

"GRANDMA FANNIE ALLEN"

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Martha Frances McLeroy Travis Allen

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Her Recollections and Genealogy

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➔ Section I-----Recollections

Section II-----Background Material  
Copies of her original newspaper  
articles and reference notes made  
in her own handwriting circa 1930

Section III-----Genealogy  
This section consists of genealogy  
of the Hartsfield-McLeroy connection  
and allied family connections. Note  
numbers preceeding names indicate  
the generation number of the family

chart of  
Barbara McConnell Weatherford

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# RECOLLECTIONS OF

"GRANDMA FANNIE ALLEN"  
MARTHA FRANCES McLEROY TRAVIS ALLEN

as told to  
James T. McConnell

## foreword

In the early part of this century, without the benefit of TV, radio and motion pictures, entertainment was somewhat limited. I feel that I was indeed fortunate. My great-grandmother, Martha Frances McLeroy Travis Allen, lived in the same household.

She enjoyed relating to me, her first greatgrandchild, the joys and excitement of antebellum days, the sorrows of the Civil War and the tragedies of the reconstruction years. I shall forever cherish those treasured moments.

She was called "Grandma Fannie Allen" by her wide circle of friends, and she contributed under that name a hundred or more columns in a weekly newspaper, The Clayton County News and Farmer. I shall refer to her hereafter in these notes by that affectionate title, or just grandma.

Not only did she regale me with delightful stories (too bad some were sad), but made notes for my future reading. It is from these notes, newspaper articles, notes of my own and recollections that I hope to share with my grandchildren her early youth and a phase of life in the north central part of Georgia not long after it was acquired from the Creek Indians.

From these and other references, I have attempted to arrange this communication in both a chronological and categorical order. It is hoped that this will provide ease in following.

In instances where I have used her direct quotes from notes and newspaper columns, I have (enclosed these portions in quotes). Since she rarely used paragraphs, I have taken the liberty of including them. In addition, where she referred to a relative, I have inserted the actual name. Other than that I have not "tinkered" with her remarks. The possible exception is that while she felt that her parents were reared in Pike County because

they lived there at the time of their marriage, I have included in her family background their actual residences at various times. This is based upon years of genealogical research. Her actual notes and copies of selected newspaper articles are included in the back section for comparison and authentication.

Martha Frances, born July 20, 1842 in Fayette County (the area is now part of Clayton Co., Ga.), the daughter of Henry and Martha Hartsfield McLeroy. The ancestors of both families were in America before the Revolution.

Because of the spelling variants of the name McLeroy, the ancestry of Henry McLeroy was difficult to trace and to document. But, through wills, deeds and other documents, it led to one John McKleroy who was born in Cecil County, Maryland around 1690.

The McLeroys (spelling variants) were from Ireland and it is believed from County Sligo. County Sligo is adjacent to Ulster or Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is principally Protestant, while Ireland is largely Roman Catholic. All information presently available would indicate that the McLeroys were Protestant, probably because they were in Ulster before being transported to America.

Being transported means that passage was paid by someone else and that they had to work for a specified number of years (usually seven) to repay their passage.

The Hartsfields were first in America in Pennsylvania, later moving to Maryland where they were associated with the McLeroys in the eighteenth century. Many families during this period of migration to the south made stop-overs in Virginia and the Carolinas before settling in Georgia.

Many descendants in the twentieth century are found in Texas and most western states.

After the association in Maryland of the Hartsfields and McLeroys, they traveled together very much in the fashion of Irish septs. The Irish septs differ from Scottish clans which are so rigidly organized in that they are held together by a common surname and customs, and inhabit the same general area.

Examination of genealogical records will show that there were many marriages between the McLeroys and Hartsfields. While in North Carolina, a branch of the Sims (spelling variants) became associated and moved at about the same time and in the same areas as the McLeroys and Hartsfields.

Records substantiating the close relationship of the two families (and to a degree the Sims family) will be found in marriage and other records in the Wake County area of North Carolina, in the Wilkes and Oglethorpe areas of eastern Georgia, and in Pike, Henry, Fayette and neighboring counties of central Georgia.

Beginning around the first of the nineteenth century, a large number of McLeroys and Hartsfields migrated to Georgia. Settlement was principally in that area of Wilkes that later became Oglethorpe County. The migration to central Georgia was around 1810 when they started moving to the Jasper section, and after the 1821 Creek Indian cession movement was again underway to Pike, Fayette and Henry counties in central Georgia.

# RECOLLECTIONS

After marriage in 1829 in Pike County, Georgia, Henry McLeroy, father of "Grandma Fannie Allen", moved in the early 1830's to neighboring Fayette County (locating in that area that became Clayton County in 1859). Now I am picking up with Grandma's notes.

"I often think and muse over my happy childhood days as I am lonesome this day. I have decided to write some of it down for my children, grandchildren, greatgrandchildren and friends. I remember well when I was six or seven years old." (Note: this would be 1848-1849.)

"I was little Fannie McLeroy, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry McLeroy. At the time my father owned a large farm consisting of several hundred acres (note: actually over a thousand acres) of fine farming land in Fayette County, a little distance leading from the Fayetteville to McDonough Road."

