

# **Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Archives**

## **FMH-A0007a transcription**

**Transcript of the continuation of interview with Hazele Williams Payne with an unnamed interviewer. Mrs. Payne comments on 3 comic poems about Fairhope people written and illustrated by W. A. Dealy. This interview picks up in the middle of reading and reviewing the 1916 (updated and illustrated in 1943) of "Dem Were Da Days." This review started in FMH\_A0004b. The other 2 comic poems are from 1931 and 1935.**

### **FMH-A0007a, Approximately 32 Minutes**

This is April the 28th, 1982. We're continuing an interview with Hazele Payne on the PPK Minstrels of February 1916.

We could rave all day about that early bunch and wouldn't have time to stop for lunch, So we'll just jot down a few of the others by name, and you figure out how they won their fame.

There was Thompson and Pilcher. Pilcher and his wife were the ones that wrote the Fairhope song. Pilcher wrote the words, and his wife, she was a musician, and composed the music to the song of Fairhope. Thompson was an early settler here. All I remember was that she was my Sunday school teacher. Oh. The Christian church? Mm-hmm.

And Williams and Ring. Ring were the ones that had the Ring farm. The boys from Texas that bought the farm in the country started the farm, dairy farm. At our first, you might say, dairy farm, they had dozens of cows and shipped the milk.

And Fowles? Oh, Streeter and Woods, who'd done everything. Wood was an early settler and was one of our justices of the peace. Isn't that Piney's father? No, it was before Piney's time. And Woods' daughter married Coleman. Coleman was an older man and Genevieve was his daughter and she married this Mr. Coleman and he had a little office right there about where Gaston's garage is now.

And Fels and Troyer, Dr. Sheldon by gee, who drank condensed milk with his friend Archie. Fels was connected with Fells Naptha soap, and he was a very good friend of the Organic Schools, gave many donations towards it, was very interested and visited here many times.

Who was the other? Troyer. Troyer had large holdings, satsumas, out Morphy Avenue about two miles, went on there from satsumas and pecans and extended east for a mile or more. And he had a packing house at one time for satsumas. He had so many and he had his own packing house and shipped these satsumas. And the satsumas became

so famous through here our climate was just right for it that Russia heard about it and Russia's climate on the Black Sea is practically the same as ours. The Black Sea area? So, they sent some men here, Russians, to look the situation over. And they found it very favorable, and they wanted to take these satsumas back and plant them, start their own orchards over there at the Black Sea. And they stayed quite a while, and Mr. Troyer sold them crates and crates and crates of satsumas that my husband Leonard Payne helped pack and they shipped them and when they got ready to ship them over they wanted Mr. Troyer and Mr. Payne to go with them to plant them to see that they got started all right.

Well Mr. Troyer went but my husband did not go thank goodness because Mr. Troyer was over there for maybe one year or two, I don't remember just how long. He got them planted, well established and all, and his wife eventually joined him there. And one night in the dead of night, they came and took him. He was a very outspoken man. And I imagine the religion, I mean the politics they had over there would go very much against what he thought. And he probably talked a little bit too much. And so they took him one night, and that's the last she or anybody ever saw or heard of him. And she stayed there for a year or two, thinking that she could get some connection, and through our department, they tried to make connections with him, but they never could find anything about him. And eventually, they got her back to this country, and her brother lived in Bellingham, Washington State and she went up there with him but soon after she passed on. It was a very sad affair.

Dr. Sheldon? Dr. Sheldon was no army surgeon. He had his home along there about over where Price's is along in that street anyway and he was really he and Dr. Michonne were the first doctors in Fairhope but Sheldon was the surgeon and he was quite a guy. He mixed in with everybody and was everybody's friend. And he drank condensed milk with his friend Archie. Yeah I guess so. He used to make coffee and I know he'd only let the keep started like drip coffee. He let it go through once and take it out. That's all. And he said that it wasn't fit to drink if it stayed in there, if the grounds did. Now what he dripped them through I don't remember, but that was our first drip coffee that we knew about around here.

