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The Family of Francis Marion Shaw Newsletter

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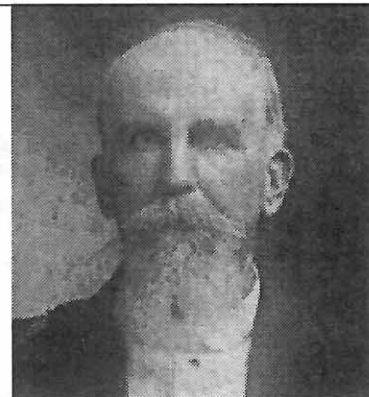
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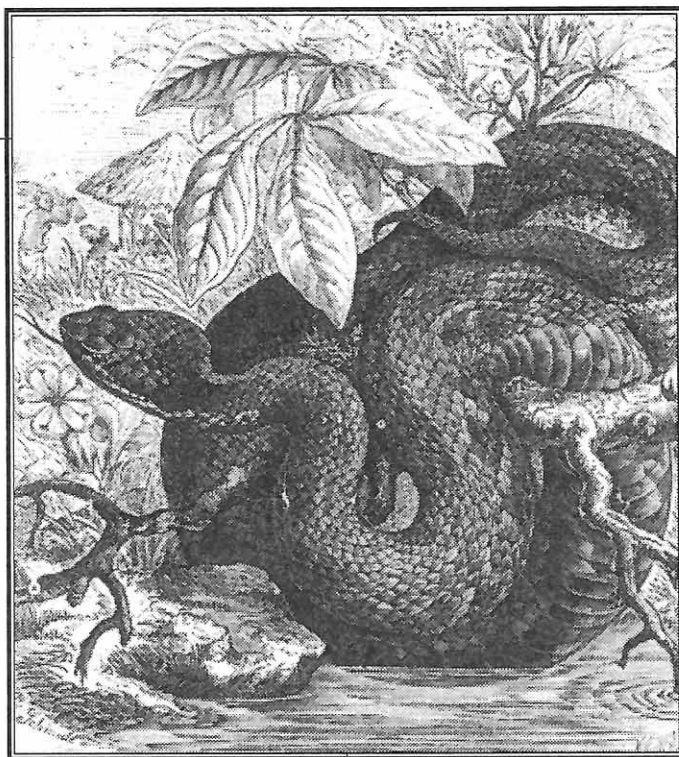
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THE FAMILY OF FRANCIS MARION SHAW



SNAKES!



Since the earliest time of the settlement of the Georgia wilderness, the pioneers of the Wiregrass region of the state have endured every imaginable obstacle. From Indians to outbreaks of contagious diseases, our ancestors faced each threat with courage and determination to carve a civilization out of the most inhospitable conditions.

However, one ominous threat has always slithered its way through each generation and even continues to strike fear into the Wiregrass descendants today—snakes!

It is no wonder that every type of

coiling reptile found the swampy, timberland homesteads of the Shaw-Allen families a perfect haven for their species. Rattlesnakes, water moccasins, and many other scaly-

skinned creatures were frequently encountered as the families cleared the dense vegetation.

The frequency of these unwelcome encounters was a topic of discussion amongst neighbors and often found their way into the columns of the local newspaper. Though most of the following extractions, fortunately did not involve a family member directly, the fact that they were such common occurrences suggests that each farmer had his own snake story.

