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# *The Thrasher Newsletter*

CoEditors: Sue Q. Thrasher & Nancy T. Cherry

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*Capitol Building, Montgomery, Alabama*



## Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!

John E. Thrasher III

Don't miss the fun! The time is getting short, so if you have not yet made plans to attend the Thrasher Reunion next month, make those plans now.

We look forward to our annual "get-together," and this year our hosts, David and Alice Thrasher, have made splendid plans for us and have made every effort to make it a memorable occasion.

Montgomery is a great reunion site. I remember well the reunions of 1997 and 1998 that were held there. We also remember what a great time was had by all last year with hosts Joe and Angie Grooms in Virginia.

Reunions draw family and relations from coast to coast. A great part of holding reunions is meeting new Thrasher related people and seeing old acquaintances again. For many, it is the only time some of us have to visit with each other. There will be several new faces with us this year, and you will be so welcome! Thankfully, some members who have not been able to attend for some time are returning and it will be so good to see them.

I hope that you will share your special Thrasher stories and treasured items with us. Last year Linda Thrasher Gee brought a scale used in one of her ancestors' stores - a treasured family keepsake. What an unexpected and fun item! We will have a "show & tell" time again

this year, and I hope you will bring something along, perhaps a family photo or an item handed down. Just think of what you may have that would let people have a glimpse into our Thrasher past. I look forward to seeing something of yours that you might share with us all.

Several years ago, Joann Bandy addressed an issue that frequently slips through the cracks - who are the later generations of Thrashers? Many of the earlier generations have been well documented, but if you have material to add to that or if your branch isn't there, why don't you contribute your information for a future issue of the Thrasher Newsletter? It would help to create a valuable resource for coming generations, since our newsletters are submitted to several genealogical archives.

Annual meetings are always informative and productive so you will want to be sure that you read the Minutes from the meeting in the next issue of the Newsletter if you are unable to attend this year.

People are what make reunions memorable. They are the glue that keeps far-flung branches and twigs connected to the family trees. Stay connected and join us in Montgomery. I'll see you there!

## **Reunion Details**

Alice and David Thrasher

David and I are looking forward to hosting the Thrasher Family Association Reunion in Montgomery next month. If you haven't already sent in your reservation, please fill out the form on the last page of this newsletter and send it to us as soon as you can. The deadline for the group rate at the hotel is April 14th.

Staybridge Suites-East Chase  
7800 East Chase Parkway  
Montgomery, AL 36117

Call: 334-277-9383 and be sure to give them your code, TFA, to get the reunion rate.

I have arranged a tour of the Capitol on Saturday at 11:00 for those interested. There are a few points of interest in Montgomery that are fairly accessible and close to the Capitol. The First White House of the Confederacy is right next to the Capitol. It is the home Jefferson Davis and his family lived in during the time Montgomery served as the Capitol of the Confederacy. Steps away is the State Archives Building which houses the Museum of Alabama. A couple of blocks further is the Civil Rights Memorial designed by well-known architect Maya Lin. The King Memorial Baptist Church rounds out the attractions in this area. Other points of interest in the downtown area include the Rosa Parks Museum & Library, freedom Riders Museum and the Hank Williams Museum. Parking is free on Saturdays.

Make plans to join us in Montgomery on May 5th and 6th!

## What's in a Name? Maybe More Than You Think!

Celestea Gentry Sharp

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet according to Shakespeare. But sometimes a person's name can have a powerful effect on his or her life – as the fates of Romeo and Juliet bear witness to.

When I was born in the early 1950s, my parents reached back four generations to find given names for me. For the first girl in a tribe known for producing boys, my mother and father seemed to want to include on my birth certificate as many family names as they could squeeze in. They especially wanted to honor my father's mother by using her two given

names, Mary and Bird. However, that wasn't enough for them. As my grandmother was named after her grandmother (minus one of her grandmother's three given names), my parents decided to go for broke and include *all three* of her given names: Mary and Celestia and Bird. But they did not want to make it too easy for me, so they changed the spellings of two of them – Celestia became Celestea, and Bird became Byrd. As a result, the name on my birth certificate reads "Mary Celestea Byrd Gentry." Then, they decided I would go by my middle name, Celestea, despite its being a mouthful for a small child. My parents were not through with naming me yet, though. By the time I could talk, I found that I was being called "Cissie," a logical choice in that I was to have four brothers and no sisters. This was a name that stuck with me through grammar school, high school, and college and remained

in place until I began my first real job after college, when I decided I had had enough. It was then that I simplified my name and told people to call me by a grown-up and understandable name, "Celeste" (though I kept on spelling it "Celestea").

