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The Family of Francis Marion Shaw Newsletter

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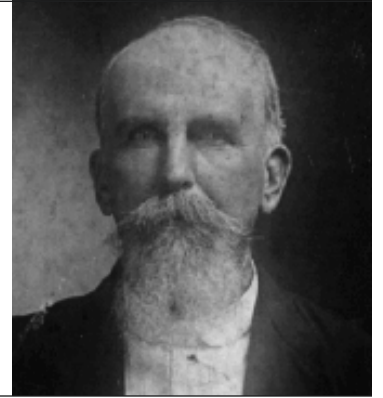
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THE FAMILY OF FRANCIS MARION SHAW



LACY LESTER SHAW— IN SEARCH OF A LOST BROTHERHOOD

Lacy Lester Shaw, the fifth child from the union of Marion and Rachel Shaw, was born 8 September, 1873 on the family farm in the Lois community near Ray City, Georgia. He received his education in the two-room Pine Grove school near his home, and his occupational training was that of a farmer, working side-by-side with his father and brothers.

On 7 June, 1896, at the age of 23, Lacy married Tula Albritton, daughter of Hodge Albritton. She was the sister of Gertrude Albritton Shaw, wife of Arthur Shaw, Lacy's oldest brother. Lacy was not particularly well to do, as the tax digest from that year listed his holdings as \$75 in horse and livestock, owning no real estate. A year later, Lacy and Tula had set up house with goods valued at \$35, horse and stock at \$63 and farm tools at \$35. And Aubrey, their first of five sons, was born.

It wasn't until May of 1899 that Lacy received a piece of property of his own from his father, 75 acres on Possum Creek, with his total wealth being \$356. The following spring their second son, Elmer Atwood, was born.

Now Lacy was particularly close to his youngest brother Chester. They were inseparable in their friendship, and as Chester saw business opportunities, he shared his insights with Lacy. And Lacy was anxious to be a part of Chester's visions. Shortly after the birth of their third son, Clyde Chester, in August, 1902, Lacy and Tula ceased their farming activities and invested in the turpentine business with Chester and his brother, Arthur. They



The above portrait of Lacy Lester Shaw, in his later years, is the only known likeness in possession of the family at the time of publication. All other photos of Lacy in this newsletter are speculative in identity.

moved their family and belongings to the Willacoochee area, where Lacy operated the commissary store at the still site.

The naval stores business was quite successful for the Shaw Brothers, but Chester felt he could make more money through a more limited partnership. Chester and Lacy sold their interest in the Willacoochee still in August, 1904, leaving Arthur to operate the holdings.

