

## BIGELOW HIGH SCHOOL

D. S. FARMER, SUPERINTENDENT

BIGELOW, ARKANSAS

December 24, 1944

## LIFE AND MEMOIRS OF AMBROSE CANANT

I was born April 2, 1883, in Cherokee County Ga. the youngest of 8 Children, born to George Washington, and Lucy Jane Hadaway Canant, when very small my Father moved to Bartow Co, Ga. near Cartersville. We lived there until I was 6 years old, when Father again moved, this time to Texarkana Ark, I attended my first School at the old Mt. Pleasant School House, which was only 1/2 Mile from our home. We lived on the main Highway 5 Miles S E of Texarkana, Father bought 120 acres of farm land from Joe Bedingfield, we did general farming, stock raising, and operated a Cotton Gin and Shingle Mill. Those were very busy days for all of us, and our schooling had to come after all other work was taken care of, there were only 4 of us Children at home at that time, my oldest Sister Laura having already Married in Ga, and had come to Ark, before us, Willis, the oldest Boy, Married soon after we came, to Exie Bell, old settlers of that Community. Amos, the next Brother worked at Saw Mills, most of the time, Eugene Eldridge, the next Boy, worked at home for a few years, and then Married, when about 21, Ida McKim, of the home Settlement, We all worked hard and late, and Father made quite a bit of money, for those times, we were always good livers, and were considered among the best Citizens of that County, we came there in December of 1889, and I went to my first School that Winter, the country School of that day had 2 Months Summer, and 3 Months Winter School. My Mother died August 20, 1894, Father Married again, and lived 3 years and died December 23, 1897, The farm was willed to Willis, Thomas, and I, we lived on the farm for 2 years, and I started out on my own, worked on farm for \$9.00 per Month and board, in 1900 I went up to Hatfield Ark, and spent the winter with Lenda, who had married some 2 years before, to W.E. McKinney, who, at that time was Section Foreman on the E.C.S. R. way, the Spring of 1901 I worked on the Farm for Bob Johnson, about 4 miles west of Hatfield, got \$12.00 per Mo. in July I went to Cove and got a job on the Section, worked 10 hrs a day for \$1.10 per day, best job I had ever had, I thought the hours so short and the work was easier than any Farm work I had ever done, but in November I was layed off, and went back to Texarkana, Willis had gone into the Grocery Business about a year before, had gone broke, but was still hanging on with a small Cash and carry Business, I went to work for him, being used to working hard and long hours, I could not find much to do, so I went out soliciting cash orders, I had better luck than I had anticipated, and despite the fact that I was very green in the Grocery Business, as well as the ways of City folks, and was very backward, and bashful, self Concious, I would often make several attempts before going in a house to solicit an order, and then very often I was scared to bad to tell my business, but my green Country ways seem to have been an asset, and I built up a very good business for my Brother, I had never made any money for myself, and all I got while with him was just my actual expenses, perhaps \$15.00 per Month, I worked in the store for about 18 Months, and was offered a job with the Southwestern Oil Co, driving an oil Tank Wagon, selling Oil, Gasolene, axle grease, to the Merchants of Texarkana, I was paid

\$50.00 per Month, which, at that time was pretty good wages, but my bashfulness among strangers, and limited experience in Business hurt me, and I only stayed there about 18 Months, I should have stayed with the Grocery Business, at least for a few years before getting into the Wholesale game, should I have started a Business for myself, no doubt I would have made a success, but I had always to get more Education, and had not given up the idea of going to School some more, and preparing to teach, or as Book Keeper, but opportunities were very limited in those days, at least they were to me. After working around there for a few Months I went to New Orleans to collect for a money lending outfit, and after a few Months at that I went on the Street Cars as Motorman, that was a nerve wracking job, and I quit there in April of 1906 and went to Atlanta Ga, and to Marietta, and Ackworth Ga to visit My Mothers People, most of them were Farmers, and I went to work, helping My Uncle make a crop, I stayed there in Cobb Co until September 1908, I enjoyed my stay in Ga very much, and it was a wise thing that I had gone there, the environment was so much better than I had been accustomed to, that it had a wonderful influence on my life, In August of 1907 I joined the Baptist Church at Lost Mountain, Church, and was Baptised, I also joined the Masonic Lodge there, in summer of 1908 I went to Cartersville to hear the famous Sam Jones Preach, in his home town, I can also remember going to his Tabernacle, and hearing him Preach when I was very small, perhaps 4 or 5 years old, he was a powerful preacher, and had the best Choir of Singers I ever heard, Singing was a great pastime in Cobb County, and we went some place each Sunday afternoon to a Singing, I had one Cousin, Cotton Madaway, who was a noted Bass Singer, he could furnish enough Bass for any Choir, most of his Brothers, and Sisters were Musicians, and at one time was offered a Contract to travel with Vaudeville, but declined, they were all very pious Christian country folks.

