821) m. Kibble Webb  
           Sarah Ann (5/31/1824) m. Moore

## SARAH (SALLY) MOORE (22)

*(Big Mama's Great-Great-Grandmother)*

Born: 1777/1779  
 Died: 1849  
 Married: John Terry



1-Thomas

Springfield

# *The Langstons*

John

Langston

3-Solomon

Langston

2-Laodicea

Langston

Richard

Bennett

4-Sarah

Bennett

Ann

?

### THE LANGSTONS

The most colorful branch of ancestors we have discovered so far in our research are the LANGSTONS. This family was extremely active in the Colonial cause during the time of the Revolutionary War. SOLOMON LANGSTON, who was the patriarch of the family at the time, served in the Revolutionary War along with many of his sons and a daughter, LAODICEA LANGSTON SPRINGFIELD (*the Great-Great Grandmother of Big Mama*).

The information that we have gathered about this branch of our family comes not only from the files of Mrs. Edna Sanders of Vernon, but also from the book entitled Genealogical History of Brown, Styles, and Related Families compiled by Viva S. Brown and Leah S. O'Donnell (1966).

SOLOMON, son of JOHN LANGSTON of Ireland, was born about 1732 and could have been born in Ireland but more than likely in America. He was living in Laurens County, South Carolina during the Revolutionary War and was in the Spartan Regiment under Captain Wofford as Lieutenant. He was an ardent Whig and did everything he could to help the cause of American freedom. SOLOMON owned many slaves and many acres of land. He was a religious man and a member of the Baptist faith. When he died in 1825 he was buried in the Langston Cemetery near Laurens, Laurens County, South Carolina. It is located at the foot of the hill behind the Langston Church. This church is about nine miles from Laurens and is one of the oldest churches in Laurens County. It was established long before the Revolution and during the war it was almost disbanded. The land for this church and the cemetery behind it was donated by the LANGSTON family. It still stands and is being used today.

SOLOMON married SARAH BENNETT in 1753. She was born in 1737, the daughter of RICHARD and ANN BENNETT. SOLOMON and SARAH LANGSTON had ten children.

The family distinguished itself during the Revolutionary War. JAMES, the oldest son, died in the war in 1758. He was killed by the Tories after being hemmed in upstairs in a

house but he sold his life as dearly as he could, taking with him several of the English soldiers.

Other members of the family served as members of the Colonial Army, but the most famous fighter from the LANGSTON family was LAODICEA LANGSTON, known as DICEY. Because of her patriotic deeds, the Daughters of American Revolution in Canton, Missouri have named their Chapter after her, and a bronze plaque has been dedicated in memory of DICEY and her husband, THOMAS SPRINGFIELD, by the Nathaniel Green Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

The following description of her exploits is from an article in a D.A.R. magazine.

LAODICEA (DICEY) LANGSTON was born in Granville County, South Carolina and came to Laurens County, South Carolina near the Spartanburg County boundary line. This section was overrun with British soldiers and Tories during the latter part of the Revolutionary War. Learning the ways at that time, DICEY became a bold and reckless horse rider. Living in a community where she was surrounded by Loyalists, DICEY found it easy to learn what was about to happen. She related her information to her brothers who were camped with a small band of Whigs along the opposite shore of the river. Questions began to arise as to how information could have come to the rebels and immediately suspicion was turned to DICEY. Legend has it the British threatened to burn the LANGSTON family out and SOLOMON warned DICEY to take no more risks. Having heard by accident that a company of Loyalists called the "Bloody Scouts" were about to visit the "Elder Settlement" where her brother and some friends were, she determined at all cost to warn them. She was obliged to leave home alone, in the dead of the night, mounted an unbroken stallion and raced through the weeds. Her brother and his friends were tired and hungry and DICEY commanded them to build a fire and she baked them hoecakes before they rode to warn the settlement of the attack. The alarm was given in time and all escaped.



On another occasion, DICEY took another night ride or walk (it is uncertain which). As DICEY was fording the Tyger River she lost her footing. She was washed around in the river for a while and when she finally reached land she had lost her sense of direction and did not know if she had gotten across the river or not. After resting she found she was across the river and went on to warn her friends. She cooked them some bread before starting back.

