

# Memories of Martha Elizabeth Gibson Anglin

- 1963 Recording Transcript-

## FORWARD



**Martha Elizabeth (Gibson) Anglin**

I remember that, when I was a young boy in the early 1960s, my grandmother would often tell me stories of her early childhood. We lived in the same town of Commerce, Texas, only a few blocks away from each other, so we grandkids felt free to stop by her house at any time and see if she had any fresh cookies or angel food cake for us. During the conversations that would ensue, she would often lean back in her rocking chair and drift away into her colorful memory – speaking of times many years ago, in the late 1800s, on the Gibson family farm near Gadsden, Alabama, where she spent her early childhood. She spoke of the migration of the Gibson clan to Texas in 1895, and of meeting Papa Johnny, my grandfather, and of their life together on the farm in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

These tales are wrapped in all the color and nostalgia of the world she knew, a world now long since passed away. I remember, once she told me she was getting too old and arthritic to write much any more, but that, if she could write, she would want to write a book about the early days she had known with her family.

One Saturday afternoon in 1963, just a few years before she became ill, an idea popped into my head. I got my father's heavy, old reel-to-reel tape recorder out of the closet, secured it to my bicycle, and walked it over to her house on Cooper Street. I explained to her that I wanted her to tell some of her stories, and that I would record them for her. To my surprise, she didn't hesitate at all, and these were the memories she recorded for us that day.

- Michael W. Anglin

## Martha Elizabeth Gibson Anglin<sup>1</sup>

*Transcription from a 1963 original tape recording<sup>2</sup>*

Oh -- the first thing I remember, I think I was six months old, and my mother<sup>3</sup> was hoeing outside, just outside the house. And a larger child was staying with me. Well, we didn't have screens on the doors then, and I fell out the door and broke one of my first little teeth. I had two teeth, and broke one of them out. And I remember when I didn't have that tooth. It was missing, but, of course, when I began to shed my teeth, why then, it came back. But it came back out-of-line just a little bit, not bad.

And then I guess about the next thing was, I remember going with my Grandmother Gibson,<sup>4</sup> and her son -- my bachelor uncle. He didn't marry until he was about thirty (I think that was when he married). And I was going some place with them, but I did not know where I was a-goin'. And he was carrying me "piggy back".

Some years after that I asked my mother if she knew where we were going at that time, and did she remember me going off with them some place. I remember we went through a beautiful woodland, kind of a forest-like -- a short distance, not very far. We must have been going to my Uncle Sam's<sup>5</sup> place, my grandmother's son, you know. She said she thought I was about two years old when that happened.

And so then, later, I remember that we moved near my uncle. My uncle and my father<sup>6</sup> had gone into partnership and bought a piece of land to farm, and we all lived there near each other. And my father and my uncle ... they farmed land up on the mountain. It was a small mountain, but up on the top of the mountain it was level and they could farm up there. They couldn't farm down on the side of the mountain. It was too steep and rocky and everything.

My sisters and I would go up the side of the mountain and take fresh water to our father and to the working hands.

And one time we found a bluebird nest on our way. There was a big stump -- tall, perhaps it was four feet high. And there was a hollow in it, and in there the bluebird had

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<sup>1</sup> Commonly known as "Mattie Gibson" (or, after her marriage, "Mattie Anglin.") (b. Nov. 26, 1886 – d. Oct. 3, 1968)

<sup>2</sup> Original tape recording facilitated by Michael W. Anglin; transcription and final editing assistance from Robert and Patricia Barnett and Reba Anglin.

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Ann (Gilbert) Gibson (b. Dec. 1, 1857 – d. Dec. 23, 1912)

<sup>4</sup> Frances Jane (Dockery) Gibson

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Gibson (d. Nov., 1902)

<sup>6</sup> William Franklin Gibson (b. Nov. 5, 1853 – d. Jan. 29, 1945)

built a nest and she had two little bluebirds. My sister -- she was older than me -- she snatched off her sunbonnet and threw it over the little hollow in the old stump, and caught the mother bird. So we took it back to the house. And my mother shamed us for it and said, "Why, you should never have done that. That isn't right -- to take a bird away from her babies. Turn her loose, now, and let her go back to her babies." And, of course, we turned her loose.

At that same place, I remember, there was a spring not too far down from the house, and women like my mother would very likely have their wash vessels at the spring, and their husbands would build them a wide wash bench made out of logs that were just sawed and split. And they would use them for big wash benches. That's when they used "battle sticks". And when the women were doing their washing, why, you could hear the battle sticks of the neighbors around, just going up and down the hollows.

And so, we had a cow that was kinda' vicious. I didn't think anything about it, and I went off to the little spring where they were getting their water. They carried it for a distance, probably about twenty or thirty feet away. And I was playing there around the spring. And the cow saw me and, oh, she was just furious. She would have killed me, probably, if my mother and sister hadn't of noticed that she was coming so speedily toward me. She had wide horns, broad horns, you know? And they ran to me and ran to her, and got a stick and knocked her back out of the way, you know, and then picked me up. I was so small, I don't remember how old, but anyway, I guess they saved my life.

And once, my father owed a neighbor fifty dollars that he had borrowed, and he asked my mother if she could go one morning and pay back the fifty dollars. She said I could go with her if I wanted to, but somehow I didn't care to go with her so she went on alone and paid that fifty dollars back. Well, that couple had two little children and the mother had put the fifty dollars under the mattress on the bed, and right after that the money somehow worked out from under the mattress, with her moving it and making the beds, I guess. And these little children found that money and they decided they'd start a fire, so they picked up those bills, amounting to fifty dollars, and stuck them there for kindling -- to help start the fire -- and burned them up!

So they were really hurt over that -- the parents were -- because everyone back then was really needy of everything they could get. Families were striving so hard to just keep a bare living for their families, you know. And, so, I remember how that seemed so terrible to me to think about -- after my father had paid the debt, that it would be just burned up.

