

Martha Elizabeth (Winchester) McLaren
was the youngest child of Anthony and Rilda Winchester.
Known as “Tookie” throughout her life, she was born, raised, and lived
most of her life in Wilmington, California. This booklet is an attempt to share some
of her photographs and other records of the Winchester family.



In a 1990 talk to her women’s group, she described her childhood. She left a
copy of her notes, and we will use her words to introduce the
Winchesters of Wilmington.



Licitia and John

John Potter Winchester
1849-1903
Licitia Johnson Evans
1839-1915

May 1871

William Levi Winchester
1872-1878 (6 yrs. old)

Anthony N. Winchester
1874-1967

May 1895

Rilda Haseltine Burch
1875-1954

starting in 1864, John, Catherine, Susan, Nettie, Alice, Willie, Charles, Cleveland and Dora.

also, James Tony Burch
1877-1971
"Uncle Jim"

and, Velma Colleen (Burch) Smith
1891-1971
"Aunt Coll" - the youngest Burch child

Virginia Alice Winchester
1876-1895

December 1893

Mang Draper
????-1938

Myrtle (Draper)
Holland
1894-1981

Rufus Toi Winchester
1878-1959

May 1900

Donna Fletcher
1880-????

- Johnnie 1903-1959
- Anthony 1905-1930
- Luke 1909-1930
- Georgia 1911-
- Virginia Louise 1913-
- Frank D. 1914-1945
- Ralph 1917-
- Margaret 1918-
- Janie Ruth 1922-1924

Barney Burch
1839-1921
Martha Elizabeth Jones
1840-1925

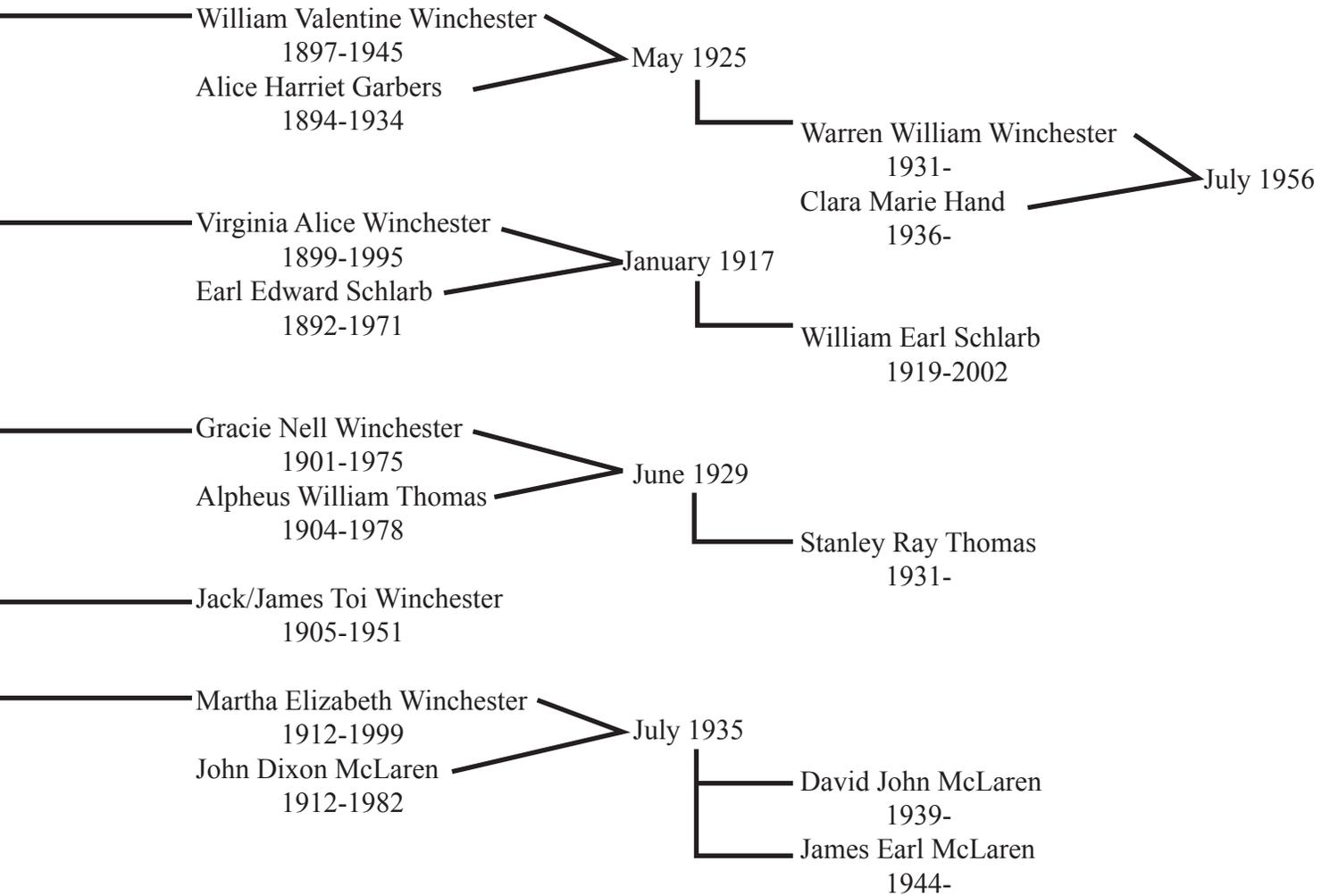
May 1861



Martha and Barney



Rilda and Anthony moved to
Wilmington, with their four
children, in 1906



Phineas Banning named “an area of tide flats and shallow water” he obtained from Jose de Sepulveda and Manuel Dominguez after his birthplace, Wilmington, Delaware. These wetlands were home to great flocks of migrating geese, so Wilmington, California, was often called “Goosetown”.

