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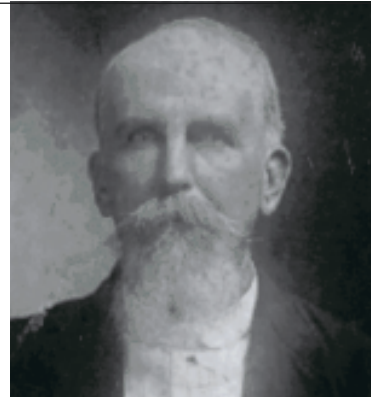
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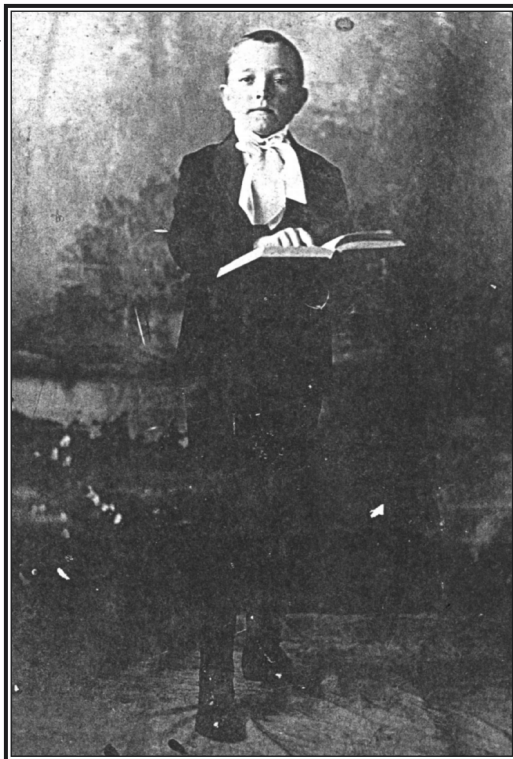
THE FAMILY OF FRANCIS MARION SHAW AND RACHEL MOORE ALLEN



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

FONDREN WILLIE MITCHELL SHAW “Preacher”

In the collection of photographs belonging to Betty Shaw Hughes, was a vintage photograph of a young boy about 6 or 7 years-old, dressed in a jacket and nickers with a flourished neckerchief, posed in a stoic stance, holding an open book. On the back of the mounted photograph was written “Preacher Boy.” The likeness is the earliest known photograph of Fondren Willie Mitchell Shaw. And from this photograph



most likely came the moniker that followed him the rest of his life—“Preacher.”

Fondren Willie Mitchell Shaw, was the seventh born child of Jesse Shelby “Dock” Shaw and Susie Bullard Shaw. He was born May 13, 1906, in a log home on the west bank of Possum Branch, in the New Lois community near Ray City, Georgia.

Two years later the family moved into their new home up on the knoll west of the log home, where Preacher spent the rest of his adolescent life. His formal education was formed in the one-room Pine Grove and two-room Kings Chapel schools.

It was at the Kings Chapel school that he met his life-long companion, Susie Ray, daughter of Charles M. Ray and Maggie Hutto Ray. She had finished

her educational training by attending Valdosta Women’s College, and had been teaching at Pleasant Vale and Indian Camp schools. She had just started teaching at Kings Chapel when she met young Preacher Shaw. It is not clear if he was finishing his formal education or if he was attending a function there and made her acquaintance.

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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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Young "Preacher" Shaw about the time he was courting Susie Ray. Note the rumble-seat coupe in the background left, the only car the couple had when they were first married in 1927.

Top opposite page: The Charles M. Ray homeplace on Indian Camp Road, which later became the home of Preacher and Susie Ray. It was also the home of their son, Gerald and his wife Diana after Preacher's heart attack.

Center opposite page: Susie Ray Shaw and Preacher Shaw in front of their home. The front porch was later enclosed to provide space for an indoor bathroom.

The only automobile that the couple had to court in was the rumble-seat coupe that belonged to Susie. But it was adequate and they were married on November 13, 1927 in the home of Susie's parents by Elder Aaron Knight.

