

WPA Alabama Writers Project  
Short Stories by:  
Vera L Henry, Hale County

Hale County  
Vera of Henry



### Aunt Hannah Jones

Aunt Hannah is the oldest ex-slave that I know in Hale County she lives in Greensboro in "Silk Stocking Alley" with her daughter in the home of her granddaughter, who has a grandson making five generations.

Aunt Hannah says she was born two or three miles from Bunker's Hill on the bluff of the Appomattox river on the plantation of John Fretwell and is ninety-seven years old was bought by Judge Sidney Moore and brought to Alabama when she was sixteen years old and has been here eighty-one years.

Hale County  
Vera D. Henry



Lawson Chapman's Home



"Martin gourds"



"Martin gourds"

THE CORK TREE

This is a picture of a cork tree. It is said to be the only cork tree in the South and some say the only one in the United States.

It is on a farm belonging to the Jones estate. Mr. Matson Jones' grandfather planted this tree bringing it from South America about fifty years ago and it never had acorns on it until it was Forty years old. The bark of the tree is cork.

To find this tree, leave Greensboro going west on the Akron Highway, turn to the left at the first road leading from the highway, go until you cross the railroad track and about two hundred feet out in an open field you will find this beautiful old tree.

(Picture and original copy filed under Historic and Famous Trees)

AUNT HANNAH JONES

Aunt Hannah is the oldest ex-slave that I know in Hale County. She lives in Greensboro in "Silk Stocking" Alley" with her daughter in the house of her grand-daughter, who has a grand-son making five generations.

Aunt Hannah says she was born two or three miles from Bunker's Hill on the Bluff of the Fretwell and is ninety-seven years old. Was bought by Judge Sidney Moore and brought to Alabama when she was sixteen years old and has been here eighty-one years.

Fale County  
Vera L. Henry

This was taken from "Greensboro Watchman"

Dated March 4, 1897

The marriage of Mr. H. Graham Benners and Miss Annie LeVert Pollnitz, which occurred in St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 2:30 o'clock Thursday afternoon, was decidedly the most notable society event of the season.

Long before the appointed hour, the edifice was thronged with a representative assemblage eager to see the union of two society favorites, even nature had put aside her frown, the tempest had spent its fury, and her smiling face was seen peering in at the windows and lending an additional brightness, making all exclaim "Happy is the bride the bride the sun shines on."

Cowan's "Bridal Chours" by a double quartette heralded the bridal party, which was led by the ushers. Messrs Frank D. Gully and Edwin S. Jack, the attendants came alternately, two bridesmaids and two grooms, separating and crossing over on reaching the chancel, where they formed a double semicircle. They were: Misses Fanny Erwin Jones, Lida Inge, Juliet Pickens, Lucy Stickney, Edith Cobbs, Ethel Erwin, Maggie Nelson, Lucy Cobb and Messrs Charles Pollnitz, Joe Benners of Birmingham, Wynn Coleman, J. A. Blunt, Lane Castleman, Inge Seldon, George K. Kealy and William Pickens. Then the well winsome, fairy-like flower girl Miss Annie Erwin Parrish, attended by her gallant cavalier, Master Henry W. Pollnitz followed by the lovely maid of honor, Miss Stella Pollnitz

who carried a gorgeous bouquet of pink roses. Last of all the blushing beautiful bride came leaning on the arm of her father, Major Charles Pollnitz. The groom accompanied by his best man, Mr. Augustus Benners of Birmingham, emerged from the vestry room and awaited the bride at the altar.

The bride wore a superb and exquisite French gown of white satin, with soft lace corsage garniture, which enhanced her piquant brunette beauty to a marvelous degree, and made her a quaint, sweet picture and an ideal bride. The handsome bouquet which completed this perfect costume was of bride roses. The pretty bridesmaids attired in dainty white muslin and fairly blooming with pink and white carnations and smilax, were as gay and as light and as bright.

"As the lay of the lark in his fitful flight."