Oh, I remember, I'd go along to the fields a lot of times with the children just because I was lonesome for them and wanted to be with my brothers and sisters, you know. And one time we were out there about a half a mile away from home, and without any water, and so we just went out into the woods and started looking for water. Well, we came to a little pond, a little place where it was a regular hog wallow, I guess.

But we were so thirsty we drank that water. It could have killed us, you know. It's so dangerous to drink contaminated water. But we did drink it, and it didn't hurt any of us, that I know of -- as the Lord takes care of us so often when we don't realize it, you know.

And all the blackberries! They grew so fine just up and down the fence rows, along the branches, and in the little drains everywhere. And when blackberry-time came, we'd take buckets and go out and just gather blackberries galore. Sometimes we weren't even able to buy the sugar to make pies, or we didn't have flour to make the pies, but we ate plenty of berries.

There was so much wild fruit back there that you could go out into the woods and gather almost everything that you'd need -- wild crabapples and wild berries, and wild grapes -- fine grapes -- and just so many things. And there were these old places that had been settled a long time before, with houses that had been burned down or had been torn down and were gone, but they would still have the peach trees around. And you could just go out to an old place like that and just gather fruit galore. I remember my oldest sister<sup>7</sup> climbing up in a great big cherry tree and gathering cherries, you know. They weren't worth anything -- she would have been glad to have sold them, but it just seemed like there wasn't any market for them -- that would even pay to gather them, you know.

We would have such fun. One of my sisters<sup>8</sup> just older than me -- she was crossing a little branch coming to a field where the rest of us were, one day, and she found a duck a-swimmin' around in the water down there -- and there was no house anywhere close by, so she thought it was just a stray duck and that it didn't belong to anyone. So she caught it. She worked with it and caught it and brought it up to the field. And I think my daddy had her to take it back and turn it loose down on the drain<sup>9</sup>, because he figured that someone lived up that drain and the duck had wondered away from home, you know.

That all happened while we were living near Gadsden, but not as close to Gadsden as we were when we lived at the place right along the Coosa River.<sup>10</sup> I guess it must have been about three or four miles away from our place on the river.



"Mattie" Gibson, circa 1905

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<sup>7</sup> Aunt Willie Magnolia (Gibson) Dockery (b. Jan. 21, 1877)

<sup>8</sup> Aunt Mary Parilee/Pearlee (Gibson) Ham (b. Jan. 18, 1882)

<sup>9</sup> "drain" -- a small creek

<sup>10</sup> The Coosa River runs from Lake Weiss, northeast of Gadsden, to just north of Montgomery, where it empties into the Alabama River. The home place referred to here was located just south

It was not until we moved to that place there close to the Coosa River that we first met Mark Smith. He was the ferryman there when we moved close by. And, so we lived there at that place three years before moving on to Texas.

And Mark Smith and my father loved each other like brothers -- and they *were* Mason brothers. Well, people just loved each other, seemed like, then a lot anyway. As Abraham Lincoln, you know, said, "God must have loved poor people so much, for he made so many of them." You know, when you have the same needs, and you have the same conditions around you, it seems like it draws you closer together, you know. They were very fond of each other.

I shall never forget, one cold winter night the block and tackle on the ferryboat's cable line froze up in the middle of the river, and the boat wouldn't move. Mr. Smith couldn't get it to go either way, it had frozen so, and he didn't know what he was going to do. So he hollered to the shore and told his wife to go and see if my daddy would come and help him. And so, of course, he wouldn't have turned him down at all. Why, he would have died himself in there trying to save him, I suppose. So he loosed up a little "bateau" -- they were the little flat-bottom boats that they used, you know, to cross the river some times when the winds were blowing and the waves would be up. We sometimes crossed the river in those little boats. And so he got out to the ferryboat on that bateau, and both of them worked at it till they got the ice to turn loose. And then they got the ferryboat to shore.

I remember some of the men in the area would go and sit on the bank of the river and fish a lot for their family -- and just because they like to fish, anyway. It was a sport to them. They would hardly catch enough to feed their family at all, but they'd fish anyway.

My daddy never had time. He wouldn't take time to go to fish. He'd make him fish baskets out of splints from trees -- white oak trees I think -- and he'd make a fish basket and put it out in the water. And my mother would bake a bread that would attract the fish so they'd go into the basket to get the bread, but it had been fixed with these little hooks in such a way that they couldn't get out, you see. They could go in but they couldn't come out. Sometimes he'd just catch a lot of fish in those baskets and then bring them up from the river and share them with the neighbors, I guess, around the area. We couldn't use all of them ourselves. So, he wasn't like some men that could just sit on the bank of the river and fish, you know? He was a hard-working man and loyal to his family, sure.

Young folks didn't crave to go places then -- to have big times -- because there was just every chance for them to be together in the community. And there were some things besides preaching and the singings and things like that. I know our school

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of the Alabama Highway 77 bridge (the "Mark Smith Bridge") that crosses the Coosa River today in south Gadsden, Alabama (known as "Southside").

teacher at Alliance Hall, he organized a prohibition society. And he'd meet with his students, you know. I guess there were others that belonged to it, too. But he'd meet with them just every week or two and then on Sundays, he'd be in Sunday School and church with them. He was a fine Christian man, besides being a good teacher. And he certainly believed in holding the reigns down on the children -- big ones and all.

I first went to school when I was so little -- when I was about seven years old. I'm sure that there were girls and boys that came to that very school that were more than twenty-one years old. And one boy, his last name was Gilbert, but he wasn't related to us, but he walked, I think, six miles a day to come to that school.