The couple set up house for a brief time with Susie's parents, where their first child, Latrelle was born July 14, 1928. They shortly thereafter moved into the Martha Carter place just off of the Old Valdosta Highway near Barker Road. Here their second child Lawanna was born March 26, 1930. During this time, Preacher was farming the property of Susie's parents.

The family then moved into a small home on Indian Camp Road about a mile west of the Ray homeplace. It had been the old White Pond Church, which had been moved to the Ray property by Preacher and Susie's brothers, Henry and Buck.

By November the following year 1931, Preacher and Susie had moved over to the "Dock" Shaw place, helping on that farm. They lived in the log house that Preacher had been born in 25 years earlier. Their

third child, a son Otis was born on November 16, 1931.

Early the following year in 1932, Preacher suddenly suffered an attack of appendicitis, and was rushed to the Little Griffin Hospital in Valdosta. His recovery was slow, and Susie stayed at the home of Preacher's sister, Cora Shaw Griffin. Susie visited Preacher daily while walking to the hospital and back carrying baby Otis in her arms.

Preacher worked the Ray property until about 1937, when he went down to Jacksonville, Florida to work for his brother-in-law, Lewis Ennis, Mary Idell's husband. Lewis owned and operated a service station and oil company in Avondale, Florida. Preacher would drive back and forth from Jacksonville to Ray City about once a month, while Susie worked the family farm.

The children were attending the New Lois School about this time, walking the four mile distance each way, daily. One of their fondest childhood moments was when Preacher brought home a used girl's bicycle from Jacksonville.

With the birth of their fourth and last child, Gerald on April 5, 1938, Preacher found employment a little closer to home, working on a construction crew, building roads near Thomasville. However this opportunity turned into tragedy, when one of the construction tractors turned over on top of him. He was hospitalized in critical condition for sometime before finally recovering. He carried scars from that accident the rest of his life.

All during the months and years that Preacher was working out of town, Susie was home, raising the children and working the farm. She was also an accomplished seamstress, sewing all of the children's clothes. She was often sought after for seamstress work by many of her neighbors and her work was well known throughout the county.

When Preacher recovered from the accident, he returned to work the farm, and the family moved in and lived with Susie's widowed mother. About 1940 Mrs. Ray deeded the Ray homeplace and 100 acres of the farm in the 134th land lot to Susie. Maggie Ray died August 2, 1942.

Preacher found it hard to stay too close to home. This was especially evidenced by his great love of baseball. During his adult years, he became a gifted ball player, always ready to be coaxed away from the mule and plow to engage in any pick-up game his fellow ball players would draft him for.



In Lamar Blanton's book, "Tales of Ray's Mill," he reflects on his recollection of Preacher Shaw the ball player:

The most famous of the baseball players in our part of the state was a man nicknamed "Preacher," a title that he somehow obtained without any evident relevant behavior on his part. Preacher was considerably older than the other members of our team, but age is no handicap to a pitcher who is the complete master of a baseball. His repertoire included virtually every pitch that has ever been named in baseball jargon. Being past his prime, his fastball did not exactly whistle any more, but he resorted to a vast variety of curves, and speed did not really matter, for it was only an infrequent accident that the hitter was able to get his bat anywhere near a pitch thrown by Preacher. And all of the time that old son-of-a-gun would just stand there on the mound, grinning with infuriating devilishment as batter after batter left the plate to sit down in complete frustration.

Some of the visiting teams refused to play unless it was agreed that Preacher would not pitch. He could hold any other position, for he was no better than an average ball layer in a non-pitching role, but it was considered an unfair advantage for him to be on the mound.

He and his brother Charlie, who played shortstop, were often recruited by the local ball clubs to beef up their rosters. (Charlie was killed in an auto-train accident in 1937.) Preacher actively played the sport until 1948, being listed on the April roster of the semi-pro Berrien Blue Jays that year. However he was not listed as an active player by the end of the season. Interestingly, his children seldom if ever went to watch him play.



