

JOSEPH AUGUSTINE SAMS

By

(Katie Lucia Sams)
Mrs. Travis Johnson

His daughter

Having passed the half century mark, I now can look back with more complete understanding and appreciation for the noble, kind, generous, understanding gentleman of the old school whom through the graciousness of Heaven I have the privilege of calling my father. A South Carolinian by birth, and proud of it, he loved the memories of his boyhood spent in the numerous towns where the calling of his father, a scholar and a minister, carried the family. Born to parents of means in Greenville, South Carolina on November the thirteenth, 1856, he lived through varying circumstances during childhood. Stories of these early days told to me by my father are some of the happiest memories of my own childhood.

Often on a summer's night our family would sit on the wide porch which circled the entire girth of our large Victorian home of the tiered and frosted wedding cake variety - the home my father had built for my mother after they had spent the first eleven years of their married life caring for and supporting his father and mother, who, having passed through the vicissitudes of the war between the states, had lost or given to others in need their pre-war wealth. Here on this porch our father in his deep, rich spoken voice - a mellow bass - would tell us of the time he was sent to find a valued milk cow owned by an aunt and how he had to face alone the lonely valley of fire-flies and hanging grey moss. Sometimes it was a story about Johanas, their coachman, or about his very own faithful little colored slave, who played with him and served him and protected him constantly; or perhaps the story would be of jolly, fat Julie, their pastry cook. And always when these stories were of his mother gentleness and a note of pride came into his voice, for his love for her was deep and from her training and guidance came his kindness to all, his humility that leavened his sternness and austere pride, heritage of his father.

Rich indeed were these nights of story telling, and my brother, sister, and I always ruefully heard, "Me shack Shad rack - and to bed you go" - the Biblical pun that sent the three of us to bed. Yet the nights of singing were equally as enchanting, for the sweet voice of my mother, who carried either the alto or soprano lead, mingled with the mellow bass of my father. I can hear their voices today as they sang "Coming Thru the Rye" - "Annie Laurie" and "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

Steel becomes steel only because of the process of fire - so had the nobleness of my mother and father been molded. All superficiality had been burned from their characters - if ever it were there, for sorrow had breathed its hot breath on them seven times over. They fought their way up through necessary debt, incurred for care of my father's parents and his sister who was a victim of what we now know as polio miliatis - debts which had mounted through the first years of their marriage, slowly to be dissolved by rigid self-denial and sacrifice on the part of both. They tasted the depth of sorrow when through ignorance of the age scarlet fever and other childhood illnesses robbed them of their first five and later a sixth child. Thus the two of them were welded together with a strength of love that lives through eternity. However, their laughter came less freely and the gaities of life that beckoned to others lost allure. For this

reason our home was never often lit by the glare of revelry, dancing or social activities - ours was a more serious background in which to grow.

As I sit and write I look down over a wooded valley garden and a path that winds into the woods beyond. Ferns hold back the sweet shrubs, azaleas, heart-leaves, laurel, and other natives of our Southland, lest they take back the soil that once was theirs. The love of these things, wildings of our hillsides, and knowledge of their beauty, which is free, was a priceless gift to me gleaned from walks along other wooded paths, other winding streams, in other years with a father who brought us as children into these nature-made cathedrals to learn, know, and love this beauty that is God. To this day never can I press a heart-leaf in my hand and breath its pungent odor but that I think of those placed with care between my father's handkerchiefs for their woodsy fragrance; and the smell of sweet shrubs seems to say - remember that other day when you walked the hills with your father.

