

Bell

Fairfield Museum

From: Ray or Evelyn [rayevelyn9@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Wednesday, March 16, 2016 5:38 PM
To: FAIRFIELD COUNTY MUSEUM FAIRFIELD COUNTY MUSEUM
Subject: Re: HEDouglas' store
Attachments: Mary Lee Bell Douglas.odt

On Thursday, February 18, 2016 9:26 PM, FAIRFIELD COUNTY MUSEUM FAIRFIELD COUNTY MUSEUM <fairfieldmus@truvista.net> wrote:

I just found a hand written account by Mary Lee of growing up on the farm, loss of pets, fruit trees, etc. Jimmy RAY shared a copy with me. Have you seen it? I can scan the pages to send to you if not.

From: "Ray or Evelyn" <rayevelyn9@bellsouth.net>
To: "Fairfield County Museum" <fairfieldmus@truvista.net>
Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2016 3:16:57 PM
Subject: HEDouglas' store

Picture taken in 1922.

Store was in the Branhamtown section of Winnsboro. General Merchandise and Watkins Products. Daddy also took his wares on the road, serving the rural areas of Fairfield and Chester Counties. Daddy sometimes stayed overnight in Blackstock, at "the Widow Bells house. Her fresh apple and peach pies for supper and hot biscuits and homemade apple jelly for breakfast were the main reason he stayed (I think). That is until he met the Widow's daughter, Mary Lee, who was away at Linwood College in Gastonia, NC. Daddy and Mama were married in 1921.

Mama: Mary Lee Bell Douglas (1900-1991)

Parents: Robert McMaster Bell "Mack" (1877-1910) Anna Montgomery Carson Bell (1877-1948)
Husband: Harold Eugene Douglas, Sr. (1890-1978)

Mama's granddaddy, John Brown Carson, a Sgt. in the Confederate Army, lost his left arm in the Battle of Chancellorsville. A handwritten account of part of his service, in the war, is in the Library in Gastonia, NC. I have a copy of it. He was captured and served part of his time on a prison ship. He was a teacher and a farmer.

Mama talked some about her childhood. She was especially fond of the Mills family, who were distant relatives. Her best friend was Evelyn Mills. Evelyn Mills was also her college roommate when she attended Linwood College in Gastonia, NC. Mama named me, Evelyn, after her friend.

Mama said the Mills family were all "great friends". She told about being picked up on her way, walking to school, on rainy or cold days, by the Mills family. A horse and wagon, loaded with school children, mostly Bells and Mills. I remember asking her, "Mama, did the wagon have a top on it?" and she would laugh and say, "No, but riding in the rain was better than walking in the rain".

There were memories of a Gin, Sawmill, Blacksmith shop, a steam engine (sold to Mr Dickey for \$25) a lot of farm implements and a Surry. Mr Dickey also bought the Gin and Sawmill. During the illness and after the death of Robert McMaster Bell, neighbors stopped by and used the blacksmith shop to shoe horses, repair wagons and other repairs.

In the 1910 US Census:

Robert M Bell age 33, is listed as Farmer, General Farm

Anna C Bell age 33, is listed as Laborer, Home Farm

Charles R Bell age 11, is listed as Laborer, Home Farm

Mary L Bell age 9

Rachel C Bell age 6

Thomas B Bell age 4

John B Bell age 1

Mama's Daddy "Papa" had TB and did not want to take a chance of his family getting it. His brothers help put up a tent in the yard for him to stay in. Her Mama was the only family member allowed in the tent. The children could go to the opening in the tent and talk to their daddy, but could not go inside. I don't recall her ever saying how long he stayed in the tent before he died. He died Sept. 1st, 1910, less than a month before Mama's 10th birthday.

"Mack" left a widow and 5 children, ages 11 to 1 (Charles Ralph 11, Mary Lee 9, Rachel 6, Tom 4 and John 1) to run the farm. A farm with, as Mama would say, "great orchards, with apples, peaches, pears, cherries and figs". Also cotton, corn and a really big garden. Mama said that she learned to make jam, jelly and preserves by Grand mama's recipes, as well as relish and chow-chow. I would love to have a taste of Mama's apple jelly, pear relish and green tomato chow-chow right now. They were my favorites. The main thing Mama said, about the apple jelly, was "you have to cook it until two drops gather before it falls off the spoon".