When the ceremony by Reverend Dr. R. H. Cobbs was concluded the bridal pageant proceeded down the aisle to the soul stirring strain of Mendelsson's wedding march, the bride and groom being proceeded by their tiny attendant Miss Annie Parrish and Master Henry Pollnitz, who strewed flowers on their way, and many were the wishes that in the years to come flowers as sweet might spring up in their pathway, and conceal the rough places in life's journey.

A prettier wedding Greensboro has not seen, no one in which more real interest was manifested. From the church the bridal party with relatives and friends repaired to the home of the bride's parents where good old time aristocratic hospitality and a sumptuous repast awaited them. For the genial host and hostess Major and Mrs Pollnitz are known throughout this

section to be delightful entertainers.

Mr. and Mrs. Benners departed on the 5:30 train for a trip to New Orleans.

The bride has been a much admired factor in social circle here during several years of young ladyhood. She is a brilliant conversationalist being wonderfully clever at repartee which together with her charm of form and face gives her a prominent place in any social gathering.

The groom is bright and cultivated gentleman, a prince of a good fellow with a host of friends throughout the state who congratulate him upon the prize he has won. He has for years been the editor of the Alabama Beacon which continues to shed its brilliant rays broadcast and cheer the lives of many.

Eight three handsome wedding gifts attested the popularity of the happy pair, very costly were many of the presents, which showed every variety of solid silver, cut glass, hand-painted china and an exquisite onyx and brass five o'clock tea table.

At the present time December 20, 1938, Mr. and Mrs. Benners are both living in Greensboro in the town in which they married. They are dearly loved by all who know them and Mr. Benners works in the Watchman office with Mr. Verby and has a column in the paper every week. They have no children but Mrs. Benners has been a mother to her brother's two sons, Dr. C. A. Pollnitz sons.

but there was a good wall under the tree and the town objected to having  
the tree cut. One night when the people of the town went to sleep the  
tree was standing and when they awoke the next morning the tree was gone.

#### MAGNOLIA GROVE

Isaac Croom married a gifted and very charming young woman from  
North Carolina, Sarah Pearson, sister of Judge Richard H. Pearson, Chief  
Justice of Supreme Court. He also served as Ambassador to Rome.  
is one of the shifanes of Alabama. It is reached by a graceful winding  
walk and a circular driveway. The flower garden joins the vegetable  
garden and orchard and is most attractive. The ten beautiful magnolia  
trees, mystery trees of the South, with other trees, form the twenty-  
acre grove.

Built in early part of the eighteenth century, of bricks made on  
the place by slaves. The home is spacious, eight rooms, high ceilings,  
wide halls and verandas full length of the house. Across the front are  
columns of solid masonry; in the rear they are of fluted iron, which are  
supposed to have been brought from England. In the wide entrance hall  
there is a winding stairway, which is unusually distinctive and handsome,  
the most interesting feature of the house to many people.

It is people who have built and lived in a home that really makes  
its interest, the ancestors came from North Carolina. Isaac Croom built  
the Hobson home. He settled in Green County then, now Hale County. At  
the county seat and selected one of the prettiest sites in that section.  
After Isaac Croom had finished his house he found that a large oak tree  
that grew at the end of the street kept people from seeing his pretty  
new house so good, so he asked the permission of the town to cut this tree

out-door sports and hunting, swimming and riding. The house is filled with

but there was a good well under the tree and the town objected to having the tree cut. One night when the people of the town went to sleep the tree was standing and when they awoke the next morning the tree was gone.

Isaac Croom married a gifted and very charming young woman from North Carolina, Sarah Pearson, sister of Judge Richmond M. Pearson, Chief of Justice of Supreme Court. He also served as Ambassador to Rome, Minister to Persia and also to Greece. He was maternal grandfather of Richmond Pearson Hobson, the Merrimas hero.

The Crooms had no children so the home passed into the possession of Sarah Croom Pearson, afterward Mrs. James H. Hobson, mother of Captain Hobson.