It was also told that her brother left a gun with her to hold until he sent a friend with a countersign to give for it. Later when some men came, DICEY forgot and brought out the gun before calling for the word. The leader of the group told her he already had her and would not have to give her the word. She quickly cocked the gun and showed him he was mistaken. He then gave her the word and got the gun; this was THOMAS SPRINGFIELD and it was implied that this was their first meeting.

THOMAS and DICEY were married in 1783 and went to Greenville, South Carolina where they bought land and built a log cabin. They eventually had 22 children and in her old age, DICEY was proud to say that she had 32 sons and grandsons to vote and fight if need be. At the time of her death on May 23, 1837, she had about 140 grand- and great-grandchildren.

THOMAS SPRINGFIELD (1)  
*(Big Mama's Great-Great Grandfather)*

Born: July 15, 1766  
 Died: March 21, 1845, Greenville, South Carolina  
 Married: Laodicea Langston, 1783  
 Children: \*Aron/Aaron (5/25/1786-4/15/1872)  
           m. Elizabeth ? 8/28/1806  
           James L. (2/5/1788-4/28/1859)  
           m. Nancy Stiles/Styles  
           Moses (9/14/1789-1836) m. Margaret (Peggy) Andrews  
           Henry (7/23/1791-2/18/1836) m. Levinia ?  
           Elizabeth (1/19/1793-9/22/1840)  
           m. James Jarvis Maxwell  
           Ephraim (3/30/1794-?)  
           Sarah (2/6/1796-11/1/1848) m. John Bates  
           Hugh (11/19/1797-2/15/1849)  
           Martha (Patsy) 5/6/1799  
           Laodicea (4/1/1801-4/15/1834) m. Thomas Harkins  
           Nancy (9/17/1802-5/2/1853) m. Miller  
           Thomas B. (9/27/1804-5/9/1865)  
           m. Amy Stiles/Martha ?  
           Bennett (3/2/1806-?) m. Mary Ann Wilbanks  
           Solomon L. (8/19/1807-5/23/1842) m. Catherine Bradley  
           Willis (5/27/1809-?)

LAODICEA LANGSTON (2)  
*(Big Mama's Great-Great Grandmother)*

Born: May 14, 1766, Granville County, North Carolina  
 Died: May 23, 1837  
 Married: Thomas Springfield, 1783  
 Father: Solomon Langston  
 Mother: Sarah Bennett

## SOLOMON LANGSTON (3)

*(Big Mama's Great-Great-Great Grandfather)*

Born: 1732 (probably in Ireland)  
 Died: 1825  
 Buried: Langston Church, S.C.  
 Married: Sarah Bennett  
 Father: John Langston  
 Children: Mary Langston (b. abt. 1756)  
           James Langston (b. abt. 1757)  
           Solomon Langston (b. abt. 1761)  
           Sarah Langston (b. abt. 1763)  
           Laodicea Langston (5/14/1766)  
           Henry Langston (6/23/1769)  
           Selah Langston (b. abt. 1770)  
           Patty or Martha Langston (b. abt. 1772)  
           Amy Langston (b. abt. 1774)  
           Bennett Langston (6/14/1777)

## SARAH BENNETT (4)

*(Big Mama's Great-Great-Great Grandmother)*

Born: 1737 Greenville, S.C.  
 Died: 1810, Laurens County, South Carolina  
 Father: Richard Bennett--Born: Bute County, North Carolina  
           Died: August, 1764  
 Mother: Ann ?  
 Married: Solomon Langston, 1753



## FAMILY MEMORIES

*There is no way to capture the past. This section in our family history is merely an attempt to record some of the events, the times, the places that went into making the present generation of our family.*

*Accuracy was very important, but while talking with the participants in the following narrative, we discovered that even in minor instances their memories seldom agreed completely.*

*If you were one of the these participants in the times depicted, you will no doubt remember a few things differently from the way they are recorded. Also many touching or amusing things did not manage to get included at all. It is our hope, however, that the years of your childhood have been presented in the way that you remember them.*

*Cosby and Myra Cunningham are referred to as Pop and Big Mama in the stories even though they were not called this until after their first grandchild was born. They were referred to in this way during the research on this section.*

*Whether you were a participant, or someone who has heard these stories many times, or someone who has never heard them at all, we hope you will enjoy reading about the life and times of Big Mama and Pop's children from their birth until they eventually left home.*

SULLIGENT/VERNON AREA1916-1921

Beginning with their marriage in 1916, Big Mama and Pop lived in several houses in and around the Sulligent area, including the Old Robinson place and Doctor Woods' place. Their first child, Kate Laurene, was born in Vernon and a year later their second child, Frances Jeweline, was born. The first son, James Denton, was born a little over a year later.