Perhaps to help me bear the weight of all my names, my parents took the time to explain to me where they came from and, in so doing, to value my family heritage. As a result, I generally accepted my continual state of name confusion with equanimity and actually did not mind always having to spell and respell "Celestea" for strangers.

I am happy to report that a point came in my life in the early 1990s when the trials of bearing my name for decades were completely outbalanced by a wonderful connection with my ancestry and the bearers of my name. That day came when a distant cousin, Rastus Thrasher, led my father, my brother, and me to Whitlow's Hill in southern Oconee County,



Mary Celestia Bird Elder Thrasher

Georgia. In this plantation cemetery, I came face to face with the obelisk-style grave marker of my great-great-grandmother, that *first* Mary Celestia Bird. I was overwhelmed with a feeling of connectedness in this moment unlike anything I had ever experienced before. Having wrestled with my unwieldy names in filling out forms with too few spaces and having explained endlessly that I go by my middle name, I had had cause to focus on my name perhaps far more than most people do. To witness the point of origin of my name carried tremendous meaning for me. This feeling of significance led me to learn much more about this great-great-grandmother, her family, her home county, and her times.

I discovered that she was born on August 28, 1826, in what was then called Clarke County (now, Oconee County) near Rose Creek at the home of her parents, Edmonds Elder and Nancy Tigner Elder. Her father Edmonds was the oldest son of that great patriarch – father of 15 children – David Elder, who came to Georgia from Virginia in 1807 with the second of his three wives. Her mother, Nancy Tigner, was the daughter of Revolutionary War veteran and Methodist minister Philip Tigner, one of the earliest residents of the Rose Creek area of what was then southern Clarke County. More research on my part revealed that, at age 15, Mary Celestia Bird Elder married Barton Cloud Thrasher (1823-1876), a neighbor in early Clarke County and a son of Isaac Thrasher and Elizabeth Hester. In fact, it was in the Isaac Thrasher family cemetery that my great-great-grandmother would be buried, surrounded by the graves of her husband, her parents-in-law, and at least two of her ten children – Josephine and Mary (Mamie) – among the other Thrasher family members buried there.

From studying deeds and census records, I determined that my great-great-grandmother was called by her first name, Mary, and also by a popular nickname for Mary, Molly. Luckily for her, she did not suffer the confusion of going by her middle name!

Mary, or Molly, would outlive her husband by many years. Barton Cloud Thrasher would die in 1876, while his wife would live to the age of 72, dying in 1898 at her home in Oconee County.

Of the ten children Mary and Barton Cloud Thrasher were to have, two were to carry her given names. Their daughter Celestia lived only to the age of 22; though married, she left no living children. A younger daughter, Mary C. (or Mamie), also died at the young age of 16 and never having married, had no children. Their fifth child, Frances Pamela Thrasher, was born in their family home between the towns of Watkinsville and High Shoals in Clarke County in 1852. “Fannie,” as she was called, was my paternal great-grandmother.

Further research revealed that Fannie’s young life had seen the beginning of the War Between the States and, when she was 12, the passage of a band of Yankee stragglers from the Stoneman Raid through her homeplace near Robinson’s Creek. In 1872, she was to marry a young junior Methodist pastor from Gwinnett County (Rev. James H. Baxter) in a double wedding with her older brother, Barton Edmond Thrasher. Fannie would follow her

husband's career postings as a minister in the North Georgia Conference until his untimely death in 1891. She and her children would never live in Clarke/Oconee County.

Fannie and her husband had four children, three girls and one boy. They would name their second daughter after Fannie's mother, but they decided to drop her middle name, Celestia. Thus, their child born on February 5, 1875, would be named Mary Bird Baxter. Never called Mary, my grandmother went by her middle name, Bird, which was always transformed into "Birdie."

My father's mother Birdie was to marry Oscar Alachua Gentry in 1901. Living all their married life in Eastman, Georgia, they would have three sons, the youngest of whom was my father, Edgar Crawford Gentry. With earlier namesakes of that first Mary Celestia Bird having died without children and without a daughter in my father's generation to bear those early family names, the time was ripe when I was born for my parents to give all of these names to me.