And I remember my Grandfather Gibson.<sup>11</sup> When he was a young man, he volunteered and went to fight in the Civil War, and left behind his wife (my grandmother) and their little children. And Uncle John, I think he must have been an older man than my father's father, because I know he was a pretty old man when he used to visit us, when I was a little girl before we left Alabama. And, anyway, I have heard it said that once during the Civil War my grandfather was sick, and he had done some little something out of line, something that was against regulations, and they were going to make him take a heavy rifle and march so many times around a certain place, you know. And Uncle John was with him and he asked them to let him do it. He didn't think his brother was strong enough. So not too long after that, then, why my grandfather developed measles and he died with a relapse -- I imagine with pneumonia because pneumonia usually gets them, you know, it's so apt to have complications. He was buried near where he died, and my grandmother and the children never got to see his body again. See, then, our government had no such plans or money to send bodies home to be buried. She never married again; she just stayed and raised her children.

Before he went off to war, of course, they lived right there by that river close to where Mark Smith, the ferryman, later lived. My grandmother's brother lived there, also, and he was ferryman then, I'm quite sure. And then my grandmother lived close by. And I'm quite sure they owned the land through there then. My sister Dillie<sup>12</sup> said that she heard our aunt one time say that they had owned the land and that they were chiseled out of it some way -- that somehow some other heirs "came in" on it some way, and they didn't maybe have full title to it and had to give it up.

There weren't ever any slaves ever owned by our family. Papa Johnny's family had some; but not any of my people. And I'm glad we didn't. I'm glad I don't have remember that. Really, because I never believed it was right -- ever since I was a little girl. I wasn't taught to think slavery wasn't right -- my parents didn't teach me that it wasn't right, not at all. Naturally, some people said, "Oh, yes, they opposed slavery because they were envious since they didn't own slaves. They would, naturally, be against it." But that wasn't it. I just, in my own way, came to the conclusion that if slavery had of continued to exist, the poor white people would soon have been beneath

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<sup>11</sup> Samuel Fleming Gibson (d. circa 1865 as Civil War soldier)

<sup>12</sup> Aunt Dillie Etta (Gibson) Collins (b. Aug. 19, 1890)

the slaves, because they would not have been able to get work. The plantations would have been bought up by the people that owned the slaves until everything had become big plantations, you know. And they would have worked the plantations with slaves, and the white people wouldn't have known what to do. I do believe it would have come to that.

I had a teacher once that was what they called a "secessher" [secessionist]. They were so embedded in the South, you know, that they couldn't get away from those ideas. He had been raised with the idea that it was right to secede from the Union, you know, because of the slaves, but I never did believe it. He wasn't but just about three years older than me. He was a young man. And so, in class one day he was talking about it in history. And I said, "Mr. Clint, I think about it like this: If slavery still existed, I think that white people who did not own slaves, the poorer class of people, would have been apt to have been worse off than ever -- and the few people that owned the slaves, in the South, they would have kept buying up land in big plantations, and they would have worked them with their slaves, and the poor class of the people couldn't even have gotten work. They wouldn't pay for workers; they'd just work their bond slaves. And it said a long, long time ago in the old Bible: *"There shall be no more bond slaves"*.

And so, from then on he thought about it differently, too. He said: "You know, I hadn't thought about that side of it."

See, when we stop to think, a lot of times, if we'll think twice instead of once, why, we can see differently. The first thought might not be the best one, and if we'll wait and take a second thought, *it* might be the best.

I never shall forget the time -- while we were living about three miles from the Smith place, the strangest thing happened. You see, back then letters came by relays, you might say. Gadsden was the nearest post office, but there wasn't any way to get the mail delivered out away from Gadsden. So one neighbor from the whole neighborhood would go into town and get the mail for everybody else. And then they'd let everybody know that their mail was there and they could come and pick it up. So one of my great uncles from marriage -- my daddy's aunt's husband -- he had picked up this letter and they thought, I guess, that it was a death notice somehow. And they opened it to see who it was that had died. And so they thought that it was Uncle Dan Gilbert<sup>13</sup> (my grandfather) but, really, it was Uncle Dave Gilbert that had died. And they sent my mother word, or she got the word somehow, that her father, Uncle Dan Gilbert, had died.

And so she was so troubled, of course my daddy was, too, troubled about it; they both were. And they knew that if he had died it would be hard for them to go to the funeral services even though it was just fifty miles across up to Sand Mountain and across to where he lived. But it took a long time to get across that mountain, so rough were the roads, you know, with rocks and winding ways and everything, so she was so

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<sup>13</sup> Daniel Gilbert (d. 1893)

grieved about it. And in the night, well, she got up and went out in the yard and she just walked in the yard. And she said while she was out there, she heard a voice ... and it spoke to her just as plain as anything. It said, "Your father's not dead."

And she went back and told my father. She said, "My father's not dead."

And he said, "Why, what happened? How do you know he isn't dead?"

She said, "Because I heard a voice say that he wasn't dead." And she was just as satisfied as she could be, and the next morning she got the letter, and sure enough, it wasn't Grandfather that had died. It was his brother that had died.

Now later on, my Grandfather Gilbert did die, when I was eight years old, and I had seen him only once before that, when I must have been about four years old. But I do remember him -- remember being in his home. My mother had a step-mother. Her father married several years after he lost his first wife, my mother's mother. His name was Dan Gilbert. And they were living in their own home, then -- at the time of his death. And I remember the big apple trees all about the place, and they were the prettiest things, so shady. They were up in the yard, some of them. All just loaded with apples, when we were there. And I remember how kind he was. It seemed like everything he'd say to us children it would be something of kindness, you know, with love. And then the next time I saw him was just after he passed away.



Sara Ann (Gilbert) Gibson  
Sara Ann (Gilbert) Gibson  
(12/5/1857 - 12/20/1911)

He died with a cancer; he had a little knot, my mother said, that came on his leg. It had been on his leg a long time and he fell and hurt it. And then it started growing. So the doctors told him that it would have to be taken out if he expected to live. And so he considered that he would go ahead and have it taken out. It grew large. Well, they didn't have much hospital facilities then, you know, so they were going to operate on him at his home. And so when they were fixing to operate on him -- and they had everything ready -- they told him, they said: "Now, we can't guarantee that this wouldn't come back in some other part of your body. We maybe can't get all of it."

