

Biography of Leola Callaway Farley

By Scarlett Teel

Leola Callaway Farley

Beginning here with the words of her niece, Gail Callaway Collier, I want to tell the life story of Leola Callaway Farley, a renowned productive artist and citizen of Clanton and Chilton County. She came from pioneer families of the area and married into one also. According to her niece, Gail Callaway Collier....."Leola was born on February 16, 1913 to Samuel Luther Callaway and Lula Ellen Aldridge Callaway. She was their 3rd child. My dad, Adkin Lamar Callaway, was the oldest, born 1908 and my aunt, Loris Callaway Rich, their second child, born 1910. They lived in Mobile where their dad was an accountant. He died in 1918 during the flu epidemic and the family stayed in Mobile for awhile. They later moved to Clanton where they lived with Jessie Stephan and Belle Aldridge, Lula's parents. Leola as well as her siblings attended schools in Clanton and graduated from high school. Her siblings left for Memphis and Birmingham but Leola decided to remain in Clanton where she met and married Berber Farley, also from Clanton.....Leola died in 1976 and Berber in 1995. Neither Leola nor Loris had children. My brothers were the only nephews (Lamar John Callaway and Kenneth Paul Callaway) and I am the only niece (Gail Callaway Collier)."

"After their marriage they bought a house in Clanton on Popular Springs Road. Leola and Berber raised sheep and lambs on their property. However, Leola began to paint commercially at this time. Also, WWII had broken out so she applied for a job with the Red Cross and remained with them until the war was over. Her office was above a drug store in downtown Clanton. I remember that well because when we visited Clanton she would take me with her to spend the day. The office was above a drug store that was named Upchurch, I think. It was about this time that Lula's father died and his property was divided among his children. Lula, Leola and Berber moved to the farm on Enterprise Road and began renovating and building the house and barn fences. She also, began art lessons for the local community."

"When we visited our relatives, the highlight of our visit was when all of us would go to the living room or kitchen and Leola would get out her guitar or

accordion for a sing-a-long. Her favorites were 'You Are My Sunshine,' 'Barnicle Bill the Sailor,' and 'Tell-Me-Why' and, of course, we were all singing. It was wonderful and my family will never forget the time. During the day we enjoyed trekking to the creek to watch the beavers dam the creek. Oh, the tales we heard about the creek.....When it was watermelon time we always walked to the back of the pond, picked out our own watermelon and took it down to the little spring that flowed on the side of the pond so it would cool off so we could eat later. The spring was actually cold."

Gail continued....."Leola Farley was an energetic lady. She was very accomplished musically, playing the piano, the organ, the ukulele, the guitar and the accordion. She sang very well in a type of 'hoarse' voice. The life-long Alabamian sewed beautifully and cooked a 'mean' meatloaf. On any given day, you could find her plowing a field or harvesting vegetables, feeding the cows or rounding up stock. She was very well read and could be found on her porch reading history books of the Netherlands or Winston Churchill. Her life was anything but dull. However, everything she did was encircled with a background of classical music which she said was part of her being....."

The only recollection of the house on Popular Springs Road was after Leola had moved away but I knew then that that house had a uniqueness about it that had to come from Leola but when I first walked into her house off of Enterprise Road for my first art lessons, I knew that I was in the presence of a most unique, talented, creative, energetic and well read lady. She had conceived and built a huge kitchen that she, Berber and lovely Mrs. Lula used for cooking, eating and visiting while warming around a huge fireplace. In the middle of the room set a huge table that Berber had made for them especially for that room. At the end of the table set one of the first television sets that I ever saw. It was one of the floor models with the little tiny screen at the top. On display also were some of her paintings. Later onto this room, she added a roomy painting studio which she creatively used the ends of apple crates to make a beautiful unique floor. Tucked into a niche that Berber had built into the entrance hall wall was a beautiful sculpted body of one of the Greek gods. As I got off my bicycle on my arrival, I was met by a beautiful unique dog, Peri, an

Afghan Hound. I had never seen such a creature.

