

GOOCH CONNECTIONS

(A Vintage Vignette by John P. Rankin, November 18, 2008)

The impact of the 1849 California gold rush upon this area is often unnoticed, except by genealogical researchers who suddenly lose the trail of families during the time that they went to California. The local Gooch family pioneers could not overlook the effect of the gold rush upon them. One of their own died while traveling west to seek a fortune. According to various reports, including the Gooch family story written by Mary Ann Hamm in the book "The Heritage of Madison County, Alabama" (1998, on file at the Huntsville Public Library's Heritage Room), Mary E. Gooch married Rufus C. R. Petty in Madison County in 1838. Her sister America Virginia Gooch married Isaac Newton Petty in Madison County in 1851. Mary Ann Hamm related that both Petty families were moving to California during the gold rush era, when Mary Gooch Petty died on the ship and was buried at sea.

Identification of the relationships of these particular Petty men in this area has been elusive, but their brides' Gooch family was extensively interconnected with other pioneer families of the area by marriages. Mary and America were children of Roland and Elizabeth Gooch, who were the first owners of the land that became Dublin Park today. Besides the two girls, their children included Eleanor, Nathaniel Matson, Nancy, William M., Louisa Cole, and George W. Gooch. George died at age 22, but his tombstone says that he was "Aged 23 years, 7 months, and 8 days". However, it also says that he was born December 15, 1816, and died August 7, 1839. The stone was emplaced by George's brother, Nathaniel Matson Gooch. Nathaniel also emplaced all other stones in the family cemetery. Nathaniel may have been wrong in his math, or his memory may have dimmed by the time he had the stone made. Nathaniel was born in 1822, and he died in December of 1901, according to his own stone, so it may have been many years after George's death that the stone was prepared.

Nathaniel's sister, Eleanor Gooch, married James Dublin in 1825. She later inherited her father's land, thereby passing it into the Dublin family. Nancy Gooch married William Rowe in 1834. William M. Gooch married Mariah Combs in 1844, and Louisa Cole Gooch married first to Hezekiah Bailey in 1836, then to Joseph Hambrick after Hezekiah died.

In 1850 Nathaniel married Susan Caroline Litzy, a daughter of Jacob Litzy of Limestone County. The Madison County marriage record shows her surname as Lightsey, but it is always Litzy in the family records. According to the 1910 census, Susan bore nine children, but only four were living at the time of the census. It is known that Nathaniel and Susan had children named Mary, Martha, William Tell, John, Matson ("Matt") Roland, and Beulah Cora. Martha married Robert D. Tribble, John married Mary Donaldson, William Tell married Ada Louise Whitworth, Matson or Matt Roland (also

called "Sam") married Mary Elizabeth Pike, and Beulah Cora married Matthew Leven Foot Stewart. Seven of the ten children of "Leve" and Beulah Gooch Stewart were surviving in the 1910 census. The fact that they were part of a close-knit family taking care of one another was related in an earlier Vintage Vignette where it was told that Beulah's parents provided the care for Beulah's doomed daughter Katie until her death at age 7. As further evidence, for several years until her death, Leve and Beulah took care of Beulah's mother, Susan Litzy Gooch, after a fall that broke her hip.

Another of Beulah's daughters, Cora Mable Stewart, married Richard Balch in 1924. The Balch connection is compounded by the fact that Matt Roland Gooch had a son named Richard Matson Gooch (namesake of Gooch Lane), who married Ada Mable Balch, a daughter of Jesse and Gertrude Clutts Balch. Beulah's husband Leve was a son of Thomas and Sarah Litzy Stewart. Thomas had a brother, Calvin Stewart, who married Mary Ann Litzy. Catherine Elizabeth Litzy married Wesley M. Dublin, son of James and Eleanor Gooch Dublin. Sarah, Mary Ann, and Catherine Elizabeth were all sisters of Susan Caroline Litzy, wife of Nathaniel Matson Gooch and mother of Beulah.