"This first home was called the Old Dickson Place. Father bought it from either Mr. Bob or Mr. John Dickson. The house was old style, built of large rooms up and down stairs. It had a piazza and small bed room on front and a long shed room on back. It was a very nice convenient old style house with pretty white sandy yards and large mulberry trees for shade for the yards. It was a sweet happy home for me."

From Grandma's notes, she recalls the first train through Lovejoy on the way to Jonesboro...

"I saw the first train at Lovejoy on the way to Jonesboro (note: Jonesboro was originally spelled Jonesborough). Father had carried us in his two horse closed carriage to visit grandfather (Warren) Hartsfield who lived at Lovejoy. Father's carriage was enclosed and had steps that let down, and had curtains at the windows."

"Grandfather Warren Hartsfield and his entire family then went to the rail road to see the train. It was a real show and a very large crowd had gathered for the excitement."

Note: This was the Macon and Western Railroad (now the Central of Georgia) that had been constructed to reach the railroad heads of the Georgia Railroad from Augusta and the Western and Atlantic (owned by the State of Georgia) at Terminus (later Atlanta, Georgia). The Western and Atlantic is now part of the L&N RR from Clayton County Regional Library, Jonesboro, Georgia Folder Collection, Genealogy Room

Chattanooga to Atlanta.

It was while living at her first home that Grandma early experienced the need and comfort of religion. I continue with her text from a newspaper column...

"While living there I felt that I was a little sinner; a little girl of only eight years old, if that. I felt that I must pray to God for forgiveness. I had read the Lord's Prayer in my mother's New Testament."

"I took the Book, opened it at the Lord's Prayer (St. Luke, Chapter 11) and repeated it to God as my sentiments. I felt better afterward and ever since that day I have never forgotten my humble prayers."

"All this appears as fresh to me as if it happened but yesterday. I have great faith in the Good Lord. He has blessed me and mine in many ways and I never forget to pray and ask him to bless me. My prayers are weak and feeble. But I feel that God has heard me and answered my prayers. He has brought me safe thus far and will take me to rest in that happy land."

It was after moving to her second home that Grandma joined a church, the Flint River Baptist Church.

"I was converted, joined the church and was baptized when I was twelve years old at the old Flint River Baptist Church, near Jonesboro, a dear spot to me."

Grandma's mother and her Hartsfield grandparents were members of Hebron Primitive Baptist Church at Lovejoy. Her father, Henry McLeroy, attended church with his family, but I am not sure he was a member. There were several Primitive Baptist ministers on her mother's side of the family. Grandma's grandmother Elizabeth Holmes was married to Warren Hartsfield by her brother-in-law the Reverend Benjamin Milner. Grandma's newspaper columns contain additional references to Hebron Baptist Church.

Discussing members of Hebron Church, "I remember old man Avery Strickland and family, Rollene Brown and his family, Martin Brown and family, John D. Stewart and Billy Stewart's father, old "uncle" Ruben Wallace and family, Will Matterson's mother and "grandmother" Tucker. (Note: Uncle and grandmother used here were affectionate terms and do not indicate relationship.) They were all honest, law abiding citizens."

"Many other families of first class belonged to Hebron Baptist, but I will not name them now."

"My grandmother Hartsfield (Elizabeth Holmes Hartsfield)

and grandmother McLeroy (Mary "Polly", wife of Edward, father of Henry McLeroy) were members. I am part Primitive and part Missionary Baptist, my old self, in belief."

"I remember when I was a very little girl I was sitting on the front row near the pulpit (at Hebron). My father said to my mother after we left church, 'Martha, I want you to put longer dresses on Fannie or keep her off the front row seat.' People were more particular then. Now grown ladies have been wearing short dresses above their knees and don't think anything about it, because it is the style. I do not like that style, but if it suits others it is alright with me. I do not think any less of them and love them all the same."

"I want to tell you a little more about old "uncle" Ruben Wallace, his wife and Mrs. Watterson; three dear, good people, now resting in Heaven, I believe. These dear old people left their home and stayed at our home where we waited on them through their sickness, until the end. They were good Christian neighbors."

"'Uncle' Charlie Austin and wife lived on the Fayetteville road; two more good old people, members of Hebron Church. Old 'uncle' Billy Bennett, his wife and son Cam and his wife lived in Fayetteville and were members until a new Primitive Baptist Church was built there. Old "grandma" Tucker was another good faithful member and a fine neighbor."

Grandma was particularly impressed that this was still frontier country. Less than thirty years previously this was Creek Indian Lands. Her parents and grandparents were among the first white settlers to move into previously Indian Lands after the 1807 and 1821 cessions. She relates in her text her mother's stories about Indians, and this is an example from her notes and verbal revelations.

"I had heard mother tell about Indians (i.e., Creeks) while living with her father, grandfather Warren Hartsfield. When she was a little girl the Indians would come into their yard, build a fire and dance all night. They were friendly, all right, if you didn't cross them."

"The Indians would cook sweet cakes in hot ashes. They would carry them on a stick, through a hole in the cakes. They gave mother one to eat and she kept it until they were out of sight, and then threw it away. She kept the beads they gave her. They also had pockets (term then used for pocket book or purse)."

