

## Susannah Miranda Lanning 1850 - 1929

### The Early Years



Miss Maranda Lanning, daughter of John Lanning, lived and died in upper Turniptown.

Miranda was born on a cold winter day in February, 1850. She was the first daughter, and third child of John J. and Annie. As a young child she went to school with her older brothers Thomas and Enos. The name of the school they attended was called 'Upper Turniptown'. This school was located in a log building just up the road from where the family lived, and just across Stover Branch.

In the early 1850's, there were three schools on Turniptown. One was Upper Turniptown that served the children at the end of the road: One was Turniptown that was about middle ways between the other two schools and near the Lloyd Henson place. The other was Lower Turniptown located near the Cartecay River road that led to the town of Ellijay.

In 1856 James Smart taught the children of John J. and Annie on Upper Turniptown. In 1879 Miss Hattie Smith was teaching. Her salary in 1882 for 1 month was \$32.50 and there were 49 children enrolled in the Upper Turniptown School. In 1885, A.L. Pinson was the teacher.

Down at Turniptown in 1879 John Perry taught and was paid \$31.61 per month. In 1885 the teacher there was Alice Redman. John S. Everett taught the third school further down on Lower Turniptown. Two text books used in these schools during the early years were: Baldwin Reader and Harvey's Speller.

In 1850, John J. Lanning paid \$1 to the poor school fund.

### After John's Death

Miranda never married. When she was 29 years old, John J. died. After his death she and Annie lived for several years on the homeplace. In the early 1900's the two moved into a small house down, and off, the main road. This move was probably made so they would be nearer Margaret who had earlier married John Painter and

was living nearby. The two women lived here until the death of Annie.

At the time of Annie's death, Miranda and Margaret were her only children living on Turniptown. Francis and Thomas had moved to Rome, Georgia with their families and were working in the cotton mills there. Miranda sent them a telegram notifying them of their mother's death.

After Annie died, Miranda moved into a small one room house in an isolated hollow on Stillhouse Branch. She kept a large flock of laying hens and sold the eggs as a source of income. In the 1920's daddy bought eggs from her. He paid her 10¢ a dozen. With her meager income she managed to keep the taxes paid on the homeplace.

### **Miranda's Trumpet**

During the years Miranda lived by herself, she kept a trumpet for a very special reason. She was to blow it as a signal to her neighbors if she ever needed help of any kind. No one remembers her ever having to use the trumpet for this purpose.

Estelle Henson remembers: "When I was a little girl and would go visit Aunt Miranda, childlike, I wanted to blow that trumpet so bad I didn't know what to do! But, I was never allowed to."

Miranda's trumpet is in the possession of Margaret's descendants. It is in excellent condition with the exception of the small mouth piece which is missing. Her oak mantel clock has also survived and it too, is the possession of one of Margaret's descendants.

### **Sweetbread**

Children enjoyed visiting Miranda. She would bake them large pones of sweetbread in a covered oven over an open fire. Miranda never owned a stove in her lifetime, but did all her cooking in the fireplace. She had two large iron frying pans. She would fill both at the same time with thick slices of ham. She would fry the ham and serve it to the children with the sweetbread.

### **Nathaniel In The Tater Patch**

Below Miranda's house was a large spring called Eagle Springs. Directly above the spring Miranda planted her Irish potatoes. The seeds were those of White Star, a potato known for its giant tubers. One day her great nephew, Nathaniel Painter happened upon the potato patch. "There they were", Nathaniel said, "Potatoes so huge they were coming out of the ground by themselves! They were just bursting open. And, there was the spring right at the edge

of the patch! Well, I just started throwing the big potatoes off down into the spring, listening to the big splash they made when they hit the water. After a few minutes I heard Aunt Miranda calling out from the house above me, scaring me half to death."

"Don't throw em in the spring!" she called, "Bring em to the house!"

### **Attending Church**

On Sunday mornings, Miranda would get dressed and go to church. When she left her house she would take a short cut down Stillhouse Branch to the main road as she walked the distance to Turniptown Church and back again. Occasionally, during the week, she would be seen walking up and down Turniptown Road. Rarely, did she stop and visit with a neighbor. They said she would speak to them in passing, but if invited to stop she would most often decline. They said, "Miranda, always seemed in a hurry to get somewhere. Like, she didn't have time to visit."

One bright sunny day, Miranda borrowed her niece, Becky's fancy fur-trimmed coat, and someone snapped her picture. It shows a gentle person with just a hint of a smile on her face. It also shows a fragile look that somewhat belies the strong woman she most certainly had to be.

### **Miranda's Last Ride**

Time came when Miranda could no longer live alone, and she moved into the home of a nephew, Andy Painter. It was there on December 31, 1929, at the age of 79, she died. Becky Nabell and Delia Henson Davis, kinfolks, went to assist Andy's wife, Violet, in preparing Miranda's body for burial. The three women sat up all that night making the burial clothes, sewing them with their fingers by lamplight.

Funeral services for Miranda were held the following day in the Painter home. It was New Year's, snowing, and bitter cold. Reverend Carter Burrell was pastor of Turniptown Church at the time. He did not live in Turniptown, but by some coincidence happened to be in the area, and conducted the service.

Following the service, Miranda's coffin was carried from the house and placed in the bed of a horse drawn wagon. The wagon was driven up the rocky road to the cemetery on top of the mountain. The family followed on foot. There were just enough men that went that morning to dig Miranda's grave, and the only women outside the Painter family were a niece, Becky Nabell, and her daughter, Ruby. As the small procession passed the home of Andrew Lanning, one of his daughters, Mary (Goble) recalls: "I was a child at the time, and I remember standing, looking out the window, watching

as the wagon passed our house on the way to the cemetery. It was cold; too cold for us to go to the funeral."

Miranda was buried beside her mother, Annie. Fieldstones were stood upright at the head and foot of her grave. The stones were unmarked.

### **Moments And Memories**

On a recent visit to Miranda's old house site where she had spent her last years alone, we found the tumbled stones of the chimney, the only remains of the small one room house. Scattered about the yard were the broken neck of a medicine bottle, the rim of a brown pottery churn, and the bottom of a three legged pot. We also found a pitted hammer stone once used by a Cherokee Indian. No doubt Miranda's house site had been previously occupied by an Indian family.

Below the house site, we stood where Miranda's potato patch had once been, and looked over into the clear and cold water of the big spring, now clogged with leaves and years of neglect. We could easily imagine what fun a small boy must have had throwing Miranda's big "taters" over into the water.

Walking down along the edge of the yard, Wilma Flowers stumbled upon the partially buried skeletal remains of what once had been a fancy buggy. We wondered how many years it had served Miranda, and perhaps, Annie. We learned later however, that the buggy had been a "plaything" for Uncle Andrew's children, Bill, Homer, and Harvey. They probably spent many happy hour pulling, and racing the buggy up and down the rough Turniptown mountain roads. One day, probably after growing tired of the game, they simply abandoned the buggy in Miranda's yard. It lies there today, a gaunt reminder of a long ago woman, and a long ago time.