You may ask how bearing my names has affected my life. I can answer by saying it has led me to writing an 863-page history of the area of southern Oconee County where my great-great-grandmother lived, to making a documentary film chronicling development pressures on this county in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and to my purchase of a small farm in the Barnett Shoals area of the county. And all of this, while I lived in New York City.

Would I have done these things if my name had been something different? I really don't believe I would have. So parents, give careful thought to how you name your children



*Mary Bird Baxter Gentry*

Be sure to visit ***our Thrasher Family Association*** website  
at: <http://thrasherfamilyassociation.wordpress.com/>

## In Memory of Mary Thrasher

August 11, 1917 - March 10, 2017

“I believe if you think about it, you will see that I am right.” Having lived a full life over the last 99 years, Mary Lorene Thrasher had more than a little insight worth sharing. And now that we think about it, we admit that she was, in fact, generally right. Her wisdom is but one of many things that will be sorely missed.

Mrs. Thrasher died March 10, 2017, surrounded by her family. Born August 11, 1917, in Pickens County, Alabama, to Nolan and Annie Pearl Hughes Pridmore, she married Robert Patton Thrasher, Sr. Together they made their home in the New Hope community of Columbus, Mississippi, where, by all accounts, she was the proverbial wife, raising six children, who would later give her 71 grandchildren.

Mrs. Thrasher attributed her longevity to “good, clean, hard living. I didn’t dip, chew, smoke, or cuss.” She worked hard, loved harder and enjoyed more than a few laughs in between. In addition to raising a family and farming the land to help provide for them, she worked at Seminole and Beneke in Columbus and later at New Hope school, where she was known for making the best rolls the cafeteria had ever seen (and perhaps slipping extras to her favorites).



From showing others how to can green beans produced in her garden, holding a quilting class at Beersheba Cumberland Presbyterian Church (where she was an active member for many years), or divulging secrets on how to make the perfect icing for her famous coconut cake, Mrs. Thrasher was a teacher at heart. A natural conversationalist with quick wit and a keen sense of humor, she could roll out biscuits or fried apples pies while simultaneously curing the ills of the world from her kitchen table, and, while not one to mince her words, her oft-shared godly wisdom was always paired with relentless love.

Being the matriarch of six generations was not a responsibility Mrs. Thrasher took lightly—she remembered each and every birthday, favorite meals and hobbies, shared pastimes and life’s milestones. Her door was always open (and often revolving) to guests, and when she wasn’t visiting or off on an adventure, she was likely on the phone, checking in and staying in touch. Whether she answered to someone by Lorene, Momma, Grandmamma, Mamaw, “Miz”

Thrasher, Aunt Rene, sister, or friend (likely calling them all "honey" in return), she had a gift for making each of her family members and friends feel special and uniquely loved.

In addition to her parents and her husband, Mrs. Thrasher is now reunited with her brother, Preston Pridmore; grandchildren Ann House, Pat Gore, and J.J. Whitten; and sons-in-law Junior Parker, Ray Gildon and Edward Whitten. She is survived by her children Nealie Gildon, Buddy (Glenda) Thrasher, Shirley Nance, Lanada (Ron) Marcinko, Angie Whitten, and Tammie (Darrell) Burgess; brother Hubert (Mary Charles) Pridmore; sisters Ruth Ponds and Atlas Boyer; grandchildren Pam (Jimmy) Galloway, Marshall (Katie) Thrasher, Bobby (Lanette) Thrasher, Debra Hampton, Mike (Delisa) Parker, Theresa (James) Evans, Melissa Harmon, Ronnie (Jane) Marcinko, Christy (Ernie) Hill, Patton (Christy) Whitten, Salethia (Chris) Holifield, and Drew (Ashley) Whitten; 29 great-grandchildren; 27 great-great-grandchildren; one great-great-great-grandchild; and a host of nieces, nephews, family, and friends.

Services were held at Beersheba Cumberland Presbyterian Church with Rev. Tim Lee officiating with burial in the church cemetery.