An old Otto Vent, Vent, Vent, Vent, do an odd chores to help pay his rent. Otto Vent was an old Dutchman that liked to fish. He carried his bait in his pocket and you could smell him a mile away coming. Mrs. Cross, who ran the Fairhope Hotel and myself, used to fish out on the wharf quite a little bit. We both went out there for our health, the doctor advised us, and Otto would come out to fish. Some boys were out there one day, and Otto was pretty strong that day in his smell, and they decided he needed a bath, so they threw him overboard. Well, after they threw him in, they realized he couldn't swim, So they had to jump in and pull him out.

And Dewey Wheeler, who ran a big store, there you'd pay spot cash as you left the door. He had a mercantile store there where Judy Judy's is on Fairhope and Section. And he was sort of a crabby old fellow, but he ran a pretty good store, but you had to pay money for it.

And Papa and Mama's variety store covered with junk from ceiling to floor. Papa and Mama Rathje. They had R-O-G -E-E. R-A -T-H-J-E, I think is the way they spelled it. And they really had a variety store. You could hardly get in. But in a mud, the mud and scum of things, you'd find some lovely things. And if you really wanted some real, real nice dress material or some very beautiful lace. You'd go to Mama Rathje's, and she'd put the box out, and you'd fall through that, and you'd find some beautiful pieces of lace. And there were some lovely bolts of material that you'd dig out of the other things. They had all sorts of things, and it is where Holland's drugstore is now.

And old Papa Zanders would hand out the beans while Emile would rave about the girl of his dreams. That was Papa Zander's had our first delicatessen store on the corner of Fairhope and Bayview. And he just had sort of a delicatessen downstairs in his home. Served beans, hot potato salad, weenies. And many a time the gang would get him out at 11 o'clock at night and make him come downstairs and fix up things for us to eat. Emile, his son, was a little bit remedial but he was enough so that he helped his father a lot with this store.

And here's some other names that he has written down. Clark, Powell, Weaver, Millie Beckner, Old Man Olsen, Olson was a ship builder. He lived down there by Magnolis Beach, had a home right on the shore. He fixed boats and built small boats also.

Charlie Wilson? And Charlie Wilson was the son of the Wilsons who were kin of the Hunnells the first people that came here.

Millie Beckner was a tall spinster lady who lived on Church Street across from the First Christian Church in the home of the Stearns that her lady bought. Her father was a preacher. Christian church preacher? Yes. And she was just about, he was retired, he didn't preach. But she was just about as severe as her father was.

Dr. Slosson and his brother Eugene, they came from Silverhill, but where they came from to Silverhill I don't know, but they came from Silverhill and they built two big homes which still stand on Bayview and Magnolia. Bayview and Magnolia. And that's Mrs. Boise's father. Mrs. Boise's father. In fact, Boise Lane is there now. There's a lane called Boise Lane. Yes.

And then Cresswells. Who? Cresswells. I had those. They were—I don't know where they came from, but they had a large home. They were an older couple and they lived on Section Street where Greer's is.

There's Swift? The Swifts, they got a—they came from Des Moines, Iowa and they bought a section of land from the Bay clear straight to Section Street. It was an old Spanish grant. Mr. Swift was my grandfather. And when he bought the place, there was an old house in it with what you might call a dog track right through the middle, a large, large room, and a large gallery all around with dirt floors. They enclosed some of those galleries and made a couple more rooms and lived there until they built the larger home, which is now Mrs. Kendrick's house.

And Cross? Cross? Cross came from Texas, and Mr. Cross was a—they called him Captain Cross, so he must have been an army man. They came and had a little farm out in the country, oh about two or three miles out, and us lived out there. And later they moved into Fairhope and built the Fairhope Hotel, which the Milhams now own. Fairhope Avenue.

