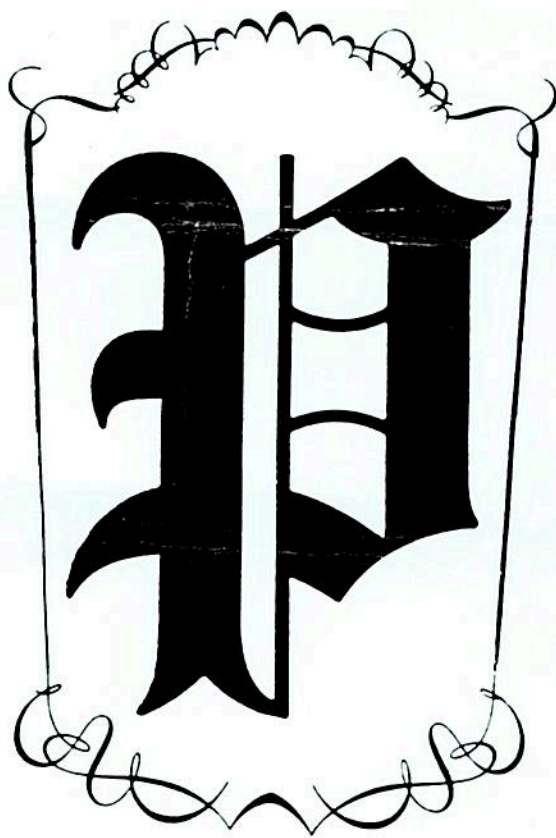


The Pearson



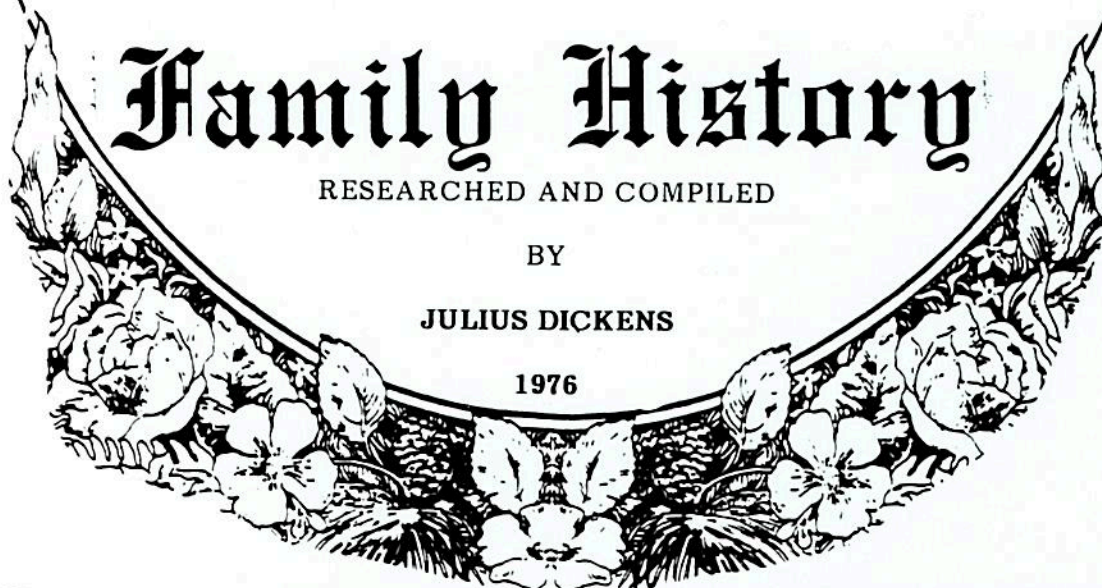
Family History

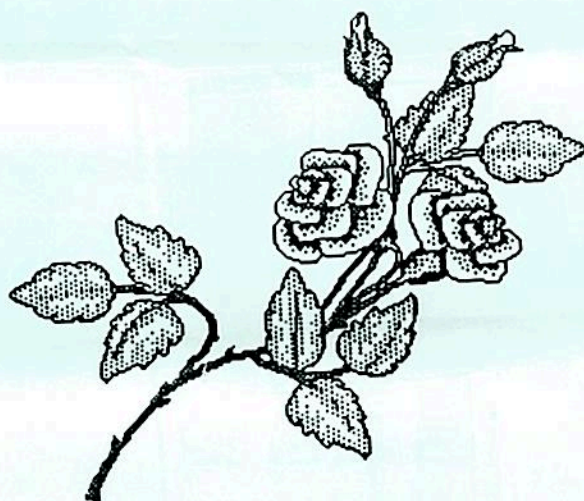
RESEARCHED AND COMPILED

BY

JULIUS DICKENS

1976







Dedication

Over a period of time, the Pearson family has been blessed with a large number of descendants, a great cohesiveness, and an abundance of rich, valuable property. These attributes possess a colorful history, which we are proud to hold. However, we must admire the persons who have shown such great capabilities in retracing this incredible story over a 150-year period.