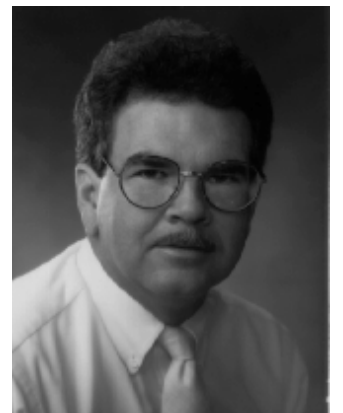
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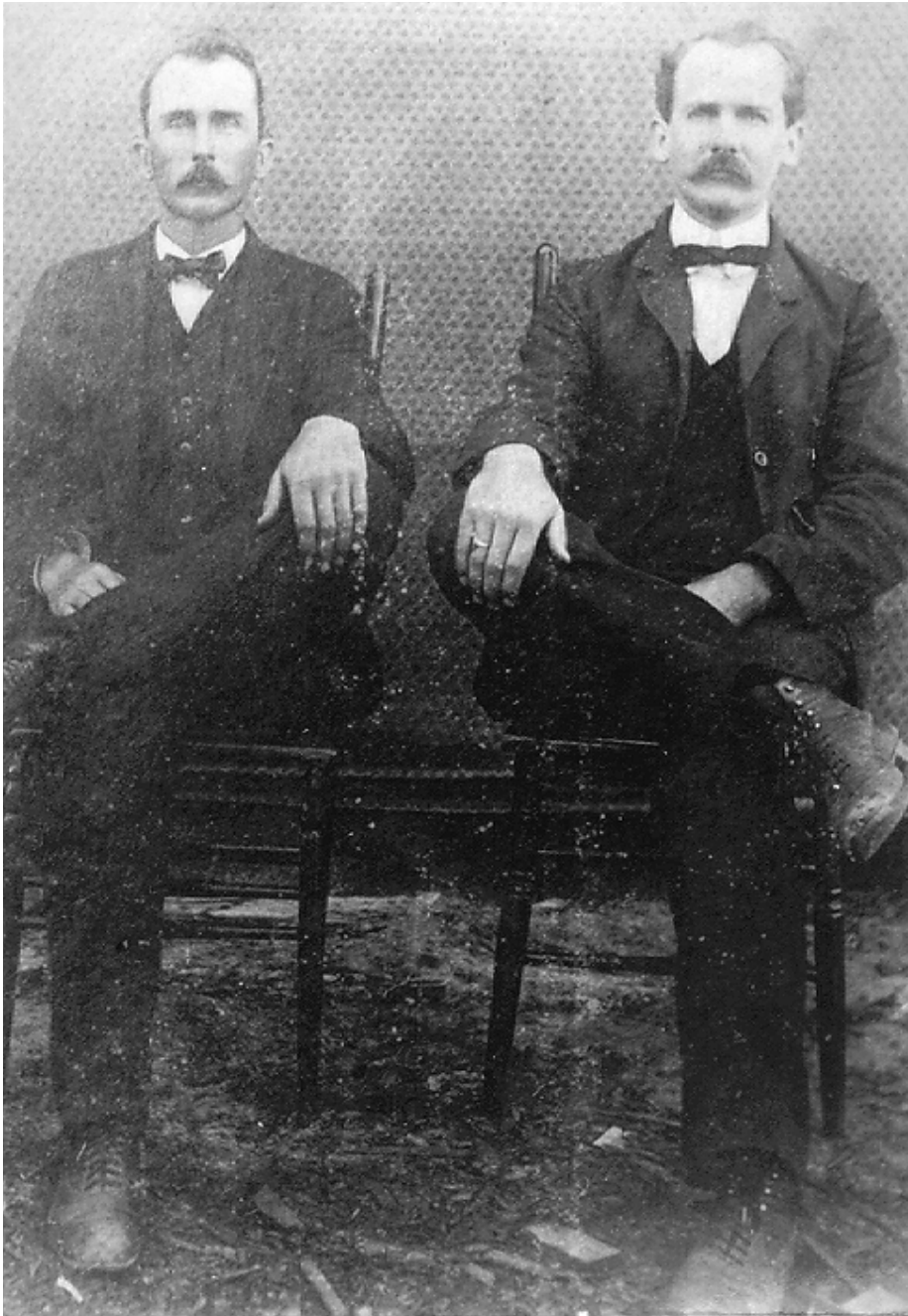
The Family of Francis Marion Shaw is a non-profit newsletter published semi-annually or more frequently for the benefit of the descendants of Francis Marion Shaw and his wife, Rachel Moore Allen Shaw.

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 non-returnable manuscripts and photo submissions to:

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PORTRAIT OF PARTNERS

Though not positively identified, the above photo is of Chester Shaw, right, and probably Lacy, on the left. It was taken about 1904 when the two brothers first entered their limited partnership. Note the wood chips and twigs on the ground, indicating the photo was probably taken at the still site by a traveling photographer, who used a draped background.

The following month Tula bore their fourth son, Leonard Cleo, in Willacoochee, where she was helped in her convalescence by her sister Gertrude.

It didn't take long for Chester to find a lucrative operation for the brothers to invest in, leasing 4,000 acres of timber and purchasing a still site just north east of Nashville. He opened the operation under the name of C. D. Shaw and Co. The "Company" being his brother, Lacy. Together they increased the production and value of the still over the next twelve months. In September, 1905, they sold the operation for a \$20,000 profit. Chester had found the touch of making money and Lacy was along for the ride.

As the two brothers shared in their business success, they also shared in their

social and domestic aspirations. The brothers bought two large lots on Avera Street in Nashville from Wm. D. Buie.

Ches and Lace Shaw have bought lots near Solicitor Buie's, will erect nice homes thereon, Nashville Herald 30 September, 1905.

That October, Lacy moved into a Nashville home of one of his cousins, W. R. Shaw, while watching the construction of Chester's home dominate the city block. A month later, Chester bought back his interest in the Willacoochee turpentine operation from Arthur, and once again Lacy tossed in with them.

But by the following summer Lacy seemed to grow weary of the drudgery of the commissary business. He sold his interest in the property on Avera Street to Chester, and withdrew from the daily operation of the Willacoochee still.

After the birth of his last son, Jesse Curtis, in June, 1907, Lacy and Tula moved back to the Ray City farm near his father. It seems that he enjoyed the farm life, often reporting his success on trips to Nashville.

Lacy Shaw of the southern side of the county was in town Saturday, and stated that crops were unusually good in his neighborhood. They got their first good rain Friday, Nashville Herald, 25 June, 1909.

He also became a Mason and on 23 December, 1909, was elected treasurer of Ray City lodge No. 553.

Meanwhile, Chester was gaining fame along with his fortune. He had one of the more stately homes in Nashville, and had entered into politics, being elected County Treasurer in 1908. It seemed that each had found his own comfortable life.

