

A Step Back in Time

By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas

On Christmas Eve, 1877, a young father lost his life at the Harpeth River Bridge, north of Eagleville. The McClaran Family, James P., his wife Martha Jane, and sons; 5 year old Edward Watson, 2 year old James Polk Jr. and 8 month old John William McClaran, was returning from church services, when the horse became frightened and backed the buggy off the bridge. James reached out to protect his three small sons and while doing so, his neck was broken and he died instantly. (The bridge across Harpeth River was east of the present bridge, at the time of this accident.)

James Polk McClaran, born near Eagleville in 1848, was the son of Alexander Parker and Mary Hutcherson McClaran. His siblings were: (1) Alexander Parker McClaran Jr., born about 1845, married Frances Jenkins and had seven children. The family moved to Texas where he died. (2) Martha Louise "Lou" McClaran, born 1847, married in 1867 to Harvey G. Palmer. They were the grandparents of William Harvey "Buck" and J. Robert Dyer. Buck Dyer was the first Mayor of Eagleville, serving from 1949 to 1970. (3) John Watson "Watt" McClaran, born 1849, married his 2nd cousin, Elizabeth "Betty" McClaran, daughter of Daniel and Lucinda Potts McClaran. They had no children. Watt McClaran ran a store near Eagleville at the corner of Highway 99 and Mt. Vernon Road. The store was later operated by Sill Lynch from 1941 to 1963 when he closed the store and sold the merchandise to Howard Marshall. (4) Mary Jane "Dolly" McClaran, born 1854, married 1st to George Comer, a cousin, and had eight children, who all died young. Dolly married 2nd Stephen Spain.



James P. McClaran

On January 11, 1872 James Polk McClaran married Martha Jane Stokes in Rutherford County, Tennessee. She was born in 1847 and was the daughter of Josiah and Minerva Edmonds Stokes. They lived north of Eagleville, near the Harpeth River, on part of the land his mother had owned. Unfortunately, little is known about James Polk McClaran, except the circumstances of his unusual death.

Squire Robert S. Brown of Eagleville was named administrator of his estate. Brown and Martha Jane the McClaran widow, brought suit against the Shelbyville, Eagleville, and Nolensville Turnpike Company (later referred to as the Eagleville, Unionville and Shelbyville Turnpike Company) because the bridge had no guard rails. They initially received a judgment for \$2500, but it was appealed to the Supreme Court and by the time all the costs were paid, \$753 remained for the three children.

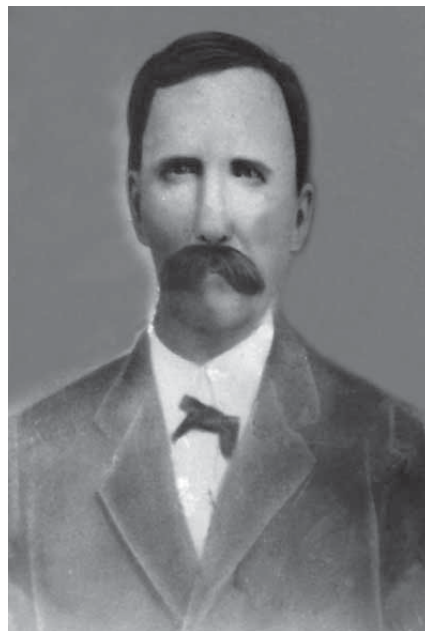
On June 14th, 1879, Martha Jane McClaran married Albert Henry "Cooch" Hudson and in 1880 the family was living at Puckett Tennessee,



Martha Jane Stokes McClaran Hudson

between Eagleville and Rockvale near Will Puckett's Store. Albert Henry was a farmer and blacksmith. Two children were born to this union; Leland Moore Hudson, born in February 1880 and Minnie May Hudson born in March 1882.

Soon after the birth of Minnie May, Martha Jane and one of her sons, John William, was taken ill with typhoid fever. When she was very sick, she asked her late husband's brother, John Watson McClaran to take her son, John William, to live with him and his wife. Years ago during a visit my grandfather, Lee Hudson and I had with John William "Bill" he recounted, he was about 5 years old and unable to walk from typhoid fever, his uncle Watt came for him on a horse. His last memory of his mother was leaving his home with his uncle and waving good-by to her. Martha Jane died on July 2, 1882. Her other two McClaran sons, Edward Watson and James P. Jr. made their home with their aunt, Mary Jane "Dolly" Comer.