And Comings? Comings had the, you might say really, it was the hotel and it was on where Gavin Hunter's laundry is. They had that whole corner. She had a large, large home there called The Gables. She had rooms and served meals, so it would be more or less the hotel that we lived there.

She had that whole square there, right straight through, because she had two or three cottages on the back that she rented. And in one of those cottages, she let Mrs. Johnson have to start her first Organic School. She and her—they were from Michigan, that's where they were—and she was a calisthenic teacher up there. She used to come to the public schools. Mrs. Johnson, the first year here, taught in the public school. She became acquainted with the Comings, and they would come up and she would give calisthenic lessons to us once a week. And old Mr. Commings would come up and teach carving once a week. We all had our jackknives. And to get holly wood, it's very, very soft when it's green to carve into things. But when it gets cold, it hardens into just like stone as it dries. So we learned to make knives and forks and chains and various things, but they were intensely interested and she gave Mrs. Johnson this house and twenty-five dollars a month to run her school. It was the first starting of it.

Captain Nichols? Captain Nichols was an old sea captain and he had all that land down where Chateau Royale is now from the bay front back quite a ways. I don't know how far back. He had a large home on the bay front. He had one son, Forrest. That's about all I know about him. He'd sit on the porch and smoke his pipe. When Anna May Oswald and I used to go down and see him, he was her uncle. We'd play on the beach and he'd always be on the front porch smoking his pipe. He was Annie May Oswald's uncle? Yeah.

And Flynn? Who? Flynn. F-L-I-N-N. Slim. No, F. Flynn. Flynn. Don't know.

And Minnich. Minnich's came from St. Louis. And the Minnick home still stands. It's across the street from Greer's, a large two-story house there. And several cottages have been built in the yard to rent since. And they were retired people. They just came here and what brought them here, I don't know. Very, very well-cultured people.

Well, folks, this must stop, as I said before. And still we've left out a hundred or more. Old hometown, like the old gray mare, now ain't what she was in those days so rare.

Now this was done in 1943, and so that was about twenty years after the minstrels. And the PPK you say stood for Paw Paw Kewin. Paw Paw Kewin. K-E-W-I-N is the way it sounds. It's an Indian name. Okay. The next one is called... I forgot. I've been coughing all through that thing, how it'll sound on that record.

**This concludes the review of the 1916 (revamped and illustrated in 1943) “Dem Were Da Days” by W. A. Dealy.**

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**Another cartoon/poem by Dealy written in 1931 titled *That Old Gang of Mine* is now discussed by Mrs. Payne.**

The next one is *That Old Gang of Mine*. And this was written in 1931 from Wilson Dam, Alabama. W. A. Dealey. Fifteen years away from the gang, calling it home where my hat would hang, jumping around for your Uncle Sam, designing a lock or building a dam. But during this time I've kept track of you because the Courier tells what you plan and do. Tells about Jim and his new garage, why he sells Fords and not the Dodge, or that Piney has played for some social tea or one of her kids fell out of a tree. And that Axel Johnson is taking a rest after the strain of a golfing test. And that Nettie, his wife, is all upset because Axel went and won the bet. Says Leonard Payne goes to Silverhill to help the doctor whose bugs to kill. Those bugs to kill. And that Hazele, his wife, is a busy type ever since Billy fell off of his bike. It says Captain Ed has built a new home because his wife adopted a child for her own. That was Phyllis. His wife is now Phyllis. Dade. Dade. It was Phyllis Roberts, Captain Ed Roberts. Says our old friend Jack is the same old boy and his daughter's marriage brought him joy That was Jack Galbraith that son-in-law of the Whittiers who had the boarding house on Magnolia and Summit Summit and their daughter they had one daughter Gladys and she married a Mr. Kramer who was a lawyer and icame to Fairhope Nick Kramer. Nick Kramer, to live. And they had this one son. And that Grace, his wife, is all aglow since the stork made a call on Gladys, you know. That was quit, Kramer. Mm-hmm. And that Walter Mask is doing fine, still helping the folks at the end of their line. Walter Mask had the first mortuary in Fairhope, and that mortuary is still there. In the social world, his wife still reigns, knocking them cold when she entertains. Marie was quite a social climber, entertained lavishly, had nice silver, nice china. And that Max McGill has opened a place for

