

HISTORY OF THE WOODS FAMILY

A Tribute to the Memory of Robert Samuel Woods

by

Rev. Denton R. Woods

At the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of our father, Robert Samuel Woods, on June 2, 1935, at the home of his oldest living son, Wm. W. Woods, Bentenville, Arkansas, the writer was asked to prepare a brief history of the life of our beloved father. There were present at this gathering in his honor, all the living children Will, Martha, (Mrs. N.P. Stipp) Eph, Elbert, and Denton and many of the grandchildren and great grandchildren, also many relatives and friends, including Jack Maxwell, Lizzie Woods Deason and others making about forty in all. The rain came down in torrents that day, keeping many relatives away.

The writer of these notes was asked not to be too modest but to forget the public and put much of personal touch in this history that would be of interest to the direct posterity of the subject of this tribute. So when you see some small detail just remember it was not written for the public eye. However this history is of interest to a large group of descendants of the earliest and most distinguished of pioneers of the American Continent, and who figured in the building of this Republic.

The Courier-Journal, Louisville, Kentucky has published a large volumn called the Woods-McAfee Memorial containing an account of John Woods and James McAfee of Ireland, and their descendants in America. Its author is the Rev. Neander M. Woods, D.D. LL.D. We have examined this book very carefully, and I am personally acquainted with a good many direct descendants of these two noted families, and have had much correspondence with some of them. From this splendid work of Neander Woods we find the origin of the Woods name. We quote him, "The name Woods is undoubtedly English, derived from Anglo-Saxon, Wudu, but not all the people who bear it are of pure English stock.

Some of the Woodses whom we find today in Scotland whose ancestors generations back were English, but crossed the border to dwell among the Scotch, and became so thoroughly identified with them by marriage and long residence as to become unidentifed from the dwellers to the north of Tweed. Some of these Anglo-Scotch Woodses in after time migrated, along with the unmixed Scotch, to the north Ireland and from there to America; and they would naturally come to be regarded as Scotch-Irish their English blood being almost entirely lost sight of." This, I am sure, is exactly what took place with our own people, for they called themselves Scotch-Irish, and seemed to think they originated in Scotland, then came to North Ireland and from there to America.

Quoting further from the volumn of Neander Woods he said, "Secondly, among the unhappy Huguenots who fled from France during the period of Catholic persecution there were not a few families by the name of Du Bois (Dubose) some of whom, after settlement in England, signalized expatriation from the land of their birth by adopting the English equivalent, "Woods" for the name they had formerly borne as Frenchmen. Thirdly, there are some Woods, now in America, whose ancestors not far back were Germans and who were formerly called by the name Waltz, but who have seen fit to make their patronymic conform to their new place of residence among the English speaking people. Finally, there are a few Irish Woodses whose ancestors formerly were known by the Gaelic name of O'Colite, but who exchanged it for the English equivalent "Woods". These Woodses as a rule are pure Irish, and almost without exception, Roman Catholic. Thousands of them are to be found in the United States at the present." We have quoted extensively from the Woods-McAfee Memorial for it is one of the best authorities we have found. We said in a note above that our people, without doubt, were of the Anglo-Scotch blood, having mixed with the pure Scotch till they almost lost the English idenity, and came through North Ireland, and on to America sometime before 1750. Also the Woodses to which we belong

were Protestants and mainly Presbyterians.

We here quote from a letter we have from the Rev. David Woods, one of the oldest members of the Woods family: "Our branch of the Woods family came to America about the middle of the eighteenth century, and settled in North Carolina. James Woods left North Carolina a few years later and located at Fort Nashville, Tenn., where he reared his family and took an active interest in the early settlement of Tennessee. He was a captain in the Revolutionary War and distinguished himself for bravery at the battle of King's Mountain, S.C. At the close of the Revolutionary War he settled in Georgia, where he and his wife died. His seven sons scattered to various states, and some back to Tennessee. His sons Oliver and William took active part in the War of 1812. William especially distinguished himself at the battle of New Orleans. After the war they returned to Tennessee and engaged themselves in farming. Oliver located near the city of Nashville. Here in 1804 he married Nancy Haynes, who was a grand-daughter of Rev. Cyrus Haynes, a noted minister, being contemporary with Lyman Beecher. In 1838 Oliver moved to Benton Co., Arkansas and in 1844 to Lawrence County, Mo. Oliver and Nancy Woods had three sons and three daughters, Samuel Newton, John Blackburn, Andrew Finkney, Maria, Louise, and Elvira. John Blackburn Woods married Martha Harris Pace, whose grandfather, William Pace, is thought to have been one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. J. Blackburn Woods moved from Tenn. to Lawrence Co., Mo. April 1836 and located on the farm, part of which is still owned by son David."

And it is this son, David, a Presbyterian minister, from whom we have been quoting. Though he is now past ninety-one years of age and has been blind for over thirty years, we see by a newspaper the other day, he is a regular attendant upon Sunday school and church. He has a keen memory and it is from him, as well as many others, that we have received valuable information concerning our family history in general. Because of the close relation and personal interest in this good man we gave the precious brief history of his father Oliver, the youngest son of James Woods, whose family seems to have been the first American settlers of our Scotch progenitors.

