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Sounds of the Past

Vivian Cole*

On a winter evening our family gathered around the fire in the huge rock fireplace in the old log kitchen of our house. Outside it was freezing cold, but inside we were cozy and warm. Frances and I would laugh at the sounds made as the sap in some of the green wood on the fire neared the boiling point. Sometimes the sound would be like someone humming a high-pitched tune. At other times it would be a popping and cracking noise ending with a loud pop as the sap exploded sending hot embers flying out almost to the edge of the hearth.

On some of those evenings we heard the wind whistling around the house and even down the chimney. It was a loud, wailing noise which would have frightened us had we not felt so safe and secure in our warm kitchen with Mother and Daddy.

Where are those sounds now? I am sure greenwood still makes the same noises as it burns, but I don't have a fireplace anymore. The people I know who do have fireplaces use gas logs, so I never hear the songs of the burning wood. And I never hear the wind wailing as it blows around the house and through the trees. Is it because my den is in the center of my house? Or is it because there are so many other noises I just don't pay attention?

Another weather-related sound we used to hear was the train as it passed through Farrington Station, which is now covered by the waters of Jordan Lake. On a cool, damp evening we would first hear the sound of the whistle as the train neared the crossing. Then we could hear faintly the clicking of the wheels on the rails as the long, long freight trains passed. Then, if all conditions were right, we might hear the choo-choo-choo of the engine. Someone would always

say, "It's going to rain. I hear the train." And sure enough it always did, and very soon, too.

Sometimes, late in the afternoon, we could hear music coming from towards town. We recognized this music as coming from the carillon in the Morehead-Patterson Bell Tower on the campus. There were no university or hospital buildings between us then, and no heavy automobile traffic to block the sounds. It has been many years since those bells have been heard in our community.

Mr. Bill Cheek ran a sawmill a short distance down the road from our house. Every day at twelve o'clock the sawmill whistle blew announcing to the workmen at the mill and those who might be working in nearby woods it was time to stop for lunch, or dinner as we said. Ladies in the community checked their clocks when the whistle blew. If their time was different, the clocks were always set because everyone knew Mr. Bill's time was right. I'm not sure it was, always, but at least everyone in the community had the same time. The mill has been closed for a long time. We have to set our clocks by the radio or television now.

There were some farm sounds which I never hear now, of course, but the one I think of most is the sounds of the chickens. Mother, Grandmother, and Aung Marilee each had a flock of chickens. In the mornings when I would awaken, the hens would already be at work laying their eggs. Each one would cackle loudly announcing to anything and any person within hearing distance that she had just laid the biggest and most beautiful egg in the world. Other hens acknowledged her claim, making the chicken lot a very noisy place. By then the roosters realized they were being ignored so they would crow very loudly several times to make sure everyone remembered their importance. Hardly anyone in our community has chickens now.

There was one sound I am happy not to hear now. Sometimes in the late autumn or in the winter I would be on the verge of sleep just to be awakened by the barking of a bunch of dogs. I knew they were

*Vivian Cole grew up in Chatham County. The family homestead was near today's US 15-501 and Mami's Chapel Road. The Chatham County Historical Association greatly appreciates her permission to print this reminiscence.

hunting dogs in hot pursuit of their prey. As the dogs became more excited and their barking louder, I would pull my pillow over my head hoping to block the sound of the gunshot which was sure to follow. I prayed that the little rabbit, coon, opossum, or whatever was able to escape and was now safely hidden from the dogs and men.

There was a sound which we heard occasionally then which we take so for granted now that we pay it no attention. That was the sound of an airplane. Airplanes had been around for a while. However, they were still so rare in our area that when we heard one we stopped whatever we were doing and went outside to watch the plane pass.

In those days we heard all the animals on our farm. We heard the sound of the tractor as Bill plowed the big fields. We heard our neighbors as they called in their cows and chickens. We could hear the neighbors' children laughing and squealing as they played and were filled with such a strong desire to go play with them. We heard the church bell ring on Sunday morning. We heard the songbirds, the crows, and the owls.