He died with a cancer; he had a little knot, my mother said, that came on his leg. It had been on his leg a long time and he fell and hurt it. And then it started growing. So the doctors told him that it would have to be taken out if he expected to live. And so he considered that he would go ahead and have it taken out. It grew large. Well, they didn't have much hospital facilities then, you know, so they were going to operate on him at his home. And so when they were fixing to operate on him -- and they had everything ready -- they told him, they said: "Now, we can't guarantee that this wouldn't come back in some other part of your body. We maybe can't get all of it."

So he said, "Well -- if that is the sentence -- then I will not take an operation." He said, "I'll go on until I die." And he didn't take the operation.

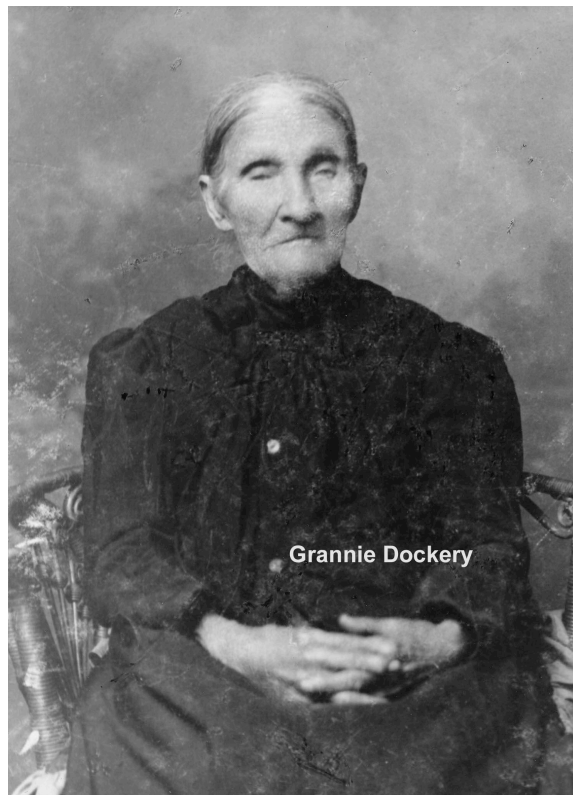
So I remember, when we were there he was so very ill, and he and my step-grandmother were in the house with his oldest son. And his oldest son had three sons of his own. And they were the best things to him. I remember how it struck me that they must be the finest young men because they cared for their grandfather so well.



There would never be a time when one of those boys wasn't sitting by his bed, day and night. They were all grown, and they took turns about seeing to his needs.

Of course, others came in, too, but there couldn't be too many that could come inside to visit him -- he was getting so low. Well, he had never seen my little brother, Dan,<sup>14</sup> who was named for his Grandpa. And so my mother went to the bedroom door and she said, "Pa -- here's our baby. His name is Dan -- for you." And she says Grandpa looked at him and he took him and held him on his chest and said, "He's a fine baby." And so, after we left, he passed away in just a short time.

Now, I don't know a thing about the Scotts except just what Grannie Dockery,<sup>15</sup> my great grandmother, told me. And I know that my grandmother, on my mother's side, was her sister, Frances.<sup>16</sup> And she was a Scott. And, of course, I don't know anything about the rest of the family. I don't even know the names of their sisters they had. There were ten sisters, and their youngest child was a boy. She said they had to help do pioneering, clearing land, splitting rails, digging wells, building fence ... doing everything that a boy and a man could do because they had no brothers to help their daddy and so they just did all those things. She said that they, they would weave their clothes -- cord and spin the thread and then make it into materials for their clothes. And the first dress that she ever had was a print dress, outside of what they had made at home on the old loom. She swapped her homespun material to a Spartanburg, South Carolina, merchant and got her some print material to make her a dress. They called it calico, then. And so she said that she was so proud of that dress.



Zilpha Etta (Scott) Dockery

She said that they had to climb over fences so much that they fixed "stiles" that they could climb up and get to the fence tops and then over the fence on blocks. And she said she could hardly get across the fence without tearin' her new calico dress because it was made kinda' narrow.

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<sup>14</sup> Uncle Daniel Franklin Gibson (b. Nov. 30, 1892)

<sup>15</sup> Zilpha Etta (Scott) Dockery ("Grandma Ziff" or "Granny Dockery") (b. Sep. 8, 1796 – d. Jan. 14, 1903)

<sup>16</sup> Frances (Scott) Gibson

And she said that her father would make their shoes, and that the first pair of bought shoes she ever owned, she was so proud of them that she wouldn't wear them until just before she got to church -- she'd wait until she got nearly to church and then she'd sit down and put her shoes on. And after she left the church, why, she would sit down and pull her shoes off and go on home barefooted. And she wasn't by herself -- other people did that way, too. She was thirteen years old then.

This was all in South Carolina, there near Spartanburg. That was their home town, Spartanburg was. And those that didn't walk to church, why, they'd have ox wagons and go to church in ox wagons. I remember seeing that, though, no older than I am. My Grannie Dockery would have been a hundred and sixty-five years old, at least, if she had lived, I guess. But when I was little girl, I saw people that came to church in ox wagons. And I rode in an ox wagon one time. I didn't ever but one time. But my daddy used to farm with them. He'd make his crops with oxen. And they didn't have lines for them -- they had big yokes that yoked the necks together, you know, and they taught them to know which way to go when they spoke to 'em. "Gee" was to the right, and they learned that. And "haw" was to the left. When they wanted to go to the right, they say "gee" ... and they'd go to the right. And, then "haw" would be to the left. Now, that's the way they taught them. They learned to do it, too. And my daddy said a yoke of oxen ran away with him once -- went down a hill, right down into a deep hollow. And he said, oh, he sure did get a shaking up a-goin' down that hillside with those oxen just runnin' away.