We descend from and older son of James Woods, Samuel, who was born in the midst of the Revolutionary War, in 1776, and died in Bentonville, Ark., 1840. You may visit his tomb at the old family cemetery on the old Woods homestead 3 miles east of Bentonville. His children were William H., Samuel Jr., David, and Nancy who married John Hammock. Also Polly and Martha who remained in Tenn. William H. and Samuel Jr. married sisters Mary (Polly) and Eliza Dickson.

Our grandfather, William H. Woods was born in Ohio July 17, 1811, then moved to Tenn. and in Feb. 1832 he was married to the golden haired Scotch lass, Mary Dickson (usually called Polly) granddaughter of General Joseph Dickson of the Revolutionary War and his wife Margaret McEwen, back of whom is one of the most romantic and fascinating stories ever told. Margaret Isabella McEwen's mother was Isabella Miller, born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1720, daughter of Sir Michael Miller and his wife Margaret McNaughton of Glasgow, Scotland. The Millers were possessors of great wealth and had only two children, this daughter and a son David Miller. Against the wishes of her parents, Isabella married in 1740 out of her class, as they thought, a James McEwen (formerly called McKnown) who was a workman in the mills or woolen factory that Sir Michael Miller owned and operated. For this she was disinherited. According to a letter written Feb. 16, 1856, to a relative by Christopher Erwin McEwen this couple remained in Scotland till three children were born, Margaret and twin boys, William and James. Then about the year 1764 they started to seek their own fortune and make their own fame in the free land of America. And in America they came to be, and are today, one of the most outstanding families in the land. We have had personal correspondence with several scores of their descendants, other than our own immediate family. And at this time have on file in our study more than half a hundred of the most interesting letters from lawyers, Physicians, business men, ministers, educators, mayors, statesmen, farmers, mothers of homes and men and women in all walks of life a great people in numbers, I find from this great

Scotch family.

James and Isabella McEwen first settled in Pennsylvania, and seemed to have remained there until after Margaret married Gen. Joseph Dickson and then moved to North Carolina where James McEwen died and was buried at Statesville then some time after his death Isabella with James and William and possibly the other children moved to Tennessee where Isabella died in 1812 and was buried in Rutherford County.

Sir Michael Miller's one son lived all his life in bachelorhood and after the death of his father and mother and possibly finding himself near the end of life, repented of the family attitude toward his sister, Isabella in America, with whom they seemed to have had no correspondence and willed her and her heirs in America all the estate.

We are giving here a copy of the will of David Miller of Glasgow, Scotland exactly as it has come to us. I cannot vouch for the validity of this document but it has been handed down as a true instrument:

I, David Miller, of the city of Glasgow, Scotland, being weak in body but of sound mind and memory do make and publish this my last will and testimony. First I do will and bequeath unto my sister, Isabella McEwen(nee Miller) and to her bodily heirs in America or wherever they may be all my estate lying in Dunkeld Perth rental at 2000 pounds. Then I give to the Reverend Deacon Morvich, two hundred pounds.

Then I give to each of my servants, John Roach, Andrew Peer, and Mary Ann Aanon each ten pounds also out of the same residue.

Then I desire and ordain that all my plate and household goods be sold and the proceeds be given to charitable purposes, such as my executors will deem most proper.

Then I request that my body should be buried in a respectable manner without display, hoping that the Almighty God will recieve the same on the great Judgement day.

Then I request that James Andrew McFay of Kilmore Argyleshire and David William Dennon of Dunkeld Perth, and Simon James McDonald of Dunkeld Perth, shall be my sold executors, giving them full power to act in the premises above mentioned and deviating thereof.

(Seal) In witness whereof I have here unto set my hand and my seal this ninth day of Sept., one thousand eight hundred and fifteen.

David Miller

Signed, sealed and declared by the said David Miller to be his last will and testament, in the presençe of us, who have here unto subscribed our names as witnesses in the presençe of the testators: John James Collins, Richard David Patterson, Andres McNeal.

Affirmed and registered at Glasgow in the second Division Court the seventeenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixteen.

John McCurdy

(Seal) I certify that this copy has been examined with the original will deposited in this registry and that it is a true copy thereof.

Edward F. Jermer, Registrar.

But as you see Isabella had died in Rutherford Co., Tenn. in 1812, three years before this will was made, her husband, James McEwen, having died sometime before. It was a long time no doubt before their children knew about this bequest, and I suppose there have been several attempts to obtain this estate but to no avail. I suppose mainly because there were no heirs in Scotland. It was left for many years to trustees, it is thought, and finally reverted to the Crown, no doubt.

