

# Viola's Autograph Album

Viola Horn was the only daughter among four surviving children born to Perry Horn and Mattie McFadden. She died at 23, and her grieving parents cherished a little autograph album given to Viola in her late teens. They handed it down to their eldest son, my mother's father, who left it to Mother, and she left it to me.

Autograph albums were especially popular from the 1850s through the early 1900s, but were printed in England and America as early as the 1820s. In Agatha Christie's book, Evil Under the Sun, her famous Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, said, "*When I was young (and that, Mademoiselle, is indeed a long time ago), there was a game entitled, 'If not yourself, who would you be?' One wrote the answer in young ladies' albums. They had gold edges and were bound in blue leather.*"

Viola's little book is not as fancy as those of M. Poirot's acquaintances. Hers is composed of rough brown paper with cardboard covers in varying shades of brown with black detail. A round inset picture on front shows a stone cottage, split-rail fence, and quiet little pond. The words *Made in Germany* appear just inside the front cover.

Most of those who wrote in Viola's album were in their late teens and 20s and had familiar old Itawamba surnames. Written entirely in pencil, their faded words are almost impossible to read, and some entries were not signed. The following selections offer a glimpse into the simple lives of young folks of courting age in Itawamba County a century ago. Actual words, punctuation, and spelling were used, when possible, and an attempt was made to identify the writers, as well as their families.

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## Selections from Viola's Album

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*Remember well and bear in mind, a good true friend is hard to find. But when you find one good and true, never change the old one for new. Say, dearest Viola, may you remember Dec. 25--and 26--also. What a jolly time you and I had.*

*Lovingly, Carlie  
Dec. 26, 1907*

Carlie Ford was born in Itawamba County around 1884. Some Ford family researchers believe her parents were Miles Montgomery Ford and his first wife, Eliza Ann Mattox. After her parents died, Carlie made her home with Viola's uncle, Steve Horn, whose wife, Janey, was Miles Montgomery Ford's sister. Their mother was a *Medley* and sister to Viola's maternal grandmother, so Carlie and Viola were cousins as well as friends.

About 1909, Carlie married Drayden Todd, son of James Todd, whose family came from North Carolina, and Eveline Gann, whose family came from Alabama. Carlie and Drayden had three daughters: Noreen (Wheeler); Annie Sarah (Young); and Loretta June

(Henickman). Carlie died March 13, 1924 and was buried at Union Grove Baptist Cemetery in Tilden. After her death, Drayden married Savannah Wheeler and also outlived her to marry a third time to Alice Prestage Bennett. Drayden died in 1975 and was buried at Asbury Methodist Cemetery.

*Remember me while life is sweet.  
Remember me 'til next we meet.  
And if the grave is not our lot,  
Dear sweet friend, forget me not.*

*When in my lonely grave I sleep,  
And bending willows ore me weep  
Tis time, my dear, and not before,  
That I will think of thee no more.*

*Written by a true friend & cousin, Annie Dill*

Annie Madge Dill was born in Itawamba County in 1889 to John Calvin Dill and Sarah Riggs who were born in Alabama, but married in Itawamba County about 1882. In 1911, Annie married Jesse Efelbert McNeece, son of William Thomas McNeece and Sally Ford. Jesse died in 1978, and Annie died in 1984 at the age of 94. They were buried at Union Grove Baptist Cemetery in Tilden.

*Viola, Juddy, Luke, & Lula spent a few pleasant hours together at Viola's home.*

*Feb 17, 1908, Monday night.*

*Quite a lot of difference in tonight and last night. Just Viola and I. Can't you see I'm  
lonely, lonely as can be. No one can cheer me but \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Feb 18, 1908, Viola and Lula*

Lula Dill evidently wrote this entry during an extended visit to Viola's. Lula was sister to Annie Dill (who wrote the last entry) and married Dow McNeece, brother to Annie's husband, Jesse. The identity of *Luke* is unknown, but he was, apparently, the only one at the time of this entry who could cheer Lula. Lula died in 1968, and Dow died in 1969. They were buried at Union Grove Cemetery in Tilden.

*The sea is wide, and I can't step it.*

*I love you, and I just can't help it.*

*As ever, a friend, Callie Mae*

Callie Mae Dill was the older sister of Lula and Annie from earlier entries. In 1910 Callie married Chester Jessie Henderson, son of Osburn Henderson and Elizabeth Jackson. After his death in 1918, she married Edris Lee Dove, son of John Dove and Ella Dill. Edris Lee died in 1969, and Callie Mae died in 1975. She and both husbands are buried at Union Grove Cemetery in Tilden.