This was while Warren Hartsfield was living in Jasper County. Jasper (originally Randolph) had been in

existence for only twelve or fifteen years and was on the border of Creek Indian Lands. After the 1821 cession, Pike and neighboring counties were created and opened for white settlement.

Grandma first went to school while living at the home of her birth, and she relates in her notes...

"First school that I went to was a little log cabin with stick and dirt chimney. Father blazed the trees on each side to make a path for us to go through the woods, so that we would not get lost going to school or returning home."

"Mother, in addition to telling about Indians, would relate about panthers, bears and other dangerous wild animals, that abounded when she was young."

"Seeing pictures of Indians taking little children and slashing their brains out against trees and pictures of panthers pursuing women with babes on horseback made me fearful of going to school through the woods."

"This was a little one room school house. The teacher allowed us to spell out in ABC's from the old Blue Back Spelling Book. (Note: The Blue Back Spelling Book was still in use in rural schools in the south as late as the early 1900's.) It was so loud that you could not hear yourself think. Those were happy days."

I assume that the happy days referred to did not include the trip from home to and from school through the "fearful woods".

It was at about this time that Grandma's father Henry McLeroy bought more property and moved. The new location for a home already had a small house on it. The existing structure was turned into a kitchen or as generally referred to at that time, a "cook house", and was detached from the main or big house. This was in case of fire from cooking the principal residence might not get destroyed. There was a covered passage way connecting the two structures.

Much of the mill work, finished lumber and glass was brought from Savannah (some from Milledgeville) via mule and wagon train when returning after carrying cotton to market.

This might be termed a large farm or small plantation. The large plantation with stately columns that comes to mind when we think of the old south plantations did not exist at that time in this frontier land. Such large plantations with the picture post card mansions existed in the old established counties along the Savannah River

and in the Wilkes, Clarke and Baldwin areas. Fayette and surrounding counties at that time were only some twenty-five years from the wig-wams of the Indians.

The land consisted of over 1200 acres along the Flint River in the 5th Land District of original Henry, then Fayette, and in 1859 made part of the newly created Clayton County. By the then standards for the area, it could be considered a plantation. Property values as listed in the 1850 census show that this numbered among the largest land holdings in Fayette County. Grandma describes the move...

"A short time later he built and moved out on the main public road near Old Hebron Baptist Church (note: this road is now called Tara Road)."

This property was sold in 1853 to Philip Fitzgerald, greatgrandfather of Margaret Mitchell who wrote Gone With the Wind.

This period was evidently a very happy one for Grandma, with the exception of two tragedies. Her father died in 1853, and shortly before that her brother, Henry Jr., took his own life with a gun and was found on the bank of the Flint River by searchers. www.georgiapioneers.com

Grandma was very devoted to her parents and spoke often of them. As far as I can recall, her father Henry McLeroy did not belong to a church, but was a religious man with very high moral principles. His will indicates the strong paternal feeling that he had for his children, and the deep devotion to his wife, Martha.

Grandma recalled that her father kept a decanter on the side board and every morning before riding over the farm lands to inspect the progress of crops, he would take a "dram". I assume that "dram" referred to an alcoholic beverage. At other times, she stated, the only time he took a "dram" was at social functions. Her mother never indulged.

Typical of many pioneer families, Henry McLeroy had moved a good deal searching for greater opportunities and a better life for his wife and children. He felt that he had now found it.

Before the coming of the railroad (and in many instances after) planters in the Fayette area would carry their cotton and farm produce via horse and mule caravan style to Savannah for sale or consignment to commission merchants to sell to England, or New England. They would return with staples and manufactured goods not produced on the farm. Clayton County Regional Library, Lithia Springs, Georgia Folder Collection, Genealogy Room

Many small one-horse or two-horse farmers would arrange for the larger producers to transport their goods to market.

Grandma refers to the type of products that the caravan returned with to the plantation...

"The farm produced large crops of cotton, wheat, corn and potatoes (note: oats were also an important item). The produce was carried to Savannah in four-horse and two-horse wagons."

"When returning, he would bring bags of good old Java coffee, bushels of brown and granulated sugar, loaves of sugar, barrels of molasses and Orleans syrup for his family, black and white."

The molasses mentioned was commonly known as black strap and the Orleans syrup is a lighter color syrup. Also certain types of cloth by the bolt were purchased in Savannah.

The plantation owner would usually accompany the caravan to Savannah and make arrangements for disposition of his produce.

"He always boarded at the same place in Savannah."

From her conversations, this was where many of the planters from Henry, Fayette and Pike counties made their headquarters while there. Many business transactions, including the sale of land and purchase of land and slaves were concluded there.

If we are to believe what we hear, Savannah in the fall was a really exciting place for planters whose previous excitement in the red clay hills of central Georgia consisted of log rollings and corn huskings. Of course there were some weddings and parties to add to that daring social life. Grandma continues with life on the plantation...

"I have known father to kill as many as 50 head of fine hogs a year for meat."

"At hog killing time he would have meat cut up in middlings, shoulders, hams, heads and jowls. Early next morning two negro men would rub salt in the meat and pack it up in large hogsheds (containers), each type of meat being separate."