reproducing the lines of your face. He had a photo shop in Mobile and they lived, his wife was Leah Gaston and they lived on the bay front and he had his photo shop in Mobile. And Leah, his wife, is some busy bee taking care of their kiddies three. And we read about Pete an awful lot but never a word about tying the knot. That was Pete Baldwin. That was Pete Baldwin. Or that old Ed Sheldon's a contractor now forgot all about when he milked Brown's cow. And that Cornie Gaston has settled down as a prominent doctor of the town. He was a chiropractor. He went to Chicago to learn the trade and came back and had an office here. And Spider sticks on the job with his dad, getting the merchants to take an ad. Spider Gaston. Fairhope Courier. Gaston's youngest son. But Frankie hasn't changed. She's just the same, helping her dad in the newspaper game. Maybe I better say there that Spider's real name is Arthur Fairhope, and he was the first boy born in Fairhope. First child, I believe. Frances was Gaston's oldest daughter and worked in the Courier office with her father. That's Frankie. Watching us boys when we get too gay and bawling us out in the same old way. Yeah, Spider's been married quite a while. His wife, like Cornie's, has lots of style. And our friend Gladys Lowell's in politics, seeing the taxpayer plays no tricks. Gladys worked in the city office, just what she did. I don't know, she clerked there for some time. And the Myrtle Hotel, run by old Bill Funk, has plenty of room for your bags and trunk. That was a little hotel on Fairhope Avenue. It was there I guess where the old Funk home was. And Mrs. Funk, well she's mighty fine, seeing that everyone has a good time. She did, she was very jolly. Her first name was Lolite? I don't remember. 'Twas a wonderful sight for Jim and I when we gathered round for a real fish fry. There was the gang not changed one bit, and with Mac and Joe they made a big hit. So here's to the gang of our younger days. Stick together, you'll find it pays. And some of these days, you can mark this down, we're all coming back to our old home town.

**This concludes the 1931 piece.**

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**Another piece written in 1935 by W. A. Dealy titled "Merry Christmas Folks" is read by the interviewer and discussed by Mrs. Payne.**

This next one is called a Merry Christmas Folks card and it was done in 1935 and it's from the Dealiys when they lived in Nashville, Tennessee. I've just got to go back to that good old time when we were all kids and the town in its prime when Sweet Marie and Bolan G as well just couldn't let things lay down where they fell. Sweet Marie was the first librarian (Howland) and Bellangee was one of the first settlers here in Fairhope and they did tangle. Yeah Albright and Wolfe both swore they were right and started in with the Colony fight. T'was then our first mayor put the order out that no more drunks could amble about on Christmas Eve nor on Christmas night. Still Doc was the first one to get half tight. 'Twas that same Christmas in the old town hall that Freeman staged that free-

