

**Read Family**  
**Mt. Beulah, Edwards Township, Hinds County, Mississippi**

**The John Read family came to Mississippi in 1828 after spending six intervening years between Tennessee and Mississippi and Alabama. Son, Jesse, and daughter, Rebecca, had been born in Greene Co., Alabama. The family had also lived in Tuscaloosa Co., Alabama.**

**In Mississippi, the Reads lived first in Madison Co., where daughter, Elvira, was born in 1829. It was not long before they moved on to Hinds Co. and established a farm on land five miles from Edwards between Bolton and Edwards. Here they remained for 35 years, tending their farm, growing cotton. Their last child, Mary Elizabeth, was born there in 1835. In 1850, their real estate was valued at \$1,200.00; and in 1860 \$10,000 and personal estate was \$19,000.00.**

**John and Dicy were Methodists, worshipping at the Old Liberty Church at Edwards. Dicy was buried in the Old Hinds Co. Cemetery there. She died in 1867, at 68 years of age, while on a visit to Carroll Co., near Winona at her son Jesse's home. John left the farm after Dicy's death and moved to be near Jesse in Carroll Co., Winona did not become part of Montgomery Co., until 1871 when Carroll Co. was divided. We do not know when John died. It was after 1871 when he applied for a War of 1812 pension at 77 years. Only two of their children were still living when John and Dicy died, John and Mary Elizabeth. John & Dicy were married over 50 years.**

**Arthur Knight Barlow, Elvira's husband, lived in the Read house with his new family after John left. An earlier Barlow farmhouse had been burned in the Civil War. Ida Barlow, daughter of Elvira and Arthur Knight Barlow, had gone with her grandmother to visit Jesse. She stayed on there after Dicy's death and was raised by her aunt and uncle. In 1916, John Read's heirs received \$2,160.00 for property taken or destroyed in the war.**

## **Mt. Beulah and the Read Family**

**Text from an Article published in THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL paper in September 1926 written by Mrs. Ida Barlow Trotter. Describes her memories of a place called Mt. Beulah, located in Edwards Township, Hinds County, Mississippi. Includes description of Antebellum life in Mississippi as well as family experiences during the Civil War. Also includes some genealogical information about the family.**

**Background information about the Mt. Beulah and the READ family that lived there.**

**THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL  
September 1926  
Mrs. Ida Barlow Trotter**

**I have read what your Jackson readers said about the old home of Mr. McKinney L. Cook, near Edwards, MS. I am told by my children that I live mostly in the past and I do; therefore what the reporter had to say about "Mt. Beulah" was just another door that opens into the hall of my memory, where I can see hanging the pictures of people and scenes I knew in the years of "Long Ago".**

**With the youngest daughter, Laura, at that home, I was wont to romp and play all over that great old home. In the days we knew no cares and before the war clouds of the "Rebellion" hovered over our beloved southland. We played all over that place, up and down that spacious hall, in \_\_\_\_\_ beautiful parlor, where the older \_\_\_\_ like to show us off -- to their \_\_\_\_ -- in the large dining room with its snow-white sand upon the floor, as was the custom in those homes.**

**Out upon the lawn where the great \_\_\_\_\_ spread above us, down by the \_\_\_\_\_ where we loved to watch the \_\_\_\_\_, in the back yard where were \_\_\_\_\_ of little black piccaninnies. My fathers' home was near the Cook home, their slaves had intermarried and a well-beaten path led from one home to the other. The masters of the two homes were lifelong friends, the sons grew to manhood together.**

The daughters had their parties together, Mary, the oldest daughter, afterward Mrs. W. T. Ra\_\_\_\_\_ of Raymond, was my mother's maid of honor at her wedding. My mother was named Elvira Read, one of the Cook girls was named Elvira also. She was married to Captain William Smith, my mother to Arthur K. Barlow.

I have heard that all the little nieces and nephews called these two young matrons "Aunt Bye and Aunt \_\_\_\_". The servants also said "Young Miss Bye and Young Miss Vie".