This old home was always the center of much gaiety and entertainment, especially when the beautiful Pearson sisters from North Carolina came to visit their aunt, Mrs. Croom, Sally Pearson, the mother of Admiral Richmond Pearson Hobson, and her sister, Laura, were noted belles and beauties.

In the home are portraits of Colonel Isaac Croom and his wife; Judge Richmond M. Pearson; Eliza Mumford, mother of Judge Pearson; Judge James M. Hobson, his mother, Ann Morehead and others.

Naturally, Richmond Pearson Hobson is there in his Naval uniform. He entered the Naval Academy at Annapolis at the age of fourteen.

Although the Admiral's work carried him to all parts of the world, he tried to make an annual visit if possible, to his old home at "Magnolia Grove" where there was always entertainment given in his honor. He loved out-door sports and hunting, swimming and riding. The house is filled with

curios brought by Admiral Hobson from many different lands. Among them is a pine of the tree under which there was an exchange of prisoners made when Admiral Hobson was made free after being captured when he sunk the Merrimac. Also there is a chair which was once aboard the Merrimac.

It is gratifying to the friends of the Hobson family that belated official recognitions from Congress came to Richmond Pearson Hobson in 1933 for the daring feat performed in June, 1898, during the Spanish American War, which has been pronounced one of the most brilliant deeds of heroism in the entire military history of the nation. This was because of a defect in the law. This law restricted award of the Congressional medal to enlisted men, was later amended to include commissioned officers, and Congressman Oliver of Alabama, introduced a bill to correct the long and officially honor the hero by presenting to him the medal.

These were the words of "Uncle Ben", "Shucks, you ain't tellin' me nothin', man. I knowed as how Rich was gwine ter be a big man. Didn't I see dat boy, a sailin' all sorts of little boats on dat pond out dare. He didn't take no foolishness neither. A boy playin' wid him tried to ruinate one uv dem ships one day, and de way, Marse Rich th'ashed dat boy wuz a sight."

"Uncle Ben" the old family servant of the Hobson family, said this when he was told that the whole world was talking about what a hero Capt. Richmond P. Hobson of Alabama, had proved himself to be. "Uncle Ben" was just as glad as anyone else for he had been with the Hobson family all his life, and he felt as though "Rich" as he called Richmond, belonged to him.

At the present time visitors are welcomed at the Hobson home without any cost. There are two sisters and two brothers of the late Rear Admiral Richmond P. Hobson living in the home.

Information on "Magnolia Grove" and Richmond Pearson Hobson came partly from "Historic Home of Alabama and Their Traditions" and mostly from Miss Margaret Hobson, sister of the late Richmond P. Hobson.

12/15/38

S.J.

cb

Vera L. Henry  
Hale County

February 18, 1897.

The Greensboro Telephone Exchange has recently had a new list of subscribers printed. The sheet contains sixty-two names. The Exchange is growing in popularity on account of the splendid service rendered and the convenience of the 'phones.

At the present time September 29, 1938 we have two hundred and twenty listed and a few new ones have not been listed yet and there is a plan to have the dial system within another year.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE STORY OF A SMALL FARM OWNER

Leaving Greensboro going west on the Akron road turn to the right at the first road, leaving the highway, follow this winding white sandy road, go past the Mason's home and in the next house on the right, lives Lawson Chapman and his family, his family consists of his mother, Mrs. Chapman, his wife Nina and two daughters the oldest girl is sixteen and the other is fourteen years of age.

They did live in town but wanted a place where they could have chickens, cows, a garden, etc. So <sup>they</sup> bought this small farm. It took a long times to pay for it, seemingly but only about six years really. Lawson is an ex-soldier of the World's War and did get a compensation of twelve dollars a month for awhile and this twelve dollars was what they made their monthly payments on their home with after making the first down payment. Lawson's compensation has stopped just five months

before he was to finish paying for his place, leaving him owing sixty dollars and he heard that the man he bought the place from remarked that he would get the place back now, but told Lawson to take all the time he wanted to finish paying the last sixty dollars. But Lawson went to the bank and borrowed the money and payed the man, got his deed and then payed the bank back a little at a time. When they bought the place there was only two rooms to the house, but now they have torn the smallest room away and built a new dining room, kitchen, small bedroom and a large bed room, also a new front porch extending all across the front of the house. They have had the house screened and have painted the front and want to finish it as soon as they can.