There was only one person capable of performing this task at this time. With her extensive and accurate recollection of family facts, experiences, and figures, I was able to develop a family history and tree, charting nearly 300 persons and tracing seven generations. Without her most needed assistance, this booklet would not have been at all possible.

Therefore, I dedicate not only this booklet, but all my time spent, to **Mrs. Methel E. Baker**, the last surviving child of Law and Mary Pearson's fourteen children.

Julius E. Dickens, Family Historian

July 10, 1976

THE PEARSON FAMILY history undoubtedly stems from the tribes of Africa and also other tribes and groups from within this continent. But faded memories and breakdowns in generational communications has left this family with but only a few treasured jewels still rich, deep, and surviving.

Within the state of Georgia, Telfair County (now Coffee County), in the year 1844, a child, Law, was born a slave. He was the son of Elias and Alicia Graham. At this time, all slaves took the names of their masters, and theirs was Graham. It is to be suspected that their slaveowner's name was Alexander Graham, an owner of eleven slaves in 1830.¹

Upon the master's death, between the age of 70-80, all his property, including at that time, his slaves, were willed to his family. Law and his brother, Holmes, were heired to the master's widowed daughter, Mrs. Mary Pearson, and from that time, acquired her married name.² Their mother, Alicia, was willed to a family named Willis, and so became her last name, also.

Apparently, Elias Graham was either heired to a son or stayed with the immediate family, because he maintained his original name. After their family separation, Elias married again, having a son with his same first name.

Alicia also married again within the Willis slave family, and had four additional children, three boys and a girl. The male children's names were Joe Willis, William Willis, and John Willis. The girl's name is unknown.

Life for Law and Holmes was not as rough as for many other slaves. Their skin was light because their mother's father (their grandfather) was white but their grandmother was a slave.

However, they were not light enough not to be considered black. Several times the boys would be chased by the "patty rollers," now known as the Ku Klux Klan, but would manage never to get caught.

Finally, the vigilantes visited Mrs. Pearson, their slave mistress, and explained how Law and Holmes refused to be caught, and being they were now teenagers, it was time for them to get beatings for small mischievous doings.

During this visit of the 3K, Law and Holmes hid in Mrs. Pearson's chimney corner, since field slaves were not allowed in the big house, and listened while she told the "pillowcase-covered-men" that they had never given her any trouble and how they "better not put their hands on them." Law and Holmes never had any more trouble from them.

After this episode, Mrs. Pearson made Law the overseer of all her slaves and he kept this position until the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863.

Six years after the document was enacted, 1869, Law, now 25, married the former Mary Hall, 15, daughter of Bob and Annie Hall. She was born in 1854 in Appling County, Georgia. She had four brothers and four sisters: Joe, Louis, Ben, Easter (also known as Esther), Affie, Emily, and Louise (one brother's name is forgotten). They all remained in Appling County except Louise, who went to Atlanta where her sons now own Sellars Bros. Funeral Home.

During her early childhood, Mary also was treated differently than most of the slaves. Mary's complexion was considerably red, because her mother's father (her grandfather) was an Indian.

Mary was treated like the white children and was later appointed their nurse, eating with them and even accompanying them on church camping trips. Fortunately, she was never beaten.

When she and Law married, they had their first two children, Linnie (August 9, 1870) and Annie (July 10, 1872) in Coffee County, later moving to Laurens County, where Dublin now stands, and had 12 additional children.

The rest in their order of birth and date were: Mary Louise, Jan. 24, 1877; Emma E., Nov. 22, 1877; Ivory, Dec. 29, 1878; Ellen, Jan. 4, 1880; Nathan, Oct. 13, 1882; Henry Lawson, Sept. 19, 1884; Minnie Elizabeth, Aug. 17, 1886; Dolly, Apr. 10, 1888; Robert, June 29, 1890; Lillia Bell, Nov. 24, 1892; Ethel Lee Ora, Aug. 4, 1896; and Methel Eudel, June 2, 1898.

Law never went to school but could do arithmetic better than his youngest daughter, Methel Eudel, who finished seventh grade. She stated her father "could beat her figuring a bale of cotton at any price using a stick on the ground."

Mary attended school until third grade, but in that short time learned to read, write, and spell. She could pronounce and spell any word in the Bible from memory.