I know now what I did not know then - that a garden can help heal one's hurts, rest one's tired mind, and refresh a weary soul. Perhaps for these reasons a garden was an essential part of my father's life - perhaps he had turned to the soil when sorrow and burdens were heavy in his heart, when he struggled to meet the demands of life without sacrificing ideals or his rigid adherence to truth of character. In his big bold hand the diary record of his gardening, carefully entered, as always he did each task no matter how small, today is one of my most valued books, and today I smile as I think how I rebelliously, and reluctantly I am afraid at times, spent my afternoons as a child helping with garden chores - little knowing then that the seeds planted by my father were not all dropped into the rich earth, but as many or more perhaps were planted deep in the mind of a child - seeds of thought to bud, grow and bear fruit as the years went on. Vitamins, not known as such in that day, were in quantity and of the highest quality at our table - lush vegetables, fruits and berries in abundance for us and our neighbors ... my mother saw to that. Early spring peas, or juicy red tomatoes, will never taste so good as those from my father's garden - a garden any seedsman would have been proud to claim. Yes, a garden was my father's hobby - his club life - his golf, and poker games were rows and rows of beautifully grown vegetables in endless succession throughout the years.

Through Constance vigilance on the part of our parents the three of us were trained to live the truth - think the truth - and speak the truth. And it almost seems that quotations which helped school us in matters of character, when now they greet me from the pages of Shakespeare or other volumes, are the quotations of my father rather than the author. Even today, when I find myself lagging in some matter, cross, or out of tune, I can hear most clearly - "The man worth while is the man with a smile when everything goes dead wrong" or "To thine own self be true, etc." - and on and on. A quaint and old-fashioned way of schooling our moderns would see it, but as long as I live these quotations will be literary fingers poked into my ribs if I vere from the ways I was taught.

The business life of my father demanded much of him and much sacrifice on the part of my mother, who seemed to live solely for his welfare and that of her children. In his early years he had started to work - not being able to have the advantage of a formal education for law, the profession he would have chosen to follow and for which he sent his younger brother, Stanhope, through college. His first job was with Mr. Lewis of the Atlanta cracker factory - and it was nailing cracker boxes. Soon, however, he started on the beginning of his life career of "railroading" - first with the Louisville and Nashville and later with the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis. Ho where in the southeast was a man so well known and loved in this field. The loyalty and devotion which he gave his work could not be excelled. Sometimes I think it was almost too much loyalty, as my

mother spent many anxious hours, and lonely ones, when in his absence she had all the care and responsibility of both the home and children. My father's untiring efforts, enduring energy, and determination were a constant challenge to those who worked with and for him, and the friends he made and held through the years were from the lowest to the highest rank. His judgment of his fellow-man was keen and seldom if ever wrong.

During the first World War he was drafted by the Government as one of the most capable men in the transportation field, and appointed to a position of importance for the duration of the war - his own road welcoming him back at its close.

So stern was his sense of duty that I can remember him in his eighty-second year taking trips throughout the southeastern territory with the same thoroughness as in his earlier years - trips that demanded arduous living in hotels, in small southern towns - train travel and early and late hours. He was devoted to his work and continued to work up to his last illness...more than fifteen years beyond the retirement age. He was never retired. His closest friend, Vice-president of the road, had a deep love and respect for him and in every way saw to it that my father's every wish was carried out. More than fifty years of service he gave to this work which he loved.

My father lived carefully and discreetly - he denied himself much to be able to deny his children nothing - and though marrying when his monthly stipend was only thirty dollars, he built by conservative planning and investing a fortune of a size to leave his three children financially free from care.

In my life I have never been wrapped in a more unselfish love. He gave of himself freely, with no thought of himself, for his children were his first: and last thought besides my mother - sweet gentle spirit that she was - whom he lost in her sixty-fifth year. Be there no other reason for my existence, the love of these two, whom I love so dearly, has made my life more than worthwhile.

The foregoing was written by my sister, who cared for my father after the death of our mother and brought a joy and comfort into his life as no other could have done. This is understandable, for she possesses all the noble characteristics of both her father and mother and her life is a tribute to them.

Lula Duncan Sams (Bond)
October - 1950

ABSTRACT FROM ENTRIES IN THE PICTORIAL BIBLE of "W. J. Houston - from his sister:
(This Bible published by Robert Sears - 1858) Mrs. Eliza J. Clarke - to:
Mrs. Katie Sams - from her father,
W. J. Houston - 1904."