"Negro women would cut up the fat and dry it to make lard, using large kettles holding several gallons. There were two types, gut lard and leaf lard, which would be

kept separate in large stoneware jars. There would be hundreds of gallons."

"There were no mills to grind sausage. The hog meat would be put on a bench and beat up with a wooden mallet, then stuffed (in cleaned pork or sheep casings) and hung up to dry (note: seasonings, including home grown sage, red peppers and salt, would be sprinkled on the meat before pounding)."

"Feet and heads were cooked, then bones removed. It was combined with seasonings to make press meat and souce (sauce?) meat. (Note: Black pepper was a principal seasoning.)"

"This was a time of plenty, with smoke houses full and crackling bread for every meal; the result of the wonderful goodness a bountiful harvest had produced. The wheat houses were full of grain and the bee gums were flowing over. Neighbors and friends were often invited for 'bee hiving'."

"There was a drink called meltiglums. The honey comb was put in water and then squeezed out. The comb was then put in cloth sacks and boiled to make beeswax. Beeswax was used on thread and for medicinal purposes." [www.georgiapioneers.com](http://www.georgiapioneers.com)

"Women in olden times made their own starch out of wheat. I recall seeing negro women put wheat to soak in large tubs of water, where it would remain until the grains burst. It would then be strained through a sieve made of coarse cloth. The water would then be drained off completely and this would leave a firm cake of starch which would then be broken up into lumps."

Even though slave labor was used extensively in that day and time, log rollings and quilting parties were usually reserved as a social event. The slaves prepared the "feast".

Log rollings were where friends and neighbors pitched in to clear new ground. This was very popular during the winter months. This was usually accompanied by a quilting party for the women.

The activities were usually ended by mid-afternoon, and the host and hostess then provided a bountiful feast, and indeed it was a feast from what I have been told. I am sure the men were served a "dram" after their hard work and before the "supper". This kind of combined work and social life was not confined to the slave owners, but to all in the area.

For the younger members of the families, corn huskings or corn shuckings were the order of the day. If a boy found

a red ear of corn it was license to kiss his girl. These events provided labor and also produced social events (this type of activity, which started in the seventeenth century frontier country, continued until early nineteenth century) and I quote from Grandma's column...

"Someone writing in the News about going to a quilting party brought back sweet memories of long ago when I was young. They had big log rollings, quilting parties and corn shuckings. Good old times and good eating; dinners and suppers we had, cooked in ovens in the fire place, chicken pie, potato pie called "slicemarina" (a deep dish cobbler type pie with dumplings well seasoned with butter)."

Family reunions were frequent. Parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters and cousins would gather for big Sunday dinners.

"For big Sunday dinners there would be several kinds of meat, boiled victuals and cakes. I guess it would be a show for you young folks to see pot hooks and dinner pots boiling, hanging on the rack." When guests stayed all night, "after supper would come old fashioned play parties."

A self-contained plantation required much in addition to food. Clothing, too, was important and necessary. Grandma comments...

"Negro women would card and spin on the spinning wheel the thread to weave on the loom. They would make cloth for everyday clothing for the white family and the negro families. On his trip to Savannah, father would buy bolts of nice cloth for our Sunday dresses and underwear."

"The men and boys had home-made brown and grey jeans for winter. For summer wear, nice home-made colored cloth was used."

"Father's large flock of white, black and grey sheep would be shorn in the spring. He would take the grey and dye some of the white a brown color and take it to the factory where it would be carded, spun and woven into nice jeans for men's Sunday wear and for their underwear and for balmorals for women."

"The children had indigo blue, turkey red, purple, brown, black and white striped and checked homespun dresses."

"Mother had firty or more geese and had them picked once a year in the spring. This down was used for bedding and pillows."

While not in Grandma's notes, I recall that often she spoke of the kindness and concern shown by her father toward the slaves. He would never allow whippings or other acts of brutality by overseers.

After all, slaves represented a large investment, and from what I am told, he felt that kindness would pay better dividends than harshness and demanding treatment. In addition, some received a cash bonus. This cash bonus was more widely used than most history books lead us to believe. A check of the 1850 and 1860 census, especially of Virginia, will show that there were many free negroes (slaves who had purchased their freedom).

Henry McLeroy, according to Grandma, would never purchase or sell slaves when that would break up families. In fact, I was told that in only one instance during his lifetime did he sell slaves because of a problem. One of the men had threatened violence and Henry McLeroy sold him, his wife and two children, although only the man was a problem:

Doctors in those days were few and far between. Family remedies of course were widely used for minor as well as for major ailments. When illness among the slaves occurred, they were brought into the main house by Martha McLeroy, Grandma's mother, and cared for and nursed back to health. I think this practice was typical of that era and locality. A few of Grandma's comments...

"My father owned a good many slaves, young and old, small and grown."

"Father always fed and clothed his negroes well."

"I recollect when I was small that drovers came in covered wagons loaded with negro men, women and children to sell. They would camp at father's place for several days."

Grandma's notes also contain reference to horse and mule drovers coming from Tennessee and Kentucky and stopping over at her father's home. It appeared that Henry McLeroy's place offered an opportunity to replenish their supplies of food for the people and feed for the animals.

This provided a good opportunity to dispose of farm surplus and provide additional cash.