A true embodiment of what it means to have a servant's heart, Mrs. Thrasher recently lamented that she was no longer physically able to help those in need. "You've done your time. It's our turn, now," she was told in response. The torch has been passed; may her spirit of giving shine on in all who knew her.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matthew 25:21

Submitted by Robert "Buddy" P. Thrasher to honor his mother

***Please continue to share your news and photos with your "cousins by the dozens"***

Susie Q. Thrasher: 1101 Christian Drive, Watkinsville, GA 30677 or by email:  
[drsuethrasher@gmail.com](mailto:drsuethrasher@gmail.com)

Nancy T. Cherry: 3100 Elkridge Court, Beltsville, MD 20705-3239 or email:  
[NancyTC@aol.com](mailto:NancyTC@aol.com)

John E. Thrasher: 6424 SE 169th Avenue, Micanopy, FL 32667 or email:  
[fish\\_jet@bellsouth.net](mailto:fish_jet@bellsouth.net)

## Honoring our Thrasher Mothers

*Honoring Our Thrasher Mothers* as a regular feature in our *Thrasher Family Newsletters* until all those who send one in see their story published. So keep the pictures and articles coming!

### Frankie Thrasher Sumner

By David E. Sumner

Frankie Thrasher Sumner (1880-1922) was my grandmother and the granddaughter of "Cousin John" Thrasher. I taped an interview with her daughter and my aunt, Susie Sumner Bugbee (1902-1989), in 1986 in Dade City, Florida, where I grew up. My dad died at age 46 and never spoke with me about his Thrasher history. Both grandparents died before I was born. So this interview provides the only information I've had about details of Thrasher history in Dade City.

Cousin John, his wife and sons, Barton, Willis, and David, all moved to Dade City in the 1880s. "The Thrashers originated from Atlanta," Aunt Susie said. "When my grandmother was pregnant with my mother [in 1880], they came in a covered wagon through South Carolina. In those days, they had to go way out of their way to come to Florida. They had to go through Charleston, around and down the coast to get into Florida. My mother was born in a covered wagon in Charleston. And then they came on to Dade City."

I asked Aunt Susie why the David Thrasher family moved to Dade City. "I don't know," she said. "I guess people back then was just looking for better things, and they thought



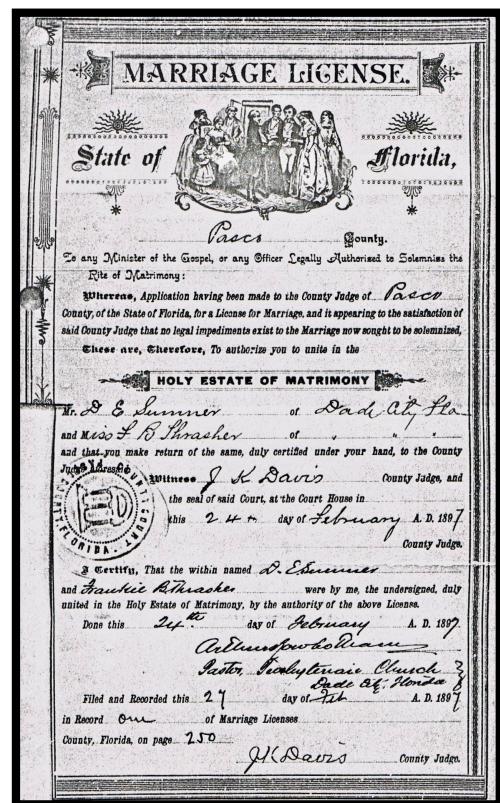
Florida was a nice place to come." The only reason I can think of that they had to take the circuitous route through Charleston is that Georgia bridges and railroads destroyed by General Sherman during the Civil War had not yet been rebuilt. The *Dade City Banner* reported that Cousin John moved to Dade City in 1884.

Aunt Susie described the prominent role that Frankie's father, David O. Thrasher, played in early Pasco County history. "Her father was the first lawyer in this county when they established it as a county. He was the only lawyer around here for a long while. When new lawyers wanted to take the bar, they had to take it under my grandfather's supervision.... He was also very prominent in establishing the Bank of Pasco County. He helped establish St. Leo College [in 1890]. He also helped establish the Baptist church up here. He was very religious, he was a good man, and everybody liked him. I can remember when I was a little girl, he wore a long black coat and he kept peppermint candy in his pocket. Every kid he came up to on the street, he'd get a stick of candy out of his pocket and give to them.

