

NICHOLAS W. ABBOTT
1850 – 1921

Son of John J. Abbott & Paulina “Perlina” S. Lax/Lacks
Husband of 1st) Nancy Jane Elizabeth Lowery
and 2nd) Mary “Molly” Isabelle Alexander

Report by Joan Horsley
Based on research as of April 2013

Nicholas Wade Abbott was born 30 Jun 1850 in Halifax County, Virginia, the fourth child of John J. Abbott and wife Paulina S. Lax (also known as Perlina Lacks). Nicholas was about a year old when his parents decided to leave Halifax, probably due to the county's poor economic conditions, and moved their family to Alabama. Nicholas grew up in Talladega County and then in adjacent St. Clair County, where his father, a farmer, prospered.

However, during his teen years, Nicholas not only suffered with everyone else the tragedies of the Civil War, but he experienced a series of untimely family deaths and sad losses. Nicholas' eldest brother, James, died in 1863 at age 20 while serving in the Confederate Army when Nick was 13; his mother, Paulina, died at age 42 in St. Clair in 1866 when Nick was 16; and two years later, in 1868, two of his younger siblings died at ages 12 and 16 when Nick was still only 18 years old. Soon after, abt. 1869, his father, John J. Abbott, re-married and began a new family with Amanda McCargo. John lived only ten more years and died at age 55 in 1876, but he lived long enough to see his son Nicholas happily married.

Nicholas W. Abbott married Nancy Jane Elizabeth Lowery (called "Nannie") on 25 Jan 1874 in St. Clair County, where Nannie was born 13 Nov 1859. Her mother was Elizabeth Dycus (b. c1834, NC), and her father apparently was Martin S. Lowery (b. c1832, NC), both of whom were living in Murray County, GA by 1850. Nannie's mother died when Nannie was a few weeks old, and her father moved away. She and her sisters, Martha Lowery (then age 5) and Mary Lowery (age 3), were cared for by their mother's Dycus siblings in St. Clair. There were several untimely deaths in the Dycus family in the 1860s, and by the 1870 census, Nannie (named there as Elizabeth Lowery) was living with William and Rebecca (Dunlap) Kendrick near the Dycus families in the Kelly's Creek district, where Nicholas Abbott's family also lived. Nick and Nannie (recorded in their marriage record as "N. W. Abbott" and "N. E. Lowry") married four years later. Nannie was 14 years old, and Nicholas was 23. Surely with the losses each had experienced, they fully understood each other's griefs and lightened each other's load.

By the 1880 census, Nicholas and Nannie were living in the Bear Creek area of northern Shelby Co, AL near the St. Clair line, where Nicholas was teaching school. They had three children: John James, Susan/Sudie Kate, and Mary E.

1880: Bear Creek & Acton, Shelby Co. AL (Beat 14)
Abbott, N. W. - 30 - Teaching School - VA-VA-VA
Nancy E. - 20 - Wife - Keeping House - AL-GA-GA
John J. - 5 - Son - AL-VA-AL [b. 9 Dec 1874]
Susan - 3 - Daughter - AL-VA-AL [b. 19 Dec 1876]
Mary E. - 1 - Daughter - AL-VA-AL [b. 6 May 1879]

Census Note:

Their daughter "Mary E." in the 1880 census might be a daughter who died in infancy, as their surviving daughter Mary Ella Abbott was always told she was born 10 Apr 1882. References in family letters also indicate that when her mother died in 1887, Ella was closer to 5 years old (b. 1882) than 8 (b. 1879). A 3-year difference would seem noticeable in young childhood, and Ella was raised among close relatives who would know fairly accurately when she was born, so this conflict in birth dates is a mystery. A similar discrepancy between the birth dates Nicholas wrote down and later-known dates exists with his son Robert, but the time gap is not so large.

In addition to their daughter Ella, Nick and Nannie continued their family with Minnie Mae Abbott (b. 12 Apr 1881), Robert Wade Abbott (b. 22 Sep 1883 or 18 Jan 1884), and Edgar Cook Abbott (b. 14 Aug 1886).

Then, tragedy struck the young family. Nannie died of "the dread disease measles" on 11 May 1887 at 27 years old. The next month, even before the obituary memorial to Nannie could be printed, two of their children also died of measles. Their youngest, Edgar, died 6 Jun 1887 at 9 months old, then their eldest child, John, died three weeks later on 27 Jun 1887 at age 12. Nicholas' memorial obituary for Nannie is poignant in its loving portrait of a beautiful life and spirit, and Nicholas' loss is heavy between the lines. *[See transcription in separate report for Nancy Elizabeth Lowery Abbott]*

The obituary was delivered by Pastor M. E. Butt; however, Nicholas' granddaughter Gloria Furman has the original in his own handwriting in a notebook he kept. She told me, "In the last paragraph he wrote, 'Before I got this ready for the press one of our darling little children, Edgar Cook, aged 10 months, has joined her sainted spirit in the realms of endless glory.'" My copy, a typed version, is the same as Gloria's except that Nicholas' comment is omitted and the deaths of both sons Edgar and John are included. This final version was in the papers of Nicholas and Nannie's daughter Ella (my grandmother), who wrote this on the back in the handwriting of her later years: "How I wish I could have had her to guide me at all times." Ella missed her mother all her life.