The last attempt to secure the estate was about 1825. A Mr. Jesse Tull, an attorney of Washington, D.C. secured the power of attorney and some funds from a group of the heirs of Margaret McEwen Dickson and proceeded on the assumption that there were but three of the McEwen children children, Margaret, who married Gen. Joseph Dickson and two boys and that the boys and their mother, after the death of their father, James McEwen, went back to Scotland, leaving only Margaret in America and that the boys had obtained their part of the estate and that Margaret's part had been put in trust for her and her heirs and had never been settled. Supposing that these

papers were correct many of us signed them, not knowing any better. After receiving a letter from a relative in Seattle, Wash., we were convinced that this data was wrong. Then we had a conference with Judge William A. Dickson of Bentonville, Ark. and together we examined several old records and found that Mr. Tull was following a wrong course. Just on the eve of his leaving for Scotland, we sent our own legal advisor, attorney Sebe Christian of Sapulpa, Okla. to Washington City to tell Mr. Tull that there were nine McEwen children instead of three and that none of them ever returned to Scotland, and that the grave of the mother, Isabella Miller McEwen, was well known by many of the heirs to be in Rutherford County, Tenn. But Mr. Tull would not accept the information from our attorney and sailed the next day for Scotland on funds furnished by some of the heirs, including our own little contribution, and despite the fact that the time and place of her death is so well known he claimed that he found that Isabella Miller McEwen died in a hospital at Edinburgh and that the boys had obtained their part of the estate and that Margaret's part had been put in trust for her and her heirs and later sent to them, at least this was the supposition. In his report, however he speaks of tracing the estate of Thomas McEwen and finding these things. But Isabella Miller was not the wife of Thomas McEwen but James McEwen. How he got them connected we do not know. I give this report here for since then we have had much personal correspondence with the McEwen side of the family and none of them seem to wonder how these folks got off on such a tangent when none of them ever returned to Scotland, nor has their part of the estate been settled any more than ours. This is just a little side-light that we thought might be of interest to some and clear up some things that some folks have not fully understood. Now to proceed with our history.

James and Isabella had nine children: Margaret, William, and James (twins), David, Eleanor, Jane, Betsy, Mary, and Daniel. Margaret married Gen. Joseph Dickson, Rev. soldier and statesman, who was born in Penn. in 1745 and died in Tenn. in 1825. Margaret and Joseph Dickson also had nine children: James, Elizabeth, Isabella, John, Joseph, Robert, William, Mary and Ezekiel.

Robert was married twice, Sara Moore and Eleanor Rankin and they had several children, amongst whom was a beautiful auburn haired girl, Mary (Polly). It was to this Scotch lassie that our Scotch grandfather, William Harny Woods, was married on Jan. 10, 1832, and the next month put her on a gray mare and put a bundle of belongings on behind her (the old fire shovel that they took along is hanging now in the garage of our brother, William W. Woods at Bentonville, Ark.) Taking a rifle on his shoulder and walking beside her they started west from Tenn., a buoyant youth with a plucky bride looking toward the west. The sky must have been their limit at least until they found a place where they wanted to settle down and build a nest for themselves and their hoped-for children. Finally at Bentonville, Ark. one hundred and three years ago, in 1832 on the brow of a hill, out of which gushed a large stream of cool refreshing water, and just at the edge of a wide spreading prairie reaching to the south and at the border of a beautiful woodland reaching in the other direction toward Little Sugar Creek, they stopped to build a home. And it was there at this lovely spot, one hundred years ago, (the second day of June 1835) that Robert Samuel Woods was born. It is he, our own noble father, about whom we started out to write. You do not wonder that he was a man of sterling character when you know just this little bit about his background. It was here that our father, Robert Samuel, started his life. Then in a few years his father, William Harvey, persuaded his father, Samuel, and his brother, Samuel, Jr., to come to him from Tenn. and he gave them the old homestead he had already started and moved one mile farther west, nearer the town site of Bentonville, and started a new home on the brow of another hill overlooking two springs, and there our father grew up.

With my wife and two of our brothers, Will and Elbert, we visited that old home while on vacation, summer 1835. It is now turned into a barn, but some of the floor, the old stairway, and the original doors were still there, and part of the house that was made of logs is in as fine a condition as one could ever imagine. The part of the house that was made of lumber is rather dilapidated but the log part is well preserved after almost a hundred years. The fine straight logs were

hewn with such accuracy, and all of a size and so notched and fitted that you could scarcely see a crack anywhere. It looked as if it might stand another hundred years and defy rain and storm. We said that the original doors are as of old. All but one are. Brother Will replaced the front door that had the bullet holes in it that were made when the bushwhacker tried to kill grandfather because of his sympathy for the union in the Civil War. This door he has on his store-house where he lives.

From this old homestead, grandfather (1883) and grandmother (1878) went to our old family cemetery; and from there their sons and daughters went out to marry and make homes for themselves, except the baby boy, John, who went out one day with a group of men whom the Government had made a home guard during the awful war between the States, and he never returned, for a bushwhacker shot him down on the prairie, and that spot always reminds us of the horror and suffering our people endured along the border between the north and south. I spoke of the bullet holes in the front door of the old home, the results of a determination to kill grandfather because of his sympathy with the Union. In fact there were a good many others in Benton County who didn't favor secession. The country as a whole voted to stay in the Union and sent a delegate, A.W. Dinsmore, to the State Convention to vote against secession. But secession carried, and of course, a great many who were in favor of staying in the union went against it because the State said so. But grandfather and our father felt that they owed a greater allegiance to the Government than to the State, and so asserted themselves as did some of the other relatives.

