

MAYS BEND AND FAMILY

In thinking of Mays Bend and Family, it is necessary to think back before the American Revolution into Indian times.

There are a number of stories as to the origin of the American Indians. Some believe they came from Asia, crossed the Bering Strait into Alaska, came down the Pacific Coast and across the country. Others believe they came from Mexico, crossed the Gulf of Mexico into Alabama and the Southeast.

The Muskogee was the largest tribe in the Southeast. From them came the Creek, Chicksaw, Choctaw and Seminole tribes. The Creeks, who received their name (Creek) after settling into communities forming villages on the streams, lived in this area of Alabama.

The first white men came from Spain ca 1540.

Time passed and then came the American Revolution. After the colonies got their independence from England in 1776, everything began to wake up.

In 1809, the Federal Government made the Louisiana purchase and within it, the Alabama Territory was formed and named for the Alabama Indians.

In 1817, St. Clair County was formed as the county within the Territory, two years before Alabama became a State (1819). After the State was formed, St. Clair became a county within the state and it is a county two years older than the state.

Along with these changes, more and more white men were coming. At first, the Indians were awed and thought they were great white Gods, but as more came and took over their lands, trouble developed until we had the massacre of Ft. Mims, south of St. Clair County. One hundred white men were killed.

This began the Creek Indian War of 1812. Andrew Jackson, a red headed, hot headed individual, so they say, was connected with the military and was ordered to form an army, go down South and wipe out the Indians.

He came from Tennessee with 3,000 men and supplies. They crossed into Alabama at Ft. Deposit and marched due south taking the shortest route which brought them into St. Clair County and onto the banks of the Coosa River near the present day Ragland. Headquarters were set up and from here he drew supplies and men for his needs during the time he was in the Southeast. This included the Battle of Horse Shoe Bend which broke the back of the Indians and forced them to go west of the Mississippi River to live. Their march became known as

the Trail of Tears and is a sad spot in history. By 1820, the year Alabama got its Constitution and the Indians having been sent west of the Mississippi River, more and more white men came.

Among the pioneer settlers was Marshall Bryant from North Carolina and his young wife, Anna Sivil Pipkin. They settled on the Coosa River in Mays Bend of today.

Marshall got a land grant from the United States Government.

The early settlers had only that which they brought with them. They settled at times with little more than a roof over their heads and began work on materials for their permanent homes. With the tools they brought, cut trees from the woods and planed them into logs and even made their own square head nails.

At times, it took a year or more to get the materials together. We don't know how long it took Marshall Bryant, but his first house burned, after which he began his permanent home (house). It was logs with two big rooms across the front with a dog trot between. There was one room to the rear, with a room above as the upstairs. The kitchen was a separate log room in the rear, away from the house. This was the custom due to fire and since cooking was done on the fireplace. As time passed, they added to the log house and built with lumber a more modern one. Not the square colonial type with Gothic columns, but a pretty nice house for the times. There were double front doors surrounded by glass, a big porch with small columns, etc. Time passed and finally all the log part was torn away; and, as more time passed, the remaining part served as a tenant house.

Marshall and Anna S. Bryant had five children. Three boys and two girls. When the boys were 18 - 23 years old, they developed pneumonia while hunting. Two died so nearly at the same time they were put into one big coffin, no doubt a home-made wooden one. Before they were buried, the third one died and he was put into a single coffin and all buried in one big grave. They are in the Mays Bend graveyard.

Their mother grieved so deeply over their deaths, she died after a few months. Marshall Bryant (father) lived only one year longer. This left only the two girls and one became my grandmother, Mary Dickson Bryant. She married Larkin Leslie and had one child, Larkin, Jr.

By this time, the Civil War was being fought and most men were away fighting. A colored woman, whose name was Beavers, with her baby, moved into the house with my grandmother and they held things together until the end of the war. The Beavers family and our family have worked together over the years. Billy Beavers was near his 99th birthday when he died.

in 1984. Bill McAfee, whose mother (Aunt Cindy) was a Beavers, died in 1985.

Shortly after the war, Edward Rutherford Buchanan married into the Family. He had just returned from the war and had a slight wound from which he never fully recovered.

These, the reconstruction days, were very rough times for all. So many men killed during the war or were wounded. Confederate money was no good, etc, etc.

Edward Rutherford Buchanan must have been a jovial Scotsman because there have been lots of yarns told about him. After his wife died, the children would ask him for something they wanted. He would say "Now, Bettie (or Dixie), go along and wait two weeks. If you still want, come back and we'll get it." He saved a lot of money.