What do we hear now? We hear cars and trucks and trucks and cars. We hear the sirens of the ambulances which pass so often I pay little attention unless there are several close together. We hear the fire trucks with their sirens wide open, and occasionally the siren of the highway patrolman.

The old sounds were comforting sounds. They were about home, family, and neighbors. They were sounds of work, of nature, music, and happiness. The new sounds speak to us of hurry and confusion; of danger and trouble. They are the sounds of our times, but I think I like the old sounds better.

Mt. Pleasant Church and the Burnett Family

J. Lamont Norwood*

Records and documents sometimes become lost. Thank Heaven for those records that have been saved. A record kept by the Mann family for the first one hundred years or so lists all the preachers who have served at Mt. Pleasant and their tenure. This list begins in 1779, so that is thought to be the formal

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beginning of Mt. Pleasant. Other records point to the general time frame, but none list it with exactitude. For example, *Methodism in North Carolina* by Grissom¹ reports that Mt. Pleasant existed in 1790—but then it doesn't say how long it had been in existence.

In pioneer days, a large part of the people could not read or write. Someone who could read would invite his neighbors over on Sunday for Bible reading and prayer. Sometimes this developed and spread until it became the starting point for a regular church, and a special building would be erected for it. (Grissom's book says that these early churches were usually extremely crude. A split log might serve as a pew.) No one knows who the original reader was, or even if Mt. Pleasant came into existence in the above-described manner. Some families that were prominent in the early days moved out. For example, the Crow family settled along the Little Tyrell Creek and owned most of the land. The name was changed to Crow's Creek. By the time of the 1850 census, they had all left.

According to Grissom, Mt. Pleasant Church was urgently needed. He said that the people were "desperately wicked." I am not buying the idea that Chatham County had a corner on the market of being wicked. I assume he was reflecting some of the unflattering things Bishop Asbury said about Chathamites after his visit in 1780. In his diary,² Bishop Asbury wrote of those who attended a church meeting: "They looked as wild as the deer in the woods. . . . They are exceedingly ignorant withal." The last person Bishop Asbury saw in Chatham swore at him. He wrote: "I crossed Deep River in a flat boat. The poor ferryman sinner swore, because I had not a silver shilling to give him."

Bishop Asbury did a slow burn when some people came to a church meeting carrying their guns. My suggested explanation is that back in those days, wild game was an important part of their "daily bread." It would have been sinful for one to watch a turkey cross the road and sit there without a gun.

Bishop Asbury was not the only one to give Chatham a bad name. Someone suggested that the reason Chatham came into existence was that the proper and dignified people who made up Hillsborough got tired of those ruffians from the lower part of the county (Orange) coming into town on court days where they tracked mud around, tried to drink the bar dry, and otherwise made donkeys of themselves. The solution: they drew an east-west line eighteen miles south of Hillsborough, and everything below it became Chatham. So named in honor of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham. The county seat became Pittsboro.

Thomas Mann, Jr. was a circuit-riding Methodist minister. He was in Chatham from 1805 to 1807, 1812

Mt. Pleasant as it was when the R. J. Moore family joined the church in 1927. The roadster in the yard probably belonged to Bland Moore or William Norwood. The sedan may have belonged to T. V. (Bunn) Riggsbee.

(Photograph courtesy of Louise S. Moore)

to 1815, and upon retirement in 1828 until his death in 1830. Six of the thirteen volumes of his diary are at Duke University.³ (The other seven are lost.) Rev. Mann wrote largely about himself, but what he said still throws a lot of light on events in this area.