The family livelihood from the beginning involved farming and working in sawmills. In 1920, Pop suffered a disabling sawmill accident in which he lost an inch and a half of the right heel. While recuperating, Pop used the insurance money received for the accident to go to business school. While attending this school, the teacher was invited over for supper one night. Everything went well until time for dessert. When Big Mama went to serve her crowning glory--a beautiful meringue pie--she discovered that Jeweline had stuck her fingers in it.

At other times the children occupied themselves with such things as riding a tricycle, swinging on doors, and sliding down the cellar door. By the time the fourth child, Dorothy Faye, came along, having babies was a pretty common thing around the Cunningham household, but Grandma Cunningham came to stay and help with the little ones anyway. Jeweline had to use the potty in the middle of the night and Big Mama was so uncomfortable she just told her to find the pot under the bed for herself. After several unsuccessful tries, Jeweline settled for what to her was an acceptable substitute --Grandma's big, wallered-out shoes. It was not quite as acceptable to Grandma the next morning however.

Another memorable thing about that day was the supper meal. Grandma couldn't find anything for the children to eat in the kitchen except some old coffee and biscuits, so this is what they were fed, cold biscuits soaked in cold coffee.

At this time the family lived in an old hotel in Sulligent. The children were old enough to play on their own and one of their favorite places was a crib playhouse in a barn nearby. Unfortunately, this was in a pasture with a very mean milk cow named Filie. Filie loved to chase kids and, of course, the mad dash across the pasture running from "Old Filie" made the playhouse that much more exciting.

Other exciting things that happened at this house included the circus that came and set up in the pasture. For the use of the pasture, the Cunningham kids were allowed to see the circus and all its animals anytime they wanted. There was also a train ride for Kate and Jeweline from Sulligent to Crews with two new straw hats thrown in.

DETROIT, ALABAMA

1921-1923

In 1921 the family moved to a three room shotgun house in a sawmill camp halfway between Sulligent and Detroit, Alabama. The family came to call this place "Other Mill." The fifth child, Thomas Ferrell, was born while the family was living at this house. When the time came, the doctor was called and the children were told that he would bring their new baby. The children were waiting in the yard when the doctor drove up in his Model-T and they waited patiently for the doctor to bring the new baby out of the car. When he went on in the house, the children were confused but continued to wait patiently. Finally they began to circle the car to get a better look and eventually searched the car themselves, but still couldn't find the baby. When word came from the house that they had a new baby brother inside, they were completely surprised and never figured out how the doctor "snuck" him into the house.

One of their favorite pastimes at this house was a playhouse in a tent near the road under some pine trees. They would also sneak off whenever possible and wade in the



creek because it was forbidden. They loved to hunt crawdads and, of course, anything new was terribly exciting. One time "anything new" meant some snuff, but to the displeasure of the others Jeweline ate all of it and the others didn't even get to try it.

Their pleasures were simple. Walking along the road and popping maypops was one of the things they enjoyed. One day they came to a large maypop that wouldn't pop. They looked a little further on and there was another one and a little further still was an even larger one. They continued to ramble and discovered they were in the middle of a watermelon patch. The natural thing to do was to enjoy a watermelon, but after it had been consumed, guilt set in. They realized that someone had planted all the watermelons and they had stolen some of his crop. Filled with remorse, they ran home and told Big Mama who then went and paid the man for his watermelon.

#### JOE STEVENS HOUSE

1923-1928

In 1923, the family moved to the Joe Stevens house owned by Pine Dimension Lumber Company in Monroe County, Mississippi. Moving to Mississippi constituted moving to a "heathen" land in the minds of the children. They didn't know what to expect but knew it would be strange and the people in Mississippi would be scary. Not long after arriving, Kate and Jeweline were looking around and in spite of being scared, curiosity got the better of them. There was an old black man getting water at a pump in the backyard, and they eased up to him and shyly asked him what his name was-- knowing all the time that it would be something they had never heard before. His name was Henry Cunningham.