Well, then came the time of our move to Texas. My father had planned for eight years to come to Texas, but my mother asked him not to come while her father was living. She said that she felt like if she was to leave him, she'd never see him any more, so he agreed he wouldn't bring her away. So, then, eight years went by, and in a year's time after Grandpa Gilbert had passed away, why my father decided that he'd come to Texas.

He hadn't discussed it with my mother, either. He had been to Gadsden that day, and sold some cotton. And he came back home and asked my mother how long it would take her to knit him three pair, I think, of socks. And she said, "Well, it won't take me long -- to knit three pair of socks."

She said, "Why -- do you ask me?"

He said, "I think I'm going to Texas, just right away."

And we had a pretty nice crop in the field. I think there's about sixteen bales of cotton gathered after he left, maybe. But my mother took over and the children, and sometimes the relatives and the neighbors would all help pick the cotton and not charge anything at all for it -- just help to get it out. Just every once in a while some of 'em would come in and help us pick some cotton.

And, finally, my mother gave a *cotton pickin'*, and, of course, I think they got out about maybe two bales that day ... where they had so many field hands that had come in to help, you know. And then she and the other women arrived, and they had gotten together and fixed a supper, or dinner one, for them, you know, for a big get together.

And I think they had a sing-song all together that night, just a bunch of them -- all singin' just, oh, I don't know, I guess some hymns and maybe some folk songs and things like that, you know -- just had fun, a good time together.

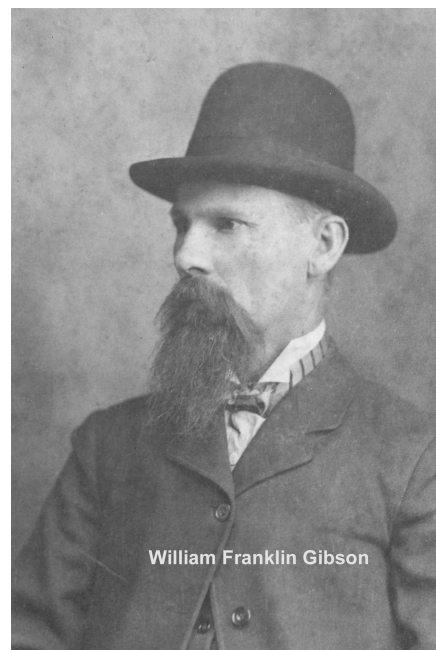
But 1895 was the year we left for Texas.

My father didn't come back to Alabama to get us, either. He stayed in Texas and made arrangements for two of his brothers and one of his uncles, and his family, all to get places in Texas, good black land farms for every one of them. And then he worked for the man that lived on the same farm that we lived on after we came there. He worked with that man, and helped him gather corn for two months until we came to Texas.

We hadn't seen him in two months. I was just crazy to see him. Oh, I thought it was so long to stay away from my daddy. I remember we missed him so, we little children did, that once we found his foot tracks out in the field somewhere, and we got little particles of sticks of some kind, or rocks, and built up around his tracks. We missed our daddy so much (laughter). And some of us were getting so tired on the train,<sup>17</sup> you know, but all I was thinking was, oh, I wanted to see my daddy. That's what I was thinkin' about. I wanted to get there to see my daddy.

And he met us at Blossom, Texas -- just this side of Detroit, you know. That's where we landed and put our feet on the Texas soil. The first time was at Blossom, Texas.

There were thirty-two of us in all that came with the caravan -- including two adopted children. One of Grannie Dockery's daughters, why, she and her husband never had any children of their own, and these two very unfortunate children -- their mother got into trouble and she had to go to the prison, and this girl and boy were just real smart and they had been sent to this "poor farm", it was called "poorhouse" back then, you know. But they were sent there temporarily until they could find homes for 'em, some way, you know. And so my uncle and aunt liked them so well, and they



**William Franklin Gibson**  
(11/5/1853 - 1/29/1945)

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<sup>17</sup> The Gibson family migration to Texas in 1895 began by covered wagon from Gadsden, Alabama, north to Memphis, and then by leased train cars from Memphis to North Texas.

didn't have any children. They had *raised* one of my uncle's nephews -- took him when he was a baby after his mother died -- and they raised him. And so they adopted those two children, that sister and brother. And they were just real smart. Smartest things. And he educated the boy. Now the girl, I don't think she did so very well and he didn't send her to much school, but he gave this boy, now, a good business education and he married up there close to Rockston, and later went to Sacramento, California. And he would write back to my uncle and aunt and tell them what they were doing and everything, and he'd send them money. Just every once in a while, he'd send them money. He wrote to my uncle once that his business was worth \$250,000. Of course, that wasn't so big, you know. But it was big for him because he hadn't been out there too long. But he was just a fine business young man.

Now, there was one that came with us but wasn't related to us -- a neighbor woman that my parents had known, I guess always, nearly. She had a sister in Blossom that she hadn't seen in thirty years, and she said she would like to come with us because she didn't want to travel alone. And so she came with us to visit her sister in Blossom. And we parted there and never saw her anymore. We never knew just how she went back; and when she went back home. But she had children back there, and grandchildren in Alabama.

So my brothers Tom and Jute were both born in Texas, but all the other ten of us children were born in Alabama -- so all of them came in the caravan. And, also, my grandmother and my aunt (my daddy's sister that had never married). She was an old maid. But she wasn't *old*. I don't guess she was much over thirty years old. But she hadn't married. And my Grandmother Gibson, and Grannie Dockery, and my Gibson aunt. And there were two of my father's brothers and their families. His oldest brother had a good-sized family; his younger brother didn't have but two or three children, I think. And, so they all settled over there pretty close together in Lamar County, down east of Paris. And that's where I mostly grew up, east of Paris.

I was fourteen years old when I went out with Lee Mazey, the preacher's son, on my first date. He was about sixteen as I recall. And I didn't want to go with him at all. He was too much like a brother! We just always played together as children, and had been raised up in the same community, you know, and I couldn't think of him as anything but just to be like a brother. And we went to camp meetings together.