The family seems so perfectly happy together and Mrs. Chapman says nine is just as good to her as if she is an own daughter instead of a daughter-in-law and that there is nothing that Bessie Ray and Mary Ruth, her grandchildren refuse to do for her and I don't think there has ever been a grandmother any better to her grandchildren than she is to them. Lawson is her only child and she has always lived with him.

This is Bessie Ray's third year in High School and Mary Ruth's first. The family is so glad Mary Ruth has entered high school so they can go together for the last two years Mrs. Chapman or Nina one has gone part of the way to school as they were afraid for her to go alone.

At the present time Lawson is working in the town of Greensboro at Johnson's filling station getting fifty-five dollars a month. This gives them a very comfortable living but of course they don't get everything they want by any

### 3 Hale County

means but Lawson likes his work and is very independent he says he does not want help from any kind of relief work as long as he can live any other way. A friend of Mrs. Chapman kept trying to get her to make application for an old age pension (she thought but was really direct relief) so without Lawson knowing it she put in her application which was approved and when her check came, Lawson positively would not let her accept it. He said his mother took care of him when he was little and that he was certainly going to take care of her as she was old. She is sixty-eight years old, tall and very slender.

Mrs. Chapman gets up every morning and makes the coffee, fries the meat and makes gravy for breakfast then she usually calls Nina to make the biscuits. They get up around four thirty o'clock so they will have plenty of time to eat, without rushing so as Lawson has to be at work at six o'clock every morning. He works on Sunday too, but does get off on half day every other Sunday morning, does not go to work until noon time.

Mrs. Chapman does most of the cooking she boils some kind of vegetable every day whether is in season peas, beans, turnips salit, collards, cabbage of which they raise most of their own, but there are times when they have to buy something, she says "I like to boil the pot and cook cornbread, but Nina does all the extra cooking, cooks pies, desserts and makes the salads."

Mrs. Chapman had a light stroke of praalysis several years ago so they are very careful of her diet and of course never feel exactly easy about her condition. This has been an expense to them as she had to have a doctor and medicine and they do believe in taking precaution against disease that

4 Hale County

can be avoided Nina suffered with indigestion for several years but seems well now and has gained in weight until she weighs one hundred and sixty pounds and Lawson says "she is a nice ~~firm~~ firm now." The children have always been healthy they are both tall slender blonds with naturally curly hair which Lawson refused to let them cut until a few years ago. They both wear it in a long bob now.

Nina and Mrs. Chapman both love flowers and you will always find a few box flowers and petunias, cosmos and other flowers of some kind in the yard and I must not forget Mrs. Chapman's pepper she always has plenty of hot pepper and besides having plenty for their own use she gives it to her neighbors whenever I want any I know where to find it. They also love cats and dogs. They have one big yellow dog named "Bran" and also a little terrier, and they only have seven cats the youngest ones are more than half grown now and Mrs.

Chapman says she does not know what they will do if they continue to increase as Mary Ruth never wants to give any away and Lawson says they shall not get rid of them without her knowing it, for he remembers how it hurt him when his 'dad' would make some of his pets disappear. They have six cows and calves and about fifty pretty Rhode Island chickens.

Lawson is a member of the American Legion and dislikes to miss a single meeting. He and his mother both vote but Lawson did not have to pay poll tax because he is a World War Veteran so Nina's was neglected and it has been so long now they never seem to have the money to catch up but she is very interested now and would like very much to vote.

Lawson and Nina want to give their children at least, a high school education but have not decided beyond that yet as

5 Hale County

the girls have to decide what they want to do as their  
life works but they have an idea of taking a business  
course at some good business college as it seems hard to  
get work without a business education.

10/13/38

L.H.