The Joe Stevens house itself had been built for the Cunninghams but another family was already living in one half of it when they arrived. It had a big open hall and

after the chimney was complete, the other family moved out. There was still little enough room, and the children sometimes slept five to a bed. One night in the dead of the night, one of the pillars supporting the house caved in and scared the family badly. One whole corner of the house had fallen down.

The older girls were by this time responsible for the younger children and Ferrell was a special problem for them to keep clean. He learned to crawl, but he didn't exactly crawl. It was more of a dirt gathering slide. His hair was also tangled and fine and earned him the nickname "Fuzzy" which he carries to this day.

Other responsibilities included being in charge of the house while Big Mama plowed. Kate had to do the dishes, churn, cook dinner, and mind the kids. The most trouble she had involved making cornbread. The milk was always unpredictable, and baking powder and soda had to be added to the meal. The wood burning cook stove was not exactly dependable for an even heat either. The result was that the cornbread was sometimes burnt to a crisp on top and mush in the middle. Sometimes it would just bubble in the pan and never really do anything. These were the times Big Mama would just start over when she got in from the field.

There was another time she had to cook more dinner also. A black man had been hired to clean out the well and each day he brought his lunch in a bucket which he set aside while he worked. The children found the lunch just too tempting one day, and ate his lunch while he wasn't looking. When lunchtime came, Big Mama had to cook something for him to eat.

Big Mama busied herself with other things for her children. They were always dressed well. She would make clothes from scraps of old suits from her brother and anything she could get her hands on. At one time, she even made two little patent leather purses for Kate and Jeweline from the tongues of some old shoes.

Pop, in the meantime, farmed, worked at a sawmill and on construction work. There was little money, but Christmas was always a special occasion anyway. The Christmas of 1924 was especially memorable. The family loaded in a wagon filled with hay and quilts to keep warm and went to Aberdeen on Christmas Eve to see Santa Claus. After the shopping, the parade, and lots of time the family got ready to go home, but Ferrell was missing. The family searched for hours for the baby, taking turns looking, calling, tracing and retracing their steps. He was finally found waiting patiently at an intersection in Aberdeen.

It was while living in the Joe Stevens House that the twins were born to the family. Tillie Clo was born followed fifteen minutes later with Billy Joe.

Two and one half years after the twins were born, the last child came into the family. Harroll Glenn became the perpetual "baby" of the family, nestling Billy out of this much cherished position.

It was also at the Joe Stevens House that the older children started to school riding on a Model-T bus driven by Claude Hankins. Kate and Jeweline were always in the same grade and were good students. In the fifth grade, Kate represented her school in a Math contest and won second in the county.

In the meantime, the younger children occupied themselves with such games as stick people dressed with scraps of cloth, a wagon built by older brother James and one year Tillie got her first doll for Christmas. Big Mama had made it out of gourd head and it even had blue eyes that would roll open and shut. The doll made it through a lot of playing until one day Tillie and Dot were playing in their house in the wood pile and Big Mama walked up to see what they were doing. She stepped on the doll's head and crushed it to pieces. The girls were extremely disappointed but not as much as Big Mama whose hard work had been ruined.



CROSSVILLE, ALABAMA1928

In 1928, the family moved for a short time to Crossville, Alabama while Pop worked in a sawmill. The house had an extremely high front porch and a back porch that came out at ground level. It was at this house that the family heard their first radio when Herbert Hoover was elected President.

The children's favorite toy was the body of an old Model-T car. Ferrell, the oldest child not in school, was left in charge of the younger children. They wanted some candy, so Ferrell went to Yerby's Store where the family had a charge account and charged a nickel's worth of candy. He brought this back to the little ones and then they wanted some more. Ferrell was embarrassed to go back to Yerby's so he went to Mixon's store where the family did not have a charge account. He got some candy and when he found he couldn't charge it, he just ran. Later, when the matter had been solved, he had to pray for forgiveness for a long time as his punishment.

This same old Model-T was the scene of one of Billy's accidents. He broke his arm when he ran against one of the doors and it opened too easily.

It was while living here, at Crossville, that the older boys got their first taste of possum hunting. One moonlit night, they struck out already scared of an old crazy man in the neighborhood and got about 200 yards from the house. An owl hooted and that ended the possum hunt with a race back to the house.

MASON HOUSEFALL 1928

The family spent the latter months of 1928 in the Mason House right on the side of the railroad on the flower farm in Monroe County, Mississippi.