At camp meetings people would take the camping outfits, and they would camp for two or three weeks there. They'd take covered wagons. They'd stretch tents and they would have their cook stoves -- some would have them right out in the open and cook out there. And, I guess those with tents, they would have their little stoves inside the tents -- even though it was hot summer. They could raise the sides of the tent, you know, and it would be cool. And they had a lot of beautiful shade trees all around the big church grounds.

And so, there were cold drink stands out away from the tabernacle -- way out from the tabernacle, you know. And the young folks, of course, would go to the cold

drinks stands -- well everybody would, I guess, at the lunch hour. On Sundays everyone would take their lunches, and here and there different groups would spread their lunches together. And they'd be spread just all over the place that way. And so, I later told our children, jokingly, that this boy, Lee Mazey, and I walked up to the Coca Cola drink stand, and he asked me if I cared for a cold drink. I said, "Yes, I think I'll take a lemonade." And he bought himself one and drank from it and then turned around and said to me, he said, "This is certainly delicious. Would you like some of it?"

Well it wasn't so, of course, I just told them that ... just to see if they would believe such a thing as that, you know, but of course it wasn't so. I just wanted to tease them and tell them that that was the way that girls and boys were back then, and that was the kind of dating they would do -- that he'd buy himself something, drink it down part of the way, and then ask her if she would like some of it.

And they were the nicest, finest boys. Lee went with me one time after that, and then we never went together again. He married a real nice girl and she was related to Maud and Mamie. Let's see, I don't know but what he went to World War I, and came back with all of his health impaired so badly, and he didn't live long. I'm not sure that he did go overseas, but I know that he didn't live too long, anyway. And he left two or three little children and his wife. And she never did marry again, I don't think. She was young and a pretty girl, too, but I don't think she ever married again.

I also remember that we had church services in our house when we first came to Texas. This preacher lived in that community, and maybe some of the neighbors around would ask him to come to their house and preach because there wasn't a church building right close by, you know. And he'd agree to come, and then the neighbors whose house it was, where they were going to gather, why they would send word around and let it be known that there'd be preachin' services at their house at a certain time. And then the neighbors would come in for this church service in the home.

And, then, we finally got to where the men would build a "brush arbor", a tabernacle, you know. They'd go down to the woods and cut the tops out of tall, slender trees, you know. And they'd just set the corner posts and everything in a way that could then conveniently lay poles over the tops, you know. And, then they'd add the brush -- the shaded brush with the green leaves still on, you know -- so it wouldn't let the heat of the sun come through so badly.

And that's where I remember that there was this colored man -- a member of a colored family that lived near us -- and this old colored man wanted to go to church and hear this preacher -- I think it was Church of Christ preacher. And he would come and sit down at the roots of a big oak tree near the tabernacle. And he would sit himself back against that big tree and he would listen to that sermon -- just as interested as anyone I have ever seen listening to a sermon. And I've said that if the people that are against black folks, and talk about 'em, and think they don't have a soul, maybe -- that I imagine that once they got to heaven and knew this old colored man, that he wouldn't

be black up there -- and he wouldn't be sittin' out under an oak tree, either. He'd be right in among the rest of us.

I met Grandpa Anglin<sup>18</sup> before I ever met Grandma Anglin<sup>19</sup>. I didn't meet her till later when Johnny and I were married and we went home to their place to live. But I had met Grandpa Anglin before that. He was crippled -- he couldn't walk very well -- and he was visiting some of his relatives over there about Cooper, and he came back to Paris and he thought he'd catch a way to get home, you know. But it was a little late and so he just started walking, and he was just simply too crippled to walk that far.



Grandma Anglin

**Flora Ann (McKay) Anglin**  
(3/8/1846 - 5/23/1942)

You see, that wound that he got in the Civil War never did just heal completely, always bothered him. And he got to our house, out from Paris a little more than a mile from where the train came in to Paris, you know. And my father and mother had already met him, but I never had. And he came up to the gate, and he and my daddy got to talkin' and he said he expected some of his folks to be by there and that he could ride out to his home with them, you know. Well, my daddy, I guess, just asked him right on in -- to come in and spend the night with us, and that we'd see to it that he could call his son, Johnny,<sup>20</sup> the next morning so he could come in after him. So then, I didn't see him any more until Johnny and I were married and got down to their place.



**John Thaddeus Anglin**  
(6/24/1872 - 6/7/1952)

Not too much later was when I first met Johnny -- when we lived just south of Paris -- just one mile south of that Evergreen Cemetery which you come to before you get to town, you know. And the Anglins lived, oh, about three miles still further south. A Baptist preacher and his family that we had known ever since we came to Texas were livin' down not far from the Anglins. And one of his boys was about my age and the other one was two years older, I think, and he was Lee Mazey, my first date. And, so, one night they brought Papa Johnny up to our house to meet us. My sister Dillie was all grown then, and I was, let's see ... I was nineteen years old then, I think. And so Johnny asked me for a date. He asked me if I'd go to church with him one night. He was going up to Paris and he was going to have to come back that way, and he asked me if I would go to church with him that night. And I told him it was gettin' kinda' late, and said I didn't think that I would have

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<sup>18</sup> Thaddeus Augustus Anglin (b. 1838 – d. Dec. 1, 1911)

<sup>19</sup> Flora Ann (McKay) Anglin (b. Mar. 8, 1846 – d. 1942)

<sup>20</sup> John Thaddeus Anglin (b. June 24, 1872 – d. June 14, 1952)

time to get ready to go and get there in plenty of time. I just never could go to church and come draggin' in late, and I never did like to see a young couple do that, you know. And he thought that I meant simply to turn him down. And, afterwards, he always looked like he was interested in me, but he never made a proposition for a date any more.

And when he went west then that following fall, he wrote me a letter right straight after they got out there and asked me if I'd correspond with him. And we did correspond, and that's the way our courtship was -- through correspondence.

