

The Locke Family Newsletter

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to All the Locke Family

Another year passes, and we can reflect upon the things that make up thankful, and remember those loved ones who are no longer with us. The extended Locke family is a strong one, and we have so much history to pass on to the younger members. This issue will be mostly about Christmas memories, but you'll find some interesting family photos and stories mixed in. As with past newsletters, make sure you forward this one to all the special people on your family e-mail list, and please print copies for those among us who don't have access to the internet. Also, download this file, and print a copy for your physical file. By binding all the newsletters together, you will have the best possible record of our incredible family. *Currier and Ives* always captured the season best.



The History of Christmas Cards in America

by Penne Restad

The rise of Christmas cards revealed other aspects of the new holiday's profile. R.H. Pease, a printer and variety store owner who lived in Albany, New York, distributed the first American-made Christmas card in the early 1850s. A family scene dominated the small card's centre, but unlike its English forerunner (itself only a decade older), the images on each of its four corners made no allusion to poverty, cold, or hunger. Instead, pictures of Santa, reindeer, dancers and an array of Christmas presents and Christmas foods suggested the bounty and joys of the season.



It took Louis Prang, a recent German immigrant and astute reader of public taste, to expand the sending of cards to a grand scale. Prang arrived in America in 1850 and soon made a name as a printer. By 1870, he owned perhaps two-thirds of the steam presses in America and had perfected the color printing process of chromolithography. After distributing his trade cards by the thousands at an international exposition in 1873, the wife of his London agent suggested he add a Christmas greeting to them. When Prang introduced these new cards into the United States in 1875, they proved such a hit that he could not meet demand.



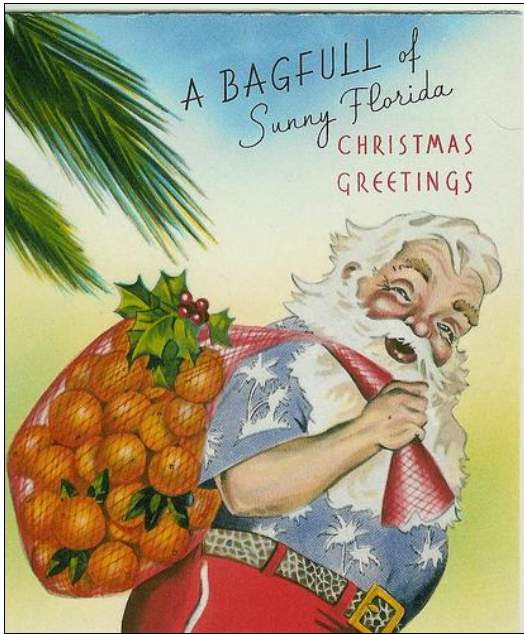
Behind Prang's delight in profits lay a certain idealism. He saw his cards as small affordable works of art. Through them he hoped to stimulate popular interest in original decorative art and to educate public taste. In 1880, Prang began to sponsor annual competitions for Christmas card designs to promote these ends. These contests made Christmas cards so popular that other card manufacturers entered the market. By 1890, cheap imitations from his native Germany drove Prang from the Christmas card market entirely.