He and his wife had six children, two boys and four girls. The boys died young, one (Forney) when six years old and the other (Bruce) at eighteen. At the time of his death, his trunk was packed to go to Atlanta to study medicine. I thought this was a made-up yarn until I remembered they were still weaving cloth at home even though by now, some yard goods could be bought in the dry good stores. Sheets, pillow cases, curtains, etc. were made at home, as well as all wearing apparel. There were dress makers who came and lived with family until new outfits were provided. So, with this set up, Bruce's mother may have been working for months to get clothing and things made and putting them into his trunks for him to take to Atlanta to study medicine. Shoes were often made at home, also. The shoe maker would come and stay until all had a pair of new shoes. For the children, they added a raw egg so when they walked the shoes squeaked and all would know they had new shoes.

The four Buchanan girls, Flora Dickson (Dixie), Mary Elizabeth (Bettie), Emma Cornelia and Martha Arminda (Minnie), grew up and were sent away to school. This enabled them to make contacts and friends. Even though, by today's standard, this area was still wilderness. There was no Birmingham, no Pell City and the residents of Eden went to the little post office in Cropwell to get their mail. There was a train which stopped at Seddon and the girls would hitch the horses to the carriage and go to Seddon to meet their guests. They seemed to have a pretty good time of it.

Hugo Black, who became a Justice in the United States Supreme Court, grew up in Clay County and was Aunt Bettie's beau. The E. E. Forbes Piano Company is still in business in Birmingham. E. E. (Ernest) was Dixie's beau.

Due to the lack of men in the family for four generations, the husband of the oldest girl took over the management, and

for this reason, on the markers in the graveyard are the names: Mays, Buchanan, Leslie, Bryant.

In 1892, James Campbell Mays married Flora Dickson (Dixie) Buchanan. In 1902, after buying the property of the other heirs, he assumed the responsibility. There were five children in this family:

Dixie Buchanan	1893 - 1968
Mary Edward	1898 - 1900
Mary Arminda	1903
James Campbell, Jr.	1905 - 1969
John Edward	1910 - 1965

Some years were good and some were tough.

James C. Mays went to Memphis to buy mules, had about 20 tenant houses and, in the Spring, bought fertilizer by the carload. But there were bad years also. Sometimes, the Coosa River overflowed its banks and washed away 200 or more acres of corn. The depression of 1920 and the big depression of 1928 affected everyone. On top of this, the boll weevil brought great distress to cotton growers.

James Campbell Mays died in 1933 and we carried on through the good and the bad. At the time of his death, it seemed befitting to ask the colored men from the Bend to be his pallbearers. Six or eight were asked to come, but on the morning of his funeral, thirteen, all in clean overalls, showed up and said, "I want to help." This was the perfect eulogy for one who had helped so many.

My mother (Dixie) remembered hearing from the time she was a small girl as to the Government building dams on the Coosa River and every few years a Corps of Engineers came and surveyed but nothing developed.

There was a Federal law which stated all water ways must be developed by the Federal Government, but in 1934 the United States Congress passed a law which stated private industry could develop water ways. The Alabama Power Company came forward and said: "Let us build the dams which the Government has talked about for more than one hundred years." This kind of talk continued for several years.

In his will, James C. Mays named James C. Jr. as his Administrator. He was living in Chicago at the time but came back and assumed the responsibility. By this time, the cotton market had fallen until cotton sold for five cents per pound. Most tenant farmers had left to find jobs at public works, many going to Cleveland, Ohio or Detroit, Michigan.

Farming, which had depended greatly on growing cotton and corn, had become a venturesome business. Jim (James C. Mays, Jr.) concentrated on turning farm fields into pasture lands for cattle and, through the United States Forestry Department, planted several thousand pine seedlings.

The dam was completed and Lake Logan Martin formed in 1964.

Negotiations were begun with Reese-King for developing Mays Bend. This took time and much planning, but in 1964 the first lot was sold.

True to the past, boys have still been scarce in the family and for the next generation there are none.

Dixie had one girl

Jim had two girls

John had three girls

Dixie Ann

Dorothy Roper

Jamye Campbell

Mary Buchanan) twins

Clara Hackney)

Martha Turbyfill.

All are married and scattered over several states.

There are a few things which seem to help characterize this family:

1. They settled and owned the same land for 145 years and there was never a mortgage signed against it.
2. Throughout the years, they emphasized education and all children were sent away to school.

I hope this helps answer in part some of the questions which come my way.

Mary Armina Mays
2 July, 1986

More men were killed in the U.S. Civil War than in all of the wars involving the U.S. from the Revolutionary War to the Korean War, inclusive.

Just for the siege of Vicksburg, Missouri furnished thirty-nine regiments; twenty-two for the Union and seventeen for the Confederacy.