Here is Tookie’s presentation [with my comments in brackets]:

GOOSETOWN - WILMINGTON, THAT IS.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

You have asked me to tell you a bit of my childhood in Wilmington; surely a boring subject, I have no “claim to fame” at this time other than that I was born in Goosetown, i.e., Wilmington.

Mother and Father came to Wilmington from a small rural valley in Tennessee; Buffalo Valley was about 100 miles from Nashville. My grandparents were respected residents and Grandpa Winchester ran a Tannery along the Caney Fork River that placidly ran thru Buffalo Valley. Grandpa Burch was a casualty of the Civil War and was an invalid until his death; they were very proud but poor folk.

Mother had suffered greatly from typhoid fever and the doctor recommended a move. Tennessee friends had already migrated to Wilmington and, on their recommendation, my family settled here.

It was in 1906 [Virgie, in an aural history, said 1905] that Mother and Dad, leaving their tranquil life in Buffalo Valley, boarded a train for their journey to the west coast; their family was complete for they now had two girls and two boys - the baby boy one year old when they arrived here.

A home for the family was purchased in the 1000 block of Bay View Avenue; it was a “shanty” but there was a lot of love and caring and it served itself well.

All seemed to be going smoothly in the Winchester home - but, I surprised them and became a part of this family in 1912. Mother was 37 at the time and not quite up to raising another child.....not really, she and Dad loved me very much.....but I was a nuisance to the “grown family members”. I learned at an early age how to hold my breath to gain attention....I worked that overtime....

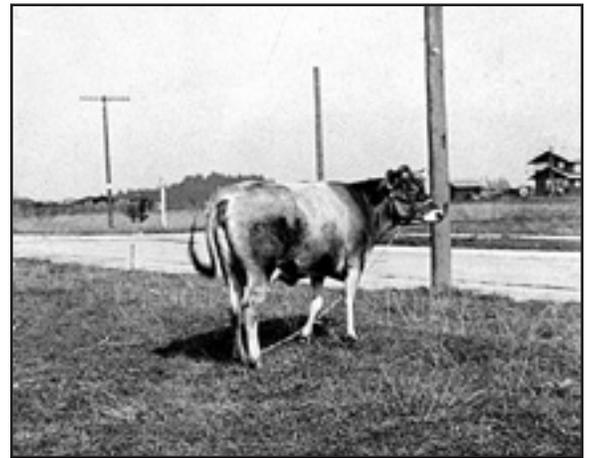


Rilda seated, holding Toi. Virgie on her right. Anthony stands behind with Bill and Grace on his left. The other men are not identified.

This home purchased by my parents had been a store at one time. It was moved to 1036 [Bay View] and converted into “sparse” living quarters. No running water, no bath, no closets. Our clothes were hung on nails on the wall or on one fair piece of furniture in the bedroom.

We all slept on feather beds - Mother’s hand-made quilts were used for warmth - each bed had its own commode. We had the usual wood stove for cooking and winter warmth - with a wood-burning stove in the front room. It had a tin roof. Our living room was seldom without a quilt in progress on the quilting frames.

A large back porch that covered the entire back of the house was a place I will lovingly remember. [Tookie's memories are those of a small child; nothing "large" could be attached to that house.] Mother had her sideboard there with flower, sugar, etc., in their respective bins. A large home-made table held the day's milk from Bossie our cow...there were the bowls of milk in various stages...the butter molds...and the familiar churn on the floor. Here, too. Dad kept his shoe last and I will long remember his soling our shoes. A huge tub...used for bathing...sat in a far away corner....Then, of course, the familiar flat iron that was always at the back of the stove.



Bossie

We had a windmill and this provided us with ample and refreshing water. The building was barren at first but later it was covered with honey suckle and morning glory.

Of course, we had an outhouse, some 20 to 25 ft. from the back door. Between the back porch and the outhouse, was a fire ring. Here Mother would heat a tub of water daily to do the family wash.

My father was a carpenter - never a contractor - but worked for them. In his early years he worked on the old Virginia Hotel in Long Beach. He rode his bicycle to work each day...this was before oil and macadam and his was a dirt path between the tire marks of the cars. [The trip would be just over six miles each way.] Many week-ends (Saturday) he would take my brother and sister with him (each had a bicycle) and they would play on the sand next to the hotel...in a spot where Dad could watch them....at noon, he'd come down and they would have their lunch together. Dad later worked on the Naples Hotel and he would bike it to Long Beach and then take the red car to Naples.

As I began to grow, and since this was the age before TOYS R US, we made toys and games for our own amusement.

- My mud pies...the goodest...dirt as fine as silt...with fresh eggs. I was very proud of them.
- Spent some time with dolls - but more time with tricycle. Outgrew it and brother made me, surely, one of the first "wheelies" in town. He lowered the seat - and I covered a lot of territory on that. Bay View was not paved at this time.
- Bad Girl - often mad at some of family - would take clothes Mother had painstakingly ironed with the old flat iron - throw them across handle bars of tricycle and head for Franklins across the street.

Bay View Store
1049 Bay View Avenue

Mrs. Franklin in front



Tookie: "This is the store I spent much of my childhood in - located across the street from our house on Bay View."

Now, Mr. and Mrs. Franklin played an important part in my life...store with a candy case and cans of eagle brand milk on the shelf (my favorites). No children...adopted Fred as a baby but he passed away in his early 20's. Now, I was their baby...I had two sets of parents.



Mr. Franklin, Inside the Bay View Store. The calendar to his right says April, 1925.
The clock above his head was eventually given to Tookie

Since Dad was a carpenter - work sporadic at times. He saw to it that we always had food on our table. He raised chickens and rabbits; he always had a big, big garden; we had "veggies" and melons in abundance. It was here that I was first introduced to the potato bug...are they still around? Mother made 'heavenly biscuits' - with her home made butter and some sugar mixed with that ...we ate well.