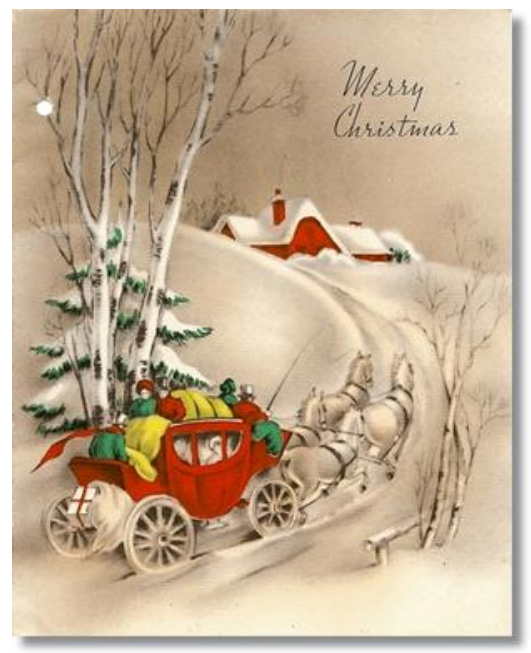
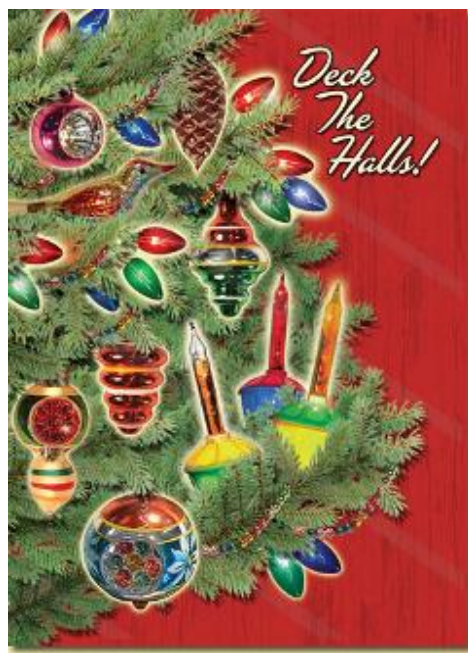
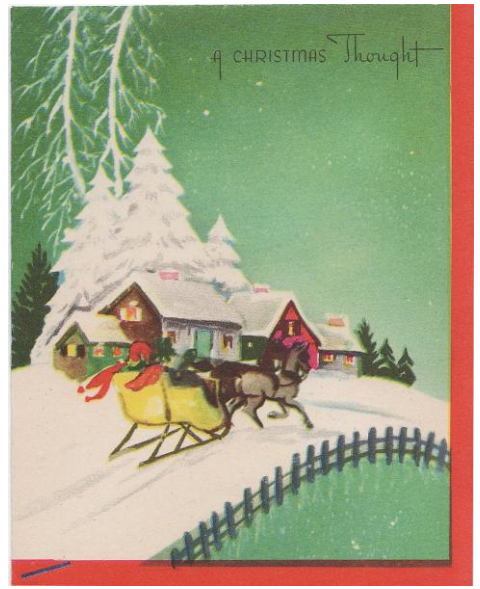
Whatever Prang's plans for democratizing art in his accepted land, the advent of Christmas cards in the marketplace soon served functions in keeping with the increasing pace and essential nature of American society. In a hurried and mobile nation, more and more Americans resorted to cards instead of honoring the older custom of writing Christmas letters or making personal holiday visits. The cards' ready-made sentiments drew together friends and families spread across a rapidly expanding national geography, making them a staple of December's mail. "I thought last year would be the end of the Christmas card mania, but I don't think so now", one postal official complained in 1882. "Why four years ago a Christmas card was a rare thing. The public then got the mania and the business seems to be getting larger every year".

Christmas cards also made modest but suitable presents. "Worn out from choosing gifts for old friends and school mates", one writer noted, "we usually fall back on Christmas cards, which constitute one of the most precious and at the same time inexpensive contributions of these latter days to the neglected cause of sentiment".

Historic Christmas Cards

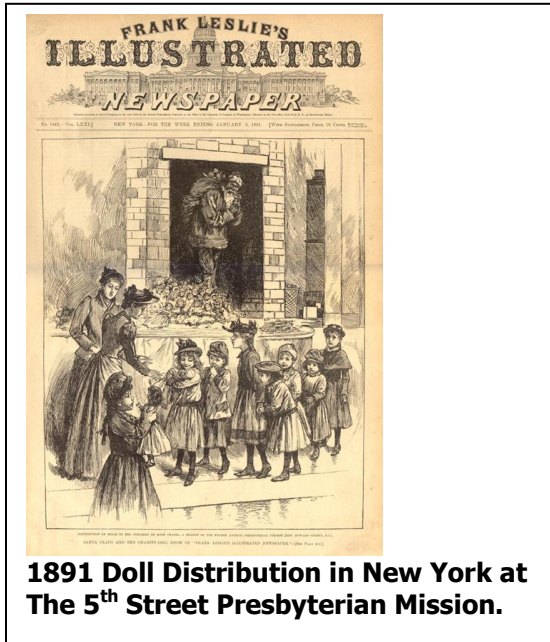
If you're like me, you remember the excitement of finding Christmas cards in the mailbox over the years. I thought it might be interesting to revisit some of the classics of the 40's and 50's, and see how cards have changed over the years. Below are a number of my favorites, and perhaps you'll remember their style.