TROOP STATION HOUSE1929-1935

Shortly after Christmas, the family moved to the Troop Station House. They spent the depression years in this house which was also on the flower farm on the side of the railroad, not moving from here until 1935.

The train ran by the house three or four times a day and there was also a dummy run between Aberdeen and Columbus several times a day. The railroad claimed its price on the pets of the family. One was an old crippled rooster named Crip. He was addicted to dead flies and would run up every time the fly swatter hit the porch. When he was run over and killed by a train, nobody in the family could stand to eat him because of all the dead flies he had eaten.

They were not so discriminating in another case, however. They had adopted a runt pig as a pet and had named him Spot. Spot had the misfortune of getting killed by a train one hot summer day. The family had to eat the pig at the time he was killed in order for the meat not to be wasted. Unfortunately, it was wasted anyway--all over the place. In the middle of the night the family came down with a case of simultaneous, massive diaherra. The toilet was about a hundred yards from the house and might as well have been a mile. Some made it and some did not. Another popular stopping place was the woodpile, but some did not even make it this far. The shortest dash ended under the kitchen table. This was attributed to Jeweline who was caught on her way out the back door. Big Mama made her clean up the mess and it was not until much later that James was exposed as the true culprit.

The whole family was sick again later when everyone except Big Mama and Glenn came down with measles that Kate had brought home after nursing the neighbors. With the whole family sick Big Mama and Glenn had to run their legs off to take care of the whole bunch, but they all eventually

recovered. After they were back in school Glenn and Big Mama came down with the measles and had to fend for themselves.

Glenn got in on other work also, frequently carrying out the pot for Jewelene. In this case, though, he got reimbursed at the rate of a penny a day. Other swaps were common too, like the one between Ferrell and Tillie. He got her left over milk in exchange for a piece of his ribbon cane.

Their entertainment ranged from listening to a phonograph brought over by their neighbors, the Finches, to playing with fireballs. These were made by soaking tightly balled up rags in Kerosene and then lighting them and playing pitch.

There was a rash of mad dogs one summer. The children were playing on the road bank one summer night and James was up on the road. He looked up and approaching him was a dog known to be mad. Instead of running, he whispered for all the kids to be quiet. They all froze and the dog came by James with only a foot or two to spare. It went on down the road and got in a fight with some other dogs, who all came down with rabies later. It had already bitten a neighbor, Audrey Hanson, who had to take the shots.

When they were not worried about mad dogs, there was always something else after them. Their neighbors, the Hansons--Burline, Virgil, and Verdell--were quick to take advantage of the fact that none of the Cunninghams were allowed to fight, not even to defend themselves. There was a constant battle to outwit them. Kate at this time was having trouble with "mean" Clyde Sanders. He seemed to delight in making Dot cry especially on the bus, and Kate had to fight him all the time.

On one occasion something else got after them. All the kids were in the back of a wagon with James driving, coming back from a meeting in Hamilton. Slowly someone with some kind of covering over his head began to approach the



wagon from the rear reaching out trying to get a hand on the wagon. James made the mules run but the "haint" followed them for a long, long way.

Other night trips in the wagon included trips to Vernon. The family would pack a supper and drive as far as Bethel Church to eat it. Then they would drive all night to Grandpa Sanders house. The trips were generally cool and were looked forward to by the kids.

When they were at home, they were ingenious at making toys and games to play. One favorite was a flying ginny made with a plank in the woodpile. It would go around and around, and one time when Billy tried to get off at the wrong time, he was knocked unconscious. The children were scared, thinking that he had been killed and were very relieved when he eventually regained consciousness.

The girls by this time had their own ideas of how to play. One afternoon Big Mama had gone to an aunt's funeral, and Kate was quilting using ravelings out of flour sacks as thread. The younger girls came in complaining that they needed a place for a playhouse. Kate gave them permission to burn off a place. Unfortunately, the place they picked to burn was a garden full of peanut shocks. In fact, it was the whole winter's supply of peanuts that went up in smoke, but it did make a nice big playhouse.

The last of the children started to school while living at the Troop Station House. Billy and Tillie had an especially interesting first day at school. It was a near disaster. Tillie decided that school was not for her and proceeded to hide out behind the coal bin. Billy, being of a calm, gentle nature was sent to get her and finally got her calmed down and returned to class. Later that day Edward Blair "peed" on the floor and Tillie laughed so she had to stand at the blackboard with her nose in a ring. Billy found an aspiring poet named Hanna Williams who told the same fascinating story in its entirety and everyday from

then on "Peter Rabbit, Peter Rabbit HOP HOP HOP. Make your ears go FLOP FLOP FLOP."

