

A LETTER OF NOSTALGIA

Marjorie M. Major

Dear Browns and Cooks:

We had a most pleasant experience last Sunday afternoon - one which we want to share with you. Friends here in Murray, Cook and Enid Sanders, asked us to go with them to Boydsville - a trip we had talked about for some time. The warm sun, the crinkle of leaves underfoot, cleaning of the monuments in the cemetery with Cook's wire brush and seeing relatives highlighted the day. Cook says he is not blood related to the Cook family but that his uncle married a Cook and he was named for her. His relatives were from the northern part of the County which we also visited. We may - or may not - be related.

Perhaps you all know that for me - and for some of you - Boydsville is OUR mecca. Three cemeteries on State Line Road - one in Tennessee and two in Kentucky - within a mile of each other, are the final resting places of my grandparents, my great grandparents and my great great grandparents. Respectively, they were my grandparents Mary Frances (Molly) Cook and John DeWitt Brown in Boydsville Cemetery, my great great grandparents Selinah Catherine Hawpe and Edward Robinson Cook (Ned) in Boston Cemetery and my great great grandparents Margaret Ditterline and Cook in the Cook Cemetery. All of these cemeteries are maintained and enclosed with substantial fences. The Boydsville Cemetery is the largest of the three and besides having the graves of my grandparents, my Aunt Edna Brown Yates is also buried there.

We stopped to see Lucile Cook at her home place on State Line Road. She was coming in from the fields but we persuaded her to ride with us to the Boston Cemetery. Here there are perhaps a dozen or more graves, including those of Selinah Catherine Hawpe and Edward Robinson Cook. Their two-pronged monument is unusual and the inscriptions are legible. Each of their graves is surrounded with an oval of white marble about 3 inches wide which was intended to surround flowers, I think. This cemetery is not accessible from the highway but entry is through Lucile's property - part of her 500 acres. It was across some of this property that Selinah Catherine walked on a cold winter day and contracted pneumonia which caused her death.

Within a stone's throw of Lucile's house is the Cook Cemetery - oldest of the three. Here are buried Margaret Ditterline and her husband Cook, their graves marked by a single monument with the broken-off top ornament secured with wire.

Sorry to say but none of the Brown family homestead remains. The one most vivid in my memory is the large, white two-storied home of my grandparents. The large reception hall was between the parlor which had a piano and the two pieces of sheet music which I remember are "Whispering

Hope" and "Humoresque," and the family sitting room which also had two double beds. Behind this room was the large oblong dining room with the oblong table always set for the next meal and laden with jams, jellies and relishes in stemmed pressed glass dishes. Of course, behind this room was the kitchen which had a filled wood box beside the cook stove. There were shelves of coal oil lamps whose chimneys had to be cleaned of soot each day. A large orchard and garden were behind the house and flower garden.

This old kitchen also had a cherry sugar chest whose top was scarred from cutting ham and bacon on it through the years. After refinishing, it now adorns our dining room. It is said that the mistress of the house always wore the key to the sugar chest around her neck as sugar was a precious commodity brought by river from New Orleans.

Once, when I was quite small, I was going to Boydsville with my Aunt Clara in a horse-drawn buggy. It seems I fell over the dashboard and she was frantic for my safety but I was unhurt. Kids can stand a lot! Another time, Uncle Carl came to Murray on "Fourth Monday" - a day to sell and/or trade. My mother allowed me, then about 5 or 6 years old, to go home with Uncle Carl after one of those "Fourth Mondays," which were considered rough days because of the drinking. Anyway, Uncle Carl had an automobile and this was my first ride in one. How thrilled I was but alas! - a short distance from Boydsville the car stalled. In childish fashion, I kept asking him, "Uncle Carl, is it about fixed?" Finally, in his frustration, he fussed at me so I said, "If thats the way you feel about it, I'll walk" but I soon found that Boydsville was too far to walk so I had to return to the car - and wait.

When I was a child it pleased me to tell my Murray friends that when I visited my grandmother (my grandfather having died in 1912) in Boydsville, I ate in Kentucky and slept in Tennessee in the SAME house as supposedly, the State line went through the house but that sounds stupid, doesn't it!

Across the gravel road from the John DeWitt Brown home was a grocery store. Around the turn of the century William Wallace McElrath came from Murray to run this store. He boarded with the Browns as they were nearby and always "had room for one more" in the large bedrooms upstairs, each of which had two double beds. He and my mother Zuella Brown fell in love and were married June 26, 1901, in the white, frame Methodist Church which joined the Boydsville Cemetery lot. I can imagine the excitement this event created in the Brown household as there were still unmarried brothers and sisters - Carl, Wayne, Clara, and Kate. My mother's other brothers and sisters were Edna (also buried in Boydsville Cemetery), Clarence, Lizzie, Emmet and Mary who died in infancy. None of my Brown aunts or uncles are living.

Another two story commanding house was in Tennessee, a short distance from Boydsville. It was the Cook home and it was my grandmother's ancestral home and where she was born August 24, 1850. In later years,

after she moved to Mayfield, all the relatives gathered at that long oval table to celebrate her birthday. A story handed down in the family is an incident which happened during the Civil War. It seems that when Northern soldiers scourged the land and came to the Cook's, the family shotgun was saved by hiding it in bed with a sick child.

In my childhood, Boydsville was a nice little village. It not only had the store mentioned above but there was another store run by a Mr. Williams a little way west on State Line Road and the farmers were prosperous. My mother and her sisters Clara and Kate attended Memphis Conference Female Institute (now Lambuth College), Jackson, Tennessee, arriving there by train from Hazel, Kentucky. Then the roads were not paved and even today, only 2 or 4 roads leading to Boydsville are paved.

Going east from Boydsville on a gravel road, we came to the home of Richard Cochran, son of Ealy and Maud Cochran who are buried in Boydsville Cemetery. She was my grandmother's sister.

Richard came to greet us and upon hearing my name, he said, "Oh, yes, of course, I remember Aunt Molly," who was my grandmother. Richard was concerned about a cow who had become entangled with some wire in a ditch and had sprained her back but he thought she was improved that day.

Around the curve and down the road toward Route 97 we passed the site of the home of Ernest and Chester Brown which was torn down by new owners. I remember going there for bountiful Sunday dinners served to maybe two dozen relatives as a matter of course, and it was a great time for grown-ups to visit. Almost opposite this site is the lovely country home of Glenn and Ann Doran who own about 3,000 acres in this general area.

Gussie Brown Paschall, daughter of Walter Brown, still lives in the home place on Route #69 near Cottage Grove, Tennessee. Her son Dan lives on a nearby farm with his wife and children Pam and Andy. He raises thoroughbred cattle.

When my grandfather John D. Brown died in 1912 from blood poisoning, my mother had just delivered my brother Robert and was unable to go to Boydsville. My father decided to attend his funeral and took me along, a child of five years, in the horse-drawn buggy. We made the round trip of 16 miles in one day as my Dad didn't like to stay away from home overnight. This was too long a trip for the horse Daisy and I can remember on the return trip pausing a few miles from Murray to "rest the horse."

All in all, my childhood was a happy one spent in the environment of Murray, then a much smaller town than now. It was a good place to grow up!

October 31, 1982
Murray, Kentucky