*When far away and friends are few, just think of me, a dear friend true. Remember  
well and bear in mind a true friend is hard to find.*

*Cora, Carlie, and Viola--and Viola is expecting somebody else. (Ha! Ha!)*

*When the golden sun is setting and your mind from care is free, when of others you are  
thinking, will you sometime think of me.*

*Lovingly, Cora Horn*

Cora Ann Cantrell was born to James Cantrell and Mary Friday in 1887. Her brother, Juddie James, who married Viola, was born in 1888. Cora married Oscar Horn, in 1904 and they had two children; Edgar and Earline, my mother. I sometimes wear Cora's wide gold wedding band Oscar gave her when they became engaged. The words *Solid Gold* were carved on the inside. Oscar died in 1948, and Cora died in 1967. They were buried at Union Grove, as were both their children and one grandson.

*Dear Viola, when your work on earth is ended, and your path of life is trod, may your name in gold be written in the autograph of God. On your golden chain of friendship, regard me as a link.*

*Your loving cousin, Eunice Stone, Wednesday, Feb the 5th, 1908.*

Eunice Stone was born in 1889 to W.E. Stone and Savannah Medley. Her mother and Viola's grandmother were both Medleys, so she and Viola were cousins. Eunice married Roy Burch, son of John Henry Burch and Mollie Roberts. Eunice and Roy had two sons, Harold and Lee, who both moved to Texas. Eunice must have gone there at some time because she died in Ft. Worth at the age of 97. She was returned to Itawamba County for burial at New Home Cemetery.

*Dear Viola, been reading your post cards, looking at pictures, and into everything.  
Ever to be remembered Feb 5, 1908.*

*Came to see Viola, and her gone. Guess Viola is talking to J. (Ha! Ha!)  
Epron Azalea*

Epron Azalea Stone was the eldest of four children born to William and Mary Stone. Her siblings were Emmie, Cletus, and Effie. Neither she nor younger sister, Effie, married, and they lived together in the old family home. They were fondly known in my family as *Azalea and Effie*; as if one person instead of two.

*When I was a child, Mother took me along with her on a visit to Azalea and Effie. After some looking and shouting, we finally found them "down at the spring." Once inside, I began to wander about and, to my delight, found an old pump organ in their parlor. While pumping away on the thing, I happened to glance up and see a picture of someone in a casket who appeared to be quite dead! I didn't leave Mother's side again the entire time we were there. Azalea and Effie really knew how to rid their parlor of naughty little girls, and Mother said it was good enough for me!*

*When others clasp your tiny hand and say forget me not, will only they your thoughts command, and must I be forgot? I never can forget you; 'tis in vain for me to try. I will think of you forever and love you 'til I die.*

*Written by a true friend, Florence Miles (Mar. the 15th, 1908)*

Florence Miles was the daughter of Benjamin Bradford Miles and Martha Ann Johnson. Around 1902, she married Thomas A. Gillespie, son of N.J. Gillespie and Sallie Lee. Tom died in 1931, and Florence died in 1973. They were buried at Key's Cemetery.

*This day shall ever be remembered by me.  
Bunyan Hartsell and wife*

Bunyan Hartsell, obviously a man of few words, wrote this brief note on the occasion of Viola's 20th birthday party. Bunyan and his older sister, Dessie Nora, were born in Itawamba County to James M. Hartsell and his second wife, Mary Priddy. Bunyan moved away sometime before 1930 at which time he was counted on the census for Cameron County, Texas. According to that record, he had been married to his wife, Thula, for 18 years, and they had one child, a daughter named Chloris. The birthplace of both wife and daughter was listed as Mississippi.

*March 26, 1909. Ever to be remembered. Such a jolly crowd. Enjoyed the beautiful day with dear Viola as it's her birthday. Sure did enjoy a nice, good dinner and will never forget the good time. Belle*

Belle Reynolds was the daughter of James Reynolds and Corilla Wallace. Her maternal grandmother was Caroline Medley, so Belle and her siblings were Viola's cousins through the Medleys. Belle's married name was Lynn and, according to her brother's obituary, she lived in Amarillo, Texas in 1941. Her sister, Pearl, married Alvin Jolly, and the same obit said she lived in Osceola, Arkansas. Their other siblings were: James; Annie (Doris) of Forrest City, AR; Retha (Christopher), also of Forrest City; and Lema (Fikes), Ezra (Robinson), Osie (Walker), and Eva (Robinson) of Itawamba County.