Law owned over 800 acres of land, but eventually sold over 100 acres to three of his children, Nathan, Henry, and Emma.³ He gave land and the first \$10 for the community's first Black school, the Mary Grove School, named in part after his wife. He also started a family cemetery when his first child, Dolly, died in 1892, which later became a community cemetery.⁴ When he died, Law had the remaining land equally divided and distributed to his living children or grandchildren (see diagram in back of booklet).

Besides farming his land and being a father, Law owned a shingle mill, horses and mules, including a racer, and bred mares. He also helped build the first African Methodist Episcopal church, Fleming Chapel, in Dublin.⁵

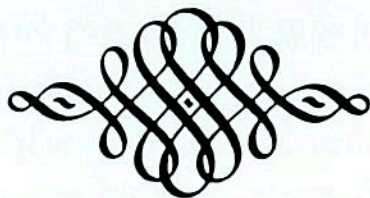
Besides raising a family, which was over a 40-year continuous job, Law and Mary's biggest desire was to help people in trouble or distress. Seemingly unselfish people, the Pearsons would lend money to people, Black and white, and were usually never paid back. An example of Law's kindness was the time when a man stole his dog and he paid \$25 to get it back, holding no hard feelings against the individual.

But finally, Law and Mary's goodness had to end. Law passed away at 79, on May 23, 1923; and Mary at 83, on June 10, 1937. The order of their children as they passed away and their ages:

Dolly, 4 – 1892; Minnie, 23 – Aug. 30, 1909; Robert, 20 – Dec. 25, 1910; Linnie, 51 – April, 1921; Emma, 66 – 1943; Mary, 68 – Dec. 26, 1945; Annie, 74 – Sept. 19, 1946; Ivory, 75 – 1953; Ellen, 77 – 1957; Henry, 76 – 1960; Ethel, 71 – 1967; Lillia, 78 – April 3, 1971; and Nathan, 89 – June 1, 1971. METHEL 1983

Law and Mary's willingness to share and their unselfishness may not have stopped at their death. Hopefully, it was transpired through their 14 children, who passed it along to their generation of offspring, and so forth.

This one quality of Law and Mary can be and should be a tradition, a quality distinctive of the Pearson clan.



FOOTNOTES

1. Graham owned eleven slaves in 1830—five males and six females. Their ages were (males) two under 10 years; one, 10-24 years; one, 24-36 years; (females) three under 10 years; two, 10-24 years; one, 24-36 years. It can be assumed that Elias and Alicia Graham were two of these eleven slaves, probably in the 10 through 36-year-old category.

2. According to early census reports, Mrs. Pearson, widow of Bennajah Pearson, owned eight slaves in August 1850. Law and Holmes were approximately seven and three years old, respectively. There were four slaves older and two younger than they were.

3. According to Laurens County land deed records, Law bought his first 100 acres of land from his brother Holmes, which was located in the 246th land district. Throughout the years, Law purchased property from various landowners in the Dublin area, including Willis Wynn, J. D. Hearth, Cross, McLendon, and Gay.

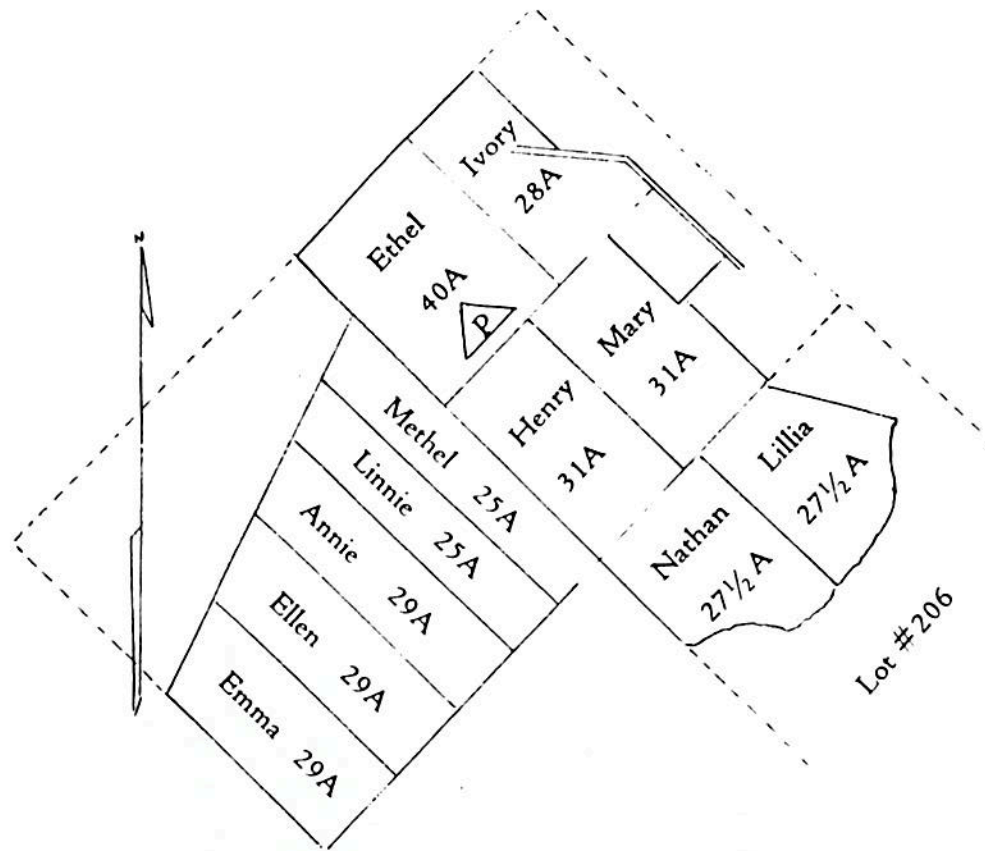
4. This cemetery is still a part of the family estate and was managed for several years by Ethel L. Clayton. Dolly Pearson's grave was marked by a small china cup embedded in concrete, which still exists.