It was in the fall of 1852 at Savannah that Henry McLeroy discussed the sale of his property with Philip Fitzgerald, who already had large land holdings in Fayette County, as well as a tract of land (or perhaps an option) in Florida. It is believed that the transaction was in Jackson County.   
 Clayton County Regional Library, Jonesboro, Georgia Order Collection, Genealogy Room

The deal was concluded in the summer of 1853 and here are some of the comments from Grandma's notes...

"When I was nine or ten years old, father took a notion to sell his farm and move to Florida where he had a rich uncle and aunt."

"He sold to Mr. Philip Fitzgerald, and this included the house and little red houses for the slaves."

The uncle and aunt mentioned were William Hartsfield and Pellatiah McElroy Hartsfield. Pellatiah was a sister of Mary ("Polly") McElroy McLeroy, Henry McLeroy's mother. William Hartsfield was a son of Richard and Anna McElroy Hartsfield. This is used to illustrate the numerous marriages between the McElroys (spelling variants) and Hartsfields.

The sale to Philip Fitzgerald was for part cash and a tract of Florida land. (See the section of this book for her father, Henry McLeroy, for a copy of the deed from Henry McLeroy to Philip Fitzgerald.) Grandma's notes...

"When he went to Florida to buy (information indicates he had already purchased, subject to examination) he took his sons-in-law with him." (Note: These would be Millegan Bert DeVaughn, husband of Mary Elizabeth, and Wiley Jones Gay, husband of Peletiah.)

"They went by private conveyance and wagons and camped out enroute."

While there, he encountered fever and Grandma relates the circumstances...

"Father was taken seriously ill. They brought him back on a feather bed. He never got well, but died and left us."

Grandma's notes outline the terms of the will that Henry McLeroy made on his death bed, but since it is included in its entirety only brief comments are included here.

In being fair to his children he directed that \$1200 be given to all except the two eldest daughters. They had been given property and money equal to that at the time of their marriage, and this sum was to compensate the others. His daughters, when they married, had been given very elaborate weddings. Cooking for the events required a full week.

Part of the will directed that Bert DeVaughn use funds from the estate to buy another home for Martha McLeroy

and children.

"Mother bought 400 acres of good farming land and built five miles from Jonesboro on the road from Jonesboro to Fairburn (note: this is presently highway #138). This was near Bethsadia Baptist Church on the line of Clayton and Campbell (now Fulton) counties. While there I went to school to Mr. Willis Beavers for two or three years."

"When I was about 15 years old I boarded in Jonesboro in order to go to school there."

Grandma attended school at Jonesboro while she was 15 and 16 years old. Also she went to a special writing school taught by her sister-in-law Elizabeth ("Bettie") McConnell, wife of James W. ("Jim") McLeroy.

A popular pastime of young ladies of the period was having a Memory Book. Portions of Grandma's book are included in the back portion.

This era was also an enjoyable social period, especially around Jonesboro. Grandma recollects...

Speaking of a May party at the school, "The May Queen was Miss Lavonia Dorsey, who later married Mr. Matt Dorsey. She and Miss Fannie Johnson were first cousins. [www.georgiapioneers.com](http://www.georgiapioneers.com) Miss Fannie Johnson had the prettiest curly hair, natural curls in ringlets. Duck Ellington was Winter, Tank McConnell represented Spring, Fannie Boaen represented Summer, and I represented Autumn."

Christmastime in Jonesboro was a particularly joyous season as Grandma tells in her column...

"I wish all of you young folks, boys and girls of Jonesboro, may have as good times ... as I had when I was a young girl 75 years ago at Christmastime in and around Jonesboro."

Referring to her brother Wiley, "spent most of our Christmas times in that dear old town (this was when Grandma was about 16 and with her brother was attending boarding school in Jonesboro). Oh, I tell you, my girl friends and I, with our sweethearts, had such a nice happy time together. We would have good old time parties somewhere every night through Christmas; have singings, plays, hog-drovers and London Bridge and so on. The boys would get their partners, go marching around singing, play stealing partners, club fist, flying thimble, dropping the handkerchief, and so on. All the partners would get around in a ring, hand in hand, drop the handkerchief behind someone that would pick it up, and such another running, whipping and slashing we would have. And snap up another, get in the ring and snap out Clayton County Regional Library, Jonesboro, Georgia Folder Collection, Genealogy Room

the one you wanted."

"Then, Brother I am bobbed. I didn't much like that play. Then twistification, with which we would sometimes have music, a fiddle or banjo, and dance as twistification, an old fashioned reel. Such good old times as we did have, such fun. How we all did enjoy it!"

"I will give you a few names of my old friends, girls and boys: Camps, Sparkmans, Hutchesons, Sims, McConnells, Keys, Burnsides, Johnsons, Gays, Manns, Morrows, and many others, all of them my good friends. I only mention their last names, too many to mention their first names. Smith was one name most particular."

"I was then happy Fannie McLeroy. Milner was another familiar name. They lived out in the country adjacent to Jonesboro. We would spend the night enjoying ourselves. I remember mother consented for us to have a party at our house about five miles from Jonesboro. Many town girls and boys attended. It was a cold and freezing night and they stayed until daylight."