for-all. And Miss Alice Herring was covered with roses while friend E.B. Gaston sang "Old Man Moses." Alice Herring was the sweet Alice that we talked about later. And she later married a man named Christopher, and the old Christopher home still stands on Magnolia Avenue, east of the Whittier Hall. And as long as she lived there, whenever she ate, she always set his table after he passed on, she always set a place for him at the table, even the coffee and the water and everything. We had music by Finkley, a fiddling fool, who used to teach in the old Gable School. Finkley was the, he was an old fellow and he lived right straight down here on the North Summit and at that time that was woods. And we thought he lived way back in the woods when he lived down in there. There was only one or two houses in this whole section. It was way down there. And to go back to this Alice Christopher, Alice Herring, she married this Christopher under the old magnolia platform tree on the bay front. And it was an event open to the public. And it was quite an event. It was a marriage ceremony down there. And playing his fiddle, teasing the girls, shaking a head that was nothing but curls. and while his old horse lay down for a rest, Jim Gaston and Bill worked a fireworks test. Up jumped a horse and away it tore, leaving the wagon piled up on the store. An old man Coleman stayed up all night hoping to shoot some boy on sight, swore that by dawn he'd have the proof as to who threw the rocks on his old tin roof. His house was roughed with tin. and to torment him, they'd throw rocks on it. It was about the same time that Cresswell's store burst out in flames about a quarter to four. So Pilcher and Williams and old Rudy Clark got up volunteers to fight every spark. And about this same time, the Mershon store put that elevator in to their second floor. They had just cut the hole when Cornie came by and fell through the hole, and we thought he would die. Yeah, it was quite a man. Cornie fell through. They had just this one big, well, it was just one big thing, the elevator thing that went up, just a platform that raised up to carry the things upstairs. Very crude affair. The whole thing wasn't. Cornie fell through, and we thought surely he was gone. And then there was Mark and his brother Paul, who drove an old mule that did nothing but stall. They were the Mullen old boys that lived out in the country. But boy could he swim out at Cowpen Branch, that old swimming hole right close to their ranch. And old Doc Sheldon, what songs he could write, drank condensed milk just to keep himself right. He and friend Archie could hit the high spots along the Bay Shore, especially Knott's. Archie was Archie Littlefield. Now let's skip a few years, say till about 1910, and see how this gang got together again. Now Old Doc Ring has the Jersey farm with his friend Bill Dealy to keep him from harm. Grace, did you want to say something? Bill Dealy lived in the country about a mile and this Doc Ring lived on the farm about two miles out and they were very close friends and both a little bit on the rounder side. Grace and Jack Galbraith arrived about then and started to raise them a new sort of hen And then the Payne boys drifted down our way to raise a few acres of cowpea hay. The pain, three Payne boys came from Chicago and they had 120 acres, about three miles out on the farm and it was planted to most anything and everything. And built them a

shack about three miles east where all of the gang was assured of a feast. Yeah, we used to get in wagons and everybody would go out to this shack. It wasn't much larger than this room, half of this room. And we always had a feast out there, cook outdoors. Of course, the girls always brought a lot of things and they'd do some cooking outside. Next came Gene Frazier who took the town with a line of hot air that never ran down. Gene Frazier was a friend of theirs from Chicago. And he was the son of a wealthy father. I think probably he gave him so much to leave Chicago, I don't know what else. He came here with a big car and he'd known the Payne Boys in Chicago so he ganged up with them out on the farm. And he probably built him about 40 acres with a little house on it just to have some place to go and stay I guess. And so he lived over in there and eventually the Payne Boys bought his farm and added it to theirs, but he belonged to the gang. And then came Jim Spencer with Barr as well, a bunch that could harmonize something swell. Jim Spencer was another ne'er-do-well from the east somewhere, I don't know where, but he came down and joined the boys and he was more or less of a brick mason, so he used to go down and help the builders and all. And this Barr, I don't know where he came from or what he did. He was about 6'5", I guess. He was the tallest fellow I've ever seen, probably. And he joined up with the gang, too. So they had quite a bunch out there. In the PPK Minstrel, they sure put the pep, and on the dance floor they had a new step. Yeah, they did. They joined the minstrels, and that's what put the minstrels over big. They had all this gang with it and they were all good dancers and everything went well. It was just about now that Myrtle Monroe came down for the winter and knocked Bill for a roll. Yep. Of course Daphne and Frank had been married sometime when Myrtle and Bill fell into the line. It's Daphne and Frank Anderson. That's uh, that was Francis Gaston and Daphne Brown Anderson.

End of audio tape.