

Katie Belle Gunn [Lewis]

1879-1967

Katie Belle and Ralph Lewis

Picture taken about 1960 in front of their home in Alberta, Virginia

Katie was my great grandmother



Katie Belle Gunn was the fourth child of Peter Harrison Gunn and his wife Mary Thomas Johnson. She was born near St. Mark's Methodist Church in Nottoway County on September 3, 1879. She was my great grandmother.

Katie Belle Gunn married Ralph Lorenzo Lewis on December 22, 1897 in Nottoway County, Virginia. Ralph was the son of Alexander Silkirk Lewis and his wife Cornelia Ann Abernathy. Ralph and Katie Belle were married by the Rev. James L. Spencer. Their marriage is recorded at the Nottoway County Courthouse in Book Two, page two. Katie was eighteen years old, and Ralph was twenty-one.

Hereafter, they will be called "Country Grandma and Grandpa. I called them Country Grandma and Country Grandpa to distinguish them from the nearly dozen living grandparents, I was fortunate enough to know growing up.

Country Grandma was a homemaker, and Country Grandpa was a farmer. I remember them as being so happy whenever their grandchildren came to see them. They loved children. My family would drive from Richmond, Virginia to see them on Sunday afternoons after church, with my grandparents Lafayette Monroe and Mary Catherine Lewis Gunn leading the way. More often than not, my aunts and their husbands, and my cousins, followed in a convoy of relatives, all going to Alberta, Virginia for a visit.

I remember watching home movies, sitting on the grass at the home place, with Country Grandpa smoking a pipe or cigar to keep the mosquitoes away. In 1954, my father gave me two chicks at Easter, one blue, one pink. They were supposed to die. They didn't and they grew to adulthood following me everywhere I went, to the horror of my mother. One Sunday we took them to the country, so they could live free at Country Grandma's house. On a return visit months later, I remember inquiring about my pet chickens, and having Country Grandma tell me, how delicious and tender, they had been! Oh, Country Grandma!

My next remembrance was of a time, when Country Grandma had been ill with pneumonia and the prognosis wasn't good. Sadly the convoy of family was coming to Alberta, thinking it could possibly be the last time we would see her. As we entered the hospital wing where Katie Belle's

room was, I heard her laugh. I ran down the hall, so happy to hear her, all the while, my parents were calling out to for me to "stop" my running. I reached her room, where she said, "Well, Cheryl Gayle, it's good to see you, wish I didn't have to almost die to get you here. Where's your daddy?" I've never seen so many smiles from my family, and how happy we were to see Country Grandma sitting up in bed, laughing and hugging all the Richmond relatives.

Country Grandma was a true Christian woman. She taught Sunday School at Bethel Church in Alberta. She raised her children with good values, one being hard work. She was always small in statue and had braided white hair. Katie and Ralph weren't wealthy in terms of money and property, but were enriched with the love of family, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Katie was a good cook, a quilter, and lived by the motto "If you can't say something good about someone, don't say anything"

Katie and Ralph were thin. They worked too hard to be anything else. I remember their 60th wedding anniversary and going to see them, and Country Grandma wore a corsage on her shoulder. Most of their children were there for the celebration. There were so many people, all family and most of them lived close by.

Country Grandpa, Ralph Lorenzo Lewis died September 13, 1963 at the age of 87, and was buried in Bethel Church Cemetery in Alberta. Country Grandma, Katie Belle Gunn Lewis died October 9, 1967 at the age of 88. After Country Grandpa died, Katie Belle spent a lot of time with her daughter, Mary Carter Lewis Gunn in Richmond, and also with her daughter Kate Lewis Parsons in Mechanicsville. It was at great Aunt Kate's home in Mechanicsville that Country Grandma died from pneumonia. She was buried in Bethel Church Cemetery beside her husband Ralph L. Lewis.