"We had a large crowd, large rooms full with big wood fires. There were no automobiles then. Our sweethearts and beaux owned fine horses and buggies. We had good old times then. Wish you young boys and girls can have as good times in 1930 as we had so many years ago."

I have heard from Grandma about so many pleasurable happenings she experienced while at school in Jonesboro, that I am inclined to think that school was an excuse for a gala social life.

It was while attending school, or at one of the social functions in Jonesboro that Grandma met Benjamin Marlin Travis, son of Hobard Travis.

To discourage this love affair, her mother sent her to Forsythe Female Institute, at that time considered a fine school for daughters of planters in central Georgia. However, this did not discourage the young love affair. Benjamin Travis followed on horseback, and Grandma climbed out of the window and eloped! Three children were born of this union before Benjamin Travis became a Civil War casualty.

Forgiveness by her mother was immediate! Martha McLeroy continued the custom started by her husband, Henry McLeroy, of giving a generous wedding gift to each of their children. The present was a completely equipped farm with necessary implements, live stock and a furnished home, or the necessary funds for purchasing.



Martha McLeroy gave Grandma a farm adjacent to her own in Clayton County. After the death of Benjamin Travis, Grandma moved with her three children into the home with her mother and rented her own farm.

The happiness and the good life experienced by some (not all were so privileged) was of short duration. The clouds of the Civil War were forming and the news of Fort Sumter changed forever the way of the south. Benjamin Travis went to honor his country and, as mentioned previously, tragedy struck and Grandma was left a widow.

There has been much written (perhaps too much) about events in and around Jonesboro during the Civil War that makes comments here unnecessary. Just change the names and most situations will apply to other families. However, I will quote briefly from an article in the Constitution Magazine Section of October 30, 1927. This records an interview with Grandma, and her remarks principally relate to the August 31, 1863 Battle of Jonesboro. Grandma's and her mother's houses were located between opposing lines.

"At that time I was a widow, my husband, B. M. Travis, having died from exposure earlier in the war. My three little children and I were living with my mother, Martha McLeroy, also a widow. Her home was situated on the road from Fairburn and Jonesboro. The Federal lines of defense were on one side of our home and the Confederate army on the other. They warned us three times to leave before they started firing. My youngest child (Mollie Travis) that day was one year old and quite ill. In fact we were expecting her to die at that time, so we hesitated taking her out in the hot sun."

"But after the third order was given us to leave, I took my baby on a pillow, and together with two other children (Iula and James Travis), my young brother (Edward Thomas McLeroy) and sister (Emily McLeroy), my mother and the slave women and their children, left our home and crept through the woods, expecting to be killed any moment, as the shells were tearing out tops of trees above us. Oh, I'll tell you, child, there was praying then, they were earnest prayers, too. The negro women as well as mother and I were praying as never before, asking God to save us."

"We had barely left home when a shell struck the house and went right through it, tearing as it went. It went right by the bed where my sick baby had lain a short time before."

"About two miles from mother's home we came to Mr. Sherwood Gay's home over on the Fayetteville Road. Here we stopped for a while, that was the end of the trip. We

lines a few days at least. The next day my mother took my little brother and the negro women and went back home. But my sister, my children and I stayed until my baby was better."

General Atkinson of the Union Army made his headquarters at the Sherwood Gay home. Sherwood Gay was with General Lee in Virginia at the time. When there was no battle in the area, the female members (all males were at war) and children of Sherwood Gay were allowed a part of the house. And from all accounts, General Atkinson was a gentleman of the first order. He did not allow card playing in the house out of respect for the ladies.

"When mother arrived home, the Federal officers had taken her home for headquarters, but she being a fearless woman went right in and demanded they give up her home. They were very kind to her, surrendered all but one room in which they slept."

"The slaves were good and faithful, and many wanted to stay as before they were free. But of course this was a new day for them."

"Just a few days before, there had been a brood of chickens hatched off, fifteen of them, and what do you think, fourteen were pullets and one rooster. This one hen and her brood had managed to hide out when hundreds of the others were killed and eaten by the Federal troops."

"Another occurrence that seemed like providence was that just about a week after the armies had passed on, two of our milk cows came up from the river bottoms, these being all of an immensely large herd that was left to us."

"All Federal soldiers I came in direct contact with were just as nice as our own southern boys."

"There was a young Federal soldier guarding Mr. Sherwood Gay's home and when I started to leave there he offered his services to guard me home, for there were dregs of both armies wandering around. A brother could not have been nicer than he. I will never forget his kind thoughtfulness."

Grandma married for the 2nd time, my greatgrandfather, Benjamin Zachary Allen, a Civil War veteran. They lived variously in the Clayton-Fayette area except for a short period in 1870 in Clay County, Alabama.

The genealogy of Benjamin Zachary Allen will be found in Allen-Anthony and Allied Families at the Georgia Department of Archives and History. This traces his ancestry to Europe and to the middle ages.

# "Grandma" Allen Tells of Battle of Jonesboro

**G**RAPHIC details of incidents happening in Jonesboro when a battle was fought in that place August 31, 1863, between a detachment of southern forces and a large group of Federal soldiers are told by Mrs. Fannie Allen, 508 East Point Avenue, who was living in Jonesboro during the battle. Mrs. Allen is known as "Grandma" to all her friends and although very old, she keeps right up with all modern affairs.