FAIRY INGRAM.

Fairy Ingram is the wife of James Otis Ingram and the mother of three lovely little girls even if she did want the last one to be a boy, so bad. Her husband has a job as a foreman with a road construction company, therefore they live at one place for only a short time. Their parents live in Electic in Elmore County and Otis and Fairy are buying themselves a home on a fortyacre farm near Electic.

Fairy will be twenty-seven years old in the month of January 1939. She married when she was nineteen and in December before she was to graduate from high school the next spring.

The principal talked to her begging her to wait at least until she finished that session of school, but she married anyway, and maybe she has wished at times she had waited but no one has ever known it yet. And she seems so happy.

For the first two years after she married they rented rooms from her parents, living in the house with them, then they moved to their own home, which they are buying, and in a short time Otis started working with a building contractor and now for several years has been a carpenter for this road construction company of which he was made foreman a few months ago. He is now making thirty-five dollars a week which gives them a good living but they have had doctor bills and other extra expence with the arrival of the new baby girl who is only one month old.

Fairy has a colored girl to help her cook and do the house work she says she does not need help always but with the new baby she needs one for awhile. Fairy gets up and cooks breakfast, because Otis goes to work so early and then Hattie, the colored girl the children breakfast and get June off to school. The rest of the morning is spent mostly in bathing, dressing, feeding the baby, for all little babies require quite a bit of attention, then Pattie, who is two and one half years old needs part of her mother's time too, al-

though she waits on herself lots, we can hear her say often "mover, open door for me," or "I want cool water" she never says she wants water it's always cool water, and there are many other things to do for her. Then Fairy places the meals and has three full meals every day for she says with Otis working and the children need them too, she is careful to have a balanced diet which of course includes plenty of vegetables, fruit and milk for the children.

Fairy is full of life and fun, young and pretty, weighs one hundred and forty pounds. But she takes her motherhood seriously, realizes the importance of giving her children the right kind of start in life.

Fairy and Otis are buying a car they have it almost paid for they are also making monthly payments on a frigifere. They are now living in Hale County in Greensboro, Alabama moved here September the first, 1938 and on account of the baby has not been to church or Sunday school here yet but has always gone to church she is Baptist and while she lived at Electic always played the piano for services in her home church. She wants her children in church and Sunday School and June goes every Sunday now, and she intends to go as soon as she can.

Fairy was an Emfinger (?) before she married, both of her parents are living, they live on a farm near Electic. She has two brothers, one older than she who is married and has two boys the other is younger and is not married. She has one sister, married and her husband has a job with the same road construction company that Otis works with.

Otis quit school just before graduating from high school also but both he and Fairy as most everyone else, want their children to have a little more education than they and they want them to have special training for whatever work they take up for life, while as they are so young have not decided on yet, but Fairy laughs and says sometimes she thinks Pattie will be a carpenter like her daddy as she wants a hammer and nails so often.

Fairy has a machine and does most of her sewing for she and the children she says with her ~~three~~ three girls she will have to sew and have a good ironing board for girls will always have something to press, and she wants

them to know how to do things for themselves.

At one time Fairy and Otis talked of letting Fairy take the children and go to their home to live said they believed they could live cheaper by letting him board and save the trouble of moving so often. But Otis had to go off on a job for about three weeks so left his family as June was in school, and for such a short time and when he came back had fully decided not to do that said life was too short and he loved them so much could not stand to be separated from them and as long as possible was going to keep them with him.

Fairy loves flowers and intends to have many when she does go to her home to live, she wants a yard, garden, cow and chickens she wants to make a real home where she can have plenty of house room for her girls and friends but she does not want to live separate from her husband says the children need their daddy, and she needs him to help share the responsibility of their early training. She gets tired of being crowded but says when she can get two laerge rooms can do very well and she does not feel able to rent more than two rooms. She is an excellent housekeeper and with her children she is really kept busy. Fairy does not vote now but did until she started moving around but says she is not an interested as she was and has not paid her poll tax in several years now.