#### THE CANANT FAMILY

I know very little of Canant Family History, I was told that My Grand Mother Canant came from South Carolina, to Ga, around the Civil War period, she had 5 sons, and 2 Daughters, they were, Bill, Tom, Pink, Charles, and George, which was my Father, Bill, and Tom went to Texas some years before we went to Ark, my Father, his two Sisters, and Charles, were blonds, and I am sure took after their Mother, while Bill, Tom, and Pink, were black headed, were taller than the others, which would indicate that they looked like their Father, I can remember seeing my Grand Mother, and I am quite sure she was short, stocky built, and near red headed, quite sure she was Irish, and according to all information I have been able to gather, my Grand Father must have been French, but what became of him, or when, I never have learned, I was too young when Father died to be interested in Family history, hence my reason for writing this, I have always wanted to something of my ancestry,

Of my Family, Laura, Willis, Amos, Eldridge, one Infant, Thomas, are dead, just Lenda and myself are left, Lenda lives in New Orleans, and is 67 years old now, Laura was 73 when she died, Father died with stomach trouble at about 49, and Mother ( who was 2 years older than Father died at 48 of Typhoid fever, Thomas died of heart failure, so did Eldridge, Eldridge went to Memphis Medical in Fall of 1899, and Practiced Medicine in Cass Co Texas until he died at age of 67, Willis also died of stomach trouble at about 56 and I have had stomach trouble since 25 years of age, I had one operation in Little Rock in 1919, and Dr. said it was Cancer,

however his Diagnosis proved false, and the Ulcer got well, only to appear again in 1923, then again in 1937, at which time the outlet almost closed up, so in 1939, July, I went to Mayo Bros, Rochester Minn, and had an operation, which has been a success thus far.

In September of 1908 I left Ga, and came to Little Rock, where Bro Thomas was working, and he had a job for me with the England Realty Co at 113 w. 2nd St, I collected house rent, and worked in the Office there until March 1910, when R.M. Yarbrough and I bought a small Grocery & Market at E. 21 & Rock St. we did very well, but I soon tired of being a Partner in Business, and sold my share, working at various jobs until December, when I moved to Bigelow.

I was Married April 10, 1910, to Miss Lizzie Hay, of 13 & Jones St. I had had my first attack of Ulcerated stomach while working for the Realty Co. and it was giving me trouble when we moved to Perry Co, in fact that is what brought us here, Wifes Uncle had a small Farm near Bigelow, and we moved on it, hoping the change would help my stomach trouble, and at apparently did, so we continued to Farm until Jan 1st 1924, when we moved to Bigelow, and I began work for Peter Hempel & Sons, at \$75.00 per Mo. I worked in that store for 3 different owners until April 1928, and after Jan 1st 1929, opened a small Grocery Business for myself, so at this writing I am still in Business at the same location.

#### THE MADAWAY FAMILY

The Madaway Family came from Virginia and settled at (Lowery Branch Ga) in the early days, 40 or 5 Generations back, they were of English stock, My Great Grand Father died in War of 1812, and left Wife and one son which was William Madaway, my Grand Father, my Great Grand Father drew a Section of land in southern Ga, for his services as a Soldier, but his son never knew of it until he was an old man, and then never did get possession of it, Grand Father died at the age of 84 years,

#### RELIGION

My Father was a Primitive Baptist, was very consecrated to his Church and belief, he practiced his Religion at home, and held Family Prayer, and Prayed in public, but seldom ever attended Church of other denominations, he was very strict in discipline, and impressed upon his Children the importance of Honesty, and uprightness, his word was as good as his bond, was a hard worker, and believed that every one should work, and save a part of his earnings, Father & Mother are buried at the Goodwin Grave Yard, on Highway 71, about 4 Miles SE, of Texarkana.

#### MY PERSONAL HABITS, CHARACTER, AND BELIEF

In my younger days I drank some, when with others that drank, but never to excess, danced some, but quit that when about 22, never had any desire to gamble, did not appeal to me as a pastime sport, or as a means of making money, I have always believed a lot in Heratage, in body ailments, as well as, general disposition, and Character, I think it is at least a 50-50- influence with Environment, however without proper Environment, inherited traits are often dwarfed, and seldom predominates. I have never sought Publicity, Office, have never been arrested for any cause in my life, never paid a Fine, never cared to fight, and deplores quarrels, have served on various School Boards a good part of my life, was always interested in Education, and the higher standards of Citizen ship, have served as Secretary of School Board for past 8 years, and am serving 4th year on County Board of Education, have served for 4 years as Associate Member of Advisory Board, to Selective Draftees, all these without pay.

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### Military Service

I have never seen any Military service, except for 2 years in the State Guards, 1903 & 1904, I was a member of Company G, Texarkana, and went with the Co, to the Worlds Fair in St, Louis in September 1904, I was to young to be called for Service in the Spanish American War, and for World War 1, I registered, but was never called, I was farming, and had 3 Children at that time. I have written this just as it came to mind while writing, so; it is not in proper form as it should be, it is my intention to re-write it at some muture date, and put each subject under the proper heading, however, as I said before, the main object of this article, is, that future Generations might know something of, at least, a part of their ancestors, so, I am passing on, what little I happen to know about past, and present generations.

### PRESENT BUSINESS

As I have already said, I began a Grocery Business in Bigelow January 1929, at the beginning of the worst depression the U.S.A. has ever witnessed, I only had \$50.00 in cash to start with, so I borrowed a team & wagon and went to Houston, 6 Miles, and hauled my supplies for several Months, as I could not buy supplies in less than case lots from the Jobber, but by close dealing, and living, with Courtesy, and service, Wife and I built up a good paying Business, we never made a lot of money, but we have lived very well, raised our Family, paid all obligations, help to support our Churches, and Schools, and in a small way have been successful. My Motto has always been the Golden Rule, and by close, upright living, anyone should be able to succeed. We are proud of all our Children, they have contributed a lot to our happiness, and success, and thus far, have never caused us any grief, or embarasment. I believe this just about covers every thing, that I would like to say, especially to date.

*Ambruse Benant*