

LITTLE TEX

One bright, warm morning, August 25, 1855, a tiny babe entered this world and began the journey of life. It was to be a life filled with many disappointments and sorrows, also a life endowed with courage and strength to sustain to the end.

Little Tex, as she was called by her family, was the tenth child of a family of eleven. She was christened Texana Bryant. Her parents, James Richard Bryant and Carolina Kirby Bryant, lived on a farm a few miles from Spartanburg, South Carolina.

The house that the Bryants lived in was built of log construction when first built. Later on more rooms were added of frame work. One room was much larger than the others. This room had a huge fireplace, not only to heat with, but knotty pieces of pine were used in the fireplace to make light. It was here by the hearth that Little Tex began her school work. The older children would bring their few books, including the Bible and hymn books, and assist the younger ones in their school work. It was at this time of day that the older ones of the household also gathered near the hearth and spent an hour or more in reading.

A few weeks before Little Tex was old enough to go to school, her parents decided that the pet name, Little Tex, should be dropped and the name Annie should be used, as it was part of her christened name. Annie never forgot or failed to cherish the love and joy that she imbued from answering to the call of these words, Little Tex.

The school that the Bryant children attended was the Pacolet School and was only a six month school term.

The Bryant's were farmers. They did not own any slaves, although, they did use some Negro help when necessary. However, Annie's Uncle Ruben owned a large planataion and had several slaves that worked for him. Annie would go with her mother for a visit in the Uncle's home. While visiting there one evening Annie went into the kitchen where Lize, the maid, was working. Of course, Annie began asking questions and this was pleasing and amusing to Liza. So she began to tell Annie stores, to entertain her while the mother visited with the older members of the family. Annie said she never forgot the story of the falling stars.

When Annie was only a small child the Civil War began. She was too young to understand the real cause of the conflict, but she was to always remember the sorrow and sadness that it brought into ther home. Her father and her eldest brother were the first

of the family to take part in the conflict. Roland, the brother, was only eighteen years of age when he enlisted. A short time later her brother, George, who was only sixteen years of age, had to join his father and brother in the conflict. The younger brothers, Govan, Richard and Chester tried to keep up the farm work the best they could. They did make mistakes and problems began to mount. The Bryants had used cotton as their main crop, but were compelled now to grow food crops in order to live.

In July, 1863, Annie's mother received word that her son, Roland, had been killed in the battle of Gettysburg and that her husband, James, was very ill. A short time later word came that he too, had passed away. Several months later, Annie's brother, George, returned home. The war was over and they were all so glad, but it had brought sorrow and sadness in their home that was so hard to bear.

Another year passed, but month after month hardships seemed to increase and the Bryant family decided to look for more fertile land. The Bryants heard that some of the Western States had good farming land. So a number of families met and decided to form a group and move westward. Annie was about eleven years old when her family started on their westward journey.

The group left Spartanburg, South Carolina, on the fifteenth of April, 1867. Annie's family making this trip were her brothers, George, Chester, Richard and Govan, and her sisters

Allie, Fannie, Tennie and Louella, and her mother. They knew it would take several weeks to make this trip and that they would encounter many hazardous times and trials, but they thought it would be a worthwhile adventure.

When the group arrived in the State of Tennessee the Bryant and Kirby families decided to locate here for a few months. They rented a farm near the town of Clarksville. The Cannon, Harbinson, Mousner, Schitzler, Berry and other families in the group traveled on to the State of Missouri. Several months later the Bryant and Kirby families moved on to Missouri and settled on a farm near Benton, Missouri. Annie's family soon adjusted to their new home and seemed pleased to get settled and start a new life for themselves.

Month after month went by and everything seemed to go very well for Annie and her family, until their mother's health began to fail. She began to show the strain of the hardships and sorrow which she had so courageously tried to endure. So as time went by Annie, as well as the others, knew that another sorrow as soon to invade their home. Their mother grew steadily worse and on March 28, 1871, the one who had so faithfully guided them through their everyday problems, passed away leaving them with her faith in God to guide them.

A few months passed and Annie's sisters, Fannie and Tennie, married and moved to Durant Oklahoma. Fannie married John Mousner,

and Tennie married Edward Berry. They spent the remaining years of their life in Durant.

As time went by other members of the family married and moved from the home. Allie married George Guthrie and moved to a farm near Blodgett, Missouri. They lived on this farm a number of years until Allie's husband became ill, and was not able to do farm work, so they moved to Morley, Missouri, and lived there until he passed away. Annie's brother, George, married Betty Spaulding and moved to a farm near Crowder, Missouri. Chester soon decided he, too, would like to start farming for himself, so he rented a small farm near Benton Missouri, and later married ^{Martha Alice} ~~Martha~~ Armstrong. They spent most of their life on this farm.