To show you the feeling of our grandfather about this matter and his grief over the loss of his nineteen year old boy we will give here a copy of a letter wrote to Uncle Denton Maxwell after he moved away from the old place to Mt. Vernon, Mo. till the strife would be over. There he farmed and taught school but his heart was breaking. The original letter lies before the writer now well worn but in a fine steady hand and well written throughout:

C. Denton Maxwell:

I received yours of the 15th yesterday, and take the present opportunity of giving you an answer, although I have no news of interest to communicate. I was glad to hear from you all, and to hear that you were well, and had a prospect of making something for yourself and family to eat and wear; and Paul says, "Having food and raiment be therewith content". We have got moved to the place where we design staying at least awhile. We have a comfortable house, good farm, good spring, etc. I think if we are let alone we can make a support. I design to commence sowing oats in the morning. I think if I can get to farming I will be better satisfied. You request me to take care of your wheat at Calvins. If I live and can I will do so. It looks like it would make good wheat. This is Sunday, and Robert and Jane and Lizzie and Mat are all gone to meeting. Liz wrote a few lines to before she left. Mat told me to tell you and Mary that she would have written but did not have time. We have our trials here below but there are a great many things for which we should be thankful. For instance, I have one dear son that I have a strong and abiding hope is in heaven, for the ground of that hope I feel thankful. I have a dear wife and six children and three son-in-law that I have a hope are on their way from this troublesome world to a world of unchangeable, unutterable, and infinite delight. For such a hope tongue cannot express, pen cannot write the thankfulness of my heart. Tears of gratitude run down my cheeks as I contemplate. God forbid that the conduct of any one of the above named should be such as to weaken that hope. There is no one of my immediate family that is in open rebellion against the government of his God and His Country for which I feel thankful. As for me, rather than use my tongue in opposition to the government of God or my Country, let it cleave to the roof of my mouth, and rather than raise my puny arm against the government of my God or my Country, let it fall lifeless to my side, never to be raised again. O Denton, when I look back at our pleasant homes, farms, and orchards, and then look over the circumstances that drove us from them, I am ready to cry out in the language of the Psalmist, "O Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph?". But then and when I look forward the great and anticipation that though we come through great tribulation, we may at

last be an unbroken family in heaven our troubles and privations all dwindle into nothing and I am ready to cry out, it is enough. Let others stretch their arms like seas, and grasp in all the shore but grant me the smiles and approbation of my heavenly Father, and I desire no more. Let us walk humbly and uprightly, and deal justly and love mercy, and ever live in that way that when we leave this world we may all meet in a better world, where parting will be no more. Mother joins me in sending our best love and respect to you and Mary and all the children. Also to John Woods and family, John Deason and Rena, and all our inquiring friends.

Yours Respectfully,
William H. Woods

Of course after the war they all came back to the old home place and commenced the long process of rehabilitation. Because of terrible conditions along the border our father and grandfather had gone North, and the Maxwells and Deasons had gone South (refugeed as they called it) to Johnson County, and Uncle Calvin Maxwell went into Texas, and his family are still there. Harry Deason was three weeks old when they started, as he told the writer recently, and most every house along the old wire road, except grandfather Maxwell's was burned about this time.

I said that the children of William H. Woods and Polly or Mary Dickson went out from this old home on the hill to make homes of their own: Margaret to marry Wm. Blace, Mary Ann to marry Denton Maxwell, America (Mach) to marry Michael Maxwell, Mattie to marry Capt. E. Etris, and Elizabeth to marry George Conley. Out of this home went Robert Samuel Woods, our father, to teach school where the City of Rogers now stands, and took up board with a family by the name of Maxwell. This family also originated in Scotland, but we understand went to Ulster, but after a stay of about thirty years there, our branch of the family came on to America. Ebenezer Maxwell was this man's name, and was born in 1803, and in 1825 he married Martha Griffin in Tenn. where most of their children were born as follows: Wm. Griffin Maxwell (1827) Michael Maxwell (1830) Calvin (1831) Mary G. (1833) Denton (1834) Brunson (1836) Irene (1838) Jackson (1840) Martha Jane (1842) Nancy Elizabeth (1844) Jerry (1847) and they came from Marion County, Tenn. to Benton. Co., Ark., in 1852. Martha Jane was a lassie of seventeen when the twenty-four old teacher (our father) boarded there and she attended school to him. One evening on the porch of that home, in the soft moonlight, words were spoken. Words that made the wedding bells ring and bound them together till death did them part. Robert Samuel Woods and Martha Jane Maxwell were married July 2, 1859, and there were two girls and eight boys born to them:

John H. Woods (1860-1904) married Molly Woods. Their children were Robbie, Bessie, Harvey (who died in infancy), Leroy, Bell, Ernest, Everette, and Lucille.

