

[Mrs. Eulalia McCranie]

26046

February 23, [1939?].

Mrs. Eulalia McCranie

114 East 5th-st.,

(Native Floridian)

Rose Shepherd, Writer.

LIFE HISTORY

of

MRS. EULALIA McCRANIE

It was a rather cold February day when I kept my 2 o'clock appointment with Mrs. McCranie. Here is one of the earlier homes in the Springfield section of Jacksonville, where she has lived for twenty-five years. Bright variegated azalias whose bloom tops the handrail of the steps leading to the front porch are as yet untouched by the cold winds prevailing for the past two days. Flowers and plants are growing in greatest profusion, the well-kept lawn dotted with beds of hardy annuals, while rose bushes flank the long sun room on the [east?]. The house fronts the north, and is nearly opposite the Springfield Methodist Church on the corner of 4th 6th and [?] Market [sts?]. Fla.

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Mrs. McCranie [herself?] answered the doorbell. A tall, erect woman, with kindly face and bright blue eyes, only her snowy white hair would give a hint of her age of seventy-two years. Her skin is clear and delicate.

She cordially welcomed me, and while the house seemed comfortably warm, she said:

“We will go on into the dining room. I suffer very much from arthritis of the spine, and have a favorite chair near the heater where I can rest better.”

She seated herself in a straight-backed dining chair near the [partition?] wall close to the circulating coal heater, placing me opposite in a well padded rocker, and taking a [square?] pine board from 2 from the top of the heater, she said:

“You have had a long walk in the cold, and if you will place your feet on this feet on this board, you'll be surprised how it will send the warmth up through your body.”

I did as she suggested, more to test the novelty of such a “foot-warmer,” than from any need of such comfort, and, as she said, it did give an agreeable warmth. The board was a twelve-inch square of inch-thick fat pine, which might be split up later on and used for kindling.

“Just an old ‘cracker’ custom,” she said, as I thanked her for her [solicitousness?].

“Mrs. McCranie, is it true that you are a descendant of the Indian Princess, Ulalah, whose romantic interest in Juan Ortis four hundred years ago gave rise to one of the earliest historical [love?] stories of Florida?’ I asked.

“No.” she said, laughing, “but I was named for a Spanish Princess, of the early days, Eulalia. She later became queen of Spain.

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“My father, H. S. Williams brought my mother to Florida from South Carolina just before the War between the States, locating near the present town of Melrose, where I was born in November, 1866. This is about sixty miles from Jacksonville.

“When I was four or five years old, a colony of South Carolinians settled in Columbia County, between Gainesville and Lake City, and [we?] moved there.

“In this section and all around Lake Santa Fe were beautiful, well-producing orange groves at that time, and my father operated one of these groves.

“As I grew up in that section, Melrose, Waldo, Hawthorne, and Starke were popular as tourist towns. Canals were dug connecting 3 Waldo with the towns mentioned and others located on Lake Santa Fe, and [?] small steamer made regular daily trips between these points. This was the only [?] of transportation, as there were no railroads in that section.

‘At Earleton, named for the [Earle?] family of early settlers on the Santa Fe River, there was a popular old hotel, called the ‘Balmoral.’ It accommodated many famous travelers to Florida in the early days. I saw the wreckage of this old hostelry when I was a very small child, just after the war, but our fortunes were so [disustrouly?] affected by the aftermath of the war that I have tried to forget everything concerning it, so do not remember the names of any of these travelers, or who operated the hotel.

“Sixty years ago, Waldo was probably a better tourist town than Jacksonville. South Florida, of course, had not then been developed.

“There were no small fruits or vegetables grown in that vicinity then. Strawberries came in commercially in the Starke section about forty-eight years ago. They were grown and shipped from there for a great many years before the Plant City region was developed.

“The great freeze in 1889 destroyed the fine orange groves around Lake Santa Fe and on down to Dade City. Grove owners did not then understand cultivation, [propagation?],

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caring for with fertilization, smudging in cold weather, and other things like they do now, and the destruction of the citrus groves was complete.

“I was educated in the early Florida schools and went to a girls' school in Columbia, S. C., where I was graduated in [1886?].

4

“I met my husband, Hugh J. McCranie, and we were married in 1886. My husband was a native of Georgia, and we located at Waycross, where we lived for fourteen years. He was in the lumber business and became associated with Mr. George Drew, one of the early Governors of Florida, and they operated a sawmill at New Branford, on the Suwanee River, near the present town of [Ellaville?] in 1887 and 1888. G. B. Porter had charge of the planing mills.

“By this time the railroads were being developed in Florida. The early H.B. Plant System came in by way of DuPont and Live Oak, and went on to Gainesville, then down farther south. My husband became an auditor for the railroad company.

“In 1898, during the Spanish American War period, he was transferred to Tampa, taking charge of the office there.

“At that time there was just one paved street in the city of Tampa, [and?] that was Franklin Street, which was paved with cypress blocks. Two or three streets later were paved with those heavy blocks, but the loaded [drays], and the constant tramping of the horses to the delivery wagons broke up the blocks and wore them down, so that they were very unsatisfactory, then during heavy rains they would wash out and would have to be replaced.

“It was after the Spanish American War that Plant Avenue, Hyde Park, and the older sections were paved with asphalt.

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“While we were living in Waycross my husband purchased a beautiful bay saddlehorse, which he enjoyed riding. After we moved to Tampa he had little [time for?] riding and wished to sell the animal. Learning that Col. Theodore Roosevelt was desirous of securing a 5 mount, Mr. [Spottswood?], father of our local commercial photographer, Jack [Spottswood?], relayed the information to Mr. McCranie, who got in touch with the popular [‘teddy?],’ with the result that the sale was [consummated?], and it was this horse which led the popular here up San Juan Hill.

“Yes, I am a firm believer in the Church and I do not believe its influence is waning. It is just that there are so many people in the world nowadays and there are diversified interests, so that they do not devote the time to religious observances so much as in former years.

“Do I vote? Yes, I have voted since it has been permissible. I felt a little strange at first, but now that so many women vote and serve as clerks and tellers at the polls, one feels right at home. It is a privilege to express one's [preferment?] by voting, and I believe everyone should avail themselves of this privilege as a duty.

“I am heartily in favor of the New Deal, and its results are apparent even in my neighborhood. In former years, my pastor who lives across the street, adjoining the Springfield Methodist Church, was often hard put to it to take care of some of his flock. But the work furnished and the wages paid to those in our neighborhood on the WPA are apparent, and if it is so in this small section, what must its accomplishments and rehabilitative affects be throughout the United States?”

On leaving my attention was called to the lovely paintings adorning the walls of Mrs. McCranie's home, the work of her nephew, Hugh Colwell, a local artist of ability. He has gone in lately for portraiture, and has just completed a life-like portrait of Senator J. Turner Butler, and is engaged on another of T. T. Phillips.