

A Tiny Little Book from 1911

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In our day we have high school annuals. Had 'em for decades. They are nice, hard-bound books with pretty pages and lots of glossy photos. But it hasn't always been so.

I came across a little book about the size of a post card. You'd call it a booklet, paper bound, stapled on the edge like a magazine. It probably belonged to Aunt Lillie Blake Warren, Uncle Sam Warren's wife. He and my grandfather married sisters.

In the book, Aunt Lillie was in the second grade attending the Morrison Public School with her siblings. I suppose it was a one-room school house where every grade met in one large room all taught by the same teacher. Mine is a photocopy of the book Lillie received that I found amongst my mother's things.

Aunt Lillie's must have gone to her son Grady after she died. His signature is on the page where his mom's name appears. He added these words, "My mother Lillie Blake" along with his and her birth dates.

The cover of the little book appears above. Like all photos and documents linked in this blog, click the link, right-click the photo or document, then select the option to save a copy to your computer if you want to keep one. [CLICK HERE](#) for the cover.

A poem from "My Teacher" as well as other poems are on spare pages. Look at [THIS ONE on PAGE-1](#). Turn the page and on [PAGE 2](#) the names begin. There is Aunt Pearl Blake in the 4th Grade (Misspelled "Pearle") and Uncle Rufus Blake in 3rd Grade. He's right under George Jones (Naw, not THAT George Jones).

On **PAGE-3** I found Cousin Grady Warren's note that says, "Born 10/23/23" with an arrow pointing to his signature. Below that, he wrote "My mother Lillie Blake Born Aug 17—1902." Grady died Oct. 2010 at the age of 86. Aunt Lillie died in back in 1987. She was 84. In the little book from 1911, Lillie Blake Warren was in 1st Grade. Uncle Ernest Blake, Lillie's brother, was in 2nd Grade.

There was another Blake in 1st Grade with Lillie. Her name was Winnie. Never heard of her. Who could she be? I did some investigating. To paraphrase Alice in Wonderland, this story began to get "curiouser and curiouser."

You see, Chester A. Johnson, he's dead now, was an archaeologist and an excellent family genealogist. I stumbled across his book while doing family research in the late 1980s. Cousin Chester wrote about every member of the Blake Family in Bibb County, Alabama, who was there from 1819 to 1988 – all of them except for some of our family. I filled him in on our branch. Unfortunately, he already had the book published. Chester died before he could add us in a later edition.

But Cousin Winnie was in Chester Johnson's book, page 64, something like a 2nd cousin to Lillie, Rufus, and the rest of our bunch. After she was grown, Winnie married Fred J. Ballenger. They had no children. In 1947, Fred was out golfing one day and died suddenly. Maybe a heart attack or something. Winnie couldn't bear the grief of living alone and hung herself.

While searching through **Chester Johnson's book** looking for Winnie, I stumbled on yet another cousin. His name was Ross Franklin Gray. You won't find his name listed in the 1911 book from Morrison Public School but I should mention it anyway. Ross Gray was my mother's 3rd cousin.

I worked at the phone company with a guy named Gray from Bibb County. The name of "Gray" shows up elsewhere. On the road from Greenpond to Shelby County we used to drive out "Gray Hill Road." Maybe they're the same Grays, you say? Yeah, I'd say the same thing.

It doesn't stop there. Ross Gray is famous. He fought and died at Iwo Jima in WWII. He won our nation's highest military award, the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was an amazing hero. There's an old 1940s black and white, silent film on YouTube that shows everyone gathered on the football field at Bibb County High in Centreville. In it, a U.S. admiral is awarding the Medal of Honor to Ross's dad while the Governor of Alabama and other dignitaries look on.

Archibald Henry Blake, Sr.
(1795-1874)

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Archibald Henry Blake, Jr. (1824-1892)	Marion Alonzo Blake (1846-1922)
Theodocia Blake (1859-1888)	Joseph Benjamin Blake (1869-1947)
Benjamin Franklin Gray (1879-1966)	Lela Oney Blake (1905-1942)
Ross Franklin Gray (1920-1945)	Doris Virginia Warren (1924-2001)
MOH Recipient Iwo Jima Ordained Method. Min. (Johnson p. 59)	