

The Farrar's of Mecklenburg County Our Family History

Many Farrar men and women who claim Mecklenburg County in southern Virginia as the place of their family roots can directly trace their line to John Farrar (1850). The ninth census, taken in the year 1880 shows John Farrar living in the Flat Creek District of Mecklenburg County. He was then, thirty years old and married to Mary, age 28. Back in 1874, they had one daughter, Cora, age six at the 1880 census. The record shows that John and Mary were both born in Virginia, that they were called "Mulatto" (fair skinned Blacks) and that neither could read nor write. John's occupation was shown as "laborer" and Mary's "keeping house.... These "occupation" entries in the census records were the same ones used earlier for slave labor. It is likely that both John and Mary were born slaves.

When Cora was sixteen, she fell in love with an eighteen year old man named Granville Baskerville. Their families lived thirteen houses away from each other. During their four to five year relationship, Cora and Grandville had three children, Willie Samuel, born 1890; Charlie, born 1891; and Ella, born 1892. Ella was only eighteen months old when her mother, Cora died in 1895 of tuberculosis. Cora was only twenty-one years old. Granville was unable to manage three small children, and placed them in the care of Cora's parents, John and Mary. And, since Granville and Cora had never married, the children were raised with Cora's family name, Farrar. During his life, Granville would marry two other women raising families with each. In his marriage to Virgie Phillips five children were born, all of whom knew and later acknowledged Willie, Charlie and Ella as half siblings.

Willie, Charlie and Ella grew up farming with their grandparents, John and Mary. Only Willie was old enough to have remembered their mother. The 1910 census shows that John, Mary, and the three young adult grandchildren lived in the twentieth house along Iron Mill Road. Iron Mill or State Road No. 4 is accessed off Buggs Island Lake Road, one half mile off Highway 58. Mary lived to be fifty-eight years old and died in 1910.

We are not certain when her beloved John died, but we believe it was after 1910. Exact burial locations for John, Mary, and their daughter, Cora are not known at this time. Born, September 5, 1921, one of Willie, Charlie and Ella's half siblings, Duretta Baskerville Brooks, daughter of Granville and Virgie, still lives on Iron Mill Road. In 1912, Willie was twenty-two, and married eighteen year old, Lola Alexander, the daughter of Thomas and Amanda Alexander. Nine children were born to their union; John William, 1914; Thomas, 1915; Esline, 1918; Venzelor, 1921; Theodore Roosevelt, 1925 ; Mabel, 1928; Kenneth, 1930; Ada Mae, 1932; and, Lola, 1936. Tragically, two daughters died before adulthood. Ada Mae died, at age nine in 1941, of complications from leg injuries sustained when one of the Newman brothers struck her with his truck. A few years later, just after Mabel turned twenty-one, a jealous boyfriend took her life in a shooting incident. He was tried, convicted and spent twelve years in prison for the crime. It is hard to imagine the heartbreak of losing two beautiful daughters.

Willie and Lola lived most of their lives in the Cedar Grove community. Their first home was a house that stood at a sharp curve on Cedar Grove Road approximately three miles from Highway 58. The two-story house had been built and was owned by Lola's brother, Eddie Alexander. Willie and Lola's first three children, John, Thomas and Esline were born in that house.

On October 18, 1920, they bought a 64.57 acre tract of land from a black couple who lived in New York City for two hundred twenty five dollars. The property was located just one mile further east on Cedar Grove Road. During World War II, a fine carpenter named William Green was contracted to build the house that would become the family "home place". It was a large house for the times. Though fewer acres remain in the family plot today, many of us still remember playing on the rolling wooded hills of the home place. The house no longer stands.



One mile further east on Cedar Grove Road from the new house once stood the old Cedar Grove Baptist Church. Many of our family members first heard of the neverending love of God at this church. Two of Willie and Lola's children; John William and Kenneth, are buried in its cemetery. The last pastor to lead this Church was Rev. G.W. Watson. Lola Farrar Connor is the only surviving child of Willie and Lola Farrar. Lola F. Connor's in-laws (the Barnes) gave the land on which Cedar Grove Baptist Church was founded.

Willie and Lola Farrar were early members of the old Sharon Baptist Church and are both buried at its old location on Iron Mill Road in nearby Baskerville, Virginia. In the 1960s, the Church rebuilt its sanctuary on Highway 58 in Midway, near the intersection of Cedar Grove Road. Lola's family (Alexander) was instrumental in establishing old Sharon Baptist Church on land believed to have been donated by a sympathetic white family. Church history tells that nine families including Alexander's and Farrar started the worship gathering. It is also recorded that worship actually began under a lean-to of tree branches at the Alexander blacksmith shop.



Willie and Lola were proud members of the brotherhood of Odd Fellows and sisterhood Household of Ruth organizations. In the late 1950s, The G. U. O. of O. F. in America, Hayes Chapel Lodge No.8123 in Baskerville, Virginia was where Willie held a position of leadership. The old two-room, Cedar Grove School offered public education for black children in the area. Located deep in the woods off Cedar Grove Road, a mile west of Willie and Lola's first home was where most of the Farrar children walked to attend school.

After many years, the old school needed to be replaced. Many family members had learned their lessons under teachers like sisters; Octavia, Ruth and Elizabeth Bowers; Jessie Alexander and her sister, Ruth Alexander Hilliard. A new Cedar Grove Elementary School was built just off Cedar Grove Road by Sherman Bennett and a Mr. Boyd from Bracey, Virginia, after seventy years at the old location. The old property was purchased by Cephus and Lou Brown who used the old lumber to build their home in the Cedar Grove Community. The "new" school house is still in use today as residential housing.

Willie's oldest grandchildren can remember that he was never without his little notebook in which he would record all manner of important information and slip it into the center pocket of his bibbed overalls which were always worn with a belt. Even on Sunday, Willie might be seen in his shin, tie and overalls. Though Lola could be seen in her fox stole on important occasions, she loved simple house dresses that buttoned from top to bottom which most often had a full apron tied in front.

We are their legacy; their memory will remain fresh with us for as long as we call their names.

Charles L Farrar, Grandson, 2008