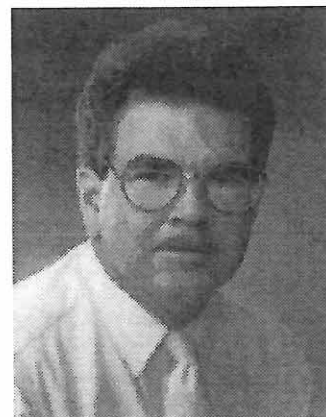
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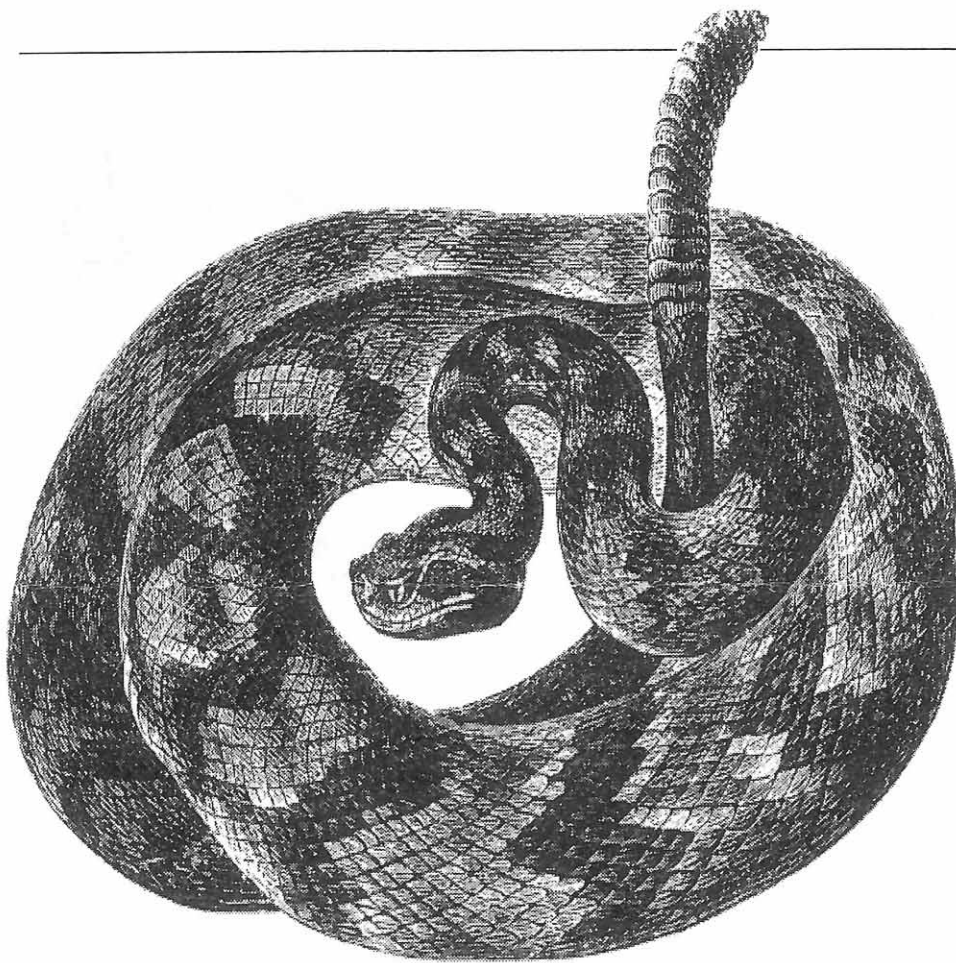
The Family of Francis Marion Shaw is a non-profit newsletter published semi-annually, or more frequently, for the benefit of the descendants of Francis Marion Shaw and his wife, Rachel Moore Allen Shaw.

Historical contributions are requested. Your family histories including character traits, religious affiliations, professional pursuits and vital information such as birth dates and places, marriage dates and places, and death dates and places, are all welcome. Photographs help make the newsletter come alive. If you have some special photos of your ancestors which you would like to share with all of the family, please make a copy print of it and send it on to the address below. If original photos are sent, they will be carefully handled and returned, but editor cannot be responsible for loss or damage. Send your manuscripts and photo submissions to:

*Bryan Lee Shaw, Editor
3249 South 4355 West
West Valley, UT 84120*

Bryan Lee Shaw, Editor





Coiled and ready to strike

Surely, few encounters strike fear in the heart or take the breath away more than coming upon the coiled and buzzing mound of a sinister rattlesnake. Or seeing the leaves and grass become alive with the smooth motion of the silent water moccasin. Snake! Perhaps no single word in the farmer's and woodsman's vocabulary is so descriptive and filled with adrenaline.