William W. (1862-) married Eva Black. Their children were: Earl, Floy, Marie, Eunice, and Vada.

Martha (Mattie) (1864-) first married Jasper Caviness. Their children were: Mattie Bell (died in infancy) and Myrtle. Jasper died and Mattie later married N.P. Stipp.

Robbie (1866-1881) a beautiful curly headed boy, dying at the age of fourteen.

Samuel Ephraim (1868-) married Dora Wright. Their children were: Alma, Opal Denton and Samuel Theron.

Thomas J. (1872-1932) married Mattie Walker. Their children were: Homer, Denton, and Helen. The two boys both died at about 13 years of age.

Elbert F. (1872-1936) married Mantez Price. Their children were: Beulah, Gertie, Claude, Eva, and Raymond.

Denton R. (1874-) married Minnie Lee Vaughn. Their children were: Crystelle, Charles, and Kenneth.

George M. (1876-1934) married Norah Vaughn. Their children were: Robert, Thell, Ruth, and George, Jr.

Mary E. (1878-1892) the baby girl dying at the age of 14.

This union of Robert Samuel Woods and Martha Jane Maxwell was a most happy one. Mother had some of the Maxwell impetuosity, and was sometimes a bit impatient with conditions, for she wanted to see things go, but she had a fine sense of humor, and was thoughtful and earnest, and profoundly sincere, and her religion ran deep, but was never on parade. In fact she disdained display. She was most kind and gentle. Our father has been known to say he had been married to her ten years before he ever heard her speak a harsh word. If the weight of ten children and home and school, and church could have been lessened no doubt there never would have been a ripple in her pure, sweet life. Thought she had "spirit", her make up was as gentle as that of a dove and her disposition naturally as quiet and mellow as the softest summer day. After the bearing of ten children with all the care and work at home, the coming and going of friends, sleeping and the feeding of dozens at a time; besides brick yard hands, harvest hands, threshing hands, and the latter part of her life keeping boarders while the younger boys went to college, and after all this she was as plump and pretty as many a girl. Really a lovely woman. A few days before she died so suddenly and unexpectedly she looked more like a girl than the mother of a large family, the youngest of whom was twenty-three. Mary would have been twenty-one had she lived. George, the youngest boy, had been teaching school as well as attending school for four years when she died. Oh, she was proud of her children. She was heard to say many times that she had the best children in the world. And how we loved to come home and go to church with her and sit beside her in the pew and watch father superintend the Sunday School, and weave the elements of the sacred sacrament in the communion services of the church. Yes, we were always proud of her, and had a feeling she was proud of us. God bless her dear memory. There lies on the writer's desk now a letter he received from this good mother thirty-nine years ago last April. You told me to give personal touches, therefore I feel free to give this letter:

Rogers, Ark.

April 15, 1896

Dear Son: I thought I would answer your kind and welcome letter. I was glad to hear from you and to know that you were getting along so well. We are all well. Pa and Tom are planting corn. We thought we would go to Jasper's Friday. Mattie and Jasper were here Saturday night. They came to Bentonville Saturday and went back Sunday. Mattie did not like it because you did not send her one of your pictures. Save her one if you can. My health is so much better since I have been here. I haven't had a bad spell of headache since I have been here and I am better satisfied than I thought I would be. I would do very well if you and George were here. But I hope we will be together before very long but if we do not it will not be long till we'll all meet in heaven. I am so thankful that I have children that can write good religious letters. Of course it is hard for me to be absent from you and George but hope and pray that you and he will get along alright. I want you to be a good boy and pray for us as well as yourself.

Tom and Mat are going to Jasper's as soon as we get back and they said for you and George to come and go with them. We shall let you know when we get back and they are ready to go.

Well it is dinner time and I will have to close. I want you to write me often. I get lonesome and want to hear from you and want to know how you are getting along. Give this to George to read too.

Your loving mother

Well, all the children know how much that sounds like mother, with her keen interest in the family and so many things. As we look back we are amazed at how she did so many things, and got all the children off to school and to Sunday School on Sunday morning and then went herself most of the time. Of course, Father helped her lots. He always treated her as if she was the most precious thing in the world, and the nearest thing to his heart, and she was. He was never heard to speak a harsh word to her or cross her at any time. Never in his