DAY PLACE

1936

By the time the family moved to the Day Place in 1936, the kids had gotten a little older and more mischievous. They liked to walk around and explore. On one occasion, they had started a fire in an old grass field to keep warm, but the fire got out of hand and they decided to leave the scene before they were caught. They moved on down the Tombigbee River and came to a fork. Hearing a motorboat they stuck their heads up over a bank and someone started shooting at them. The shots hit the leaves above the boys heads but it was enough to put them in gear and they left the scene again but this time on their hands and knees through the briars and brambles.

This house was only about a quarter of a mile from the river and a very common pastime was swimming. Most of the family were adept swimmers, but Jeweline was always a little bit scared to go across the deep part. One day she finally got up her nerve and made it about halfway across. But she got scared and started going under. James after trying to get her to swim on across by herself tried to help her out but to no avail. Finally he got under her and standing on the bottom of the river, he shoved her upward as hard as he could. The kids on the bank managed to catch her.

Another incident happened on the river on the Fourth of July of that year when Big Mama's brother, Kent and his family, came for a picnic. Three of the boys decided to float down the river to the picnic grounds and meet the family there. The boat they commandeered turned out to have the front end out of it, but they solved this problem by dobbing it up with mud. They also didn't have any paddles, but since they would be floating downstream, they decided

they didn't need any. So they started out, having to stop every few hundred yards to bale out the boat. They came to a barely submerged log and not having any paddles with which to steer, they turned sideways just before hitting it and the three of them were poured out into the river. Again, they had to rescue the boat and start over. They eventually made it to the picnic about three o'clock in the afternoon.

The year of 1936 brought the family the best crop they ever made. When totaled up, they had harvested 36 bales of cotton. It was time for the family to have a car. Pop and Big Mama went to Aberdeen and bought a 1929 Chevrolet from Richardson Motors. Then they realized they did not know how to drive at all. Fortunately, they ran across Wade and Dallas Smith who liked nothing better than to drive a car. The Smiths drove the car as far as the highway where Big Mama and Pop turned off. They got the car headed down the dirt road to the Cunningham home, put it in gear, gave it a shove and jumped off. Pop slipped behind the wheel and his first experience with driving was thrust upon him. He finally maneuvered the car to a stop in the front yard and havoc broke loose, as all eight children yelled, laughed, danced around the car in a ring, and, of course, tried it out for size. By one account, the revelry lasted all night long. The next day was time for another driving lesson. John Sutton was asked to come over and teach James the mechanics of driving. All of the family got in, but instead of teaching, John was more interested in just driving. Eventually James elbowed him over enough to get in a little practice. The car had to be pushed off to be started and was always out of brakes, but it was the most glorious thing in the world to the Cunninghams.



COLLINS PLACE1937

The kids were getting older all the time and as they did, their games became more sophisticated. This house was located in North Hamilton. The road close by had a large bank. The boys had gotten an old tire pump and rigged it with a valve on either end. This unique tool made it possible to fill the pump with water through one valve, wait for a car to come along, and squirt the water through the valve up over the bank and all over the unsuspecting motorist. One Sunday afternoon, the idea was especially effective. The boys could not see who was coming along because of their location, but when they heard a car they really let him have it. They plastered mud all over the preacher riding in the rumble seat on the way to a meeting.

The most serious injury at this place was the blood poisoning James got from a cut he got in his leg while swimming in a creek. Big Mama finally healed it up with zinc oxide.

The Collins house seemed to have a nature of its own and was said to be haunted. This may have been because of a strange water puddle that kept forming even during dry weather near the head of the bed in the boys room. It was near where Lee Watson's Daddy had died. The house was also noisy and popped a lot, especially the tin roof.

Another notable thing about this house was that it was apparently near an Indian settlement or battlefield. After a rainfall, the field nearby would be scattered with arrowheads.

BENEFIELD PLACE1938-1944

By the time the family moved to the Tom Took place which later became more commonly called the Benefield Place, the kids were in their teenage years. Also at this time,

Charles Vaughn became acquainted with the family. These two circumstances produced some interesting results over the years spent at this house.