A boy hung a large rattle snake up at one corner of the court house a fortnight ago, and it has been raining snake stories ever since. Every man that sees it tells a snake story.
—Nashville Herald, March 25, 1904.

Most stories consisted of grand details defining the length of the reptile and/or the number of rattles or buttons attached to the tail.

RATTLESNAKE KILLED

Mr. Bill Railey, a farmer residing near Alapaha, reports the killing of a large rattlesnake last week while mowing hay on his farm. The snake was cut into by the mowing machine at about the instant he attempted to strike one of the mules. The reptile was a huge one, about six feet long and as large as a quart bottle.
—Nashville Herald, September 23, 1937

SNAKE SIX FEET LONG IS KILLED WITH SLINGSHOT

The largest snake seen in the Ocilla section in many years was killed near that city on a farm known as the Barfield place.

The snake had 20 rattles and was approximately six feet long. It was crawling out of a gopher hole, where it had hibernated, when it was killed with a slingshot.

Thin and emaciated at this time of year, the snake would have been an enormous specimen later in the spring, after feeding.
—Nashville Herald, April 8, 1937

But as is usually the case, when one neighbor spins a tale, the next one is usually a little more "remarkable".

CHOICE HUCKLEBERRY IS SNAKE'S RATTLER

Sylvester—Moral: Be sure it's no a snake's tail when you reach out to pick a berry. Mr. M. A. Dix, of near Abbeville, will not make this mistake again. Mr. Dix was gathering huckleberries the other day, when he spied an especially juicy specimen. Needless to say, he withdrew his hand with some swiftness when he found out that he was holding the end rattler of a 13-rattle snake. Mr. Dix perhaps will give up the "harmless" sport of berry-picking.
—Nashville Herald, August 1, 1940.

Not to be outdone by any previous "believe it or not," there was always one more that defied credibility.

IT MUST BE SO

Mr. John Sirmans comes forward with a snake story this week.

He states that Dr. W. P. Patten, of Empire, killed a rattlesnake on his farm recently and hung it in a sapling near the public road for the inspection of those passing, as it was a very large snake with twelve rattles. That going back to the tree sometime later, Dr. Patten found that a King snake had climbed the tree, wrapped itself around the rattler and had same squeezed almost to a jelly. That the King snake was removed from around the rattler, turned loose and that the rattler was taken away for stuffing and mounting. That on passing the tree several hours later, that the King snake was there climbing it again.

We KNOW that the above is TRUE, because John says that he saw it with "his own eyes."
—Lanier County News, July 30, 1930

Snake stories were not, however, confined to the farmer and his fields. Housewives and the domestic retreat were not spared the fright from invading vipers.

SNAKE'S VISIT SCARES HOUSEWIFE

Statesboro—The Walker home had an unwelcome visitor recently—and Mrs. Walker is just getting over the shock.

It seems that the housewife was tidying up a bedroom when she unwittingly placed a hand upon a two-foot rattlesnake. The intruder had entered through an opening in the screen. Neighbors were called and the snake was ousted.

—Nashville Herald, October 9, 1941

And about the time a person thought that their bedroom was a safe harbor from such encounters—

A TRUE SNAKE STORY

Over at our neighbor town of Stockton at the western extremity of town is George Dopson's sawmill and George has an office and a camp home where he holds out through the work days and some of his men or partners sleep there while his real home and his family is in Thomasville. But occasionally his wife and daughter come over and spend a few days outing with him and last Sunday morning while on one of these visits, the twelve-year-old daughter Miss Nell, went to the dresser in the best room to comb her hair, and arrange for her attire and in so doing stepped up near the dresser and moved about as a person will in the act of dressing and while thus engaged she heard a peculiar noise sounding like a busted tube and air escaping. On tracing the noise she found it came from under the dresser, and when she looked under it she was terrified to see a huge rattlesnake coiled and rattling vigorously. She called her mother and she came and got her shock to see the real live, mad rattler under the dresser and within a few inches where her child had been standing. She called help as Mr. Dopson was down at the Post Office and a colored man came and held his snakeship with a piece of lath until one of the white men could finish the job.