In her reminiscences told to Mrs. Madge McConnell, 508 East Point Avenue, she tells of how she and her children escaped the shells of the two armies and speaks interestingly of the way the slaves stuck to the women and children during the war.

The Battle of Jonesboro was fought on a hot day in August, according to Mrs. Allen, who was living in a house which was located directly between the opposing forces. In describing the battle to Mrs. McConnell, Mrs. Allen said:

"At that time I was a widow, my husband, B. M. Travis, having died from exposure during an earlier period of the war. My three little children and I were living with my mother, Mrs. Martha McLeroy, also a widow. Her home was situated on the road from Fairburn to Jonesboro. The Federal lines of defense were on one side of our home and the Confederate army on the other. They warned us three times to leave before they started firing. My youngest child, that day one year old, was quite ill, in fact we were expecting her to die at any time, so we hesitated about taking her out in the hot summer sun. But after the third order given us to leave, I took my baby on a pillow, and together with two other children, my mother, my young brother and sister, also the slave women and their children, left our home, crept along through the woods, expecting to be killed any moment, as the shells were tearing out the tops of trees



Mrs. Fannie "Grandma" Allen.

above us. O, I'll tell you, child, there was praying then, they were earnest prayers, too. The negro women as well as mother and I were praying as we never prayed before, asking God to save us. We had barely left home when a shell struck the house and went right through it and tearing as it went. It went right by the bed where my sick baby had lain just a short while before.

"About two miles from mother's home we came to Mr. Sherwood Gay's house over on the Fayetteville road, here we stopped, for we felt

that we were out of the drift of the lines for a few days at least. The next day my mother took my little brother and the negro women and went back home, but my sister, my children and I stayed until my baby was better.

"When mother arrived home the Federal officers had taken her house as headquarters, but she being a fearless woman, went right in and demanded they give up her home; they were indeed very kind to her, surrendered possession of all but one room in which they slept.

"Those were the most serious

times I have ever known, but then there were some real funny incidents that happened along then. Mother had one slave, Old Man Henry, we called him, who would not leave mother for a minute. His fright was positively comical. He kept saying, 'Oh, Mis' Marfa, please don't let them Yanks git me; Mis' Marfa, I'll always be good if you'll jes' keep them Yanks back and not let 'em git me.' Of course we did not laugh much right then, but it was an extremely laughable matter when we thought of it afterward; a great husky man following at her heels as though he had been a small dog, begging her for protection. The slaves were all good and faithful. Why, lots of them wanted to stay and work as they had before even after they knew they were free.

"Just a few days before there had been a brood of chickens hatched off, fifteen of them, and what do you think? Fourteen of them were pullets and the fifteenth a rooster. They were all that were left of the hundreds we had before.

"Another occurrence that seemed like providence, was that just about a week after the armies had passed on, two of our milk cows came up from the river bottoms, these being all of an immensely large herd that was left us.

"All Federal soldiers I came in direct contact with were just as nice as our own southern boys.

"There was a young Federal soldier guarding Mr. Gay's home and when I started to leave there he offered his services to guard me home, for there were the dregs of both armies wandering around. A brother could not have been nicer than he. I'll never forget his kind thoughtfulness, and if he is living I surely would like to see him and thank him personally, for had it not been for his kind protection I probably would not have been living to tell my story today."



References to ancestry, written in her own handwriting. At age 86 she wrote a small ms outlining her youth and life on the plantation owned by her father, Henry Mc Leroy. In it she referred to parents and grandparents. Photostatic copies of the original ms are in a bound volume 'GRANDMA FANNIE ALLEN' at the Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta GA.

July 16, 1928  
 Mrs. Martha F. Allen  
 Story of her childhood & family

Reference to parents (Henry Mc Leroy)

old I was little Fannie Mc Leroy  
 daughter of Mr & Mrs Henry Mc Leroy

Reference to Mc Leroy grandparents (Edward Mc Leroy)

[www.georgiapioneers.com](http://www.georgiapioneers.com)

don't remember where my  
 Grand Father & Grand Mother <sup>Edward</sup> lived  
 Father's name was I don't know

References to Hartsfield grandparents (Warren Hartsfield)

had heard my Mother tell  
 about the landings living  
 near her Father's Grand  
 Father's Warren Hartsfield  
 when she was a little girl

Grand Father Hartsfield lived  
 at Love Joy Ga Father taken as in his

3/25/1982

Clayton County Regional Library, Jonesboro, Georgia Folder Collection, Genealogy Room

# MARTHA FRANCES McLERoy TRAVIS ALLEN

Excerpts from a weekly newspaper column (Clayton County News and Farmer Jonesboro, Ga.) that she wrote during a period 1928-1934