But about 1910, things began to change. Many of the Shaw Brother's business transactions over the years had several loose ends. Lawsuits became a part of Chester and Lacy's life. Chester had positioned himself to absorb much of the effects of the litigation. However, Lacy found his resources dwindling.

When Chester lost his reelection bid in 1910, he moved back out near his family's farm and proceeded to build a fine farm home which remains standing today. In a similar way, Lacy tried to maintain his prosperous lifestyle, and his association with his brother. In May, 1910, he purchased 120 additional acres of land from his father, and in 1911 sold the old farm house and built a grand new home that also remains today.

The brothers had reunited. They had become neighbors and had renewed their close friendship. They made frequent trips to Nashville together. When one was in town, they were both in town. They talked politics with everyone. They even served together on the September 1912 Superior Court jury.

It must have been like a knife in the heart. Perhaps the two brothers had just spent the December afternoon hunting quail together. And maybe Chester took the limit home for Mimmie to fix one of his favorite meals. It would be his last.

Lacy and the family received word that Chester would not survive the day. He was dying of a gangrenous bowel from a quail bone lodged in his intestines. He died 13 December, 1912.

The family was devastated, especially Lacy. He had lost his brother, his friend, and his confidant. His beacon of life, in many ways. Lacy was always willing, but Chester had been there to show the way. The distraught brother was appointed joint administrator of Chester's estate. As Lacy, for years, had called upon Chester to put their business operations in order, Chester called from the grave for Lacy to set his estate in order. It was a painful but devoted obligation that was fulfilled.

Lacy hoped he could carry on with much of the same success that he had enjoyed with Chester. He must have felt that his resources would help offset any shortfalls that might come from his farming. He also may have seen himself as the carrier of the political banner for the Shaw brothers.

Mr. L. L. Shaw of the Rays Mill district, was here Monday. Lacy is being urged to make the race for Tax Collector next year, Nashville Herald, 24 October, 1913.

In January, 1914 he announced his candidacy for the office of County Tax Collector. It was a five-man race with incumbent J. D. "Dave" Mathis as his most serious opponent.

As the July primary drew near, the local newspaper "straw" poll showed Mathis with a healthy lead over Lacy. But when the election was held a week later, on July 10, 1914, Lacy lost to Mathis by just four votes out of 2490 votes cast, in one of the closest elections in the history of Berrien County. The ballot counting was a heated dispute:

There was but one fight here, and it occurred late at night, while the votes were being counted out. It was a very private affair, as no one was over. Nobody hurt much [The combatants were not identified.], Nashville Herald, 17 July, 1914.

Lacy continued to seek after the office of Tax Collector, considering running again as early as October, 1915.

Mr. L. L. Shaw of Ray City was in town Tuesday. He says he expects to be a candidate for Tax Collector again next year. He was defeated by just four votes last year, Nashville Herald, 22 October, 1915.

Since newspaper records are missing for the year 1916, it is not known if he actually



entered the race, but if he did, indications are that he was defeated. When he ran for the office of Tax Collector again in 1920, no mention was made that he had previously held the office.

Mr. Lacy L. Shaw of Ray City is the first candidate in the field. He announces this week for Tax Collector. He is one of the best known men in Berrien county, and will have the backing of a large number of the best men in the county, Nashville Herald, 16 January, 1920.

Perhaps he felt he had a good opportunity to win since J. D. Mathis was not running for reelection. It was a four man race, with S. B. Griner and Lacy fighting it out for the win. However, as before, Lacy fell short. This time by 49 out of 1766 votes cast. He failed to carry Nashville, 300-50. Lacy never ran for public office again.

DECLINING RESOURCES

The photos of the two homes shown above reflect the decline of Lacy and Tula's resources over a period of about ten years. The top photo is of the fine farm home Lacy built about 1911 just before Chester's death. By 1920 he had sold the farm home and property, purchased lots in Ray City, where he built the home on North Street, pictured above. It is the same home where Francis Marion Shaw drew his final breath on 21 September, 1922. Today it is the residence of Merle Sirmans, great-granddaughter of Marion and Rachel.



Tula Albritton Shaw, the first wife of Lacy Lester Shaw, and mother of all of his children.

WRITING IN THE PAST TENSE

There are many difficulties in writing about an ancestor that was born over one hundred years ago. One challenge is to gather information specific to that ancestor. In the case of Lacy Shaw, it was a prolonged effort of interviewing grandchildren and a few surviving contemporaries of Lacy and Tula, whose memories were but faded images. It meant driving through deteriorated neighborhoods that showed little resemblance to the well kept homes there six decades ago. I found myself reading hours and hours of faintly copied microfilm of three decades of newspapers from three counties. I roamed through the musty air of seven libraries in search for any detail of Lacy's life.