It was a genuine diamond rattler near four feet long, with nine rattles.

It is very probable that all that saved the young lady's life was the fact that the space between bottom of the dresser and the floor was so limited that when the reptile went to strike he had not room in which to rise and deliver the blow they characteristically do in biting. That mother and daughter, and for that matter the little town, will not soon forget the first Sunday in August 1924.

—Lanier County News, August 7, 1924

Sadly, many of the confrontations with the coiling culprits resulted in a more serious malady, even death.

CHILD DIES FROM BITE OF RATTLE SNAKE

Little Muriel Langford, the 3-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Luther Langford, who resides about a mile from Ray City on the Milltown-Ray City road died Tuesday morning from what was thought to be the bite of a rattle snake.

The child was playing in a potato patch near the house, while her mother was working nearby, when she cried out and ran to her mother. The mother thinking the child had fallen down and hurt herself took her into her arms to console it when she noticed that blood was oozing from her leg just above the ankle. Thinking that possibly the child had been bitten by a snake or some reptile the mother started for the house with the child but before reaching the house the child became limp. The



father who was at the home of a brother nearby was notified and an effort to secure a physician in Ray City failing, Dr. Smith of Milltown was summoned and arrived within a short time after the child was bitten. Dr. Sloan of Stockton was passing and was also called in and both these physicians rendered all the aid that medical skill could give, but the child died within half an hour after their arrival.

—Nashville Herald, September 4, 1925

In one instance the mere sight of a rattlesnake caused death.

KILLED BY FRIGHT OF RATTLER NEGRO THOUGHT HE HAD BEEN BITTEN AND DROPPED DEAD
Valdosta, Ga., June 28—Elder Barwick, a Primitive Baptist minister, tells of a rather unusual occurrence which happened in Alabama last week while he was preaching there. A negro turpentine hand in chipping boxes came to a tree which was surrounded by a cluster of bushes. He was in the act of trimming the bushes away when a huge rattlesnake sprang up and [bit] its fangs into his clothing,

No Snake Story Here

The rattlesnake shown above was killed by Jerry Mills, husband of Elva Allen Mills of Allenville, Georgia. Jerry and Elva were walking near the wooded edge of their property when Elva had unknowingly walked within a few inches of the snake coiled up near a pile of leaves. Jerry called to her to hold still while he shot it with a snake pistol which he regularly carries with him



The Cook County Snake-bite Case Principles

Daily papers gave the snake religion occurrence in Cook county a big play-up in 1940. Above are principles in the affair. (Left) Albert Rowan, father of six-year-old Letha Mae Rowan, (right) Rev. W. T. Lipham, leader of the religious belief, who was charged with murder in the death of Mrs. Jeffie Smith of Ray City in 1938. (Center) Mrs Albert Rowan and her daughter Letha Mae Rowan, with her bandaged hand caused when bitten by a moccasin in Cook County. This editor has not found the results of the charges.

hanging to him as he jumped back. The negro fell over and died in a minute. An examination showed that the snakes fangs only touched his clothing and that he was not harmed by the bite, his death being due to fright.

—Nashville Herald, July 1, 1904

There is one occasion which brought the threat of snake bite into the home of Frank Allen, son of John L. Allen.

RAY CITY MAN SNAKE VICTIM
Tragedy Tuesday Afternoon Near Ray City Died This Morning at 10:30 O'clock
Russell Herring, a young farmer residing two miles west of Ray City, was bitten by a rattlesnake late Tuesday afternoon, and died this morning at 10:30 o'clock at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Allen here in Nashville.