Surplus from the orchards and the garden were canned, and Grand mama sold some of these along with the extra eggs. I feel sure that she made plenty of egg custard too, because Mama really made good egg custard. Mama said everyone loved Grand mama's pies and cobblers. As Uncle Tom would say, "they sold a lot of the fruit, but probably gave neighbors and friends more than they sold".

Aunt Rachel was a "frail child" and stayed with relatives part of the time. Mama said that they all

missed her, but knew it was best. I feel that the others grew up, knowing what hard farm work was really like. One of Mama's chores was to milk the cow. I remember when Daddy had the dairy, Mama had a pet cow that she would not allow anyone to put the electric milker on. She milked "Pet Cow" herself. I asked her to teach me how to milk a cow and she said, "no daughter of mine will ever learn to milk a cow. I have never milked a cow, but Mama's words did come in handy. Not long after Ray and I were married, Ray brought home a lot of fish and told me they were in the kitchen sink. I asked him what he wanted me to do with them and he said, "clean them and cook them". I told him the story about Mama, the milk cow and me and said, "and I feel the same way about cleaning fish. So, he cleans them, I cook them.

Not all work on the Bell farm. There was music too. Grand mama was the "fill in" organist at Hopewell Church. She mostly played by ear, but was good at it. She made sure Mama took piano lessons and Mama was still playing the organ at New Hope Church until she broke her hip at age 84. Mama could make an old "out of tune" piano sound good. She "sort of" rolled her fingers when she played. Uncle Ralph, Uncle Tom and Uncle John also played guitars and fiddles. Mama had another musical talent that Grand mama did not like. She could whistle so pretty that it sounded like a flute. I can still hear her whistling, "Listen to the Mockingbird". She would also make bird sounds when she whistled that song.

Other favorite stories: One day a gentleman's automobile was stuck in the creek and he couldn't get out. Uncle Ralph, Uncle John and Uncle Tom took the old mule down to the creek and pulled the car out. The man wanted to pay them, but they knew Grand mama would not want them to take money for helping someone. The man then asked if he could get them something for their help and they told him they were out of flour. The man brought a bag of flour to their house. When they ran out of flour, they were all worried, but Grand mama told them, "don't worry, the Lord will provide". Well, he surely did, didn't he.....

Another favorite story was about the dog, "Two Cents". Someone stopped by Grand mama's house and told the family that Two Cents had to be shot because he had rabies. After hearing this, Uncle John said, "two cents bit Tom". Uncle Tom was sick and now they thought that might be the reason. Uncle John Bell was called and he and Grand mama took Uncle Tom to Columbia on the train. Uncle Tom was given rabies treatments and soon was well. Uncle Tom did not graduate from high school because his Uncle John thought he was badly needed on the farm.

Three of Grand mama's brothers, Erskin Grier Carson, John Wooten Carson and Robert Watson Carson, were ARP Ministers. Robert Watson Carson (Uncle Rob) sent Mama to Linwood College. The College was not far from Grand mama's childhood home and Mama would be near her favorite cousin's home. Her cousin, Ellen Carson Dixon, a few years her senior had already finished her two years at Linwood. Mama was so happy that her college roommate was Evelyn Mills, her best friend from home. Mama's Uncle John Bell sent Aunt Rachel to Winthrop College. Mama said she and some of her friends at Linwood went for a long hike around Crowders Creek and did not get back until after suppertime. I asked if they were punished and she said, "we had to go to bed without any supper, and we were never late again".

Money was scarce in the household, so Grand mama occasionally took in an overnight boarder. One boarder was a traveling salesman, Harold Douglas. He owned a General Merchandise and Watkins Products store in Winnsboro. He knew he could get a good supper with some kind of fruit pie and breakfast with hot biscuits and apple jelly at the Widow Bell's house. Don't know exactly how Mama and Daddy met, but Mama said that he stayed at Grand mama's when she was away at college. She

said that Daddy had a lot of customers in the Blackstock area and stayed overnight sometimes when he was covering that route. (I like to say, "Maybe Grand mama had one of the first bed and breakfasts"), but I know, in those days, a lot of people took in boarders, both long term and overnight

In the 1920 US Census:

Anna C. Bell is listed as age 42, a widow, Farmer, General Farm

Children listed as: Charles R. Bell age 21, Laborer, Home Farm

Mary Lee Bell age 19, School Teacher, County Schools

Rachel Bell age 16, Laborer, Home Farm

Thomas B. Bell age 13, Laborer, Home Farm

John B. Bell age 11, Laborer, Home Farm

After finishing two years at Linwood, Mama got a job teaching school. She said the school only had one room and the children were all ages, some almost as old as she. She had to get to school early on cold days to start a fire in the heater, but said, at least, she did not have to cut or carry in the wood. The older boys in her class, carried in wood after school while she cleaned up. She was not sure who cut the firewood, but there was always plenty. Mama said that she gave most of her money earned from teaching to Uncle Ralph to help with the family expenses.