James Toi with his chickens (left) and with Bossie, the family cow

We can all certainly identify with many of my 'games and toys':

Marbles, jacks, skipped rope, hop scotch, each home had stakes for a game of horse shoes, swing with tire, rolled car tires. Dad built merry-go-round and this was a gathering spot for neighbors, played Hide and Seek with the Buckner and Shell family, I chased Leland round-and-round the hay stack, Mumbly peg (knife). My playhouse was in the corn field.... used blanket for rug and known to hang curtains on corn stalks.

Before the scooter and skate boards - wheels on 2 x 4 and apple box with handles. Each week-end, Dad would hitch up our horse and neighborhood children came to take turns riding from the 1000 block down to 7th Street and back...now Anaheim.

This picture looks north on Bay View, with the Franklin Store on the left. Though the original was badly damaged, you can see the horse and wagon behind Toi and baby Tookie.



Here Virgie and Tookie are seated in the wagon. Virgie was almost thirteen when Tookie was born and Tookie often said their relationship was as much mother-daughter as it was sisters.



Christmas celebrations were memorable; but, oh, so different. We had honest-to-goodness Charlie Brown Christmas trees. For, all alone - in the wide open fields between our home and where the Methodist Church is today - stood a lonely, but lovely, pepper tree. This tree served as a back-drop for family pictures...and a limb or branch from that tree became our yearly Christmas tree. Decorations were home-made garlands of popcorn and cranberries, as well as the paper chain links. Most outstanding, however, were the real burning candles...strategically placed to, hopefully, avoid fire. Christmas gifts were meager; always a clean worn stocking with 1 orange, 1 apple and a few nuts....and usually flour sack underwear made by Mother.



Under the pepper tree.
Tookie's caption: Winchester family, Dad, Mother,
William (Bill), Virgie, Grace, James Toi.
I came later . . .

You folks didn't have the privilege of knowing our neighbor, Mr. Taller. He lived in a 'shanty' two lots south of us. Mr. Talley was a bachelor...a loner...a good man - but different. His family was well known in Hollywood circles; they were owners of several Talley Movie Houses. His family came to visit him often and his Mother, a fashion plate and pretty lady, brought clothes she no longer wanted...she gave them to my Mother who, in turn, kept my older sisters in lovely and fashionable clothes. Oh, yes, his constant companion was his dog, Tige. They were inseparable.

Mr. Talley purchased an old Ford pick-up with a simple truck bed. He put a roof on it ...had using glass on sides for windows...had room for a bed and simple cooking utensils. Now, to me, this was a "first" in Motor Home living. He and Tige spent many happy hours, weeks and months traveling in this motor home. When we moved from 1036, Mr. Talley sold his 'shanty' and 'hit the road'. Ever so often, he and Tige would show up and park in the lot beside our new home; he'd camp there for a week or so and then be on his way again. Very happy memories for me.

Instead of Mr. Talley's pick-up, we have Earl Schlarb picking up Virgie in front of 1036 Bay View, before the street was paved.

The sign on the side of the truck says: "Consolodated Store - Phone 120."



Then, you must meet our neighbor to the north, Mrs. Sherlock. She lived about a block up the street. Bay View was now paved.... she purchased a Maxwell car....a sporty number. It was a coupe type...before the days of the rumble seat. She would fold the top down and head for town. I can still see her with her little black hat and gloves; she thrilled all as she drove by. Soon her tires wore out and, rather than replace them, she'd tie gunny sacks around the rims and 'away she'd go'. They served her well until she could no longer drive.

With this great advance of oiled streets and an occasional car (smog was not in the dictionary)...as a child I was aware of the Clear Blue Sky above me.... sitting on fence and looking at mountains in winter time....beautifully capped with snow.

Shadows and shimmering clouds were such a fascination to me; I tried for years to catch my shadow - never succeeded. What child today takes time to watch their shadow or a shimmering cloud?

It was a happy childhood....open fields around us filled with spring flowers....Indian paint brush, lupine, poppies....homes with an abundance of honey suckle and morning glory. Fields of spinach in northern section of town.



Toi, Tookie and Grace. The Bay View Store on the left. This photograph was in poor condition, but you can see the dirt street, paths and the open fields. That is a wagon behind Toi's head.

When I was 7 years of age [in 1919], Dad built another home on McDonald (one block away). Here we had running water, indoor bath with real bath tub....toilet, wash basin...and Mother had her first washing machine. WHAT A TRANSITION...tub of machine was made of wooden slats and we propelled it manually; there was a hand wringer attached.



Anthony and
Rilda in front of
1046 McDonald

There were plate rails in our dining room. We had our ice box and looked forward to the iceman's daily visit. WHAT PROGRESS. Bossie, our cow, was no longer around and the milk man now brought milk in glass bottles with the cream on top.

These were years of "people helping people" - and the Sawyer family played an important roll in our lives. 3 blocks as the crow flies....Sawyer's big house. Fredia's sister, Edith, was now an RN. When my sister underwent major surgery — a hospital in far-away L.A., Edith took care of her day and night until her recovery. Yes, Fredia, in one of your programs you mentioned your Mother's flower garden and I remember it well....I remember your Mother and your Father; I could sit on our fence and watch activities at the Sawyer compound.

Near your home was a large pond. I spent countless hours there watching the pollywogs and learning of their transition into frogs!

All this time that I was making my famous mud pies and riding my "wheelie", and watching the Sawyer compound, the stately Banning Mansion stood in all its splendor and that family was over-seeing great progress in Wilmington. We are told that they could stand on their front porch or cupola on the 3rd floor and view the dredging of the harbor, rebuilding of downtown Wilmington, and the building of many other stately and beautiful homes in the area. They could even see the Winchester shanty and the Sawyer compound. Here are pictures of a few....I do remember all of them well and was saddened when they 'made room for progress'.