Young Herring, who was 27 years old and a married man with two children, was bitten while he and another young man, James Fountain, were sawing wood in the Cat Creek swamp near his home. He was immediately rushed by automobile to Nashville to the office of Dr. P. H. Askew for treatment.

The doctor's office was reached between thirty and forty-five minutes following the snake bite. As no serum could be located in Nashville, another thirty minutes was required for a quantity to be rushed by automobile from Valdosta. He rallied somewhat following the

first injection, and later additional injections were administered. Due to his robust health he held up well and still hope for his recovery was held as late as early this morning.

The young man was bitten on the left leg just above the ankle, with one of the snake's fangs being deeply embedded. His leg was bound immediately, however not sufficient to stop the flow of blood. The two boys had to walk about 300 yards before reaching the Herring home, and then the auto ride to Nashville. The tragedy created intense interest and hundreds visited the doctor's office following his arrival in Nashville.

After the bite the boys did not wait to kill the snake, a huge reptile between three and four feet long, they stated.

—Nashville Herald, August 26, 1937

Surely it would be expected that churches and pastors might be spared the trauma of such slithering serpents, but it appears that was not the case.

SNAKE HOPS RIDE IN PASTOR'S CAR IN TALBOT REGION

Talbotton, Ga., May 28—Charlie Blunkerly, Negro mechanic, of Mrs. J. A. Battle's garage, Thursday, found a 5 1/2 foot chicken snake coiled on the battery of a 1934 Ford coupe when he removed the floor board to make adjustments.

The car is owned by Rev. W. E. Irwin, county Methodist circuit pastor.

Mr. Irwin said: "Several miles out from Junction City I saw the snake in the road and thought I ran over it. I got out to see if I killed it, but could not find the snake. I wondered how it got away so quickly."

—Nashville Herald, June 2, 1938

RATTLER IN PIANO STRIKES AT TUNER
J. F. Setterich was tuning a piano at a Thomas county church and he noticed that one key kept giving a rattling sound. Close investigation led to his discovery of a foot-long rattlesnake inside the piano.

The snake struck at him but fortunately missed, and Mr. Setterich quickly disposed of the reptile with a quick blow with his hammer, getting the piano in tune of the rattler "off key."

—Nashville Herald, December 17, 1936

Strange as these occurrences may seem, they have a long way to go to challenge the Cook County Snake Case.

SNAKE BITE KILLS WOMAN
Ray City Woman Allowed
Rattler to Bite Her in Religious
Meeting Sunday

Venom from the bites of two poisonous snakes, a rattler and a moccasin, proved fatal Tuesday morning to Mrs. Jeffie Smith, 31, of Ray City, who allowed the snakes to bite her at religious services during Sunday afternoon and Sunday evening.

She allowed the snakes to strike her three times each, it is understood, as a proof of her faith in her religion, and as evidence of the fact that her claim of faith overcoming the poison of the snakes was a valid one. The young woman had allowed snakes to strike her before, and had survived the poison, after suffering from swelling and pain, it has been learned here.

No doctor treated her after the bites, it is said.

Information given authorities said the young woman first allowed a moccasin to bite her three times during services of a sect gathering near Lenox, Sunday afternoon. Later Sunday evening, she is said to have gone to Ray City, where she allowed a rattle snake, carrying six rattles and a button, and measuring more than five feet in length to strike her.

She became quite ill later in the the night, and was removed to the home of Mrs. Ruth Fender, of near Ray City, where she died.

Numerous instances of persons allowing poisonous snakes to bite them, in connection with religious ceremonies have been reported in the south during the past few years. This is the first local instance to become generally known, however.

—Nashville Herald, July 14, 1938

Two years later the preacher and one of his followers was arrested for this incident and another one involving a 6-year-old girl.