BIRTHS;

Eliza Catherine Houston born Atlanta, Georgia, May 15th, 1859
Joseph Augustine Sams born in Greenville, S. C., November 13th, 1856
Augustine Sams born Decatur, Georgia, February 19; 1893
Lula Duncan Sams born Decatur, Georgia, June 29th, 1897
Katie Lucia Sams born Decatur, Georgia, February 27, 1900
Marion Augustine Sams born April 5th, North Decatur Road, DeKalb Co., 1924 - son
of Augustine Sams.
Charles Joseph Sams, son of Augustine Sams, born 1557 North Decatur Road, Atlanta,
Georgia, on June 10, 1928.
Edward Stanhope Sams, son of Augustine Sams, born 1557 North Decatur Road, Atlanta.
Georgia, on December 9, 1933
Richard Houston Sams, son of Augustine Sams, born 1557 North Decatur Road, Atlanta
Georgia, on January 15, 1935
Catherine Sams Bond born Decatur, Georgia, October 26, 1923, daughter of Lula Sams
Robert Eavenson Bond, son of Lula Sams, born March 21, 1928, 1230 Clairmont Avenue
Decatur, Georgia.
Joseph Augustine Sams Bond, son of Lula Sams, born March 25; 1951; 1230 Clairmont
Avenue, Decatur, Georgia.

MARRIAGES;

Joseph Augustine Sams and Eliza Catherine Houston were married in Atlanta, Georgia
May 25, 1879 by the Rev. Dr. Spalding of Atlanta.
Augustine Sams and Lucile Eileen Dodd were married on 29 of May, 1923, at the
home of her parents, Decatur, Georgia. Dr. D. P. McGeachy
officiating.
Katie Lucia (Peggy) Sams and Travis Johnson were married on November 2k, 1927, at
the home of her father, Decatur, Georgia. Dr. D. P.
McGeachy officiating (Thanksgiving Bay).
Lula Duncan Sams and Cone Eavenson Bond were married on October 2k, 1922, at the
home of her parents, Decatur, Georgia. Dr. D. P. McGeachy
officiating.

DEATHS:

Eliza Catherine Sams died December 8, 1924 at eleven-fifty P. M. Buried Oakland
Cemetery, Atlanta, Georgia.
Joseph Augustine Sams died September 12, 1939 at seven-twenty P. M. Buried
Oakland Cemetery, Atlanta, Georgia.

This Bible is now owned by Mrs. Travis Johnson of Atlanta (Katie Lucia Sams).

MARRIAGE RECORD OF -
Joseph Augustine Sams
and
Eliza Catherine Houston

MARRIAGE BOOK 1876-1881 - VOL. D - PAGE 181 - DEKALB COUNTY COURT HOUSE
Decatur, Georgia

License Ho. 37 - given 22 day of May 1879 - by H. V. Bayne, Ordinary

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE - given by Albert T. Spalding, Baptist Pastor
Atlanta, Georgia

Dated - 25 of May, 1879

Joseph Augustine Sams and Eliza Catherine Houston were married by Rev. Dr. Albert T. Spalding, Baptist Minister, Atlanta, Georgia, at his residence and in the presence of his wife.

Mrs. Travis Johnson (Katie Lucia Sams), their daughter, has the letter that Joseph Augustine Sams wrote to Major W. J. Houston, father of Eliza Catherine Houston, informing him that he married his daughter on the above date, May 25, 1879-

COPIED FROM "THE W. J. HOUSTON"
CEMETERY LOT IH OAKLAND
CEMETERY - ATLANTA, GEORGIA
(Including Lots 3 and k)

BLOCK NO. 2*48

LOT HO. 3 - GRAVE HO. 9

FATHER

JOSEPH AUGUSTINE SAMS

Born Nov. 13, 1856 Died Sept.
12, 1939

"...But the greatest of these is Love."

LOT HO. 3 - GRAVE HO. 8

MOTHER

ELIZA CATHERINE SAMS Wife of J. A.

Sams

Born May 15, 1859 Died Dec. 8,
192^

"Faith, Hope and Love."