

- **Claiborne County Progress**

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## **THE FINEST FLOWER**

**By Nell Quesenbery**

Inside, the chapel is constructed of light planed and varnished wood. The morning sun entering into the long windows brightens the wood to a gleaming finish. The congregation is neither large nor rich, but nowhere can be found a more spotlessly clean House of God.

Sprightly, a slender gray-haired woman makes her way to the front of the polished wooden benches. Blue-gray eyes filled with gay laughter, hands tiny and sure, she places the worn French harp to her smiling roughed lips. Heartily, she both plays and sings, "God Be With You Until We Meet Again" as the Sunday services close.

The woman, a tiny velvet ribbon pressed into her halo of brightly white curls, a scent of clean, sweet violets clinging to her fashionably draped person, is Ida Jennings. Ida was ninety years old on December 1, 1981.

Each Sunday, for eighty-one years, Ida has attended the little white clapboard Methodist Church, with its long, slender steeple, that sits in Lone Mountain near the railroad.

For seventy-six of those years, since Maggie Sharp gave Ida her first piano lessons, she has played the church piano.

Ida moved to Lone Mountain from Howards Quarter when she was nine years old in 1900.

Ida was a particularly lovely child, whose slender fine frame was topped by fat, golden blonde curls.

Her father, Ace Pearson, married Dr. Sam Stone's daughter, the beautiful Nan. They had four children, Leona, Mima Kate, Ida and Lon Pearson.

Ace Pearson was an excellent carpenter. He built the house I live in, Tom and Imogene Rose's house, Henry Payne's fine new house and helped build the new Baptist Church. He remodeled Mr. Hill's house, Bob Payne's house, Byrd Payne's house and John Mason's old hotel.

The Pearsons moved about somewhat, but for a while, Ida lived next to Mr. Hill and Mamie Cordie. The Hills had two children, Claude and Bessie Lee. Ida, the same age as Claude, quickly became good friends with these children.

Dark, handsome Edgar Jennings had carried mail from Lone Mountain to Howards Quarter, so he became one of the first persons that Ida knew in Lone Mountain. Shortly, however, she became acquainted with all the young people that mixed freely in each other's houses.

At first, Edgar, a few years older than Ida, married Gertrude Carr. The marriage lasted only nine months, ending in young Gertrude's death by consumption.

A couple of years after Gertrude's death, upon going to the post office, Ida received a love letter from Edgar. Saying nothing to her mother, Nan, who was in the room sewing, Ida placed the letter into the fire. Finally, one day Edgar asked, "Why haven't you answered my letter? Didn't you get it?"

They were married in 1911 by old Uncle Johnny Sulfridge. Their wedding took place at Mike Farmer's home, where James "Feller" Jordan and his sister, Cleo, now live.

The pretty frame house by the railroad that Edgar's father, Bill "Moss" Jennings, and Edgar had built for his first bride, Gertrude, was where Edgar and Ida began housekeeping.

Five children were born to this union: Gertrude (Mrs. Tom Harkleroad), named for Edgar's first wife; Raymond Jennings, married Hilda Durden, died of cancer 1971; Forrest "Dick" Jennings, retired painter, who lives at home with his mother; Margaret (Mrs. William Hitson) and Bobbie David Jennings, district president of the Co-op Company that sells mining equipment, who married Martha Gruber,. There are ten grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

In the years that followed, Edgar was often away from home working as a miller or carpenter. The only time Ida lived away from Lone Mountain was once, briefly, she lived on Queensbury Hill in Middlesboro, Kentucky. Edgar worked at that time in Joe Walker's Rolling Mill. Later, Edgar opened a general store in Lone Mountain which he ran until he retired.

During these years, Ida also worked. She was a fine seamstress that sewed for several families. Ida could tailor men's clothes as well as make white dress shirts.

In her middle years, she and my grandmother, Bessie, loved to fish. Ida says she can still see Bessie, cane pole over her shoulder, coming down the road toward her house to go fishing.

I remember the taffy candy pulls at Ida's house. She doesn't remember the mixture, but says it's mostly sugar and water, boiled, then placed in buttered dishes until it becomes cool enough to pull.

She has had several trips outside Tennessee. During World War II, Ida visited her son, Forrest, who was in the Army stationed at Charleston, South Carolina. Raymond was in the Navy, a career man, stationed in Texas. Ida went once to Texas for a visit and once to see Raymond when he was dying in 1971. She has been to New Jersey to visit Bobbie David's family. Several times she went to Michigan to visit Gertrude's family. For many years, Gertrude was a nurse at Detroit's Harper Hospital.

Asked if she can remember her first automobile ride, Ida says, "No, I can't remember that, but I can remember Doanie Jennings and I borrowing Bob Payne's horses and riding horseback. Also, when Tip Campbell and Gid Stone had their horses hitched up at the store, Doanie and I would borrow their horses, too."

"Edgar died in the Claiborne County Hospital on November 30, 1963," said Ida, "one day before my seventy-fourth birthday. One of the things I remember most about Edgar is that he teased everyone, the young and the old. He would keep you laughing most of the time."

Ida tells people she saves tiny pitchers. She has a collection of all kinds of these little pitchers that people have given her.

Also, she likes to quilt, do her housework, garden, walk to the store daily and play five hundred rummy with friends. Ida enjoys cooking on a large wood cookstove. She is a very fine cook.

In 1944, Samuel and Bertha Harper bought the Jennings house by the railroad. Edgar and Ida now own her mother's house on the Lone Mountain Road.

I hope you have a happy birthday, Ida. Perhaps you can play yourself a song upon your French harp. I like to hear you play, "He Has His Eyes Upon the Sparrow."