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Capturing Memories from Edgecombe

Edgecombe County Genealogical Society



Annie Pitt Felton Humphreys
1902-1997

RELEASE

EDGECOMBE COUNTY
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

909 Main Street
Tarboro, N. C. 27886

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(Signature) Allyson Bullock Sugg, Executive for Arria Pitt Jiltock Humphrey

(Date) December 3, 1997

(Researcher's Signature) _____

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Date: October 7, 1997

Interviewee Information

Name: Annie Pitt Felton Humphrey
Address: [REDACTED]
Tarboro, NC [REDACTED]
Birth Date: June 2, 1902
Birth Place: Mildred, NC, Edgecombe County
Married: August 25, 1948, Raleigh, NC, Wake County

Genealogical Information

Father of Interviewee:

Name: William Richard Felton **Birth Date:** March 24, 1870
Birth Place: Wilson County, NC
Death Date: April 30, 1942
Death Place: Edgecombe Co., Tarboro, NC

Mother of Interviewee:

Name: Susan Etta Knight **Birth Date:** May 21, 1871
Birth Place: Edgecombe County, NC
Death Date: January 19, 1938
Death Place: Mildred, NC, Edge. Co.

Spouse of Interviewee:

Name: Edwin Cobb Humphrey **Birth Date:** June 17, 1902
Birth Place: Hartford, Connecticut
Death Date: January 30, 1970
Death Place: Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Parents of Spouse: Leon B. Humphrey, Goldsboro, NC **Born** _____ **Died** _____
Jennie Cobb, Mildred, NC **Born** _____ **Died** _____

Note: Annie Pitt Felton Humphrey died Thursday, October 9, 1997 of congestive heart failure, just days after this interview.

Note of Clarity by Allyson B. Suggs, niece and executrice:

Annie Pitt told me that Leon & Jenny Humphrey went to Hartford after their marriage. All three boys (Edwin, Frank and Leon) were born there. For some reason, Miss Jenny and the boys went to Mildred about 1910 or 1911 and lived with Miss Jenny's sister, Miss Betty McDuffie. They stayed eight years. After W.W.I, they returned to Connecticut. Annie Pitt said she had never known why they stayed away from Conn. for so long. and Edwin did not know either.

I am Minnie Jo Fisher Gay of the Edgecombe Co. Genealogical Society, director of Oral History. Today I am interviewing Annie-Pitt Felton Humphrey and she was born here in Edgecombe Co. Her father was William Richard Felton (from Mildred, NC) and she taught school in Edgecombe County and in Tarboro City Schools. We are "tickled pink" that she has come back from all her traveling around to be here at the Albemarle Retirement Home in Tarboro, NC.

MJFG: What is the earliest memory that you have?

APH: I don't remember. I was born June 2, where my grandmother lived and about the earliest thing I remember about that is the school days, when I started to school. They kept my sister, I was a year later starting. I had to wait for her and we did walk to school. Seleta was her name.

MJFG: How many children were there?

APH: There were seven, six girls and one boy. Seems like I remember that we walked. Our house was in Mildred about a mile or so from the railroad. The school building was between our house and Mildred. At that time it was a one teacher school. Her name was Miss Boice, she married Haywood Foxhall in Tarboro, NC. She taught all the grades when I started. That is just about all that I can remember of it.

MJFG: Were you a farmer's daughter?

APH: Yes, Papa never did anything but farm, you know.

MJFG: Where did you go to high school?

APH: I went to Tarboro High School. Graduated from Tarboro in 1920. From there I went on to Greenville, to ECTC. When I finished high school that Summer, I went to Greenville, I started a course and my father's sister (Aunt Florence) wanted me to start with her. She had married and was ready to go back to teaching and so that was what we did. I started with Aunt Florence and I made that turn and I don't remember but from then on I just taught and did my work. I taught and got my certificate. It's been so long ago.

MJFG: My mother, Virginia Turner, did the same thing. She went to ECTC and got a teaching certificate. I don't know whether it was two years, or six months.

APH: At first they had a two year certificate. They have not had these four year certificates so very long.

MJFG: Where was the first school you taught?

