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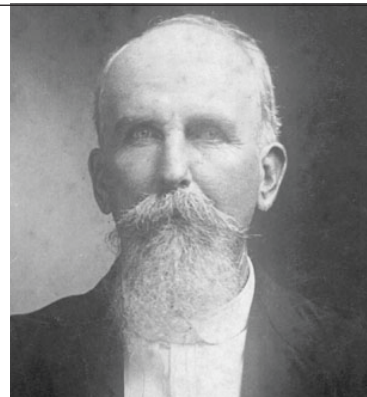
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THE FAMILY OF FRANCIS MARION SHAW AND RACHEL MOORE ALLEN



T H E G R A N D C H I L D R E N

LESSIE L. PARRISH GASKINS “Keeping House”

As is usually the norm when doing the research on one of our female ancestors of the family, very little is recorded about her in documentation or even in oral histories by the surviving generations. Most often, on the census records especially, the entry for the occupation of the wife simply states, “Keeping House”.

However, over several decades of a person’s life, those census records often reveal the number of times a wife went through childbirth, or even the loss of a child. It also reveals the number of times she had to pack up her household belongings and follow the aspirations of her spouse—or the disappointments of those aspirations. And sometimes it hints at the homesick daughter wishing to live closer



to her parents and siblings when living a great distance apart. Such were the circumstances of the life of Lessie Parrish Gaskins.

Lessie Lenora Parrish was the third child born to Ida Jane Shaw and W. Bartow Parrish. She was born on October 7, 1888 in the family farm home on the west bank of Possum Branch, west of Ray’s Mill, Georgia.

She received her formal education at the small two-room Pine Grove school, about two

miles from her home. Each school day she passed the house of her grandparents, Francis Marion and Rachel Shaw, often walking or riding along with her many Shaw-cousin classmates.

Lessie was raised in the Primitive Baptist faith, so most likely it was at one of the “Big Meetings” where she first met and began an early courtship with master

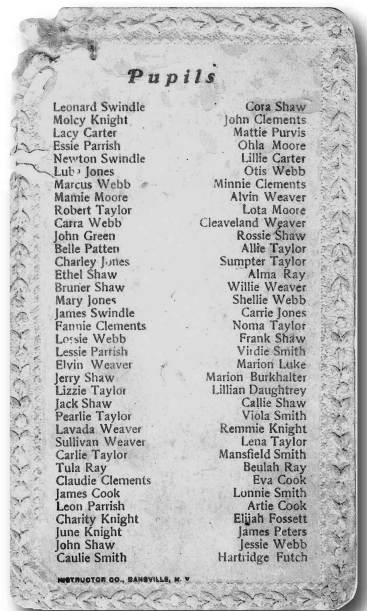
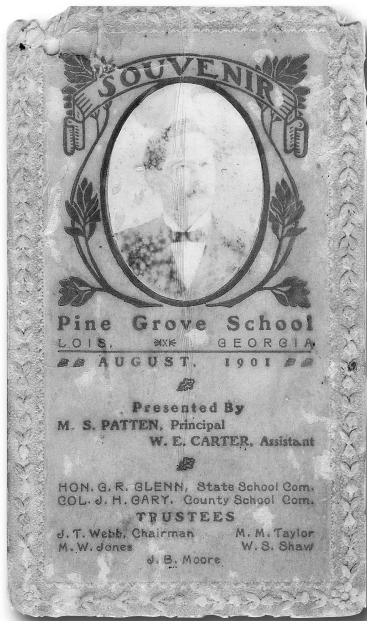
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The Family of Francis Marion Shaw is a non-profit newsletter published semi-annually, or more frequently, for the benefit of the descendants of Francis Marion Shaw and his wife, Rachel Moore Allen Shaw.

*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:
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Above, Pine Grove School list of pupils who attended in all grades, 1st through the 8th, at the close of the school year in 1901.

Above right, the family farm home of W. Bartow Parrish and Ida Jane Shaw Parrish on the west bank of Possum Branch, in the Loos community two miles west of today's Ray City Georgia. It was the place Lessie Parrish Gaskins called home for 15 years of her life. It was also the location of her wedding in 1904.



Lucious Butler Gaskins, son of John A. Gaskins, one of Berrien County's most prosperous farmers. Lucious was a not-so-young man almost 9 years Lessie's senior.