I was the only girl in my family, but had two older brothers, James and Thaddeus, who grew to manhood with the Cook boys. I can remember when young McKinney went to South America. We all felt like to had gone to the very end of the earth.

My mother was my father's second wife, and there were years of difference in the ages of the older Cook children and the younger ones, who were friends of mine and my brother Walter. The youngest girl, Laura, afterwards Mrs. Zack Wardlow, was my little friend, but since our marriage we have lived so far apart, I have only seen her once.

In slave time it was the custom for each father to give to each child when they married one or more slaves as a wedding present.

When my mother married my grandfather gave her Harriet and her children. My mother died when I was five years old. It was also the custom for all motherless or fatherless children to have guardians. Mr. Cook's son-in-law, Capt. William Smith, was appointed my guardian and my mother's slaves were sent to Mrs. Smith, who paid us rent for their labor. Two of them were allowed to go with us to our grandmother's home where we were reared. Our father was married the third time and we never lived with him again but once a year had a month's visit with our step-mother and our little brother, Benjamin. After going to my grandmother's I only saw my friend Laura Cook on Sundays at the old Liberty Church, where we all worshipped and where

our grandparents, our brothers and sisters, our parents and many other relatives now lie buried in the old churchyard.

My last pilgrimage to the old home town and to that old cemetery, was about 20 years ago, but fond memories of the olden days still come to me and I often long to see my old friends and the land of my birth, where as a child I grew to young girlhood amidst the fearful turmoil, distress and heartaches of those lamentable days called the Civil War. Should I write a book it could not contain the many experiences and perils we had to endure during those years and the awful climax known now as "The Siege of Vicksburg".

We were so close to Grant's headquarters that the northern soldiers were daily in our home, from the west and the southern soldiers from the east.

There had been battles all around us. Our beloved capital city, Jackson, had been laid in ruins. Raymond, Baker's Creek, and Champion's Hill all go down in history as scenes of carnage. The northern forces then settled down about Vicksburg like a hive of angry bees. Only our, old men, our women and children were left at home. Every male who was strong enough to shoulder a gun was gone to the front to fight for the principles that we of the southern states held sacred. Our lives were in constant danger and we lived in mortal dread. One morning a squad of Grant's men rode up to my father's gates and asked if he had seen any "rebs" as they called any southern men. My father had seen none, so they rode on toward town to the east.

A short distance from the house they were encountered with a volley of shot from some of our men who were in ambush in some deep gullies in front of our home. Several men were killed and some wounded. They were brought into our house until an ambulance could be sent out from headquarters on the banks of Big Black River. The northern soldiers were so enraged with my father, saying he had known the "rebs" were hidden in the gullies, when in truth they had hidden down the gully and had not passed our gate at all.

As soon as the dead and wounded were taken away the enemy set fire to our home and told my father he would be killed if he was at the place at sundown. He was without a coat or hat and not a thing from the house could be taken out. All the outhouses were burned and even the chicken coops were thrown into the blaze.

Leaving his home a smoldering mass of ashes, my father, stepmother and little brother walked into town and secured a conveyance to take them to my grandfather's, five miles from town. As my grandfather was much opposed to the secession of the states from the Union the northern men had favored him by not burning his home, but had burned his gin house in which he had stored the cotton from three years' crops. They had taken all of his slaves, his horses, mules, cattle, sheep, hogs and chickens, in fact everything that they could take away, except our clothing and furniture. Many of the hogs had been left in the woods and these were our only means of food except what my grandmother had hidden away, as thousands of cavalry horses had been turned into our gardens, orchards and into our growing crops. In time we had to draw our rations from the army commissary, just as the soldiers did, as we were now prisoners of the army of the north. Each Saturday my old grandfather, my father, who was also too old for service in the war, went into the enemy's camp and drew what they all owed us for the next week.

