

- **Claiborne County (TN) Progress**

## **Nell Quesenbery Report**

**August 11, 1983**

**DORA JENNINGS - SPRING, 1874**

**By Nell Quesenbery**

Breathlessly, the child sucked in her breath. The slap had come cruelly, unexpectedly. She felt her cheek fill with fever. Her black eyes burned with tears, yet standing on her box, the little girl, barely four years old, steadfastly continued washing the load of dinner dishes.

Where the greasy water struck her arm was a line of grime, well-suited to the stiff dirty unbleached flaxy linen of her dress. Further adding to the forlorn appearance of the child were long black curls, their softness now stiffened with dirt.

Looking into the dishwater, Dora (Granny) tried to comfort herself with thoughts of her gentle mother, Ann Vance Jennings, who had gone to be with Jesus last winter. Ann Vance Jennings was the second person to be buried in the Janeway cemetery of Lone Mountain.

Then, shudderingly, she saw her new guardian approaching. The woman snatched her by her hair, dragging Dora (Granny) off her box. Cruelly, before leaving, the woman again struck the cringing child across the face.

Watching the woman walk toward the fields, Dora (Granny) began to place her few clothes in a square red cloth. She tied the cloth by four corners to a long stick. Placing the stick across her thin shoulder, she began the long walk out of Perry Hollow.

Finally, she came to the place called Buzzard's Glory. Here a foot log crossed Straight Creek where large tracts of land were owned by the Phelps family.

The woman, Sarah Phelps Bush, standing in the doorway of the log cabin, had been watching the pack-laden child make her way down the steep limestone ridge. It was Dora Jennings.

“Where are you going, Dora?”

“I’m leaving. She is so mean to me I can’t stand it.”

Gently, the woman said to the little girl, “Come here, Dora. You can live with me.”

Bob and Sarah Phelps Bush raised their children and Granny in a log house near Mason’s Spring in the Bear Creek community.

Recently, this log house was depicted in a mural by Cumberland Gap painter William Yarnell at the Tazewell branch of the Claiborne County Bank. The log house was bought and reassembled by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Barger of New Tazewell.

And as it came to pass, the woman that was so cruel to Granny grew old and was near her death and in great pain. Returning good for evil, Granny took the woman into her home and waited on her until the old woman, often begging Granny’s forgiveness, died.

Reading “England Home News” this week, I noticed Ann Davis (Mrs. Buster) celebrated her birthday last Saturday. When I began writing stories for the Progress several years ago, Ann Davis sent me word she liked my stories. This greatly pleased me. Also, I felt pleased when Inez Kivett told me recently that Ann Davis thought my grandfather, Horace Yoakum (Dora’s only child), was one of the most handsome men she had ever seen. Happy Birthday, Ann Davis.

Special wishes for a fast and comfortable recovery to Inez Kivett, who has undergone surgery.

Congratulations to Mike and Charlene Smith on the birth of a new 8 pound, 4 ounce boy July 26,1983. Imogene Love (Mrs. Joe) told me that Mike and Charlene named her new grandson, Travis Lee Carl Joseph Smith.

Reva Hurst (Mrs. Thompson) called asking me when to pick her blueberries. I told her to let it frost on the berries a time or two. Reva, who is a widow, lives with her son, Russell Hurst. Reva’s house sits in a meadow just past the Lower Caney road on 25E. A little bridge crosses the

creek that runs in front of the house. Reva and her cousin, Euna Evans, gave her the blueberry plants.

We bought milk from Floyd and Euna Evans for six years. Floyd has sold his cow, and they have quit milking, but I'll always remember the best milk and some of the best butter I've ever eaten.

Regency Village is the new housing development near the new nursing home. My friend and neighbor Doshie Lee Caskey moved up there last week. Doshie, who never lived in a brand new place before, loves her new home. Her new neighbors are Mr. Elmer Hill and Ossie Robinson. Mr. and Mrs. William E. Dickson oversee the place. Doshie is anxious for me to come up and visit her many new friends and see her pretty place.

John S. Jennings' connections: I received a letter from Mrs. Roy Greenlee of Morristown, Tenn. Mrs. Roy Greenlee's grandmother Dora (Cotney) Ray married the son of John S. Jennings and his second wife, Ellen Johnson, who was John S. Jennings Jr., nicknamed John "Bear" Jennings.

Mrs. Roy Greenlee's query: My father's name is Charlie Ray. Does anyone know about her father, Bill Ray, from Hancock County?

Does anyone know anything about Charlie Ray's mother, Dora (Cotney) Ray? Please write Mrs. Roy Greenlee, 1351 Eastley Court, Morristown, Tennessee 37814.