Papa Johnny and I became engaged about six months after our family [the Gibsons] had moved further west -- into West Texas. We became engaged and then we didn't get married for a year's time. We moved out there in November, and I soon got a letter from him, and then we got married the 30th of the December following [1907].

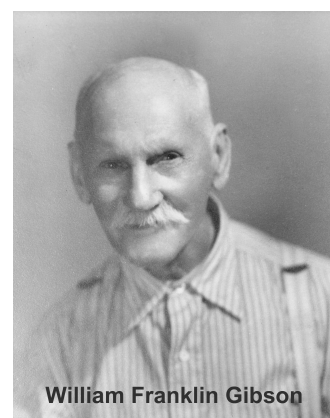
The members of my family weren't sure that I was going to agree to go further into West Texas with Johnny, because I told them that I might not go. And I never will forget the day he came to visit, and when he was fixin' to leave that morning, he came in from the dining room, and my daddy was sittin' back in his chair.

And he said, "Mr. Gibson, seems that you're going to have to give me your daughter to get rid of me."

And my daddy had his hands up over his head and said, "She's twenty-one years old. Well she's twenty-one."

I thought, oh, I wish he'd said, "Well, take her with our blessings and, and may you have a happy life together, and we'll miss you so much."

But I understand that this was the thing that was uppermost in people's mind -- whether one is really aware of what they're doing, you know. Marriage is the thing that everyone looks forward to doing -- is to have their mate, some day, of course.



William Franklin Gibson

**William Franklin Gibson**  
(11/5/1853 - 1/29/1945)

My mother said, "I don't have any children to give away." I said, "Well, what if all of us had stayed single and had all been here together, old bachelors and maids, wouldn't it have been a houseful of us?"

Papa Johnny's brother, Homer, had just lost his first wife and was left with four little children, you see. And they were there, and Eva and her mother were trying to take care of those little things. And when we talk it over, he and I, after he came out, I said, "I'm afraid that it won't work out. It won't be best for me to go. Too many, maybe, in one house."

He said, "Well, it would be yours just the same as anybody else's." And he said, "I know that you can -- you can just build a home -- whatever you want to do." He said that what was there, that he was the provider for it anyway, you know.

And I said, "Well, I know I could get along with 'em, as far as that's concerned," but I just said, "I'm just afraid that it's too many of us together, you know." And that they had the care of the little ones, and I didn't want to feel like I could be in the way at all."

He said, "Well, I don't blame you, if you don't want to, but I'll assure you of this, that after a year's time you'll have a home. I'd certainly expect that you'd have a home after a year's time."



**Mattie Gibson**  
Circa 1921 (age 35)

And when he went on, then, well I got to thinkin' about it -- that when he got back home his folks and his friends would think, "Well, she's let him down." And I decided then that we would go on and get married.

And so we went on to Childress and visited two of his sisters up there ... and stayed about a couple of weeks and he'd go out a-lookin' for land, just nearly every day. And he finally found some down near Lazare, and he liked it so much, it seemed. He knew it was rich and fertile, and he saw possibilities in it, and he came back and told me that he thought he had found what he would like to have. And, of course, whatever he liked, I did, too, so I said, "Well, I know I'll like it, too."

Well, there wasn't a thing on it, not a fence, not a plank of any kind. But it had plenty of water on it, and the people nearby were letting their cattle go, you know, just graze, and they'd go there and get water. And two bankers from Quanah had money in the bank for him when he got out there -- paying him for the use of the water. And he didn't even know that they were goin' to do it, but they had deposited that money in the bank there for him, for the use of the water for their cattle. The different people around owned cattle, see, and there were no fences, but then people began to take in the land then, and fence it, and then that kinda' thinned out the cattle as they put 'em in the ranches where they belonged, you know.

And Johnny's sister Eva -- and she was such a pretty young girl, beautiful blue eyes -- black hair. She was just a beautiful girl. Just his type, they both had black hair and big blue eyes. And she and I, just seemed like, I guess, felt like sisters to a great extent because of being together so much, you know. And so, not long after Johnny and I were married, she came to me one day, and she was a-writin' to a young man over in Oklahoma. And she said, "Mattie, I want to ask you to do a favor. Would you write a letter -- for me -- to my boyfriend?"



I said, "Why you -- what do you mean -- wanting me to write your boyfriend a letter?"

She says, "Yes, I do. I know you can write a better letter than I can."

I said, "Oh, I don't want to. Why don't you get your own writing done?"

And she just prevailed with me so till I agreed to write it. I think she copied it. But she sent it on -- with the wording that I put in there. So we did things together -- enjoyed a lot of things. I loved all of his sisters, but she was more like a sister to me because we had lived in the home together. And when Papa Anglin died, she and Mother Anglin moved on with us right out here south of Commerce, you know. And they lived there until she got married. Then she and Mother Anglin went to make their home down at Bogata. And my children were very attached to her -- the older children.

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When I first saw this poem, it was in a, a newspaper. And I thought that I would cut it out and save it, and learn, it because I always liked it so much. And I remembered it from having heard one of my teachers, when I was a small little girl, recite it, and I thought after that how glad I'd be to have that poem and to be able to recite it myself -- but, of course, having no "expression" as he used. I could never do justice to it, cause I couldn't use the expression, you know. But then I had always wanted to learn it and so I put my heart and mind to it and learned the words.

I have always been a great person to collect poems. Used to, when we'd get papers and magazines, and I'd find poems that I liked, and I would most certainly cut them out and save them -- and learned a lot of them just by memory. But this one -- it always appealed to me so much.

*Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight.*<sup>21</sup> Seeing the courage of a person, and understanding how that one could perform such a feat as that because of love and tenderness of their heart. That they could love someone enough to do that and suffer the things that she suffered.