The four surviving children were sent to live with various relatives. In a letter to me in 1986, Ella's daughter Elizabeth wrote, "Her father knew he could not give his three children (girls) the proper and loving upbringing that a mother could, and he placed them in homes of relatives where all of them could live near each other and grow up with the care and love of complete families." (Elizabeth apparently was unaware of the surviving son, Robert.)

Ella Abbott was raised in Easonville, St. Clair Co., in the home of George R. Hardwick, a businessman crippled from age 20 with no children of his own, and an Abbott relation through the Hardwick and Willingham families. George and his wife Elizabeth Johnson were loving and wise parents who treated Ella as their own daughter, and she loved them dearly. After Ella married in Easonville in 1903, she lived and raised her children in adjacent Shelby County less than 18 miles from where her father Nicholas Abbott raised his second family, but apparently her children did not have contact with their grandfather, as they knew only his name and thought he was a traveling salesman.

Ella's sister Minnie Mae Abbott was raised just a few houses away from her with Nicholas' brother Thomas J. Abbott and his wife Mattie Willingham, who also had no children of their

own. Nick and Nannie's oldest daughter, Sudie Kate, was 10 when her mother died and married seven years later. In the interim, Sudie also lived in Easonville. Her grandson Harold King told me she was raised by a Smith family, but no more was known about them. They probably were related to Z. O. Smith, who attended a family reunion for Sudie in 1956.

Nick and Nannie's only surviving son, Robert Wade Abbott, was 3 years old when Nannie died. He was raised by the Jesse Ginn family near Eden, about 7 miles north of Easonville. In 1860, Jesse Ginn married Sarah Dycus, a sister of Nannie's mother Elizabeth Dycus Lowery. Sarah died in 1876, leaving Jesse with five children ages 1 to 13. When Jesse took Robert Abbott into his family, his children were ages 12 to 24. They considered Robert their "foster brother" (as they listed him at age 16 in the 1900 census) and continued to raise him after Jesse Ginn died in 1897. In fact, the oldest daughter, Josie Ginn, did not marry until after Robert married. Ella Abbott's foster-father, George R. Hardwick, J. P., performed Josie's marriage.

The sisters stayed close, but they lost touch with Robert when he left the state in 1919. He came back for a visit in 1956 and was reunited with Sudie, the only sister still living, and afterwards they kept up correspondence. He had changed his name to Henry Robert Abbott (still called Bob) and lived in Minnesota and Wisconsin, where he died in 1974.

Nicholas Abbott left St. Clair after Nannie died and went to live in adjacent Shelby County. Two and a half years after her death, Nicholas married Mary Isabelle "Molly" Alexander on 7 Nov 1889 in Shelby County, AL. After all the sad family deaths in his early life then the loss of his beloved Nannie and two sons within weeks of each other, Nicholas was blessed with sweet and gentle Mollie. She gave him new life and a wonderful family who his granddaughter Gloria Furman says loved, respected, and cared for him deeply. Nicholas and Mollie had eight children and lived near Montevallo, Shelby County, until Nicholas' death in 1921.

1900 - Montevallo, Shelby Co, AL

Abbott, Nicholas W - 49 - b. Jun 1850 - marr. 11 yrs - occupation: Org [?]

Mollie B - 34 - b. Jun 1866 - 5 children, 5 living - AL-SC-SC

Myrtle M - 9 - b. Aug 1890

Arthur A - 8 - b. Mar 1892

Katie B - 6 - b. Feb 1894

Florence N - 4 - b. Oct 1895 [Nalda]

Cora E - 3 - b. May 1897

Note:

Molly's parents, James and Catherine Alexander, are listed next door. Molly's middle initial B may stand for Belle, from Isabelle.

1910 - Montevallo, Shelby Co, AL

Abbott, Nicholas W. - 59 - 2nd marr - 19 yrs this marr - Farmer - VA-VA-VA

Molly B. - 38 - 1st marr - 19 yrs - 8 births, 8 living - AL-SC-SC

Myrtle M - 18

Arthur A. - 16

Katie B. - 15

Nalda F. - 13

[continued]

Cora E. - 12
 James W. - 9
 Dora F. - 6
 Walter W. - 4

Note:

Molly's parents, James Alexander (70) and wife Catherine (68) are still living next door.