When I first began art lessons with Leola, I had no art supplies except what was left from a Paint by Number set that I had received for Christmas so my mother and daddy had worked out a trip for me to go with Leola to Birmingham for us to purchase those precious art supplies that I needed. Leola and I set out happily in their old rusty pickup truck to the art store where we got what I needed then we went down through Mountain Brook to Leola's sister, Loris Callaway Rich's home where we had lunch with Loris and her husband.

In the big unfinished living room, we did the art class. Not only did I receive art instructions but I had my first introduction to opera and classical music. I went to her house mostly on Saturdays so we sat there surrounded by all kinds of art work and books, listening to the live productions broadcast from New York Metropolitan Opera House while talking about art history and artists and painting. Some Saturdays, her nephew, Mr. Leonard Farley, Jr., joined us and, indeed, did give me my first lessons in perspective. Mr. Leonard Farley, Jr. taught art for years at the University of Mississippi. Leola Farley taught others art lessons from around Clanton such as Mrs. Vivian Klinner; Mrs. Barbara Popwell Teel; Mr. Vernon Payne and Mrs. Olive Fiquette and she painted many portraits for families.

I am sure that there were many influenced by Leola Callaway Farley by her "specialness" but I know that I was. My fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Joe Callaway—I think, also a relative of Leola—got out and worked it out with my mother and father and Leola to do art lessons for me for which I am so grateful. I have been influenced all my life since with my love of art and especially my love of Oriental Art. I remember Leola working in her studio on some watercolors of beautiful Oriental ladies. I have always wanted to be like Leola. Thank you, Leola Callaway Farley, for your positive influences in my life.....and, for certain, being an asset to Clanton and Chilton County.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting is Sunday, **July 26th, 2015**. NOTE! We have reserved the **Chestnut Creek Heritage Chapel** for our meeting at **2:00 PM!** We appreciate their continuing hard work in saving this historical part of our county.

Our speaker will be **Mr. Bobby Lane**. He will be discussing Clanton over the years and talking about the contents of a book he is writing.

Some Informational Notes!

July 26 – **Who Do You Think You Are** - genealogy based TV show resumes on TLC.

ONLINE – Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH):

The Alabama Department of Archives and History (<http://www.archives.alabama.gov/>) has listings of their records online that are useful to prepare before you go for a visit. However, they also have a few databases online that you can directly use for your research. One that I just found/noticed is the **Alabama 1867 Voter Registration Records Database**. The Internet address for it is: <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/voterreg/> It has a good index and search page and also will provide images. You can also just browse. (Note there was no Chilton County at this time so you have to look at Shelby, Bibb and Autauga).

The ADAH also has an online database for the **Alabama Civil War Service Cards File**, which is located on the Internet here:

<http://www.archives.alabama.gov/civilwar/>

You can search for soldiers and see their information transcribed from the service cards. However, no images are provided.

Another online searchable database is the **World War I Gold Star Database**, which is located online here: <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/goldstar/info.html> It has images of the "Gold Star" card and information as well as some photos of the soldier, etc. There are 24 entries from Chilton County.

Also, the ADAH has links to some online Alabama photo galleries, many old pictures that are unidentified. Spend some time on their site!

There are other ADAH databases available on Ancestry.com – the ADAH site has a PDF containing the list. A few databases are available on Ancestry for free, but most will require a membership. Note that you can visit a library or the ADAH and use their Ancestry access if you are not a member of Ancestry.

IN MEMORIUM

It is with great sadness that we report that our Vice President, **Riley Bernard "Benny" Harris** passed away on June 22, 2015. He was born on April 28, 1955 to James Lowell Harris and Peggy Dean Scott Harris.

Benny was very active in many historical and genealogical and cemetery preservation organizations. He will be greatly missed.

Upcoming Dates

July 26, 2015

"Next" SUNDAY!

**CCGS Meeting at
Chestnut Creek Heritage
Chapel, 2:00 PM:**

- – Mr. Bobby Lane will talk about a book he is writing and changes in Clanton over the years.

Fall meeting

Oct 18, 2015

Location is TBD.

Our speaker will be Dr. Mike Mahan and he will be talking about and reading from his book "No Hill Too High for a Stepper: Memories of Montevallo, Alabama."

**CHILTON COUNTY
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**
P. O. BOX 703
THORSBY, AL 35171