Did our South Carolina Ancestors Celebrate Christmas?

I was curious how **Josias Locke** and his brother **William** might have celebrated Christmas in northern South Carolina after arriving there in 1801 from Halifax County, North Carolina. My research uncovered some little known facts about Christmas in America in general. Because our ancestors were mostly Scots-Irish Presbyterians, you might be surprised at what I found.



Because Christmas was not specifically mentioned in the New Testament as anything other than a day like any other, Presbyterians believed that there should be no special celebration associated with the time of Christ's birth. During the early 19th century, Presbyterians continued to reject the observance of Christmas, although some changes were occurring. Because the Anglican Church, which included the Episcopalians, had been the official religion of much of Colonial America, its customs had spread throughout the colonies, and one of those customs was to attend church on December 25th to "honor the birth of the Savior." Those services included the telling the story of Christ's birth, the singing of special Christmas hymns, and the sharing of food and drink. Once the Presbyterians were aware that many of their congregants were attending these special observances, they began to adopt the custom for themselves.

In the rural areas of the country like South Carolina, Christmas went unnoticed among the Presbyterian settlers. Presbyterian Missionary Philip Fithian served as a missionary among the Scots and Scots-Irish Presbyterians in the western counties of Virginia. On Dec. 25, 1775, his diary read: ***"Christmas Morning - Not a Gun is heard - Not a Shout - No company or Cabal assembled - To Day is like other Days every Way calm & temperate - People go about their daily Business with the same Readiness, & apply themselves to it with the same Industry."***

Prosperous Southerners, especially those of Anglican English or French descent, hosted lavish Christmas meals and parties. Men shot off guns both on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Firecrackers and gunpowder explosions added to the din. Children without access to either of these items sometimes celebrated by popping inflated hog bladders, the nineteenth-century farm equivalent of a balloon. Southern Christmas celebrations featured so many bangs and explosions that some witnesses said they rivaled Independence Day celebrations. In addition to noisemaking, residents of many Southern cities also enjoyed dressing in costume on Christmas Eve. In some places they were referred to as "fantasticals," like their fellow celebrants in Pennsylvania. Baltimore, Savannah, Mobile, and St. Augustine hosted versions of this Christmas Eve masquerade. Arrayed in costumes ranging from funny to frightening, residents sallied forth to promenade up and down the main streets of the town. Something similar survives today in New Orleans' Mardi Gras celebrations.

The slaves in the South developed Christmas customs of their own. In North Carolina some celebrated Jonkonu. Some slaves observed an all-night vigil on Christmas Eve during which they sang, danced, and

prayed. Throughout the South slaves greeted white folk on Christmas morning with the cry of "**Christmas gif!**" According to custom, the white person responded by giving them a present, either a coin or a gift. In addition, slave owners often distributed presents of clothing, shoes, blankets and other necessities to their slaves at Christmas time. Some slave owners provided their slaves with extra rations of food at Christmas, including meat, which was something the slaves rarely ate during the rest of the year. Slave owners frequently provided ample portions of liquor as well. At many plantations slaves celebrated Christmas by dressing in their best clothes, feasting, and dancing. At other plantations slaves worked through the Christmas holidays. Sometimes slave owners withheld the privilege of celebrating Christmas from those slaves who had displeased them during the year. Others gave presents only to women who had borne babies or to the most productive workers. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) later looked back on the customs of the plantation Christmas as mechanisms for controlling the slaves. He argued that days of drunken carousing subtly convinced some slaves that they were incapable of productive behavior if left to their own devices.

All across the country many of those who celebrated Christmas in nineteenth-century America did so with noisy, public, and some-times drunken, reveling. By contrast, non-observers tried to ignore the noise and the festivities. They treated the day as any other workday, since it was not a legal holiday in most of the century.

The Dutch settlers of New York brought the custom of a benevolent old man named **Sinterklaas**, who was based on **Saint Nicholas** of earlier Roman Catholic legends, along with them when they settled in their new home. In 1809, something important happened. **Washington Irving**, the popular Hudson River Valley writer, using the pseudonym, **Diedrich Knickerbocker**, included Saint Nicholas in his book, "**A History of New York**". Nicholas is described as riding into town on a horse.