About 1945, Preacher went to work in Nashville for Jake Rutherford in the fertilizer business. This began a long venture in the feed, seed, and fertilizer business that lasted over two decades. He worked at the Leah Stallings Feed and Seed, Perkins Warehouse, and John David Luke at the Nashville Mills.

He was a "drummer", a natural-born salesman, selling seed and fertilizer, then traveling through out Berrien and the surrounding counties, buying back the farmers' crops. Then he would sell them seed for the next crop year.

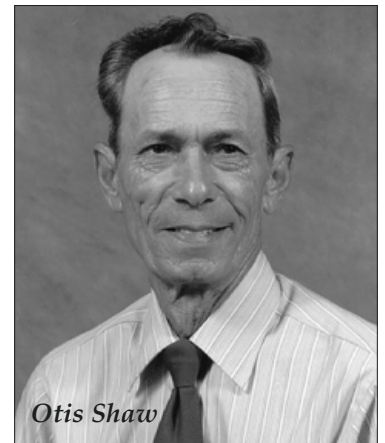
His pleasant, friendly manner brought a lot of encouragement for him to follow in the footsteps of his father, "Dock" Shaw, and run for County Commissioner.



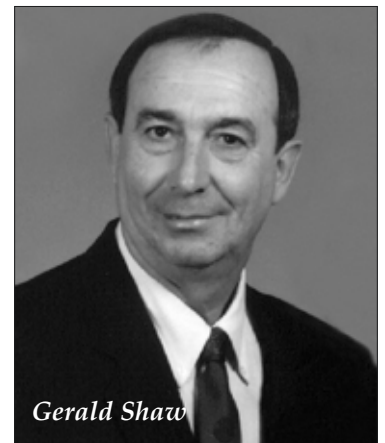
Latrelle Shaw Chisholm



Lawanna Shaw Maples



Otis Shaw



Gerald Shaw

Children of Preacher and Susie Ray Shaw



The last team Preacher Shaw played for was the 1948 Semi-pro Berrien Blue Jays. He is pictured on the back row, far right in the team photo, above.



Preacher's second love to baseball was hunting and fishing. No dog was allowed on the farm unless it was a hunting dog. His dogs were trained to hunt, but only for him. He would often lend them out to friends, who would bring them back in disgust as the dogs refused to even get out of the car.

It was required to be a property owner in the county to qualify to run for public office, so Susie sold him one acre of the farm that was in her name. This was the only property Preacher ever owned outright.

In December, 1947, Preacher Shaw entered the political race with this announcement:

"I hereby announce my candidacy for election to membership on the Board of Roads and Revenues of Berrien County If elected I promise to serve just as faithfully and efficiently as my father, J. S. (Dock) Shaw, during his eight years as a county commissioner."

His father's coattails served him no advan-

tage as he finished second to June Brogdon, losing by 153 votes out of 3,832 votes in a 6-man-race. However he had come too close to be discouraged, so four years later, in December, 1951, he once again entered the race for County Commissioner:

"I hereby announce my candidacy for the office of County Commissioner If elected I shall do my utmost to fulfill the duties of this office to the best of my ability. Your vote and influence will be greatly appreciated."

He did not call on his family name, but ran on his own accord. It served him well this time, defeating June Brogdon by 55 votes 1684 to 1629 in a 3-man-race.

However when he was up for reelection in 1956, the election rules had changed, and he finished second in a four-man-race by almost 700 votes. Heyward Keefe finished first, so there was a runoff election held. Preacher lost in that election 2534 to 1481. He served out his term and never ran for public office again.

Just before Christmas of 1962, Preacher suffered a severe heart attack. He was rushed to the Berrien Hospital, where he spent 15 days in recovery. This reduced his work load at the John David Luke's mill, and Gerald and his wife Diana moved in with Preacher and Susie, helping the couple on the farm.

In 1972, Preacher suffered another massive heart attack while at home, and died at the Berrien Hospital, October 14, 1972.

Susie lived out the rest of her life in the home she was born and raised in. She died March 19, 1993. They are both buried in the Beaver Dam Cemetery in Ray City, Georgia.