PREACHER LIPHAM BEING HELD IN JAIL
ON CHARGE OF MURDER

Warrant Detains Him in Death of Berrien County Woman in 1938

Farmer-preacher W. T. Lipham, leader of cult which believes poisonous snakes may be handled without danger when "the power is upon" its members, remained in Cook county jail at Adel this week pending conclusion of investigation into a snake-bite death two years ago.

Detention of Lipham was asked by Sheriff N. N. Hughes [father-in-law of Betty Jean Shaw Hughes] of Berrien county, who said officers were still probing the death of Mrs. Jeffie Smith, of Ray City, who succumbed after a snake-handling ceremony.

Albert Rowan, arrested with Lipham over a week ago after his six-year-old daughter, Letha Mae, suffered a bite from a copperhead moccasin, was released under \$3000 bond Tuesday after the child was declared out of danger. She was bitten at a snake-handling in Cook county.

Both Rowan and Lipham were arrested on grounds that they were responsible for the girl's injury.

—Nashville Herald, August 8, 1940

With all of these snake sightings and bitings, it is only appropriate that there be an antidote for such inflictions:

FRIED EGGS AN ANTIDOTE FOR
BITE OF SNAKE

Mr. Ike Harnage was in to see us Saturday and said he had read a week-or-so-ago where a little boy had died from a rattlesnake bite and that he knew of a remedy that he had seen tried for the bite of a ground rattler which he felt sure would be just as effective for the bite of a rattlesnake. A number of years ago a little colored boy was bitten by a ground rattler near where he lived. He had heard of the remedy and told the child's mother to try it, which was hot fried eggs applied to the bite. Mr. Harnage says that each egg drew poison from the wound and that when six had been applied just as hot as the child could stand it, all of the poison appeared to be removed and that the child was soon well.—

Adel News

—Lanier County News, June 5, 1924

It is no small miracle that the descendants of our courageous and hardy ancestors have grown to hundreds of thousands with such tried and proven treatments.

However you would still be well advised that as you go about searching your family roots in the backwoods of Georgia, you better watch your step!—BLS

SENSIBLE OR SENSELESS
SNAKE STORIES

Since you are probably wondering what possible relevance this newsletter has to the history of the Shaw-Allen family, I must admit that I too found it a stretch to add this issue to the collection of biographies that I have seriously researched to this date.

However in a feeble attempt to justify this publishing, I will just say that as I read through hundreds of newspapers covering half a century in Berrien, Cook, Lanier, and Lowndes counties, I was fascinated by the frequency of articles detailing snake encounters. And in my own travels driving the roads of our ancestors' homeland, I have crossed paths with several of the spooky serpents as well.

There is no doubt that the pioneers encountered large quantities and varieties of snakes in Wiregrass Georgia, and perhaps it is only because the occurrences were so common place that they did not consider writing about them worthy of their time. If they had taken the time to pen a journal, how wonderful it would be to be able to read of their daily lives. And I would like to believe that even a simple sighting of Mr. Rattler would occasionally have found its way onto the written page.

Since my attempt to share with you the biographies of our ancestors includes all aspects of their life's experience, as best as can be documented, I hoped that you, the descendants, would enjoy reading of the whimsical and sometimes serious encounters that their friends and neighbors had with the writhing reptiles under foot. I hope they are as enjoyable to read as they were for me.