A few months passed and Richard married Betty Sides, and moved on a small farm south of Benton. This left Govan, Annie and Louella in the home. Then next to leave the home was Louella. She married Daniel Cannon and also moved to a farm near Benton, that he owned, where she lived until her death.

Soon after Annie's sister, Louella, married, Annie became engaged to a young man named Willard Chapman, who lived near Sylvania, now known as Oran, Missouri. Annie began making, and collecting, all sorts of household articles for her home to be. She also bought the material and made her wedding dress, painstakingly sewing it all by hand. She was so happy, and so

much in love and looking forward to a wonderful life. Then on November 13th, she received a letter from Willard's mother stating that Willard had passed away. He had double pneumonia, which was most always fatal in those days. They were to have been married Thanksgiving Day. This was a very sad and a real disappointment for her. At this time Annie and Govan were the only members of the family left at home. Govan had planned to marry soon after Annie was married and settled in her new home. But since she would not be leaving the home now, he thought best to postpone his his marriage for awhile. So he and Annie maintained the home for a short time. Annie had become reconciled to her misfortune, and realized that she had an opportunity to help others. She asked Govan to sit down and listen to a decision that she had made. She told him she knew that her brother, George and family needed her help and that she would go and live with them. After they had talked the matter over, he agreed that if this was really what she wanted to do, then she should go. Annie's brother, George and family were very glad to have her come and live with them. Shortly after Annie had moved, Govan and Fannie Kirby were married. They remained on the farm where the Bryant family had lived for sometime.

A year or so later Annie met a young man, Mark Black, whose parents lived near Charleston, Missouri. His father had purchased a small tract of land near Sylvania or Oran, as it is now called. Annie and Mark became very good friends, and as time went by they became engaged and were married in the spring of 1880. Mark had contracted to farm the Ben Allen farm near Benton, Missouri, that year. The Allens moved into the town of Benton and Annie and Mark moved into the house they vacated on the farm. They were very happy and were looking forward to a long and wonderful life together. They lived on this farm for two years, but the farm was almost too large for Mark to farm by himself, so he decided to look for a smaller farm. The following year they moved on a farm two miles south of Benton, known as the Ran Deaton farm. In the late summer of their third year here Mark became ill with typhoid fever. This was a very much dreaded disease and one that the doctors were not able to cope with at that time. After being very ill for several days Mark passed away.

Annie had to experience another crisis as she was left with three small boys. She never lost faith in herself and thought that somehow, someday she would be able to make a home for her children and keep them together, just as her mother had done with her family. Will and Roy were very small boys and Freddie, only a babe.

Annie had said so many times there was always something in life to be thankful for, which really she found to be true. The neighbors were so kind and helpful. They came and helped to harvest the crop and attended to many of the farm chores. This being in the fall of the year there was not much work on the farm to do for the next few months, and Annie had not decided just how she would manage the farm work in the spring. One of the neighbors that came and helped with gathering the crops was a young bachelor, George O'Neill, who had come from the Blodgett, Missouri area to help Mr. Deaton harvest his crops. Annie said he was very kind to the children and they seemed to like him. He visited in the home quite often in the next few months. Later on the next year he asked Annie to marry him. She had been very fond of him too, and she knew that if he loved her that their love for each other could grow. A few months went by and they were married.

They rented a farm in the Hickory Grove Community, which was between the towns of Benton and Blodgett, Missouri. Some of the land was ready for cultivation, but some of the land had to be cleared of the trees and made ready to use. This required them to have to hire help, and as there was no house on the farm for the laborers to live, she had to furnish room and board of them. This really made more work for her, although she said she wanted to help in anyway that she could,

not only to improve their own surroundings, but to help improve the community in which they were to make their home.

The house that they moved into was located about one half mile from the Hickory Grove School, which the children would attend and almost two miles from the Hickory Grove Baptist Church. Annie had united with the Methodist Church at Benton, Missouri, when a young girl, however, she knew that they could not travel that far to attend church services, so they would attend Sunday School, and church service at the Hickory Grove Baptist Church. She said the people were very friendly and tried to make them feel welcome. Annie still maintained her membership in the church at Benton. Her husband, George, had been reared in a Catholic home, but later in life also united with the Methodist Church at Benton.

