

Document in genealogy files of Ann Arnold Hennings

Remembrances by Betty Lou Payne Bennett in April 2001 of her grandparents, Will and Emma Arnold.

Robert Stoy 17 Oct 2020

Will and Emma Arnold

The Great Depression was in full swing. After Helen and Agnes married, Elsie, Edmund and Worth assumed financial responsibility for Emma and Will Arnold. Early 1927, Emma was 56 and Will was 65, young by today's standards.

The three: Elsie, Edmund and Worth bought a car together. Using it they explored areas around the District. Elsie worked in the Government Printing Office, Edmund with the Gas Company (?) and Worth in Eastern Building and Loan (?). They considered themselves fortunate to have jobs.

Eventually they found a home on Balls Hill Road in which the manager of the Mack Farm once lived. Together they bought this home and Emma and Will moved in. Soon after the family settled, all three announced plans to be married.

Immediately, Emma discovered that Langley Methodist Church was closed because the congregation could not afford to repair the furnace. According to the deed, the property would revert back to the Mackall family (now Happy Hill School) if it was not used as a church for 5 years. Emma was the moving force to get the church re-opened and, certainly, the spiritual head of this congregation for many years. At her funeral, so many Methodist preachers attended that they joked they had nearly enough to hold an Annual Conference. In those years, Langley Methodist Church was small and would attract young preachers for one or two years and Emma became the confident of most of them.

After the Langley Methodist congregation relocated to Dolley Madison Blvd in McLean they dedicated their library as the Arnold Library in memory of Emma. Her portrait hangs above the fire-place and I often wonder if anyone has any idea who she really was. Makes one wonder about the legacy we will all leave.

Granddaddy was not active at Langley as he considered himself Baptist. When we would visit Grandmother, which was often, my earliest memory was of him walking out and working in the garden. I thought he was reclusive but now that I am older he probably just got tired of "women talk!" My memory of "women talk!" was of Grandmother and the sisters having wonderful times with lots of giggling and laughing – I loved it!

I wasn't "privy" to the details but sometime prior to Grandmother getting sick Granddaddy went to her and dictated his confession, either accepted the Lord or re-dedicated himself to Jesus, and had her write it all out. At her death, this letter was coiled up and placed in her hand in the casket.

Although young, my sister Jean and I were both spiritually impacted by Emma, our grandmother. We knew that she had an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus and both of us desired to be like her. Just prior to Jean's death, March 13, 2006, we spoke, once again about the spiritual impact Grandmother had on our lives in such a dynamic, positive way.

As one of the "younger" grandchildren I have no memory of Grandmother sharing anything about Jesus with me personally. Of course, she often shared in the Sunday School, was interested in Missions and kept the Piggy Bank that we Sunday School children put our pennies in for missionaries. In those years, the Women's Missionary Society would often select someone to honor and one year they honored Emma. Money was sent, in her name, to the Mission Society Board and she was presented with a pin. It became her favorite piece of jewelry (maybe her only other than her wedding band) and she asked to be buried wearing it. She wore a wide gold wedding band (I wanted mine to be just like hers – that is the impact that she had on me). At her death Granddaddy wore it on his little finger and lost it in the strawberry plants in the back yard of the Balls Hill Road House. Jean stopped by the school that now uses it as Administrative Offices and asked if the ring is ever found could she be contacted.

One of the beautiful stained glass windows at Langley was imprinted with her name after her death. I remember being so proud that I was one of her granddaughters...an amazing legacy that she left.

Grandmother unexpectedly died, in 1948, and the Edmund Arnolds moved into their home on Balls Hill Road for a number of months. At some point, it was decided that Will, Granddaddy, would move in with his three daughters, spending three months with each of them. When he moved in with us, Elsie and John decided that he should live with us full time.

This was sometime in 1948. Jean was preparing to graduate from Fall Church High School and I was entering Junior High. We have incredibly delightful memories of having him live with us. One particular memory is of him describing how little children would come and dance and play around him, particularly when he was sitting in the yard. He would reach out his hand and they would come really close, one in particular charming him. Cherubs or angels???

He lived with us from 1948 until June of 1954 when John was transferred to Albuquerque, NM with the US Government, Bureau of Indian Affairs. At this time Will moved to live with Jean and Mike Volz and baby son, Michael until just before his death March 26, 1955.

April 2011 – Betty Lou Payne Bennett