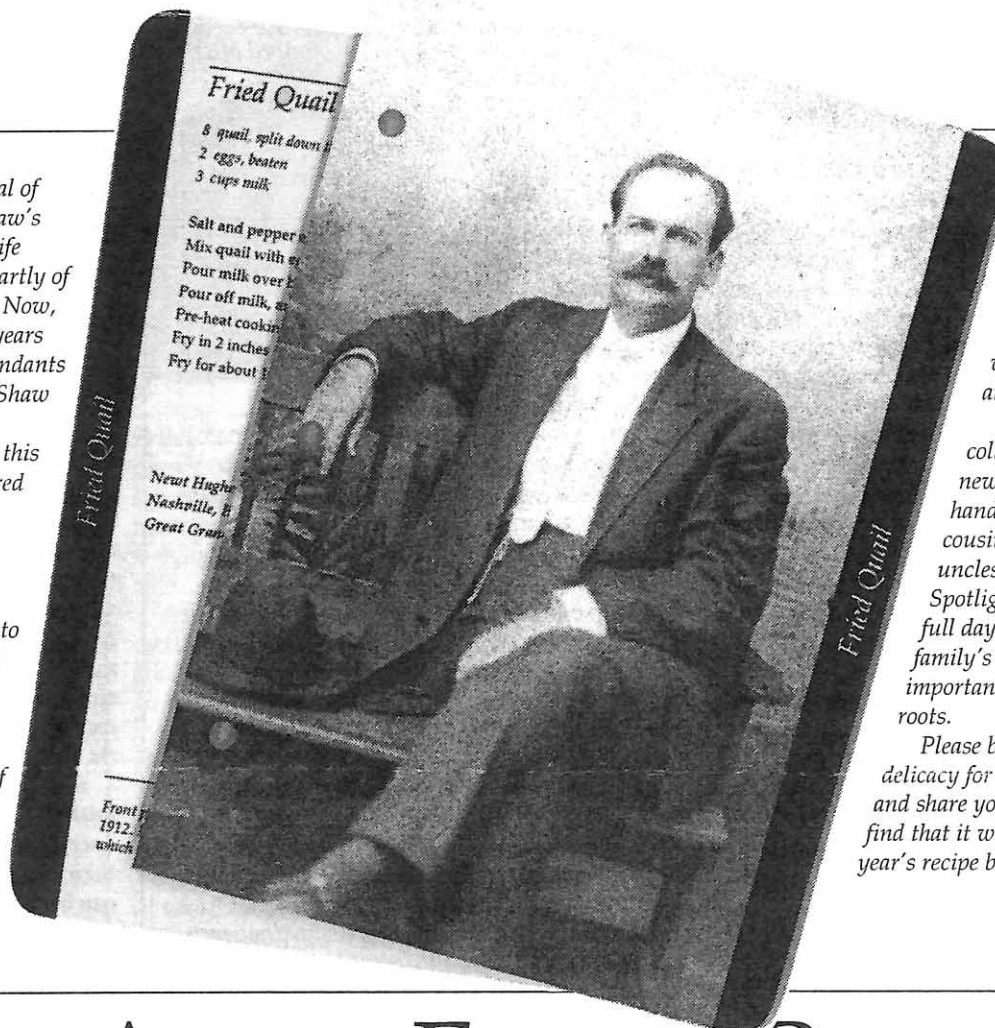
—Bryan Lee Shaw

WAS THIS THE RECIPE FOR CHESTER SHAW'S LAST MEAL?

The final meal of Chester Shaw's shortened life consisted partly of fried quail. Now, almost 90 years later, descendants of Chester Shaw

have shared their family recipe for—fried quail! Is this the same recipe that savored the pallet of the Berrien county treasurer on that fateful December day in 1912, and resulted in his death from gangrene due to a quail bone lodged in his lower bowels?

Be sure that you are present at the 9th annual gathering of the Family of Francis Marion Shaw and add this recipe plus 17 more new ones to



your Shaw Family Recipe book. There will also be a few binders made available to those who were not in attendance last year.

Add to that the full collection of Shaw newsletters and handouts, visits with cousins and aunts and uncles, plus the Heritage Spotlights, and you have a full day of discovering your family's heritage and the importance of their ancestral roots.

Please bring your own delicacy for the noon luncheon and share your recipe. You may find that it will be the hit of next year's recipe book additions.

SHAW-ALLEN FAMILY REUNION

NEW DATE—

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2002, 10:00 A.M.
RAY CITY, GEORGIA, SENIOR CITIZEN'S CENTER