We all used 'paths' in those days as a short cut to a destination. Along one path between our home and downtown, a baby's grave stood all alone. In later years, my Uncle - who was a contractor - was building the Ambassador Hotel on Fries Avenue. In the process of digging for the basement, a coffin and body was found. It is my understanding that a graveyard once was in that vicinity and I remember Marge mentioning this in one of her speeches - but it seemed that she was not certain of the exact location. In passing, my Uncle also built the Modern Market, Neptune and Anaheim. Driskill's Furniture Store was the first tenant. Remember them?

Another path familiar to me was one that led to the home of my Aunt and Uncle. They lived just off Avalon and the home was surrounded with corn fields. One day, my two cousins led me into the cornfield....we could not be seen....we had in our possession matches and Tennessee twist smoking tobacco. Here we rolled Tennessee twist in a corn husk and tried our hand at smoking....my first, and my last attempt.

All of the above are memories etched deeply in my mind.

Thanks for listening to me . . . it has been fun reliving my childhood in Wilmington.

Signed: "Tookie"



None of us knew why Martha was called "Tookie" until her memorial service. There, a lifelong friend explained:
As a child, surveying the Franklin store inventory, she mispronounced the word "cookie" fervently and often. Her plea followed her through her adult life. Here she is; do you think anyone would give this poor child a "tookie"?

John Potter Winchester and Licitia Johnson Evans
1849-1903 1839-1915

In Buffalo Valley, Tennessee, we find the source of the Winchesters of Wilmington.

Anthony's father, John Potter Winchester, was the youngest of Andrew Winchester and Theresa Presley's nine children. Andrew died when John Potter was twelve years old.

Anthony's mother, Licitia Johnson Evans, was the eighth of nine children – of William Dale Evans and Paulina Pigg.

John Potter and Licitia had four children. The first child died at age six, leaving Anthony the oldest, to a sister Virginia Alice and brother Rufus Toi.



Licitia and John Potter
Their three children,
Rufus Toi, Anthony
and Virginia Alice

The original Winchester home in Buffalo Valley



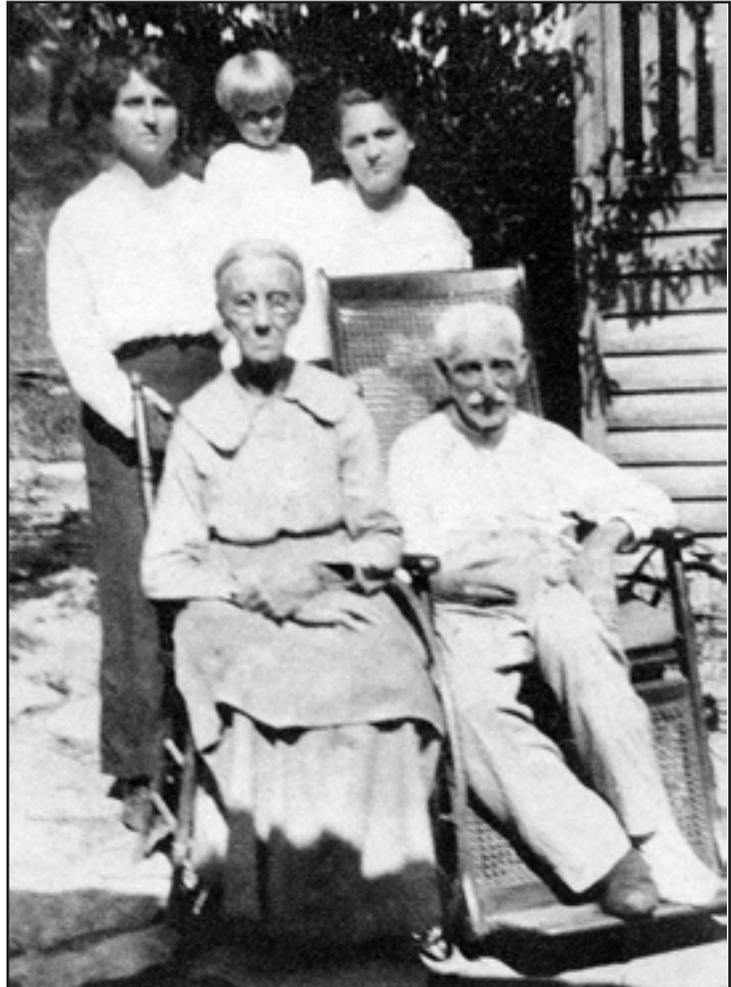
Note two front doors and a fireplace in the middle of the house.

Barney Burch and Martha Elizabeth Jones
1839-1921 1840-1925

Rilda's father, Barney Burch, entered the Civil War at age twenty three. At the battle of Missionary Ridge, in November 1863, he received a wound that affected him for the rest of his life, leading to paralysis which eventually caused his death.

Rilda's mother, Martha Elizabeth Jones, married Barney in Buffalo Valley in 1861. In 1864 she bore the first of twelve children.

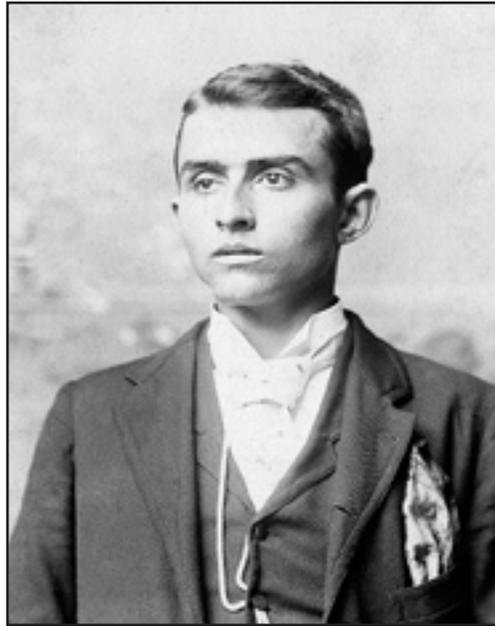
Here Barney appears to be seated in some sort of wheelchair. Remember, Tookie said: "Grandpa Burch was a casualty of the Civil War and an invalid until his death." He obviously had a difficult life. We note, however, he survived his wound for fifty eight years (he died in July, 1921, at age eighty two), sired twelve children, and outlived four of them. Standing behind Martha and Barney are their daughters Colleen and Dora; the child is Dora's daughter, Juanita.