1812: Irving revised his book to include Nicholas riding over the trees in a wagon.

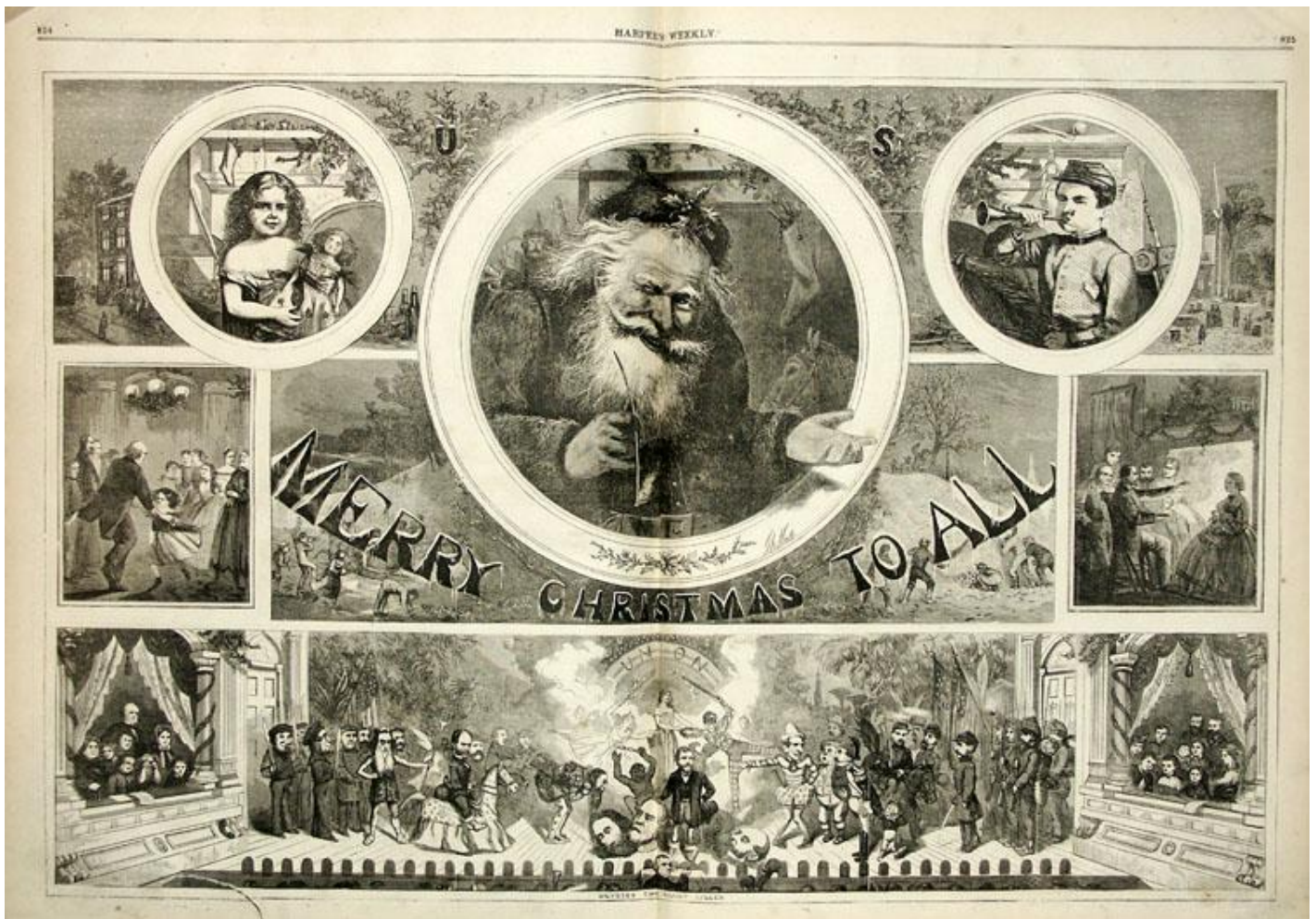
1821: New Yorker **William Gilley**, taking the **Sinterklaas** legend and making it more English, printed a poem about "**Santeclaus**" who was dressed in fur and drove a sleigh drawn by a single reindeer.