*Thursday even March 26, 1908  
Long may you live happy. May you be loved by all and dearly by me.  
Lovingly, Estell McF*

Annie Estell McFadden was born in 1891 to Richard Boden Kendal McFadden and Tennessee Alice Lawson. Her father and Viola's mother were McFadden brother and sister, so she and Viola were first cousins. Estell married Jesse Ellis Welch, Jr., and had one son and six daughters: Robert Reed, Jesse (Sandlin), Chessie Lee (Wood), Jeffie (Farrar), Willie (Wallace), Mary Alice (Bowen), and Ruby (Barber). Estell died in 1953, and Ellis died in 1978. They were buried at Union Grove Cemetery.

*Apr 14, 1911  
So lonely sitting up by myself this morning; by myself with Viola! Day is breaking now, and I want my craw full. Wake up, Cora, and cook me some biscuits!  
Your brother,  
Oscar Horn*

Oscar Grover Horn, my maternal grandfather, was Viola's older brother and the eldest of three surviving sons born to Perry and Mattie McFadden Horn. He was born in 1884 and married Cora Ann Cantrell in 1904. They had two children, three grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. Oscar died in 1948 and is buried beside Cora at Union Grove.

*Remember me in school days. Remember me, dear friend, when I am called above.*

**Juddie C.**

***Rainy so rainy, this day will ever be remembered by one lonely so lonely.***

***Oct 3, 1907 (Viola)***

***For those whose hearts are true, for the heaven that smiles above you and the good that you may do. Remember one is no task. Remember me is all I ask.***

***Your friend, Juddie C.***

***Remember this day, Oct 14, 1908. (Viola)***

Juddie James Cantrell was born in 1888 to James Cantrell and Mary Friday. He was Viola's future husband when he wrote these entries--he just didn't know it yet. His entry indicates he was totally unaware Viola wanted to be more than a friend. He finally got the message, though, and they married in December of 1910.

***On Feb 25 a great rain came. The lightning flashed, bursting Grandmama's sugar gourd all to smash.***

***(Viola)***

Rainstorms played a depressing part in the social lives of young folks in the days before paved roads and automobiles. Storm "houses" carved from red clay banks were once found all over Itawamba County. My experience was limited to one time only!

*On a 1950s visit to Uncle Juddie Cantrell, my grandmother scanned the skies and pronounced there was a "cloud coming up." Someone decided we should grab a flashlight and make haste for the storm house. Once the door to our little cave was shut, Uncle Juddie calmly advised we should look out for snakes. Preferring to take my chances with the storm, I immediately ran back outside!*

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## **More about Viola**

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Viola Horn Cantrell was born in March, 1889 and died in April, 1912. Until her marriage in 1910, she lived with her parents and three brothers on *McFadden* land in the Tilden community. Her father was Perry Horn, son of Nicholas and Jane Hill Horn of *Horn's Crossing*, and her mother was Martha Minerva (Mattie) *McFadden*, daughter of B.B. and Almena Medley *McFadden*. About 15 months after Viola married Juddie Cantrell, she died in childbirth, as did the little baby. Oddly enough, no mention was made of the child on the tombstone or in the obituary which read as follows:

*April 8, 1912: Death angels hovered over the home of Juddie Cantrell, taking from him his companion, Viola. Viola was the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. N.P. Horn of Tilden. She was a member of the Baptist church, having united with the church at the age of 17 years. She was laid to rest in the Union Grove Cemetery.*

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## **Viola's Picture**

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After Oscar Horn's death, Cora Horn built a little house on South Fulton. She didn't like clutter, so her living room was sparsely furnished. Two mission-style rockers faced the fireplace, and she considered them the best seats in the house. A huge picture of Viola was in front of the fireplace grate in summer and to its left, propped against the wall, in winter. The dark ornate frame perfectly showcased Viola's youthful beauty and, obviously, anyone who sat in the rockers faced both the fireplace *and* Viola!

Cora's brother, Juddie Cantrell, and his wife, Enue, always dropped by when we were in Fulton, and Cora insisted they sit in her beloved rockers. Once I learned the beautiful woman in the picture had been Uncle Juddie's first wife, I was fascinated to watch their faces as *they* watched Viola. Aunt Enue was always perfectly relaxed and content, but Uncle Juddie appeared mesmerized by the sight of his first wife and talked very little. This was perceived through the romantic imagination of childhood, you understand, so it's entirely possible he was thinking of his fine pack of hunting dogs! It pleased me, though, to believe he was remembering Viola and the little baby.

Viola's album has been donated to the Itawamba Historical Society.

Submitted by Patsy Adcock Kennedy  
G-Niece of Viola Horn Cantrell

**CREDITS:** Itawamba County's excellent *Genforum* site.