## SOME CORRECTIONS MADE IN REFUGEE STORY

Dear Editor and kind friends, I wish to rectify some mistakes made in my last letter about refugeeing. Mother had a large four horse wagon, hitched four mules to that, and a two-horse wagon with two mules hitched to that instead of four one-horse wagons and two horses. Brother James Mc Leroy instead of James McCray. Mother had a double seated buggy. Her and my young sister and brother had one mule hitched to that and they went or moved in that. I and my children went in my single buggy, drove my gentle buggy horse. Bro. Jas. Mc Leroy came with a large army wagon to assist us to Zebulon. We only got as far as Jonesboro the first day, and spent the night with aunt Emily Haines. We couldn't rest for flies. I never saw so many before or since. The ceiling overhead, walls and floor were black with them, crawling all over us. When we moved back, only got as far as Griffin the first day. Our mules had been worked so hard and half fed they couldn't travel fast; took us several days to move back. My young sister Emily, myself and three children came with the first load. Mother and Brother Doc stayed until the last load. I tell you pone corn bread and sorghum syrup eat good then. We had a substitute for coffee, sweet potatoes chipped up fine and parched, meal parched, parched corn and wheat were best substitutes for good coffee in time of the war and refugeeing.

We took our 15 little baby chicks, hatched the day before the army came through and carried off their mother and left them motherless. We raised all 15, fourteen, pretty blue game pullets and one fine blue game rooster, all we had to start anew with. We, mother and I, had one milk cow each left, came up after the army was gone. They hid in mother's big canebreak in the creek swamp.

The Yankees' or Sherman's army, took a large goods box full of home made cloth mother had the negroes hide in the gin house of lint cotton. They took all of large gin house full of cotton, several bales, a great loss from that was our luck.

Before Jonesboro was incorporated I remember it was spelled "Jonesborough."

The poor Confederate soldiers and their widows are cheated out of their pensions that were justly provided for them. Last year, 1929, I was cheated out of \$50, the last payment, and I haven't got but two payments this year. Past time for third payment and December is time for last. I guess they are going to take \$100 from us instead of \$50 this year. The money has been in the treasury, purposely for us, but we can't get it. A shame and disgrace on Georgia.

I am sorry to hear W. G. Travis has been confined to his home on account of illness; hope he will soon be able to be out. Also sorry to hear of Mr. and Mrs. G. M. Hule's automobile accident; hope they will soon recover.

I must close, with best wishes to my friends. As ever the same,  
GRANDMA FANNIE ALLEN.

## GRANDMA FANNIE ALLEN VISITS IN JONESBORO

Mr. Editor and Dear Friends:

Here I come this cold disagreeable Monday morning, not feeling very good but writing just the same. I am feeling much better than I felt yesterday evening and last night and am thankful that I can write you this short letter.

In the afternoon Billy and his son drove us down to Lovejoy to Mr. Green Dorsey, Sr.'s old home place, where Mr. Willie McConnell, Edna's husband, Madge's father, is buried. We then turned back and they took us to my father's old home, where he died. Duck Wallace's widow resides there; passed old Hebron church place, they have a new church. The old place looks natural but not like it did when I was a child 79 years ago; from there to where I was born; the old house is gone, the Dickson grave is there all right. From there to the old Tucker place where father Henry Mc Leroy, Sr., and brother Henry, Jr., were buried. I am glad to tell you their graves are all right; all the old graves are walled with rock. Grandpa and Grandma Tucker and all several marble tombstones there now. The cemetery is nice and clean. My heart rejoiced to find it so well cared for. That was the most natural place I went to. I feel greatly relieved of that burden that has worried me for the longest. I thank Billy and his son; think it was so nice and sweet of them to accommodate and afford an old lady so much pleasure. God bless them and their families.

Say, folks, do any of you remember before cooking stoves came in style and cooking was done on fireplaces; had potrack of iron built in chimney over fire place, then they had pot-hooks to hang the dinner pot on to boil meat and vegetables, ovens and skillets with lids to cook good brown crust pone bread; then we had good potlikker and corn bread and good times.

I am thanking and appreciate all you Bethselda folks' compliments on my writing in the News and Farmer. I am sorry I intruded on you Jonesboro people by asking a favor of you in telling me if your Baptist pastor, Rev. W. C. Sparkman, was related to the family of Uncle Billy Sparkman that lived in the vicinity of Jonesboro before the civil war. Excuse me for worrying you, I am sorry.

Some one writing in the News about going to a quilting brought back sweet memories of long ago when I was young. They had big log-rollings and quiltings in the day time and quiltings and corn-shuckings at night; young ladies did the quilting and the gentlemen rolled the logs and shucked the corn. Such good old times and good eating, dinners and suppers, as we had; cooked in ovens in the fire place; chicken pie, potato pie, called "slicemarin," cooked in large ovens, well seasoned with butter; cake and good boiled victuals. After supper came old-fashioned play parties. I guess it would be a show to you young folks to see a pot-rack and pot hooks and dinner pot boiling, hanging on the pot-rack.

Well, what do think about the way they are treating the old Confederate veterans and their widows? I think it's a real shame. From last August to January of this year, four months, they got only \$15 a month instead of the \$30 they were suppose to get. When the roll is called up yonder some one will suffer for treating us so bad, taking our rights away from us.

I was converted, joined the church and was baptized when I was 12 years old at old Flint River Baptist Church near Jonesboro, a dear spot to me. I am now an old lady, 87 years old, have 7 children, 35 grandchildren and 22 great grandchildren.

I am an old Confederate widow.  
M. F. A.