APH: At Speed, I have some pictures taken years ago there. Aunt Florence Felton Savage and Miss Mary Bridges taught in Tarboro. I got the second grade Teacher and her name was Miss Chatman. Miss Boice and Miss Chatman were the first two teachers that taught me. I don't know about the third but by the time I got to the fourth I started in Tarboro to the Elementary School there.

MJFG: You graduated in 1920 and started teaching at Speed and then at Tarboro City Schools. How many years did you teach there?

APH: Aunt Florence taught before 1923 with Miss Lula and Miss Mary Bridgers. They were the three teachers in Tarboro. And then I started out with Aunt Florence at Speed. She taught the first grade but I had the older children, the six and seven year olds. The last school that we had, the grades went from first grade to six and seventh so far as I remember.

MJFG: Where were you living when you were teaching? Did you stay at home?

APH: I went out to Speed and I stayed with the Cherrys, Mrs. Joe Cherry. Papa would take me out there on Sunday afternoons and I would stay until Friday and go home.

MJFG: Did the children always behave in school?

APH: Well they were not so bad, not like they got to be. I'm glad I am not teaching now!
It's bad that discipline is gone.

MJFG: Did you ever have any pranks played on you by the kids, something that stands out?

APH: I don't remember any special pranks. I reckon they did, I don't know. They were not as hard to manage as they are now. The last school that was between our house and Mildred, about the seventh grade, along in there was as far as we went. I do remember another teacher I had before I went to Tarboro. That was Lula Bridgers and she was about ready to retire when I was in school.

MJFG: What did your family do for fun when you were growing up?

APH: Well, we did like most families, we had picnics and parties, taffy pulls. Of course, Papa raised watermelons and anytime you wanted one you just got one and cut it, you did not have to wait for the whole family to get together to cut one.

MJFG: Did they have any kind of sports events when you were growing up?

APH: I reckon they did, I don't remember much about sports. I never played basketball. My sister, Vera Felton and your mother, Virginia Turner were good basketball players.

MJFG: Do you remember much about World War I?

APH: Not so much. The most I remember, there was a family that lived in Mildred and she was Jenny Cobb and her husband, Leon Humphrey, sold Insurance and he, I think, had about nine states that he supervised or something. When it was over, they had lived in Connecticut and so after the war was over they went back to Connecticut and that's all I remember about that.

MJFG: What about Pearl Harbor, do you remember that?

APH: I remember it, but I don't remember much about what happened. The Humphreys all went back up to Connecticut. Edwin, my husband, was born in Hartford, Connecticut, and he was Edwin Cobb Humphrey, we were married in 1948.

MJFG: Did you teach school in Connecticut?

PH: No but I substituted for a while. But, you know, the weather in Connecticut, you have to be careful about that (heavy Snow), so I substituted now and then. Then later, I went to work with G. Fox and Company, the big retail store, like Belks. I worked there for about eleven years before we retired. I worked in the same office with Edwin, in the same building, and that building was on the lot by Katherine Hepburn's home. The Arrow Hart and Hagman Company that we worked for, was built on the land that was Katherine Hepburn's home.

MJFG: What year did your husband die?

APH: 1970 and I came back to Raleigh (in 1973). When I came back I went to Raleigh and lived up on Hillsboro Street in the Apartments there. I can't remember the name right now.

MJFG: Have you met many people you knew since you came back?

APH: Yes, There are right many people in here that I knew. Pininah Fountain, from Leggett, is one and Maurice Conyers and I can't think right now. Archie Burnette is another. He is out from Conetoe. I think his sister, Doris taught with us one time. He has been to see me since I have been in here. He lives up on third floor.

MJFG: You do not drive do you?

APH: No I stopped driving in 1991. I thought I had better stop before I had too.

MJFG: When you were a child, did they have things like a Circus?

APH: Oh yes, yes, the Circus and the Circus had, was it a fire? (*I think this refers to a horrible circus fire.*) I did know what year that was but I have forgotten. But that was one of the best entertainments, the Circus.

MJFG: When you think about the stores in Tarboro, what are some of the first ones you remember?

APH: The first ones I remember Edgcombe Drug Company, Mr. Nicholson was Pharmacist. He had four boys and one of them is living here now and Marrow-Pitt Hardware Company. Papa had a lot of business with them in his farming but I wish I did have a better memory of what went on before.