We had never eaten such food and the hardship was great. It consisted of fat meat, hard tack, a little flour and coffee. The meal had worms in it, the hard tack had weevils in them. My grandmother soaked the hardtack in water and fried it in the grease that came out of the meat. They drank the coffee without sugar.

When the gin house was burned, the two men took long poles with forks on the end and fished out 18 bales of the burning cotton. This they rolled into the creek nearby and later hid it away in the woods.

Sometime after, when we were almost starved, the two old men put one bale of this cotton on an old cart that had been left and dragged it into Yankee camp and sold it for a good price. When they reached home with a few things they had bought in the town, they hid the money in a secret drawer in a dresser in my grandmother's room. Before night two men, who had evidently seen grandfather receive this money, came to our house, and placing a pistol to the old gentleman's temple, said "Hand out that money, old man." Grandmother had large rolls of Confederate money in her wardrobe, so she gave the men a lot of that. They seemed satisfied although the money was worth nothing. We expected them to return, but they did not.

One day the advance guard came into our yard and told us to vacate the place as the line of battle would be drawn through our yard.

Grandmother got her knitting and the two old people took their seats on the front porch and said:

"Come on, gentlemen. I will die, where I have lived." The line of battle, however, was put down below the garden in an old field. We all sat about. We saw the flash of the first cannon. We heard the bellowing of the great guns. We saw the tops of trees cut off, and trees splintered into shreds. We heard the shrieks of dying and wounded men, and the yells of the commanding officers.

After the battle was over, our house and all houses nearby were turned into hospitals, and everybody was expected to do their part. Those who died were some of them buried nearby, some taken away. The wounded were cared for by my grandmother, aunts and all of us did what we could. I was deputized to keep the sick in drinking water, and to keep the flies off them with our great peafowl fly brush. I cannot remember if all those poor fellows were our own men or Yankees or both. I only know we did all we could for them. Some were with us for days, some for weeks. Inside the city the fighting was fierce. Every man, woman and child was doing his part. Some were packed away in caves dug in the sides of hills, old people and little ones, here

they languished from the heat, and lack of food. Brave ones were doing their best to rout the enemy, who had destroyed all they had. For 47 days they were exposed to the elements. They were cut off from all help, as the city was surrounded by all sides, but even if it had been, there was nothing in the country to send them. Hunger, and death from bullets was the inevitable.

We have heard they had eaten the flesh of horses, mules, dogs, cats, frogs, of anything they could find.

There was left, only the gaunt human creatures, who stared at each other with bloodshot eyes, and parched lips.

We were in the enemy's power and never knew what would be our fate.

Before things had gotten so bad, we had hidden everything we could. We had some shingles taken from the roof of the back porch and many things put up there, all of our silver and jewelry was packed in boxes and hid in holes dug under our parlor. Grandmother had put a layer of hams between two mattresses on a bed in one of the bedrooms, so we could get them easily when wanted.

\_\_\_\_\_ when was knew the Yankees were about one of my aunts was instructed to lie in bed and feign sickness. I stood by her with a fan.

My cousin, Miss Bettie Read, was not so patient -- she spent much time doing what she could to aggravate the enemy. This kept my old mother and our grandparents in a state of constant uneasiness for fear we would all be killed or our house burned. One night a little colored maid came in and said: "Miss Bettie, dem Yankees is sleepin' on your pianner."

The young lady bounced in the parlor and ordered them to dismount--for two men were sprawled out on top of the great square piano--they got down and one said: "We will if you will play some for us."