On December the 18th, 1888, a new member came to live with them. They named her Birdie Louella. They were very proud of her being the first girl. This being near the Christmas season the boys, Will, Roy and Freddie were elated too. Before the Christmas Holidays were over the O'Neill's received word that Tom O'Neill who lived near Blodgett, Missouri, was ailing and he would like to come for a visit with them, as he was not able to work. Tom was Annie's husband's brother. Annie knew this would make more work for her but she just could not refuse to bring him into their home, knowing that he needed medical care. So the first of January he came to their home, but

was very ill when he arrived. He was a quite, kind person, seemed to enjoy seeing the children play, and they became very much attached to him. As the weeks passed by he grew steadily worse, and passed away. He was never married and had no close relatives, only brother, George.

Winter was almost over now and the spring work was soon to begin. They were looking forward to a good year of farming. More land was to be cleared and this would require more plowing, planting and harvesting but they enjoyed every day of their work. Another year passed and they did have a good harvest. It took courage and patience along with a lot of hard work, but they were proud and happy to be able to turn some of the land into a cultivated growth of grain.

On September the 2nd, 1890, a son was born to the O'Neills. They named him Earley Darrell. Their family now of five children really kept Annie busy, but she would always say they had so much to be thankful for.

The land had produced good crops for them and they were in the class of good farmers now. They had acquired a sizeable herd of cattle and swince which helped to increas their income from the farm. The following year new barns wre built and new store houses were also built to store canned fruits, vegetables and cured meats.

On June the 12th, 1892, another little daughter arrived to make her home with them. A very tiny babe and a perfect blond, as Annie said, and I should say, as the tiny babe was none other than, I, the writer of this little article touching on the life of my mother and her family. Mother said it was difficult to decide on the name I should be called, as friends and relatives wanted to select the name. This surely must have been true, according to the name selected, Nancy, Beulah, Jane. My father said that after his mother passed away that he had made his home with an Aunt, Nancy O'Hare. She was so kind and good to him that he asked mother that I be called Nancy.

The summer passed and as fall was approaching there was much work to be done before the winter snow and freeze came. Father and the laborers were very busy harvesting the crops and taking the grains to market, that were not needed to feed the livestock through the winter months, and until another harvest. Mother was also busy preparing and canning fruits and vegetables along with cured meats. Mother said they had so much to be thankful for, they had harvested another bountiful crop, which they really needed with a growing family.

The following spring, two or three children in the community became quite ill with seemingly severe headaches

and colds, and there was talk that it might be light cases of spinal meningitis. Mother thought it would be best to keep her family home for awhile and avoid taking the children where they might come in contact with others that might have colds. However, one day when Freddie was out playing with the other children of the home, he suddenly clasped his hands to his head and began to cry. Someone of the children ran into the house and told their mother. She went immediately to him, however, when she reached him, he said the pain was gone and he was alright. Later on there were other attacks and he became quite ill. The doctor was called, and he said it could be meningitis, but after a few hours he seemed to be better, and they thought he would be alright. The next day he grew suddenly worse and passed away.

I remember mother saying that this was one crisis that she could hardly bear. One that she almost questioned, why, but having the faith that she had, she knew that she must go on.

On May 10th, 1894, another son was born to the O'Neill family. They named him George Bryant O'Neill. Mother said this made quite a family, but her belief was, "if there was a will, there was a way."

A short time later on a niece of my fathers came to live with use, her mother had passed away and her father was also

dead. This left her alone, so mother and father took her into their home, just another opportunity to help someone, mother said. She never was known to say anything was a burden. When Annie Bryant came to our home mother instructed we children to call her Cousin Annie, as this might help her to feel like she was loved and wanted. Mother said she was so kind and so helpful to her. She seemed to be satisfied and happy with us. She was always willing to attend Church and Sunday School services with us.

One afternoon a young man, by the name of Charles Morgan, came to our home and asked Cousin Annie to accompany him to church services that evening. Mother and Father were very well acquainted with him and his family. Cousin Annie had met him in the Sunday School Class. So she asked mother if she might go with him. Annie was almost eighteen years of age, but she would always ask if they were willing, or for their consent before she would go anywhere. Mother and father gave their consent. Now, back in those days some people used the two wheel cart drawn by one horse. The cart was more of a sport type conveyance. Mr. Morgan was using this type of conveyance this particular evening when he came to take Cousin Annie to Church. They had attended church and were returning home when the horse became frightened and began to run. Mr. Morgan couldn't control him and the cart turned over throwing them out onto the ground, and as Cousin Annie fell she struck an iron pipe, that had been placed near the

road to mark the sections of the fam. She sustained some broken ribs and later developed pneumonia, from which she did not recover. This was another trying ordeal for Mother, but she seemed to have the faith and courage to carry on, never questioned why. Although, it took some time for her, as well as the other in the family, to recover from the shock of Cousin Annie's death. We all loved her so much.