Slowly England's sun was setting o'er the hilltops far away,  
Filling all the land with beauty at the close of one sad day;  
And the last rays kissed the forehead of a man and maiden fair,  
He with footsteps slow and weary, she with sunny floating hair;  
He with bowed head, and thoughtful, she with lips so cold and white,  
Struggling to keep back the murmur, "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

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<sup>21</sup> Rose Hartwick Thorpe, the poetess; 1850-1939; *Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight* poem was first published in the *Commercial Advertiser* (a Detroit, Michigan newspaper) in 1870

"Sexton," Bessie's white lips faltered, pointing to the prison old,  
With its turrets tall and gloomy, with its walls, dark, damp and cold -  
"I've a lover in that prison, doomed this very night to die  
At the ringing of the curfew, and no earthly help is nigh.  
Cromwell will not come till sunset"; and her lips grew strangely white  
As she breathed the husky whisper, "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

"Bessie," calmly spoke the sexton - every word pierced her young heart  
Like the piercing of an arrow, like a deadly poisoned dart -  
"Long, long years I've rung the curfew from that gloomy, shadowed tower;  
Every evening, just at sunset, it has told the twilight hour;  
I have done my duty ever, tried to do it just and right -  
Now I'm old I will not falter: Curfew, it must ring tonight!"

Wild her eyes and pale her features, stern and white her thoughtful brow,  
As within her secret bosom Bessie makes a solemn vow.  
She had listened while the judges read, without a tear or sigh,  
"At the ringing of the curfew, Basil Underwood must die."  
And her breath came fast and faster, and her eyes grew large and bright,  
In an undertone she murmured: "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

With quick step she bounded forward, sprang within the old church door,  
Left the old man treading, slowly, paths so oft he'd trod before;  
Not one moment paused the maiden, but with eye and cheek aglow  
Mounted up the gloomy tower, where the bell swung to and fro  
As she climbed the dusty ladder, on which fell no ray of light,  
Up and up, her white lips saying, "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

She has reached the topmost ladder, o'er her hangs the great dark bell:  
Awful is the gloom beneath her, like the pathway down to hell;  
Lo, the ponderous tongue is swinging, 'tis the hour of curfew now,  
And the sight has chilled her bosom, stopped her breath and paled her brow;  
Shall she let it ring? No, never! Flashed her eyes with sudden light,  
As she sprang and grasped it firmly: "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

Out she swung, far out; the city seemed a speck of light below;  
There 'twixt heaven and earth suspended as the bell swung to and fro;  
And the sexton at the bell rope, old and deaf, heard not the bell,  
Sadly thought that twilight curfew rang young Basil's funeral knell.  
Still the maiden clung more firmly, and, with trembling lips so white,  
Said, to hush her heart's wild throbbing: "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

It was o'er, the bell ceased swaying, and the maiden stepped once more  
Firmly on the dark old ladder, where for hundred years before  
Human foot had not been planted. The brave deed that she had done

Should be told long ages after: as the rays of setting sun  
Crimson all the sky with beauty, aged sires, with heads of white,  
Tell the eager, listening children, "Curfew did not ring that night."

O'er the distant hills came Cromwell; Bessie sees him, and her brow,  
Faded white with fear and anguish, has no anxious traces now,  
At his feet she tells her story, shows her hands all bruised and torn;  
And her face so sweet and pleading, yet with sorrow pale and worn,  
Touched his heart with sudden pity, lit his eyes with misty light;  
"Go, your lover lives!" said Cromwell; "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

Wide they flung the massive portal; led the prisoner forth to die,  
All his bright young life before him. 'Neath the darkening English sky,  
Bessie comes with flying footsteps, eyes aglow with love-light sweet;  
Kneeling on the turf beside him, lays his pardon at his feet.  
In his brave, strong arms he clasped her, kissed the face upturned and white,  
Whispered, "Darling, you have saved me -- curfew will not ring tonight."

I can say nearly all of it ... a few words that I didn't get in. Brother Harrod used to save me poems; he knew I liked them, so he'd save them for me. Once he sent me *The Drinking House Over The Way*. It was a long poem, but a sad one, sure. But he knew I just loved 'em, and he sent that poem to me when he was up in the Boston Mountains of Arkansas.

And when I think of all my children, I want to say that I have prayed that all you would all be the good Christians, devoted Christians, that you should be, and walk humbly with God.

Let's see, there's a Scripture that says, "What more does God want of a man but to show mercy -- and walk humbly with God." I believe that's how that goes.

I don't know what I would want to tell all of my children if they were here right now. There are so many wonderful things that I could say; but I could say this, "That the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." God tells us that. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. Not only then do we have wisdom from fearing God, but we are promised long life, if we fear God. And we are promised when you honor your father and your mother, we are promised a long life ... "*that your days may be long in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee.*"

I remember Milbern, saying, "Mama, don't you ever get with another mother and get to talkin' with her and be inclined to say, 'I just *know* my child didn't do such-and-such a thing' -- cause you don't know what your child might have done. And I said, "Don't you fool yourself, honey, I wouldn't say that because, although I *never* doubted my children *trying* to do the right thing, and I didn't believe that they would go *deep* into

wrong, still I would imagine that they might swerve somehow away from the path that they should have traveled sometime -- that most people would."

But, let's pray to God that we can be found in that narrow path. It's said "not many travel it." But they are traveling to the eternal, wonderful home, on that narrow path. And those on that broad path, there's many going there, you know -- and maybe that's a sad thing, I think.



**Mattie Anglin**  
Circa 1965

Well, honey, I can say this much to my children: I know I love them -- every one of you. And I would ask God to watch over 'em, correct 'em, protect 'em, and direct their way, each one of 'em. I've written my children many times: "May God direct, correct, and protect you." And whenever that's done, why, that's a wonderful thing, sure. I can say that with all the patience, all the interest that I know to speak of, I have at heart: my children, my grandchildren, and all that may follow after me.

And how I love people. And how I love God. I know He first loved us. I heard a man get up once and say, well, he loved God, and he thought God loved him. And the preacher corrected him, he said, "Wait a minute, God loved you first."

And so He did, and so He does.