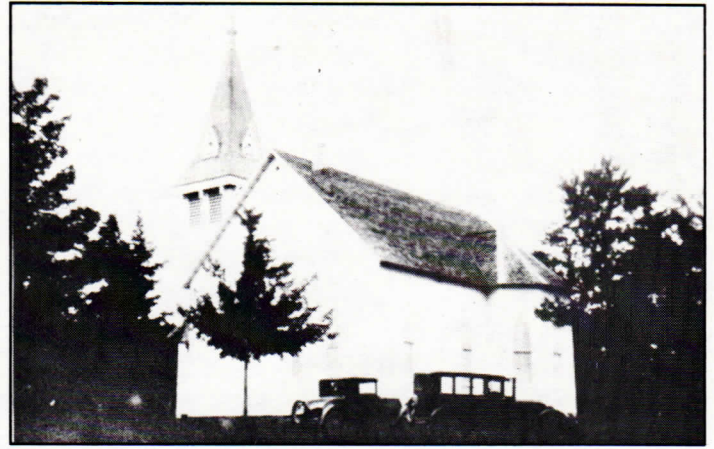
Rev. Mann wrote in his journal on 27 July 1906: "Heard Cole preach at Mt. Pleasant. Brother Daniel Burnett exhorted. Had a shout." This is brief, but to the point. We may reasonably reach the conclusion that Daniel Burnett had been a leader at Mt. Pleasant for some time (or he wouldn't have been called on to exhort). The fact that he moved the congregation to shouting implies that he spoke forcefully and effectively. An entry for 11 January 1807 said that "Daniel Burnett preached at Mt. Pleasant." An entry for 19 February 1811 said that Rev. Mann stayed at the home of Daniel Burnett. Also three entries in 1813 refer to Daniel Burnett. Four times in 1814 Rev. Mann wrote about Daniel Burnett preaching at Mt. Pleasant.

Rev. Mann stopped circuit-riding in 1828. Retirement is the most polite word, but it may not be the most accurate. Rev. Mann was so strict that some years he threw out more than he took in. The Bishop may have frowned on that. In any event we have him back on his farm in the Mt. Pleasant community. He was still available for preaching by special invitation and kept his journal active, right up until the day he died. That is to say, he recorded his activity for 21 May 1830 and died that night. In 1828 and again in 1830 he recorded that Lucian Burnett prayed at Mt. Pleasant.

Apparently Isaiah Burnett took up where his father left off. In 1832 Isaiah Burnett and James Poe gave land for a new church building at Mt. Pleasant. In 1834 Isaiah added another acre to the lot.

John Ferrington Burnett, son of Isaiah, was most impressive for "hoeing all the way to the end of the row." In 1875 he dropped dead while saddling his horse. The purpose of the saddled horse was to ride to Mt. Pleasant to preach that Sunday.

Often major athletic teams will have what they call the "go to" man. For example, with the UNC basketball team last season, the "go to" man was Antwan Jamison. In a particularly tough situation, you know they are going to try to get the ball in to Jamison. At Mt. Pleasant, the "go to" person was Mrs. Cara Bland Moore. It would work like this: The superintendent, Leon R. Mann, would count the regular collection receipts and if short contact some who could be counted on to add a bit in an emergency. If still short,



he would "go to" Mrs. Moore. The problem would be resolved. One could depend on it.

Mrs. Moore was born into a time of a male-dominated society. She was 35 before women could vote in North Carolina. Apparently she restrained herself and did not push for official offices, but that didn't mean that one could not work hard. In the old church she taught a class of youngsters that met in one of the "amen corners" of the building. She was often called on to lead the congregation in prayer, and sometimes served as delegate to the Methodist Conference. Margie Mann Burke recalls that Mrs. Moore invited her to stay at her home with Miss Lina Burnett Moore while she went to the conference for a few days. I suppose Lawrence was away in the Army, and Mr. Robert would be at the store all day. Anyway, that was fifty-plus years ago, and Margie doesn't remember it in much detail. She recalls that someone came in and cooked breakfast—a luxury not available at home.

"Women's Lib" began in France, I think, and had been around for decades but was not taken too seriously during the active years of Mrs. Moore. An incident at a church picnic for teenagers causes me to wonder if a difficult problem could have surfaced had "Women's Lib" climaxed earlier. At the picnic a little shower of rain came up. Mrs. Moore took the girls in the car. The boys stayed out and got wet. That is to say, Mrs. Moore saw nothing wrong with females first. On the other hand, she was fiercely loyal to tradition, and tradition in her most active years was male-dominated.

When the church shown in the illustration was burned down in 1935, no one was more determined that it should be replaced, nor did anyone work harder to bring that about than Mrs. Moore.