Albert Henry Hudson

Albert Henry "Cooch" Hudson, with the help of his father and aunts, took care of Lee who was 2 years old and Minnie May, age 4 months after their mother died. Lee married Mary Beasley and made their home in Rover. Minnie May married Cager Pinson and lived near the Harpeth River, north of Eagleville.

Edward Watson "Ed" McClaran, born December 19, 1872 and died September 13, 1948. His wife was Sallie Hudson, daughter of Crockett and Amanda Wilson Hudson. At the time of his death, he was living near Murfreesboro.

According to the History of Rover, they had the following children; William Clarence, Clara, Henrietta, Ira Edward, Vernon Earthan, Elizabeth Maud, Horace Manson, Elam Crockett, Roy Carmick, Woodrow Wilson, and Jesse Watson.

James Polk McClaran Jr., b. Feb 1875 d. 2 Feb. 1944, married Mary Ella Hudson, b. 30 Oct 1875 d. 13 Jan 1970, daughter of John Crockett and Amanda Jane Wilson Hudson. Jim and Mary, the first of this family to make their home in Bedford County District 10, had nine children:

1. James Lee, b. 1900, married Nannie Ranson Patterson. They had 4 sons; James Lee Jr., William Bates, Samuel Ralph and Howard Francis "Pat".

Tragedy On Christmas Eve

- Willie Mae, b. 1902, married W. Earl "Jack" Smotherman and lived in Wartrace, Tn. They had children; Travis Elam, Dorothy Elizabeth and James Edward.
- Nettie Gertrude, b. 1904, married Roy Cleve Jernigan. Their children were; Mary Katherine, Robert Caldwell, Dolores and Rawlin Cleveland.
- Martha Jane, b. 1906, married Charles Warren Nutting. They had a daughter, Loretta Diane.
- Ernest Ralph, b. 1910, married Rubye Ollene Drennon and had 6 children; Mary Esther, Albert Leon "Bubba", Sherry Lane, Karen Joy, Marion Troy and Cynthia Ann.
- Lela Pearl, b. 1912, married John Ivie Powers. Their children were; Wanda Lou, Rita Jean, Edwin Ivie, James Ronald and Lela Frances.

Three children of James P. Jr. and Mary Ella McClaran; Otho Clyde, Albert Leonard and Nannie Lou, died young.

John William "Bill" McClaran, who was born April 29, 1877, continued to live with his uncle Watt McClaran after his mother's death. In 1897 he married Florence Eliza Ralston, who was born December 10 1876. She was the daughter of Josephus and Martha M. Reid Ralston. Bill and Florence's home place was the farm located south of the Rocky Glade Presbyterian Church. In 1904, he ran J. W. McClaran's General Merchandise Store in Puckett Tn. (The former J. N. Puckett Store, 4 miles east of Eagleville). Bill and Florence had 4 children:

- Aubrey D., b. 7-20-1898 d. 2-7 1968, married Lucy Pearl Tomlin and had 8 children; Joe Harold, Imogene, Nancy Elizabeth "Tiney Olphie", B. F. (who died as a small child), John Edwin "Jack", Ruth Ann, Barbara June and Wayne.

2. Nora Meaky, b. 9-23-1899, married Ernest Benz. Meaky lived most of her life in John Watson "Watt" McClaran and John William (Bill) McClaran Nashville but moved to Church St., Eagleville for the last few years of her life.

3. John Marvin, b. 10-30-1901 d. 3-2-1979, married Pauline Gardner and lived in the first house north of the Harpeth River, east of Highway 41A north. Marvin and Pauline had 5 children; Lottie Lee, John William, Donald Marvin, Sarah Jane and Cynthia Marie.

4. William Darrell, b. 7-23-1903, married 1st to Myrtle Ruth Read and had 4 children; Alvin Eugene "Sam", Nora Claudine, Peggy Ann and Helen Darrelaine. He married 2nd to Urnie Jackson.

Many descendents of James Polk McClaran (who tragically died 134 years ago on Christmas Eve) and Martha Jane Stokes McClaran Hudson presently make their home near Eagleville, Rover and surrounding communities.

Thanks to Carolyn Smotherman, who has done extensive research on the McClaran Family, for sharing information for this article.



John Watson "Watt" McClaran and John William (Bill) McClaran



L to R: John Watson (Watt) McClaran and the McClaran Brothers, John William (Bill), James P. (Jim) and Edward Watson (Ed)