But my greatest challenge was to put myself into the mind and heart of Lacy as I put the pieces of information together, trying to feel what he might have felt as he saw the growth of his wealth in a brief ten year span, then see it slip away with the death of his loving brother. Or to ache over one political defeat after another. And at the end, be near penniless. Forgive me if I have not been thorough enough in my search nor fair enough in my writing.

Bryan Lee Shaw

In December, 1917, Lacy sold his fine farm home and property in Lois, and purchased two lots on North Street in Ray City, where he built another home. It appears that, with financial assistance from his father, he again tried to capture the touch of Chester, entering the hardware business as the Ray City Supply Company. But on 21 September, 1922, Francis Marion Shaw died in the back bedroom of Lacy and Tula's home. And with his death, perhaps, the end of Lacy's last successful enterprise.

Less than two years later, in March, 1924, Lacy sold his home and lot on North St. and, sometime thereafter, ended his fifty-year residency in Berrien County.

By 1930, Lacy and Tula were living in Valdosta in a modest tenant home at 1014 Johnson St. The depression was setting in and Lacy and his son Clyde were driving trucks for Model Bakery on Ashley St.

But Lacy told Tula he wanted to try the grocery business one more time, probably pouring the last of their resources into the effort. By 1937, he and Tula had moved into the home of their son and daughter-in-law, Clyde and Golie, at 904 Oak St. The

grocery store was located just south across the railyard at 625 West Savannah St., a distance that Lacy walked every day.

That same year, 25 April, 1937, after supporting Lacy in the pursuit of his elusive dreams and consoling his heartaches for over forty years, Tula, age 62, passed away in her son's Oak Street home.

By 1940 Lacy no longer owned or operated the grocery on Savannah St., nor was he listed in the Valdosta directory. That was about the time that Lacy found solace from his lifetime of losses in the company of Lula Touchton. Lula, a spinster, had fawned after Lacy all of her life. On 24 December, 1941, Lacy and Lula were married by Reverend Charlie Vickers of Ray City. They lived in Bemiss, on the road between Valdosta and Ray City, where Lula's family operated a small grocery business.

Their bliss was brief as Lacy's health diminished rapidly. On 11 May, 1944, Lacy Lester Shaw, the last surviving child from the union of Francis Marion and Rachel Shaw, was reunited with his parents, his brothers and his sisters, even that special brother that he had spent so much of his life in search of—Chester. —BLS

FAMILY GROUP SHEET

LACY LESTER SHAW / Naval Store Commissary Operator, Grocer, Farmer

Born: 8 September, 1873, Lois, Berrien, Ga

Died: 11 May, 1944, Valdosta, Lowndes, Ga

Buried: New Ramah Cemetery, Ray City, Berrien, Ga

SPOUSES

TULA ALBRITTON

Born: 8 July 1874, Berrien, Ga

Died: 25 April, 1937, Valdosta, Lowndes, Ga

Married: 7 June, 1896, Berrien, Ga

Buried: New Ramah Cemetery, Ray City, Berrien, Ga

LULA TOUCHTON

Married: 24 December, 1941

CHILDREN

Aubrey B. Shaw

Born: 27 April, 1897, Lois, Berrien, Ga

Died: 13 November 1970, Valdosta, Lowndes, Ga

Elmer Atwood Shaw

Born: 22 March, 1900, Lois, Berrien, Ga

Died: 15 October, 1965, Valdosta, Lowndes, Ga

Clyde Chester Shaw

Born: 3 August 1902, Lois, Berrien, Ga

Died: 14 March, 1969, Valdosta, Lowndes, Ga

Leonard Cleo Shaw

Born: 14 September, 1904, Willacoochee, Ga

Died: 7 December, 1987, St. Petersburg, Fl

Jesse Curtis Shaw

Born: 25 June, 1907, Willacoochee, Berrien, Ga

Died: 20 October, 1965, Orlando, Orange, Fl

SPOUSES

Rosa Turner Married: 15 August, 1914

Born: 22 September, 1894, Nashville, Berrien, Ga

Died: 23 September, 1985, Valdosta, Lowndes, Ga

Olive Lee Married: 25 February, 1922

Born: 6 October, 1900, Ray City, Berrien, Ga

Died: 18 December, 1993, Valdosta, Berrien, Ga

Golie Gaskins Married:

Born: 3 November, 1905, Ray City, Berrien, Ga

Died: 30 December, 1968, Valdosta, Lowndes, Ga

Beulah Cason Married: 30 August, 1929

Born: 2 January, 1898, Waycross, Ga

Died: 28 January, 1970, St. Petersburg, Fl

Nona Ruth Fendley Married:

Madelyn Louise Smith Judge Married:

Born: 3 September, 1912

Died: 3 July, 1992