This is the Burch home in Buffalo Valley. The picture is dated September 1916, five years before Barney died and Martha moved to Wilmington. Tookie: "... they were very proud but poor folk."

Anthony N. Winchester and Rilda Haseltine Burch
1874-1967 1875-1954

Here is “A. N. Winchester,”
obviously as a young man.



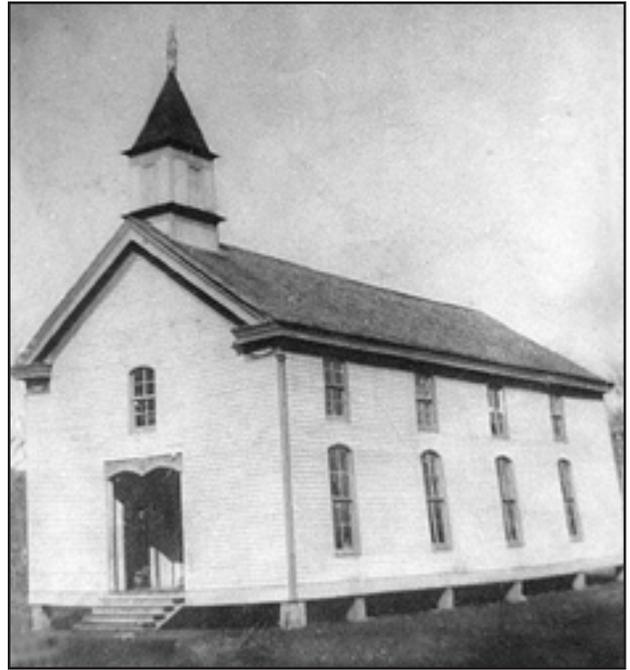
In a handwritten note on the
family genealogy Tookie
writes: “Dad had no middle
name. He added the letter
‘N’.”

Anthony and Rilda married, in Buffalo
Valley, in May of 1895.

Though it had no caption other than their
names, this looks like a wedding picture.



Here is the schoolhouse in Buffalo Valley. Again, Tookie writes: “A.N. Winchester taught here for a time – math. Bill, Virgie, and Grace [his children] attended their first grade here before the family moved to Wilmington in 1906.”



Virginia Alice Winchester and Mang Draper
1876-1895 ????-1938



Anthony’s younger sister, Virginia Alice Winchester, married Daniel Mang Draper (he used his middle name) in December, 1893. She was seventeen.

In November, 1894 she gave birth to a daughter, Myrtle Draper, and in December, 1895, Virginia died – at age nineteen.

Myrtle Draper was then raised by her grandmother, Licitia; presumably with Mang’s help. Mang, however, remarried in October 1896, had three children with his second wife, and married again in 1915, having four more children with his third wife.

Myrtle (Draper) Holland
1894-1981

Here is a picture of Myrtle Draper standing behind Anthony and Rilda's children. The picture is taken at "the old spring" in Buffalo Valley. In front of Myrtle are Grace, Virgie and Bill Winchester.

Myrtle is standing directly behind Virginia Alice Winchester, Anthony and Rilda's daughter. Myrtle's mother (Anthony's only sister) was also Virginia Alice Winchester, dead just over three years before Virgie was born.



Myrtle (Draper) Holland lived in Buffalo Valley for eighty seven years. She provided much of the Winchester family history for Tookie's records. Her contributions included a tiny envelop with a 2 x 3 inch tintype photograph of John Potter Winchester, which she apparently took herself. On the back: "My Grandfather, John Potter Winchester, by Myrtle Draper Holland." It is duplicated here.

Rufus Toi Winchester and Donna Fletcher
1878-1959 1880-????

Anthony's younger brother, Rufus Toi, became part of the Winchester migration to Wilmington, but Tookie's record of his presence is sketchy at best. On the right is a picture of Anthony and Rufus Toi.

Married to Donna Fletcher in May 1900, Rufus Toi had nine children. One of the Evans (Anthony's mother's) family sent genealogies to Tookie and his reference to Rufus Toi said: "He came to California in the early twenties and then later on was followed by his wife and children." I assume his wife moved the rest of the family to California after their youngest child died of measles in 1924 (Janie Ruth was born in 1922). Janie Ruth is buried at the Winchester home in Buffalo Valley.

The oldest child, daughter Johnnie, born in 1903, married a man from Tennessee and moved back. She died in 1959, the same year as Rufus Toi. The oldest son, Anthony, born in 1905, was killed by a street car in Los Angeles in 1930. The next son, Luke, born in 1909, died at the age of twenty one in 1930.



Frank, the third son, provides a fascinating story. Born in 1914, Frank was the student body president of Wilmington's Phineas Banning High School when he graduated in 1932. This looks like a graduation picture.

He received a Master of Science degree from the University of Kentucky and worked there until enlisting in the U.S. Army in 1942.





In Germany, under General Patton, his division was assigned to protect the Ramagen Bridge over the Rhine. There he was killed by a German artillery shell on March 9, 1945. These pictures, several newspaper articles, and copies of letters from his commanding officer and another soldier in his division were all in Tookie's albums. This picture is from the newspaper article announcing his death. (Newspaper pictures do not transfer well into digital scans.)