On February 26, 1904, the following article was printed in the Nashville Herald:

"The marriage last Sunday [February 21] of Miss Lessie L. Parrish and Mr. Lucious B. Gaskins was an occasion of social interest throughout the county. The rites were solemnized at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bartow Parrish, parents of the bride, about thirteen miles southeast of Nashville, Judge R. K. Turner officiating. The marriage was witnessed by a large number of relatives and friends of the happy young couple. They will make their future home about three miles east of Nashville. The Herald wishes them a long life of happiness and prosperity.

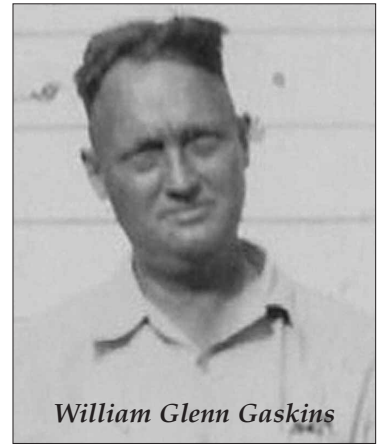
Shortly before his marriage to Lessie, Lucious purchased 355 acres in land lots 193 and 176 of the 10th district near Avera Mill from his father, for \$850. There he was engaged in farming. The couple immediately started their family with the birth of their first child, a boy William Glenn, born April 11, 1905. That was followed by the birth of their first daughter, Flora Louell, on January 23, 1907.

Their third child, Avanelle was born July 30, 1909, and then another girl, Bronnie Mae was born April 14, 1911. Shortly thereafter in May, 1911, Lucious sold the property near Avera Mill back to his father for \$5500 and purchased a 270 acre farm on the south side of the Nashville-Mud Creek Road (now Radio Station Road), on the east bank of Ten Mile Creek, for \$8000.

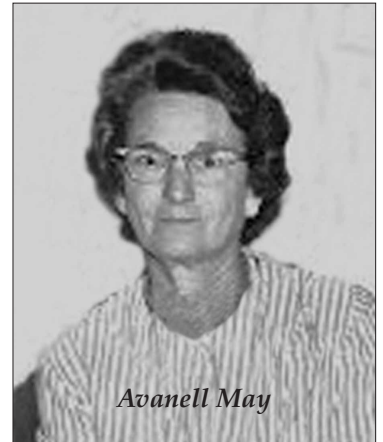


Lucious Butler Gaskins

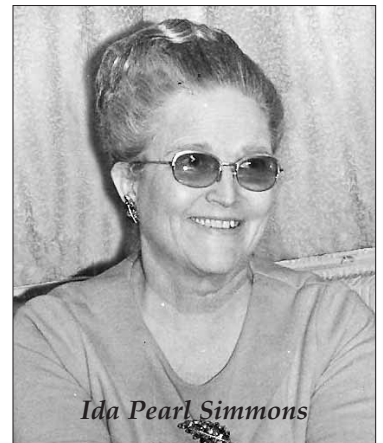
But Lessie wanted to live in closer proximity to her parents in the Ray City area. So in January, 1912, Lucious moved Lessie and the children to Allenville, closer to her parents home. There in Allenville he purchased a 350 acre farm on the west bank of Cat Creek in land lot 328 of the 10th district from his wife's half-first cousin, Marcus L. Allen, for the sum of \$1000. The children attended the Pleasant Vale two-room school, just across the creek on the Old Ray City-Nashville Road.



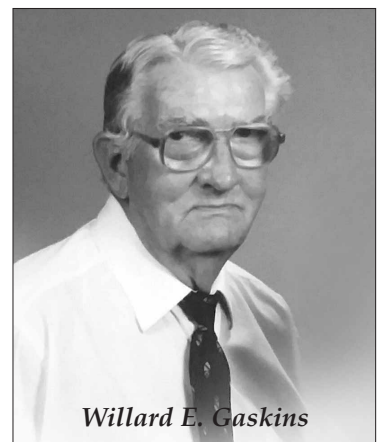
William Glenn Gaskins



Avanel May



Ida Pearl Simmons



Willard E. Gaskins

Four of Lucious and Lessie Gaskins' eight children

Though Lucious was primarily engaged in farming, he was also investing in businesses and properties in Nashville and Ray City, which would prove to be a wise decision in his later years.

The couple remained in Allenville for about 9 years, while expanding their family by two: Lucious Butler, Jr. born November 1, 1912, and their fourth daughter and sixth child, Ida Pearl, born March 29, 1918.