MJFG: I think you do wonderful for your age (95) because I can't remember as well as you are doing. I hope I haven't tired you out too much.

APH: You haven't learned very much from me because as I say I don't remember. We had a little program when I lived in Raleigh, a year or so ago, and asked people to remember back and some of them could remember a lot of things. As I said, it was in one ear and out the other.

Note: Annie Pitt Felton Humphrey died Thursday, October 9, 1997 just days after this interview.

She has a sister who also lives at The Albemarle Retirement Center, Viola Felton Harrell and a sister living in Raleigh, Fay Felton Orders. Her niece, Allyson Bullock Sugg and husband, Francis Sugg along with other neices, Sue, Kay, Judy, Barbara and BiBi took part in the services.

I am attaching a copy of comments made at Graveside Services in Kinston, NC at Pinelawn Memorial Park. These comments attest to the quality of teacher and person she really was. These by Allyson Sugg:

When we think of Annie-Pitt and our family, I think we would say that she was the quiet one - meek, mild, perhaps even timid, always staying in the background. But when you look at her life, you see that she was really a rather adventurous person. After attending college she lived and taught in several Eastern N.C. towns, later returning home to teach and tend to duties there. When she married, she moved not just out-of-state, but to another section of the country. And when she decided to return to N.C., after Edwin's death, she didn't go back to her familiar surroundings in Tarboro, but instead moved to Raleigh, and embraced a new life with both old and new friends. And then, last June, when the doctor told her to get some help or move to a facility where help was available and began to describe some of the places in Raleigh, Annie-Pitt announced that she was

going to Tarboro to The Albemarle. And so, at age 95, she moved again. Just last Sunday, October 5th, she was a participant in the Alzheimer's Foundation fund-raiser, won the race, and had her picture on the front page of Monday's Daily Southerner.

Some of us might think of Annie Pitt as indecisive or wishy-washy, and she was sometimes, but not in things that really mattered. When she made a commitment, she honored it. She joined Howard Memorial in the 1920's and never moved her membership. Last month she received her 50-year pin from the Tarboro Chapter of the Eastern Star, but next year would have marked 60 years of membership. And if you were her friend, you were her friend for life. Whether you were a childhood friend, a family member, a teaching colleague, a neighbor, or even a friend of a friend, she never forgot, and that's why people remember her.

We will remember, too, each in our own way. But we can do more than just remember. The best way we can honor Annie Pitt's life is to try to live our lives as she did - always being more concerned about others than ourselves.

Annie Pitt had a habit of copying things, scriptures, poetry, or news articles - on small scraps of paper. I have found them stuck everywhere. When I asked about why she was interested in some of the things I found (like celebrities' birthdays), she said she copied those to practice her hand-writing, because she thought it was not as good as it had once been. Last week, I found this paper by her chair, on which she had written three items that I want to share with you, because I think they illustrate how Annie-Pitt looked at life and met its challenges.

First - "Gather the crumbs of happiness and they will make you a loaf of contentment."

Next - "Life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved."

And finally, a thought that we can all use as a guide for our lives

"Be thankful for the past, Have courage for the present, And Christian faith for the future."

BiBi shared her thoughts on Annie-Pitt as a teacher. Annie-Pitt was Bibi's first customer for her artwork. She also told how Annie-Pitt encouraged her students, and visited in homes, where not many would have gone, so she could learn the student's background and let the parents know she cared. Bibi said she is glad that her son and other family members have gone into teaching and sees that as a way of carrying on Annie-Pitt's legacy.

Minnie Jo Fisher Gay told that her daughter, Ginger, had TB in first grade in 1961 and that Annie Pitt sent her letters and gifts for the entire time she had to be hospitalized away from Whitakers. Minnie-Jo had not even been aware that Annie Pitt was keeping up with her until that happened, but



*Annie Pitt Felton, Teacher Outstanding
daughter of
Willie Richard Felton and Susan Etta Knight
Mildred, NC, Edgecombe County.
Married
Edwin Cobb Humphrey
son of
Leon B and Jenny Cobb Humphrey*