1823: Perhaps the best known poem in the English language is "**A Visit from St. Nicholas**", or as it's often called, "**The Night Before Christmas**". Its author, **Clement Clarke Moore**, a professor who owned an estate on the west side of Manhattan, would have been quite familiar with the St. Nicholas traditions followed in early 19th century New York. The poem was first published, anonymously, in a newspaper in Troy, New York, on December 23, 1823. Reading the poem today, one might assume that Moore simply portrayed the common traditions. Yet he actually did something quite radical by changing some of the traditions while also describing features that were entirely new. For instance, the St. Nicholas gift giving would have taken place on December 5, the eve of St. Nicholas Day. Moore moved the events he describes to Christmas Eve. He also came up with the concept of "St. Nick" having eight reindeer, each of them with a distinctive name.

Josias and **William Locke** were literate, and their sons and daughters could also read and write, so it is safe to assume that they would have been aware of both Washington Irving and "**The Night Before Christmas**", even in the rural South. When Josias died in 1826, Christmas in the South was changing, just as it was changing across the entire country.

Between the years 1830 and 1870 Christmas slowly crept into Sunday school curriculums. The middle of the century also witnessed the publication of new American Christmas hymns. A number of these, such as "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," and "We Three Kings" — all

composed by clergymen — have become Christmas standards. By the end of the century, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Congregationalist churches were offering Christmas services on the Sunday nearest Christmas. Perhaps this change signified that the passage of time had finally severed the connections made by many Protestants between Christmas, Roman Catholicism, and the religious oppression of past eras.



The Civil War marked a turning point in the way **Santa Claus** was used to promote Christmas. The above center spread by artist **Thomas Nast** appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in 1862. It showed the importance of children and family, and mocked warfare in general. Thomas Nast's fanciful Christmas drawings widened the sphere of Santa's rule in the late nineteenth century. **Clement Moore** had already supplied eight reindeer to pull the sleigh. Nast gave him a workshop and ledgers to record children's conduct. He made him taller and dressed him in red. To this, Nast and others added a home at the North Pole, elves, a wife and even, by some accounts, children. Christmas gifts started to become more common about mid-century. First, people began to adopt the German custom of installing a Christmas tree in their parlors as a holiday decoration. The Germans covered their trees with good things to eat and small gifts. Hence, the tree focused everyone's attention on giving and receiving. In addition, because it stood at the center of the household, the tree showcased the family gift exchange. Whereas, in the past, some parents may have stuffed a few sweets into their children's stockings, they now could hang little gifts from a tree branch. Liberated from the tight quarters of the Christmas stocking, the gifts parents gave to children grew in size and substance. Before 1880 people usually hung their unwrapped gifts from the tree with thread or string. After that time, wrapping paper and fancy decorated boxes slowly became fashionable. As Christmas presents grew too large or heavy to hang on the tree, people began to place them beneath the tree.

The Locke Reunion of August 10th and 11th

On Friday evening, **August 10th**, a number of Locke family members gathered at a restaurant on *Lake Lure* for a special pre-reunion dinner. It was a lovely evening, and our conversation was about Locke history and the beauty of the *North Carolina Mountains*. **Locke** and **Ernestine Boyce** drove all the way from Jacksonville, and his nephew **David Boyce** drove up from Monroe with his wife **Tammy**, and their daughter, **Maddy**. **Gladys Howell** drove in from *Charlotte*.