The articles listed Frank's address, with his wife Edith, as 1427 Ravenna Avenue, Wilmington. They also say his parents, "Mr. and Mrs. R.T. Winchester," were living at 814 Sandison Street. Further: "He leaves four sisters, [Virginia] Louise Gilbert and Margaret Myers of Stockton; Georgia Saunders of Wilmington; and Johnnie Jackson, residing in Tennessee – and a brother, Ralph Winchester of Kentucky."

In 1967, Virginia Alice Winchester (Anthony's daughter) and her son Bill, an Army Colonel, visited Frank's grave in Liege, Belgium.

Here Frank is laid to rest with 7,989 other Americans. Tookie had a card in her address file with Frank's name and address: The Henci Capelle Cemetery; Plat E, Row 9, Grave 18.



We can use the cemetery to segue back to Buffalo Valley, where we visit graveyards.

Barney and Martha Elizabeth Burch, Rilda's parents, are buried in a cemetery on the Shanks property. Willie, their one year old child, is also buried there.

Myrtle (Draper) Holland, the grandchild raised by John Potter and Licitia Winchester, escorted Tookie on a visit to the site in the early 1970's. Here they are pictured beside the Burch headstone.



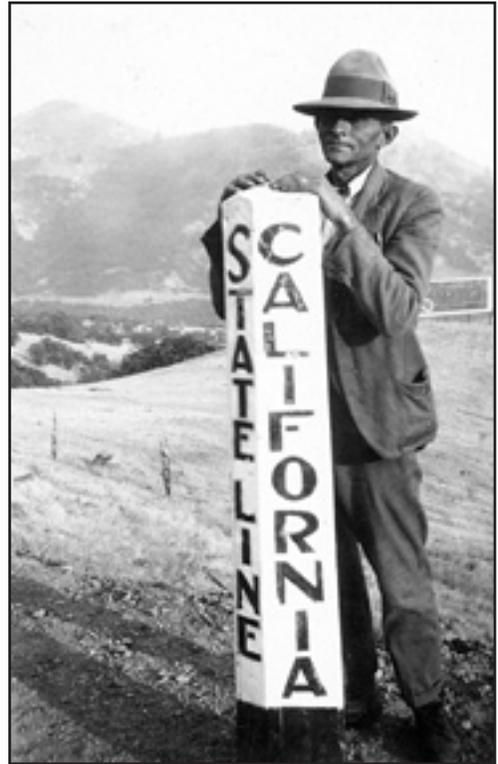
On the Winchester property, “to the side of the house (and back),” we find:

The large stones, from the left, are John Potter Winchester, Licitia Johnson (Evans) Winchester, Virginia Alice (Winchester) Draper and John Evans [Licitia’s brother]. The small stones are Levi Evans [Licitia’s brother], his wife Martha Evans, and Janie Ruth, the youngest daughter (two years old at her death) of Rufus Toi Winchester.

Under the largest stone, the nineteen year old Virginia Alice (Winchester) Draper was laid in her wedding dress. Her epitaph reads: Fair well sweet Virgie, thou will ever be a star, to guide us to heaven, and to thee.



In 1906 [or 1905] Anthony and Rilda moved their four children to California. Here Anthony pauses at the state line.



They settled in the spacious accommodations at 1036 Bay View, Wilmington. Here is another look at their home. Tookie's caption: "My birthplace." Martha Elizabeth was born here, as was William Schlarb, Virgie's only child. (At the beginning of the twentieth century more than ninety five percent of births took place at home.)

Here is Virgie (Virginia Alice) on the Bay View porch. When this picture is enlarged, the house number is clearly 1038, not 1036. I have no explanation.





After Anthony built a new home on McDonald, in 1919, the Bay View residence was torn down and replaced with what became the home of Virgie and Earl Schlarb

Here we see the replacement. This picture, with Bill Schlarb and Warren Winchester, was taken about 1932.



The house on Bay View is still recognizable at the start of the 21st Century. This picture was taken in 2002. The exterior has been covered with stucco, the cars have changed, but the lines of the house remain. The current house number is 1036.



Not all homes in the area were austere. The Krause home, shown here in 1908, was at 1036 McDonald, one block west of Bay View. (Some records show the house number as 1038. Tookie says 1036. This is the same number discrepancy we have for the family home on Bay View. The current address is 1036.)



The Winchester children knew the Krauses. Tookie often refers to them and here are pictures of the Winchester children “on Mrs. Krause front porch.” The residence Anthony built for his family in 1919, at 1046 McDonald, was two doors north of the Krause home.



Toi and Bill

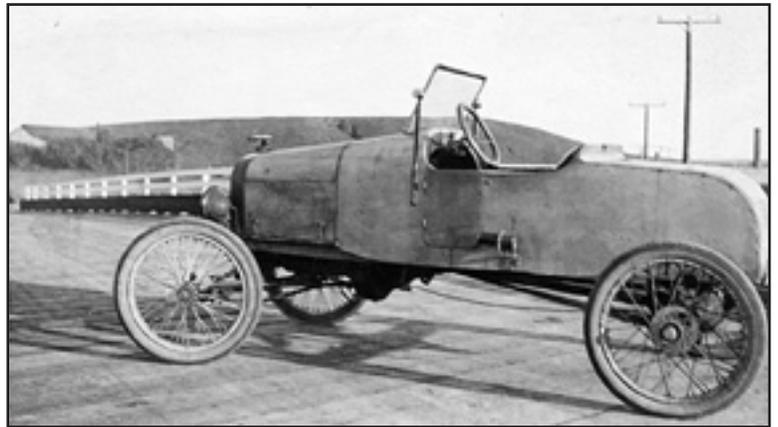


Grace and Virgie



As a further illustration of Wilmington's sparse population, here are Virgie and her future husband, Earl Schlarb. The photo is captioned: "1915 – in front of Sawyer's house on Ronan Avenue [one block West of McDonald] – where Gulf Avenue School now stands [Ronan at "L" Street]."