**She said: "I will not play for you, but I will play for the two Confederate prisoners you have over there."**

**Men were lying on the sofa, floor, and many were asleep, but she sat on the piano stool and began to play--one of the men came up and stood by to turn her music--when she noticed a beautiful diamond ring on his finger.**

**She told him she knew he had stolen it from some southern girl. He said: "You can have it if you can get it off my finger." She told him to give her his knife and opening a blade she whacked on his finger and the blood flew.**

**He said: "I believe you want to kill me." But she said: "No, not you--but I would like to kill Captain Chambers." He unbuckled his belt and handed her his pistol and said: "He is on the porch, go kill him." Her mother passed the door and saw her daughter with the pistol and screamed. She took the young lady by the hand and led her upstairs, to her room.**

**Upon one occasion a crowd of Yankees were in the house and yard, one walked in the room where my make-believe sick aunt was lying, protecting what hams we had left.**

**One of our own servants was following the man--a boy we had reared as a dining room waiter.**

**He said: "Come on boss, I'll show you the pantry, where the goodies are."**

**My aunt jumped from the bed and grabbed an old musket my uncle left at home. She snatched out the rusty bayonet and struck the Yankee on the shoulder. He rushed outside and we all thought our time had come, that we would all be murdered, but after a talk with one of the officers my grandfather came in and told my aunt to behave herself and we heard no more about it.**

**One night several Yankees came in with a Confederate prisoner and told us they would shoot him at 9 o'clock. My grandmother begged for his life, but to no avail. The poor doomed man gave**



grandmother his overcoat and an army shawl, and at 9 he was led out toward the old gin house and out of the darkness we heard the report of the gun that sent his soul into eternity.

One afternoon I was in the yard gathering blue bells when I heard a groan and saw a dying man lying by our gate. I do not remember what army he belonged to, but for years and maybe until yet the odor of a blue bell would make me feel as if I would faint. I could ramble on and tell of many scenes and horrible times we had in those awful days, but the most tragic occurrence that took place in our neighborhood was with the family of Mr. Cook, but not Mr. McKinney Cook, whom I first spoke of in this paper.

They were not even related, but this Mr. Cook also owned many slaves and evidently some of them had told the Yankees something that angered them, for at night they came and killed every member of that family except one little boy about three years old. This child crept under his dead mother's hoop skirt and was not seen. Neighbors found out what had taken place from some of the servants, and took the little child. This little boy has for many years been a physician in Vicksburg and one of his daughter's, Genivieve McBee, lives in Greenwood, Miss.

Stragglers had told us of what conditions were inside the city, where death and destruction reigned. Starving creatures with only rags hanging to them were trying to escape the enemy. They had given all they had but a feeble claim on life for their country. This they were willing to give up also, but our generals said, "No, we must give up," and on July 4, Vicksburg was given over into the hands of Gen. Grant and his army. Then the death blow fell upon our beloved Confederacy for those in authority knew that all hope was vain and the cause for which our brave men had given their lives was lost.

For days and weeks we endured the pitiful sight of seeing our men who were left straggling home. There were no trains for them to ride on, their horses had been taken, and with bare feet and partly naked, they came in a steady stream. We had little but shelter and water to give them but the poor fellows were still

afraid and would only stop long enough for water, until they were out of the Yankee lines, and many a one fell by the wayside.

One by one our own boys came home. My brother James fell at Malvern Hill; Bob died in camp, Charles lay in a Federal prison for months before he was sent home. Robert came with one arm gone; Joe came with one leg; John, Alex and William were unharmed. Capt. Barkley, my cousin Bettie's sweetheart, was killed at Selma, Ala. Oh! The widows, the fatherless children, the brokenhearted girls, the white-haired mothers and fathers, but dearest of all were the noble, battle-scarred, defeated, but not conquered men, that were left after that awful slaughter called "The Siege of Vicksburg".

But I started out to talk of the old "Mt. Beulah," the home of my father's friend, that grand old man McKinney L. Cook, and here I have wandered, as all old people do, and have told you of the days, that even at this late date fill our souls with sorrow and heartaches. I am old and gray, my once soldier boy husband gone many years ago, one son in the U.S. army 25 years gone, one other son gone. Yes, I am growing old, but I have to sit and ponder on those old days when I was young and thank God for all the blessing He has given me, and some day I hope to fall asleep, dreaming of the beautiful lights I see shining up the King's Highway.

Winona, Miss., June 26