David Boyce and daughter Maddy



Ernestine and Locke Boyce



Gladys Howell, Tammy, Maddy, and David

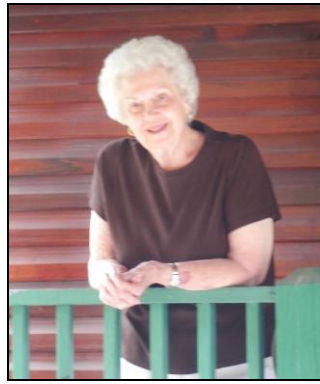


Maddy Boyce

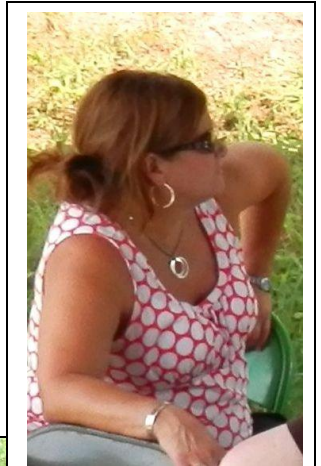
On Saturday, **August 11th**, the Locke clan gathered at Vann's home north of *Lake Lure* to enjoy each other's company, and have some really wonderful Southern cooking. Joining the group from Friday evening was **Lewis** and **Ginny Whisonant** from Rock Hill, and Lewis's niece, **Penny Carter** from New York City. It was so good to see **Nancy Locke** from Rock Hill. Driving up from Charlotte was **Deborah Brotherton Fox**, her daughter, **Erin**, and Erin's beau, **Ritchie**, and Deborah's little sister, **Donna Brotherton Parker**. Because we were a small group, we were able to spend quality time together, and share many good family stories. Peach and Blackberry cobblers with homemade vanilla ice cream finished off a sumptuous feast with the mountains as our background. Thanks again to **Gladys Howell** for all her help and for her award winning sweet tea.



Gathering for a Southern Feast...



Gladys Howell



Donna Parker



David and Maddy Boyce



Nancy Gaston Locke



Penny Carter and Ginny Whisonant



Tammy and Maddy



Lewis and Locke



The Banquet



Ritchie, Erin, Deborah, and Donna



Donna, Gladys, Deborah, Maddy, Tammy, and David

Photos from the Minnie Belle Locke Family

John Calhoun and **Nancy Ferguson Locke** had six children in York County, South Carolina in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Their middle daughter, **Minnie Belle**, was born in 1885, and she would eventually marry **Newton Whiteside Williams** (1878-1947). The photographs featured below are in addition to family photos that were published in The Locke Family Newsletter of April, 2009. Thanks go to **Lewis Manning Whisonant**, who is the son of Minnie's daughter, **Faye Lyle Williams**, and her husband, **Garland T. Whisonant** for providing these wonderful images.