The children of Ralph and Katie Belle Gunn Lewis were:

1. Myrtle Belle Lewis born 10-299-1898 and died January 1975 at the age of 76. She married Joseph Ashby Brooks on Dec 21, 1922 in Richmond, Virginia. Myrt and Ashby lived in Highland Springs, Virginia not far from my house. They had two sons, Joseph Ashby Brooks, Jr, who never married, and Lewis Earl Brooks. Myrtle is buried in Oakwood Cemetery.
2. Mary Carter Lewis born March 11, 1900 and died August 9, 1991 at the age of 91. (my grandmother) Nannie married her double second cousin, Lafayette Monroe Gunn, Sr. in 1917. They had four children, three survived infancy; Myrtle Francis Gunn, Lafayette Monroe Gunn, Jr (my father); Audrey May Gunn, and Mildred Anne Gunn. Roy Robbins Gunn died at the age of 2, and is buried in Riverview Cemetery.
3. Viola Lewis born March 22, 1905 and died in Richmond, Virginia Oct 3, 1985. Viola married Thomas Allen about 1933. They divorced and she married Roy M. Steele. Roy worked on the Panama Canal. Roy died in 1972 and Aunt Vi moved to Richmond to be near her sisters, Mary Lewis Gunn, and Kate Lewis Parsons. She was 80. Viola is buried in Washington Memorial Park.

4. Ralph Loyd Lewis born Feb 15, 1909 and died April 3, 1992. Ralph never married. He joined the U.S. Navy in WWII, and contracted sphyllis. He spent his life in veteran hospitals in Hampton Roads, Virginia; Salem, Virginia; Newport News, Va; and finally Bayside Convalescent Home in Poquoson, Va. He is buried at Bethel Church Cemetery. He was 83.
5. Katie Arlene Lewis born 12-3-1910 died July 24, 2009. Aunt Kate married Ed Miller on June 14, 1947. Ed died in 1972 and was buried in Westhampton Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia. Kate married second to Edward Brett Parsons on April 8, 1975. They lived in Mechanicsville, Virginia on Burnside Drive. Brett died September 21, 1985 and Kate lived in their home until her death. She had no children. She is buried in Westhampton Cemetery beside her first husband Ed Miller. She was 98.
6. Emory Wilson Lewis born September 16, 1912 and died Jan 21, 1990 at the age of 77. Uncle Em was a personal favorite. He had a laugh that was infectious and was such a fun person to have at every family event. He married Evelyn Baggett on April 20, 1935 at Hatcher Memorial Methodist Church in Richmond, Virginia. He and Evelyn had two sons; Emory Wilson Lewis, Jr., and Thomas E. Lewis. He is buried in Westhampton Cemetery in Richmond.
7. Cornelia Ann Lewis born April 23, 1915 and died March 7, 2002 at the age of 86. She married Grayson W. Leiss on Apr 25, 1934 in Washington, D. C. Grayson and Cornelia had three children; Patricia Ann Leiss; Robert Alvin Leiss; and John Wise Leiss. Cornelia is buried in the cemetery at Bethel Methodist Church, Alberta, Virginia
8. Francis Louise Lewis born June 6, 1917 and died Nov 6, 2008. Aunt Lou married Henry VanHouten on March 29, 1950 in Warrenton, Virginia. She and Henry had one son Steve VanHouten. Aunt Lou and Henry divorced. She worked in Washington, D.C. for the War Department in the Pentagon until 1952, when she was transferred to MCAS at Opa Locka, Florida and for the Internal Revenue Service in Jacksonville, Fla, finally she moved back to Washington, DC where he worked until retirement for the Department of the Intertior. She moved to a retirement village in Richmond, Virginia until she passed away November 6, 2008 at age the age of 91. She is buried in Richmond in Washington Memorial Park.
9. William Edward Lewis born 8-16-1921 and died Nov 11, 1995 at the age of 74. He had a twin brother, and was affectionately called (Big Boy) by the family. He married Etta Inez Evans on Dec 16, 1940. Big Boy had six children.
10. Wilbur Price Lewis born 8-16-1921 and died June 12, 2003 at the age of 81. (Little Boy) Wilbur married Grace Matthews on August 26, 1940. Wilbur and Grace had three children; twins girls Jean and Jane Lewis; and Anthony P. Lewis.