5. Fleming Chapel still exists today and conducts services once every four Sundays. The Pearson name can be clearly distinguished in the building's cornerstone.

SOURCES

1. Mrs. Methel Eudel Baker
2. Mrs. Ora Mae Robinson
3. Laurens County Library (Georgia Census Records)
4. Laurens County Clerk of Courts Office (Land Deed and Plat Records)

The Pearson Estate



Plat to the Estate of Law Pearson as divided amongst his heirs. This land is in the 17th Land District, Laurens County, Georgia.

Surveyed and drawn, November 15, 1935.

 Pearson Cemetery

Song for the Old Ones

My Fathers sit on benches
their flesh count every plank
the slats leave dents of darkness
deep in their withered flanks.

They nod like broken candles
all waxed and burnt profound,
they say "It's understanding
that makes the world go round."

There in those pleated faces
I see the auction block
the chains and slavery's coffles
the whip and lash and stock.

My Fathers speak in voices
that shred my fact and sound
they say "It's our submission
that makes the world go round."

They used the finest cunning
their naked wits and wiles
the lowly Uncle Tomming
and Aunt Jemimas' smiles.

They've laughed to shield their crying
then shuffled through their dreams
and stepped 'n fetched a country
to write the blues with screams.

I understand their meaning
it could and did derive
from living on the edge of death
They kept my race alive.

—Maya Angelou

FAMILY GATHERING

1937



STANDING LEFT TO RIGHT:

Cousin Louisa, Nathan and Bessie Pearson, Mary Pearson-Carter, Ethel and Leonard Clayton, Ellen and James A. Baker, I.J. and Evie Dell Coleman.

KNEELING LEFT TO RIGHT:

Methel Liggins, Mae and Dewey Baker and Lorainey Hall, children, Rudolph and Jasper Liggins.

AIM HIGH

WILLIAMS, Osceola (Pearson) *

Graduate of, Fort Valley Jr. College, N.D.I (1938), Fort Valley State College, B.S. (1954), Tuskegee University, M.Ed. (1956) - In addition to her teaching responsibilities she served as supervisor for the "Follow Through Program" sponsored by the Bank Street College, New York, New York.

WILSON, Lorene (Pearson)

Graduate of, Fort Valley State College, B.S. Education - Presently teaching classes at the Tabor High School in Warner Robins, Georgia. And is currently working towards a Master's degree at Fort Valley State College.

WYNN, Cassandra

Graduate of, A & T College, Greensboro, NC, B.S. (1973) - Teaching classes at Norfolk State College, VA and serving as student advisor.

WYNN, Featrice

Graduate of A & T College, Greensboro, NC, B.S. (1972) - Presently teaching in the public school system of Fayetteville, NC.

WYNN, Lavera (Pearson) *

Graduate of, Fort Valley State College, B.S. (1945) - Taught classes in several school systems throughout Georgia and North Carolina. Was a teacher at Makenburg Agriculture Extension Service.

WYNN, Veronica

Graduate of, A & T College, Greensboro, NC, B.S. (1970) - Presently serving as assistant professor in Mathematics, Clark College, Atlanta, GA.

YERIMA, Mechelle (Liggins)

Graduate of, California State College, B.S. (1979) - Presently serving as a teacher on the secondary level, Catholic Arch Diocese School District, Los Angeles, California.

* Retired

** Deceased