Most of their enterprises were at night. One, for instance, was the popular sport of Snipe Hunting. This particular game involved all ages. The younger children were in charge of getting down in a gully on an especially dark night, holding a sack low on the ground, and calling over and over, "Here Snipe. Here Snipe." The older members of the crowd took the lantern and went out to round up the snipe and make them run into the gully. Since it was such a mild sport, the older ones usually lost interest and just went on home without telling the sack-holders who would usually drag in hours later very confused.

For the stouter of heart, there was always night prowling down deep in the woods. On one occasion all the Cunningham boys; a 300 pound neighbor, Charles Henry Myers; and another neighbor, Fowler Poindexter; as well as Charlie Vaughn, were out on an expedition. There is some dispute about the actual purpose of this particular expedition, but no matter how it started out, it had a very interesting grand finale. After a while, the bunch sat down around a lantern to rest. At this point, Charlie Vaughn took over with stories about the panthers roaming this section of the woods. He bragged that he could call one up if he wanted to and could even get one to answer him. To prove his point, he let out a blood-curdling yell and shut the lantern off at the same time. This was bad enough, but when some kind of animal nearby answered him, "all Hell broke loose." The boys ran, terror stricken, full speed, through the pitch black woods. The inevitable happened. Charles Henry Myers ran into a pine tree and someone plowed into him. Another terrified boy hit a burned out tree stump. Charles Henry slammed into him from the rear finally going down with a grunt when he stepped in the stump hole. The sound of flight

could be heard as all the boys tried desperately to reach the cornfield at the edge of the woods. Their only pursuer however was the booming laughter of Charlie Vaughn. After this sobering adventure, the boys stayed close to home for a while.

This did not mean, however, that they stayed out of trouble. One cold night they were playing close to the newly paved Highway 45. The kids built a grass fire on the side of the road mainly to keep warm, but when a couple of cars turned around and went the other way, the kids had their plan. They put out the fire on the side of the road and rebuilt it in the middle of the highway. As the night proceeded and corn stalks were added, the fire reached gigantic proportions. The reactions of unwitting motorists especially delighted the kids. Some would stop and turn around, some would stop and then ease by, others sped up to get by in a hurry. The most surprising reaction however caught the kids completely by surprise. A Greyhound bus came along headed for Columbus. By this time the kids were crouched in the ditch along the side of the road. Instead of going on immediately, the driver stopped and turned on the big spotlight on top of the bus. He started scanning the field around the road with the spotlight and the kids found themselves running. When the light would swing by, they would jump up and run as far as they could until it swung back again. Charles Henry, however, found it hard to stop and start, so he just kept going, right over the backs of the people in front of him. Luckily, there were no injuries. By the time the Greyhound Bus driver had reported the mischief to the highway patrol in Columbus, and the patrolman had gotten back to the scene, the kids had cleaned up most of the mess, and somehow escaped getting in trouble even from Big Mama and Pop who had slept through the whole thing.

On another night, the family was returning from a singing at Koloa Springs by a gravel road when the headlights



picked up an unusual animal--a black possum. The possum ran in the ditch and James stopped the car. Ferrell got out to catch the possum, saw him running in the ditch, and decided to give him a good swift kick to stun him. Ferrell got stunned. It was not a possum, but a fine specimen of a skunk. After the thick blue fog lifted, Ferrell staggered back to the car. He was most unwelcome, and despite the cold had to ride home on the front of the car. When he got really cold, the family let him stick his head in long enough to get warm. His shoes suffered the most damage, but since they were fairly new and could not be replaced they had to do. Even after they were buried for a while (which was supposed to get rid of the odor), Ferrell could empty a room in a hurry if he got too near a heater for very long.

The most serious illness while living at this house was the malarial fever that caused Kate and Jeweline to have to skip the ninth grade in school. In spite of the setback, they went on to finish with good grades. All the other children eventually finished also, and began to scatter. In the 1930's the girls began to marry and leave home and the boys began to go into the service as World War II came and went.

#### NORTHINGTON PLACE

1944

In 1944, Pop and Big Mama bought their first land, which had been the Northington Place in Hamilton, Mississippi. In 1947, with the help of their boys, they started construction on their present home.

This home has become a frequent stopping place for all the children and still serves as home base for visitors who often use it to sit around and talk about "the old times."