A few months passed and Mother and Father received a letter from my Father's cousin, John Langham, asking if they needed someone to help with the housework. Cousin John was a cripple and had to use crutches to get around, but he could do housework. Mother and Father decided to invite him to come and live with us for awhile, as he needed a place to call home, as the Uncle and Aunt that reared him had passed away, leaving him all alone. So Mother had responded to another need for kindness and hospitality.

Cousin John came to our home in the early spring. Mother said that he was much older than we and that she would like very much for us to be kind to him and obey him, as she was sure he would want us to do. After he had been with us for a few months one of the people of the community began to talk to him about going out and finding work where he could demand a salary. He was a very good worker and helped Mother with the work, so they took care of him as one of the family. He seemed to be satisfied and we, children grew to love him, although he was very strict with us.

At this time there was a family in the community who had lost the mother of the home, and the oldest girl in the family was trying to keep the hime, which was quite a task for her as she was only twelve years of age. There were four other children in the home. Cousin John asked Mother if he might go and talk to the father of the children about keeping house for them. Mother told him she thought this would be too much for him to do the housework for a family of this many, However, if he really wanted to go then he should decide for himself. So he got in touch with the father of the family and they agreed on the salary, and Cousin John left our home and went to work for this family. He had been with these people only about two months, when he became ill with cold that developed into pneumonia. The family was not able to take care of him and mother went and brough him back to our home, but he lived only a few days. This was another trial of her faith and courage, as she said she thought if she had been more thoughtful, and had never given her consent for him to try this task things might have been different, as he might not have gone if she had just have said no, yet she knew that she had no right to do this.

A few months later on my Father's health began to fail and he was not able to do the work that he once did, so he had to hire more help to keep the farm work done. Then after a few years, Will, the eldest of the Black children, decided he wanted to go out on his own and find work, which he did.

Shortly afterwards he met a girl, Ada Taylor, they dated for sometime, then with the consent of her mother, they were married.

My Father decided to rent a farm near Benton, Missouri and move onto it, as it was a much smaller farm and he would not need very much hired help. Then in January of the following year, Roy Black, the only one of the Black boys at home yet, took pneumonia and passed away. Mother was very shocked and bereaved, but as always she bore her sorrow with courage and faith.

Then in March of the same year, Father decided he would like to move to Nashville, Arkansas, as he thought his health might improve. He had visited there a few times with my Uncle Govan and Aunt Fannie Bryant, and they wanted him to come down there to a special doctor, whom they thought might help him to regain his health. So Mother agreed and we moved the last week in March. We located on a small farm two miles from Nashville, Arkansas. Mother would take Father into Nashville to the clinic about once a week for treatments. He did seem to improve for awhile, then he began to grow steadily worse. So the doctor thought it best for him to enter the clinic and take the treatments everyday. Mother made arrangements for a lady to come stay with us, and she

went with him to the clinic to take care of him. After a number of weeks the doctor told Mother that nothing more could be done for him and that she might take him home, if he wanted to go home. He lived only a few weeks and passed away on July 6, 1906. This surely was another crisis for her to meet.

Mother, having promised my Father she would return to Missouri, we moved to Morley, Missouri in September, 1906. My Uncle George Bryant rented a house for us to move into until Mother could find a suitable one, that she could buy.

A short time after we moved, my Aunt Allie wrote a letter to Mother and wanted to come live with us, as she was ill and there was no one to care for her, except her little Granddaughter, Ruth Moore, who was only nine years old. So Mother took on another task. She said that she just could not say no, when she knew that someone needed help. So Mother took Aunt Allie and Ruth into our home and cared for them until Aunt Allie passed away. A few months later Mother's niece and husband, Nellie and Clarence Abernathy, took Ruth and kept her until she married.

A few months passed and mother bough a house in Morley, known as the Dr. Tomlinson home. She rented some land and the boys began to farm.

The first year or so they seemed to do very well, then bad management of crop planting, and too much spending caused them to began to loose financilly. As the months passed by

debts surmounted and mother was forced to sell her home. She never gave up, nor lost faith that she could buy a smaller place with the money that she had left, after paying all the debts, and this she did. Once again there was trying times and her health began to fail. She was always cheerful and could see some good in everyone.

In the early spring of 1937 she suffered a stroke of paralysis from which she never recovered. Although she was almost helpless for several months, she would still smile, and let you know that she knew all that was being said. In January of 1939 she contracted pneumonia and passed away, at the age of 84 years.