Here is a photo of William Winchester's 1913 Ford.



Since Bill was born in 1897, we can reasonably assume this was not a new car.

Here are Vioma (Shell) Eakin, a family friend, with Bill Schlarb and Tookie.



This appears to be Bill Winchester's 1913 Ford, and since Bill Schlarb was born in 1919, this was obviously taken about 1920.

Anthony and Rilda's second son, Toi, graduated from Wilmington High School in June 1924 (with eleven classmates). This is his graduation picture.



Toi's birth certificate is for "Jack Toi Winchester;" his graduation announcement lists "Jack Winchester," his memorial announcement is for "Jack." Yet every reference Tookie makes to her brother is to "James Toi" – with the single exception of a handwritten note on the family genealogy: "also known as Jack." We all knew him as "Toi," thus avoiding any confusion. There is probably a story here.

Toi loved cars. Here he admires his new 1931 Hudson. A note, dated summer 1941, appears in my baby book: "Baby enjoyed his Uncle Toi's new red Hudson. [Not the car in the picture, by 1941 Toi had a new Hudson.] When it was around, he would ride in no other car. He would say 'Toi's car' every time we passed one like it. As a matter of fact, he liked his Uncle Toi as well as the car, for he took him for a ride most every day." When "baby" left for college, in 1958, he was driving Toi's 1949 Hudson.



Never married, Toi was badly burned in a fire while working at the Standard Oil refinery. He died in 1951, at age 45, of complications from the burns.

We might briefly consider the naming protocols in the Winchester family. Anthony and Rilda doubtless named their first child after Anthony's older brother, William Levi, dead almost twenty years when William Valentine was born. Their second child was given a name identical to Anthony's sister, Virginia Alice Winchester, who died four years before Virgie's birth. Anthony's younger brother shared middle names with son Toi. Rilda finally had her chance with Tookie, as Martha Elizabeth was both Rilda's mother and her youngest daughter.

Anthony's brother, Rufus Toi, named one son Anthony and one daughter Virginia.

Finally, in his will John Potter Winchester referred to "my two sons, Anthony and Toy" (yes "Toy," not "Toi" – I assume that was a typo). So he used Rufus Toi's middle name, just as we used Jack/James Toi's middle name.



Aunt Coll

In October of 1933 Toi was involved in an auto accident that took the life of his uncle, John Smith. Both Toi and John worked for Standard Oil.

John was married to Velma Colleen Burch, Rilda's sister and the youngest child of Barney and Martha Elizabeth – and they had moved from Buffalo Valley to Wilmington. John and Colleen's son, Carl Smith, was six years old when his father died.

Velma Colleen, "Aunt Coll" to everyone, raised Carl by herself and became a family legend in the process.

Sweet as sugar, tough as nails; baking cookies or re-roofing her rental houses, she was a wonder to us all.

Carl Smith had a shoe box with some of Coll's old photos. Here we see Coll and her sister, Rilda, with young Carl. The caption reads: "Carl, 18 months old."



Coll and Rilda's mother, Martha Elizabeth Burch, lived in Wilmington for a time before she died. Martha's husband, Barney, died in 1921 and is buried in Buffalo Valley. I assume she was there until his death. This picture is from Tookie's albums. Martha is standing in front of 1046 McDonald in a dress that Tookie preserved; it was given to Warren and Clara.



This picture of Martha Elizabeth is from Coll's shoe box. Behind her are Rilda and Rilda's daughter, Virgie Schlarb. Next to Martha is Bill Schlarb, Virgie's son.

On a following page you will see Rilda wearing the same dress and string of pearls for her 50th birthday picture, taken in December 1925. Since Martha Elizabeth died in September 1925, this is probably the last picture of her.

1925 would make Bill Schlarb six years old, which looks about right.

It took me a while to appreciate the significance of this photograph: Bill is standing in front of his mother, Virgie, his grandmother, Rilda, and holding the hand of his great grandmother, Martha. Very nice.

A newspaper clipping in Tookie's album announced: "Mrs. Martha E. Burch died on Sunday at the age of 84 years, one month and 21 days, at her home, 1029 McDonald Avenue, Wilmington."

Her remains were returned to Buffalo Valley by Aunt Coll and her husband, John Smith.



One other Burch child came to California, James Tony Burch. This picture shows him at a construction site with Anthony. Tookie makes a few references to “Uncle Jim” but the details are missing.

Coll had this photo of Jim Burch driving a gorgeous Model T Ford. The Model T was built from 1923 through 1925 (Detroit had not progressed to yearly model changes). The picture of Uncle Jim is significant, but we also need preserve the picture of this magnificent car. It’s a guy thing.



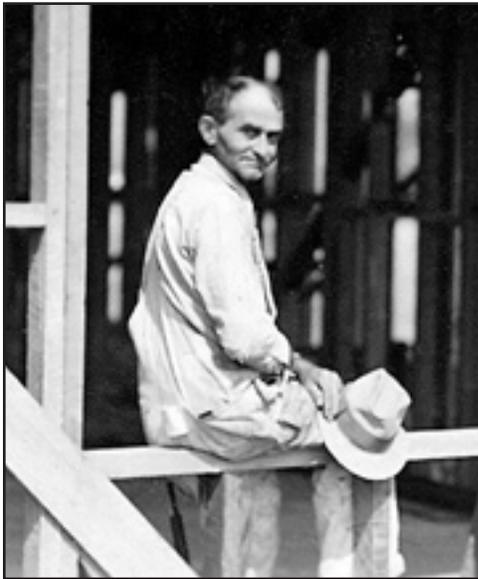


The last photo from Coll's shoe box had no caption and no date – but we don't want to miss this family gathering. Carl Smith, Warren Winchester and I will vouch for the identities, from the left, of Rilda and Anthony Winchester, Earl and Virgie Schlarb, John Smith (under the big hat), Alice (Garbers) Winchester, Colleen Smith and Toi Winchester. Grace and Tookie are in front. Bill Winchester is in back. Note that while Rilda and Colleen are sisters, Virgie (Rilda's daughter) and Colleen are much closer in age.