life was he known to scold her in the least by word or look. That is the kind of man he was, noble, but gentle, kind but firm. He could not be budged from his conviction about things. We only wish we could hand down to his posterity a true picture of this man. He was lovable and affable but, also, so strong in his purposes. He was tall and square built, and carried himself like a king. Usually wore a long, black Prince Albert coat. Had long, flowing, black beard in his early manhood, but gradually got shorter and streaked with grey as the years went by. His deep-set steel grey eyes always looked so earnest and appealing. When he looked a boy in the face he made the truth come out of him even if at first he wanted to hide it. Whip a boy, which he did not often do, or otherwise correct him, and then with a loving hand on the boy's head, like the great patriarch he was, he would pray and make the boy want to pray too. One would look at him and think of the prophets and apostles, and other men of strength that cause men to stop and look at them, and then grow steady and confident, feeling that they were in the presence of a mighty man of God who could influence with the powers of the universe. You weren't afraid of him. You loved him. Yet there was something about him that you did not want to offend. You felt that you didn't dare; not that you were afraid, or that he would hurt you in the least, but you did not want to hurt that something in him. You felt that you just never could forgive yourself if you were to offend or be rude to that something in him that always seemed to be sacred to you. You would not stab that and have it die so you could not see it and feel it for anything. One imagines it is sort of how we feel about God. We do not mean to compare our father with God, but there seems to be something sacred there that you do not want to be guilty of marring or destroying. If you could destroy that divine thing, and it brought you no retrioution for doing so, you would not want to do it, for you would miss it so. If one could conceive of such a thing as to be able to destroy God he would shudder at the thought for he would miss him. So it is with parental authority, and all these sacred things of life. We sometimes think we wish we were free from them, and rid of them, then we do not want to be, for, after all, in them lies the thing we most love.

Yes, father was a wonderful man. He saw things in their true light. He felt the need of the spiritual above the natural, the temporal things. To him there were things temporal and things eternal and there was no doubt as to his choice. His motto was, "Seek first the kingdom of God." You could see this in the common every day things, in his conversation, in his letters, every day, everywhere. I have here a letter or two he wrote the same time that mother wrote the preceeding one, nearly forty years ago. They are typical of the way he wrote the children as long as he lived and show that his mind was on the things that endure and not on things that do not abide. These are exact copies.

April 15. 1896

George, Dear Sir:

I write you a few lines to let you know how we are getting along. We are as well as usual. I hope you are well. I hope you are getting along well in your studies. I am very much interested in your education but much more in your spiritual welfare. You must not neglect your religious duties. You should read your bible everyday. A man may get all this world can afford him as far as books and observation in concerned, and leave the heart uncultivated, and he will be a complete failure at last.

R.S.Woods

Denton, Dear Sir:

= This leaves us all well, hoping that you are well. Tom and I will get done planting corn today, except the new ground. Ma and I are going to Jasper's and Elbert's next Friday. I would like very well for you to go with us if you could. I do not know how long we will remain there. I want you to be a good boy, do right and pray much, meditate continually, read your bible, study its teachings, and follow its precepts.

R.S.Woods

What we call spiritual things were as real to father as the things we call natural. He really lived and died in the atmosphere that the above letters express. One of the first memories the writer of these notes has of him, is, when a child of six years he stood in the floor of the old homestead and saw father sitting on the side of the bed where Robbie lay all pale and father was holding his hand. And to our surprise when Robbie's last breath was gone father knelt by the bed, still holding the hand of that beautiful boy of 14, and said "The Lord gave, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" Then he arose to comfort mother and the brothers and sisters and then to direct about the funeral. Then just twelve years later, when Mary was just 14, we saw him hold her hand one Sunday night till the light went out of her lovely eyes and we saw this noble father kneel and again say "The Lord gave, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord". But that was a great trial for him as well as when the fine boy went for Mary was his and mother's baby girl. Though it was not such a surprise to him as it was to the rest of us for less than two weeks before that Sunday night he came to the field where his two youngest boys were at work and said "Boys, I have come to tell you something, something I think you should know, that you may bear it when it comes; if there is not a change for the better, your sister will not be here two weeks from today." We protested and thought he ought not to talk that way, and told him it was impossible, that she was up and going about as she pleased. He assured us that was just his reason for warning us, and that he had just told mother the same thing and had gotten the same kind of reply we had given. Then with his hand folded behind him, as he often did when in deep thought, he went into the grove, and as we were sure, to his knees in prayer. We often wondered how he could see and know so much about every member of the family. He seemed to see so far, far away and know what was in the offing. When his preacher son was a boy and struggling with the problems of a call to the ministry but did not dare tell a living soul, and did not suppose that anyone ever suspected his thoughts, he was terribly surprised one day when father said, "My boy, what is on your mind, what is bothering you, what is the struggle going on in your soul?" Well the boy tried to hide it, and evade the question, but father would not be so easily disposed of, but calmly said, "Well Denton, if God is speaking to you, you listen, and if he is calling you to some special work in his kingdom, you heed the call." Then the boy knew he was into the secret and there was no need to try to hide it any longer. But the answer was "The older boys are married and have families of their own and you and mother are well up in years, and your health is gone, and your farm is involved and there is no chance for me to leave and prepare for the greatest of all callings." Father calmly answered, "Never mind all of that. If God has laid his hand upon you for the ministry he will make a way if only you will dedicate your life to him and follow where he leads you." Bless God for a father that understands and can put a boy on the right track when he cannot see the way. It would be impossible to measure the meaning of that council to the boy who that day listened that day and heeded. It was like facing a rock wall to the boy but not to the man who knew God better, and that wall, long since, faded away. Let God be praised.