"He taught Sunday School in the Baptist church, and every Sunday he would tell the children that if they didn't miss a Sunday, he would give them something. And he gave them a Bible. And some of the men I have known say that they still have Bibles that Judge Thrasher gave them. He was the sweetest person that you ever knew in your life. He had a wonderful disposition. Joe, your father, was a lot like that. My mother (Frankie Thrasher) was a lot like that.

"My mother's side were all strong Baptists. She never missed a prayer meeting or a missionary society meeting. Every revival they had at the Baptist church, my mother never missed a one. She used to take me when I was three or four years old, and I didn't like to go. I would get down on the floor up under her dress; in those days, the women wore dresses down to their ankles. I thought I was under my mother's dress, but I was under the lady's dress who was next to her. She jumped up; she didn't know what in the world was under her. My mama jumped up, took me out of the church, and gave me a good whipping."

Frankie Thrasher married David Edwin Sumner in 1897 when she was 17. "She lost the first baby the first year she was married. Edwin was born soon after that and then me. Then your father, Joe [in 1913]. Mama had six children in all, but only three of us survived. That was Edwin, myself, and Joe."



Frankie Thrasher died in 1922 at age 42 when my father was only nine years old. My grandfather Sumner was a sales manager for Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company, which sold fertilizer to citrus growers. After his wife's death, he enrolled my father at St. Leo Academy, a boarding school near Dade City. He had to drop out after the eighth grade because of the depression. After that Dad lived with Aunt Susie and her husband until he was old enough to become independent and start growing oranges and grapefruit on the 150 acres my grandfather left to him. That land had been in the Sumner family for at least three generations and is where I grew up.

David O. Thrasher became the first county judge after Pasco County was created in 1887, the third superintendent of schools in 1896, and was elected mayor of Dade City in 1905. Four Thrasher families were recognized among its official "Founding Families" in the Dec. 5, 1998, dedication of the restored Old Pasco County Courthouse in downtown Dade City. They included John J. (Cousin John) and Margaret Scaife Thrasher, David Hughey and Sarah Thrasher, Judge David O. and Ellen Thrasher, and Willis Edgar and Pallen Thrasher. Eight Sumner families were among these founding families, including David Edwin and Frankie Thrasher Sumner. Plaques for each family were imbedded in the sidewalks leading to the restored Old Pasco County Courthouse.

*Author's note: I asked Joe Stein to review this article before it was published, and he had this response: "If your grandmother, Frankie, was born in Charleston, S.C., on Aug. 26, 1880, on the way to Dade City, why was my grandfather, Robert T. Thrasher, born in Toccoa, Ga., on Aug. 1, 1881, one year later? Did their mother return to Georgia for his birth, or was he born in Florida? Robert T.'s birth date is taken from his head stone on his grave which is different from date in Our Thrasher Heritage (Feb. 9, 1881). I always wondered how Frankie's' and Robert's birthdays were so close. Another mystery!"*

If you haven't made your reservation for the Reunion, turn to the last page and do it NOW! You also need to make your hotel reservation before April 14<sup>th</sup> to get the TFA rate.



*See Y'all in Montgomery*

## REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE REUNION

### THRASHER FAMILY ASSOCIATION REUNION

MAY 5 - 6, 2017

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

Staybridge Suites - EastChase

334-277-9383

It's that time of year again and David and I are looking forward to hosting the Thrasher Family in Montgomery! Staybridge Suites - EastChase (Thrasher Family Association rate) will be providing our accommodations. The cut-off date for the special rates is Midnight 04/14/2017. Donna Dawson is our contact person should you run into any problems. Also, please contact me (Alice) at 334-398-0319 should you have any questions. A meeting room is being provided for the weekend and breakfast is included. For anyone wishing to arrive early or stay late, the group rate is available the Thursday prior and Sunday after the meeting.

The annual meeting of the Thrasher Family Association will commence at 2:00 pm on May 6, 2017 at the Staybridge Suites - EastChase. Saturday morning will be free to take in some of the historical sights on Montgomery. I'm currently working on scheduling a tour of the capitol building for those interested. We will be having dinner at the clubhouse in our neighborhood on Saturday evening. Dinner Friday night will be on our own but I do hope to find a restaurant that can accommodate all of us.

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Please remit \$30.00 per person for dinner Saturday to: David Thrasher

3518 Oak Grove Circle  
Montgomery, AL 36116

Name\_\_\_\_\_

No. Attending\_\_\_\_\_

Interested in a tour of the Capitol? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_