In sports there is a slang term called "grandstanding." It refers to action taken to impress those viewing the game (in the stands), rather than the more important issue of influencing the outcome of the game. Christ very much disapproved of that sort of thing.

He called it "to be seen of men." Mrs. Moore echoed that thought numerous times. Her expression was "in the right spirit." That is to say, good works, gifts, or whatever didn't count unless they were done "in the right spirit." We haven't forgotten!

When Mrs. Moore's health and energy declined, an ever-increasing part of the workload and responsibility was taken up by Miss Lina Burnett Moore. This continued until she became to Mt. Pleasant what an "angel" is to a Broadway play. (An "angel" accepts responsibility for the bills; if the play flops, he loses a bundle.) This was totally in keeping with her mother's "right spirit." Never did she say, or imply, "Hey, Look!" In fact, when Mann's Chapel was struggling to stay alive, she helped them out too, and I doubt if more than a mere handful of people even know that it happened.

There was more to Miss Moore's giving than keeping abreast of the situation. She hoped to leave Mt. Pleasant in a favorable position to face the future--the long-range view. She hoped that Mt. Pleasant would fulfill its destiny. At one point she said something to the effect that she hoped Mt. Pleasant would do what God intended for it to do. Perhaps she was inspired by Isaiah:

*So shall my word be, that goes forth from my mouth,
It shall not return to me empty,
But it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
And prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

In remembering the generous financial gifts Miss Moore made, we don't want to forget some of the smaller things that had a personal touch. Every Christmas she saw to it that every Mt. Pleasant shut-in got a poinsettia and at Easter, an Easter lily.

Apparently Miss Moore's natural instinct led her toward the traditional and ultra-conservative. She regarded some of the postwar developments as downright permissive. She never learned to like them but was adaptable enough to learn to live with them--somewhat. It would seem that music was secondary in her life, but some of her finest work was in that field. Except for a couple of years of work in Raleigh during World War II, her career was in schoolteaching, but she was a competent musician. Once at a Memorial Sunday the pianist, who was having family troubles, didn't show up. Miss Moore filled in. She had maybe five minutes to get ready--How much does one need?!

A passage in the Bible tells about Christ healing ten lepers. One returned and thanked him. Cousin Rhomie Mann said that human nature doesn't change much. Being thanked one time out of ten is right much like today. I don't know what the ratio was for the ones Miss Moore helped, but I will put it this way: The enthusiasm with which Virginia Lewis

Andrews remembers Miss Moore is enough to make up for some who forgot. She said that Miss Moore made it possible for her to go to church when she was small, taught her the basics of music, inspired and encouraged her when she took five years of voice training after she was grown, and always attended her concerts.

A children's choir that Miss Moore managed sang at Memorial Day in 1962 or 1963. They really sang out, and loud enough for the oldsters to hear. In fact, some of the old timers were tickled pink that they did so well. At that time we are talking about Susan and Bob Harris; Louise, Robert, and Donna Manring; Richard Whitfield; and Steve Mann. Then the Johnson family moved to the community, and we added four more to the children's group (Debra, John, Jackie, and Jeanne). There was *no limit*. They learned whatever Miss Moore asked. Rev. Ron Ramke probably summed it up with the attitude: *I don't believe what I just heard--it is not possible for children to do that well!*

It was routine for Miss Moore to lead in prayer, and some of us observed a style or pattern. She always began, "Our gracious heavenly Father." She never forgot "our sins of omission and commission"--having done that which we should not have done, and not having done that which we should have done. If you think that an acceptable style would consist of

*Adoration. . . Thanksgiving. . . Confession. . .
Intercession. . . Petition,*

you would be right at home with Miss Moore.

NOTES

1. William Lee Grissom, *History of Methodism in North Carolina from 1772 to the Present Time*, (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1905), p. 209, quoting E. W. Atwater from the *Raleigh Christian Advocate* for 4 November 1888.

2. Elmer T. Clark, editor-in-chief, *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958).

3. Thomas Mann, *Journal*, Manuscript, Records, and Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

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