Reverses came. Father became unable to do much. Was never very well after passing the meridian. Of course, he helped mother a great deal about the household duties. He lost his farm and all these reverses hurt him all the more because they hurt mother so much. One important thing he had left was a house and lot in the little college town of Pea Ridge. He and mother moved there and kept boarders while the two younger boys went to school, and taught and carried on with them. That became too strenuous and they gave it up to go and spend a year with Tom and his good wife, Mattie, who were living near Rogers. God bless the memory of Tom and Mattie. Nobody on earth could have been truer to parents than they were to Father and Mother. But they decided to come back to the little home and the two boys were to be with them and finish school. However, they had leased the home, and the lease was not out and father rented the Peel house. The boys taught through the fall, as usual, and attended college the rest of the year.

School was out, vacation was on and then came the greatest trial of Father's life.

Mother sickened and after a very brief illness, so unexpectedly, and to the shock of all of us, passed away from us. I wondered what Father would do then. Calmly but terribly grieved he knelt and said, "The Lord gave, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord," Well we knew if he could say it then he could say it anytime. From then on earth meant less and Heaven meant more to him. Father was wonderful in prayer, and earnest and eloquent in speech. He had a fine voice for public speaking and never lacked for speech to express himself. Many wondered why he was not a preacher. Indeed he did have a strong inclination for the ministry, but because of the ravages of the Civil War and the duties pressing upon him to reestablish the home for his family after the war he did not carry out his inclination to prepare for the ministry. He certainly did a great work as an elder and leader in the church and community. He loved the bible and knew what it taught. He always held family worship morning and evening. And how loyal he was to his pastor and how fond he was of him. The Reverend Peter Carnahan was pastor to our family for forty-six years. In his early ministry Mr. Carnahan took charge of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Bentonville that our grandfather and a number of the other relatives helped to establish. Our father and grandfather were both elders there under him. I suppose our grandfather was an elder long before he came, from the beginning of the church I think. I see that uncle Denton Maxwell was treasurer for a long time. I examined some of his records this summer preserved by his son, Jack Maxwell, and I noticed that grandfather, Wm. H. Woods, always headed the list in the pledges to the support of the church and pastor's salary. In most cases he was the biggest giver of all and in no case did anyone exceed his giving. Our grandfather was charter member of this church and helped to furnish the material and hauled most of it to the site to build. This was the first Presbyterian Church in that section of the country. It was a Cumberland Presbyterian Church located at Bentonville, Ark.

After the Woods church was built on the corner of Father's land the Rev. Peter Carnahan gave up the church at Bentonville and came out to serve it and the church at Pea Ridge, and served them the rest of his life, or till he finally retired. When he was past 85 years of age. No Woods family history would be complete without this noble pastor in it. Our grandfather, William H. Woods, our father, and all the older boys served as elders under him. John was an elder when he died; Tom was as elder when he died; George was an elder, not in the old church but at Mulberry, when he died; Will is still an elder at Bentonville, and Ephraim is an elder at Pea Ridge. Most of them were ordained to the eldership by Rev. Carnahan. I suppose all of them were but George. He was ordained by his brother, who writes this history, in his first pastorate. I have ordained many men since that time. I doubt if ever I ordained as true a man to this office as George was. The Rev. Peter Carnahan was a great friend of the family, christened many of them, followed some of them through life and to the grave, always came to our family reunions as long as he lived and paid many glowing tributes to the family. We remember many of these tributes. Possibly one of the strongest he ever uttered was that "The Woods family was the noblest Christian family he ever had known." Surely that is saying a lot but he said it at one of our reunions and now we do love his memory. Our father thought Carnahan had no peer. He held the gospel ministry as the most sacred thing in the world. When the writer of these notes was ordained to the ministry a few years after the union of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. this noble pastor had charge of the ordination services, and shortly after this he said, "Well, my boy, I have been worth several thousand dollars and gave it all up for the ministry. I have seen the time I did not have a roof over my head that I could call my own nor a dollar in my pocket but if I had it all to do over I would still choose the ministry. In fact if I were to be offered the same road through the ministry of the presidency of the United States I would choose the ministry. These were encouraging words to us. And we understand them better now than we did then. Yes, this noble pastor followed our father through to the end and how they loved each other.

After mother died Father did not have much interest. Of course he was interested in the church and the children but he seemed to think his work was over.

Though he was not pettish or peevish, but kept the same gentle spirit he always had maintained; and the children were married, and all but the two younger boys were married and had families of their own, all vied with each other to keep him and he divided up his time with them and no man had daughter-in-law more gracious and loving to him.