1920 - Shelby Co, AL – Precinct 4 (Calera Road)
 Abbott, Nicholas W - 69 - Owns home w/ mortgage - VA-VA-VA - Farming
 Mollie I. - 53
 Nalda F - 23
 James W - 19
 Dora F - 16
 Walter D - 14

Note:

"N. W. Abbott" was the enumerator for this precinct (Beat 4, Enumeration Dist. 114). His family's list is dated 15 Jan 1920. Automated computer programs assign his household to Wilton, abt. 2 miles southwest of Montevallo where I assume Nicholas was still living, as Calera Road is closer to Montevallo. "Nicholas W. Abbott" was also the enumerator for Montevallo, where the computer programs assign his daughter Katie Belle's family, with her husband Earl T. Peterson, daughter Myrtle with husband William A. Reid, and unmarried son Arthur A. Abbott. The Petersons are listed on/near Aldrich Road.

1921 - Death Record for Nicholas W. Abbott
 Death Date: 04 Oct 1921
 Death Place: Calera, Shelby Co, AL [7 mi. east of Montevallo]
 Age at Death: 71y 4m
 Spouse's Name: Mollie B. Abbott
 Father's Name: John J. Abbott
 Mother's Name: Lock *[sic]*

[Source: Online transcription. "Alabama, Deaths, 1908-1974," index, FamilySearch
 (<https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/JD26-3Z9>), citing film no. 1908233; ref. no. cn 17022]

Nicholas W. Abbott is buried at Spring Creek Cemetery in Shelby County, Alabama.

Memorial to N. W. Abbott from Minutes of the Presbytery of Birmingham, AL

Mr. N. W. Abbott was born in Halifax County, Virginia, June 30, 1850, and moved to St. Clair County, Alabama, when a boy and spent the rest of his life in Alabama. On January 25, 1874, he was married to Miss Nannie J. Lowery. This union was blessed with six children, three sons and three daughters. Two *[sic, three]* of the daughters and one son are living. In November 7, 1889, he was married to Miss Mary Alexander and to them were born three sons and five daughters.

Mr. Abbott was a graduate of the state University of Kentucky and spent most of his life teaching in the State of Alabama; later he was connected with farm demonstration work. He joined the church at the age of 14 and was a faithful member all his life. He was ordained an elder in 1901, serving efficiently in this capacity until his death, which occurred on October

4, 1921, after a brief illness of a few days. As an elder he was a faithful presbyter and his counsel was valued by the brethren of the Presbytery. In times when the church was pastorless, he kept the organization going and his life has left a lasting and beneficial influence upon the community, and he will be greatly missed because his chair is vacant.

To the family, the brethren of the Presbytery extend their sympathy and share your sorrow, for your loss is our loss also, for we had learned to love Brother Abbott as a co-worker in our Lord's Kingdom upon the earth and we shall miss his counsel and faithful, loyal, loving service. /s/ L. E. Brubaker

[Source: Electronic copy to me Jan 2006 from Gloria Furman, a granddaughter of Nicholas and Molly]

1930 - Birmingham, Jefferson Co, AL

Abbott, Mary I - 63 - widow

Florence N - 25 - clerk, laundry

Walter D - 23 - tank test, tank facility

Note:

Molly, then widowed, could not afford the mortgage left on Nicholas' farm. By this census, she and her two unmarried children were living in the same house with Mollie's daughter and son-in-law Katie B and Earl T. Peterson with their young daughter Gloria. After Molly's death in 1932, her son Walter married. Molly's daughter Florence Abbott (called Nalda) never married and lived with her sister Katie Belle Abbott Peterson's family.

1932 - Death Record for Mary Isabela [sic] Abbott

Death Date: 19 May 1932

Death Place: Siluria, Shelby County, Alabama

Age At Death: 64y 11m

Spouse's Name: Nicholas Wade Abbott

Father's Name: J. O. Alexander

Mother's Name: Katie Crawford

[Source: Online transcription. "Alabama, Deaths, 1908-1974," index, FamilySearch

(<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/JDGY-5TM>), citing film no. 1908500, ref. no. cn 13182]

Molly is also buried at Spring Creek Cemetery in Shelby County, Alabama.

From: *Heritage of St. Clair County, Alabama* (1998)

Article written and submitted by Gloria Furman

[Comments in brackets added by J. Horsley]

ABBOTTS

The first record of this family was found in Halifax Co., VA, census of 1850. My grandfather, Nicholas Wade, was five months old at the time. His parents, John James and Perlina S. Lacks Abbott, and family, moved to Talladega [Co., AL] sometime before the 1860 census. Perlina died in 1866 and I found the family living in St. Clair County [AL] in the 1870 census. John James then married Mattie McCargo.