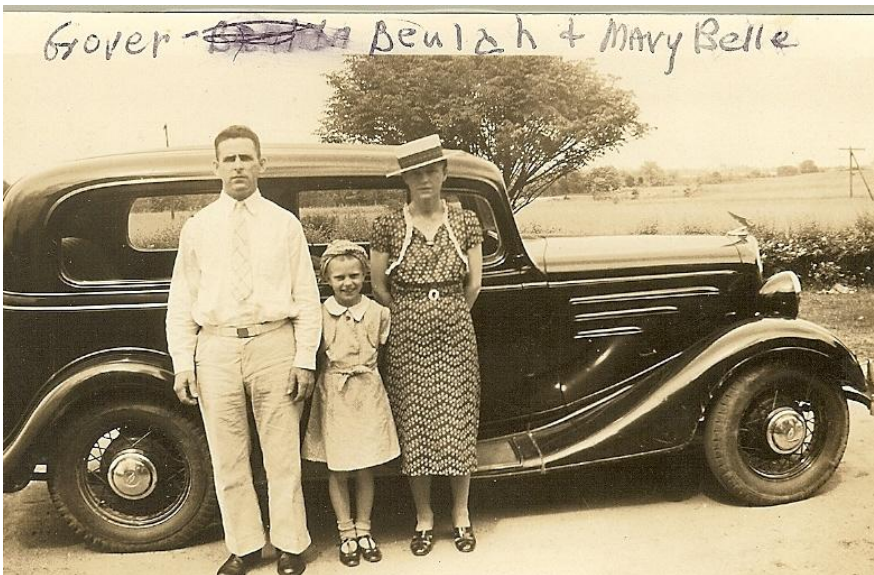
A Young Newton W. Williams



A Young Minnie Belle L. Williams



Ida Pauline "Polly" Williams Holt



Grover , Mary Belle, and Beulah Williams Branham



Cecil Whiteside Williams, son of Minnie



Jones Whisonant, Lewis, & Faye Lyle Williams Whisonant



Polly Holt w/ Minnie, girls Sandy & Ronni



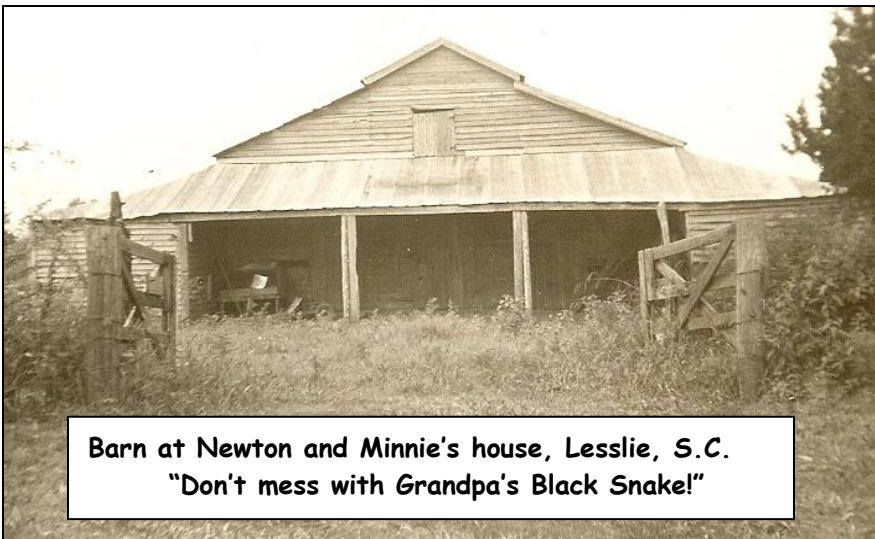
Lewis Whisonant, Herbert O. Williams Jr.



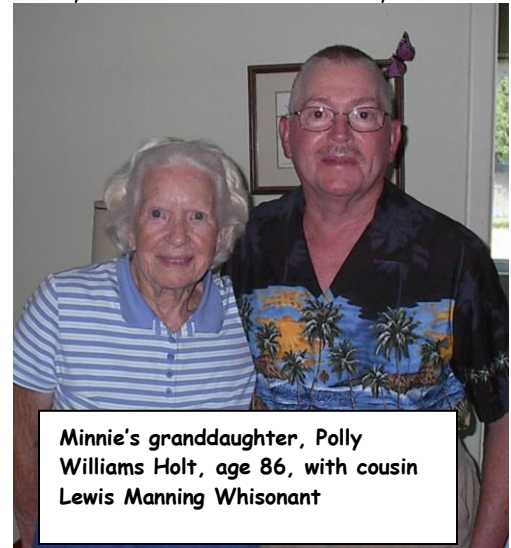
Herbert, Gene Newton Williams, Lewis



Sandy and Ronni Holt with Uncle Heyward Williams



Barn at Newton and Minnie's house, Lesslie, S.C.
"Don't mess with Grandpa's Black Snake!"



Minnie's granddaughter, Polly Williams Holt, age 86, with cousin Lewis Manning Whisonant

Photos from the Absalom Lewis Locke Family

These photos were in the collection of **Mae Helms Howell**, daughter of **Martha Hope "Mattie" Locke Helms**, who was the oldest child of **Absalom and Lizzie Locke** of *York County, South Carolina*.



Top Row: Glenn Howell, Kelly Helms, John Howell, Buck McAuley with Butch, And Lonnie Helms. Bottom: Mattie, Mae Helms Howell, Ray Howell, Margaret Helms McAuley, Betty McAuley, and Jean Helms, daughter of Roy Helms. 1943

Great Grandma Lizzie Locke holding Ray Howell. 1935



Jean Helms 1936



John Howell and Mae Helms atop Chimney Rock



Elisabeth "Betty" McAuley

1926



Harold Helms



Margaret and Mae Helms



Furman Locke and sister Mamie Locke Boyce



Furman, Sue, and Mattie 1957

This late 1950's photo was made in Kure Beach, North Carolina at the home of Mattie Locke Helms, right. She is joined by her brother Furman Master Locke, and his wife, Sue Winchester Locke. The building in the background is the old Blue Anchor, where rooms were rented overlooking the Atlantic. Sue and Furman lived just down the road.

This was the 50th Anniversary party for **Furman and Sue Locke** in 1965. From the left, it's sister, Sadie Locke Winchester, sister Mattie Helms, sister Mamie Locke Boyce, Furman, and Sue. This may be the last photo ever made of Mattie. This party was in April, and Mattie would pass away the following November at age 83. Sue would outlive them all, passing just shy of her 100th birthday in 1991.