The seventh boy of the family is the writer of these notes and here I want to pay tribute to the older children. These lines are not for public consumption but I do want our own posterity to know these boys and their sisters. How fortunate one is to have older brothers and sisters to lead the way for the best things in life. To have brothers, as I had, that would stop in the field or by the roadside and pray for me and help me to decide about the great questions of life, is a thing to cherish. I can go now to some of the spots that some of my brothers made sacred by prayer while we were going about the daily things of life. I never had one of my brothers to put as evil thing in my way but always the better things. I never heard one of them utter an oath of profanity, or lie, or black-guard, or defile the good name of anybody. I never saw or knew of one of them taking a drink of whisky, or strong drink, or even to use tobacco in any form. I do not mean that they were wholly perfect, and of course they were "he" boys every one of them, and could have as much fun as any set of boys but I tell you they were clean and honorable, and honest to the very core. I never knew of one of these boys trying to take advantage in a trade or giving anybody a bad deal of any kind. Just to be the seventh boy down the line and have them always to want to help you to be good and clean, and help you to grow to be a real fellow, and then to go into their homes after they established them, and hear them return thanks at the table and pray in the family and pray for you, and for the neighbors and the whole world; I tell you I count myself very fortunate, I was fortunate. I wonder how many families are doing it that way. No wonder all of them became officers in the church, and no wonder they and our noble father helped to make a preacher out of me. Everyone of them helped me in every way during the long hard struggle toward the ministry. And God bless their good wives, they too helped. And what was true of the older boys was true of the one younger than myself, he of God's noblest men. And the baby girl, Mary, how sweet and fair. Could she have lived beyond her fourteenth year, how much she might have blessed the world. And, Mattie, the searest of sisters, the third from the top. No wonder she was her Daddy's pet, and the pet of all the boys in the family, and admired and loved by hundreds of others, far and near. Seems that she just ought to live always to help and be mother and sister and friend and pal to all that have to travel this way. There are just no words to express what she has meant to her brothers, as well as to many others, along the way of life. All the youngsters that read this family history, some of them possibly down the generations, ought to know that Martha Woods, now called Mattie, Mattie Caviness Stipp, was all but worshipped by the whole pack of brothers because she was so good in heart and so fine in spirit, and so noble in principle, and so indispensable to their hearts. She dwells in her home at Neosho, Mo., and plays mother, not only to her own daughter and two grandchildren, but to lots of others, like she has been to us brothers since some of us can remember.

The children all wanted father with them as much as possible after mother was gone. But now she had been gone two years and father was at the home of the oldest son, John, three and one half miles from Bentonville on the old Kindly place, when he became ill and past going. The children were all where they could run in and see him often, except the two younger boys, who were teaching in Rhea, in Washington Co. Dr. Charles Hurley was waiting on him and he told those boys he would call us. One day the phone rang and Dr. Hurley said, "Your boys had better come to your father." We turned the school over to our assistants and started to him. We arrived at six o'clock that Thursday evening. When we walked into his room he smiled and said, "I am so glad you came. I was afraid you would wait too long. I do not have one word to say. I have already said it. You have my life and all of my teachings before you. It is yours. Take it for what it is worth and make the

best of it. I have said and done everything I know to say or do for your instruction and for your good." I never had such a feeling of comfort. He was up with his work; he was up with his praying. He had nothing to go back and patch up, and no fences to fix up. He was up to date with his religion and advice, and he did not need then to commence something different. A little later he said, "I just wanted all of you with me in my passing. Everything is all right but I want you with me. I am sure that when my feet touch the chilly waters this old body will draw back, but do not let that bother you, that is natural, but all will be well, and I am glad to go, for it will be better over there."

Just one week from that Thursday, after we had all done what we could to make him comfortable and sometimes read some of his favorite chapters of the Bible to him and listened to the prayers on his lips, the end was at hand. The Rev. Peter Carnahan, our pastor of whom we spoke, slipped in and had a word with him and slipped away. Then mother's brother, Jack Maxwell, a minister of the gospel, came in and such a conversation we had never heard. Uncle Jack went straight to the bed and in the most matter of fact way said, "Well, Bob, it seems you are going to beat me over," "Yes, I am going," Father said. Uncle Jack asked, "Is the way clear?" "Yes, the way is clear." was the calm answer. "Well", said Uncle Jack, "When you are over tell them I am on the way, and I'll be coming, too, someday." Up to now it seemed he had been pushing on, anxious to step over, and now the beautiful autumn day was wearing away, and all of a sudden there seemed to be something disturbing the calm repose that had hovered about through it all. There seemed to be a drawing back. Oh, how it did hurt our hearts. The writer of these notes rushed into the back yard and if ever he prayed he prayed then. "Oh God, here is a boy thinking of preaching thy word, here we are witnessing the passing of a man that has told us all our lives that God in Jesus Christ is sufficient at all times, and now shall he falter? Show us thy glory and let us know for a certainty that what he has taught us is true. O God, do not fail us now, in Jesus name, amen." Then we went back into the room and it seemed aglow with God's presence. All shrinking was gone, and he was reaching forward. Withdrawing his hands from the hands of the boys he lifted them high toward Heaven and said "Glory! Glory!" and as that beautiful day of November 17th 1901 faded away he took flight to his eternal home. Thus, ended the career of earth of a noble man but he still speaks to the passing generations.