Children of the first family were James D. [sic, James B], John H., Mary C., Nicholas W., William R., Thomas J., George W., F. Jefferson [sic, Jefferson D.], and Matthew L. [sic; Matthew T.] Children of the second family were Sudie, Robert E, Mattie, and Gertrude (?). [Gertrude is confirmed];

The family was mentioned in the History of St. Clair County, written by Mattie Lou Crow. She tells that the Abbott brothers were among the first business men to open and operate stores in the area. What is now the Kilgroe Funeral Home was begun in 1908 by Thomas J. Abbott and his wife Martha Willingham Abbott. [JH Note: This was the couple who raised Nicholas and Nannie's daughter Minnie Mae Abbott.]

John James, Perlina, and Mattie are buried at Cropwell along with many other Abbotts and their families. My grandfather [Nicholas] moved to Shelby County after his wife Nannie J. Lowery died, and later married my grandmother, Mary Isabelle Alexander. They had 3 boys and 5 girls all deceased now and buried in Birmingham. My grandparents are buried in Shelby County next to the Spring Creek Presbyterian Church.

Grandfather Nicholas taught school for many years, and I have his record book with the names of pupils he taught. He was an elder and acted as church clerk in the Valley Grove Presbyterian Church from 1908 until just before his death in 1921. Even though I never knew him, I heard him spoken of as a man who loved his family and church. He enjoyed singing and reading his Bible. Grandmother Mary joined him in 1932.
(p. 73-74)

The following are excerpts from Gloria Furman's e-mails to me about her grandfather and my great-grandfather Nicholas W. Abbott (included here with her permission):

My grandfather Nicholas kept a journal (which I have) with the names of his children, and the names and grades of his students. Also the obituary for Nannie is in the book and signed by him. In the last paragraph he said "Before I got this ready for the press one of our darling little children, Edgar Cook, aged 10 months, has joined her sainted spirit in the realms of endless glory".

In the journal Nicholas kept he listed [classes he taught as] orthography, reading, spelling and some other material. He taught at several schools in Pell City and Shelby County. Here are some notes from Nicholas' journal:

Antioch Academy - Wolf Creek, Al. Oct. 1872
Pleasant Grove Academy - 1873
Godwin School House - Cahawba Valley, Jan. 1874
Cedar Grove Academy - St. Clair County, Al. Feb. 1874
Jefferson County Academy - 1874
Cobb, Al. - Principal of Farmers Literary Institute of Art
Dealer in Books and Musical Instruments
Also farmed and sold fruit trees.

His original goal was to be a doctor, but while studying found he could not be part of an autopsy and left immediately. He then turned to other studies and became a teacher. He was never able to kill a chicken.

He was an elder in the Valley Grove church in Shelby for many years...He was a Bible teacher and a singer.

I have a picture of the church where Nicholas served as an elder many years. He and his family lived directly across the road and many visiting preachers sat around their table. The church was small and did not have a full time pastor, so Nicholas would fill in on Sundays when no preacher was available. My mother, Katie, was the organist and a Sunday School teacher and Nicholas would lead the singing. I was told that the Abbott home was a gathering place to play croquet or horseshoes and visit and eat. When Nicholas died the house was not paid for and there was no way for Mary to stay there with two young children so they moved to Birmingham to live with the older children.

The Abbott tombstone picture is not very good but is the best I have. It is in the cemetery by the Spring Creek Cumberland Presbyterian Church on County Road 12 between Calera and Montevallo, Shelby County, Al. I don't know the date but Abbotts were members of this church at one time. A lot of them were at Calera Presbyterian Church and moved to Valley Grove Presbyterian Church U.S.A. in 1908. It was built on Alexander property in front of the house where grandmother [Molly Alexander] Abbott was born. It was removed some years ago when sink holes from the lime works forced many families to move and there were not enough members to support it. The Alexander house is still there and is lived in by descendents. The Abbott house was removed about 10 years ago.

Acknowledgement:

My deepest thanks and appreciation to Gloria Furman for all the valuable Abbott family information she has shared with me. No amount of research could produce the kind of personal family knowledge that Gloria has generously provided about her grandfather and my great-grandfather and his family. She is a dear and valued friend whose kindness and loving care have been a blessing ever since we met eight years ago, when she welcomed me into our Abbott family about whom I knew so little at the time. She is also the inspiration and greatest supporter for the extended research reports I have written on our Abbott family. I am honored to have Gloria as both friend and relation.

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