

Annie Thompson Burns (Winchester)

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March 2024

My grandmother, Annie Thompson Burns, was born in Pittsboro, Chatham County, North Carolina on April 3, 1883. She was the daughter of Robert Marsh Burns and Martha Susan Johnson Burns. She was the youngest of four children – sister Emma Burns was the oldest, then brother Augustus Merrimon Burns, and brother Robert Henry Burns, Sr.

The earliest photograph that I have is one of Annie sitting on the back porch of the family home with two of her father's hunting dogs.

I grew up hearing Grandmother's stories about her childhood – and now have regrets that I did not write down all her wonderful stories. One of her favorites was about walking home from school one day and deciding to take a "short cut" across her father's pasture rather than walking the road. She had been told to stay out of the pasture because the bull was very aggressive – but like most children, she saw no danger. The bull suddenly made his presence known – Grandmother responded by climbing an apple tree where she sat until late afternoon with the bull pacing around the tree. As the afternoon



Young Annie Thompson Burns on back porch of Pittsboro home with her father's hunting dogs.



May Day tambourine.

wore on, the family became concerned that Annie had not arrived home from school. The two older brothers set out to find her – and quickly located her sitting in the apple tree! She was rescued and never took the short cut again.

In 1895 there was a May Day celebration in Pittsboro. The young schoolgirls wound the ribbons around the Maypole, and they carried tambourines. Grandmother treasured her tambourine because her grandmother, Elizabeth Brantley Burns, painted pink roses on it – the date of May 1895 is written with pencil on the back side. Grandmother gave this wonderful keepsake to me when I was in high school.



Sunday School Class of the Pittsboro First Baptist Church, Feb 18, 1899.

A photograph of Grandmother with her First Baptist Church Sunday School Class is dated February 18, 1899. On the front row, left to right: Mary Bynum, Charlie Creel, Esper Paschal, Stella Holt and Clara Paschal. On the back row, left to right: Annie Burns (Grandmother), Margaret Creel, Ben Nooe and Annie Lutterloh. Love the hats! A second photograph of Annie and friends is undated and without names. Annie is on the left in the front row. The women of that time loved their hats!



Annie (front left) with friends.

Following graduation from school, Grandmother went to work in Raleigh at the law office of her brother-in-law Herbert Norris, the husband of her older sister Emma. Herbert Norris built a beautiful home for his wife Emma in Raleigh in 1898 – the home was named Norburn Terrace. In recent years, the home was placed on the National Historic Register. Grandmother stayed in Raleigh with Herbert and Emma during the years that she worked in his law office – she did legal research for Herbert – a unique opportunity for her at that time. Both of her brothers were attorneys and at that time women were only dreaming of being accepted into law school.



Annie Burns and wedding party.

In July of 1905, Annie Burns married Edwin Cheatham Winchester of Monroe, North Carolina. They were married in Pittsboro by Rev. E.Y. Poole at the Baptist Church. The newspaper carried the details of the wedding including the following: "The bride was charmingly attired in a traveling dress of blue taffeta, the jacket trimmed with Persian bands, hat to match. She carried a shower bouquet of bride's roses tied with white chiffon. The maid of honor, Miss Clara Edna Paschal, of Goldston, was gowned in white organdie over pink taffeta, white valenclennes picture hat, with white violets, shower bouquet of white carnations and sweet peas. The bridesmaids, Misses Mary Hill, and Mary Bynum, were in white organdie, pink girdles, each carrying shower bouquets of pink carnations tied with yards of pink chiffon."



Annie with Edwin C. Winchester, Jr.

Following their marriage, Annie moved with Edwin to his hometown of Monroe, North Carolina. The following year their first child was born – Edwin C. Winchester, Jr. Edwin was the oldest of the Winchester children, followed by sister Martha Burns Winchester, brother Thomas Page Winchester (my father), and sister Jane Brantley Winchester.

I have a letter written to Annie by her father in April of 1919. The letter begins "My Dear and oft remembered Baby I am going to try and drop you a few lines to let you know that I have not forgotten you & also to let you know that your Mother and I are still here in the land of the dying; but thankful to say we are on pleading ground . . ." The letter tells of the death of a neighbor and friend of the family and ends with "I am as ever your devoted father."

Chatham County and Pittsboro always held a special place in Grandmother's heart.