Mama and Daddy (Mary Lee and Harold Douglas were married June 9th, 1921. Daddy bought her ring at Sylvan s in Columbia. I have it and only wear it on special occasions that Mama would have attended.

In the 1930 US Census:

Anna C. Bell is listed as age 53, Widowed, Farmer, General Farm

Thomas Bell is listed as age 24, Laborer, General Farm

John Bell is listed as age 21, Laborer, General Farm

Rachel Bell is listed as 26, Waitress, Hotel

Ralf (Charles R. Bell) is listed as age 31, Farmer, General Farm

Mildred Bell (wife of Charles Ralph Bell) is listed as age 31

Mildred J. Bell (Mickey) is listed as age 5 (granddaughter)

Robert M Bell (Mack) is listed as age 3 (grandson)

In the 1930 Census:

Daddy (Harold Douglas) is listed as Cattle Dealer, General Farm

Mama (Mary Lee Douglas), Harold Jr, Leslie, Sara, and Uncle Pryor (Daddy's Brother) are living in Winnsboro.

Uncle Ralph borrowed money on the farm for improvements. The farm was taken by the bank. (Don't know dates.)

In the 1940 US Census:

Grand mama and Uncle Tom are living in Winnsboro.

Uncle Ralph is working in construction in Durham, N.C.

Mama (Mary Lee) is married to Harold Douglas and living in the Douglas Community, Fairfield County.

Aunt Rachel is married to Monroe Chappell and living in Vass, N.C.

Uncle John is in the Air Force.

Uncle Tom is working as a farm manager on the Davis farm.

In the 1940 Census:

Daddy bought Granddaddy's house in the 1930s and The 1940 Census lists:

Harold (Head), Mary Lee, Leslie, Sara, Marion, Mary Ann, Wallace, Evelyn, Granddaddy(Father), and Hagar, (the Cook).

Harold Jr is no longer living there and Tommy was born in 1942.

Mama raised 8 children. She did not allow anyone to use curse words around her children and told them so. She never turned away someone asking for food at her door and sometimes sent extra food with them. She did not talk about people and found something good to say about anyone she heard being talked about. She added another best friend to her life, Irene Douglas Wilkes, Daddy's sister. Mama's "bad words" were, "Oh myOh" and "I do think". And when she heard something upsetting, she said, "that beats anything I have ever heard of". When someone criticized someone, she found something good to say about them. She never seemed to get sick or complain, but had a really bad stomach ache when she was in her 80s. Doctor Buchanan sent her to Columbia to the hospital for tests. The doctor asked Mama what was wrong and she said, "I think I ate too many fig newtons". He told her he would run a few tests and then would know what her problem was. After the tests he said, "you can take your Mama home today". I asked what Mama's problem was and he smiled at me and said, "I think she ate too many fig newtons"

Mama played games and cards with us and then with her grandchildren. She learned to play canasta and loved playing. I don't remember her ever winning because she played such a "nice game". She took care of her father-in-law and her mother until their passing.

One day she walked too far too late and was lost in the woods. Her dog, Ben, stayed with her and when he heard someone looking for Mama, ran out of the woods and led them back to her.

Mama never had a problem having overnight company. Our house was where Uncles, Aunts, Cousins and friends stayed for visits. She won a ribbon for her biscuits at the State Fair. She made ginger bread with her special lemon sauce poured over it. Like her mother before her, Mama had a big garden and canned so many vegetables, jellies, preserves, relishes, pickles and fruits. Everyone picked their favorite cake and she baked it for their birthday, except Wallace, who sometimes wanted Lemon Pie instead of cake and Tommy who wanted banana pudding. If it was your birthday, "you got to lick the big spoon and the bowl". My cake was caramel and I have the bowl.

....I have tried several times to make Grand mama and Mama's apple jelly. Nothing but apple peelings cooked in water, then drained, mix equal amounts of juice and sugar and cook until two drops gather before falling off the spoon. Pour hot jelly into jars and seal. (No sure jell or anything else added). My husband, Ray said, "The only reason your Mama's apple jelly is not a best seller is because she has never sold any of it". I would love to have some on a hot biscuit right now.

Evelyn Douglas Long