MOTHER

You wrote no lofty poems
that critics counted art,
but with a nobler vision
you lived them in your heart.

You carved on shapeless marble
To some high soul design,
but with a finer sculpture
you shaped this soul of mine.

Beulah O'Neill Foster

(See Related Photos on Next Page)

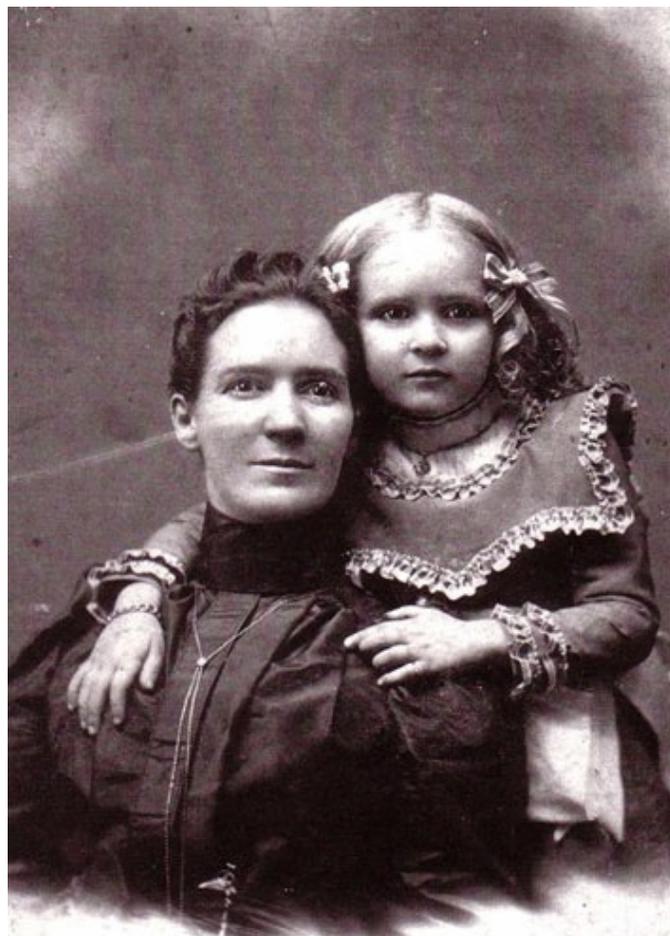
Photos of some of the folks named in the “Little Tex” story.



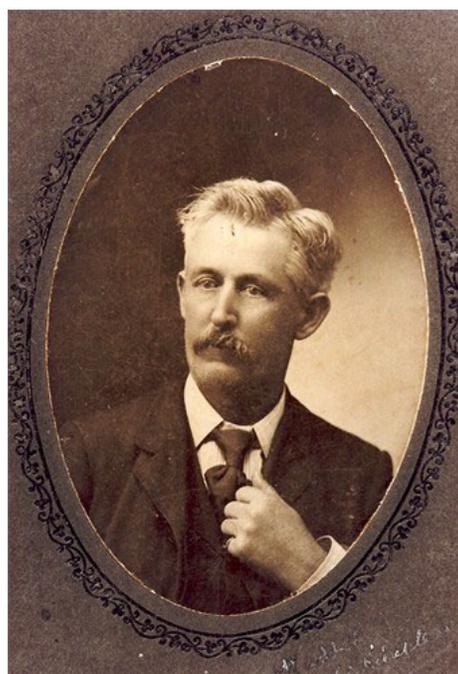
MAR · 62

At left is Beulah Foster, the daughter of “Little Tex” who wrote the story. Next is Birdie Miles then Esther Bryant. On the extreme right is Maggie Bryant McMullin. Maggie was orphaned when she was 8 years old and was adopted and raised by her Uncle Martin Govan. In 1957, Maggie made a trip back to Pacolet to renew a connection with the Pacolet Bryants. In the back is Richard Bryant.

To the right is the photo of Hosea Chesterfield “Chester” Bryant. He was the father of Maggie and died when she was young.



Louella Bryant and her daughter Ella Cannon. Louella was the younger sister of “Little Tex”.





From the left, sitting is Martin Govan Bryant and standing just behind him is his wife Fannie Kirby Bryant. Martin and Fannie adopted and raised Maggie Bryant at age 8 when her Dad died. Sitting beside Martin is Missouri Texana Bryant. She is “Little Tex” and is the subject of this article. Beside her is Frances Arkansas Bryant. Sitting in the front on the right end is George Washington Bryant. Standing in the back, to his right, is his wife, Mary Alice Hardison Bryant.