In July, 1920, Lucious sold the farm in Allenville to Dr. P. H. Askew of Nashville, and moved the family back up near Avera Mill. Lucious and his father, John A. built a home in the White community between Avera Mill and Weber, and Lucious ran a grocery store there on the north side of the Georgia and Florida Railroad tracks. The children attended the Avera Mill School on the edge of Lewis Lake. While residing in the White community, Lessie's mother, Ida Jane Shaw Parrish, passed away in September, 1921. A month later, Lessie gave birth to another son, Willard E. on October 19, 1921.

In the 1920s, it was boom time down in Florida, and after a few unproductive years with operating the White grocery store, in 1925 Lucious and Lessie packed up the family and headed for Okeechobee, Florida.

Lucious built a nice home there in the bustling community, and the younger children loved living in town and attending the new brick elementary school. But once again, Lessie missed living near her family and friends, and soon began to grow homesick for the rural farm life back in Georgia.

In September, 1925, Lessie's father

Aerial view of the John A. Gaskins farm that Lucious purchased in 1911 and lived in for a period of time when the couple returned from their brief stay in Florida.

passed away and almost a year later, in June, 1926, Lucious's father John A. Gaskins passed away. With those occasions, along with the pining of Lessie for her family, Lucious finally sold their home and his interest in the grocery business in Okeechobee and moved back to Berrien County, Georgia. A year later, on August 4, 1927, Lessie gave birth to their eighth and final child, John Donald.

Upon his return to Georgia, Lucious was engaged in farming the acreage on Radio Station Road that he had purchased from his father in 1911. However, Lucious preferred the city life, so in 1930 he built a home on East Washington Avenue and Mathis Street in Nashville, where a small car wash stands today, and moved his family into town.

That same year he opened an oil and service station business a block away on the corner of McPherson and Mathis Street, and his son, Glenn was the operator.

Though Lucious had been diagnosed some time earlier with diabetes, it seemed to be not too serious. However about the first week of April, 1934, his condition began to worsen. Finally, at 11:30 p.m. on April 13, Lucious Butler Gaskins passed away.

Lessie, now age 46, was left with three children still living at home and attending school. She had spent her life as a house wife, without any professional skills. However, she did have Lucious's earlier investments that she sold off to help provide for herself and the remaining children.

Pictured on the right is the Sinclair service station that was built about 1930 for Lucious B. Gaskins, Sr. on the corner of McPherson Avenue and Mathis Street. Glenn Gaskins, the Gaskins' oldest son, is on the left. Glenn operated a number of stations around Nashville. The roof of Lessie's home on Washington Street can be seen in the center background of the photo.



Lessie Parrish Gaskin, on the right, as she appeared in her mid-50s. She died at the age of 78.



Editor's note: Thanks to Lessie's daughter, the late Avanelle Gaskins May, and her granddaughters, Jan Harrelson, and Marlene Basson, who granted me the time to interview them from which much of the information for this newsletter was gathered.

In addition, Lessie was also using her skills as a seamstress and helped Glenn's wife, Bessie, with her laundry and ironing business.

In 1946 the Nashville Food Packaging Company opened a pickle bottling plant just east of the Gaskins home. Lessie hired on during the harvest season and since she never learned to drive, each day she would walk to and from the pickling plant one mile away.

Death in her family struck once again in October, 1946. Her youngest child, Donald had been serving in the post-war effort in Japan. On October 25, 1946, he was suddenly killed in a car accident on Honshu

Island. His body was returned to the U.S. and he was buried with military honors near his father in the Gaskins Cemetery.

Lessie loved to have her children and grandchildren gather at her home every Sunday for dinner. Each of the adults prepared a portion of the meal. It was not unusual to have 20 or more family members in the kitchen, dining room, or out on the porch to share in this tradition.

In 1960, the City of Nashville was concerned with the blighted conditions that were prevalent on the eastern end of town, ending on Mathis and Washington Streets. Raymond Guest of the Nashville Urban Renewal Program, encouraged Lessie to sell her home before the site was taken by eminent domain. So in 1962, though her home was still in very good condition, she sold it and moved next door into the home of her daughter, Ida Pearl and her husband Max Simmons.

In February, 1960, Lessie felt the loss of another son, Lucious B. Jr, and again in August, 1964, her son William Glenn, passed away. It was just two years later, on December 11, 1966, Lessie Parrish Gaskins was finally called to life's closing door. She was buried at the Gaskins Cemetery in East Berrien, along side her husband and sons.

In a 1963 Nashville newspaper article, Lessie was recognized on her 75th birthday for her longevity, her cake baking, and crocheting. But her life's accomplishments were even more than that. She had also been a devoted wife to her husband and had raised a family of eight children—all just part of her calling—“Keeping House”.