Before the breakwater turned Los Angeles Harbor into a basin, Long Beach had real surf rolling on the sand. Six miles from the McDonald home the family could enjoy a day at the beach. Here we find Coll, Virgie, Rilda and Anthony haven't quite adopted the surfer lifestyle. But John McLaren, Tookie's date, is a dude.



Here are Anthony and Rilda on Rilda's 50th birthday, in 1925.



Anthony continued his carpentry. This picture was taken in 1936, at 1435 Marine Avenue. Anthony is sixty two years old.

Here Anthony and Rilda celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary, late May, 1945. They are seated in the dining room of 1046 McDonald.



Another picture from the Golden Wedding Anniversary. Anthony and Rilda are standing in front of 1046 McDonald with their children, Virgie, Grace, Toi and Martha (Tookie). This celebration would obviously be tinged with sadness as the eldest son, William Valentine, died in early April.



Further, a newspaper clipping announcing the event identifies the host as Mmes. Colleen Smith and R.T. Winchester. Rufus Toi's son, Frank, had been killed in March. 1945 was a bittersweet year for the Winchesters of Wilmington.



Here Rilda and Anthony are standing on the north side of 1046 McDonald, their backs to the vacant lot next door (where Anthony fashioned a compacted dirt croquet court). The date is September, 1953. Rilda died in early 1954.



Finally, a picture captioned “Dad Winchester,” in the back yard of 1046 McDonald, in April, 1967. Anthony died in June.

Anthony N. Winchester was healthy well into his nineties, so we might want to consider his lifestyle choices.

First, his affection for alcohol was a constant source of conversation and concern in the family. To limit his access, Virgie arranged to have Anthony’s Social Security checks mailed to her (those were simpler times); but she continued to find empty bottles. She finally discovered he was selling rabbits to raise cash. Anthony knew she would not be able to regulate his rabbit inventory.

Then, his diet was truly remarkable. I personally recall watching him fix breakfast: Warm a slab of fatback (pure pig fat) in the frying pan, drop it on a plate and cover it with mayonnaise. Knife, fork, black coffee. Mmmmm.

And there was the Five Brothers pipe tobacco. It arrived in small cloth bags with a pull-tie at one end. Anthony would empty several bags onto an inverted trash can lid, place the lid in the back yard, in the sun, and “cure” the tobacco for a week or two. My father once borrowed a pipe full when they were working on a roof, took one drag, got so lightheaded he thought he would fall to the ground, and declared Grandpa’s tobacco unfit for mortals.

Finally, many of the Winchesters, including Anthony, were plagued by phlebitis (inflammation of veins, swelling and permanent darkening) in their feet and lower legs. Warren remembered observing Anthony’s home remedy: Roll your pants up to the knee, wrap the lower legs in burlap sacks, soak the burlap with kerosene and sit in the sun. We would like to think he didn’t smoke his pipe during this process; but he probably did.

Alcohol, fatback, Five Brothers and phlebitis shortened Anthony’s life to ninety two years, six months and change.

The Zone diet, some aerobics, and he might still be here to tell us more about the Winchester family. Or not. In any case, we can all be grateful for any genetic material we have received from Anthony.

Most of the pictures in this booklet were scanned from Tookie's albums. Several came from a shoe box (literally) belonging to Aunt Coll and a few came from Warren Winchester. Many of them have been enlarged and restored to the best of my limited ability. (The original pictures were generally small, dark, and often damaged.) The originals are now stored in archival albums. The digital scans, very large TIFF files, are available for anyone who wants them.

Compiling these pictures and stories brought up scores of questions. As a child I had dreams about strange people coming out of the walls at 1046 McDonald; people I didn't know or didn't recognize. Some of those people were doubtless the "uncles," "aunts" and "cousins" Tookie refers to. I am simply amazed at what I don't know about my own family. We've all read the stories about people who regret not doing this kind of research when their parents were alive and able to fill in the blanks. Now I'm one of those people. Sigh.

The project also brought a flood of memories from 1046 McDonald: The recently headless Thanksgiving turkey hopping its last hops across the croquet court; the circle of family members lining the walls of the living and dining room for Christmas; the steam, heat and aromas from family canning parties; the attempt to raise rabbits in the shed behind the house; Anthony leveling his pellet gun through the window of his workshop, shooting crows off his corn; Warren and Stan throwing dirt clods and chasing me around the oil tanks by the house. They go on and on.

The real significance of this story, for me, is a look at Tookie's childhood, comparing it to mine and to that of my children and grandchildren. She was reared with four siblings in that tiny house, under conditions we associate with undeveloped countries, and she underlined her own words: "It was a happy childhood." Furthermore, she became a happy, and entirely admirable, adult. The lesson seems obvious.

If you find errors in this booklet, or if you have stories you would like to add, please let me know. Corrections and additions are relatively easy. This is the November 2002 edition. Please consider this a work in progress.

On the opposite page is part of a 1976 map of
Wilmington, "the heart of the harbor."

It is a small town. What you see here covers less
than two miles, from West to East.

The star designates 1036 (or 38) Bay View.
1046 McDonald would be one block West and two
houses North. The pepper tree that sheltered the
Winchesters for the opening photograph was located
near what is now the corner of Opp and Neptune.

